

STANDING ^{IN} THE NEED ^{OF} PRAYER

A Modern Retelling
of the Classic Spiritual



Written by
**Carole Boston
Weatherford**

Illustrated by
Frank Morrison

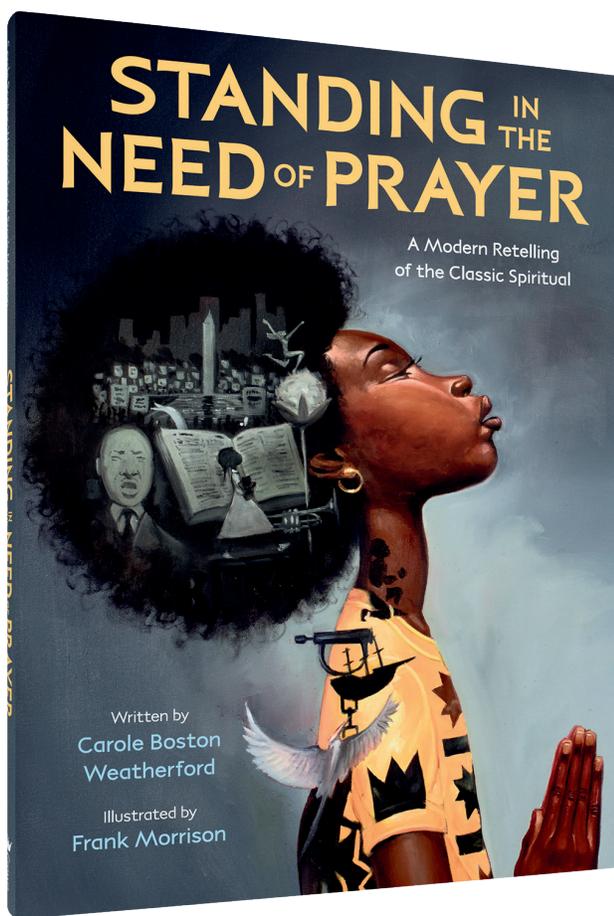
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EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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Themes: Historical Fiction, African American Interest, Religious & Biblical Stories

About the Author



Carole Boston Weatherford is a two-time NAACP Image Award winner and the author of *Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre*, which won the Coretta Scott King Author and Illustrator Awards, a Caldecott Honor, and a Sibert Honor; the Newbery Honor book *Box*;

the Newbery Honor book *Henry Brown Mails Himself to Freedom*; and the Caldecott Honor books *Freedom in Congo Square*, *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer*, *Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, and *Moses: When Harriet Tubman*

Led Her People to Freedom.

Born in Baltimore, Weatherford now teaches at Fayetteville State University, in North Carolina.



About the Book

This inspirational book encapsulates African American history and invites conversations at all levels. Carole Boston Weatherford's riveting text and Frank Morrison's evocative and detailed paintings are informative reminders of yesterday, hopeful images for today, and aspirational dreams of tomorrow.

Starting in 1619 and stretching more than four hundred years, this book features such pivotal moments in history as the arrival of enslaved people in Jamestown, Virginia; Nat Turner's rebellion; the integration of the US military; the Selma to Montgomery marches; and peaceful present-day protests. It also celebrates the feats of African American musicians and athletes, such as Duke Ellington and Florence Griffith Joyner.

At the end of the book, readers will find descriptions of the people, places, and events that are featured, along with a note from Carole Boston Weatherford.

Visually stunning and incredibly timely, this book reckons with a painful history while serving as a testament to the ability of the human spirit to persevere in even the most hopeless of circumstances. Its universal message of faith, strength, and resilience will resonate with readers of all ages.

About the Illustrator



Photo credit: Lucie Garzaoli

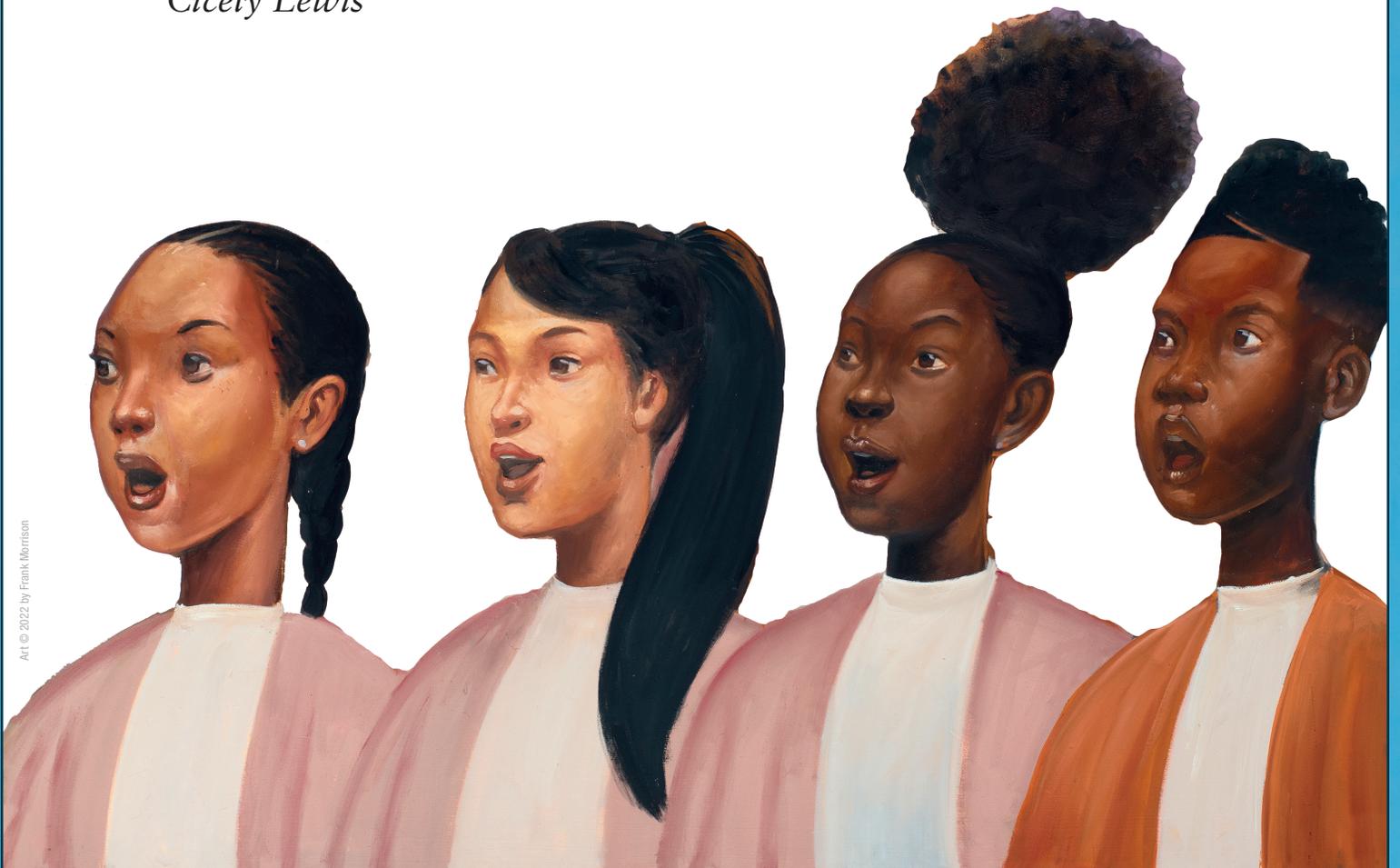
Frank Morrison started his journey as a graffiti artist in New Jersey, tagging walls with spray paint. It wasn't until he visited the Louvre Museum in Paris as part of the Sugar Hill Gang's dance entourage that he realized painting was his true creative path. His work

has been featured at Art Basel, SCOPE Miami Beach, and Red Dot art fairs, and shown at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Mason Fine Art Gallery in Atlanta. He is the illustrator of over twenty children's books, including the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winner *R-E-S-P-E-C-T*, the Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award winner *Jazzy Miz Mozetta*, and the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor books *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* and *Let the Children March*. Frank was a Society of Illustrators Original Art Silver Medal honoree two years in a row for *The Roots of Rap* and *R-E-S-P-E-C-T*.

Dear Educators,

Discussing prayer and religion in school can be challenging, but navigating these topics can lead to a rewarding learning experience. Learning about different religions can help our students be more empathetic and knowledgeable. When I started the Read Woke challenge at my school, I wanted my students to read books that amplify the voices of the global majority. Books like *Standing in the Need of Prayer* epitomize this and help teach about one of the darkest eras of our history. This book shows the resilience, beauty, and power of Black people and how music soothes the soul.

Cicely Lewis



Discussion Questions

“The African American spiritual, which is a type of religious folk song, originated with enslaved Black people in the South. The enslaved not only sang spirituals during worship but also while working in the fields. Some spirituals even passed along coded messages of pending escapes.”

—*Standing in the Need of Prayer* Author’s Note

1. What does music mean to you? Is it important? Why? When you hear your favorite song, how does it make you feel?
2. Which songs encourage you when you are feeling sad? What do you notice about them? Are they upbeat? Slow?
3. What is a spiritual? Why is it important that we continue to learn about spirituals even though these songs were written years ago?
4. Fredrick Douglass, in his autobiography, writes about the significance of singing by enslaved people: “I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery.” Some people may misinterpret spirituals sung by enslaved people as proof that they were happy. What does Frederick Douglas have to say about this? How does he describe spirituals?
5. What was the purpose of spirituals for enslaved people?
6. What have you learned about yourself and the world from *Standing in the Need of Prayer*?

Picture Reading

Focus on the illustrations and lead a discussion with students.



1. What do you see in the picture?
2. What do you think about the picture?
3. Describe the people in the picture. What do you think they are saying or thinking?
4. What would you do if you were in that scene?
5. When do you think this is happening?

Students can record their answers and discuss with partners.

Listen and Draw!

Step 1: Listen to the song or excerpt from the song without drawing.

Step 2: Listen again and ask questions while the students are drawing and listening.

Step 3: Repeat the process or allow students to listen individually with headphones or in groups.

Step 4: Allow students to share their art and explain.

Questions to Ask While Listening

- How does the music make you feel?
- What do you notice about the song?
- What colors does the music make you think of?
- What pictures come to mind?

Suggested Spirituals

- “Swing, Low, Sweet Chariot”
[youtube.com/watch?v=j49N8G4h0QI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j49N8G4h0QI)
- “I Got My Ticket”
[loc.gov/item/ftvbib000038/](https://www.loc.gov/item/ftvbib000038/)
- “Go Down, Moses”
[youtube.com/watch?v=ueSULIAKSkU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueSULIAKSkU)



Remix!

Think about global events. Carole Boston Weatherford, the author of the book *Standing in the Need of Prayer*, modified the original song to reflect different parts of history. What other events could you add? Create a new verse based on any event you think is appropriate.

Event Ideas

- Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson became the first Black female Supreme Court Justice.
- Zaila Avant-garde, a fourteen-year-old from Louisiana, became the first Black American to win the Scripps National Spelling Bee.
- Raphael Warnock became the first Black senator elected in the state of Georgia.
- Amanda Gorman, a Black writer and the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history, recited “The Hill We Climb” at President Biden’s inauguration.
- Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open and brought awareness to mental health and self-care.
- Local events from your community

Helpful Vocabulary: Words to Know

Slavery: The practice of people owning other people is called slavery. Enslaved people have to work for the owners, doing whatever the owners ask them to do. In the past many societies had slavery.

Orator: a public speaker, especially one who is eloquent or skilled

Athlete: a person who is proficient in sports and other forms of physical exercise

Prayer

“This spiritual advocates a close, personal relationship with God—a bond forged through prayer. The song also elevates the concept of family, a core value among African Americans, who dreaded the separation that could come with enslavement. Most of all, it affirms the power of prayer. That power, as this hymn proclaims, is vital to anyone, to everyone, to you. However simple, prayers express inner feelings of joy, sadness, gratitude, grief, conflict, and compassion. And prayer is accessible to all.”

—*Standing in the Need of Prayer* Author’s Note

Many religions incorporate prayer into their practice. Using a variety of sources, research prayers from different religions.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think people pray?
- What can be gained by taking inventory of what is stressful or worrying in your life?
- How does praying about positive things remind us to be grateful?



This guide was prepared by Cicely Lewis, a media center specialist at Meadowcreek High School, Norcross, Georgia, and the founder of the Read Woke program.



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