



## Part II:

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity  
Patterns of African Americans  
in Children's Picture Books



# Assumption

- Children and adolescents depend upon healthy role models and positive environmental cues for practicing healthful behaviors on a daily basis.
- Children's picture books are an effective medium for observing human role models.



# Rationale & Background

## Fact 1:

Although 7 of every 10 deaths among Americans are due to chronic disease, the actual underlying causes of these deaths are often risk factors that could have been prevented....and chronic diseases do not have to be an inevitable consequence of aging.

**Source: National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, 1998**



# Rationale & Background

## Fact 2:

Three such behaviors – tobacco use, poor nutrition, and lack of physical activity – are major contributors to cardiovascular disease and cancer, our nation's leading killers. These negative behaviors increase risks for diabetes, lung disease, arthritis, and osteoporosis.



# Methodology

- Selection Process
- Selection Criteria



# Selection Process

- Over 4000 picture books were reviewed on the Children's Picture Book Database at Miami University (<http://lib.muohio.edu/pictbks>)
- The CPBD@MU is a bibliography for designing thematic units in eight academic disciplines. Each picture book is assigned more than 10 keywords to allow greater access (and use) of books across the curriculum.



## Sample Size (n = 59):

- **20 books with nutrition-related story lines**, including different types of foods and beverages; places and socialization around food (picnics, restaurants, home), and types of meals (breakfast, lunch, & dinner), and
- **39 books with physical activity-related story lines**, including play, recreation (fishing), exercise (bicycling), dance, and sports.



# Selection Criteria

Books were read then selected for the study if it included:

- A predominant story line about African Americans;
- Human subjects as the focus on the story, not animal or novel characters;
- Positive environmental cues for food, nutrition, exercise, and/or physical activity -- either through the text or the visual images.





# Descriptive Statistics

Out of the 4000 picture books reviewed,

- 20 books or .5% had nutrition-related story lines with African Americans, and
- 39 books or .1% had physical-activity related story lines with African Americans.



# Types of Food

- Fruit = 8
- Potatoes = 6
- Greens = 5
- Beans & Nuts = 3
- Corn on Cob = 3
- Chicken = 4
- Turkey = 1



# Types of Food, *continued*

- Crab cakes = 2
- Corn bread = 3
- Tea cakes = 1
- Pies = 3
- Fried spoon bread = 1
- Cookies = 1



# Types of Beverages

- Buttermilk = 2
- Tea = 2
- Milk = 1
- Cocoa = 1
- Coffee = 1
- Alcohol = 1



# Types of Meals

- Breakfast = 2
- Lunch = 1
- Dinner = 6



# Place of Meal

- Picnic = 3
- Restaurant = 3
- Home = 12

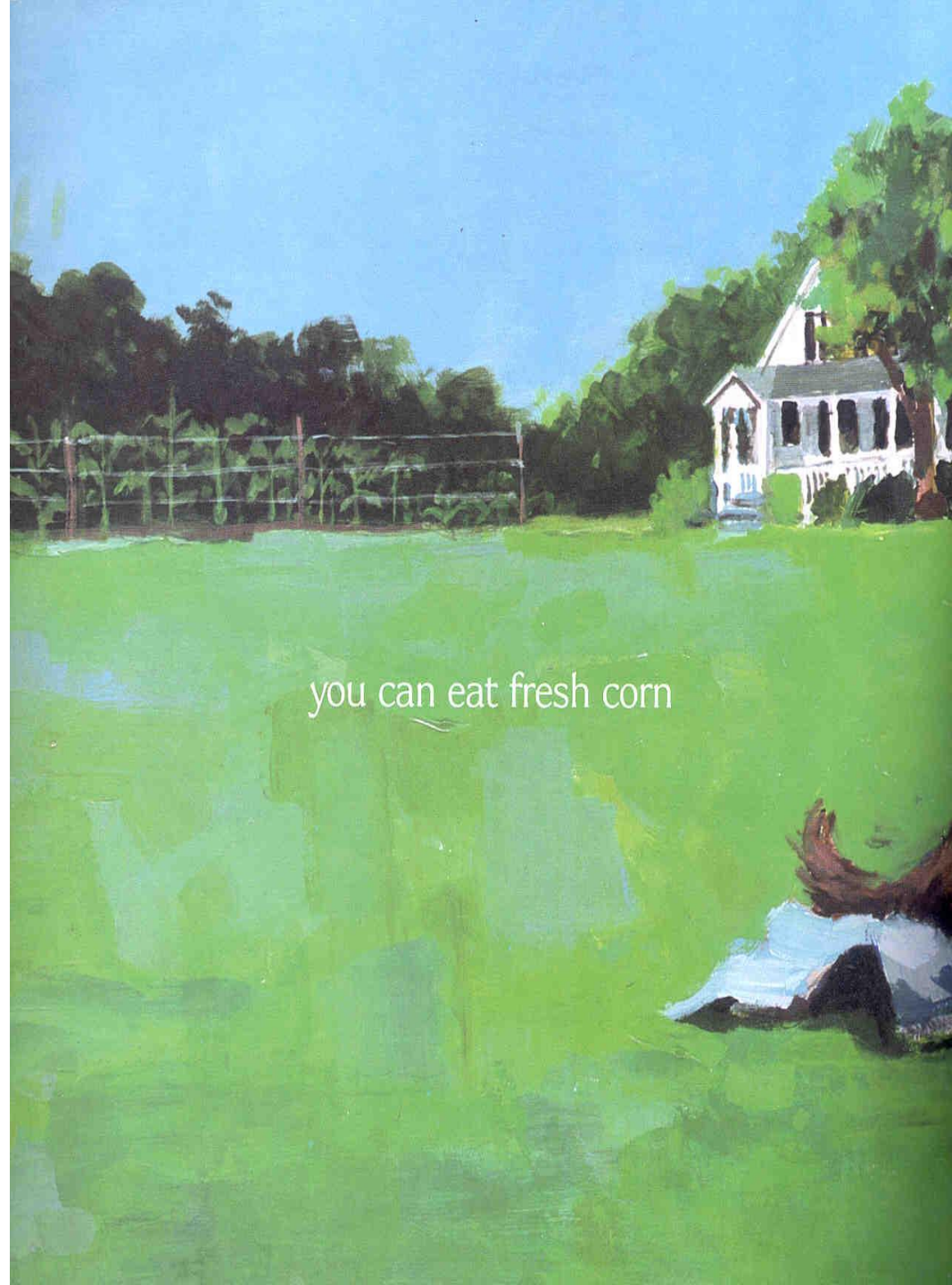
There were at least 9 story lines with intergenerational family relationships.



# Knoxville, Tennessee

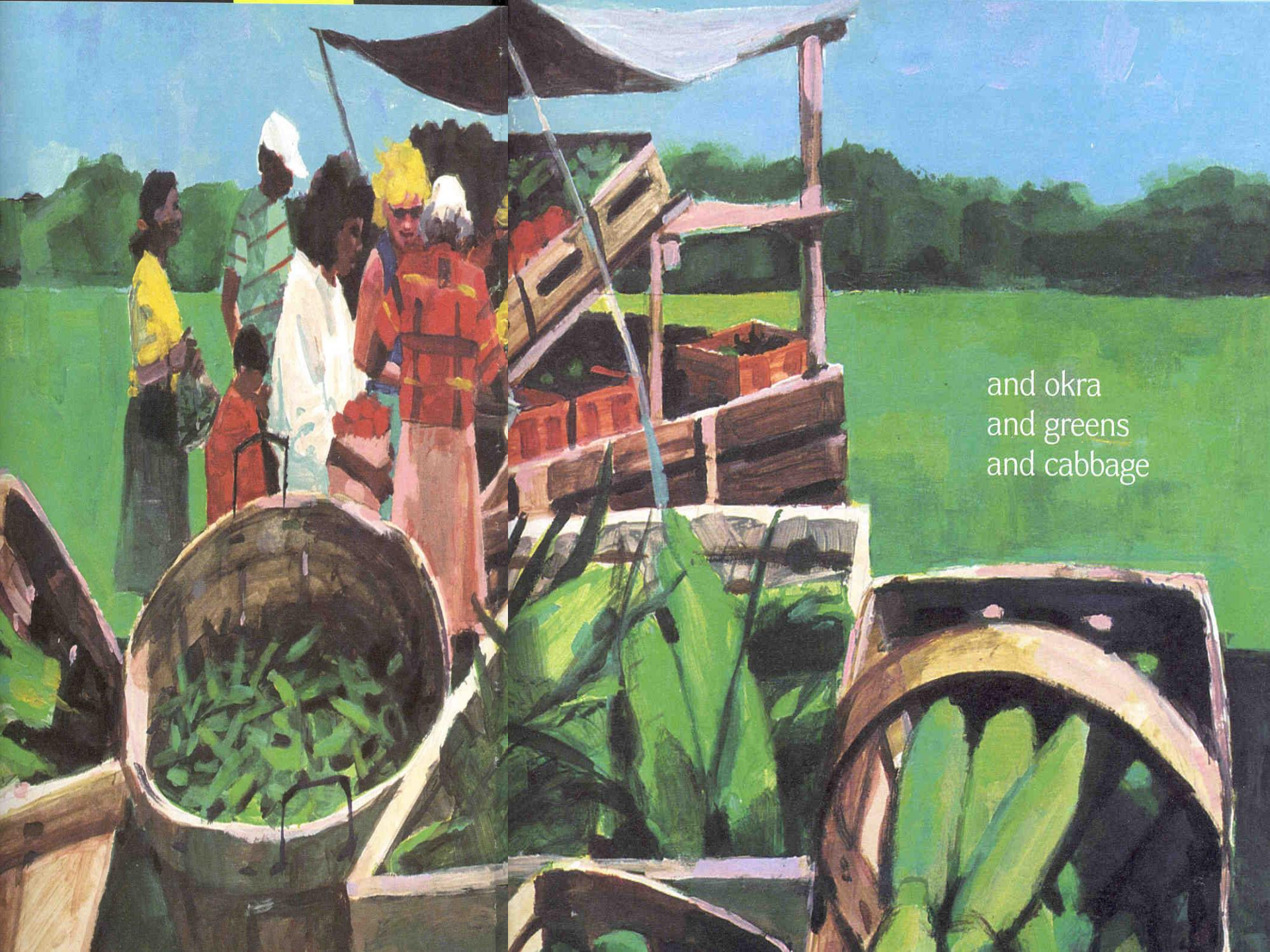
**BY NIKKI GIOVANNI**

illustrated by Larry Johnson



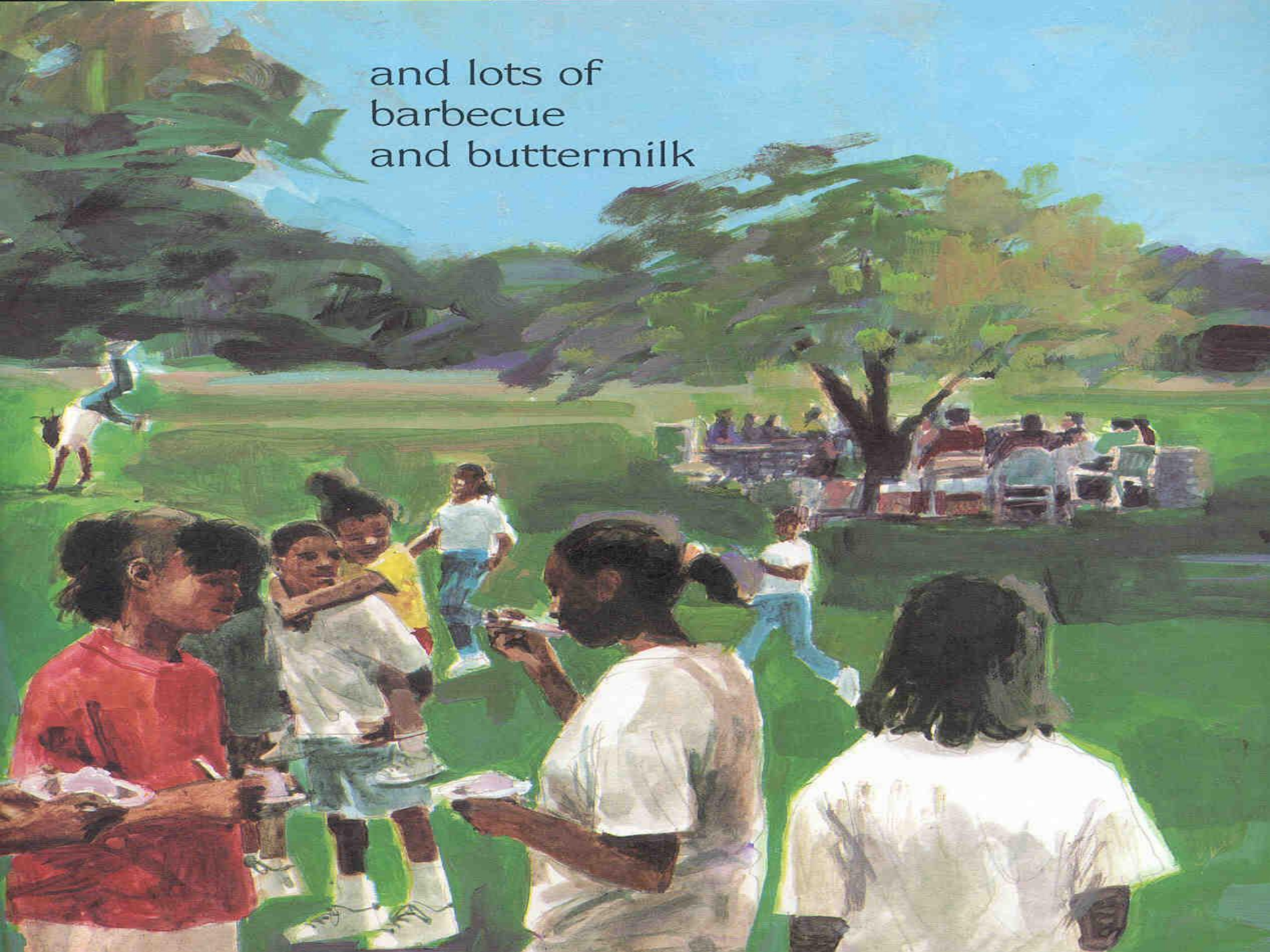
you can eat fresh corn



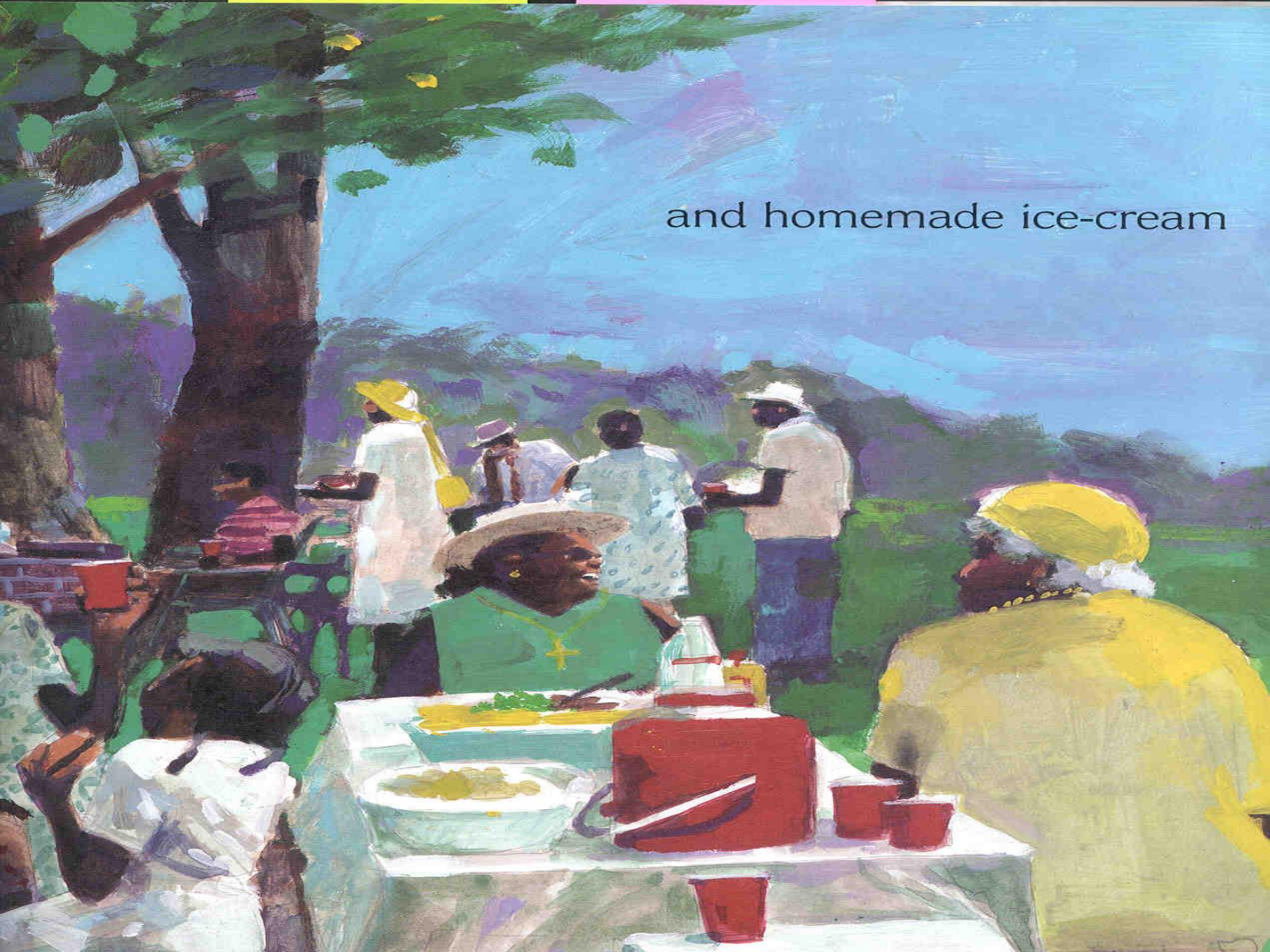


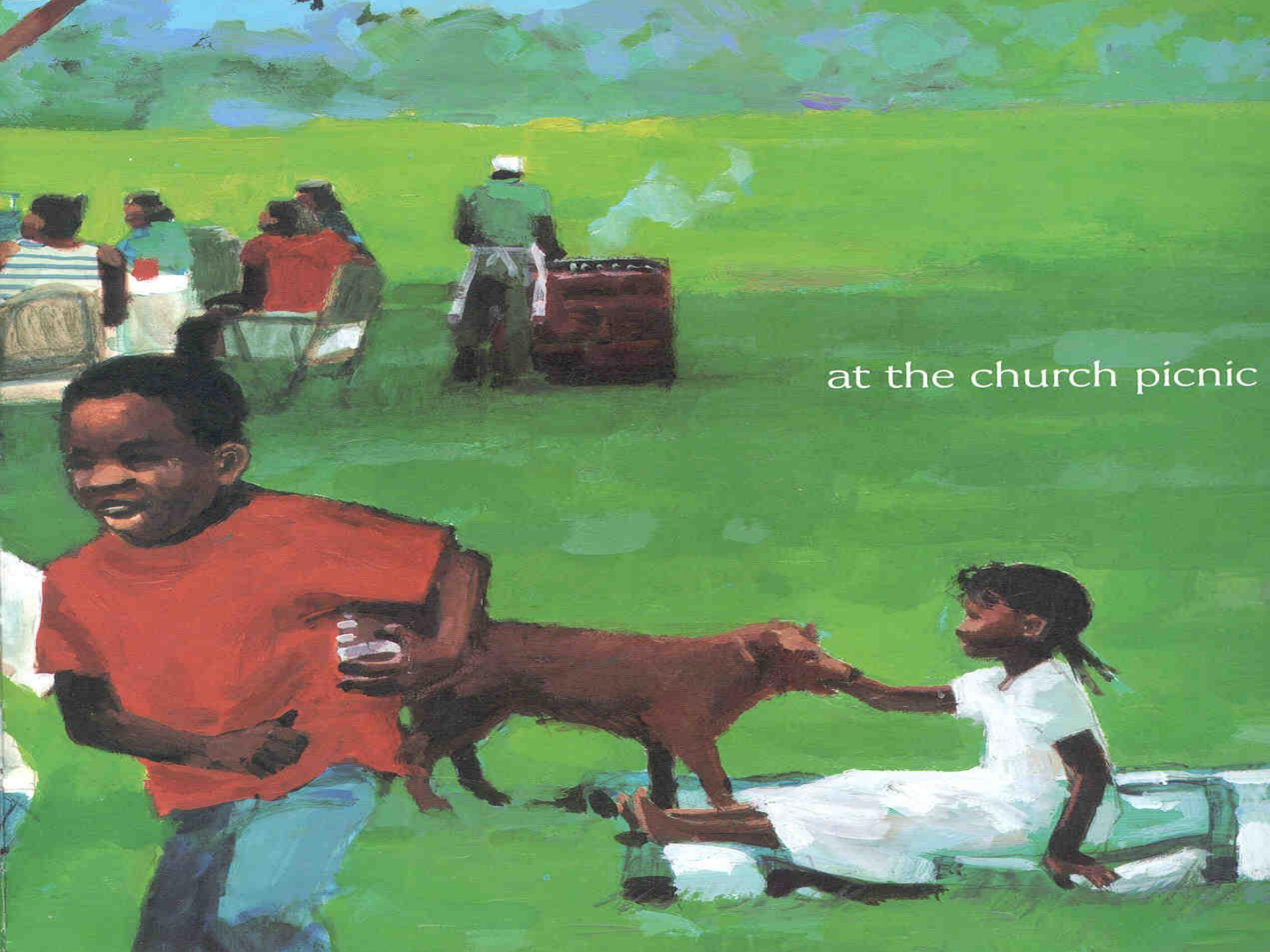
and okra  
and greens  
and cabbage

and lots of  
barbecue  
and buttermilk



and homemade ice-cream



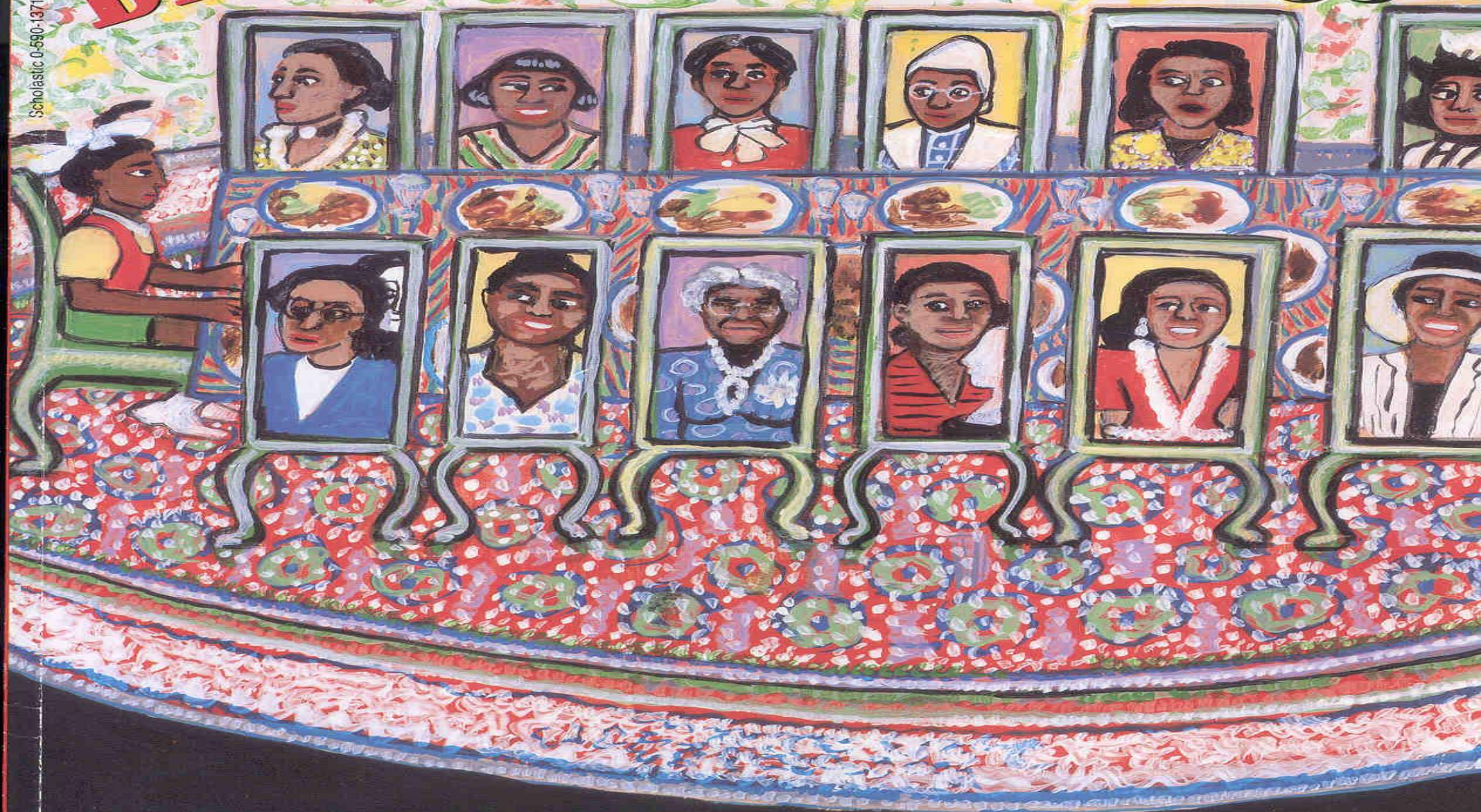


at the church picnic

# DINNER *at* AUNT CONNIE'S HOUSE

*Faith Ringgold*

Scholastic 0-590-13713-1





Aunt Connie's dinners are the best. We had roast turkey, duck, cranberry sauce, corn bread, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, candied sweet potatoes, and fresh greens. Seated around the table were the usual people: Aunt Connie and Uncle Bates, my mother and father, Grandma and Grandpa Bates, my sister Dee Dee and her new husband, Carl, and Mr. and Mrs. Tucker. But only Lonnie and I knew that today's dinner was extra special. It was magical. As we ate, Aunt Connie spoke about each of the women in her portraits.

# Chicken Sunday

Patricia Polacco



We called those Sundays “Chicken Sundays” because Miss Eula almost always fried chicken for dinner. There’d be collard greens with bacon, a big pot of hoppin’ john, corn on the cob, and fried spoon bread.

One Sunday at the table we watched her paper fan flutter back and forth, pulling moist chicken-fried air along with it. She took a deep breath. Her skin glowed as she smiled. Then she told us something we already knew. “That Easter bonnet in Mr. Kodinski’s window is the most beautiful I ever did see,” she said thoughtfully.

The three of us exchanged looks. We wanted to get her that hat more than anything in the world.





Later that day as Miss Eula sat at the head of the table she said, "Oh baby dears, I can die happy now. And after I'm dead, on Chicken Sundays, I want you to boil up some chicken—bones, gravy, and all—and pour it over my grave. So late at night when I'm hungry, I can reach right out and have me some."

Then she rolled her head back and laughed from a deep, holy place inside.





# Types of Physical Activity

- Dancing = 12
- Walking = 10
- Running = 10
- Basketball = 8
- Bicycling = 4
- Gymnastics-like activities
  - Cartwheels = 2
  - Somersaults = 2



# Other Types of Physical Activity

- Skipping = 3
- Climbing = 3
- Swinging = 2
- Soccer = 2
- Leaping = 2
- Swimming = 1
- Marching = 1
- Hopscotch = 1



# Books with Story lines about Dance ( n = 6)

- Boys dancing = 0
- Girls dancing = 6
- Coed interactions = 5



## **Books with Story lines about Sports ( n = 3)**

- Boys dancing = 0
- Girls dancing = 6
- Coed interactions = 5



# **Books with Intergenerational Story lines about Physical Activity ( n = 7)**

- Girl walking with grandfather
- Boy walking and dancing with mother
- Girl dancing with father
- Boy playing basketball with father
- Boy walking with grandfather
- Others



# Interesting Observations

- Boy jumping rope
- Girl climbing tree
- Girl playing basketball with social positioning by her father



# Gender Frequencies for Physical Activity

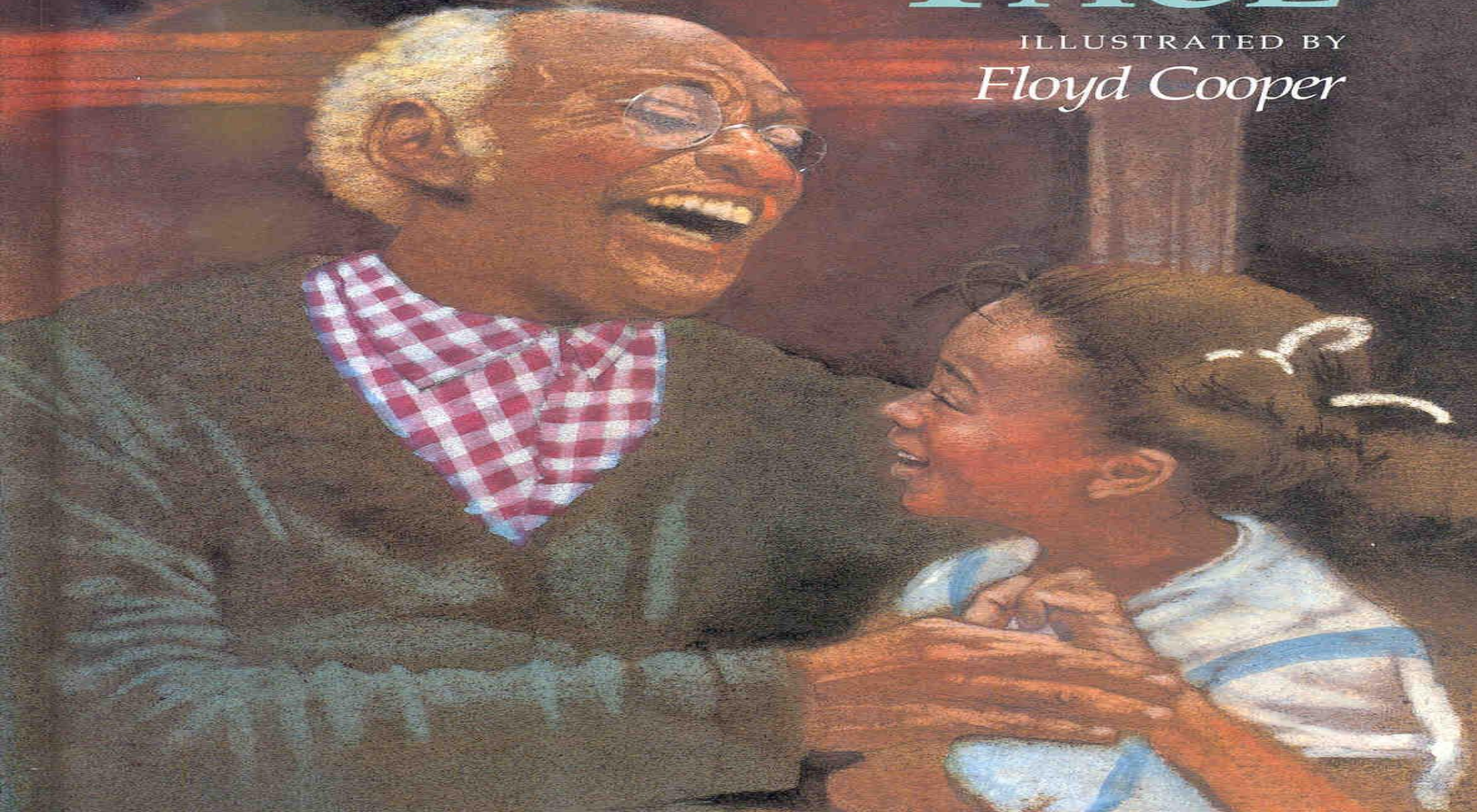
- Girls = 43 times
- Boys = 38 times
- Men = 15 times
- Women = 13 times

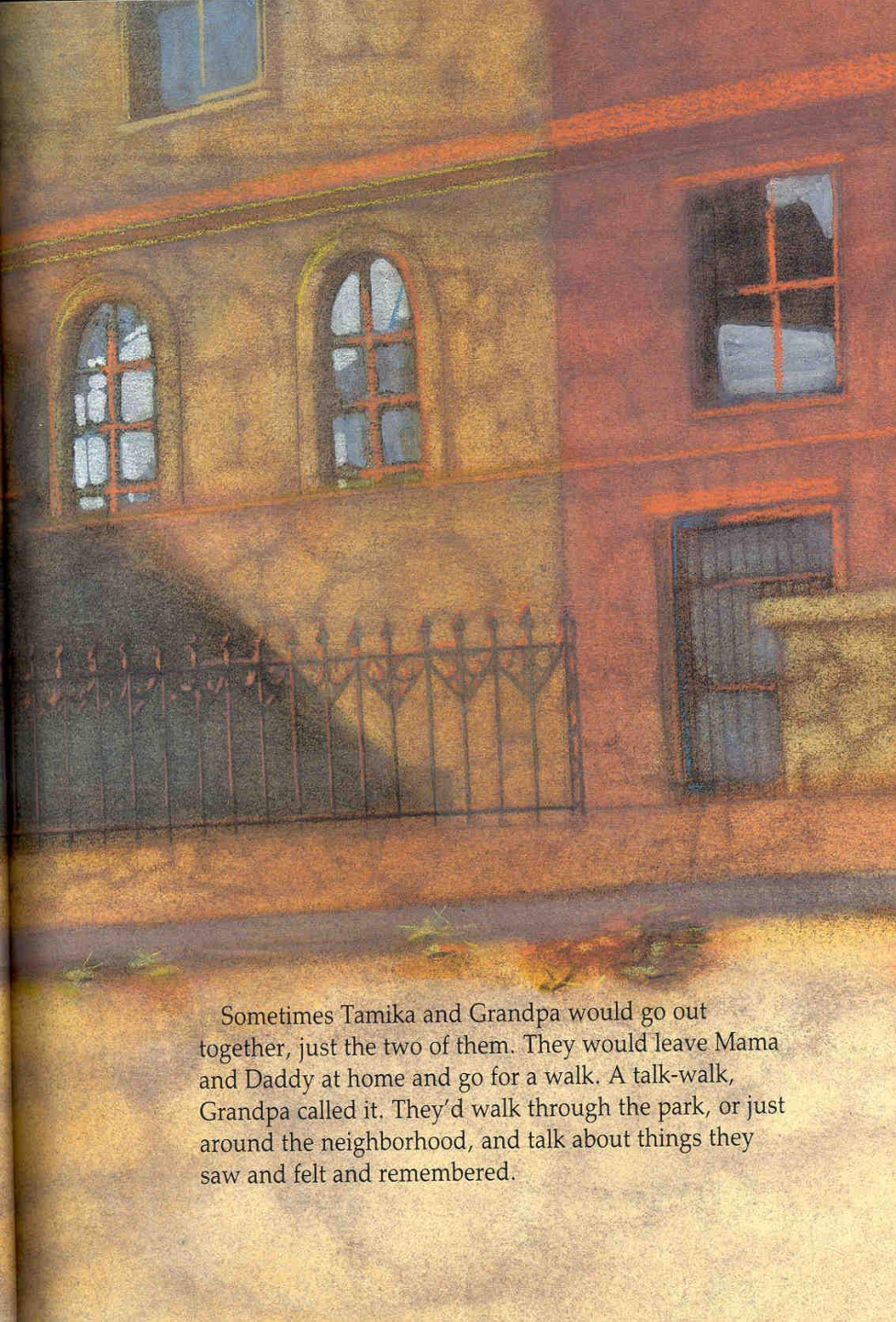
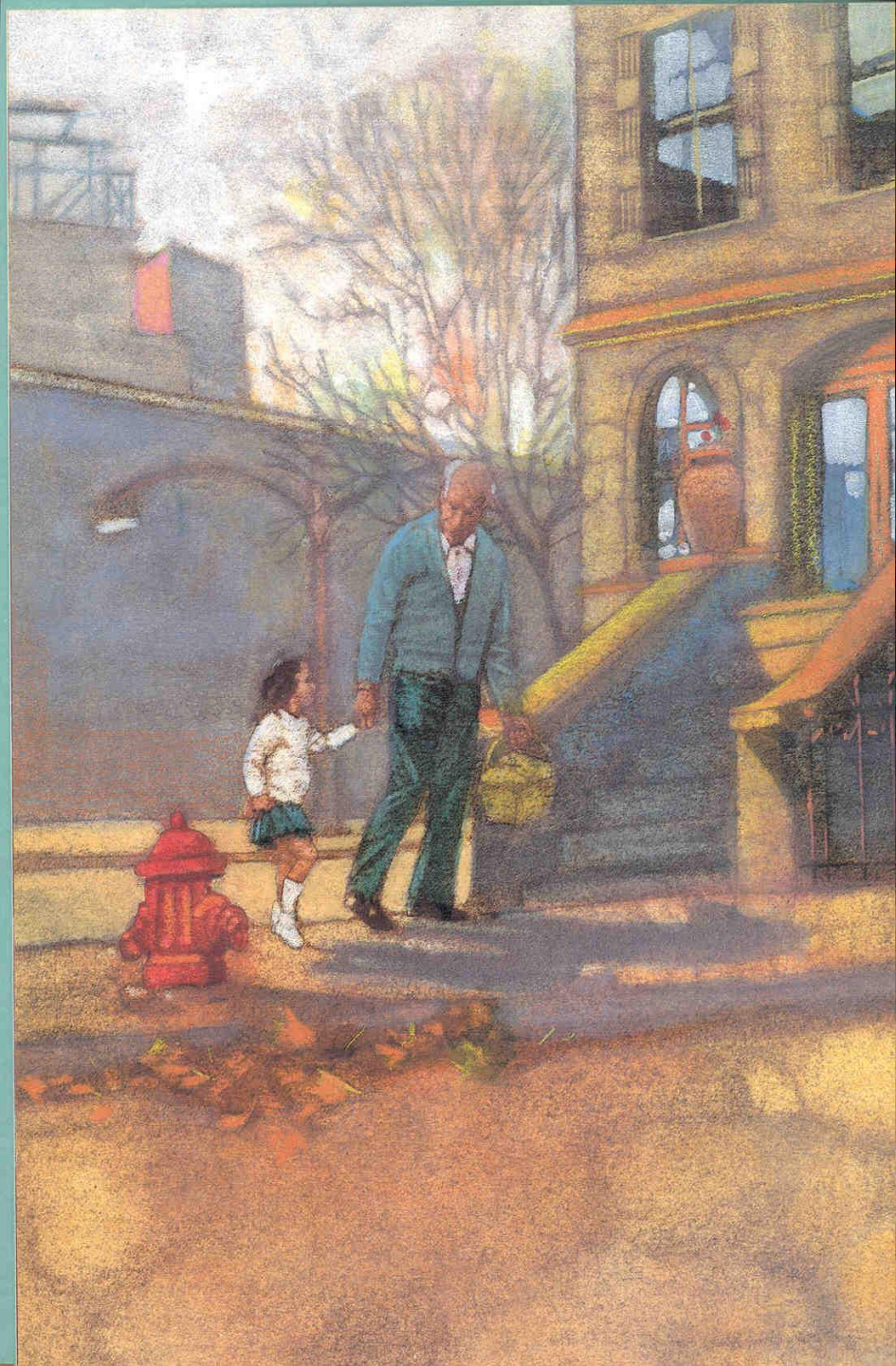


*Eloise Greenfield*

# GRANDPA'S FACE

ILLUSTRATED BY  
*Floyd Cooper*





Sometimes Tamika and Grandpa would go out together, just the two of them. They would leave Mama and Daddy at home and go for a walk. A talk-walk, Grandpa called it. They'd walk through the park, or just around the neighborhood, and talk about things they saw and felt and remembered.

# Jonathan and His Mommy

by Irene Smalls

Illustrated by Michael Hays

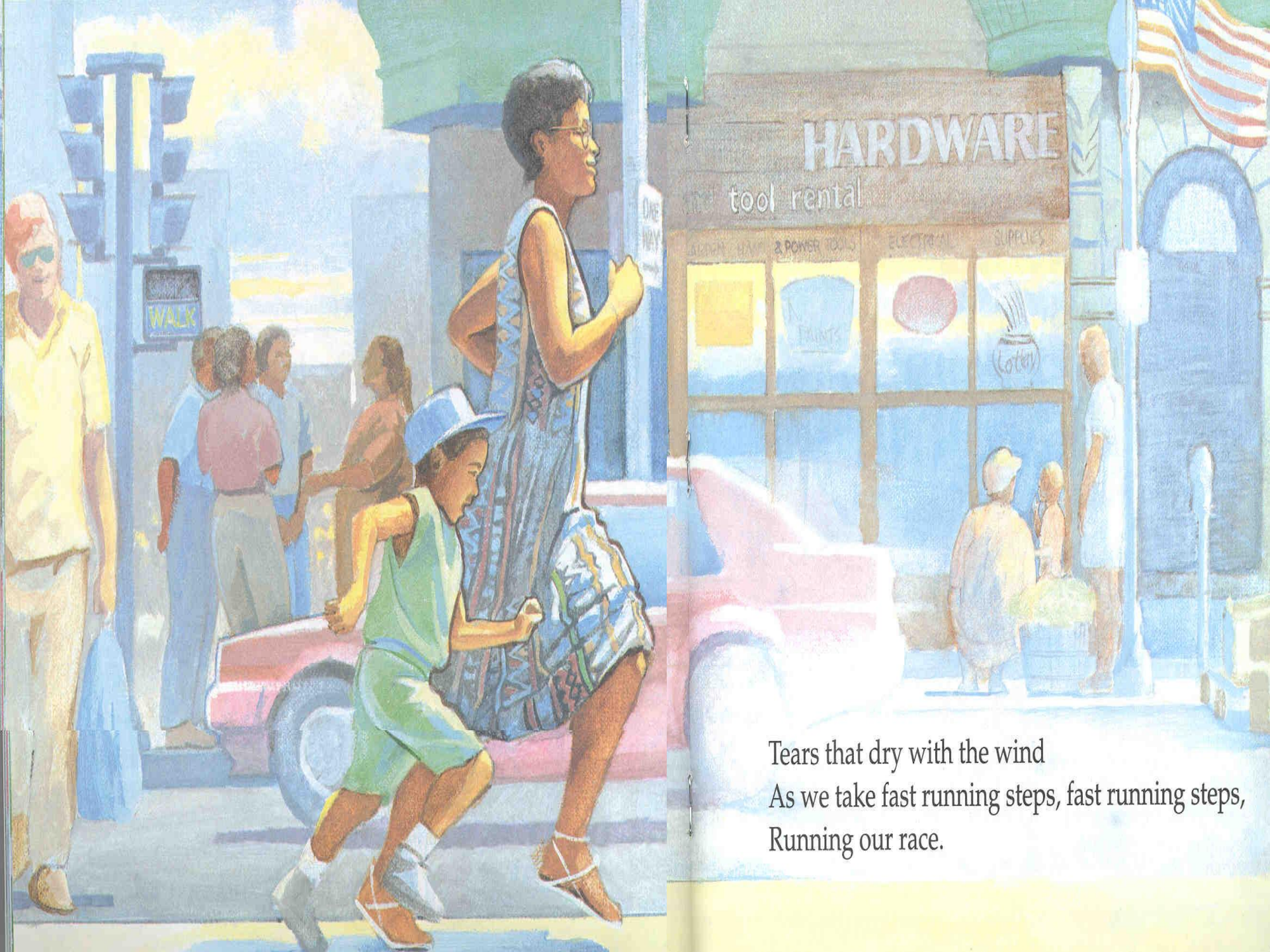




I like to go walking and talking with my mom.

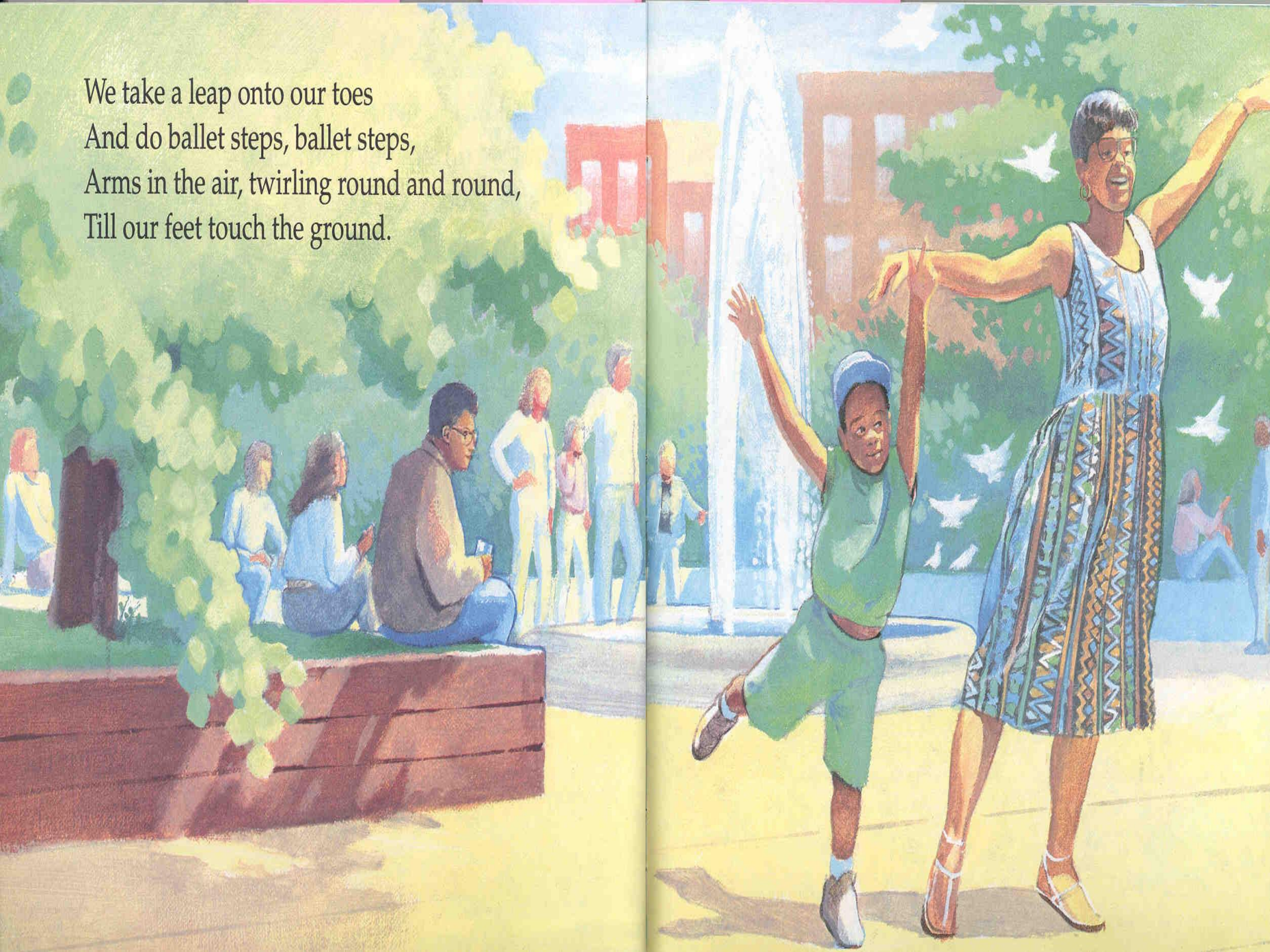
Then we take big giant steps, big giant steps,  
And talk in loud giant voices,  
And we say big things the way giants must talk:  
"I say, did you see  
That hu-mon-gous mammoth among us?"





Tears that dry with the wind  
As we take fast running steps, fast running steps,  
Running our race.

We take a leap onto our toes  
And do ballet steps, ballet steps,  
Arms in the air, twirling round and round,  
Till our feet touch the ground.



Then we take backward steps, backward steps,  
And go to all the places we've been . . .





# BILLY THE GREAT

Rosa Guy



*illustrated by*  
Caroline Binch

DELACORTE PRESS · NEW YORK



When Billy was four, his mother said, “We have to get Billy ready for college.”

“Let’s get him through grade school first,” Dad said. Billy smiled.



Rod was ten years old. He climbed trees and ran as fast as the wind. Billy tried to climb trees too. When Mom saw him she said, "I don't want you to play with that boy. He's too old and too rough."

Billy said, "I like Rod. I like climbing trees."

"You'll tear your nice clothes," Mom said. "Go and play with children your own age."

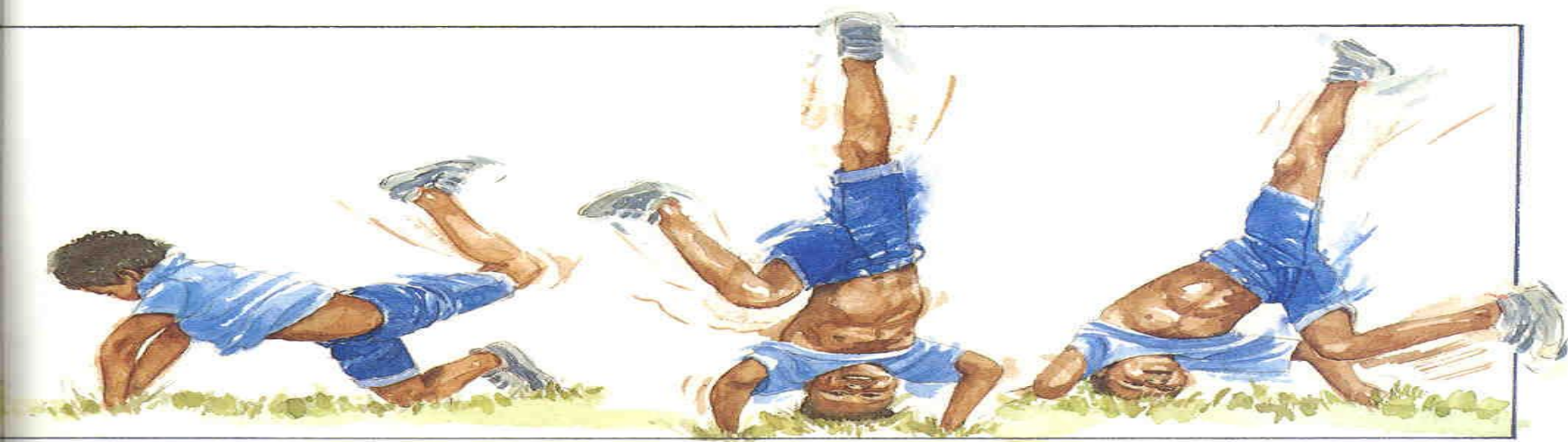


On Billy's seventh birthday Dad bought Billy a big leather soccer ball.

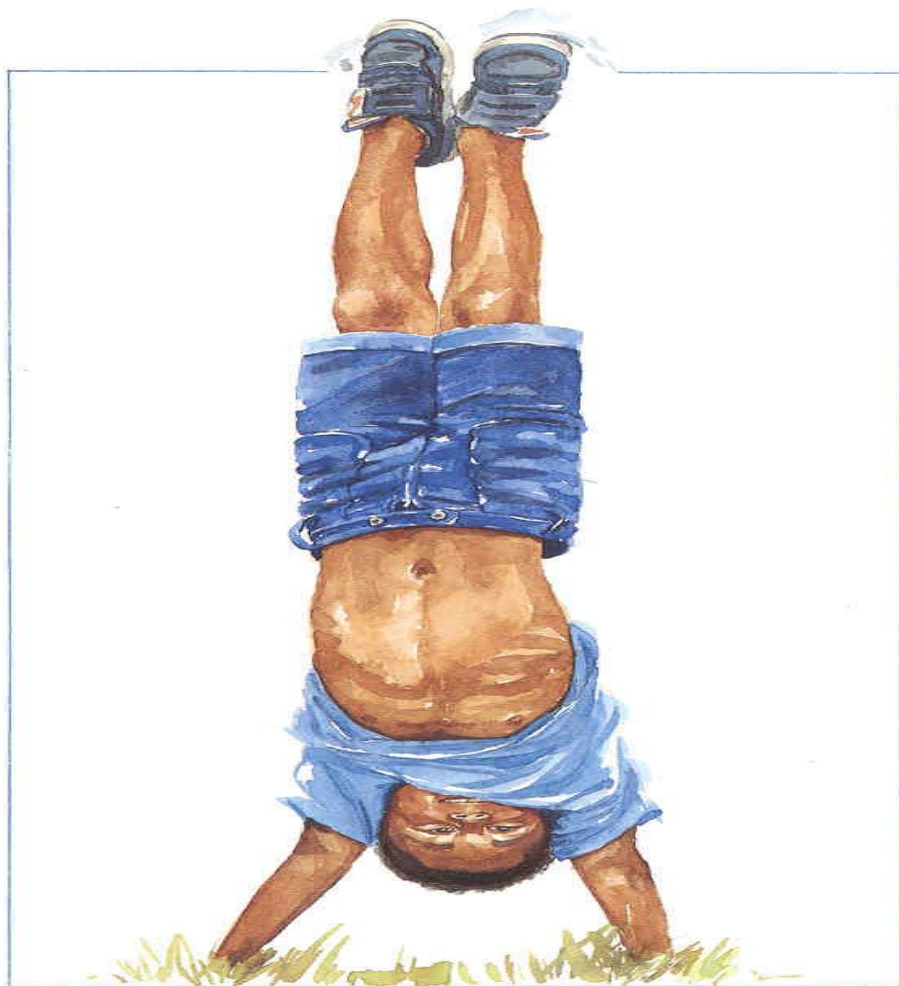
"Now we can start training you to be a great soccer player," Dad said.



then back on his other hand, just like a wheel.  
Billy tried and tried.



“Mom,” Billy said, “Rod showed me how to do a handstand—watch!” Once again Billy stood on his hands, his feet straight up and steady over his head. Mom stared. ....





Billy and Rod raced each other and did  
cartwheels over the grass.



# Knoxville, Tennessee

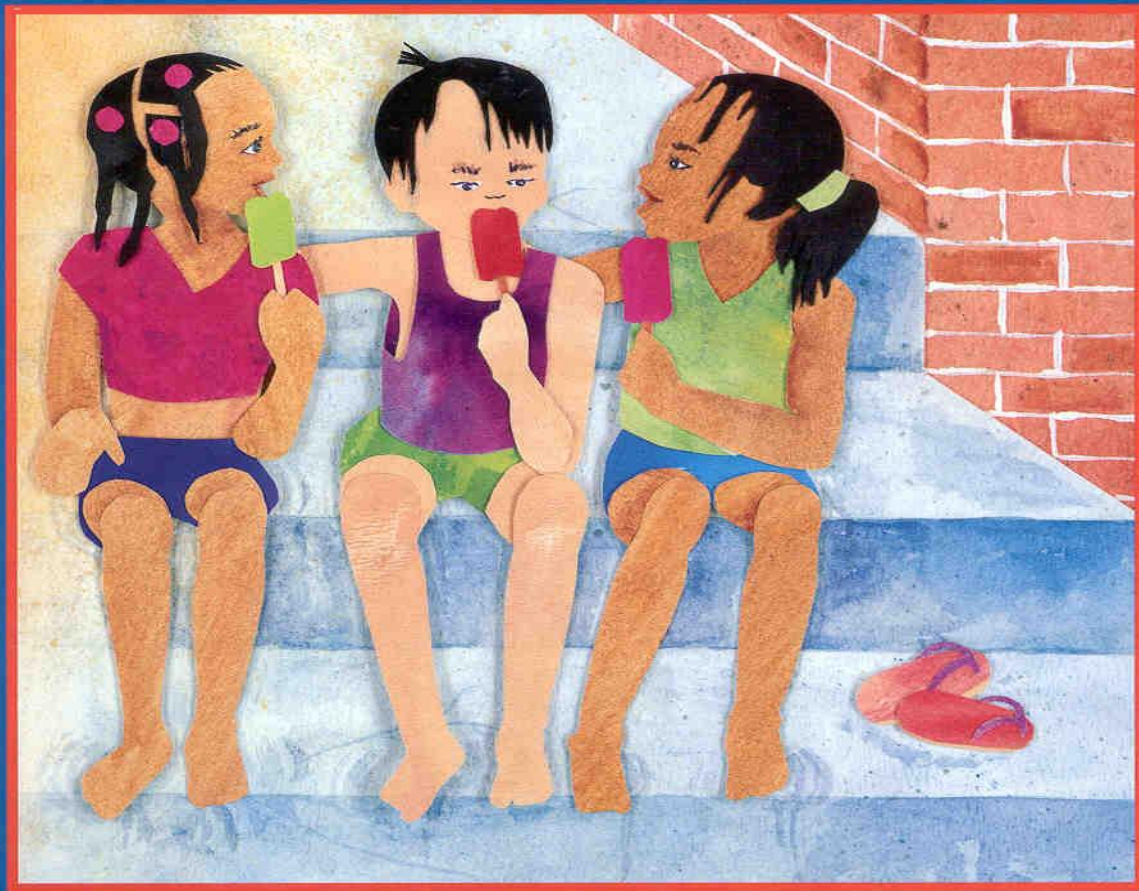
**BY NIKKI GIOVANNI**

illustrated by Larry Johnson





# MY STEPS



by **SALLY DERBY** • illustrated by **ADJOA J. BURROWES**



**T**HESE ARE MY STEPS,

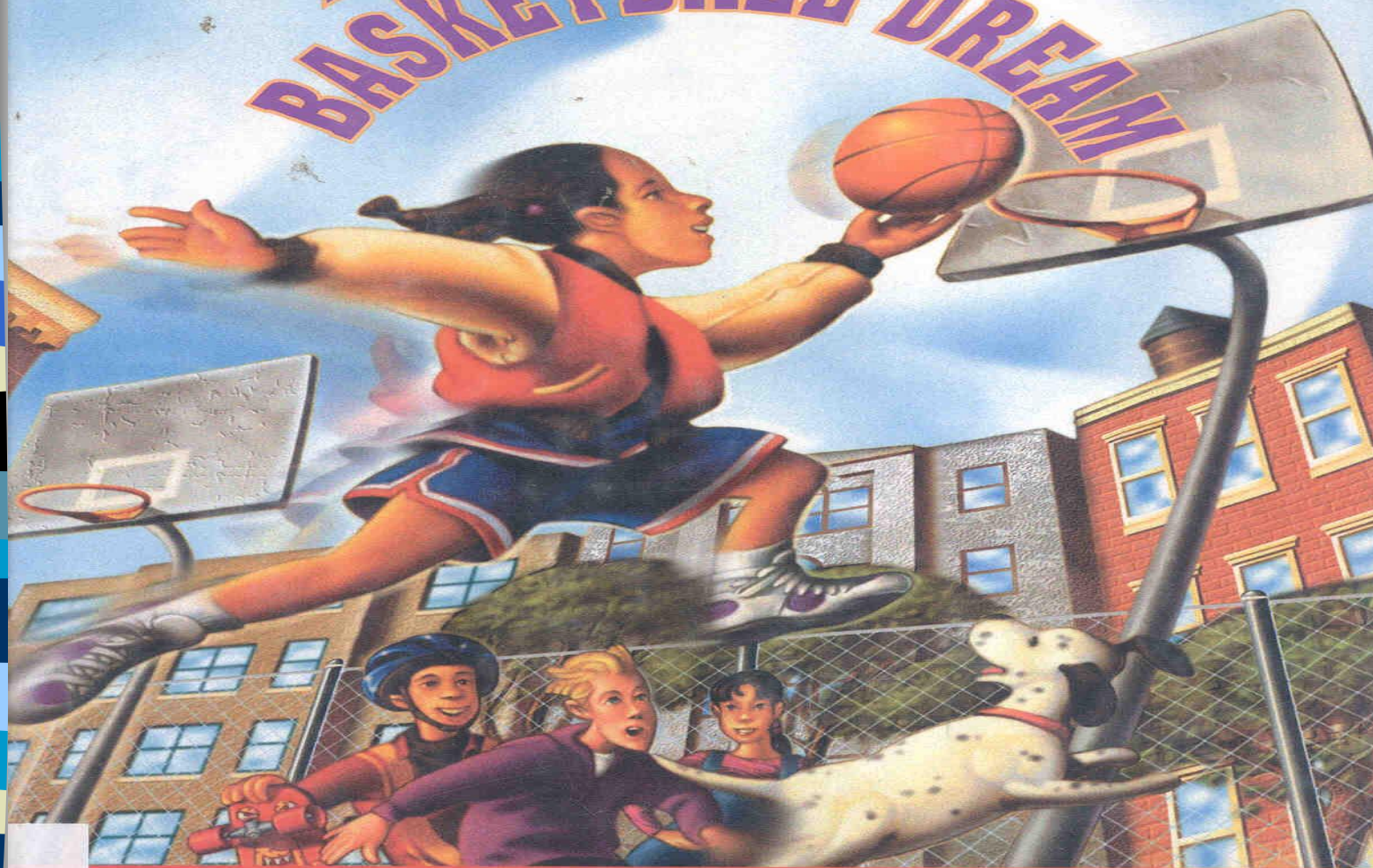
all five of them.

One, Two, Three, Four, Five.

I can hop up from One to Five  
and down from Five to One  
on just one foot.



# ALLIE'S BASKETBALL DREAM



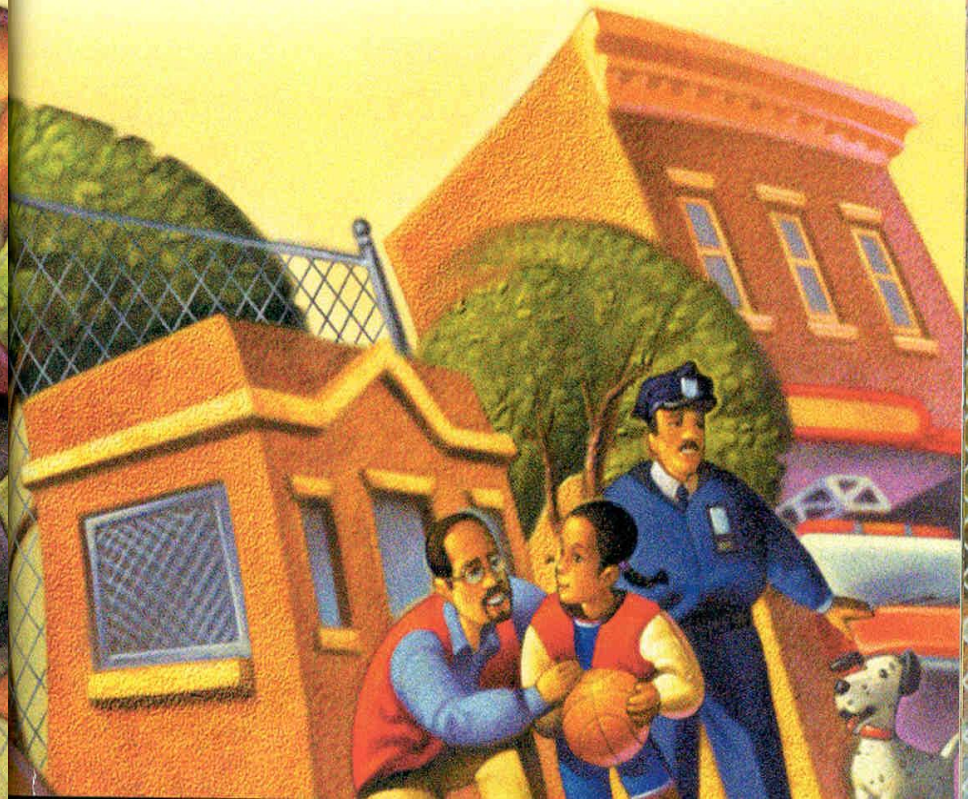
BARBARA E. BARBER • DARRYL LIGASAN

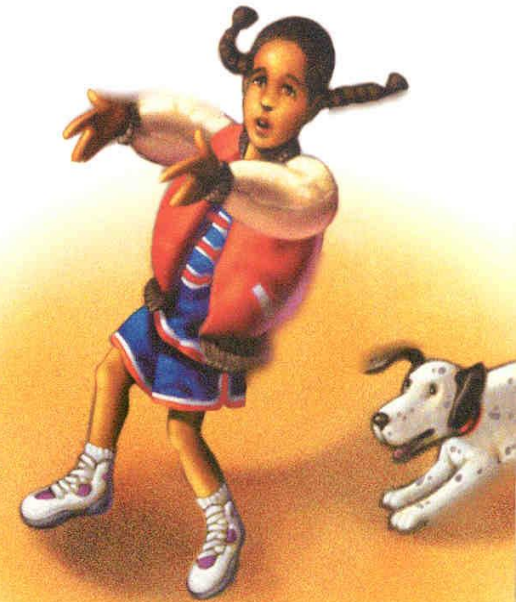
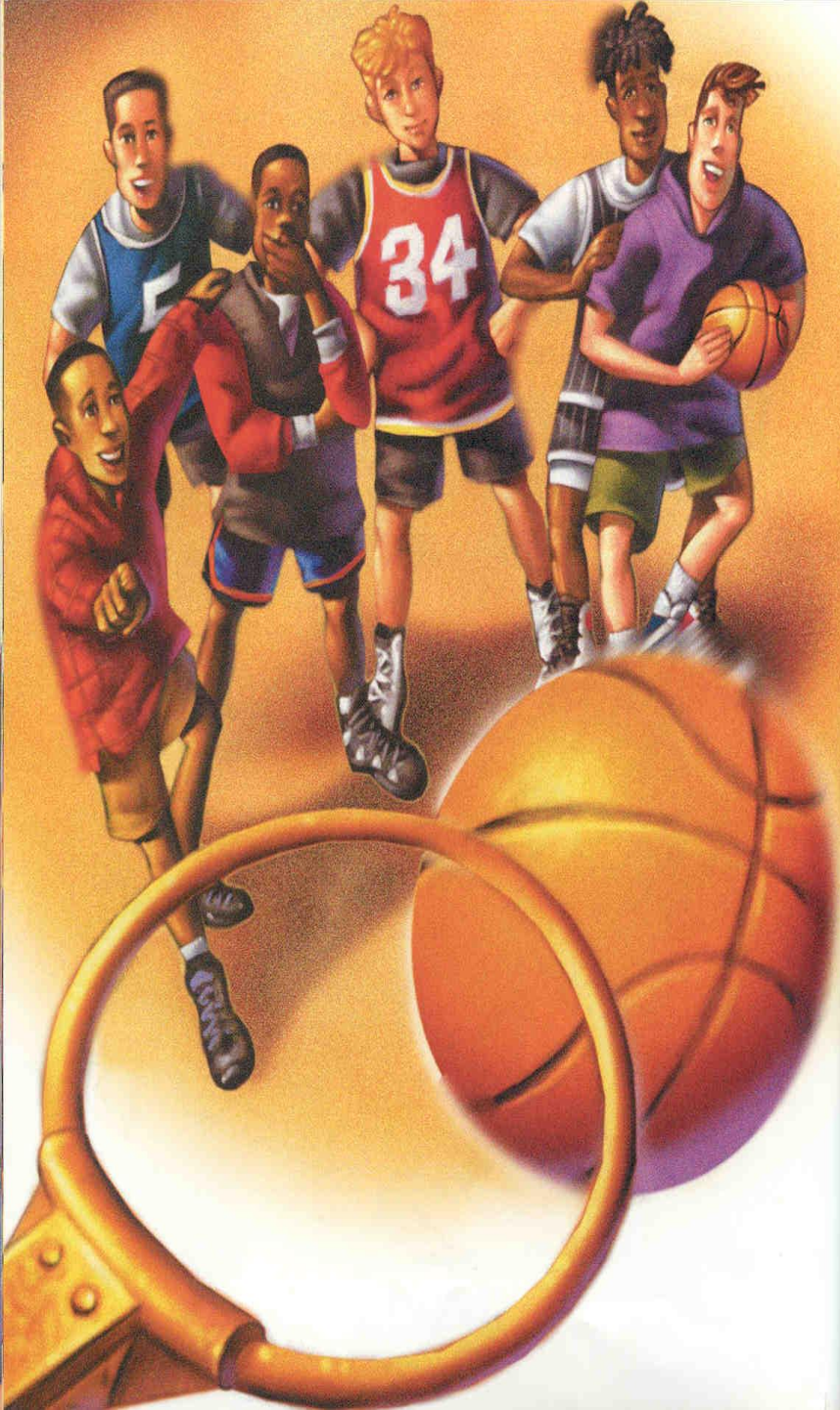


At the playground, Allie scanned the basketball courts while her father talked with Mr. Gonzalez, the park monitor. Some older kids already had a game going. All of the players were boys. They hardly ever missed a shot.

"Go ahead and practice, and then we'll shoot baskets together as soon as I get back from taking Aunt Harriet shopping," Allie's father told her. "I'll just be across the street. If you need me, tell Mr. Gonzalez, and he'll come get me."

"Okay," Allie replied.





She waved good-bye and ran to an empty court. She lifted her new basketball over her head and aimed. The shot missed. She aimed again. She missed again.

One of the boys playing in the next court noticed Allie and started to laugh. The others joined in.

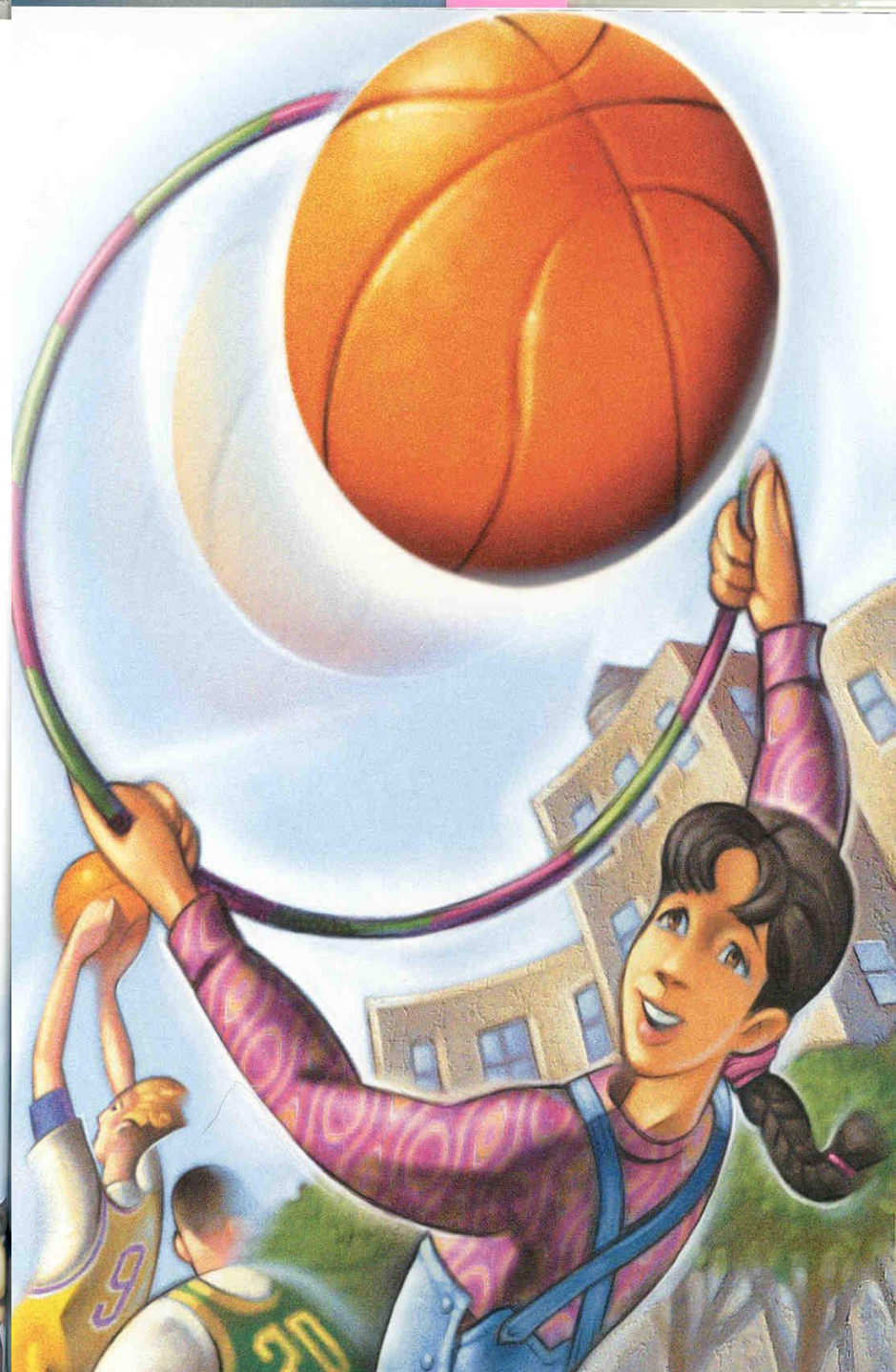
"Boys," Allie mumbled. Then she dribbled and bounced. And bounced and dribbled.

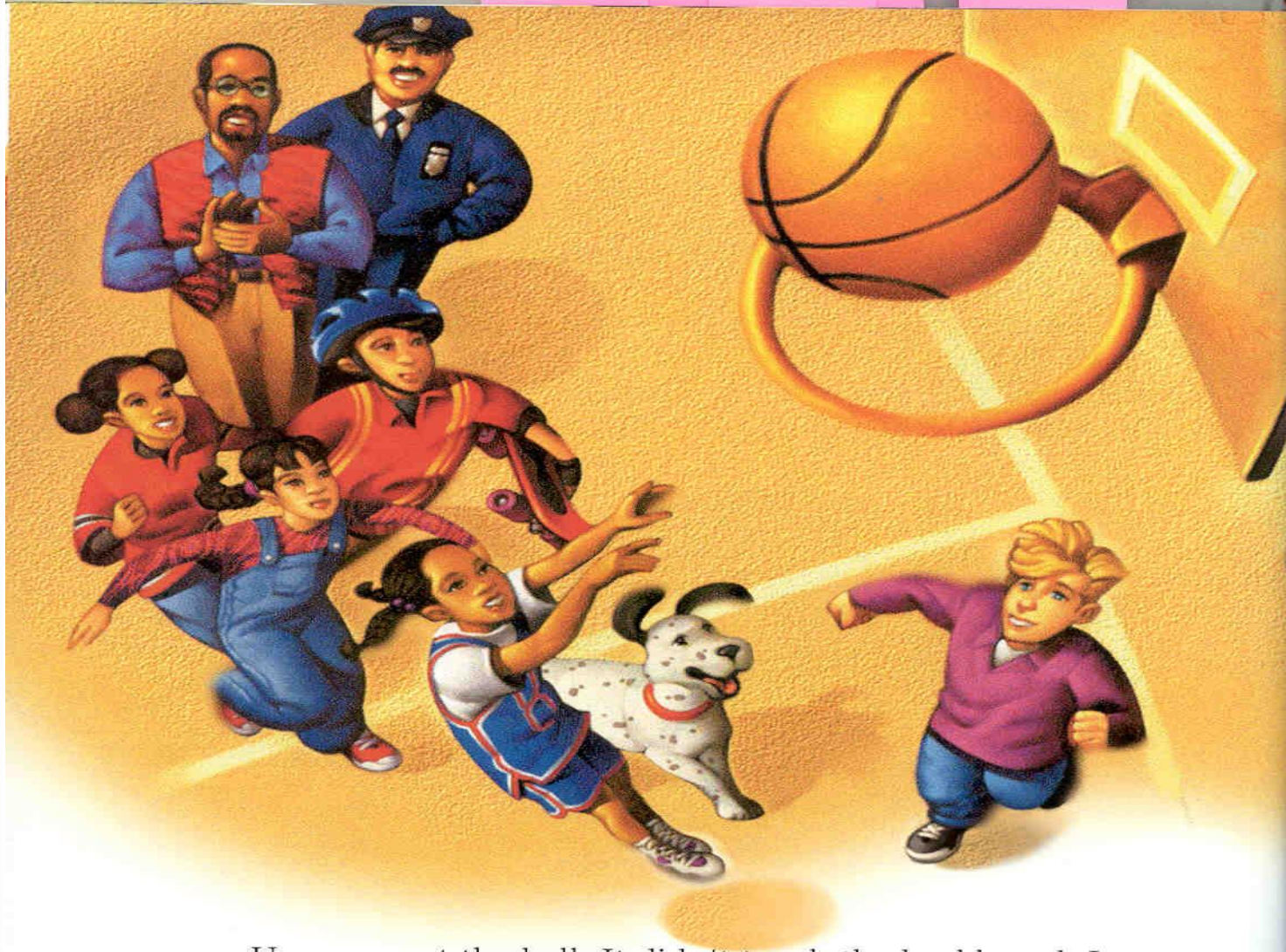
Allie's friend Keisha came into the playground with her hula hoop. Keisha saw Allie and held the hoop up. Allie aimed her basketball and.... *Zoom!* Right through the middle.

"Let's play basketball!" Allie said.

"I don't know how," Keisha answered.

"I'll show you."





Up, up went the ball. It didn't touch the backboard. It didn't touch the rim. It didn't touch anything.

*Zoom! In!*

The older boys in the next court applauded. Mr. Gonzalez whistled. Domino barked. Above all the noise rose a familiar voice—Allie's father.

"That-a-girl!" he shouted. "Hooray for Allie!"





*I Have Another Language*  
*The Language Is Dance*

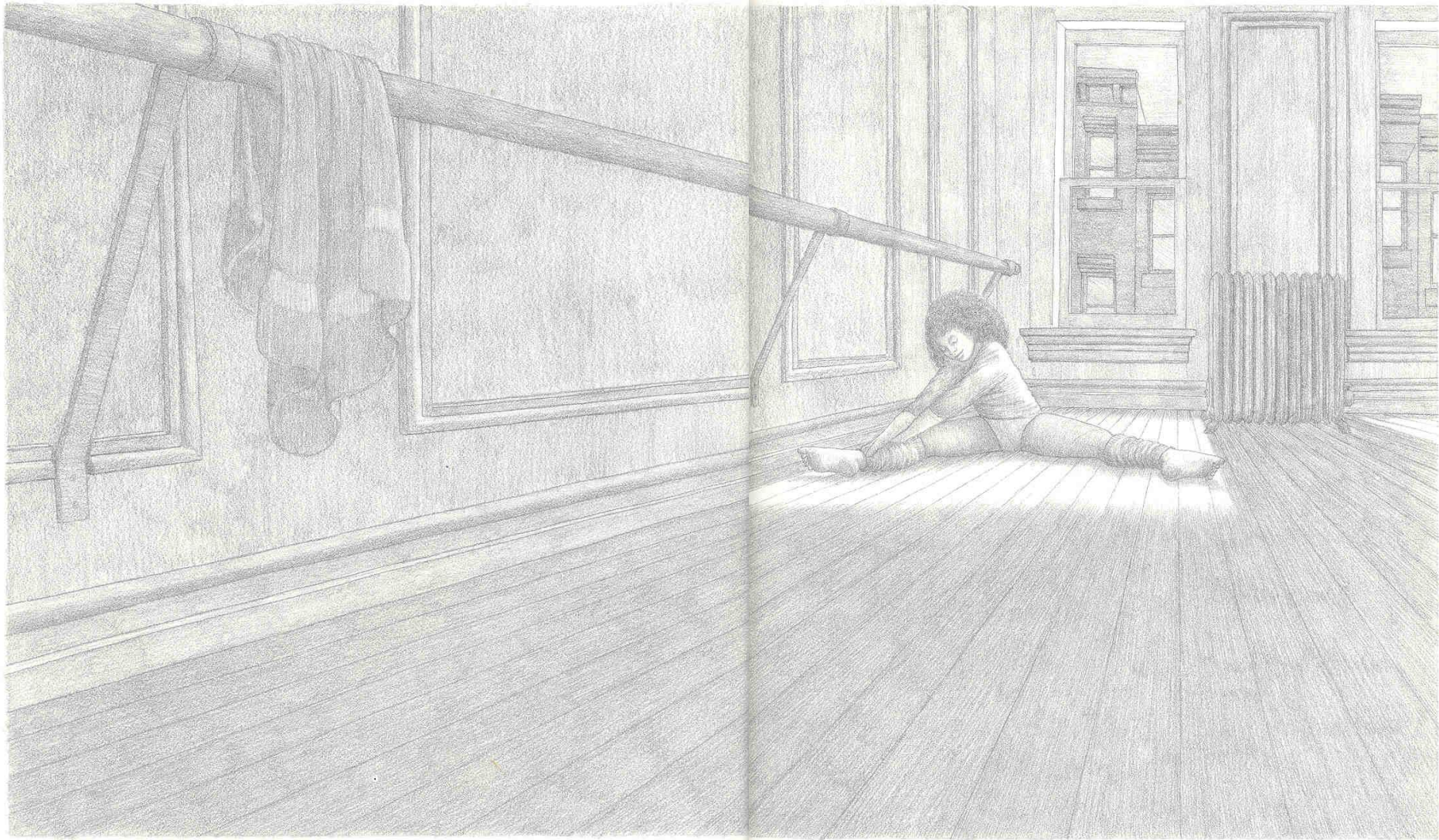
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*Eleanor Schick*

MACMILLAN PUBLISHING COMPANY NEW YORK

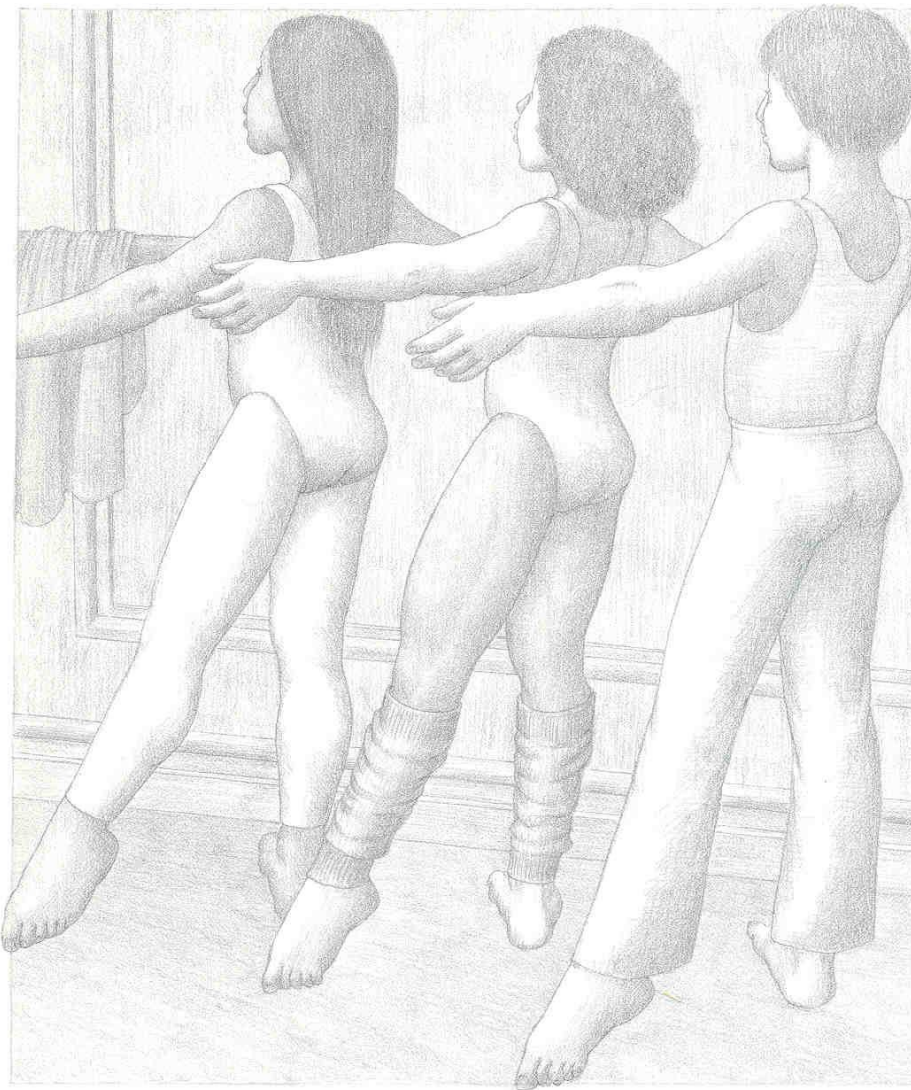
Maxwell Macmillan Canada Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International  
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney

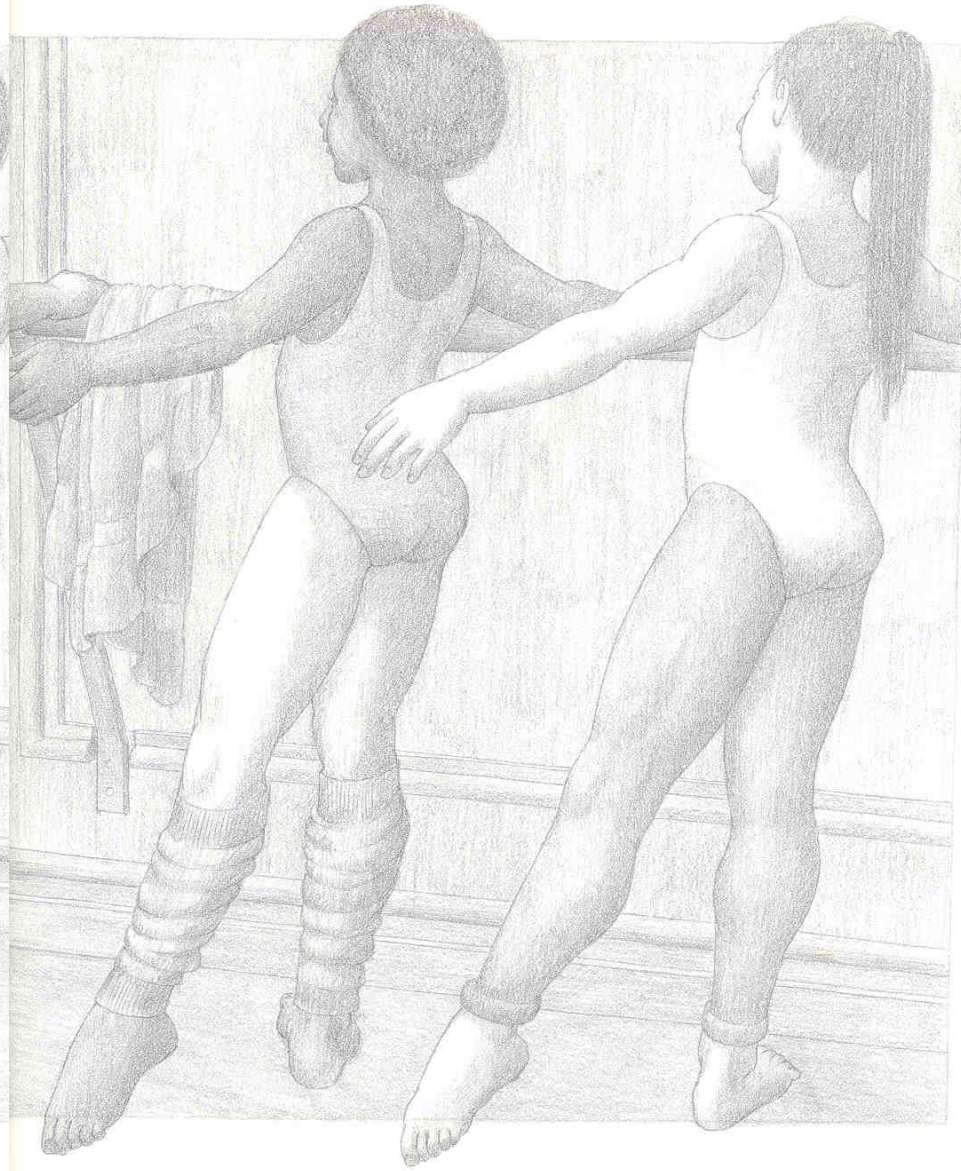


I come to dance class early,  
to stretch in the quiet of the room.

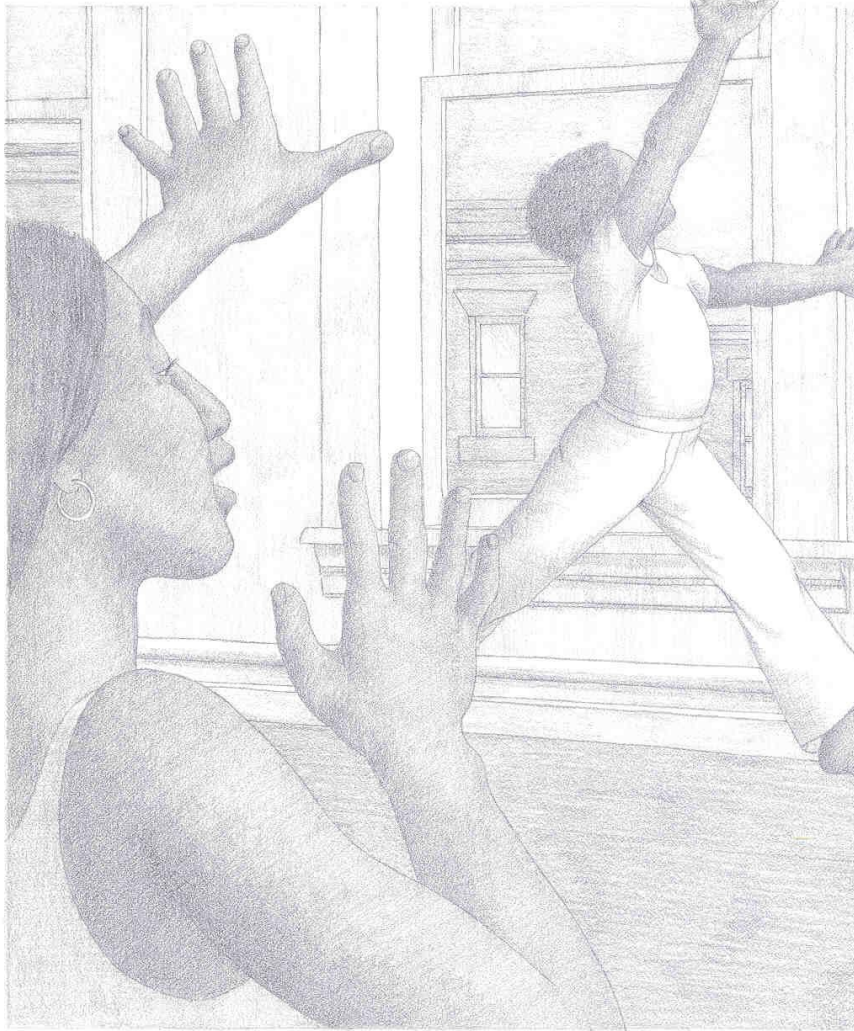
My body quivers,  
thinking of tonight.



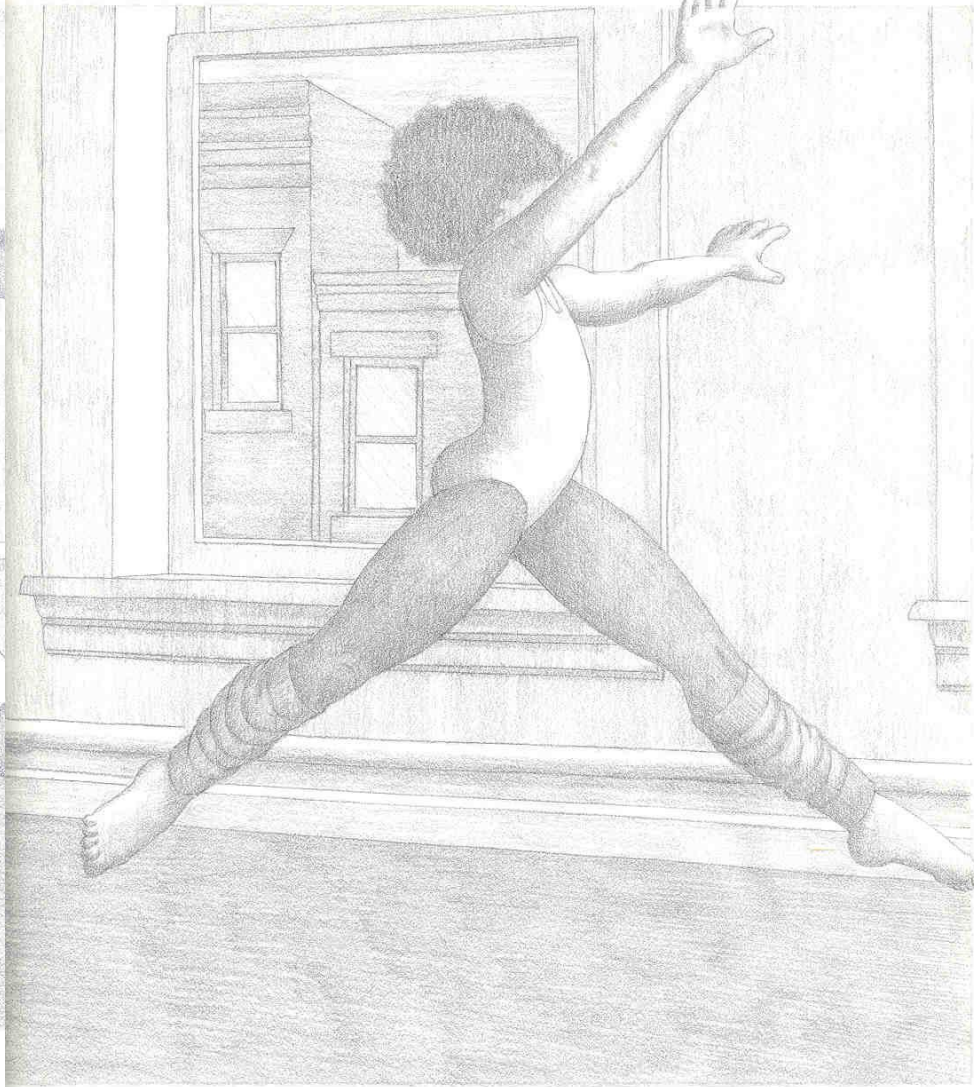
The class begins.  
I exercise hard,



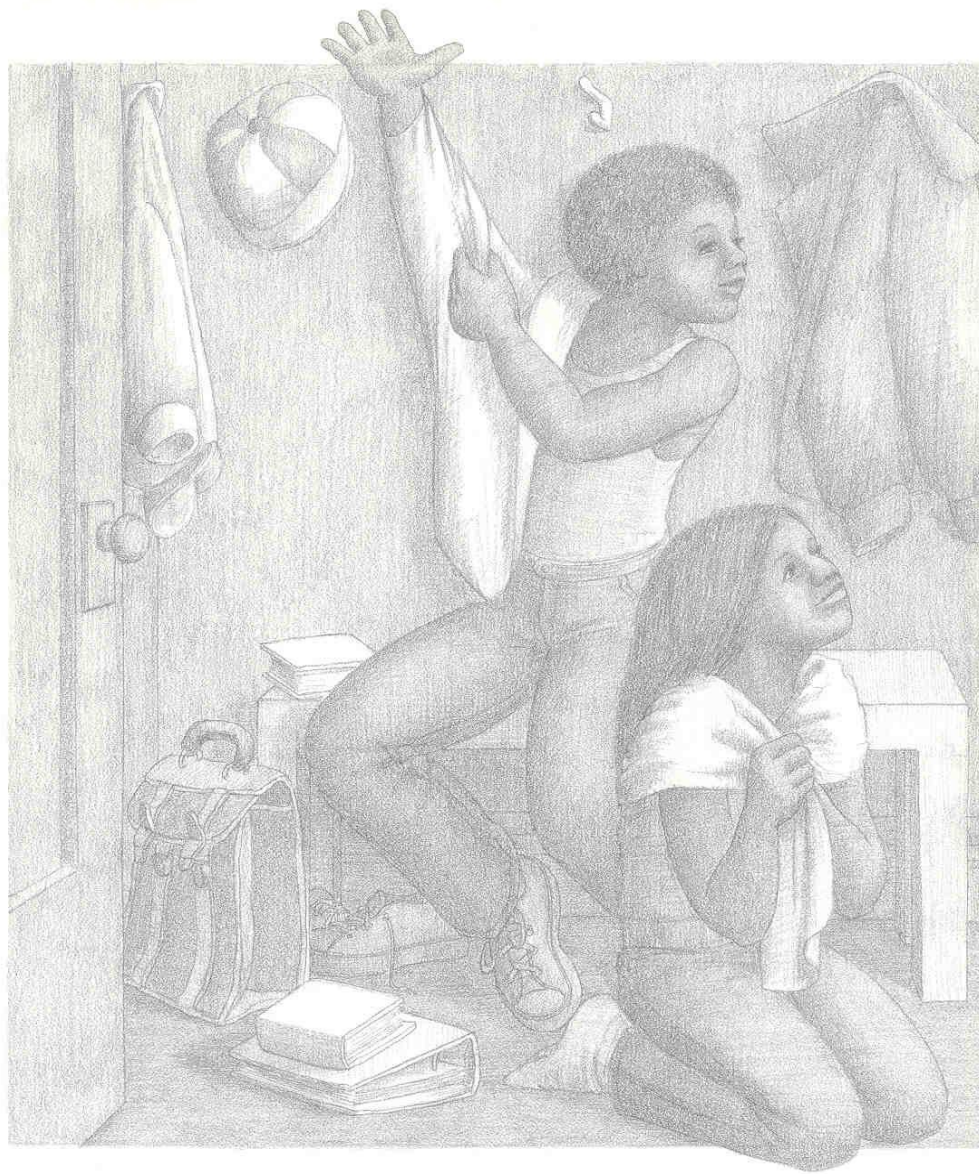
till sweat streams down  
my face and back.



Music fills the room. We  
do our leaps across the floor.



We want to dance full out, but our  
teacher tells us, "Save it for tonight."



Now we'll go home  
to rest



Things I can't say in words  
run through my body as I dance.



# Possible Future Directions

- Compare story lines with a focus on African Americans with story lines of other cultures;
- Study eating behaviors, dietary patterns, and physical activity patterns (including sport and dance practices) depicted in picture books in the context of public health trends;



# Possible Future Directions

- Continue to investigate if there are adequate representative samples of health-related themes in children's literature;
- Promote picture books as a wonderful way to promote literacy, health, and education.
- Read, read, and read some more!