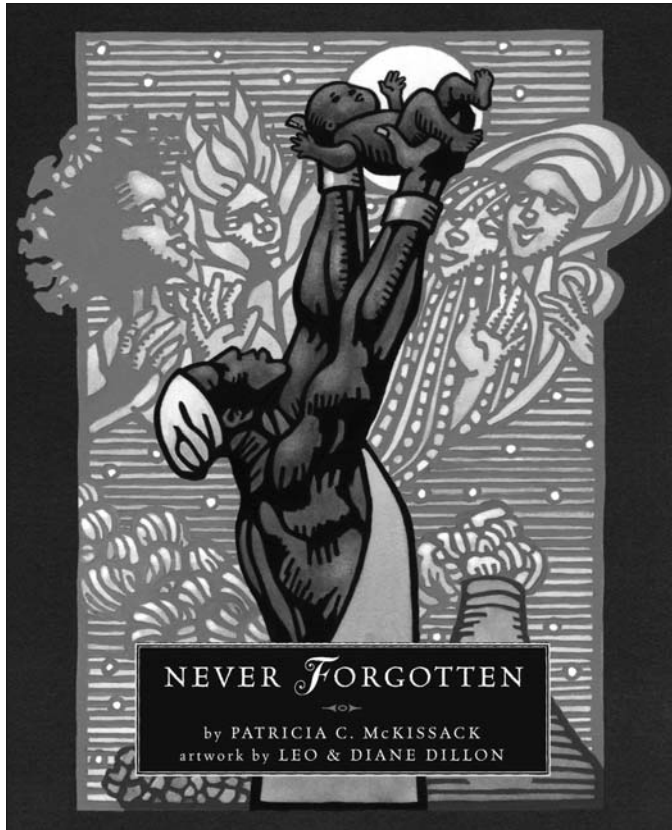


# BOOKNOTES

educators guide



HC: 978-0-375-84384-6  
GLB: 978-0-375-94453-6  
EL: 978-0-375-98387-0

## THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Loss • Remembrance  
Intergenerational Relationships  
Courage • Freedom

ALL GRADES

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Loved ones are never forgotten  
When we continue to tell their stories

*The Taken*. One small word to represent the millions of people captured, forcibly and brutally transported to Europe and the Americas, and sold into slavery during the West African slave trade. Millions who would never lay eyes on their homeland again. *Never Forgotten* tells the story of one of the Taken, Musafa, and how his father Dinga, and the boy's allegorical mothers, Earth, Fire, Water, and Wind, desperately try to rescue him from the "pale men" with "the blue of the sky in their eyes." Told in lyrical verse and illustrated in vivid, bold images, readers will learn of how Musafa, and so many others like him, endured the brutality and humiliation that was the slave experience, yet remained strong and true to themselves and their history in the most dire of circumstances. Above all, *Never Forgotten* will remind children that their slave ancestors should never be forgotten, and that family and the lessons that are passed from generation to generation are more important than anything else.



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## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Write the words *griot* and *prelude* on the board. Explain the meaning of each word: a *griot* is the name for a West African storyteller, often a poet or a musician, whose stories perpetuate the oral traditions of a family or village. A prelude is, as it pertains to *Never Forgotten*, the introduction to a larger body of work. Read aloud “The Griot’s Prelude” at the start of the text. Show students the African continent on a world map, pointing out the western region and inform them that the story takes place in what is known as the Sahel, a semi-arid savannah. This simple geography review will give students background knowledge before reading the text and will help them visualize how far the Taken were transported.

## THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

### QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

#### LOSS

During the centuries in which the West African slave trade operated, millions of people were captured and forcibly and barbarically transported to Europe and the Americas. In the text, these people are referred to as the Taken. The author writes, “We rarely speak of the Taken.” Why do you think this is so? In the section, “A Father’s Journey Begins,” Musafa’s mother dies in childbirth, and Dinga breaks with custom and chooses to raise the child himself. How is Dinga’s decision in the face of personal loss an example of his strength? When Dinga realizes that Musafa is lost to him forever, he “let his fire go out.” Beyond the literal meaning, what does the author mean by this phrase?

#### REMEMBRANCE

In the section “Dinga, The Blacksmith,” the author tells of Dinga’s honored position within the village, yet he is “remembered best for being a loving father.” How does Dinga demonstrate his love for Musafa? In “Wind’s Saga,” Dinga hears Wind Spirit describe the lives of slaves in the Americas, and says, “Then I realized they had not forgotten.” How did the slaves keep their family and cultural traditions alive? Why is it important to perpetuate family and cultural stories?

#### INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Musafa is the eighth in a generational line of blacksmiths. In “Musafa Becomes an Apprentice,” Dinga is frustrated with Musafa’s smithing skills, but allows him to practice forming scrap metal into “useless objects.” How does Dinga’s willingness to let his son learn his craft in his own way ultimately aid Musafa/Moses in Charleston, South Carolina? How does Musafa/Moses’s statement, “I learn by reaching back with one hand and stretching forward with the other” symbolize the cycle of family generations? Study the illustration at the end of the book. Who do you think is pictured in the illustration? Why?

#### COURAGE

Do you think it was courageous of Dinga to choose to go against custom to raise Musafa without a mother? In “The Presentation,” Fire Woman predicts that Musafa “will be a spiritual leader, inspiring, forceful, courageous!” How does her prediction come to pass? In “Musafa,” Mother Earth tells the boy, “Fear is a leopard; Courage renders him toothless.” Discuss this adage. In “Water’s Tale,” what is Musafa’s “ballad of defiance”? How did his defiance give courage and hope to the other captives?

#### FREEDOM

Although Musafa was robbed of his freedom and sold into slavery, he says later in life, “In my mind I have always been free, as free as the wind.” Explain how Musafa/Moses can feel this way while still being a slave. Throughout the story, the author connects the wind to the concept of freedom. How and why is the wind an apt symbol to represent freedom? How does the author carry this symbol through to the story’s conclusion?



# CONNECTING TO THE CURRICULUM

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Musafa is the eighth male in a family line of blacksmiths. Discuss the concept of family generations with your students. Model for students how to create a basic family tree. (Search online for a basic template). Encourage students to spend time with parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles to help fill in the branches and leaves of their family tree. Remind students to look for generational connections, such as lines of work, education, names, etc.

Reread the following: “The Griot’s Prelude,” “Earth’s Answer,” “Fire’s Ordeal,” “Water’s Tale,” and “Wind’s Saga.” Place your class into groups of 3 to 4 students. Assign each group one of the sections listed above. Have each group read and analyze their assigned passage, and research the facts that it references. For example, in “Water’s Tale,” the author is describing the Middle Passage, so students can research the facts of the brutal journey that slaves took in crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Each group will present their research to the class.

## THE ARTS

The four elements figure prominently in *Never Forgotten*. The author transforms each element into an allegorical mother to Musafa, but at the same time shows how these natural forces serve to teach, explain, and inspire in both oral and written traditions. Review how the illustrators depicted the four elements as allegorical figures. Discuss stylistic choices the artists made in depicting the elements as they did. Challenge students to design and create an allegorical figure that represents one of the four elements. After students have completed their artwork, allow time for presentation and critique.

## LANGUAGE ARTS

In *Never Forgotten*, the illustrations brilliantly and powerfully enhance and reinforce the text. Choose a selection of illustrations from the book and challenge students to analyze the images to determine how the pictures and text work together to create a unified whole.

An *adage*, also known as a *proverb*, is a traditional saying that conveys a common experience or basic truth that has gained acceptance over time. *Never Forgotten* contains examples of adages, such as “The Tortoise does not have milk to give but it knows how to take care of its young.” Direct students to search the text for other adages. Discuss the meanings of these proverbial sayings and how they pertain to the story’s action and characters. Give students time to research other common proverbs from Africa and other cultures. Students can illustrate their chosen adage, and present their artwork to the class. (A list of African proverbs can be found at: [cogweb.ucla.edu/Discourse/Proverbs/African.html](http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Discourse/Proverbs/African.html)).



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## VOCABULARY | USE OF LANGUAGE

Have students define these words taking clues from the context:

Such words may include:

artisan  
captives  
abide

persuaded  
forge  
calabash

apprentice  
countenance  
ballad

defiance  
ponder



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**PATRICIA C. MCKISSACK** is the Newbery Honor- and Coretta Scott King Award-winning author of *The Dark-Thirty* and many other highly acclaimed books for children, including *Goin' Someplace Special* (Coretta Scott King Award winner); *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (Caldecott Honor, Coretta Scott King Award winner); *Let My People Go* (recipient of the NAACP Image Award); and ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Books *Precious and the Boo Hag*, *Porch Lies*, and *The All-I'll-Ever-Want Christmas Doll*.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATORS

**LEO and DIANE DILLON** have illustrated over 60 books for children and have received just about every honor and award imaginable. They are the winners of two Caldecott Medals (*Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* and *Ashanti to Zulu*), five *New York Times* Best Illustrated Awards (including one for the Knopf book, *The People Could Fly*), and numerous Coretta Scott King Awards.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

### Africans in America, Part 1

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr4.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr4.html)

### NPR: Slavery's Legacy in West Africa

[www.npr.org/programs/re/archivesdate/2004/apr/slavery](http://www.npr.org/programs/re/archivesdate/2004/apr/slavery)

### University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire: Map of West African Slave Trade

[www.uwec.edu/geography/lvogeler/w111/slaves.htm](http://www.uwec.edu/geography/lvogeler/w111/slaves.htm)

## ON THE WEB

For bios, teachers guides, and more, visit our FREE online site:

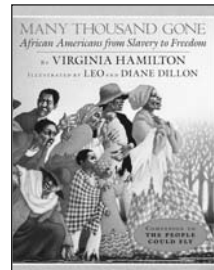
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## RELATED TITLES BY THEME



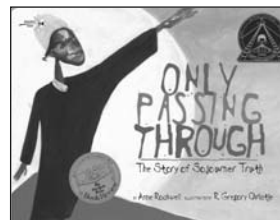
### Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom

Virginia Hamilton

Illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon

Grades 3 up

PB: 978-0-679-87936-7



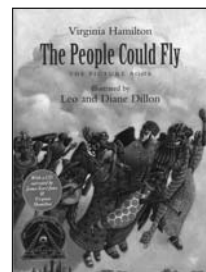
### Only Passing Through: The Story of Sojourner Truth

Anne Rockwell

Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

Grades 2-5

PB: 978-0-440-41766-8



### The People Could Fly Picture Book and CD

Virginia Hamilton

Illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon

All Grades

HC: 978-0-375-84553-6