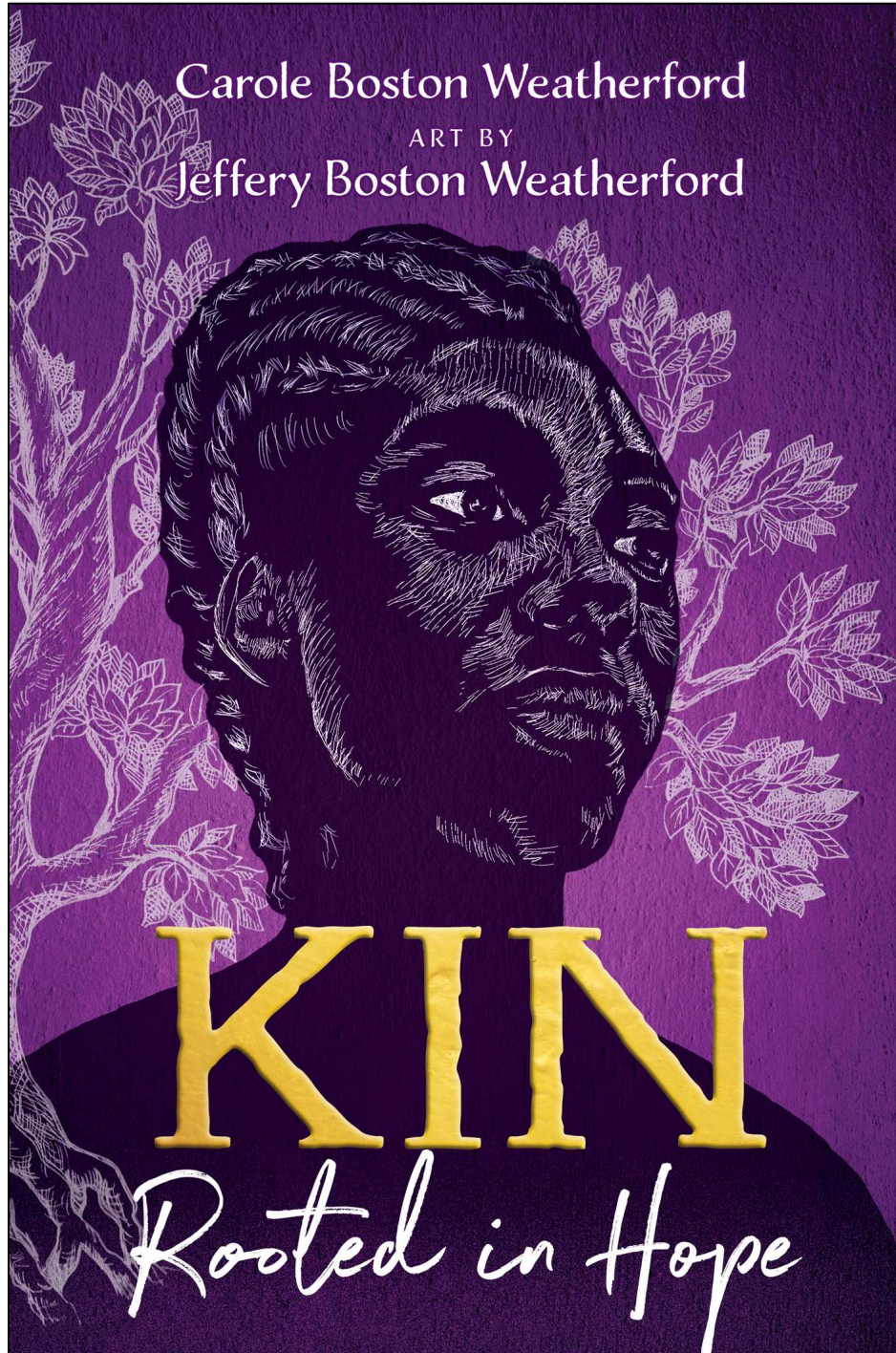


Carole Boston Weatherford

ART BY

Jeffery Boston Weatherford



A Curriculum Guide for

*Kin: Rooted in Hope*

By Carole Boston Weatherford

Illustrated by Jeffery Boston Weatherford

## About the Book

Author Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrator Jeffery Boston Weatherford provide an accessible examination of slavery and its impacts on individuals, families, communities, and nations. The book is historical fiction that chronicles the history of Boston Weatherford's African ancestors and their descendants from the Gold Coast of Africa to America, from the 1600s through the present day. The author records in verse her efforts to discover and document her family's past, interwoven with history, autobiography, and biography, including events and historic persons. Poems that are haunting and thoughtful chronicle the history in language that paints vivid images. Jeffery adopts a realistic artistic style using scratchboard techniques. *Kin* is the culmination of Carole Boston Weatherford's ideas, interactions, and searching that shaped her quest for her ancestors' stories.

## Prereading Strategies

1. Describe your initial reaction to the cover in a response journal through written description, poetry, art, or journalism.
2. Take a visual stroll through the book. Look at the front and back covers of the book. What do you see, feel, or think about when you examine the book?
3. Write down five to ten facts that you know about slavery in the USA. Why do you think the author chose *Kin: Rooted in Hope* as the title to explore her family's history?
4. Identify new information you may obtain from the book.

## Discussion Questions

1. Carole Boston Weatherford discusses the impact of Alex Haley's book, *Roots*, on her as a teenager and now. Identify the key points and the ways in which her reactions changed over time. Who is Alex Haley and what has been his impact as a journalist and author? Review journal and magazine articles and list ten facts you acquired. How does Haley's book, as well as the 1619 Project, shape *Kin*?
2. The book cover is arresting. Determine clues in the text that suggest who the individual depicted on the cover might be. What are some possible meanings of the foliage surrounding the person on the cover?
3. Describe how the illustrations change, develop, or remain the same throughout the book. Chart your responses.

4. Select four poems from the book that capture what you believe are the experiences and feelings of the enslaved. Compare their responses to those of the enslavers.
5. Discuss the technique of presenting alternating views of the enslaved and enslavers. How does the structure allow for greater insight into the individuals?
6. Carole Boston Weatherford chose to present her poems in chronological form. What are some effects of this structure?
7. Historic figures are interspersed throughout the book. What is the impact of reading about Frederick Douglass, Francis Scott Key, and others?
8. Literacy, the ability to read and write, is a powerful tool. Frederick Douglass said, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” (p. 43) Discuss in groups what Douglass meant by this, and why enslavers did not want the enslaved to be literate.
9. Irony is the expression of one’s meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite. An example of irony is the vignette about Francis Scott Key. (pp. 139–141) Explain why it’s ironic.
10. A person’s kin is their family members and those they are related to, but in the institution of slavery, people were often separated from their families, forcing them to create new family relationships, including adopted families and chosen families. Describe examples of these unique family bonds and relationships from the book.
11. Identify five ways in which Carole Boston Weatherford presents the interior lives of the enslaved (e.g., spitting in the food of the lascivious guest or the pain of not keeping one’s children).
12. The Lloyds and other enslavers would list the names of their enslaved people in ledgers of their property, along with things like their farm animals, furniture, and clothes. The author goes on to call the names of the enslaved that she found in these ledgers. A person’s name validates their existence, is proof that they lived. Discuss in small groups what your name means to you. Include any meanings your name might have in different languages, or if you share your name with other members of your family or ancestors, and how that makes you feel.
13. Metaphors are used throughout the book, for example, Marena Copper’s mirage and her comparison of the anchor with the ball and chain, and the sails of a slave ship with bed sheets. (p. 97) Select four examples and discuss their meanings.

14. In a small group discussion, talk about the use of multiple characters used to propel the story forward. How might responses change if the author focused on fewer perspectives with a more traditional narrative structure?
15. Create a reader's theater script for sections of *Kin* and perform it.

### Extension Activities

1. **Nature:** Carole Boston Weatherford highlights the importance nature plays in the everyday lives of both the enslaved and their enslavers.
  - a. Select four poems from *Kin: Rooted in Hope* that incorporate the importance of nature, and discuss how they do this.
  - b. Research some wild fruits and edible grasses that occur naturally in your area. Create a presentation or report that includes their edibility, their optimal growth environment and season, any animals or insects that use these fruits/grasses as a primary diet source, and any meals, dishes, or medicinal salves they could be incorporated into.
2. **Music:** Listen to music that was performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Here are examples: 1909 recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUvBGZnL9rE>
  - a. Describe your reactions.
  - b. Research how this group came to be.
  - c. Identify insights you discovered about the Fisk Jubilee Singers in this news report: <https://www.newschannel5.com/news/over-100-year-old-recording-of-the-fisk-jubilee-singers-revealed> What is the current status of the group?
  - d. Listen to other performers that recorded songs about African American experiences—whether folk or work songs, spirituals, etc.—such as Odetta, Oscar Brown Jr., Nina Simone, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Abbey Lincoln, and Rhiannon Giddens (who has resolved to highlight roots music and recently won a Pulitzer Prize for music, her second Grammy Award, and a MacArthur fellowship). Describe your reactions.
3. **Stories:** Slave narratives, historic records, and books and articles written by historians document enslavement resistance ranging from breaking tools to poisonings, fires, and revolts.

- a. Select one of the movies listed and watch it. Write a review for one of the following movies: *Amistad*, *12 Years a Slave*, and *Harriet*. Identify major themes, point of view, character development, and historical accuracy.
  - b. How does the form/genre/writing of the film affect its ability to impact the viewer?
  - c. Locate interviews with Carole Boston Weatherford (PBS, Reading Rocket, author's page, etc.). What insights does she reveal about her writing (e.g., choice of topic, genre, format, etc.)?
4. **Math:** Plantation records provide stark realities of the financial aspects of purchasing a human and providing meager food and clothing, the sale of products produced on the farm or plantation, and how inheriting enslaved people improved the economic standing and lifestyles of the enslavers.
- a. Document the rise in economic status of the Lloyd family in a graph. Create a key that explains the points on the graph. What insights can be acquired from the graph?
5. **Information Searches:** Developing research skills is necessary for critical thinking and discernment that goes beyond using Google. Librarians and media specialists welcome your queries.
- a. Interview a librarian about the best techniques for locating information about slavery and the use of archives.
  - b. Review information included in the author's note, bibliography, and back matter. Identify an archive used by the author, and document the information contained within it.
  - c. Interview a member or members of your own kin (birth, adopted, or chosen family) or someone in your community to learn their history and record their stories. If you're not sure where to start, ask them about what their life was like when they were your age.
  - d. Discuss the oppressive purpose of unmarked and anonymous graves of enslaved people on plantations. Consider having students research various grieving and mourning practices from different African countries and cultures and present their findings to the class.

- e. Using your school or local library, or trusted online sources, research the ways in which slavery in the United States was different from other forms of slavery across time and in other countries.
6. **Music Vocabulary:** Some of the types of music created by the enslaved include work songs, coded songs about flight and freedom, and spirituals or “sorrow songs”; later, the emancipated created the blues, gospel, jazz, and rock and roll.
  - a. Describe the ways in which the book includes references to these genres of music.
  - b. African instruments brought to the Americas included drums, banjos, balafon, flute, and panpipe:  
[https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraID=6&smtID=6#:~:text=Enslaved%20Africans%20either%20carried%20African,panpipe%20\(a%20tuned%20pipe.](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraID=6&smtID=6#:~:text=Enslaved%20Africans%20either%20carried%20African,panpipe%20(a%20tuned%20pipe.)  
Read the article cited above and discuss as a class the key points it makes.
  - c. Many spirituals were coded songs that the enslaved sang to share with one another hidden messages about flight and freedom. Identify three coded spirituals and discuss the hidden messages they contain.
7. **Interdisciplinary/Music:** Music is integral to all cultures. African Americans are credited with creating the blues, gospel, jazz, rock and roll, and rap, and significantly influencing others. Wynton Marsalis and Rhiannon Giddens are two exceptional composers and musicians that have received critical acclaim and honors.
  - a. What views do Marsalis and Giddens hold about music, performance, and creative processes?
  - b. Identify why each received the Pulitzer Prize for music. Review information on the Pulitzer Prize website (<https://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-category/225>). Marsalis was the first jazz musician to win the prize.
  - c. Both created music that explored slavery. Listen to excerpts from each prize-winning body of work (*Omar* and *Blood on the Fields*), and describe your reactions. How does musical genre influence the presentation of information?
8. **Art:** Cover art, frontispiece, back pages, endpapers, and other formatting decisions shape the interpretation of a poem, fiction, or nonfiction. Jeffery Boston Weatherford selected scratchboard as the style for the book’s illustrations.

- a. Read interviews with Jeffery Boston Weatherford found on the PBS website, YouTube, and elsewhere, and identify key aspects of his artistic philosophy.
  - b. Collect or check out several books illustrated by Jeffery Boston Weatherford from the library. Identify the artistic style of each. How does the style generate certain reactions from the readers? Does he lean toward a particular style, or does he incorporate an eclectic style?
  - c. Become the artist: Using photos of family members or loved ones, work on creating portraits of your own kin. You could try working in Jeffery Boston Weatherford's style or your own.
9. **Cooking:** Weatherford carefully compares and contrasts the variety of dishes enjoyed by the enslavers and the meager amounts of food given to the enslaved. Consider reviewing plantation records for similarities.
  - a. Analyze the diets of the enslaved for their nutritional value. Speculate on the ability of the enslaved to work endlessly on these meager diets.
  - b. How might the enslaved learn to cook the fancy meals found in the book?
  - c. Read cookbooks written by African Americans such as *Jubilee: Recipes from Two Centuries of African American Cooking* (T. Tipton-Martin); *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South* (M. W. Twitty); and *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America* (J. B. Harris & M. Angelou). Comparable cookbooks exist about Caribbean, Central American, and South American cuisine. Identify the key history in each. How do the cookbooks differ or present similar information?
  - d. Talk to your family about the food and meals that are traditions for them. Collect a few of these recipes by writing out the ingredients and the cooking instructions on a piece of paper and put it in a binder. On another piece of paper, draw or place a photograph of the finished meal to create a personal family cookbook. Consider also asking your family member where the recipes originated in your family and what has changed about them over the years, or why they haven't changed at all.
10. **Social Studies:** Slave narratives were collected in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries. Those produced through the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s often have recorded memories of the formerly enslaved.

- a. Why is the WPA important? Discuss the process of identifying the formerly enslaved and the collection of their personal histories.
- b. Identify and list how the narratives differ on the basis of gender, age, type of plantation and crops, and location of the enslaved—for example, slavery in the North, Southwest, mid-Atlantic states, and deep South (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, etc.).
- c. Listen to slave narratives in the Library of Congress found at this link:  
<https://www.loc.gov/collections/voices-remembering-slavery/about-this-collection/>.
- d. “The Star-Spangled Banner” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” are considered the American national anthem and the African American national anthem, respectively. Compare and contrast each stanza of each anthem. For whom is each written? What is controversial about the third stanza of the “Star-Spangled Banner”? Discuss why brothers J. Rosamond and James Weldon Johnson wrote “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”
- e. Read the poem and examine the time line of “A Tale of Two Statues,” which starts on page 184. After reading, provide printouts of articles about the removal of the Common Soldier statue, or another statue in your area or region, and lead a civil discussion about the meaning behind the statue, its location, dedication, etc.
  - i. Discuss recently erected statues and art installations in your area, and what these mean to students. Consider hosting a class debate about the removal of statues, and whether the act is erasing history or displaying cultural growth.
  - ii. Students can create their own “Tale” by having them choose one or two statues or monuments from a list of those available in their state or region. Using trusted library and internet resources, as well as their city’s historical archives, research the history of the person the statue or monument represents, the erection of the statue, and how the decision to build it came about. Students should then create a poem from the statue’s perspective about its “life” and what people think of it.



11. **Poetry:** Write a poem that describes your responses to slavery. Identify and review other books written in poetic forms that parallel *Kin*, such as books written by Marilyn Nelson.

### **Back Matter**

The author's afterword provides more detailed information about the catalysts for the book. Similar to others searching for their personal histories, Carole Boston Weatherford explores her African ancestry as a means of acquiring knowledge about her family's history in America.

1. Explain how the 1619 Project and the "Year of Return" to Ghana on the four hundredth anniversary of the Transatlantic slave trade influenced Boston Weatherford's crafting of the poetry collection.
2. What insights can be gleaned about the author's search for information from her bibliography?
3. Identify key points in Jeffery Boston Weatherford's illustrator's note.

### **Other Recommended Resources to Augment *Kin: Rooted in Hope***

Major literacy and literary organizations, along with early childhood organizations, provide guidance to support the use of *Kin* and similar titles. They include the American Library Association (ALA), International Literacy Association (ILA), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the Poetry Foundation.

Another important organization, which was created in 1915 to ensure accurate books, journal articles, and curricular materials about African Americans, is the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, among the first to document African American history (<https://asalh.org/>). All the above organizations provide recommendations for books, magazines, and online resources. Peruse these resources for recommended books that can be used to support the discussion questions and complete extension activities. Also see the American Library Association's website for vital information about book challenges: <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/respond>

Several important African American history museums are valuable sources of information, including the International African American Museum (<https://iaamuseum.org/>) and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/>).

## Recommended Books for Librarians and Teachers

History is an ongoing collection of processes. Each person is a part of that history. Historical accuracy and authenticity are important components of the historical records. Following is a sample of various histories that offer essential information and serve as an introduction to African American history. Other works written by historians may be found among members of the American Historical Association, Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and the Association of Black Women Historians.

- *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Donald Yacovone
- *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin and Evelyn Higginbotham
- *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* by Wilma King
- *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* by Annette Gordon-Reed
- *African American Odyssey* by Darlene Clark Hine, William Hine, and Stanley Harrold
- *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* by Nell Irvin Painter

## Art

- *Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat* by Javaka Steptoe
- *Jacob Lawrence: The American Struggle* by Elizabeth H. Turner, et. al.
- *The MET: Faith Ringgold: Narrating the World in Pattern and Color* by Sharna Jackson and illustrated by Andrea Pippins
- *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet
- *Infinite Hope: A Black Artist's Journey from World War II to Peace* by Ashley Bryan
- *Just Jerry: How Drawing Shaped My Life* by Jerry Pinkney
- *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave* by Laban Carrick Hill and illustrated by Bryan Collier
- *Gordon Parks: How the Photographer Captured Black and White America* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Jamey Christoph
- *By and By: Charles Albert Tindley, the Father of Gospel Music* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Bryan Collier

## Poetry

- *Hip Hop Speaks to Children* by Nikki Giovanni
- *How to Write a Poem* by Kwame Alexander and Deanna Nikaido
- *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song*, edited by Kevin Young
- *The Roots of Rap* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Frank Morrison
- *Freedom in Congo Square* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
- *Box: Henry Brown Mails Himself to Freedom* by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Michele Wood

## Writing

- *The Write Thing* by Kwame Alexander
- *Kwame Alexander's Free Write: A Poetry Notebook* by Kwame Alexander
- *Writing in Color: Fourteen Writers on the Lessons We've Learned*, edited by Nafiza Azad and Melody Simpson

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