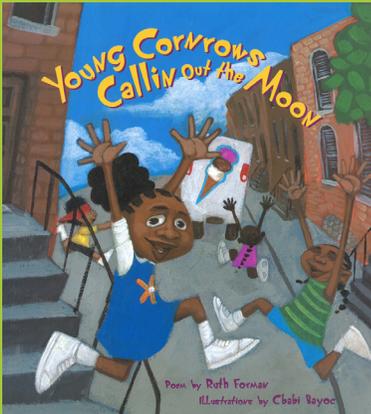


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Young Cornrows Callin Out the Moon

written by Ruth Forman

illustrated by Cbabi Bayoc

Reading Level

Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: I

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: NA

Lexile™ Measure: NP

Genre: Poetry

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Cities, Summer, Families, Friendship, Games, Home, Dreams and Aspirations, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Poetry, Pride, African/African American Interest

Synopsis

*we don have no backyard
frontyard neither...*

Who needs a backyard when you've got brownstone steps, double dutch, and freeze tag beneath the sizzling summer sun? The jingling bell of the ice cream truck mingles with laughter and side walk rhymes. Frosty lemonade from the corner store and tight cornrows beat the heat with style. There's nothing like summer time in the city when you've got your friends, family, and imagination to keep you company.

Ruth Forman, whose work has been honored by the American Library Association, offers a poetic testament to childhood, language, and play. Cbabi Bayoc's richly hued paintings brings to life the streets of South Philadelphia to vivid life. *Young Cornrows Callin Out the Moon* is a celebration of city summer memories, and of African American culture and community.



BACKGROUND

South Philadelphia: Philadelphia is the capital of Pennsylvania. There is a rich African American history in the city. (See <https://www.visitphilly.com/articles/philadelphia/african-american-historic-sites-in-philadelphia/> for more.) South Philadelphia, or South Philly, is a collection of neighborhoods known for its rich cultural diversity, history, and food. It's also home to the city's professional sports complex. For more information about the area's history, visit <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/south-philadelphia-essay/>.

Cornrows: Cornrows are thin braids typically braided flat against the scalp. The name references rows of corn in fields. The braiding process ranges in the time it takes, and can vary from simple to intricate stylistic expressions. They can serve as a lower-maintenance hairstyle once completed. To read more about the historical and cultural significance of cornrows, especially as related to African American culture, visit <https://www.ebony.com/style/everything-you-need-know-about-cornrows/> or <https://www.essence.com/hair/respect-our-roots-brief-history-our-braids-cultural-appropriation/>.

Note: Poet Ruth Forman reads *Young Cornrows Callin Out the Moon* on NPR: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9645327>. Have students follow along with the poet while they read.

This poem was first published in Ruth Forman's poetry collection *We Are the Young Magicians* (1993).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you like about where you live? What sights, sounds, smells, or feelings that come to mind first when you think of that place?
- How might a city feel in the summer? What kinds of thing might kids love to do in the summer in the city?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Note that the cover says, "Poem by Ruth Forman." Ask students to make predictions about the text given that it will be a poem.

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author and illustrators' dedications, illustrations, author's note, glossary and author's sources.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- which summer memories the author includes in this poem
- what the title means and why it's significant

Encourage students to consider why the author and poet, Ruth Forman, would want to share this poem with young people.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Where don't the narrators play? Where do they play?
2. What foods does the poet describe?
3. What games do the children play?
4. Where do they go in their neighborhood?

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

backyard/front yard, brownstone steps, South Philly, black eye peas, ham hocks, hot pepper greens, corn bread, double dutch, freeze tag, kickball, corner store, red cream pop, Rick James, Bump the Rock, callous, ashy knees, naps, cornrows

Academic

fine, attitude

5. What is the narrator proud of? Why?
6. How does the poet describe the people in the neighborhood?
7. What does Mamma do to do the kids hair? Why?
8. What do the kids do as it gets dark?
9. What is “magic” to the narrator? Why?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why do you think poet Ruth Forman focused on her memories of the evening? What's special about the evening?
2. What do you think the line “more to watch than TV” means?
3. How do you think the poet feels about the people and the neighborhood? How do you know?
4. What does the title mean?
5. Why do you think the poet doesn't “really want no backyard/front yard neither?”
6. What do you think the poet means by “black magic n brownstone steps?”
7. What might the poet assume people think about kids who spend summer in the city? What do you think the poet most wants readers of this poem to know?
8. How do the illustrations support the poem's message?
9. Now that you've read the poem, what do you think the title means?
10. How is this a poem about community in addition to being about a place? Give examples from the text.
11. Compare this to your neighborhood. What do you think should be celebrated in your neighborhood. Why?
12. In the author's note, Ruth Forman says, “The concrete landscape was a summer song I kept in my pocket long after the August moon left for September.” What does she mean? Why are memories so special to people?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Does this poem remind you of any food, games, or places in your neighborhood? Which ones?



2. Make a list of reasons you are proud of your family, friends, and neighborhood. What's something unexpected about where you live that you think should be celebrated?
3. What's your favorite season and time of day in that season? Why? What sights, sounds, smells, and feelings remind you of that time?
4. Do you enjoy busy, crowded, and noisy settings? Why or why not? If not, what do you prefer and why?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk describing a place special to them. Encourage them to share details related to each of the five senses.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

6. An audio version of the story is available from NPR read by poet Ruth Forman: <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9645327>

Social and Emotional Learning

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships. Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of *Young Cornrows Callin Out the Moon*:

1. Have students chart the narrator's emotions over the course of the story. How does she feel when she's interacting with each character in the story and with each place in her neighborhood? Use the illustrations as a visual reference and way to tap into students' visual literacy skills.
2. What Social and Emotional Learning skills does the narrator exhibit over the course of the book? (some examples include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, and perspective taking) How do they influence her character? Why was it important for her to demonstrate those skills?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 5)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)



1. Review the author’s note, in which she describes her approach to poetry as using “images, movement, smells, tastes, sounds, textures, and rhythm so that people... can experience a certain feeling.” Ask students to choose a time and place, close their eyes to imagine the specific details, and write a poem that uses details to help readers feel like they are there.
2. Read *Bein’ With You This Way* by W. Nikola Lisa (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bein-with-you-this-way>), a celebration of friendship with an urban setting. Compare and contrast the two texts with a list or Venn diagram.
3. Read *Summer Sun Risin’* by W. Nikola Lisa (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/summer-sun-risin-bebop>), a rhythmic account of a summer day on a farm. Compare and contrast the two texts with a list or Venn diagram.
4. Read *Black All Around* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/black-all-around>) by Patricia Hubbell. Discuss why the author may have written this book and make connections to Ruth Forman’s reasons for writing *Cornrows Callin Out the Moon*. Check out the NPR interview with Ruth Forman on “Black Characters Fill Rolls in Children’s Books:” <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12635359>
5. Read *On My Block: Stories and Paintings by Fifteen Artists* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/on-my-block>). Discuss connections to *Cornrows Callin Out the Moon*. Encourage readers to think about why these artists selected each place and what makes a place meaningful to someone. Questions to consider: how does each place celebrate community or family? How does each place capture the past and present? How can a physical place make up who we are? Encourage students to write a poem or paragraph describing a place that is special to them and why.

Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaborate, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Invite students to use paintings from the story as inspiration for creating their own paintings of their favorite places. Encourage them to include details that show the season and time of day in their work.
2. Investigate how the illustrations show people’s movement and positioning. Have students experiment with drawing or painting people moving, such as with arms up or out, legs bent, etc. Encourage them to try

to more intentionally show people’s movement and positioning in when they illustrate their own stories and poems.

3. Ask students to observe how the moon looks from where they live and use their observations to create evening-themed paintings or oil-pastel drawings with different takes of “calling out the moon.”
4. Have students watch the video of Ruth Forman on her published work and becoming a poet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly-dBOxV8HK>. Encourage students to write a letter to Ruth Forman with questions they have about being a writer and poet or describing their favorite memories in the summer.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Locate South Philly on a map of Philadelphia. Read more about the notable characteristics of this area. If your school is located near a city, learn more about particular neighborhoods in your city.
2. Look at a soul food cookbook or images of the foods online. If students are familiar with the foods, ask them to describe them further. If possible, make and taste cornbread or one of the other dishes listed.

Physical Education

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Learn more about and/or try out the games and activities described in the poem (double dutch or regular jump rope, freeze tag, kickball, hide and seek.)

School/Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3)

1. Have students interview a family or community member about their favorite summer memories. Compose a list of interview questions that encourages sharing of specific and sensory details.
1. Ruth Forman created an additional activity guide for educators and families available here: https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/239/Young_Cornrows_Callin_Out_the_Moon_Teacher_Material.pdf.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Forman is a prize-winning poet, author, and friend of words. She still loves to sit on brownstone steps and her favorite time is summer dusk, right after dinner when the air is still warm and indigo gently kisses us into the night. She currently lives in Washington, DC. Visit her website at <https://www.ruthforman.com>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Cbabi Bayoc is a fine artist and illustrator whose artwork reflects his love of music and family. Originally named Clifford Miskell, he changed his name in 1997 to an acronym that encompassed his mission and beliefs: “Cbabi” stands for Creative Black Artist Battling Ignorance and “Bayoc” stands for Blessed African Youth of Creativity. His paintings can be found in galleries and homes around the world. He lives in St. Louis with his wife and children. His website is <http://cbabibayoc.com>.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children’s book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, “about everyone, for everyone,” is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company’s goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

ORDERING INFORMATION

On the Web:

www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering (general order information)

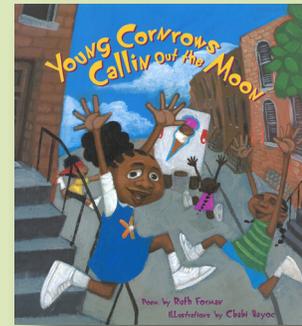
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/young-cornrows-callin-out-the-moon>
(secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Book Information for

Young Cornrows
Callin Out the Moon



\$8.95, PAPERBACK
9780892393633
*Reading Level: Grade 2
Interest Level: Grades PreK–3
Guided Reading Level: I
Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
NA

Lexile™ Measure: NP

THEMES: Childhood
Experiences and Memories, Cities,
Summer, Families, Friendship, Games,
Home, Dreams and Aspirations,
Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence,
Poetry, Pride, African/African
American Interest

RESOURCES ON THE

WEB:

[https://www.leeandlow.com/
books/young-cornrows-callin-
out-the-moon](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/young-cornrows-callin-out-the-moon)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.