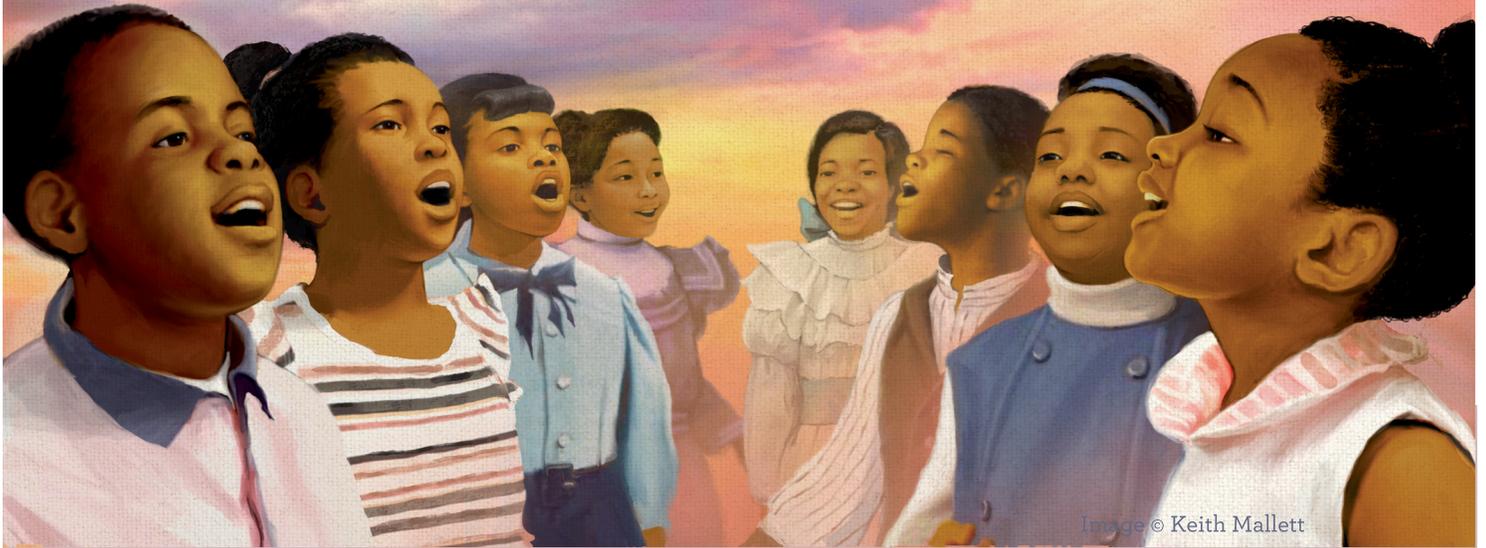
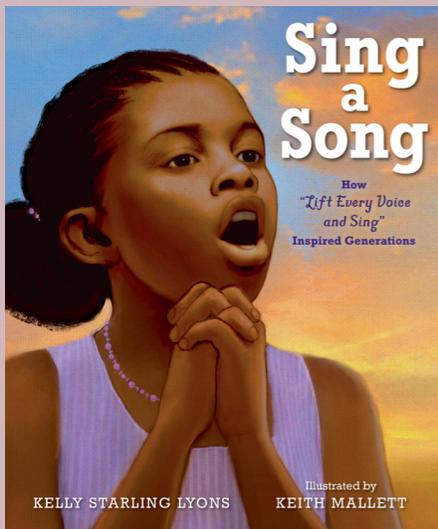


Lift Every Voice and Sing



Celebrate the 120th Anniversary



Teach kids the history behind the song known as the Black National Anthem by adding **Sing a Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations** by Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrated by Keith Mallett (Penguin Young Readers) to your school, library, house of worship, organization, or home collection.

- *Booklist Starred Review*
- *Notable Social Studies Trade Book*
- *ALSC Notable Children's Book*
- *CCBC Best Books for Young Readers*

Sing a Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations celebrates the history of the Black National Anthem in a story that imagines five generations of children in one family drawing strength and hope from the song. The book includes a detailed author's note and the words to all three verses of "Lift Every Voice & Sing."

"Before you were born, a girl learned a song . . .
On the big day – February 12, 1900 – she was part of a choir 500 strong.
Back straight, head high, heart and mouth open, she sang."
—**Sing a Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations**

Sing a Song: How “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Inspired Generations

Activities to Celebrate the Meaning and Majesty of the Song

Here are some ideas for celebrating the meaning and majesty of the song at your school, library, house of worship, or organization:

- Read and discuss **Sing a Song: How “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Inspired Generations** by Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrated by Keith Mallett (Penguin Young Readers).
- Pledge to sing “Lift Every Voice and Sing” with students or children you know. Times to celebrate include Black History Month (February), Music in Our Schools Month (March), National Poetry Month (April), Black Music Month and the birthday of James Weldon Johnson (June). Look for the attached lyric sheet.
- There are versions sung by everyone from Beyoncé to Ray Charles. Show young people different renditions of the song at <https://www.jamesweldonjohnson.org/press-1> and on YouTube.
- Do writing and art projects that help bring the song to life and have kids reflect on the meaning in their own lives. Lesson Plan: <http://www.kellystarlinglyons.com/books/onemillion/documents/SingaSongStudyGuide.pdf>.
- Watch interviews on the meaning of the song to educators, children’s book creators, people of faith, parents, and more at <https://youtu.be/4T7MuJrWW88>

History of the Song

On February 12, 1900, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was performed for the first time. Five hundred schoolchildren from the segregated Stanton School in Jacksonville, Florida, sang it for a celebration of President Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. The school’s principal James Weldon Johnson wrote the lyrics. His brother John Rosamond Johnson composed the music. The Johnson Brothers moved from Jacksonville and wrote many other compositions. James Weldon Johnson became a respected poet and author, civil rights activist, NAACP executive secretary, and diplomat. The students who sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing” never forgot the power of the song.

The kids who sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing” grew up and passed the song on to their students and children. It spread across the South and North and became the official song of the NAACP. “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was part of the Civil Rights Movement, graduation ceremonies, and sporting events. It was played on radio stations and in houses of worship and homes. The song, which celebrates Black brilliance, strength, resilience, and faith, is a hymn and a rallying cry. It even made the news when Beyoncé sang it at Coachella.

Explore the picture book by Kelly Starling Lyons & illustrated by Keith Mallett (Penguin)
email@kellystarlinglyons.com | www.kellystarlinglyons.com | Image © Keith Mallett

Sing a Song: How “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Inspired Generations

Resources

- James Weldon Johnson Foundation: <https://www.jamesweldonjohnson.org/press-1>
- Yale University Library: <http://exhibits.library.yale.edu/exhibits/show/lift-every-voice>
- Ritz Theatre and Museum - <https://www.ritzjacksonville.com/p/visit/302>
- NAACP: <https://www.naacp.org/naacp-history-lift-evry-voice-and-sing/>
- Penguin Random House: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/567912/sing-a-song-by-kelly-starling-lyons-illustrated-by-keith-mallett/>
- UNC Press: <https://uncpress.org/book/9781469638607/may-we-forever-stand/>

Locating the Book

You can find a copy of **Sing a Song: How “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Inspired Generations** at your favorite bookseller for \$17.99 or request it at your library.

To place a bulk order, please contact Penguin Random House at 800-733-3000.

For schools serving children in need, First Book, a nonprofit social enterprise, has discounted copies of **Sing a Song: How “Lift Every Voice and Sing” Inspired Generations** for \$6.50 each. You must be registered to receive the discount. Find out if you’re eligible here: <https://www.fbmarketplace.org/eligibility-faqs/>



Explore the picture book by Kelly Starling Lyons & illustrated by Keith Mallett (Penguin)
email@kellystarlinglyons.com | www.kellystarlinglyons.com | Image © Keith Mallett

Sing a Song: How "Lift Every Voice and Sing" Inspired Generations

Lift Every Voice and Sing

By James Weldon Johnson, J. Rosamond Johnson

Lift ev'ry voice and sing,
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on 'til victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
'Til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

This song is in the
public domain.
Feel free to copy,
share, and sing.