



Title: Fifty Cents and a Dream

Author: Jabari Asim

Illustrator: Bryan Collier

Themes: Education, Literacy, Triumph, Slavery, Dreams, Freedom

Hear the book read aloud here: [Fifty Cents a Dream](#)

Volunteer readers should review the About section, Author’s Note, and Illustrator’s Note at the end of the story for relevant background information beforehand

★ 2nd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Ask students to discuss the difference between a “life” dream and a “sleeping” dream. Discuss why it is important to have a “life” dream. Have students share some of their “life” dreams.
- Ask students what **freedom** means.
- Tell students they will be learning about a person who was born a slave around the time of the Civil War. Students may not be familiar with the concept of **slavery**. Explain that **slavery** meant it was legal for white people to own black people. Black slaves had to do all the hard work for their white owners. They were not free to live their own lives. They did not have the same rights as the white people. Tell students that slaves were not even allowed to learn to read or write.

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

During Reading

- P. 1: Read; have students define **longed**, using the context clues in the two sentences. Ask students what they think the author means when he writes, “Booker dreamed of making friends with words, setting free the secrets that lived in books.” Tell students this is an example of “**showing writing**” which is an author’s way of “showing” the reader information about a character rather than directly telling the reader qualities about a character. Ask students what we learn about Booker in this way (he couldn’t read but desperately wanted to).

Ask students if they notice anything else in the picture (bubbles). Tell them that you wondered about the bubbles and turned to the back of the book where you found the Illustrator’s Note. Show students, and explain that here you learned that the illustrator decided to use bubbles of light to remind us as we read the book that Booker always *listened* and *dreamed*.

- Pp. 2-3: Read; ask students what it means when it says, “he could feel magic seeping into his hands”. What is it referring to? Have students discuss the picture and what Booker’s job was, and share their feelings about it. How would they feel if they were Booker, and why?
- Pp. 4-5: **Before** reading, have the students discuss what is happening in the picture. What is Booker dreaming about, as we see the bubbles? Read the text. Have students share what it must have felt like standing outside every day for hours, watching what he wanted to be able to do himself.

- Pp. 6-7: Read first sentence. Explain that the slavery law was changed when Abraham Lincoln was president, meaning that it was against the law for white people to own black people. Black people were now free to live their own lives. Continue reading.
- Pp. 8-9: Read; have students discuss the importance of the spelling book here. Ask students if they notice anything in the picture (ray of light with bird starting to fly out the window). Ask them what the illustrator might have been trying to show us with this (spelling book/reading/knowledge).
- Pp. 10-11: Read; ask students what was so astonishing (black man who could read). Ask students what bubbles are meant to show (that Booker dreams of reading too someday).
- Pp. 12-13: Before reading, ask students what seems to be happening in the picture. While reading, students likely won't understand the word Negroes so tell students it is another name for black people. What do the bubbles tell us around Booker? Discuss the examples of "showing writing" and what we learn about Booker.
- Pp. 14-15: Read; ask students how Booker feels, and why? What is he dreaming about now, as the bubbles show?
- Pp. 16-17: Read; ask students what they observe in the picture (no bubbles but streams of light all connecting back to Booker). Reread the last sentence and have students discuss how it might relate to the picture.
- Pp. 18-19: Read; ask students to describe Booker's expression in the illustration (focused, determined, etc.). Draw students' attention to the map pattern on Booker's shirt, the illustrator's way of showing how long and far Booker had to walk.
- Pp. 20-21: Read.
- Pp. 22-23: Read; note the bubbles. Point out the **simile** (a comparison of one thing to another thing using the word **like** or **as**): "...his empty stomach rumbled **as** loud as approaching thunder" and ask what two things are being compared (*stomach/thunder*). Have students discuss what we really understand about Booker's situation with this **simile**.
- Pp. 24-25: Read; discuss the examples of "showing writing" in the second paragraph and what we learn about Booker (works hard and in pain to achieve his dream, little by little; focused; determined; does not give up).
- Pp. 26-27: Read; ask students to infer what the circular illustration with the X signifies (he has finally reached his destination).
- Pp. 28-end: Read. On last page ask students why the last words are written larger than the rest?

III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

Post Reading

- What do you think the author's message is to the reader with this story? What are lessons we can learn from life stories such as Booker's?
- What character traits helped Booker achieve his dream?
- What is the meaning behind the title of the book?