



2017

Brick by Brick

Bailey Drayer

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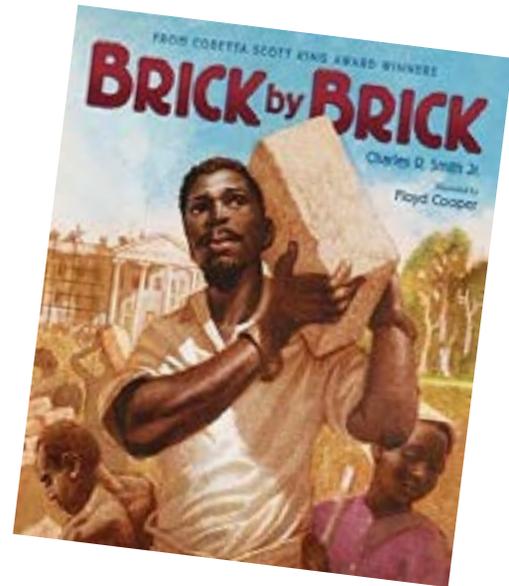
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Book Review

Title: Brick by Brick
Author: Charles R. Smith Jr.
Illustrator: Floyd Cooper
Reviewer: Bailey Dryer
Publisher: HarperCollins
Year: 2012
ISBN: 9780061920820
Pages: 32
Interest Level: Primary
Rating: Outstanding



Review

The foundation is being laid for the heart of a new country. Nameless, faceless hands labor to construct the white house: home to the president of the land of the free. The colored hands of men, women, and children labor alongside white men in mixing, sawing, and lifting each brick. As the symbol of freedom is built with the blood and sweat of these hands, their earned wages are pocketed by the slave owners who call them property.

The simple poetic structure of this book mimics traditional children's literature, but carries an uncommonly heavy theme. Smith beautifully identifies the irony of slave labor and its role in constructing a nation valuing freedom. Listed names interrupt the rhythm of the rhyme scheme as a powerful spotlight of the individuals whose stories have been darkened by anonymity in history. This book handles weighty themes artfully and effectively expands children's literature to a more influential sphere. The illustrations support the author's ability to name, identify, and consider a shouldered group of people. Each page features detailed illustrations in a muted palate with special attention highlighting the individuality of each character. The expressions are emotional and the twisting, moving bodies show artistic dynamism. Overall, a very high-quality artistic rendering that is well-matched to the text. This book is a traditional size and shape for children's picture books with smooth, glossy pages. A very valuable story delivered artfully and in a way that even young children would understand.