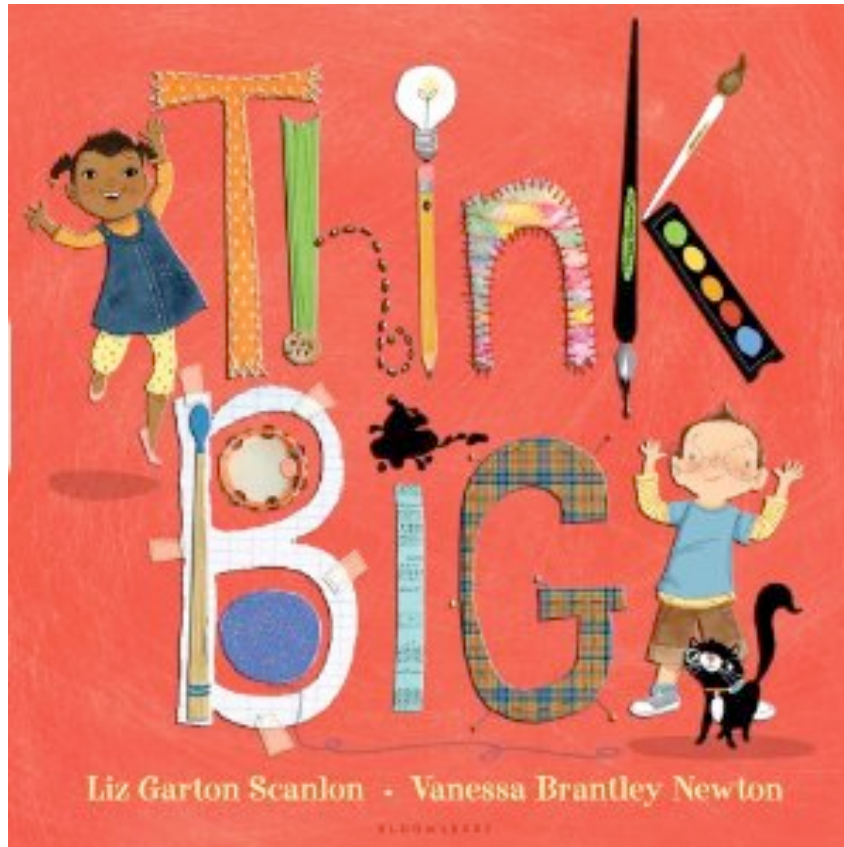


A Teacher's Guide to
Think Big

Written by Liz Garton Scanlon
Illustrated By Vanessa Brantley Newton



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Bloomsbury Books for Young Readers; ISBN 978-1-59990-611-9 (hardcover)

Praise for Think Big

A bouncy, early-childhood answer to Glee shows a racially diverse classroom of kids eagerly preparing for a multifaceted art performance. Scanlon's spare rhyming text bursts with gusto. No page has more than four words, but every word's turbocharged because of flawless scansion and exuberance.” ~ **Kirkus Reviews**

"No one is left on the sidelines, whether they're singers and crafters ... or potters and dancers. Scanlon's brief, percussive rhymes and Newton's gently 1960s retro collages portray an industrious, competent, and preternaturally collaborative group.” ~ **Publishers Weekly**

Story Summary

Each of us has an artistic spirit just waiting to be discovered! Come along as this exuberant gang gets creative—painting, singing, dancing, cooking, and more. There is no end to where our imaginations can take us when we THINK BIG!

About the Author



LIZ GARTON SCANLON is the author of the highly acclaimed *New York Times* bestselling picture book *All the World*. Illustrated by Marla Frazee, which was awarded a Caldecott Honor and received multiple starred reviews. Her other books include *A Sock is a Pocket for Your Toes*, illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser, and *Noodle & Lou*, illustrated by Arthur Howard. Liz lives in Austin, Texas, surrounded by people who THINK BIG. Learn more about Liz and her other books at www.LizGartonScanlon.com and <http://liz-scanlon.livejournal.com/>.

About the Illustrator



VANESSA BRANTLEY NEWTON is THINKING BIG, living her dream as an artist after attending both the Fashion Institute of Technology and the School of Visual Arts. Vanessa wrote and illustrated *Let Freedom Sing* and *Don't Let Auntie Mabel Bless the Table*. She is the illustrator of *Magic Trash* by J.H. Shapiro, *Presenting...Tallulah* by Tori Spelling, and *One Love*, based on the song by Bob Marley. Vanessa lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Learn more about Vanessa and her work at <http://oohlaladesignstudio.blogspot.com>.

Pre-Reading

Defining Art

Before introducing the book, ask students: What is art? What materials do artists use? Record their answers on chart paper. After you have shared *Think Big* with them, do the same activity on a new sheet of chart paper. Take out their original answers and let them compare and contrast the two.



- *Identify the use of art in everyday life.*
- *Identify simple ideas about original artworks, portfolios, and exhibitions by peers and others.*

Book Preview

Look at the front cover and find the title and names of the author and illustrator.



- What are the jobs of the author and illustrator?
- What does “think big” mean?
- Who are the children on the cover?
- Look closely at the letters in the title. How are they different? What do all the letters have in common?
- Look at the back cover. What do you think the children (and the cat) might be thinking?
- *Identify the front cover, back cover, and title page of a book.*
- *Name the author and illustrator of a text and define the role of each in presenting the ideas or information in a text.*
- *Predict what might happen next in text based on the cover, title, and illustrations.*

Stocking Our Shelves

Open the book to the end papers on the inside of the front cover. Ask students to comment on what items are on the shelves and who might use these items. Flip to the end papers inside the back cover. What happened to the items on the shelves?



Ask students what they would put on shelves of their own. To make their own “shelves,” have them glue a 1” strip of brown construction paper across the bottom of a white piece of construction paper. On the paper “shelf,” have students draw or create a collage of things that they would put on their own shelf that reflects their interests and talents. Display their shelves, one above the other, from floor to ceiling.

- *Recognizes and describes individual differences.*
- *Practices holding scissors correctly.*
- *Follows/uses safety procedures while using common tools and materials (glue, and scissors).*

Vocabulary

Your students may be unfamiliar with the following words. Encourage them to use text and picture clues to infer meanings.

- *Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.*
- *With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.*

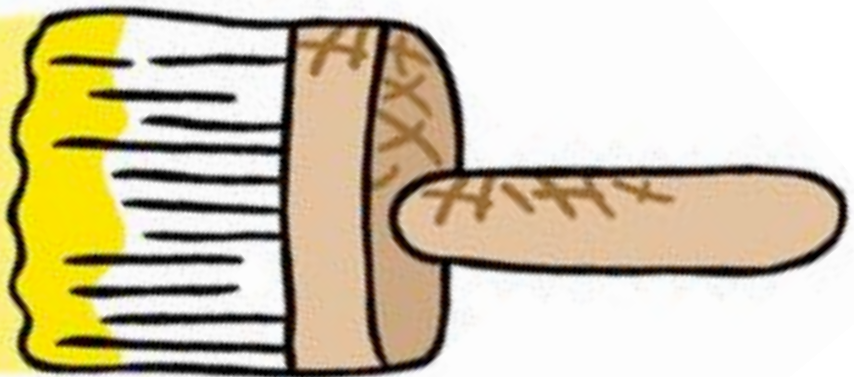
bow stroke

brainstorm scene

hue dice

chop on pitch

trim thread stitch



Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of art are the children making? (*knowledge*)
2. Why are the children creating art? (*comprehension*)
3. The children in the story created a program to hand out to their parents at the show. If your class were to showcase your talents, what kinds of things would you list in your class program? (*application*)
4. Which type of art is your favorite? Why do you like this kind best? (*analysis*)
5. Make a list of some of the materials the children used. Come up with a “recipe” for a new art project using the same materials. (*synthesis*)
6. Which type of art do you think would be the hardest to create? The easiest? Compare your answers with those of your friends. (*evaluation*)

Student Activities

Helping Hands



The children in the book all worked together to put on a creative show for their parents. Have each student create their own handprints in paint like the children did in the story. Once the prints have dried, discuss ways that children could lend each other a helping hand in the classroom or on the playground. Let them each write their idea for helping on their handprints and display them on a bulletin board labeled

Helping Hands.

Variation: Instead of writing, take a digital photo of students helping each other in different ways. Let them glue the photos onto the hands, one per child.

- *Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.*

Deep Hue

On the second page of the book, the children have created a “deep hue” of purple. Discuss the meaning of this phrase. Give students cups of paint in primary colors: red, blue and yellow. Give them spoons to measure equal parts of the following colors to make secondary colors:



red + blue = purple

red + yellow = orange

blue + yellow = green

Once they've experimented with mixing colors, ask them how they might make deeper hues of purple, orange and green. For example, when they mix red and blue to make purple, how does the hue change when they add twice as much red than

blue? Or twice as much blue than red? Which combination results in a deeper shade of purple?

- *With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).*
- *Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has “more of”/“less of” the attribute, and describe the difference.*

A Recipe for Fun



Show the illustration of “ants on a log” (celery with peanut butter and raisins). What other ways can food be used to create art? Let students experiment with arranging healthy snack items like veggies, pretzels and crackers into faces, objects or scenes. Look online for inspiration with sites such as this one:

<http://pinterest.com/kellylhardy/food-fun-with-kids/>.

Take photos of finished products to create a class recipe book.

- *Create artworks, using a variety of colors, forms, and lines;*
- *Arrange forms intuitively to create artworks.*
- *Develop manipulative skills when constructing artworks, using a variety of materials.*
- *Identify types of foods that help the body grow such as healthy breakfast foods and snacks.*

Shape Up The Band

Turn to the page that reads:

Bow stroke

One, two



Create a t-chart with instrument names and shapes that the students see on this page, both 2- and 3-dimensional. Some instruments have more than one shape; for

example, the body of the cowbell is rectangular, while the handle on the top is a half-oval.

Gather together instruments that are available at your school and give one to each child. Allow time for children to try out their instruments and note their instruments' shapes.

For the whole-group activity, gather 2- or 3-dimensional shapes to use as models. Hold up a shape and then clap out a rhythm. Students with instruments that have the same shape will repeat the rhythm on their instruments. For example, if you hold up a circle, students with a tambourine or drum would be the only ones who respond by repeating the rhythm you clap.

- *Sort common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.*
- *Describe objects in the environment using names of shapes.*
- *Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.*
- *Identify shapes as two-dimensional (lying in a plane, "flat") or three-dimensional ("solid").*
- *Analyze and compare two- and three-dimensional shapes, in different sizes and orientations, using informal language to describe their similarities, differences, parts (e.g., number of sides and vertices/"corners") and other attributes (e.g., having sides of equal length).*
- *Sing or play classroom instruments independently or in a group.*
- *Create and imitate movement in response to selected rhythms.*

Postcards



On the page that reads, "Thick paint," look at the illustration of the children sitting on the giant postcards. Ask students what the difference is between a postcard and a letter.

For an end-of-year activity, take and print a photo of each student doing his or her favorite school activity. Tell students that you will be sending the photos as postcards to your new students in the fall so that they will know what to expect in your classroom next year. Have each child write a note like the sample on the following page explaining why the activity in the photo is a

favorite. Notes can be written directly on the back of the photo, or use peel-and-stick postcard backing.

In the fall, invite your former students to come and meet their postcard recipients.

iPad Variation: Download the app called *Postcard On The Run* and let students enter their messages directly on the iPad.

- *Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.*
- *Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.*

June 10, 2013

Dear Friend,

Welcome to Mrs. Kelly's Kindergarten class! This is a photo of me in the blocks area. I love making patterns and building high towers.

Your friend,
Pablo

Mixed Media

Look at the way the illustrations incorporate both photos and drawings. Turn to the page that reads:

No thought

Too great

You think

We'll wait



Ask students what the girl, boy and cat all want to be when they grow up. How do their actions in the story reflect what they want to become when they're older? Which elements of their "thought bubbles" are photos, and which elements are illustrated?

Let students brainstorm what they want to be when they grow up. Give each student a sheet of white drawing paper. Show them how to orient the paper vertically, then pull the top edge down to the bottom edge and fold the paper in half. On the bottom half of the paper, let them either draw their self-portraits, use a photo, or both—a combination of facial features from the photo with the rest of the portrait colored in with crayons.

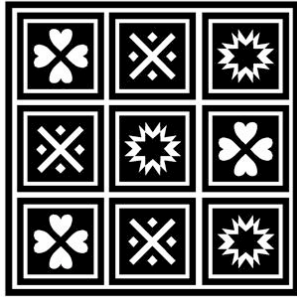
On the top half of the paper, have them draw a thought bubble showing what they're thinking of becoming as adults. Using colorful magazine photos, show students how they might incorporate the photos into a picture showing a profession—a fish for a future marine biologist, a white coat for a doctor, etc.

Display their finished projects on a bulletin board with a title such as:

Mr. Shin's Class Thinks Big!

- *Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.*
- *Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.*
- *Use illustrations and details in a story to describe characters, setting, or events.*
- *Relate art to everyday life.*

A Quilt of Art



Take a photo of each child demonstrating an artistic talent, or send home a note like the one below requesting photos from home. Photos might include one child playing an instrument, one singing, another mixing ingredients for a recipe, etc.

Once the photos are ready, let each child glue their photo in the center of a cardstock quilt square like the one below.

Punch holes along the four edges of each square so that the holes line up when placed next to another square. Let students choose a color of yarn to stitch two sides of their square to other students' squares.

Variation: If using fabric quilt squares, print digital photos onto paper that becomes an iron-on transfer.

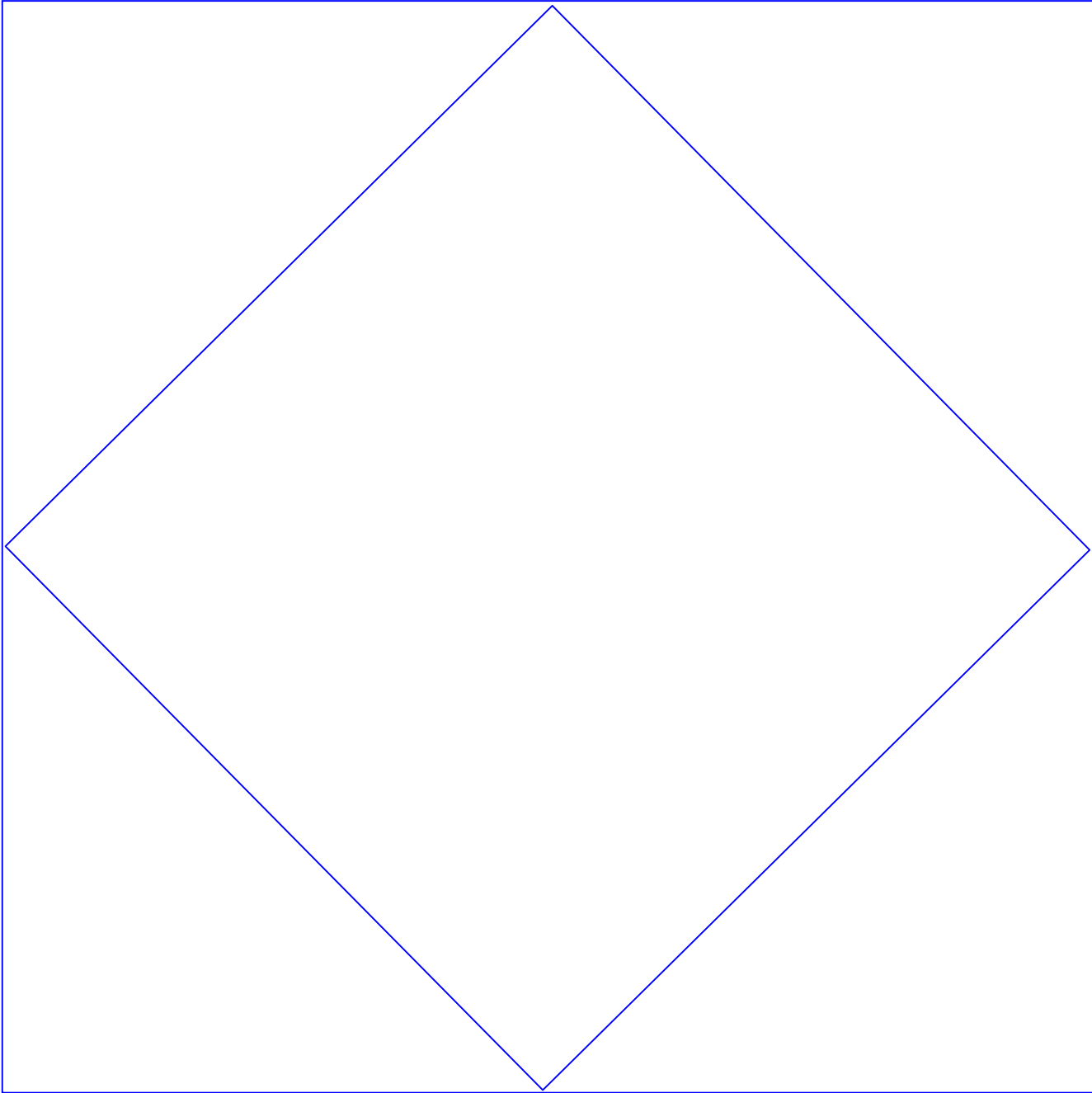
- *Completes lacing cards.*

Dear _____,

We read a book called Think Big, written by Liz Garton Scanlon, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton. In the story, we learned that we are talented in all kinds of artistic ways—we are painters, sketchers, musicians, actors, chefs, photographers, stitchers, sculptors, dancers, and decorators!

Our class is creating a quilt to showcase all our talents, and we need photos! Please send in a copy of a photo of me doing art. When we are finished, you can come and visit our class to see our quilt.

Love,



Clay-Go-Round



Look at the illustration of the children creating clay projects. Show students a video of a potter centering a lump of clay on a potter's wheel, such as this short clip:

http://www.ehow.com/video_4429273_center-clay-potter_s-wheel.html. Discuss how the clay shape looks on the spinning wheel both before it's centered, and afterwards.

Introduce the concept of centrifugal force with play dough and a spinning disk like a Sit 'N Spin toy or a merry-go-round. Have students experiment with placing dough on the disk and spinning it. Have them predict what will happen as the speed of the spinning disk increases or decreases. What happens when twice the amount of dough is used? Half?

- *Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference.*
- *Plan and conduct simple descriptive investigations such as ways objects move.*
- *Communicate observations with others about simple descriptive investigations.*
- *Observe and describe the ways that objects can move.*

Dancing Feet

Look at the page where the children are dancing. Ask students how the children in the story might use the numbered footprints shown in the illustrations. Help students each trace one footprint on a rubber mat (for non-carpeted surfaces) or felt (for carpeted surfaces). Cut out the footprints, number them, and store them in a plastic zip bag. Show students how they can use the footprints to follow simple dance steps or create their own dance moves for others to follow.



- *Recognize that motor skill development requires correct practice.*

Waving Our Flag

Show students the string of triangular flags on the “handmade” page. Ask parents to send in a list of the countries from which they and/or their ancestors come, along with one holiday, custom or food that originated from one of these countries.



Using an online or print database, have students research the flags that represent their families' countries of origin. (Note that many Native American tribes also have flags). Let students decorate and label at least one flag that represents their heritage. As they share, discuss how their language, holidays and family traditions might stem from cultural heritage.

As a class, put the countries in alphabetical order and string all the flags together to display in your classroom.

- *Describe and explain the importance of various beliefs, customs, language, and traditions of families and communities.*

The Art of Rhyme



Rhymes help children to predict and decode new words. Copy the following three pages onto cardstock and cut out the handprints (there are additional blank handprint to add other rhyming words). Challenge children to pair the rhyming hands.

- *Uses phonograms (cat, hat, sat, mat, fat, pat) when playing with rhymes.*
- *Identifies the words that rhyme in a read aloud book written in rhyme.*









An Interview with Author

Liz Garton Scanlon

When did you know you wanted to become a writer?

When I was little I wrote for fun, the way some kids kicked a soccer ball around. When I was in college, I started writing seriously. I majored in journalism. I wrote a lot of poetry. And then I spent years dipping my feet into textbook work, corporate marketing and teaching. But it was when I became a mother that I made the happy discovery that writing for children was what I truly loved.

What kind of training does a writer need?

A writer needs a solid understanding of the elements of craft – language, structure, grammar, all the nuts and bolts. But equally important, writers learn by being avid readers – through apprenticeship and example. There are many academic degrees that can help a student on the way to being a writer but there's not a particular one that's required. Writers write.

How did you get the idea for THINK BIG?

A number of years ago, I was having a conversation with my kids about art, and I realized they were talking about only visual art -- the kind they themselves did with paper and paint, the kind on a museum wall. So I said, "What about photography? What about ceramics?" And they answered with, "Or knitting!" "Or acting!" "Or cooking!" We couldn't stop once we'd started.

Once the idea came to you, what happened next?

Nothing! I knew I wanted to somehow incorporate all these art forms in a picture book text but I didn't know how. So I just moved onto something else. One day, months later, I was noodling around and just started writing down pairs of words – pairs like "big breath" and "thick paint" and suddenly I realized that this was my art book.

What was the most challenging part of writing this book? The most rewarding?

Once I set this very restrictive form for myself (mostly two-word lines and two-line couplets) I was locked in, and it was sometimes really challenging making an idea fit the form. Lots of my attempts ended up on the cutting room floor.

The most rewarding aspect of the process was, undoubtedly, seeing the artwork Vanessa Newton created to marry with the text. The visual narrative she added, the collage features, the merry cat -- I just found it all so delightful!

Do you have a writing routine?

I do, but it varies, according to what I'm working on and what time of year it is and other factors. Writing and revising lead me into different routines, for example, as does my kids' summer vacation. In general, I work from about 9:00 am-2:00 pm, but I have also gotten some of the best ideas in the middle of the night. When that happens, I get up and work!

What's the best piece of writing advice you've ever received?

"Omit needless words" – from Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. A huge amount of my daily effort goes into trying to distill something down to its most essential form. I guess that's why my books are so short!

What advice do you have for young writers?

Read. Read. Read. There is no better instructor in the art of writing than a good book.

When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?

Mostly I love hanging out with my husband and daughters – hiking, cooking, traveling, playing cards. I also love running half-marathons, reading good books, and practicing yoga.

What do you hope readers will take away from THINK BIG?

With THINK BIG, I'd like to circle back to the original conversation I had with my daughters. I'd like to explode open our conventional ideas about what art is. I'd like to help kids recognize the true diversity of the word, and see space for themselves and their own ideas in there somewhere.

An Interview with Illustrator Vanessa Brantley Newton



When did you begin to think of yourself as an artist?

I knew I was an artist when my mom and dad punished me for drawing on the sides of our kitchen stove!

How did you become an illustrator?

I don't think I decided to become an Illustrator I think Illustration picked me. Being dyslexic, it was hard trying to comprehend and read. The way that I communicated was through drawing. I found that I could convey how I was feeling and share my thoughts through illustrations.

After attending FIT in NYC, I couldn't find a job in fashion illustration. There weren't many black illustrators in the field either. I found work as a phlebotomist and worked at it full-time. I began looking at children's books from the 50's and 60's and fell madly in love with them! It took me back to my childhood. One of my favorite books was written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keat, *The Snowy Day*. My kindergarten teacher read it to me and I remember it being the first time I had seen a black child in a picture book. Peter looked like me. He lived in the same kind neighborhood as I. It would remain with me for many, many years. I started drawing again when I came across a copy of the book in a visit to Barnes and Noble. For a long time only the pictures made sense to me. That visit to B&N would set me on a course to children's book illustration. It clicked for me when I put the words and the pictures together. I cried like a baby as I read *The Snowy Day* and decided that I would take classes in children's book illustration, and loved it! A few years and five more classes later and here I am.

What type of media do you like working with the most, and why?

I do a lot of digital work and while I love it very much. I do so love traditional watercolor and collage. It will always be traditional. I am looking forward to doing more books in traditional watercolor and mixed media collage.

How long did it take to illustrate THINK BIG?

About six months all together with sketches and redoes.

What was the most challenging thing about this project? The most rewarding?

Finding fun ways to compliment the beautiful words of the book. I mean sure it seems easy enough, but *Think Big* is about thinking outside of the box and doing fun things. The most rewarding part was when I received the book in the mail. I just held it and looked at it with wonderment. Sometimes it's as if someone else had done the work.

Did you collaborate with the author as you did the illustrations?

I never once spoke to the author. The publishers meet with both the author and illustrator at different stages. In the beginning, it is mostly the editor and author and maybe the art director. They work out how the language will flow for the book sometimes page layouts. Then they look for a suitable illustrator whose work will fit the writer's style. Then the manuscript is passed on to the illustrator and it can take up to a year to illustrate the book. Sometimes quicker. Sometimes people think that the writers have to have an illustrator for their project, but this is not true. The publisher finds the writer and the illustrator and pairs the two together to produce a book.

You've illustrated several books for children. How does your process differ from one book to the other?

Sometimes I get an art director to work with and then there are times when I work with the editors directly. With *Think Big*, I really got to have a chance to spread my wings, so to speak. I had brainstorm sessions with the editors and this helped me SOOOOO much! We put our heads together and I was told to bring my creativeness to the process. I was given the freedom to create my best work ever!

Are any of your characters or aspects of the setting modeled on real-life people and places?

Always! I am a people watcher. These characters are children that I know and see. I watch them day and night and they become the characters for my books. Riley, (the little boy with the glasses, or our hero) is a little boy that I met while working at a

Jewish school. The little African American girl is my niece Chyna.

Pablo Picasso once said, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Do you agree?

Absolutely this is true. I think that many artists die at the age of ten. Everyone is telling the child to, "Grow up and be a big boy or girl," or "Stop daydreaming," or "Stop thinking so big!" We have to nurture our children's creativity and push them in the arts.

When you're not illustrating, what do you like to do in your free time?

Spending time with family and friends or crafting, singing, or painting.