

*“George’s love of words had
taken him on a great journey.*

Words made him strong.

Words allowed him to dream.”

— **Poet: The Remarkable Story
of George Moses Horton,**
a picture book by Don Tate,
Peachtree Publishers, 2015

Words & Illustration © Don Tate

Words as Freedom

Using **Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton**
to Teach Self-Expression & Poetry

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ABOUT THE KIT

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton, a nonfiction picture book by Don Tate, tells the story of a North Carolina man who spent his lifetime writing and performing poetry despite being enslaved. For most of Horton's life, words were the only freedom available to him.

This series of workshops shares the astounding life of George Moses Horton with children and allows children to explore how words can be freedom in their own lives. Using a series of self-expression writing prompts and poetry lessons, children will take steps to tell their own personal truth.

These workshops can be used in a classroom, library, or community setting, can flex from one session to multiple sessions, and can be done with or without a poet or poetry educator on hand.



This kit was written by the educators at Sacrificial Poets, also known as SacPoe, an award-winning, spoken word poetry organization that uses the written and spoken word to encourage creativity and self-expression within youth of the Triangle Area of North Carolina.

Workshops & Resources Include:

1) RESOURCE: ABOUT THE BOOK AND ITS CREATOR: *Page 2*

2) PREPARING FOR & MARKETING YOUR WORKSHOP: *Pages 3-5*

3) POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP Part 1-2: *Pages 5-8, Worksheets Pages 12-16*

This structured poetry exercise connects George Moses Horton to the reader's sense of self and concept of freedom and comes with a complete set of worksheets.

4) EDITING WORKSHOP: Six-Word Stories: *Pages 8-9*

This workshop teaches the importance of selecting words and revising with a step-by-step exercise on revising a thirty-word story down to six words.

5) PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: The Body Electric: *Page 9*

This workshop helps readers be aware of their bodies when they read aloud and perform.

6) RESOURCE: ABOUT POETRY SLAMS *Pages 9-11*

Explore the history of the oral tradition of poetry, the rise of the poetry slam movement, the terminology of slam, how to hold a slam, and how to explore more.

7) RESOURCE: EVENT POSTER: *Page 17*

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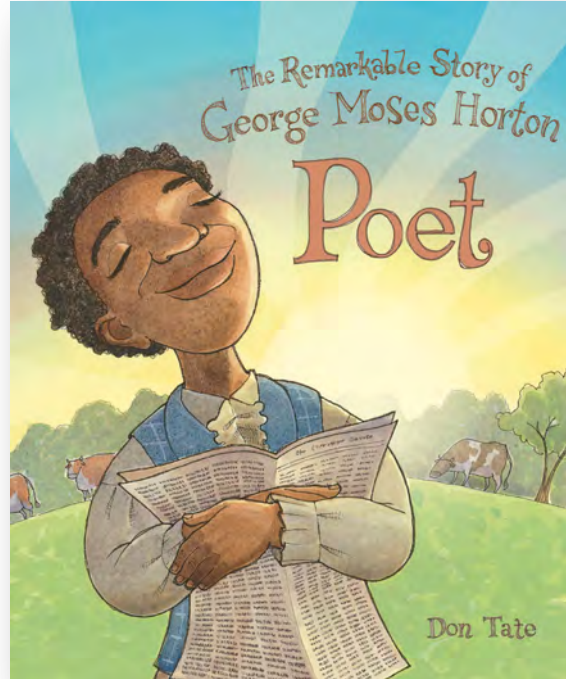
ABOUT THE BOOK

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton

Written & Illustrated by Don Tate
Published by Peachtree Publishers
ISBN-13: 9781561458257
Age Range: 7 and older

George loved words. But George was enslaved.

Forced to work long hours, George was unable to attend school to learn how to read. But he was determined - he listened to the white children's lessons and learned the alphabet. Then he taught himself to read. Soon, he began composing poetry in his head and reciting it as he sold fruits and vegetables on a nearby college campus. News of the slave poet traveled quickly among the students, and before long, George had customers for his poems. But George was still enslaved. Would he ever be free?



In this powerful biography of George Moses Horton, the first southern African-American man to be published, Don Tate tells an inspiring and moving story of talent and determination.

“A lovely introduction to an inspirational American poet.”
—*School Library Journal*, **Starred Review**

“Fascinated by the power of words, Horton taught himself to read and began composing verses...remarkable man's life offers a new perspective with remarkable clarity.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, **Starred Review**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR / ILLUSTRATOR

Don Tate is the illustrator of numerous critically acclaimed books for children including two other picture books featuring Emancipation, **Hope's Gift** by Kelly Starling Lyons and **The Amazing Age of John Roy Lynch** by Chris Barton.

In 2013, he earned an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Honor Award for his first picture book text, **It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw**. Explore more at dontate.com. To book Don Tate for an appearance, visit thebookingbiz.com.



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PREPARING FOR THE WRITING WORKSHOP(S):

You will, of course, create your own program or lesson plan. Following are simply suggested ways to prepare for an event or classroom experience.

___ Locate a copy of the picture book **Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton** by Don Tate (Peachtree Publishers).

___ Consider partnering with a local poet to produce this workshop. The websites pw.org/directory/featured or poets.org/poetsorg/poetry-near-you can help you locate a poet. Look to see whether there is a poet or organization that already works with children. Is there a budget to partner with that poet? Would it be a stronger choice to work with a poet of color?

___ If you plan to partner with the poet, share the picture book and workshop ideas with him or her. Together, plan how you will connect the story of the poet George Moses Horton with your children's own poetry writing.

___ Decide if this is a single workshop event or whether you want to have multiple sessions.

___ If you are doing an event for the public, copy and display the poster in this kit, hand it out in your community, and include it in a display. If author/illustrator Don Tate is part of your event, visit dontate.com/media/ for a bio and headshots for your marketing.

___ If you list your events in newsletters and online calendars, here is some text that may help with those listings:

Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton, a nonfiction picture book by Don Tate, tells the story of a North Carolina man who spent his lifetime writing and performing poetry despite being enslaved. For most of Horton's life, words were the only freedom available to him.

Join us as we explore the astounding life of George Moses Horton and how words can be freedom in our own lives. With a series of writing and poetry prompts, we will tell our own stories and dreams. Best for ages 7-12, but all welcome.

___ Familiarize yourself with the "What Freedom Means to Me" writing exercises on pages 5-8 and the companion worksheets on pages 12-16. Reproduce the worksheets for all your anticipated participants.

___ Poet and Sacrificial Poets educator DJ Rogers completed the "What Freedom Means to Me" writing exercises for you to use as an example. You can view them on page 16. If you would like to use his examples, prep them on easel paper or on your white board or reproduce and use the printed version. If you are working with a local poet, he or she may want to complete the writing prompt himself or herself as an example.

___ The worksheets lead your young poets through gathering words and then arranging them into stanzas. Be prepared to supply them with pencils with good erasers. Some poets

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may want to cut out and tape their words to create drafts. Have scissors and tape available to accommodate them.

___ Consider putting the Marianne Williamson quote, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate...” on an easel or white board as an inspiration for self-expression and poetry.

POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP Part 1: Poet George Moses Horton and Words As Freedom

You will, of course, create your own program or lesson plan. Following are simply suggested steps, talking points (in italics), and exercises.

___ Introduce the book.

This is a picture book for all ages about George Moses Horton, one of America’s first black poets. For most of his life, he was not a free man, but through his words and his legacy, he gained freedom. This book talks about his journey as a poet and performer, using his words to free himself and others.

___ Read the book and discuss the final page that reads, “George’s love of words had taken him on a great journey. Words made him strong. Words allowed him to dream.”

Author Don Tate says words took George Moses Horton on “a great journey.” How? How can words take us on a journey? Can we journey through reading? Writing?

Would George Moses Horton’s journey have been different without reading or without poetry?

“Words allowed him to dream.” Who else do you know that used words to dream? (MLK, Obama, etc.)

___ Discuss the final sentence in the book, “Words loosened the chains of bondage long before his last day as a slave.”

How did Horton’s use of words loosen his own bonds?

How did Horton’s words loosen the bonds for others?

What one word describes Horton’s journey best? (freedom!)

___ Use the illustrations to emphasize the difference between Horton when he was able to write and publish and Horton once those rights were taken away. Show Spread 9 that begins “Caroline arranged for George’s...” with spread 13 that begins, “Now it was too dangerous...”

Don Tate, the creator of this book, is an illustrator, an artist. Let’s look back at the picture of when George’s poems were first published. What do you see? What colors did Don Tate use? Why? How did Don draw George? What is the position of George’s body?

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Now let's look at George in the fields after he can no longer write full-time. What do you see? What colors did Don Tate use? Why? How did Don draw George? What is the position of George's body?

What are the differences in these images?

___ Discuss slavery and freedom.

How would you define slavery? How would you define freedom?

Is the freedom to speak a freedom Horton had? What about the freedom to make others listen? Are being heard and understood forms of freedom?

___ Introduce the idea that there is a responsibility attached to freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

The end of slavery was the beginning of all men and women in this country being able to say and write what they felt without being harmed.

That struggle goes on – in our homes, in our schools, in our communities, and in our government to protect the freedom of speech and the freedom of expression.

The way that you can help that struggle is by always choosing your words carefully, telling people what you feel and telling people what you think.

___ Connect the silencing of young people with the need for self-expression.

Young people's stories and voices are often silenced and unheard. It is a loss of freedom – the freedom to be understood by your classmates and teachers and peers.

Think about times when you were frustrated because you could NOT get someone to understand you or you were not allowed to speak.

Now think about what made you feel that way. What would you say to the people or things that made you feel that you weren't free?

One way to answer that is to complete the thought, "If you really knew me, you'd know..." or "What freedom means to me is..."

Today, we will use words as our own form of freeing ourselves and discuss what freedom means to us.

POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP Part 2: What Freedom Means to Me is...

___ Hand out the four-page "What Freedom Means to Me" worksheet and pencils. Lay out scissors and tape for poets to share.

___ Introduce the project.

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Poetry is a collection of carefully chosen and arranged words. Some poems follow rules. Some poems do not. Today's poem has a few rules. First, our poems will have four stanzas.

A stanza is a grouping of the lines in a poem.

Each line in the stanzas will begin the same way. How you finish that line will be completely up to your imagination and invention.

You may already write poetry. This may be your first time writing poetry. Either way there is nothing to worry about. We are going to go to first collect words and then arrange those words. If you listen to music, if you read, if you listen to the people around you, you can arrange words in a way that is poetry.

___ Walk them through "What Freedom Means to Me: Part 1." Share DJ Rogers' or your visiting poet's example.

In each column, you are going to write down a word or phrase that fits the column. Try to put 3-5 words in each spot.

"I am..." can be as simple as your name, what you like doing, what you're good at.

"I am from..." isn't just the city you live in, or living in an apartment or a house. It is your background. Your family, your life.

"Freedom is..." is totally up to you. What makes you feel free? When you define "Freedom" what are you thinking about?

___ Walk them through "What Freedom Means to Me: Part 2." Share DJ Rogers' or your visiting poet's example.

Okay, so "Freedom is..." is a big, BIG topic, right? Let's break it down.

We all have senses – they are how we interact with the world. Our senses are one of the things that make us free. What do you sense? What do you feel? What do you taste? What do you see?

How do these things paint your picture of freedom? Let's explore.

___ Transition from the word exercise to the poetry writing session or "What Freedom Means to Me: Part 3." Share DJ Rogers' or your visiting poet's example.

These words that you have written down can become a poem. These words could even become the lyrics of a song.

Pull out Part 3 and look at the lines and stanzas that are available to you to create a poem.

The words are yours. The shaping is yours.

Some of you may want to use a pencil to "fill in the blanks." Some of you may want to cut out your words and try them in the different blanks.

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___ Share the Marianne Williamson quote.

Marianne Williamson says, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate..." –

What does she mean? Can someone say that sentence in another way?

You have a voice. You have the words. You have the freedom. You can write poetry. Go to it.

___ Encourage your poets to share their work.

When you do write your poems down, consider sharing them with your class, your friends, and your family.

Think about George Moses Horton, brilliant George Moses Horton being brave enough to stand on the grounds of the university and to recite his poetry to strangers.

Think about George Moses Horton writing about ending slavery and risking his own life to do so. Honor George by sharing your words.



POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOPS & PROJECTS:

EDITING WORKSHOP: Six-Word Stories

For this workshop, we will focus on revising work and considering the importance of our words.

___ Lead your writers in a brainstorm about the major events that they can personally remember. On the board, write down some of those examples. Examples could include a death of a family member or friend, the birth of a sibling, a sports event, breaking your first bone, or one's first kiss. (Your writers may suggest their own birth as a major event, but unless they can remember it, they should choose another event.) (5 minutes)

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___ Have your writers pick one event about which to write a story. The catch is this: the story is to be EXACTLY 30 words long. No more and no less. Once the students have produced their story, they can share the stories aloud. (10 minutes)

___ After this, have your writers cut 10 words out of their original. (5 minutes). You may want them to share the new 20-word story with the group.

___ After this round, have them cut another 10 words, creating a 10-word story. (5 minutes).

___ Finally, after sharing the 10 word stories, have the students cut a final 4 words, leaving a 6-word story which they can then share.

The purpose of this exercise is to convey to your young people that all of their words matter when writing. When we revise work, more often than anything we are removing excess wordage from our work and making it flow better. Ernest Hemingway once wrote what is considered the world's shortest novel, comprised of the words, "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

The ability to tell a story in so few words is in us all, and learning what is important to your writing will make all of it, not just poetry, stronger!

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP: The Body Electric

For this workshop, we will focus on being aware of our body at all times when we read or perform our own words or others.
(30 minutes total).

___ Have each young person write a sentence or find a selection of poetry that is at least 10 words. For example: The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dogs twice. You could also have them select a stanza from a poem by George Moses Horton, another poet, or a piece of their own.

___ One at a time, call the students to stand and read their sentence or stanza. When they do, ask them to be mindful of the spots where they want to move (bob their head, talk with their hands, etc.).

___ The first time they read their sentence, have them move naturally.

___ The second time (of three), have them raise only their right hand when they would want to move.

___ Lastly, have them read the sentence with no movement but to raise their voice on the emphasized words.

The purpose here is to raise awareness of your body in space. What makes us want to move? Where do we find emphasis? Where can we get that with voice alone?

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POETRY SLAMS

Before George Moses Horton learned to write and record his poetry on paper, he memorized his poems and performed them for those who would listen. His notoriety as a poet began by reciting his poems for the surprised students at the university. Modern poets perform their poetry at readings, of course, but it is the current Poetry Slam movement that best resembles George Moses Horton's first expression of freedom on the grounds of the university.

Oral History of Poetry

Poetry is an art of writing and expression that uses imagery and writing devices to create a picture that is not necessarily narrative or dramatic or any other form of writing. It tends to have meter and is often read out loud.

For the entirety of human history, we have shared stories with one another. In Prehistory (the time before writing), we would share stories through oral tradition or word of mouth. Village elders would pass stories down to their children, and for generations this is how history was told and stories were shared.

Eventually, traveling artists would roam across the land reenacting and telling stories to anyone who would listen. These were the griots. From the griots travelling and telling their stories you get bards and minstrels who would do the same with story and song, and even today, you have traveling theatre troupes sharing stories on stage all over the world!

The rhythm of poetry and the music of sharing words aloud is the basis for what we know today as hip-hop. Have you ever thought about the fact that Drake or Jay Z are modern-day griots, traveling the world to share their stories?

There are lots of ways today that we present spoken word – including poetry slam!

Poetry Slam

Poetry slam is a competition – that's what the word 'slam' means in this context. People (of all ages!) get in front of an audience and read their poems and the poems are given scores. It's somewhat like a pageant or gymnastics, which have judges, except these judges are pulled right out of the audience! The poems have certain rules – they can't go over 3 minutes, you can't use props or extra music, and the poems must be your own poems! The purpose is not to win, it is to share your works with a group that supports you and wants to hear YOUR story. There are no losers in slam, though there are some winners sometimes. There is no boo-ing of any poets, though slam audiences sometimes boo scores they do not like!

Poetry Slam History

Poetry slam is just adding a competition to spoken-word poetry – and spoken-word poetry has existed for just as long as people have. Slam itself was founded in 1984 by a construction worker in Chicago named Marc Smith and has been a part of spoken word ever since.

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Poetry Slam Terms

Slam – a competitive poem of spoken word poetry.

Spoken-word poetry – any poetry that is spoken aloud. Any poem can be a spoken word poem! We have been sharing poems through word of mouth for years and years. We've been speaking poems longer than we've been writing them.

Round – one portion of a poetry slam. Every poet in a round reads a single poem, then sometimes poets with the lowest scores are eliminated.

Bout – in larger poetry slams (tournaments or multi-day events), bouts are how we divide up competing poets. They are smaller rounds to a larger competition.

Time limit – amount of time a poet has to read. Normally, this is 3 minutes with a grace period of 10 to 40 seconds, depending on the slam.

Sacrificial Poet – before every bout or slam, there is a poet who helps the judges learn how to score poems. This poet is not considered part of the slam and is called a sacrificial or calibration poet.

SO WHAT?! – if you're at a slam you may hear people say this after the name Marc Smith, the creator of slam. This is a reminder that words and poetry are what we are celebrating, not the structure of slam or its founder, Marc Smith.

Slam in the Classroom or Library

To run a poetry slam is simple and requires only a few tools: a way to keep time, a way to keep score, and poets! A good way to do this at first is to find 3-5 volunteers to slam, then have them rotate in a 4-round bout. No eliminations and have fun with it!

Start by designating a timekeeper (for an in-class slam, you may even forego time limits and just let kids read their poems!). Then find yourself 5 judges. These can be members of the class who aren't participating, faculty, or staff.

Find one volunteer to be a sacrificial poet. Have them read and then have the judges score. After this, have all the slammers read a poem and then rotate the order between rounds. It could go something like this:

ABCDE
BCDEA
CDEAB
DEABC

Assign each poet a letter. Tally the scores at the end (or don't!), and the highest score at the end wins.

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Further: Slam Resources

Search “America SCORES National Poetry SLAM!” on YouTube

Search “LEAF Kids’ Poetry Slam” on YouTube

Look for “Classroom-friendly Poems” on Button Poetry YouTube Channel
youtube.com/user/ButtonPoetry

Website: Raki’s Rad Resources: “Slam – Poetry with Passion”
rakisradresources.com/2013/07/slam-poetry-with-passion.html

Web Article: Stage a Poetry Slam! by Gary Hopkins for Education World
educationworld.com/a_lesson/02/lp262-04.shtml

Web Article: Teaching Slam Poetry by Emy Lopez for Scholastic
scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/teaching-slam-poetry

Web Article: Kids Feel the Power of Poetry in Performance by Grace Rubenstein for Edutopia
edutopia.org/poetry-slam-global-writes

Web Article: A Poetry Slam Cures the Blahs by Brenda Dyck for Education World
educationworld.com/a_curr/voice/voice069.shtml

Website: K-12 Competitions: Kids Philosophy Slam
philosophyslamlam.org/index.html

Sacrificial Poets

Are you in the Chapel Hill, NC area? Sacrificial Poets facilitates workshops and slams all over the triangle area and would be delighted to come into your school, hold workshops, and host a poetry slam. You can contact us at sacrificialpoets.org.

What Freedom Means to Me: Part 1

In each column, write down 3-5 words or phrases.

“I am...” can be as simple as your name, what you like doing, and what you’re good at.

“I am from...” isn’t just the city you live in, or living in an apartment or a house. It is your background. your family, your life.

“Freedom is...” is totally up to you. What makes you feel free? When you define “freedom” what are you thinking about?

I am...

I am from...

Freedom is...

What Freedom Means to Me: Part 2

Okay, so “Freedom is...” is a big, BIG topic, right? Let’s break it down.

We all have senses – they are how we interact with the world. Our senses are one of the things that make us free. What do you sense? What do you feel? What do you taste? What do you see? How do these things paint your picture of freedom? Let’s explore.

Freedom...

looks like...

sounds like...

smells like...

feels like...

tastes like...

This exercise was designed by the Sacrificial Poets to be used with an exploration of the picture book
Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton by Don Tate (Peachtree Publishers)

What Freedom Means to Me: Part 3

The words and phrases you have written down in Part 1 and 2 can become a poem. These words and phrases could even become a song.

We're going to take what you wrote in every column you filled and turn them into lines of poetry. We will go stanza by stanza. What is a stanza? A grouping of lines of text in a poem. The groupings of lines below make four stanzas!

You can make several drafts. Some people like to cut out each of the words and phrases and try combinations by moving them around on this sheet. You can even choose new words and if you like.

Do what feels right. You are the Poet.

I am _____

I am from _____

Freedom is _____

I am from _____

Freedom is _____

I am _____

Freedom is _____

I am _____

I am from _____

Freedom looks like _____

Freedom sounds like _____

Freedom smells like _____

Freedom feels like _____

Freedom tastes like _____

I AM FREE!

What Freedom Means to Me is...

By _____

What Freedom Means to Me: *An Example*

Poet, Performance Artist and Sacrificial Poets educator DJ Rogers went through the same write exercise you did. This is what he came up with. Does this poem give you a glimpse of who DJ Rogers is and what he thinks freedom means? Let other people know you and your thought through your poetry!

<i>I am...</i>	<i>I am from...</i>	<i>Freedom is...</i>
DJ	A farm	Surfing
Poet	Tobacco	Working with youth
Martial Artist	A big family	Writing
A gamer	A loving family	Speaking

Freedom...

<i>Looks like</i>	<i>Sounds like</i>	<i>Smells like</i>	<i>Feels like</i>	<i>Tastes like</i>
Open doors	The bell ringing	Home cooking	Sand between toes	Cold water
Turning in a test!	Car starting		Fresh cut grass	
The clock at the end of the day				
My mother's arms				

What Freedom Means to Me is...

By DJ Rogers

I am DJ.

I am from a farm.

Freedom is speaking.

I am from a loving family.

Freedom is writing.

I am a poet.

Freedom is working with you!

I am a son.

I am from a mother.

Freedom looks like my mother's arms.

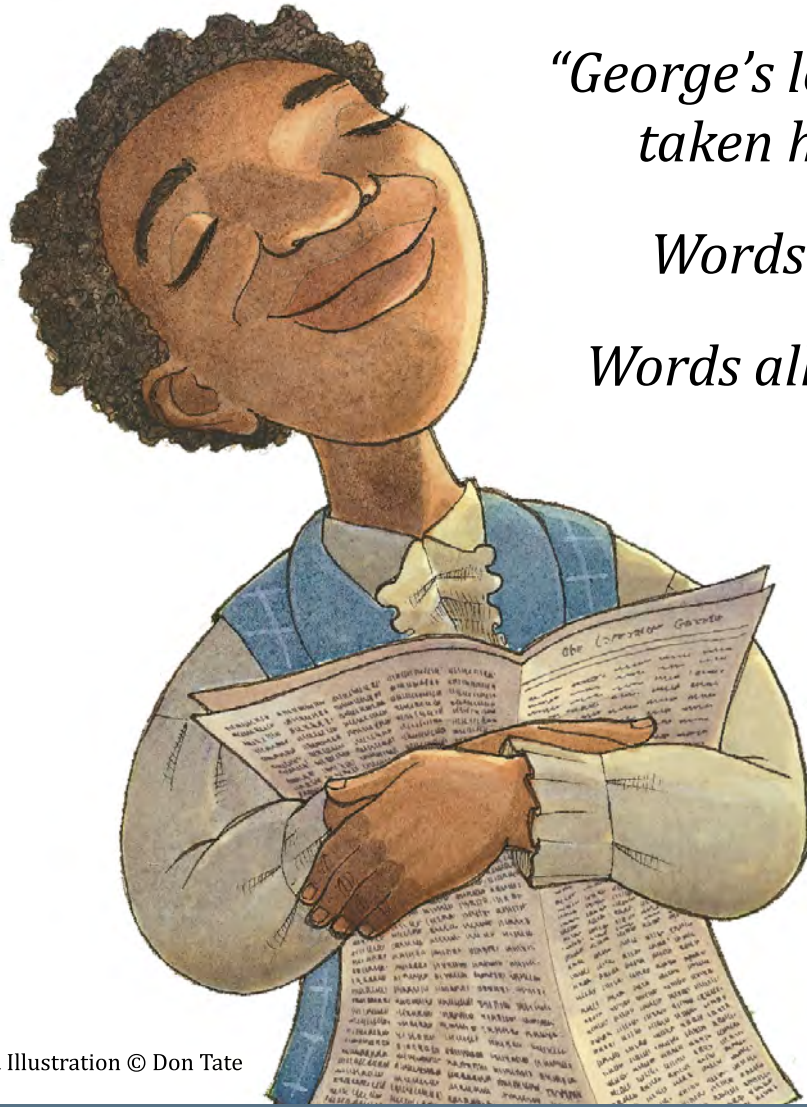
Freedom sounds like my car starting.

Freedom feels like fresh-cut grass.

Freedom smells like sweet potato pie.

Freedom tastes like a cool drink in summer.

I AM FREE!



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Words made him strong.

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Words & Illustration © Don Tate

POETRY WORKSHOP