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## OVERVIEW

*Auntie Luce's Talking Paintings*

Written by Francie Latour

Illustrated by Ken Daley

Published 2018 by Groundwood Books

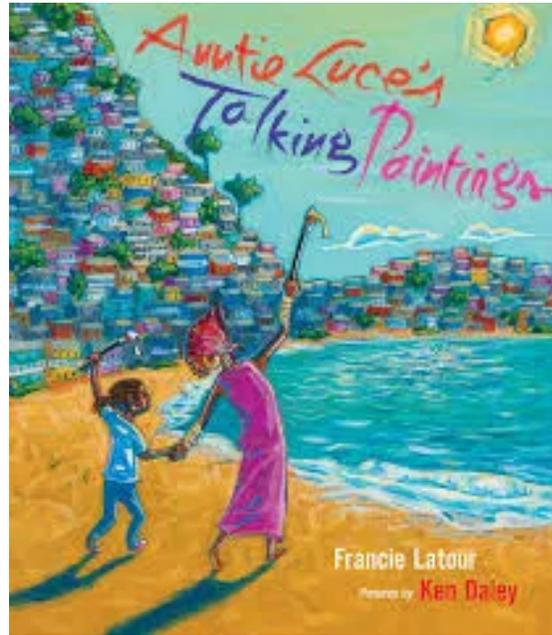
ISBN 978-1-77306-041-5

## Reading Level

Grades 1 - 3 / Ages 5 - 10

## Content Areas

Children's Literature | History | Art | Haitian  
Revolution & Independence | Kreyol  
Language | Painting | Identity



## Synopsis

A young girl born to Haitian parents in the United States tells her story of visiting her aunt in Haiti. Her aunt, a vibrant painter, shows her niece around the country and explains her personal and Haitian history to her through beautiful paintings. Through Auntie Luce's portrait of her, she begins to see her own Haitian connections even as she wrestles with not feeling Haitian.

## Reviews

“Young readers will enjoy how Latour and Daley celebrate Haitian history and culture through this lovely, artistic story.”

--*Kirkus*

“Through Auntie Luce's story, Latour has painted a vivid, authentic and beautifully lush tapestry of Haiti.”

--Ibi Zoboi, National Book Award Finalist, author of *American Street*

“[T]he illustrator's Afro-Caribbean roots amplify the love song the Haitian American author has composed to Haiti. ... An excellent selection for exploring deep connections to Haiti through love, family, history, and art.”

--*School Library Journal*

**About the Author: Francie Latour**

Francie Latour is a prize-winning writer whose work explores issues of race, culture, and identity. Her work has been featured on National Public Radio and the *Today* show, as well as in *The Root*, *Essence* and the *Boston Globe*. Her writing was also anthological in *The Butterfly's Way*, edited by Edwidge Danticat. Francie is co-founder of Wee The People, a social justice project for kids. This is her first picture book.

A mother of three, Francie was born to Haitian parents. She was inspired to write *Auntie Luce* by a chance encounter in 1992 with the late artist Luce Turnier - one of Haiti's most celebrated female artists - who painted Francie's portrait. Francie and her family live in Boston.

**Author's Note:**

We all have birth stories. In my family, we tell them often: my brother, the "miracle baby," born so early he wasn't expected to survive, much less thrive at six feet tall; my daughter, the daredevil, who could not wait to meet the world and shot out like a cannon, with people to see, places to go and things to do.

Nations have birth stories, too. And though few people know it, the two countries at the heart of Ti Chou's world - Haiti and the United States - were both born from the same fire: revolutions for freedom that changed the world.

Only one of these revolutions is taught in school - a band of colonies that overthrew British rule, a heroic general named Washington, and a new nation of free citizens we now call America. But just a few years later and a little farther south, a band of rebels on an island called Saint-Domingue also defeated a powerful European ruler. They, too, had a heroic general, named Louverture, and a declaration of independence from France under the emperor Napoleon.

When these rebels birthed a nation and called it Haiti, the whole world paid attention. Why? Because these new citizens - who beat the French, the Spanish and the British - were Black, descended from Africans who were forced across an ocean and into an inhuman system of slavery.

The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) did more than overthrow a government. It overthrew an *idea*, one that Europeans invented and had to protect to keep slavery going: that they were "White," that Africans were "Black," and that Blacks were somehow inferior - less human, or not human at all. As long as this idea stayed in place, Europeans and Americans could use the forced labor of others to become wealthy world powers. They could write birth stories of freedom and democracy in our history books, despite keeping generations of Black people in chains.

For proving these ideas wrong, Haiti would be punished. From the moment this Black republic was born, it was totally alone in the world. No country would trade with it or even recognize it as a nation. To get that recognition, Haiti had to sign a deal that guaranteed a future of poverty. It was forced to pay hundreds of millions to the French for the property they lost in war - an

amount that today is worth about \$20 billion. That lost property included Haitians' very own bodies, which the French believed they had a right to own.

Growing up, the only stories I heard about Haiti in school were that it was violent and poor, one of the poorest countries on Earth. And this is why knowing our birth stories is so important to understanding the world, and each other.

**About the Illustrator: Ken Daley**

Ken Daley was born in Canada to parents who emigrated from Dominica, and his illustrations for this book are inspired by his African Caribbean roots. Ken has also illustrated *Joseph's Big Ride* by Terry Farish, an Ontario Library Association Best Bet. He has exhibited his art in Canada, the US and the Caribbean, and his work can be found in numerous private collections. He divides his time between Cambridge, Ontario, and Providence, Rhode Island.

## **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

### **Reading**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2 - Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7 - Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1 - Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

### **Writing**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2 - Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3 - Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.9 - Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **Speaking and Listening**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.3

Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.6

Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2

Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

### **Language**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.4 - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.5 - Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

**CLASSROOM APPLICATION:**

**Framed Motivation -- The Haitian Revolution**

Goal:

As preparation for reading the book, the goal of this framed motivation is to get students thinking about the Haitian Revolution. You can use this activity to activate prior knowledge and fill in any knowledge gaps to prepare all students to engage fully with our text.

Learning Plan:

1. Ask students about the word “revolution.” Where have they heard it before? What does it refer to? Have students respond to these questions with think, pair, share (give them a minute or two to think for themselves; some time to share with a partner; then ask for a few pairs to share out).
  - a. You can take notes on the whiteboard or poster paper while pairs share, so that students can see what they know and refer back to it throughout the lesson.
2. Use this as a chance to correct any misconceptions around revolution. You can also make connections to students’ knowledge about the American Revolution, including the end of slavery in both countries, the fight to free a group of people from oppression from another, and what a “colony” is. It is also important to note how the Haitian Revolution differs from the American Revolution, as the leaders of the Haitian Revolution were enslaved people themselves rising up to end slavery.
  - a. Depending on the age and past knowledge of your students, you can give them the chance to discuss the similarities and differences between the Haitian and American Revolutions using these sentence stems:
    - i. The Haitian and American Revolutions both...
    - ii. The Haitian and American Revolution were different because...
3. After these discussions, it’s time to read this text. Depending on your students, you can all read the text together or send them to read in groups or alone. Students will come back to the text over the next few activities.

**CLASSROOM APPLICATION: Reading Questions**

Goal:

These questions will guide student thinking as they summarize the story and understand the author's meaning.

Learning Plan:

You can determine which or how many of the following questions will support your students in reading this text. You may want to ask them all verbally and have students discuss with a partner. You can also choose a few to ask students to respond to in writing.

Questions:

- What does Auntie Luce do? Where does she live? Where does her niece live?
- What do you notice about the landscape of Haiti? What do you see?
- What does Auntie Luce have in her art studio? What do you think is important to her?
- What do you think Auntie Luce means by this: "To paint Haiti takes the darkest colors and the brightest ones, and all the colors in between"?
- How does Auntie Luce's niece see herself in her new portrait? What does she see?
- What does Auntie Luce mean when she says, "...it's yours. These colors, this people, this place belong to you. And you belong to them, always."
- What do you think the narrator learns from her time with Auntie Luce?

*After Reading:*

- What did you learn about Haiti?
- Which illustrations stood out to you? Why?
- How did Auntie Luce's niece change over the book?
- How would you describe Auntie Luce?
- Why does Auntie Luce like to paint?

**CLASSROOM APPLICATION: Juicy Sentence**

Goal:

After having read the text and answered the questions above, you can use this “juicy sentence” to wrap up your discussion of the text. Working as a class, you will make meaning of the language and tie this specific sentence to the overall meaning of the book.

Learning Plan:

For this task, we'll be looking at the following sentences:

*“Auntie Luce says our faces are like maps. ‘I can trace yours halfway around the world, from the kingdoms of Benin to the sugarcane fields that turned into battlefields, where we fought to the death for our freedom,’ she says. ‘All the ways to this room, in this light.’”*

1. Project or write this sentence on the whiteboard to be annotated. You'll also want the book open to this page so that students can reference the artwork.
2. Have a student, or the class, read the sentences.
3. Ask the following questions to your students. Depending on their age and the size of the class, you may want them to answer in full group, in partners, or in writing. Either way, be sure to have many different voices heard in response.
  - a. What does Auntie Luce mean when she says that she can TRACE her niece's face? Is she actually tracing it like a drawing?
  - b. What do you think the kingdoms of Benin are? Where do you see this in the illustrations on this page?
  - c. How did the sugarcane fields turn to battlefields? What was the importance of sugarcane to Haiti? Where do you see this on this page's illustration?
  - d. How do all of these events and illustrations relate to Auntie Luce and her niece?
  - e. How do you think these events connect to why Auntie Luce paints?
  - f. What kind of history do you think Auntie Luce would trace from your face?

**CLASSROOM APPLICATION: Vocabulary (Word Play)**

Goals:

Auntie Luce uses colors and paintings to introduce her niece to the history and beauty of her beloved country. Through this activity, students will make connections about how the author uses colors to describe Haiti and its history.

Learning Plan:

1. Open to and/or project the following sentences from the book:
  - a. *"I gather the brushes in a rag and follow my aunt to the washroom. Over the sink, I let the colors bleed together in the water, ash to cocoa to rust, butterscotch to nut, and nut to clay."*
2. Ask students to identify, circle, or highlight all of the different colors used in this paragraph.
3. Pose these questions to students:
  - a. What types of words does she use to describe colors? Are these typical "color" words?
  - b. Why doesn't she just say the colors bleed together in the water from light brown to dark brown?
  - c. Why would she use all of these specific shades of colors?
4. Ask students to pick something in this classroom, something in their house, or a memory they have. Ask them to write two sentences describing that scene, but challenge them to use at least three descriptive color words.

My object or memory is _____.		
It has these colors:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Red	<input type="checkbox"/> Purple	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue
<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow	<input type="checkbox"/> Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Green
<input type="checkbox"/> Orange	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Teal
<input type="checkbox"/> Pink	<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Words that I will use instead of the color words:		
• Instead of _____, I can say...		
• Instead of _____, I can say...		
• Instead of _____, I can say...		

Using our new color words, write at least 2 sentences to describe your space or memory:

## CLASSROOM APPLICATION

### Writing Task: Haitian Heroes

#### Goal:

Given the central nature of Haitian history and heroes in this text, students will learn basic facts of one Haitian hero from the Haitian revolution. Students will watch a short video about their chosen hero.

#### Learning Plan:

1. Refer to the page set in Luce's studio. Re-read this page as a class and give students a moment to look over the photos of the heroes from the Haitian revolution. Depending on the size of your group, you can ask students to brainstorm ideas about each hero mentioned. Some prompting questions:
  - a. What do you think they did based on their paintings?
  - b. Flon's head is wrapped in white - why? What could that white be from?
  - c. They describe Louverture as "the man who opened the way." What do you think this means? What "way" are they talking about?
2. From these brainstorms, ask students to self-select a hero to learn more about. You could also assign students to a hero. Students can watch these videos on individual devices or with all the students who chose that hero.
  - a. *If you don't have enough devices, you could choose one hero and have all students learn about them.*
  - b. *If you wanted this to be more focused on reading, you could assign short articles or bullet points for each hero.*
3. After watching the video, students will complete a bubble map about their hero (see example on next page).
4. Using their bubble maps, students will write a short summary to describe their hero and their role in the Haitian Revolution (there are sentence stems provided below depending on students' needs for support).
5. Finally, students will create 3 questions that they would ask their Haitian hero if they were able to sit down for dinner with those people.
  - a. *For a fun challenge for students who finish early, you can ask students with the same hero to trade questions and create responses based on what they know about their hero.*

Videos:

Catherine Flon: <https://www.facebook.com/trealtoonz/videos/924475218389253>

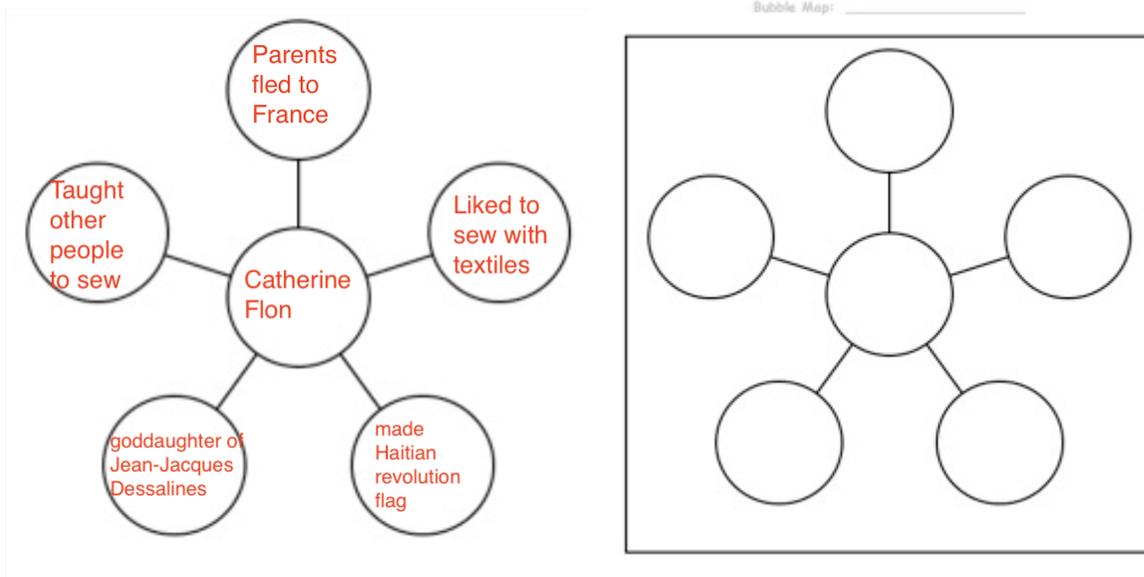
Sanité Bélair: <https://youtu.be/sw4LNtCYPtI?t=29>

Jean-Jacques Dessalines: [https://youtu.be/gqDzN\\_w7YAM](https://youtu.be/gqDzN_w7YAM) (a lot of reading)

Toussaint Louverture:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/toussaint-louverture-biography-facts-quotes.html> (you will have to create an account to view this video but it is free)

Bubble Map:



Sentence Stems:

- [My hero] was born in \_\_\_\_\_. They liked to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Before the Haitian revolution, [my hero] ....
- During the Haitian revolution, [my hero's name] was important because they...

Question Prompt:

Surprise! You get to have dinner with your hero! What three questions would you ask them?  
These questions can be totally random or about the Haitian revolution!