# It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw
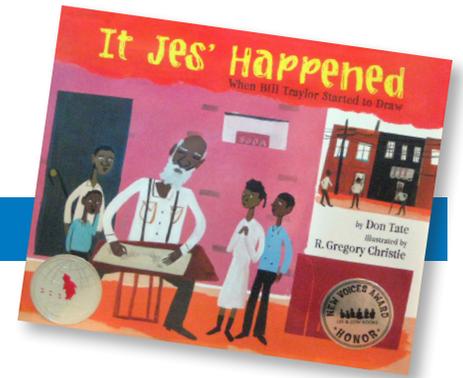
A RIF GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY COORDINATORS

Themes: Folk Art, Slavery, Transitions

Book Brief: A former slave, Bill began drawing at the age of 85. His drawings were based upon his memories of rural life and the observations he made of the bustling urban life in Montgomery, Alabama.

Author: Don Tate

Illustrator: R. Gregory Christie

TIME TO READ!

Before reading: Ask children what they notice about the man on the cover. Have they ever heard the saying, "You're never too old to start something new"? This story is about an artist, Bill Traylor, who did not start drawing until he was 85. His art, folk art, is art created by a person with little or no formal artistic training. His pictures today sell for thousands of dollars.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

SHAPE IT UP! (AGES 5-12)

Bill Traylor began most of his drawings with simple geometric shapes like ovals, circles, squares, and rectangles. Have children create their own pictures using basic geometric shapes. Encourage them to fill in and add to the shapes to create a person or an animal.

MUSICAL PICTURES (AGES 5-12)

Music was an important part of Bill Traylor's life on the farm and is also an important part of the folk arts. Visit **www.songsforteaching.com/folk** for some familiar multicultural folk songs to share with the children. The site provides audio clips and lyrics for the songs.
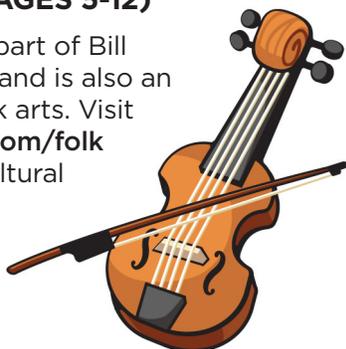
Have children choose a song and draw a picture to depict the storyline for what they are hearing.

MEMORY MAGNETS (AGES 5-12)

Materials: index cards, magnetic strips, markers, scissors

On the blank side of an index card, have children draw a picture of a favorite memory. Use scissors to cut around the picture. Attach a magnet strip to the back side of the card. Before children take their memory magnets home, have them do a little experiment to see what is metal and what is not. Where do their memory magnets stick?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

OTHER BOOKS ABOUT AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTISTS

Art from Her Heart: Folk Artist Clementine Hunter, Kathy Whitehead (2008), *Dave the Potter,* Laban Carrick Hill (2010), *Deep Blues: Bill Traylor, the Self Taught Artist,* Mary E. Lyons (1995).

Reading Is Fundamental