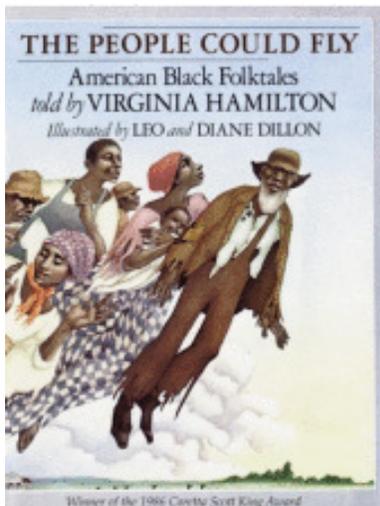


The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales

by Virginia Hamilton (author) and Leo and Diane Dillon (illustrators)
A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



About the Book

This major contribution to children's literature brings the fascinating range of American Black folktales and humor to all children.

In this treasury, we hear the voice of Virginia Hamilton – a voice that echoes the slaves and fugitives from her own American black ancestry as she tells the stories that keep the culture alive. Here are the spirited trickster tales where the wily Bruh Rabbit outwits larger and stronger animals; robust tall tales filled with riddles and laughter; spine-chilling ghost and devil tales; and finally the moving tales of freedom, including true slave narratives as well as fantasy escapes exemplified by the hauntingly beautiful title story, "The People Could Fly."

Permission to use book jacket image granted by Random House Inc. Book description from the Virginia Hamilton website (<http://www.virginiahamilton.com/>); used with permission of Arnold Adoff.

Book details:

The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales by Virginia Hamilton, illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Random House, 1993, ISBN 978-0-679-84336-8 (paper), 978-0-394-86925-4 (hardcover). Ages 9-up, grades 4-up.

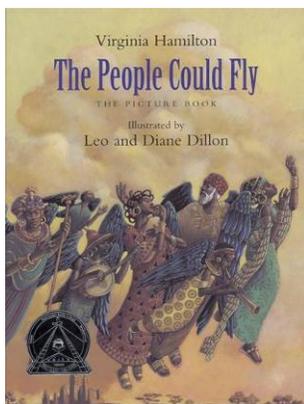
<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl/9780679843368.html>

Other formats: audiobook, 2005, 978-0974171180.

Available through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program: <http://www.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio>.

The People Could Fly has been honored with numerous book awards and distinctions, including:

- 1986 Coretta Scott King Author Award
- ALA Notable Children's Book
- Booklist Books for Youth Editors' Choice
- *The Horn Book* Fanfare Honor Book
- IBBY Honor List
- Kansas William White Master List
- Kentucky Bluegrass Master List
- Library of Congress Children's Books of the Year
- NCTE Teacher's Choice
- *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book
- *New York Times* Notable Book
- Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies
- Read-Aloud Handbook Selection
- *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year



The title story in ***The People Could Fly*** was also published as a picture book with original illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon.

The People Could Fly: The Picture Book

Random House, 2004, ISBN 978-0-375-82405-0.

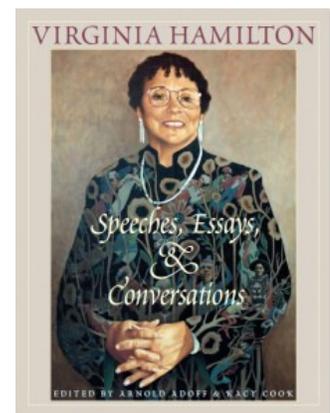
<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375824050>

Readers will also enjoy:

Virginia Hamilton: Speeches, Essays, and Conversations.

Edited by Arnold Adoff and Kacy Cook. Blue Sky Press, 2010.

This collection of Virginia Hamilton's writings illuminates the thinking behind her work and speaks to a new generation of readers, introducing them to Ms. Hamilton's provocative vision and her stunning body of literature.



Learn about all of Virginia Hamilton's books at the Official Virginia Hamilton website:

<http://www.virginiahamilton.com/virginia-hamilton-books/>

About the Author

Virginia Hamilton, together with two brothers and two sisters, grew up on a large farm in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Her mother was Etta Belle. (You'll see that name in some of her books). Her father was Kenneth James Hamilton, the manager of the dining hall at nearby Antioch College and a farmer. The farm was large and was surrounded by the farms of other relatives. She has said that you could "range a whole day and never leave family land". She has lived in Columbus, Ohio, and New York City. Her husband was Arnold Adoff, the poet and children's author. They have two children, Leigh and Jaime. Virginia Hamilton died in 2002.



Virginia Hamilton's contribution to the field of African American literature for children is substantial and quite wonderful. This is partly because of the breadth of her work. She is a storyteller, and many of her books are collections of African American folktales. Her novels explore new ground and have given us some of the strongest, most interesting characters in children's literature. Her nonfictional and biographical works bring the famous and the not-so-famous people of the past to the forefront. Virginia Hamilton always wanted to be a writer, and when she burst into the field in 1967 with her first novel, ***Zeely***, the children's book world had little doubt that a new strong voice had arrived.

Author biography courtesy Carol Hurst from Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site (<http://www.carolhurst.com/authors/vhamilton.html>); used with permission. Photograph ©2011 by the arnold adoff revocable living trust; used with permission.

Author Resources:

The Official Virginia Hamilton Website

<http://www.virginiahamilton.com/>

Virginia Hamilton: Her Influence, Her Words, Her Love - an essay by Jaime Adoff

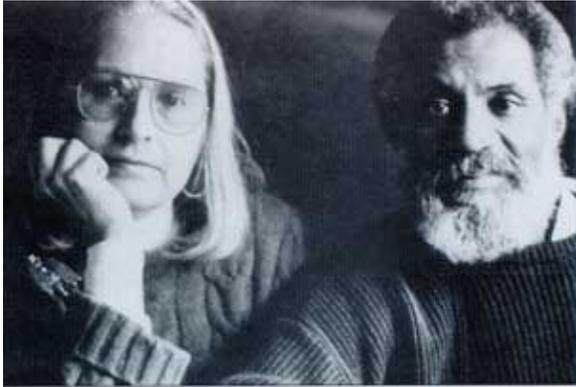
<http://www.ohioana.org/features/legacy/vhamilton.asp>

From the Ohioana Library Ohio Legacy Series

Virginia Hamilton from Scholastic Teachers site

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/contributor.jsp?id=3195>

About the Illustrators



Leo and Diane Dillon have been collaborating and creating award-winning art for many years and have illustrated more than twenty-five picture books together. They met while attending the Parsons School of Design and were friends and also fierce rivals. They fell in love, married, and opened a studio. For years they designed posters, maps, and book covers, but were given a chance to illustrate a picture book

when one of their book covers caught the eye of a children's book editor. Their first book, ***The Ring and the Prairie***, came out in 1970.

Leo and Diane have received numerous honors including two Caldecott medals, Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, and a Coretta Scott King Award. They have made the *New York Times* Ten Best Illustrated Children's Books List several times.

Illustrator photo from and biography excerpted from Children's Literature: Independent Information and Reviews, http://www.childrenslit.com/childrenslit/mai_dillons.html. Used with permission.

Illustrator Resources:

Leo and Diane Dillon from National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature

<http://www.nccil.org/experience/artists/dillon/>

Meet Authors & Illustrators: Leo and Diane Dillon from Children's Literature

http://www.childrenslit.com/childrenslit/mai_dillons.html

Leo and Diane Dillon page on Kidsreads.com

<http://www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-dillon-leo-diane.asp>

Secrets of the Artists: Leo and Diane Dillon from the Legacy Project

<http://www.legacyproject.org/activities/secretsdillons.html>

Interview with Leo and Diane Dillon from Locus Magazine (2000)

<http://www.locusmag.com/2000/Issues/04/Dillons.html>



Learn & have fun!

Educators: These activities align to Ohio Academic Content Standards as indicated in parentheses after each activity. These are examples. Other content standards may also apply.

Kids, parents, and others: These ideas are useful for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Academic content standards define what students in K-12 should know and be able to do at each grade. They are included for teachers who want to use this book in school. For more information on the Ohio Academic Content Standards, see the Ohio Department of Education website at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us> and click on "Academic Content Standards" in the Educators section.

- Choose your favorite scene from any folktale in **The People Could Fly** and illustrate it. Next, create a new scene for the same folktale, using the characters and situation from the tale. Write your scene in the style of the tale, and create a second illustration for it. (*A Visual Art Creative Expression and Communication K-4, 5-8; ELA Writing Applications 3-4, 5-7*)
- The story "Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble" is told partly in the Gullah dialect. Read this story without looking at the glossary, and try to determine the meaning of the Gullah words from the story's context. Next, study the glossary. The term "dayclean" is unfamiliar, but so descriptive that it immediately makes sense. Create your own descriptive, multisensory vocabulary terms for several of the concepts in the glossary. (*ELA Acquisition of Vocabulary 4-7; SS People in Societies 3-5*)
- Several of the stories in the first section of **The People Could Fly** involve the famous trickster character Bruh Rabbit, otherwise known as Br'er Rabbit. Use library resources to research the Br'er Rabbit stories. Locate and read several retellings of Br'er Rabbit stories in library books. Many libraries keep books of folktales in call number 398. (*ELA Reading Applications: Literary Text PK-3, 4-7; Library Information Literacy 3-5; SS People in Societies 3-5*)
- "Wiley, His Mama, and the Hairy Man" is one version of a common folktale motif in which a child encounters, and eventually outwits, a monster or scary person. As a group, make a list of all the stories you know that are similar to "The Hairy Man". What sorts of real-world situations do such stories address? Take turns retelling your favorite story to your class or group. (*ELA Reading Applications: Literary Text PK-3, 4-7*)
- Access The ART Collection, an art database available to students through INFOhio (<http://www.infohio.org/>) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (<http://www.ohioweblibrary.org/>). In the "Browse" section, click on "Culture/Nationality". Select an African art object and write a story about it in the form of a folktale. Or select one of the African art objects to associate with a story in **The People Could Fly**. Write an explanation of how the art object fits with the story. Work in small groups to retell the stories, incorporating the art objects into the plot of each story. (*A Visual Art Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts K-4, 5-8; Connections, Relationships, and Applications K-4, 5-8; ELA Writing Applications 3-4, 5-7; Library Technology Literacy 3-5*)



<http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>

Explore more!

The Virginia Hamilton Conference

<http://virginia-hamilton.slis.kent.edu/>

The longest-running event in the U.S. focused exclusively on multicultural literature for youth promotes cultural awareness, affirms cultural pride, and addresses issues around the concept of culture. It is held each April at Kent State University.

The Virginia Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award

<http://www.virginiahamilton.com/legacy/virginia-hamilton-lifetime-achievement-award/>

The American Library Association (ALA) has introduced this award to recognize outstanding African American authors and illustrators. The award pays tribute to the quality and magnitude of Virginia Hamilton's contributions through her literature and advocacy, especially in her focus on African American life, history and consciousness.

The Virginia Hamilton and Arnold Adoff Resource Center

<http://www.virginiahamilton.com/legacy/virginia-hamilton-and-arnold-adoff-resource-center/>

The Center was established at the Bolinga Black Cultural Center, Wright State University, in spring 2010 with a permanent gift of Virginia's and Arnold's extensive research library.

Virginia Hamilton, Featured Author

<http://www.carolhurst.com/authors/vhamilton.html>

From Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site, this page includes an annotated bibliography of Virginia Hamilton's books. Also explore this site for activities and booklists about **Fools and Tricksters** (<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/fools.html>) and **Slavery in Children's Literature** (<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/slavery.html>).

Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award video

http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/al_focus/coretta-scott-king-virginia-hamilton-award

2010 award committee chair Barbara Clark discusses Virginia Hamilton's contributions to literature, the award itself, and the inaugural winner, Walter Dean Myers.

International Children's Digital Library

<http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>

The ICDL Foundation promotes tolerance and respect for diverse cultures by providing access to the best of children's literature from around the world.

About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio (CTRO) spotlights Ohio authors and promotes reading across Ohio. The State Library of Ohio, in partnership with Ohioana Library Association, developed this initiative to encourage Ohioans of all ages to share literature by authors native to, residing in, or associated with Ohio. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>.