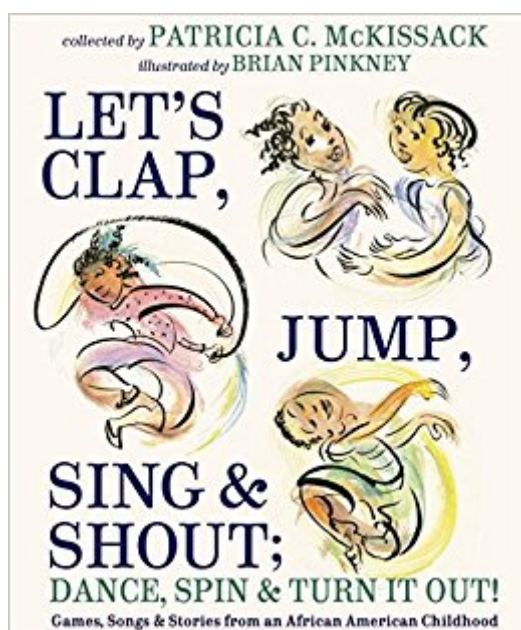


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# Let's Clap, Jump, Sing & Shout; Dance, Spin & Turn It Out!: Games, Songs, And Stories From An African American Childhood



## Synopsis

"Part songbook, part research text, this work is perfect for families to share together or for young scholars who seek to discover an important piece of cultural history." —*Â School Library Journal*,  
starred review  
From Newbery Honor winner Patricia C. McKissack and two-time Caldecott Honor winner Brian Pinkney comes an extraordinary must-have collection of classic playtime favorites. This very special book is sure to become a treasured keepsake for African American families and will inspire joy in all who read it. —*Â* Parents and grandparents will delight in sharing this exuberant book with the children in their lives. Here is a songbook, a storybook, a poetry collection, and much more, all rolled into one. Find a partner for hand claps such as "Eenie, Meenie, Sassafreeny," or form a circle for games like "Little Sally Walker." —*Â* Gather as a family to sing well-loved songs like "Amazing Grace" and "Oh, Freedom," or to read aloud the poetry of such African American luminaries as Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, and Paul Laurence Dunbar. And snuggle down to enjoy classic stories retold by the author, including Aesop's fables and tales featuring Brer Rabbit and Anansi the Spider. —*Â* "A rich compilation to stand beside Rollins's Christmas Gift and Hamilton's The People Could Fly." —*Â* "The Horn Book" —*Â* "An ebullient collection.... There is an undeniable warmth and sense of belonging to these tales." —*Â* Kirkus Reviews, Starred

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-6 "Children's literature powerhouses McKissack and Pinkney team up for the second time, creating a dynamic collection of songs, rhymes, and stories with origins in the African American diaspora. McKissack recalls most of the examples from her childhood in Missouri and Tennessee and shares her own versions as well as memories and anecdotes. However, this volume is far from just a trip down memory lane. The extensive research, much of which the author attributes to her late husband in the thorough back matter, highlights the histories behind these classics. McKissack weaves this research together fluidly in a storylike format with accessible language. Many pieces have changed over time, and she acknowledges this evolution by presenting different versions and iterations. The content represents a wide range of formats and includes performance poetry by Langston Hughes, Anansi trickster tales, Christian spirituals, Underground Railroad hymns, proverbs, and such standards as "Miss Mary Mack" and "If You're Happy and You Know It." Pinkney's artistry brings even more joy to this lively assortment. His distinctive broad brushstrokes, bright watercolors, and playful characterizations add a splash of color and light. Each section heading features a large, vibrant illustration, with other color and black-and-white vignettes peppered throughout the chapters. VERDICT Part songbook, part research text, this work is perfect for families to share together or for young scholars who seek to discover an important piece of cultural history. McKissack and Pinkney capture the essence of the songs, stories, and play of an African American childhood." —Clara Hendricks, Cambridge Public Library, MA

"A comprehensive treasury of memories, verbal art, and play." — Kirkus, starred review "It's a collection valuable both for its rich assembly of songs and stories that have delighted, comforted, and inspired generations of black families and for the illuminating historical context that McKissack brings to each selection." — Publishers Weekly, ★ starred review "Part songbook, part research text, this work is perfect for families to share together or for young scholars who seek to discover an important piece of cultural history." — School Library Journal, ★ starred review

bought as a gift. love it. oh the memories that came back when I looked through it. the person I purchased it had stories to tell and lots of smiles I will purchase again for gifts.

Love my cousin's book. RIP cousin Pat.

What a way to celebrate Black History Month! With plenty of games, songs, poems and stories, this volume happily combines them all into a delightful rhythm of rhymes, clapping and singing. While the book focuses on games and songs from an African-American background, children of various backgrounds will find new and familiar games on the pages. This mix of discovery and warm familiarity makes this a book that both invites exploration and gives everyone a place to stop and smile in recognition. This book is almost an encyclopedia of games and songs. Page after page will have readers humming along, singing aloud and looking for a partner to play a newfound or best-loved game. The poetry section adds a real richness to the book, allowing it to slow from the fast pace of the games and songs. McKissack introduces each game, song or poem with a short paragraph about it. This creates a book that is far more than one game after another, adding historical information too. Pinkney's illustrations are pure movement on the page. They dance and swirl and tilt and play. Sweeps of color embrace the ink drawings, adding even more motion to the page. There's a feeling of freedom in the illustrations, a playful wildness that is pure refreshment to the eye. A book for every public library, this is a must-have. Appropriate for ages 6-9.

Would you like to know the last film Orson Welles ever appeared in? It was *Transformers: The Movie* from 1986. The great Raul Julia? His last film was the video game adaptation *Street Fighter* in 1994. Random facts. What's my point exactly? Well, none of us know when we're going to die, so it wouldn't be the worst idea to treat every project you work on as your last. On April 7, 2017 the great author Patricia McKissack passed away. Prior to that, on January 10th, her collection of African American poems and songs, parables and rhymes *Let's Clap, Jump, Sing & Shout* was published. A luscious offering of fables, children's rhymes, historical details, and chants, it is, in many ways, McKissack's magnum opus. If you are an artist and you're going to exit this world, bow out like Patricia McKissack. Leave behind something as meaningful as it is beautiful. Leave behind a masterpiece. "Our earliest toys are our hands, feet, and voices," writes Patricia McKissack. Now take those toys. Put them to good use. In *Let's Clap, Jump, Sing & Shout* Ms. McKissack draws upon material with origins in Africa, the Caribbean, and America. She organizes the book in terms of age, starting with the earliest of hand rhymes and claps, then morphing into jump rope rhymes and games. Circle games and ring shouts are followed by more serious material, like spirituals and hymns, proverbs and psalms. Covering

every possible form of storytelling, we are treated to fables, superstitions, and African American sayings before the book closes with performance pieces inspired by African American writers and finally, folktales and storytelling. All this, additional Notes, a Bibliography, and an Index round out the piece. McKissack isn't merely recording schoolyard rhymes with her book. She's tying history into those rhymes kids might chant on the bus, giving them weight and context and, ultimately, respect. Lots of children's book authors and illustrators have turned to nursery rhymes over the years for inspiration. Shel Silverstein often visited the children's bookstore Books of Wonder in Manhattan to add old editions to his collection. Maurice Sendak put out his own collection *I Saw Esau: The Schoolchild's Pocket Book* with the aid of the Opies. When I settled on reviewing this book I figured it would be easy to conjure up a list of other collections of African-American rhymes and songs. I'd seen them mentioned in books like *Over the Hills and Far Away*, edited by Elizabeth Hammill, so how hard could it be? But as I sat in my chair, staring into space, wracking my brain, I eventually came to the horrifying (to me) realization that until now there really hasn't been a definitive book like this one. Fortunately, Ms. McKissack includes an extensive Bibliography in the back of her book. Look there and you'll see mentions of books like Kyra D. Gaunt's *Games Place Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* and *Gullah Culture in America* by Ruth Hawthorne. In terms of rhymes, though, that is it. I think it's fair to say this book was a long time coming and could be described, quite accurately, as overdue. Reading this book I came to it expecting to find a delightful collection of old favorites. I was delighted to find some new rhymes unknown to me (*Eenie Meenie Sassafreeny*, *Jump Back, Honey, Jump Back*) and I was flummoxed when I discovered not only the rhymes with African-American roots (*Patty-Cake*, *Solomon Grundy*) but also how many of these rhymes made it into rock n' roll hits of the 1960s, and were in turn made from popular songs (*Shake Your Body* ala Harry Belafonte). For example, the ring shout *Little Sally* (Waters) Walker contains the line *Rise, Sally, Rise*. You learn something new every day. Ms. McKissack talks a little in her Introduction about why she chose to write this book. As she puts it, "In writing this book, I have relied heavily upon my own play experiences as a child . . . This really is a collection of my favorite childhood games, songs, poetry, and stories that are directly linked to my African American heritage." And had she chosen to do so, she could have just limited this book to those games, songs, and rhymes. What makes the collection far more interesting is her ability to add in some context. So you'll have your jump

rope rhymes in the *Turn About* chapter, as well as songs inspired by the Underground Railroad in the *Follow the Drinking Gourd* section after that. The psalms were a surprise to me, no doubt about it. The casual inclusion of Christian selections in any book for kids that doesn't come from a specifically religious publisher is a rarity. But it was in the last chapter where I felt Ms. McKissack was really taking her final bow. Over the years she's produced such memorable books as *Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters*, tall tales like *A Million Fish . . . More Or Less*, and the unforgettable *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural* (also done alongside Brian Pinkney). Chapter 9 of *Let's Clap, Jump, Sing & Shout* feels like a victory lap, reminding us of just how much we lost when Ms. McKissack passed away, and how much she left behind for us to enjoy. Accompanying McKissack is her longtime collaborator Brian Pinkney. Mr. Pinkney is such an interesting illustrator to watch. If you weren't paying attention you might assume that his art looks the same in every book he does. It would be more accurate to note how the man is always trying new things. Whether it's scratchboards or watercolors, he isn't afraid to adapt to whatever book he's accompanying. In this title the forms and figures are consistently circular. His watercolor brush strokes swoop over and around and around and over. Even if a character is in a static position, standing or praying, lines of paint swoop about, connecting. I was curious whether or not Mr. Pinkney would include any information at the end of the book about why he chose to return to the circle movement. It's not like he hasn't done it in books before. His *Hush, Little Baby* for example, is a little more precise with its brushstrokes than what we're seeing here, but no less circular. No official word on his reasons exists, though he does have a Note at the beginning of the book that says that *When I touched paintbrush to paper, the images danced from my hand onto the page.* I think it's fair to say that when you're trying to convey movement, a circle is an effective tool to have in your back pocket. Sometimes my six-year-old will come home from school and proudly announce the rhymes she learned on the bus that day. She hasn't yet quite learned that these rhymes are supposed to be forbidden to adult ears. So while I still can, I listen. Some of the rhymes she recites are found in this book (*Shame* is a staple) while others are all new to me. When we consider whether or not "Let's Clap, Jump, Sing & Shout" is just a fancy reference book or a collection that you could actually use with children, recall too that nothing in this book is dead and gone. As Ms. McKissack writes herself, *Like all folk expressions, they have continually morphed over the years, and continue to do so today.*

Share this book with a classroom of kids. Share this book with your own kid when they start chanting something that they think is out of earshot. Share this book with any kid you can imagine, but share this book. Share the works of Patricia McKissack, a woman whose contributions to children's literature will be remembered long after you and I are gone. Share her great works. For all ages.

This book is a favorite for my 3-year-old. She picks it to read almost every night before bed. Unfortunately, I don't know the tune/rhythm to all the songs and hand claps, so we have to skip through to the ones I know. It would be awesome if someone created a CD/DVD to go with the book!

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