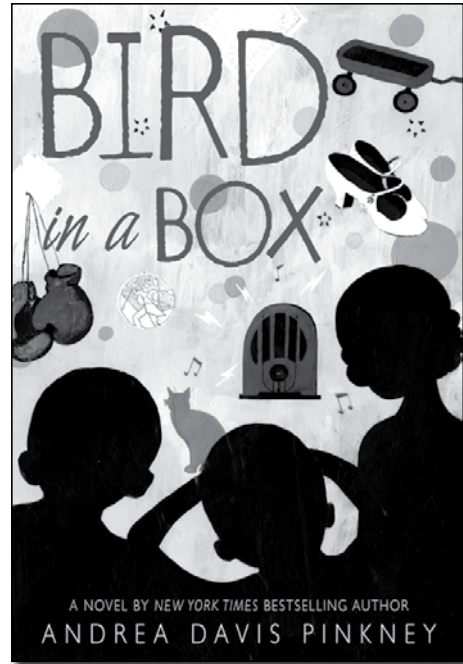


about the book

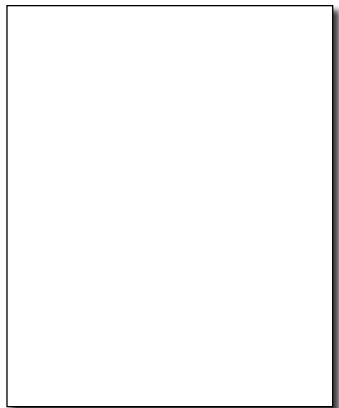


It is 1936. America is in the middle of the Great Depression, and three children—Otis, Willie, and Hibernia—are about to become friends. They already have a lot in common: They’ve all lost someone they loved; each of them has a secret dream worth fighting for; and they’re a lot like their hero, famed boxer Joe Louis. As their lives gradually converge to form friendship, family, and love, the children learn that hope and determination can change their lives forever. Throughout this moving

novel, their trials and triumphs echo those of Joe Louis as he fights to become the American heavy-weight boxing champion. Award-winning and bestselling author Andrea Davis Pinkney masterfully weaves in factual information about Joe Louis and actual radio commentary from his fights, enriching the narrative of this uniquely rendered and beautifully written novel.

Also by Andrea Davis Pinkney

Sit-In:
How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down
 Written by Andrea Davis Pinkney
 illustrated by Brian Pinkney
 ISBN: 978-0-316-07016-4



about the author



Andrea Davis Pinkney is the *New York Times* bestselling author of more than 20 books for children, including the Caldecott Honor Book and Coretta Scott King Honor Book *Duke Ellington*, illustrated by Brian Pinkney; *Let it Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters*, a Coretta Scott King Honor Book and winner of the Carter G. Woodson Award; and *Alvin Ailey*, a Parenting Publication Gold medal winner.

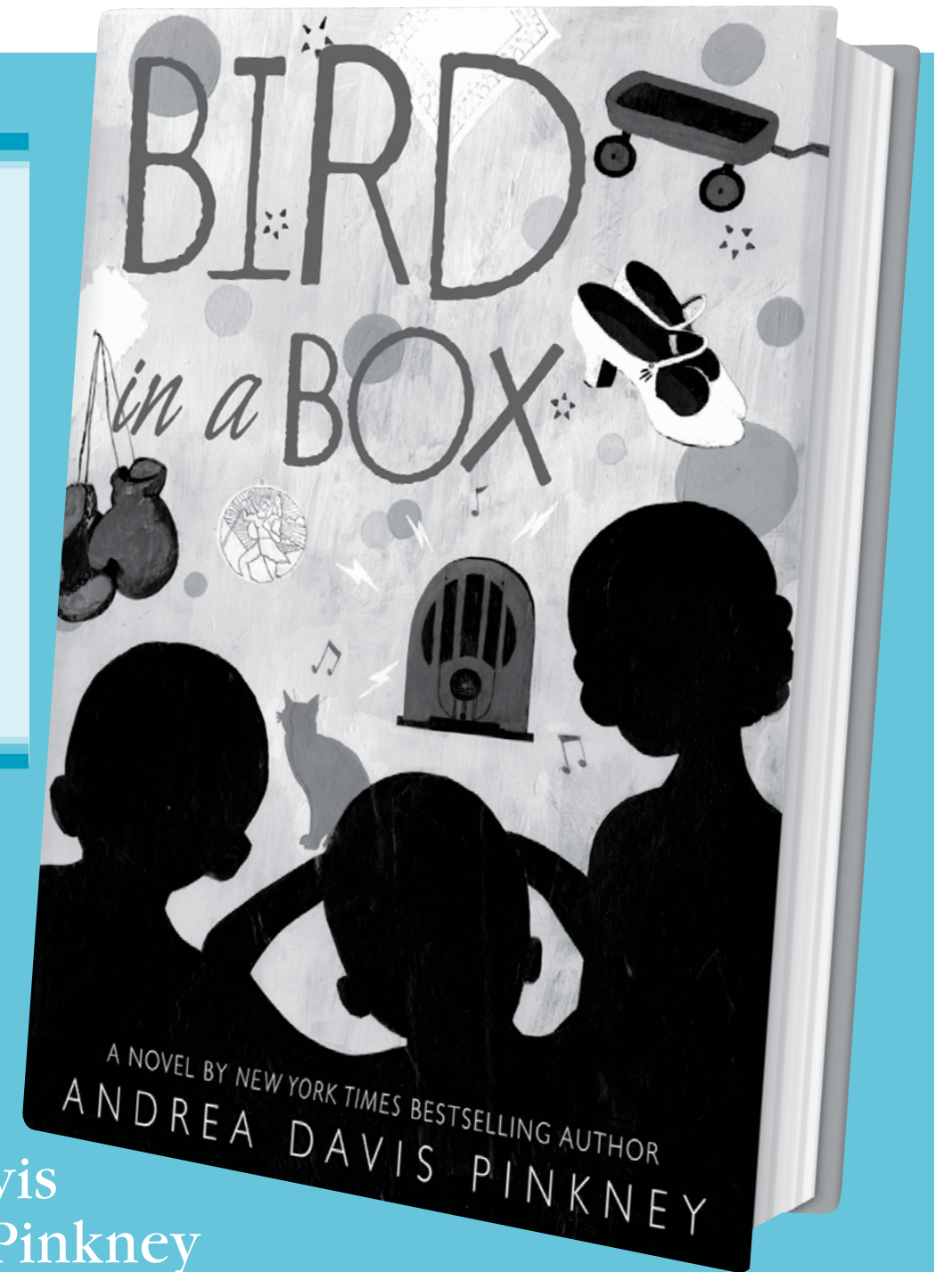
Raised in a family of readers and storytellers, Pinkney was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Connecticut. She went to Syracuse University, where she majored in journalism. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

BIRD *in a* BOX

curriculum connections

- ❖ American History
- ❖ Civil Rights
- ❖ Sports Figures

Ages: 8-12



by Andrea Davis
Pinkney

Pre-reading:

Brainstorm what you know about the Great Depression era in America.

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

1. List what you've learned about Hibernia Lee Tyson. Circle the top three things that you predict will be most important to the story.
2. Decide what are the three most important facts about Willie's life. Discuss your choices.
3. What are some things that make Otis feel better? What do you do to feel better? Who takes care of you when you feel bad?
4. Describe Hibernia's relationship with her father. Does he seem strict to you or not? What, if anything, do they have in common?
5. Why does Otis's dad move to Philadelphia without them? What does he ask Otis to do for him?
6. Why does Willie let Ricky Tate knock him out with one punch even though he loves to box?
7. What happens when Otis's dad comes home from Philadelphia to visit the family?
8. Describe the incident that forces Willie to leave his home and arrive at Mercy. Why does his mother stay? What are the long-term effects of this incident on Willie?
9. True Vine Baptist Church is like a second home to Hibernia. What does Hibernia like most about church? Who joins the congregation and what does she ask of the pastor?
10. Describe Mr. Sneed and Mrs. Weiss's argument as Otis overhears it. Whose philosophy do you agree with more? Which one do most of your teachers subscribe to?

11. How does the radio become a connection between Otis and Willie? What does it offer to each boy? Is there anything in your life that is so important?
12. What does Hibernia discover in her father's bible? How does it make her feel? What do you think she should do?
13. Lila shares the three S's for gift giving- sincere, soon, and sweet. Do you agree with her? How does Otis's attempt to use it on Hibernia work out?
14. What does Willie find on Christmas Eve? Would you compare him to what he found?
15. Over time, Willie learns to expand the use of his hands. What two things does he learn that help him?
16. Why does Mr. Sneed snatch the philco from Otis and Willie? How is he repaid for his cruelty? How is it eventually recovered?
17. Describe what happens at the Brown Bomber's Box Campaign? Does this event change Hibernia's relationship with her father? What does she learn?
18. How does Lila teach a preacher's daughter the fine art of prayer? What components are most important in a prayer? What do they ask for? Are their prayers answered or not?
19. Why is the career of Joe Louis so important to the African American community? Is it more than just a sporting event or not? Why? How does it bring all the characters in the novel together?
20. In the end what happens to each of our characters? Predict where each of them will be in five years. In ten? What evidence from the novel makes you think this?

ACROSSTHE CURRICULUM:

Reading:

- Good readers make predictions as they read a text. These predictions are based on three different things: evidence from the author or text, knowledge of how stories work, and what you know about the characters. At the end of each section make a prediction about our three main characters using each type of evidence as your guide. Remember, predictions are often wrong but that's what makes reading to the end fun!

Characters:	Ch.1	Ch.2	Ch.3	Ch.4	Ch.5	Ch.6	Ch.7	Ch.8	Ch.9
Hibernia									
Otis									
Willie									

History:

- Choose one of the following topics from the novel and write a pamphlet or create a powerpoint about what you learned:

- The Great Depression
- Orphanages
- Apollo Theater
- Ella Fitzgerald
- Langston Hughes
- Harlem Renaissance
- Joe Louis
- History of Radio
- Duke Ellington
- Jack Benny



Listening:

During the Great Depression people escaped from their financial worries by tuning into variety shows and other forms of entertainment. This is similar to how important television or the internet is to modern American families. For one evening, try to LISTEN to your favorite show without actually watching it! Then, describe the experience in a brief journal reflecting on these questions: How was the experience different? Did you need to use more of your imagination? Could you still understand the narrative story? What was lost by listening rather than watching? Can you imagine listening to the radio instead of watching television each evening? How would our lives be different?

