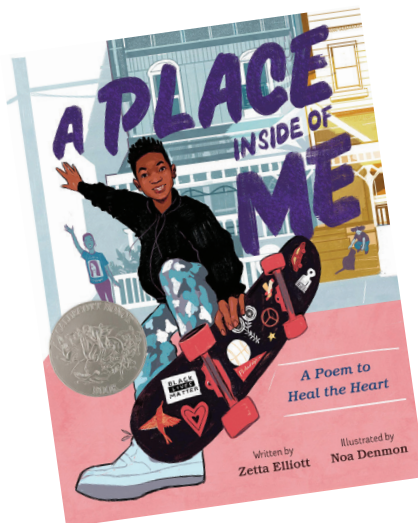


CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Jeaneau Julian

A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart

Written by Zetta Elliott/Illustrated by Noa Denmon
Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers
Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC, 2018



Emotions are part of who we are. We will experience a multitude of highs and lows over a lifetime or even in a single year. Life presents many twists and turns, and one small incident can change our trajectory. Zetta Elliott's *A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart*, illustrated by Noa Denmon, explores a Black child's shifting emotions throughout the course of a year. As educators, we work within our given context to build resiliency within our students. Through energetic illustrations and lovely metaphoric language, this Caldecott Honor Book can advance both Social Emotional Learning and music learning in our classrooms as it honestly and positively explores our complex emotional realities.

We all have a "space deep down inside" of us where all our "feelings hide" until we "find the strength to reach inside." **Joy** and happiness shine delight in Elliott's character's life until **sorrow** takes over after his community is wounded by a police shooting. Other emotions, such as **fear** and **anger**, fester, yet **hunger** takes over insisting to be ...

free.

Instead of allowing negativity to dominate his emotions, **pride** reminds the boy of the struggle and how Black people have emerged strong, triumphant, and beautiful. **Peace** calms the whispering doubts, as **compassion** heals the wounds of the past. **Hope** allows him to know he can use his life to help and **love** others as well as himself.

The words in bold here are emotions we all feel or have felt. Thinking as a music teacher, I can use most of these emotion words to identify and practice quarter notes and eighth notes. Students can add other emotion words to expand the list, drawing on and building social-emotional skills while building music literacy. The phrase "inside of me" works well as an ostinato on unpitched percussion of the student's choice during a reading of the story or in lieu of reading those particular words. Invite different students to act or move like each emotion as a visual representation of how they feel after discussing how it might look. Consider engaging with a language arts colleague to mine the book's poetry further as well.

Our students must know that we as teachers care about their emotional well-being. It is part of establishing strong relationships. *A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart* is the perfect addition to your library as you develop strong relationships with your students and help them grow in love and resiliency. ■

JEANEAU JULIAN is an elementary music educator in Little Rock, Arkansas. She completed her undergraduate degree in instrumental music education from the University of Oklahoma and earned a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages from Arkansas Tech University. She has completed AOSA Teacher Education Levels I–III and currently serves as Region III representative on the AOSA National Board of Trustees.