

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

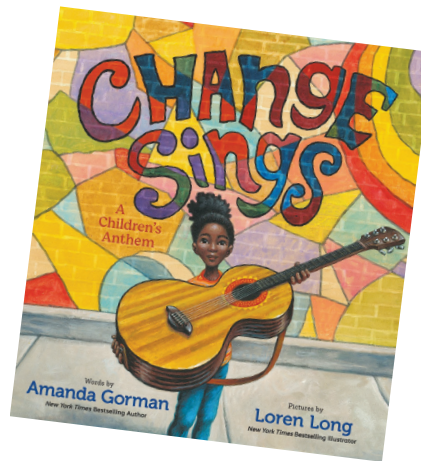
Reviewed by **Misty Kikoler**

Change Sings

Written by Amanda Gorman

Illustrated by Loren Long

Viking, 2021



Love, dream, hope, chant, forgive, include, accept, unite ... these are the themes of *Change Sings*. Written by presidential inaugural poet and activist Amanda Gorman and illustrated by Loren Long, *Change Sings* is a call for readers to use their talents and abilities to make a difference in the world.

The book opens with a young girl playing a guitar. As she cares for other children in her community, they join her efforts to serve the neighborhood. Gorman and Long show that even small acts of service can make a big difference. Long's rich, colorful illustrations showcase a beautiful, diverse community working together to create change. *Change Sings* is a window showing students how to become better global citizens and a mirror representing children of various colors, abilities, sizes, and religions.

Change Sings is recommended for 4- to 8-year-old children. With adult guidance, the content is accessible to young readers. Older students can use this book, too, as a springboard into a larger project or performance. They would likely have a better understanding of the vocabulary and catch on to some of the more nuanced language and accompanying illustrations. For example, in the text, "I don't make a taller fence, But fight to build a better bridge," the accompanying illustration shows children building a ramp for a child in a wheelchair. Although younger

students can grasp this on a simple level, richer conversations might follow with third- through fifth-grade students.

This book could be used in assembling a performance using songs, dances, speech pieces, and instrumental works that match some of its common themes. As a standalone piece, the story can inspire composition and improvisation using the author's powerful language. For example, Gorman's words and derivatives—"Scream, include, forgiveness, change-maker, acceptance"—in Long's vivid mural illustration, could be incorporated with Keetman's rhythmic building bricks. Older students familiar with the Orff Schulwerk approach can take these chunks, either as a class or in small groups, and create an original piece with text, instruments, and movement, bridging their exploration of songwriting and musical anthems.

In addition to the musical components, the book inspires many opportunities for collaboration with classroom and visual arts teachers. For instance, students could write poems to describe how their own change sings or, modeling Long's mural, they might paint a performance backdrop or, on a smaller scale, illustrate their own words as a mural.

Change Sings is a must-have book in any culturally responsive elementary music classroom. "We all hear change strumming. Won't you sing along?" ■

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