



DEAR BLACK BOY

written and illustrated by
Martellus Bennett



Reading and Activity Guide

BEFORE READING

- + Think of a time you felt discouraged. Maybe you were trying something new, or you were having a hard time with something at home, school, swim lessons...Did someone encourage you? How?
- + In this story, the author is encouraging people like himself, Black boys, to keep working, practicing, striving - because they can accomplish amazing things.

DURING READING

- + The author, Martellus Bennett, is talking about running a race and training...Do you think he is only talking to athletes? No! He is using a race as a metaphor - he's comparing life to a race - no matter what you're working at or dreaming of, practice, work hard, and don't give up.

AFTER READING

- + Today's story was an encouraging story. Notice the words "discouraged" and "encouraged" - they both have the word "courage" in them! When we encourage someone, we give them support, confidence, or hope that they can do it! It's like we give them the courage they need to face their challenges and overcome them! Did you realize that your words could be that powerful? They are! Let's think of ways we can encourage each other when we notice each other feeling discouraged.
- + Martellus Bennett says he wishes someone read *this* book to *him* when HE was a little boy. Can I tell how smart someone is, or how nice someone is, or how fast someone is, just by looking at the color of their eyes, skin, or hair? No! But sadly, in our past and even nowadays, many people judge others by the color of their skin or eyes or hair. This can be really hurtful and discouraging, and the person may feel like giving up! So we especially want to be thoughtful about our words and actions, to make sure we don't *discourage* or tear someone down because of how they look.

SPRINGBOARD ACTIVITIES:

Activity #1: Positive Portraits - Throughout our country's history and even still today, we don't always see people who are different from us as "equals". We may think of them as "less than". But God created them just like He created you and me, with likes and dislikes, loved ones, and amazing talents and skills! Learn about important people in our history that we might not know much about, such as: Thurgood Marshall (former Supreme Court Justice), Richard Allen (pastor), Dr. Charles Drew (surgeon and researcher who organized America's first large-scale blood bank!), Sidney Poitier (actor, director), or Gwendolyn Brooks (poet). [Click here](#) for more names. Check out picture book biographies, watch videos, or read their works. After learning, create something to share your new knowledge (portrait, paragraph/report, poem, story, video, etc!).

Activity #2: Words of Encouragement - Pass out or set aside special paper, explaining it is for writing notes of encouragement to each other. Provide examples or situations where it would be encouraging to write a special note. "Encourage" your children to especially keep an eye out for those they might not normally reach out to with encouragement - it's easy to encourage our friends, but Jesus "encourages" us to help "the least of these" - people we might not normally interact with.

