Notes for the teacher

Faith Ringgold in her own words…

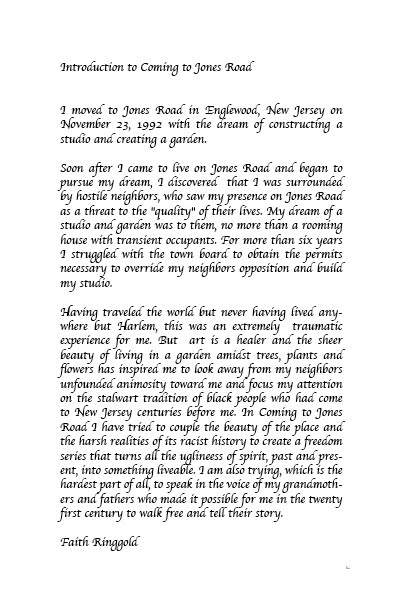
When I was a little girl growing up in Harlem, I was always encouraged to value who I was and to go after what I want. Ever since I was young, I've always had a need to express my ideas through art. Being an artist and a writer of children's books is a fulfillment of my lifelong ambition.

I became an artist for the same reason I became a writer - I wanted to tell my story. I was born in Harlem in 1930. I was the baby of my family, the youngest of three children. My childhood was the most wonderful period of my life, until now. Because I was sick with asthma when I was growing up, I was forced to spend a lot of time at home. This was not a hardship, however. Instead, it gave me time alone with my mother, who was a fashion designer at the time. She taught me how to sew (just like her grandmother had taught her) and how to be creative with art and fabrics. My mother also took me to museums and to see great performers. She put me in touch with the best of everything.

When my mother died in 1981, I started making quilts as a tribute to her. During that time, I was trying to get my autobiography published, but no one wanted to print my story. In 1983, I began writing stories on my quilts, as an alternative. That way, when my quilts were hung up to look at, or photographed for a book, people could still read my stories. I have “written” 30 story quilts since then. They are written the way I write my children's stories - each section written on the quilt is a page.

Writing children's books has allowed me to communicate my ideas and vision and, I hope, give back to children some of the magic they have shown me.

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From the book, Coming to Jones Road, by Faith Ringgold