

But Mary didn't watch for long. Even at only eight years old, she knew the first rule of the Union Springs, Alabama, plantation she lived on:

**KEEP
WORKING!**

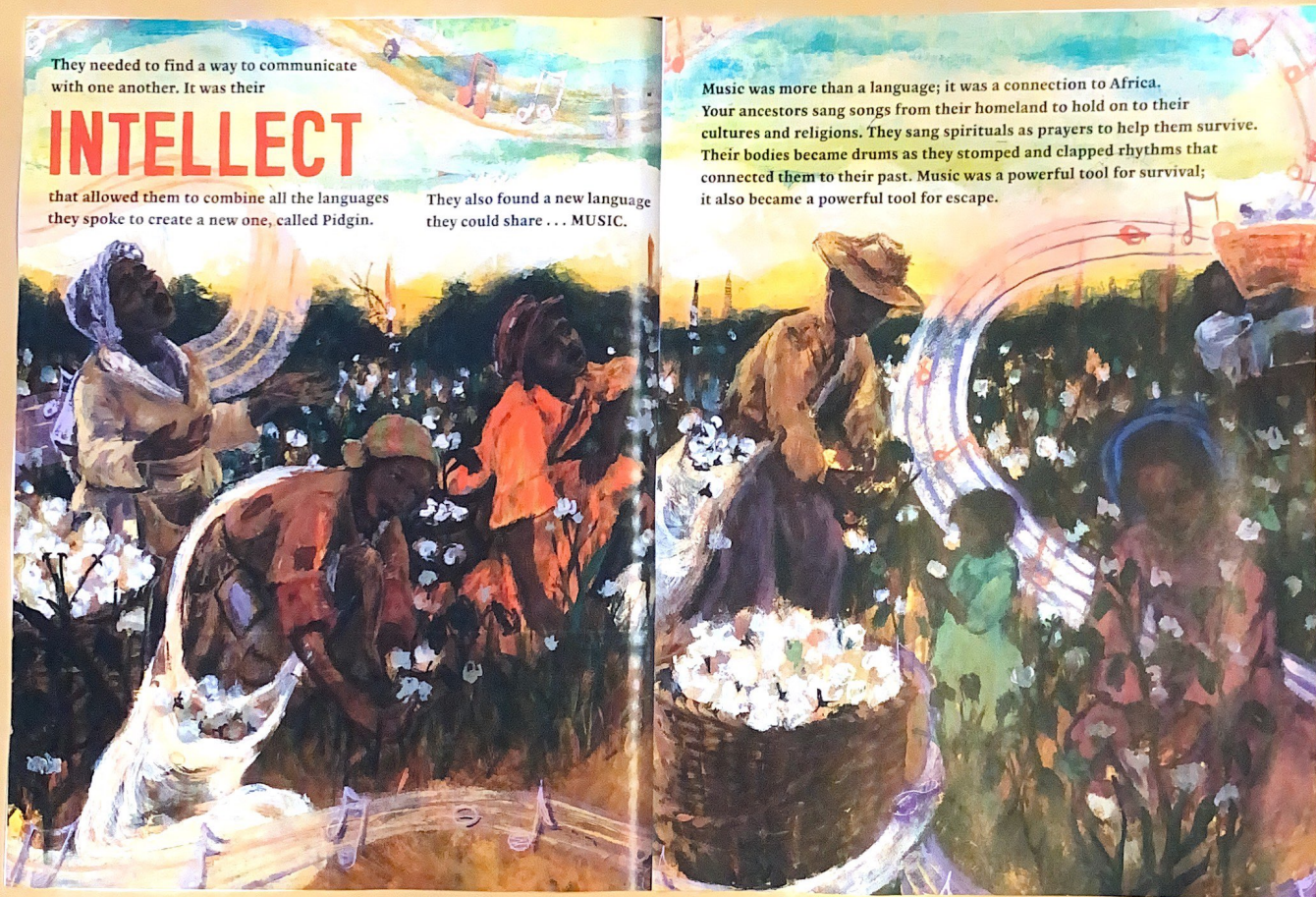
They needed to find a way to communicate with one another. It was their

INTELLECT

that allowed them to combine all the languages they spoke to create a new one, called Pidgin.

They also found a new language they could share . . . MUSIC.

Music was more than a language; it was a connection to Africa. Your ancestors sang songs from their homeland to hold on to their cultures and religions. They sang spirituals as prayers to help them survive. Their bodies became drums as they stomped and clapped rhythms that connected them to their past. Music was a powerful tool for survival; it also became a powerful tool for escape.





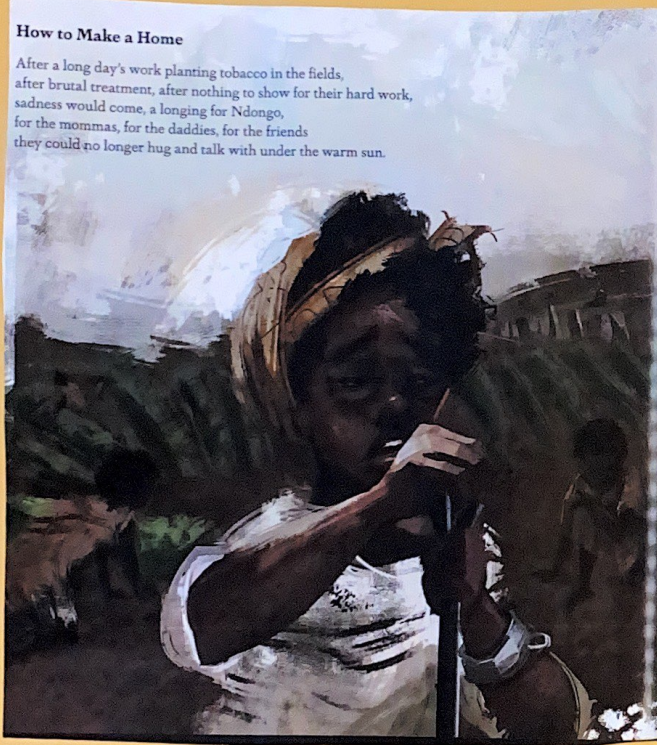
And now we all must move quickly. We hear music upstairs as people begin to arrive. The kitchen buzzes like a hive, and everyone has his or her task. There is the swishing of skirts and aprons as we all move as fast as

we can to get the platters ready for the servers to take through the covered passage to the dining room. Everything must be ready as soon as we hear the music stop.

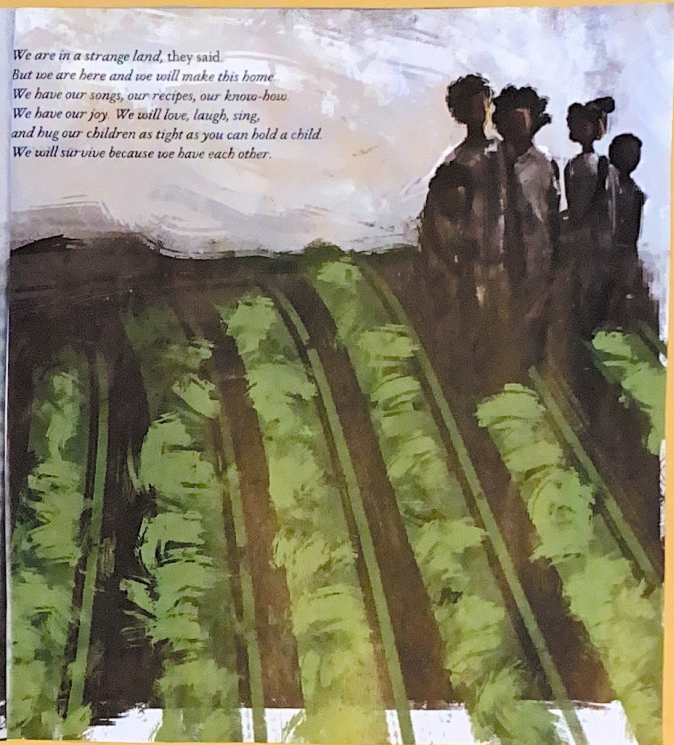


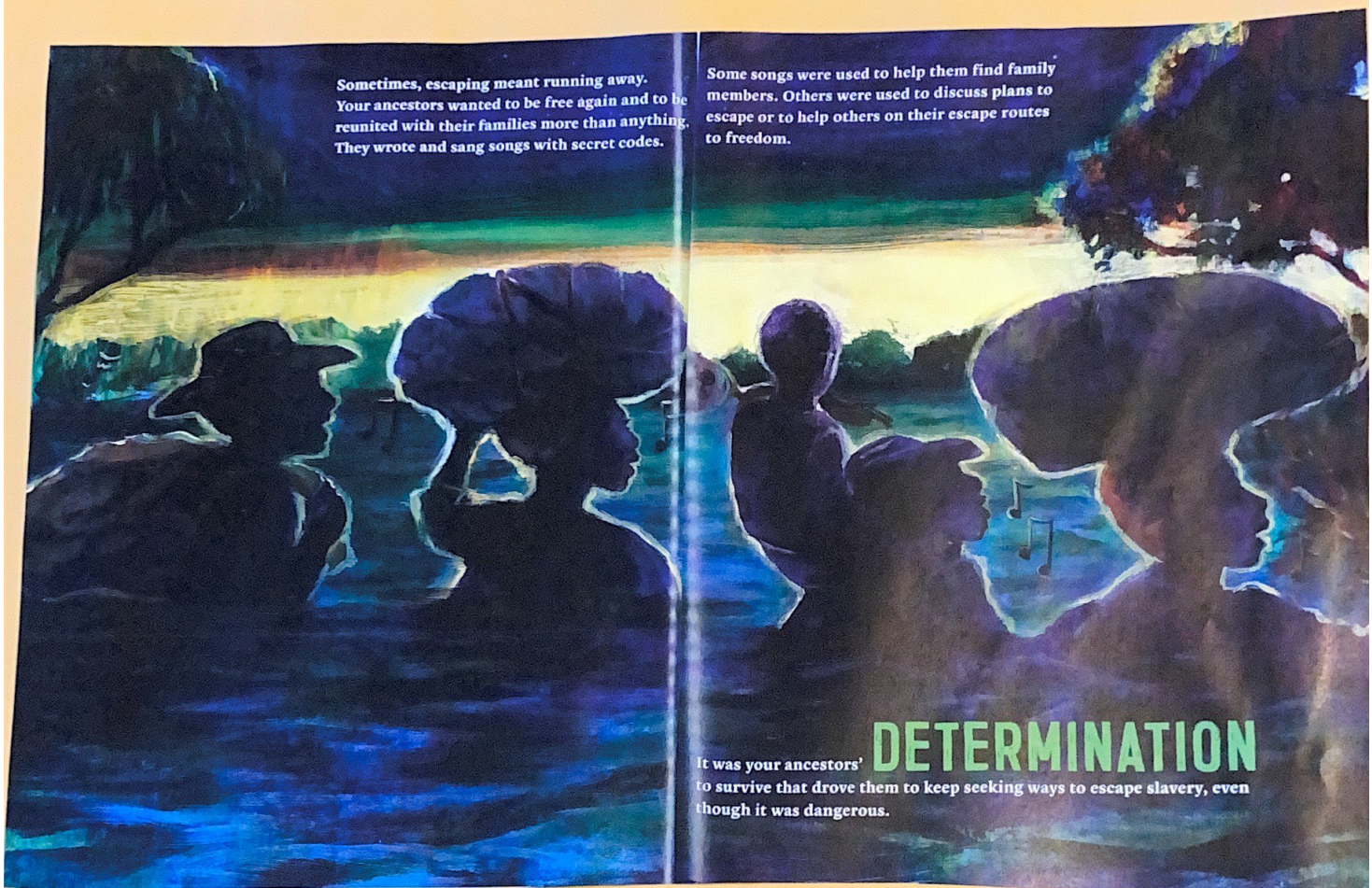
How to Make a Home

After a long day's work planting tobacco in the fields,
after brutal treatment, after nothing to show for their hard work,
sadness would come, a longing for Ndongu,
for the mommas, for the daddies, for the friends
they could no longer hug and talk with under the warm sun.



*We are in a strange land, they said.
But we are here and we will make this home.
We have our songs, our recipes, our know-how.
We have our joy. We will love, laugh, sing,
and hug our children as tight as you can hold a child.
We will survive because we have each other.*





Sometimes, escaping meant running away. Your ancestors wanted to be free again and to be reunited with their families more than anything. They wrote and sang songs with secret codes.

Some songs were used to help them find family members. Others were used to discuss plans to escape or to help others on their escape routes to freedom.

DETERMINATION

It was your ancestors' to survive that drove them to keep seeking ways to escape slavery, even though it was dangerous.

and so the people
planted the seeds they'd carried over the ocean,
luck to visit one another in the dark of night,
sing songs, swapped tales of yesterday,
remembering, remembering.

And the people planted dreams and hope,
willed themselves to keep
living, living.

And the people learned new words
for love
for friend
for family

for joy
for grow
for home.

*We are in a strange land, they said.
But we are here and we will make this home.
We have determination, imagination, faith.
We will survive because we have each other.*

