

# PAINTING A JOURNEY OF LIGHT & TRUTH



## SO TALL WITHIN: SOJOURNER TRUTH'S LONG WALK TOWARD TO FREEDOM

By Gary D. Schmidt, Illustrated by Daniel Minter, and published by Roaring Brook Press

### THE FESTIVAL

Welcome to the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival! Where is the festival happening? Right here in your space, in your hands. By creating art based on *So Tall Within*, you are taking part in a celebration of books and book creators from across the African Diaspora. You are also telling *your own story!*

### THE BOOK

Look for the read aloud of *So Tall Within* on [BeautifulBlackbird.com](http://BeautifulBlackbird.com). Isabella had a long walk to freedom. In Slavery Time, she looked at the light of the stars and moon to feel close to the family she was forcibly separated from. Illustrator Daniel Minter paints the moment she walks into the night, starting her journey to tell the truth about slavery. Under the stars, she chooses a name for herself—Sojourner Truth. In Freedom Time, Daniel Minter paints Sojourner Truth and others wrapped in white clothing, woven with symbols of healing and power. In white and light, they recover and renew themselves from the dark truths of Slavery Time.

### THE ART ACTIVITY

This activity invites you to create a handmade accordion book mapping your personal journey. An artwork that can also hold the truths you hope to learn or speak about on your journey. Explore the questions and suggested steps.

*On the journey you are taking through your own life, what truths do you want to tell?* Brainstorm and write down a list of truths as single words or phrases. For example, *Black is Beautiful*. Some of these words will be added to your art with a wax crayon.

*Where will that journey take place? On the streets of a protest? On an ocean? Between your home and somewhere important?* Consider what that landscape looks like and what will be featured on it. A representation of that space can be drawn onto your accordion-folded canvas. *How will you find your light in the darkness?* You will be working with a crayon because it contains wax. Water

cannot attach to wax. When you write your truth words on your canvas in white crayon, those words will be mostly hidden until you paint over them with black or dark watercolors. You will see your truths shine out from the darkness!

### Materials:

- Paper or food box cardboard\*
- Scissors
- Crayons or other water resistant drawing tool
- White crayon (optional)
- Black & dark colors Watercolors
- White tissue paper (optional)
- Glue stick (optional)

\*This project is best used with a thicker paper that can absorb water based media. Watercolor paper is ideal.

### Watch a Video:

<https://beautifulblackbird.com/books/so-tall-within-sojourner-truths-long-walk-toward-freedom-by-gary-d-schmid-illustrated-by-daniel-minter/>

### Suggested Steps:

1. Using a rectangular white piece of paper fold in half along the long edge.
2. Open the paper.
3. Fold the two edges into the center crease. Open and you should have four equal sections.
4. Flip your paper over and repeat, by folding in both directions your book will be more flexible.
5. Use your crayons to form a sequence of images that stretches across all four pages. In your images, try incorporating a repetitive image; one that rises and falls along the landscape.

6. Write text using your white crayon, adding pressure so that the wax sticks to the paper and your truths can be revealed clearly.
7. With black or blue watercolors dip your brush into water and gently swirl in the paint.
8. Paint across the entire page revealing your truths. You can vary the intensity of your color by using more or less water.
9. Set aside to dry .
10. Again fold your book, first in half along the long edge .
11. Open the book and fold both edges towards the inner crease .
12. Open and fold into an accordion, alternating folding forward and backward. This creates a W or an M shape .
13. Create a cover if you choose and display or share your truths with others.
4. Unfold your tissue paper carefully to reveal your shawl in full.
5. Gently cut a series of simple shapes dividing your tissue paper into smaller wisps of material.
6. Once your book is dry, glue these pieces in overlaying particular areas of your composition. Rather than cut tiny pieces, let it hang off the edge of the page and trim afterwards.
7. Complete steps 10-13 above.

**Share your Experience!** If your family, guardian, or teacher agrees and if you can protect your privacy, take a picture or video of your artwork and share it with the hashtag #BeautifulBlackbirdFestival.

### Additional Art Activity

If you want to create another layer to your artwork, follow these suggested steps.

1. Complete steps 1-9 above.
2. While your paint is drying, begin to fold your sheet of tissue paper, folding it half multiple times to create a rectangle.
3. Grab your scissors and carefully cut small shapes along the edge making sure to not cut the tissue paper in half. Imagine you are mimicking the Sojourner's intricate shawl in Minter's paintings.

Thank you to Mia Bogyo of the Center for Maine Contemporary Art for designing this activity as part of their support of the Beautiful Blackbird Children's Book Festival!