



# Illustrator's Thoughts

By Samuel Fleming



# Parts



Family/Relationships



Symbols

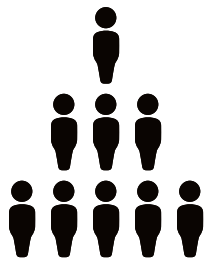


Heavy Moments



Moments of Power

\*\* The numbers in brackets represent the position of the images as they appear in the book. i.e “ (1)” means the first image of the book.



# Family/Relationships

## Amina (1)

The idea behind Amina was to make a child that both young girls and boys could look at and relate to either as themselves or a friend/classmate. Her hair is intentionally very large and expressive in order to set the tone of “embracing who we are”. Amina embraces her natural hair to its fullest extent. Her hair binders are red, her dress is black, and her introductory background is light green. These are the colors of the Ghanaian flag and an old symbol of black unity and love. Light green, here, is also meant to be whimsical and happy in nature.

## Amina’s Mother (2)

Amina’s mother follows a similar rubric for her introductory design. She wears cornrows and braids, two more quintessentially black hairstyles. She is also depicted above Amina, marking her maternal role in Amina’s life as well as her status as a mentor. Her introductory background color is a lighter shade of purple: a mixture between blue and red representing her wide range of emotion. Red represents her strength and blue shows her tranquil and wise nature.

## Amina’s Father (4)

Amina’s father, also follows the same design traits as Amina and her mother. His tie is green, one of the black, green, red, themes which appear throughout the book, and his background is a mixture of pink and light purple, very similar to Amina’s mother. He also wears a suit, an image of a black man that is seldom portrayed in the media today.

## Amina’s Father and Amina (5)

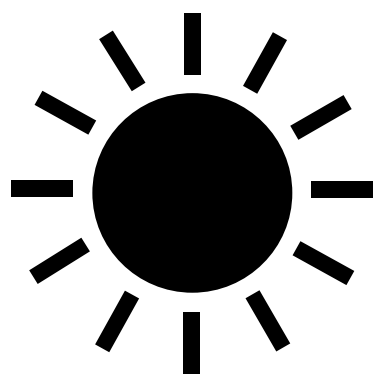
The color red plays a variety of roles in this book and love is one of those roles. Amina loves her father and he loves her beyond her comprehension. The red on this page symbolizes the intense love the two share for one another.

## Alfie (6 - 8)

Alfie wears red and black following the green, red, and black theme mentioned earlier. Like his sister, his hair is also very large and expressive. His background is grey as he is a character who has experienced very little and can understand very little. Grey is very close to the color of a blank page meaning his story has yet to be written. Additionally, Alfie was drawn to be as cute as possible. The love his sister has for him is put on display with a strong background color that symbolizes the love the siblings have for one another.

## Amina’s Mother Strengthens Amina (21-22)

The background color here is grey to, again, represent uncertainty and sorrow. Amina is experiencing hardships with which she is not familiar. Her mother knows them all too well and is feeling a mix of emotions. Amina’s mother looks to comfort her daughter, knowing full well she cannot stop the hatred of others and knows her daughter, like her, will have to endure it. The background is a cool color in order to show that comfort.



# Symbols

## **Butterflies (9)**

Amina has “butterflies in her stomach” on this page, a feeling I chose to represent with literal butterflies flying around. Her face shows surprise and hesitancy and the background color shows instability and inconsistency, similar to that of a cloudy day.

## **Leaves (10)**

Amina likes to watch the colors of the leaves change, a feeling reflected by the color of the background, light green meant to seem whimsical like her introductory page. Her face, however, is expressionless as the “butterflies in her stomach” have restricted emotion.

## **Clouds (11)**

Jumping from cloud to cloud is a freeing thought. Being able to jump through the skies without a care is a feeling I can say I have from time to time. Here I’ve represented it literally to contextualize Amina’s thought - so the readers visualize freedom.

## **Butterflies Return (12)**

The butterflies have returned. They are much bigger now and obstruct much of the page. This is to preemptively convey to the readers the gravity of what will soon be explained in the pages to come.

## **Crosshatched Bullies (13)**

Amina recalls what the bullying looks like at her school. The color of her thought bubble is red to represent the severity of her thoughts and her background is yellow to show her fear and uncertainty. Her expression is obstructed and the expression of the figure she is imagining is emphasized.

The figure is drawn in black and white using the crosshatching style. It is to remove agency and legitimacy from these figures. They are still humans but they are closer to unwanted ideas and unsavory concepts that Amina experienced than fellow characters both introduced and to-be introduced. These cross hatched characters, scrawled into the pages and Amina’s mind will appear several times in the pages to come.

## **Hatred Distorts (23)**

Like the faces of pages in the past, these figures are distorted and grotesque to represent how hatred distorts humanity.





## Heavy Moments

### **Pulling of the Hijab (14)**

Having one's hijab pulled off is unacceptable. This event was done out of hate. The background is black so only the event is focused on. The crosshatched hand is very large and clenched in an aggressive fashion to show the anger of the perpetrator. Khadijah is horrified as shown by her expression.

### **Lester's Parents (15)**

Lester is being ridiculed for having parents of the same gender. The crosshatched characters are distorted and grotesque to show their current lack of humanity as recollected by Amina. Lester placed in center and at the bottom of the page, and receives all of the undue negativity.

### **Fall of a Mentor (16)**

Being laughed at by a teacher, especially as a black student is an old tale that many can relate to. The laughter is attempting to overtake Amina's identity. The teacher is intentionally obscured in order to emphasize the action and its effect on Amina.

### **Amadou at Assembly (17)**

Amadou's experience is drawn similarly to Lester's experience. The dark orange highlights the severity of the situation. The face of the classmate who told Amadou to go to the back of the class is fully shown. Her face has been made in crosshatch style to show how hatred can contort somebody's character.

### **Amina's Two Faces (22)**

The contrast between Amina's simultaneous feeling of anger and sadness is on display here. On one end of the page you see anger, on the other you see her sadness. Only her eyes are shown.

### **Our home? (23)**

Every character who had experienced some form of negativity is drawn on this page. They all wonder if they truly belong.

### **Ignorance of Others (24)**

This drawing is an old personal favorite of mine. It was originally a political cartoon created to represent how racist thoughts, born out of fear and ignorance, are more than enough to strangle and disrupt the less powerful.



# Moments of Power

## Black Power Fist (25)

Many shy away from the Black Power Fist but I do not view it as a symbol of exclusive support for one group of people. I have always seen it as a rallying symbol for all of the oppressed and less fortunate. I’ve drawn it against the yellow background to emphasize its shape and importance.

## Activists (26-30, 32)

For the pages of the activists I used similar colors in their backgrounds. Yellow and gold-like colors take on a regal role rather than an indecisive fearful one. The faces are all drawn in a semi realistic style as well which contrasts with the main fictional characters in the book, but even more sharply with the antagonistic figures in the book to show how real people are doing real things to combat this ridiculous enemy of progress that is hatred for your fellow human beings.

## Hidden Figures (31)

This drawing is inspired by black women that worked at NASA which the movie “Hidden Figures” is based off of. While this face is of nobody in particular and partially obscured by a meteorite, the goal here was to emphasize the achievement and put forth the idea that she could be anyone and that all readers have the potential to do great things.

## Carry The Torch (33)

The drawing of the black and white hands holding the torch symbolizes unity. It was based off of an old stamp from the 60’s during the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

## Icons of Strength (34)

This page is of a few icons that represent some of the people that received negativity in the book. The Black, Red, and Green flag, the moon and star, and the symbols for gender equality LGBTQ communities. The idea was to introduce readers to these symbols and hopefully to begin to normalize them as icons not to be feared or looked down upon.

## Stronger Together (35)

The final page is similar to the Black Power fist drawn on an earlier page. This page shows the same fist with the same background but with different shades of skin tones meant to explicitly encompass the entire human population. We are strongest when we all work together no matter what.