**Dave the Potter**

**Artist, Poet, Slave**

**By Laban Carrick Hill**

Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Nominee 2012

Grades 3 – 5

*Submitted by Mary Ricard, - Librarian, East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Baton Rouge , Louisiana.*

*Hill, Laban Carrick. Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave, Little Brown and Company, 2010 unp.*

SUMMARY

*Dave the Potter* is a picture book biography of a slave who lived in South Carolina more than two hundred years ago. His life and craftsmanship is captured in this colorful edition portraying him as an artist immensely engrossed in his work. Dave’s love of the clay that he molded made him create interesting poetic verses as he worked. These expressions transcended to dated and signed autographs on each of his accomplishments.

**AWARDS**

Caldecott Honor book for 2011; Winner of the 2011 Coretta Scott King Gold Illustrator Award;

New York Times Bestseller 2011.

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Laban Carrick Hill is an acclaimed author of note whose literary works date back to 1990. He is an accomplished lecturer and editor and resides in Burlington, Vermont. Also, at present, he teaches at St. Michael’s College in Vermont. His writing encompasses works for children, juveniles and adults. There is a wealth of information at the author’s website, www.labanhill.com. The book *Harlem Stomp!: A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance,* was recognized as a 2004 National Book Award Finalist. Other awards include, Parents’ Choice Gold Award, and finalist for National Book Award, both 2004.

**ILLUSTRATOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Bryan Collier graduated with honors from Pratt Institute in New York earning a BFA. His early interest in books with pictures led to efforts at connecting elements of a story with art. Collage was the art style he embraced with measureable success. Because of the encouragement that

Bryan received growing up; he works diligently in his community with youth, the schools and the parents to foster a love of art. He illustrated the Coretta Scott Honor Book and Caldecott Honor Book, *Martin’s Big Words.* His official website is [www.bryancollier.com](http://www.bryancollier.com).

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

***Note:*** *There is an* ***Educator’s Guide to Dave from the University of South Carolina:***[*www.digitaltraditions.net/html/D\_Resources.cfm*](http://www.digitaltraditions.net/html/D_Resources.cfm)

*and 45 page printable PDF version* [*http://www.digitaltraditions.net/T\_Resources/Dave\_Pottery/Recompiled.pdf*](http://www.digitaltraditions.net/T_Resources/Dave_Pottery/Recompiled.pdf)

**READING**

Even though Dave was a potter the author compared his work to that of a magician. Have the students come up other similes. For example, “He was leaping like a frog,” “He swam like a whale,” “He was athletic as an Olympian.”

Dave was obsessed with his art leaving descriptive verses and a signature to identify his talent. Students might write simple creative verses about their own passion.

*Dave the Potter* was considered legendary. The following websites may be used to further ascertain his meaningful status as a Southern legend.

wwwgo\_star.com/antiquing/stoneware0904.htm

wwwdavetheslave.orgversesonvesselsmadebyDavetheSlave.htm

www.leonardtodd.com

Other readings include *Carolina Clay the life and legend of the slave potter Dave* by Leonard Todd. Todd writes about Dave’s poems, pots, and life. His interest was intrigued after learning that Dave was owned by his ancestors.

**SOIAL STUDIES**

A time line would be a good social studies project because students could trace the dates of prohibition as related to slaves. Slaves were not only illiterate during this period but teaching slaves was punishable by law. Born in 1801, Dave’s life in South Carolina can be traced through

the 1880 U.S. Federal Census and manufacturing data.

There are many time line websites, <http://www.ehow.com/how_5134703_create-historical-timeline.html>, teaches how to do a time line.

**ART**

Have students make their own small clay pots. Provide some self hardening clay and toothpicks for students to scribble on their clay with. You can also make your own Baking Soda Clay for students to use and air dry <http://thenewnew.blogspot.com/2011/07/baking-soda-clay.html>.

*Here are two online resources:*

* Make a clay pinch pot: <http://lauraspector.hubpages.com/hub/Kids-Art-Project-Easy-Clay-Pinch-Pots>
* Coil Pot Method: <http://www.dltk-teach.com/fables/stonesoup/mbowl.htm>

Books:

Ball, Charles. *Charles Ball and American slavery*. Austin Texas: Raintree Steck-Vaughn,

C1995.

Celsi, Teresa Noel. *John C. Calhoun and the roots of war*. New Jersey: Morristown,

c1991.

Malaspina, Ann. *Phillis sings out freedom*. New York: Albert Whitman and Company,

c2010.

Polacco, Patricia. *January’s sparrow*. New York: Philomel Books, c2000

**ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST**

Show and Tell – Children could bring a piece of pottery from home or a relative’s home.

Human Rights Day – Invite guests or explore the cultural diversity of classmates.

**Additional Websites:**

**Educator’s Guide to Dave from the University of South Carolina:** [www.digitaltraditions.net/html/D\_Resources.cfm](http://www.digitaltraditions.net/html/D_Resources.cfm)

and 45 page printable PDF version <http://www.digitaltraditions.net/T_Resources/Dave_Pottery/Recompiled.pdf>

**Online Biography of Dave:** [www.usca.edu/aasc/davepotter.htm](http://www.usca.edu/aasc/davepotter.htm)