first names

Beyoncé KNOWLES-CARTER



first names

Beyoncé
KNOWLES-CARTER



Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl

Illustrations by Tammy Taylor

For Z, always. NNI

To the reader, whose imagination brings each book to life. TT

First Names: BEYONCÉ KNOWLES-CARTER
is a
DAVID FICKLING BOOK

First published in Great Britain in 2020 by
David Fickling Books,
31 Beaumont Street,
Oxford, OX1 2NP

Text © Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl, 2020
Illustrations © Tammy Taylor, 2020

978-1-78845-042-3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

The right of Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl and Tammy Taylor to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Papers used by David Fickling Books are from well-managed forests and other responsible sources.

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C018072
www.fsc.org

DAVID FICKLING BOOKS Reg. No. 8340307

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A

First Names: *Beyoncé Knowles-Carter* is not an official biography, but it has been carefully checked and the facts are accurate to the best of our knowledge. However, if you spot something you think may be incorrect please let us know. This text is intended to be entertaining, that's why we've included Beyoncé as a cartoon character. However, the words and thoughts spoken by this character are not the actual words and thoughts of the real Beyoncé Knowles-Carter – they're sometimes just for fun – and the Explained sections aren't explained in Beyoncé Knowles-Carter's own words. Some of the passages in this book are actual quotes from Beyoncé and other important people. You'll be able to tell which ones they are by the style of type: *I was served lemons, but I made lemonade.*

Contents

Introduction – Beyoncé Sings A Song 7

1 – Beyoncé Puts On A Show 11

2 – Beyoncé Gets A Break 24

3 – Beyoncé Signs A Real Deal 45

4 – Beyoncé Weathers A Storm 59

5 – Beyoncé Spreads Her Wings 74

6 – Beyoncé Goes Solo 86

7 – Beyoncé's Date With Destiny 99

8 – Beyoncé Shatters Glass 111

9 – Beyoncé Takes A Gamble 119

Timeline 140

Glossary 142

Index 143



Introduction – Beyoncé Sings A Song

THE PLACE: St Mary's Talent Show, Houston, Texas.
THE TIME: 1988.

The school auditorium was so hot Beyoncé felt she could have burst into flames. From her backstage view (poking her head through the curtains), she saw a sea of people waving paper programmes around like fans. There wasn't a single thing in the world seven-year-old Beyoncé could think of right now that would help her cool down, though.

With her heart pounding as loud as a drum, her nerves were almost getting the better of her. She wished she could disappear. But it was too late now. **It was her turn to sing**!

'Take a deep breath,' her teacher, Miss Darlette, told her as she gave her pupil's hand a squeeze. Then she pushed Beyoncé forward.

The microphone and wooden stand were only a few feet away from her, but they might as well have been on the moon. Beyoncé's feet felt like they were dragging through sludge, but finally, she made it. Now all she had to do was summon up the courage to sing.

Beyoncé was used to family singalongs at home with her mum, dad and sister. Those were always a blast. But this was her very first talent show . . . her

very first time onstage in front of a large audience for that matter. It was new, terribly scary territory.

As Beyoncé stood frozen in front of the wilting audience, the music started. **And then a miracle happened**. *Poof*, like magic, her pesky nerves were gone . . . and something else, something much bigger, replaced them. Little Beyoncé dug deep down inside herself and, spreading her arms as wide as an eagle's wings, she found the courage to sing. Her incredible voice carried John Lennon's 'Imagine' around the hall, and the audience were suddenly wide awake, sitting bolt upright in their seats. Beyoncé's nerves were completely forgotten.

As the song drew to a close, the audience erupted. Everyone was on their feet! Disaster was well and truly averted, and Beyoncé was in seventh heaven. She'd won a standing ovation and totally stolen the show.

Her parents, meanwhile, were in total shock. They hadn't even seen their little girl rehearse!



But it was. Beyoncé had just found her voice.

She won the talent show, of course. Then she went on to win another, and another and another. In fact, by the time Beyoncé was 35 years old, **she'd won about a gazillion awards** (OK, more like three hundred) . . . she'd had several record-smashing world tours . . . a leading role in an Academy Award-winning movie . . . and she owned her own entertainment company. The list of achievements goes on, and today it seems like Beyoncé has it all: money, fame, success . . .



That's true, and you're certainly well known for working harder than anyone else in your industry.



Sounds exhausting! And still, you never seem to miss a beat.

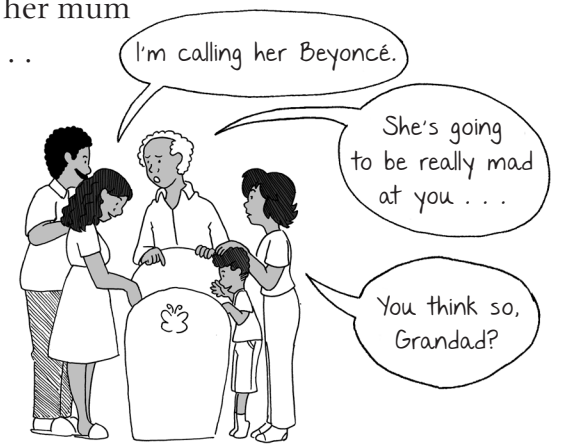


Really – when?

Y'all better read on, and find out!

1 Beyoncé Puts On A Show

Beyoncé Knowles made her grand entrance into the world on 4th September 1981 in Houston, Texas. According to her mum, giving birth was the easy bit – naming her baby turned out to be the complicated part. Quite a few family eyebrows were raised when her mum announced . . .



Celestine Beyincé Knowles (better known as Tina), wanting to keep her roots alive, had made an adjustment to her own family's name for her firstborn child. The rest of the family had their doubts, and once she was old enough to have an opinion, **Beyoncé herself wasn't exactly keen**.



Whatever name she preferred, Bey or Beyoncé basked in the love of her doting parents. It was nearly five years before the family expanded, giving Beyoncé a baby sister, Solange. Beyoncé was a dutiful and protective big sister, helping with the baby right from the start. The two girls always stuck together.



The Knowles family were pretty well off. Dad, Mathew, earned a good living as a sales executive for the Xerox Corporation (inventors of the first photocopier) while Mum, Tina, owned a happening hair salon called Headliners. A few years after she was born, Beyoncé's parents moved into a roomy six-bedroomed house in Houston's well-to-do Third Ward neighbourhood. They drove nice cars, the girls went to private schools, the family even had a housekeeper!

But Beyoncé's parents hadn't always lived so comfortably. Tina and Mathew came from poor families in the southern part of the USA, which had a terrible history of unfair laws. They were born at a time when racial prejudice and discrimination were just part of everyday life, when African

Americans were still fighting for their civil rights. So they both understood how important it was to work hard and **make something of whatever you had** – it was a message they'd pass on to their daughters.

When Tina's parents couldn't afford to pay the tuition fees for her Catholic school, her mum, Agnèz, had paid her way by sewing clothes for the priests and the nuns who worked there and making uniforms for the other students. She made sure Tina knew how to sew, and you'll soon find out just how useful those skills would be as Beyoncé and Solange were growing up.

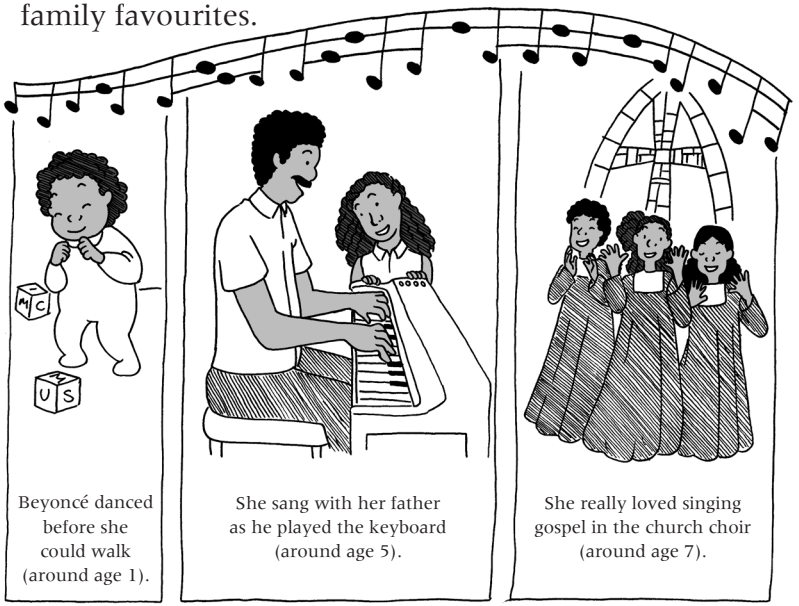
What Tina and Mathew also had in common was a real love of music.



In her teens Beyoncé's mum had sung in a pop group called the Veltones, inspired by 1960s all-female singing sensations Diana Ross and the Supremes. Mathew dabbled in music too. As a boy, he'd been in his school choir and, when his daughters were little, he'd often mess around on the keyboard while the girls danced and sang.

Music was as much a part of home life for the Knowles family as the air they breathed. Sunday

dinners were often followed by another family ritual: grooving and singing along to Mum and Dad's record collection. Prince and Michael Jackson were firm family favourites.



One day, not long after she started school, Tina asked Beyoncé what she'd learned. '*A song*,' said Beyoncé.

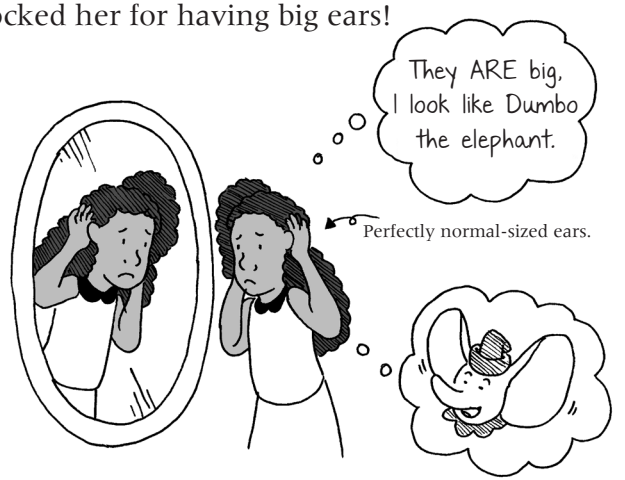
'*Well, that's nice. Let's hear it*,' said Tina. As little Bey proudly sang to her mum, she experienced **a rush of excitement** she'd never felt before!



Miss Darlette's Dance Studio

She may have had a big voice at home, but away from her family and close friends Beyoncé was quiet and shy. She had an especially hard time at school.

A few of her classmates made fun of her because her skin was lighter than some of the other girls', and mocked her for having big ears!



Beyoncé just didn't fit in, and it turned out Grandad was right, her 'unique' name didn't help. She struggled with her schoolwork too, and with all the bullying and teasing she often **wished she could just hide under a rock**.

Sending Beyoncé to dance classes at Darlette Johnson's dance studio was Tina and Mathew's solution. They thought it might help build up her confidence.

Beyoncé loved it. Sometimes she danced so hard that she ripped her costumes apart at the seams.



Often the last one to leave, Beyoncé was mooching around after class one day, when she heard Miss Darlette singing a song slightly out of tune. Without a second thought, Beyoncé joined in, finishing the song. She must have sounded pretty good because Miss Darlette asked her to sing it again.

When Tina and Mathew came to pick her up that day, Miss Darlette was full of excitement. '*She can sing! You know, she really* can *sing*,' she said. Miss Darlette was convinced that **Beyoncé had something special**, and soon she was encouraging her to perform a John Lennon song in that very first talent show that she went on to win.

In spite of her nerves, from her first show onwards, Beyoncé was hooked on performing – and she was 100 per cent sure it was what she wanted to do.

Practice Makes Perfect

Not many kids have their future mapped out from the age of seven, and Beyoncé's parents weren't quite sure what to make of it. But they could see how much their daughter loved the stage, so they enrolled her in more competitions. And the more she entered, the more she wanted to enter!

A lot of the competitions were just glorified beauty pageants with a talent section, and being a tomboy at heart, **Beyoncé hated having to be primped and preened** with ruffles, flounces and frills.



But although it was the talent section she loved, you couldn't win without entering the beauty part.

After one year of competitions, Beyoncé's bedroom was overflowing with trophies. Some were as tall as she was . . . one or two were even taller! She had so many that she could barely walk around her room without knocking one over.

Her sister's success must have puzzled little Solange because, one day, she took care of the annoying trophy problem by cheerfully taking apart every single one she could get her tiny hands on. When Beyoncé found her, Solange was sitting among the wreckage of at least 30 of them.



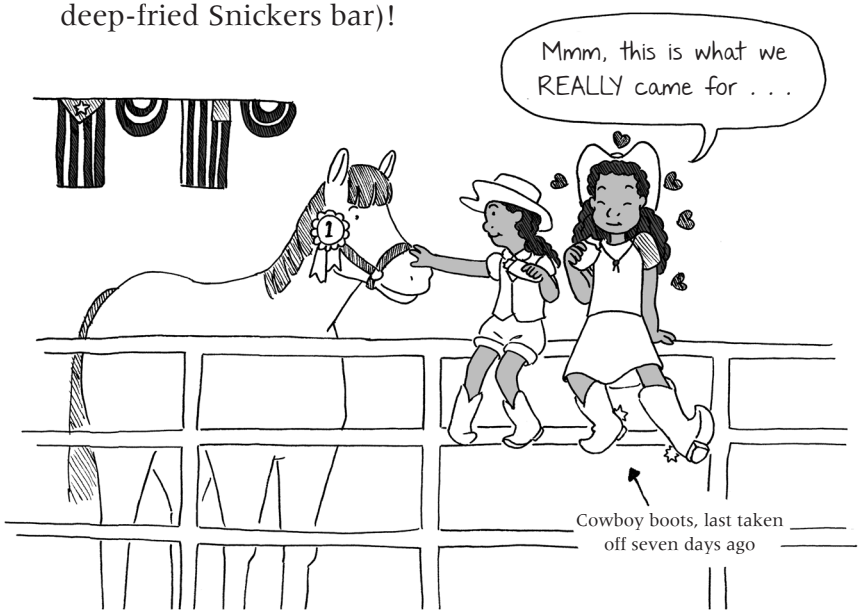
With the trophies piling up, though, Beyoncé's parents realized that nothing was going to stop their firstborn from following her dream. They quickly jumped on board and decided **they would do whatever they could to help her**.

Mathew spent time with her practising and perfecting her routines before her shows, while Tina searched for professional singing lessons. If Beyoncé was serious about this, she might as well get proper voice training.

Tina found a local coach called David Lee Brewer. When he first met the sweet little eight-year-old (wearing a frilly dress and matching socks), David was amazed. Beyoncé opened her mouth and nearly knocked him over with the power of her voice. There was no question about taking her on. At one point David even moved in, living over the Knowles's garage so **Beyoncé could have lessons on demand**. Even outside lessons, Beyoncé could belt out tunes all day long with the help of a karaoke machine.

Bedrooms And Backyards

Apart from singing and dancing, Beyoncé had all the comforts of a happy childhood: fun family Christmases; summer-long sleepovers with her favourite cousin, Angie; a pair of pink cowboy boots that her mum had to peel off her she loved them so; and trips to the local Livestock Show and Rodeo (along with the obligatory deep-fried Snickers bar)!



Mostly, though, Beyoncé and Solange were happiest putting on a show. They would practise together nearly every day. Beyoncé worked on her routines in her bedroom mirror **over and over again** until she was totally breathless. She wanted them as polished as Janet Jackson's.



Janet Jackson



Born 1966
Singer/songwriter,
dancer, actor, choreographer

Janet Jackson's big bro was none other than Michael Jackson, the King of Pop, but she had a massive following too. Her singing career skyrocketed in the 1980s and 1990s. With the help of big pop hits like 'Control' and 'Rhythm Nation', she sold over 180 million records. Beyoncé wasn't just amazed by her singing; her dancing was incredible too. Her performances were larger than life, her choreography spectacular.

Taking matters into their own hands, the sisters made a stage out of just about anything: sofa cushions, beds, coffee tables. Nothing was off limits. Then they'd perform together for anyone who would listen! Maybe it's because their personalities were so different – Solange was sassy and Beyoncé was sweet

– but there was never any real rivalry between them, they just did what they loved doing as often as they possibly could!

Most parents would have something to say about their kids jumping on the furniture. However, Tina and Mathew weren't like most parents. Knowing just how much both girls loved to perform, they did something amazing. They built an **out-of-this-world-sized deck** behind the house for Beyoncé and Solange to practise on.



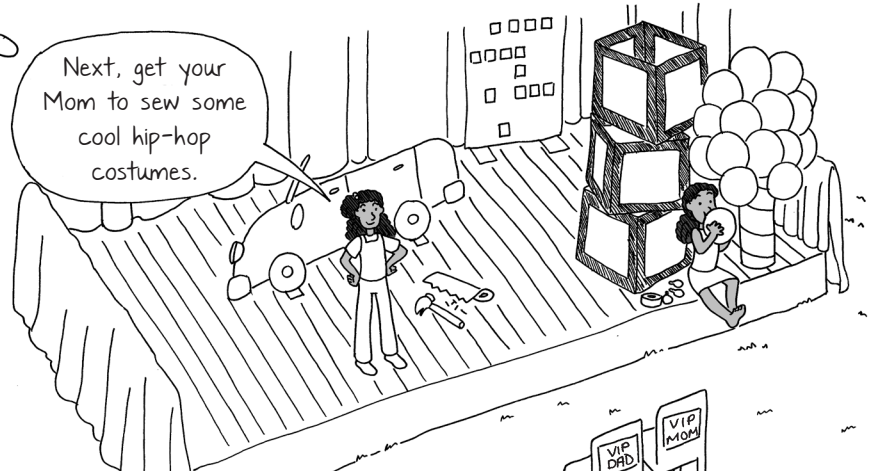
Beyoncé and Solange were thrilled. They used their deck to put on shows as often as they could.

Putting On A Show Explained





Use your powers of persuasion to get your parents to buy (or make) you a few stage props. You know, fireworks, huge fans . . . anything with a wow factor!



Finally, get all your friends and family members to come to the show. Aunts, uncles, cousins . . . Everyone is welcome . . . But everyone has to pay!



Beyoncé lived and breathed performing. She knew how to charm a crowd, blowing kisses to the audience and messing about onstage. **She was a natural**. She loved the sense of freedom she had onstage, and the singing was just so exhilarating.

But at the tender age of eight the local audiences were starting to seem too small to Beyoncé. While other kids her age were still dressing up, she was thinking about how to make her dreams come true . . . in the real world.

