To David
–A.B.

For all my fellow illustrators
who tell stories with their art
–D.R.

The illustrations in this book were made with watercolors, pen, and ink on Arches paper.

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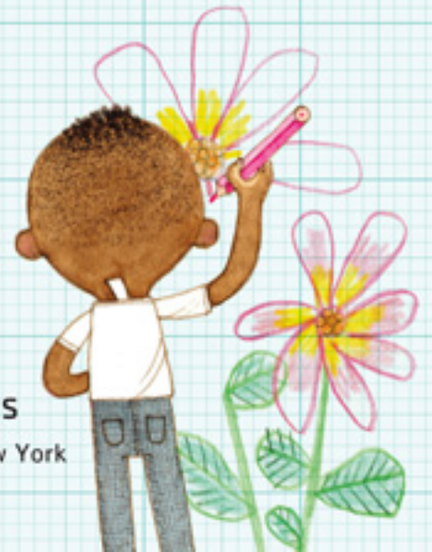


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AARON SLATER, ILLUSTRATOR

by Andrea Beaty
illustrated by David Roberts

Abrams Books for Young Readers, New York



At the end of the garden, in the soft, fading light,
when the day turns to dusk and the dusk into night,
the sweet scent of jasmine floats into the air
to mix with the music of laughter, and there . . .
Aaron D. Slater soaks it all in
with his flowery blanket tucked under his chin.
Words drift like music. Melodious. Mild.
A sweet summer song for a sweet summer child
who drifts off to sleep as the cottonwoods sway
at the end of the garden. At the end of the day.





It's summer, then summer, and summer once more,
and soon Aaron D. is a youngster of four.
The jasmine climbs higher. The roses have grown.
And Aaron himself has a spot of his own
for seedlings and saplings beside the slate walk,
which he illustrates daily with a bucket of chalk.



But what he loves most—what makes Aaron's heart sing—
is to listen to books in the old garden swing.
To write stories, he thinks, *is the greatest of things.*



But first, he must read. It's the best place to start,

and young Aaron wants to with all of his heart.

But the words are just squiggles, and try though he might,

even with help Aaron can't get it right.

"Why can't I do it? Why is it so hard?"

He goes back to drawing on slate in his yard.



It's schooltime at last!
In his sunflower socks
and poppy-red jacket and with matching lunchbox,
he marches to class with a teacher's bouquet
ready to read by the end of the day.