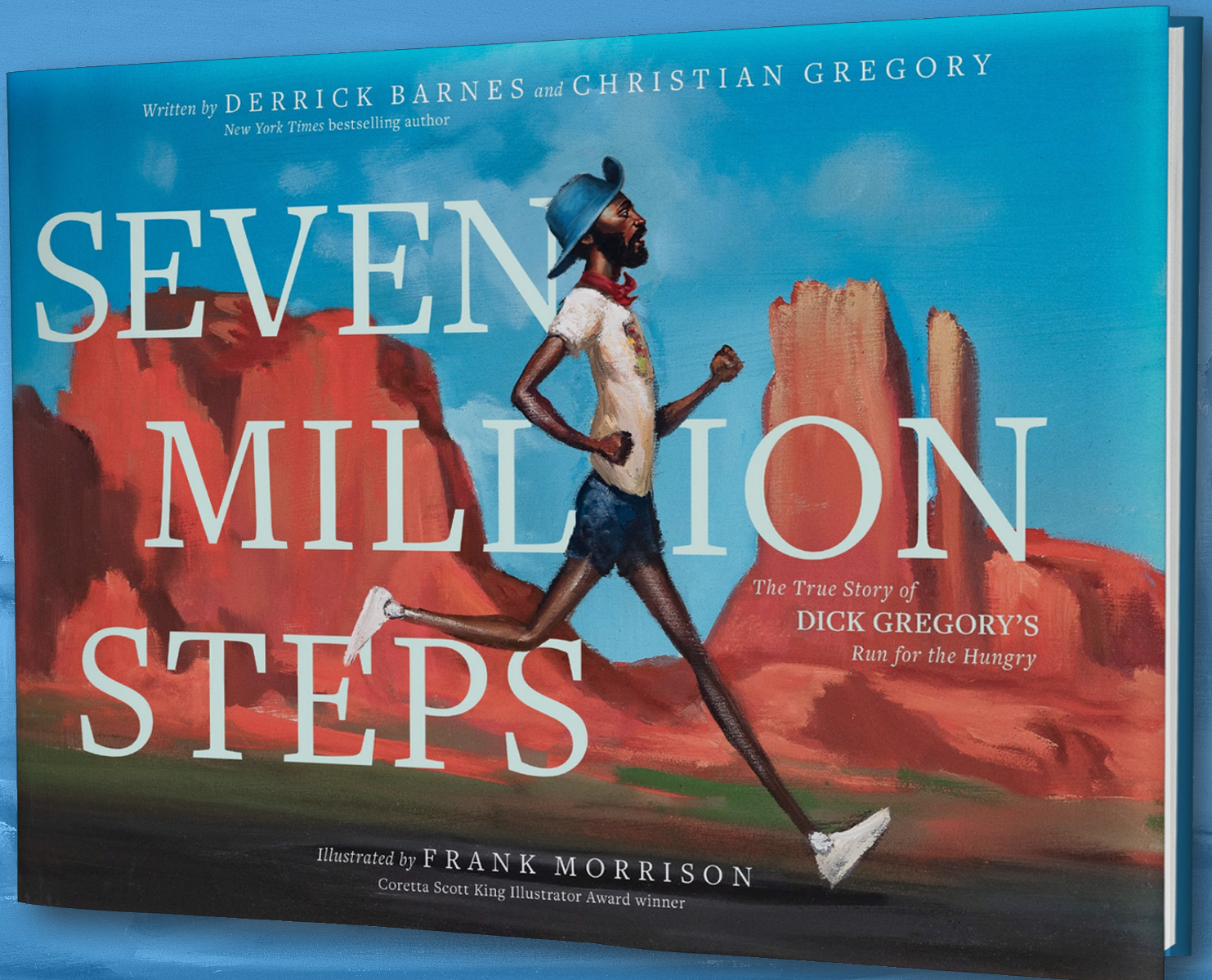
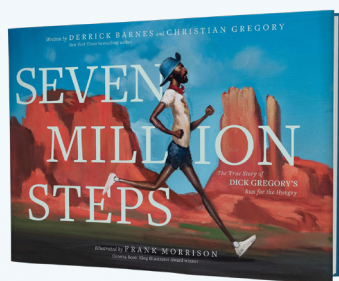


# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Art © 2026 by Frank Morrison

# ABOUT THE BOOK



Explore the question “What would you do if you had a wild idea to stand up for something you believe in?” through comedian and activist Dick Gregory’s unprecedented Food Run of 1976. This lyrical text features captivating illustrations and takes readers on a two-and-a-half-month journey from Los Angeles to New York in which Dick Gregory’s goal is to raise awareness about the epidemic of poverty, hunger, and food insecurity in the United States.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Photo by Epsilon Photography

**DERRICK BARNES** is the creator of the *New York Times* bestselling companion picture books *The King of Kindergarten* and *The Queen of Kindergarten*. His graphic novel *Victory. Stand! Raising My Fist for Justice* was a National Book Award finalist and won many other awards. He is also the author of the critically acclaimed, multi-award-winning picture book *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, which received a Newbery Honor, a Coretta Scott King Author Honor, the Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award, and the Kirkus Prize for Young Readers. Derrick currently lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, with his enchanting wife, Dr. Tinka Barnes, and their four sons, the Mighty Barnes Brothers. You can visit him online at [derrickdbarnes.com](http://derrickdbarnes.com).



Photo courtesy of the author

**CHRISTIAN GREGORY** is an Emmy Award-nominated producer, author, and entrepreneur. The eighth child of Dick and Lillian Gregory, he cofounded Dick Gregory Media with his father to preserve his iconic legacy. As executor of his father’s estate, he produced and guided a multitude of award-winning film and television, literary, and off-Broadway productions. Christian and his wife, Melissa, are based in Washington, DC.

# ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Photo by Jeremy Davis

**FRANK MORRISON** is the award-winning illustrator of many books for young readers, including *Jazzy Miz Mozetta* by Brenda C. Roberts, winner of the Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award for New Talent; Katheryn Russell-Brown’s *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Book; and Gene Barretta’s *Muhammad Ali*. Before becoming a children’s book illustrator and fine artist, Morrison toured the globe as a breakdancer. He lives in Georgia with his family. You can visit him online at [morrisongraphics.com](http://morrisongraphics.com).

# PREREADING QUESTIONS

1. After sharing the front and back matter of the book, ask students who they think the man on the cover is and why they think the book is called *Seven Million Steps*. Then, visually depict what seven million looks like; head to <https://populationeducation.org/visualizing-large-numbers-making-sense-of-the-massive/> for ideas.
2. As a class, discuss the word “hunger” and what it means—brainstorm potential definitions, what comes to mind when you hear the word “hunger,” associated words, emotions related to hunger, etc. Then, have students pair off and brainstorm some reasons why people may experience hunger. After reading the book, including the back matter, have a class discussion on how the man on the front cover and hunger are connected.
3. Explain to students that the authors use a form of writing called lyrical text, which is similar to poetry. Read the book aloud, and as they listen, have students note any descriptive language. Then, discuss what these examples look like in their minds.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Look closely at the children on the first three pages. Do they look happy or sad? What makes you think they might be feeling very sad or worried right now?
2. Think back to the class discussion of the word “hunger” (Prereading section). How does not having enough food make the families shown in the book feel inside their homes? What do you think Dick Gregory will do about it?
3. What does hunger look like in this family? What does it sound like? How do you think this makes the family feel? How do you know? How does it make you feel?
4. Review the section “Hunger and Food Insecurity: Key Differences and Impacts.” How are hunger and food insecurity different? As a class, define both terms. How do these concepts appear in the book?
5. Mr. Gregory is the adult in the story. He is leading work to fight hunger. What is Mr. Gregory’s plan? Who is he doing this for? How does he plan to do this? What does this tell you about Mr. Gregory?
6. How do the illustrations in the book make you feel? Choose one illustration and describe how it makes you feel and why. How do the words on that page add to how you feel?
7. Why does Mr. Gregory “feel like a machine?” What words do the authors use to describe why he feels this way?
8. The authors use an array of descriptive words to describe what Mr. Gregory sees as he runs across America. How does he describe what he sees? What does this make you visualize in your mind?
9. Running for so long is very hard work! What is one thing that Mr. Gregory does to help him remember why he started running in the first place? What does this tell you about him as a person?
10. Many people come out to see Mr. Gregory run. What do they do to show him that they are supporting his mission? What would you do to cheer him on?
11. Mr. Gregory’s goal is to run 50 miles a day, which could take anywhere from 12 to 25 hours if you are a beginner runner. Describe how Mr. Gregory feels while he runs. Does he face any hardships? How do the illustrations convey how he is feeling?
12. On page 33, Mr. Gregory reaches his destination. How do you think he feels at this moment? What motivated him to keep moving? What would motivate you to run for this long?
13. What do you think the authors and illustrator want you to learn from Mr. Gregory’s story? How could you apply it to your own life?

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

*Students will visualize the descriptive language and connect text to images.*

As a class, list descriptive phrases from the book. Then, have each student pick one phrase and imagine a short “movie scene” of that phrase in action. Ask: “What does the author want us to see, smell, hear, touch, or feel emotionally?” Then, students will draw a picture of a scene they visualized, using colors that match the feeling of the phrase.

## THE SCALE OF A MISSION

*Students will understand scale, distance, and the physical reality of the journey.*

Print out a map with a scale for each student, or one map to use as a class, and review the start (Los Angeles) and end point (New York City) of Mr. Gregory’s run. Draw a line representing the path of the run, and then using a piece of string and the map scale, measure the approximate distance of Mr. Gregory’s run. Discuss what 50 miles a day means and connect this to a local landmark 50 miles away.

Optional extension: Have students divide into groups and brainstorm three hardships from the book and three motivations that kept Mr. Gregory going. Write each hardship and motivation on a sticky note, and then place the notes along the path of the run on their map, visually representing Mr. Gregory’s struggles and support.

## “MY ONE STEP” ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN (ALL GRADES ADAPTATION)

*Students will connect Mr. Gregory’s large action to smaller, personal acts of advocacy.*

Derrick Barnes writes in his Author’s Note, “Regardless of your degree of education, wealth, age, or level of success, figuring out who you are and how you are going to use your God-given abilities to help others, to bring about a positive change in the world, is of the utmost importance.” Pick one of these activities to facilitate a discussion on how everyone can contribute a positive change in the world.

- **My Helping Heart Pledge (PreK–K):** Students will share with the class examples of things they did to help someone else and then brainstorm ways to help in the future. Each student will draw a picture of them helping someone else, write one word describing how this action made them feel, and complete the following sentence about how they can help in the future: “My one step to help is to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- **I’m Taking One Step (Grades 1–2):** Have students fold a piece of paper in half. On one side, they will draw and/or write a single, small action they can take to bring about a positive change in the world. On the other side, they will write **WHY** they chose that step (connecting to Mr. Gregory’s motivation).
- **A Step for Change (Grades 3 and up):** Students will write a short persuasive paragraph inspired by the content of the book. They must identify a problem (hunger, unkindness, environmental crises etc.) and propose **one specific, impactful action** they can take as individuals to contribute a positive change, and **one specific, impactful action** their school or community can take. Encourage students to use strong, descriptive language like the authors of *Seven Million Steps*.