

# WHAT MAKES A NEIGHBORHOOD?

Kids in the book all live near the school, but each street has its own characteristics, some positive and some negative. Read how Jason Reynolds described some of the streets and houses below.

Make lists of what was good or not so good in each place. What about your own neighborhood? Do any of the descriptions remind you of where you live?

If you had to describe your neighborhood to someone, what would you include? Use a blank piece of paper in your kit and write a description of your neighborhood. Use lots of descriptive words, like Jason Reynolds.



All the houses on Fatima's way home look the same, like graham cracker houses, like a box with a triangle on top, with big windows and a front room no one sits in. Fatima writes, "I don't know any of the people who live in any of them. I wonder if any of them see me walk past every day with this notebook. I wonder if all the houses are empty like mine. People have to work to pay bills. Graham cracker houses cost a lot of money. So does green grass and bushes and people who cut that grass and trim those bushes."

When Cynthia's grandfather closed his liquor store, the apartment complex tore it down and build a playground. She and her mother live in a two bedroom apartment on the fourth floor with her grandfather. They share a bedroom, which means most nights because her always exhausted mother sleeps like a woman fighting a bear, Cynthia sleeps on the couch.

Most people tighten up when they walk down Chestnut. Tuck tails and tuck chains. But for Kenzi and Simeon, this was where they could let loose. Where they could run and slap the street signs pretending to dunk... Where they could open random doors of random shops and speak to the owners—Mrs. Wilson's beauty supply store (Tell your mama I got new wigs!) or Mr. Chase's hardware store (Your daddy get the sink to stop leaking yet?). But nowhere was better than Fredo's.

Marston was a street lined with houses that Jasmine's mother always said had been around for a long time, an old neighborhood. In newer communities every house looked like the last house, a choir of homes dressed in the same robes, singing the same song... which makes a boring song. But Marston Street was lined with a little bit of everything... old enough to look lived in. TJ's house had no gate, no fence, a patch of dry grass. The house was small and wooden like it had been built without machines, no bulldozers, just human hands and love.