

# JAMES FINDS THE



# BEAT

Ty Chapman • illustrated by Anastasia Magloire Williams

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free spirit  
PUBLISHING®



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For my mother, who always encouraged  
my creativity.  
—Ty



For Ryan, the beat of my heart.  
—Anastasia

The moment Mr. Brown writes the math problem on the board, I'm sure I know the answer. I start to raise my hand, but then I get all shaky, and my chest feels full of bumblebees.

$$2,528 \div 8 =$$

$$734 \times 2 =$$

6



This happens to me all the time. I'm great at tests and homework, and playing games in gym class, but talking to people makes my stomach do gymnastics.



## Dearest Reader,

I hope you've enjoyed James's story. It's very personal to me. The inspiration for writing *James Finds the Beat* came from my own experiences as a young person. Growing up, I was a pretty anxious kid. While I loved making friends and joining different activities at school, I sometimes had a hard time expressing myself, and I *often* had a hard time with how loud and chaotic a school setting can be. Much like James, it was difficult for me to deal with the noise of a lunchroom, and I had terrible anxiety during class time.

Throughout my childhood and into my adult life, music has always been my sanctuary. Whenever I feel overwhelmed in loud public spaces, I pop in my headphones and find comfort and safety in rap music. Additionally, like James and Aria, I've always been best at expressing my thoughts and emotions through art. Art—especially writing—is a way for me to process difficult thoughts and emotions. It helps me grow as a human being.

My hope is that in reading this book, other kids like James and Aria—like *me*—will see themselves on the page. That this story encourages you to express yourself through art and find joy and safety in whatever inspires you. My hope is that this book reminds you that your voice is so important. And that you can and should use it however feels best, no matter what other people have to say about your passions.

My hope, young reader, is that you find your own beat.  
That it chases away the bumblebees.

That you never let that passion go.

And who knows? Maybe you'll find your own crew to rock with along the way.

—Ty



## Questions to Think and Talk About

- Why do you think James felt so nervous at school?
- Why did Mr. Brown get upset with James?
- What could James have done differently? What do you think you would do in his situation?
- What could Mr. Brown have done differently?
- Do you ever get a nervous bumblebee feeling? If so, what situations, places, or times make you feel that way?
- What helps you feel calmer when you're nervous?
- Do you, or one of your friends, get bothered by loud noises? How can we help our friends and classmates when they're feeling overwhelmed?
- Aria gave James a turn to rap when no one else wanted him to. Why do you think she did that?
- Who do you like to laugh and joke with?

JAMES!

