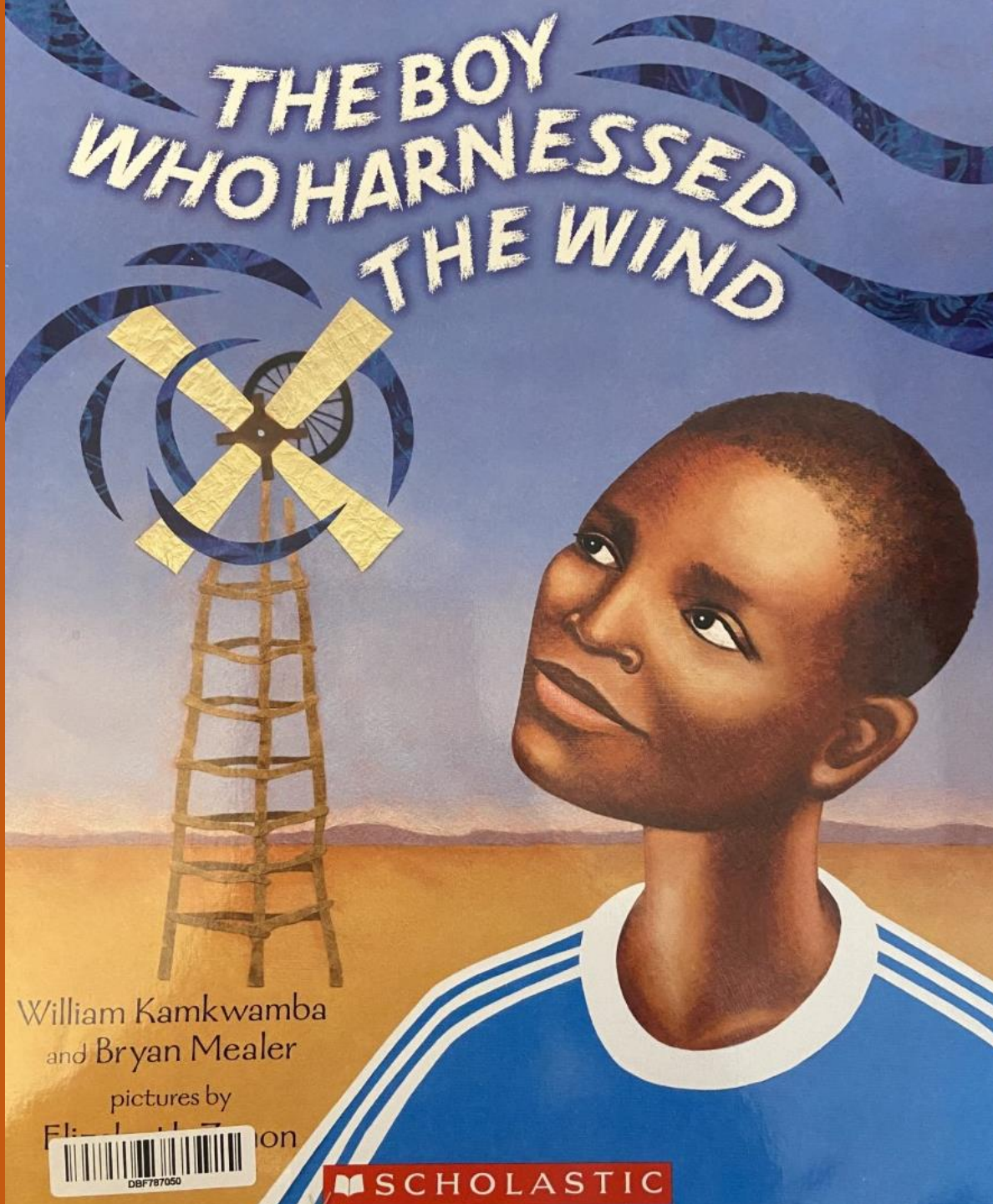


# THE BOY WHO HARNESSSED THE WIND



William Kamkwamba  
and Bryan Mealer

pictures by

Elisabetta Dami



 SCHOLASTIC



In a small village in Malawi, where people had no money for lights,  
nightfall came quickly and hurried poor farmers to bed.  
But for William, the darkness was best for dreaming.



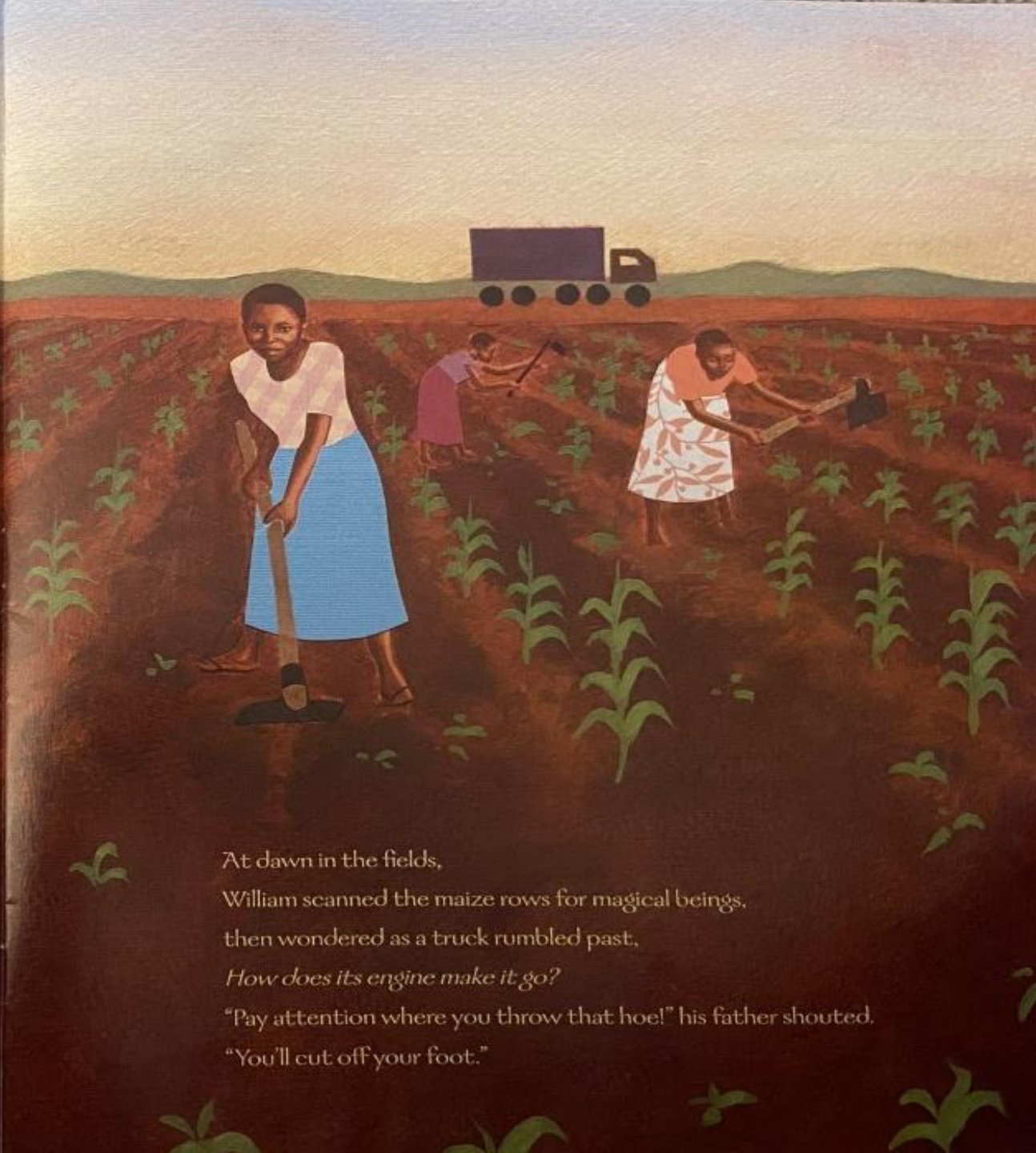
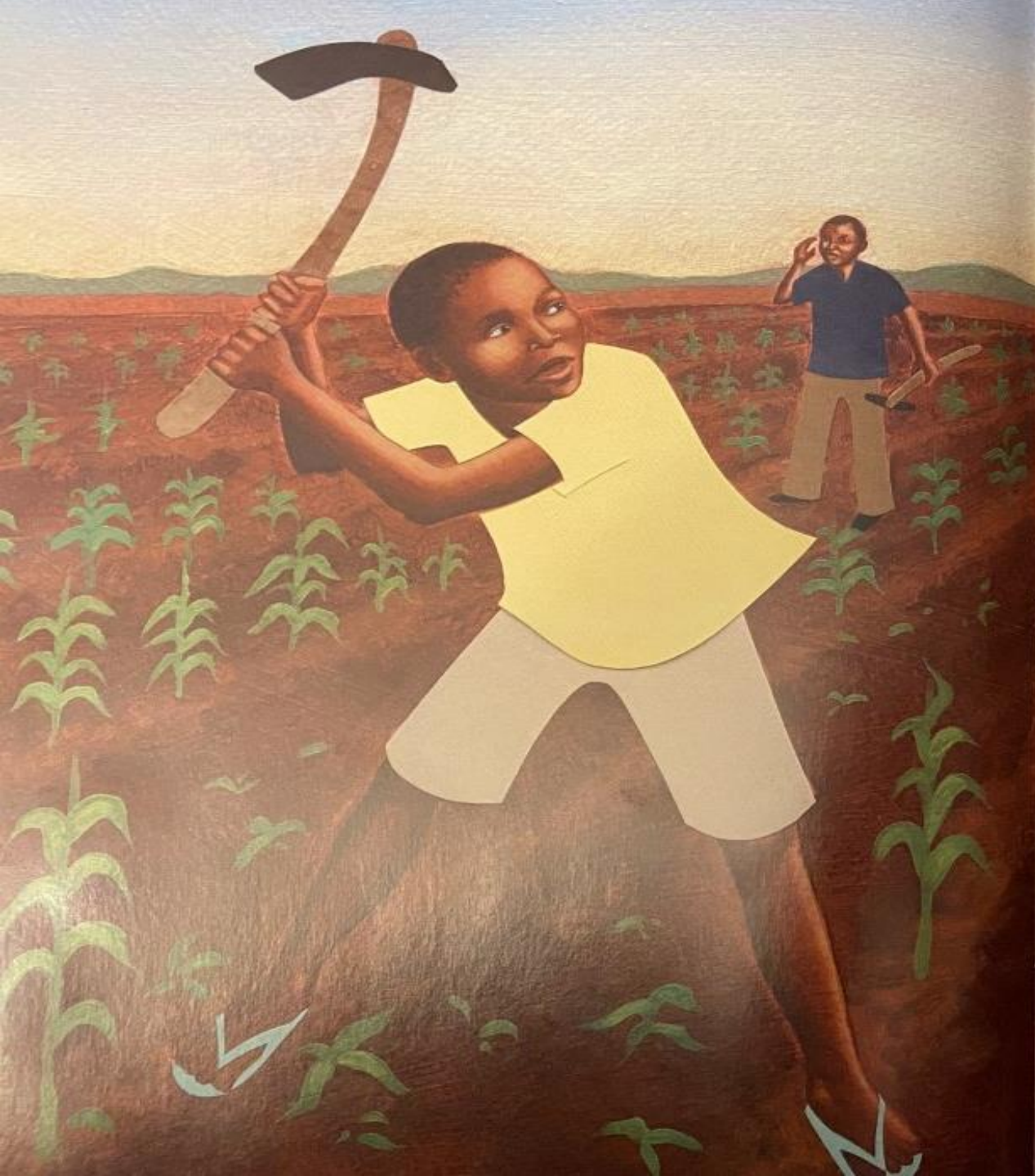




He dreamed of building things and taking them apart,  
like the trucks with bottle-cap wheels parked under his bed  
and pieces of radios that he'd crack open and wonder,  
*If I can hear the music, then where is the band?*

His grandpa's tales of magic also whispered in the pitch-black of his room.  
Witch planes passed through the window while ghost dancers twirled  
around the room, as if a hundred men were inside their bodies.





At dawn in the fields,  
William scanned the maize rows for magical beings,  
then wondered as a truck rumbled past,  
*How does its engine make it go?*  
“Pay attention where you throw that hoe!” his father shouted.  
“You’ll cut off your foot.”



For all its power over dancers and flying things,  
magic could not bring the rain.  
Without water, the sun rose angry each morning and  
scorched the fields, turning the maize into dust.  
Without food, Malawi began to starve.







Soon William's father gathered the children and said,  
"From now on, we eat only one meal per day. Make it last."  
In the evenings, they sat around the lantern and ate their handful,  
watching hungry people pass like spirits along the roads.



Money also disappeared with the rain.  
"Pepani," his father said. "I am sorry. You will have to drop out of school."  
Now William stood on the road and watched the lucky students pass,  
alone with the monster in his belly and the lump in his throat.  
For weeks he sulked under the mango tree,  
until he remembered the library down the road,  
a gift from the Americans.



He found science books filled with brilliant pictures.  
With his English dictionary close by, William put together  
how engines moved those big trucks,  
and how radios pulled their music from the sky.  
But the greatest picture of all was a machine  
taller than the tallest tree with blades like a fan.



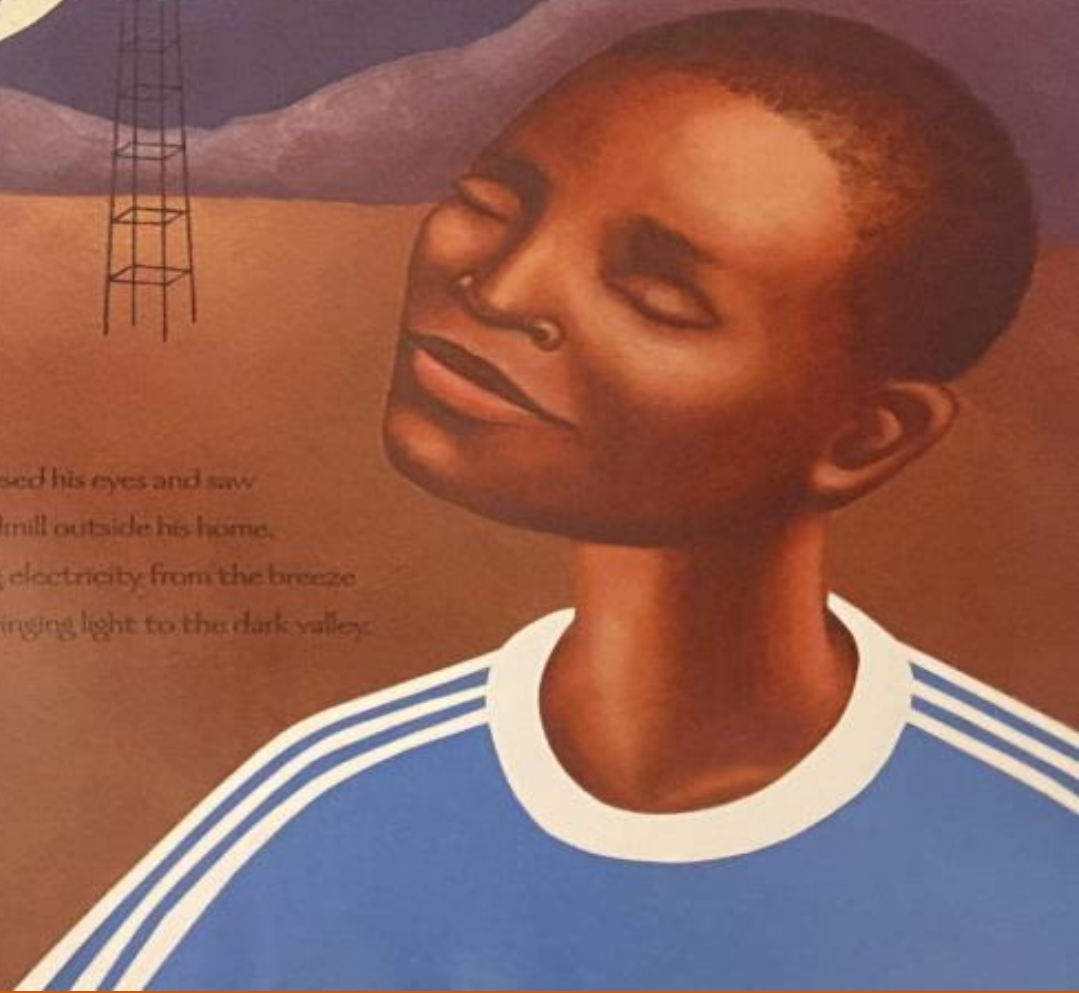
A giant pinwheel?  
Something to catch magic?




Slowly, he built the sentence:  
"Windmills can produce electricity and pump water."



He closed his eyes and saw  
a windmill outside his home,  
pulling electricity from the breeze  
and bringing light to the dark valley.







A two-page spread from a children's book. The top half of both pages shows a stylized illustration of a windmill with dark brown wooden lattice legs. The background is a light, textured sky. In the foreground, there are several green maize plants with yellow cobs. The bottom half of the pages shows a brown, textured ground with several blue and grey teardrop-shaped water droplets scattered across it. The text is written in a simple, sans-serif font on the left page, and a single line of text is on the right page.

He saw the machine drawing cool water from the ground,  
sending it gushing through the thirsty fields,  
turning the maize tall and green,  
even when farmers' prayers for rain went unanswered.  
This windmill was more than a machine.  
It was a weapon to fight hunger.

*"Magetsi a mphepo," he whispered:  
I will build electric wind.*





In the junk yard, pieces appeared  
like rusted treasures in the tall grass.  
A tractor fan. Some pipe.  
And bearings and bolts that required every muscle to remove.

"Tonga!" he'd shout to the birds and spiders,  
holding up his prize.  
But as William dragged his metals home,  
people called out,  
"This boy is *misala*. Only crazy people play with trash!"





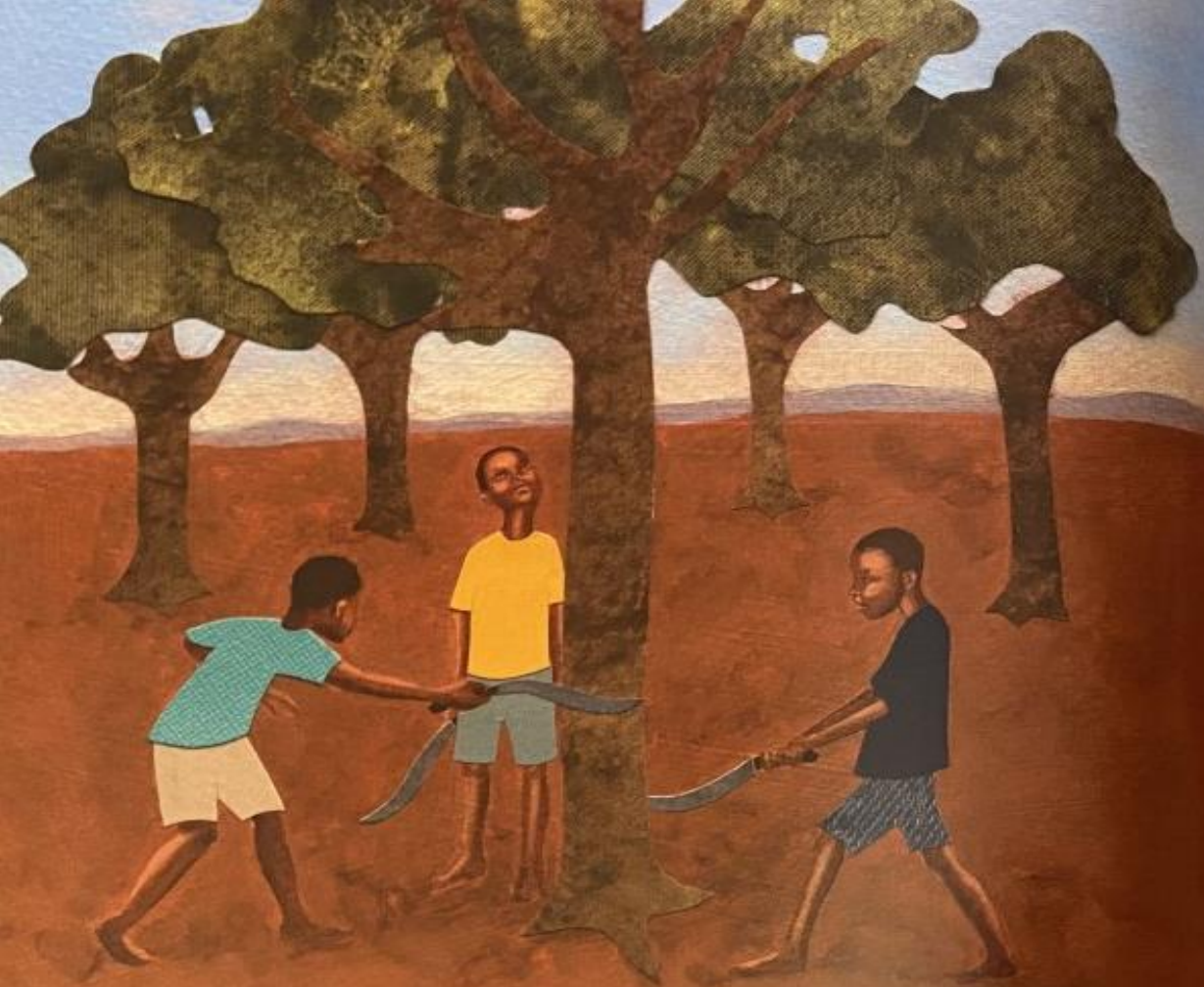
After many weeks, William arranged his pieces in the dirt:  
a broken bicycle, rusted bottle caps, and plastic pipe,  
even a small generator that powered a headlight on a bike.



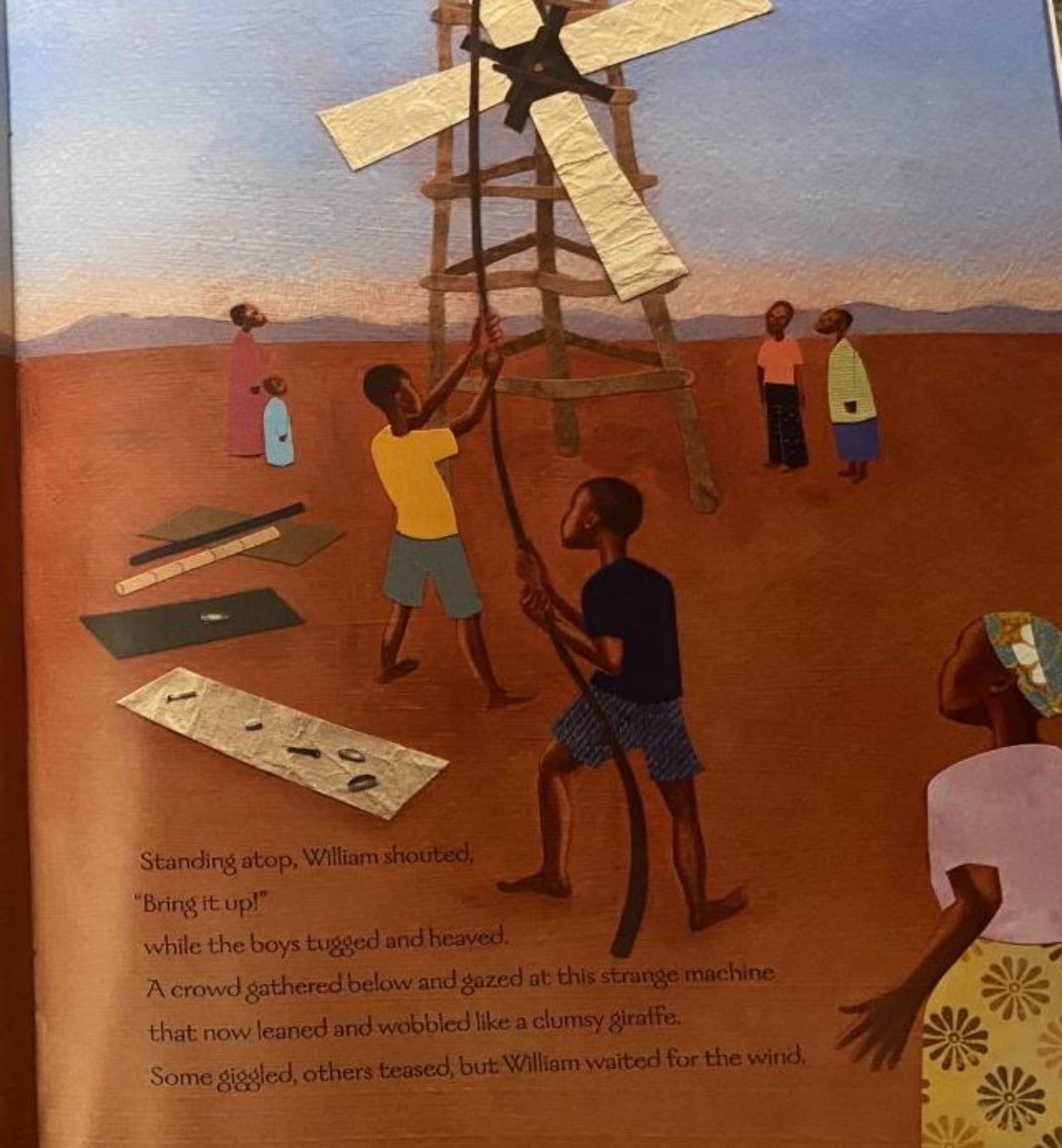
For three days, he bolted, banged, and tinkered  
while chickens squawked and dogs barked  
and neighbors shook their heads, saying,  
“What’s *misala* doing now?”







His cousin Geoffrey and best friend Gilbert soon appeared.  
"Mulibwanji," they greeted. "Can we help with electric wind?"  
"Grab your pangas and follow me," he said, and took them into the forest.  
Together, they swung their sharp blades into the trunks of blue gum trees,  
then hammered them together to make the tower.



Standing atop, William shouted,  
"Bring it up!"  
while the boys tugged and heaved.  
A crowd gathered below and gazed at this strange machine  
that now leaned and wobbled like a clumsy giraffe.  
Some giggled, others teased, but William waited for the wind.



Like always, it came,

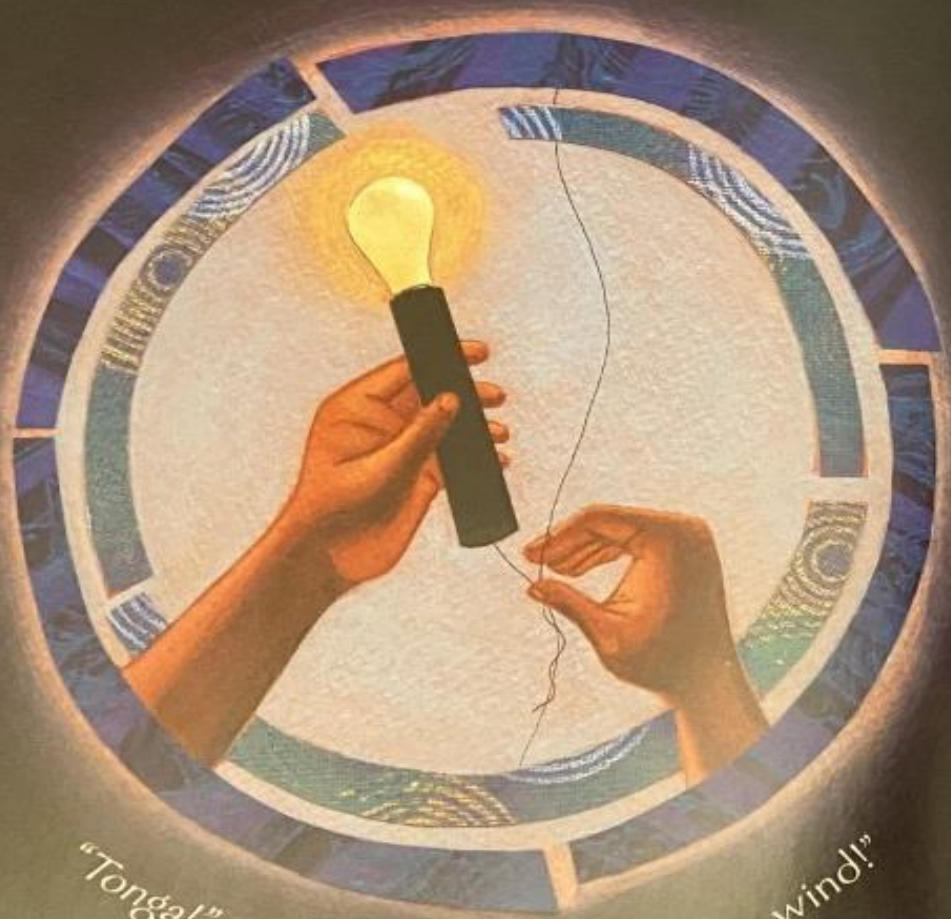
first a breeze, then a gusting gale.

The tower swayed and the blades spun round.

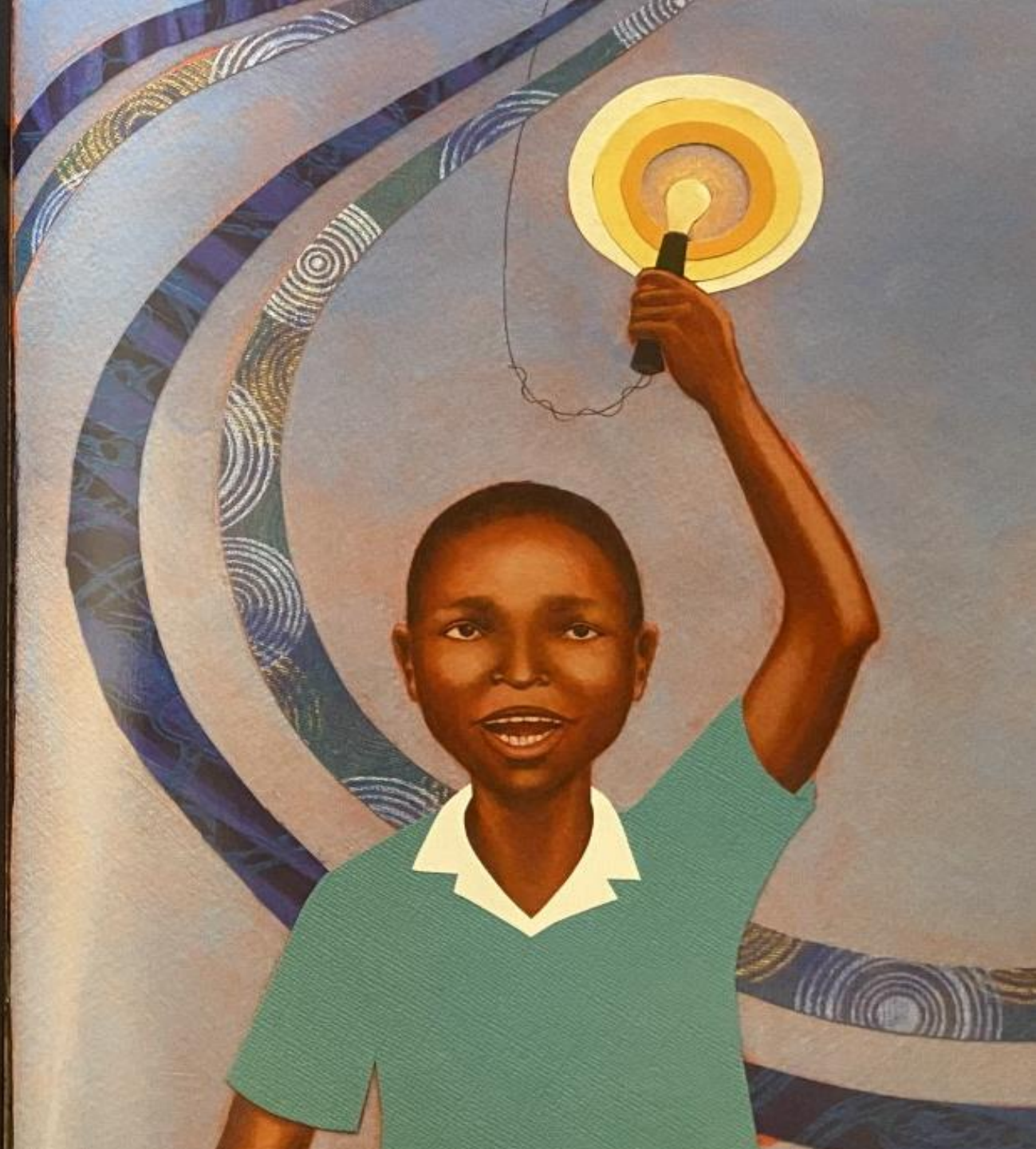




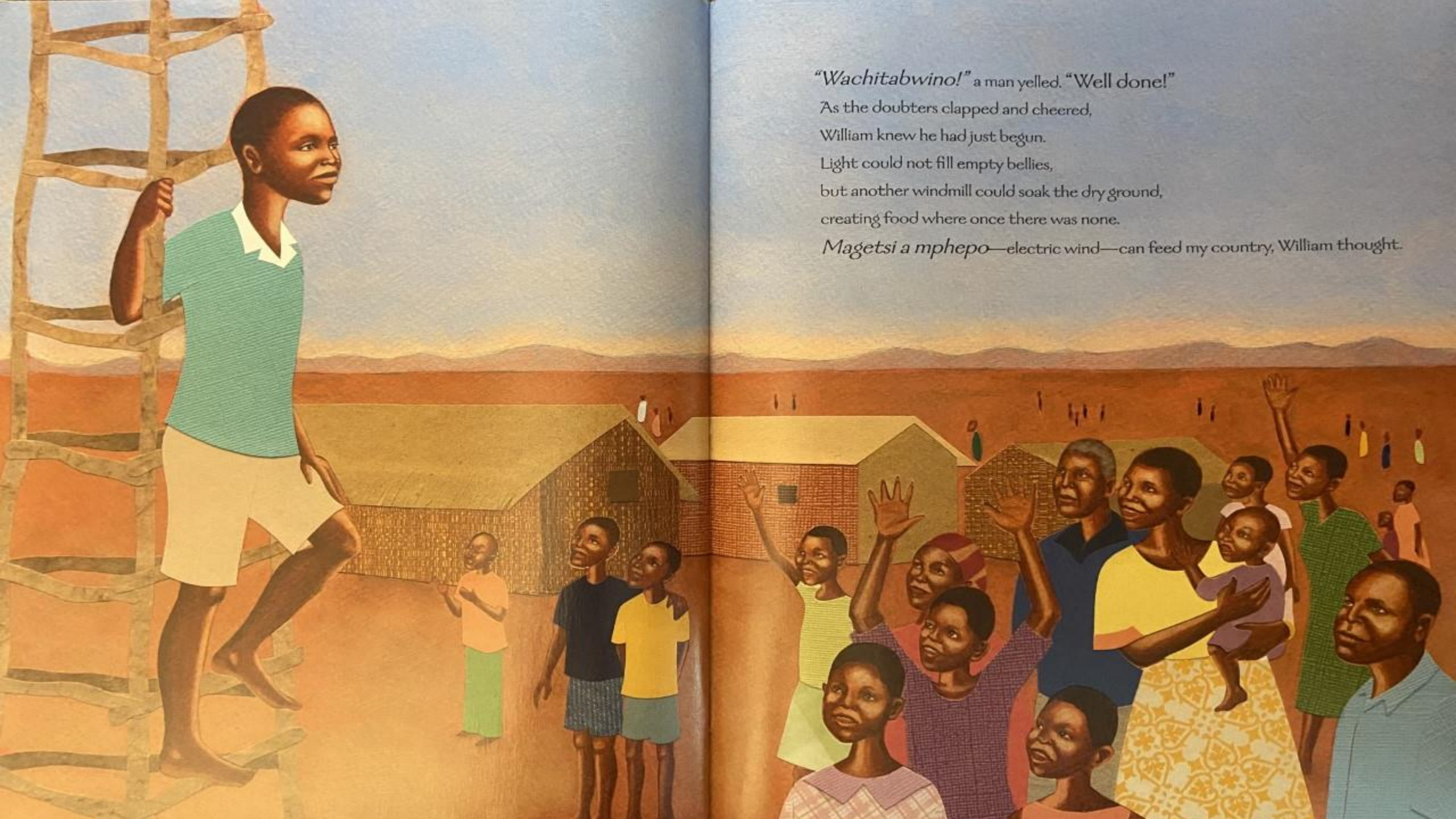
With sore hands once slowed by hunger and darkness  
William connected wires to a small bulb, which flickered at first,  
then surged as bright as the sun.



"Tonga!" he shouted. "I have made electric wind!"







*"Wachitabwino!"* a man yelled. "Well done!"

As the doubters clapped and cheered,

William knew he had just begun.

Light could not fill empty bellies,

but another windmill could soak the dry ground,

creating food where once there was none.

*Magetsì a mphèpo*—electric wind—can feed my country, William thought.



And that was the strongest magic of all.

