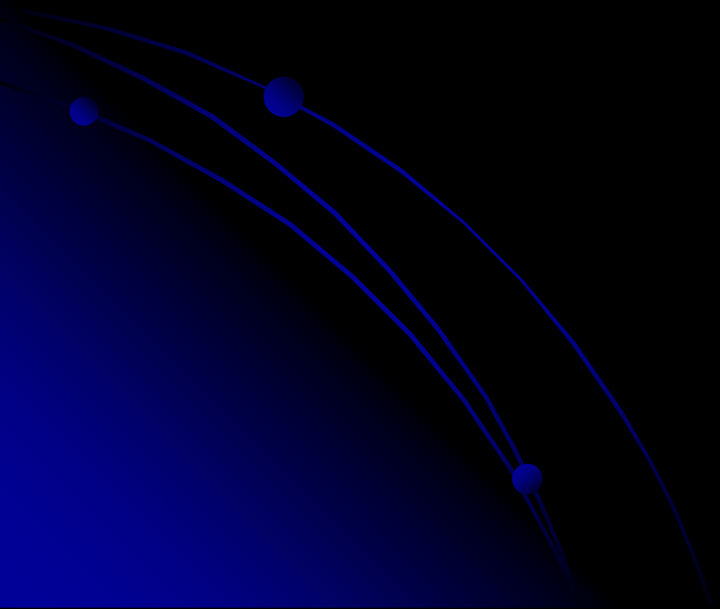


<http://www.public.asu.edu/~jblasin/>



"But I'm Not Really a Reader': Selections and Strategies to Change Students' Reading Identities"

- * Books Guaranteed to Pique Students' Interest
- * Strategies for Transitioning Students from Non-readers into Avid Readers
- * Helping Students to Find and Join their Reading Affinity Group
- * Setting Young Readers on the Ladder to More Sophisticated Selections

Ray Villareal, from Arte Público Press and Piñata Books

http://app1.kuhf.org/houston_public_radio-news-display.php?articles_id=1219145999



Ray Villareal, a native of Dallas, Texas, and one of nine children, received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Southern Methodist University in 1981. Ten years later he completed his Masters of Liberal Arts degree from the same university. He has taught in the Dallas Independent School District for twenty-six years and currently works as an instructional reading coach





It was while he was teaching sixth grade that Ray got the idea for his young adult novel, *My Father, the Angel of Death*. Ray was concerned that every time he took his class to the library, he would observe a number of his students, boys in particular, futilely scanning the library walls in search of something to read and not finding anything they connected with. In the classroom, however, the kids constantly talked about WWE wrestling on TV. So Ray decided to give them what they wanted—a fictional story about what it might be like to be the son of a wrestling superstar. He wrote it specifically to target the male reluctant reader. (www.latinoteca.com)

***My Father, the Angel of Death* tells the story of a boy whose father is the ominous, black-clad, skeleton face behemoth, the ACW wrestling heavyweight champion, the Angel of Death.**



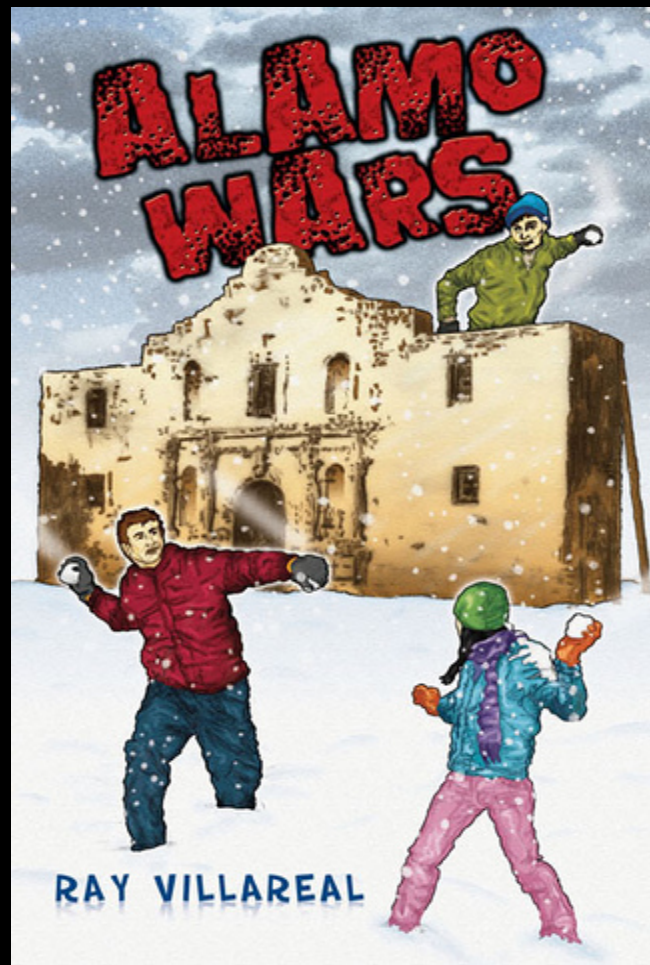
Out of the fog billowing from the regions of the Netherworld steps a gigantic, ominous figure dressed in black. A white, skeleton face peers from the long, hooded cloak draping his massive frame, and in one hand, he clutches a wood-handled scythe with a razor-sharp blade. It's ... the Angel of Death, the American Championship Wrestling Heavyweight Champion! But one of the most popular wrestlers on Monday Night Mayhem is also Mark Baron, Jesse Baron's father.



Jesse has all sorts of problems. His father's celebrity status and frequent road trips are the source of marital strife. Everywhere the family moves, and they've moved a lot, Jesse finds new friends who really only like him because his father, and everyone wonders why Jesse isn't a seventh grade version of his macho father.

Then one day, Jesse decides to stand up to a gang of bullies who have been taking lunch money from girls at school, and his first love begins.

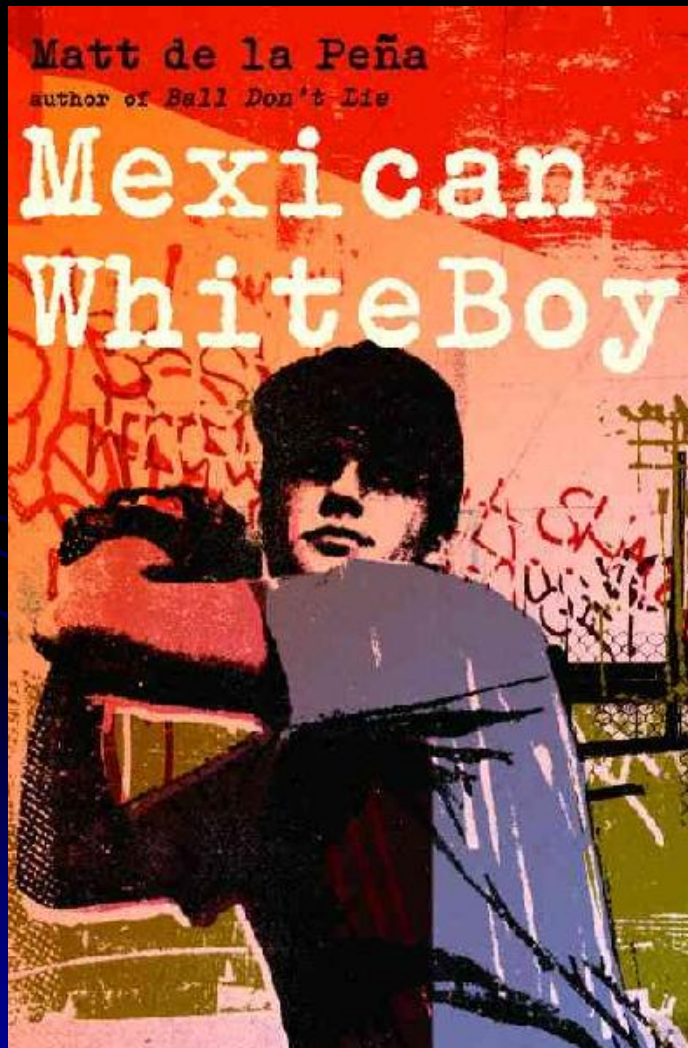




When “Miss Mac” (Ms. MacKeever) really does “die on the job” after 51 years of service, as everyone joked she would one day do, the school decides to put on her original play about the Alamo. No one can foresee how much controversy this will cause. (Seventh grade Golden Gloves champion Marco Dias wins the part of Jim Bowie). But his friend Raquel, an undocumented immigrant, calls him a sell-out because she believes the play makes heroes out of the people who stole her ancestors' land. And Sandy Martinez, Miss Mac's much younger replacement, finds the Mexican characters' dialogue not only politically incorrect but downright offensive.

(www.amazon.com)

Mexican White Boy, by Matt de la Peña

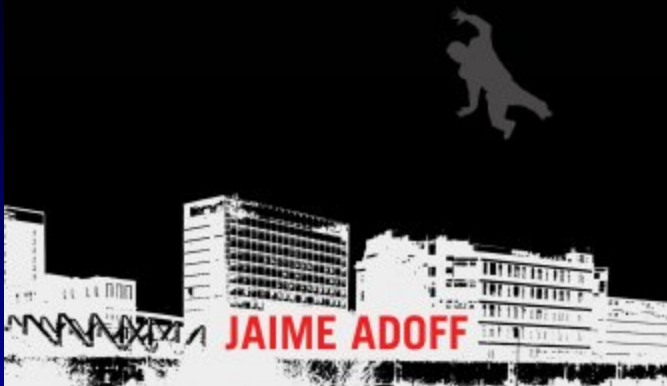


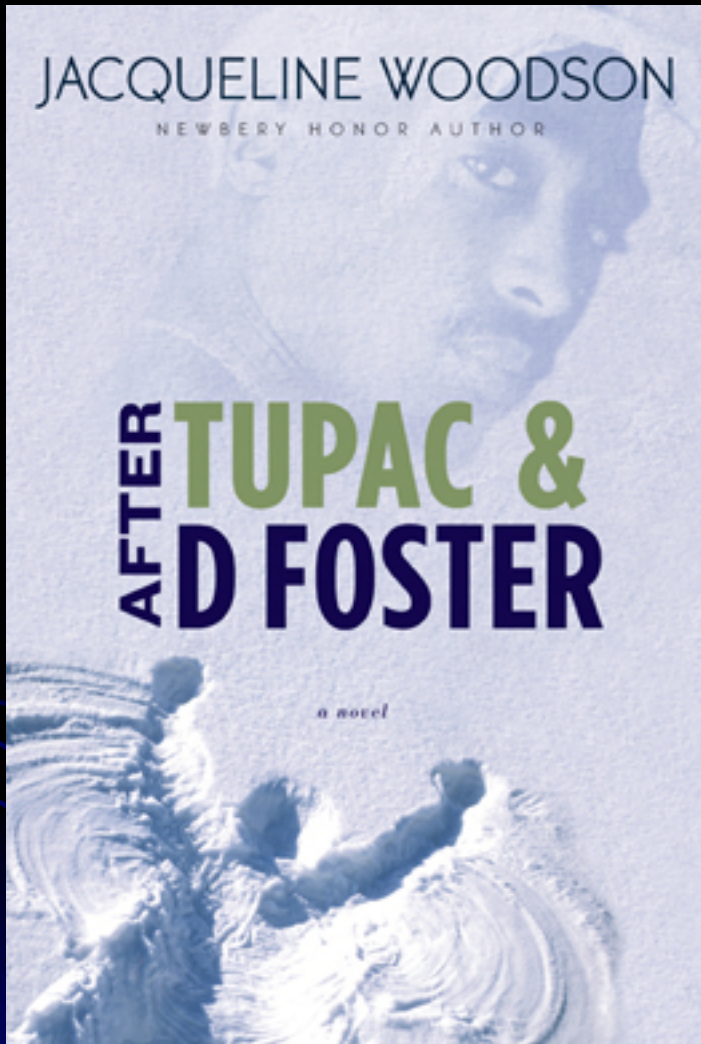
- In his latest novel for young adults Matt de la Peña describes the life altering summer of Danny Lopez, a bi-racial high school student spending the summer with his father's relatives in a low-income, predominately Mexican town, just north of the Mexican border near San Diego, California. Danny has moved a great deal in his young adult life, but grew up mostly in an upper-middle class neighborhood in San Diego and now attends a prestigious, private high school where he is one of only a few students of color. His father is Mexican and his mother is Caucasian American and Danny spends much of his time trying to come to terms with feeling in between two cultures and two ethnicities. When he is at school, he feels too brown and when he is around his Mexican relatives, he feels too white. Unfortunately, the adults in Danny's life continually let him down and fail to provide the support and guidance he desperately seeks. (Jessica Early, JAAL, March 2009)

So many young people are trying to figure life out and find themselves so very alone and so very hopeless.

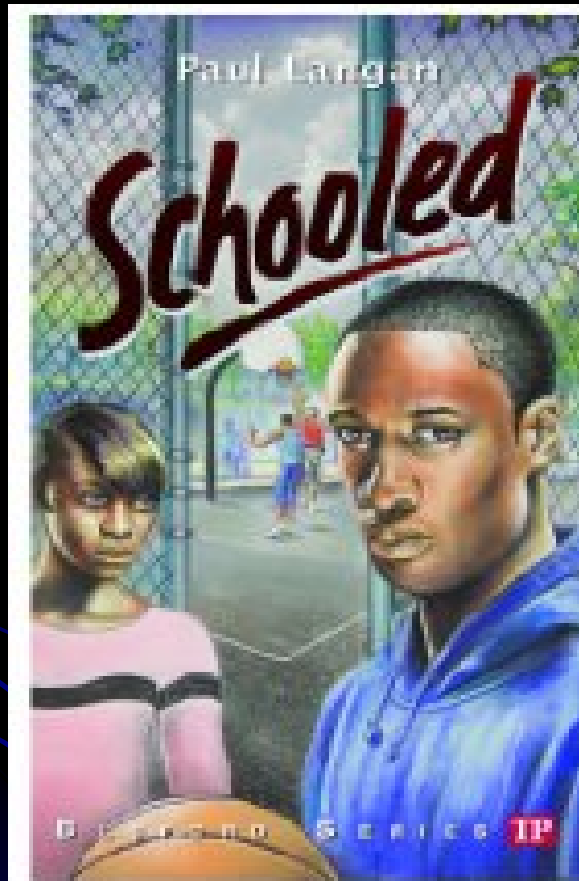
the death of **JAYSON PORTER**

- Jamie Adoff is very adept at portraying the reality that many kids face. Jayson Porter's life is terrible; it's depressing and rather hopeless, so much so that suicide is a very viable option to end his pain. But what if you attempted to suicide and then had a second chance.





When D Foster steps off the bus and strolls into their lives one day, Neeka is not sure she wants a new girl in the mix, but a shared love of Tupac and a passion for double-dutch the girls unites them. “Three the hard way” becomes their trademark as they prepare to face the years ahead together. Their love of Tupac brings them as close as they can be and provides them with hours of conversation and entertainment. This music brings meaning and clarity to many aspects of life for the girls. Together they start their search for their “Big Purpose” in life. (JAAL March, Bridgette Stahn)

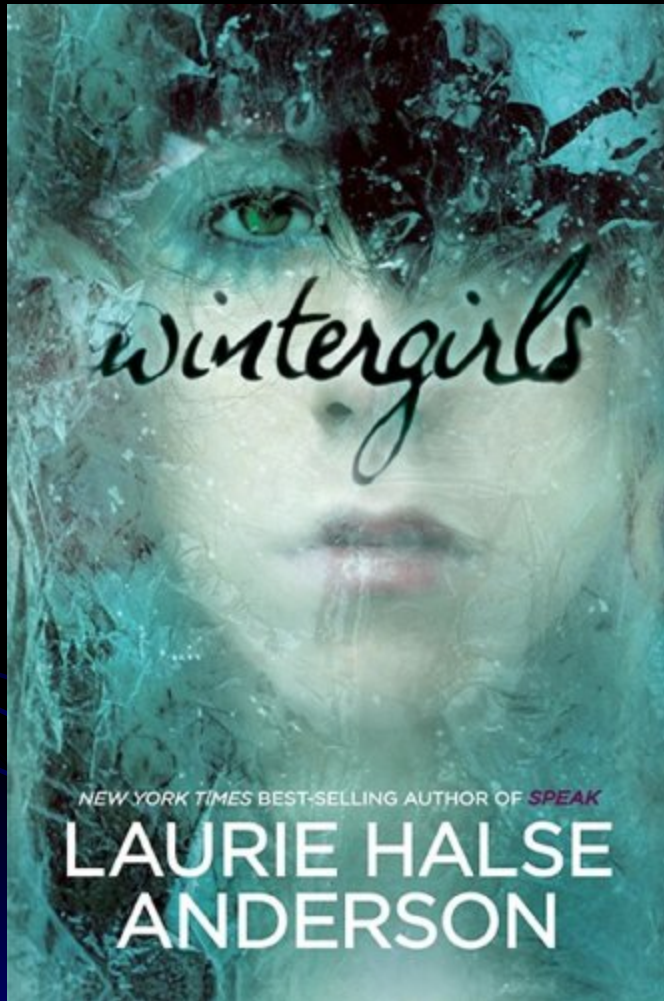


There's no backing down for Lionel Shephard. With a dream of joining the NBA, all he wants to do at Bluford High is play basketball. But everyone's trying to stop him. His father thinks basketball is a waste of time; his teachers don't know he can barely read and threaten to fail him; and his dropout friend Jamar wants him to quit school. Unsure where to turn, Lionel must make a choice. Will he pursue his dream or get caught in a nightmare?

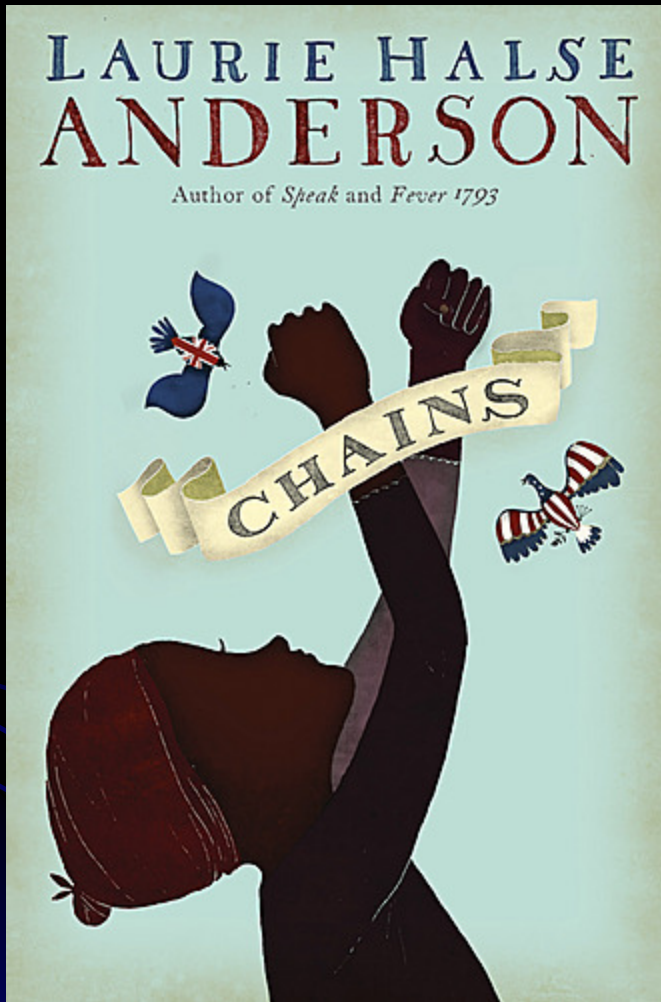
- Laurie Halse Anderson, just won the ALA's Margaret Adams Award for an author's work in "helping adolescents become aware of themselves and addressing questions about their role and importance in relationships, society, and in the world." This award goes to an author for a body of work and not just one book.

(<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/margaretaedwards/margaretedwards.cfm>)



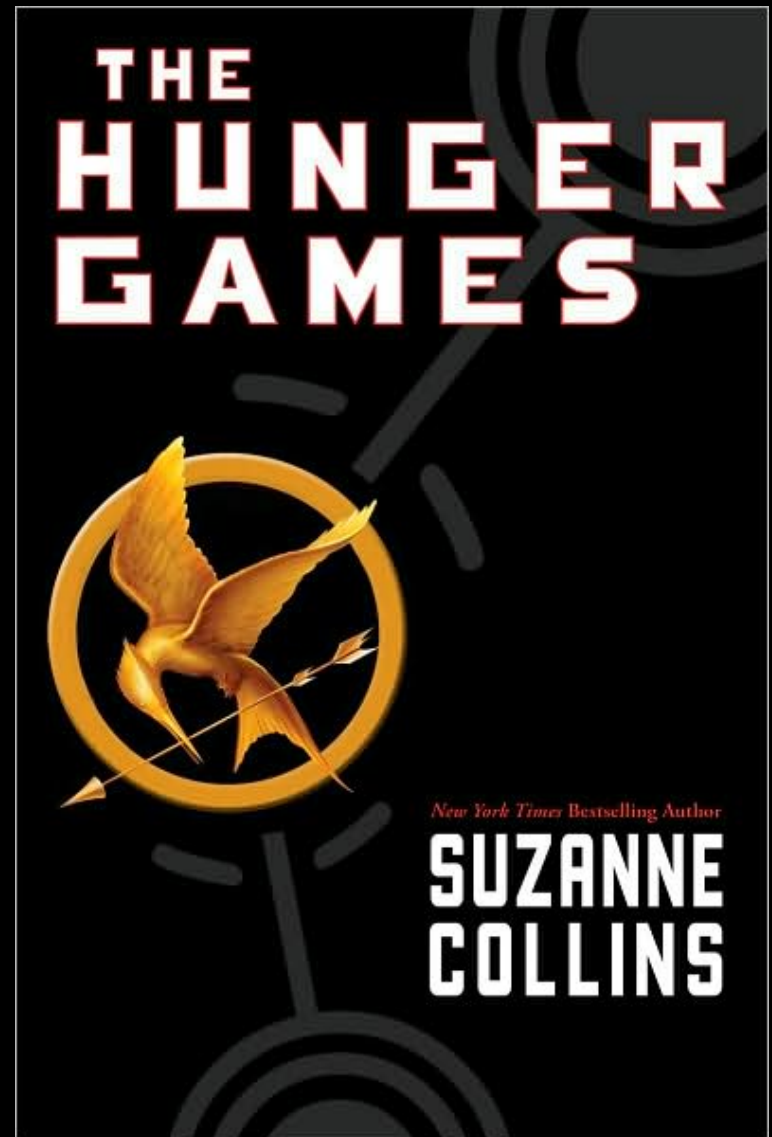


Lia is not only anorexic but also a cutter. Lia's friend, Cassie, has already died from starving herself and Lia may not be far behind. Cassie's lonely ghost seems to call to her to join her. This book is getting rave reviews. It just came out a few days ago and it's already selling like crazy.



One of Laurie's latest books, *Chains*, is a Revolutionary War slave narrative about thirteen-year-old Isabel who has been promised freedom upon the death of their owner. When Isabel and her sister, Ruth, become the property of a mean couple, the Locktons, British sympathizers who have no intention of honoring the promise, Isabel becomes a spy for the Patriots, informing them of the British invasion plans. One of the first things she learns is that when neither side can be trusted.

One of the hottest books right now is *Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins. (28 weeks on NYT Bestseller List)





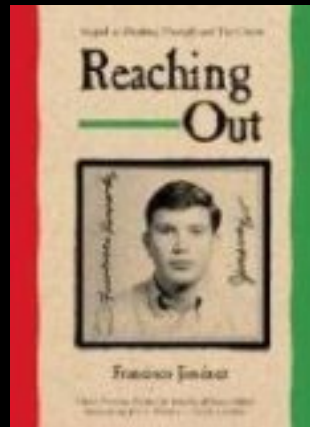
Dave is a poor vampire, working the night shift at the 24-hour convenience store run by his vampire master, Lord Radu Arisztidescu, who thinks Dave is pretty much a wuss as a bloodsucker. Truth is, Dave would rather steal his nutrition from a blood bank than kill the innocent. But this choice leaves him weak and vulnerable to more predatory types like alpha-vampire surfer dude Wes, who's making a move on Rosa, the Latina gothic babe Dave has his eye on. There's plenty of humor with Dave's friend Jerome acting as a *Clerks*-like foil, coming over to Dave's work at night when the black-eyeliner crowd comes by (the Running of the Goths). (www.amazon.com)

YALSA 2009 Great Graphic Novels for Teens Award

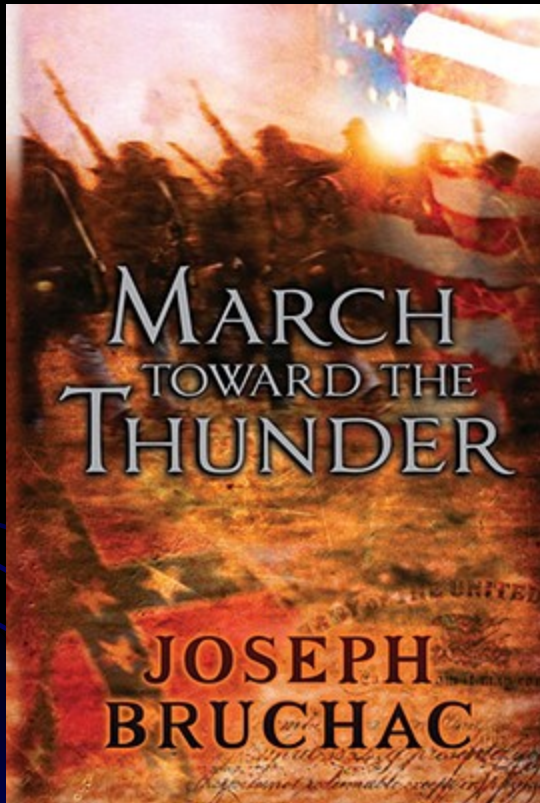


Who knew Rapunzel had it in her? All those years spent locked away in that tower, waiting for some handsome young prince to come along and rescue her --- wait, she didn't need a man to get out of that predicament?

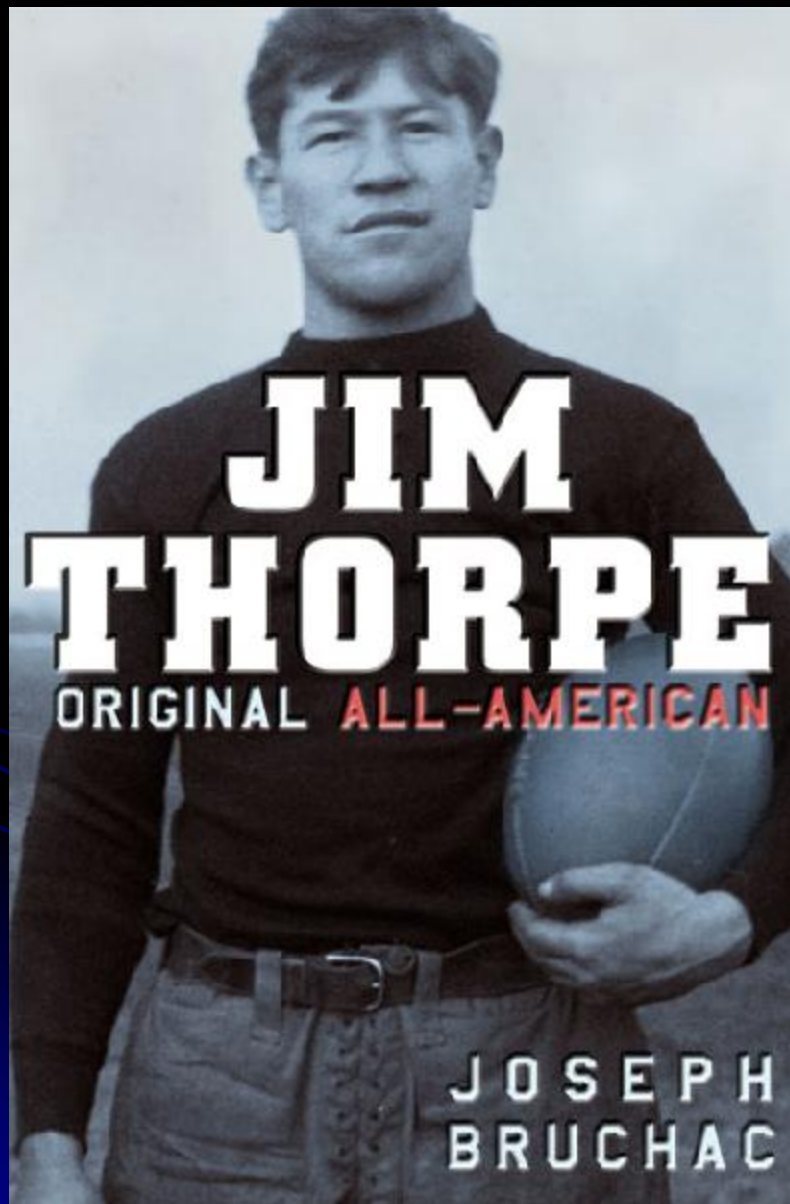
It turns out Rapunzel was actually a kick-butt heroine who had a feisty temperament and tenacity --- or at least that's how a trio of Hales have envisioned her. Shannon Hale, a Newbery Award-winning children's book author, has teamed up with her husband, Dean, to write *RAPUNZEL'S REVENGE*, which turns the original Brothers Grimm tale on its ear. They brought in the help of talented illustrator Nathan Hale (no relation) for help fleshing out the story. (Amazon review from a reader)



- "[Jimenez] does a thorough job . . . of describing the difficulties, such as feeling unprepared and disadvantaged when compared to others, that some first-generation college students face . . . There are several kind-hearted mentors and benefactors . . . These gestures of kindness offer readers hope. This book is recommended for the library that already has the first two books on its shelf."-- VOYA (3Q3P)



- Joseph Bruchac's latest novel follows fifteen year old Louis Nolette through his battles for the Union Army in the famed Irish Brigade. This novel is largely about cultural boundaries and crossings, about war, and about the role Native Americans played in the Civil War.



In 1903, a group of defeated warriors stepped out onto a field in front of thousands of hostile fans. They walked off heroes.

THE REAL ALL AMERICANS

THE TEAM THAT CHANGED A GAME, A PEOPLE, A NATION



SALLY JENKINS

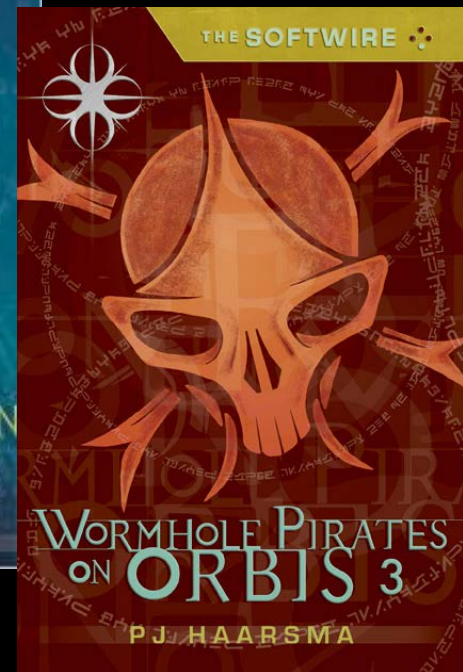
Cowriter of the Bestselling IT'S NOT ABOUT THE BIKE

**But I Have Some Students whom I
Just Can't Get Interested in
Reading!!**



PJ Haarsma's Softwire series may be the newest, hottest thing in reading for reluctant boy readers.

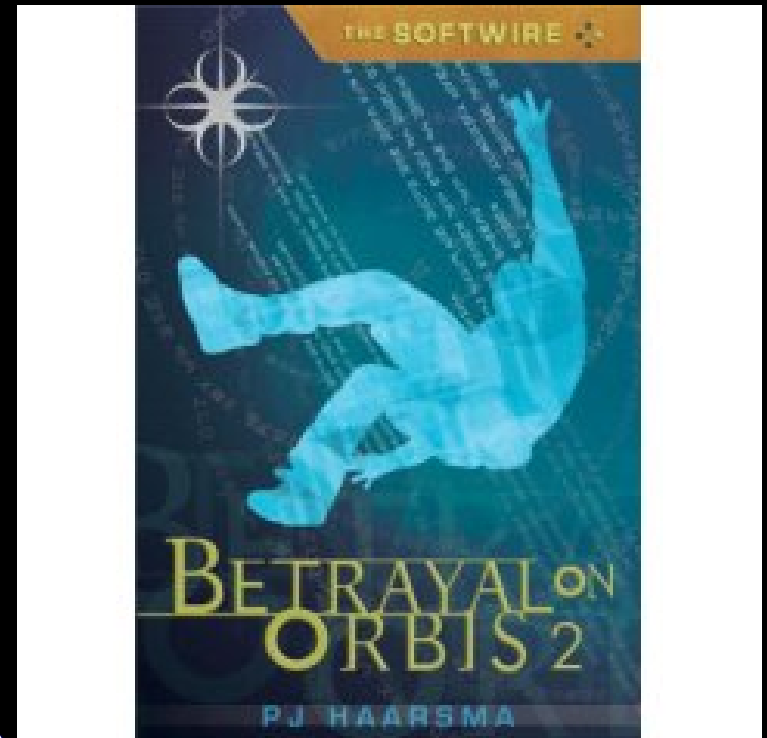
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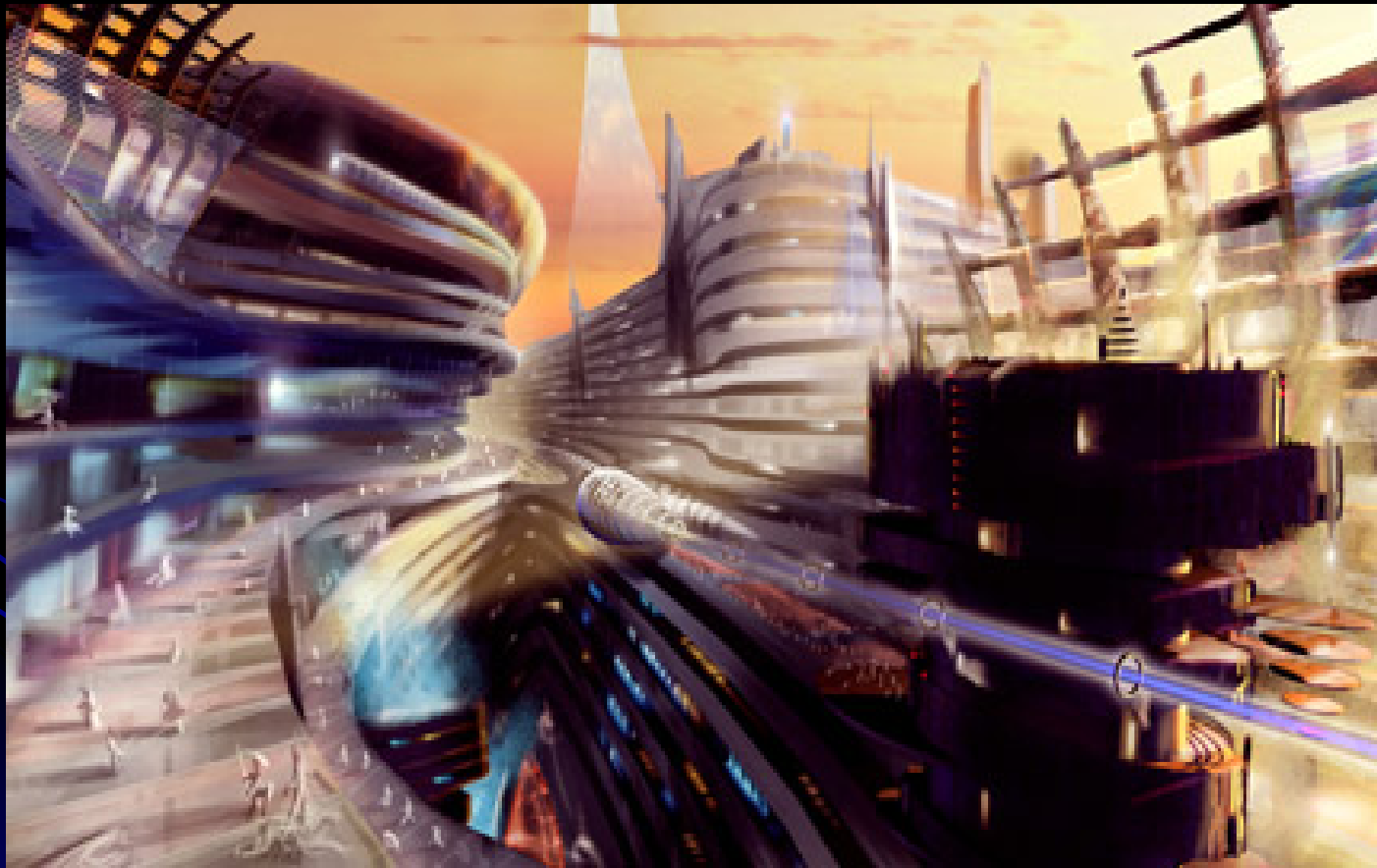
All three **Softwire** books are cool science fiction and action/adventure stories, but at the heart of all three is

Always an immigrant story. Johnny Turnbull (JT), his sister and their friends are the lowest beings in all social classes on Orbis because they are indentured servants.

In the second book, JT is privy to information about the subjugation of various races of aliens who have come to Orbis to do the work for its “citizen” class and how their progress is intentionally hindered to make sure Orbis has an abundant source of cheap labor.



PJ has created a free, online video game that parallels the books' stories and expands as new books come out.



<http://www.thesoftware.com/readergetyourprize/>

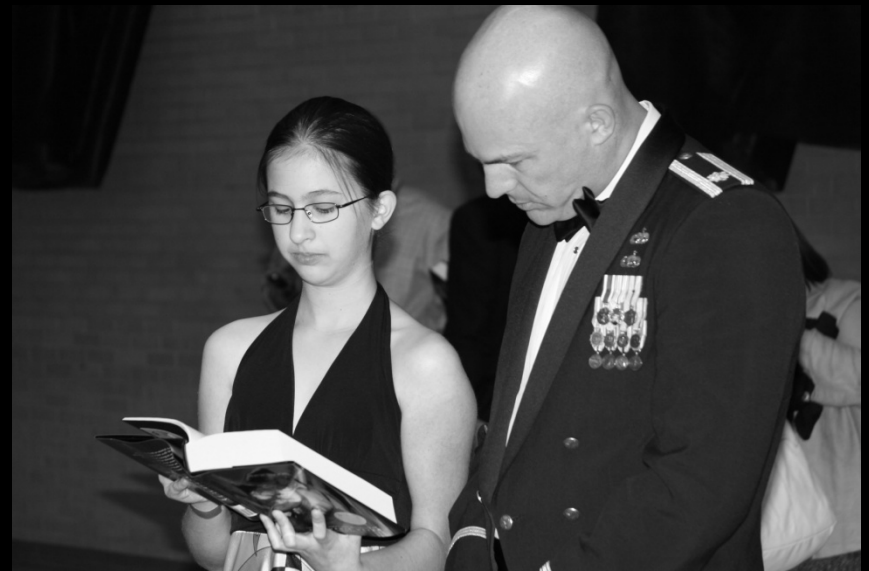
PJ and Nathan Fillion, star of *Serenity* and *Firefly*, have started Kids Need to Read, a foundation to provide under-resourced schools and libraries with books.

<http://www.kidsneedtoread.org/>



Our association with Stephenie Meyer goes back to her visit to class in 2006. In May of 2007 we put on the Eclipse Prom celebrating the release of Eclipse, the third book in the runaway success Twilight Series.

- We had 1,000 people from all over the world, mostly young women, some in groups, some with parents.



Prom goers
either came
in vintage
evening
wear



As characters from the book



Including vampires and werewolves



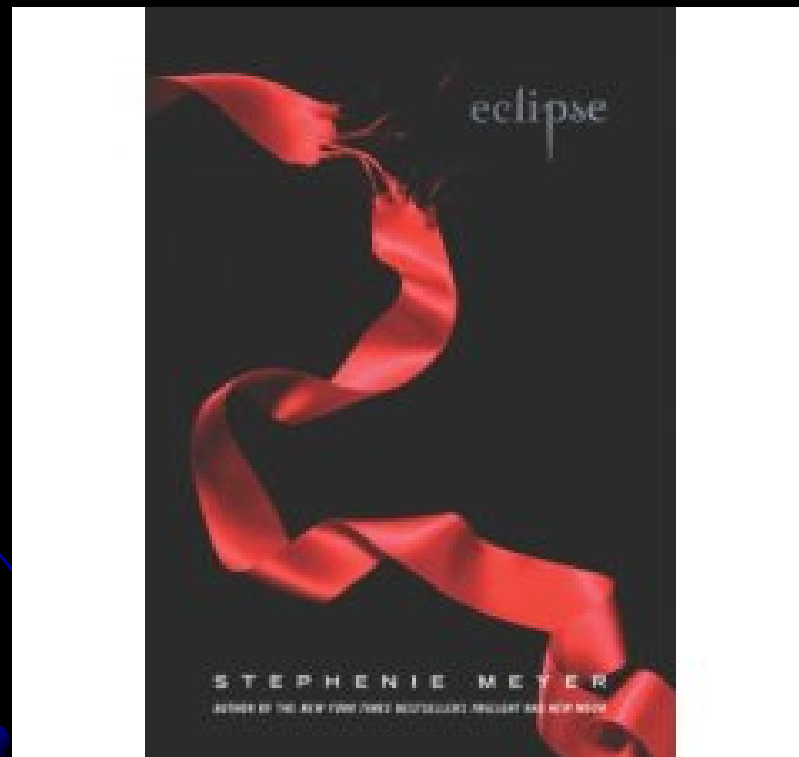
Stephenie, herself, read the opening chapter of the third book, *Eclipse*, (which wouldn't be released for three months)



People danced and ate and had their pictures taken with actors playing the parts of the characters, but mostly they read.

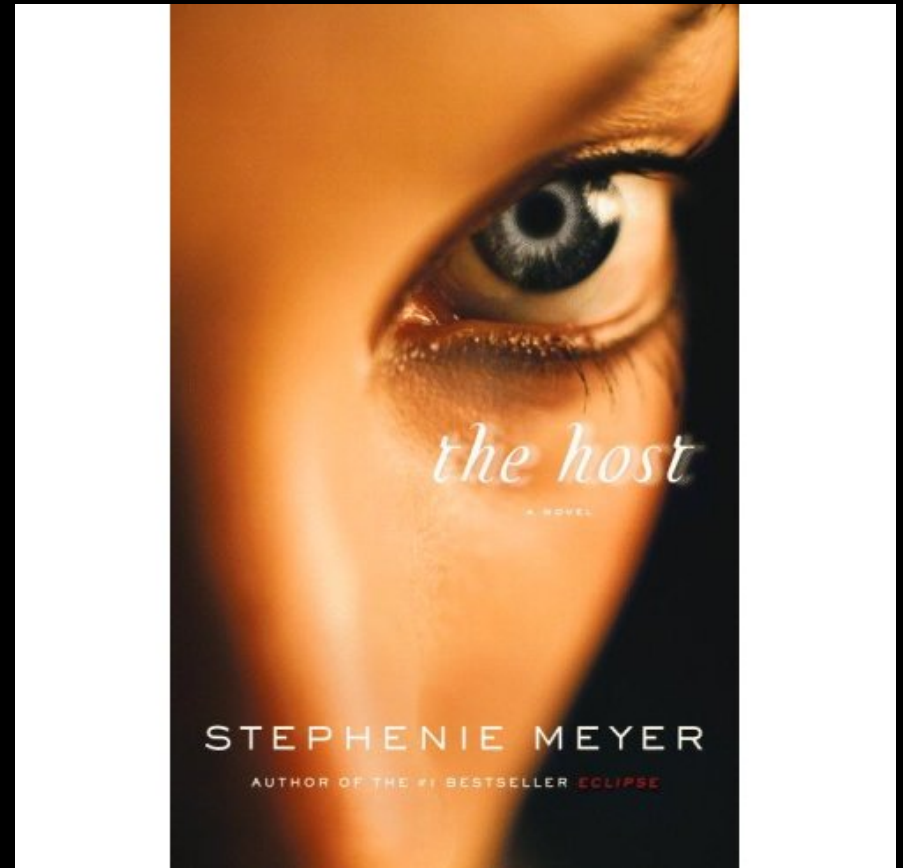


In this third in Meyer's vampire/werewolf serie, Bella, the protagonist, finds her two heart throbs, Jacob and Edward, competing for her affections.



Last May, 2008, we helped with the author appearance and book signing of Stephenie Meyer's latest book, *The Host*.

- *The Host* was marketed as an adult book, but most of the readers seem to be young adults.
- This is the story of a very unusual love triangle.

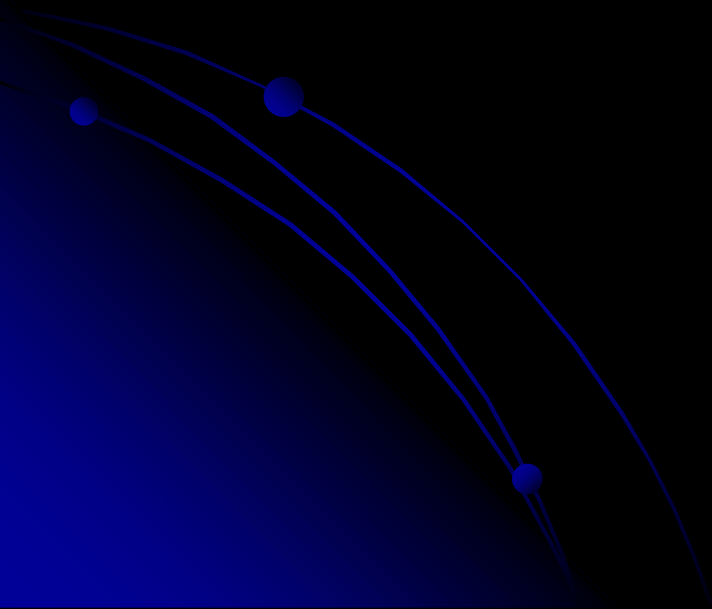


We also helped with signings for the fourth book in the Twilight Series, *Breaking Dawn*, which came out in August, 2008.

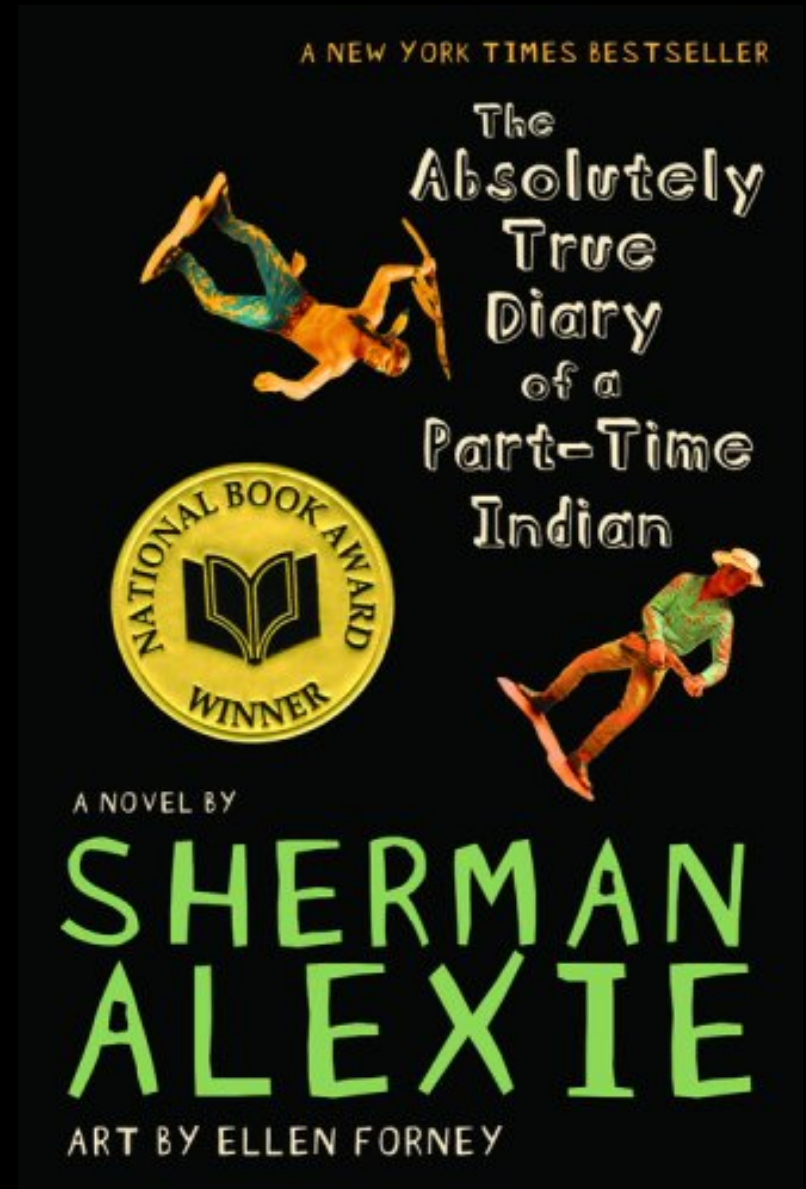
- It's impossible to summarize the plot without spoiling the book, but let's just say that this is **TRULY** the conclusion begged for by the first three books.
- On Sunday, March 30, this book was #6 of all books being sold on amazon.com., and 4,2614 reviews has been written by customers



- <http://www.twilightlexicon.com/>



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian has the meeting of cultures at its center.



And we need to treat young readers with respect.

- Sherman Alexie, winner of the National Book Award for Young People's Literature (*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*) expresses his insistence upon respecting young readers:
- “Kids have complicated and emotional lives” and disallowing literature that reflects this is a failure “to take kids seriously. It’s condescension. Kids respond well when they are taken seriously.”



Under the Bridge: Stories from the Border

A collection of seven short stories offering an honest look at the complex lives of Latina women living on the Mexico-Texas border. The discussion of border politics plays out through narrative rather than polarizing rhetoric. These accurate accounts of immigration and border life are much more complicated than what we are regularly exposed to through the American mass media. The stories illustrate the sacrifices women make to fight for a decent way of life. *Under the Bridge* works to demystify the daily reality facing these amazing women who are trapped by their geography.

The women portrayed in the seven distinct stories in this English/Spanish collection range in age from twelve to forty years and come from all walks of life.

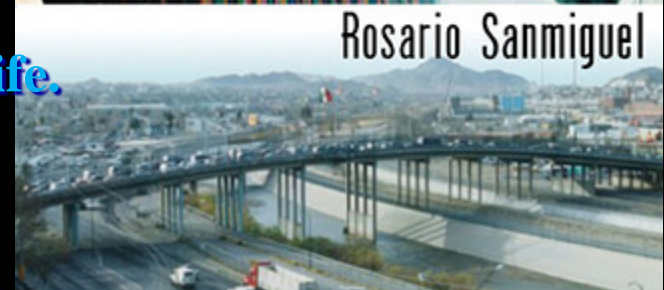
Issues of sexuality and violence are addressed in these stories and this content may make this book inappropriate for readers under 16.

Under the Bridge
Stories from the Border

Bajo el puente
Relatos desde la frontera



Rosario Sanmiguel



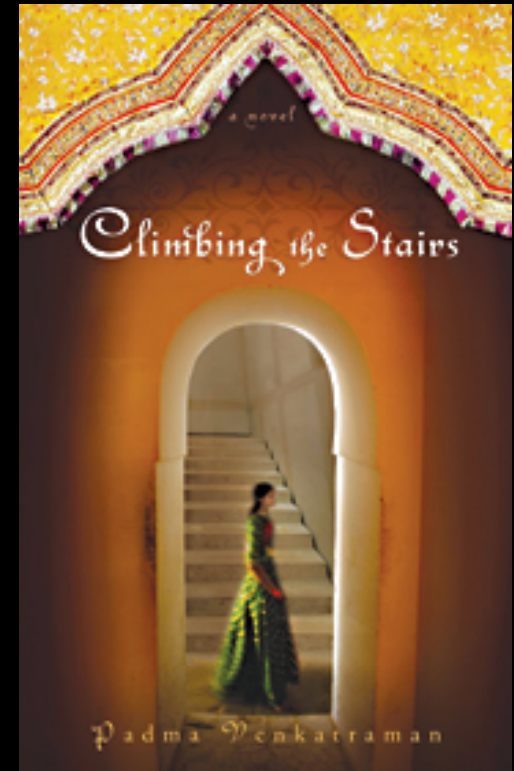
Climbing the Stairs

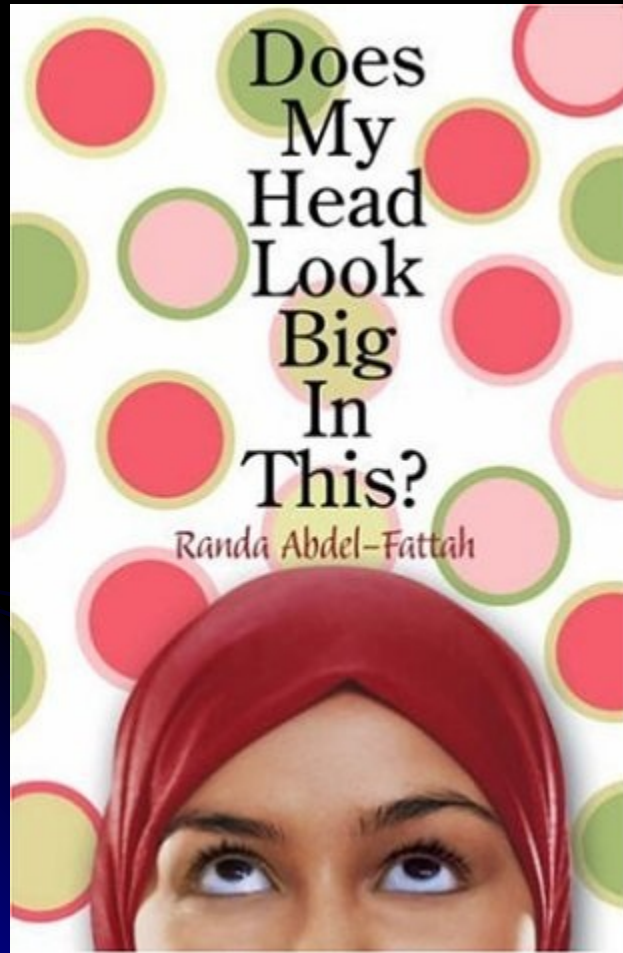
by Padma Venkatraman

Fifteen year old Vidya is a Brahmin (upper-caste) girl living in Bombay, India, during an important time in India's independence movement. Her father is a member of the non-violent independence movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. As a doctor, Vidya's father serves by caring for the protesters wounded by the British during peaceful demonstrations. Vidya's father is also a scholar and discusses history, religion, and philosophy with Vidya. He teaches her that the caste system was originally about the responsibility of the rich to take care of the poor and was not meant to be hereditary. This is why Vidya's father treats their servants with respect, when many others of their class do not.

- At fifteen, Vidya is nearing marital age. Vidya, however, is afraid to get married. She wants to finish school and then continue on to college. Vidya's father promises her that she will not have to marry early and that she can go to college, a promise which dies with him, when he is killed while trying to help wounded demonstrators in a riot.

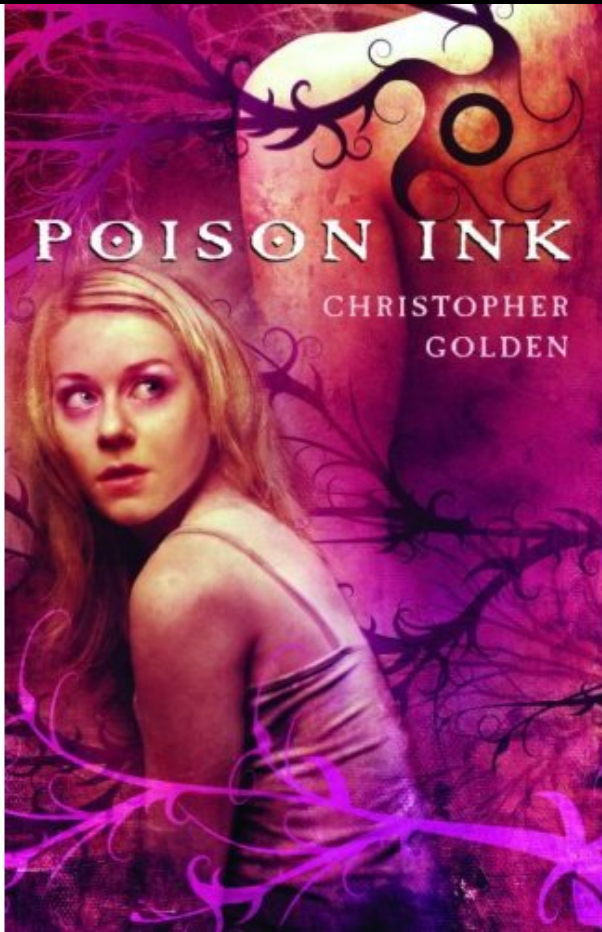
Vidya's new life in her grandfather's home will be very different from her previous life.





Randa Abdel-Fattah writes the story of Australian-born, Muslim Palestinian, 11th-grader Amal, who is witty, charming, funny, and smart. She also holds her Muslim faith very high. outspoken, a good student, and a loyal friend. Some of her relatives want her to totally assimilate into Australian culture, and are aghast when Amal decides to wear the hijab to school and in her daily life. Her parents (medical doctors) understand and so do her real friends of all cultural heritages although some of the folks at her upper crust prep school take the opportunity for inappropriate and ignorant observations. She also is refused a job in the fast food court at the mall because she's "not hygienic," which is ironic given the hairnet requirement. This book is funny and informative, and selling well.

YALSA Quick Pick Award 2009



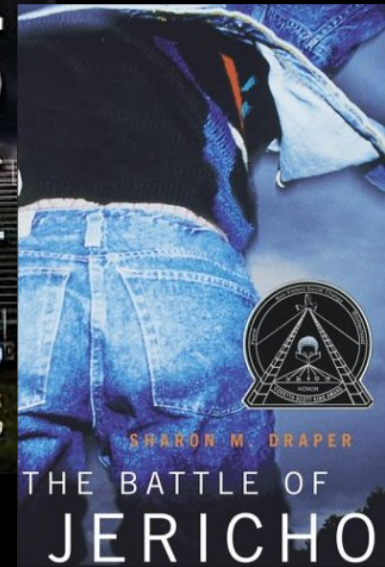
Things go bad when all but one of five friends get a tattoo, which turns out to be magical (and not in a good way).

Former, United States
Teacher of the Year,
Sharon Draper, writes
about November
Nelson, who loses her
boyfriend in a stupid
accident.

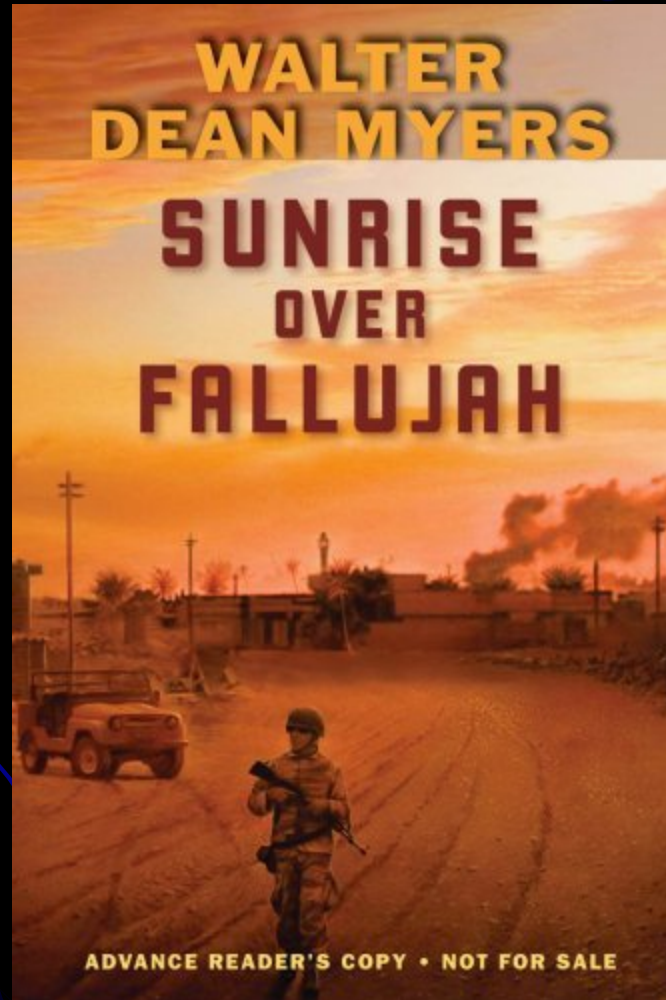
Realistic account of
pregnancy.

Sequel to *The Battle of
Jericho*

Coretta Scott King
Honor Book



- **Harlem teenager Robin Perry is part of the Civil Affairs unit -- that is simultaneously supposed to be winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqis while trying to survive the random attacks and setups Sort of a sequel to *Fallen Angels* (1984) --Robin Perry's uncle is Richie Perry, the protagonist from Myer's Robin writes Richie about difficulty of**



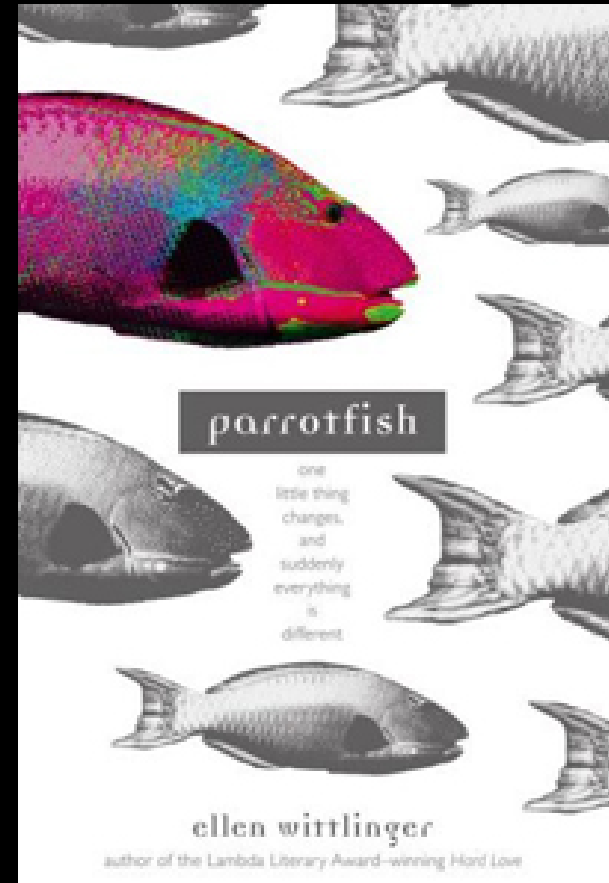
**Vietnam book.
letters to Uncle
the irony and
their assignment.**

- **Grady McNair used to be known as Angela, but comes out to the world as transgendered and begins to live life as a boy.**

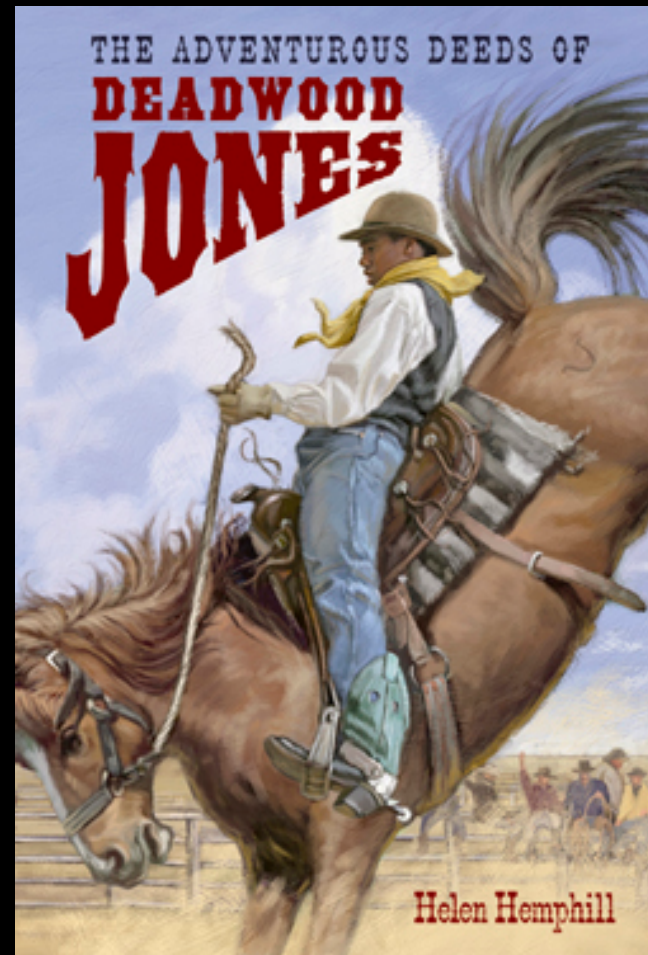
- **Hopeful**

- **Ellen Wittlinger**

- **Featured in *The ALAN Review*, Fall 2008**



- Helen Hemphill's heavily researched and admirably accurate fictional account of Prometheus Jones is based on many real characters in American history, not the least of which is Deadwood Dick.

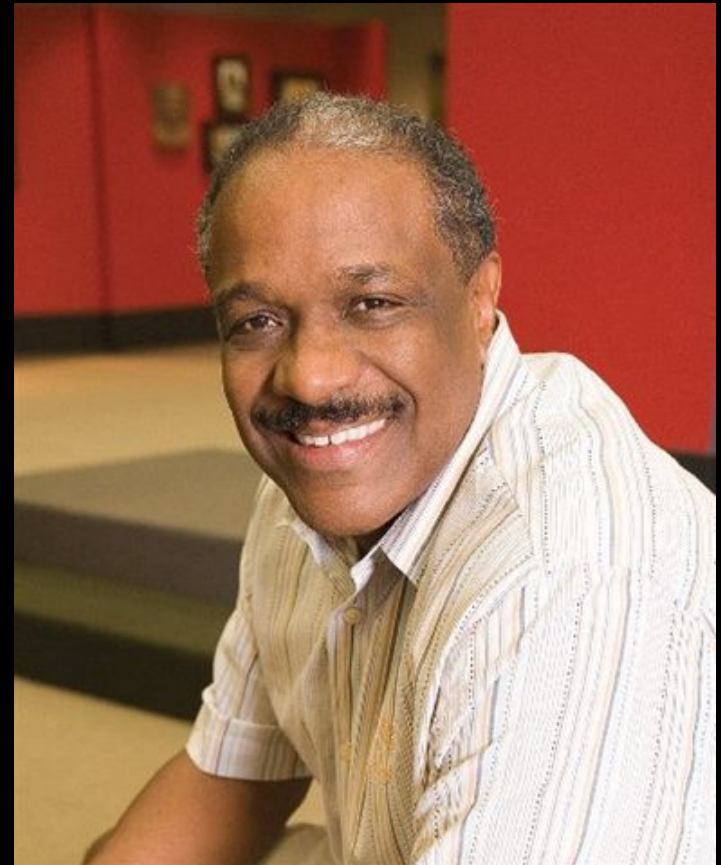


How do we pick the right books for our young readers, all of our young readers?



What are the hallmarks of the very best in literature for adolescents? Perhaps a better way to ask the question would be: What kind of books do young adults need in their lives?

- What kinds of books and authors appeal to kids?
- What kinds of books reflect the reality of their world?
- What teaching activities used with which books will lead to what Arthur Applebee has called “complex literacy tasks”?
- What questions should be asked when considering a book for use in class or even just for an independent reading recommendation?



Let's begin by asking what young adult readers need.

1. Young adults need books with characters and situations to which they can relate.
2. . Young adults need books that help them to make sense of their own lives. Young adults need books that treat the issues that adolescents face respectfully.
3. Young adults need books that reflect the diversity of their world.
4. Young adults need books that treat the issues that adolescents face respectfully.
5. Young adults need books that are accessible to them.



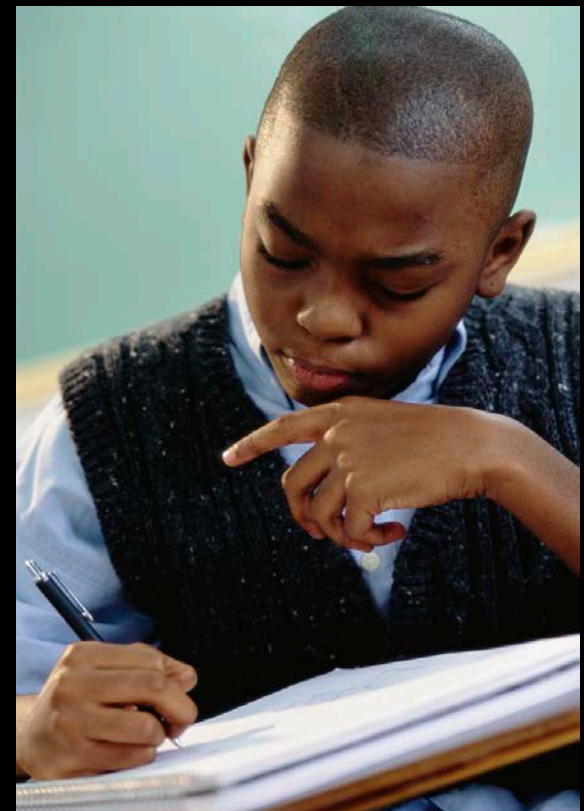
Kids need books that will help them make sense of their lives, books can be the safe place where kids practice for real life.

- As adolescents they are going through personality development and moral development, trying on various identities and trying to answer the question, “Who am I?”
- They need books about those very struggles so they can struggle along vicariously and process life’s problems from a safe distance.

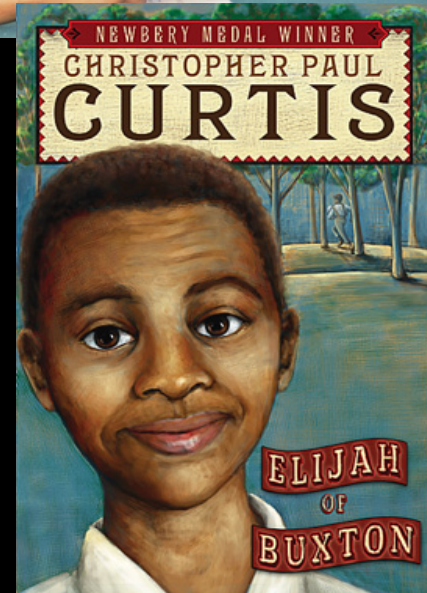


And it's in the process of reading good books with which they can engage that students are most able to improve their language arts skills.

- And that means meeting the state standards for reading, writing and critical thinking.
- Arthur Applebee's 2003 study arrived at interesting conclusions about what went on in schools— which teaching approaches resulted in student competence at “high literacy tasks.”



One of the commonalities that has come out in the interviewing of young adult authors is that they often write the book they needed when they were teens, a book that didn't exist at the time, books like *The Outsiders* (1967), *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* (1967), *The Contender* (1967), and *The Chocolate War* (1974).

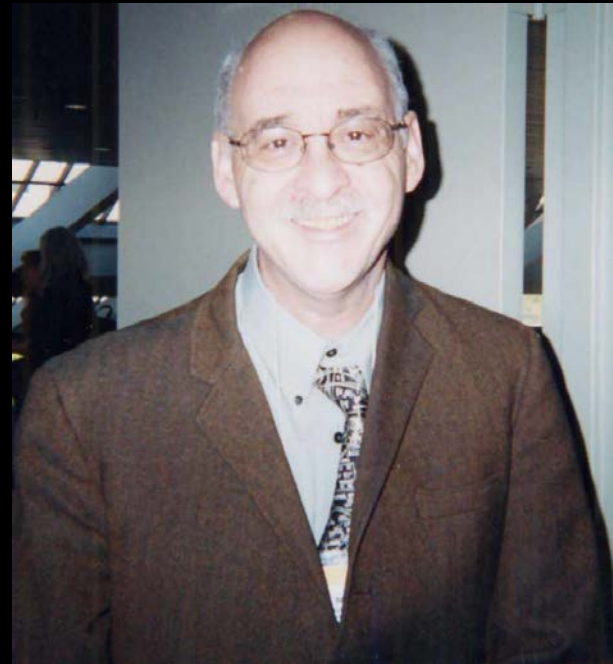


- ***Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff.*** (Viking) Walter Dean Myers first young adult novel, one of the first with African American main characters wouldn't come out until 1975. Too late for Christopher Paul Curtis.



Identification and Engagement are the Keys

- Mel Glenn who spent his adult life teaching English at his alma mater, Abraham Lincoln High, in Brooklyn, after a tour in the Peace Corps, (author of *Split Image*, *Class Dismissed*, *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale?*, and many other great books), says this:



“A major key for good young adult literature is one word—identification. . . . When a reader can say, “Hey, I feel what that character is going through,” a tangible connection has been made[and] The reader and the protagonist intertwine”



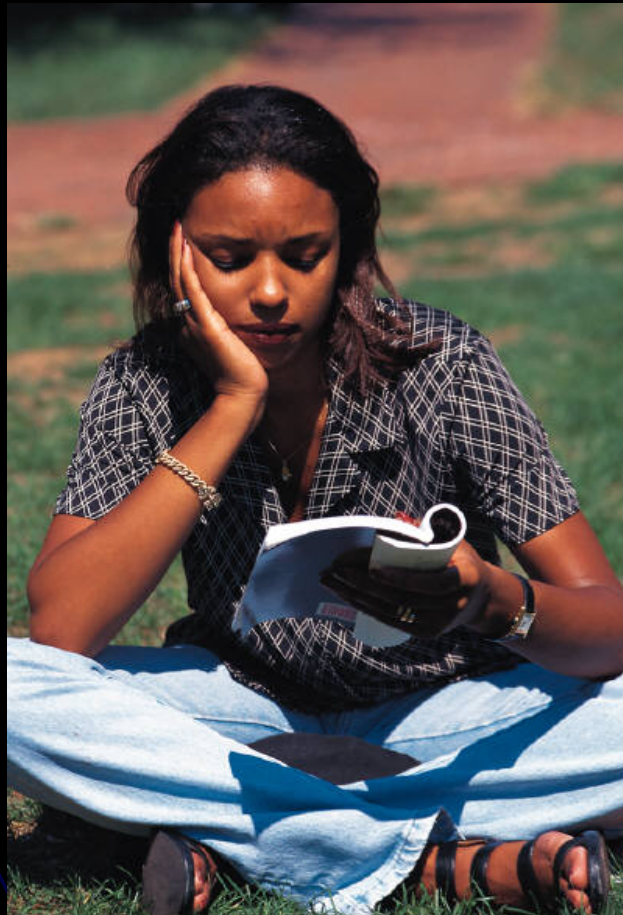
Characters with whom young readers can identify are crucial.

Otherwise it is very difficult for them to engage with their reading.

Unless it speaks to them, they can't use it to make sense and meaning of their world, their lives.



When adolescents do not see themselves in their reading, they are likely to infer, consciously or subconsciously, that they do not count or do not matter.





- In her 2006 article, “The Voices of Power and the Power of Voices,” scholar of Native American teen literacy, Marlinda White-Kaulaity (Navajo), describes the consequences suffered by young readers who never see their own ethnic or cultural heritage reflected in their classroom reading: She states that, “When certain voices are excluded ... teachers deprive young readers of one purpose of literature: to read and learn about themselves and others in life” (p. 8).

Young readers not only need to read about characters like themselves but also characters different from themselves.



Young adult books have an imperative to help young people grow to understand the world they live in and all its peoples. As White-Kaulaity explains, all young readers, from all walks of life, “need cross boundary knowledge, interaction and experiences to live in an interdependent world. Literature can help achieve such goals” (p. 10).

As former president of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English, author and editor, Michael Cart, says,

“Literature teaches empathy, tolerance, and respect for the dignity and worth of every human being” (As quoted in Blasingame, 2007, p. 130).



In *From Romance to Realism: Fifty Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature*, Cart says:

- Yes we can get statistical profile of the adolescent problem drinker from a report in *Time* magazine,



but to emotionally comprehend the problem, to understand how it feels to be trapped in that skin, we turn to Robert Cormier and his novel, *We All Fall Down ...* To understand the emotional plight of impoverished, single-parent families, we look to Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Make Lemonade* (p. 269)



Multicultural children's literature scholar, Virginia Loh, further explains the problem with stereotyping of any kind, positive or negative:



- The main caveat seems to be attributing characteristics and traits to an entire group without considering individuals and the multiplicity of culture and ethnicity even though there are consistencies among cultural groups. No one image is enough to create stereotypes, but pervasive images do, which are then reinforced by culture and/or society. (p. 48)

Stereotypes are a problem, regardless of whether they are positive or negative.



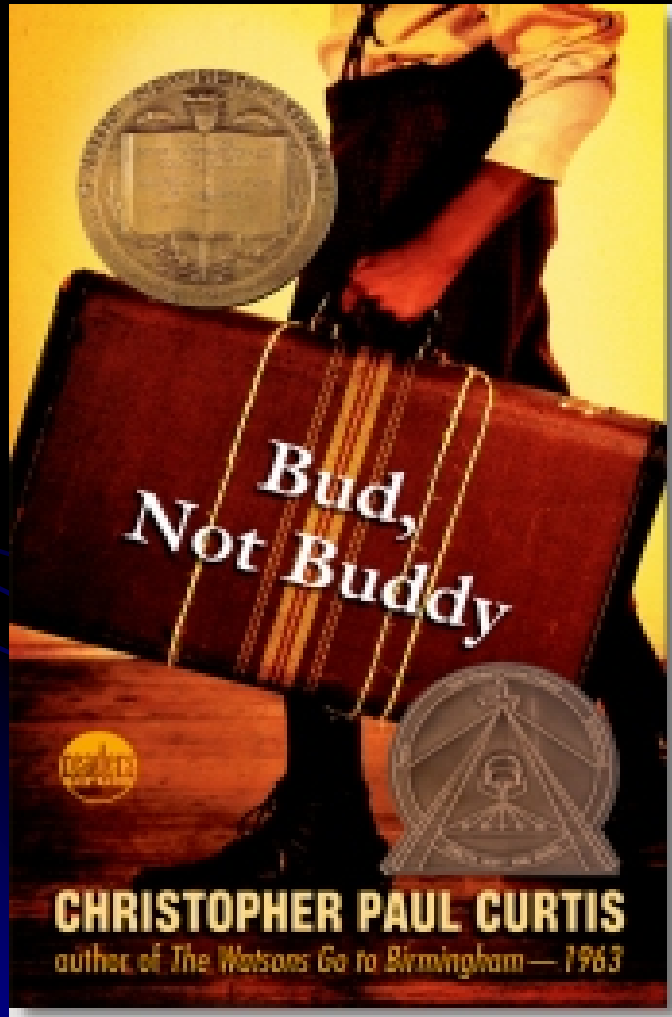
- Native American author Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee) states that the romanticized stereotype is nearly as bad as the old cowboys and Indians movie image of a fearsome savage: “The problem is that it’s equally dehumanizing. Literature must show us in our full complexity, and that includes flaws and, in some cases, perspectives that might make others uncomfortable” (As quoted in Blasingame, 2007, p. 163).

One author who is adept at creating characters reflecting the “full complexity” of human beings is Gary Soto, National Book Award Finalist and winner of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation’s Award for Literature.

- ***Buried Onions*** (Harcourt, 1997)
- ***Accidental Love*** (Harcourt, 2006)
- ***Jesse*** (Harcourt, 1994)
- ***Living Up the Street*** (Strawberry Hill Press, 1985)
- ***A Fire in My Hands*** (Turtleback Books, 1990)
- ***Baseball in April*** (Harcourt, 1990)
- ***Petty Crimes*** (Harcourt, 1998)



How can I find other authors like Gary Soto and how do I go about finding the best books?



- Exemplary young adult literature is recognized for its excellence through the bestowing of many awards, some with a very specific accomplishment in mind, such as the Coretta Scott King Award, which is given to authors of African descent representing an appreciation of the American dream (American Library Association 1). *Bud, Not Buddy*, for example, won both the Coretta Scott King Award and Newbery Medal.

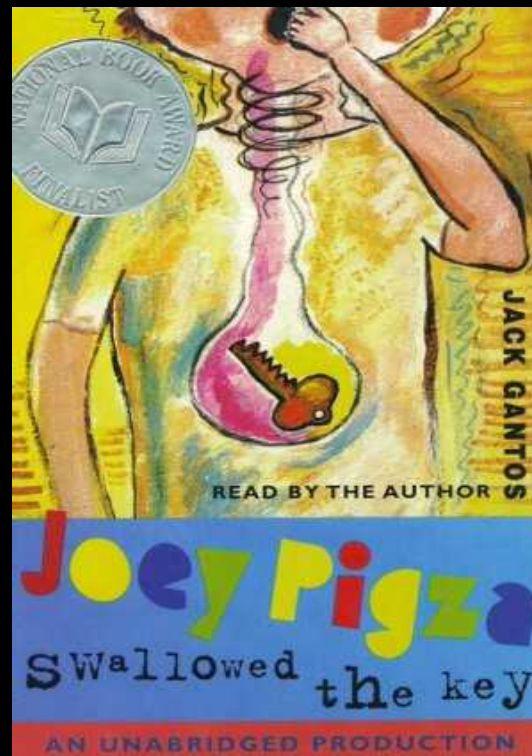
A Few of the More Prestigious Awards

- Coretta Scott King Award
- American Indian Youth Literature Award
- Asian American Literary Award
- Pura Belpré Award (portraying and celebrating the Latino/ Latina experience)
- Margaret A. Edwards Award
- National Book Award
- Newbery Medal
- Printz Award
- VOYA Books in the Middle
- YALSA Popular Paperback for Young Adults

For more information, take a look at the American Library Association (ALA) awards:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklistsbook.htm>

Voices from diverse ethnic/cultural heritages are important, and so are voices of the individuals who all too often receive negative attention or no attention at all.



Another walk of life involves mental illness.



- One of the best recent novels to address this aspect of adolescence is *Damage* (HarperCollins, 2001), by A.M. Jenkins. Her protagonist, Austin Reid, is the star quarterback of the Parkersville High School Panthers, who secretly suffers from depression and suicidal impulses caused by a chemical imbalance. Ultimately, Austin will have to accept that he is who is and must love himself enough to look for help.

And as long as we're talking about quarterbacks

- Bill Konigsberg, currently a sportswriter and editor for the Associated Press, has also written for ESPN.com, *The New York Daily News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Miami Herald*, *Denver Post*. In his first young adult novel, which came out from Penguin this fall, Bill asks the question: What would happen if the star of the high school football team was secretly coming to terms with being gay and then was outed unwillingly?

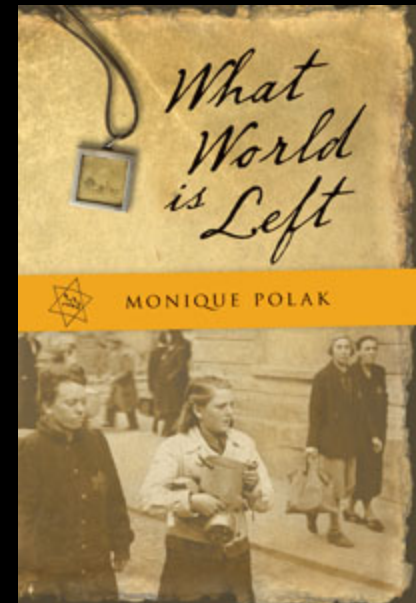


Out of the Pocket

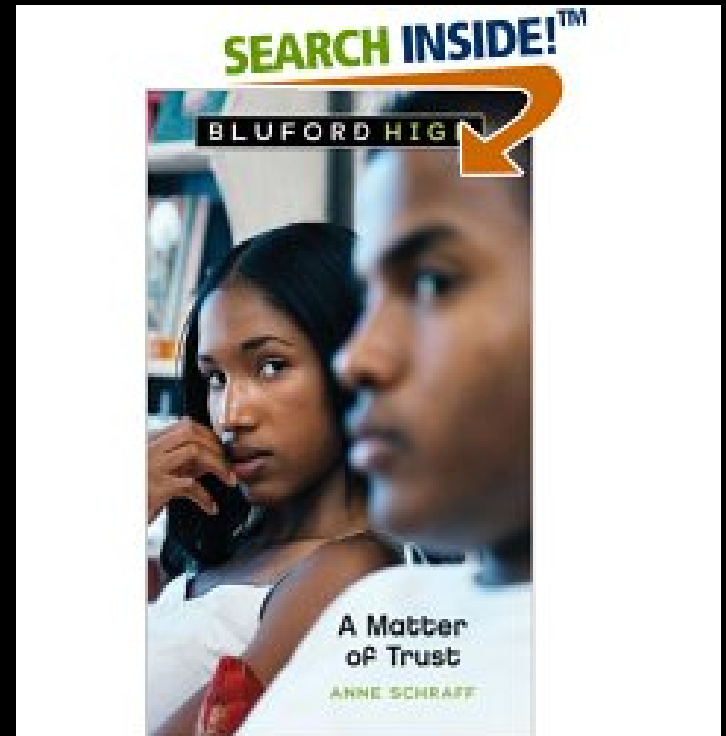
BILL KONIGSBERG

Five possible solutions to this dilemma are

1. “High/low books,” books that have high interest topics written about at lower reading levels; series books, books that maintain the same characters and setting from book to book;
2. graphic novels, books with storyboard graphics to go with the text;
3. short story collections, sets of stories centered on a common theme;
4. poetry collections, collections of poems, usually centered on a theme;
5. and narratives told in verse.



- The Bluford Series has been getting rave reviews. It's high interest/low reading level and has an urban setting

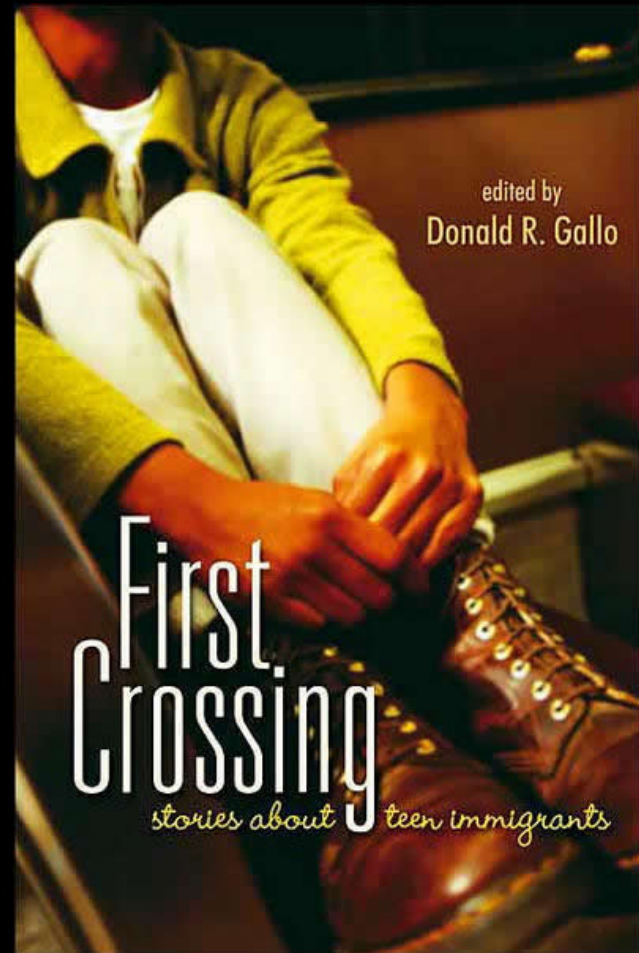


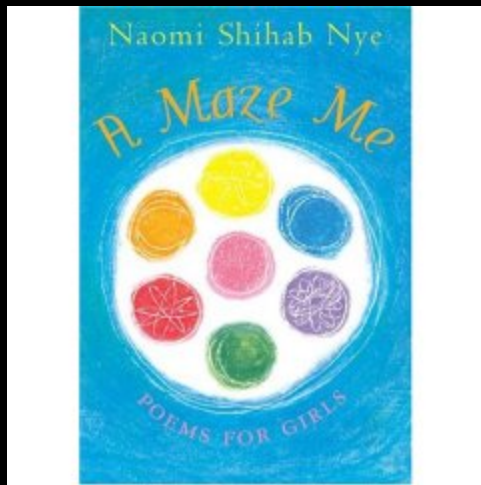
Graphic novels provide additional clues to assist comprehension

- And they are finally getting their long-deserved respect.

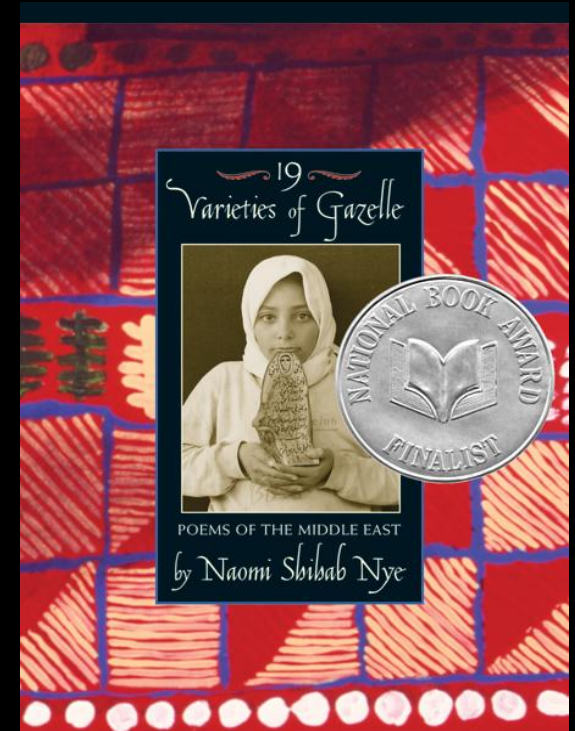


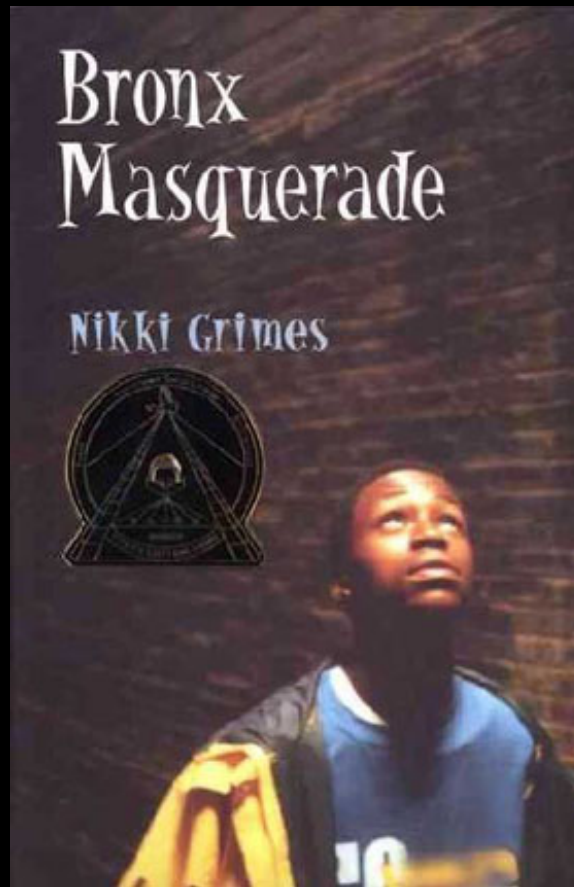
- Short stories provide quick and satisfying conflicts and conclusions and can help a young reader find a topic or author he or she especially enjoys.





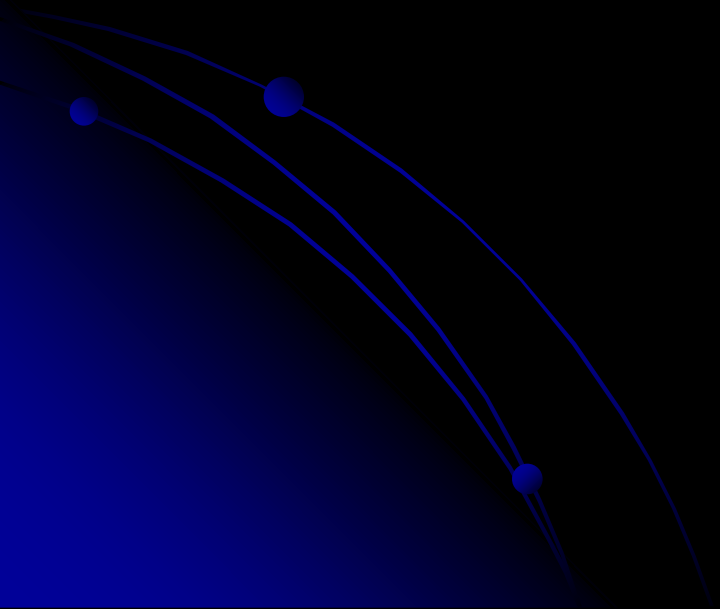
- Naomi Shihab Nye is doing some excellent poetry collections.



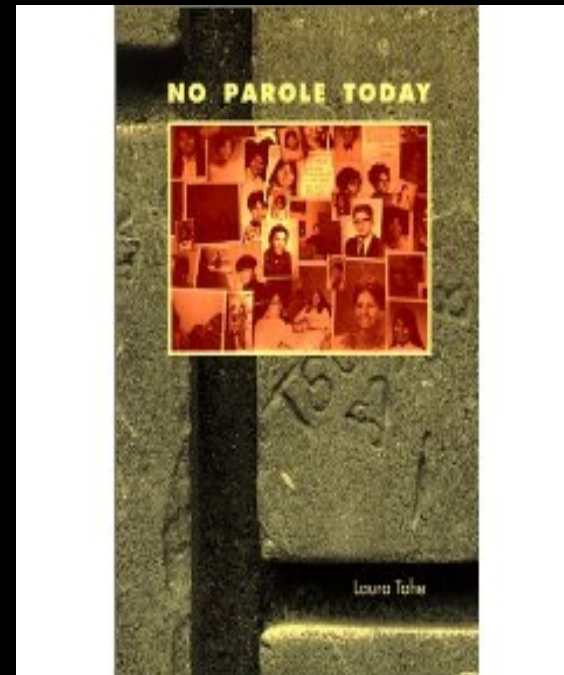
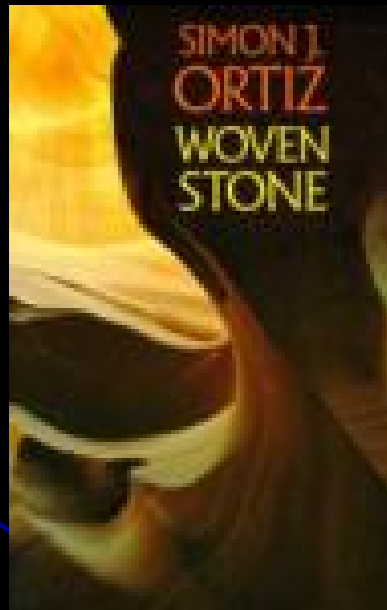


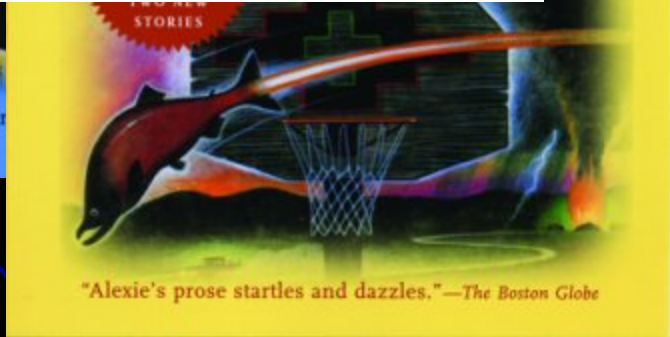
And novels told in
verse can be easier to
read and provide an
effective bridge into
more complex texts.

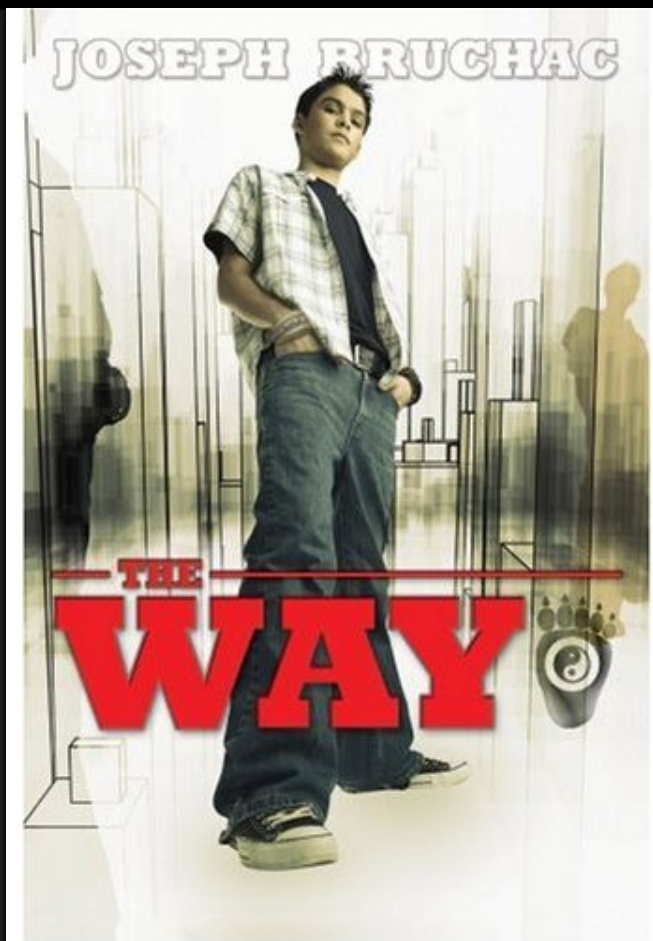
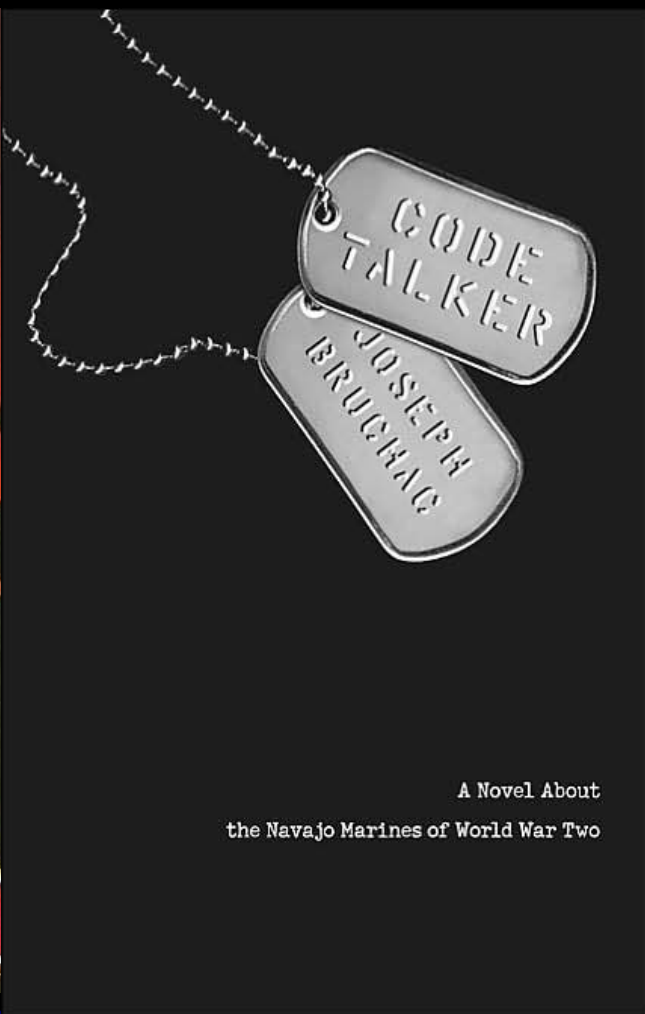
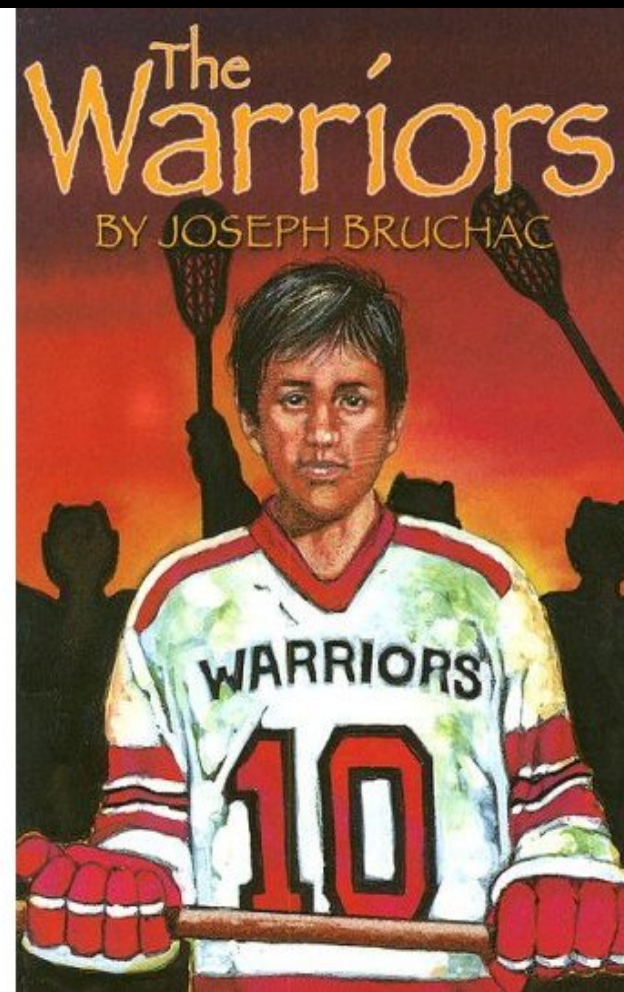
And some not so new but still
very good books!

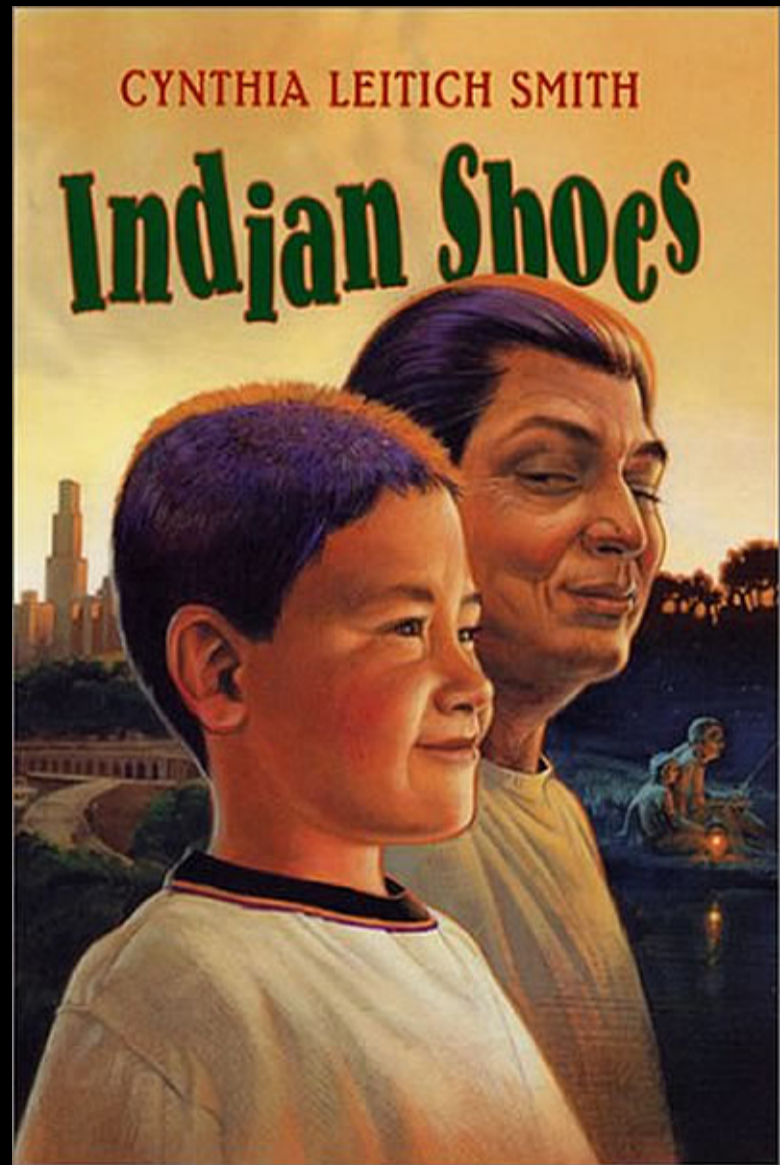


Simon Ortiz and Laura Tohe will be performing at the Poetry Olio on Tuesday at 7:00 in the West Building

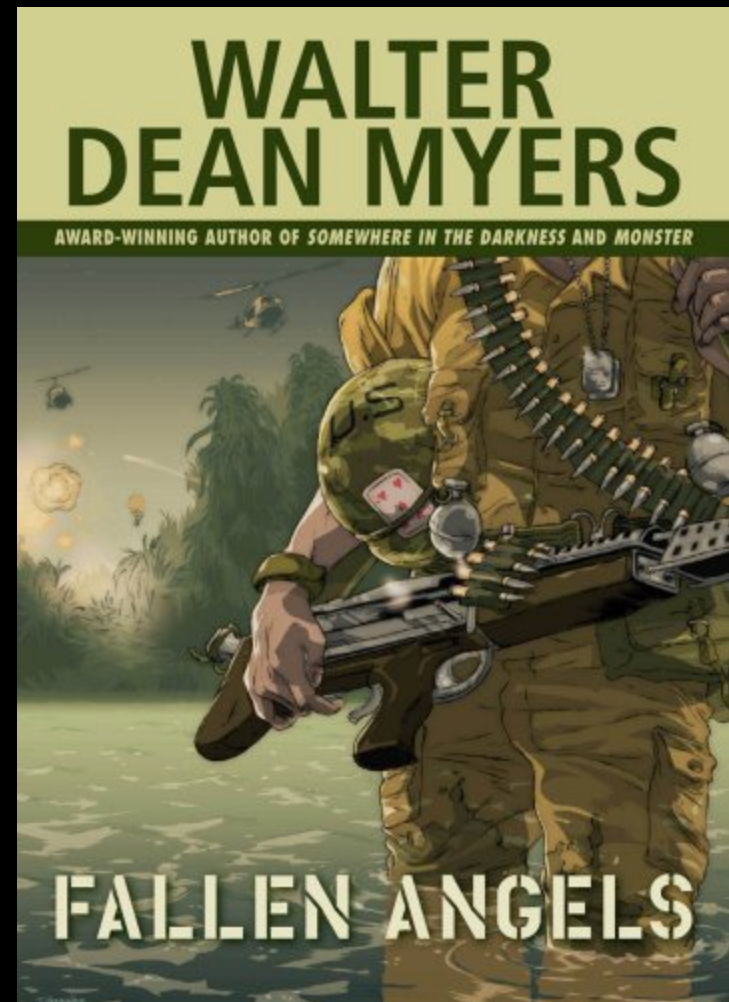
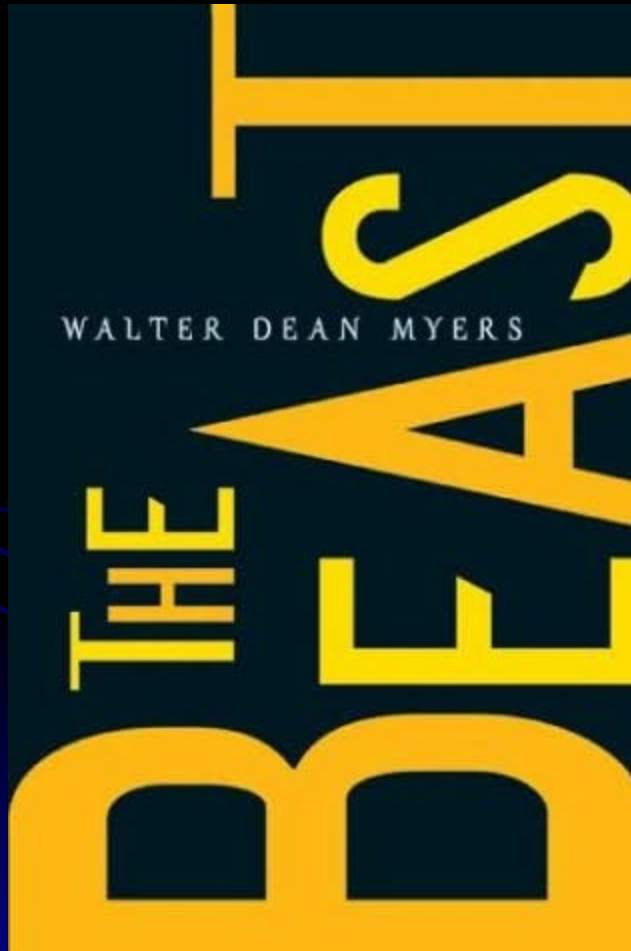




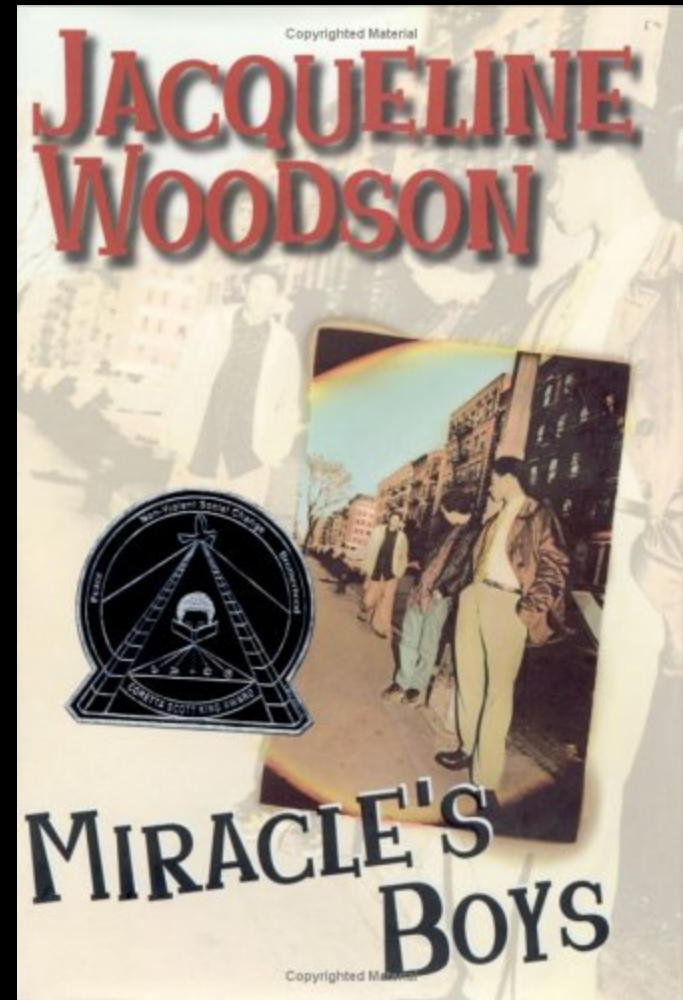
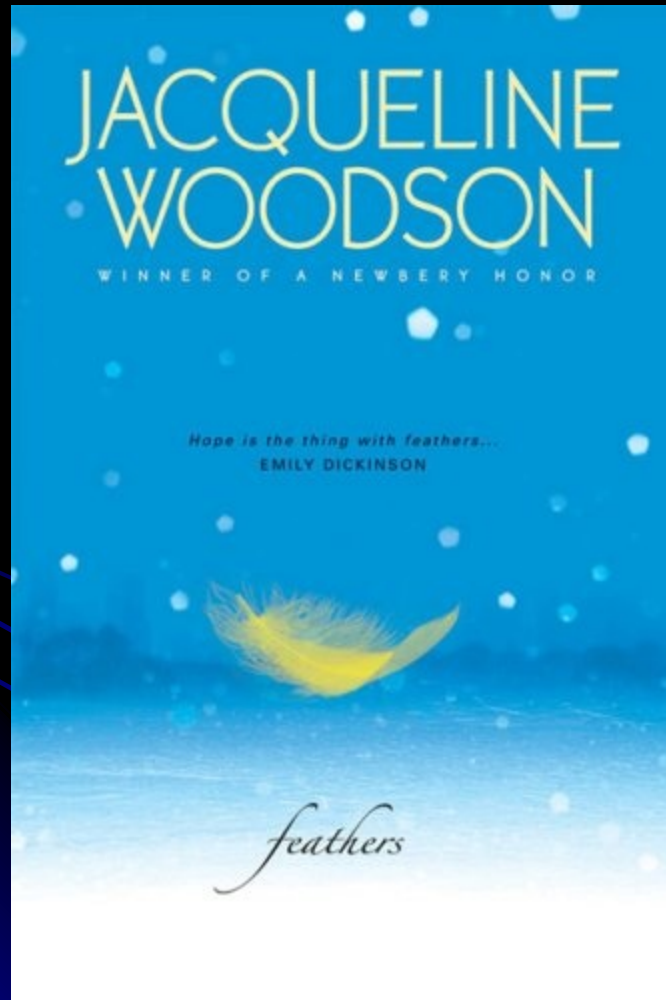




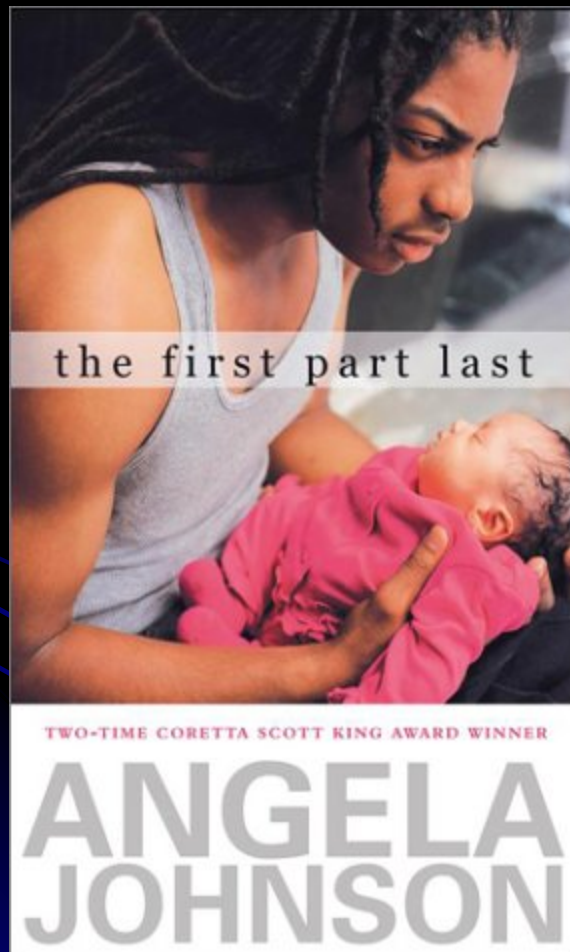
Anything by Walter Dean Myers



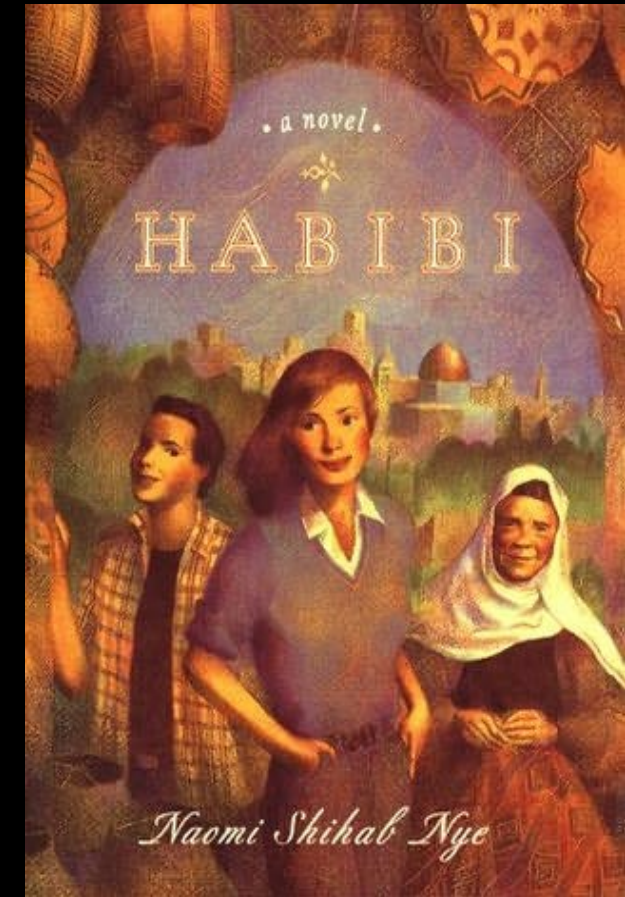
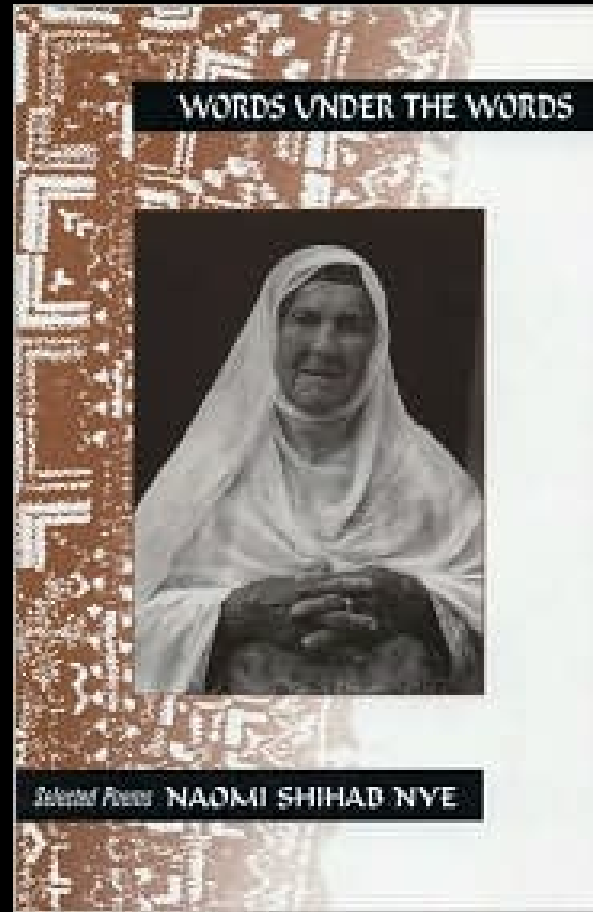
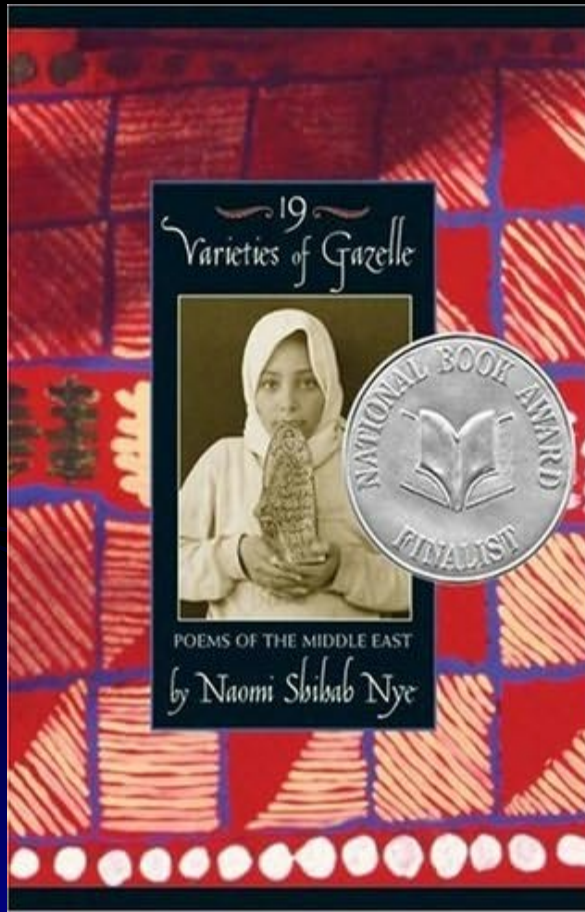
Anything by Jacqueline Woodson



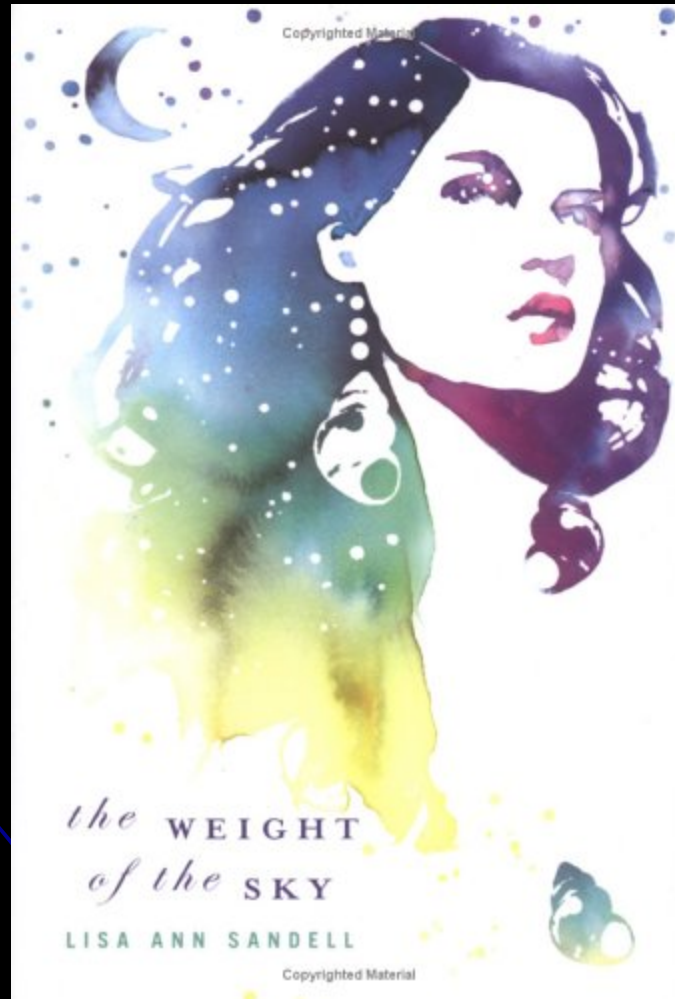
Anything by Angela Johnson



Naomi Shihab Nye

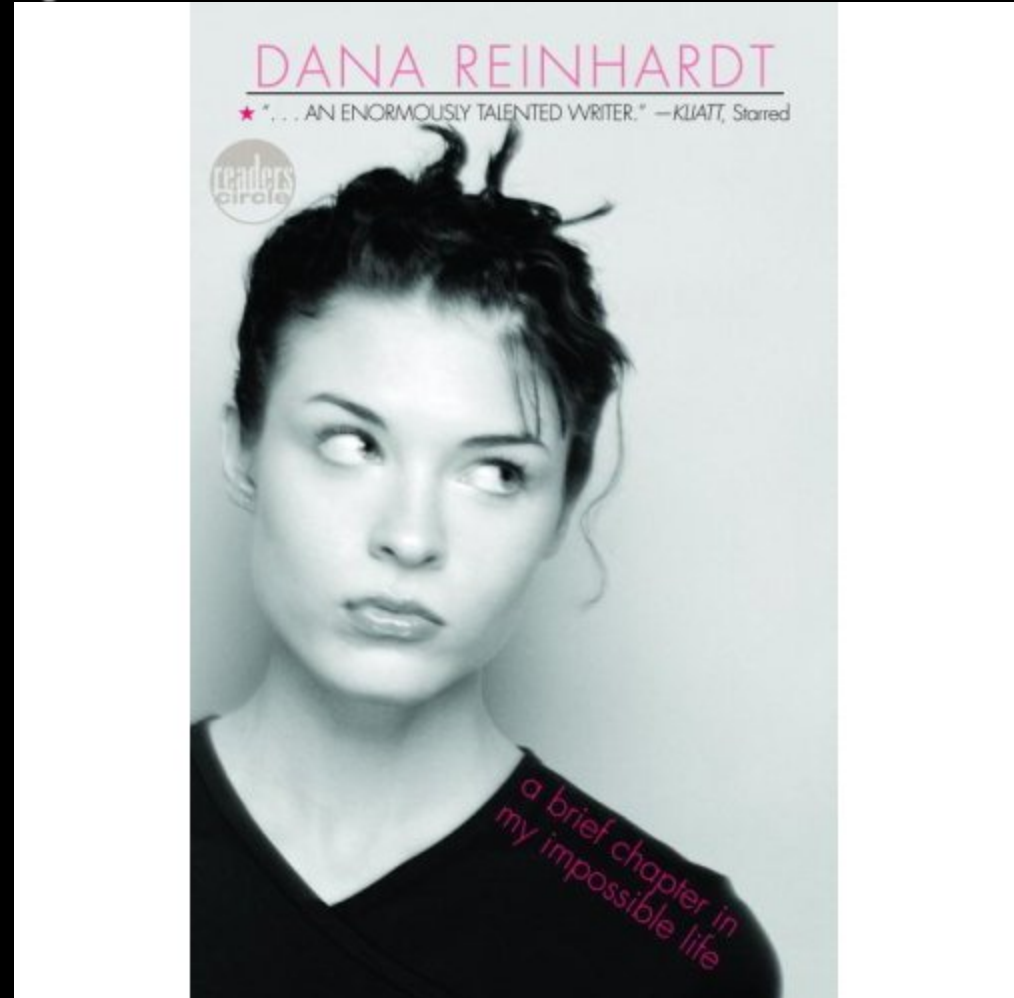


Sixteen Year Old Sarah Green goes to Israel for the Summer to work in a Kibbutz



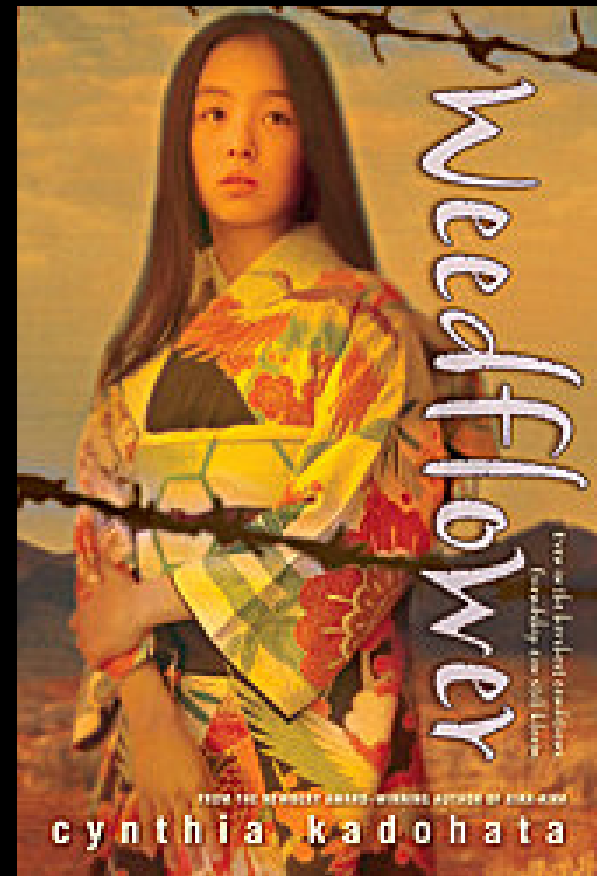
A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life

Simone meets her birth mother who is a self-exiled Hasidic Jew and dying of cancer



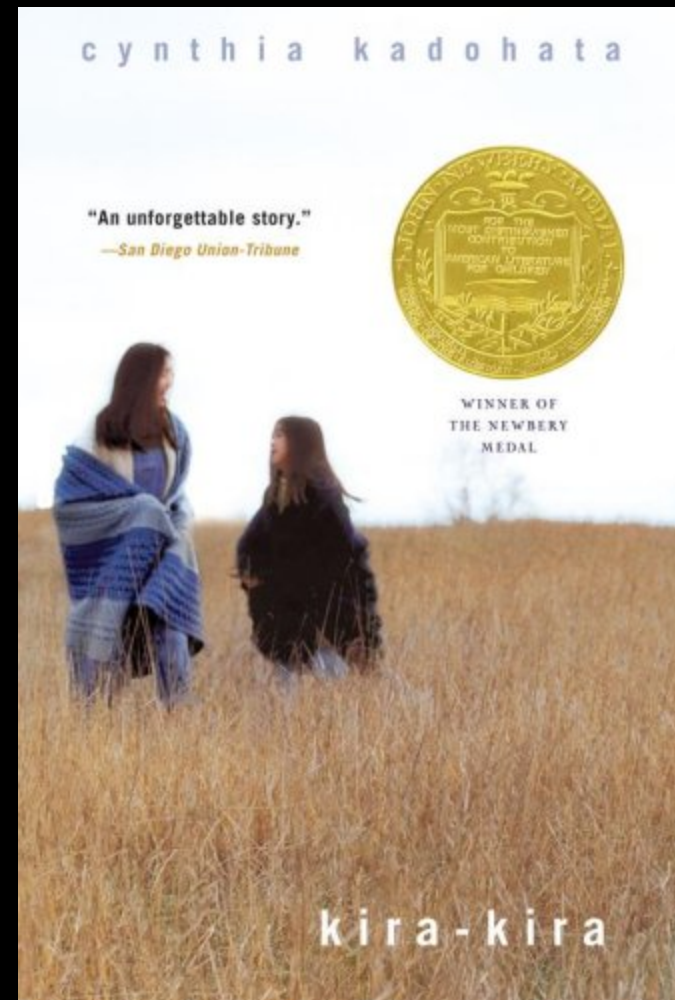
Starred Review. Grade 5-8—When Pearl Harbor is attacked, the lives of a Japanese-American girl and her family are thrown into chaos. Sumiko, 12, and her younger brother, Tak-Tak, live with their aunt and uncle, grandfather Jiichan, and adult cousins on a flower farm in Southern California. Though often busy with chores, Sumiko enjoys working with the blossoms, particularly stock, or weedflowers (fragrant plants grown in a field). In the difficult days that follow the bombing, the family members fear for their safety and destroy many of their belongings. Then Uncle and Jiichan are taken to a prison camp, and the others are eventually sent to an assembly center at a racetrack, where they live in a horse stable. When they're moved to the Arizona desert, Sumiko misses the routine of her old life and struggles with despair. New friends help; she grows a garden with her neighbor and develops a tender relationship with a Mohave boy. She learns from him that the camp is on land taken from the Mohave reservation and finds that the tribe's plight parallels that of the incarcerated Japanese Americans. Kadohata brings into play some complex issues, but they realistically dovetail with Sumiko's growth from child to young woman. She is a sympathetic heroine, surrounded by well-crafted, fascinating people. The concise yet lyrical prose conveys her story in a compelling narrative that will resonate with a wide audience.—*Marilyn Taniguchi, Beverly Hills Public Library, CA*

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Amazon.com Review

In Cynthia Kadohata's lively, lovely, funny and sad novel -- winner of the 2005 Newbery Medal -- the Japanese-American Takeshima family moves from Iowa to Georgia in the 1950s when Katie, the narrator, is just in kindergarten. Though her parents endure grueling conditions and impossible hours in the non-unionized poultry plant and hatchery where they work, they somehow manage to create a loving, stable home for their three children: Lynn, Katie, and Sammy. Katie's trust in, and admiration for, her older sister Lynn never falters, even when her sisterly advice doesn't seem to make sense. Lynn teaches her about everything from how the sky, the ocean, and people's eyes are special to the injustice of racial prejudice. The two girls dream of buying a house for the family someday and even save \$100 in candy money: "Our other favorite book was *Silas Marner*. We were quite capitalistic and liked the idea of Silas keeping all that gold underneath the floorboards." When Lynn develops lymphoma, it's heartbreaking, but through the course of her worsening illness, Katie does her best to remember Lynn's "*kira-kira*" (glittery, shining) outlook on life. Small moments shine the brightest in this poignant story; told beautifully and lyrically in Katie's fresh, honest voice. (Ages 11 to 14) --*Karin Snelson* --This text refers to the **Hardcover** edition.



- **Synopsis**

- 2001 National Book Award Nominee

When she is five, Young Ju Park and her family move from Korea to California. During the flight, they climb so far into the sky she concludes they are on their way to Heaven, that Heaven must be in America. Heaven is also where her grandfather is. When she learns the distinction, she is so disappointed she wants to go home to her grandmother. Trying to console his niece, Uncle Tim suggests that maybe America can be "a step from Heaven." Life in America, however, presents problems for Young Ju's family. Her father becomes depressed, angry, and violent. Jobs are scarce and money is even scarcer. When her brother is born, Young Ju experiences firsthand her father's sexism as he confers favored status upon the boy who will continue to carry the Park name. In a wrenching climactic scene, her father beats her mother so severely that Young Ju calls the police. Soon afterward, her father goes away and the family begins to heal.

BarnesandNoble.com

