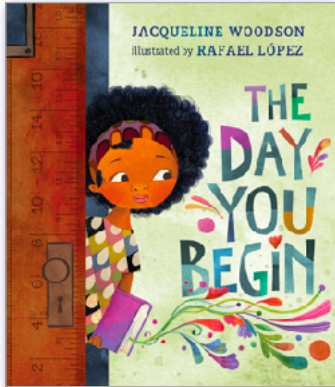


Thoughtful Books

as collected by Julie Stepp

The Day You Begin



by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael López

This powerful, lyrical picture book speaks directly to the children who are its intended readers, describing those familiar moments when a child may be marked as an outsider among their peers because of their home language, or the color of their skin, or the “different” food they bring for lunch. (Review by Rethinking Schools)

Woodson [reads her book](#) aloud for us! (Netflix Jr.)

There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you until the day you begin to share your stories.

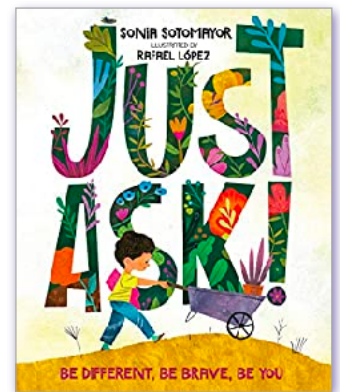
Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You

by Sonia Sotomayor, illustrated by Rafael López

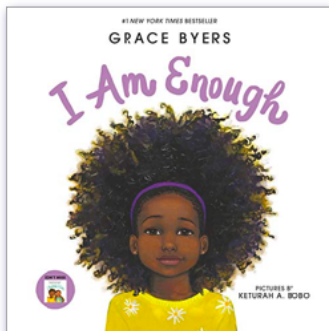
United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor celebrates the different abilities kids have. Using her own experience as a child who was diagnosed with diabetes, Justice Sotomayor writes about children with all sorts of challenges – and looks at the special powers those kids have as well. (Book description)

A [guide for all](#), activities, and video from Justice Sotomayor’s visit to Sesame Street.

I don’t always like having to explain – it frustrates me – but it helps me when I tell people that it’s just what my body does.



I Am Enough



by Grace Byers, illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo

from a not so glowing review: “I really have to wonder what a child gets out of a poem of abstract platitudes.” I will tell you - a love for words! If you have wondered what a story with diversity should look like, here’s an example, even if a little didactic.

A [printable poster](#), which includes the quote below, discussion questions and extension activities.

*I know that we don’t look the same: our skin, our eyes, our hair, our frame.
But that does not dictate our worth; we both have places here on earth.*

The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story

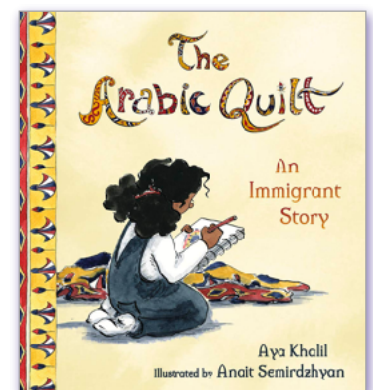
by Aya Khalil, illustrated by Anait Semirdzhyan

An endearing story of little Kanzi’s first day of 3rd grade in the U.S. She recently immigrated with her family from Egypt and doesn’t want any extra attention on her than is necessary. (Isra, *Muslims in Kid Lit*)

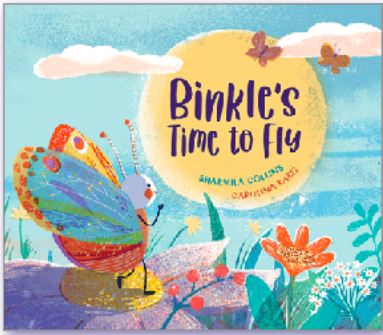
Aya Khalil’s [blog post](#) about basing her book on her experiences as an immigrant.

At lunchtime, Kanzi is surprised when Mama walks through the door. “Habiti, you forgot your lunchbox!”

“Habiti? Like The Hobbit? Isn’t your name Kanzi?” Molly snickers.



Binkle's Time to Fly



by Sharmila Collins, illustrated by Carolina Rabei

Binkle can't wait to turn from caterpillar to butterfly. He'll finally have strong, beautiful wings to take him high into the sky! But when the day comes, something is terribly wrong. Why are his wings so wispy and weak? How will he ever fly like the other butterflies?

Link to instructions for an [origami butterfly](#) and [Binkle coloring page](#).

Binkle was waiting. First he was an egg. Then he was a hungry caterpillar. And then he was in a cocoon. But what he really wanted to be was a butterfly, with big and beautiful wings.

I Talk Like a River

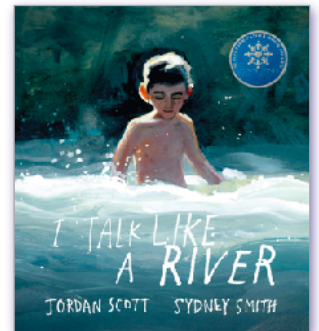
by Jordan Scott, illustrated by Sydney Smith

What if words got stuck in the back of your mouth whenever you tried to speak? Or they came out mixed up? Sometimes it takes a change of perspective to get the words flowing. When a boy who stutters feels isolated, alone, and incapable of communicating in the way he'd like, his father takes him on a walk by the river to help him find his voice.

Author Jordan Scott and illustrator Sydney Smith [discuss their picture book](#).

"See how that water moves? That's how you speak."

I look at the water... bubbling, whirling, churning, and crashing.



Lift



by Min Lê, illustrated by Dan Santat

The story of a young girl named Iris whose favorite thing to do is push elevator buttons. After a serious family betrayal (her little brother dares to push the button himself), Iris discovers a magic elevator button that transports her to different fantastical places. (Mr. Shu Review)

A [blog post](#) from Mr. Schu (Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic) that extolls the worth of this wonderful book.

I always get to push the button. Until one day... BETRAYAL.

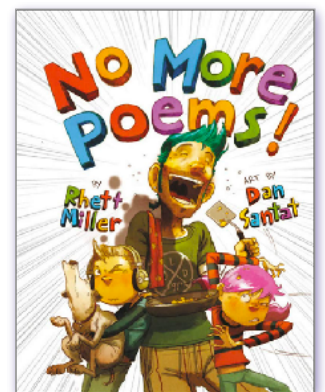
No More Poems!

by Rhett Miller, illustrated by Dan Santat

These poems bring a fresh new twist to the classic dilemmas of childhood as well as a perceptive eye to the foibles of modern family life. Full of clever wordplay and bright visual gags—and toilet humor to spare—an ideal read-aloud experience! (Book Description)

[Rhett Miller](#) introduces his book in this [30 minute video](#), including some singing, insight to his writing, and (of course) poetry readings.

*I did my homework but I lost it; My mom might've though it was garbage & tossed it
My stupid sister might've hid it; One thing's for certain though, I did it.*



tinyurl.com/ALAYMA21

ALA Youth Media Awards for 2021.

Other Words for Home



by Jasmine Warga

Warga portrays with extraordinary talent the transformation of a family's life before and after the war began in Syria. Her free-verse narration cuts straight to the bone and confronts the difficult realities of being Muslim and Arab in the U.S. Poetic, immersive, hopeful. (Kirkus Reviews, *starred review*).

A [review and overview](#) from *Islamic School Librarian*, includes links to author interviews.

Americans love labels. They help them know what to expect. Sometimes, though, I think labels stop them from thinking.

Each Tiny Spark

by Pablo Cartaya

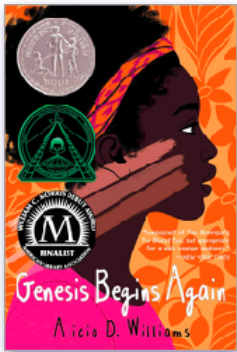
In mashed-up English and Spanish, this tween hero's tale will have readers cheering her on as she digs for the truth, stands up for herself and her friends, and gets handy with a welding gun. (Commonsense Media Review)

[Pronouncing Pable Cartaya and a autobio; fantastic discussion guide to his 3 books.](#)

I hear the bus rounding the corner, rumbling like a grumpy yellow rhino that hasn't had coffee yet. Would a rhino drink café con leche? Probably. I wish I had a remote control that could pause the bus for a moment longer.



Genesis Begins Again



by Alicia D. Williams

There are ninety-six reasons why thirteen-year-old Genesis dislikes herself. She knows the exact number because she keeps a list. She is determined to fix her family, and she's willing to try anything to do so... even if it means harming herself in the process. (Book Description)

A "[what to read next](#)" review from *Mesa County Librarians*.

It feels kinda silly—I'm not seven anymore—but I don't care. It lets me pretend to have good hair. It makes me beautiful. Even my skin looks lighter against the dark fabric.

Dig.

by A. S. King

Five estranged cousins are lost in a maze of their family's tangled secrets. With her inimitable surrealism, award winner A.S. King exposes how a toxic culture of polite white supremacy tears a family apart and how one determined generation can dig its way out.

[Five Questions](#) interview with A. S. King published in *Hornbook*.

You don't have to be racist to not know you're white.

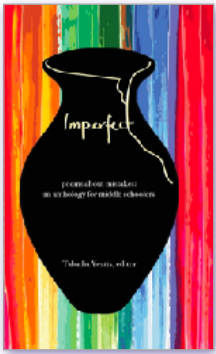
But sometimes you do. And Marla has no idea she's white or that the whole world was made for people like her.



tinyurl.com/AuthorsGalore

Authors and illustrators - especially helpful with pronunciations and author backgrounds.

Imperfect: Poems about Mistakes



edited by Tabatha Yeatts

Why an anthology about mistakes? Because we make mistakes all the time. Some are the size of erasing a hole in your paper, mispronouncing a word, or tripping over your shoelace. Some are the size of telling a friend's secret. Some can be useful, like a science experiment that goes wrong but gives you a new idea. (Book Description)

Yeatts [collects and shares](#) more poems, music, images, and other artistic ventures.

*Once upon a time, / there was a girl / who never made a mistake.
Which is why / this is / a fairy tale.*

White Bird

written and illustrated by R. J. Palacio

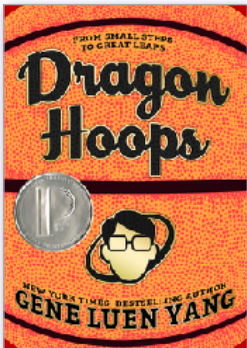
Palacio's graphic novel debut with Grandmère's story: how she, a young Jewish girl, was hidden by a family in a Nazi-occupied French village during World War II. how the boy she and her classmates once shunned became her savior and best friend. (Book Description)

A (deep!) [collection of resources](#) for teachers to provide historical context to the story.

On the weekends when the bluebells bloomed, my parents and I would have a picnic on the edge of the woods. ... Yes, in those days, I was as happy and carefree as a bird. But the world was changing.



Dragon Hoops



written and illustrated by Gene Luen Yang

Part memoir, part biography, part history, part sports diary, Dragon Hoops is Gene Luen Yang's story of several months charting the ups and downs of a high school basketball team. (Lata Review on Goodreads) – she kind of left out that the basketball team was eager to finally win the state championship that has eluded them. (JS)

[Activities and Discussion Guide](#) - including a "draw your own story" graphic organizer.

No, you're right. I was trying to make sure that cartoon-you reads as Punjabi rather than African American. It's an important part of the story – of your story.

With Fire on High

by Elizabeth Acevedo

Ever since she got pregnant freshman year, Emoni Santiago's life has been about making the tough decisions--doing what has to be done for her daughter and her abuela.

The one place she can let all that go is in the kitchen, where she adds a little something magical to everything she cooks, turning her food into straight-up goodness.

Acevedo [introduces us](#) to her beautiful story.

The world is a turntable that never stops spinning; as humans we merely choose the tracks we want to sit out and the ones that inspire us to dance.



Greenlights

by Matthew McConaughey

One Question a Day: A Five-Year Journal