

THE HERO NEXT DOOR



William Alexander



Joseph Bruchac

Lamar Giles • Mike Jung • Hena Khan

Juana Medina • Ellen Oh • R. J. Palacio

Linda Sue Park AND Anna Dobbin

Cynthia Leitich Smith • Ronald L. Smith

Suma Subramaniam • Rita Williams-Garcia

EDITED BY OLUGBEMISOLA RHUDAY-PERKOVICH

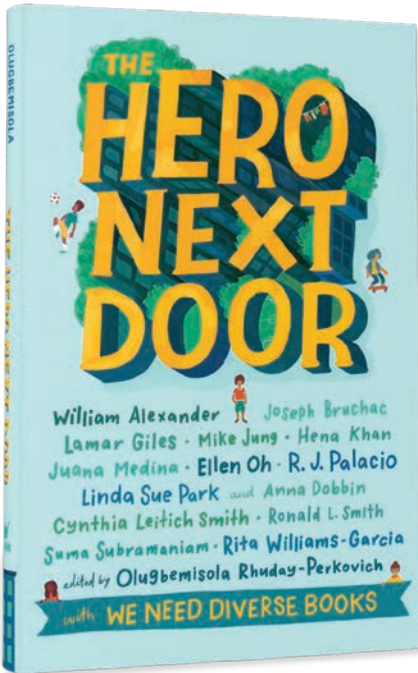


WITH WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE



Sometimes bravery is the greatest superpower.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Not all heroes wear capes. Some heroes teach martial arts. Others talk to ghosts. A few are inventors or soccer players. They're also sisters, neighbors, and friends. Because heroes come in many shapes and sizes. But they all have one thing in common: they make the world a better place.

Published in partnership with We Need Diverse Books, this vibrant anthology features fourteen acclaimed authors whose powerful and diverse voices show how small acts of courage can save the day. So pay attention, because a hero could be right beside you. Or maybe the hero is *you*.

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Contributors to this anthology include:

William Alexander, National Book Award Winner

Joseph Bruchac, *Horn Book* Honor Winner

Lamar Giles, Edgar Award Nominee

Mike Jung, We Need Diverse Books Founding Member

Hena Khan, ALA-ALSC Notable Children's Book

Honor Recipient

Juana Medina, Pura Belpré Award Winner

Ellen Oh, Cofounder of We Need Diverse Books

R. J. Palacio, #1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

Linda Sue Park, Newbery Medal Winner and

Anna Dobbin

Cynthia Leitich Smith, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

Ronald L. Smith, Coretta Scott King Award Winner

Rita Williams-Garcia, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

Suma Subramaniam, We Need Diverse Books Short Story

Contest Winner

Edited by:

Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich, NAACP Image

Award Winner



★ **“A stellar collection that, in celebrating heroes, helps readers find the universal in the specific.” –KIRKUS REVIEWS, Starred**

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Have students read the foreword by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich, the editor of the anthology. Then use the below suggestions as writing prompts or group discussion starters.

- Define *hero*. What are the qualities of a hero? What does a hero look like? Who decides who is a hero?
- Who are the heroes in your life? Why are they heroes?
- What is an ally? Use resources from TeachingTolerance.org to help guide conversations about being an ally.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Each question invites readers to reflect and respond. The readers may respond orally, artistically, or by writing in their journals.

“Minnows and Zombies”

Rita Williams-Garcia

- What do the Minnows choose as a prize for beating their swim relay record?
- Who are the zombies? Rita Williams-Garcia uses the word *zombies* deliberately. Why do you think she chose this description?
- “You want to be nice to zombies because they used to be real people. Sumaya knows.” (p. 9) Who is the zombie in Sumaya’s life? How does the narrator feel about Imiri?
- Describe the moment when the zombie comes toward the narrator and Sumaya at the 7-Eleven. (pp. 15–16) Who do you think this zombie is?
- Sumaya wants her brother Imiri to come home. Do you think that will happen? Why or why not? Write a script of a possible conversation between Sumaya and Imiri if they were reunited.
- What is the theme of this story?
- Who are the heroes in this story? Pull specific evidence from the text to explain your choices.

“One Wish”

Ronald L. Smith

- Reflect on how wolves are described and characterized in fairy tales and children’s stories. Consider other transformation stories such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Frog Prince*.
- Why does Cuz give Sacky the creeps?
- Why doesn’t Sacky’s aunt want anyone to come into their home when she’s not there? (p. 20) What did Sacky do?
- Summarize the story that Cuz tells Sacky prior to giving him his wish. (pp. 26–30) What do you discover about Cuz at the conclusion of story?
- What breaks the curse that plagued Cuz?
- Sacky wishes for Cuz to be a wolf again. (p. 31) Do you agree with his decision?
- Dramatize Cuz’s transformation into a wolf.
- What are the heroic moments in this story? Why?



“The Assist”

Linda Sue Park and Anna Dobbin

- Why does the school’s soccer coach call Eddie and his friends “the UN”? (p. 39) Discuss the global popularity of soccer and how shared interests can bind groups of friends together.
- Describe the positions on a soccer team.
- After practice, Eddie bumps into Noah, who had an essay from the internet about *All American Boys* by Brendan Kiely and Jason Reynolds. Why does Noah have this paper? (pp. 43–45)
- How does Eddie respond to Noah’s dilemma? (p. 47)
- Eddie and Noah skip the team’s pasta party. How does Eddie help Noah articulate his thoughts for his essay on *All American Boys*?
- Do you think using text messages helps Noah write his essay?
- The pivotal game for the team to make the playoffs has a thrilling finish. Who is the hero of the game? (pp. 54–58) Cite the text to explain your answer. Do you think the hero of the game and the hero of the story are the same?

“Home”

Hena Khan

- The opening paragraph describes the narrator in a taxi with her family, heading to an orphanage in Meknes, a city in Morocco. Research Meknes, and write a short paragraph about it.
- Read and reflect on “A Baby in Morocco,” a personal essay in the *Washington Post* by a mother who adopted an infant from Meknes. ([washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2015/01/14/a-baby-in-morocco/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ae0e4d4f5459](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/parenting/wp/2015/01/14/a-baby-in-morocco/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ae0e4d4f5459))
- Why does the narrator’s mother say the orphanage was heartbreaking? Refer to the story to support your answer. (p. 64)

- Aleena and her family go to the orphanage to meet her little brother, Hakeem. Describe their first meeting. How does Hakeem react when he meets Aleena?
- How does Hakeem adjust to being in his new home in Virginia? How does this adjustment make Aleena feel? (pp. 65–69)
- Aleena has her twelfth birthday party at home. Her friends come to celebrate. For a while, Hakeem isn’t near the birthday crafts. Later, Aleena notices “that [Hakeem’s hands] are covered with sand. Multicolored sand.” (p. 73) What races through Aleena’s mind at this moment?
- When Aleena’s friends disparage Hakeem because he messed up the sand projects, she says: “I know my friends are trying to make me feel better, but it isn’t working. Instead, their words swirl inside and make me feel emptier than the bottles without any sand left in them.” (pp. 74–75) Why does she feel this way?
- Think about Aleena’s birthday wish from last year. Discuss the difference between expectation and reality.



“Ellison’s CORNucopia: A Logan County Story” Lamar Giles

- Respond to these articles and videos:
 - “Schoolgirls build homemade Mars rover—and you can drive it!”
 - [nbcnews.com/sciencemain/schoolgirls-build-homemade-mars-rover-you-can-drive-it-6C10887940](http://www.nbcnews.com/sciencemain/schoolgirls-build-homemade-mars-rover-you-can-drive-it-6C10887940)
 - Teaching kids to build robots: [youtube.com/watch?v=SfW5en3H4vA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfW5en3H4vA)
- Create a visual representation of the Logan County Farmers’ Market. (p. 77)
- “You’re glitching again,” Leen says to Wiki. (p. 80) What does she mean by “glitching”? What is Wiki doing?



- What does Leen and Wiki notice about Wendy? Why is she crying? (p. 82)
- What happens as Dewey is closing Mr. Hannamaker's empty cashbox? Describe the fight. Make models of Dewey and Red Eyes. (pp. 90–91)
- Who is the second suspect in the theft of Wendy's cashbox? What leads Leen and Wiki to remove her from the suspect list? (pp. 92–93)
- Describe the Yeasterlys' criminal enterprise. How are they finally caught? (pp. 94–96)
- What do you think is happening to Miss Wavers? Why do you think the Yeasterlys took advantage of her? (p. 98) Discuss what it means to be vulnerable.
- How do you think Giles uses irony in the story?

“Rescue”

Suma Subramaniam

- Read the first page. Describe the scene. What is happening? (p. 101)
- This story is titled “Rescue.” Why? Who needs rescuing? Who rescues them? Discuss the theme of rescuing throughout the story.
- What kind of homelife does Sangeetha have? Read the poem “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke. (poetryfoundation.org/poems/43330/my-papas-waltz) Are there parallel themes between Sangeetha’s homelife and this poem?
- What causes Amma to leave with Sangeetha? (pp. 103–106)
- Joe, the neighbor, says, “I knew this day would come, Sangeetha.” (p. 108) What did Joe mean?
- Research Ganesha, the Hindu elephant god. What is the Gayatri Mantra? Why does this chant comfort Amma and Sangeetha on difficult days? (p. 115)
- Who are Grace and Buddy? Why does Amma agree to take them to Provo, Utah? (pp. 114–115)

- Do you agree with Amma and Sangeetha’s decision to go back to get Duke? Why or why not? Write a persuasive piece stating your rationale. (pp. 119–120)

“The Save”

Joseph Bruchac

- What position does Oren play? Why is he anxious?
- Why does singing “*We are the Iroquois, / we’re proud, we are strong,*” inspire him more than Jay-Z’s latest rap? (p. 123) Who are the Iroquois?
- Research lacrosse. Write a short report about the history of the game.
- The game against the Buffalo Bulls is played on the Rez. What is a reservation?
- Create a video or storyboard recounting the lacrosse game, showing Oren’s big save.
- At the Firekeepers restaurant, Oren and his grandfather have a conversation about the save. Why did Oren call it a “happy accident”? What perspective and advice did his grandfather share? (pp. 130–132)

“Los Abuelos, Two Bright Minds”

Juana Medina

- Describe your grandparents or any older adults in your life. What makes them special? How do they show they care about you?
- Imagine what Abuela’s studio looks like. Make a visual representation of it.
- Create character sketches of Juani’s abuelos. Use evidence from the story.
- Why does Juani’s abuelo work so much? (pp. 136–140)
- Describe the collaborations between Juani’s abuelos. How did they help their community?



- A theme of this story is the power of love. How is love demonstrated in the story? What are the different types of love we see? (Extension: Read *Love* by Matt de la Peña. How are the stories similar?)
- What is the most important moment in this story? Explain why you selected this moment.

“Thrown”

Mike Jung

- Stevie’s sensei tells him he is ready to move into the teen and adult class. What is his experience in the new class? Describe how Brandon Sensei is different from Anika Sensei. (pp. 147–155)
- Stevie has autism. Research autism and share what you’ve learned. What does Stevie do when he feels overwhelmed? (p. 153)
- When talking with his parents, Stevie shares that he likes Brandon Sensei because of the way he moves and because he is also autistic. Why do you think this is important to Stevie? (pp. 155–156)
- Stevie thinks, “In the kids’ class I was awesome at aikido, but in the teen and adult class I was an out-of-place loser. It was like being in school. I didn’t want aikido to feel like school.” (p. 156) Based on this passage, what is school like for Stevie? Why might he not want “aikido to feel like school”?
- Arthur advises Stevie to “be like Stella.” (p. 162) What does this mean?
- Martha directs Stevie to watch a video called “Life on the Spectrum: Aikido.” What does Stevie discover while watching this video? Why is it important? How does this video cause Stevie to move out of his comfort zone?
- Watch the video “Spectrum: A Story of the Mind—Autism & Aikido” at pbs.org/video/spectrum-story-mind-autism-aikido. Respond to the video. Explain how Stevie feels about aikido. (p. 167) Is there anything you are passionate about?

“A Girl’s Best Friend”

Cynthia Leitich Smith

- Sophie asks her mom for a dog. Why does her mother say she cannot have a pet? Who does Sophie ask next?
- Miz Wilson is described as not having “a flexible personality.” (p. 173) Why? What causes her to seem negative?
- Sophie is “a Muscogee-Osage girl and a Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizen.” (p. 172) Research the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Osage Nation at mcn-nsn.gov. What did you learn?
- For her birthday, Sophie and her mother volunteer at the local animal shelter. They walk and socialize the dogs. Create flash cards (similar to baseball cards) with traits for all the dogs that Sophie mentions.
- Why does Miz Wilson put a notice of eviction on Sophie and her mother’s front door? Why is Miz Wilson incorrect in her assumption? (p. 176)
- Sophie delivers the rent check and clears up Miz Wilson’s confusion. What happens as a result of this conversation? (pp. 180–184)
- How does the new dog impact Miz Wilson and Sophie’s relationship? Cite evidence from the text.

“Everly’s Otherwordly Dilemma”

Ellen Oh

- Create a visual representation of the goblin that Everly saw. (p. 185)
- What types of creatures are Max and his family? What is Everly’s special talent? (p. 189)
- What are the Shinobi Rangers? What do they do to the goblin? (pp. 192–194)
- Darcy Watson, a Shinobi Ranger, recruits Everly to the Ranger cadet program. Why? How does Cameron Morrison, the captain of Shinobi Rangers, feel about this invitation? Why? (pp. 195–196)



- Think about the statement “The Buraku are always the hunted.” (p. 200) What does this mean? How is this idea woven throughout the story?
- Sophie declares, “Welcome, hero of the Buraku.” (p. 207) Create a movie trailer or storyboard that continues the story.



“Reina Madrid”

R. J. Palacio

- “Reina wasn’t her real name. Maria Eugenia was. . . . The neighborhood kids didn’t know that [Reina] meant ‘queen’ in Spanish.” (p. 209) What does your name or nickname mean? Do you know how you got your name? Discuss the importance of names and nicknames in creating identity.
- After Reina’s father passes away, her mother needs to move to a new home. The realtor makes assumptions about where she wants to live and what she can afford. Why? How does Reina’s mother make herself clear to the realtor? (pp. 210–211, 213)
- Reina often translates for her mother. What unspoken lessons does Reina learn when her mother and other adults speak in a “coded way”? Why is intent important? (p. 217)
- Describe Franny’s homelife—her living conditions and her family. Why do you think Franny tells the story of being trapped in a closet for twelve hours? What does this anecdote tell you about her family compared to Reina’s?
- Franny’s father does not want her going out and playing with Reina. He uses a racial slur. What are Franny’s, Reina’s, and their friends’ reactions to this? How do you think Reina’s friends should have responded? (p. 228)
- Discuss the statement: “Neither one of them ever acknowledged what had happened. They were best friends, but they were strangers, too. There were boundaries, like in foreign countries, that were never crossed.” (p. 229)
- Reflect on and respond to Mrs. Madrid’s question: “Why would I punish Franny by depriving her of your friendship?” (p. 230)

“Go Fish”

William Alexander

- How do Colt, Elora, and Avery meet? Where do they meet?
- Describe Colt, Elora, and Avery.
- Avery says to Colt, “Don’t call me he or she.” Why is it important that Colt honored Avery’s request? Watch the video “Kids Meet a Gender Non-Conforming Person” at [youtube.com/watch?v=DZsBei4nChU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZsBei4nChU).
- Elora creates a card game, Sleepsuits, for her friends to play. With a deck of cards, play the game by following the rules as explained. Write down the responses. They may be shared or kept private. (p. 242)
- The statue of Beauregard Errington Grizzle is creating havoc in the cemetery. Who was this man? What is his ghost doing?
- Above the catacombs in the cemetery, groups of people are shouting at one another. Why? (pp. 249–250)
- What happens to the statue of Beauregard Errington Grizzle? Why does he say, “This town is proud of me, though I was the worst of its sons.” (p. 252)



- Research the debate about the removal of Confederate statues across the South.
 - Read this article: “SPLC’s ‘Whose heritage?’ Report: A Teaching Opportunity” tolerance.org/magazine/splcs-whose-heritage-report-a-teaching-opportunity
 - Review the case study of the Arthur Ashe statue on Monument Avenue, Richmond, VA. See the following article: “How an Arthur Ashe Statue Ended Up in Richmond’s Confederate Memorial” at writing.tennis.com/pro-game/2017/08/statue-arthur-ashe-richmonds-monument-confederacy/68685/
 - Discuss what it means to memorialize someone. Talk about when these monuments were built, and how that context is important when discussing intent.

LOOKING AT THE ENTIRE COLLECTION

Even though these stories are able to stand alone, they can also be read together. These stories are linked by common ideas that are important for young people to think about, including interacting with friends and family, hardships at school and home, and personal identity. In addition, these stories fundamentally undergird the notion that young people want to be seen and validated and that heroes are in their everyday life. They can be heroes, too. The following section gives examples of discussion questions and activities for the entire collection.

1. Consider the collection as a whole. What theme binds all the stories together?
2. Select your favorite short story. Discuss why this story is your favorite. What about this particular story stands out to you?
3. These stories are by popular authors who have written a vast array of books. Choose one and conduct an author study. For this project, you will read, research, and delve deep into the work of that author. You are responsible for two components:
 - a. a research/oral presentation about the author, his/her inspirations, and the books they have written
 - b. an exhibition of 6–8 objects related to the author and their works. Include a short explanation for each object
4. Create a multimedia trailer for each story. Explain the choices you made.

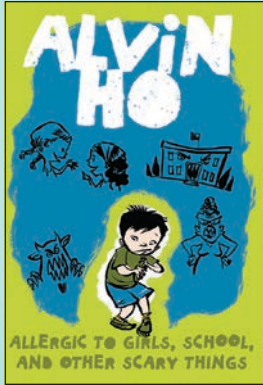
COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards can be used to shape discussions and activities inspired by this collection. The applicable anchor standards are listed below, and they may be used to support the questions and activities provided with each story.

- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading: 1–10
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing: 1, 3-5, 9, 10
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening: 1–5
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language: 1, 3, 4, 6



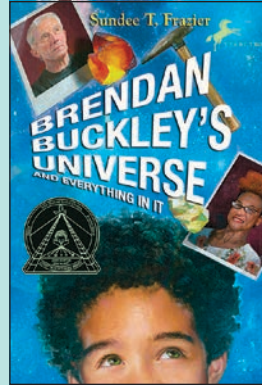
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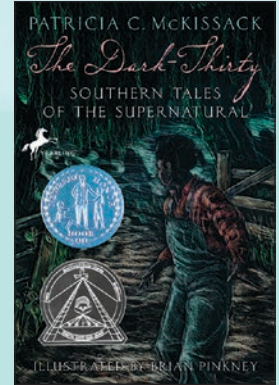
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Lenore Look
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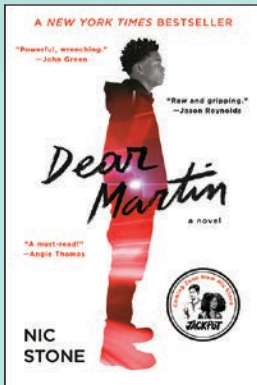
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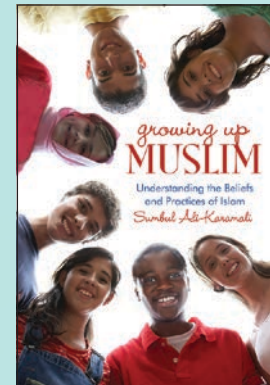
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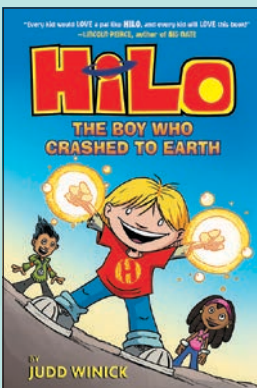
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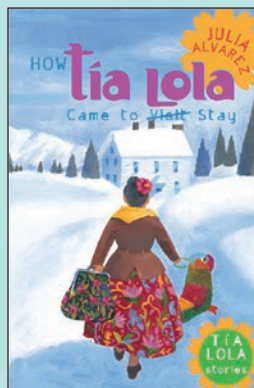
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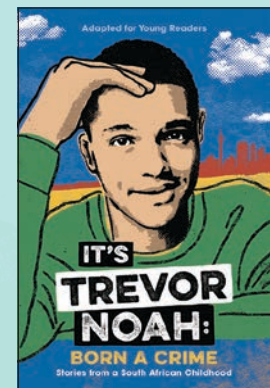
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Judd Winick
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Julia Alvarez
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Trevor Noah
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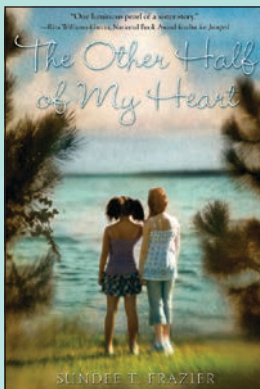
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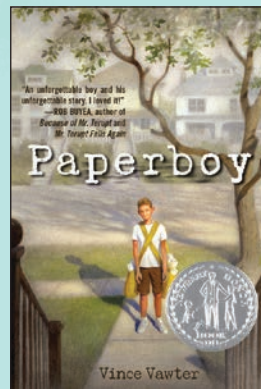
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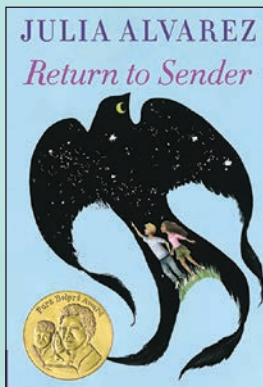
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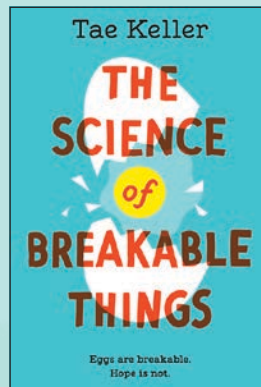
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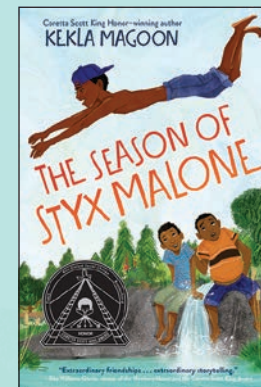
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STORIES FOR THE CLASSROOM



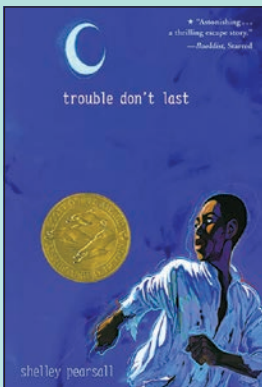
The Skirt
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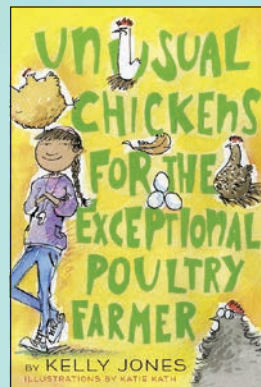
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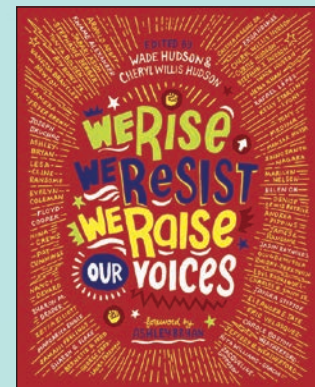
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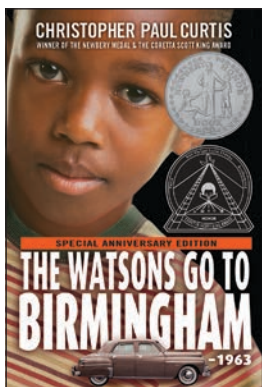


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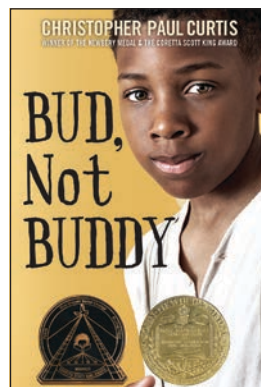


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We Raise Our Voices**
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CHRISTOPHER PAUL CURTIS



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Bud, Not Buddy
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The Mighty Miss Malone
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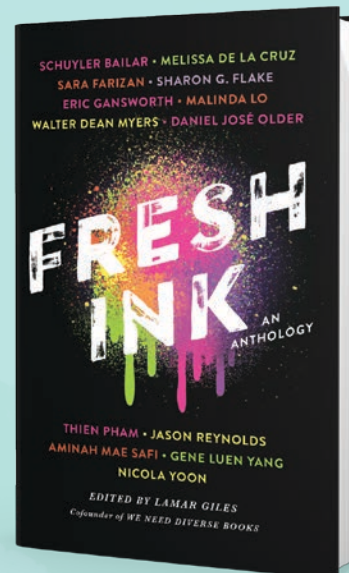
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- ★ “A natural for middle school classrooms and libraries, this **STRONG COLLECTION** should find eager readers.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred
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Guide prepared by Shanetia P. Clark, PhD, associate professor of literacy, Salisbury University, MD
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