

Recent Children's and Young Adult Literature of War, Genocide, Immigrants, and Refugees: Picture Books, Middle Grade, Young Adult, & Young Adult Crossovers

prepared by

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NOTE TO READERS: This is a project-in-process. I have been invited to speak in Greece in 2027 and will be adding more books from time-to-time.

In Kenneth Kidd's words, reading about trauma should not be traumatic to young people. Teachers and caregivers can exercise care and sensitivity when introducing books to young people.

Kidd writes, "How to explain this shift away from the idea that young readers should be protected from evil and toward the conviction that they should be exposed to it, perhaps even endangered by it? It's almost as if we now expect reading about trauma to be traumatic itself—as if we think children can't otherwise comprehend atrocity."

That said, all young people should have access to "mirror" books—those that reflect their lived experiences. And all young people should have access to "window" books, in which they are allowed to see what other young people experience (Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990).

“It is the obligation of every one born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks.”-- Dina Nayeri

Recent Picture Books

Words and paintings by #1 New York Times Bestseller

NIKKOLAS SMITH



The
History of **We**

IMMIGRANTS ALL
The History of We by Nikkolas
Smith (Kokila, 2025)

As humans, we have always migrated from one place to another. All of our ancestry came from the continent of Africa and we have spread around the world from there. Along the way, we have created art, music, dance, architecture, theater, stories, and literature. We have developed math, science, and written history, among other accomplishments. Stunning illustrations.

2026 Jane Addams Children's Book Award

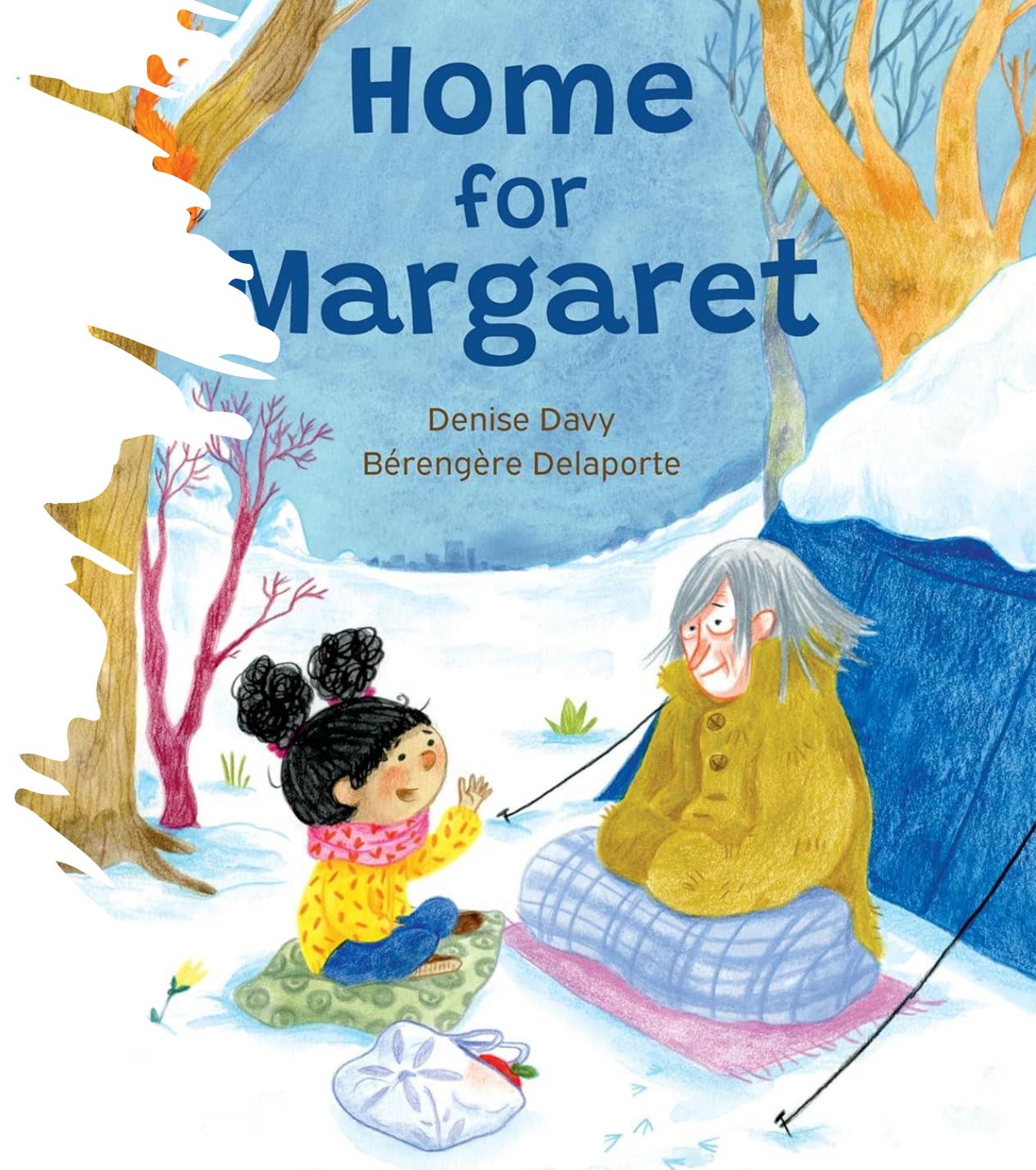
2026 Notable Book for a Global Society

2026 Robert F. Sibert Honor

2025 A Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature
Best Book

Home for Margaret by Denise Davy, illus. Bérengère Delaporte
(Groundwood, 2025)

Emma and her mom love to go hiking on a winter's day, playing in the snow, and noticing nature and wildlife. On this day, Emma encounters a homeless woman, Margaret, who is living in a tent in the cold. Back home, Emma asks her mom, who is a social worker, why Margaret doesn't have a home. Her mom wisely responds, "Some people have lost their jobs. Some people have health problems. No one chooses to be homeless." Emma's mom makes calls and eventually helps Margaret find a home. Based on a true story. While not about immigrants and refugees per se, I'd add to what Emma's mom said, "Some have had to flee a war-torn country."



Fly Away Home

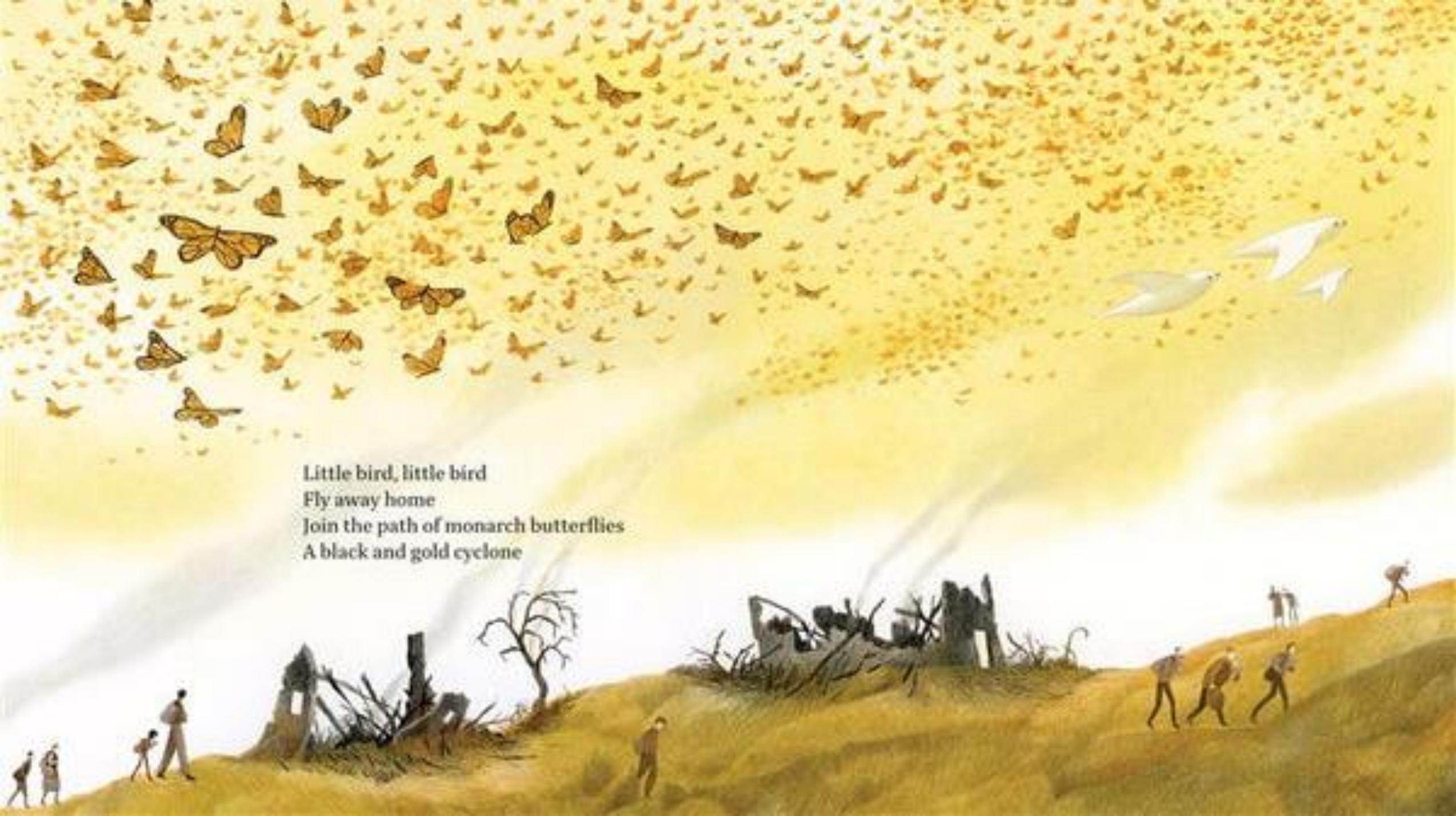
Betty Quan
Akin Duzakin

Fly Away Home by Betty Quan,
illus. by Akin Duzakin (Groundwood,
2025)

Quan’s dedication: “To the ancestors who made the journey, and to my mother, for inspiring Little Bird.”

Duzakin’s dedication: “To all children uprooted and set adrift, seeking belonging far from home...”

Little Bird and her mother join those walking toward a new home. Along the way they notice all kinds animals and birds traveling—finches, magpies, dragonflies, butterflies. And in most pictures, other humans with backpacks and suitcases, sometimes leaving bombed out homes. A lovely way to introduce immigrants and refugees.



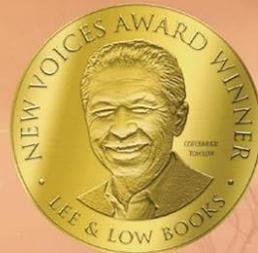
Little bird, little bird
Fly away home
Join the path of monarch butterflies
A black and gold cyclone

The Home We Make



by Maham Khwaja

narrated by Fareeda Pasha



rb
media
RECORDED BOOKS

The Home We Make by
Maham Khwaja, illus.
Daby Zainab Faidhi (Lee &
Low Books, 2024)

As bombing grows closer, a family leaves their home for the safety of a refugee camp to which they must travel by boat. In the camp child watches her parents fill out the endless paperwork that is finally rewarded with asylum in the U.S. Based on the author's experience, moving from India to Pakistan to the U.S.

Written in verse.

2024 Lee & Low New Voices Award



la Davies
d by Rebecca Cobb

The Day War Came by Nicola
Davies, illus. Rebecca Cobb
(Candlewick/Help Refugees, 2018)

A child is having an ordinary day: eating breakfast with her family, learning about volcanoes and tadpoles, and drawing a picture of a bird. Her school is bombed. The world as she knew it disappears in a second, leading to flight, a refugee camp, and being turned away from school, where they are learning about volcanoes and tadpoles, because there is no chair. Later, a knock on the door and a child shows up with a chair for the child refugee. The author read about how a child was turned away from school because there was no chair, thus launching #3000 chairs to help refugees.

2019 Jane Addams Honor Book
2019 Charlotte Huck Honor Book
2019 Chen Bochui International
Children's Literature Award

CENTRAL AMERICA TO U.S.

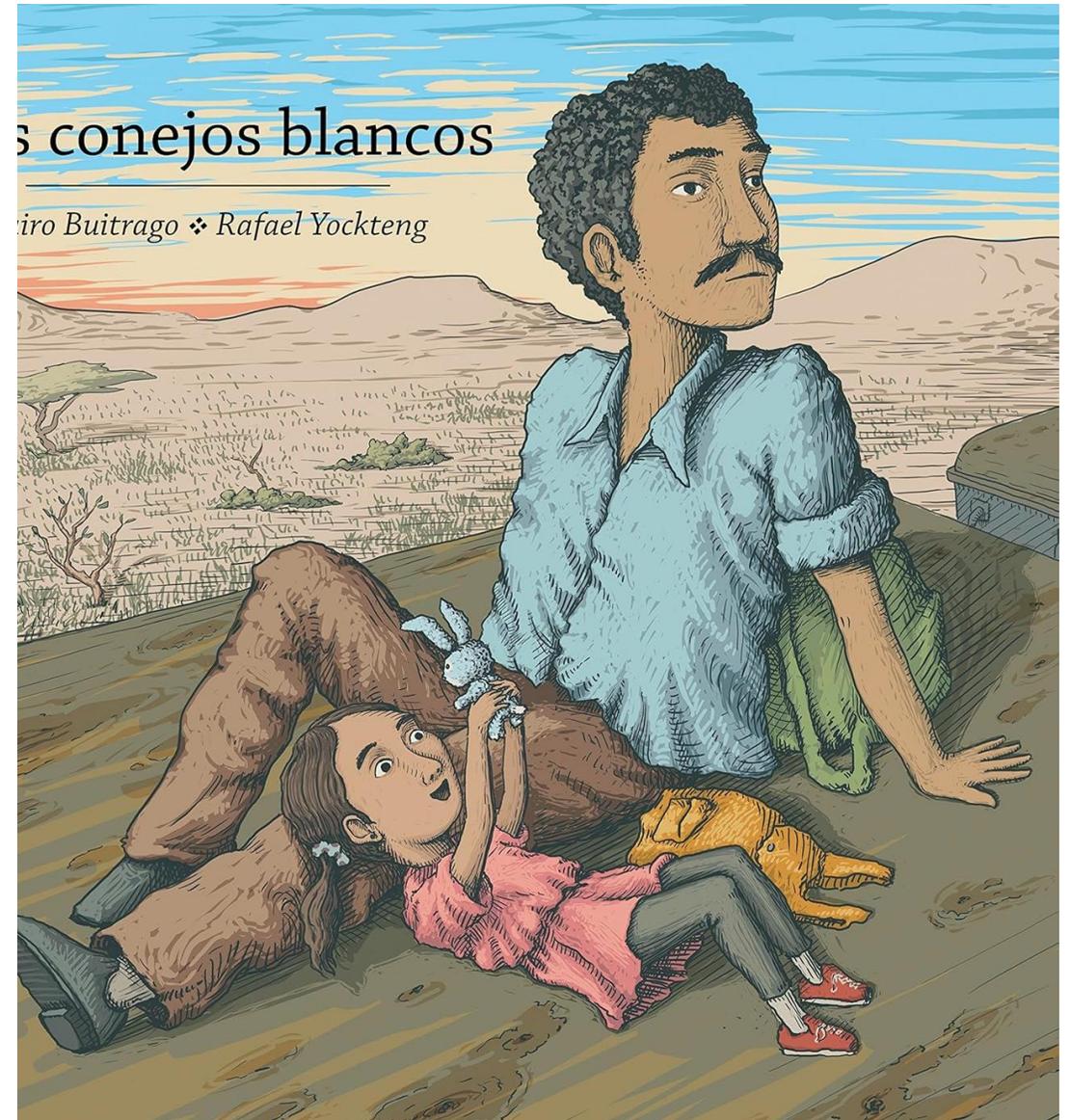
Two White Rabbits by Jairo Buitrago, illus. by Rafael Yockteng—2 editions: One in English, one in Spanish (Groundwood, 2015)

A girl traveling with her father doesn't know where they are going. Instead she notices and counts: hens, cows, a donkey, birds, and people. In the clouds she sees the shapes of swans, trees, and rabbits. Along the way she meets a boy she befriends. When she and her father have to depart, he gives her two white rabbits.

2016 USBBY Outstanding International Book

2016 Notable Book for a Global Society

2016 NCTE Charlotte Huck Recommended Book



Two White Rabbits by Jairo Buitrago, illus. by Rafael Yockteng,
continued

The last page has a message from Patsy Aldana, who founded Groundwood Books and is past president of the IBBY Foundation:

“The father and daughter in this book are leaving their home and the world they know and love to go to a different country. Maybe it is because the father cannot find work and a way to support his daughter at home. Maybe because the world they live in has been destroyed by violence, war and danger. We don’t know....What do those of us who have safe comfortable lives owe to people who do not?”

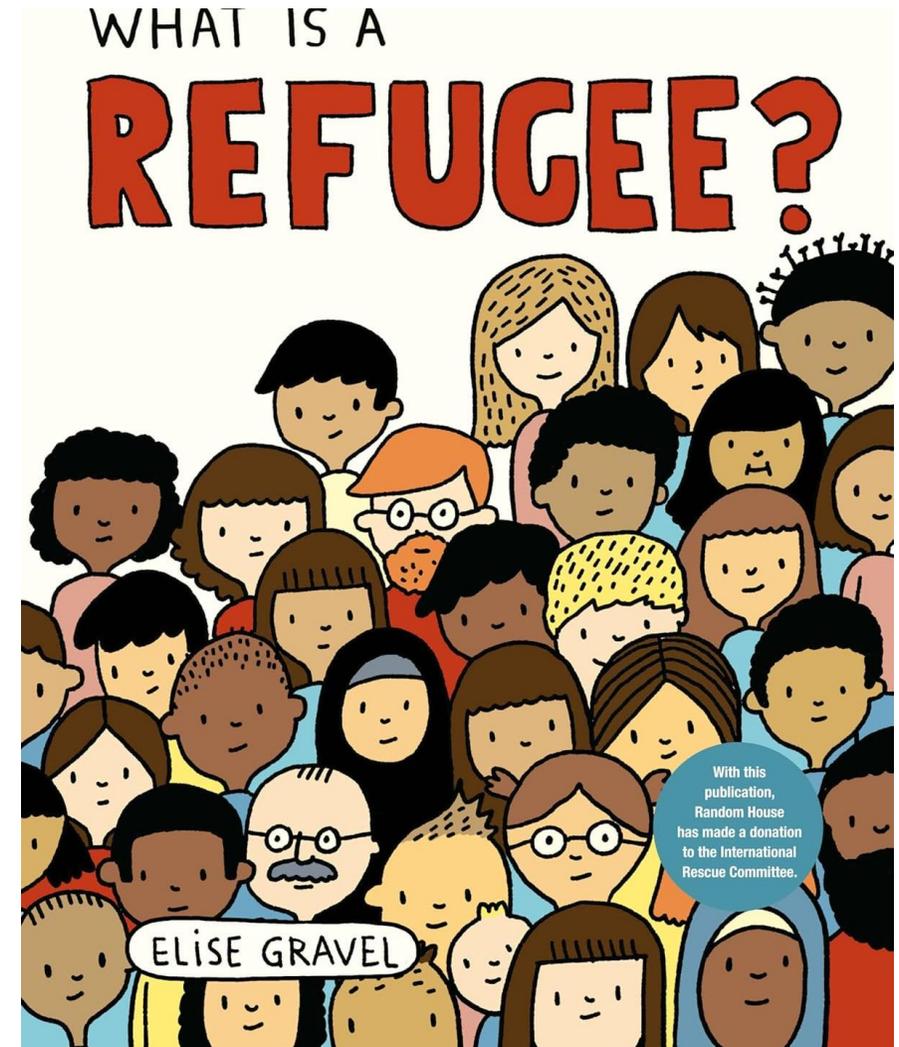
What Is a Refugee? by Elise Gravel (Schwartz & Wade, 2019)

A simple and accessible text for younger children with the explanation that most people would rather not leave their home countries. The author includes quotes of child refugees from Syria, Sudan, Haiti, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Cuba, all of whom who just want to play like all children.

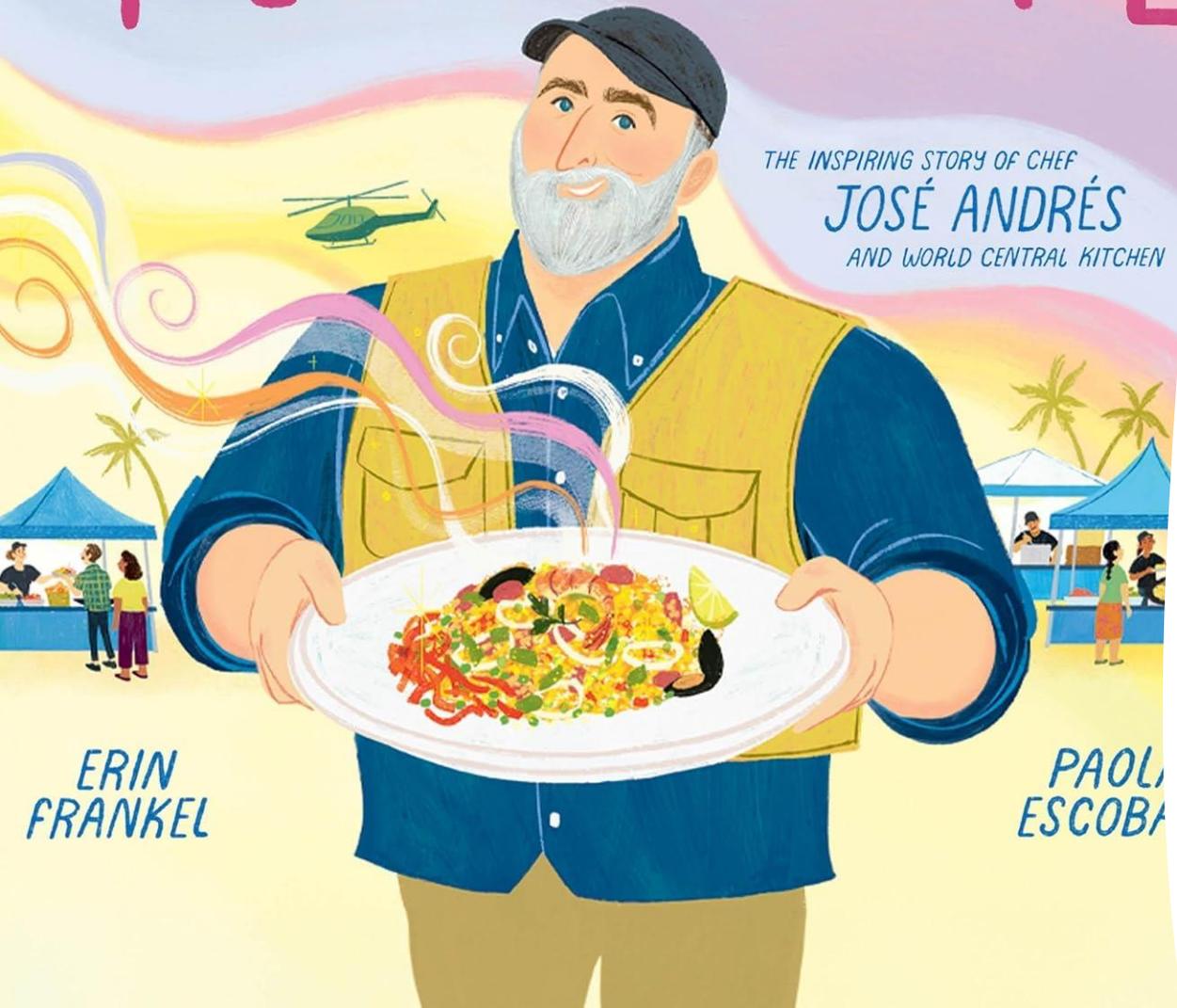
2020 Governor General's Award for Illustration (Canada)

2020 National Council for the Social Studies

CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies



A PLATE OF HOPE



SPAIN TO THE U.S. TO THE WORLD
A Plate of Hope: The Inspiring Story of Chef José Andrés and the World Central Kitchen
by Erin Frankel, illus. Paola Escobar
(Random House, 2024)

Born in Spain, Chef José Andrés immigrated to U.S. and, because he believes no one should go hungry, founded the World Central Kitchen that has responded to disasters around the world, serving over 500 million meals.

2024 Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature Best Book

2025 Orbis Pictus commendation

2025 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People

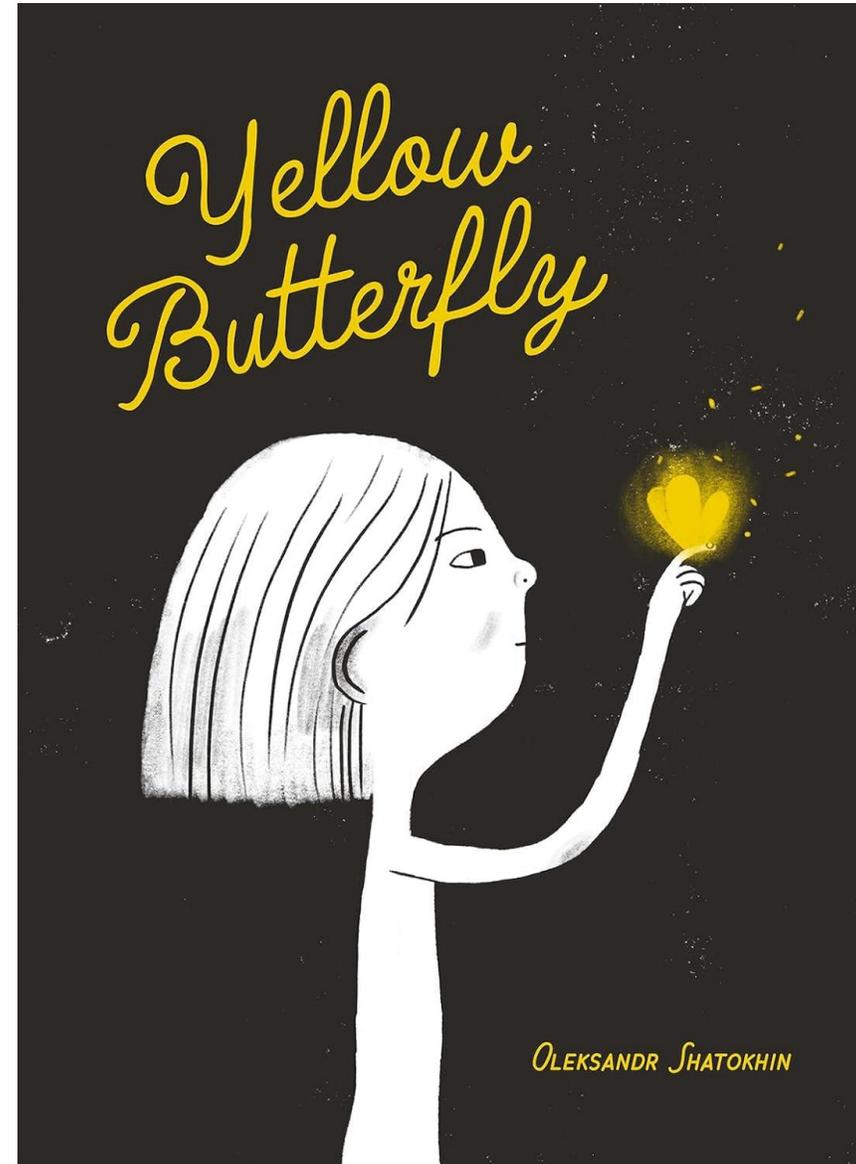
2025 Odyssey Award

UKRAINE

Yellow Butterfly by
Oleksander Shatokin (Red Comet
Press, 2023)

The first children's book published in English on the Russia-Ukraine war that began in 2022. In a wordless book, a child's feelings about war emerge in visual images: barbed wire, enormous spiders, and explosions. The child falls to the ground when a butterfly emerges. She follows the butterfly, seeing nature destroyed, a playground bombed. Despite the destruction, there are thousands more butterflies that lead to the blue sky, blending the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag.

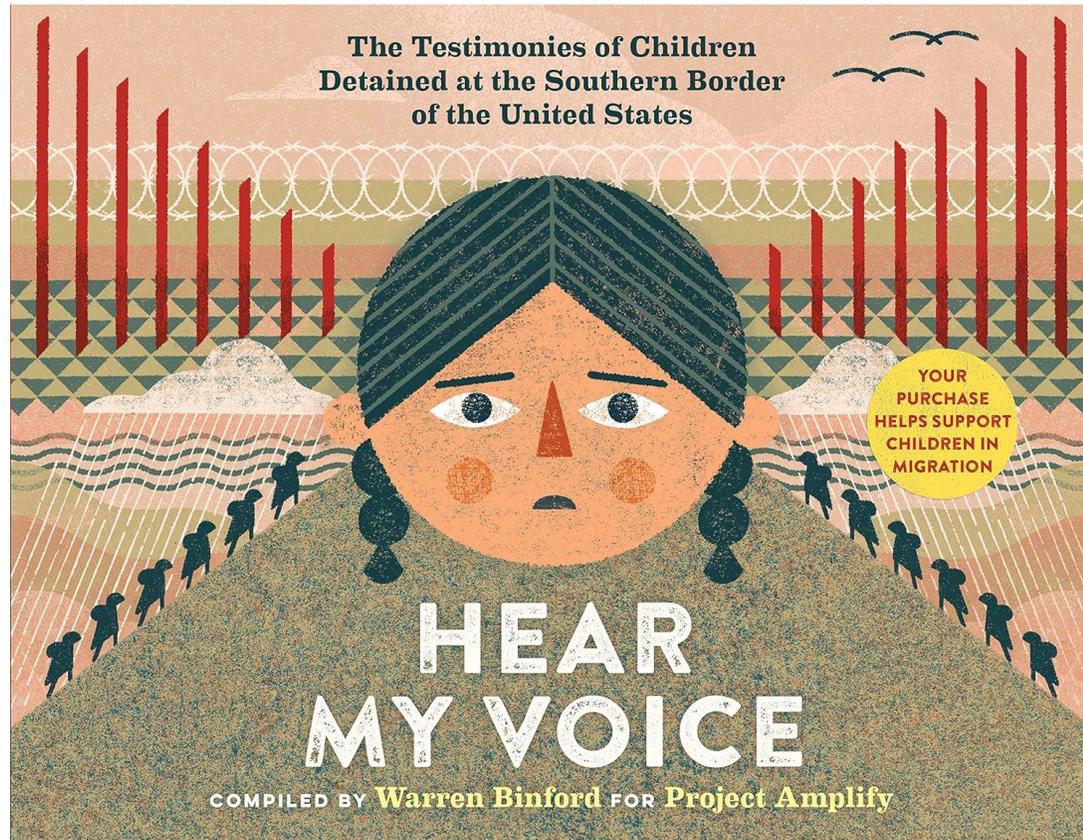
2023 World Illustration Award Shortlist







Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States/Los testimonios de los jóvenes detenidos en la frontera sureña de los Estados Unidos compiled by Warren Binford for Project Amplify (Workman, 2021)



Written in both English and Spanish.

2022 Bank Street College Flora Stieglitz Straus Award

Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States/Los testimonios de los jóvenes detenidos en la frontera sureña de los Estados Unidos compiled by Warren Binford for Project Amplify, continued

In 2017 when children were separated from their parents at the border Binford, a professor of law and pediatrics, was one of the few allowed to visit. Here she gathered children's stories; their ages ranged from 5-17. They came from Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Ecuador. A recurring theme is not wanting to leave their homeplace behind but not having much choice. A child from Honduras explains, "Our grandfather saw the gang kill our neighbor. They threatened to kill him and so we all had to leave."

Once in the detention center, another child: "There were many children there, perhaps about 200 or 300 kids. We were kept in a cage. It is very crowded....There's not even enough room for the baby to crawl." Predictably, the food is substandard and there is not enough. Going to the bathroom is not private—they hold up blankets for each other. Bathing and clean clothes are rare. Children become sick. Older children must become stand-in parents for younger children.

The Rock in My Throat

Kao Kalia Yang
illustrated by
Jiemei Lin



HMONG IMMIGRANTS FROM
THAILAND TO THE U.S.

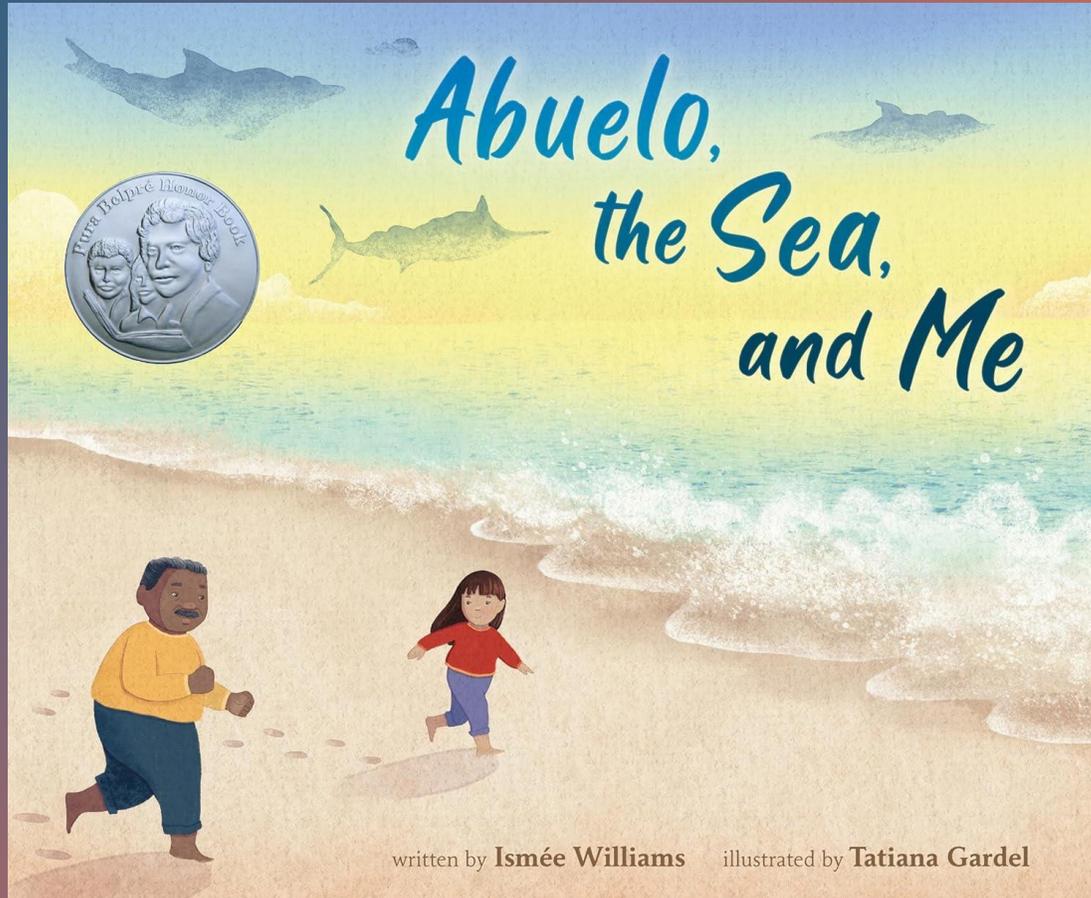
The Rock in My Throat by Kao Kalia
Yang, illus. Jiemei Lin
(Carolrhoda, 2024)

As a Hmong immigrant from a refugee camp in Thailand, a child watches the rude and impatient way some English-speaking people treat her parents. And, in school, the girl does not feel seen for who she is so becomes mute: “There is a rock in my throat now, and it grows heavier by the day.” Based on the author’s experience.

2025 Asian/Pacific American Award

2025 National Council for the Social
Studies Carter G. Woodson Award

2025 International Literacy Association
Notable Books for a Global Society



CUBAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S.
Abuelo, the Sea, and Me by Ismée
Williams, illus. Tatiana Gardel
(Roaring Brook, 2024)

Abuelo fled Cuba and, being with his granddaughter at the sea, tells her stories of his homeland: “Geese chasing the vanishing sun south, toward the island Abuelo fled.” Based on a true story.

2025 Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor

UKRAINE, HOLOMODOR

Threads: Zlata's Ukrainian Shirt by Lina Maslo (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2024)

For her birthday, Zlata's mother embroiders a shirt called *Vyshyvanka*, the word for Ukrainian embroidery. Her father tells her the red is for love and the black is for sorrow, which is part of life and soon comes to them in the 1930s. To weaken the population the Communists deliberately starve the Ukrainians. The father of one of her best friends betrays the family for hiding food and Zlata's father is taken away. "It was a long time before life began to get better. But we never gave up what made us Ukrainian—our language, our beliefs, our traditions. Even though it was dangerous, we never gave up making beautiful things. Beauty made life bearable."

2024 Coretta Scott King for Illustration



My name, Ziata, means *golden*.

Like my hair, Mama says.

And like the wheat fields that stretched across Ukraine.





HOMELAND

My Father Dreams of Palestine

by Hannah Moushabeck illustrated by Reem Madooh

PALESTINE

Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine by Hannah Moushabeck, illus. Reem Madooh (Chronicle, 2023)

Based on the author's father who was living in Palestine in 1948 during the time of Al-Nakba (*catastrophe*) and had to shelter in the Greek Orthodox Monastery until he could escape to the U.S. He enchants his children with stories of their homeland—the food, art, music, crafts.

2024 Arab American Book Award

2024 Notable Books for a Global Society

written by **MAYSA ODEH**

illustrated by **ALIAA BETAWI**

A MAP FOR FALASTEEN



A PALESTINIAN CHILD'S
SEARCH FOR HOME

PALESTINE, U.S.

A Map for Falasteen: A Palestinian Child's Search for Home by Maysa Odeh, illus. Aliaa Betawi (Holt, 2024)

In school Falasteen cannot find Palestine, her ancestors' homeland, on a map. Upon questioning, her teacher thinks it doesn't exist. Falasteen's grandparents and mother reassure her it does. Her grandmother still keeps the key to the home she had to leave. Her mother tells her, "Their maps can't erase our memories. Their maps can't erase our past...Palestine lives in you and me." Based on the author's experience.

2025 National Council for the Social Studies Carter G. Woodson Award

One morning, Falasteen's teacher showed her class a map of the world.

"Can each of you tell us where your family is from?" she asked.

The children gathered in a circle and began sharing their stories with pride.



A Map for Falasteen: A Palestinian Child's Search for Home by Maysa Odeh, illus. Aliaa Betawi, continued

But when it was her turn, Falasteen searched the map and found nothing.

"Miss Baker, why isn't Palestine on the map?"

My Home is in My Backpack



VENEZUELA

My Home Is in My Backpack by

Eugenia Perrella and Angela

Salerno (Floris Books, 2025—first published in
Chile in 2023)

Many of Clara's family have already left and now, she and her family must too. Despite the hardships, together they look for shooting stars, tell stories and jokes, play hide-and-seek—all part of a happy childhood. Clara's father explains, "our *home* is special: it is made from the people we love and the things we love doing."

2026 USBBY Outstanding International
Book

EGYPT TO U.S.

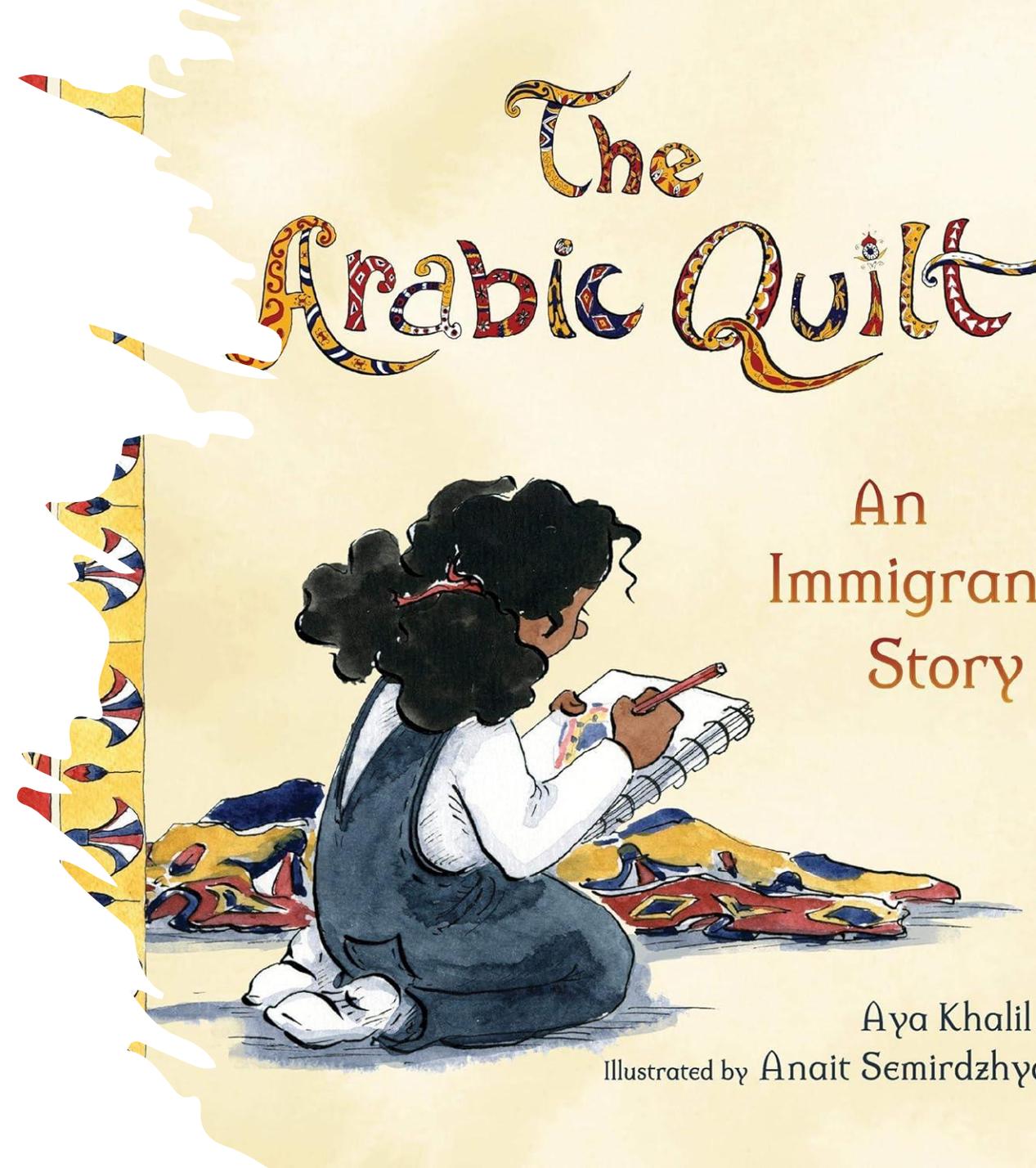
The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story by Aya Khalil, illus. by Anait Semirdzhyan (Tilbury, 2020)

2021 Arab American Children's Book Award

2021 Children's Africana Book Awards (CABA) Honor

2021 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (NCSS)

2021 Notable Books for a Global Society.



The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story by Aya Khalil, illus. by Anait Semirdzhyan, continued

Kanzi does not want to stand out in her new school and wishes her mother would pack her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich instead of a *kofta* sandwich. But when her teacher finds a poem Kanzi wrote about her grandmother's quilt, Kanzi's mom is asked to help the class create their own quilt using all the children's names. While writing their names in Arabic, she also shares Arabic words commonly used in English: "Algebra, coffee, lemon, sugar..." The project helps break down barriers between Kanzi and her classmates and she makes new friends. Soon, another quilt appears in the hallway, this time in Japanese. Inspired by Kanzi's class, another teacher created a similar quilt.

wishes



By Mượn Thị Văn

Illustrations by Victo Ngai

VIETNAM, HONG KONG, U.S.
Wishes by Muon Thi Van, illus.
by Victo Ngai (Orchard, 2021)

Based on the author's experience, a young girl must flee in the night with her family. Her father had been on the "wrong side" during the Vietnamese war and lived in hiding. The book opens with, "The night wished it was quieter," followed by other wishes and longing. It ends with "And I wished I didn't have to wish anymore." After a dangerous journey on a boat over open seas, they arrived in Hong Kong where they stayed in a refugee camp for a month before coming to the U. S.

2022 I'm Your Neighbor New Arrival Book Award

2022 Margaret Wise Brown Prize for Children's Literature

2022 Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis

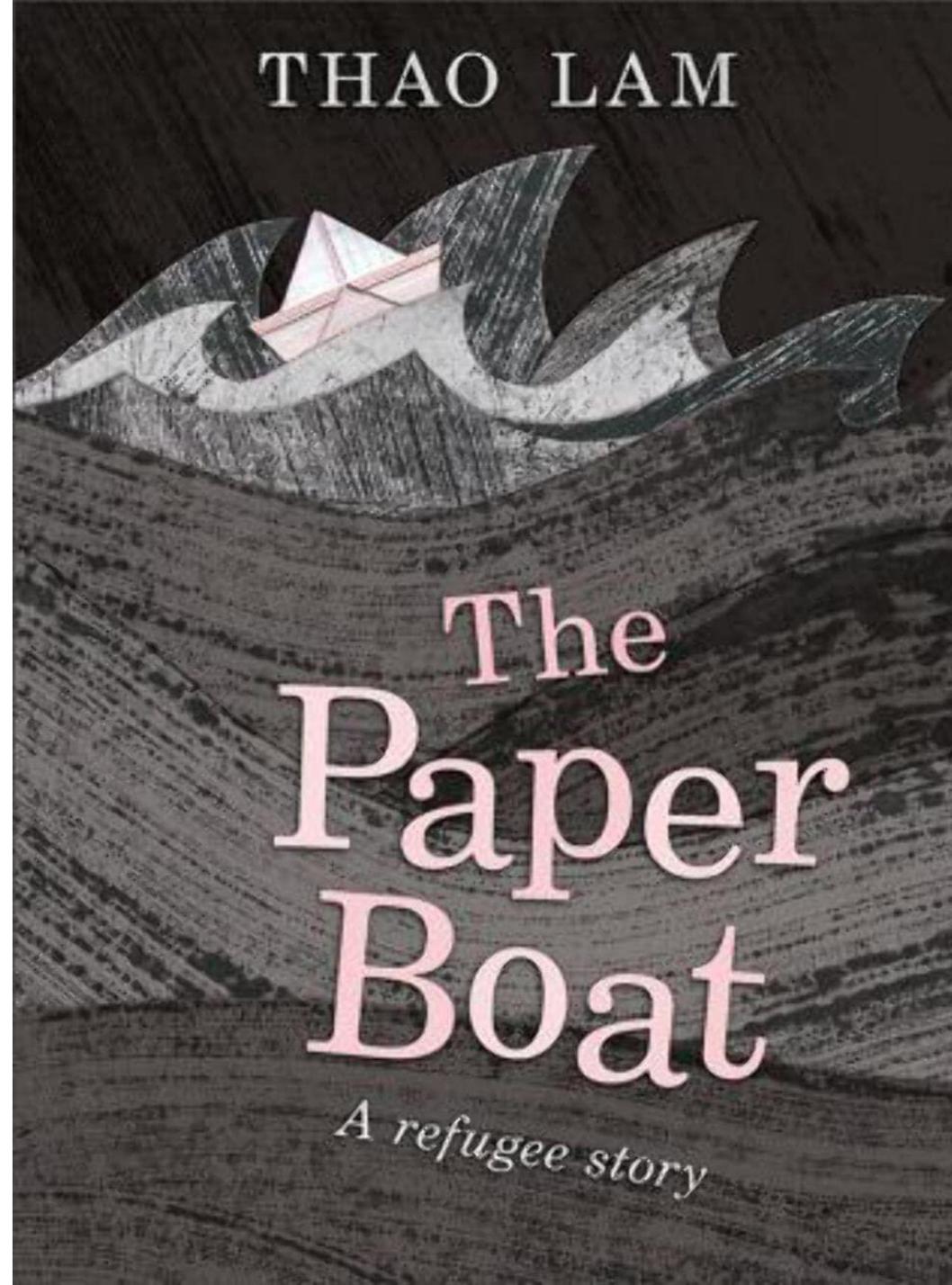
2022 Zilveren Penseel (Silver Brush) Award for Illustration, a Dutch Award

VIETNAM TO U.S.
The Paper Boat: A Refugee Story
by Thao Lam (Owlkids, 2020)

A girl rescues ants from a trap, which becomes a parallel story as this Vietnamese family must, like the ants, face circumstances that seem to want to end their existence.

A wordless book.

2021 USBBY Outstanding International Book



KOREAN WAR

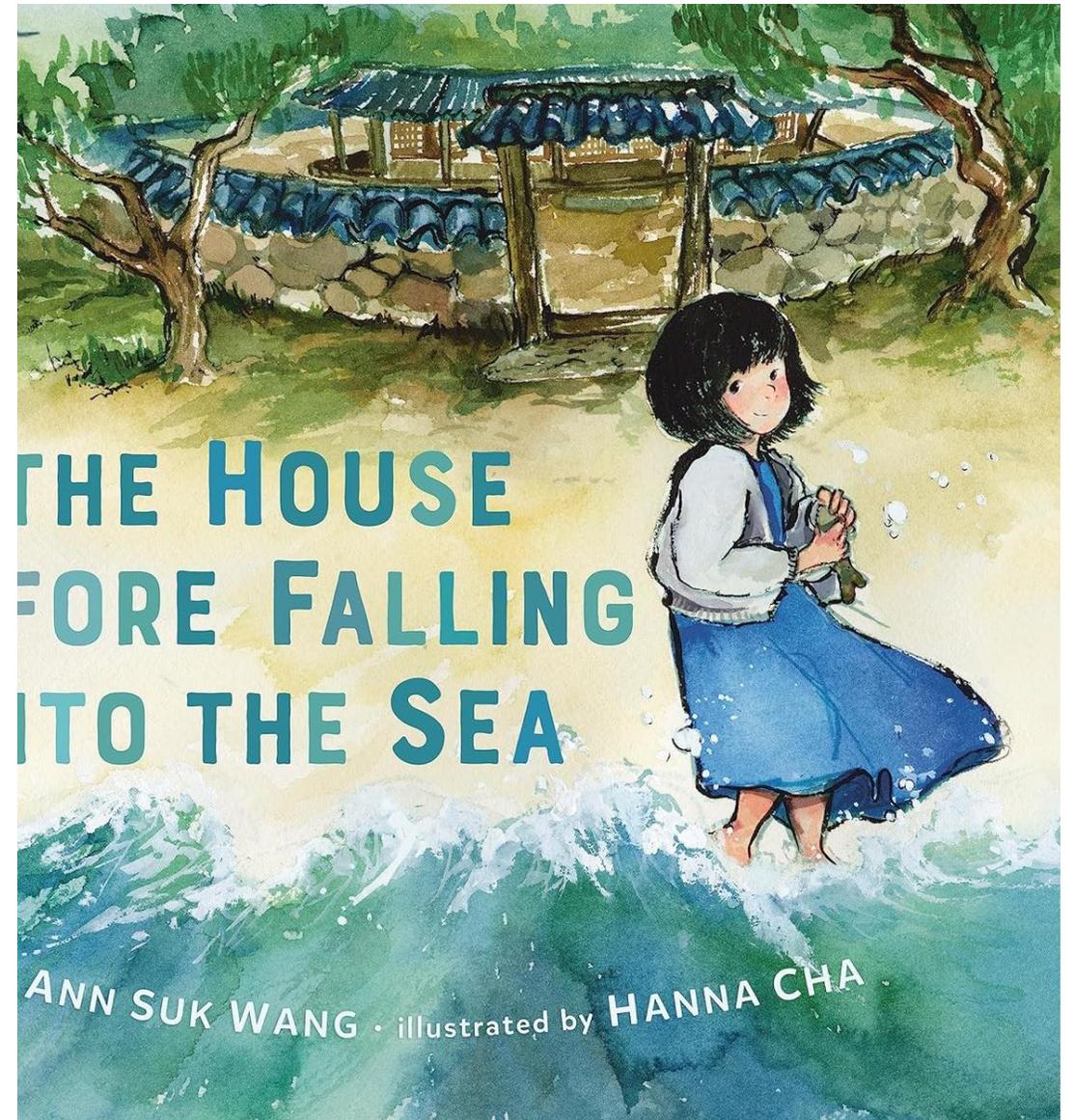
The House Before Falling into the Sea by Ann Suk Wang, illus. by Hanna Cha (Dial, 2024)

Kyung's family take in refugees fleeing from the north as their home is the last stop before they simply "fall into the sea." Kyung misses the days before her house was so noisy and crowded. Her parents help her see that kindness towards those who are suffering is the right decision.

2025 Jane Addams Children's Book Award Finalist

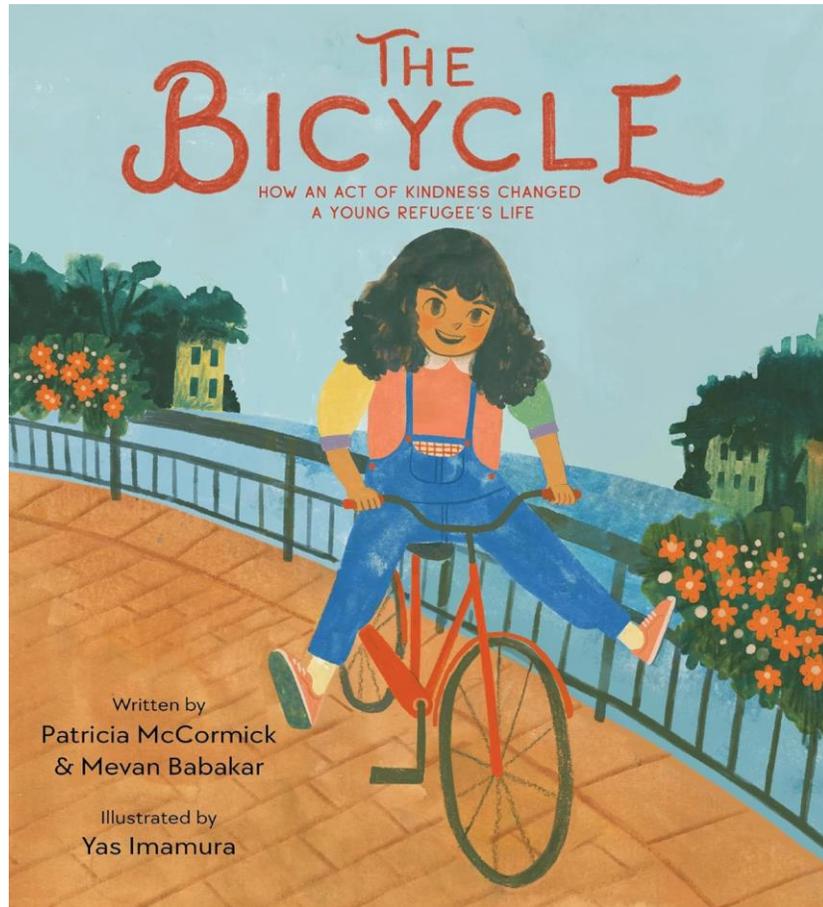
2024 Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature Best Book

2024 National Consortium for Teaching about Asia Freeman Book Award



KURDISTAN TO THE NETHERLANDS

The Bicycle: How an Act of Kindness Changed a Young Refugee's Life by Patricia McCormick and Mevan Babakar, and illustrator Yas Imamura (HarperCollins, 2024)



Based on a true story. A young girl, Mevan, because of conflict with Iraq must leave with her family. It is difficult not to despair—until a stranger gives her her very own bicycle.



CHINA, U.S.

Paper Son: The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong, Immigrant and Artist by Julie Leung, illus. by Chris Sasaki (Schwartz & Wade, 2019)

Tyrus loved art his whole life. To seek better opportunities, he and his father immigrated to the U.S. when Tyrus was a child, enduring grueling interviews at Angel Island. Both father and son had to take employment below their abilities. Even at Disney Tyrus worked the tedious job of an “in-betweener”—drawing the same scene over and over, tweaked with “small changes...to create the feeling of movement.” Until the film *Bambi*, when Walt Disney noticed Tyrus’s immense talent. He remembered all he had learned about Chinese art and brought its delicacy to the Western screen.

2021 Asian/Pacific American Children’s Picture Book Award

SYRIA TO EUROPE

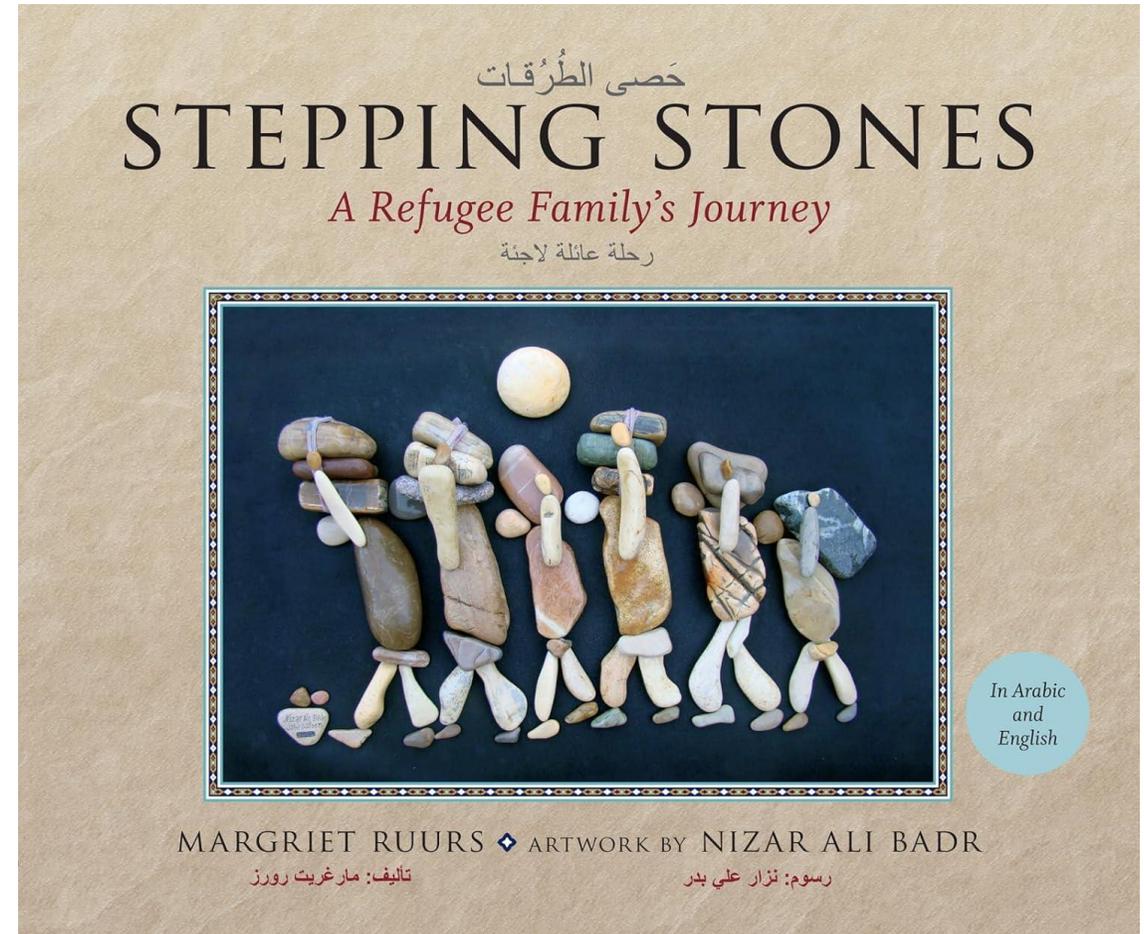
Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey Margriet Ruurs,
stonework by Nizar Ali Badr (Orca,
2016)

Rama, watches neighbors flee; when bombs fell too close to her home, Rama's family fled, too: "That night I lay in bed and cried because I knew I would never again hear the crow of the rooster, the creak of the gate, the bleat of our goat." Then came a life of endless walking until they reached the sea, taking their places in a small boat they knew might not reach its destination.

2017 Canadian Children's Book Centre Best Books for Kids & Teens

2017 Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Books of the Year.

2017 Notable Books for a Global Society



HAITI TO U.S.

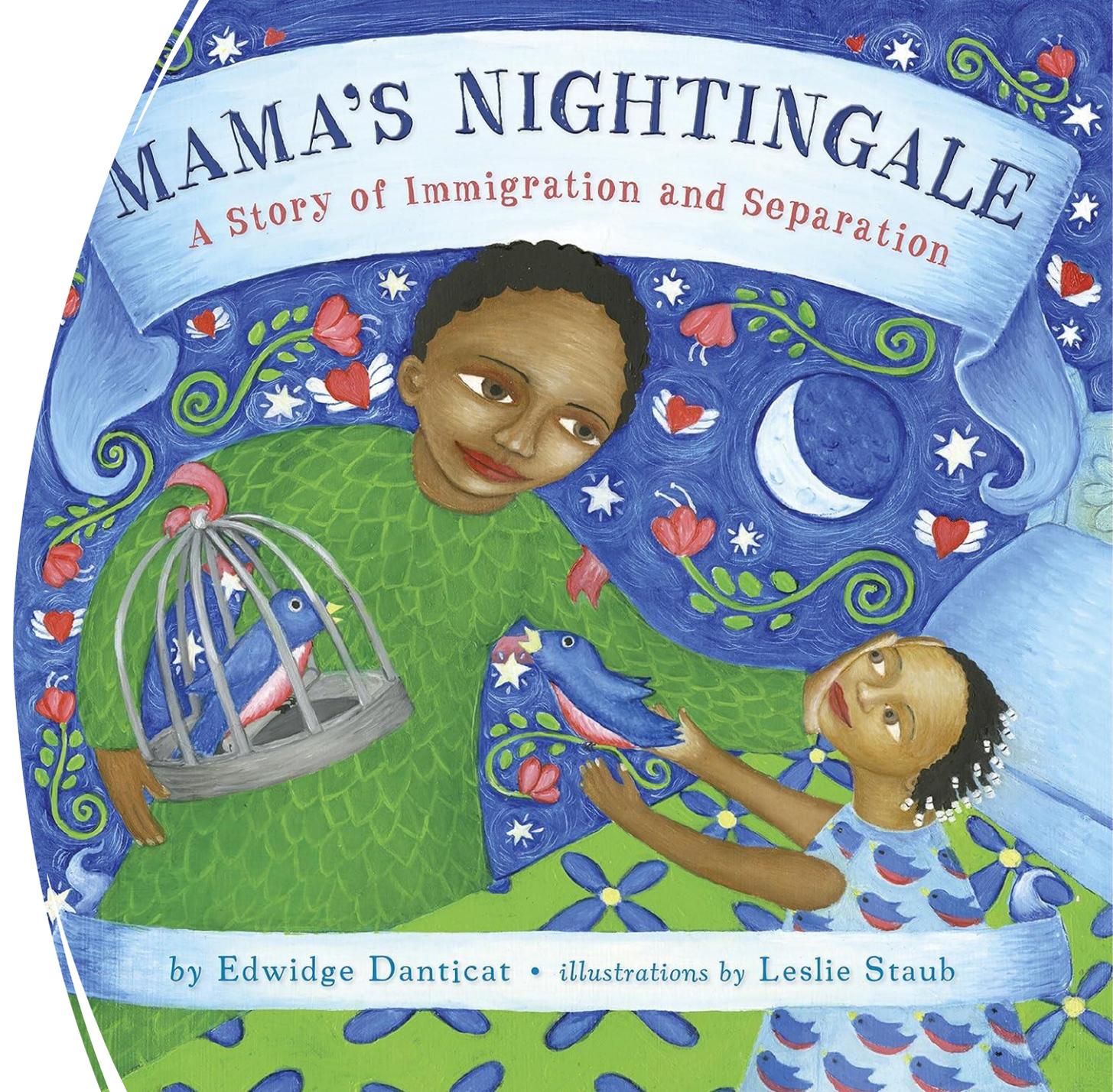
Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation by Edwidge Danticat, illus. Leslie Staub (Dial, 2015)

When her mother is taken to a detention camp in the U.S., Saya misses her deeply. Like many young children she must watch her father not only work full-time but fill out endless paperwork trying to get his wife out of detention. Saya's mom sends her tape recordings of Haitian stories, a bit of comfort. Saya learns she can write letters to her mother and one is published in the newspaper, leading a judge to allow Saya's mom to come home while awaiting papers.

2016 Jane Addams Children's Book Award Honor (Younger Children)

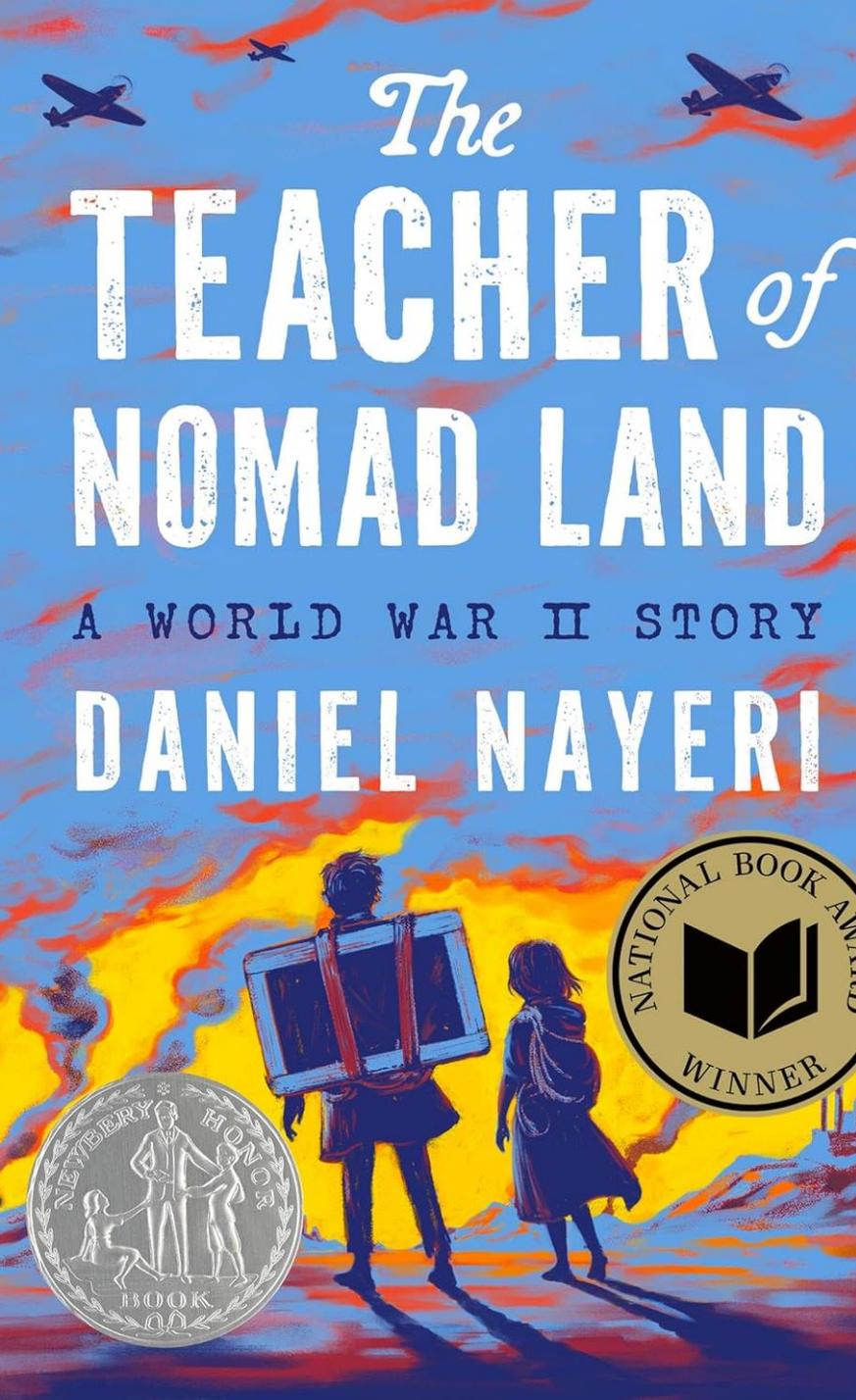
2016 CCBC Choices (Picture Books for School-Age Children).

2016 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Highly Commended)



Middle Grade and Young Adult

The books I think are more middle grade are at the beginning and the young adult books more towards the end. Depending on individual readers, there will be crossover.



IRAN AND POLISH IMMIGRANTS

The Teacher of Nomad Land:

A World War II Story by Daniel Nayeri (Levine Querido, 2025)

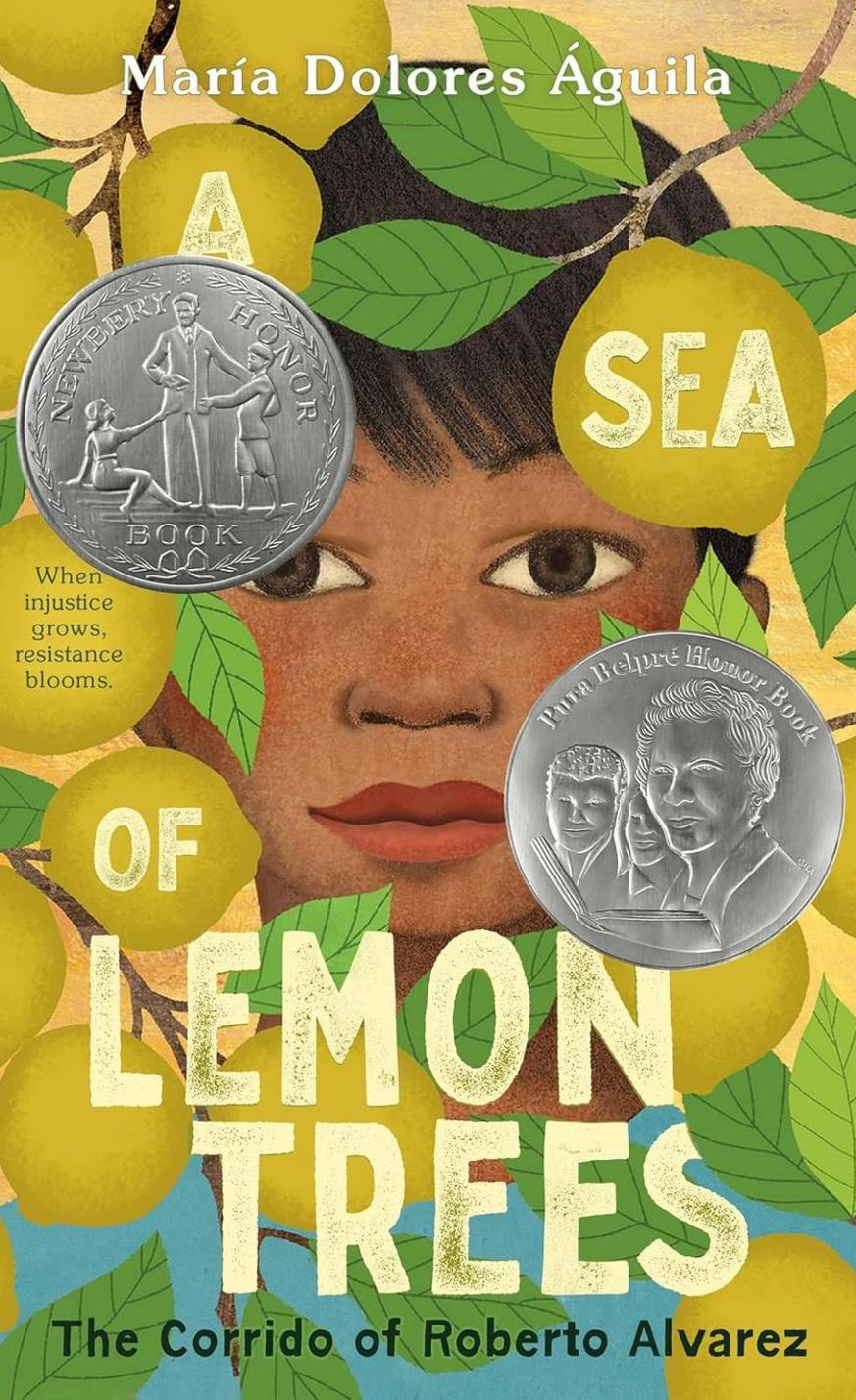
After losing both of their parents and subsequently being ill-used by a relative, Babak and Sana try, and fail, to join a tribe their mother had belonged to in the Zagros mountains of Iran. World War II is raging, with both the British and Russians struggling over Iran's oil. And, over a thousand Polish refugees have sought protection in neutral Iran, one of them a Jewish boy named Ben who meets up with Babak and Sana. Whenever he can Babak tries to follow in his father's footsteps as a teacher, as he carries his chalkboard on his back. Their adventures lead to helping the Allies in their fight against Nazis. A novel.

2026 International Literacy Association Notable Books for a Global Society

2026 Newbery Honor

2025 National Book Award for Young People's Literature

María Dolores Águila



MEXICO TO U.S.

A Sea of Lemon Trees: The Corrido of Roberto Alvarez by
María Dolores Águila (Roaring Brook Press, 2025)

2026 Jane Addams Children's Book Award Winner

2026 Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction Winner

2026 NCTE Charlotte Huck Children's Book Award Winner

2025 National Book Award Longlist Title

2025 New York Public Library Best Book of the Year

A Sea of Lemon Trees: The Corrido of Roberto Alvarez by María Dolores Águila, continued

A fictionalized biography-in-verse about Roberto Alvarez's role in the 1930s Lemon Grove Incident. His ancestors fled Mexico during the brutal revolution (1910-1920), settling in California where they encountered racism. Twelve-year-old Roberto coped with racist slurs by pretending "I am a sparrow/soaring far away/from these ugly words" (63). When seventy-four Mexican children including Roberto were banished from the White public school to a barn, Roberto's parents hired attorneys, who did not work pro bono, to represent him. "Equality costs money," Roberto realized, however, their community came to their aid. The judge who heard their case ruled in the Mexican children's favor, citing infringement of "*the laws of the State of California*" (259).

SOMALIA TO U.S.

When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson
and Omar Mohamed (Penguin, 2020)

2020 National Book Award Finalist

2021 Children's Africana Book Award

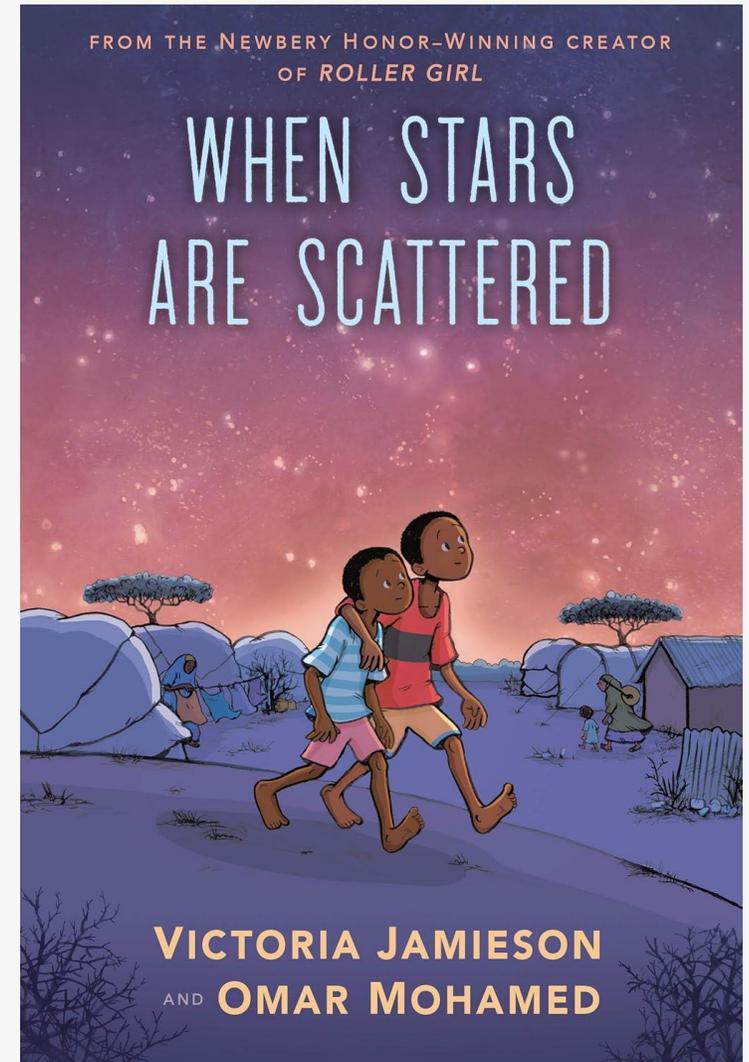
2021 Walter Dean Myers Award

2021 Bank Street College Josette Frank Award

2021 Schneider Family Book Middle School Honor

2021 Odyssey Award Honor

2021 YALSA Great Graphic Novel for Teens



When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed, continued

Because of conflict in Somalia, Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, live in a refugee camp in Kenya. Hassan is a special needs child who does not speak; Omar is deeply protective of him, refusing to play with others his age and resisting opportunities for education. A kind older woman, Fatuma, who has also lost all her family, offers to watch Hassan while Omar goes to school. Eventually, after years of waiting, Hassan and Omar immigrate to the U.S., but are saddened with Fatuma will not go with them.

A graphic novel.

RUTH BEHAR

PURA BELPRÉ AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF
LUCKY BROKEN GIRL

**ACROSS
SO MANY
SEAS**



SPAIN, TURKEY, CUBA, THE
U.S.

Across So Many Seas by
Ruth Behar (Nancy Paulsen,
2024)

Benvenida and her family are expelled from Spain in 1492 for being Jewish. Along with others in the Jewish Diaspora, they arrive in Turkey. Benvenida later marries and her husband disowns their daughter, Reina, for a perceived wrong doing, banishing her to relatives in Cuba. Reina's descendant, Alegra, at teacher, must leave for Miami when Castro comes to power in the 1960s. Alegra's daughter, Paloma, has the joy of rediscovering her ancestor's passageways and achievements.

Historical fiction.

2025 Newbery Honor

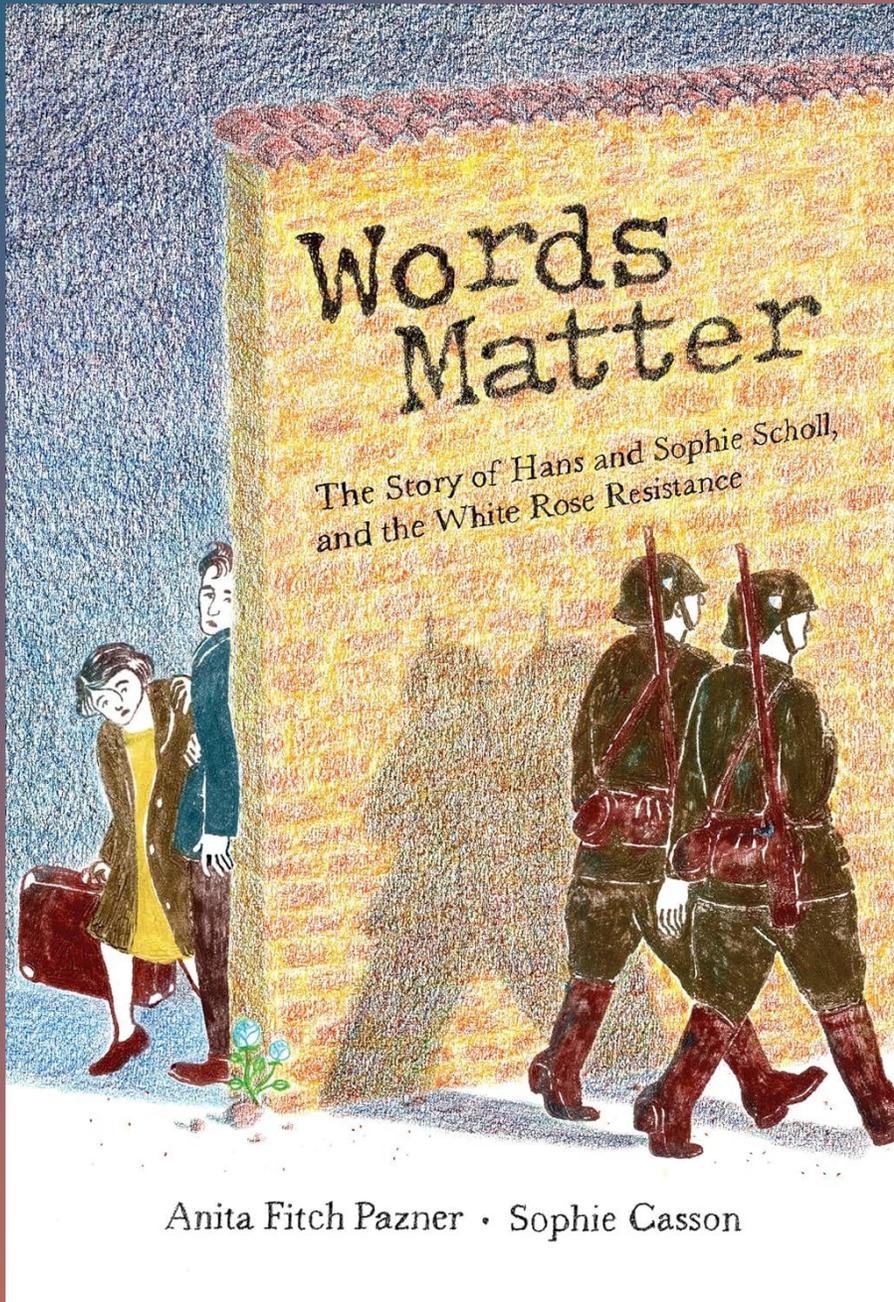
2025 Sydney Taylor Honor

GERMANY, THE HOLOCAUST
*Words Matter: The Story of Hans
and Sophie Scholl, and the White
Rose Resistance* by Anita Fitch
Panzer, illus. Sophie Casson
(Groundwood, 2025)

The Nazis executed Hans and Sophie in 1943 for their participation in the White Rose Resistance. Their childhood in Ulm, Germany, was a loving one; their parents provided music, art, and literature, teaching them to think for themselves. At first Hans and Sophie joined Hitler youth groups but when they saw the Nazi cruelties and persecutions, dropped out and used their words, spreading leaflets in Munich against Hitler for which they were arrested.

A biography in verse.

2025 Jane Addams Children's Book Shortlist



Anita Fitch Panzer • Sophie Casson



VIETNAM, U.S.
*A Two-Placed Heart: A
Memoir in Verse* by
Doan Phuong Nguyen (Tu
Books, 2024)

2025 SCBWI Golden Kite Award
Finalist

2025 Notable Book for a Global
Society

A Two-Placed Heart: A Memoir in Verse by Doan Phuong Nguyen, continued

Now living in the United States, Bom worries her younger sister does not have the memories of her homeland, Vietnam. Bom remembers her loving grandparents and relatives, Vietnamese food, and her happy early days. But Bom's father, Ba, had worked for the Americans during the Vietnamese war and had to live in hiding. After the war, Ba was one of the "over 1,000,000 people" who "were imprisoned in 'reeducation' camps" (28). Bom adds that over 165,000 were either killed or died in the camps. After a decade of traveling hundreds of miles to fill out the correct paperwork, the U.S. Embassy grants Ba a visa. But the family must wait in a camp in Thailand for over a month.

When the family arrives in Nashville, their experiences are greeted by church members who help them get started. An elderly single woman, Miss Helen, becomes a loving adopted grandmother and Peter, a disabled man, shares books and reads stories to Bom and her sister. In school, Bom takes ESL classes until fourth grade. But there is loneliness, isolation, and bullying—children who mock how Bom looks. She eventually makes a friend, Amanda, but even that friendship is tenuous at times.

ROHINGYA OF MYANMAR TO AUSTRALIA

The Bone Sparrow by Zana Fraillon
(Little, Brown, 2016)

After fleeing Myanmar to Australia, Subhi's mother and sister are placed in a detention center where Subhi is born. Maá's stories enchant Subhi, as does the natural world. But Maá's stories disappear. The conditions of the camp lead her to withdraw into silence. Subhi longs for the outside world. One day he meets a girl, Jimmie, who shares a diary with him she cannot read. The two of them help each other cope with difficult circumstances.

A novel.

2017 Australian Book Industry Award



GUATEMALA TO U.S., U.S. TO GUATEMALA

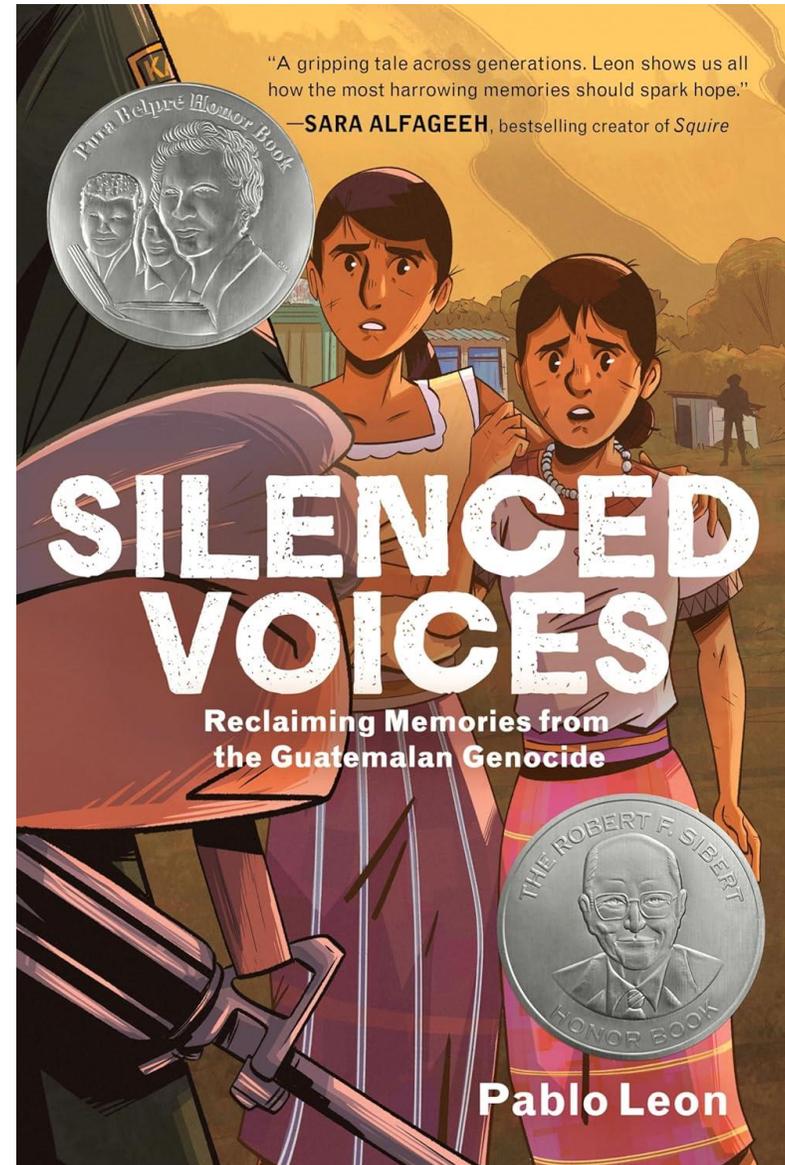
Silenced Voices: Reclaiming the Memories from the Guatemalan Genocide by Pablo Leon (HarperAlley, 2025)

Jose and Charlie know their mother is from Guatemala but know nothing about the genocide that occurred there. Interested in the trial of the *genocidaire*, Efrain Rios Montt, they pepper their mother with questions she reluctantly answers. Flashback to the 1980s when their mother and her sister became separated in the confusion of war. The boys help their mother reunite with her sister, who she did not know was now living in the United States.

A graphic novel.

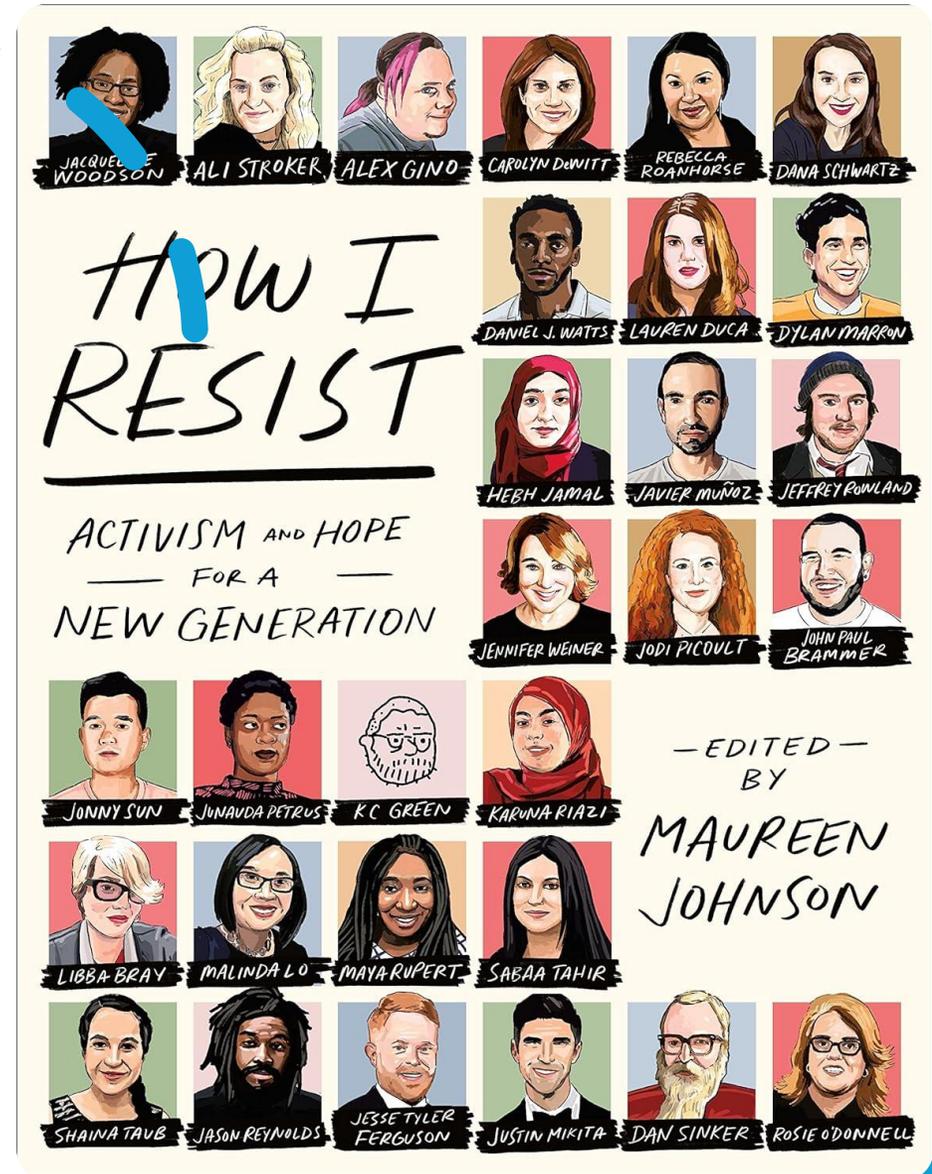
2026 Pura Belpré Award Honor, Young Adult

2026 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Honor



How I Resist: Activism and Hope for a New Generation edited by Maureen Johnson (Wednesday Books, 2018)

Although not specifically about immigrants and refugees, some of the activists are either immigrants or children of immigrants. They push back on anti-immigration policies.



“Can you imagine being thirteen years old and having your parents tell you to get ready to move from your homeland to a completely new world?”

—Zahraa, Iraqi refugee

Finding Refuge

Real-Life Immigration
Stories from Young People

Finding Refuge: Real-Life Immigration Stories from Young People by Victorya Rouse (Zest Books, 2021)

An English teacher and former Peace Corps worker, Victorya Rouse, now living in Spokane, Washington gathers stories from young immigrants whom she has taught. The stories are uplifting as they share the positive paths and contributions to the community young immigrants make. Spokane a resettlement hub. A note: Bosnians would prefer their language referred to as Bosnian (not Serbian).

2022 Children’s Book Committee at Bank Street College Best Children’s Book of the Year

2022 In the Margin Best Book for Teens

Sibert Honor Author

DEBORAH HOPKINSON

HOLOCAUST

*We Had to Be Brave:
Escaping the Nazis on
the Kindertransport* by
Deborah Hopkinson
(Scholastic, 2020)

WE HAD
TO BE
BRAVE

2021 Sydney Taylor Notable Book

2021 NCTE Orbis Pictus
Recommended Book

2021 YALSA Award for Excellence
in Nonfiction Finalist

We Had to Be Brave: Escaping the Nazis on the Kindertransport by Deborah Hopkinson, continued

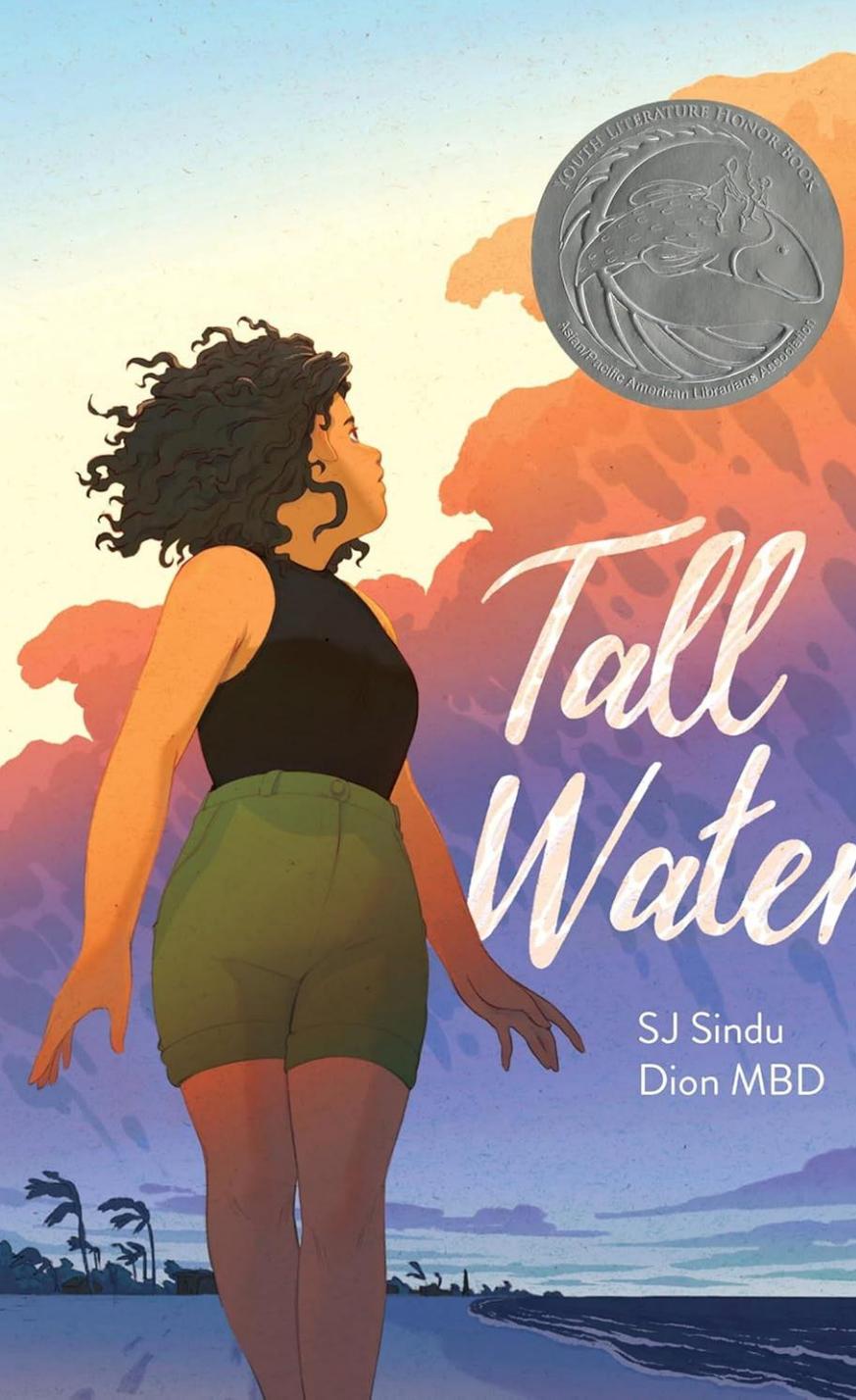
Hopkinson conducted extensive interview with Kindertransport survivors and their heirs. After Kristallnacht in 1938 humanitarian groups arranged to save Jewish children under the age of 18.

“Crisis was Hitler’s oxygen. He needed it to survive”—(Ian Kershaw, 1).

“Wave after wave of refugees has drifted across the world, uprooted from their homes, penniless, destitute, no country found ready at hand to receive them, separated from their surroundings” (Samuel Hoare, 141).

Fred Rosenbaum upon arrival in his new English home: “They gave me a small bedroom where I hung up my few clothes, sat on the bed, and cried in that absolute loneliness only a child can know who has been separated from everyone and everything he loved, not knowing what the future would bring” (177).

Sir Nicholas Winton: “Goodness, kindness, love, honesty, decency: those are standard ethics. I mean, I didn’t invent them. But if people lived...an ethical life there would be none of this business happening in the world today” (191).



SRI LANKA, U.S.

Tall Water by SJ Sindu, illus. by Dion

MBD (HarperAlley, 2025)

Nimmi's parents are separated during the war between the Tamils and the Sri Lankan government. Her injured mother stays behind while her father takes her to safety in the U.S. Just before the 2004 tsunami, Nimmi's father goes to Sri Lanka on assignment. Against his wishes, Nimmi secretly follows him there; her mother has appeared to her in a dream, asking her to come.

Of course, Nimmi wonders why Amma has never come to see her or, seemingly, did not want to be her mother. Nimmi comes to understand Amma's heart was torn between the needs of Sri Lankan orphans and her own daughter, and that in war terrible choices must be made.

2026 Asian/Pacific American Award Young Adult Literature Honor Book

SRI LANKA, U.S.

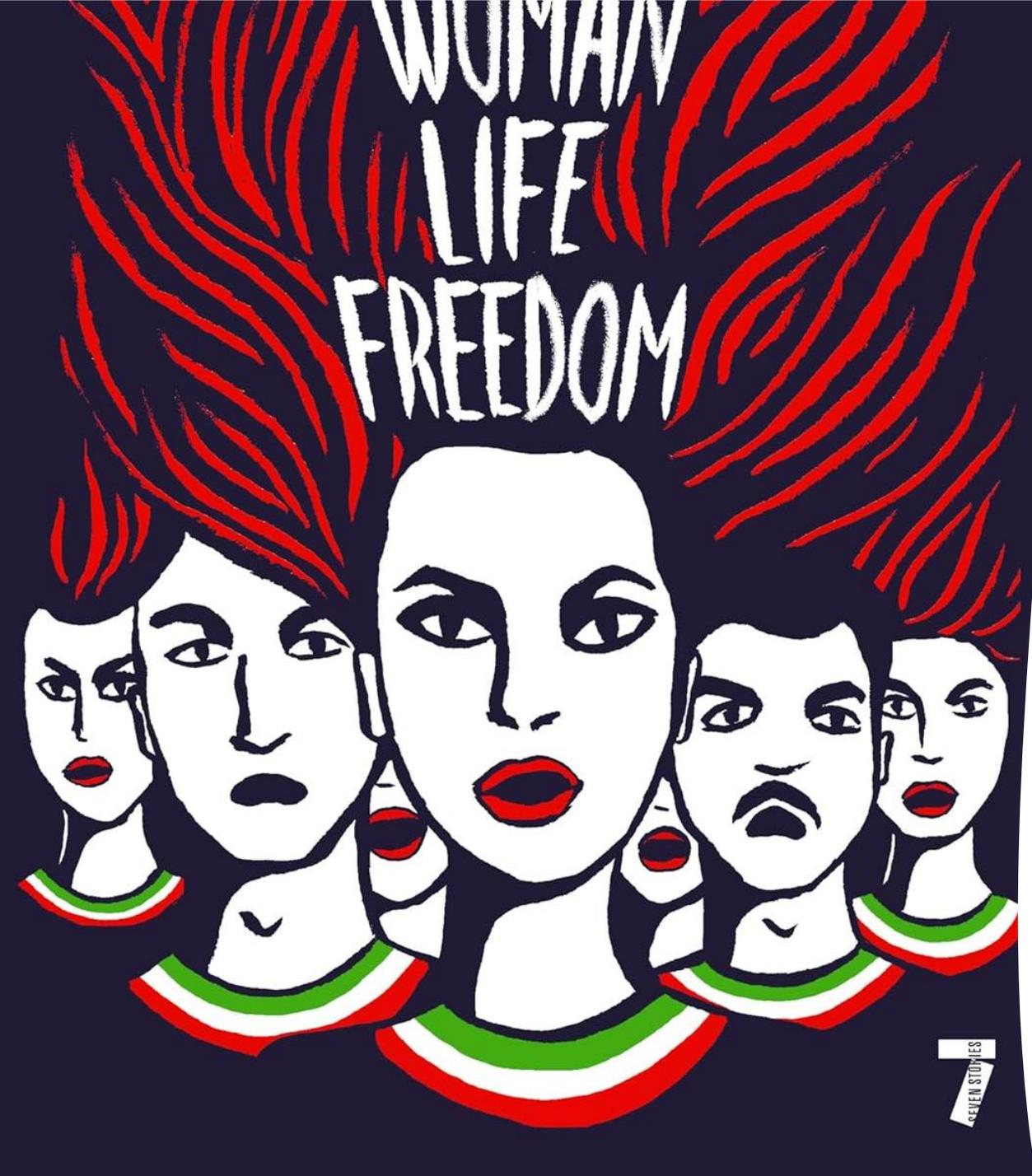
Tall Water by SJ Sindu, illus. by Dion MBD, continued

While the United Nations has not formally declared genocide in Sri Lanka, it recognizes war crimes and crimes against humanity. While in high school, Nimmi is reigned in by the school administration for writing in the school newspaper:

“Your T-shirts Are Funding Genocide!

While you may think that you’re just shopping for clothes, you may actually be helping to fund genocide in Sri Lanka, a small island country off the coast of India. Since 1983, Sri Lanka has been the site of a massive and deadly ethnic civil war between the government...” (17).

Implied are the Tamil people.



IRAN AND THE IRANIAN DIASPORA

Woman Life Freedom edited by Marjane Satrapi (Seven Stories Press, 2024)

In 2022 Iran’s morality police determined Mahsa Jina Amini was not wearing her veil correctly. They killed her, which led to over 9,000 protests and 500 deaths in Iran. In this graphic novel, twenty diasporic Iranian artists—four writers and sixteen graphic artists—wrote and illustrated Iran’s history since 2022, including protests and protestors, many of whom the Iranian government has either killed or suppressed: “Since November 2022, over one thousand young schoolgirls have been poisoned by toxic gas in schools across Iran. People suspect this to be an intentional act, an attempt to force girls’ schools to close, since the government fears the young and young girls most of all” (85). Sadly, in 2022 “over 27,000 girls under the age of fifteen were married” (225).

2025 Alex Award

2026 Spain’s Princess of Asturias Prize for Communication and Humanity



Woman Life Freedom
edited by Marjane Satrapi,
cont.

Also profiled are the *Aghazadeh*, the wealthy oligarchs and their children, who lead luxurious Western lives when out of the country but pretend to be strict Shia Muslims when in Iran.



BRIGHT

"Crackles with energy...
In a word, gorgeous."

—SAMIRA AHMED,
New York Times bestselling author of
INTERMENT and HOLLOW FIRES

RED

SAFIA
ELHILLO

FRUIT

SUDAN TO THE U.S.

Bright Red Fruit by Safia Elhillo (Make Me a World, 2024)

Samira and her mother are in conflict as they navigate their culture's Muslim customs with America's seeming permissiveness. Samira's father couldn't take "the indignity of immigration" and returned to Sudan (45). Grounded for the summer because of her involvement with an untrustworthy musician she met online, Samira reads and writes constantly, aspiring to become like her aunt who has adapted to her new country: "I'm going to be elegant & terrifying/like aunt Aida, who lives next door/alone & surrounded by books/shelves stacked floor to ceiling? (16). Ultimately the tension between Samira and her mother is resolved; her mother says, "I'm trying to keep you safe/ in this country where the culture is not our culture" (246). This novel-in-verse incorporates contemporary young people's daily lives: texts, emails, Submittable.

2025 Michael J. Printz Honor

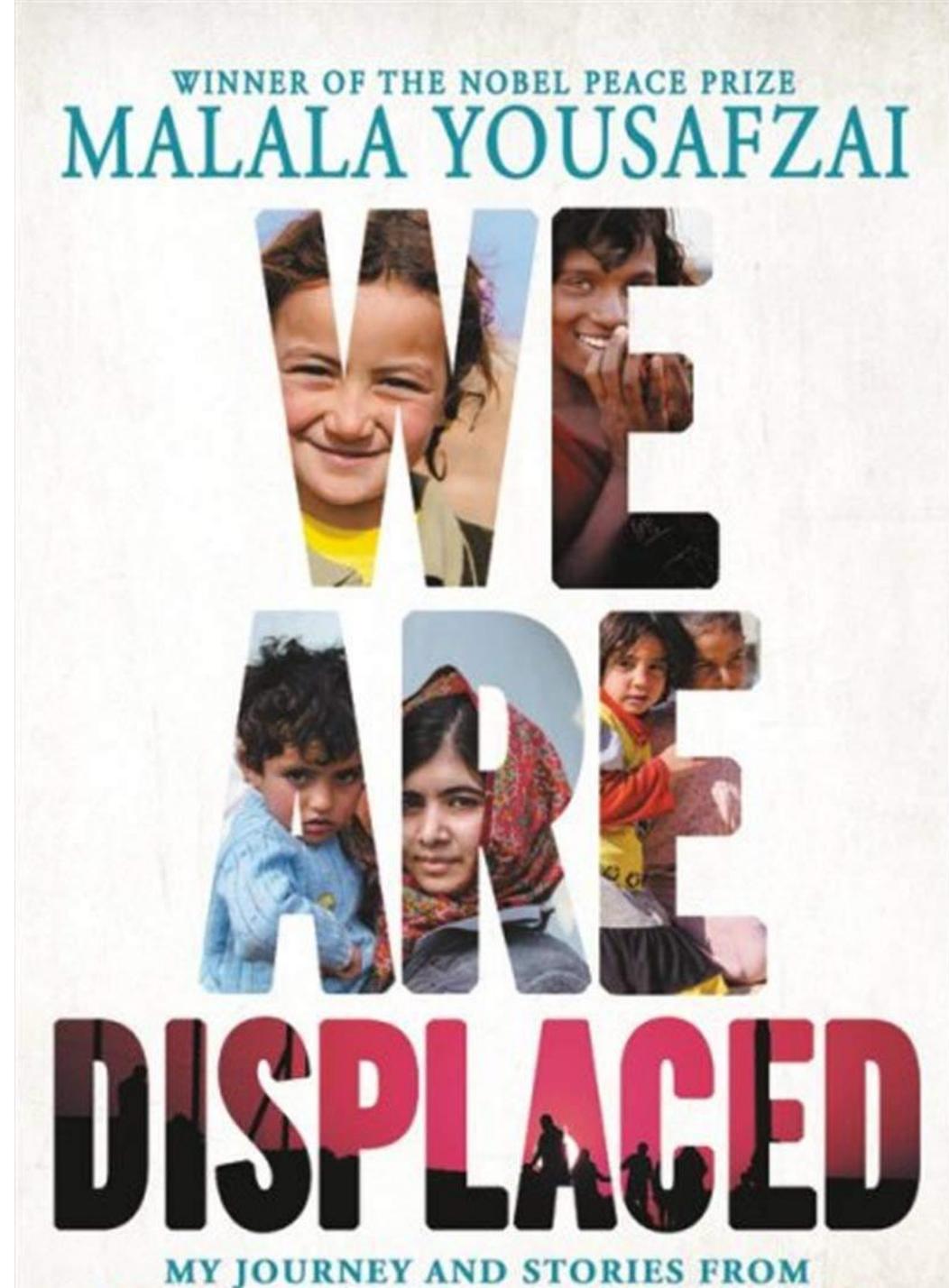
We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World by Malala Yousafzai and Liz Welch (Little, Brown, 2019)

Like many others, Malala makes the point that no one willingly leaves their home unless, quoting the poet, Warsan Shire, home has become “*the mouth of a shark.*”

Zaynab from Yemen is granted asylum but her sister, Sabreen, is not—a heartache for both sisters. And, Donald Trump’s election let loose hatred for Muslims, which Zaynab experienced in a mall when a white man saw her hijab. Other young women have equally compelling stories.

2019 ALA Notable Books for Children

2019 ALA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

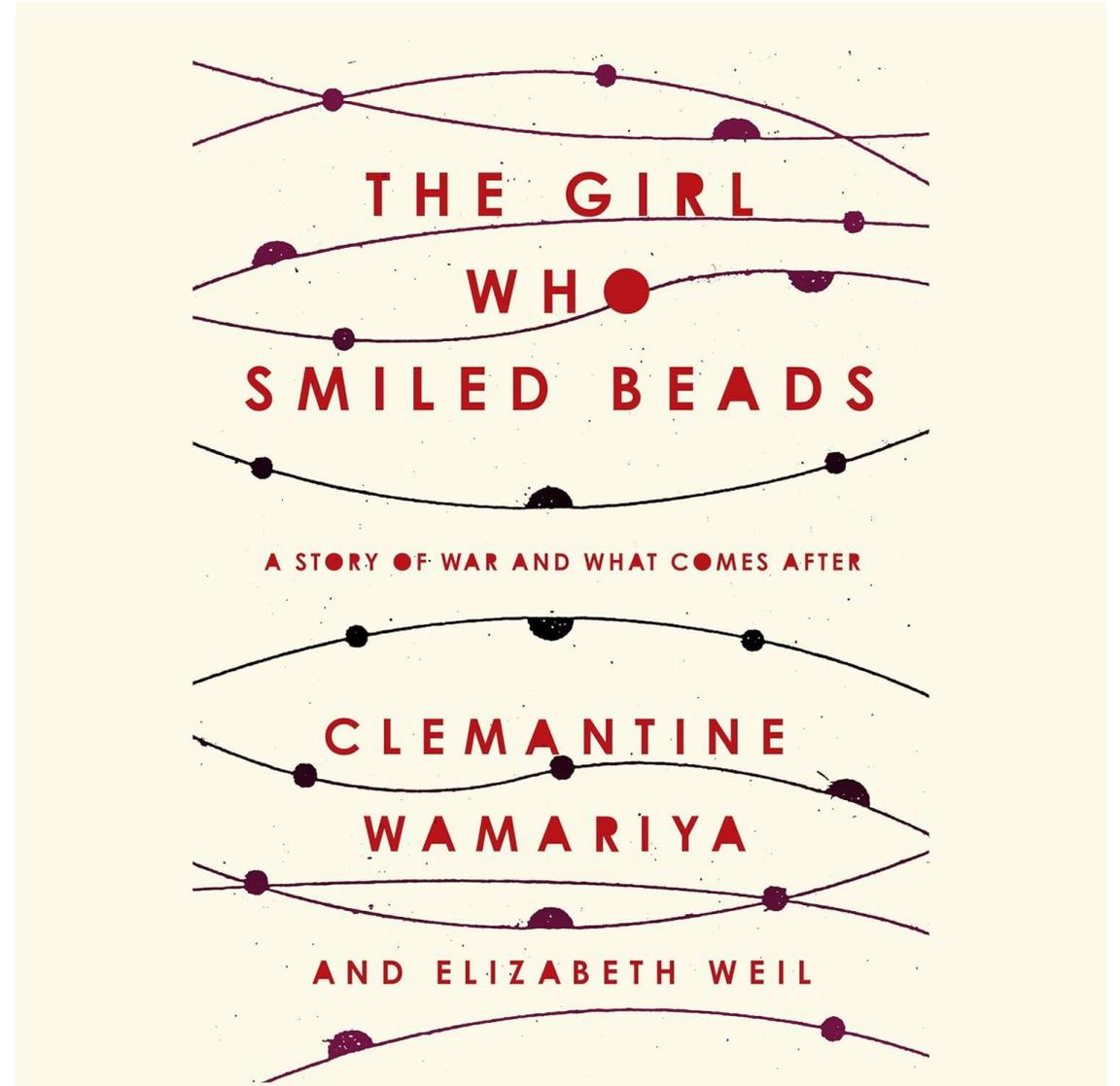


RWANDA TO U.S.

The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After by
Clemantine Wamariya and
Elizabeth Weil (Crown, 2018)

At the onset of the Rwandan genocide, Clementine's parents urged her and her sister, Claire, to flee to their grandparents' home. When the *genocidaires* came there, too, Clementine and Claire ran again, from one refugee camp to another—seven in all.

2019 Alex Award



The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil, continued

“It’s strange, how you go from being a person who is away from home to a person with no home at all. The place that is supposed to want you has pushed you out. No other place takes you in. You are unwanted, by everyone. You are a refugee” (29).

Clemantine was eventually granted asylum in the U.S., where she began to heal.

NORTH KOREA TO SOUTH KOREA

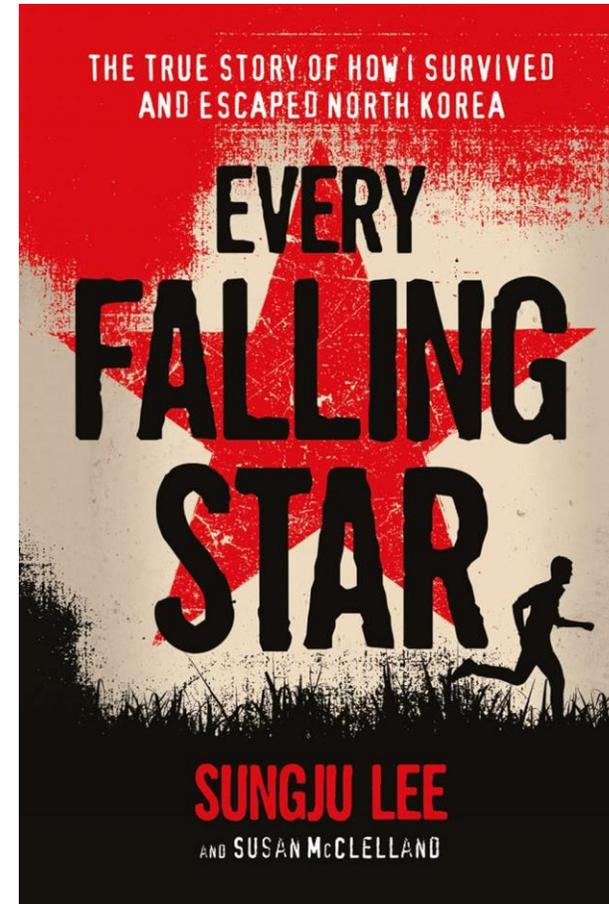
Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea by Sungju Lee and Susan McClelland

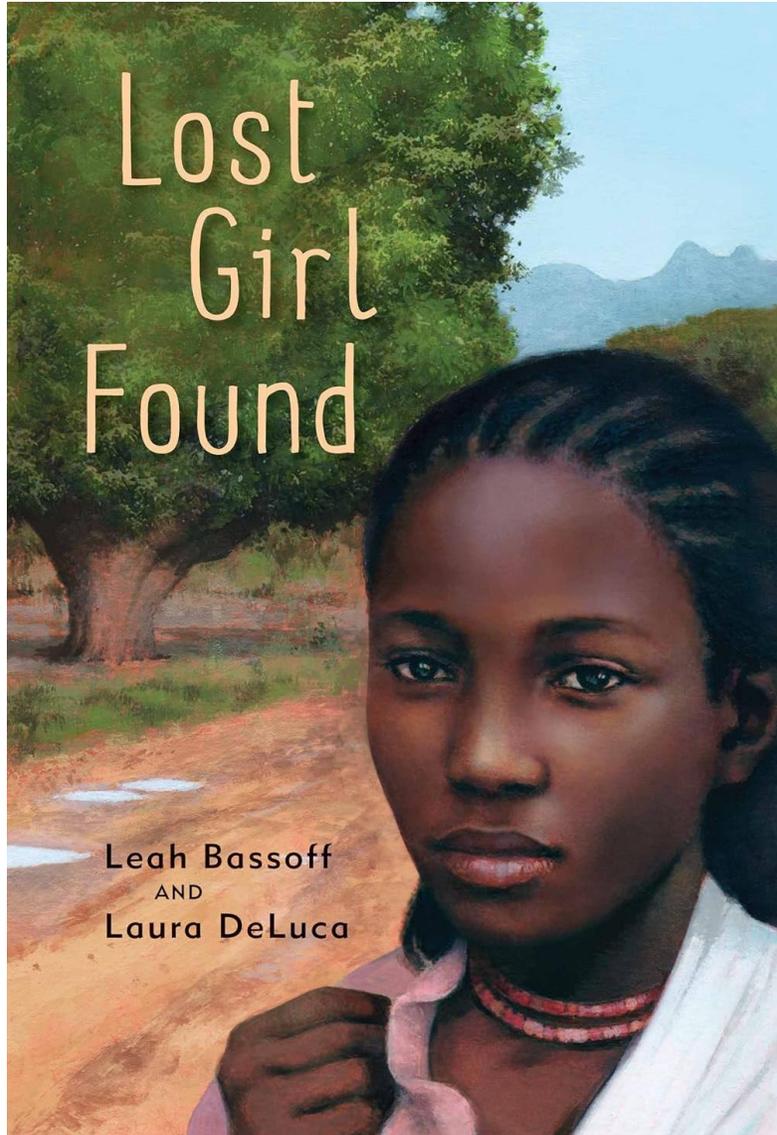
(Amulet, 2016)

Lee's is the first book for young adults on the North Korean genocide. Until his father made the mistake of criticizing the regime, he lived in relative opulence. Banished from Pyongyang and hungry, first his father left and then his mother. Left alone at age 12, to survive, he joined a gang. But, he said, "There are two rules: We don't steal from children, and we don't steal from old people." After his friend Young-Bum died, Lee heard Young-Bum whisper, "Go back to Gyeong-seong." That is where he saw his grandfather, which led to being reunited with his father. They escaped to South Korea.

2017 CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People (2017)

2017 Notable Books for a Global Society





SUDAN, U.S.

Lost Girl Found by Leah
Bassoff and Laura DeLuca
(Groundwood, 2014)

A novel

Lost Girl Found by Leah Bassoff and Laura DeLuca, continued

In her village before the outbreak of Civil War, Poni watches her friend Nadai, a young teen, married off to an old man with several wives. In ten months, Nadai dies in childbirth. Poni sees the flaws in her Didinga culture as well as its strengths. She deeply loves her family, especially her mother. Both she and her mother are determined Poni stay in school and not be married off young like Nadai was.

When bombs hit their village, her mother yells, “Run!” As often happens in the chaos of war, families become separated and, after many miles painful walking, Poni arrives at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya where camp officials give her as a foster daughter to an older woman. Like Nadai’s parents, the foster mother plans to marry her off to an older man for a bride price. Poni reconnects with a boy, Lukore, who had a crush on her in the camp. Always hungry, always waiting and never wanting to end up like Nadai, Poni plans an escape to Sister Hannah’s orphanage, which she eventually does. Years later, the U.S. grants Poni asylum.

Although this book won an award for grades 6-8 readers, as an adult I found it very difficult to read with scenes of rape and violence. I am not sure it wouldn’t be, in Kidd’s words, traumatic for some young readers.

2015 USBBY Outstanding International Book

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
TO U.S.

*How Dare the Sun Rise: Memoirs of a
War Child* by Sandra Uwiringiyimana with
Abigail Pesta (HarperCollins, 2017)

In an attack on a refugee camp in Burundi, Sandra's mother and sister are killed. She escapes—to destitution. Eventually, she is granted asylum in Rochester, New York, where there are even more challenges. Although marketed for ages 13 and up, this book could be a very challenging read for some.

2018 YALSA's Quick Picks for Reluctant Young
Adult Readers

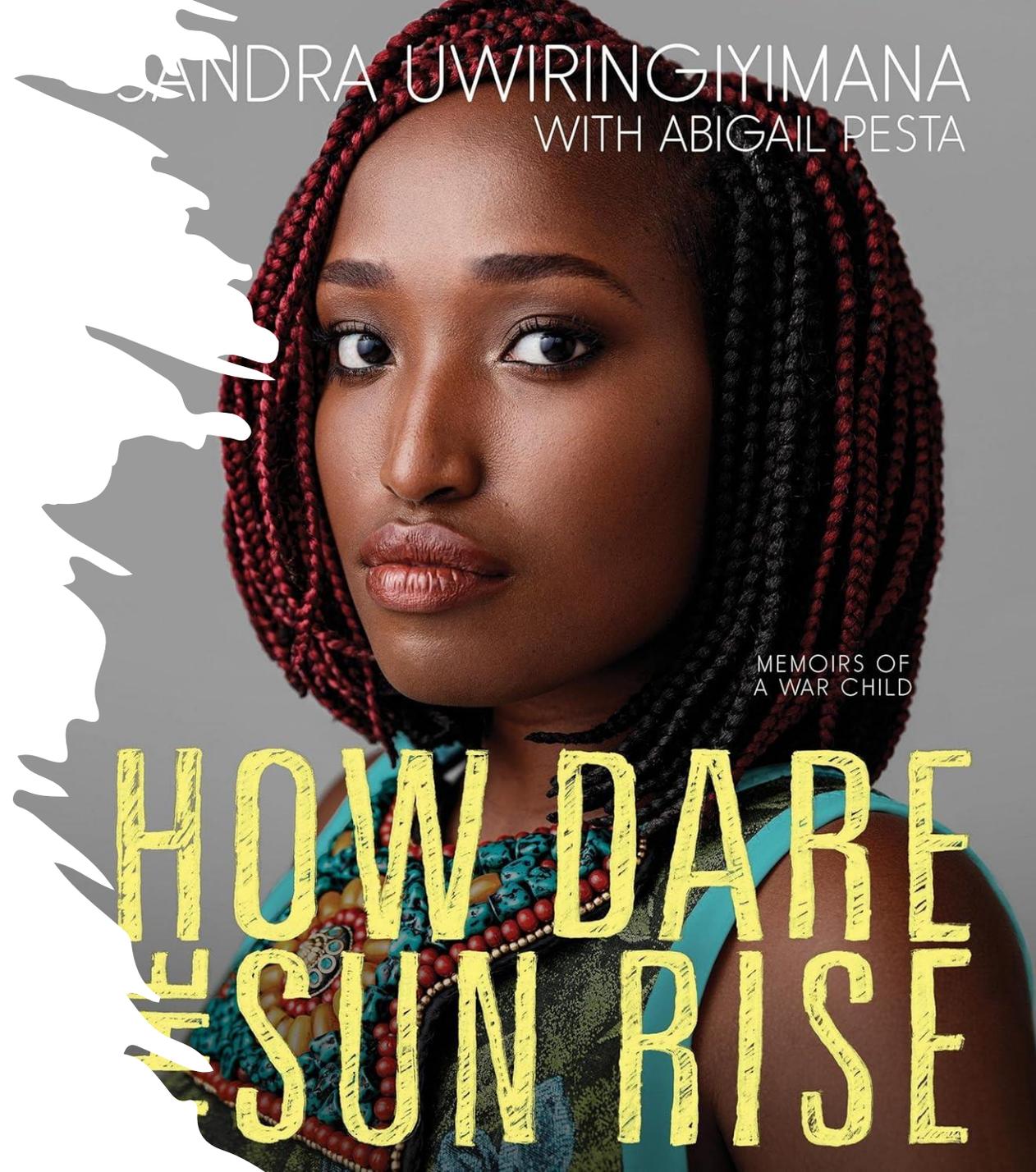
2018 Bank Street's 2018 Best Books of the Year

2018 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young
People

SANDRA UWIRINGIYIMANA
WITH ABIGAIL PESTA

MEMOIRS OF
A WAR CHILD

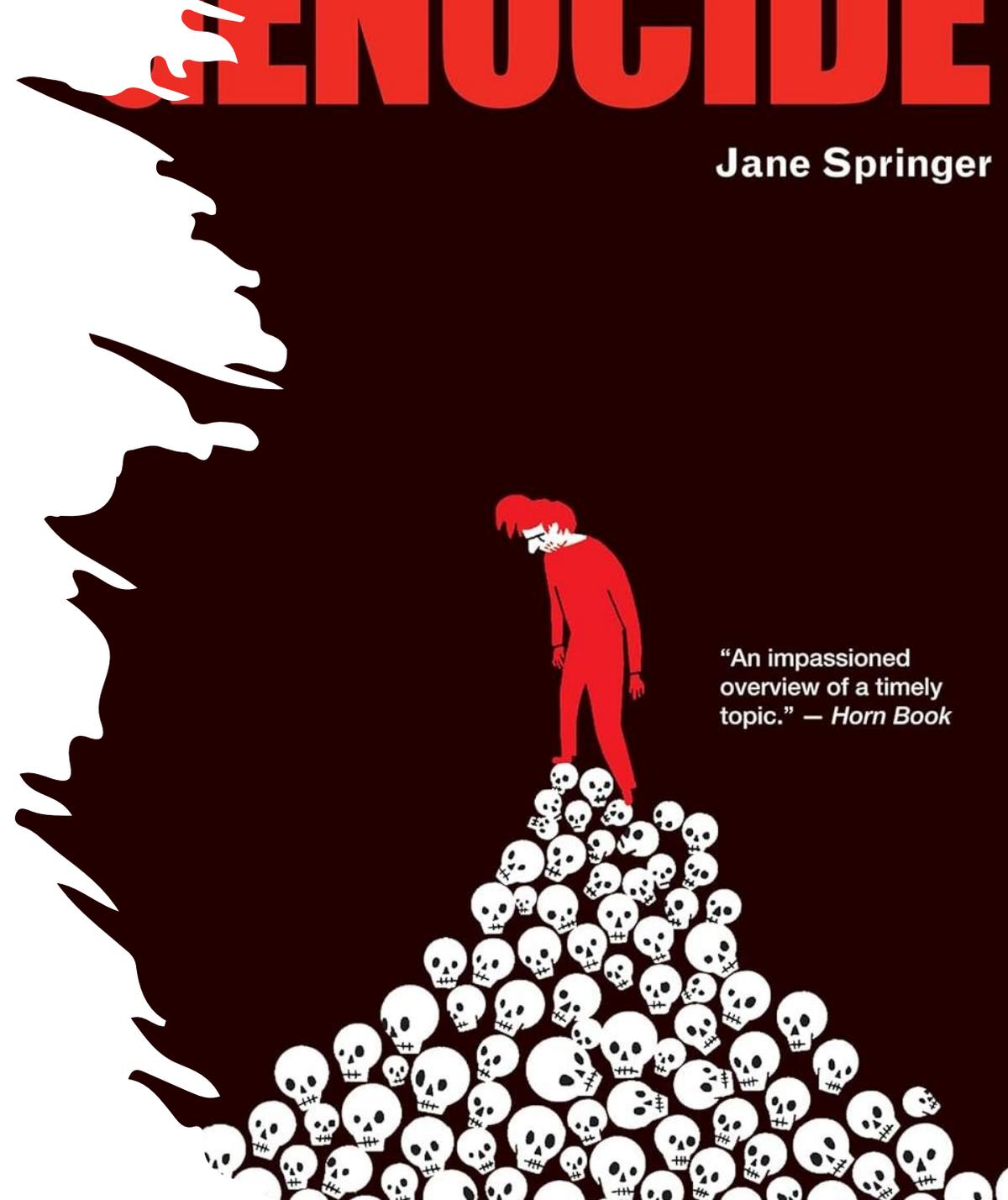
HOW DARE
THE SUN RISE



Genocide by Jane Springer, revised and expanded

(Groundwood, 2024)

Groundwood markets Springer's book through House of Anansi for adults as well. When I teach *Genocide in Literature and Art*, I use this brief but intensely informative text—undergraduates through doctoral students. It provides the necessary framework for introductory genocide studies.



Young Adult Crossovers

Books written for adults but read by young adults



ISRAEL & PALESTINE
*The Gates of Gaza: A
Story of Betrayal,
Survival, and Hope* by
Amor Tibon (Little Brown,
2024)

THE GATES OF GAZA

A Story of Betrayal, Survival,
and Hope in Israel's Borderlands

2026 Wingate Literary Prize
Winner

2024 National Jewish Book
Award
(Memoir/Autobiography)

The Gates of Gaza: A Story of Betrayal, Survival, and Hope by Amor Tibon, continued

An Israeli journalist, Amor Tibon gives an even-handed account, alternating between the present day and Israel's history. On October 7, 2023, Tibon and his young family were living in the kibbutz, Nahal Oz. Tibon and his wife were awakened by explosions nearby and got their daughters into their safe room. From there, he texted his father their situation while being watchful of his cell's battery charge. His parents undertook the dangerous journey to rescue their son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren.

What's impressive that, while attesting to the horror of October 7th for Israel, Tibon also relies on Moshe Dayan's 1956 speech after Palestinians murdered Roi, a young Israeli: "Let us not cast the blame on the murderers today. Why should we declare their burning hatred for us? For eight years they have been sitting in the refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we have been transforming the lands and the villages, where they and their fathers dwelt, into our estate.

It is not among the Arabs in Gaza, but in our own midst that we must seek Roi's blood. How did we shut our eyes and refuse to look squarely at our fate, and see, in all its brutality, the destiny of our generation? Have we forgotten that this group of young people dwelling at Nahal Oz is bearing the heavy gates of Gaza on its shoulders?"

FILMS