

Writing Novels in Verse: Eloquent Words, Tough Subjects

Craig Lew and Sarah Tregay

MIDDLE GRADE NOVELS IN VERSE *(for a complete list, please visit sarahatregay.com)*

Booked - Kwame Alexander 2016

Twelve-year-old soccer player Nick deals with problems at home, stands up to a bully, and tries to impress the girl of his dreams.

The Crossover - Kwame Alexander 2014

Josh and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court and can bust some serious rhymes. When misunderstandings and a girl come between them, only tragedy can bring them back together. Newbery Medal Winner and Coretta Scott King Honor Award Winner.

Home of the Brave - Katherine Applegate 2008

Kek, a Sudanese refugee, has moved to Minnesota to live with his aunt and cousin. Laugh and cry with Kek as he learns English and new ways of doing things.

Little Dog, Lost - Marion Dane Bauer 2012

Mark is a boy who needs a dog. Buddy is a dog that needs a boy. Mr. LaRue is a neighbor who needs a community.

Caminar - Skila Brown 2014

It's 1981 and Guatemala is in the midst of civil war. Word of rebel fighters has come to Carlos's Village, forcing him to flee.

Serafina's Promise - Ann Burg 2013

Serafina wants to go to school and become a doctor, but Haiti is plagued by natural disasters.

This Journal Belongs to Ratchet - Nancy Cavanaugh 2013

Homeschooled Ratchet wishes she could be a normal girl with a friend instead of helping her tree-hugging dad fix cars. A mix of poems and essays.

Frenchtown Summer - Robert Cornier 2001, Illustrated by David Krovitan

HISTORICAL - Set in 1944, 13-year-old Eugene hides a terrible secret about his uncle.

Heartbeat - Sharon Creech 2004

Annie, 12, takes great pleasure in running. Max runs to escape his personal problems. Annie learns that her mother is pregnant and her beloved Grandpa is slipping into dementia.

Love That Dog & Hate That Cat - Sharon Creech 2004

Jack discovers poetry, a pastime for girls, and grieves his beloved dog.

Somewhere Among - Annie Donwerth-Chikamatsu 2016

Eleven-year-old Ema has always summers in California for as long as she can remember, but this year she and her mother are staying with her grandparents in Japan.

The Wild Book - Margarita Engle 2012

Fefa struggles with reading, but when her mother gives her a book with no words in it, Fefa grows her own garden of words. (Fifth grade and up.)

Salt - Hellen Frost 2013

HISTORICAL - Anikwa and James, twelve years old in 1812, spend their days fishing, trapping, and exploring Indiana Territory on the brink of war.

Planet Middle School - Nikki Grimes 2011

Twelve-year old Joy loves playing basketball with the boys, but Jake is suddenly acting weird and her other best friend is has taken up flirting.

Words With Wings - Nikki Grimes 2013

Gabby is a daydreamer, and words let her imagination soar. (For ages 8-12.)

Downtown Boy - Juan Felipe Herrera 2005

HISTORICAL - Juanito follows his migrant-worker parents from town to town in 1950's California.

Naked Bunyip Dancing - Steven Herrick, illustrated by Beth Norling 2008

AUSTRALIAN - The students in Mr. Carey's class learn what they are good at.

Out of the Dust - Karen Hesse 1997

HISTORICAL - Set in 1934 in Oklahoma, 14-year-old Billie Jo lives amid the dust storms.

Full Cicada Moon - Marilyn Hilton 2015

HISTORICAL - Half-black, half-Japanese Mimi, moves to Vermont in 1969.

Rhyme Schemer - K.A. Holt, 2014

Kevin has a real knack for rubbing people the wrong way—and he's even figured out a secret way to do it with poems. But what happens when he is the one getting picked on?

House Arrest - K.A. Holt, 2015

Timothy navigates life with a sick brother, a grieving mother, and one tough probation officer.

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup & Shakespeare Makes the Playoffs - Ron Koertge 2006

Baseball star, fourteen-year-old Kevin is forced to stay home sick with mono.

Inside Out and Back Again - Thanhha Lai 2011

Ten-year-old Ha and her family are refugees from Vietnam when they move to Alabama.

Up From The Sea - Leza Lowitz 2016

Kai loses nearly everyone and everything he cares about in the 2011 Tsumani. When he's offered a trip to New York to meet kids whose lives were changed by 9/11.

Sister Heart - Sally Morgan 2016

AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL - A young Aboriginal girl from the Stolen Generation is taken from the north of Australia and sent to an institution far away.

Pearl Verses The World - Sally Murphy, illustrated by Heather Potter 2011

AUSTRALIAN - Pearl doesn't feel particularly rhyme-y when her grandmother passes away.

Dust of Eden - Mariko Nagai 2014

In 1942, Mina and her Japanese-American family are sent to an internment camp in Idaho.

American Ace - Marylin Nelson 2016

Connor finds out that the man who raised his Dad was not his birth father, and the only clues to the man's identity are a class ring and a pair of pilot's wings.

May B. - Caroline Starr Rose 2012

HISTORICAL - Twelve-year-old May is helping out on a neighbor's Kansas prairie homestead, fifteen miles from home. May gets trapped all alone by a blizzard without any way to let her family know and no neighbors to turn to.

Blue Birds - Caroline Starr Rose 2015

HISTORICAL - It's 1587 on Roanoke island, Alis meets and befriends Kimi, a girl about her age.

Serendipity and Me - Judith Roth 2013

Middle schooler, Sara, adopts a kitten to help her family heal from a devastating loss.

Eddie's War - Carol Fisher Saller 2011

HISTORICAL - World War II suddenly feels much closer to when Eddie's big brother enlists.

The Last Fifth Grade of Emerson Elementary - Laura Shovan 2016

With bulldozers parked outside Ms. Hill's classroom, students write poems.

Red Butterfly - A.L. Sonnichsen illustrated by Amy June Bates 2015

Kara, a modern-day Chinese girl, is abandoned by her birth mother and taken in by an American.

Summerhouse Time - Eileen Spinelli 2008

Laugh and cry as Sophie, her extended family, and her cat, Orange, rent a summerhouse on the beach for the month of August.

Where I Live - Eileen Spinelli 2007

Another one I just love! Diana loves where she lives, especially her best friend, Rose. But moving changes everything. (For readers 8-12.)

Like Pickle Juice on a Cookie (series) - Julie Sternberg, illustrated by Matthew Cordell 2012

Eleanor's favorite babysitter moves away and she has to face the summer without her.

The Lonely Ones - Kelsey Sutton 2016

Fain escapes from reality into a fantasy world she rules as Queen of monstrous creatures.

I am Calliope June - Elliah Terry, coming 2017 (SCBWI Utah/Southern Idaho Author)

Calliope struggles to keep her Tourette Syndrome in check while she navigates new friendships.

Becoming Joe DiMaggio - Maria Testa 2005, Illustrated by Scott Hunt

HISTORICAL - Growing up listening to the triumphs of Joe DiMaggio on the radio, Joseph Paul learns to dream. (Grades 4 to 7.)

Girl Coming in for a Landing - April Halprin Wayland, illustrated by Elaine Clayton 2004

The main character goes from an imaginary boyfriend to a real one to the loss of that boyfriend.

Zorgamazoo - Robert Paul Weston 2008

The story of Katrina, Morty, and the missing Zorgles. (For readers ages 8 to 11.)

You Can Fly: The Tuskegee Airmen - Carole Boston Weatherford

NONFICTION - The story of the Tuskegee Airmen, the African-American pilots of WWII.

Brown Girl Dreaming - Jacqueline Woodson 2014

MEMOIR/HISTORICAL - Woodson's love of stories created the first sparks of the writer she was to become. Coretta Scott King Award, Newbery honor, and National Book Award.

Reaching for the Sun - Tracie Vaughn Zimmer 2007

Bulldozers are carving up Josie's farm as she tries to concentrate on the complexities of 7th grade.

YOUNG ADULT NOVELS IN VERSE

TEEN READS:

Shark Girl & Formerly Shark Girl - Kelly Bingham 2007

A shark attack leaves Jane without an arm.

Freakboy - Kristen Elizabeth Clark 2013

Brendan tries to understand his sexual identity, Vanessa fights for her relationship with Brendan.

One - Sarah Crossan 2015

Tippi and Grace share everything because they are conjoined twins.

Audacity - Melanie Crowder 2015

HISTORICAL - Clara Lemlich Shavelson organizes a union of women factory workers.

Forget Me Not - Carolee Dean 2012

Ally is devastated when a scandalous photo of her is made public.

Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings - Margarita Engle 2015

MEMOIR - Margarita lives in LA, but her heart is in Cuba. Hostility erupts between Cuba and the U.S. at the Bay of Pigs and her worlds collide.

The Good Braider - Terry Farrish 2012

Viola has made the journey from war-torn Sudan, to Cairo, and to Portland, Maine.

Crossing Stones - Helen Frost 2009

HISTORICAL - Set during WWI, 18-year-old Muriel must find a way to care for her family.

A Heart Like Ringo Starr - Linda Oatman High 2015 (*Example of a hi-lo read*)

Faith Hope is not long for this world. Unless she receives a heart transplant.

The Secret of Me & The Girl in the Mirror - Meg Kearney 2007

Fourteen-year old Lizzie grapples with her feelings about her adoption and worries about what her parents might think.

The Sound of Letting Go - Stasia Ward Kehoe 2014

When her parents send her autistic brother to an institution, Daisy is furious.

Nix Minus One - Jill McClean 2012

When Nix's older sister, Roxy, starts breaking the rules things spiral out of control.

Heaven Looks a Lot Like a Mall - Wendy Mass 2007

A life-changing dodge ball zooms toward Tessa's head.

Under the Mesquite - Guadalupe Garcia McCall, 2011

Lupita's mother is diagnosed with cancer and goes for treatment in another town.

Street Love - Walter Dean Myers 2007

Damien and Junice overcome differences in this urban tale.

How I Discovered Poetry - Marilyn Nelson 2014

HISTORICAL MEMOIR - Marilyn Nelson tells her story in fifty eye-opening poems.

Three Rivers Rising, a novel of the Johnstown flood - Jame Richards, 2010

HISTORICAL - Celestia, daughter of a wealthy business owner, falls in love with Peter, the son of a coal miner, in the days before the Johnstown Flood of 1889.

I Heart You You Haunt Me - (*and other titles*) Lisa Schroeder 2008

Ava can't see or touch Jackson, her dead boyfriend, but she knows he's there.

Trinkets - Kirsten Smith 2013

Tabitha, Elodie, and Moe are an unlikely trio tied together by the thrill of shoplifting.

What My Mother Doesn't Know & What My Girlfriend Doesn't Know - Sonya Sones

The story of too-tall 14-year-old Sophie, her crushes and her best friends.

Orchards - Holly Thompson 2011

Kana gets to know her heritage as she processes the guilt she feels about a tragedy back home.

The Language Inside - Holly Thompson 2013

Raised in Japan, Emma isn't ready to deal with her mother's cancer. Or move to Massachusetts.

Love and Leftovers - Sarah Tregay 2012 (*SCBWI Utah/Southern Idaho Author*)

Stuck on summer vacation, Marcie Foster has to start her sophomore year at a new school.

A Time to Dance - Padma Venkatraman 2014

Veda lives to dance—so when an accident leaves an amputee, her dreams are shattered.

Paper Hearts - Meg Wiviott 2015

HISTORICAL - Slave laborers at the munitions factory in Auschwitz find friendship.

Make Lemonade (series) - Virginia Euwer Wolff 2001

LaVaughn takes a job babysitting for Jolly, a teenage mother of two.

READS FOR OLDER TEENS

The Best and Hardest Thing - Pat Brisson 2010

Molly's reputation makeover goes to far.

Because I am Furniture - Thalia Chaltas 2009

Anke's father abuses her brother and molests her sister but ignores her.

Death Coming Up the Hill - Chris Crowe 2014

HISTORICAL - Set during the Vietnam war, Ashe is forced to deal with his rough home life.

Hideos Love, The Story of the Girl Who Wrote Frankenstein - Stephanie Hemphill 2013

HISTORICAL - Mary is in love with poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Crank, Glass & Fallout (*series, plus many other titles*) - Ellen Hopkins 2006

Kristina/Bree's haunting tale of her relationship with crystal meth.

The Lost Marble Notebook of Forgotten Girl and Random Boy - Marie Jaskulka 2015

Two nameless teens form an intense, abusive relationship.

Skyscraping - Cordelia Jensen 2015

Mira finds out about her parents' open marriage as her father's health declines due to HIV/AIDS.

Kiss of Broken Glass - Madeleine Kuderick 2014

Caught cutting in the girls' bathroom, 15-year-old Kenna has to face her addiction.

The Book of My Life by Angel - Martine Leavitt 2012

Sixteen-year-old Angel is coerced into drugs and prostitution by a man she meets in a mall.

Breath to Breath - Craig Lew 2015 (*SCBWI Utah/Southern Idaho Author*)

Seventeen-year-old William is sent to live with his estranged father and comes face to face with both his own past and the sexual abuse of a young boy.

Dating Down - Stefanie Lyons 2015

Samantha Henderson falls for an older, edgier, boy she will not name.

Karma - Cathy Ostlere 2011

HISTORICAL - After her mother's suicide, 15-year-old Maya and her father travel from Canada to India for a traditional burial. On their arrival, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated.

Exposed - Kimberly Marcus 2011

Liz and Kate are best friends, until Liz's older brother does something unthinkable.

Sold - Patricia McCormick 2006

13-year-old Lakshmi is sold into prostitution in India.

Ghosting - Edith Pattou 2014

When a group of friends have too much to drink and go looking for a thrill at a haunted house, the home owner's teenage grandson tries to defend the property with tragic consequences.

Crazy - Linda Vigen Phillips 2014

When her mother has a mental breakdown, Laura opens her heart to the mother she never knew.

The Gospel Truth - Carolin Pignat 2014

HISTORICAL - Phoebe is a slave on a Virginia tobacco plantation when a strange man from Canada comes to visit, claiming that he is there to watch birds.

Audacious - Gabrielle Prendergast 2013

Sixteen-year-old Raphaëlle, who always says the wrong thing, moves to a small town.

You Are Not Here - Samantha Schutz 2010

Sixteen-year-old Annaleah grieves the loss of the boy she loved.

Purple Daze - Sherry Shahan 2011

HISTORICAL - Love and war, feminism and racism, riots and rock 'n' roll in the 1960's.

Counting Back From Nine - Valerie Sherrard 2012

Laren knows the rules. You can't date your best friend's ex.

To Be Perfectly Honest - Sonya Sones 2013

A novel based on an untrue story.

A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl - Tanya Lee Stone 2007

Impossible to put down, this book is about three girls who experience heartbreak after a nameless jock uses and dumps each of them.

Like Water on Stone - Dana Walrath 2014

HISTORICAL: Sosi, Shahan, and Mariam escape the Armenian genocide of 1915.

Glimpse - Carol Lynch Williams 2010 (*SCBWI Utah/Southern Idaho Author*)

Secrets of sexual abuse and their mother come between sisters, Lizzie and Hope.

The Watch that Ends the Night, Voices of the Titanic - Alan Wolf, 2011

The ship sinks.