

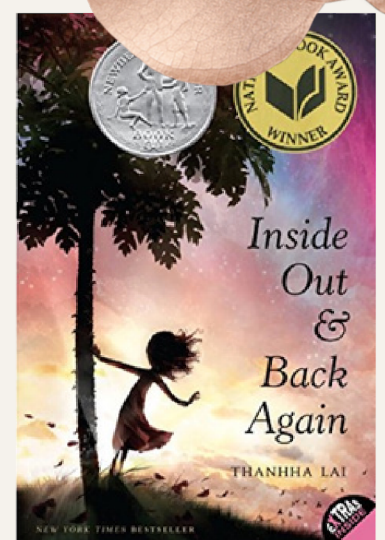
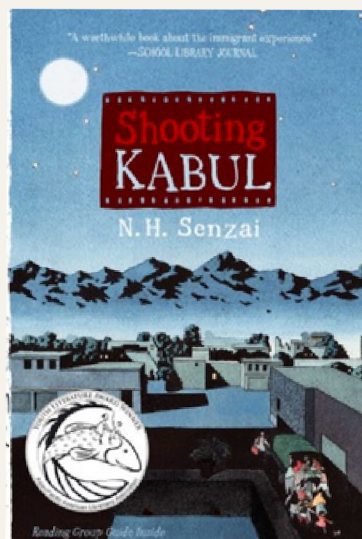
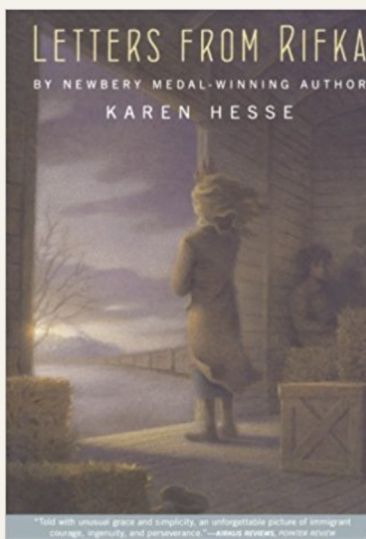


"The historian will tell you
what happened. The novelist
will tell you what it felt like."

E.L. DOCTOROW

Annotated Bibliography

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE ON IMMIGRATION





HEY, I'M AMY

I'm an author, speaker, retreat leader, and veteran classroom teacher, with over a quarter century of experience teaching middle school English.

I'm passionate about helping kids read great books and making teachers' jobs as joy-filled as possible. Our job is hard; let's make things easier for each other!

I hope this list helps you do so.

If you're looking for more teacher encouragement, please check out my books:

Sweet Jesus, Is It June Yet?
and
A Saint Squad for Teachers

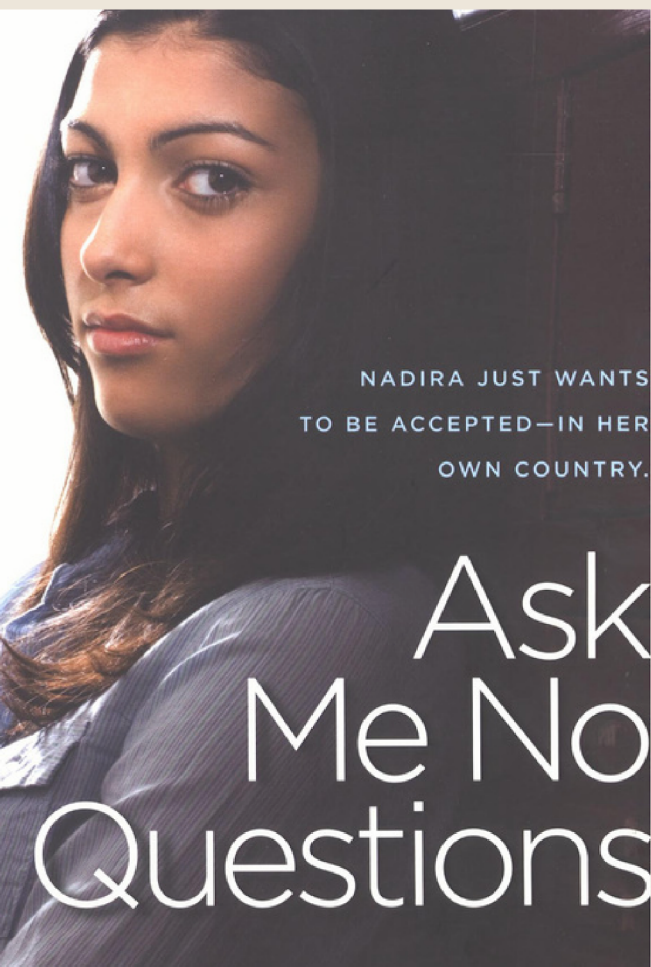
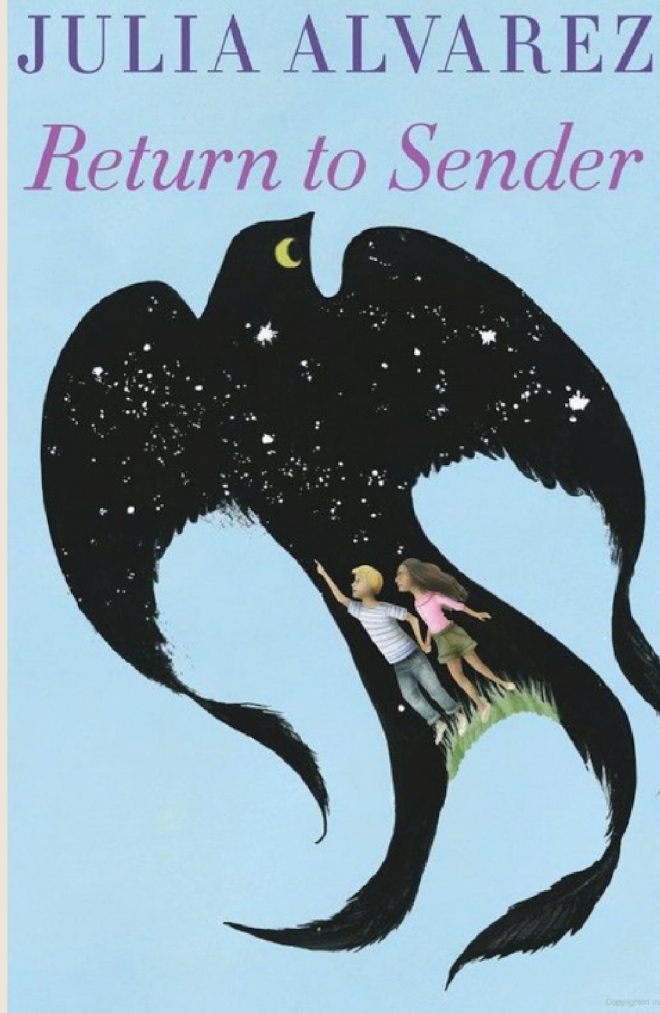
GREAT BOOKS



Alvarez, J. (2010). *Return to Sender*. New York: Yearling.

This novel is told from two very different perspectives: Tyler, a twelve-year-old boy whose family has been farming the same land in Vermont for generations, and Mari, the daughter of an documented Mexican worker that Tyler's family hires to work the farm after his father is injured in a tractor accident. From Tyler's perspective, we see him struggling to understand why his very patriotic family has broken the law in order to hire three undocumented workers, and from Mari's perspective, we see what it is like to live in constant fear of being deported.

The stories of undocumented Mexican workers in the United States is important to tell, and Alvarez's novel may help create both mirror and window experiences for its readers. Although the book is labeled for ages 8-12, it is quite long at over 300 pages, and the switching back and forth between Tyler's sections, which are written in third person limited past tense, and Mari's sections, which are written in first person present tense, could be confusing for some young readers.



Budhos, M. (2007). *Ask Me No Questions*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

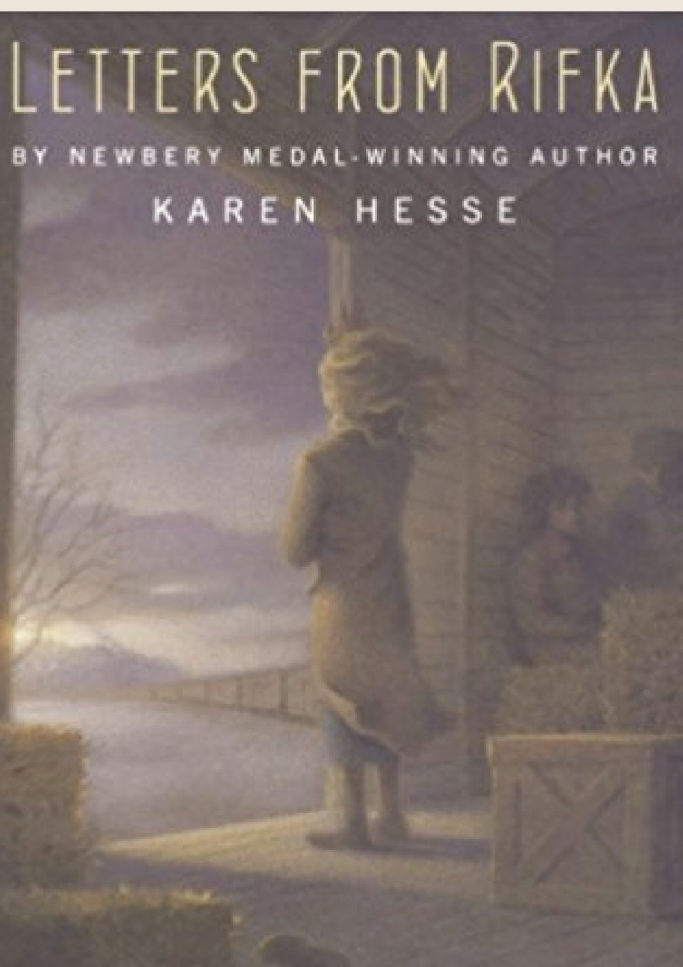
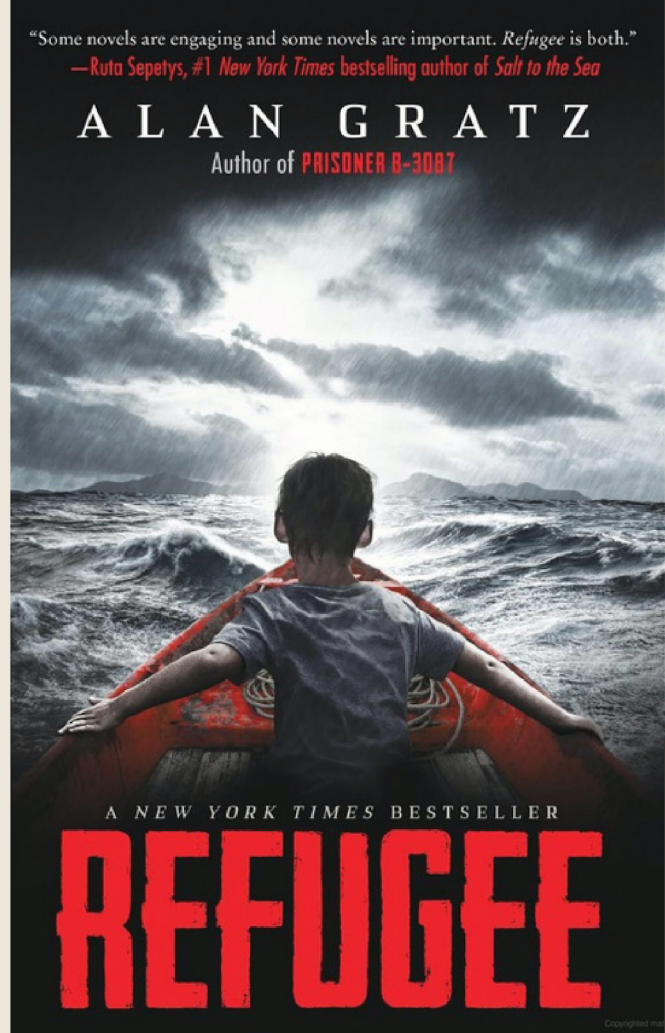
In the aftermath of 9/11, fourteen-year-old Nadira and her family question whether or not they should remain in the United States. They have been living on her father's expired visa in America, hoping that one day they would be granted residency. When a new law requires every Muslim man over eighteen from certain countries to register, Nadira's father decides it is time to flee. However, Canada turns them away at the border, and her father is arrested for his expired visa. With her older sister on the verge of graduating from high school as the class valedictorian, Nadira sets off on a quest to defend her father during his upcoming trial and help her sister apply to college.

This book shows how one family can come to the United States very legally (via travel visas) and hope to be granted residency, but when that doesn't happen before the travel visa expires, they become "illegal." We see how one family struggles to achieve the "American dream" but can't figure out how to do it within the current immigration laws.

Gratz, A. (2017). *Refugee*. New York: Scholastic Press.

In this novel, the reader follows the journey of three refugees, each from a different era and country but with remarkably similar stories. Josef is a Jewish boy whose father is captured and then released by the Nazis in 1930s Germany. When the Nazis release his father, it is under the stipulation that the entire family must leave the country. Isabel is an eleven-year-old girl living in Cuba in the 1990s. When Fidel Castro temporarily allows any Cubans the right to leave the country right after her father is wanted by the police for protesting in the streets, she and her family board a neighbor's newly made boat and head over the dangerous sea to Miami. On the other side of the world in 2015, Mahmoud has been avoiding war and bullies in his hometown of Aleppo, Syria, for too long. When his family's apartment is destroyed by bombs, they begin a long trek across Europe hoping to find a country that will take them in.

This is a gripping novel that beautifully shows how horrifically history keeps repeating itself. Even though these refugees are of different origins and faiths (Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim), we see how similar their stories are and how so many people across cultures have been forced to flee their homelands in order to save their lives.



Hesse, K. (2009). *Letters from Rifka*. New York: Square Fish.

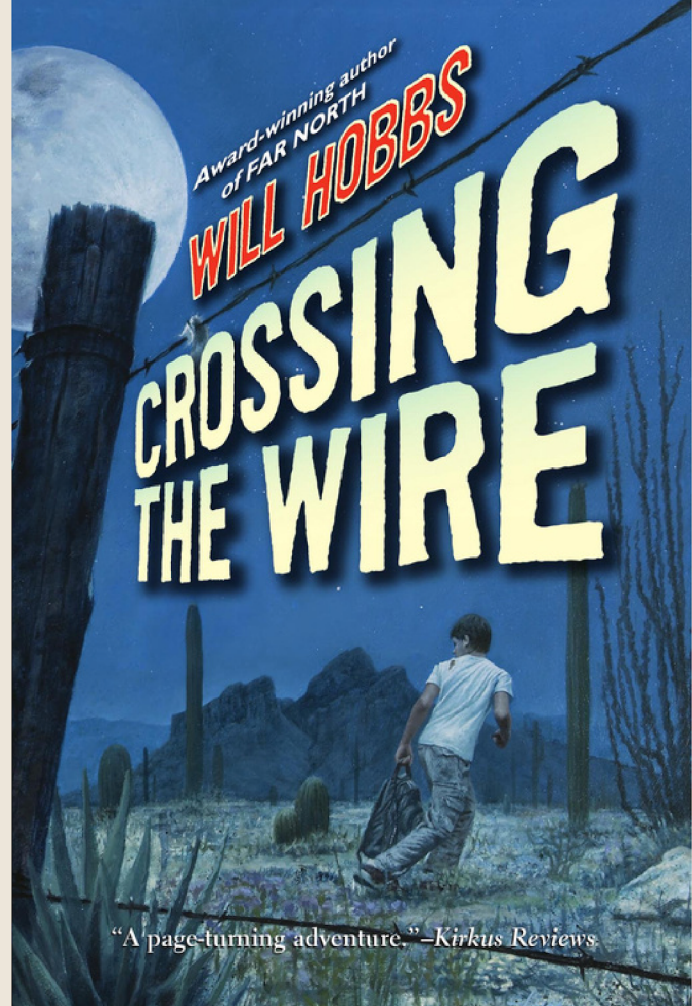
In 1919, one of Rifka's brothers deserts the Russian army. The punishment is death for the whole family, so they decide to flee the country, heading first to Belgium and then the United States. As they journey, Rifka records her thoughts in the form of letters addressed to her beloved cousin Tovah who remains in Russia. She cannot actually mail these letters, but instead records them in her cherished book of poems by Alexander Pushkin. Rifka writes about all of her trials - humiliating medical exams, illnesses (including typhus and ringworm), separation from family, and stormy seas. When she finally reaches Ellis Island, she is detained because her ringworm has returned.

Author Karen Hesse based this story on her great aunt's experiences. If you're looking to help your students understand the Ellis Island experience of the "Great Immigration" period in the U.S., this book will certainly bring it to life for them.

Hobbs, W. (2007). *Crossing the Wire*. New York: HarperCollins.

In this middle grade novel, fifteen-year-old Victor Flores has been trying to provide for his mom and younger siblings ever since his dad died. However, when the United States lowers the price of its corn (thanks to subsidizing), no one will buy the corn Victor has been raising in Mexico. With no job possibilities and no chance at education, Victor decides he must do what his father did—head to El Norte to work and send back money. The only problem is that crossing the border into the U.S. has gotten even more dangerous since 9/11, and even if he can cross, he may end up dying just like his father did.

Most of this novel reads like an adventure story with Victor meeting a mix of characters as he tries several ways to cross the border, each more dangerous than the next. Because the conditions for border crossings have changed over the years, author Will Hobbs chose to ground the story in the year 2004, shortly after the 9/11 attacks caused the United States to tighten up on illegal immigration.



Khan, H. (2017). *Amina's voice*. New York: Salaam Reads/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

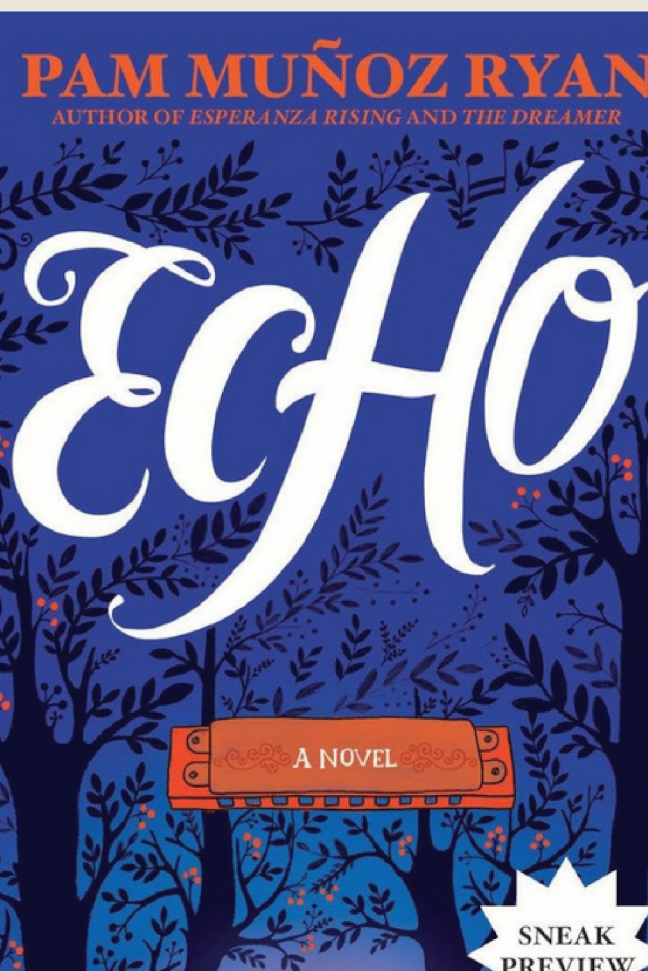
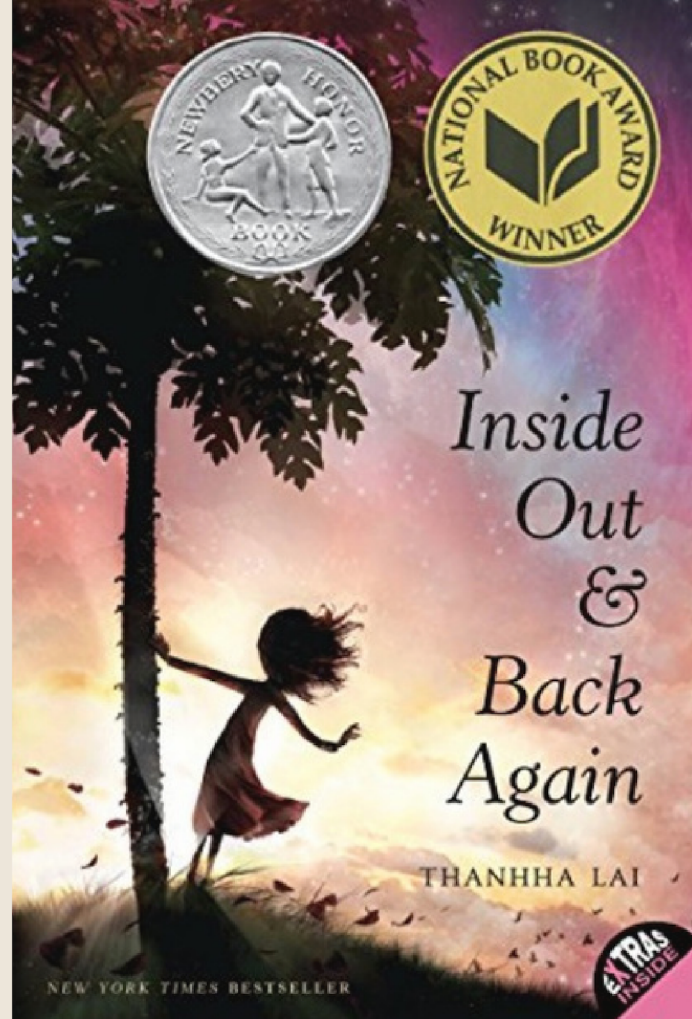
Sixth grader Amina is coping with adjusting to middle school. It doesn't help that her best friend Soojin has suddenly become friendly with Emily, a girl who used to tease both Amina and Soojin about their ethnicities. Complicating the situation is the arrival of her father's elder brother from Pakistan who has very traditional ways and may not be impressed with how "Americanized" Amina and her family have become. Meanwhile, Amina struggles to overcome her stage fright so that she can sing in front of others as well as compete in the Quran competition at the local Islamic Center. As she struggles to juggle all the changes in her life, the Islamic Center is attacked, and Amina questions whether or not her family is even welcome in the community anymore.

This novel is very engaging and told in a style that will appeal to young readers. Amina is a very relatable character as she tries to adjust to middle school. At the same time, we see her family wrangle with how to maintain their Muslim and Pakistani cultures while also enjoying being part of a diverse American community.

Lai, T. (2017). *Inside Out & Back Again*. New York, NY: Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins.

This middle grade novel told in verse details one year in the life of ten-year-old Hà, a Vietnamese girl whose father has been missing since shortly after her birth. The year is 1975, and Hà is used to the sounds of war near her home in Saigon. When her mother decides it is time to flee their homeland, they join their uncle on a navy ship that is headed out to sea. Hà must leave behind her beloved papaya tree, her friends, and most of her belongings. After weeks on the ship, they are finally rescued by an American ship but must then wait in Florida for a family to sponsor them. Eventually, they are sponsored and moved to Alabama, where Hà finds that peacetime in Alabama may be worse than wartime in Saigon.

The use of verse to tell this story makes it a very easy, quick read. The poetic style also makes some of the very poignant lines stand out, creating an emotional depth despite the brevity of this book. Hà is a likable character, and author Thanhha Lai's choice to tell it from a first person perspective makes it easy for young readers to empathize with her.



Ryan, P.M. (2015). *Echo: A novel*. New York: Scholastic Press.

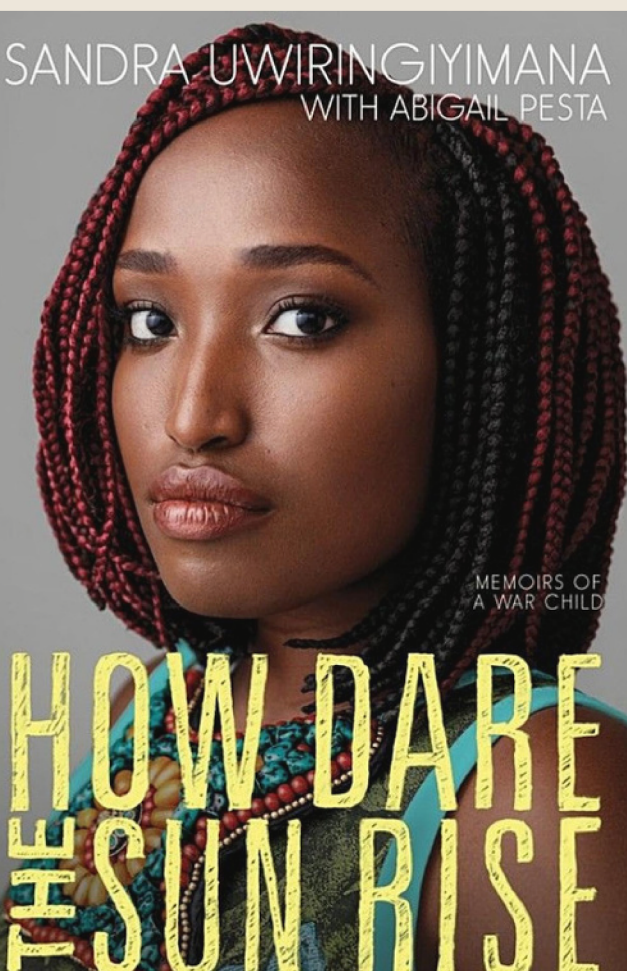
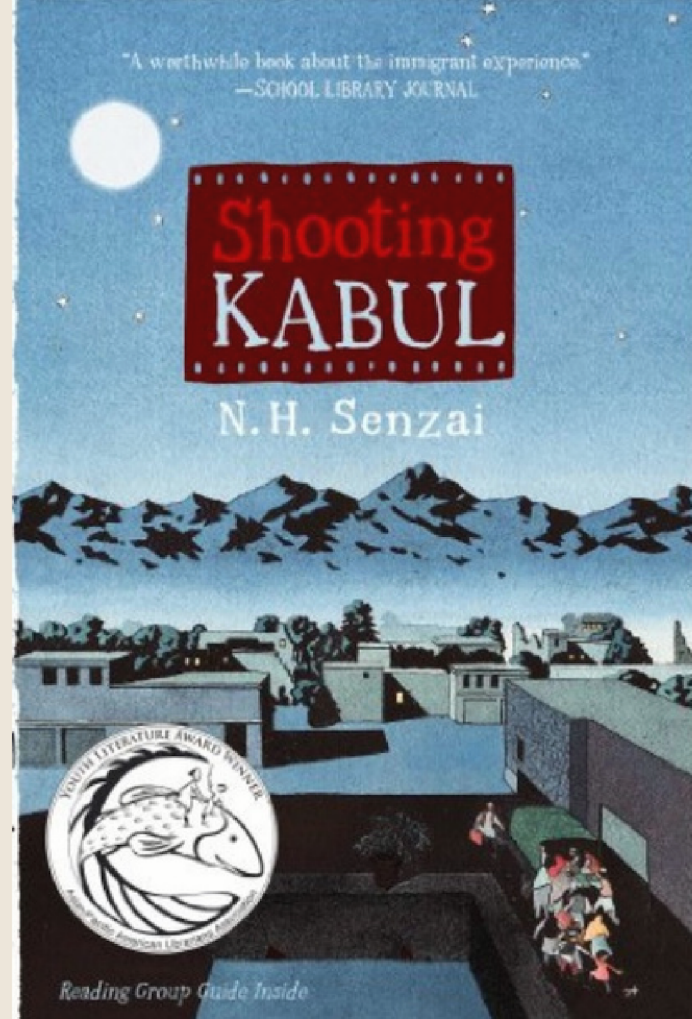
Echo weaves together three stories into one finale. The book begins with a boy who finds a harmonica and three ill-fated sisters whose enchantment won't be broken until the harmonica saves a life. We are then transported to Germany in 1933 where a boy dreams of leaving the bullies behind and becoming an orchestra conductor. First, he must work at the harmonica shop with his father and escape the Nazis who are tracking down Jewish sympathizers. Next, we head to Philadelphia in 1935, where two orphans dream of being adopted before the orphanage can separate them. Finally, we are brought to southern California in 1942. Ivy and her family manage the farm for a Japanese-American family that has been sent to an internment camp. Ivy herself faces discrimination when she is sent to a segregated school.

The mysteriously beautiful harmonica appears in each of these stories, and the ending Pam Muñoz Ryan writes brings the three stories together. More than a story of immigrants, this is a story about accepting those who are different.

Senzai, N.H. (2010). Shooting Kabul. New York: Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books

Twelve-year-old Fadi and his family flee the Taliban in Afghanistan in the summer of 2001. While trying to sneak out of the country, Fadi is responsible for holding the hand of his younger sister Mariam. When a truck arrives to carry them across the border to Pakistan, many families come out of hiding and swarm the truck. Mariam gets lost in the crowd just as Fadi is pulled onto the truck. Once they are in Pakistan, it is impossible for the family to go back without losing their chance for asylum. After being granted asylum in the United States, Fadi feels terribly guilty, as he believes it was his fault Mariam slipped from his fingers. He decides to enter a photography contest with a grand prize of a trip to India. Perhaps if he wins the contest and travels to India, he can sneak back into Afghanistan to save his sister.

This book is a good introduction into how devout Muslims fled the Taliban and became refugees in the United States. Told in a third-person limited perspective, this story helps us to see what it is like for a child who had spent years in the United States as a young boy to return there years later as a refugee.



Uwiringiyimana, S., & Pesta, A. (2017). How dare the sun rise: Memoirs of war child. Harper Collins Children's Books.

In this very engaging young adult memoir, Sandra Uwiringiyimana tells of her life as a constant refugee from war. Sandra grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a member of a minority tribe. There are hundreds of tribes within Congo, but her tribe was constantly discriminated against because they were originally from a part of Rwanda and had moved to Congo in the late 1800s. This meant they looked and sounded different from the other local tribes. Because of the conflicts and civil war, her family often fled to refugee camps. In 2004, Sandra's family fled to a refugee camp in Burundi. The camp was attacked by rebels who brought guns and machetes and who burned people alive. Sandra survived, but her little sister was killed in gunfire and her mother was critically injured. The family took refuge in Rwanda, but once again they faced discrimination. At the end of 2005, they began the application process to be resettled elsewhere eventually moving to the United States where they once again faced discrimination and prejudice.



NEED SOME INSPIRING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Amy J. Cattapan, Ed.D., offers a variety of presentations and retreats for teachers. Whether you are looking for a 60 or 90-minute presentation to a keynote speaker, breakout sessions, or even half or full-day retreats, she is happy to bring some uplifting professional development to your team or staff.

Sample Topics:

- Top 5 Ways to Beat Teacher Burnout
- Strength for the Journey: Tactics to Have Your Best School Year Yet
- Free and Easy Online Tools for Formative Assessment
- Bringing the Bible Back: Using Culturally Relevant Media to Bring the Gospels to Life

Amy J. Cattapan, DM, Ed.D., is an award-winning author, speaker, and middle school English teacher living in the Chicago area. Her books include *Sweet Jesus, Is It June Yet?: 10 Ways the Gospels Can Help You Combat Teacher Burnout and Rediscover Your Passion for Teaching* (Ave Maria Press), as well as two award-winning novels: *Angelhood* (young adult fantasy) and *Seven Riddles to Nowhere* (middle grade mystery). Cattapan earned a bachelor's degree in English Education (Marquette University), a master's degree in Language Arts Instruction (Northeastern Illinois University), and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction (Loyola University Chicago). Her next book, *A Saint Squad for Teachers: 42 Heavenly Friends to Carry You Through the School Year*, releases in 2024 from Ave Maria Press. You can follow her at www.ajcattapan.com.