

**Curtis, C.P. (2004). *Bud, not Buddy*. NY: Random House Audio.**

**CD-Audio | \$40 | ISBN-13: 978-0-8072-1045-1 | 5 hours 15 minutes  
| Juv Fiction**

Have you ever had something happen to you “woop zoop slup” (Curtis, 2002, p. 34), just like that? For Bud—not Buddy, because his mother would have added that “dy” to his name if she’s wanted to—this is how his life changes. One morning he’s told that he’s being moved from the orphanage to a foster home, and the next he’s on the run trying to find his father with nothing more to go on than a few old flyers his mother kept in a drawer.

Bud Caldwell’s mother died when he was six, and for the next four years he was bounced between an orphanage and various foster homes where he was abused. After his newest foster brother torments Bud and Bud defends himself, Bud’s new foster parents label Bud vermin and send him to sleep the night in a scary shed infested by hornets before sending him back to the orphanage. Rather than be sent back into the system, Bud decides to find his father. With the help of a librarian, another runaway, and Mr. Lefty Lewis, Bud arrives at the home of the man who will help him find his roots.

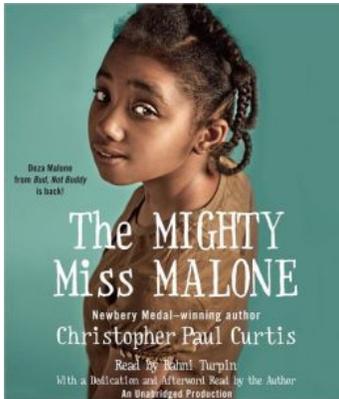
Christopher Paul Curtis does a fabulous job portraying the mind of a 10-year-old in this Newberry Award and Coretta Scott King Award winner. Intertwined in the narrative are “Bud Caldwell’s rules and things for having a funner life and making a better liar out of yourself” (Curtis, 2002, p. 11), which shows the priorities of a boy this age. Bud’s overactive imagination and fear of vampires also rings true. Parents will enjoy seeing the fears of their 10-year-olds reflected in Bud’s narrative and their children will be able to relate to it. Children will particularly enjoy the audiobook edition of this novel, as narrator James Avery nails all the sound effects that Curtis includes in his book.

This book touches on several issues. First is the issue of bullying and how to handle bullying. Both Bud and his grandfather hold to a philosophy that stresses that sometimes you have to defend yourself but also “[t]here comes a time when you're losing a fight that it just doesn't make sense to keep on fighting. It's not that you're being a quitter, it's just that you've got the sense to know when enough is enough” (Curtis, 2002, p. 9). If this philosophy is stressed to schoolchildren it could cut down on the number of fights in the schoolyard.

*Bud, Not Buddy* is set during the Great Depression and as such describes the social issues of the time, including long lines for soup kitchens, Hoovervilles, the quest for better living in the West. As such, the book would be a nice addition to a school unit about the Great Depression. The book’s engaging narrative and excellent portrayal of the mind and fears of a 10-year-old also make it a good pick for summer reading programs.

(n.d.) Christopher Paul Curtis – Books Page. *Random House*. Retrieved from <http://www.randomhouse.com/features/christopherpaulcurtis/books.php>

Curtis, C.P. (2002). *Bud, not Buddy*. NY: Yearling.



**Curtis, C. P. (2012). *The mighty Miss Malone*. Turpin, B. (Narrator). New York: Random House Audio.**

**CD-Audio | \$44 | ISBN-13: 978-0-307-96822-7 | 8 hours | Grade 4-7 (“Books in Print”) - Fiction**

Those who have read Christopher Paul Curtis’s *Bud, Not Buddy* have already met the mighty Miss Deza Malone, the girl who introduced Bud to life in the Hooverville and who gave him his first kiss. Now Deza is back in all her glory in a book that is all her own.

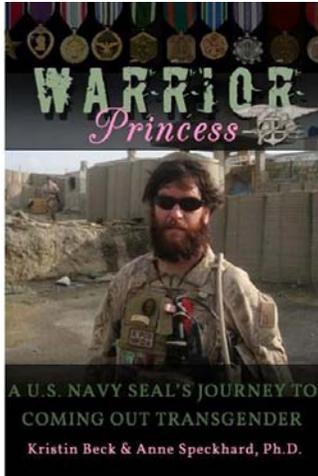
*The Mighty Miss Malone* is the story of an African American family during the Great Depression. Deza Malone is finishing the sixth grade and all she wants is to spend the summer in the library with her best friend, but when her father gets into a boating accident, things start to fall apart as first Deza’s father then her brother leave home to find work. Between moving and losing family members to the unknown, Deza never knows what will happen next or when she’ll next see the people who anchor her life. Through patched clothes, rotting teeth, and life in a Hooverville, Deza’s story is one of hope when times are rough.

*The Mighty Miss Malone* deals with several social issues. The first and most obvious one is poverty, as the Malone family struggles with unemployment, homelessness, buggy food and lack of dental care. While these issues take place in the context of the Great Depression, they are also issues which people living in poverty must deal with today and the story of the Malone family will make these real for children today. This book also deals with the issue of racism, as the family compares their lot to the white people in their town and Deza learns what being called “a credit to your race” means. This is another issue that is just as relevant today as it was during the Great Depression, as comparisons and remarks such as these are still common in society. While not a social issue, another theme of *The Mighty Miss Malone* is hope, which is shown through both Deza’s persistent hope that things will get better and the extensive coverage of the boxing match between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling in 1936.

*The Mighty Miss Malone* is an excellent choice for any school or library as narrator Bahni Turpin’s tone of voice in reading the narrative reflects Deza’s moods and curiosity in a way which will make the story come alive for listeners. The many issues addressed in this book provide rich fodder for book club discussions. Curricular activities about the Great Depression and other themes can be found in Random House’s teacher’s guide to the book, which can help teachers integrate *The Mighty Miss Malone* into studies across subjects (Random House).

(n.d.) *The mighty Miss Malone*. Retrieved from the Books in Print database.

(n.d.) *The mighty Miss Malone: Educators guide*. *Random House*. Retrieved from [http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers\\_guides/9780385734912.pdf](http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers_guides/9780385734912.pdf)



**Beck, K. & Speckhard, A. (2013). *Warrior princess*. McLean, VA: Advances Press.**

**Hardcover | \$19.99 | ISBN-13: 978-1-935866-42-8 | 220 pages | A Fiction**

Not many books receive the attention of ABC, CNN, the Huffington Post, and other mainstream media outlets within days of publication. Usually these books are written by celebrities, but in this case what makes the book newsworthy is its subject's seeming impossibility—the author is both a Navy SEAL—a member of a brotherhood of elite warriors—and a woman.

Kristin Beck was born Chris Beck to religious Christian parents who had clear distinctions between what was appropriate for their three daughters and two sons. Kristin spent her childhood failing to keep up with her athletic brother and wishing that she was like his sisters, who never got scolded or paddled the way he did. After college she joined the Navy SEALs, got married, and tried to be the man society expected her to be while struggling with her internal female gender identity. Kristin pushed herself to her physical and mental limits as a Navy SEAL, but ultimately she could not escape who she is. Rather than becoming “normal,” she drove herself into depression. After retiring from the SEALs, Beck finally began to accept her inner woman and transition towards life as a woman. Kristin calls these three periods her “three lives,” and the book follows her journey through all three of them.

*Warrior Princess* portrays the struggle and fear that comes with being a transgendered person. The reader follows Kristin from childhood through transition and relives each step of the process with her, from her childhood troubles through family rejection, fear of losing her job, and getting beat up on the street. The book is very raw and repeats emotions and internal dialogue frequently, giving the reader a sense of how constant the feelings and the struggle were to Kristin. The book would have benefited from a good copyeditor, as there are frequent punctuation errors which trip up the reader, but in a way this adds to the authenticity of the story. This is Kristin's attempt to tell her story, not a professional writer spinning a tale.

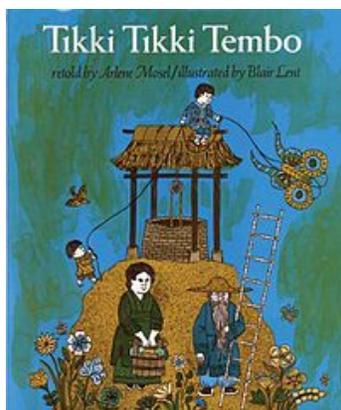
Kristin writes that her primary reason for writing *Warrior Princess* is “to reach out of all of the younger generation” because the suicide rate among transgendered individuals is almost 50% (p. 5). The struggles portrayed in this book are sure to resonate with transgender readers, but the graphic scenes of war may not be suitable for young adult readers. Readers who are not part of the GLBT community may find the book confusing, as the authors use “Chris” and “he” throughout the book and only use Kristin's true gender towards the end, where it is used in addition to the male name and pronouns. This does not portray the fact that Kristin was born female in a male body, but rather suggests that at some point Kristin became female. In addition, Kristin's wish to be like his sister as a child in order to be spared his father's wrath may confuse readers into thinking that Kristin's transgender identity is a result of parenting rather than a serious condition that she was born with. A better book for introducing readers to the transgender experience would be Jennifer Finney Boylan's *She's Not There*, which is less confusing and better written.

Boylan, J.F. (2003). *She's not there*. NY: Crown.

Ferran, L. (2013). Transgender Navy SEAL ‘warrior princess’ comes out. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/transgender-navy-seal-warrior-princess/story?id=19314231>

Hadad, C., Chun, S., & Ford, D. (2013). Former Navy SEAL comes out as transgender: ‘I want some happiness.’ *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/07/us/transgender-veteran>

Sieczkowski, C. (2013). Kristin Beck, transgender Navy SEAL, comes out in new book. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/04/transgender-navy-seal-kristin-beck\\_n\\_3383015.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/04/transgender-navy-seal-kristin-beck_n_3383015.html)



Mosel, A. (1989). *Tikki tikki tembo*. Lent, B. (illus.). NY: Henry Holt.

**Paperback | \$6.95 | ISBN-13: 978-0-8050-1166-1 | Unpaged | Juv Fiction**

Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo chari bari ruchi pip peri pembo is a name so long that many people would have trouble remembering it, let alone saying it; no wonder this book's title is simply "Tikki Tikki Tembo" rather than the name of the one of the main characters! With its shortened name, *Tikki Tikki Tembo* is a book that has been beloved for generations as an example of a folktale from a faraway land.

*Tikki Tikki Tembo* tells the story of two brothers in ancient China, the title character and his brother Chang. Like any little boys who are warned against something, the two spend time around the village's well until first one brother than the other falls into the well and has to be fished out. Chang is rescued quickly, but Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo chari bari ruchi pip peri pembo is left in the well for much longer as his brother struggles to speak his name in his call for help. The story concludes that "from that day to this the Chinese have always thought it wise to give their children little, short names instead of great long times" (Mosel, 1989, p. 32).

*Tikki Tikki Tembo* won the 1968 Horn Book Award, was named "one of the best 50 books in 50 years" by the *New York Times* in 1997, and was included in the 2007 National Education Association's Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children (Rideout, 2012). However, there is unrest in the Chinese American community about whether *Tikki Tikki Tembo* is actually a good book for children to read. Dubbed a Chinese folktale, the book actually misrepresents Chinese culture. Irene Rideout (2012) lists several problems with the book. First, the story "retold by" Mosel is actually based on a Japanese folktale, not a Chinese one, a fact corroborated by Chen (2009, p. 2). This furthers the stereotype that everything Asian is the same, despite the many different cultures in Asia. The names given to the characters are also inauthentic; no words in *Tikki Tikki Tembo* are Chinese and while Chang is a Chinese name, it does not mean "little or nothing" (Rideout, 2012). Rideout is not the only person upset by this book's representation of Chinese culture; children's author Grace Lin (2012) reposted Rideout's piece because it explained why she felt "a strange awkwardness" at a school play of *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. Chen (2009) also reports an uproar over the book on a listserv.

Perhaps Mosel, a white American woman, was well-meaning when she wrote this book in 1968, but today it is problematic. In addition to the issues mentioned above, the translation of "Chang" as "little or nothing" may lead to students teasing classmates with that last name. Choose another book to represent Chinese culture or Chinese folklore in your school or library; many more authentic examples can be found in *Multicultural Picturebooks* by Sylvia and Ken Marantz.

Marantz, S. & Marantz, K. (2005). *Multicultural picturebooks: art for illuminating our world*. (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Chen, M. (2009). Seeking accurate cultural representation: mahjong, World War II, and ethnic Chinese in multicultural youth literature. *Multicultural Education*, 16(3), 2-10.

Lin, G. (2012, April 6). Rethinking Tikki Tikki Tembo. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://blurosegirls.blogspot.com/2012/04/rethinking-tikki-tikki-tembo.html>

Rideout, I. (2012, April 4). Rethinking Tikki Tikki Tembo. [Facebook note]. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>



**Phi, B. (2011). *Sông I sing: poems*. Minneapolis: Coffeehouse Press.**

**Paperback | \$16 | ISBN-13: 978-1-56689-279-7 | 113 pages | A Poetry**

What does it mean to be invisible? What does it feel like to have one's life experiences go unrecognized in a country one calls home? For Vietnamese Americans such as Bao Phi, these questions are not theoretical; they are a reality.

Bao Phi is a spoken word artist who has won the Minnesota Grand Spam twice and whose poetry has been included in several anthologies. For his first book, *Sông I sing*, Phi presents the complexity of Vietnamese American life through poetry. Each poem tells its own story. Some poems, such as the ones in the section entitled "The Nguyễns," represent the stories of particular people across America. The voices portrayed in these poems are so clear and individually unique to each represented life that it does not matter

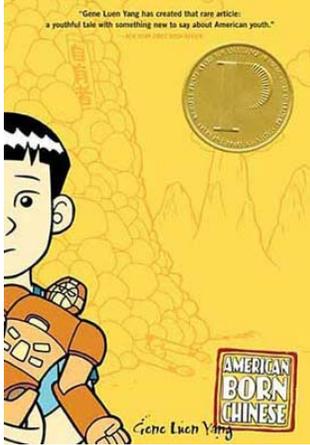
whether the people portrayed in the poem are real or whether they're simply examples Phi has composed. From a Katrina survivor who dreams of feeding the fellow victims who ignore her presence (Phi, 2011, p. 39) to the bodybuilder who longs to beat up his childhood tormentor (p. 20-22), Phi covers the range of human emotions. In the introductory poem to this section Phi writes that "they're more related than any of them will ever know" (p. 17), yet the lack of a single Vietnamese American story is immediately clear as each consecutive poem shows a different side of life, sometimes contradicting the sentiments expressed in the previous poem. Anger and sadness are recurring emotions throughout the poems.

While the entire book is politically charged, many poems speak directly to the political situation in America. Several poems are reactions to real events such as John McCain's comments about "gooks" in 2000 and the murder and framing of a Hmong American by a police officer. For these poems, Phi quotes or describes the situations and follows these descriptions by his poetic responses. In other poems, such as "FOBulous" and "Reverse Racism," Phi parodies the general atmosphere of life in America.

In the first poem of the book, Phi writes that this book "is for us, my people" (p. 1). *Sông I sing* is a place where Vietnamese Americans can finally see their experiences recognized. However, this book is also a valuable asset for non-Vietnamese Americans. In presenting the variety of experiences and lives normally left unrecognized in American culture, *Sông I sing* gives insight into the lives of others. For anyone who believes discrimination against Asian Americans does not exist in this country, this book is a wake-up call. It presents not only the realities but also the emotional impact that discrimination has on people.

*Sông I sing* is not appropriate for a young audience because some of the poems utilize vulgar language and sexual imagery. However, this book would be an excellent selection for an adult Asian American History Month or multicultural display. Individual poems could be used for a teen or adult library program on writing and identity, followed by an exercise in which participants write their own identity-related poetry. Those including this book in programming or classes might also consider showing the recording of Bao Phi performing "You Bring Out the Vietnamese in Me" featured on Coffeehouse Press's website or any of the Bao Phi recordings on YouTube.

(n.d.) *Sông I sing*. *Coffeehouse Press*. Retrieved from <http://coffeehousepress.org/shop/song-i-sing/>.



**Yang, G.L. (2009). American Born Chinese. New York: Square Fish.**

**Paperback | \$9.99 | ISBN-13: 978-0-312-38448-7 | 233 pages | YA Graphic Novel**

The bullying. The first crush. The struggle to fit in. These are experiences known to every person who has ever gone through childhood in America. Yet, for the children of recent immigrants, these struggles are uniquely colored by the home culture of their parents and the way American as a whole views these cultures. *American Born Chinese* is the example of one such struggle.

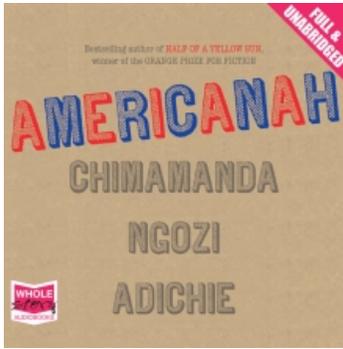
Winner of the Michael L. Printz Award and the Eisner Award (“American Born Chinese”), *American Born Chinese* weaves together three distinct stories. The first is the story of the Monkey King, a figure of Chinese folklore turned here into a classic American superhero. The second story is of Jin, a Chinese American boy growing up in a white suburb in California. The third story is of Danny, a white boy whose obnoxious, stereotypically Chinese cousin Chin-Kee comes to visit, “embarrassing the crap out of” him (Yang, 2009, p. 127). As these three stories come together, the moral becomes painfully clear: it is best to accept who you are.

In *American Born Chinese*, Yang brings the stereotypes and realities he grew up with front and center (Morton, 2010). American ignorance is introduced from the very beginning, when Jin’s teacher mis-introduces him and fails to counter the stereotype that Chinese people eat dogs (Yang, 2009, p. 31). Chin-Kee’s character embodies common stereotypes, from being overly intelligent (ibid., p. 112-113) to mixing up the consonants in words. These stereotypes hang heavy on Jin’s life, as shown by his classmates’ reactions to him when he enters their school (p. 31-33). Despite years of defying stereotypes, as a teenager Jin is asked by a classmate not to date a white girl because “she has to start paying attention to who she hangs out with” (p. 179). Yet, among all this negativity, the book also shows positive aspects of Chinese culture, including the parable Jin’s mother tells him at the beginning of the book (p. 23-24) and the story of the monkey king.

*American Born Chinese* is a good pick for reluctant readers due to its graphic novel characteristics and the Monkey King’s resemblance to super hero comics. It is a particularly important acquisition for libraries with large Chinese American populations, as it provides Chinese American teens with the opportunity to see themselves reflected in literature.

(n.d.) *American Born Chinese*. Retrieved from <http://geneyang.com/american-born-chinese>.

Morton, P. (2010). The Millions interview: Gene Luen Yang. *The Millions*. Retrieved from <http://www.themillions.com/2010/07/the-millions-interview-gene-luen-yang.html>



Adichie, C. N. (2013). *Americanah*. Leicestershire, UK: Whole Story Audiobooks.

CD-Audio | £30.62 | ISBN-13: 978-1-47124-146-8 | 17 hours 30 minutes | A Fiction

What happens to someone when they grow up in one country and then spend thirteen years (Adichie, 2013, p. 16) in another? Where does that person belong—her new country, or her old one? Or does she belong in neither? Will she always be an outsider? Through a main character in just this situation, *Americanah* by

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores the question of identity in multiple countries.

*Americanah* tells the story of two sweethearts, Ifamelu and Obinze, who grow up in Nigeria under military law. When strikes make her ability to graduate from university in Nigeria uncertain, Ifamelu moved to America with the promise that Obinze will follow, but circumstances get in the way and Ifamelu and Obinze lose touch. *Americanah* is the story of these two—where they came from, where they go, and how they meet once again. On the way we learn about the situation of student immigrants in America, illegal immigrants in England, and “Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (Adichie, 2013, p. 4).

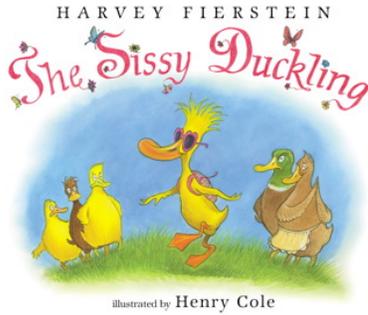
*Americanah*, which won the 2013 Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize for Fiction (Daily Post Staff) is a complex novel that brings to light the social underbelly of America. As we follow Ifamelu through her life in America, we learn about the struggle even legal immigrants undergo to get a job in America. We learn how desperate these immigrants are and how easily they are manipulated, especially women. We also learn to take a second look at race, as we see how race in America differs from race in a country like Nigeria where race is not an issue. On the flip side we learn about life in a Nigerian city, both in terms of living conditions and in terms of cultural ideas and priorities. Adichie’s identity as a Nigerian “Americanah” herself lends authority to her descriptions of life both in America and Nigeria (“Biography”).

This book is a good addition to any library book club, as it should lead to deep discussions about race and immigration in America. Libraries should consider purchasing both the print and audiobook editions of *Americanah*, as Adjoa Andoh does a wonderful job narrating the audiobook in all the appropriate accents and listeners will feel particularly connected to the Nigerian characters as they hear those characters speak in their natural accent rather than the accent of a narrator.

Adichie, C. N. (2013). *Americanah*. New York: Knoff.

(n.d.) Biography. *The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Website*. Retrieved from <http://www.l3.ulg.ac.be/adichie/cnabio.html>

Daily Post Staff. (2013). Chimamanda Adichie’s ‘Americanah’ wins American Prize. *Daily Post*. Retrieved from <http://dailypost.com.ng/2013/07/17/chimamanda-adichies-americanah-wins-american-prize/>



**Fierstein, H. (2002). *The sissy duckling*. Cole, H. (Illus.) New York: Simon & Schuster.**

**Hardcover | \$17.99 | ISBN-13: 978-0-689-83466-7 | 40 unnumbered pages | Grades P-3 (“The Sissy Duckling”) - Fiction**

What is a young boy—er, duck—to do when he’s different to the core, and the only person who seems to value him is his mother? Stay true to himself and prove his worth to the world, according to Harvey Fierstein.

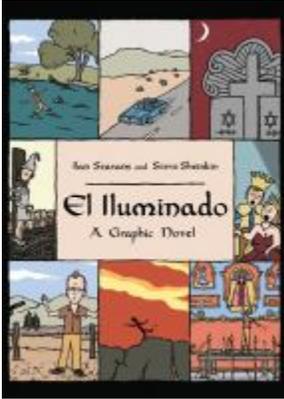
A Lambda Literary Award finalist (Naidoo, p. 106) based on an HBO animated special of the same name (“The Sissy Duckling”), *The Sissy Duckling* is a picture book which tells the story of a duckling named Elmer who isn’t like any of the other boy ducklings in his flock. He is happy building things and decorating cookies, not building forts or playing sports. Elmer’s classmates ridicule him and when his father declares that he is “no son of mine,” Elmer runs off to live on his own, using his skills to build his own home. After Elmer’s father is shot while trying to fly south for the winter, Elmer nurses his father back to health and the two ducks bond over the long months. When the other ducks return, Elmer and his father reemerge and the flock sees Elmer’s heroism and accepts him despite his differences.

*The Sissy Duckling* brings up several social issues. One of these issues is bullying, as Elmer is taunted by his classmates and in one scene he has to run from the school bully who is threatening to beat him up. Tied into this is the issue of individuality, since it is Elmer’s differences that cause the bullying. Notably, Elmer does not give in to the bullying or his father’s pressure to fit in; instead, he stays true to himself and what makes him happy.

*The Sissy Duckling* is an excellent pick for public libraries and school alike. When read at story time, *The Sissy Duckling* can foster discussion about bullying, tolerance, and individuality. Children who do not fit the gender norms will enjoy finding themselves reflected in Elmer, while other children will learn about difference in a positive way. This book will be particularly helpful for children whose parents don’t accept their personalities and try to change them, as it will give hope that someday their parents will change their minds.

Naidoo, J. C. (2012). *Rainbow family collections: Selecting and using children’s books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer content*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited.

(n.d.) *The sissy duckling*. *Simon & Schuster*. Retrieved from <http://books.simonandschuster.com/Sissy-Duckling/Harvey-Fierstein/9780689835667>



Stavans, I. & Sheinkin, S. (2012). *El iluminado: A graphic novel*. New York: Basic Books.

**Hardcover | \$24.99 | ISBN-13: 978-0-465-03257-0 | 208 pages | Grades 10+ - Graphic Novel**

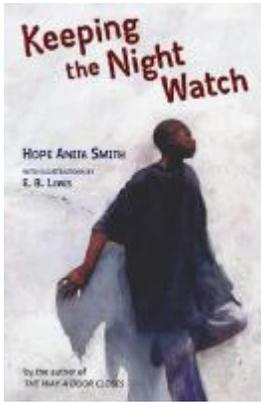
What happens when you grow up thinking you're Catholic only to find out that your ancestors were Jews? *El Iluminado* is the story of a family and a town who must answer exactly this question.

*El Iluminado* is a historical mystery not because it's set in the past—which it isn't—but because the present-day mystery hinges on historical events. The story begins with Rolando Perez, a boy who is pushed off a cliff by a mysterious woman who is trying to lay claim to documents he has found which link his family to Luis de Carvajal the Younger, a crypto-Jew who immigrated to Mexico from Spain in the sixteenth century to escape the Spanish Inquisition. When Professor Stavans visits Santa Fe, New Mexico to give a lecture on crypto-Jews, he ends up assisting Rolando's sister in the quest to find the mysterious documents and the killer who wanted to capture them.

*El Iluminado* is a book about identity. At the heart of the murder mystery lies the question of whether the Rodriguez family is descended from crypto-Jews, or Jews who converted to Christianity to escape expulsion from Spain during the Inquisition only to continue to practice Judaism in secret. Rolando embraces this idea as an explanation for the odd customs he grew up with, but it threatens both his priest brother and Santa Fe at large. The peculiarities of identity are also seen in Professor Stavans, a Mexican Jewish immigrant who discusses both how other people identify him based on his appearance and how he identifies based on where he lives.

One interesting aspect of the book is its use of "Spanglish," or sentences that combine both English and Spanish. The prevalence of this serves as a reminder of the shared Latino roots of the characters, even though Professor Stavans looks more like an Ashkenazi Jew than a man who grew up in Mexico. Unfortunately, there is no translation or glossary of Spanish terms in the book, which can make it hard for those who don't speak Spanish to understand the text without a dictionary or translation website.

*El Iluminado* is a good pick for a public library or high school that serves a population which includes Spanish-speakers. This book will be particularly useful for Spanish-speakers who are learning English, as the large amounts of Spanish in the text could make such readers feel a bit more comfortable reading a majority English text. *El Iluminado* would also make an interesting addition to a class learning about the Spanish Inquisition, due to its treatment of crypto-Jews and the lasting effects of the Inquisition.



Smith, H. A. (2008). *Keeping the Night Watch*. Lewis, E. B. (Illus.) New York: Henry Holt.

**Hardcover | \$18.95 | ISBN-13: 978-0-8050-7202-0 | 73 pages | Grades 6-8 (“Book Awards”) – Novel in Verse**

How do you forgive a parent who has walked out on you? Can you ever rebuild the trust formed between parents and child? These are the overarching questions found in Hope Anita Smith’s *Keeping the Night Watch*.

*Keeping the Night Watch* is a continuation of the events which unfolded in *The Way a Door Closes*, in which C.J.’s father abandons the family (“Hope Anita Smith,” 2011). *Keeping the Night Watch* is the story of what happens when C.J.’s father returns and the family has to learn how to live together again. While most of the family accepts its patriarch’s return fairly easily, C.J. cannot forgive his father for abandoning them. As each poem unfolds, we learn more about C.J.’s life and feelings, both while his father was gone and after he returns.

The title “Keeping the Night Watch” refers to “checking that everyone is safe” at night, something that “was Daddy’s job before he left. / And even though he’s back... / It’s mine now” (Smith, 2008, p. 19). This line, poems about his sister Zuri’s fear of people leaving, shows C.J.’s concern for his family. He stepped into his father’s role of protector when his father left, and now he can’t step down. It is only through a lot of effort on his father’s part and a letter from Zuri begging for the family to “love each other again” (Smith, 2008, p. 67) that C.J. learns to accept his father.

Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award and the Judy Lopez Memorial Award (“Books in Print”), *Keeping the Night Watch* is a good pick for public libraries and schools alike. C.J.’s experiences of the school lunchroom and his first crush will resonate with middle school readers, as any reader who has been betrayed by a family member will resonate with C.J.’s struggle to learn to trust. Teachers may find the book’s Teacher’s Discussion Guide and Student’s Discussion Guide volumes published by JHU Talent Development (“Books in Print”) helpful when using this book in the classroom.

(2011, February 4). Hope Anita Smith. *The Brown Bookshelf: United in Story*. Retrieved from <http://thebrownbookshelf.com/2011/02/04/hope-anita-smith>

(n.d.). *Keeping the Night Watch*. *William Allen White Children’s Book Awards*. Retrieved from <http://www.emporia.edu/libsv/wawbookaward/curriculumguides/keepingthenightwatch.html>

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