



Elementary Grade Books about Homelessness, Hunger, & Poverty

November 12-20, 2022



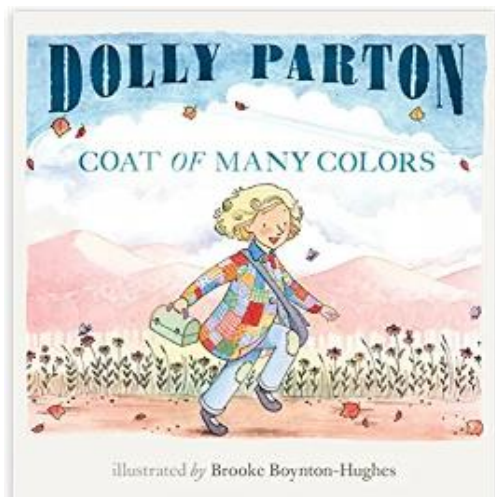
Sticks by Diane Alber

"A heartwarming story about finding your place in the world. Sticks is about a Popsicle that accidentally melts and becomes just a plain stick. He has a hard time adjusting to his new normal but with the help of some new friends (who happen to be sticks too) he realizes that everything happened for a reason and that melting was part of his journey.

Sticks is a story that almost anyone can relate to. It's about finding yourself in a situation that didn't turn out like you expected and having your friends and family help you find the courage to pick yourself back up and persevere.

Grade Level: Preschool – 2

Age: 3 - 6 years



Coat of Many Colors by Dolly Parton

"Country music legend Dolly Parton's rural upbringing in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee provides the backdrop for this special picture book. Using lyrics from her classic song "Coat of Many Colors," the book tells the story of a young girl in need of a warm winter coat. When her mother sews her a coat made of rags, the girl is mocked by classmates for being poor. But Parton's trademark positivity carries through to the end as the girl realizes that her coat was made with love "in every stitch."

Grade Level: Preschool – 2

Age: 2 - 7 years

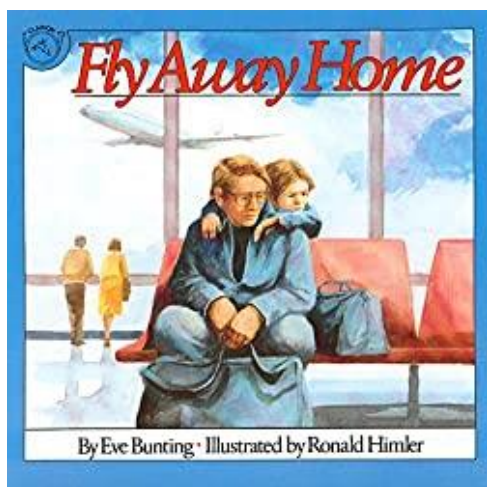


The Queen on Our Corner by Lucy Christopher

“Nobody notices the queen on the corner. Nobody, that is . . . except one young girl. Through her eyes, the woman who dwells in the abandoned plot is a warrior queen, with many battles fought and won. When, one day, danger comes to the street and the queen on the corner sounds the alarm, the little girl must find a way to thank her. Can she bring the community together to turn the queen's corner into a home?”

Grade Level: Preschool – 2

Age: 4 - 7 years



Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting

“A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal trying not to be noticed, is given hope when a trapped bird finally finds its freedom.”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3

Age: 4 - 7 years

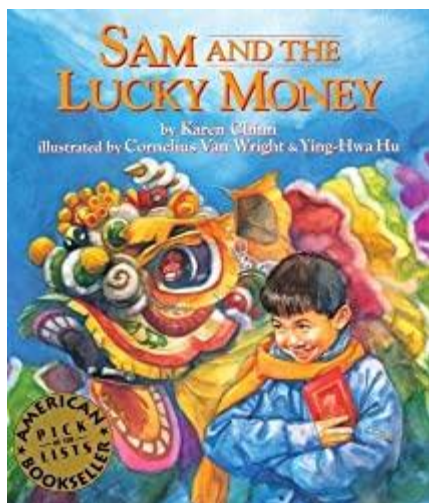


December by Eve Bunting

“A boy and his mom live in a cardboard box that they’ve carefully decorated for Christmas, including an angel torn out of a calendar from the month of December. On Christmas Eve, an old woman asks for shelter and they let her in.”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3

Age: 4 - 7 years

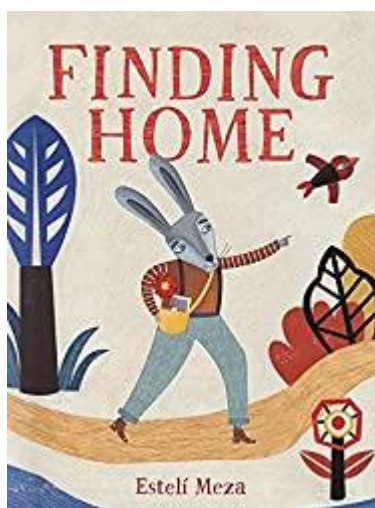


Sam and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu

“During Chinese New Year, a young boy encounters a homeless person and discovers that no gift is too small when it comes from the heart.”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3

Age: 4 - 7 years



Finding Home by Esteli Meza

“A powerful social-emotional picture book about friendship and courage in the face of hardship.”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3

Age: 4 - 8 years

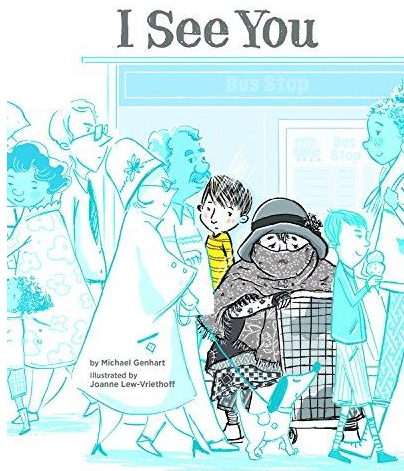


Dear Librarian by Lydia M. Sigwarth, illustrated by Romina Gulotta

“When Lydia was five years old, she and her family had to leave their home. They hopped from Grandma's house to Aunt Linda's house to Cousin Alice's house, but no place was permanent. Then one day, everything changed. Lydia's mom took her to a new place – not a house, but a big building with stone columns, and tall, tall steps. The library.”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3

Age: 4 - 8 years

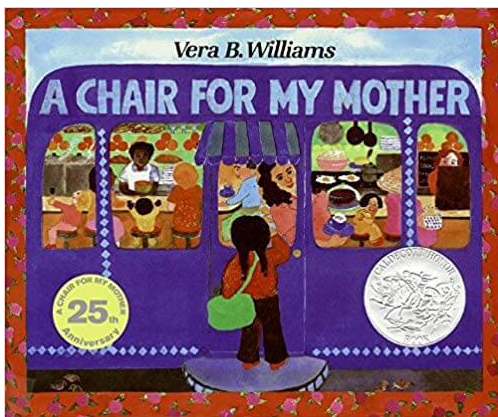


I See You: A Story for Kids About Homelessness and Being Unhoused by Michael Genhart PhD

“Homelessness is a problem that is both very visible and, in many ways, invisible. *I See You* is a wordless picture book that depicts a homeless woman who is not seen by everyone around her — except for a little boy.

Over the course of a year, the boy is witness to all that she endures. Ultimately, in a gesture of compassion, the boy acknowledges her in an exchange in which he sees her and she experiences being seen..”

Grade Level: Preschool – 3
Age: 4 - 8 years

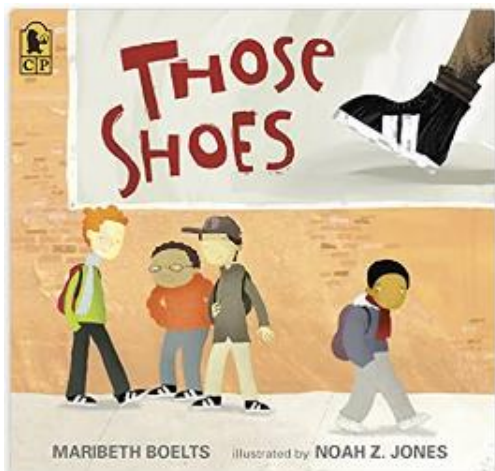


A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams

“There hasn't been a comfortable place to sit in the apartment since a fire in their previous apartment burned everything to "charcoal and ashes." Friends and neighbors brought furniture to their new apartment downstairs, but no one brought anything big or soft or comfortable.

Vera Williams tells of a young girl who, along with her waitress mother, saves coins in a big jar in hopes that they can someday buy a new chair for their apartment, the kind of chair her mother deserves after being on her feet all day in the Blue Tile Diner.”

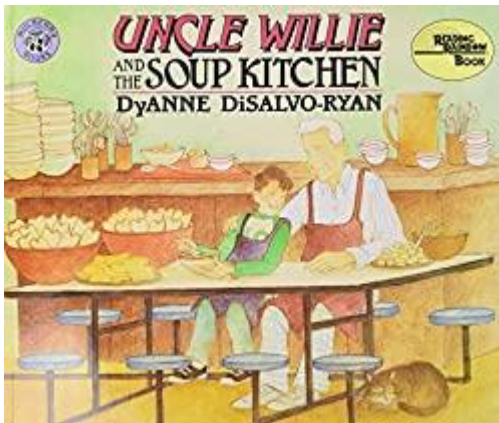
Grade Level: K – 3
Age: 3+ years



Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

“All Jeremy wants is a pair of those shoes, the ones everyone at school seems to be wearing. Though Jeremy’s grandma says they don’t have room for "want," just "need," when his old shoes fall apart at school, he is more determined than ever to have those shoes, even a thrift-shop pair that are much too small. But sore feet aren’t much fun, and Jeremy soon sees that the things he has — warm boots, a loving grandma, and the chance to help a friend — are worth more than the things he wants.”

Grade Level: K – 3
Age: 3 – 8 years

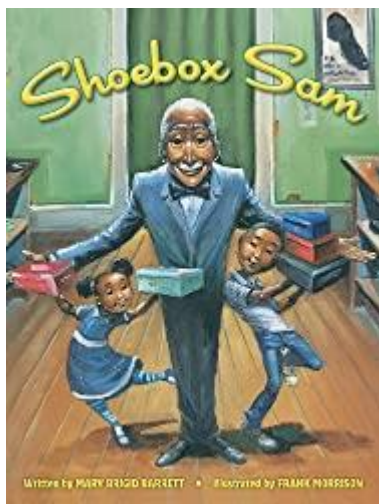


Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

“A gentle and age-appropriate introduction to two key issues of our time—hunger and homelessness—from a kid's point of view. This empathy-building book is good for sharing at home or in a classroom.”

Grade Level: K - 3

Age: 4-8 years

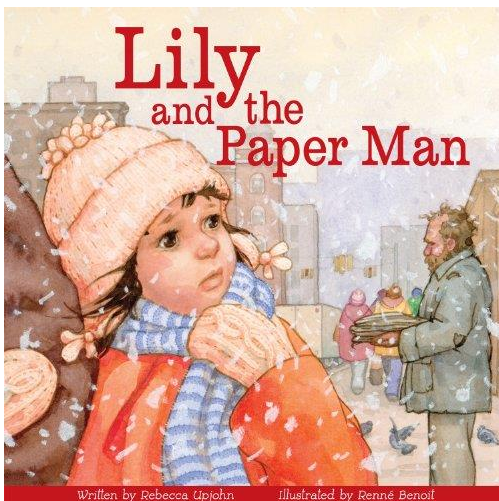


Shoobox Sam by Mary Brigid Barrett, illustrated by Frank Morrison

“Delia and Jessie spend Saturdays with Shoobox Sam, helping him with customers, rich and poor. They learn about giving and caring, loving and sharing. Then one day, when a customer notices a prized pair of shoes, they uncover their greatest lesson of all.”

Grade Level: K - 3

Age: 4-8 years

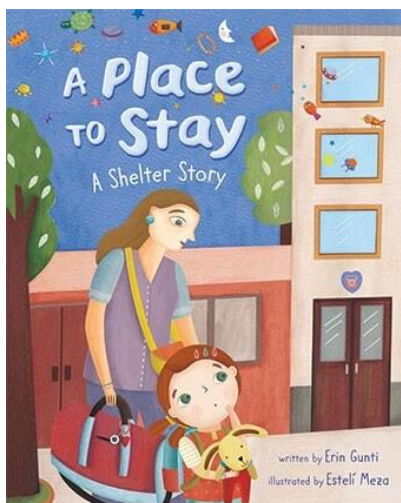


Lily and the Paper Man by Rebecca Upjohn

“Walking home with her mother one day, Lily runs into a gruff and untidy-looking man selling papers on the street. Lily is afraid of the man, but when the weather turns cold, she sees the Paper Man differently.”

Grade Level: K - 3

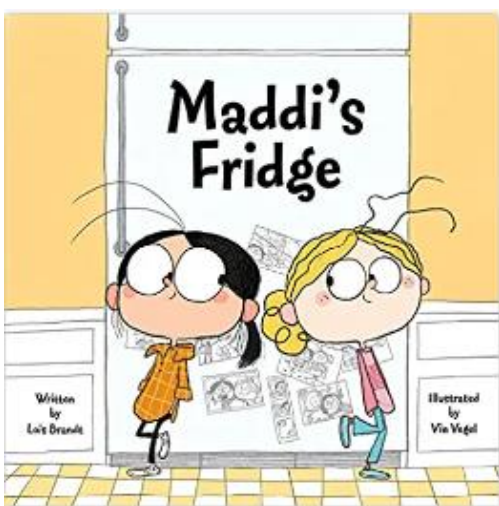
Age: 5 - 8 years



A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story by Erin Gunti and Estelí Meza

“When a little girl and her mother arrive at a women’s shelter, the child is sure she doesn’t want to stay there. Her mother uses the power of imagination to transform the activity room of the shelter into a treasure cave. The squeaky bed becomes a rocket ship that can send her right to the stars. Her mother’s encouragement eventually allows the little girl to let down her guard a bit and get to know one of the other families at the shelter.”

Grade Level: K - 3
Age: 5 - 9 years



Maddi's Fridge by Lois Brandt

“Best friends Sofia and Maddi live in the same neighborhood, go to the same school, and play in the same park, but while Sofia’s fridge at home is full of nutritious food, the fridge at Maddi’s house is empty. Sofia learns that Maddi’s family doesn’t have enough money to fill their fridge and promises Maddi she’ll keep this discovery a secret. But because Sofia wants to help her friend, she’s faced with a difficult decision: to keep her promise or tell her parents about Maddi’s empty fridge. Filled with colorful artwork, this storybook addresses issues of poverty with honesty and sensitivity while instilling important lessons in friendship, empathy, trust, and helping others.”

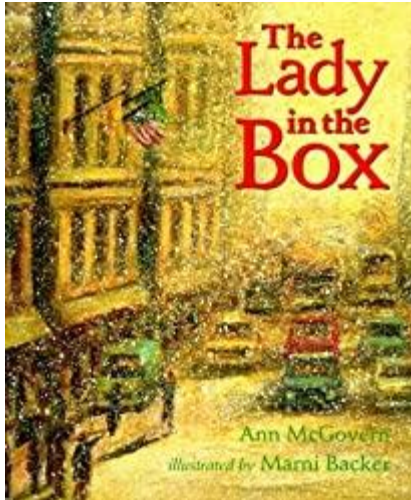
Grade Level: K - 3
Age: 5 - 10 years



The Old Man by Sarah V. and Claude K. Dubois

“This is the story of a person with no job, no family, no home—a nobody, who can't even remember what he was once named. But his day changes when he is noticed by a child.”

Grade Level: K – 5
Age: 5 -11 years

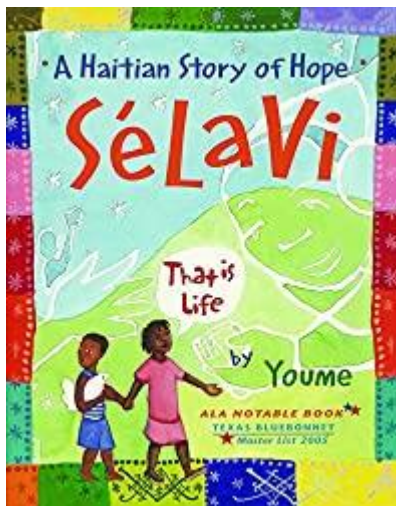


The Lady in the Box by Ann McGovern, illustrated by Marni Backer

“It is wintertime in the city and freezing cold, but not everyone is inside and warm. Ben and his sister Lizzie know that there is a lady who lives outside in a box over a warm air vent. The children worry about the kind-looking lady, and begin sneaking food and clothes out of their apartment for her.”

Grade Level: 1 – 2

Age: 4 – 8 Years

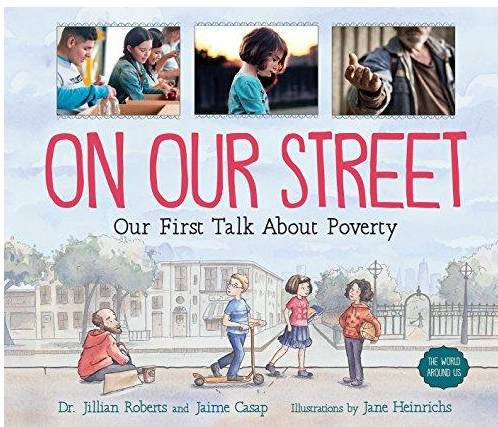


A Haitian Story of Hope: SéLaVi: That is Life by Youme Landowne

“So begins the true story of Selavi, a small boy who finds himself on the streets of Haiti. Selavi finds other street children who share their food and a place to sleep with him. Together they proclaim a message of hope through murals and radio programs.”

Grade Level: 1 – 2

Age: 5 - 7 years

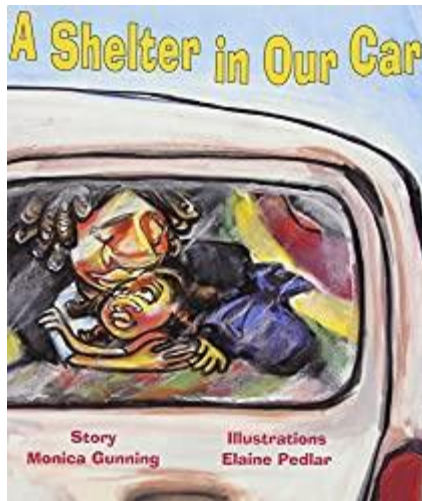


On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty by Dr. Jillian Roberts

“A gentle introduction to the issue of poverty, On Our Street explores the realities of people living with inadequate resources. Using age-appropriate language, this book addresses mental illness, homelessness and refugee status as they are connected to this issue. Insightful quotes from individuals and organizations such as UNICEF are included throughout to add further perspective on the issue. An invaluable section on how kids can help empowers readers to take what they have learned and use it to make a difference.”

Grade Level: 1 – 2

Age: 6 - 8 years

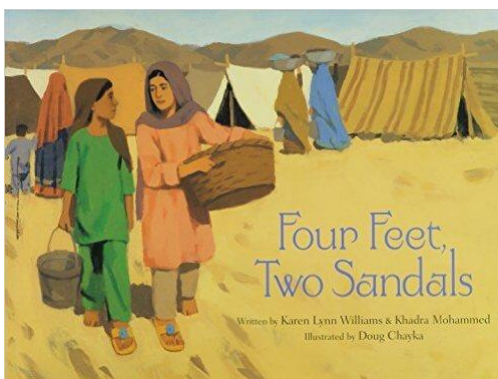


A Shelter in Our Car by Monica Gunning, illustrated by Elaine Pedlar

“A mom and her daughter live out of their car. They lost their apartment when the father died. As immigrants from Jamaica, they don’t have a network of support here in the United States. Her mother insists on education for Zettie, the little girl, even though she gets bullied at school for their beat-up car.”

Grade Level: 1 – 2

Age: 6 - 9 years

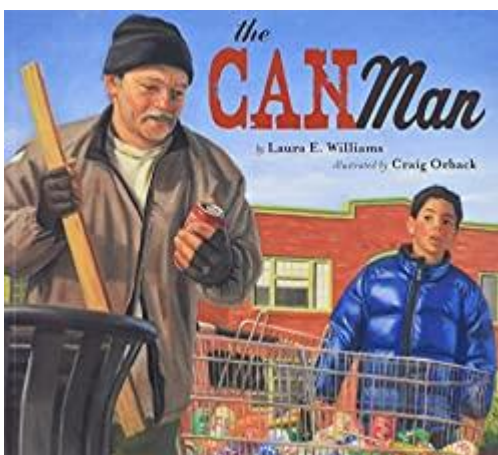


Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynne Williams, Khadra Mohammed, and Doug Chayka

“When relief workers bring used clothing to the refugee camp, everyone scrambles to grab whatever they can. Ten-year-old Lina is thrilled when she finds a sandal that fits her foot perfectly, until she sees that another girl has the matching shoe. But soon Lina and Feroza meet and decide that it is better to share the sandals than for each to wear only one. As the girls go about their routines - washing clothes in the river, waiting in long lines for water, and watching for their names to appear on the list to go to America - the sandals remind them that friendship is what is most important.”

Grade Level: 1 – 2

Age: 6 - 10 years

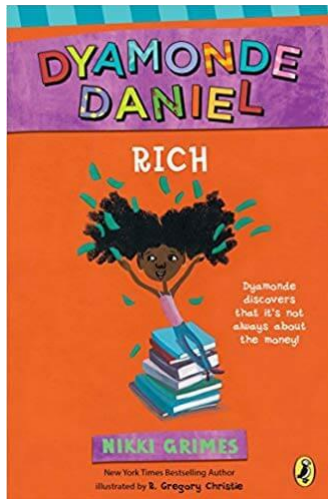


The Can Man by Laura E. Williams, illustrated by Craig Orback

“Told with honesty and respect, this timely story shines a perceptive light on current social concerns. Readers will be encouraged to think beyond themselves and celebrate the simple acts of kindness and sharing that make a difference in people's lives.”

Grade Level: 2 – 3

Age: 6 - 9 years

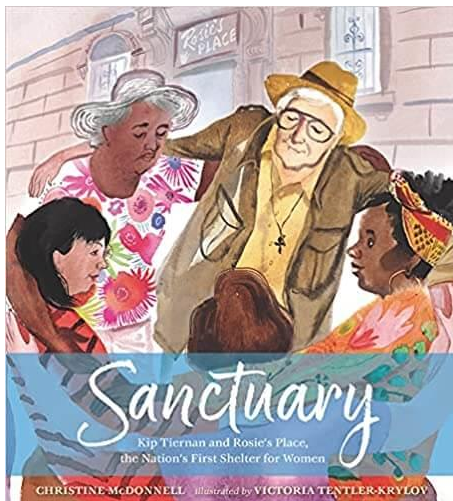


Rich by Nikki Grimes and R. Gregory Christie

“Dyamonde Daniel is excited about the local library’s poetry contest, and so is her friend Free. The prize is one hundred dollars, and just think what they could buy with that much money! But when they find out that Damaris, one of their classmates, has been living in a homeless shelter, their ideas about what it means to be rich or poor start to change.”

Grade Level: 2 – 4

Age: 7 - 9 years

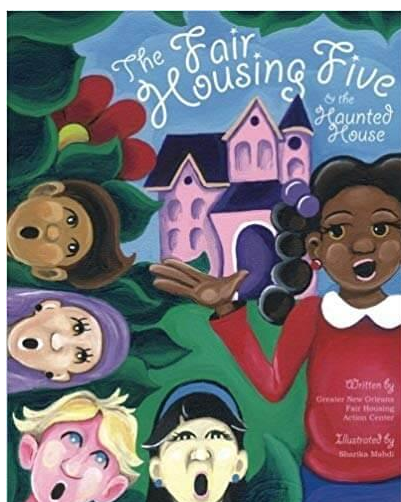


Sanctuary: Kip Tiernan and Rosie’s Place, the Nation’s First Shelter for Women by Christine McDonnell and Victoria Tentler-Krylov

“When Kip Tiernan was growing up during the Great Depression, she’d help her granny feed the men who came to their door asking for help. As Kip grew older, and as she continued to serve food to hungry people, she noticed something peculiar: huddled at the back of serving lines were women dressed as men. At the time, it was believed that there were no women experiencing homelessness. With persistence, Kip took on the city of Boston in her quest to open Rosie's Place, our nation's first shelter for women.”

Grade Level: 2 – 5

Age: 7 – 10 years

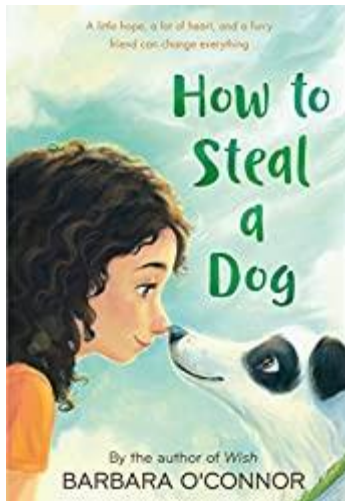


The Fair Housing Five & the Haunted House by Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, illustrated by Sharika Mahdi

“Samaria and her friends like everything about their clubhouse except the haunted house across the street. But when Samaria and her mother need to find a place to live, they realize they are dealing with a much bigger problem than ghosts or monsters. Join the Fair Housing Five as they work together to take creative action against housing discrimination in their community.”

Grade Level: 3 – 4

Age: 8 - 12 years

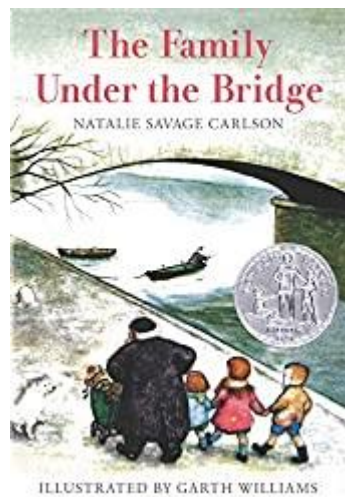


How To Steal A Dog: A Novel by Barbara O'Connor

Georgina is homeless and living with her mother and brother out of their car after her father leaves them. She cooks up an elaborate scheme to kidnap a dog to then return it for a reward. She kidnaps a dog named Willy but things don't work out the way she thinks they will.

Grade Level: 3 – 6

Age: 8 – 11 years

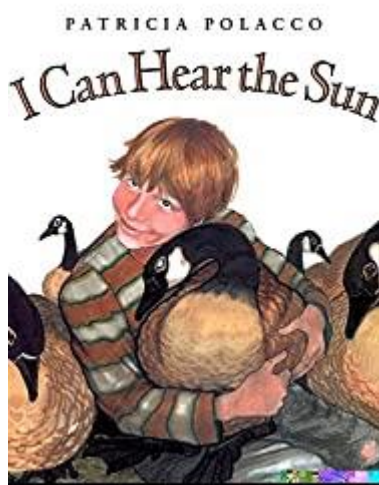


The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie Savage Carlson

“Armand, an old man living on the streets of Paris, relishes his solitary life in the beautiful city. He is happy with his carefree existence, begging and doing odd jobs to keep himself warm and fed. Then one day just before Christmas, Armand returns to his favorite spot beneath the bridge to find three cold and hungry children. Although he has no interest in children, Armand soon finds himself caring for the small family.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 7 – 11 years

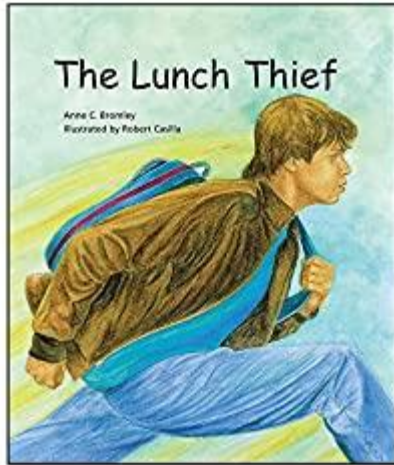


I Can Hear the Sun: A Modern Myth by Patricia Polacco

“Lake Merritt in Oakland, California is home to animals at the reserve and to the homeless. Stephanie Michele, a keeper of the animals, takes care of everyone, including a small boy named Fondo. Together they take care of the geese”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 11 years



The Lunch Thief by Anne C. Bromley, illustrated by Robert Casilla

“There’s a lunch thief in Rafael’s class and he knows who it is. The new kid, Kevin, with scraggly hair has taken a lunch each day. Rafael decides to take mama’s advice of using his mouth before his fists. He learns that Kevin is from Jacinto Valley where half the houses were burned down.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 11 years



Just Under the Clouds by Melissa Sarno

“When their room at the homeless shelter is ransacked, the family moves in with her mother’s old friend and Cora discovers “the tree of heaven”, a tree that can grow in even the worst conditions. It sets her on a quest to understand the true meaning of home.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 12 years



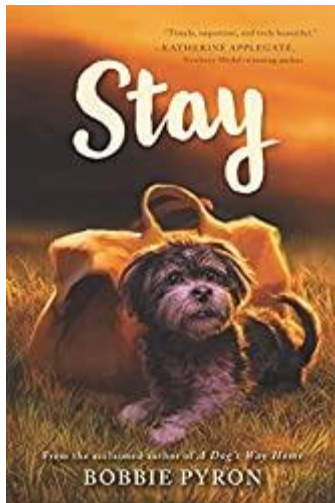
Hold Fast by Blue Balliett

“Early, her brother and mother have to flee their apartment and live in a homeless shelter when their father mysteriously disappears. They are all caught in a web of violence surrounding an international diamond smuggling ring related to their father’s library job.

It’s up to Early and her family to figure out what happened, and how to help their dad.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 12 years



Stay by Bobbie Pyron

“Piper’s life is turned upside down when her family moves into a shelter in a whole new city. She misses her house, her friends, and her privacy - and she hates being labeled the homeless girl at her new school.

But while Hope House offers her new challenges, it also brings new friendships, like the girls in Firefly Girls Troop 423 and a sweet street dog named Baby. So when Baby’s person goes missing, Piper knows she has to help.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 12 years



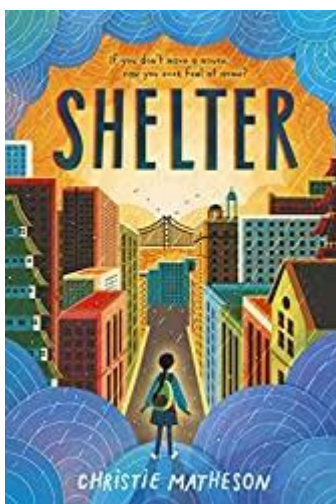
Carry Me Home by Janet Fox

“Twelve-year-old Lulu and her younger sister, Serena, have a secret. As Daddy always says, “it’s best if we keep it to ourselves,” and so they have. But hiding your past is one thing. Hiding where you live—and that your Daddy has gone missing—is harder. At first Lulu isn’t worried. Daddy has gone away once before and he came back. But as the days add up, with no sign of Daddy, Lulu struggles to take care of the responsibilities they used to manage as a family.

But family is all around us, and Lulu must learn to trust her new friends and community to save those she loves and to finally find her true home.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 12 years

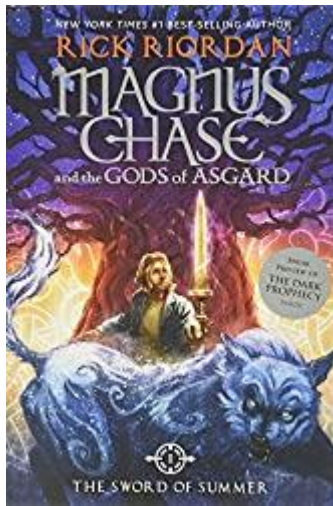


Shelter by Christie Matheson

“Fifth grade can be tough for anyone. There are cliques and mean kids and homework and surprise math tests. But after tragedy strikes her family, almost-eleven-year-old Maya has a painful secret that makes many days feel nearly impossible. And today might be Maya’s toughest yet. Her family is on edge, she needs to travel alone across the city, a bully is out to get her, and Maya has to face this winter’s biggest rainstorm without a coat or an umbrella. But even on the rainiest days, there’s hope that the sun will come out soon.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7

Age: 8 - 12 years

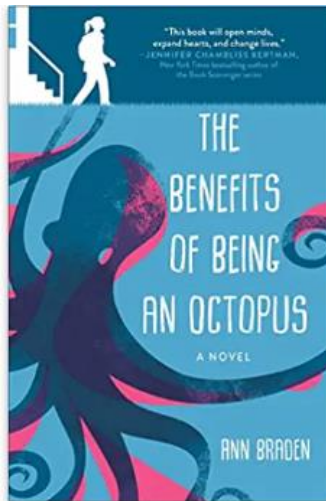


Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard: The Sword of Summer by Rick Riordan

“Magnus has been living on the streets of Boston for two years ever since his mother died in a suspicious fire. Evading police officers and truant officers has become his life. Most people don’t notice Magnus lying in a filthy sleeping bag in the middle of winter.

Magnus’ adolescent homelessness doesn’t last long in this chapter book series, but it does shine light upon the plight of the homeless.”

Grade Level: 3 - 7
Age: 10+ years

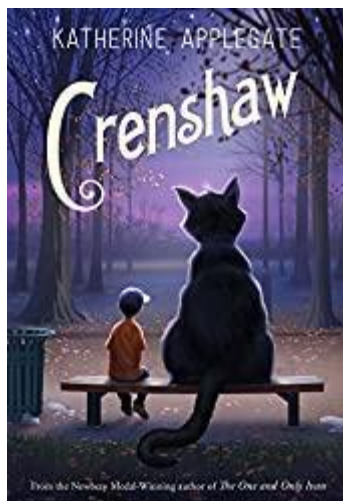


The Benefits of Being an Octopus: A Novel by Ann Braden

“Seventh-grader Zoey has her hands full as she takes care of her much younger siblings after school every day while her mom works her shift at the pizza parlor. Not that her mom seems to appreciate it. At least there's Lenny, her mom's boyfriend—they all get to live in his nice, clean trailer.

Zoey thinks how much easier everything would be if she were an octopus: eight arms to do eight things at once. Incredible camouflage ability and steady, unblinking vision. Powerful protective defenses. Unfortunately, she's not totally invisible.”

Grade Level: 3 – 7
Age: 10+ years



Crenshaw by Katherine Applegate

“It’s a slow sink into homelessness, but a hard scramble back up. Applegate’s chapter book captures the stresses it puts on a family, especially on the children. Going-into-fifth-grade Jackson’s coping mechanism is an imaginary talking cat that pops up when he’s homeless.”

Grade Level: 4 – 6
Age: 8 – 10 years



Paper Things by Jennifer Richard Jacobson

“When forced to choose between staying with her guardian and being with her big brother, Ari chose her big brother. There’s just one problem — Gage didn’t actually have a place to live. How can Ari keep up with school, her best friend, and middle-school applications when she’s “couch surfing” — a night here with Gage’s friend in a tiny apartment, a night there with Gage’s girlfriend and her two roommates — and even, when necessary, sneaking into a juvenile shelter?”

Grade Level: 5 - 6

Age: 10+ years



No Fixed Address by Susin Nielsen

“Twelve-and-three-quarter-year-old Felix Knutsson has a knack for trivia. His favorite game show is Who What Where When; he even named his gerbil after the host. Felix's mom, Astrid, is loving but can't seem to hold on to a job. So when they get evicted from their latest shabby apartment, they have to move into a van. Astrid swears him to secrecy; he can't tell anyone about their living arrangement, not even Dylan and Winnie, his best friends at his new school. If he does, she warns him, he'll be taken away from her and put in foster care.”

Grade Level: 5 – 6

Age: 10 - 12 years

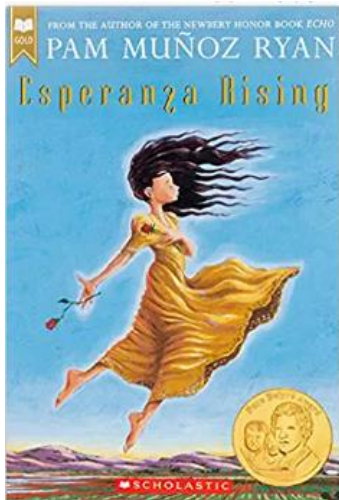


Parked by Danielle Svetcov

“Jeanne Ann is smart, stubborn, living in an orange van, and determined to find a permanent address before the start of seventh grade. Cal is awkward, sensitive, living in a humongous house across the street, and determined to save her. Jeanne Ann wants Cal's help just about as much as she wants to live in a van. As the two form a tentative friendship that grows deeper over alternating chapters, they're buoyed by a cast of complex, oddball characters, who let them down, lift them up, and leave you cheering.”

Grade Level: 5 – 9

Age: 10 - 14 years

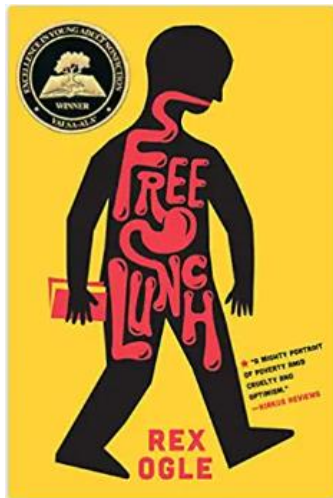


Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

“Esperanza thought she'd always live a privileged life on her family's ranch in Mexico. She'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home filled with servants, and Mama, Papa, and Abuelita to care for her. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California and settle in a Mexican farm labor camp. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard work, financial struggles brought on by the Great Depression, or lack of acceptance she now faces.”

Grade Level: 6 – 7

Age: 9 – 12 years



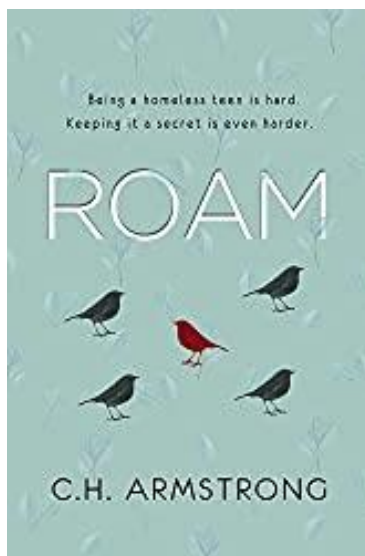
Free Lunch by Rex Ogle

“*Free Lunch* is the story of Rex's efforts to navigate his first semester of sixth grade—who to sit with, not being able to join the football team, Halloween in a handmade costume, classmates and a teacher who take one look at him and decide he's trouble—all while wearing secondhand clothes and being hungry. His mom and her boyfriend are out of work, and life at home is punctuated by outbursts of violence.

Unsparring and realistic, *Free Lunch* is a story of hardship threaded with hope and moments of grace... that illuminates the lived experience of poverty in America..”

Grade Level: 6 – 9

Age: 9+ years



Roam by C. H. Armstrong

“Seventeen-year-old Abby Lunde and her family are living on the streets. They had a normal life back in Omaha but, thanks to her mother's awful mistake, they had to leave behind what little they had for a new start in Rochester. Abby tries to be an average teenager - fitting in at school, dreaming of a boyfriend, college and a career in music. But Minnesota winters are unforgiving, and so are many teenagers. Abby is doing everything she can to keep her shameful secret from her new friends. The divide between rich and poor in high school is painfully obvious, and the stress of never knowing where they're sleeping or where they'll find their next meal is taking its toll on the whole family.”

Grade Level: 6 – 9

Age: 12+ years