
In 1969 Mim’s family moves to Vermont, where Mimi's mixed-race background and interests in science make it difficult to fit in with her peers.

Most girls in 1969 leave math, science, and shop class to the boys. Mimi is a girl who wants to learn about carpentry in shop class and enter the science competitions sponsored by her school. Most families in Mimi’s new hometown are caucasian. Mimi’s father is black and her mother is Japanese. Mimi dreams of becoming an astronaut. She envisions herself flying to the moon like the men aboard Apollo 11, but everyone tells her this is an impossible dream. After experiencing many hardships, Mimi learns one person speaking up can make a difference. This novel told in verse is historical yet timely.

**Read Alikes:**
Inside Out and Back Again by: Thanhha Lai
Brown Girl Dreaming by: Jacqueline Woodson
One Crazy Summer by: Rita Williams-Garcia

**Other Books by the Author:**
Found Things

**Author Website**
http://www.marilynhilton.com/books.html

**Reviews**

*School Library Journal*
Gr 4-8—Mimi tells her story in this novel in verse that will resonate with fans of Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Penguin, 2014). The seventh grader describes arriving in small-town Vermont from Berkeley in 1969. While filling out a form, the teen is perplexed by which ethnicity to check off: her father is a black college professor, and her mother is Japanese (they married when he was a soldier stationed overseas). In 1969, mixed race is not an option on the form, nor is Oriental the same as Japanese. Mimi is fascinated by space and the moon landing. She designs a science project for school that requires the use of power tools—all this during a time when girls were not expected to be interested in science and were required to take home economics rather than shop. When Mimi bucks convention, there are repercussions and punishments. She weathers these with support from a smart girlfriend as well as a loyal and tender boy next door. Mimi’s parents are engaged in and support the budding scientist’s projects.
This novel stands out with its thoughtful portrayal of race and its embrace of girls in science and technical fields. The verse, though sparse, is powerful and evocative, perfectly capturing Mimi’s emotional journey.

**Booklist**
Gr 4-8—Mimi tells her story in this novel in verse that will resonate with fans of Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Penguin, 2014). The seventh grader describes arriving in small-town Vermont from Berkeley in 1969. While filling out a form, the teen is perplexed by which ethnicity to check off: her father is a black college professor, and her mother is Japanese (they married when he was a soldier stationed overseas). In 1969, mixed race is not an option on the form, nor is Oriental the same as Japanese. Mimi is fascinated by space and the moon landing. She designs a science project for school that requires the use of power tools—all this during a time when girls were not expected to be interested in science and were required to take home economics rather than shop. When Mimi bucks convention, there are repercussions and punishments. She weathers these with support from a smart girlfriend as well as a loyal and tender boy next door. Mimi’s parents are engaged in and support the budding scientist’s projects. This novel stands out with its thoughtful portrayal of race and its embrace of girls in science and technical fields. The verse, though sparse, is powerful and evocative, perfectly capturing Mimi’s emotional journey.


“Who are you? What are you? Why are you here on this earth? Where are you going?”

John McLendon asked his players on the North Carolina College of Negroes basketball team these questions. Coach McLendon believed the sport of basketball could help break down the color barrier that existed in America in 1944. He snuck his players to Duke University where the Eagles played a secret game against the all-white team from Duke University Medical School. At first, the teams played carefully to avoid touching each other. Eventually, the sport took over and when the buzzer rang, the Eagles won by an overwhelming score of 88-44. The players continued to play that day, and as relationships formed, prejudices reduced. The teams agreed to keep their game a secret to protect themselves and their coaches. Years before Jackie Robinson, the integration of the NBA, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Act, a secret game of basketball and a courageous coach changed the hearts of several young men.

**Read Alikes:**
We are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball by Kadir Nelson
Richard Wright and the Library Card by William Miller
Let Them Play by Margot Theis Raven

**Other Books by the Author**
Hoop Genius: How a Desperate Teacher and a Rowdy Gym Class Invented Basketball Around the World
Strong to the Hoop

Author Website
http://www.johncoy.com/index.html

Reviews

School Library Journal
Gr 1–4—With eloquence and grace, this picture book tells the story of how one spring Sunday afternoon in 1944, two basketball teams came together to change the history of the game. The Duke University Medical School basketball team met secretly in a small gym to play against the North Carolina College of Negroes in the first ever integrated basketball game. Though rules kept black and white teams from playing each other, John McLendon, coach of the North Carolina College of Negroes, "believed basketball could change people's prejudices." At first both teams were uncertain, but they soon got into the spirit of things. For their second game, they mixed up the teams so that white and black athletes could play as teammates. Coy doesn't sugarcoat the tension of the period but still makes the story accessible. DuBurke's soft but powerful watercolor illustrations effectively emphasize the importance of inclusivity and overcoming differences. This interesting but little-known story is an important one. VERDICT A strong work with themes of sports, history, and social consciousness.— Ellen Norton, Naperville Public Library, Naperville, IL

Kirkus

A picture-book account of a historic, secret basketball matchup in the Jim Crow South. Amid widespread segregation and rampant racism in 1944 Durham, North Carolina, black players and white players came together to play ball. The legendary African-American coach John McLendon, who learned the game from its founder, James Naismith, is depicted in this true story as a man with foresight and the courage to step beyond the bounds of the color line for friendly competition. An undercover, illegitimate contest he helped to arrange between the Duke University Medical School and the North Carolina College of Negroes demonstrated that blacks and whites could play together some 22 years before Texas Western would win the national championship with an all-black starting five. DuBurke’s arresting illustrations play up the basketball action and the emerging camaraderie that conjured the possibility of defeating Jim Crow. In its focus on the so-called Secret Game, however, and its tailpiece that assures readers that “today, people don’t think twice about players of different skin colors competing with one another,” the story is a bit kumbayah. Yes, the NCAA and NBA are integrated, but the Donald Sterlings of the world show there is still work to be done.

Though necessarily brief and lacking in nuance, the story is nevertheless a charming read for young basketball fans. (author’s note, timeline, bibliography) (Informational picture book. 7-11)
Booklist

This book offers a slice of history and an inspiring portrait in courage by detailing one basketball game that white and African American teams dared play in defiance of segregation. The game took place in 1944 Durham, North Carolina, a time when the Ku Klux Klan deemed that “race mixing” was punishable by death. Coach John McLendon of the North Carolina College of Negroes “believed basketball could change people’s prejudices” and invited players from the Duke University Medical School, an all-white team, to play a “secret game” in his college’s gym. The game shows how the white players were blown away by the new, fast-break style of McLendon’s players, losing 44 to 88. The players then mixed it up in a “shirts and skins” game, with whites and African Americans on both teams. In lively detail, Coy describes the game that advanced race relations in sports, reminding readers that this took place three years before Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball. DuBurke’s use of cyan and sepia tones within his photolike illustrations perfectly conveys the look of the 1940s and the energy of the game itself. Information on Coach McLendon and a time line of integration in sports concludes this exciting account of a landmark game played ahead of its time.—Connie Fletcher


After evacuating World War II London with her younger brother, Jamie, Ada challenges the belief she will only ever be a cripple and creates a new life for herself. But, will her mother ruin the new life Ada has worked so hard to create?

Imagine you are 10 years old. You have never left your house or learned how to read and write or even walk! This is Ada’s world. She’s been stuck inside her apartment her whole life because her mother doesn’t want anyone to know Ada has a twisted foot. Ada secretly teaches herself to walk and sneaks out with her younger brother Jamie when he’s evacuated from World War II London. Ada and Jamie are placed with Miss Susan Smith, an unlikely guardian who has troubles of her own. Susan, Ada, and Jamie form a makeshift family. Ada begins to develop some independence- learning to read, riding a horse, keeping an eye out for German spies lurking in the English countryside. Just as Ada is discovering herself, will her new found world fall apart?

Read Alikes
Penny from Heaven by Jennifer L. Holm
Lily’s Crossing by Patricia Reilly Giff
Lizzie and the Lost Baby by Cheryl Blackford
Across a War Tossed Sea by Laura Elliott

Other books by the author:
The President's Daughter
The Lacemaker and the Princess
Jefferson’s Sons
When word starts to spread about Germans bombing London, Ada’s mother decides to send her little brother, Jamie, to the country. Not 11-year-old Ada, though—she was born with a crippling clubfoot, and her cruel mother treats her like a slave. But Ada has painfully taught herself to walk, so when Jaime departs for the train, she limps along with him. In Kent, they’re assigned to crotchety Susan, who lives alone and suffers from bouts of depression. But the three warm to each other: Susan takes care of them in a loving (if a bit prickly) way, and Ada finds a sense of purpose and freedom of movement, thanks to Susan’s pony, Butter. Ada finally feels worthy of love and respect, but when looming bombing campaigns threaten to take them away from Susan, her strength and resolve are tested. The home-front realities of WWII, as well as Ada’s realistic anger and fear, come to life in Bradley’s affecting and austerely told story, and readers will cheer for steadfast Ada as she triumphs over despair.

Kirkus
Crippled by an untreated club foot and imprisoned at home by Mam, Ada has survived, but she hasn’t thrived. Only caring for her brother, Jamie, has made life tolerable. As he grows, goes out and tells Ada about the world, her determination to enter it surges. She secretly begins learning to walk and joins Jamie when Mam sends him to the country. Ada narrates, recalling events and dialogue in vivid detail. The siblings are housed with Susan, a reluctant guardian grieving the death of her friend Becky. Yet Susan’s care is life-changing. Ada’s voice is brisk and honest; her dawning realizations are made all the more poignant for their simplicity. With Susan’s help and the therapeutic freedom she feels on horseback, Ada begins to work through a minefield of memories but still harbors hope that Mam will accept her. In interesting counterpoint, Susan also knows what it is like to be rejected by her parents. With the reappearance of Mam, things come to an explosive head, metaphorically and literally. Ignorance and abuse are brought to light, as are the healing powers of care, respect and love. Set against a backdrop of war and sacrifice, Ada’s personal fight for freedom and ultimate triumph are cause for celebration. (Historical fiction. 8-12)


Ten year old, Jackson’s imaginary friend, Crenshaw, a large black and white cat, appears again after several years when Jackson’s family faces hard times and the possibility of living in their van. Crenshaw provides Jackson with comfort and support as he tries to save his family from adversity.
Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again.

Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything?

Read Alikes:
*Almost Home* By: Joan Bauer
*Flora & Ulysses* By: Kate DiCamillo
*Dory and the Real True Friend* By: Abby Hanlon

Other Books by the Author:
The One and Only Ivan
Home of the Brave

Author Website:
http://www.katherineapplegate.com

Reviews:
Booklist
Soon-to-be fifth-grader Jackson goes for facts and science—things that are real and true—and having a giant, talking cat around doesn't fit the bill. It has been years since his imaginary feline friend Crenshaw was on the scene, and Jackson can't figure out why he is back or how to make him go away. It soon becomes apparent that all is not well in Jackson's home. Though he has a loving family, money is tight. Jackson can't help remembering back to when they had to live in a minivan—that was when he first met Crenshaw—and he fears that might happen once again.

Newbery winner Applegate (*The One and Only Ivan*, 2012) uses gentle humor, embodied by Crenshaw, to explore the topic of homelessness. Jackson’s anxiety is central to the narrative, and his concerns will resonate with readers who have been in stressful situations. Though the story is weighty, it is a quick read that encourages people of all ages to be honest with one another and value family and friends (real and imaginary!).

School Library Journal

In her first novel since the Newbery-winning *The One and Only Ivan* (HarperCollins, 2012), Applegate tells the story of a 10-year-old boy whose imaginary friend helps him cope with a family crisis. Jackson, his parents, and his five-year-old sister once again are staring down the barrel of an impending eviction notice. What frustrates Jackson isn’t just the lack of money: it’s his artistically minded parents’ tendency to gloss over their woes with humor and cheer rather than acknowledging the reality of their situation. It’s understandably a shock to Jackson when an old friend reappears: Crenshaw, a seven-foot-tall talking cat, who first came into his life
several years ago when the boy and his family were living out of their car shortly after his father was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Skeptical Jackson tries to dismiss Crenshaw as a figment of his imagination, but the cat’s words of wisdom start to resonate with him. Employing sparse but elegant prose, Applegate has crafted an authentic protagonist whose self-possession and maturity conceal relatable vulnerability and fears. While sardonic Crenshaw may not be the warm and cuddly imaginary friend readers are expecting, he’s the companion that Jackson truly needs as he begins to realize that he doesn’t need to carry the weight of the world upon his shoulders. Though the ending wraps up a shade too neatly, overall, children will appreciate this heartbreaking novel. VERDICT A compelling and unflinchingly honest treatment of a difficult topic.


When twelve year old Sophie and her parents move from Los Angeles to a small farm once owned by her great uncle, she soon discovers that the chickens left on the farm have unusual talents to disappear, lay glass eggs, and even move objects with their minds. When a local farmer tries to steal the chickens, Sophie becomes determined to learn all she can about the chickens so she can protect them.

Read Alikes:
Hamster Princess: Harriet the Invincible by Ursula Vernon
The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher by Dana Alison Lewy
The Chicken Squad by Doreen Cronin

Other Books by the Author:
Murder, Magic, and What We Wore

Author’s Website:
http://curiosityjones.net/

Reviews:
*School Library Journal*
Gr 4–6—Sophie Brown is new to farm life, new to being one of the only “brown people” in town (the others being her mother and Gregory, the mailman), and definitely new to caring for chickens—and these are some challenging chickens. To help herself adjust to life away from Los Angeles and her extended family, she writes letters to her great-uncle Jim and her beloved Abuelita, both recently deceased, and embarks on a correspondence course in poultry care with the mysterious Agnes of Redwood Farm Supply. Agnes’s poorly typed responses assure Sophie that the chickens that keep turning up on the farm (including Henrietta, a small white hen with a permanent unibrow of fury) belonged to her great-uncle, from whom Sophie’s father inherited the farm and who implores her to keep the chickens safe—and to be careful. But how will she protect chickens that are capable of levitating their own coop, becoming invisible, and turning enemies to stone? And why does the town’s resident chicken expert, Ms. Griegson, seem intent on stealing Sophie’s brood? Told in letters, quizzes, newspaper clippings, and delicious ink drawings reminiscent of Quentin Blake, this middle grade epistolary novel has a little magic and a lot of warm family humor. Jones delivers a dynamic Latina protagonist in Sophie, who describes her
experiences in satisfying detail: the discomfort of facing microaggressions based on her heritage (such as when the town librarian assumes that she and her family are migrant workers); love and concern for her parents, both struggling to find and keep work; and willingness to learn and grow despite typical tween self-consciousness. VERDICT Readers will cheer for Sophie and clamor for more of those amazing chickens. Exceptional, indeed.—Amy Martin, Oakland Public Library, CA


Oliver is a cat who loves his independent life. When he discovers a little girl and her family living in his favorite empty house, Oliver decides that having someone to give him treats might be nice. But when he becomes attached to the family he must choose to stay with his new “pet” or return to the streets.

Read Alikes:
The Big Move by Lindsey Leavitt
Horrible Harry and the Goog by Suzy Kline
The Cats on Ben Yuhada Street by Ann Stampler

Other Books by the Author:
I See Kitty

Author Website
http://www.catversushuman.com

Reviews:

Booklist
Grades 2-4 Picture-book author Surovec brings her cat-fueled stories to the middle-grade set in this illustrated chapter book. The narrator, a sneaky tuxedo cat, is proud of being a loner. He can go wherever he wants and no humans will squash (that is, hug) him too hard. But when a girl and her mom move into the old, abandoned house he frequents, and the girl starts giving him tasty tuna and olives, he finds himself attached to his new pet. Soon he sets out to train her and her mother, and when his pet human starts looking lonely, he recruits the help of his friend George, a rat in a plastic ball, to find a friend for her. But will his pet’s new friend replace him? Surovec’s bubbly black-and-white cartoon illustrations, composed of only minimal thick lines and flat patches of black, are an excellent companion to the lighthearted text and perfectly capture aloof-cat behavior. Cat-loving kids, particularly emerging readers, will get a kick out of the feline narrator, as well as the heartening story of friendship. -- Hunter, Sarah (Reviewed 07-01-2015) (Booklist, vol 111, number 21, p74)

School Library Journal
Gr 2 – 4 — Sweet stray cat Oliver enjoys his nomadic life about town. He has a few rules for keeping his existence carefree and happy, which include knowing where to get free food, having a good hiding spot, and keeping a few close friends. Oliver is an endearing protagonist, having learned that he can visit the Twirling Fork restaurant and give his doe-eyed “look” to anyone at the back door in order to receive a plate of free spaghetti. He enjoys visiting friends with forever homes, including Ben, a fluffy dog in a family full of kids; Farrah, a prissy kitty with a penchant for the best treats life has to offer; and George, an indeterminate gerbil or mouselike creature who is perpetually sealed in a rolling ball. Oliver is content to stay on his own in an abandoned home—especially when he needs a hiding place from the animal control truck that periodically patrols the neighborhood. When a little human and her mother move into the abandoned house, Oliver thinks he can use his “look” to score some free food without getting emotionally attached, but he is surprised when he finds himself caring for the girl. Though Oliver remains nameless
for the entirety of the book, his new human friend dubs him Oliver after he develops a taste for olives. Surovec's cheerful illustrations pepper every page with hilariously endearing portraits of Oliver and the animals in his life, along with the humans in his world. Fans of James Kochalka's "Dragon Puncher" (Top Shelf) books will find My Pet Human similarly entertaining and slightly more challenging, and readers of Tom Watson's "Stick Dog" (HarperCollins) will find a great read-alike. VERDICT A sweet story for animal lovers and emergent readers, too.—Amy M. Laughlin, Darien Library, CT --Amy M. Laughlin (Reviewed August 1, 2015) (School Library Journal, vol 61, issue 8, p81)


Explore the stylistic rhymes of collective nouns, where a shiver of sharks tries to stay warm and a sleuth of bears investigates the latest crime.

**Read Alikes**
*A Tower of Giraffes: Animals in Groups* by Anna Wright
*A Zeal of Zebras: An Alphabet of Collective Nouns* by Woop Studios

**Other Books by the Author**
*My House Is Singing*
*Which Shoes Would You Choose?*
*Looking For Me...in this great big family*

**Author Website:**
http://www.betsyrosenthal.com/

**Reviews:**

*Booklist*

Collective nouns for animals range from the humdrum and vaguely familiar (“a pack of wolves” and “a string of ponies”) to the colorful, off-the-wall, and hard to believe someone’s not just making these things up (“a bouquet of pheasants,” “a mischief of rats,” and “an intrusion of roaches”). In this inventive picture book, 33 animal-themed collective nouns become springboards for the writer’s imagination and the illustrator’s creativity. Each double-page spread carries one or two rhyming verses posing questions related to certain collective nouns, such as, “When a murder of crows / leaves barely a trace, / is a sleuth of bears / hot on the case?” Rosenthal's logical pairings and absurd hypothetical situations are well matched by the dynamic digital illustrations. Jago uses structure, color, and repeated forms well, creating pictures that reward close attention with amusing details. An appended glossary brings all the collective nouns together, defines them, and asks kids to guess why each is well suited to the corresponding animal. A lively picture book with plenty of classroom potential.
Homonyms are used as mnemonic devices to help readers remember “A Wild Gathering of Collective Nouns.”

Cleverness abounds in Rosenthal’s latest, from the title to the backmatter, which presents a glossary—“ambush (tigers): an attack from a hiding place”—asking children to guess why the words are appropriate for each animal group. The tongue-in-cheek text never falters in its rhythm and rhyme. “Does a prickle of porcupines / feel any pain? / Can a flush of mallards / get sucked down the drain?” The illustrations are a perfect match for the text’s wit. Three heavily bandaged porcupines lie in hospital beds, a sink between two of them. The convoluted pipes under the sink twist and turn across the gutter to discharge both water and mallards in an underground tunnel. A sleuth of bears, complete with magnifying glasses and fedoras, investigate a murder of crows. Three kangaroos belong to a troop, collecting dues and selling cookies while wearing sashes sewn with patches. Other highlights from the 33 featured animals include a shiver of sharks sporting scarves, a bouquet of pheasants arranged in a vase, a dancing rhumba of rattlesnakes and a lounge of lizards in the sun by the pool. Jago’s illustrations walk the line between cartoon and realistic, his animals only anthropomorphized if the text suggests it. All are painted on canvas, which supplies a pleasing texture.

Collective nouns have never been this much fun…or memorable. (Informational picture book. 5-9)

Funny Bones Kim

Tate, Don. Poet: The Remarkable Story of George Moses Horton. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2015. (Grades 2-5)

When he was a young slave, George Moses Horton taught himself to read and then turned his mind to poetry. Despite being enslaved, he finds time to learn to write and eventually publishes his own books.

Read Alikes:
Lillian’s Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by Jonah Winter
Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life by Ashley Bryan

Other Books by this Author:
Strong As Sandow: How Eugen Sandow Became The Strongest Man on Earth
It Jes’ Happened: When Bill Traylor Started To Draw
Tate paints a portrait of a North Carolina man who pursued his passion for language through long years of enslavement.

Nothing about the life of a slave could truly be deemed “lucky,” but George Horton was fortunate to live where he did. When he was growing up, literacy was not yet against the law for slaves. Fascinated by the power of words, Horton taught himself to read and began composing verses. His owner eventually allowed him to live in nearby Chapel Hill and work as a writer. His earnings were not his own, and he deeply felt the pain of his circumstances, but writing poems and living among educated people was better than the back-breaking labor most slaves performed.

Straightforward, accessible text covers the basic facts and evokes, albeit in an understated way, the hardships Horton faced. Created in mixed media, including gouache, pencil, ink, and digital, luminous illustrations provide context and convey emotion. Double-page spreads, insets, and vignettes show George as he ages and moves from the rural life of his childhood to town and, for a brief period, out West.

While the author justifiably bemoans the disproportionate number of titles about African-Americans that focus on slavery, his decision to illuminate this remarkable man’s life offers a new perspective with remarkable clarity. (bibliography, author’s note, acknowledgements) 

(Picture book/biography. 5-8)

School Library Journal

Gr 2-5–This picture book biography of poet George Moses Horton (1798–1884), a slave and the first African American poet to be published in the South, recounts his fascinating long life and masterly way with words. Tate’s distinctive illustrations feature gently curving horizons, bucolic washes of color, and figures with oversize heads and stylized, expressive faces. The illustrations and the accessible, lyrical text spare readers from the full force of slavery’s brutality: enslaved people are shown as ragged but resilient, Horton’s forced labor in the fields is genteelly called “disagreeable,” and the scene of a slave revolt is bloodless. Tate integrates historical context into the narrative, for instance, describing how prominent abolitionists tried to help Horton buy his freedom or how his business writing love poems for hire folded because his customers enlisted in the Confederate army. Nevertheless, the focus remains on Horton and his emotional journey: triumph at his first publication; heartbreak when he was sold from his family; joy and contentment in his old age when he was, at last, free. Several of Horton’s verses appear throughout the book, and back matter includes an extensive author’s note and source list.

When Tamaya and Matthew take a shortcut on the way home from school to escape a bully, they discover a super secret biofuel testing site by accident. When Tamaya attempts to thwart the bully who follows and picks up some strange-looking mud and throws it at his face, she unleashes a terrifying set of events that affect not only her, but the entire town.

**Readalikes:**
*Benjamin Franklinstein Lives* by Lary Tuxbury
*The Tomorrow Code* by Brian Falkner
*Vampire Island* by Adele Griffin

**Other Books by Louis Sachar**
*Holes*
*Sideways Stories From Wayside School*
*There’s a Boy in the Girls Bathroom*
And more…

**Author Website:**
[www.louissachar.com](http://www.louissachar.com)

**Reviews:**

From School Library Journal

Gr 3–5—Newbery Award-winning author Sachar takes on science and the government in this engaging eco-cautionary tale. Middle schoolers Tamaya, Marshall, and Chad meet in the woods near their school, but it's not to party. Tamaya follows Marshall into the woods because she thinks they're taking a shortcut home. Marshall hopes the detour will help them avoid a beating from bully Chad, who finds the pair anyway. Tamaya stops the boys’ fight by throwing some strange-looking mud in Chad's face and inadvertently unleashes an environmental disaster lurking in the woods. The mud is composed of ergonyms, a microscopic life form never seen on Earth before, created by a nearby research facility to produce a safe, inexpensive biofuel. The bad news? Contact with the mud is dangerous for most other life forms already on Earth, starting with Tamaya and Chad. Sachar confidently juxtaposes three time lines, one of which takes place several months after the initial events, revealing some of the devastation to come, which serves to increase readers' apprehension.
about the characters' fate. Another time line recaps Senate hearings into the biofuel's risks and benefits. Sachar is at his best in these chapters, wryly skewing government power and questioning science's ability to control life and save us from ourselves. A witness at the hearings delivers the author's warning: "Unless we do something to control world population, nothing will help us." Clever petri dish design elements and multiplication equations sprinkled throughout the text help readers grasp the simple math that challenges science's claims of control. VERDICT Featuring a plot that moves as fast as the ergonyms replicate, this issue-driven novel will captivate readers while giving them plenty to think about.—Marybeth Kozikowski, Sachem Public Library, Holbrook, NY

Horn Book
A shortcut through the woods? What could go wrong? Neighbors and fellow outsiders Tamaya (fifth grade) and Marshall (seventh) are in bigger trouble than they know when Marshall diverts them from their usual route home in order to evade a bully, Chad. Not only does Chad know those woods, too, but there’s a pool of mysterious mud that leaves Tamaya with a mysterious rash after she’s grabbed a handful to sling into the bully’s face. (You don’t want to know what happens to him.) Interspersed with this expert school survival drama, and not impeding it one little bit, are excerpts of testimony from “secret Senate hearings” about a microscopic manmade organism, the “ergonym,” which seems to have escaped a secret laboratory to flourish in the wild, doubling its population every thirty-six minutes. (A helpful and horrifying sequence of pictures on the chapter heads shows you how to do the math.) Tamaya and Marshall make a sympathetic pair of heroes to center this exciting tale, vintage Sachar for the way it brings big ideas to everyday drama, and recalling classic William Sleator, too, for blending just-gross-enough horror with sober — if you can stop to think about it — consideration of ethics and science.


Segregation is a fact of life in Bumblebee, North Carolina and the citizens have developed a fairly peaceful, if uneasy, daily life. However, when the Klan appears, loyalties will be tested and families will have to pull together or fall apart as they are confronted by the flames of renewed prejudice.

Ten-year old Stella journals about the experience as she witness the terrors of racism and its ugly aftermath. However, there are those in town and within her own community who feel that it is time to stand up to the hate and inequality.

Read Alikes:
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor
The Baptism by Sheila Moses

Other Books By This Author
Out of My Mind
Copper Sun
Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs Series

Author Website
http://sharondraper.com

Reviews

Booklist:

Grades 4-8 It’s 1932 in segregated Bumblebee, North Carolina, and times are tough for the tiny town. The residents of Stella’s African American neighborhood scrape together what they can to get by, and that spirit of cooperation only grows stronger when Stella and her brother, Jojo, spot a Klan rally close by. Tensions are high, and nearly everyone is frightened, but Stella’s community bands together to lift each other’s spirits and applaud one another’s courage, especially when Stella’s father and a few other men register to vote, undaunted by the cruel and threatening remarks of some white townspeople. Brave Stella, meanwhile, dreams of becoming a journalist and writes down her feelings about the Klan. Inspired by her own grandmother’s childhood, Draper weaves folksy tall tales, traditional storytelling, and hymns throughout Stella’s story, which is punctuated by her ever-more-confident journal entries. This uplifting and nostalgic tale of community and family movingly captures both 10-year-old Stella’s relatable experiences as well as the weighty social issues of the period. -- Hunter, Sarah

Kirkus:

When a young girl gains confidence from her failures and strength from what her community dreads most, life delivers magic and hope. Stella Mills and her brother Jojo witness the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross late one starry night, setting off a chain reaction that leaves their entire community changed. During the Depression, North Carolina was less than hospitable for African-Americans forced to work more to earn less while being deprived of basic human rights. Through the perspective of Stella, young readers glimpse the nearly suffocating anguish that envelops this black community, illuminating the feelings associated with suppression. In a telling passage, Stella's mother attempts to comfort her: "It's gonna be all right," her mother whispered as she smoothed down Stella's hair. But Stella felt the tension in her mother's arms, and she knew that in reality, fear hugged them both." Draper expertly creates a character filled with hope, dreams and ambition in a time when such traits were dangerous for a girl of color. While the use of language honors the time period, the author is careful to avoid the phonetic quagmire that ensnares lesser writers of the period, allowing the colorful idioms to shine. A tale of the Jim Crow South that's not sugar-coated but effective, with a trustworthy narrator who opens her heart and readers' eyes.

When an energetic little girl named Winnie interrupts Ms. Drake’s afternoon tea, life for the centuries old dragon will never be the same, especially when Winnie’s magical animal drawings come to life. Can Ms. Drake put all the animals back in the sketchbook before it’s too late while adjusting to life with her new human pet?

**Read Alikes:**
Igraine the Brave by Cornelia Funke
Dealing with Dragons by Patricia C. Wrede
Pip Bartlett’s Guide to Magical Creatures by Jackson Pearce

**Other Books by the Author:**
Dragonwings

**Author Website**
N/A

**Reviews**

*Booklist:
/* Starred Review */ Grades 3-5 In droll counterpoint to the How to Train Your Dragon franchise, Yep and Ryder offer a similar interspecies matchup from the dragon’s point of view. Miss Drake, a 3,000-year-old dragon, is initially annoyed when Winifred, 10, barges into her hidden lair beneath a San Francisco mansion. It seems that Winnie’s widowed mom has inherited the house from Miss Drake’s most recent and still sharply missed human “pet,” Fluffy (aka Great-Aunt Amelia). The irritating child has been left a key and a charge to take care of the lonely dragon. Being a responsible sort (as well as a shapeshanger and a thoroughly modern dragon with a smartphone and a debit card), Miss Drake reluctantly takes Winnie under her wing—or tries to, as the strong-willed child has ideas of her own. Despite their differences, the two make a good team, as they prove in narrowly averting major disaster to the city and its magical community, after a flock of creatures Winnie has drawn in a special sketchbook come to life. In vignettes that open each chapter, illustrator GrandPré depicts the diverse creatures, along with glimpses of dragon, child, and various significant items with her customary flair and expertise. Warm humor, magical mishaps, and the main characters’ budding mutual respect and affection combine to give this opener for a planned series a special shine that will draw readers and leave them impatient for sequels. -- Peters, John* (Reviewed 02-15-2015) (Booklist, vol 111, number 12, p85)

*Publishers Weekly:
In this series launch, Yep (the Dragon quartet), collaborating for the first time with his wife, Ryder (Won’t You Be My Kissaroo?), again conjures up a world where dragons and humans interact, and the results are heartwarming and quite funny. Miss Drake, a shapeshifting dragon, is still mourning the death of her human pet, a woman she called Fluffy, when Fluffy’s
impetuous great-niece, Winnie, barges into her lair. “I could see she would be rather impossible to train,” sniffs Miss Drake, whose scorn shifts to admiration as the two begin to bond with each other. After Winnie fills the pages of a magical sketchbook with drawings of fantastical creatures, the menacing “sketchlings” escape, and Winnie and Miss Drake join forces to track them down and return them to the book. Their mutual grief—Winnie’s heartache over the death of her father parallels Miss Drake’s loss of Fluffy—gives a moving underpinning to the magical escapades. Miss Drake’s arch narration and the sharp back-and-forth between the characters create an enchanting story, accented by GrandPré’s whimsical b&w spot illustrations. Ages 8–12. (Mar.) --Staff (Reviewed January 19, 2015) (Publishers Weekly, vol 262, issue 03, p)


Angus is a brownie. Not the kind you eat, but a magic brownie who is under a curse that ties him to the McGonnagalls. When his human dies, he has to go to the only girl in the entire family who is just the right age. The problem is, she doesn’t live in Scotland. She lives in the United States, where people are barbarians, or so he’s been told. He’s more than a little bit terrified. Alexi is not prepared when Angus just shows up and starts cleaning all her stuff. She just wants her life to be normal again. But when Angus arrives, the rest of the curse is set into motion and things get really strange. Will Alexi and Angus be able to work together to defeat the curse?

Readalikes:
Rump: The True Story of Rumpelstiltskin by Liesl Shurtliff
Frogged by Vivian Vande Velde
The Sinister Sweetness of Splendid Academy by Nikki Loftin

Other Books by Author:
My Teacher is an Alien
The Unicorn Chronicles
The Stinky Princess
And more...

Author Website:
www.brucecoville.com

Reviews:

From School Library Journal

Gr 3–6—Angus Cairns is a young brownie at only 150 years old. As a magical being, he is a subject of the Queen of Shadows, who rules the Enchanted Realm. When the old woman to whom Angus is bound passes away, the binding curse from the queen forces Angus to leave his native Scotland to live and serve in an unknown territory—America. Angus’s ancestors
were obligated by the curse to the McGonagall family until what was taken from the queen is
returned. The curse further stipulates that all male McGonagalls will become obsessed with
poetry that "shall be like the braying of asses," sure to bring embarrassment and misery. After
a harrowing journey, Angus arrives at his new and strange home and finds the girl to whom
he is bound, 11-year-old Alex Carhart. Not only is she a messy, disorganized child—the
antithesis of brownie behavior—but there is also a brother, a younger sister, and a cat in the
house. Reluctantly at first, Angus and Alex come to respect and even believe in each other.
Together they break the curse, which has started to have devastating (and very funny) effects
on Alex's brother and father, the cursed McGonagall male descendants. The story unfolds
through Angus's diary, Alex's journal, and a host of other communiques in the form of letters,
text messages, and notes. Each maintains its own cadence and the sense that magical and
human worlds are meeting. The result is a humorous, quick-paced, and engaging tale.

Human and magical characters are likable with characteristics that readers will recognize.

VERDICT This is a fresh and fast tale that is sure to elevate the standing of brownies, goblins,
and other magical beings.—Maria B. Salvadore, formerly at District of Columbia Public Library

Booklist
Bound by a family curse, Angus the brownie must leave Scotland for America to serve young Alex
Carhart, the great-great-great-niece of his recently deceased mistress. After finagling his transatlantic
voyage from a selkie, he secretly moves into the Carhart household and begins his dual task of
brining order while occasionally making mischief. Alex discovers his presence and tempers flare on
both sides. But when a larger problem threatens the family, they join forces and begin to appreciate
each other, before Angus leads Alex, her sister, her brother, and two older companions into the
Enchanted Realm in an attempt to end the curse for good. It's not easy to merge such disparate
elements as traditional Scottish lore and modern American life, but Coville brings it off with wit, style,
and respect. The story moves quickly, energized by Angus' engaging voice and the use of shifting
perspectives. Largely made up of the brownie’s diary entries, the narrative also includes passages
from Alex's journal as well as letters, text messages, news articles, poems, and other documents.
Kidby's madcap jacket art and many black-and-white illustrations will draw young readers to the book.
The first volume of the Enchanted Files series is smart, amusing, and a lot of fun.
—Carolyn Phelan

(Grades 4-6).

Peter’s family is shattered by the death of his older brother. His plans to join a Little League
team are slightly foiled when his strict Japanese father decides to coach the team. However, Peter
hopes his involvement in baseball with help his awaken his mother from deep depression.

Baseball is important to the Lee family. However, when Peter’s brother is killed in a car wreck it
seems his parents have forgotten all about him and baseball. Peter decides to join a Little League
baseball team hoping to create a new normal at home. Peter’s strict Japanese father volunteers to
coach the team. The baseball team members and parents do not appreciate the drills and
fundamental skills that Peter’s father stresses during practice. Peter’s mother sits silently on the
coach lost in grief. He wonders if his first baseball game will bring her back to him.

Read Alikes:
Baseball Saved Us by: Ken Mochizuki
Mockingbird by: Kathryn Erskine

Other Books by the Author:
The Great Wall of Lucy Wu

Author Website
http://www.wendyshang.com/

Reviews
School Library Journal
Twelve-year-old Peter just wants his home to be the way it was before—before his mother stopped
talking, before she started sitting on the couch staring at the TV, and before his older brother
died in a car accident. Peter’s father is a strict Chinese immigrant who stresses homework,
emphasizes respect for authority, and forbids baseball. Peter’s mother and siblings loved the sport
before his brother died; now baseball is no longer played or even talked about in the family.
Peter becomes convinced that the way to get his mother back is to join Little League
and play baseball again. He persuades his father to allow him to play, but during tryouts so many children
show up that another coach is needed and Peter’s father volunteers. This stressful dynamic shows
Peter a different side of his father, a man who is mourning his son, loves his family, knows a lot
about baseball, and believes in fairness. Peter is a fully realized character, but the rest of his
family and most of the players on his team fall flat. VERDICT Though the plot occasionally gets
bogged down with too many side stories, this heartwarming story is still a worthy purchase.

Booklist
It may be 1972, but for Peter Lee, everything falls into two categories: before, when the family
bonded over baseball and Peter’s older brother was still alive; and after. Now Peter’s mother
doesn’t leave the couch or talk to anyone, school seems impossible, and the family is falling
apart. Perhaps baseball can bring them together again? Peter decides to go out for a Little League
team, but he is horror-struck when his firm Chinese father is made the coach and the other kids
on the team don’t seem talented. Slowly, though, the team makes progress under Coach Lee’s
drills and pitcher Aaron’s contagious enthusiasm, coming together until it is discovered that
Aaron is actually Erin. Then the players must remember what they love about baseball. Readers
will cheer Peter on as his love for his family drives him to persevere at home and on the field.
Parallels between home plate and home as place abound as grief completes its work and
relationships are restored. Interwoven with cultural ties to both Peter’s Chinese heritage and to the women’s liberation movement, this touching novel shows the importance of patience—and baseball.

Citation:

Booktalk:
Nate Harlow is the unluckiest kid on the planet; he has never even won a coin toss! When lightning strikes Nate on his eleventh birthday at the Goofy Golf mini-golf course, he not only survives, but his luck completely changes. Suddenly he has friends, baseball ability, good fishing, carnival luck, and teachers don’t call on him when he doesn’t know the answer. His new-found luck places many demands on his time, and he struggles to remain loyal to his first and best friend, Gen, and her project to save the turtles on the island. When a dangerous hurricane lashes out during Gen’s attempt to save the turtle eggs, will Nate be there for her? This realistic fiction novel explores friendships and the true meaning of luck.

Read Alikes:
*Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron
*Three Times Lucky* by Sheila Turnage
*Savvy* by Ingrid Law

Other Books by This Author:
*A Dog’s Way Home*
*The Dogs of Winter*

Author Website:
www.bobbiepyron.com

Reviews

*Booklist (February 1, 2015 (Vol. 111, No. 11))*
Grades 3-6. Nate Harlow figures he is the least lucky kid on the planet. He has lost his parents. He has lost his dog. He has called a coin toss and got it wrong 53 times in a row. His best friend, Genesis, eldest daughter of Reverend Beam of the Church of the One True Redeemer and Everlasting Light, doesn’t believe in luck, putting her money on the science of probability. But neither can explain it when Nate is struck by a freak flash of lightning on his eleventh birthday—and his luck, and fortunes, change. All of a sudden, everything Nate comes in contact with is charmed, and soon the entire population of Paradise Sands, Florida, is vying for his Midas touch. But this newfound popularity threatens his relationship with Gen. Will he show up when she—and the loggerhead turtles nesting on the beaches—really needs him? Pyron displays a fine sense of the shifting allegiances of tweendom, and while many of the homespun secondary characters read as stock, the tender relationships will nourish readers in search of belonging.

*Kirkus Reviews starred (December 1, 2014)*
Could it ever be lucky to be struck by lightning? In the case of 11-year-old Nate, the answer is a qualified yes. Thanks to his best friend's quick wits, he isn't killed by a bolt out of the blue, but the lightning miraculously changes his luck from the worst ever to the very best. Suddenly he goes from inept to incredibly skilled on the diamond, which moves him from nerdy outsider to a place among the popular. His luck rubs off on those around him, too. Unfortunately, swept up in his unaccustomed acclaim, he meanly turns his back on Genesis, his smart, analytical and touchingly vulnerable BFF. She's befriended, in turn, by Chum, the ultimate bully target. Nate remorsefully decides the only way he can return to being Gen's best friend is to reverse his lightning strike luck by getting struck again, a terrifying prospect he's nonetheless willing to face. Even lightly sketched characters leap off the pages, adding rich depth to an already satisfying tale. In the slightly fantastical Gulf Coast world that Pyron (The Dogs of Winter, 2012) has imagined, people can change in unexpected ways. With just a spark of magic, bullies can become true friends, those without humor can learn to giggle, and perennial victims can emerge victorious. Amusing, endearing and sometimes even electrifying. (Magical realism. 9-12)

Publishers Weekly (December 8, 2014)
Pyron offers a gentler take on survival and friendship than in her gritty novel The Dogs of Winter. Nate Harlow, who has lived in a trailer with his grandfather since his parents' death, is "the unluckiest boy" in Paradise Beach, Fla. On his 11th birthday, Nate wishes for something lucky to happen that day, and is subsequently struck by lightning-"right out of the clear blue sky"-while playing miniature golf with his friend Gen, who's an ardent believer in logic and probability. Nate survives just fine, and, suddenly, his luck changes for the better. Moreover, he becomes something of a local hero after it appears that his good fortune is rubbing off on others, and a group of popular kids befriend Nate after he displays his newfound (and inexplicable) baseball skills. Nate's decision to hang with these kids and desert Gen and their mission to protect nesting turtles brings the themes of luck and friendship to a crest. A dramatic and sweetly poignant story, enlivened by a dash of magical realism. Ages 8-12. Agent: Alyssa Eisner Henkin, Trident Media Group. (Feb.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (December 1, 2014)
Gr 4-6-Wherever Nate Harlow goes, bad luck seems to follow. He has never even won a coin toss, so it comes as no surprise to many residents of Paradise Beach that it is Nate who gets struck by lightning out of the literal blue on his 11th birthday while playing mini-golf with his friend Genesis Beam. What does come as a big surprise is that Nate's luck seems to change drastically after the strike. All of a sudden, he is winning. Everything. Nate has to decide how he is going to handle this change-he is now surrounded by friends and opportunities whereas before it was only him and Genesis sticking together. Will she stay by Nate's side while he finds his feet, and, more importantly, will he support her when she needs it most? This well-told story of growth, friendship, and small-town life hits all the right notes. The quirkiness of the characters and the town never goes too far, and there is an overall cozy feeling to the book. Genesis's dad is the preacher at The Church of the One True Redeemer and Everlasting Light, but she is a scientist through and through, which adds complexity to the text, including musings on destiny, fate, probability, and weather. Fans of Susan Patron's Higher Power of Lucky (S. & S., 2006), Sheila Turnage's Three Times Lucky (Dial, 2012), and Ingrid Law's Savvy (2008; both, Dial) will
Twelve-year-old Astrid and her best friend Nicole have always done everything together. The summer before they start middle school, Astrid decides she wants to join the local roller derby camp. She is crushed when she learns Nicole doesn’t want to go to roller derby camp but is going to ballet camp instead. Astrid ventures into the world of roller derby on her own. Along the way she learns some important lessons including how to fall small, color her hair blue, navigate changing friendships, and how to talk open and honestly with her mom. This graphic novel follows Astrid as she learns that it’s okay to move past friendships and form new ones.

**Read Alikes**
- Secret Language of Girls by Frances O’Roark Dowell
- Smile by Raina Telgemeier
- Sunny Side Up by Jennifer L. Holm

**Other Books by Author**
- Pest in Show
- Olympig

**Author Website**

**Reviews**
School Library Journal
Gr 4–8—Twelve-year-old Astrid realizes that her interests are distinctly different from those of her best friend. Mesmerized while viewing a roller derby, she dreams of becoming a "Roller Girl" but discovers that the sport is considerably more daunting than she imagined and is not without physical, social, and emotional pain. Nevertheless, Astrid is determined to succeed. While this graphic novel provides interesting information about the sport, at its heart it is a story of friendship, exploring the tensions which test the girls’ relationship as they move from childhood to adolescence. Astrid learns to be honest with herself, her mother, and her friends through a series of stressful events. The graphic novelist employs several excellent visual devices: angles to denote action and effective placement and space within panels. Jamieson’s clever use of imagery is noteworthy. For example, desert and prehistoric depictions are used to suggest exaggerated perceptions of elapsed time. Her clothes shopping “hell” sequence is spot-on. Panels with stick figures are employed for comments, notes, and explanations. A prologue effectively frames the story and the realistic style with full-color art is reminiscent of the work of Raina Telgemeier. While at times some panels are a bit text-dense, the story will engage readers who will identify with Astrid as she deals with frustrations and disappointments. It will
especially appeal to those whose aspirations fly in the face of convention. Offer this comic to fans of Telgemeier’s Smile (Scholastic, 2010) and Laura Lee Gulledge’s Page by Paige (Abrams, 2011).—Barbara M. Moon, Suffolk Cooperative Library System, Bellport, NY

Publisher’s Weekly
When Astrid’s mother takes her and her best friend Nicole to a roller derby event, Astrid is intrigued, but Nicole is left cold. The rift between them grows as Astrid signs up for derby camp, while Nicole opts for ballet. Astrid works her tail off, makes friends, finds a mentor in a star skater named Rainbow Bite, and, at last, appears in her first bout. She also undergoes some uncomfortable preadolescent ordeals before reconciling with Nicole, in scenes that Jamieson (Pest in Show), in her first graphic novel, keeps blessedly free of smarminess. Jamieson’s full-color cartooning has a Sunday comics vibe, and her pacing is faultless. Astrid struggles to do right as she tries to understand her soured friendship with Nicole, and she narrates her own failures with heartwarming candor (“I don’t know why I did it. I didn’t mean to hit them”). When she comes up with an elaborate scheme to bolster a teammate’s failing confidence and carries it off despite the pressure of their upcoming bout, readers will want to stand up and cheer. Ages 9–12.
Agent: Paul Rodeen, Rodeen Literary Management. (Mar.)