

## Memoir Text Set

**Overview:** Memoirs are intimate accounts of an individual's life experiences and reflections. They offer a unique glimpse into the author's journey, emotions, and growth. Through memoirs, readers can explore themes of resilience, identity, cultural backgrounds, historical events, and the complexities of human relationships as well as the beauty behind what it means to be a human being. These captivating narratives foster empathy, understanding, and appreciation for the diverse human spirit while at the same time reflecting on our own experiences as we interact with personal memoirs.

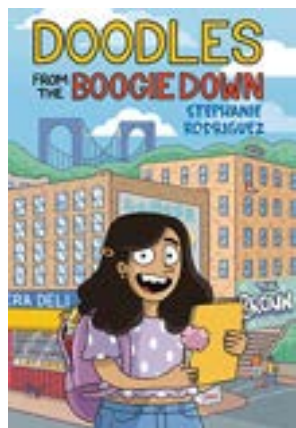
### Picturebooks & Graphic Novels



#### *Bigmama's*

by: Donald Crews

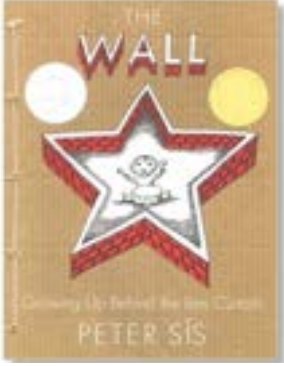



Four children travel with their mother on the train to Florida and summer at Bigmama's house. Donald Crews brilliantly evokes the sights, sounds, and emotions of a memorable childhood experience.



#### *Doodles from the Boogie Down*

by Stephanie Rodriguez

Eighth grade in New York City means it is time to start applying to high schools. While her friends look at school catalogs and study for entrance exams, Steph doodles in her notebook and waits for art class to begin. When her art teacher tells her about a high school of music and art, Steph desperately wants to apply

	<p><b><i>The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain</i></b></p> <p>by: Peter Sís</p> <p>Through annotated illustrations, journals, maps, and dreamscapes, Peter Sís shows what life was like for a child who loved to draw, proudly wore the red scarf of a Young Pioneer, stood guard at the giant statue of Stalin, and believed whatever he was told to believe growing up in Communist Czechoslovakia.</p>
	<p><b><i>Chance: Escape from the Holocaust: Memories of a Refugee Childhood</i></b></p> <p>by: Uri Shulevitz</p> <p>Details the eight-year-odyssey of how Shulevitz and his Jewish family escaped the terrors of the Nazis by fleeing Warsaw for the Soviet Union. During those years, with constant threats, young Uri experienced his awakening as an artist.</p>
	<p><b><i>Growing an Artist: The Story of a Landscaper and His Son</i></b></p> <p>by John Parra</p> <p>Today is the first time Juanito gets to help his papi on the job as a landscape architect! Juanito sketches anything that catches his eye: a nest full of baby birds, a nursery of plants and flowers.</p>
	<p><b><i>When Stars Are Scattered</i></b></p> <p>by Victoria Jamieson, Omar Mohamed, Iman Geddy</p> <p>Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent most of their lives in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is hard—never enough food, achingly dull, and without access to the medical care for Omar’s nonverbal brother. Omar has the opportunity to go to school, but it means leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day.</p>

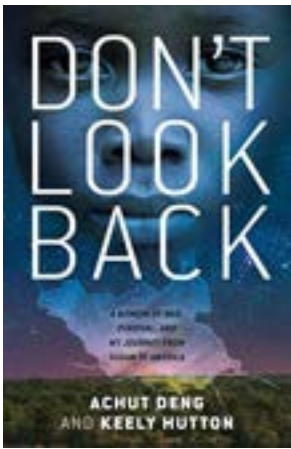


***Where Butterflies Fill the Sky: A Story of Immigration, Family, and Finding Home***

by Zahra Marwan

Zahra lives in a beautiful place where the desert reaches all the way to the sea and one hundred butterflies always fill the sky. When Baba and Mama tell her that their family is no longer welcome here and they must leave, Zahra wonders if she will ever feel at home again as she moves from the desert of Kuwait to New Mexico.

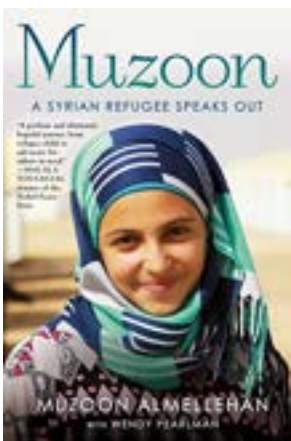
**Middle Grade, Novels in Verse, & Young Adult Memoirs**



***Don't Look Back: A Memoir of War, Survival, and My Journey from Sudan to America***

by Achut Deng and Keely Hutton

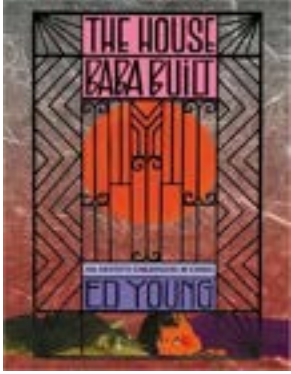
After a deadly attack in South Sudan left six-year-old Achut Deng without a family, she lived in refugee camps for ten years, until a refugee relocation program gave her the opportunity to move to the United States. When asked why she should be given a chance to leave the camp, Achut simply told the interviewer: I want life.



***Muzoon: A Syrian Refugee Speaks Out***

by Muzoon Almellehan and Wendy Pearlman

This memoir tells the story of a young girl's life in Syria, her family's wrenching decision to leave their home, and the upheaval of life in a refugee camp. She knew that education was the key to a better future—for herself, and so that she could help her country. She went from tent to tent in the camp, trying to convince other kids, especially girls, to come to school.



***The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China***

by: Ed Young

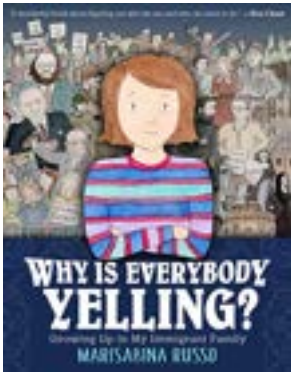
In Ed Young's childhood home in Shanghai, all was not as it seemed: a rocking chair became a horse; a roof became a roller rink; an empty swimming pool became a place for riding scooters and bikes. The house his father built transformed as needed into a place to play hide-and-seek, to eat bamboo shoots, and to be safe.



***In Limbo***

by Deb JJ Lee

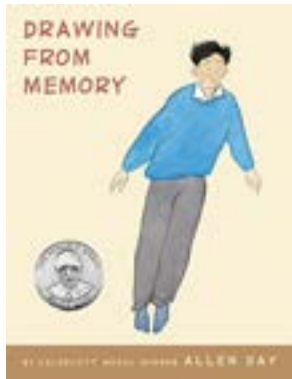
Ever since Deborah (Jung-Jin) Lee emigrated from South Korea to the United States, she's felt her otherness due to her name, language, and face. Everything gets harder in high school. Friendships change and end, she falls behind in classes, and fights with her mother escalate. Caught in limbo, with nowhere safe to go, Deb finds her mental health plummeting, resulting in a suicide attempt.



***Why Is Everybody Yelling?: Growing Up in My Immigrant Family***

by Marisabina Russo

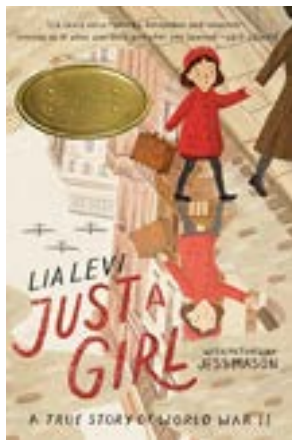
In 1950s New York, Marisabina Russo is being raised Catholic and attending a Catholic school—but when she finds out that her family members are Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, her childhood is thrown into turmoil. To make matters more complicated, her father is out of the picture, her mother is ambitious and demanding, and her older half-brothers have troubles, too.



### ***Drawing From Memory***

by Allen Say

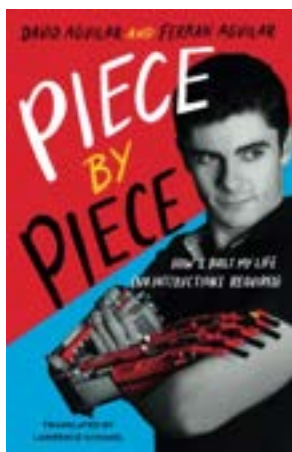
Allen's story of his path to becoming a renowned artist. Shunned by his father, who didn't understand his son's artistic leanings, Allen was embraced by Noro Shinpei, Japan's leading cartoonist and the man he came to love as his "spiritual father." As WWII raged, Allen considered questions of his heritage and the motivations of those around him. He worked hard in drawing classes, studied, trained--and came to understand who he really is.



### ***Just a Girl: A True Story of World War II***

by: Lia Levi


1938, Italy. Six-year-old Lia's biggest problem is her shyness and quiet voice—until prime minister Mussolini joins forces with Hitler and everything changes. Now there are laws saying Jewish children can't go to school, Jews can't work, or go on vacation. When her father loses his job, they give up their home and it becomes too dangerous to stay together. Lia and her sisters are sent to hide at a convent. Will she ever be "just a girl" again?

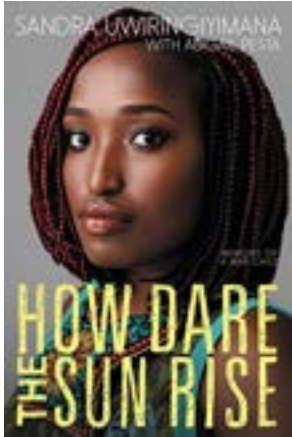


### ***Piece by Piece: How I Built My Life (No Instructions Required)***

by David Aguilar and Ferran Aguilar

David Aguilar was born missing part of one arm, a small detail that defined his life and limited people's ideas of who he was. David challenges people's expectations and makes a difference in the world. At only nine years old, David built his first prosthesis from LEGO bricks, and since then he hasn't stopped creating and thinking about how his inventions, born from a passion for building things, could fuel change and help others.

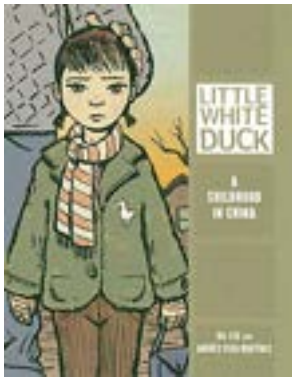
	<p><b><i>A Different Kind of Normal: My Real-Life COMPLETELY True Story About Being Unique</i></b></p> <p>by Abigail Balfe</p> <p>When Abigail was growing up, she was missing Very Important Information about herself—that she is autistic. This is Abigail’s story about what it was like growing up autistic in a confusing “normal” world. With entertaining anecdotes and funny accompanying illustrations, Abigail details her experiences and explains some Very Crucial Information about autism and neurodiversity too.</p>
	<p><b><i>Monstrous: A Transracial Adoption Story</i></b></p> <p>by Sarah Myer</p> <p>Sarah has always struggled to fit in. Born in South Korea and adopted at birth by a white couple, she grows up in a rural community with few Asian neighbors. People whisper and classmates bully her. She has trouble containing her anger—but through it all, she has her art. She's always been a compulsive drawer, and when she discovers anime, her hobby becomes an obsession.</p>
	<p><b><i>Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam</i></b></p> <p>by Thien Pham</p> <p>Thien's first memory is the sweetness of watermelon and the saltiness of fish. the taste of foods he ate while adrift at sea as his family fled Vietnam. After the Pham family arrives at a refugee camp in Thailand, they struggle to survive. Things don't get much easier once they resettle in California. Through each chapter of their lives, food takes on a new meaning. Strawberries come to signify struggle as Thien's mom and dad look for work. Potato chips are an indulgence that bring Thien so much joy.</p>



***How Dare the Sun Rise: Memoirs of a War Child***

by Sandra Uwiringiyimana and Abigail Pesta

This moving memoir is the remarkable story of Sandra Uwiringiyimana, a girl from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who tells the tale of how she survived a massacre, immigrated to America, and overcame her trauma through art and activism. Sandra was just ten years old when she found herself with a gun pointed at her head and in middle school when she came to the U.S. to find herself labeled Black and a “poor” refugee.



***Little White Duck: A Childhood in China***

by Na Liu and Andrés Vera Martínez

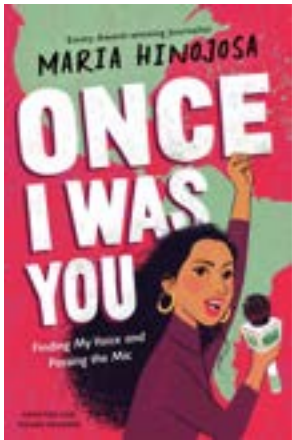
The world is changing for two girls in China in the 1970s. Da Qin and her younger sister, Xiao Qin, live in Wuhan with their parents. When their country's leader, Chairman Mao, dies, new opportunities begin to emerge. Da Qin and Xiao Qin soon learn that their childhood will be much different than the upbringing their parents experienced.



***A Game for Swallows: To Die, To Leave, To Return***

by Zeina Abirached

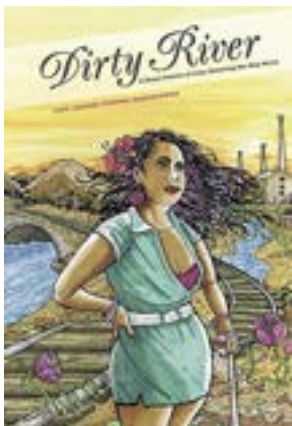
When Zeina was born, the civil war in Lebanon had been going on for six years, so it's just normal life for her family. The city of Beirut is cut in two, separated by bricks and sandbags and threatened by snipers and shelling. East Beirut is for Christians, and West Beirut is for Muslims. When Zeina's parents don't return one afternoon from a visit to the other half of the city and the bombing grows closer, neighbors in her apartment building create a safe space for Zeina and her brother where they can share cooking lessons and games and gossip.



***Once I Was You--Adapted for Young Readers: Finding My Voice and Passing the Mic***

by Maria Hinojosa

Maria Hinojosa is an Emmy Award–winning journalist, but before that, she was a girl with big hair and even bigger dreams. Born in Mexico and raised in the vibrant neighborhood of Hyde Park, Chicago, Maria was always looking for ways to better understand the world around her—and where she fit into it. She combines stories from her life, beginning with her family’s harrowing experience of immigration, with truths about the United States’s long and complicated relationship with the people who cross its borders, by choice or by force.



***Dirty River: A Queer Femme of Color Dreaming Her Way Home***

by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

In 1996, poet Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha ran away from the U.S. and ended up in Canada, where she discovered queer anarcho punk love and revolution, yet remained haunted by the reasons she left home in the first place. This riveting memoir is a mixtape of dreams and nightmares, of immigration court lineups and queer South Asian dance nights; it reveals how a disabled queer woman of color and abuse survivor navigates the dirty river of the past and "dreams her way home."

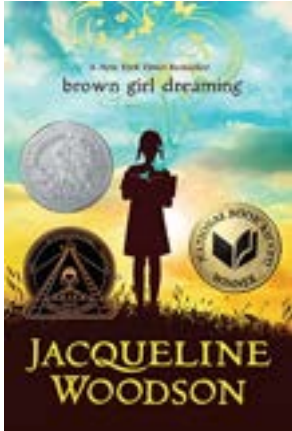


***All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto***

by George M. Johnson

From the memories of getting his teeth kicked out by bullies at age five, to flea marketing with his loving grandmother, to his first sexual relationships, this young-adult memoir weaves together the trials and triumphs faced by Black queer boys. Both a primer for teens eager to be allies as well as a reassuring testimony for young queer men of color, the memoir covers topics such as gender identity, toxic masculinity, brotherhood, family, structural marginalization, consent, and Black joy.

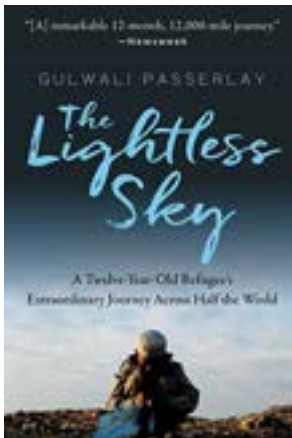




***Brown Girl Dreaming***

by Jacqueline Woodson

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's poetry reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child.



***The Lightless Sky: A Twelve-Year-Old Refugee's Extraordinary Journey Across Half the World***

by Gulwali Passarlay

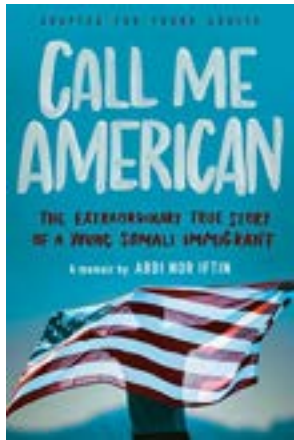
In 2006, after his father was killed, Gulwali Passarlay was caught between the Taliban who wanted to recruit him, and the Americans who wanted to use him. To protect her son, Gulwali's mother sent on a search for safety that led the twelve-year-old across eight countries, from the mountains of eastern Afghanistan through Iran and Europe to Britain. Over the course of twelve harrowing months, Gulwali endured imprisonment, hunger, cruelty, brutality, loneliness, and terror—and nearly drowned.



***Muhammad Najem, War Reporter: How One Boy Put the Spotlight on Syria***

by Muhammad Najem and Nora Neus

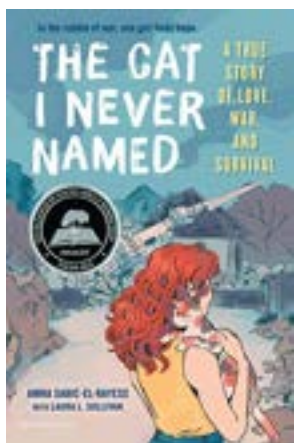
Muhammad Najem was only eight when the war in Syria began. He was thirteen when his beloved Baba, his father, was killed in a bombing while praying. By fifteen, Muhammad didn't want to hide anymore—he wanted to act. He was determined to reveal what families were enduring in Syria: bombings by their own government and days hiding in dark underground shelters.



***Call Me American: The Extraordinary True Story of a Young Somali Immigrant***

by Abdi Nor Iftin

In Somalia, Abdi Nor Iftin grew up amidst a blend of cultures. His mother entertained him with folktales and stories about her rural upbringing. He spent his days following his father, a basketball player, through the bustling streets of Mogadishu. But civil war forces his family to flee to safety. And an uncertain new life.



***The Cat I Never Named: A True Story of Love, War, and Survival***

by Amra Sabic-El-Rayess and Laura L. Sullivan

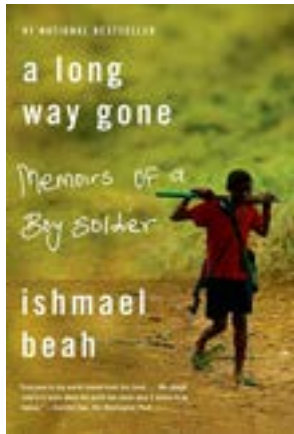
In 1992, Amra was a teen in Bihac, Bosnia, when her best friend said they couldn't speak anymore because she was Muslim. It was the first sign her world was changing. Then Muslim refugees from other Bosnian cities started arriving, fleeing Serbian persecution. When the tanks rolled into Bihac, bringing her own city under siege, Amra's happy life in her peaceful city vanished.



***In Search of Safety: Voices of Refugees***

by Susan Kuklin

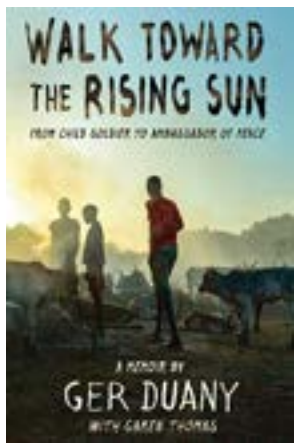
Five refugees from Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Iraq, and Burundi give first-person testimonies about what it is like to flee war, face violent threats, grow up in a refugee camp, be sold into slavery, and resettle in the U.S.



***A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier***

by Ishmael Beah

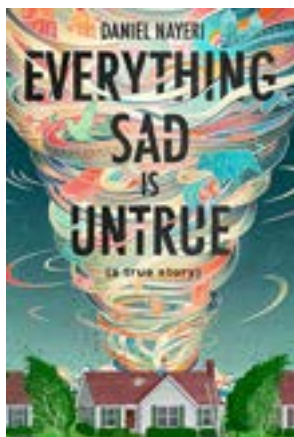
Wars are fought by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them.



***Walk Toward the Rising Sun: From Child Soldier to Ambassador of Peace***

by Ger Duany and Garen Thomas

Sudan, 1980s: Ger Duany knew what he wanted--to make his family proud, play with his brothers and sisters, maybe get an education, and become a soldier for his people when he's old enough. But then his village was attacked by the North Sudanese military, death kept taking his loved ones away, and being a child soldier was not what he thought it would be. Amid heartbreak, death, and violence, can this lost boy find his way to safety?



***Everything Sad Is Untrue: (a true story)***

by Daniel Nayeri

In an Oklahoman middle school, Khosrou (whom everyone calls Daniel) stands in front of an audience of classmates, telling the tales of his family's Iranian history, stretching back years, decades, and centuries. At the core is Daniel's story of how they became refugees, starting with his mother's embrace of Christianity in a country that made such a thing a capital offense, and continuing through their midnight flight from the secret police, bribing their way onto a plane-to-anywhere.