



Kwame Alexander

Kwame Alexander is a poet, educator, and the *New York Times* Bestselling author of 32 books, including *Swing, Rebound*, which was shortlisted for prestigious Carnegie Medal, *The Undefeated*, illustrated by Kadir Nelson, *How to Read a Book*, illustrated by Melissa Sweet, and his Newberry medal-winning middle grade novel, *The Crossover*. A regular contributor to NPR's Morning Edition, Kwame is the recipient of numerous awards, including The Coretta Scott King Author Honor, Three NAACP Image Award Nominations, and the 2017 Inaugural Pat Conroy Legacy Award. In partnership with Follett Book Fairs, he created the #AllBooksForAllKids initiative to bring more diverse books into school libraries. In 2018, he opened the Barbara E. Alexander Memorial Library and Health Clinic in Ghana, as a part of LEAP for Ghana, an international literacy program he co-founded. Kwame is the Founding Editor of VERSIFY, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt that aims to *Change the World One Word at a Time*.

“Never let anyone lower your goals. Others' expectations of you are determined by their limitations of life. The sky is your limit, sons. Always shoot for the sun, and you will shine.”

from *The Crossover*

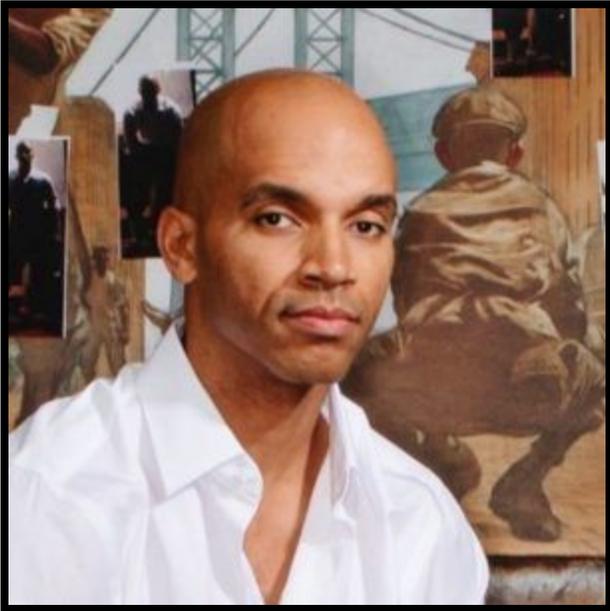


Jacqueline Woodson

Jacqueline Woodson was born in Columbus, Ohio and grew up in Greenville, South Carolina and Brooklyn, New York. She is the author of over 30 books for children and young adults. Many of her books have won prestigious awards and honors: the Coretta Scott King Honor, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, a National Book Award Finalist, a Caldecott Honor Book, a *Booklist* Editors' Choice, and one book included in the New York Public Library's list of best *Books of the Teen Age*. Four of Woodson's books have won the Newbery Honor Award. Her book *Brown Girl Dreaming* also won the National Book Award.

**“Bad won't be bad forever,
and what is good can
sometimes last
a long, long time.”**

from *Brown Girl Dreaming*



Kadir Nelson

Kadir Nelson is an American artist who exhibits his artwork in galleries and museums nationwide and abroad. His paintings are in the permanent collections of several institutions including the Muskegon Museum of Art, The National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, the International Olympic Committee, and the US House of Representatives.

Nelson has created artwork for distinguished clients including *Sports Illustrated*, The Coca-Cola Company, The US Postal Service, Major League Baseball, and Dreamworks SKG, and more than ten covers for the *New Yorker* magazine. He also created artwork for Michael Jackson's posthumous album, *Michael*, and Drake's, *Nothing Was The Same*.

Nelson has also authored and illustrated several award-winning picture books.

“Art’s highest function is that of a mirror, reflecting the innermost beauty and divinity of the human spirit . . . I choose subject matter that has emotional and spiritual resonance and focuses on the journey of the hero as it relates to the personal and collective stories of people.”



Rita Williams- Garcia

Rita Williams-Garcia is the New York Times bestselling author of ten novels for young adults and middle grade readers. Her most famous novels are three that follow the saga of the Gaither Sisters: *One Crazy Summer*, *PS Be Eleven*, and *Gone Crazy in Alabama*. Her novels have been recipients of numerous awards, including the Coretta Scott King Award, National Book Award Finalists, Newbery Honor Book, Junior Library Guild, and the Scott O'Dell Prize for Historical Fiction. She served on faculty at the Vermont College of Fine Arts Writing for Children MFA Program and she resides in Queens, New York.

“We all have our la-la-la song. The thing we do when the world isn't singing a nice tune to us. We sing our own nice tune to drown out ugly.”

from *One Crazy Summer*



Jewell Parker Rhodes

Jewell Parker Rhodes currently serves as the Piper Endowed Chair and founding artistic director of the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University.

Her most recent novel, *Ghost Boys*, quickly became a New York Times Best Seller and has garnered over 25 awards and honors, including The Walter Award, the Indies Choice/EB White Read-Aloud Award, and the Jane Addams Children's Book Award for Older Readers. Jewell's books have also won awards and recognitions like the Coretta Scott King Honor Award and a Junior Library Guild selection. Her newest middle grade novel, *Black Brother, Black Brother* will be published March 3, 2020.

Jewell has written numerous children's and adult books hoping to inspire social justice, equality, and environmental stewardship. Born in Pittsburgh, she now lives in Seattle.

**“The world can be a hard place
sometimes . . . You have to have heart.
You have to be strong . . . Not just any
strong, mind you, but loving strong.”**

From Ninth Ward



Jason Reynolds

Jason Reynolds is a *New York Times* bestselling author, a Newbery Award Honoree, a Printz Award Honoree, National Book Award Honoree, a *Kirkus* Award winner, a Walter Dean Myers Award winner, an NAACP Image Award Winner, and the recipient of multiple Coretta Scott King honors.

Born in Washington, DC, Reynolds found inspiration in rap to begin writing poetry at nine years old. He focused on poetry for approximately the next two decades, only reading a novel cover to cover for the first time at age 17 and publishing several poetry collections before he published his own first novel. Now he has written many more novels and poetry books, and even a Marvel Comics novel (*Miles Morales: Spider-Man*).

Reynolds said, "Here's what I know: I know there are a lot — A LOT — of young people who hate reading. I know that many of these book haters are boys. I know that many of these book-hating boys don't actually hate books, they hate boredom." He added that even though he's a writer he hates reading boring books too! His books are unique and interesting for everyone—even those who don't usually love reading.

Talking about his work, he said, "When I say I'm a writer, I mean it in the same way a professional ball player calls himself an athlete. I practice everyday and do the best I can to be better at this writing thing, while hopefully bringing some cool stories to the world."

**Your dream is the mole
behind your ear,
that chip in your
front tooth,
your freckles.
It's the thing that makes
you special,
but not the thing that
makes
you great.**

**The courage in trying,
the passion in living,
and the
acknowledgement
and appreciation of
the beauty happening
around
you does that.**

from *For Every One*



Bryan Collier

Bryan Collier loves to paint. And he has successfully channeled his creative energy and love of art into an illustrious career as a children's book illustrator and writer. Originally from rural Maryland, Bryan now calls New York City's Harlem home. He began painting at the age of fifteen and eventually landed a scholarship to the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York, where he later graduated with honors.

Bryan Collier is known for his unique style combining watercolor and detailed collage. He is a four-time Caldecott Honor recipient for *Trombone Shorty*, *Dave the Potter*, *Martin's Big Words*, and *Rosa*. His books have won many other awards as well, including six Coretta Scott King Illustrator Awards. He both illustrated and wrote the book *Uptown*. His recent books include *By and By*, *Thurgood*, *The Five O'Clock Band*, and *Between the Lines*. He lives in New York with his family.

“ I hope [children] learn to see beauty, and I want them to realize that no matter how dark the story begins, there’s hope and redemption before you get to the end.”



Carole Boston Weatherford

The daughter of educators, award-winning poet Carole Boston Weatherford began writing in first grade. Today she is the author of numerous books, including the Carter G. Woodson award winning title, *The Sound That Jazz Makes* and most recently, *The Roots of Rap*. Her writing covers such topics as jazz and photography, as well as the slavery, reconstruction and Jim Crow eras. When she's not traveling or visiting museums, Carole is mining the past for family stories, fading traditions, and forgotten struggles. Coming from a family of educators, she has a passion for rescuing events and figures from obscurity by documenting American history.

“I want my books to nudge young readers toward justice. I want children to celebrate African American culture, while at the same time acknowledging the most shameful chapters of our nation’s past--slavery and segregation. I hope that my young readers understand that freedom was not free and that people of conscience must speak their minds and live their values.”



Eric Velasquez

Eric Velasquez, the son of Afro-Puerto Rican parents, was born in Spanish Harlem and grew up in Harlem. His dual heritage coupled with the experience of living in dual cultures in New York City gives Eric a rich and unique cultural perspective. He did his first picture book, "The Piano Man," in 1997 and has completed more than 30 others in the two decades that have followed. He has won many awards including the Coretta Scott King / John Steptoe New Talent Award and is the only person ever to win both an NAACP Image Award and a Pura Belpre Award.

“The stories I like to tell are about people who, in one way or another, reject the labels and limitations others place on them and forge their own identity.”



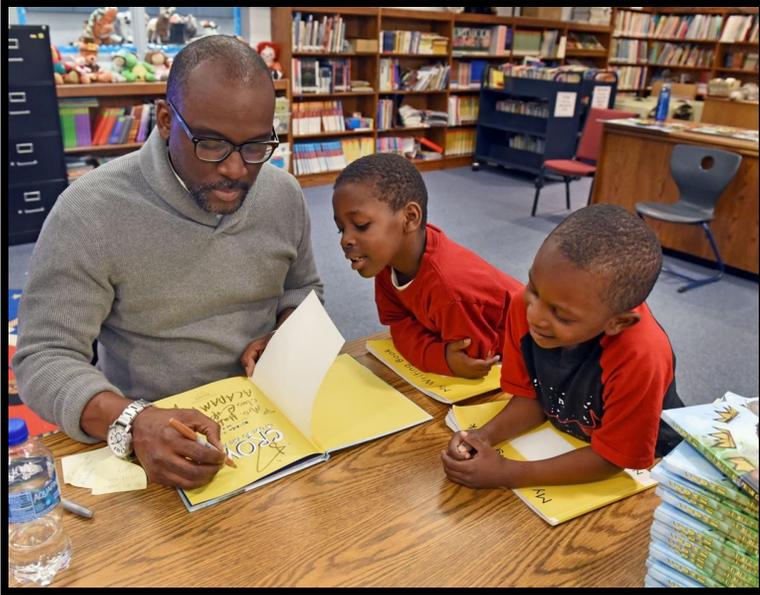
Nikki Grimes

Born and raised in New York City, Nikki began composing verse at the age of six and has been writing ever since that time. Her work includes stories and poetry for both children and adults.

A bestselling author and a prolific artist, Nikki has written many award-winning books for children and young adults including the Coretta Scott King Award winner *Bronx Masquerade*; the Coretta Scott King Author Honor books *Jazmin's Notebook*, *Talkin' About Bessie*, *Dark Sons*, *The Road to Paris*, and *Words with Wings*; Horn Book Fanfare for *Talkin' About Bessie*; ALA Notable books *What is Goodbye?* and *Words with Wings*; the popular Dyanne Daniel chapter book series, and numerous picture books and novels including *The New York Times* bestseller *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope* and, most recently, *Garvey's Choice* and *One Last Word: Wisdom from the Harlem Renaissance*.

“You have to take people one at a time, check out what's in their head and heart before you judge.”

from *Bronx Masquerade*



Derrick Barnes

Writer Derrick Barnes is a native of Kansas City, Missouri. His books include the ultra popular series *Ruby and the Booker Boys* and the novel *We Could Be Brothers*, his first middle grade release. Before he started writing children's books, he wrote copy (words) for Hallmark Cards where he was the first African American male staff writer for their company. Besides writing, Derrick is a connoisseur of music from hip-hop's Golden Age (late 80s-mid 90s), vintage jazz (Coltrane, Miles, Joe Henderson, Mingus, Monk, etc.) He loves to exercise, read (of course) and spend as much time as possible with his family. He resides in Charlotte, North Carolina with his wife and their three sons.

“And sometimes in life, that's all you ever need. A crisp but subtle line.”

from *Crown*



Frank Morrison

Growing up in New Jersey, artist and illustrator Frank Morrison began developing his own style through 'R.I.P' art scenes that brought him considerable street recognition and local acclaim. But it wasn't until he visited the Louvre Museum in Paris with his break dancing group (part of the Sugar Hill Gang's dance entourage), that he realized painting was his true creative path. His talent and hard work paid off with over 20 illustrated children's books, including the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award winner, *Jazzy Miz Mozetta* and the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor books, *Little Melba and her Big Trombone* and *Let the Children March*. Most

recently, Frank was a Society of Illustrators' Original Art Silver Medal Honoree for *The Roots of Rap*. Frank lives in Atlanta, Georgia with his wife and five children.

“My work dignifies the evolution of everyday, underrepresented people and places within the urban landscape. I seek to both highlight and preserve the soul of the city through the lens of hip-hop culture and urban iconography. I want people to experience the visual rhythms that choreograph life for the average, everyday person.”



Andrea Davis Pinkney

Mrs. Pinkney has authored over twenty books for children, including *The Red Pencil*, *Martin and Mahalia: His Words, Her Song*, *Duke Ellington*, *Alvin Ailey*, *Dear Benjamin Banneker*, and *Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters*, which won a Coretta Scott King Honor Award in 2001. She began her career in magazines and went into book publishing after watching her husband, Caldecott Award-winning illustrator Brian Pinkney, work on children's books. A graduate of Syracuse University, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and two children.

**Snow doesn't know who's needy or dirty
Or greedy or nice.
Snow doesn't *choose* where to fall.
Snow doesn't pick a wealthy man's doorstep
Over a poor lady's stoop.
That's Snow's magic.**

***From A Poem for Peter:
The Story of Ezra Jack Keats***

“Kids read for the same reasons that adults read. They want to have fun, laugh, have adventures, escape, meet new characters and learn more about the world . . . my focus is to inspire joy, power and the love of reading.”