



# Introductions

B. A. Binns is a Chicago Area author who writes stories about “real boys growing into real men,” and finds writing the perfect follow-up to life as the eldest of five, an adoptive parent, and a cancer survivor. She is a member of the Romance Writers of America, the Chicago Writers Association, the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents), and YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association). She leads a writers group at the Arlington Heights Memorial library in Illinois.



She is the author of three contemporary YA books exploring multicultural themes: PULL (2010), Die Trying and other stories (2012) and Being God (2013). Pull won the 2011 Oklahoma Romance Writers National Reader’s choice award, was named one of YALSA’s 2012 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers, and was nominated for the 2012-2013 Eliot Rosewater Indiana High School Book Award. Her books are published by AllTheColorsOfLove Press

She is a member of the Romance Writers of America, the Chicago Writers Association, the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, and YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association). In 2009 her work won the Oklahoma Romance Writers Finally a Bride Contest and the Rose City Golden Rose Contest. In 2010 she was a finalist in the RWA Golden Heart® contest. Her debut novel, PULL is the winner of the 2010 National Readers Choice Award for Young Adult fiction presented by the Oklahoma Romance Writers of America. PULL was named to the [2012 YALSA list of Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers](#) and [School Library Journal’s 2011 Best Books for Youth In Detention](#) list.

Visit her on

Facebook – [AllTheColorsOfLove](#)

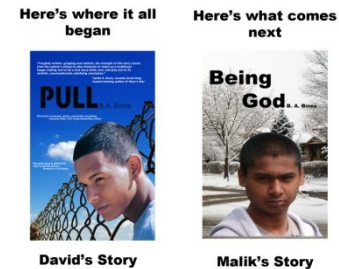
Twitter – [barbarabinns](#)

Website – [babinns.com](#)

Blog – <http://barbarabinns.com>

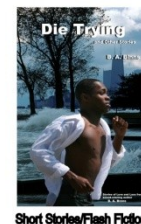
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David's Story

Malik's Story



# Let's begin - Definitions

- Multicultural / Diversity
  - An awareness / acceptance of more than one language and culture.
  - Characters, settings, and traditions of more than one racial or ethnic cultures.
  - Don't forget differences in ability, sexual orientation and mental differences. (Examples include the deaf culture, transgender people, and autism)
  - Mirror vs. Window: Reflect how we see ourselves, and reveal experiences beyond those in our daily lives
  - Not just about a main character having a friend of another race, which is often found in YA books by major publishers
- Collection
  - Physical, audio and/or electronic materials
  - Videos – including student submitted work
  - Artwork/graphic novels
  - Student writing
- Discoverability
  - Finding books, especially pairing the right book with the right reader
  - The **right** book is not always the one aimed at the mass market
  - One size simply does not fit all
- Independent Author/Publisher
  - Books written and produced by small presses or directly by the author
  - Note there are a growing number, especially now with big publishers releasing editors and authors who are free to pair up and work on their own to develop quality product

# Why read?

- Develop empathy
- Knowledge/Acquisition of information
- Critical thinking/Examining values/Exercising ethical “muscles”
- Broadening world view/acquiring a global perspective
- Self-validation, self-worth, and an understanding of ourselves and our place in life
  - Literacy is “about becoming a superior human being that can act powerfully on the world.” → Dr. Ernest Morell, Professor of English Education and Director of the Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teacher’s College, Columbia University
- Developing practical reading skills
- And never forget -

## FUN

- “I want my readers to find pleasure, as well as comfort, company, information, inspiration and empowerment.”

# Why do authors write?

- An author's goal
  - Inspire and empower readers to make them want **more**
  - Motivate youth to read and learn and help them re-image their place in the world
  - Tell a reluctant or at-risk reader that he/she is understood
  - Help readers learn something about themselves
  - Help readers of all backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, abilities, and ways of life, break down stereotypes and see people different from ourselves as “real”
  - Don't leave anyone feeling invisible
- Matt De La Pena: While visiting at a school in Los Angeles, a kid in a hoodie waited until everyone else had left before approaching me. “I read your book ‘We Were Here’ like three times,” he said. His eyes were glassy and he kept fidgeting with his backpack straps. “Yo, that's my life in that book,” he said.
- Authors of multicultural books especially, want to portray people of color, in various socioeconomic classes, different ethnicities, countries, backgrounds, or physical/emotional/mental disabilities, in a balanced rather than stereotypical fashion.
- We know that every time someone reads a book about a character who is different from them— even if they didn't know it going into it — that reader's universe is broadened a little. We are willing to write books that do this, and, in many cases, to work with teachers and librarians to make sure these works get into the hands of kids that need them.

# Mirrors/Windows

- An author's work mirrors their cultural, ethical and social beliefs and values and interacts with readers' prior knowledge and life to alter and/or reinforce perceptions
- What does it do to someone to
  - never see **themselves** on a book cover or in the pages?
  - never see **members of another group** on the cover or in the pages?
  - [Click here for a Youtube video on the importance of multiculturalism in the classroom and a list of some books for younger readers](#)

# What do young readers want?

- Fun
- Books that are developmentally appropriate
- Real world/relevant issues
- Incorporation of popular culture
- A chance to share

Fun Books appropriate issues  
culture of developmentally  
are world/relevant Real that popular

# Diversity and the Common Core

- Need texts that are “enabling,” identity-centered and relevant.
  - The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity. There is no reason YA literature, and especially multicultural YA literature, cannot comprise some of the steps that help them build knowledge, gain insights, explore possibilities, and **broaden their perspective**
  - Students enter the classroom with differing capabilities and from a wide variety of backgrounds. Wouldn't it be wonderful to reach them where they are, and use that as support in taking them further instead of leaving so many behind?
    - Students need opportunities to stretch their reading abilities but also to experience the satisfaction and pleasure of easy, fluent reading within them
    - Students' ability to read complex text does not always develop in a linear fashion.
    - With the right support, and practice, parents and educators can help students build enough confidence, knowledge, and skills.
    - Move from Hi/Lo to Hi/Hi
  - Substitutions
    - Monster by Walter Dean Myers vs Of Mice and Men
    - The Battle of Jericho by Sharon Draper vs. Lord of the Flies
    - Never Fall Down by Patricia McCormick vs. Red Badge Of Courage
    - Studying the caste system or social classes – try Tankborn
    - Bullying – try Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass
    - Looking at alcoholism or addiction – try Being God



# Critical Thinking

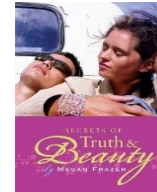
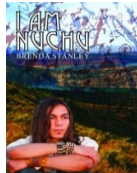
- Comments from young readers of Pull and Being God
  - [David] kind of reminded me of myself, losing someone you love such as a parent hurts, and you always hear their voices in your head before you make a decision; that David was able to give up so much for the well-being of his family was truly admirable. 'Pull' can't compare to any book I have ever read, it shows life's difficulties and just because it is difficult doesn't mean you have to give in to its bad influences.
  - This book shows that there is always a way out of trouble, and also how the decisions we make can affect us in the long run.
  - As teenagers, a problem we face is probably getting along with our parents, and witnessing all the issues Malik had with his dad gave me a sense of knowing that I wasn't the only who sometimes hates his father.
  - I really disliked that Malik would involve himself with the gangbangers, which shows that it doesn't matter who you are or how much money you have, if a teenager isn't getting love in their household, they are more likely to associate themselves with a gang and its members.
  - I strongly hated the way Malik treated [Julian Morales], but when David started befriending Julian, I knew this was a turning point for him. Julian turned to be a star player for the basketball team. I find it amazing what one encouraging friend could do to a kid like him.

# How Do We Discover Material

- Reviews
  - Look behind the obvious, there are reviewers on the lookout for diversity (click to see [slide on reviews](#))
  - Remember, many independent authors who write multicultural books cannot afford to be reviewed by Kirkus (\$400) or Voya (\$200)
- Children's Book Council (CBC) Diversity Committee
- The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (Reforma)
- Word of mouth
- Direct access to authors, especially independent authors
  - Reach out to authors you know
    - Hope you now feel you know me
  - We all have websites and many of us are on Facebook
- Covers (but watch out, can't always tell a book by the cover)

# The Importance Of Covers

- Having models on the cover that accurately represent the characters within the story tells teen readers who look like those characters that *they matter* and their stories are worth telling.
- But Publishers sometimes fear “real” covers won’t sell



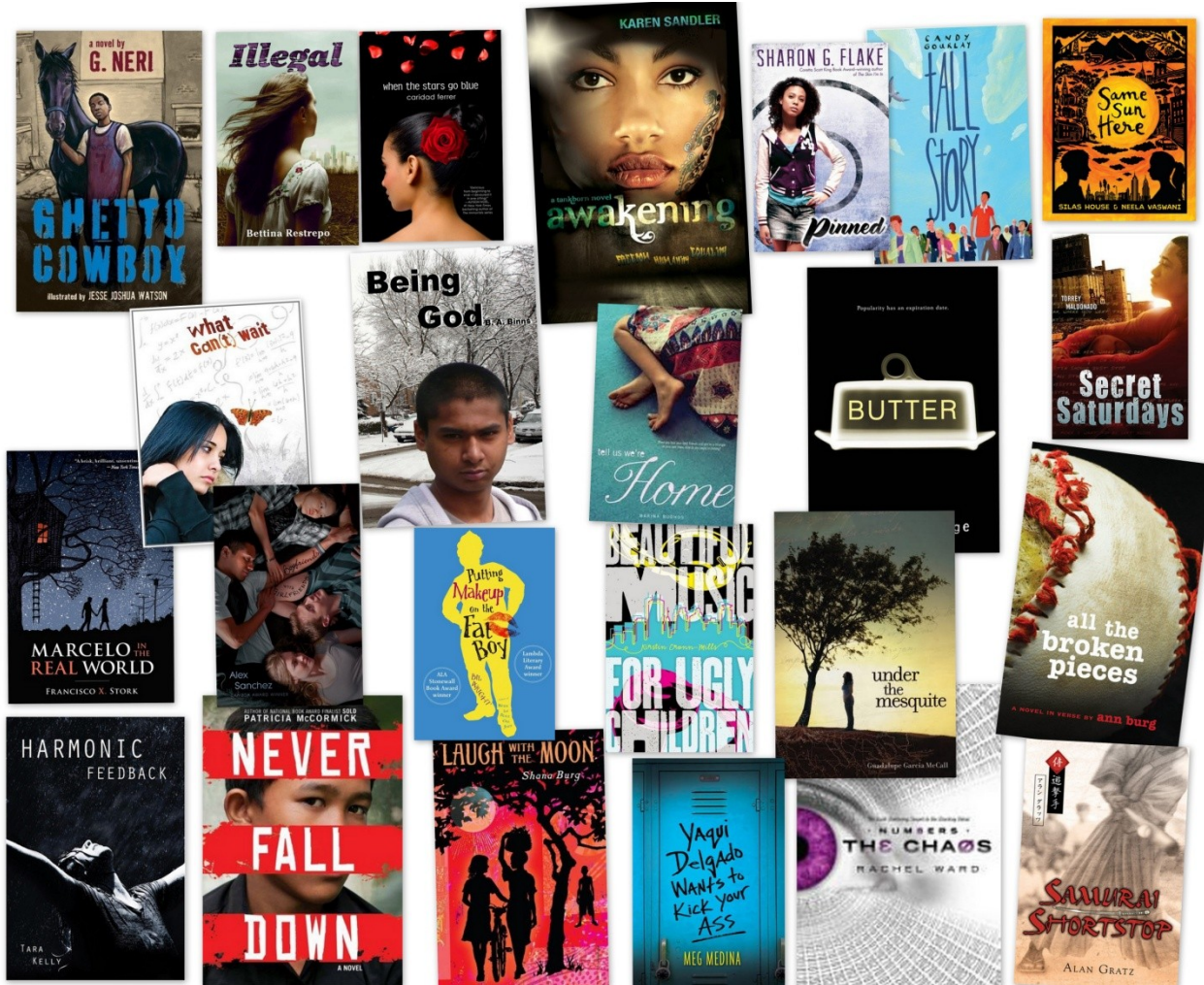
- Westside books, the original publisher for award-winning books like I Am Nuchu and Pull tried, but went out of business in 2012
- Tu books are working hard to depict diversity with covers like TankBorn
- The publisher for the Secrets of Truth & Beauty publisher chose not to depict the overweight protagonist on the cover



- Although the UK publisher for Demon’s Surrender accurately depicted the black gypsy heroine on the cover, the American publisher chose to go with the white youth who was only her romantic interest .
- Is it any wonder some authors are choosing to be independent, so they have some control?
- Can we be part of the solution? Actively searching for, purchasing and recommending books with accurate cover portrayals.

– Let publishers know that no one should be left invisible

# Importance of covers – (books used in the booktalk)



# BookTalk (suitable for middle grade)

- **Burg, Ann.** *All the Broken Pieces*. Scholastic Press, 2009. 978-0545080927 \$16.99  
Matt Pim, a Vietnamese-American boy adopted by an American family right after the Vietnam war. Matt is haunted by the specter of the American GI father who abandoned him, memories of the war, and the people he was forced to leave behind. He plays baseball, in part because he likes the game, but mostly to keep his adopted father happy. That's more important than ever because his adopted parents have a new baby and no longer need him.
- **Burg, Shana.** *Laugh With the Moon*. Delacorte Books for Young Readers. 2012. 9780385734714. \$16.99.  
13-year-old Clare, still grieving her mother's recent death, reluctantly travels from Massachusetts with her father to spend nine weeks in a remote village in Malawi, where new friends and experiences help open her mind and heart.
- **Gourlay, Candy.** *Tall Story*. David Fickling Books. 2011. 9780385752336. \$6.99.  
Sixteen-year-old Bernardo, who is eight feet tall and suffers from gigantism, leaves the Philippines to live with his mother's family in London, much to the delight of his thirteen-year-old half sister Andi, a passionate basketball player.
- **House, Silas and Neela Vaswani.** *Same Sun Here*. Candlewick Press. 2012. 9780763656843. \$15.99.  
Meena, a twelve-year-old Indian immigrant in New York City's Chinatown and River, a Kentucky coal miner's son, become pen pals, and eventually best friends, through a series of revealing letters where they discover common ground and the joy of opening their lives to others.
- **Maldonado, Torrey.** *Secret Saturdays*. Putnam Juvenile. 2010. 9780399251580 \$16.99  
Justin and his best friend Sean are both half Black, half Puerto Rican. They have even more in common, because both hide secrets about their relationships with their fathers. Sean's secret sends him floundering in school, and hanging with a tough crowd. Justin has to decide if helping his friend is worth telling the truth.
- **Mulligan, Andy.** *Trash*. David Fickling Books. 2010. 9780385752145 \$16.99  
Raphael, Gordo, and Rat, live lives of almost unimaginable poverty in an unnamed third world country. Instead of attending school, they spend their days, going through trash heaps, searching for anything salvageable. One day they find something that should never have been thrown out and find themselves in the middle of a corruption scandal that could cost their lives.
- **Neri, G.** *Ghetto Cowboy*. Candlewick Press. 2011. 9780763649227. \$15.99.  
Twelve-year-old Cole's behavior causes his mother to send him to live with a father he has never known. He soon has Cole involved with a group of African-American "cowboys" who rescue horses and use them to steer youths away from drugs and gangs.

# BookTalk – YA books

- **Binns, B. A.** *Being God*. AllTheColorsOfLove. 2013. 9781442421288. \$9.99.  
Malik has a cross to bear, or maybe it's a Star of David; being the black teenaged son of a Catholic mother and Jewish father frequently makes life confusing. Alcohol keeps him going; alcohol is destroying his life, leaving him faced with court-ordered community service shepherding an angry ten-year-old who hates the world, and an "offer he can't refuse" from the boy's gang leader brother.
- **Budhos, Marina.** *Tell Us We're Home*. Atheneum. 2010. 9781442421288. \$8.99.  
Three immigrant girls from different parts of the world become close friends in a small New Jersey town where their mothers have found domestic work, but their relationships are tested when one girl's mother is accused of theft.
- **Cronn-Mills, Kirstin.** *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*. Flux. 2012. 9780738732510. \$9.99.  
Gabe has always identified as a boy, but he was born with a girl's body. With his new public access radio show gaining in popularity, Gabe struggles with romance, friendships, and parents--all while trying to come out as transgendered. An audition for a station in Minneapolis looks like his ticket to a better life in the big city. But his entire future is threatened when several violent guys find out Gabe, the popular DJ, is also Elizabeth from school.
- **Farmer, Nancy.** *The House of the Scorpion*. Perfection Learning. 978-0756928087 2004 \$19.45  
Matteo Alacran is the clone of El Patron, a 142-year-old Latin American dictator. Matteo comes to realize the future planned for him by El Patron. But even when he escapes, the outside world presents him with even bigger problems and challenges than a future as "spare parts."
- **Ferrer, Caridad.** *When the Stars Go Blue*. Thomas Dunne Books. 2010. 9780312650049. \$9.99  
Soledad Reyes decides to dance Carmen as part of a drum and bugle corps competition, not knowing if it will help or harm her chance of becoming a professional ballet dancer but eager to pursue new options, including a romance with the boy who invited her to audition.
- **Flake, Sharon** *Pinned*. Scholastic Press, 2012. 9780545057183. \$17.99  
Autumn is outgoing and quirky. Adonis is brilliant and practical. But they both have disabilities. For Autumn, reading is a painful struggle that could end her star position as the wrestling team's only girl wrestler. Adonis is in a wheelchair and has difficulty accepting the limitations of others. Autumn and Adonis are both forced to see that our greatest weaknesses can turn into assets.
- **Garcia McCall, Guadalupe.** *Under the Mesquite*. Lee & Low, 2011. 9781600604294. \$17.95.  
Throughout her high school years, as her mother battles cancer, Lupita takes on more responsibility for her house and seven younger siblings, while finding refuge in acting and writing poetry.
- **Gratz, Alan.** *Samurai Shortstop*. Speak, 2008 9780142410998 \$7.99  
In 1890 Tokyo, Toyo's uncle commits Seppuku, an honorable suicide, rather than give up his Samurai swords. Toyo fears his father will do the same. Toyo enters an elite school, Ichiko, where seniors force new students into bloody initiation rites. He learns to honor his father and *Bushido*, the way of the Samurai, as he heads for a fateful game against an American team where players have to choose between winning with honor or losing with shame.
- **Kelly, Tara.** *Harmonic Feedback*. Henry Holt Books for Young Readers. 2010. 9780805090109. \$16.99.  
When Drea and her mother move in with her grandmother in Bellingham, Washington, the 16-year-old finds that she can have real friends in spite of her Asperger's, and that even when you love someone it does not make life perfect.

# BookTalk – YA Books

- **Lange, Erin Jade.** *Butter*. Bloomsbury USA. 2012. 9781599907802. \$16.99.  
Unable to control his binge eating, a morbidly obese teenager nicknamed Butter decides to make a live webcast of his last meal as he attempts to eat himself to death.
- **Leavitt, Martine.** *My Book of Life by Angel*. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. 2012. 9780374351236. \$17.99.  
Sixteen-year-old Angel struggles to free herself from the trap of prostitution and drug abuse.
- **McCormick, Patricia** *Never Fall Down*. Balzer + Bray. 2012. 978-0061730931. \$17.99  
When the sadistic Khmer Rouge arrive at his village in Cambodia, Arn is just a kid. He watches other kids dying before his eyes. He seizes a chance to survive by claiming he plays a musical instrument and then struggles to master the revolutionary songs the soldiers demand. Then Arn is handed a gun and forced to become a soldier.
- **Medina, Meg.** *Yaqui Delgado Wants To Kick Your Ass* Candlewick Press. 2013. 9780763658595. \$16.99  
Piddy has no idea who Yaqui Delgado is. She's only been in her new school a few weeks, and wants to learn more about the father she never knew. But that quest distances her from her mother just when she needs her the most. Her friends desert her, her schoolwork suffers, the administration turns a blind eye, and the harassment grows until Piddy is attacked in front of her home. No one comes to her rescue. She realizes there is no safety in school, or at home. Her aunt tells her she is strong, but will strength be enough to help her survive?
- **Perez, Ashley Hope.** *What Can't Wait*. Carolrhoda Books. 2011. 9780761361558. \$17.95.  
Marooned in a broken-down Houston neighborhood--and in a Mexican immigrant family where making ends meet matters much more than making it to college--smart, talented Marissa seeks comfort elsewhere when her home life becomes unbearable.
- **Restrepo, Bettina.** *Illegal*. Katherine Tegen Books. 2011. 9780061953422. \$16.99.  
Nora, a fifteen-year-old Mexican girl, faces the challenges of being an illegal immigrant in Texas when she and her mother cross the border in search of Nora's father.
- **Sanchez, Alex.** *Boyfriends with Girlfriends*. Simon & Schuster. 2011. 9781416937753. \$8.99.  
When Lance begins to date Sergio, who's bisexual, he's not sure that it'll work out, and when his best friend Allie, who has a boyfriend, meets Sergio's lesbian friend, she has unexpected feelings which she struggles to understand.
- **Sandler, Karen.** *Awakening*. Tu Books. 2013. 9781416937753. \$18.95.  
Kayla, a GEN (genetically engineered nonhuman) the lowest section in a highly stratified caste society, has joined the Kinship, a GEN underground. A deadly virus is sweeping their world, killing GENs, and thoughts of freedom need to be put aside in the fight for survival.
- **Stork, Francisco K.** *Marcelo in the Real World*. Arthur A. Levine, 2009. 9780545056908. \$8.99.  
Marcelo Sandoval, a seventeen-year-old boy on the high-functioning end of the autistic spectrum, faces new challenges, including romance and injustice, when he goes to work for his father in a corporate law firm.

# Finding Quality Material

- The quality of material is important, but just being published by a major publishing house does not guarantee quality, just as being published by an independent author does not deny quality.
  - Major houses are looking for books that will appeal to the largest number. Those looking for multicultural books or books for reluctant readers are frequently not their target audience.
- [Click here for a Youtube video about principles for selecting multicultural books.](#)
- Questions to ask an independent author:
  - Did you subscribe to those principles?
  - Who did your editing? With a large number of publishers cutting back and releasing editors, there are some excellent and experienced free-lance editors available for independent authors to use.
  - Where have you been reviewed?
  - What awards have you been nominated for, or won?
  - Are you willing to give a free copy?
- Obviously not every good book will win an award or have been reviewed by a prestigious journal. Nor can the authors afford to give a ton of free copies. But they should have something. And they should be willing to let a state or national library and/or teacher association get copies.



# A sample of small and independent publishers

- Tiny Satchel Press - <http://www.tinysatchelpress.com/>
- Saddleback Educational Publishing - <http://www.sdlback.com/>
- James Lorimar & Co, LTD - <http://www.lorimer.ca/childrens/childrens-home.html>
- Cinco Puntos Press(Native American and Hispanic) - <http://www.cincopuntos.com/products.sstg?id=3>
- Albert Whitman & Company - <http://www.albertwhitman.com/content.cfm/multicultural-books>
- Lee & Low Books - <http://www.leeandlow.com/>
- Just Us Books <http://www.justusbooksonlinestore.com/pages/ABOUT-JUST-US-BOOKS.html>
- Latinoteca (Hispanic) - <http://www.latinoteca.com/code/artepublicopress/Publications/catalog>
- American Indians in Children's Literature - <http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.net/>
- AllTheColorsOfLove – <http://allthecolorsoflove.com>

# Check out Award-winners

- Carter G. Woodson Award <http://www.socialstudies.org/awards/woodson> This annual award honors distinguished social science books that depict ethnicity in the U.S. The National Council for the Social Studies presents award for elementary, middle, and secondary school books.
- Coretta Scott King Award <http://www.ala.org/emiert/ckbookawards> Presented annually to authors and illustrators of African decent by the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the ALA.
- Golden Baobab Prize <http://www.goldenbaobab.org/> An African literary award established in July 2008 to encourage the writing of African literature for children and young adults.
- Burt Award for African Literature <http://www.codecan.org/get-involved/burt-award-africa> A literary prize that recognizes excellence in young adult fiction from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya.
- Cybil Awards [www.cybils.com](http://www.cybils.com) given by a consortium of children and young adult bloggers
- Lee & Low New Voices Award [http://www.leeandlow.com/p/new\\_voices\\_award.mhtml](http://www.leeandlow.com/p/new_voices_award.mhtml) for picture books written by writers of color.
- Lee & Low New Visions Award - [http://www.leeandlow.com/p/new\\_visions\\_award.mhtml](http://www.leeandlow.com/p/new_visions_award.mhtml) for middle grade or young adult fantasy, science fiction, or mystery novel by a writer of color.
- John Steptoe Award for New Talent <http://www.ala.org/emiert/ckbookawards/johnsteptoe> is given to a black author and to a black illustrator to recognize writers or artists at the beginning of their careers.
- Stonewall Book Awards <http://www.ala.org/glbtrt/award> The first and most enduring award for GLBT books, sponsored by the American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table.
- Filipino Readers Choice Awards - <http://filipinoreadercon.wordpress.com/>
- Multicultural Fiction category of the Independent Publisher Awards <http://www.independentpublisher.com/article.php?page=1534>

# Bloggers who review diverse books

- <http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>
- <http://thebrownbookshelf.com/>
- Books from African Authors - <http://bookshybooks.blogspot.com/>
- Books focusing on the pacific rim and South Asia - <http://www.papertigers.org/home.html>
- Multicultural books <http://campbele.wordpress.com>
- International Board on Books for Young People <http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=266>
- Kurdish-American author, middle school English teacher and blogger: <http://www.medeiasharif.com/>
- Library Media specialist - <http://missdomino.blogspot.com/>
- Pirate Tree <http://www.thepiratetree.com/>
- Thoughts of a “eclectic” reader: <http://classicvasilly.wordpress.com/>
- My multicultural reviews - <http://harperwriterstogether.blogspot.com/search/label/Multicultural>

[Click here to return](#)

# Displaying materials to attract readers

- Once you have the collection, make things easy for readers to find.



# Finding Authors

- <http://pinterest.com/crazyquiltedi/asian-ya-authors/>
- <http://pinterest.com/crazyquiltedi/latino-a-ya-authors/>
- <http://pinterest.com/crazyquiltedi/native-american-ya-authors/>
- <http://pinterest.com/crazyquiltedi/african-american-ya-authors/>

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  - <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/03/28/the-power-of-young-adult-fiction/more-nonwhite-characters-are-needed>