



Young Adult

literature log

By: Hannah Brown



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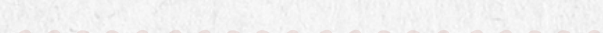
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After life

Gayle Forman

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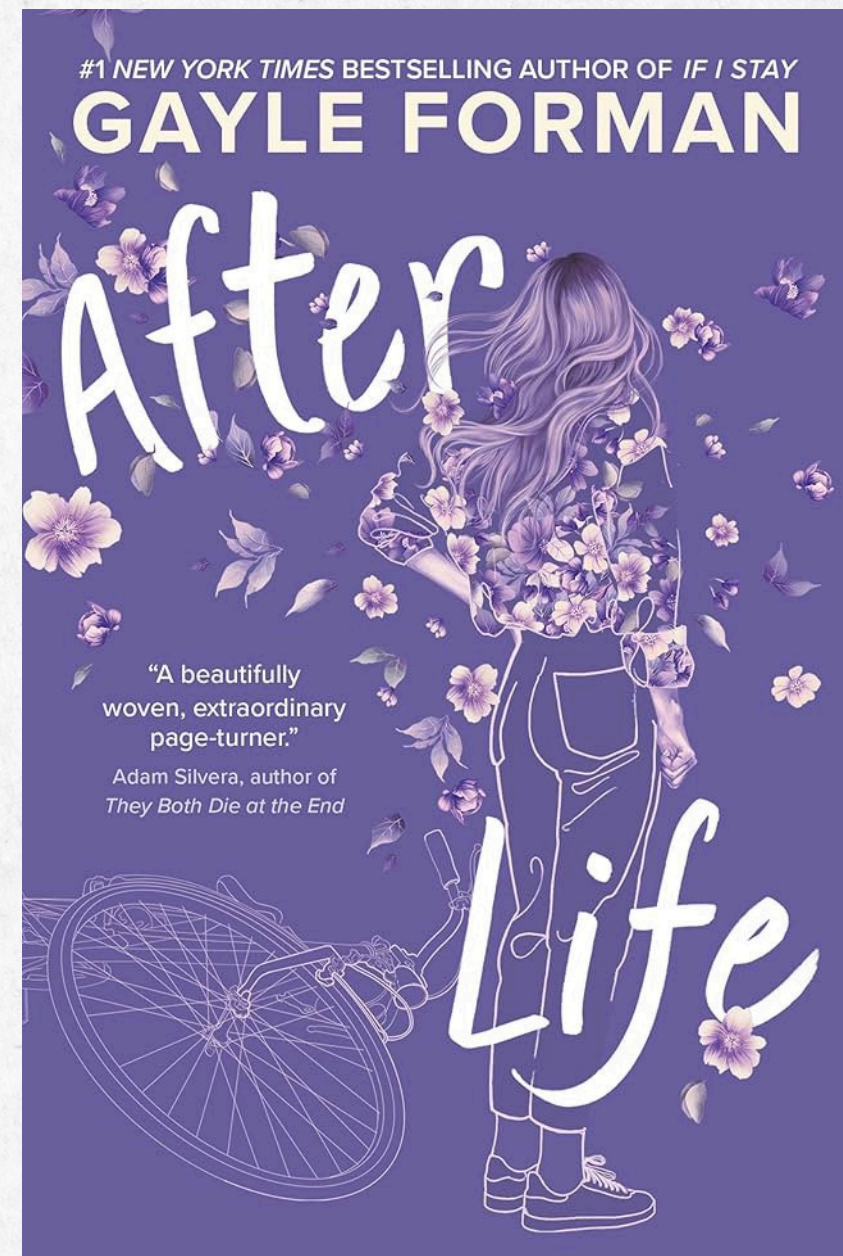
Reaction

I was captivated by the story of Amber Crane returning to her life seven years after she died in a hit-and-run accident. *After Life* was a quick read with chapters written in first person (Amber) and third person (many different people in her life), giving the reader a glimpse into the lives and perspectives of her family, friends, and acquaintances both before and after Amber's death. I thought a powerful aspect of this book was seeing how people react differently to a tragedy. For instance, her dad became more religious and had an obsessive focus on the accident itself, and her boyfriend, Calvin, did not finish school or continue with his college plans. There were also stories about smaller aspects of life and growth, like glimpses at communication difficulties between people in their youth and the impact it had, particularly Amber with a childhood best friend and Calvin with Amber. It shared a lot of perspectives, and the book clearly showed what an impact both her life and her death had on so many people who were both close and not as close to her.

I found this book to be a thought-provoking look at the journey of life, impact of death, and connection between the two. I thought the connection was particularly powerful with how Amber had always stayed with her sister, Melissa. Melissa also pointed out how more is noticed in life after someone's death. The connection is apparent, too, in how her life and death had seemed to change the path for so many people, in both large and smaller ways. Another aspect of the book that stood out was how Amber was able to look back at certain moments in her life with greater maturity and perspective upon her return, which I couldn't help but think may have happened with age, and not just death, too, if she had the chance. Beyond *After Life* being a well-told story, I think this look at life, death, and the connection between the two will have a lasting impact on me.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display** – A valuable addition to a number of book displays including those featuring an exploration of life and death or thought-provoking books.
- **High school book club** – A good choice for exploring and starting conversations about the sometimes-difficult topic of death, with its thought-provoking perspectives, and how it largely does not have a darker tone.

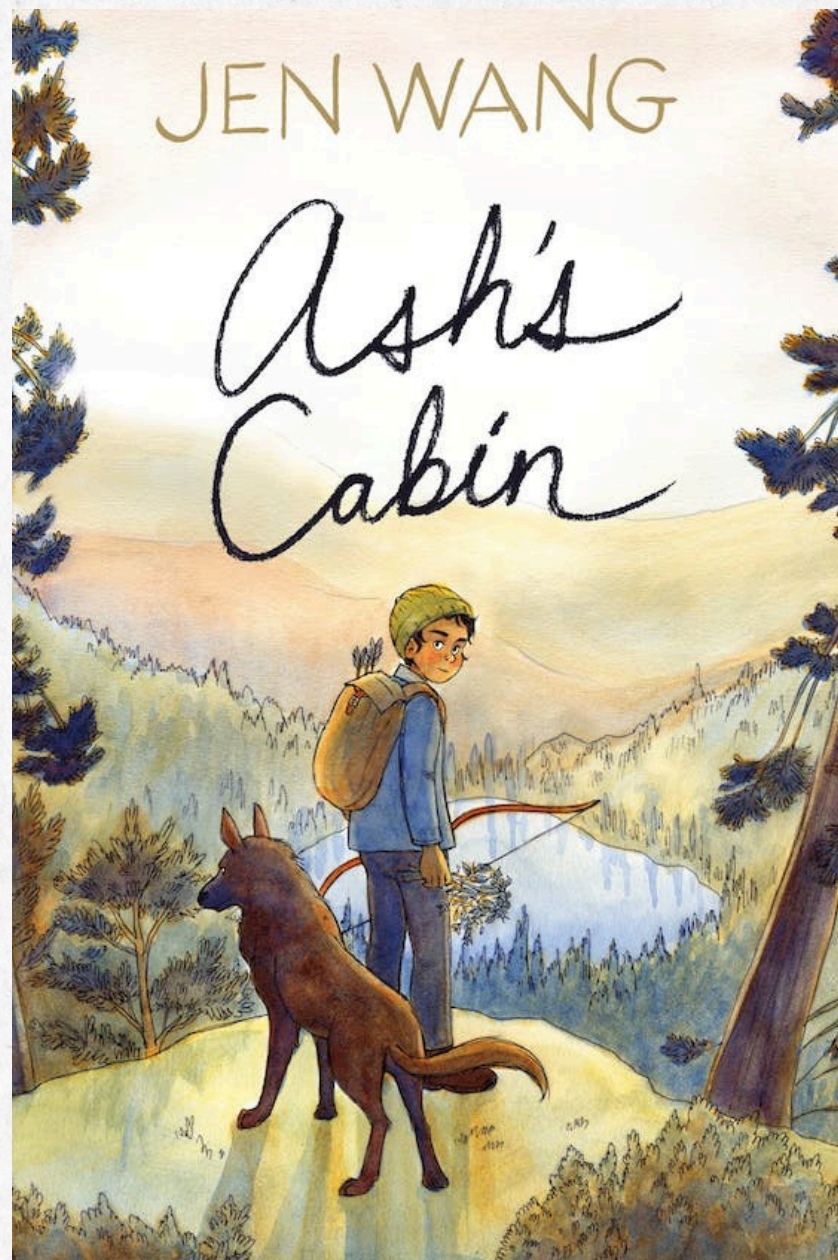


Realistic Fiction

Ash's Cabin

Jen Wang

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LGBTQ Novel/Memoir



Reaction

Ash's Cabin is an important story about both being yourself and finding yourself. I appreciated how Ash knows what they want. They had an understanding that their parents were not overly supportive of their name change or haircut, but that did not stop them from doing and advocating for what was authentic to them. Ash also recognizes that they have different priorities from their peers, and that does not make them want to conform to fit in. Ash felt connected to their grandfather and nature, and they knew that this is a connection that they wanted to explore. I also appreciated how Ash kept an open mind. When peers approached Ash about an environmental related club, Ash was open to learning about it and joining them. Ash could have shut themselves down from all people, but instead they just needed to actually find their people. Ash is Ash throughout, and that makes this a powerful story.

I also enjoyed the illustrations and environmental focus of this book. The illustrations were beautiful and supported the story. It literally showed Ash's journey in ways that words may have been hard to describe both through the conversation dialogue and some of the illustrations of being in nature. I also appreciated the focus on the environment in this book. It was not very loud, but it was powerful. From Ash trying to advocate for more clear recycling signs to literal illustrations of the edible plants, the love for nature and the environment was a very visible and important theme in the book.

One aspect of the book that was not my favorite was the part that Ash wanted to get away and find the cabin, but I would think that would have been very traumatic for their family. It seemed, while not perfect, Ash's parents cared deeply about them and Ash disappearing without telling them would have been devastating. This was not spoken to in the book beyond Ash reflecting on some interactions after returning and speaking to their cousin briefly, but I thought that this may have been a miss for this to not have been addressed more directly.

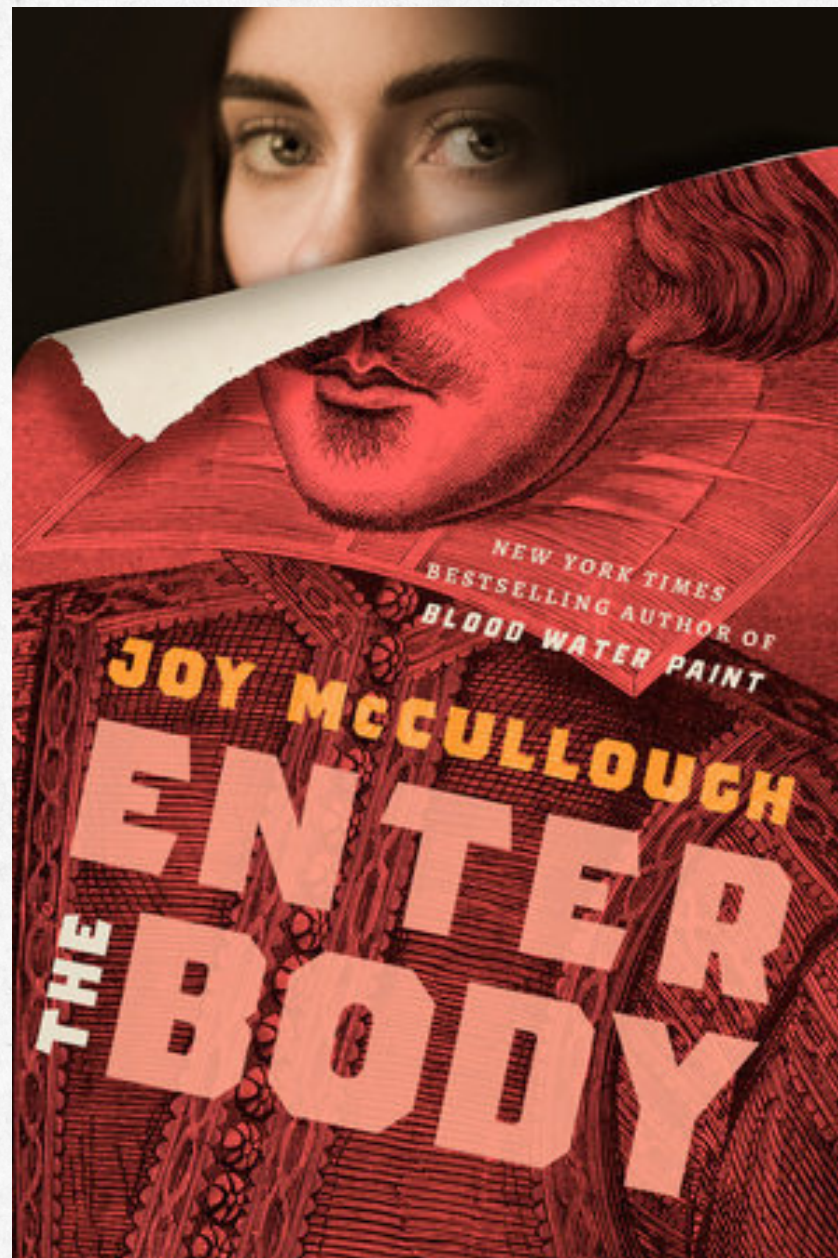
Uses in a Library

- **Book display** – This book is a great fit for a display with a theme about self-discovery, finding your identity, environment protection, or living in the wilderness.
- **High school book club** – I could see a book club including this book to support a topic around self-discovery.

Enter the Body

Joy McCullough

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Reimagined Classics & Retellings



Reaction

Initially, I admittedly was concerned that I would not be able to follow *Enter the Body*. It has been quite a while since I have read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, and I have not read *King Lear*. However, this concern quickly dissipated as I got into the book, and I have never been more interested in going back and reading these Shakespeare plays in full.

The dead women of Shakespeare, including Juliet, Ophelia and Cordelia, find themselves together beneath the stage in the trapdoor. They are wounded with missing limbs, stabs and bitemarks, but they also all are about to find out that they have a lot in common with how much autonomy (or lack thereof) they had over their body in their respective stories. The story starts with Juliet, Ophelia and Cordelia quickly retelling their actual story in a somewhat humorous way. As they tell the stories, there is also a larger question about how this violence towards these female characters is accepted, while their own desires in their respective plays were not.

While I enjoyed the retellings of their stories, I was absolutely captivated as they shared how they would have written it themselves. They stayed very true to character as they told their story and responded to the other stories being told. Ophelia's retelling involves both her mom and Hamlet's mom talking to him and changing the direction of the play. Cordelia tells a story of how she is married for the power of her mind. Both of those they chose to remain a tragedy, while Juliet is the only one who chooses a happy ending with her love story not involving death. I loved how it concludes with the women, who have gained the ability to tell their story from their own perspectives, feel empowered by this and wanted to dance. I felt like the reimagined telling of these stories provided a modern and more relatable perspective that helped me connect more with the characters and absolutely made me more interested in the original version, too.

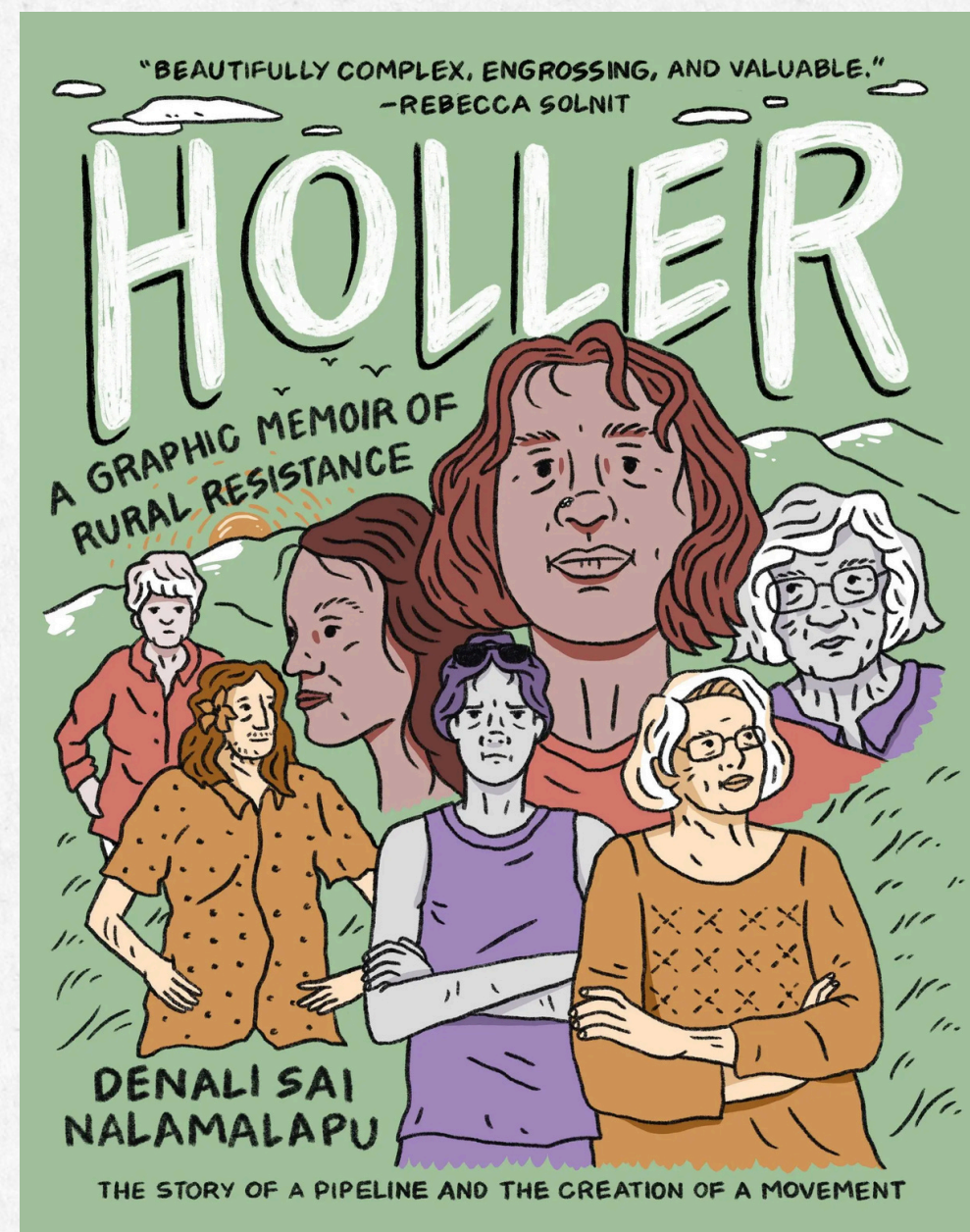
Uses in a Library

- **High school book club or classroom read** – A great book to pair with reading *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and/or *King Lear*. You could even take just the section of Juliet, Ophelia or Cordelia telling their story from their own perspective, if you only read one of the Shakespeare plays.
- **Book display, bookmark, or book poster** – This would be a good fit for a display, bookmark, or poster relating to Shakespeare, reimagined classics, or a topic relating to women's empowerment.

Holler

Denali Sai Nalamalapu

Copyright 2025



Reaction

Holler was an inspiring read that I did not even know that I needed until I read it. I was drawn to how it told so many stories within the book. There was the overall story about the Mountain Valley Pipeline and how decisions were made around it at the political level. The specific stories about the six activists. Then themes that ran between the stories like harnessing your own skills and passions to advocate for what you care about, the toll that advocacy can take on you, and how hope can come from more than an outcome but by appreciating the community and all that is around you. It also tells a story about climate justice and how real people are impacted by the decisions of corporations. While none of these stories were long, and this book was a quick read, they were moving, and the larger themes from this book will stay with me.

The graphics in this book told the story beautifully, too. While reading, I could almost feel these activists' connection to this land, and part of that came from being able to literally see it from their view. You saw a visual of them in this space. You could see their children playing on the land. You also could more easily see how they created change using their own skills. It shows an illustration of the photographer's photos. You could literally see the woman who chained herself to her car in her own yard. I felt this book embodied how "a picture is worth a thousand words," making the story even more inspiring.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display** – A great fit for a display about climate justice and/or changemakers.
- **High school book club** – This is a quick read that would create a lot of interesting discussion topics for a book club around activism and climate justice.
- **LibGuide, book poster, or bookmark** – It would also be a great addition to a bookmark, poster, or lib guide related to climate justice or changemakers.

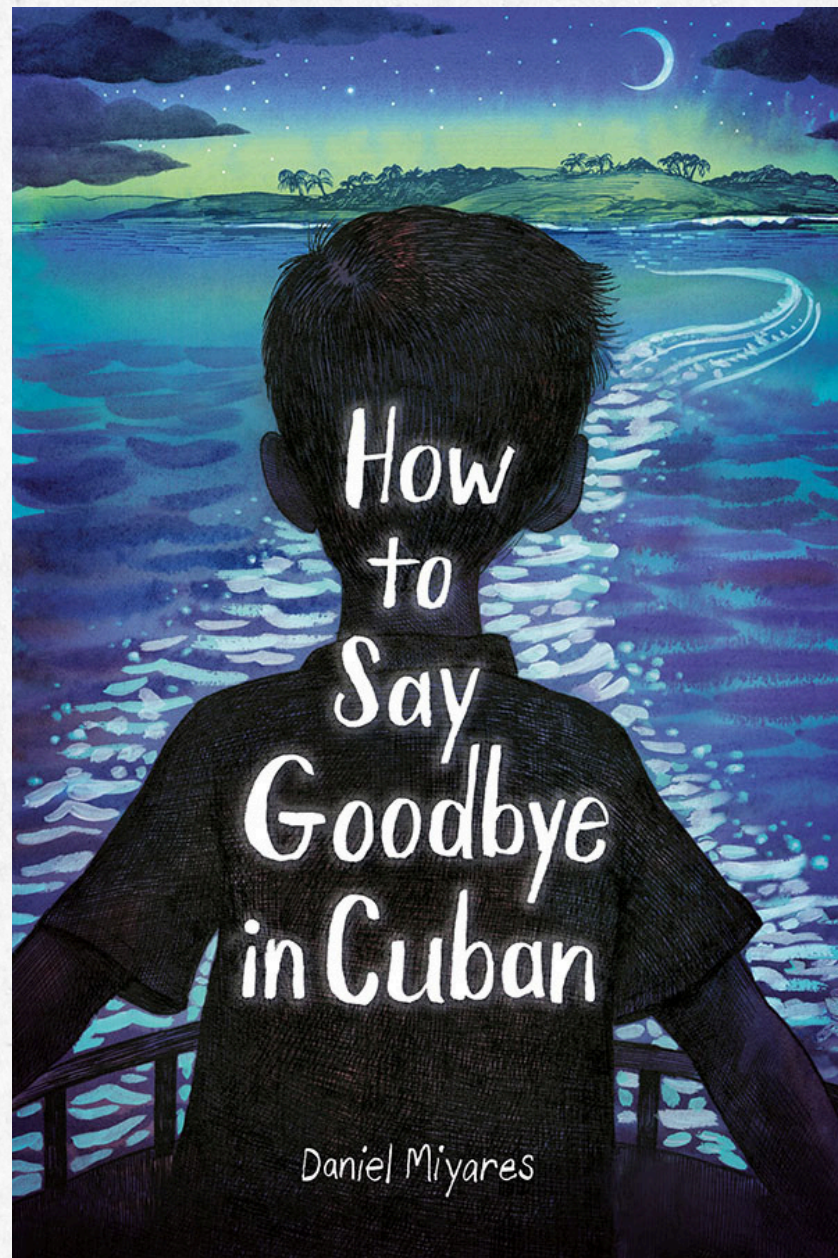
Social Justice

How to Say Goodbye in Cuban



Daniel Miyares

Copyright 2025



Reaction

Once I started reading *How to Say Goodbye in Cuban*, I had trouble putting it down until I knew Carlos and his family made it to America safely. I thought this book did a great job of communicating the child's perspective about a wide range of aspects of life including day-to-day relationships with family, moving and adjusting to living in a new place, and the impacts of the Cuban Revolution. It also captures how during big events, kids have questions, and his parents and grandfather had to navigate how to answer while trying to protect him and keep everyone safe. It felt realistic and like a well-told story that had many plot elements happening at one time.

I thought the way that Daniel Miyares mixed in full page updates about the Cuban Revolution between the chapters about Carlos and his family was a brilliant way to tell this story. It allowed there to be a full story about Carlos as a person, but also a clear part of the story about how the Cuban Revolution and its impact at that time. A few parts of the book that stood out were the conversations Carlos had with his family and his friends that showed how people felt differently during the revolution. Also, I thought it was powerful to show the reality of life under Fidel Castro's leadership with the impact on the father's business, the grandparents' farm, food rationing, and Carlos' interaction with his peers and neighbor. I thought the illustrations were beautiful and supported the storytelling. This felt like an important story about the Cuban Revolution and Latin American history. It also tells a powerful story about a family put in a situation where immigration is the path to hope and safety, yet that path requires risk, sacrifice, and leaving a lot behind. It was a captivating book, and I know I felt a lot better knowing how it ended.

Uses in a Library

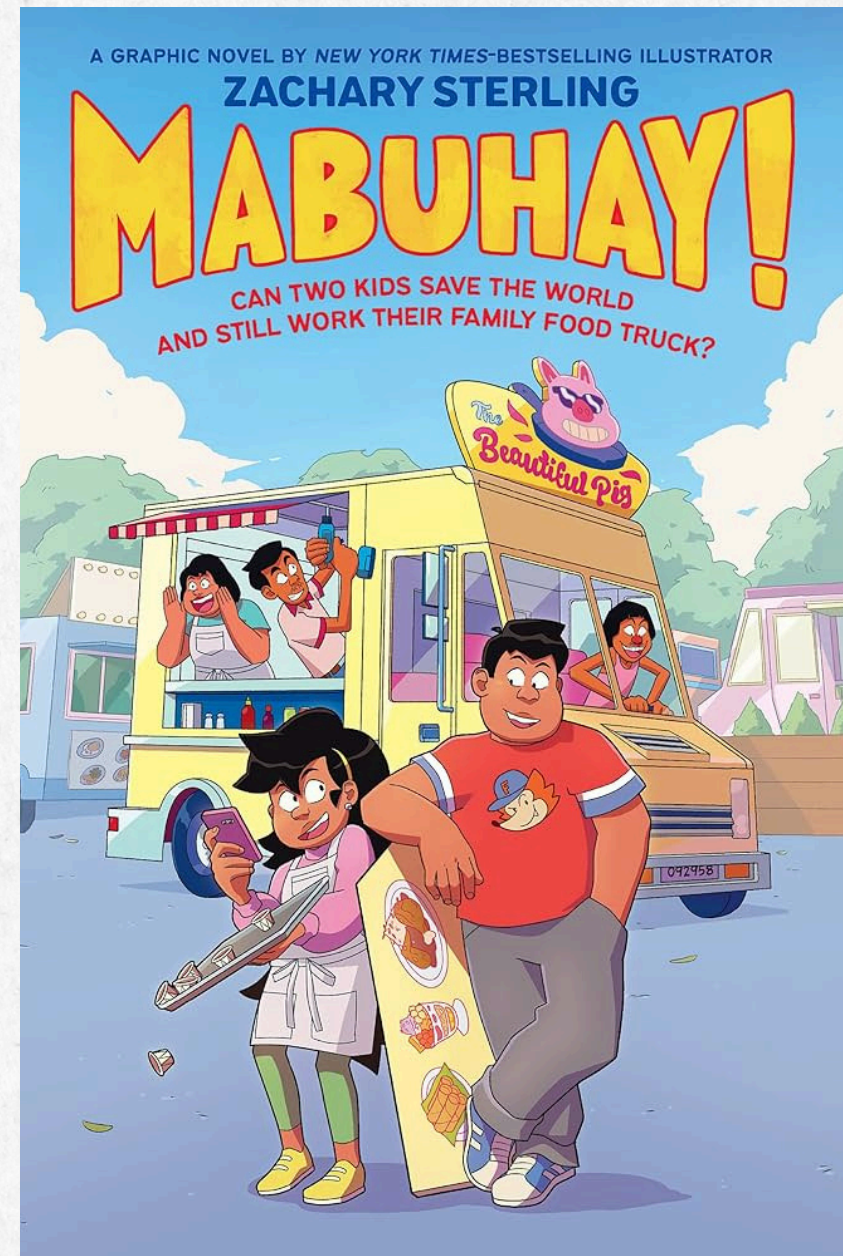
- **Display, bookmark, or book poster** – This book would be a valuable addition in a middle school or high school library to a display, bookmark or book poster relating to the immigrant perspective, asylum, the Cuban Revolution, or Latin American history.
- **Bulletin board** – I think pages from this book could support a bulletin board on one of the topics listed above, as well.

Historical Fiction

Mabuhay!

Zachary Sterling

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Reaction

If you already felt different from your peers in high school, learning that your mom, and then you, have superpowers and the responsibility to save the world probably would not make things easier. Except in this story, it was exactly the experience that JJ needed to fully realize how being different because of your heritage and cultural is something to be celebrated. This book felt like such a creative way to talk about Filipino food, culture, and the immigrant experience. I thought that there was something fun and unique about how the characters from the mom's folktales came to life, and also how Filipino folklore is weaved into the story. It was a great story, and I also appreciated that it felt different than about any book I have ever read. I had no clue how the plot was going to play out while I was reading it.

The graphics and dialogue in this book stood out to me as well. The illustrations were beautiful, and it added to the action and the fullness of the story. It made it feel like you were reading a superhero comic in the action scenes, but also that you could get transported to different areas of the world or even into a dream with the turn of a page. I thought that the illustrations and the way that they supported the story was done very well. I also enjoyed the dialogue between JJ and Althea. It felt like real siblings talking, bantering, and working together. The way the parents talked to the children, and essentially made them work at the food truck, also felt realistic from a child's perspective and also humorous at times. In a book that had a lot of elements of fantasy, this dialogue felt realistic. I thought this was a great story and that the graphics and dialogue took this book to the next level.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display, bookmark, or poster** – A good fit for a display, bookmark or poster about Filipino culture, Asian Americans, heritage, immigrant experiences, or unexpected superheroes.
- **Bulletin board** – I thought that there were some pages or panels from this book that would be a great fit on a bulletin board about the immigrant experience and learning about your heritage.

Asian Americans / Pacific Islanders

Please Pay Attention

Jamie Sumner

Copyright 2025



Reaction

I thought *Please Pay Attention* was a powerful book from a unique perspective with great storytelling that shines a light on many important (and difficult) topics related to society and schools. I was drawn to the book being from Bea's perspective as 6th grade student, as someone navigating the world with cerebral palsy and using a wheelchair, as a young person who has interests and a personality that is unique like all people, and as a someone I felt myself quickly interested in and cheering for throughout the book. I thought the book thoughtfully explored a wide range of important topics including school safety, what safety means for someone with a disability, the lasting impact of experiencing a tragedy, the power of mentorship, coping techniques, and gun legislation.

A few aspects of the book particularly stood out to me. The contrast between Bea's natural reaction at the time of hearing gun shots to look out the window thinking it may be fireworks, as in something fun, to when she startles at the loud noises from fear and trauma following the incident. Additionally, Bea's perspective after the shooting, when she is feeling like she could not protect herself when she literally could not physically follow the instructions she had been given, felt so important as a perspective different to my own life experience. Also, I felt the resilience and optimism Bea displays from the beginning to the end was inspiring, and it was powerful to see Bea ultimately feel like she could dye her hair and be able to go back to school and face a new normal.

While *Please Pay Attention* takes the reader through an experience that is difficult to think about without feeling emotions like helplessness, sadness, and fearful, I felt like there was ultimately a balance with hope and resilience that makes this a powerful book about school shootings and even having the ability to overcome great adversity in life.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display, bookmark, or book poster** – A great addition to a display, bookmark, or book poster on a theme related to living with a disability, gun control, and handling life changing events.
- **Conversation** – A compliment to a larger conversation, like a speaker or just a planned discussion, with a focus on living with a disability, gun control, or the impact of experiencing a traumatic event.

Whole Class Read

Time and Time Again

Chatham Greenfield

Copyright 2024



Reaction

I truly felt like I could have kept living the same day many more times again with Phoebe in *Time and Time Again*. This was such a fun, heartwarming, and thought-provoking book. I loved being along for the ride as Jess gets Phoebe out of her comfort zone and into experiences that result in a lot of personal growth, including developing and realizing that she had feelings for Jess. Phoebe and Jess develop a friendship that evolves into a healthy romantic relationship. I appreciated how Phoebe and Jess are full characters that extend beyond sexuality and gender identity.

I found Phoebe's character to be so relatable and also one that I truly learned from through this book. She is funny and thoughtful. She explains aspects of her life in such a powerful way. The way she shares her experiences with IBS throughout the book, particularly how present it is in so many aspects of her life, left me feeling like I understood to a much greater extent the experience of living with IBS or an invisible chronic illness. She was an insightful communicator and had a lot of empathy and understanding herself, making it a book that was not only engaging but felt like you really had the chance to learn about another perspective.

Towards the beginning of the book, I found myself wondering how I'd spend the day if I were in the time loop. By the end, after seeing how Phoebe grew so much from getting out of her comfort zone while in the time loop, I was reflecting on how I may need to explore getting out of my own comfort zone more often.

Uses in a Library

- **High school book club** – I thought Phoebe was such a good character for learning about living life with a chronic illness. Phoebe felt like a window character.
- **Book display** – This book would be a great addition to a book display with a focus on living with a chronic illness, affirming LGBTQIA+ stories, or something broader, like books from a unique perspective.
- **Bulletin board** – I believe that there are quotes from this book that would be great for a bulletin board that speak to living with a disability and embracing identity.

Stonewall Honor Book

Twenty-Four Seconds from Now...



Jason Reynolds

Copyright 2024



Romance

Reaction

Twenty-Four Seconds from Now . . . feels like the type of love story that should replace the fairytales. It is real. It is truly a story about love. It's also very funny at times. Jason Reynolds writes about Neon's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a way that feels so realistic. I felt like he brings to life both Neon as a character and Neon's relationship with his girlfriend, Aria.

I enjoyed spending time in Neon's world and learning about his relationship with Aria and also how his family has shaped him. You learn how his grandmother talks to him about relationships and love. You get to experience when his mom, loudly at a restaurant, gives him a version of "the talk" and also support. You learn about all the ways the dog, Denzel Jeremy Washington, has managed to get into his head. It speaks to differences in how his grandfather and father talk about love and relationships, and how Neon has the opportunity to learn from some his father's mistakes. You also learn about Aria, and how they both are each other's biggest cheerleaders. While at the same time, Neon also speaks to his own feelings of having some fear about the future and their relationship, too, as they are moving in different directions after high school.

I felt like this book is such an important story about life and love. His family, especially his mom and sister, have made him very considerate of Aria's feelings, especially as he is looking to take things to the next level with her. It also shows different relationships, like his sister's relationship with Spank, and also his parents who have had a more complicated relationship. His family is all invested in him, and he truly listens to their advice. I could have spent much more time in Neon's world.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display** – this is a great book for a love related display (like Valentine's Day) or a coming-of-age related display.
- **Bookmark or book poster** – This would be a good fit for a Valentine's Day bookmark or poster.

Victory. Stand!: Raising My Fist for Justice



Tommie Smith, Derrick Barnes, & Dawud Anyabwile

Copyright 2023

Reaction

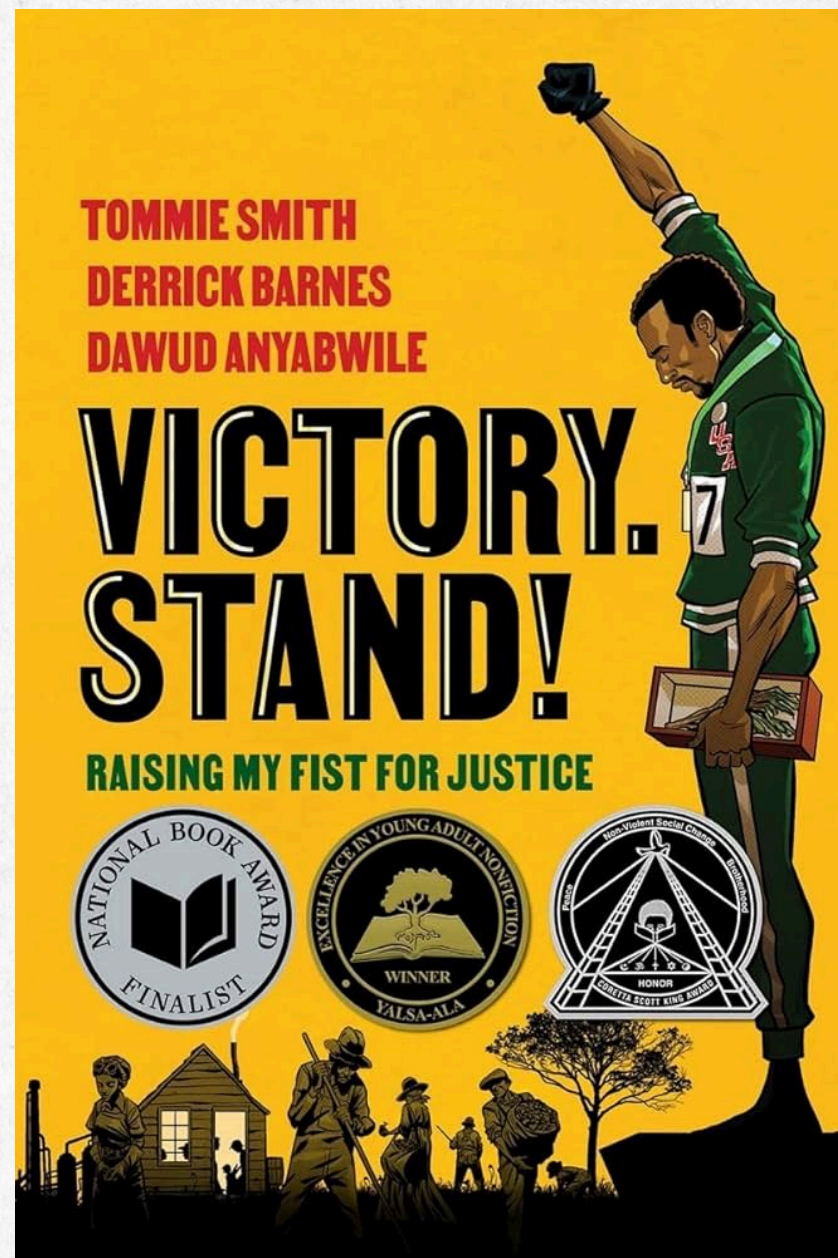
In *Victory. Stand!: Raising My Fist for Justice*, Tommie Smith described the literal action of raising his fist during the 200-meter sprint medal ceremony at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics as “planned spontaneity.” After learning about him through this book though, nothing felt spontaneous about his decision to use his platform and moment to support human rights and civil rights. Prior to reading this book, I had a background knowledge about Tommie Smith and the broader impact of the brave demonstration he was part of as the national anthem played after winning the gold medal. I think this book shines the light it deserves on how his life experiences and values influenced the protest instead of keeping the spotlight on himself, and also the longtime personal consequences he experienced because of the protest.

In addition to sharing about Tommie Smith’s life, I think this book allows the reader to learn about aspects of the larger time period through his perspective. I thought Tommie Smith’s life growing up offers a perspective on what it was like to grow up in the 1950s in rural Texas and then California as the child of a sharecropper and farmhand. As a teenager, he started attending civil rights protests and he created change through protests on his college campus. While Tommie Smith’s actions are now celebrated and respected, for thirty years it caused him great difficulty with employment and impacted his family life. It is important to learn about the impact of protest, the time period around the civil rights movement, and the consequences that leaders may face for selfless actions. I thought this book does all of that and more while being an engaging read.

I did want to note that I listened to this as an audio book, but I have learned that the book is accompanied by wonderful artwork. It was great as an audio book, but I’d imagine that the images create their own impact on the reader beyond the text. I would like to now read this book, too, so that I can have that experience as well.

Uses in a Library

- **Book display** – Great addition to a display related to the civil rights movement, black history, taking a stand, changemakers, or sports reads.
- **Classroom read** – I also think this would be a great book to pair with a middle school classroom studying the civil rights movement or black history. I think the way the book shares about his life growing up, how he evolves into being an activist, and then the repercussions of his actions provide insight about history and the time period. It is told in a way that is engaging way for a middle schooler with sports elements that may be of particular interest to some of the students.
- **LibGuide, bookmark, or book poster** – This could be added to a lib guide, bookmark, or poster for books about the civil rights movement, black history, taking a stand, changemakers, or sports reads.



Biography / Autobiography / Memoir