



# Back to the Classroom Fall 2021

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# Addressing **Learning Loss** in the English Language Arts Classroom

If you've been following the news, you've probably heard about learning loss.

By definition, **learning loss** refers to any loss of learned skills or knowledge due to gaps or interruptions in a student's education. In the past, learning loss was generally associated with periods of time, like summer break, or problems among individual students, such as extended absences.

Now, as the world heads closer toward normalcy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning loss continues to be a major issue as students return to the classroom.

According to estimates by **McKinsey & Company**, a consulting firm, students in the United States have potentially lost an average of three months of learning in math and 1.5 months in reading based on test data collected by Curriculum Associates' i-Ready platform.

Other reports project far greater impact. Stanford University's **Center for Research on Education Outcomes** estimates that, based on a typical 180-day school year, days of lost learning among American students range from 57 to 183 days in reading and 136 to 232 days in math by the end of the 2019-2020 school year. This equates to about half a year of learning in reading and a full year of learning in math.

For students attending remote classes, the quality of instruction matters, too. Another **report by McKinsey** estimates that students could lose three to four months of learning if they receive average remote instruction, seven to 11 months with lower-quality remote instruction, and 12 to 14 months if they don't receive any instruction at all.

As current reports on learning loss are only an estimate, it may take years for educators to fully understand the impact of the pandemic on student development.



## Assisting the Nation's Schools

On March 11, 2021, President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 into law. This stimulus bill is designed to help reinvigorate the economy and provide financial relief for businesses, families, and individuals as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Included in the ARP Act is [approximately \\$122 billion](#) for K-12 school funding called the [ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ARP ESSER\) Fund](#). Divided among the nation's education departments and school districts, ARP ESSER funds are meant to help schools safely reopen for in-person learning and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

[According to the bill](#), 20% of any money received by school districts must be directed to programs to reverse learning loss among students affected by the pandemic. This includes summer learning or enrichment programs, afterschool programs, and/or extended school year programs.

### Other ways schools may use the funds to reverse learning loss [as outlined in the act](#) include:

- Administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction
- Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students
- Providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment
- Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education

The act also provides [an additional \\$100 million](#) of funds available through September 2023 for the Institute of Education Sciences to research the effects of learning loss caused by the pandemic.

## Reversing Learning Loss in English Language Arts Education

Unfortunately, reversing learning loss can't be done just by putting students back in the classroom. Without [a solid curriculum](#) designed to reinforce key skills at grade-appropriate levels, there may not be much progress.

In the English language arts classroom, this means crafting a comprehensive, engaging teaching plan that tackles the core subjects like reading, writing, and vocabulary. And to do that, you'll need the right resources.

For teachers looking to improve student literacy but don't have time to source the right reading material, [Reading Informational Texts](#) and [Reading Literature](#) can help. The books in both series contain a selection of grade-appropriate passages and accompanying short-answer questions to encourage critical thinking. All passages are annotated in each edition; notes in *Reading Informational Texts* reveal rhetorical techniques, explain historical context, and clarify logical arguments, while comments in *Reading Literature* share definitions for tough vocabulary words, interpretations of difficult passages, and explanations of unfamiliar allusions.

Getting students reacquainted with the rules behind language and communication is easy with [Grammar for Writing](#). This guide uses a descriptive approach to help students learn how language works and why grammar rules exist. Each chapter tackles a specific grammar concept, such as the logic of punctuation, clauses and phrases, sentence structure, and parts of speech. Students then practice their grammar with writing exercises, not by completing simple multiple-choice questions.

If you're looking for one resource that encompasses all areas of English language arts, consider [Vocabulary Power Plus](#). Unlike other vocabulary programs that merely focus on word acquisition, *Vocabulary Power Plus* introduces new words alongside essential grammar, writing, and reading practice to strengthen students' core language arts skills. Each book includes lessons on over 200 high-impact words, context-based vocabulary questions, reading comprehension activities, and writing and grammar exercises modeled after the SAT and other standardized tests.

Students who work in a 1:1 classroom can benefit from [Vocabulary Power Plus Online](#), a digital program designed to improve vocabulary skills in just a few minutes of practice a week. Over the course of the series, students will learn more than 1,200 high-level words, thanks to interactive exercises, context-based activities, and summative assessments. Best of all, *Vocabulary Power Plus Online* features dedicated experiences for both students and teachers, giving you the control you need to make the program work for your classes.

If you need advice on tackling learning loss in your school or would like information about any of these ELA resources, please send a message to our customer service team at [info@prestwickhouse.com](mailto:info@prestwickhouse.com), or give us a call at 1-800-932-4593. We're here to help you start the school year with ease!

# The Best New YA Books for Curious Readers

There's no doubt that young adult literature deserves its place in the English language arts classroom. Generally aimed at preteen and teenage readers, YA books span genres and subject matter, offering something for every student. Avid and reluctant readers alike often respond well to YA literature, as many books feature accessible text, relatable characters, and common themes relevant to adolescents, such as identity, friendships, family, and love.

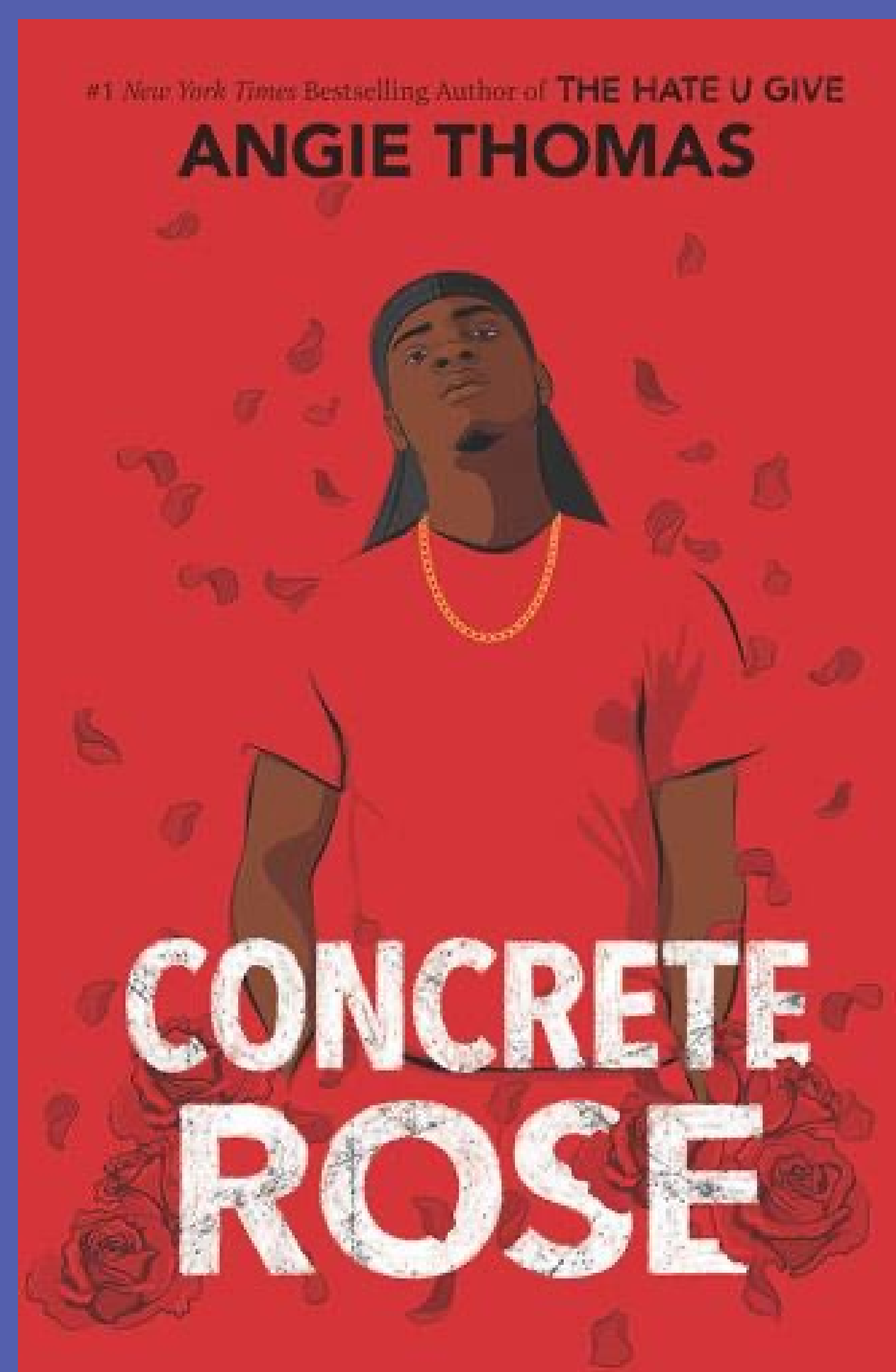
If you're looking for new independent reading choices or ideas for literature circles, check out these ten bestselling YA books that are sure to become student favorites!



## Be Not Far from Me

Mindy McGinnis

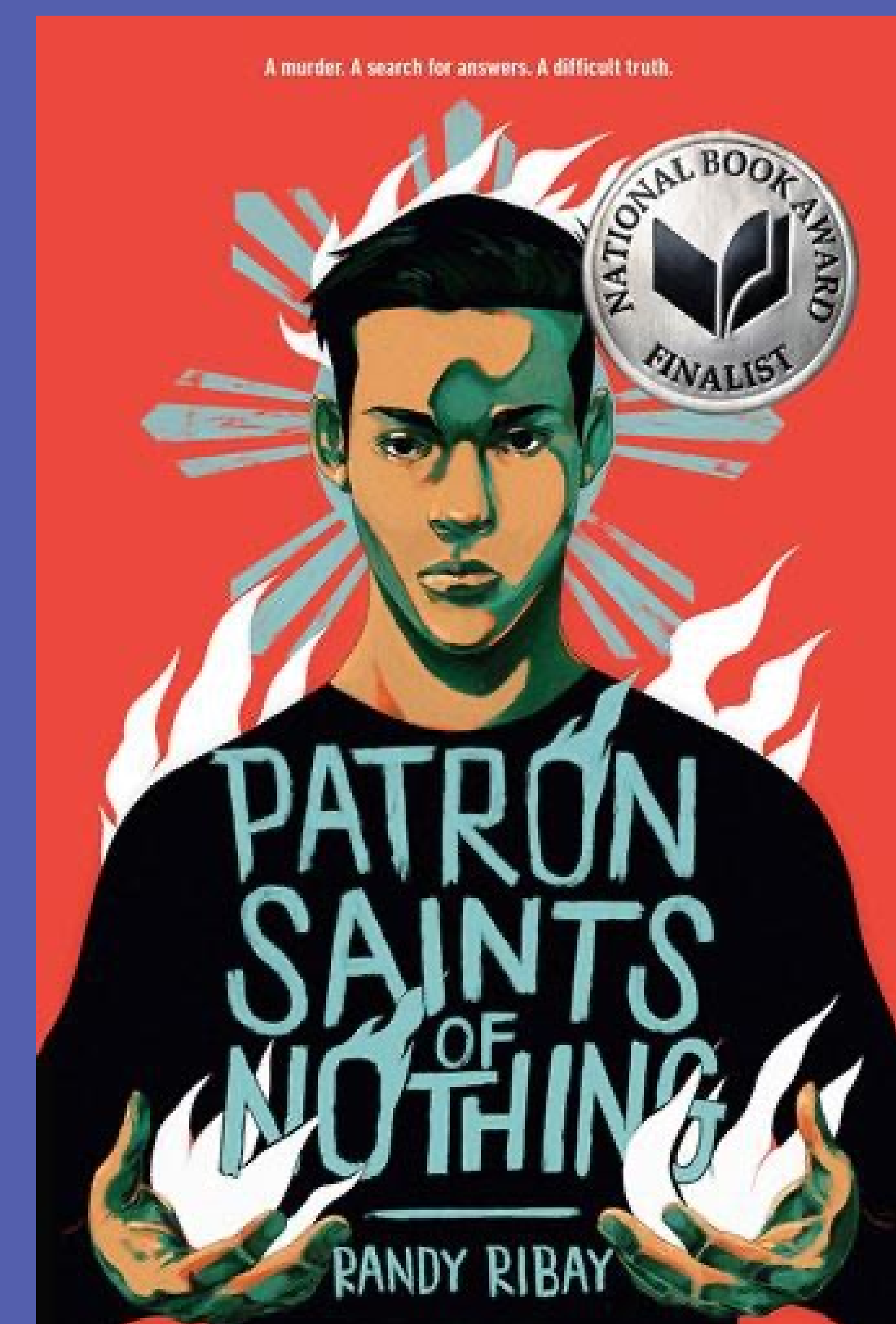
What was supposed to be a night of partying in the Smoky Mountains turns into one of terror after Ashley Hawkins catches her boyfriend with another girl. In a panic, she runs into the dark woods and falls down a ravine. As morning comes, Ashley realizes she's alone, lost in the forest with only the clothes on her back. To escape the mountains, Ashley must rely on her survival skills, knowing that giving up almost certainly means death. Violent scenes and sexual content make this book better suited for mature students.



## Concrete Rose

Angie Thomas

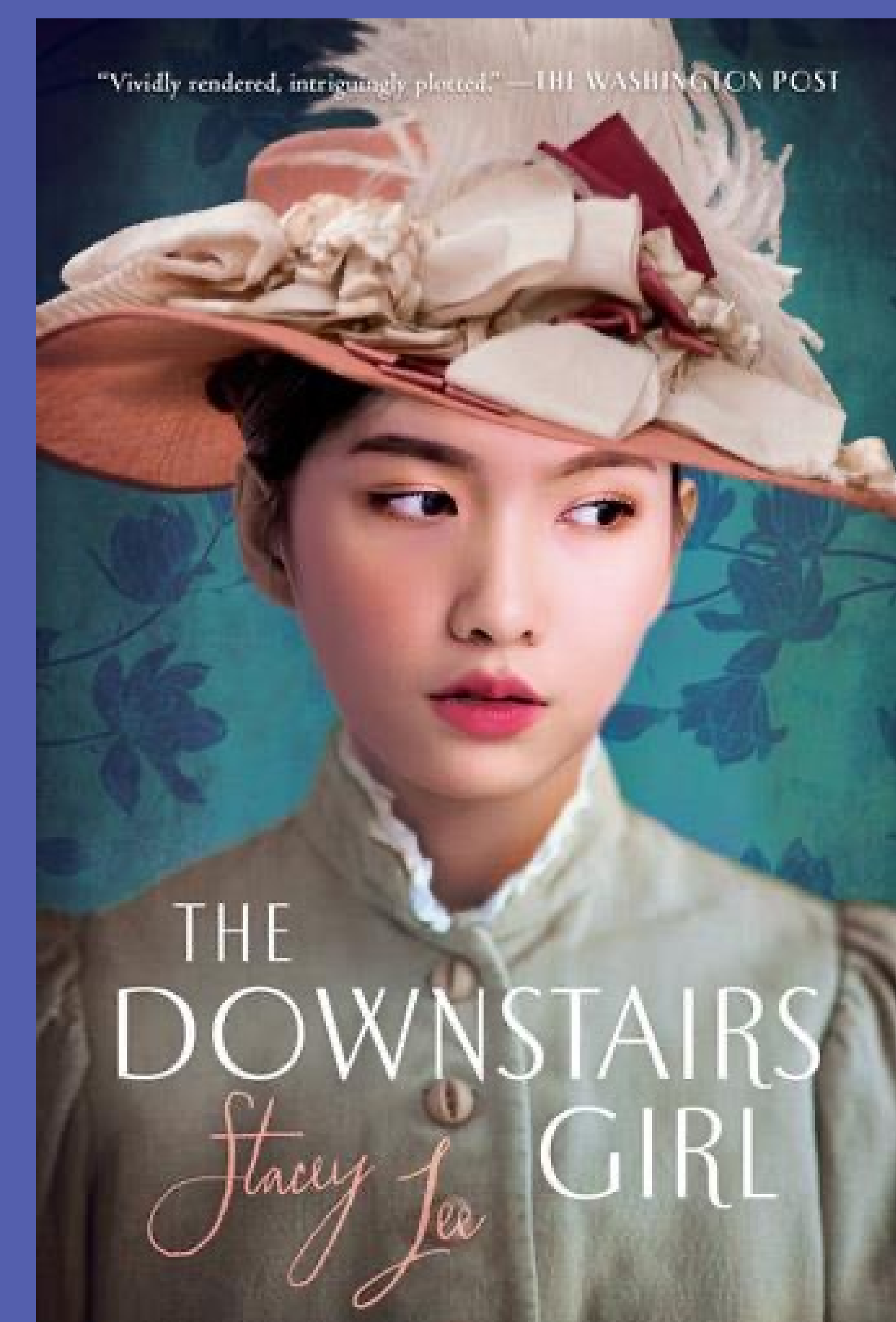
A prequel to *The Hate U Give*, this powerful novel explores the story of Maverick Carter, the father of the former book's protagonist, Starr. With his dad in prison, seventeen-year-old Maverick takes care of his family the only way he knows how: dealing for the King Lords. Things seem under control until Mav learns he's a father. With a son to raise, Mav resolves to finish school and set his life straight, but between his new responsibilities and old loyalties to his gang, Mav must make tough choices if he is to become the man he wants to be.



## Patron Saints of Nothing

Randy Ribay

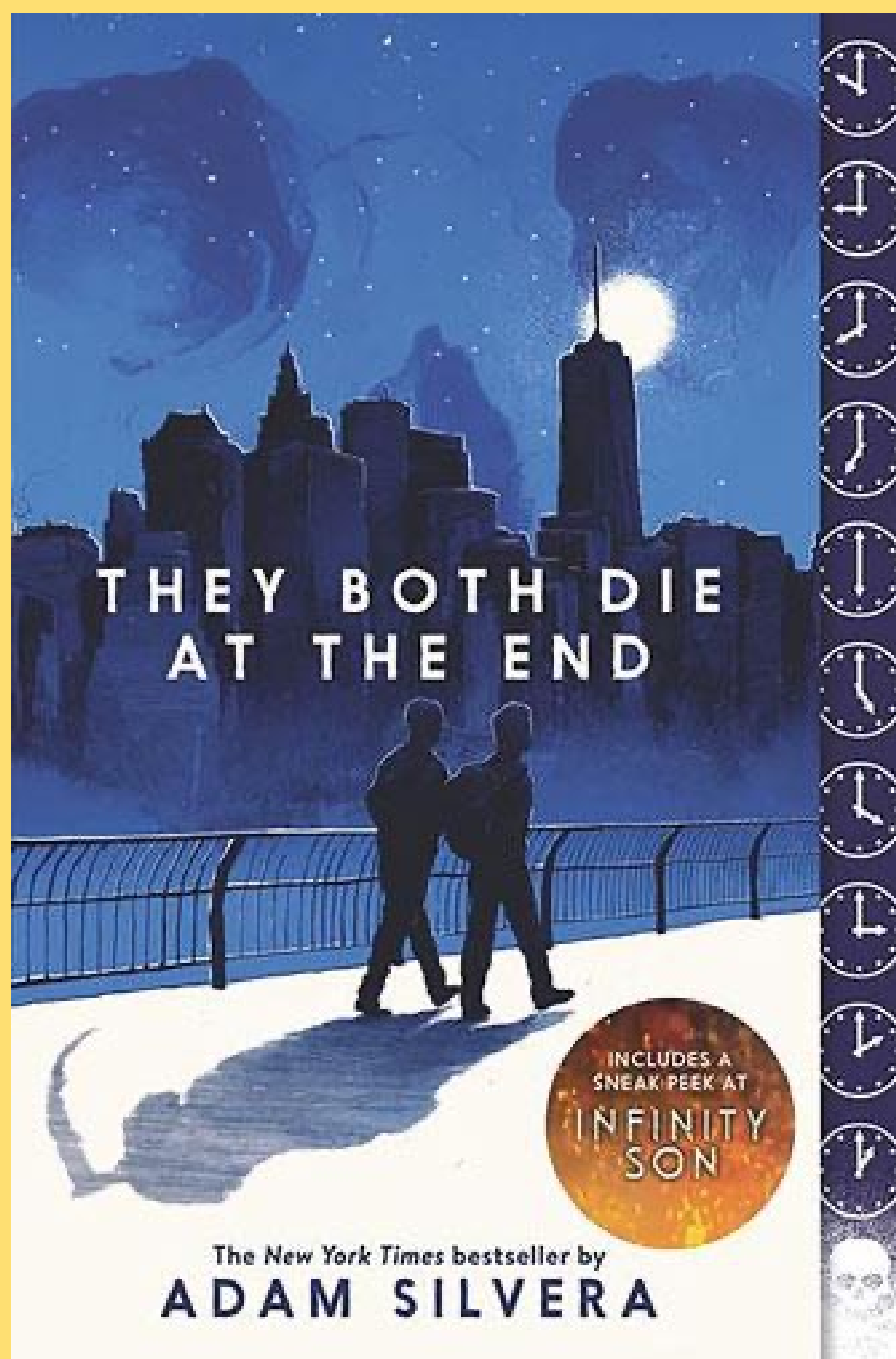
Jay Reguero planned on coasting by his last semester of high school before heading to college in the fall. But after learning that his Filipino cousin Jun was mysteriously murdered as part of President Duterte's war on drugs, Jay goes against his family's wishes and journeys to the Philippines to uncover the truth—no matter the consequences. Tackling themes of grief and guilt, this coming-of-age tale masterfully explores the complexities of cultural identity and the importance of familial bonds.



## The Downstairs Girl

Stacey Lee

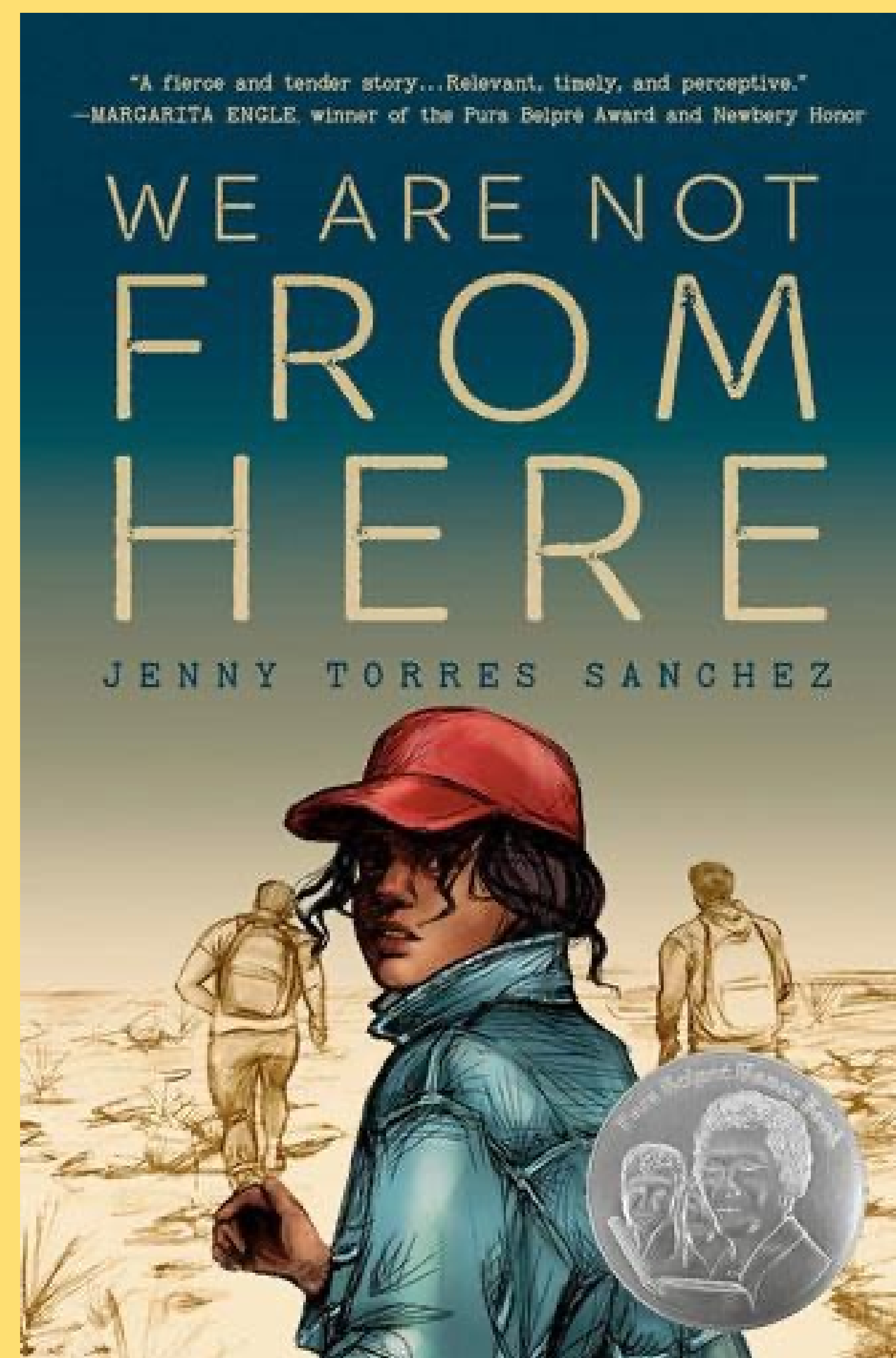
In 1890s Atlanta, Chinese American Jo Kuan spends her days working as a maid for one of the city's wealthiest families. By night, she adopts the pseudonym "Miss Sweetie," writing an advice column in the local newspaper. After her column gains popularity, Jo uses her platform to challenge conventional ideas about race and gender. But backlash soon follows, and those opposed to Jo's declarations seek to reveal Miss Sweetie's real identity. Written by the founder of We Need Diverse Books, this powerful novel explores themes relating to society and identity.



## They Both Die at the End

Adam Silvera

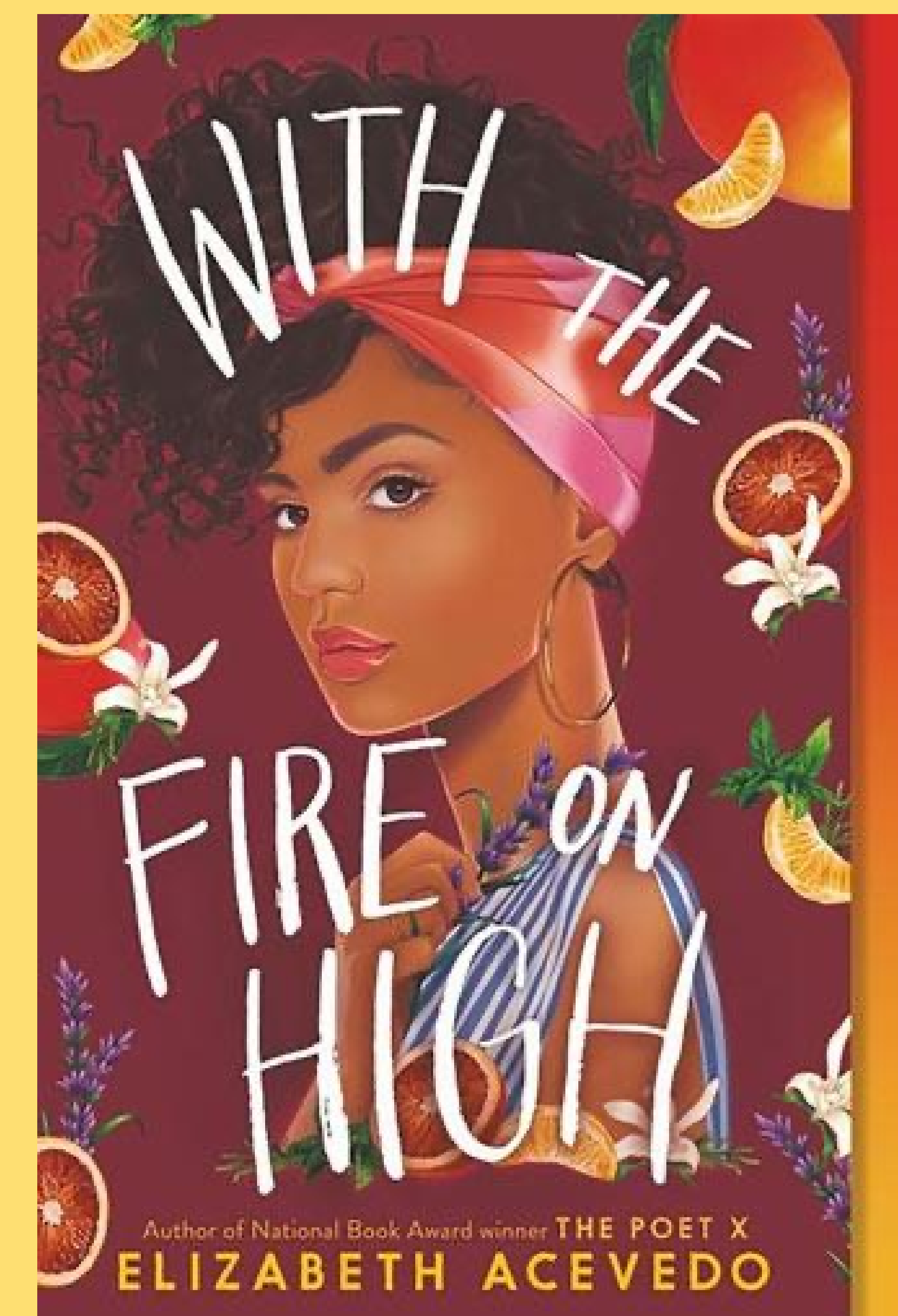
One night, Rufus Emeterio and Mateo Torrez each receive a phone call from Death-Cast, a company that is able to predict one's death, informing them that they have 24 hours left to live. Rufus and Mateo are strangers, but after connecting on an app called Last Friend, they meet up to do the impossible: to live a lifetime in a single day. Though the title reveals the story's conclusion, readers will undoubtedly follow Rufus and Mateo to the end.



## We Are Not from Here

Jenny Torres Sanchez

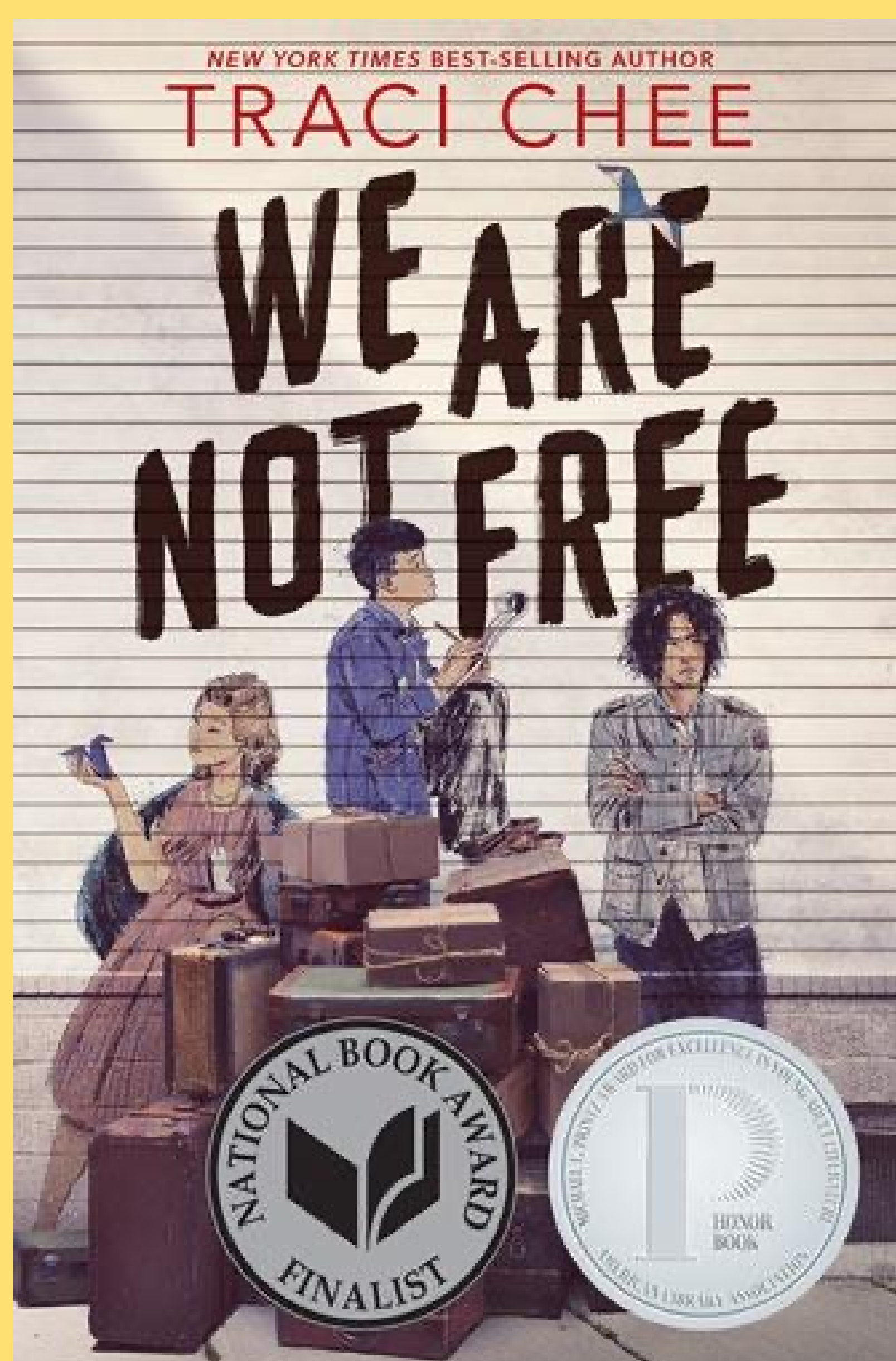
After witnessing an act of unspeakable violence, Pulga, Chico, and Pequeña make the difficult choice to abandon their Guatemalan hometown and head for refuge in the United States. To reach their destination, the teens must cross through Mexico following the route of La Bestia, an infamous system of trains fraught with threats of murder, kidnapping, and other dangers. Scenes of graphic violence and sexual assault make this book better suited for older readers.



## With the Fire on High

Elizabeth Acevedo

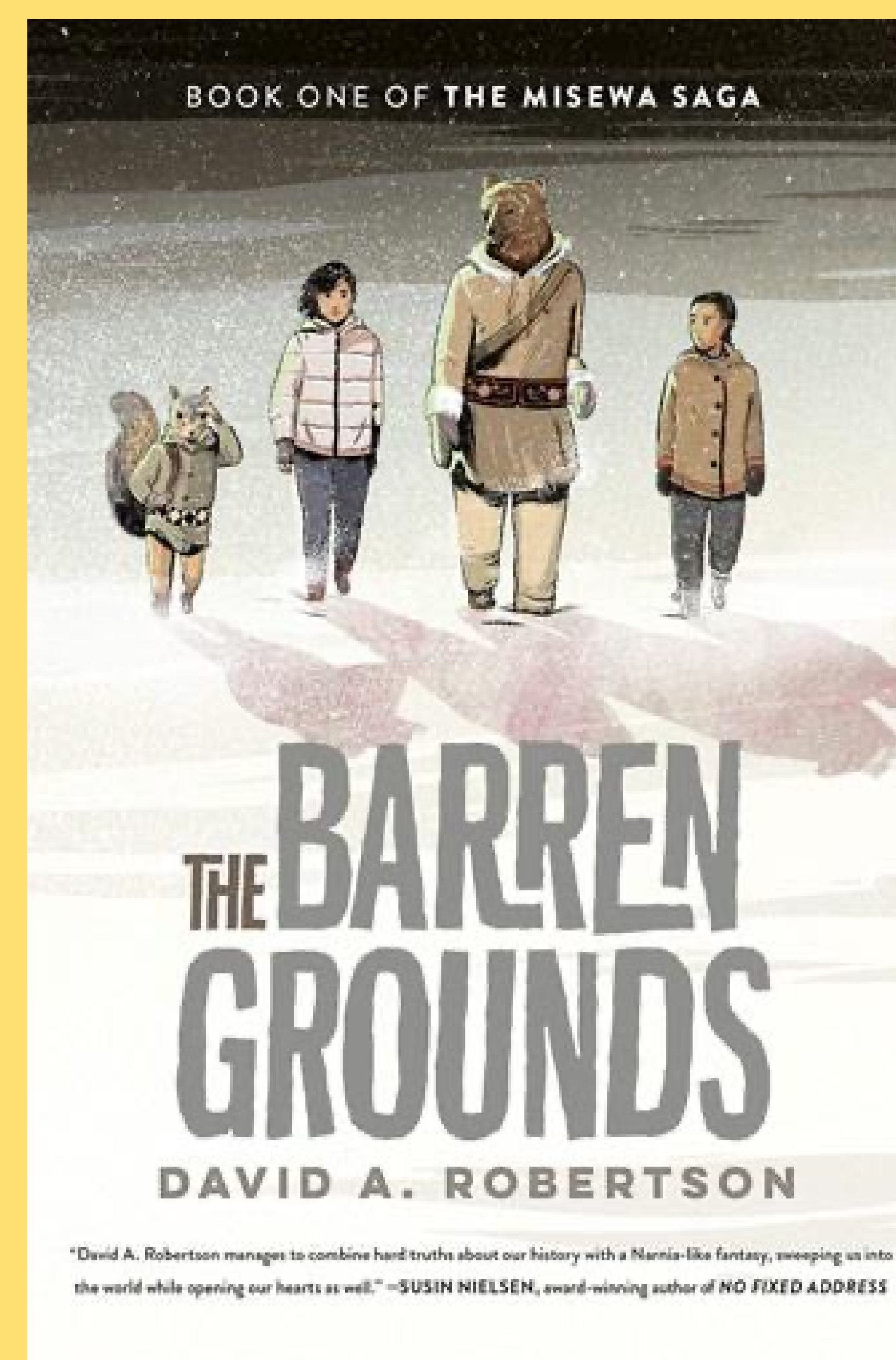
High school senior Emoni Santiago aspires to be a professional chef, but responsibilities must come first. Between caring for her daughter and supporting her abuela, Emoni barely has time for her school's new culinary arts class, let alone participate in the class's trip to Spain. Even so, she can't help but feel free in the kitchen. With a little self-confidence, a dash of courage, and a lot of hard work, Emoni realizes the future of her dreams isn't so far out of reach.



## We Are Not Free

Traci Chee

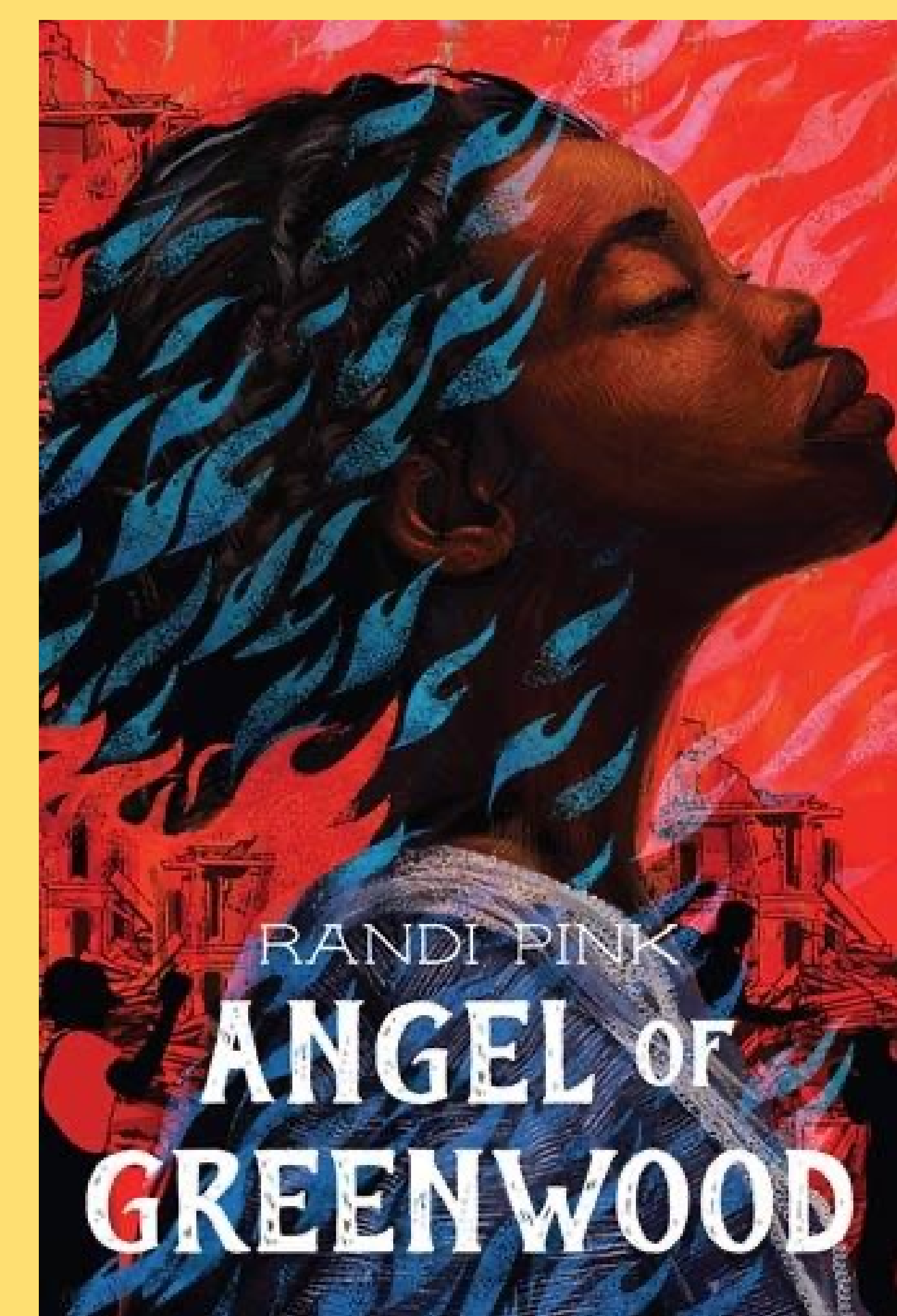
After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the US government forced over 100,000 people of Japanese ancestry into internment camps. *We Are Not Free* follows fourteen teenagers whose lives are irrevocably changed during this time. Uprooted from their San Francisco neighborhood, they are incarcerated simply because they are Nisei, or second-generation Japanese American citizens. Despite their differences, the teens must band together and protect each other from the hostilities of the world within and beyond the camp's barbed wire fence.



## The Barren Grounds

David A. Robertson

After being taken away from their families and communities, Morgan and Eli, two Indigenous children, are sent to the same foster home in Manitoba. Struggling to adapt to this new life, the two find solace in the attic, away from their foster parents. One day, a magical portal opens on the attic wall, transporting Morgan and Eli to a world called Askí. In this frozen landscape, they meet Ochek, a hunter trying to save his starving community, Misewa. In the quest for food, Morgan, Eli, and Ochek embark on a dangerous mission, racing against the icy grip of winter.



## Angel of Greenwood

Randi Pink

Known as "Black Wall Street," the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is home to two very different teenagers. A follower of W. E. B. Du Bois, Isaiah believes Black people should stand up and claim their place as equals. Angel supports Booker T. Washington's views, believing Black people should rise without conflict. Strangers at first, the two grow closer while working the same after-school job. But on May 31, 1921, everything changes when a vicious white mob destroys Greenwood, killing hundreds and displacing thousands.



# 5 Ways to Build Vocabulary Skills in Your Classroom

You already know that vocabulary instruction is essential to your students' development—reading comprehension depends on having strong language skills. But how do you integrate vocabulary instruction into your daily teaching? Here are a few ideas.

## 1. Latin and Greek Roots

Studying Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes is one of the best methods of vocabulary study, and with good reason—many English words borrow elements from Latin and Greek words. If your students can recall Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes, they'll have a huge advantage when it comes to learning new words and deciphering word meanings instantly.

Many general academic and domain-specific words are derived from Latin and Greek, including those used in a scientific discipline or context. For example, anthropology is derived from *anthropo* (meaning "human") and *logia* (in modern usage, "the science or study of"). Anthropology means, literally, "the study of humans." A few roots your students should know:

**ambi/amphi** — both  
**auto** — self  
**bio** — life  
**chrono** — time  
**geo** — earth  
**graph** — write  
**morph** — form, shape  
**photo** — light  
**tele** — far, end

Studying Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes can especially help English Language Learners (ELLs) if their first language is Spanish. Spanish is a Romance language, meaning it evolved from Latin. Showing Spanish-speaking ELLs the connections among Latin, Spanish, and English can help them better understand English, which can be a very tough language to learn.

One fun way for students to study Latin and Greek roots is to have them construct their own words from a few roots, prefixes, and suffixes and then define them. It doesn't matter if the words your students construct are "real" words or have any actual utility. As long as students can (accurately) define the words they build, they're on the right track. The more practice your students get with these roots, prefixes, and suffixes, the better, and many students love activities in which they [can show off a little creativity](#). Who knows? This could be the activity that ignites a student's love of language.

## 2. Words of the Week

This method involves selecting a few words and [creating activities and exercises](#) around these words, as well as using them regularly in class; if students encounter the words repeatedly, they're more likely to commit them to long-term knowledge.

The number of words you can teach your class certainly depends on the learning preferences of your students; some might learn vocabulary at a more rapid pace than others. Still, it's a good idea not to exceed 15 words per week—there's only so much students can commit to memory in a short timeframe.

## 3. Teaching Vocabulary from Literature

Want your students to remember the words you're teaching them? Make these words an integral part of your curriculum. One of the best ways to do this is to teach vocabulary from the literature your students are already reading.

Prior to beginning a literature unit, go through the book and identify challenging words from every chapter/act/section, and base any activities/exercises you build on these words.

One benefit of this approach is that whichever lessons you use or create will be reinforced when your students come across the vocabulary words in the book.

Of course, this approach is time-consuming and requires extra effort. The results are often worth it, but you could also look into [time-saving products](#) that do the busy work for you.

Another approach is to identify concepts or themes in the text you're teaching and come up with lists of words that relate to those concepts or themes. This is a great way to introduce words that aren't found in the text but are still relevant—and vocabulary study must be relevant, or students won't retain what they've learned.

## 4. Word Walls

A word wall is exactly what it sounds like: a wall in your classroom covered in words (and their definitions) that students are in the process of learning.

Word walls can be helpful in many ways. Some teachers use them for words their students find troublesome—whether it's difficulty spelling the words, confusing them with other words, or lacking an understanding of the precise meanings of words.

The best feature of a word wall is that it's persistent; word walls are meant to be living documents that develop over time with input from both the teacher and students. This persistence ensures that students encounter the words repeatedly, increasing the likelihood that they will [commit these words to long-term memory](#).

Another approach is to build word hubs—relating the vocabulary in some way to a central term that students likely already know. This is a great way to teach students synonyms and shades of meaning.

For example, let's say that your central word is sad. Spokes extending from that hub could include unhappy, dejected, melancholy, disconsolate, and lugubrious. Students could then try to use each of these words in different contexts, gradually developing an understanding of how they are used and how they differ from one another.

## 5. Pre-prepared Vocabulary Programs

The previous four methods of vocabulary instruction have one thing in common: They all require hours of prep work. If you need to save time (and who doesn't?) or are less familiar with developing tools for vocabulary instruction, [you may want to try a pre-prepared vocabulary program](#).

For Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes:

- [Vocabulary from Latin and Greek Roots](#)
- [Growing Your Vocabulary](#)

For Common Core/General vocabulary study:

- [Vocabulary Power Plus](#)

For SAT/ACT test prep:

- [Vocabulary Power Plus Classic](#)

For budget-conscious schools:

- [Vocabulary for the College Bound](#)

For context-based vocabulary study:

- [Vocabulary in Context](#)
- [Vocabulary from Literature](#)

For remediation/students working below grade level:

- [Standards-Based Vocabulary](#)

# How to Prepare to Teach a Book for the First Time

Teaching a book for the first time can be tough work, no matter how experienced you may be. You've chosen a text that you just know is going to help your students become better readers and thinkers—and help you reach your teaching goals for the year. So, what do you do next? Here are some ideas!

## Choose Skills You Want to Teach

To put together a strong literature unit, you'll first need to determine what skills you want to teach using the book you've selected. As you begin planning your unit, consider targeting these learning objectives:

### Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills

- Making inferences
- Interpreting figurative language
- Identifying themes and explaining how they're developed
- Evaluating an author's literary techniques
- Examining conflicts
- Identifying aspects of literary structure
- Determining a literary technique's effect on the text
- Examining the text through the lens of literary theories
- Analyzing the author's voice
- Analyzing tone and mood

### Reading and Writing Skills

- Learning and using new vocabulary words
- Writing for a specific purpose or audience
- Synthesizing new ideas from two or more sources
- Writing analytical essays
- Drafting personal responses to the text

If possible, you may want to give your students a diagnostic assessment before you start building your unit to find out what skills they already have and what they may need to work on.





## Choose Supplementary Resources

Are there other resources—whether or not they're directly related to the text—that will help students better understand the book or think about it from a new perspective? Absolutely!

For a more complete unit, consider seeking out poems, short stories, or novels that share similar themes, literary styles, and other characteristics with the main text. Studying these materials in conjunction with the book can help segment your unit and keep students engaged throughout.

Adaptations, like films and stage plays, can add another dimension to your lessons. Depending on your bandwidth, you can choose to show either full movies or specific scenes. When exploring these options, keep in mind that not all adaptations stay true to the book. Some may omit characters or key elements of the plot for clarity.

## Develop a Teaching Guide

To help your students get the most out of the text, you'll need plenty of good, thought-provoking discussion and analysis questions. Depending on your teaching style and the needs of your students, you might also want to add class-wide activities. Try to include some or all of these elements in your guide:

- **Short-answer questions**
- **Essay questions**
- **Free-writing prompts**
- **Vocabulary words and definitions for each chapter, act, or section**
- **Explanations of allusions**
- **Explanations of relevant literary theories**
- **A discussion of the text's literary genre**
- **Lessons on the text's historical context**
- **Information about the author**

Of course, not everyone has time to create a new literature unit entirely from scratch. That's why we developed our ready-to-use ***Literature Teaching Guides***. Each Prestwick House *Guide* takes a unique approach to literature—whether you're introducing literary theory or encouraging students to draw personal connections to the text. **[Check out this page](#)** for more information about our wide range of title-specific teaching guides.

Developing a new literature unit may seem intimidating at first, but don't worry! By following this advice, you'll be ready to teach your favorite books in no time.



# What's in the English Teacher's Free Library?

Launched in 2015, the [English Teacher's Free Library](#) is the place to find complimentary English language arts teaching resources created to support your work in the classroom. Whether you're looking for free lesson plans to inspire a new activity, posters to decorate your teaching space, or guides to teaching your favorite books, the English Teacher's Free Library has you covered.

New resources are added all the time, so [be sure to visit](#) throughout the school year—no library card needed!

## [Posters](#)

Decorating your classroom is easy with our collection of free downloadable posters! These high-resolution posters are ready to print and hang in just a few clicks. Choose from a variety of themes such as author quotes, famous lines in literature, poems, and literary theory.

## [Crossword Puzzles](#)

Available for more than 65 popular titles, our downloadable crossword puzzles are perfect for wrap-up activities, lessons for substitute teachers, or extra credit assignments. The clues in each puzzle ask students to recall key information about the book they've read, including character roles and relationships, details about plot and conflict, and notable words or phrases found in the text.

## [Lesson Plans](#)

Add variety to your curriculum with ready-made lesson plans covering a range of English language arts subjects like literature, grammar, and vocabulary. Most lesson plans are designed to be completed in a single class period, making it easy for you to add them to your class schedule whenever you'd like.

## [eBooks](#)

Our free eBook library is full of valuable English language arts information, from strategies for helping students understand Shakespeare to tips on teaching vocabulary and literature.

## [How to Teach Guides](#)

Need inspiration for building your literature units? How to Teach guides provide the perfect foundation for researching new ways to approach great works of literature. Each title-specific guide explores key facts, plot summaries, learning objectives, major themes, and more!



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 **Prestwick House**