

Bibliography for Books Featuring Homelessness & Poverty for Children and Young Adults

Asgedom, Mawi. *Of Beetles and Angels: A True Story of the American Dream*. Chicago; megadee books, 2001.

Selamawi and his family had to leave his homeland of Ethiopia at three years old. This story is his journey as a war refugee, eventually ending up in America. Mawi's story ends in success as he graduates from Harvard, but there are insightful experiences to be shared from the journey.

Interest Level: Grades 7-12

Balliett, Blue. *Hold Fast*. New York; Scholastic Press, 2013.

After her father disappears mysteriously and their small apartment is ransacked, Early, her younger brother, and her mother must move to a homeless shelter. When the police prove to be less than helpful, Early takes on the task of solving the mystery of her father's whereabouts to get the family back together, while managing the anxieties and challenges of homelessness.

Interest Level: Grades 3 – 7

Bauer, Joan. *Almost Home*. New York: Viking, 2012.

After several misfortunes, Sugar Mae Cole and her dog Shush, along with Sugar's mother, Reba, end up in a shelter in Chicago. When depression overwhelms Reba, Sugar is placed in foster care. With the help of her foster family and a caring teacher, Sugar, Reba, and Shush recover. Note: the dog makes it.

Interest Level: Grades 4 – 9

Baylor, Byrd. *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1994.

What would you do if your parents didn't seem to care that your family does not have enough money to replace your worn-out shoes, and that you eat at a scratched-up, homemade table. Mountain Girl's parents have different values than most people and she has to decide what is important to her.

Interest Level: Grades 2-3

ALA Booklist

Blake, Stephanie J. *The Marble Queen*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Children, 2012.

Who says playing marbles is for boys? Not Freedom Jane McKenzie, that's for sure! But she must convince her mother, the marble-playing boys (they won't include her now that they are 6th graders), and her former best friend, Daniel. That's enough to be getting on with, but she is also concerned about the upcoming arrival of a new baby in the family and her father's drinking problem. Note: set in Idaho.

Interest Level: Grades 3-6

Boeltz, Maribeth. Noah Z. Jones (illus.) *Those Shoes*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2007.

Everyone wants to have the right shoes, but Jeremy's grandmother cannot afford the black high tops his heart desires. The good news is Jeremy finds a pair of black high tops in the thrift store; the bad news is they are too small. Is wearing the "right" sneaker worth bandaged feet or can someone else make better use of those high tops?

Interest Level: Grades K-3

Brandt, Lois. Vin Vogel (illus.) *Maddi's Fridge*. Brooklyn, NY: Flashlight Press, 2014.

Maddie and Sofia are best friends and play together at the park. One day, when Sofia is ready for a snack, she heads to Maddi's place, throws open the fridge door to discover it is empty. Sofia tries to help in a number of disastrous ways, but finally hits on a solution.

Interest Level: K- Grade 3

Bunting, Eve. Lauren Castillo (illus.) *Yard Sale*. Somerville, MA; Candlewick Press, 2015.

Young Callie's family must have a yard sale to shed belongings that won't fit into their new, very small, apartment. It is a sad and bewildering day for Callie, but by the end of the yard sale she comes to realize that it isn't stuff that makes a home.

Interest Level: PreK – Grade 2

Carlson, Natalie. *The Family Under the Bridge*. New York; HarperTrophy, 1986.

An old homeless Parisian man finds three children under a bridge and discovers his own capacity for love and for family.

Interest Level: Gr. 3-6

Newbery Honor

de la Peña, Matt. Christian Robinson (illus.) *Last Stop on Market Street*. New York; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2015.

CJ and Nana take the bus from church to the soup kitchen every Sunday and CJ learns to find what's beautiful.

Interest Level: PreK- Grade 3

DiSalvo-Ryan, DyAnne. *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1991.

A young boy wonders about what his Uncle Willie does while he works at the local soup kitchen. Then, on a school holiday, he accompanies his uncle to work and recognizes some in his neighborhood who need help, along with those that provide it, and the warm relationships between the two.

Interest Level: K – Grade 3.

Dooley, Sarah. *Body of Water*. New York: Feiwel and Friends, 2001.

When a fire takes Ember's home and the family business, she finds herself living with her family in a campground. She spends the summer coming to terms with her homelessness, her family's religion (Wicca) and her suspicion that her best friend started the fire.

Interest Level: Grades 5-9

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1944.

Wanda Petronski wears the same dress to school every day, so her classmates do not believe her when she boasts of having 100 dresses at home. Her claim leads to teasing and cruelty from her classmates, until they find out she was telling the truth.

Interest Level: Grades 3-5

Newbery Honor, 1945.

Hazen, Barbara Shook. *Tight Times*. New York: Puffin Books, 1979.

Times are tight at home, but that doesn't stop a young boy from wanting a dog. Things get even tighter when Dad loses his job. What will he think of the new pet that his son brings home?

Interest level: Grades K-3

Reading Rainbow Book

Jacobson, Jennifer Richard. *Paper Things*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2015.

Young Ari decides to stick with her 19-year-old brother Gage when he leaves their guardian to strike out on his own. They want to stay together, but Gage does not actually have a place for them to live. All this moving around makes it difficult for Ari to keep up with her school work and makes her doubt her ability to keep a death bed promise to her mother: to attend a middle school for gifted students.

Interest Level: Grades 4-8

Jiménez, Francisco. *Breaking Through*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2001.

The true story of a boy who emigrated from Mexico with his family as a child, was deported, but found his way back to the United States. Although set in California in the 50's and 60's, the themes will ring true today.

Interest Level: Grades 5-8 Pura Belpré Honor, 2002.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: Harper Collins, 1978.

Gilly is a foster child who prides herself on being unmanageable. She is angry and bewildered with her latest foster placement and is determined to thwart anyone's efforts at kindness. Meanwhile, she futilely yearns for her mother to come and take her home.

Interest Level: Grades 4 – 7 Newbery Honor Book, 1979.

Perez, Amada Irma. *My Very Own Room*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2000.

With eight people in a small house, there is no privacy for the only girl in the family. With some creativity and support from her family, she is able to create a small space for herself.

Interest Level: Grades Pre-2 Horn Book, 2001

Quick, Matthew. *Sorta Like a Rockstar*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009.

Perpetual optimist Amber Appleton lives in a school bus with her dog and her alcoholic mother. She also has an active life with teaching English to Korean women, learning Haiku and spending time with friends. When tragedy strikes (not the dog), Amber must find her way again.

Interest Level: Grades 8 and up

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic Book Service, 2000.

Esperanza's family live a life of comfort in 1930's Mexico. A crisis forces them to flee to the United States. This award winning book details the changes Esperanza and her mom have to make to live happily again.

Interest Level: Grades 5-9

Pura Belpré Medal, 2002.

Reedy, Trent. *If You're Reading This*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2014.

Mike Wilson lives with his mother and younger sister in a small town in Iowa. Before he turns 15, Mike begins to receive letters in the mail from his father full of advice about life. Will appeal to reluctant readers and boys.

Interest Level: Grades 5-9

Rugg, Jim. *Street Angel, Vol. 1: The Princess of Poverty*. San Jose, CA: Slave Labor Graphics, 2005.

Jesse is a street-smart homeless teen who makes her way in the world using awesome skateboarding and martial arts skills. She and her sidekick, Bald Eagle, irreverently fight the powers of evil with wit, snark, and angst. Note: Graphic Novel. Contains mature themes.

Interest Level: Grades 10 – 12

Schindler, Holley. *The Junction of Sunshine & Lucky*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2014.

Auggie and her grandfather, Gus, live in the poor part of town. Life is good until the 5th grade brings friend problems and the attention of the town's House Beautification Committee. A feel good story about the truth of beauty and art and the shiny spirit of Auggie.

Interest Level: Grades 2-6

Shulevitz, Uri. *How I Learned Geography*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2008.

A memoir based on the author's experience as a Polish refugee during World War II in Kazakhstan. His father brings home a map that provides hours of distraction from the misery and of the family's destitute situation. Beautifully written and illustrated.

Interest Level: Grades PreK – 5

Caldecott Honor Book, 2009.

Smothers, Ethel Footman. *The Hard-Times Jar*. New York: Frances Foster Books, 2003.

Emma’s family moves around the country harvesting crops to support themselves. They put their extra money in a hard-times jar to save up in case they need something important before payday. But Emma desperately wants a real book of her own. How can she make that happen?

Interest Level: Grades 1-4

Horn Book, 2004.

Strasser, Todd. *No Place*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

Dan, a high school senior with a baseball scholarship to college, becomes homeless after his parents lose their jobs. This middle-class family find themselves living in the town’s tent city after exhausting the hospitality of relatives.

Interest Level: Grades 6-12

Tolan, Stephanie S. *Surviving the Applewhites*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.

A funny take on the bad-kid-turned-good story. Jake is sent to the crazy Applewhite family’s Creative Academy and discovers he has talent of his own and that he’s not so bad after all.

Interest Level: Grades 4-8

Newbery Honor Book, 2003.

Williams, Vera B. *A Chair for My Mother*. New York: William Morrow, 1982.

Rosa’s home is destroyed by a fire, so she and her mama and grandma have to start over. Mama works hard every day to take care of the family and Rosa wants to be able to replace the comfy chair they lost so Mama will have a place to rest.

Interest Level: Grades K-3

Caldecott Honor Book, 1983.

Wolf, Bernard. *Homeless*. New York: Orchard Books, 1995.

Follows a year in the life of Mikey, who stays in an emergency shelter, and then, with his family, is referred New York’s Henry Street Settlement Urban Family Center. A more positive take on the situation of homeless families and the services available to them.

Interest Level: Grades 1-5

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Each Kindness*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2012.

Maya is a new girl in class but she doesn't look like the other kids. Her clothes are old and ragged so the other kids don't want to play with her. When the classroom teacher gives a lesson about kindness, will it change things for Maya?

Interest level: Grades K-3

Coretta Scott King Honor Book, 2013.

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Death is the surprisingly compassionate narrator of this WWII era novel about Liesel Meminger. The story opens with Liesel on route to live with a foster family in a small German town, when she steals her first book. She lives with sweet and sour foster parents, who care deeply for her. One of the best YA books out there.

Interest Level: Grades 8 – Adult

Printz Honor Book, 2007.