

Reaching So-called “Reluctant” and/or Struggling Readers with Novels in Verse

Presented by:



ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS CANADA

Panelists



A long-time resident of Ottawa, Canada, Holly Bodger has been working in publishing since she graduated with an English degree from the University of Ottawa. **5 TO 1** is Holly's debut novel. You can learn more about Holly on her website, www.hollybodger.com



New York Times bestselling author Nikki Grimes is the recipient of the 2006 NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. Her distinguished works include ALA Notable book **What is Goodbye?**, Coretta Scott King Award winner **Bronx Masquerade**, and Coretta Scott King Author Honor books **Jazmin's Notebook**, **Talkin' About Bessie**, **Dark Sons**, **The Road to Paris**, and **Words with Wings**. Creator of the popular Meet Danitra Brown, Ms. Grimes lives in Corona, California. Nikki can be found at www.nikkigrimes.com.



Kari Anne Holt is the author of several middle grade novels in verse including **House Arrest**, (Chronicle 2015), **Rhyme Schemer** (Chronicle, 2014), and **Brains for Lunch**, which received a starred review in Publisher's Weekly and was highlighted on the Texas Library Association's Annotated Lone Star Reading List for 2011. She is also the author of *Mike Stellar: Nerves of Steel*, a nominee for the 2014 Connecticut Library Association Nutmeg Book Award and the 2013 Maud Hart Lovelace Award. Her website is www.kaholt.com



Lesléa Newman is the author of 65 books for readers of all ages including the poetry collections, **Still Life with Buddy**, **Nobody's Mother**, **Signs of Love**, and **October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard** (teen novel-in-verse) which received a Stonewall Honor from the American Library Association. Currently she is a faculty member of Spalding University's low-residency MFA in Writing program. She can be found at www.lesleanewman.com and www.lesleakids.com



Gabrielle Prendergast is a UK-born Canadian/Australian who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia. Gabrielle is the author of the verse novel **Audacious** which was nominated for a White Pine Award, a CLA Award and won a Westchester Award. The sequel, **Capricious**, was recently nominated for a BC Book Prize. Gabrielle blogs and rants at www.angelhorn.com and www.versenovels.com.



Tess Prendergast is a children's librarian and literacy researcher from Vancouver, BC. She is committed to the goals of inclusive, responsive library services, collections and programs for all. Tess especially loves doing book talks for middle grade classes and has found that introducing diverse readers to diverse forms of literature is a wonderful way to keep kids coming back to the library. Tess can be found at www.reluctantnomore.wordpress.com and www.inclusiveearlyliteracy.wordpress.com.

Three ways verse novels can address the needs of reluctant or struggling readers (including adults):

Mechanically – it is thought that some reading dysfunction results from issues such as poor “scanning” . Because of the appearance of verse on the page, readers have less distraction from their scanning and thus can focus on the words. Verse is visually ingested differently than prose. Elements of verse, such as repetition or rhyme also assist struggling readers to process and retain what they’ve read.

Logistically – verse novels are short. Often 20,000 words or less. Kids are over-scheduled. Many read slowly because of reading dysfunctions, attention issues or because they are learning English. Verse novels tell a story as complete as a prose novel but often in fewer words.

Thematically – for the above reasons and because of the impressionistic nature of poetry, novels in verse are uniquely suited to explore material that is unfamiliar and/or confronting. Novels with a cultural setting unfamiliar to the reader also benefit from this lightness. Novels with multiple protagonists also work well.

Supporting Material for this panel can be found at <http://versenovels.com/2015/05/21/ala2015/>

Resources

A wide range of posts and materials on novels in verse - www.versenovels.com

A website in development challenging the label “reluctant” - <https://reluctantnomore.wordpress.com/>

An extensive list of novels in verse <http://www.sarahtregay.com/novelsinverse.html>

Research and articles

Because novels in verse (especially for young readers) are a relatively “new” field of interest, there is a dearth of research, particularly from the perspective of librarianship or education. Some relevant studies of poetry include:

Space and Pattern in Linear and Postlinear Poetry: Empirical and theoretical approaches. Andrew Michael Roberts, Jane Stabler, Martin H. Fischer & Lisa Otty (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13825577.2012.754967>)

Sweet silent thought: Alliteration and resonance in poetry comprehension: R. Brooke Lea; David N. Rapp; Andrew Elfenbein; Aaron D. Mitchel; Russell Swinburne Romine (<http://www.scholars.northwestern.edu/pubDetail.asp?t=&id=47649120457&>)

Using Poetry to Improve Fluency and Comprehension in Third-Grade Students Karen E. Newsome Valdosta State University Doerun, Georgia knewsome@worth.k12.ga.us (<http://coefaculty.valdosta.edu/lshmert/gera/volume6/Newsome-LSfinal.pdf>)

“...research also found that reading poetry, in particular, increases activity in the right hemisphere of the brain, an area concerned with “autobiographical memory”, helping the reader to reflect...” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/9797617/Shakespeare-and-Wordsworth-boost-the-brain-new-research-reveals.html>

Library/Education Specific Follow-up questions:

Should novels in verse have their own shelves? Should libraries do special displays of novels in verse?

Can novels in verse be labelled somehow? Should novel in verse reading lists be available?

How can novels in verse be incorporated into the common core poetry units? Are they “novels” or “verse”?

Are novels in verse included on independent reading lists? Who is the perfect novels in verse reader?