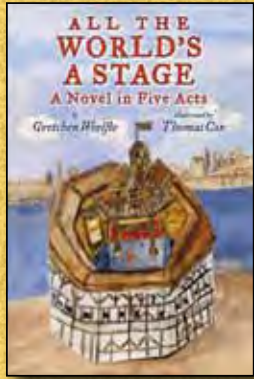


ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

A NOVEL IN FIVE ACTS

BY **Gretchen Woelfle**

ILLUSTRATED BY **Thomas Cox**



“Readers will be enthralled . . . [by] this accessible, you-are-there saga.” —The Horn Book

Inspired by fact, this coming-of-age story offers a vivid picture of the rebuilding of and life behind the curtain at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre.

Ages 10–14 HC: 978-0-8234-2281-4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

All the World’s a Stage is written in five acts with scenes for each. Discuss why you think the author chose to structure the novel this way. What significance do the chapter titles have?

Shakespeare’s plays include comedies, tragedies, and histories. Which do you think best describes *All the World’s a Stage*?

What circumstances led Kit to live on his own on the streets of London? Besides being “cutpurses,” what were other options for orphans in Elizabethan England?

Why does Kit at first prefer living on the streets to working at the theater, and why does he later decide to return?

Shakespeare often used the theme of appearance vs. reality in his plays. In what ways is that theme used in *All the World’s a Stage*?

In Shakespeare’s time, women’s roles were played by boys. Why do you think there were no actresses?

When Kit tells Molly, “At least you have got good luck now” (p. 41), she replies, “’Tis not luck.” What does she mean, and how does Kit learn the truth of her words?

Kit asks Will Shakespeare why he buys broadsides in the marketplace. Shakespeare responds, “Everything is food for my plays” (p. 45) and adds, “You are writing a play too, lad, the play of your life” (p. 46). Discuss how this theme, echoing the book’s title, is demonstrated throughout the novel.

Kit and Molly discuss fate. Kit quotes Shakespeare, who called Romeo and Juliet “star-crossed lovers. ’Twas their fate to die” (p. 122). But in his later play *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare paraphrases Molly’s belief, “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves. . . .” (I, ii, 140–141). These contradictory statements echo much of Kit’s conflict throughout the novel. What role, if any, did fate play in Kit’s life?

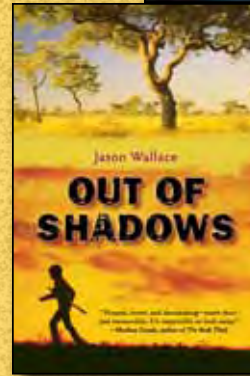
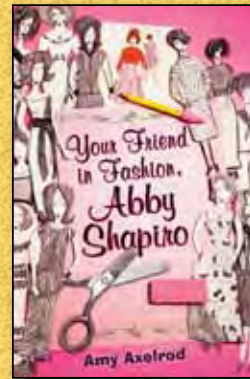
Shakespeare spends his days building a frame of words. Master Street builds buildings. What influenced Kit’s final decision regarding his life’s path?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gretchen Woelfle (pronounced Wolf-lee) is a children’s book author and travels around the world looking for stories. She’s lived in the Himalayas, on a tiny island in the Pacific Ocean, and now lives in Los Angeles, California. Visit her online at www.gretchenwoelfle.com.

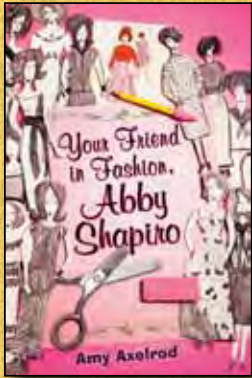
7 NOVELS NEW VOICES INCREDIBLE STORIES

From family relationships to historical adventures, from gritty tales of survival and war to hilarious coming-of-age experiences.



YOUR FRIEND IN FASHION, ABBY SHAPIRO

BY Amy Axelrod



Ages 8–12 HC: 978-0-8234-2340-8

“Funny, lively, sensitive—a real winner.”
—Kirkus Reviews

Deeply affecting and laugh-out-loud funny, this coming-of-age novel chronicles a year in the life of eleven-year-old Abby Shapiro, aspiring fashion designer, who writes letters to Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, the Possible Future First Lady of the United States.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Abby was embarrassed by the way her mother looked in public, and she was angry at what her friend Susie said about Abby’s mom. Have you ever had a similar situation involving a family member whom you had to defend even though you were embarrassed about it? How did you handle it?

There are often jealousies between family members. Abby felt that her mother was jealous of Abby’s Aunt Rina. Do you think Abby handled the situation well? If not, what could she have done instead? Have you had similar situations in your own family? How have you handled them?

Abby, who was inspired by Jackie Kennedy, began writing letters and sending fashion sketches to Jackie before she became First Lady. Who inspires you? Talk about why and then write a letter to that person.

Abby did something terrible on Halloween because of peer pressure. Have you had a similar experience when you allowed peer pressure to force you to do something you really didn’t want to do? Why do people succumb to peer pressure? What, if anything, can they do to avoid it? Is it ever justifiable to do something bad for a good reason? When? How?

Abby lost her favorite good-luck doll, Mei. What favorite objects do you have? Why are they important? How would you feel if you lost one of them?

Abby’s mother intercepted Abby’s letters to Jackie Kennedy and never sent them. Do you think it is ever a good idea for parents to invade their kids’ privacy like this? Why or why not?

Secrets and lies play a big part in Abby’s story. When is it good to keep secrets? How does it make you feel when you are keeping a secret? Is it ever a good idea to lie to someone—even if you think you are protecting that person? Why or why not?

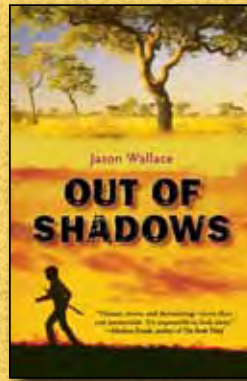
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Axelrod is the author of the best-selling *Pigs Will Be Pigs* math series. She lives in the Hudson Valley in New York State. *Your Friend in Fashion, Abby Shapiro*, her first novel, is based in part on her own childhood and is illustrated with paper dolls she made when she was Abby’s age. Visit Amy online at www.amyaxelrod.com.

Guide prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.



OUT OF SHADOWS BY Jason Wallace



Ages 15 up HC: 978-0-8234-2342-2

WINNER OF THE UK’S COSTA CHILDREN’S BOOK AWARD

★ “[A] taut drama . . . [with a] heart-pounding conclusion.”

—School Library Journal (starred review)

At an elite boys’ boarding school in Zimbabwe, privileged Robert finds himself torn between his black roommate and the white bullies still bitter over losing power because of the recent civil war.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“Surely wars are about putting an end to a wrong, not making a new one?” (p. 9) Nelson asks Robert on the first day of school. And yet Mugabe claimed to be “putting an end to a wrong” by taking land from white farmers and returning it to black farmers. In what way is this right? In what way is it wrong? Is there a fair way to right this wrong?

Both Nelson and Robert are treated as outsiders at Haven School. How does their treatment differ? How do they each cope with the way they are treated?

Mr. van Hout asks his class if they would kill Hitler if they could go back in time. Robert doesn’t realize that he will be given a similar chance. Is it possible to justify such an act of violence? Are there other ways to fight back against leaders such as Mugabe and Hitler?

Robert feels disillusioned by both his father and mother in different ways. Why does he feel betrayed by them? How does this betrayal contribute to his coming-of-age?

In chapter twenty-seven, Robert meets Greet for the first time since Greet graduated and sees what he’s become. “Where had the monster gone? Or had I just stopped believing in monsters?” (p. 189) he asks himself. What does this mean? How does meeting Greet again, and what follows, change Robert’s idea of monsters? Has Robert turned into a monster? Is Ivan a monster? What about Mr. van Hout? How does the idea of monsters, and their existence, relate to the concept of good vs. evil?

“There is a lot more to an education than what happens inside the classroom” (p. 271), Weekend says to Robert in chapter forty. As Robert’s understanding of what’s going on around him grows, he changes. How does Robert change with relation to his family? His peers? Zimbabwe? How does learning lead to growth?

Out of Shadows is full of dichotomies: rich and poor, black and white, good and evil, right and wrong. How does Robert experience both sides of each? What does he learn about each pair? What makes his experience of these ideas different from that of his classmates because he is not from Zimbabwe?

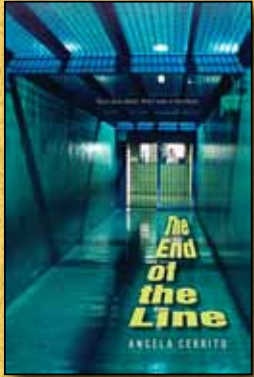
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Wallace lived in England until, at age twelve, his family emigrated to Zimbabwe. It was this experience in a tough boarding school during the aftermath of the war for independence that forms the foundation of his award-winning novel. This is Jason Wallace’s first book. Learn more about him at www.jwallace.co.uk.



THE END OF THE LINE

BY **Angela Cerrito**



“Riveting debut. . . . A thought-provoking look at culpability and grief.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

If Robbie wants to survive, he must confront the truth: he is a murderer.

Ages 12 up HC: 978-0-8234-2287-6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The author used the technique of alternating chapters, jumping between Robbie’s history with Ryan from the moment they first met and Robbie’s experiences at Great Oaks School (Prison). Why do you think the author chose this writing technique? Did you think it was an effective way to tell a story? Why or why not?

Robbie was very angry for a number of reasons, which led to his accidentally killing Ryan. What were the things in Robbie’s life that made him so angry? What would have been some alternative ways he could have handled his anger?

Robbie’s beloved Uncle Grant was going off to fight in the Iraq war, and it was very difficult to say good-bye. Do you think “Good luck” was a good thing to say? Why or why not? How have you dealt with the situation when a loved one has to leave—either to go to war or for another reason? What are the best ways to say good-bye?

Ryan acted like a different person when he was interacting with the little kids in Robbie’s mom’s day care center and again when he was helping a strange woman with her crying baby. Why do you think this happened? Why did Ryan act differently with very young children?

Why do you think Robbie and Ryan became friends? What did they like about each other?

Is murder or youth violence ever justified? Why or why not? What about capital punishment? What can be done to prevent violence among young people?

Robbie was a long-distance runner, which was very important to him. How did running and preparing for races help Robbie? Do you think it is important for young people to be involved in sports? Why or why not? Has being involved in a sport ever helped you with problems you may have had? How?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angela Cerrito was born in Michigan and now lives in Germany, where she works as a physical therapist. This is her first book. For more about Angela, visit www.angelacerrito.com/angela-cerrito.html.

POSSUM SUMMER

BY **Jen K. Blom**
ILLUSTRATED BY **Omar Rayyan**



“Touching and suspenseful.”
—*School Library Journal*

Princess raises an orphaned possum on an Oklahoma farm, but will she return it to the wild before her daddy comes back from Iraq?

Ages 8–12 HC: 978-0-8234-2331-6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Princess’s (P’s) dad discouraged her from having pets because “they only cause you pain anyways” and because he felt that only animals that helped on the farm were worthwhile. What did he mean by these statements? Do you agree or disagree with him. Why? Do you think he felt that the farm was more important than P?

P’s dad went to fight in Iraq because he said it was his “civic duty.” Do you agree with him? Why or why not? You may want to relate your own experiences with this issue.

P and Mart were the best of friends, even though they were very different. Why do you think they were such good friends? What is a true friend? Which of their adventures together did you enjoy reading the most? Why? What exciting adventures have you had with your own friends?

Although *Possum Summer* is about many very serious issues, there are also many humorous scenes included for comic relief. What are some of the humorous incidents and why are they funny to you? Why do you think the author decided to use comic relief in this story? Is this a valuable technique?

P is determined to keep her promise to her dad to take care of the farm, even when it hurts to do it. Do you think it was fair for her dad to have such an expectation of her? Do you agree with her regarding keeping promises? Why or why not? Have you had expectations placed upon you by adults that you felt were difficult to meet? How did you react?

P’s story of her summer ends with the line “I’d done the right thing by Ike. Now I could do the same by my dad.” What do you think she meant by this? Did you like the way the story ended? Why or why not?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen K. Blom grew up on a farm on the Oklahoma plains similar to the setting of *Possum Summer*, where she, unlike P, had many pets, including several dogs, many horses, a raccoon, and a possum. She now lives in Germany. Visit her website at jenkblom.com.

ALICE IN TIME

BY **Penelope Bush**



“Immensely satisfying.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

When Alice falls off a merry-go-round, she is given a chance to rewrite her wretched life. How much can she change? And will she even like the results?

Ages 12 up HC: 978-0-8234-2329-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The author used the idea of time travel to tell Alice’s story—dividing the book into three parts depicting Alice at different points in her life. Do you like stories that utilize this technique? Why or why not?

When Alice’s dad marries Trish in Part One, Alice meets her new step-grandma. How is Trish’s mom different from Alice’s grandma? How do you deal with new people becoming a part of your own family?

In Part One Alice feels a lot of resentment toward her little brother, Rory. Do you have a younger brother or sister who drives you crazy? What annoys you most about him/her? What could you do to try to make things better?

Alice feels a lot of conflict in her family, and she thinks that no one understands her or cares about her. She says she is never happy. Do you think this is normal for a fourteen-year-old girl? Have you ever had similar feelings? How have you dealt with them? What kinds of things make you truly happy?

When Alice returns to being age seven in Part Two, her fourteen-year-old self decides to “rewrite her own life.” If you had a chance to rewrite your life, what changes would you make?

When Alice learns that her grandma is going to die of cancer, she realizes there is nothing she can do to prevent it. Have you ever had to deal with a similar situation of losing a loved one? How did you handle it?

In Part Three, Alice’s life seems to be better now that she has learned the real reasons for some of the actions her parents and her friends have taken. What do you think she has learned about herself?

Alice discovers that her dad had been lying to her about why he left. Do you think he was right to lie to her? Is it ever good for parents to lie to their kids, especially to teenagers? Why or why not?

Alice learns a lot about friendship when she views her life at age seven. What do you think are the qualities of a true friend? How do you pick your own friends? Why do you think some people allow their friends to take advantage of them?

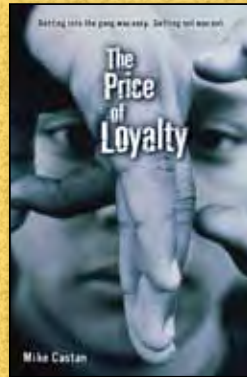
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Penelope Bush’s house was built on land that used to be covered with bushes and brambles. She explains, “One day I was walking home and I thought, ‘What if, when I get there, it’s just a piece of wasteland again and my house isn’t there? What if, somehow, I’ve gone back twenty years and I have to pick up my old life?’” And that’s how *Alice in Time* was born. Penelope lives in England. This is her first book. Visit her online at <http://penelopebush.com>.

Guide prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

BY **Mike Castan**



“[A] stirring first novel.”
—*Booklist*

A Latino boy gives in to peer pressure before making a decisive move that cuts him free from gang life.

Ages 12 up HC: 978-0-8234-2268-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What’s the appeal of joining a gang? Is a gang different from a clique? What about gang life appeals to Manny? What scares him?

How must Manny change, at least outwardly, to continue to be part of the Conquistadors? Is there a point for Manny when he feels he’s gone too far?

On page 11, Manny fears looking weak in front of the Conquistadors when inducting Bartolomeu. What are some other instances when Manny is asked to do something with which he isn’t comfortable? How does he rationalize his actions?

Loyalty is an important theme. Manny is torn because he is loyal to many people. Who are these people? How does Manny show his loyalty to each? Why is he loyal to each? How do these conflicting loyalties affect Manny’s decisions?

Manny calls the Conquistadors a “made-up gang” (p. 14). What makes the gang made up? Does it matter if it is made up?

There are a few characters whom the reader never meets, for example, Vasco, Manny’s abuela’s son. Who are the other characters the reader doesn’t meet? What roles do they have in the story? How do they affect Manny and the choices he makes?

“You are who your friends are, Manny” (p. 46), Henrietta says. Is this true? Can you judge others by the friends they have? Why or why not? Should Manny be held accountable for the actions of the other Conquistadors?

How do Manny’s dealings with Carl change his situation within the Conquistadors? How do they change how he feels about himself?

How is Manny’s new neighbor, Bernard, different from his other friends? What does Manny like about hanging out with him?

Manny’s loyalty to the Conquistadors is given the ultimate test after the fight in the cul-de-sac. Did he do the right thing? Should he have acted sooner? Is there a “price” Manny pays for being loyal to the Conquistadors? Are there benefits to being loyal to the Conquistadors?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Castan has worked with middle-grade students in Southern California, where he lives. *The Price of Loyalty* is his first book.