



## *I Am Kavi* by Thushanthi Ponweera

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

★“A moving coming-of-age story written in verse about understanding and embracing who you truly are.”—*The Horn Book*, Starred Review

“Ponweera employs spare but descriptive verse that perfectly captures the inner turmoil of a young girl wading her way through the complexities of family, friendship, identity, and emotions.”—*Booklist*

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Caught between two worlds—a poverty-stricken village and a fancy big-city school—a young Sri Lankan girl must decide who she really is and where she really belongs.

1998, Colombo. The Sri Lankan Civil War is raging, but everyday life must go on. At Kavi's school, her friends talk about the weekly Top 40, the Backstreet Boys, Shahrukh Khan, Leo & Kate ... and who died—or didn't—in the latest bombing. But Kavi is afraid of something even scarier than war. She fears that if her friends discover her secret—that she is not who she is pretending to be—they'll stop talking to her.

This dazzling debut novel-in-verse comes from an astonishing new talent who lived through the civil war herself. *I Am Kavi* centers a powerful South Asian voice, and stars an unforgettable heroine each and every one of us can relate to.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### About the Story

- Have you experienced a drastic move/change in your life? What helped you in dealing with it?
- Do you think Kavi was right or wrong to have lied? What would you have done?

- Sasha was an important influence in Kavi's life, but not always a good one. Similarly, the people we look up to can influence us both positively and negatively. Do you agree?
- Kavi is brave because she wasn't afraid to admit something wrong she did, even when she knew it would get her in trouble and she defended the people who were loyal to her. Tell us about a time you were brave.
- What do you think of Siripala? Was he the villain Kavi imagined him to be? Why/why not?
- Love can be shown in many ways and not always in the ways we expect. Kavi thought Amma was sending her away because she didn't want her anymore. Is this true? Discuss reasons.

### About the War

- During the Sri Lankan civil war, language became an element that divided people. What are some advantages and disadvantages of having one official language for everyone?
- What is a refugee?
- During a war, many people, including children like you, become war refugees, having to leave their home or country with the bare minimum, sometimes even having to be separated from their loved ones. Write about five things/people that are the most important to you.
- Do you know anyone who has lived through a war?
- When we hear or read about countries at war on the news, we often think the entire country is a warzone. Kavi's story shows us another side to this. What are some ways we can explore a event beyond just what we hear on the news?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Thushanthi Ponweera** is an author and poet from Sri Lanka. Before daring to follow her dream of being published, she was a marketing specialist and entrepreneur. Her writing reflects the frustration she feels at the inequality and injustice she sees around her and the deep love she has for her island home. After having lived all her life in Colombo, Thushanthi recently moved to Qatar with her husband and two children. *I Am Kavi* is her first novel.