

Verse Novels That Offer the World: Selected Novels

Applegate, Katherine. *Home of the Brave*, Square fish, 2008. 11-year old Kek comes alone to Minnesota from war in Africa.

Engle, Margarita. *The Poet Slave of Cuba*, Square Fish, 2011. A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano, a boy born as a slave in Cuba in 1797 who becomes a renowned poet.

Engle, Margarita. *The Lightning Dream*, Houghton Mifflin, 2013. A fictionalized biography of Cuban feminist and abolitionist Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda.

Farish, Terry. *The Good Braider*. Marshall Cavendish/Amazon, 2012. 17-year old Viola and her mother navigate cultures as they journey from South Sudan to Portland, Maine.

Herrera, Juan Filepe, *Downtown Boy*, Scholastic. 2005. Juanito Paloma grows up Latino in San Francisco in this fast-paced novel.

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*, Harper Collins. 2011. A child-refugee's story of leaving Vietnam after her father has gone missing, and settling as outcasts in Alabama.

Ostlere, Cathy. *Karma*. Razorbill, 2011
Maya, who is born in Canada, and whose mother is Hindu, her father a Sikh, returns to India where the two cultures collide.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*, Little Brown, 2014.
Amira, in Darfur, Sudan, is sustained by possession of, first, a stick, and then a red pencil to draw her story and keep her hunger for education alive.

Testa, Maria. *Something About America*, Candlewick, 2007. A story from the view of a Bosnian girl, climaxing with the real event in Lewiston, Maine when 6,000 people gathered to support Somali refugees who had made their home in this small city.

Writing Warm-ups in verse or short, short prose

■ **Stretches to Create Space for Ideas**

Half moon, twisting side to side.

■ **Walk for Ideas**

Go on a walk. Explore the natural world. Make a list of interesting objects you see, hear, smell. The items could be something that is a particular color, such as all things orange. Could be a stone, a feather, a pond, the shape of a cloud, a scent, a coyote, words or sounds overheard. Write, incorporating several of the items you found.

■ **Lines for the Season**

- ❖ Haiku Three lines: 5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables; or
- ❖ Three lines about a place you love anywhere in the world; or
- ❖ Three lines about how to prepare a favorite food you connect with the season; or
- ❖ Three lines of a memory of the season; or
- ❖ Three lines of a song lyric connected with the season.

Include one of the senses – sight, smell, taste, touch, sound.

■ **Write Instructions to Someone**

"Pulling hard and tight does not make a braid last," my mother instructed when I was young.
"Narrow rows make them last.
Braid three strands,
Two together, lift a strand from the side.
Two together, lift a strand from the side.
Narrow!"

Example from *The Good Braider*, a mother's instructions on braiding hair

"Life is made up of moments, small pieces of glittering mica in a long stretch of gray cement."

Anna Quindlen

Verse Novels That Offer the World: Snippets of Verses for Writing Prompts

All I have to do is look at you.
Your eyes speak.

Downtown Boy Juan Felipe Herrera, 85

"Lesgo!"
Mami says, "Lesgo!"
It's Sunday!"

Downtown Boy Juan Felipe Herrera

Movin', always movin'

Downtown Boy Juan Felipe Herrera

Whoever invented English
should be bitten
by a snake.

Inside Out & Back Again, T. Lai, 128

Out in the garden
lit by *cocuyos*
I feel

Firefly Letters by Margarita Engle

I have two languages
in my head
and no accent
on my lips

Something About America, Maria Testa

So I yelled at my father.
Yeah, I know.
Only in America.

Something About America, M. Testa p. 42

If you can't find a welcome mat
when you arrive,
put one out for yourself.

Something About America, M. Testa p. 81

I'm a deep wide ocean.
I'm a magic potion.
I'm a brassy saxophone.

My Feet Are Laughing, L. Norman, "Daydreaming"

"I find it so easy to forget
that I'm just a girl who is expected
to live
without thoughts."

Lightning Dreamers, M. Engle

Sometimes, fear
is the most powerful
weapon.

Lightning Dreamers M. Engle p.121

Has sunlight always
been this bright,
or were my mind
and my eyes
asleep?

Lightning Dreamers, M. Engle p. 119

On the streets I dropped the crumpled
notes like bits of garbage. Undetectable in
the dirt. Unless someone was looking.

Karma C. Ostlere, p. 496

I can speak three languages.
English. Hindi. Punjabi.
(And sometimes French.)
But who am I?

Karma, C. Oslere, p. 390

Into each pack:
one pair of pants,
one pair of shorts,
three pair of underwear,
two shirts,
sandals,
toothbrush and paste,
soap,
ten palms of rice grains,
three clumps of cooked rice,
one choice.

Inside out & Back Again, T. Lai, 55

I'm practicing
to be seen.

Inside Out & Back Again, T. Lai, 161