



Américas Award Books about Haiti

Alphabet City Ballet, Erika Tamar

Marisol, a ten-year-old Puerto Rican girl, wins a scholarship to attend ballet school, along with a Haitian-born classmate. Marisol's love of dancing coexists with her father's efforts to make ends meet and provide a good home for his children, and her brother's search for his own place in the world. This engaging, believable story provides a very real sense of this family's life in New York City. (Grades 3-5) **1996 Commended Title.**

Eight Days: A Story of Haiti, Edwidge Danticat; Illustrated by Alix Delinois

Haitian-born Danticat presents her interpretation of a young boy's experience of the Haitian earthquake. The book begins with seven-year-old Junior answering questions about being trapped under his home for eight days. Junior tells readers, "I cried, I was afraid. But in my mind, I played." This powerful book presents the Haitian earthquake in a way that highlights the imagination of one earthquake victim, showing his strength, resilience and will to survive. (Grades 3-8) **2010 Commended Title.**

In Darkness, Nick Lake

This is the story of "Shorty"-a 15-year-old boy trapped in a collapsed hospital during the earthquake in Haiti. Surrounded by the bodies of the dead, increasingly weak from lack of food and water, Shorty begins to hallucinate. As he waits in darkness for a rescue that may never come, a mystical bridge seems to emerge between him and Haitian leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, uniting the two in their darkest suffering-and their hope. A modern teen and a black slave, separated by hundreds of years. Yet in some strange way, the boy in the ruins of Port au Prince and the man who led the struggle for Haiti's independence might well be one and the same. (Grades 9-12) **2013 Commended Title.**

Josias, Hold the Book, Jennifer Riesmeyer Elygren

A Haitian boy determined to make his garden grow is brought to life through luminous watercolor illustrations. Every morning Josias is hard at work in the family's garden under the hot Haitian sun. His friend Chrislove asks, "When will you join us and hold the book?" asks Chrislove. With his garden is failing, Josias has no time to learn how to read and write. There may not be enough food for his family. Soon, Josias realizes a book might hold the solution to his problem. **2006 Américas Award Winner.**

Sélavi, That is Life: A Haitian Story of Hope, Youme

Sélavi (literally translated as "that's life") is the name of a young boy orphaned in Haiti as a result of the country's civil unrest. Sélavi meets other orphaned children and together, with the help of some townspeople, the children build a house where they will have a place to eat, sleep

and be safe. However, nothing comes easy in Haiti. The house is eventually destroyed and the children are forced to find a way to be heard. An insightful historical recounting of Haiti's recent unrest follows this poignant story. (Grades 2-5) **2004 Commended Title.**

Serafina's Promise, Ann E. Burg

Serafina, an 11-year-old Haitian girl, is strong-willed, focused, determined and intelligent. She has also promised her grandfather, an auto didact killed by the Tonton Macoutes, that despite the dire poverty in which she lives, she will succeed in her drive to get an education and become a doctor. Serafina has the interests and concerns of girls her age everywhere—friends, school, her mother's demands on her. But she also has adult responsibilities and worries imposed by the difficulties of everyday life in an impoverished country, made all the more tragic in light of such natural disasters as a flash flood and a devastating earthquake. Through beautiful free verse, the author makes us almost taste the burdens of such a life; yet inspiration and hope spring from the immutable bonds of family love and devotion, and the wisdom of a grandmother's frequent adages. The story line of this book makes it accessible to middle-grade readers of all stripes. It could be usefully employed in writing classes, as well as for social studies. (Grades 5-9) **2014 Commended Title.**

Tonight by Sea, Frances Temple

As governmental brutality and poverty become unbearable, Paulie joins with others in her small Haitian village to help her uncle secretly build a boat they will use to escape to the United States. The story, told from Paulie's point of view, sensitively weaves political and economic issues into the cultural fabric of the characters. With a subtle touch, Temple gives a very real sense of life in Haiti before Aristide's return. Beyond the poverty, she shows the strength and community that media images often fail to capture. (Grades 6-8) **1995 Américas Award Winner.**

Toussaint L'ouverture: The Fight for Haiti's Freedom, Walter Dean Myers; Illustrated by Jacob Lawrence

A collection of paintings first exhibited at the 1940 Chicago Negro Exhibition chronicle the liberation of Haiti in 1804. A well-written narrative tells of the emotional journey of those who were enslaved and their desperate fight for freedom. (Grades 6-8) **1996 Commended Title.**