



Great Authors: Walter Dean Myers

Walter Dean Myers was born as Walter Milton Myers on August 12th, 1937, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. At an early age, he was given to and raised by Herbert Dean who lived in Harlem. To this day, Mr. Myers does not know why he was given up for adoption.

He grew up in Harlem, a predominately African American community in New York. Like many African American children, his early years centered around his neighborhood and church. The neighborhood provided protection and the church provided guidance.

Myers was a smart child, he says that all kids are smart, but he didn't do well in school. Myers dropped out of high school and joined the army when he was 17. He enjoys basketball and still daydreams about games he remembers playing when he was younger. Myers doubts he was good enough to play in the NBA, but wonders what it would have been like to compete at the college or professional level.

In high school, he always wrote well and a teacher recognized this. When she could see that he was going to drop out, she told him to keep on writing no matter what happened to him. "It's what you do," she said.

He didn't understand what she was saying, but years later, when Myers was working on a construction job in New York, he remembered what she had said.

He began writing at night and eventually began writing about the most difficult period of his own life, the teen years. Today, he is primarily known as a teen author, one that writes about his experiences growing up as an African American. He also writes books for younger children and for adults.

Have you ever wondered how others grow up and experience life? You will find a lot of good reading if you look at some of the books Walter Dean Myers has written.

The Blues of Flats Brown: A Picture Book that is Not Just for Beginning Readers

From School Library Journal: Kindergarten-Grade 4. "This here's the story of Flats Brown, the blues playingest dog you ever heard of." He was born in a Mississippi junkyard owned by a man so mean that he didn't even like himself."

All the pup wants to do is play guitar. Grubbs wants to turn him into a fighting dog, so Flats and his friend Caleb, an old dog with a good heart, flee. Pursued by the junkman, he is forced to say good-bye to Caleb, who becomes too tired to run. Flats's adventures take him from playing for pennies on the street to wealth and fame in New York City.

There, he finally vanquishes his foe with a song called "The Gritty Grubbs Blues" that "touched Grubbs deep inside." Flats heads back South to play guitar on the waterfront with Caleb because he "-was a blues playing kind of dog, not a filthy rich kind of dog." Story and pictures work well together to create a bluesy atmosphere. Pastel illustrations feature variations of blue to depict the sky, the murky inside of clubs, and the Midnight Special that takes the dog to New York. Laden also uses perspective with dramatic effect.

The night train is a long diagonal snaking across two pages, the buildings of New York tilt and loom, and Grubbs's sad face fills the page as he weeps to the blues. While readers may not understand the music, they will respond to this soulful story. Words and music for "The New York City Blues" are appended. *Karen James, Louisville Free Public Library, KY Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.*

Where Does the Day Go? Illustrated by Leo Carty. New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1969.

The Dragon Takes a Wife. Illustrated by Ann Grifalconi. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972.

The Dancers. Illustrated by Anne Rockwell. New York: Parents Magazine Press, 1972.

Fly, Jimmy, Fly! Illustrated by Moneta Barnett. New York: Putnam, 1974.

The World of Work: A Guide to Choosing a Career. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975.

Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff. New York: Viking, 1975.

Social Welfare. New York: Franklin Watts, 1976.

Brainstorm. Illustrated with photographs by Chuck Freedman. New York: Franklin Watts, 1977.

Mojo and the Russians. New York:

Viking, 1977.

Victory for Jamie. New York: Scholastic, 1977.

It Ain't All for Nothin'. New York: Viking, 1978.

The Young Landlords. New York: Viking, 1979

The Black Pearl and the Ghost; or, One Mystery after Another. Illustrated by Robert Quackenbush. New York: Viking, 1980.

The Golden Serpent. Illustrated by Alice Provensen and Martin Provensen. New York: Viking 1980.

Hoops. New York: Delacorte, 1981.

The Legend of Tarik. New York: Viking, 1981.

Won't Know Till I Get There. New York: Viking, 1982.

The Nicholas Factor. New York: Viking, 1983.

- Tales of a Dead King.** New York: Morrow, 1983.
- Mr. Monkey and the Gotcha Bird.** Illustrated by Leslie Morrill. New York: Delacorte, 1984.
- Motown and Didi: A Love Story.** New York: Viking, 1984.
- The Outside Shot.** New York: Delacorte, 1984
- Adventure in Granada.** (Arrow Series). Viking, 1985.
- The Hidden Shrine.** (Arrow Series) Viking, 1985.
- Duel in the Desert.** (Arrow Series) Viking, 1986.
- Ambush in the Amazon.** (Arrow Series) Viking, 1986.
- Sweet Illusions.** New York Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1986.
- Crystal.** New York: Viking 1987.
- Scorpions.** New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Newbery Honor
- Me, Mop, and the Moondance Kid.** New York: Delacorte, 1988.
- Fallen Angels.** New York: Scholastic, 1988.
- The Mouse Rap.** New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
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- Somewhere in the Darkness.** New York: Scholastic, 1992. Newbery Honor
- Mop, Moondance, and the Nagasaki Knights.** New York: Delacorte, 1992.
- The Righteous Revenge of Artemis Bonner.** New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary.** New York: Scholastic, 1993.
- Young Martin's Promise.** Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993.
- A Place Called Heartbreak: A Story of Vietnam.** Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993.
- Brown Angels: An Album of Pictures and Verse.** New York: HarperCollins, 1993.
- The Glory Field.** New York: Scholastic, 1994.
- Darnell Rock Reporting.** New York: Delacorte Press, 1994.
- The Story of the Three Kingdoms.** Illustrated by Ashley Bryan. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.
- Shadow of the Red Moon.** Illustrated by Christopher Myers. New York: Scholastic, 1995.
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- The Dragon Takes a Wife.** Illustrated by Fiona French. New York: Scholastic, 1995.
- Smiffy Blue: Ace Crime Detective: Case of the Missing Ruby and Other Stories.** New York: Scholastic, 1996.
- More River to Cross: An African American Photograph Album.** New York: Harcourt Brace, 1996.
- How Mr. Monkey Saw the Whole World.** Illustrated by Synthia Saint James. New York: Doubleday, 1996.
- Toussaint L'overture: The Fight for Haiti's Freedom.** Illustrations by Jacob Lawrence. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996
- Harlem. Illustrated by Christopher Myers.** New York: Scholastic, 1997
- Amistad; A Long Road to Freedom.** New York: Dutton, 1997
- Angel to Angel.** New York: HarperCollins, 1998
- Slam!** New York: Scholastic, 1998
- At Her Majesty's Request.** New York: Scholastic, 1999
- The Journal of Joshua Loper: A Black Cowboy, Chisholm Trail, 1871.** (My Name Is America) New York, Scholastic, 1999
- Monster.** New York: HarperCollins, 1999
- The Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins: World War II, Normandy, France.** (My Name Is America) New York, Scholastic, 1999
- Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly.** New York, HarperCollins 2000
- The Blues of Flats Brown.** Illustrated by Nina Laden. New York, Holiday House 2000
- 145th Street: Short Stories.** New York, Delacorte, 2000
- The Greatest: The Life of Muhammad Ali.** New York, Scholastic 2000
- Bad Boy: A Memoir.** New York, HarperCollins 2001
- The Journal of Biddy Owens: The Negro Leagues, 1948.** (My Name Is America) New York, Scholastic, 2001
- Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam.** Illustrated by Ann Grafalconi. New York, HarperCollins 2002
- Three Swords for Granada.** New York, Holiday House 2002
- Handbook for Boys: A Novel.** New York, HarperCollins 2002
- A Time to Love: Stories from the Old Testament.** illustrated by Chris Myers. New York, Scholastic, 2003
- Blues Journey.** Illustrated by Christopher Myers. New York, Holiday House, 2003
- The Dream Bearer.** New York, HarperCollins, 2003
- The Beast.** New York, Scholastic, 2003
- Shooter.** New York, HarperCollins, 2004
- I've Seen the Promised Land; Martin Luther King.** New York, HarperCollins, 2004
- Constellation.** New York, Holiday House, 2004
- Antarctica.** New York, Scholastic, 2004
- Here In Harlem: Poems in Many Voices.** New York, Holiday House, 2004
- Autobiography of My Dead Brother.** Illustrated by Christopher Myers. New York, HarperCollins, 2005
- The Hellfighters: When Pride Met Courage.** New York, HarperCollins, 2006
- Jazz.** Illustrated by Christopher Myers. New York, Holiday House, Fall 2006
- Street Love.** New York, HarperCollins, Fall 2006
- 18 Pine Street.** Series (12 Books)
- Sort of Sisters.** (Writing as Stacie Johnson) New York, Delacorte 1993
- The Party.** (Writing as Stacie Johnson) New York, Delacorte 1993
- The Prince.** (Writing as Stacie Johnson) New York, Delacorte 1993