



## Flying Lessons & Other Stories

*Ellen Oh (Editor) , Sherman Alexie , Jacqueline Woodson , Kwame Alexander , Walter Dean Myers , Meg Medina , Tim Tingle , Kelly J. Baptist , more... Soman Chainani , Matt de la Pena , Tim Federle , Grace Lin ...less*

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*For the hardback, see ISBN13: 9781101934593.*

Whether it is basketball dreams, family fiascos, first crushes, or new neighborhoods, this bold anthology—written by the best children’s authors—celebrates the uniqueness and universality in all of us.

In a partnership with We Need Diverse Books, industry giants Kwame Alexander, Soman Chainani, Matt de la Peña, Tim Federle, Grace Lin, Meg Medina, Walter Dean Myers, Tim Tingle, and Jacqueline Woodson join newcomer Kelly J. Baptist in a story collection that is as humorous as it is heartfelt. This impressive group of authors has earned among them every major award in children’s publishing and popularity as New York Times bestsellers.

From these distinguished authors come ten distinct and vibrant stories.

## Flying Lessons & Other Stories Details

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# From Reader Review Flying Lessons & Other Stories for online ebook

Sue (Hollywood News Source) says

## Flying Lessons and Other Stories by Ellen Oh

Flying Lessons and Other Stories are a solid anthology. I love the recurring theme of the short stories which is the lessons you can glean after reading each one. All of the stories feature those kids who are usually unseen. The underprivileged, the weird, the outcast, the brown, and black kids. It's a necessary mirror for all ages, particularly for middle grade readers. I can't recommend it enough.

Since, this is a collection of short stories I'll rate separately the parts that left a mark on me:

### **How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court into a Place of Higher Learning and You at the Podium by Matt de la Peña - 3 stars**

This is more of a self preference. I couldn't grasp the writing, hence, why I couldn't relate to the story. It's like reading a fanfiction where the author uses 'You.'

*"When a man with nothing offered to give you something," he said, "you take it."*

*"You do?"*

*"Always."*

But, this particular part hit me on all the right spots, I decided to bump my rating.

### **The Difficult by Grace Lin — 5 stars**

This was so short! I think it would've been better if they made this the opening one. Either way, this is so beautiful I had to wipe away the mist in my eyes. A tale about rising above, compassion. Young readers would love Lingsi and her journey.

### **Sol Painting Inc. by Meg Medina — 4 stars**

A spectacular, needed story about visibility and racism. I love the family aspects, it's heartwarming. I rated it less than one star because I think there could've more with that ending.

### **Secret Samantha by Tim Federle — 3 stars**

This is my second time reading something by Federle. I love his penchant for irony. While I've come to agree I don't think I could ever love—love his stories, I will always find his distinctive voice amusing. Cute story about making new friends.

### **The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn by Kelly J. Baptist — 4 stars**

A touching story about a Isaiah, a kid who are coping with the death of his father. It also tackles poverty and hope.

### **Choctaw Bigfoot, Midnight in the Mountains by Tim Tingle — 2 stars**

Similar to Peña's story, I couldn't relate to this one. But, the young readers, who is the intended readers, would certainly do.

### **Main Street by Jacqueline Woodson — 5 stars**

*The people who don't want breaks sometimes get them.*

This is a lyrical, heartfelt story about grief. I love it so much. A must read.

**Flying Lessons by Soman Chainanu — 3.5 stars**

*Two caged birds, searching for a way out.*

A fun, summery beach read. A good story when you're soaking in the sun.

**Seventy-Six Dollars and Forty-Nine Cents by Kwame Alexander — 3 stars**

A story told in verses and poems like setup. I sadly couldn't get into as much as the others. But, I know young readers will dig the fun tone.

**Sometimes a Dream Needs a Push by Walter Dean Myers — 4 stars**

Another heartwarming necessary read about a disabled main protagonist playing basketball.

Overall, this is a short anthology. Highly recommended to middle grade readers and up.

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**Sara (sarawithoutanH) says**

This was a cute anthology. I didn't do much research before listening to this on audio, so I didn't realize it was middle grade. I don't personally enjoy MG, but I think that it's such an important collection of diverse stories for younger readers. There were so many characters from different backgrounds, ethnicities, sexualities, and disabilities. There was a different narrator for each story in the audiobook and I think that added a lot. My favorite story was The Difficult Path by Grace Lin. I honestly wanted it to be a full-length novel.

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**Jacquelyn says**

I think that no matter what my rating of this book is, that this is an important read, especially for kidlit. I think it's awesome to see more diverse stories (whether that's based off ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, race, etc.) targeted at smaller kids. I think that's amazing because when I was a young child looking for books, I never saw books like this. The industry has come a long way and still has a lot of work to do from here.

**How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court into a Place of Higher Learning and You at the Podium by Matt de la Peña**

3.5/5 stars

I liked this one since it had to do with basketball, my favorite sport and something I truly connect with. I thought the overall message was well presented and something a lot of people could learn.

**The Difficult Path by Grace Lin**

2/5 stars

This one was super strange and I'm not even sure I understood what was going on or the message of this one. This was one of my least favorites in this collection.

**Sol Painting, Inc. by Meg Medina**

3/5 stars

This one was pretty good. Interesting premise and I liked how it revolved a lot around family and relationships with siblings, etc. \*However\*, I did have a problem with one of the sentences in here and found it to be very problematic. The sentence was, "It's kind of cool to be blind for a few minutes." I found this sentence to be extremely irritating and hurtful, especially to people who are actually blind. I just wanted to point that out, since this is a book based upon diversity and celebrating people's differences.

**Secret Samantha by Tim Federle**

4/5 stars

Super cute story that takes place in a school and has to do with making new friends who are different than yourself.

**The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn by Kelly J. Baptist**

4/5 stars

A really interesting story surrounding grief, family dynamics, and the effects alcoholism can have on a family with young children. I really enjoyed this story; I would have liked to read this in an extended version.

**Choctaw Bigfoot, Midnight in the Mountains by Tim Tingle**

2/5 stars

This one was sort of weird. I liked that it was about Indian nations and such but the way it was told was a little weird and I think this was told in too short of a story length. Maybe if it was longer I would have enjoyed it more.

**Main Street by Jacqueline Woodson**

4/5 stars

This was another one of my favorites. I really liked the setting and the values of friendship and racial diversity. I would have loved to read a full book following this main character.

**Flying Lessons by Soman Chainani**

4/5 stars

I liked this one a lot! It was a fun setting and I liked the overall story and message. Great story!

**Seventy-Six Dollars and Forty-Nine Cents by Kwame Alexander**

4/5 stars

This one was written in verse which was so fun! It was super quick and engaging and I thought the overall premise was cute. I liked this one a lot - it may have been my favorite.

**Sometimes a Dream Needs a Push by Walter Dean Myers**

3.5/5 stars

This was another enjoyable story that featured representation of characters with disabilities. The main character plays basketball and is in a wheelchair and I thought this one was pretty eye opening and I enjoyed seeing a portrayal of my favorite sport from someone who has a disability.

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## Nat says

Whether it is basketball dreams, family fiascos, first crushes, or new neighborhoods, this bold anthology—written by the best children’s authors—celebrates the uniqueness and universality in all of us. **Flying Lessons & Other Stories** includes a variety of characters — from different backgrounds, disabilities, ethnicities, sexualities. And so here's a look of some of my favorite short stories featured in here:

### Sol Painting, Inc. by Meg Medina

Twelve-year-old Merci Suarez is helping her father out with at his work the summer before entering her first year at “fancy Seaward Pines School.” Her science loving brother, Roli, is also helping out. And when they arrive at their painting locating for the summer, it turns out to be their newly shared school. But the day takes a turn for the worse when some high school students walk in and destroy the hard work of Sol Painting, Inc. without even a hint of remorse.

*“My brother has always been strangely good at reading my mind. Can’t he see how awful it felt to be unimportant, to watch Papi stand there like a chump?”*

*“What did you want Papi to do, Merci? Pitch a fit and blow your free ride?”*

*Without warning, tears spring to my eyes. He pretends not to notice. Instead, he cups my scalp with his enormous hand and gives a squeeze. “Try to let this idea into your thick cranium. Papi chose to be invisible today so you won’t ever have to be.”*

That last sentence really hit hard.

Medina is a great storyteller that managed to really give depth to her characters in such a short amount. With Roli's passions and Merci's dedication to the business, I was more than swept into their lives. I hope they receive everything their heart desires.

### Main Street by Jacqueline Woodson

I love Woodson's writing a lot, so I was truly pumped when I saw her as one of the contributors to this collection. **Main Street** is told from the point of view of a main white character, Treetop, befriending Celeste, who has brown skin in a predominately white town.

*“I had never known anyone brown, and Celeste had never lived in a place where brown people didn’t.”*

It is a sprawling look at race, harmful stereotypes, childhood friendships, and identity. And that ending left me feeling hopeful for the future.

I was also left wanting more of Jacqueline Woodson's writing, so I've got to get her books into my hands very soon!

Oh, and just to give you an excerpt, here's one of my favorite passages from the story:

*“Last winter the snow fell so long and rose so high, my father hired a man from Keene to plow it. When the man arrived, his huge plow moved silently through the mass of snow. The silence surprised me. How could so much power exist inside such quiet? As I watched, pressing my head against the window, I said to my father, I want to move through the world that quietly. That powerfully.”*

I'm in love with Woodson's way with words.

### **Flying Lessons by Soman Chainani**

About a month ago, Santosh's sixty-nine-year-old nani informed (not asked) that she would take him on a three-week trip across Europe. “Less than a month later, I am alone on a naked beach.” To say that his grandmother was quite a character would be an understatement.

*“In Berlin, she left me stranded in the middle of a dodgy parade. In Marseilles, she paid a fast-talking young cabdriver named Gael to take me out with his wild teenage friends while she shopped for shoes. And yesterday, on our first night in Spain, I dressed up in a suit and combed my hair so I'd look nice for the “theater,” only to end up cowering in the front row at an adults-only burlesque.”*

But I ended up liking her so much more than expected, particularly after this next passage:

*“Did you take Mom away too when she was young?” I ask later, struggling to crack a stone crab at dinner. “Your mother is like your grandfather,” Nani says vaguely, already finished shelling and eating hers. “What’s that mean?” I ask, trying to keep the slippery crab in the silver cracker. “They’d rather stay home and do work.” “Yeah, but that’s how they both make money—” “And what do they do with it?” Nani fires. “Your mother hoards every dime as if she’ll live forever. Your grandfather hasn’t taken me to a movie or dinner or show or anywhere else in fifteen years. ‘We’re old now,’ he says. ‘We’re old.’?” “But he lets you spend as much money as you want—” “Money!” She pounces. “What good is money to a bird in a cage?”*

That last sentence left me speechless.

Since this was the title story and my first read by Chainani, I was quite excited to say the least. And the author did not disappoint: the characters were lively, complex, and the dialogue was gripping. And Kamla Sani (the grandmother) speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I loved her.

I appreciate her so much that I need to share this next dialogue, because with one final sentence she managed to shift my whole point of view:

*“Do you know why I brought you on this trip, Santosh?” “So you could get away from Grandpa?” She lets out a cackle. “No! Well, yes. But no. I brought you on this trip because you win too many awards at school.” I stare at her blankly. “What?” “Best in math, best in English, best in debate, history, science, chorus...How many awards can you win? Every year I come to the ceremony and watch you go back and forth to the stage, picking up all the trophies and making me and your mother carry them, because there are too many for you to hold.” “Nani,” I say, losing patience. “What does winning awards have to do with anything?”*

*“Because when you’re older, no one cares how many awards you win, Santosh. People care if you have something to talk about. And right now, all you have to talk about are things from books.”*

I'm not even joking with inserting that gif because that passage really was inspirational for me. Nani notices how receiving those awards year after year doesn't make Santosh happy as it used to do, and so she offers up some really useful advice that I took to heart.

And as if this story couldn't get any more hearts from me, it included a LGBTQIA+ storyline!! Props to Nani for fake fainting so that her grandson can talk to the cute boy he likes.

*“Come, Santosh, darling,” she wheezes, adding a few hacking coughs, as if while fake fainting she also happened to contract tuberculosis. “Stay with your nani and this handsome boy who rescued me.”*

Is there anyone better than her?? Nope...

I know for a fact that I won't forget her anytime soon. And so I think it goes without saying that **Flying Lessons** was my favorite short story. (However, I need to have more clarity on that ending!! Help.)

Overall, I'm so glad this collection exist; I need more like it. **Flying Lessons & Other Stories** is the best thing that's happened to me this week. And I have nothing but love for it.

**5/5 stars**

*\*Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **Flying Lessons & Other Stories**, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!\**

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**Chelsea says**

**review also posted on Wordpress! spoiler-free review!**

*Flying Lessons and Other Stories* is probably the first anthology I have ever read. As expected, I wanted more from each story, but I enjoyed them all nonetheless! This anthology features diverse stories written by diverse authors and I plan to read more books by them. It definitely focusses on diversity of ethnicity and race, which is great. But diversity also means LGBTQIAP+, mental health... representation and there wasn't enough of that.

I absolutely love how all these stories were heart-warming and positive. The experiences of a child of colour are probably different from those of white children, but that doesn't mean all these stories have to deal with racism and bullying. So make sure to get this anthology in the hands children!

I'm going to discuss each story separately. I really liked the writing styles and how distinct they all were! Normally, I'm not the biggest fan of middle grade novels because the characters sound juvenile, but that wasn't the case in *Flying Lessons and Other Stories*! The writing was understandable for children, yet



enjoyable for adults as well.

**1. *How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court into a Place of Higher Learning and You at the Podium* by Matt de la Peña**

The main character in this story is Mexican American. The writing style was very unusual: 2nd person perspective and mostly future tense. But it totally worked and I was sad when it ended so soon!

**2. *The Difficult Path* by Grace Lin**

*The Difficult Path* is probably the one that made me want *more* the most. I'd definitely read a full length fantasy or historical fiction novel by this author. It seems to take place in Asia, though I don't remember whether that was exactly specified. Perhaps it took place in Taiwan, where the author's parents are from.

**3. *Sol Painting, Inc.* by Meg Medina**

This short story features Latinx representation. was a bit disappointed because I thought there was a mystery element going on - I had the feeling as if the brother didn't go to that school, because of the way he behaved - but that wasn't the case.

**4. *Secret Samantha* by Tim Federle**

*Secret Samantha* was one of my favourite short stories!

**5. *The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn* by Kelly J. Baptist**

I also very much enjoyed this one, but it was too short!

**6. *Choctaw Bigfoot, Midnight in the Mountains* by Tim Tingle**

It's an absolute shame that this was probably the first fiction story I've read featuring Native Americans (Choctaw, to be more specific). Therefore, I really wanted to love it, but I couldn't follow the story. Because a tale was told by a family member, it was mostly *tell instead of show*. I also had a hard time remaining concentrated during the action-packed scenes.

Having said that, as soon as I finished *Choctaw Bigfoot, Midnight in the Mountains*, I did some research to find out more about Choctaw. So the author definitely succeeded in motivating people to read more stories about Indigenous people.

**7. *Main Street* by Jacqueline Woodson**

*Main Street* is about a girl who's mother passed away from cancer and who's best friend is black. Even though I thought it was too short, I really liked some of the things that were mentioned (e.g. about white people touching a black woman's hair and how that's not okay), so I'm very interested to read more by this author. At first, I thought it was odd to have a white characters discuss racism, but somehow, it worked just fine.

**8. *Flying Lessons* by Soman Chainani**

Even though I didn't think *Flying Lessons* was the best short story in this anthology, it certainly is the one I remember the most. So maybe I did love it more than I'd thought. It features Indian representation (and maybe queer representation?). Even at 22 years old, I related to the protagonist. I'm as afraid as him to make friends. I had tears in my eyes.

But I had some problems with the language that was used. Some if it seemed iffy:

- "*It's like a chromosome of fun I didn't get*". I instantly thought of Down syndrome when I read this description, so I really think the author could've used a better way to express that the protagonist doesn't have fun often.

- "g\*psy bangles" I'm absolutely not certain whether this is offensive, but I do know that g\*psy is considered a slur. I don't know whether it's harmful in this context, but I wanted to warn you nonetheless.

### **9. *Seventy-Six Dollars and Forty-Nine Cents* by Kwame Alexander**

I really liked the way this was written, but there was a bit of blackmailing going on and I didn't like that. Hopefully, that part of the story wasn't real, as the protagonist said he took some liberties with the truth.

### **10. *Sometimes a Dream Needs a Push* by Walter Dean Myers**

This story features a disabled character. It was very short! I don't know whether it was because of the writing or the pacing, but I sometimes struggled with knowing what was going on.

**Conclusion:** *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* is an anthology filled with diverse short stories. It has given me hope that I shouldn't give up on middle grade novels, as I absolutely loved the writing style in this one. I plan on re-reading this in the future, as I honestly have already forgotten what most stories were about (as you can tell by my "reviews"). But I definitely want to read full-length novels by most of the featured authors!

✧ You can also find me on Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest and Wordpress! ✧

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### **Emily Mead says**

This anthology makes me so happy. YES for diverse middle grade books about all different kinds of things - about being a trans kid, disabled, PoC, native...and the diversity is intersectional too.

The only drawback to it is that 1) the stories are INCREDIBLY short, and often it's like the story's only begun when it's finished. And 2) they're still overwhelmingly American. What I would love to see is a diverse stories anthology with contributions from all over the world, because everyone's story deserves to be told.

As much as I am a big fan of the #WNDB books movement, and the incredible things it has done, many of the dominant diverse voices still seem to be American. I don't know - just some thoughts.

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## Ron Charles says

Had the pleasure of interviewing the editor, Ellen Oh, about this great new collection of stories for kids. To watch, go to The Washington Post Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/roncharles/p...>

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## CW (The Quiet Pond) ? says

I loved *Flying Lessons and Other Stories*. This book was the perfect book to start off 2017 - **it filled me with so much joy, reminded me of the ups and downs of youth, and filled me with so much hope** -- hope, because kids with marginalized identities may read this book and find themselves in the stories' characters. And I cannot emphasize how important this is - and consequently how this makes *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* so important and successful.

**Within the *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* anthology are ten outstanding stories by ten incredible talented and authors.** Not only was each story told with a genuine and powerful young voice, each story had something meaningful and profound to tell. From family problems, acceptance, being liked, moving away, friendship, to finding your place in the world, *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* **stays true to its audience and explores its themes in a sensitive, thoughtful, and sometimes funny way.**

As this is an anthology, here are my thoughts on each story.

### ***How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court into a Place of Higher Learning and You at the Podium* by Matt de la Peña**

***How to Transform* is a quietly profound story about pursuing dreams and working hard for them, acceptance, and, briefly, the relationship between father and son.** It is written in second-person perspective, a narrative style I am not familiar with but it didn't hinder my enjoyment of the story at all. In fact, I found myself very engaged with the story.

Despite its length, de la Peña's story captures the drive and perseverance of youth with big, big dreams - in the protagonist's case, it's making it in basketball. **I loved how it explored the highs of success and the soul-crushing feeling of failure and rejection, but also how these experiences can become important life lessons.** However, *How to Transform* ends with a very tender and profound scene between the protagonist and his father. An excellent, deeply honest, and empowering story.

### ***The Difficult Path* by Grace Lin**

I am particularly fond of this one because the characters are Chinese, and how so many things in this short story felt familiar. *The Difficult Path* is set in China in a time where young girls did not receive education nor learned how to read. However, superstition leads Lingsi to receive an education despite being a servant girl.

***The Difficult Path* is a lovely story about overcoming hardship, compassion, and having 'valiant spirit'.**

The portrayal of Ancient China and its traditions were fascinating (but also familiar), but I also liked the subtle tongue-in-cheek tone when describing the Li family. I was caught off guard by the direction that *The Difficult Path* took, but it was a very pleasant surprise. The ending was absolutely wonderful, and made me wish it was longer -- or even its own book! **A powerful story about a resourceful girl and the unexpected place that reading takes her.**

#### ***Sol Painting Inc.* by Meg Medina**

This short story seems generally well-liked -- and with good reason. *Sol Painting Inc* is a powerful story about a girl and her family's painting business, and one incident during her summer.

*Sol Painting Inc.* had moments of humour - I particularly loved how Merci, the protagonist, described her brother - but it **also delves into a lesson that a lot of first-generation immigrant children learn about the sacrifices their parents make.** The story also sensitively explores racism, being 'visible', and choosing your battles. The narrative voice in this story was wonderful and made me laugh at times, but **Medina balances this with moments that were heartfelt and raw.** A heartbreaking *and* heartwarming story with so many important lessons.

#### ***Secret Samantha* by Tim Federle**

***Secret Samantha* is a simple and relatable story but is full of charm.** It is told through the eyes of Sam, the former new girl, and is about the woes of gift-giving and making new friends - two tasks I have great difficulty doing but they have undeniably high rewards!

I adored the hilarious and earnest shenanigans with the 'Secret Santa', including the tribulations of choosing a gift, the anxiety of buying the right gift - and, may I add, the fact that Sam cared so much about giving the right gift was so endearing and lovely! - as well as the excitement of giving the gift itself. **The many similarities and parallels between gift-giving and making a new friend was splendid and much appreciated.** On this front, Federle delivered.

#### ***The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn* by Kelly J. Baptist**

I'll tell you this: *The Beans and Rice Chronicles* packs an emotional punch. This story is more on the heavier, more heartbreaking side of this anthology, but that in no way diminished my enjoyment of this story. In fact, ***The Beans and Rice Chronicles* is a force of its own - incredibly moving, powerful, and important.**

It is about Isaiah Dunn following the death of his father and the small sprouts of hope that can be found in the most unexpected of places. **It is about grief, loss, family, poverty, and the power of stories.** Told through Isaiah's young eyes, the themes are depicted in a realistic way but also with a degree of innocence. Isaiah possessed so much child wisdom, something that was heartbreaking to read. When Isaiah finds a book of his late father's stories, this lights a spark of hope in Isaiah and his family's life; what follows is nothing short of spectacular.

#### ***Choctaw Bigfoot, Midnight in the Mountains* by Tim Tingle**

Unfortunately, I had difficulty connecting to *Choctaw Bigfoot*. I listened to the book twice, and after a second reading, I understood it better but I acknowledge that it wasn't written for me -- but I am certain that it'd be loved by the people who it is written for.

***Choctaw Bigfoot* is a story about a big family and celebrates our storytellers and the power of storytelling.** Though most of this story is the uncle's story, *Choctaw Bigfoot* highlights the importance of family traditions and how such traditions bring people - not just family! - together. Though it wasn't for me, *Choctaw Bigfoot* is still a delightful story.

### ***Main Street* by Jacqueline Woodson**

I didn't expect to love *Main Street*, but love it I did.

The story is about the gorgeous friendship between, the white narrator, Treetop, and her friend Celeste described as 'tall, brown and beautiful'. **The writing is melancholic and emotional, and it subtly explores the different kinds of alienation** both girls experience in a town where 'the leaves are the only colour'. Unexpectedly profound that boasts a stunning narrative, *Main Street* is a story about grief, loneliness, the terrible effect of stereotypes, but also makes room for optimism and longing for a better future.

### ***Flying Lessons* by Soman Chainanu**

***Flying Lessons* was my favourite story of this collection.** It was full of heart, absolutely delightful, made me laugh, and even had a few moments of bittersweet truths wrapped in solemnity.

The story follows Santosh and what ensues after his nani, his sixty-nine year old grandmother, whisks him away on a holiday. ***Flying Lessons* explored a plethora of themes that I really connected to - success, ambition, the meaning of life for a young student, and what makes life extraordinary.** I adored Nani, her hilarious escapades and fierce way of life, but also for her insight and astounding perceptiveness. *Flying Lessons* delves deeply into a question I always ask myself - what makes you happy? **Earnest and whimsical**, *Flying Lessons* was unforgettable and a story I will hold onto for the years to come.

### ***Seventy-Six Dollars and Forty-Nine Cents* by Kwame Alexander**

This story is told in verse and poetry and I enjoyed it so much. When I was younger and grew up with superhero movies like *X-Men*, I fantasized about having superpowers of my own, so I found *Seventy-Six Dollars* to be lovely and satisfying.

Told like a memoir, ***Seventy-Six Dollars* is a story about an ordinary boy and the extraordinary thing that happens to him.** Monk is the clever protagonist but otherwise ordinary protagonist who can suddenly read other people's minds, and I loved Alexander's writing and voice for him. With funny and witty writing, ***Seventy-Six Dollars* is a lighthearted twist on the quote 'with great power comes great responsibility'.**

### ***Sometimes a Dream Needs a Push* by Walter Dean Myers**

The anthology was dedicated to the late Walter Dean Myers, who believed that "young people need to see ... themselves reflected in the pages of the books they read." Ending this anthology with a short story of his own made the anthology as whole so much more powerful.

**This story by him is a powerful story with themes of family, guilt, and grief.** It features a protagonist with a disability, how he joins the wheelchair basketball league, and how his father, plagued with guilt, helps coach his basketball team. **Readers will connect to this story, as it explores the enduring hope parents have for their children.** The story and narrative is simple, but that's what made the story all the more profound and meaningful.

All in all, *Flying Lessons* is an outstanding anthology and, more importantly, **it has a small piece for everyone.**

**Rating: 4.5/5**

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This review can also be found on my book blog, Read, Think, Ponder!

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

4.5 stars. One of the things that initially got me into reading as a youngster was the ability that books had to let me see through new eyes and walk that proverbial mile in someone else's shoes. I think it is so important for everyone but for children and teenagers to have access to a wide variety of books that reflect all different walks of life and experience. That is just one reason that I am such a big supporter of the "We Need Diverse Books" movement. It's an important step forward for the book industry and I'm happy to see anthologies like this come out to take the movement forward!

If you read middle grade fiction, it is easy to see that the line up of authors included in the book is truly a powerhouse. Each author brings their own unique voice to the collection. I had two favorite stories in the book. First, I loved the story about a boy who finds a fantastical story that his father secretly wrote about the boy and the boy takes the idea and turns it into a story for a story contest. My other favorite was about a boy who gets dragged to Europe by his crazy grandmother and discovers how to break out of his shell.

There is a lot to love about this collection. All of the stories are incredibly different and will introduce readers to memorable characters. If you don't know some of these authors already, it will also introduce you to some of the brightest voices in middle grade fiction today. This is a great collection and one that I know that I will be recommending a lot. It would make a great gift for the middle graders in your life.

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### **Bogi Takács says**

I will probably not review this one at length, I read it because I wanted to relax with fun middle grade stories and loved the lineup. It did not go as well as I thought it would. So just some brief points.

I did not want to see in an explicitly diversity-themed book:

- \* using fatness as a shorthand for bad character traits
- \* the existence of non-Christians spoiling the fun about Christmas, as now school holiday celebrations need to be secular (multi-page scene about this)
- \* the boy forcing the girl to hold his hand presented as totally OK
- \* queer boys with sad ending (it starts early, does it)
- \* gender policing presented as everyday banter

I really enjoyed the Meg Medina story though (I need to pick up Jaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass and also her newer work). The Jacqueline Woodson, Tim Tingle, Kelly J. Baptist stories were also fine. The rest I had misgivings about, yes, even by some of my favorite authors.

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### **David Naiman says**

Some submissions read like short stories and others like an early chapter in a book, but all have an interesting story and perspective to share. Well done by all.

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### **Kelly says**

Released under the "We Need Diverse Books" imprint, and it does an excellent job proving once again why that statement could not be more urgently true. Many of these stories were about coming of age, starting to take on more mature responsibilities while at the same time coming to terms with a more mature, less rosy-colored understanding of the world. All of the stories dealt with differing cultural perspectives, cross-cultural cooperation/meetings/misunderstandings and what it's like to have to both be a kid and negotiate the extra difficulties of living that come with living in a culture that is not sufficiently built to understand or support you. I personally found "Difficult Path," "Sol Painting," "Secret Samantha," "The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn" and the title story "Flying Lessons," the most affecting, but different readers will likely resonate to different stories, and that's the whole point of the collection.

This was the summer read for the middle school kids I teach, and I'm looking forward to having a lot of great discussions with them. There's a ton to dig into. Highly recommended for all middle-school aged kids, or perhaps even some HS freshmen or precocious, advanced reading late elementary kids, with adult previewing of the stories and help processing their message/content.

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### **Donalyn says**

Fabulous anthology with a mix of genres and perspectives represented. A must-have for middle school and high school classrooms and libraries.

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### **Lesley Burnap says**

A must read for everyone! Kids, maybe, grade 5+. Many voices represented here. Hope to read more from We Need Diverse Books-maybe even stories for much younger readers?

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### **Lola says**

To my astonishment, I was able to read this book in one sitting.

I'm not surprised I could read \*a\* book in one sitting, but anthologies are not my thing. In total, I may have – may have – read two or three others in entire life, and there isn't one I read from beginning to end, without skipping at least two short stories.

That's because anthologies = multiple authors = multiple writing styles. It's rare for someone to enjoy twelve or so short stories equally. And yet, I loved the hell out of each and every one of these cultural stories.

They truly each contain an important lesson that can help young people grow into intelligent, aware and sympathetic adults. Even the short story told in verse was a hundred percent enjoyable to read and smartly-told. So beautiful.

I could say that I read this because I didn't want to go to sleep, but I honestly did not plan on finishing it so fast. I was going to alternate between this book and CIRCUS MIRANDUS, but I couldn't physically put this book down.

Oftentimes, short stories are slower paced than full length novels, perhaps because there is more description – more need to set the scene – but I flew through these wonderfully-diverse slice-of-life written works.

So, so, so recommended.

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