

# Your Library Today



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## 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.*

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

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**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.

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**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.

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**Hoops.** New York: Delacorte, 1981.

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

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

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- 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.
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- Duel in the Desert.** (Arrow Series) Viking, 1986.
- Ambush in the Amazon.** (Arrow Series) Viking, 1986.
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- Crystal.** New York: Viking 1987.
- Scorpions.** New York: Harper & Row, 1988. Newbery Honor
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- Fallen Angels.** New York: Scholastic, 1988.
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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.
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- 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.
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- Amistad; A Long Road to Freedom.** New York: Dutton, 1997
- Angel to Angel.** New York: HarperCollins, 1998
- Slam!** New York: Scholastic, 1998
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- The Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins: World War II, Normandy, France.** (My Name Is America) New York, Scholastic, 1999
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- Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam,** Illustrated by Ann Grafalconi. New York, Harper Collins 2002
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- 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
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- 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
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- Street Love.** New York, HarperCollins, Fall 2006
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- The Prince.** (Writing as Stacie Johnson) New York, Delacorte 1993