

All Together

USBBY's Outstanding
International Books
connect kids worldwide

By Kathy East

GOOD BOOKS AND THE LOVE OF READING CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE GROW in their knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live. Top-notch titles can also help kids from around the globe share powerful emotional experiences, and USBBY's 2012 list of the 36 most outstanding international books for children and teens aims to do all of that and more. For starters, read the pictures in *Anton Can Do Magic*, and let the exquisite artwork fill you with delight. Or agonize with an orphaned 13-year-old as she describes, in *Beatrice's Dream*, the harsh reality of living in one of the world's largest slums. Empathize with Lizzie; her brother, Karl; and their zookeeper mom as they try to save a noble beast from being destroyed in *An Elephant in the Garden*. And laugh out loud as young orphaned Ivo teams up with a hag, a wizard, and a troll to rescue a princess in *The Ogre of Oglefort*. These are just a smattering of the emotions and insights that American readers can expect to experience, thanks to recent titles from nine nations, including India, Australia, France, and the United Kingdom.

KINDERGARTEN—GRADE 2

DEVERNAY, Laëtitia. *The Conductor*. illus. by author. Chronicle. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-4521-0491-1. France.

In a wordless picture book, a conductor steps into a grove of yellow and olive-colored trees. He climbs one and surveys the terrain, then lifts his baton, and the forest transforms into a surreal, symbolic symphony. The book's tall and narrow shape allows the intricate drawings to soar and swell.

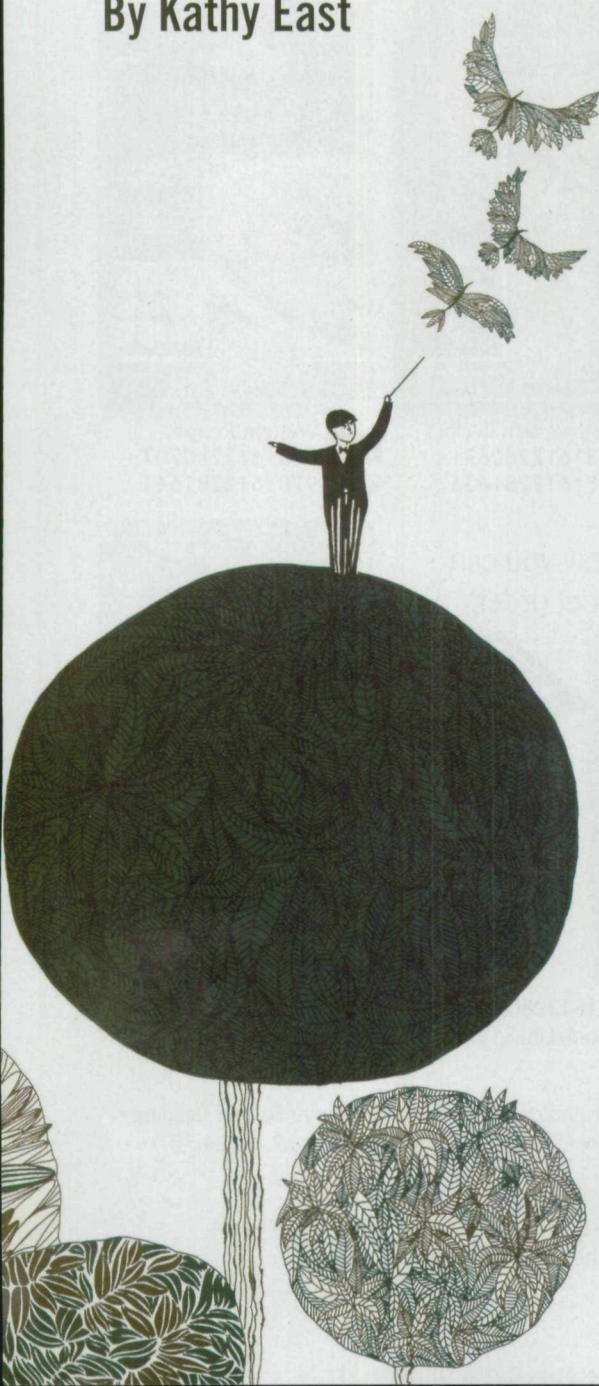
GORMLEY, Greg. *Dog in Boots*. illus. by Roberta Angaramo. Holiday House. RTE 17.95. ISBN 978-0-8234-2347-7. UK.

Inspired by "Puss in Boots," Dog seeks out special footwear at the local shoe store. All he tries, from elegant boots to high-heeled shoes, will not work for digging, swimming, and scratching. This version is complete with richly amusing text and illustrations.

KONNECKE, Ole. *Anton Can Do Magic*. tr. from German by Catherine Chidgey. illus. by author. Gecko, dist. by Lerner Publisher Services. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-8774-6737-0. Germany.

Anton, a young boy, believes he has a magic hat that will make things disappear. Although the book

The Conductor by Laëtitia Devernay © 2010 by Editions La loi de lire SA
Letitia first published in the United States in 2011 by Chronicle Books LLC



Now

is wordless, simple, charming illustrations capture the humor in Anton's youthful and successful antics.

PADMANABHAN, Manjula. *I Am Different! Can You Find Me?* Charlesbridge. PLB \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-57091-639-7; pap. \$7.95. ISBN 978-1-57091-640-3. India.

Learn to say "Can you find me?" in 16 languages in this interactive book celebrating uniqueness. Filled with teachable, fun-filled moments, it enables readers to solve puzzles and learn a bit about each language and words in English derived from them.

SCHUBERT, Ingrid & Dieter Schubert. *The Umbrella.* illus. by authors. Lemniscaat. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-9359-5400-2. The Netherlands.

After a dog finds a red umbrella, an autumn breeze pulls him up into the skies and casts him around the world. This wordless picture book uses large, colorful, yet soft images to depict the sky, landforms, and animals the dog sees before safely returning home.

TROTTIER, Maxine. *Migrant.* illus. by Isabelle Arsenault. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-975-7. Canada.

Anna compares herself to a bird, a jack rabbit, a bee and a kitten as her German-speaking family from Mexico travels to Canada for work. She longs to be like a tree with permanent roots. Soft-hued illustrations with a Mennonite quilt motif lend a dreamlike longing to Anna's story.

TULLET, Hervé. *Press Here.* tr. from French by Christopher Franceschelli. Chronicle/Handprint. Tr \$14.95. ISBN 978-0-8118-7954-5. France.

Readers press the yellow dot on the cover, then follow instructions—shaking, tilting, and more—to magically make the dots change. Wordless, a mem-

orable and creative experience allows readers to say, "Let's play it again!"

VANDE GRIEK, Susan. *Loon.* illus. by Karen Reczuch. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-077-2. Canada.

A beautiful prose poem follows two loon chicks through their life cycle amid other Canadian wildlife. Acrylic on canvas art adds a realistic texture to the gorgeous, close-up illustrations. The author includes a note and additional resources.

VAN MOL, Sine. *Meena.* illus. by Carianne Wijffels. Eerdmans. Tr \$17. ISBN 978-0-8028-5394-3. Belgium.

Could old Meena be a witch as the neighborhood children fear? In this appealing story filled with almost childlike illustrations, Meena's granddaughter and cherry pies convince them otherwise.

YOUNG, Cybele. *Ten Birds.* illus. by author. Kids Can. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-568-2. Canada.

Counting from 10 to none, each bird devises an inventive, mechanical way to cross a river. Their names each reflect the ingenuity of their devices. Stunning black ink drawings detail the birds, the numbers, and the inventions. This entertaining fable leaves the simplest solution with readers.

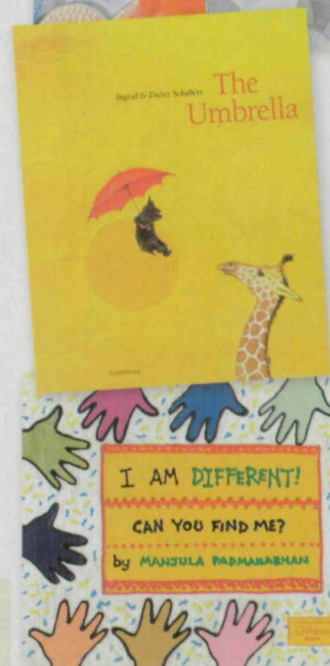
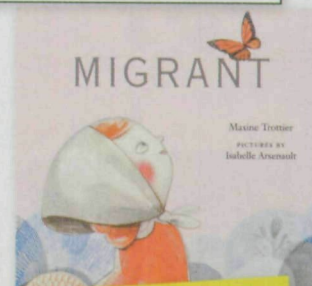
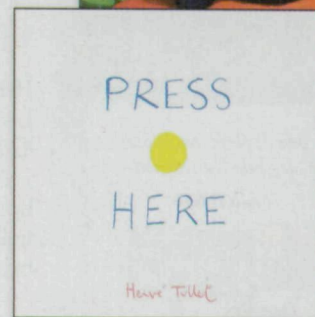
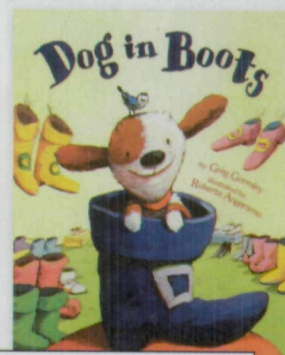
GRADES 3–5

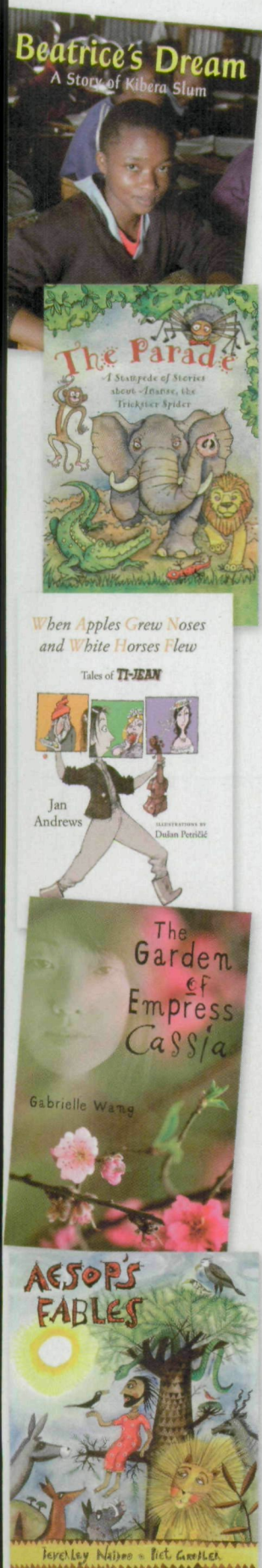
ABELA, Deborah. *The Ghosts of Gribblesea Pier.* Farrar. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-374-36239-3. Australia.

Aurelie's loving, circus family owns a rundown amusement park. When the town tries to shut it down, Aurelie, her trickster family, and a new friend save the day. This engaging fantasy demonstrates that conflict can be settled without violence.

USBBY is the United States national section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), a nonprofit organization that facilitates the international exchange of information about books and reading. Since 2006, when we launched the Outstanding International Books list, our mission has been to select titles of high literary and artistic merit that introduce American children to artists and writers from other countries, help our students see the world from other points of view, and provide a fresh perspective or address a topic otherwise missing from U.S. children's literature, while often presenting a distinct cultural flavor. This year, our committee evaluated more than 225 children's and young adult books that were published in 2011. We considered all aspects of content and presentation, including the originality or creativity of the approach, the distinctiveness of the topic, and the qualities that engage and appeal to kids. To check out our previous years' picks, visit www.usbby.org.

Members of the 2012 USBBY Outstanding International Books Committee: Kathy East (chair), Perrysburg, OH; Seemi Aziz, Stillwater, OK; Therese Bigelow, Coupeville, WA; Marilyn Carpenter, Spokane, WA; Brenda Dales, Oxford, OH; Margaret Pyterek, Glenview, IL; Maria Salvatore, Washington, DC; Mary Wong, Peoria, AZ; and Deborah Wooten, Knoxville, TN.





ANDREWS, Jan. *When Apples Grew Noses and White Horses Flew: Tales of Ti-Jean*. illus. by Dušan Petričić. Groundwood. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-952-8. Canada.

Ti-Jean, a charming and humble traditional French-Canadian folktale hero, always manages to get himself entangled in foolishly wise situations. In three entertaining stories, he matches wits with a greedy princess, a rogue marbles player, and a lord and his daughter. Pencil drawings add droll details to the lively tales.

ARRIGAN, Mary. *The Rabbit Girl*. Frances Lincoln. pap. \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-84780-156-2. UK.

Alice and Tony, as two young London evacuees, are sent to the Lake District during World War II. They become special friends with an older lady who claims to dislike children. In a quirk of fate in today's world, a drawing of rabbits connects their families and the memory of the lady, Beatrix Potter. This is a story rich in generational understanding of the bonds of war.

IBBOTSON, Eva. *The Ogre of Oglefort*. illus. by Lisa K. Weber. Dutton. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-525-42382-9. UK.

A hag, a troll, and a boy set out to rescue a princess held by an ogre. The princess refuses to return home and the troll cures the ogre's ills. Readers will giggle over all the twists and complications of this charming story.

JORDAN-FENTON, Christy & Margaret Pokiak-Fenton. *A Stranger at Home: A True Story*. illus. by Liz Amini-Holmes. Annick, dist. by Firefly. Tr \$21.95. ISBN 978-1-55451-362-8; pap. \$12.95. ISBN 978-1-55451-361-1. Canada.

Olemaun (Margaret) Pokiak, age 10, returns to her Inuit family after two long years at the missionary school. She no longer fits in after being exposed to the new ways taught by the nuns. This story portrays the sorrows of removal and then readjustment to Native cultures for children.

KOJO, KP. *The Parade: A Stampede of Stories About Ananse, the Trickster Spider*. illus. by Karen Lilje. Frances Lincoln. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-1-84780-163-0. UK.

In six lively tales, Ananse outwits and tricks the animals of the forest in mischievous ways. Cultural flavor abounds in this book, infused with Ghanaian language and illustrated with black line drawings. An excellent resource for storytellers.

NAIDOO, Beverley, retel. *Aesop's Fables*. illus. by Piet Grobler. Frances Lincoln. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-84780-007-7. UK.

Sixteen fables are retold with a distinctive African flare in both language and illustration. Stylized borders and watercolor paintings enrich the grasslands setting. The author posits that Aesop's background was indeed African.

SMITH, David J. *This Child, Every Child: A Book About the World's Children*. illus. by Shelagh Armstrong. Kids

Can. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-466-1. Canada.

Young readers are introduced to families, living and health conditions, and the status of children, in various places around the world. The book intends to raise awareness of the common needs of all children as well as the disparate realities in many of their lives. Featured on each spread is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

WANG, Gabrielle. *The Garden of Empress Cassia*. illus. by author. Kane/Miller. pap. \$4.95. ISBN 978-1-61067-049-4. Australia.

Teased and bullied because of her Chinese heritage and unhappy with her parents' expectations for only academic excellence, Mimi Lu's life changes when she draws a magical garden on the sidewalk in front of her father's herbal medicine shop using pastels, a gift from her art teacher. The fantasy explores issues of friendship and community as well.

WILLIAMS, Karen Lynne. *Beatrice's Dream: A Story of Kibera Slum*. photos. by Wendy Stone. Frances Lincoln. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-84780-019-0. UK.

Beatrice, an orphaned 13 year old, lives in one of the world's largest slums in Nairobi. Color photographs, accompanied by her own words, describe the harsh and dangerous realities of living and going to school as she struggles to follow her dreams.

GRADES 6-8

ASHLEY, Bernard. *Aftershock*. Frances Lincoln. pap. \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-84780-055-8. UK.

Makis moves to England with his mother after an earthquake destroys their home in Greece. He struggles socially until he reveals his skill at football. This realistic fictional story has an original approach to the difficulty of the immigrant experience.

BROOKS, Martha. *Queen of Hearts*. Farrar. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-374-34229-6. Canada.

In the 1940's, Marie-Claire and her siblings contract tuberculosis and move to a sanatorium in Manitoba. Undergoing treatment, Marie-Claire learns of love, loss, and friendship. This novel is deeply moving and emotionally honest, and readers will empathize with its characters.

DUMON TAK, Bibi. *Soldier Bear*. tr. from Dutch by Laura Watkinson. illus. by Philip Hopman. Eerdmans. Tr \$13. ISBN 978-0-8028-5375-2. The Netherlands.

A bear becomes part of a World War II unit of Polish soldiers. This fictionalized account is an unusual and humorous perspective on wartime experiences. Photographs enrich the truth of the story.

GERSZAK, Rafal with Dawn Hunter. *Beyond Bullets: A Photo Journal of Afghanistan*. photos by Rafal Gerszak. Annick, dist. by Firefly. Tr \$19.95. ISBN 978-1-55451-293-5. Canada.

Gerszak recounts a year spent with U.S. troops

in Afghanistan. Commanding photographs of combat scenes interspersed with photos of everyday life combine with a narrative and informational notes to give readers a sense of the horror of war as well as the beauty of humanity.

HARTNETT, Sonya. *The Midnight Zoo*. illus. by Andrea Offermann. Candlewick. Tr \$16.95. 978-0-7636-5339-2; ebook \$16.99 ISBN 978-0-7636-5632-4. Australia.

Two Roma brothers and their baby sister escape a Nazi roundup at their encampment. They flee to a bombed-out town where the only survivors are caged zoo animals with stories to tell. Magic realism combines with historical fiction to create a fable about hope, trust, and wonder.

LEWIS, Gill. *Wild Wings*. illus. by Yuta Onoda. S & S/Atheneum. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-1-4424-1445-7; ebook \$9.99. ISBN 978-1-4424-1449-5. UK.

Sharing a secret, Collum and Iona form a tight bond around the activity of an osprey found on his family's farm. Eventually the whole town becomes involved, tracking and awaiting the migratory bird's journey from Scotland to Gambia and back again. Beautifully written, this is a timeless story of hope, friendship, and caring for the environment.

MORPURGO, Michael. *An Elephant in the Garden*. Feiwel & Friends. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-312-59369-8. UK.

Frail and in a nursing home, Lizzie recalls when she was 15 and her family, including an elephant named Marlene, escaped the devastating 1945 bombing of Dresden (Germany). Readers are spellbound as Lizzie shares her riveting recollections of the sounds, smells, and feelings of war with her nurse and her nurse's son.

NICHOLLS, Sally. *Season of Secrets*. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-545-21825-2. UK.

Sent to live with their grandparents after the death of their mother, Molly and Hannah struggle with adjustments and grief. In this gently written narrative, the girls' everyday life is skillfully contrasted with the myths of nature's characters and seasonal cycles.

REEVE, Philip. *A Web of Air*. Scholastic. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-545-22216-7. UK.

Traveling with a troupe of actors, Fever uses her knowledge of technology to add special effects to the shows performed in a future England. This well-written, richly imagined story is the second about Fever Crumb.

TAN, Shaun. *Lost & Found*. illus by author. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$21.95. ISBN 978-0-545-22924-1. Australia.

This book's title theme of something of value lost and then recovered is linked to three previously published stories. Uniquely sophisticated art extends the relationships between the stories.

GRADES 9–12

ARNI, Samhita. *Sita's Ramayana*. illus. by Moyna Chitrakar. Groundwood. Tr \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-145-8. India.

The *Ramayana* saga dramatically chronicles the struggles of Queen Sita. Numerous plot turns, magical animals, sorcery, divine gods, and demons create drama. This visually stunning graphic novel, told from Sita's perspective, uses drawings from traditional Hindu pictographs and cave paintings.

BROOKS, Kevin. *iBoy*. Scholastic. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-545-31768-9. UK.

Tom realizes he has superpower after parts of a cell phone, dropped from a high-rise building, become imbedded in his brain. He battles with his urge to seek revenge on the gang that raped his childhood friend and beat him or to control his newfound powers. This book is realistic, frightening, and a real sci-fi page-turner.

CHRISTOPHER, Lucy. *Flyaway*. Scholastic/Chicken House. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-545-31771-9. UK.

After her father's heart failure, Isla hopes that saving a lone swan that is struggling to fly will make everything better. At the hospital, she meets an understanding young cancer patient who becomes the assistant in her plan. This modern-day realistic novel is tender, sensitive, and compelling.

HERRERA, Nicholas as told to Elisa Amato. *High Riders, Saints and Death Cars: A Life Saved by Art*. photos by John T. Denne. Groundwood. Tr \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-854-5. Canada.

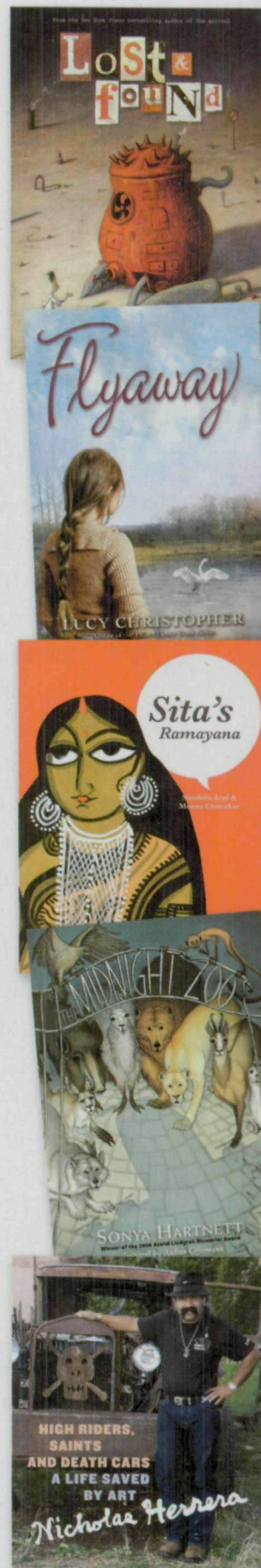
In this photo-biography, quotes from New Mexico folk artist Herrera reveal how his Spanish conquistador roots, his troubled early years, his religion, and his work as a welder and mechanic influence his art. Color photographs showcase his sculptures, paintings, and lifestyle.

WALLACE, Jason. *Out of Shadows*. Holiday House. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-8234-2342-2. Canada.

After Robert Jacklin's family relocates to Zimbabwe, he struggles for acceptance at his boarding school amid racism, homophobia, white classmates' antagonism, and hatred toward black students. He makes a moral decision when violence spirals out of control. This is a gripping, thought-provoking story set during a volatile political climate.

ZAFON, Carlos Ruiz. *The Midnight Palace*. tr. from Spanish by Lucia Graves. Little, Brown. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-316-04473-8. Spain.

Orphaned twins, separated and hidden for their protection after birth, are reunited at age 16. They discover family secrets and face unspeakable danger when confronted by the diabolical, powerful, and sinister soul of their dead father. This action-filled fantasy novel is set in Calcutta in the 1930s.



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