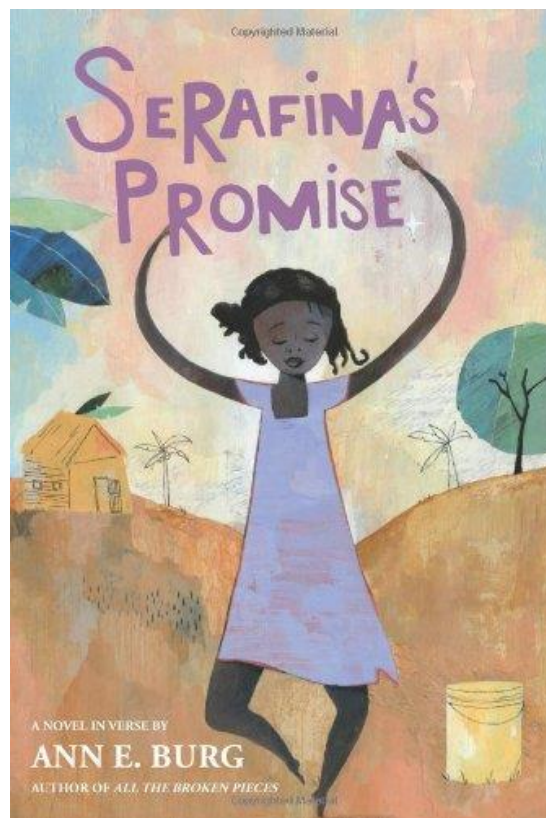


Children and Young Adult Book Review
Middle School
Serafina's Promise

Educator Reviewer: Margaret Robbins
Student Reviewers: Ashley Doss



Burg, A (2013). *Serafina's promise*. New York: Scholastic Press

Educator Review:

Serafina's Promise (2013) is a middle grades novel, primarily appropriate for grades 4-8, written in beautiful poetic verse. It tells the lyrical story of Serafina, a young girl who lives on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Serafina has aspirations to be a doctor, in spite of obstacles that stand in her way, such as family obligations and lack of finances. However, as her father advises her, "Love always finds a way. /The important thing/ is to never give up" (p. 139). Finally, Serafina gets to attend school and faces the challenge of learning French when she is accustomed to speaking Creole. She perseveres, yet the true test comes when an unexpected natural disaster hits Haiti, and many people around her are hurting and lost. Through her determination and love from family and friends, Serafina learns that dreams can come true through honesty, courage, and hard work.

This book was reviewed because it is an example of high quality multicultural children's literature. The author clearly did research about Haiti and the country's customs and languages. Serafina expresses both a desire to hold onto her cultural heritage and to work hard in her French language based school to achieve her dream of becoming a doctor. One of her mentors, a doctor named Antoinette Solaine, tells Serafina "Haiti needs people like you. / People who believe in us, /who respect our culture/and our language" (Burg, 2013, p. 257). Serafina realizes that she can achieve her goals while holding onto her cultural identity.

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Serafina's Promise (2013) would be particularly of interest to children who have to overcome obstacles, such as family expectations and lack of financial resources. It will also appeal to those who love poetry. In addition, this novel would be a good choice for instruction in a late elementary or middle school classroom. The author is a former middle school teacher and has a page on her website about relating *Serafina's Promise* (2013) to the Common Core Standards: <http://www.annburg.com/SerafinaTheCommonCore.html>

Margaret Robbins
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Student Review:

I could not put this book down! I loved the storyline and the way the author made Serafina a strong, resourceful, persistent and optimistic character. Even though she was going through hard times, and everyone said it was impossible for her to become a doctor, she made it. She persevered, she stayed strong and worked hard to achieve her goals. With everyone telling her she could not make the money for school, or couldn't do it all, she did. Even in the darkest hours, she held on to her dream and followed it all the way though. I love the message itself: never give up and follow your dreams no matter what. This book is a great reminder that no matter how hard something is, we can always achieve it if we try.

Ashley Doss
Burney Harris Lyons Middle School, Athens, GA
8th Grade