**Verse Novels: An Annotated Bibliography**

**Brown, Susan Taylor. *Hugging the Rock*. New York: Tricycle Press, 2006. Grades 3-6.**

An ALA Notable/Best Book, in this novel in verse Rachel expresses her emotions about the recent divorce of her parents, what it’s like to live without her mother, who seemingly abandoned the family, and her changing feelings toward her father. Although the verse gives readers only the information they need to know, without creating characters of depth, this is a quick read for early readers of young adult fiction.

**Creech, Sharon. *Heartbeat*. New York: Joanna Catler Books, 2004. Grades 5-8.**

Both a *Publishers Weekly* Starred Review and *School Library Journal* Starred Review, in *Heartbeat,* twelve-year-old Annie struggles with life the year her mother gets pregnant (at her age? – gross), her live-in grandfather begins getting ill, and her best friend begins pulling away from her. In free-verse, Creech uses lyrical phrases of poetry to portray the inner emotions of Annie.

**Fields, Terri. *After the Death of Anna Gonzales*. New York: H. Holt, 2002. Grades 6-12.**

In forty-seven natural and direct poems, each told from a different person’s perspective, including students, teachers, and other school staff, *After the Death of Anna Gonzales* shows the brutal effects a teen girl’s suicide has on students and staff. Some people seem to remain unaffected while others blame themselves. Many of the poems rely heavily on stereotypes; however, this is a book that many will read over and over despite that the individual voice in each poem doesn’t quite allow each speaker to take on a life of his/her own. Anna’s suicide note, included at the end, is sure to raise provocative discussion in classrooms or book clubs.

**Frost, Helen. *Keesha’s House*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. Grade 7-12. Hi-Low.**

A Printz Honor Book, in this novel told in a series of dramatic monologues that are poetic and personal, seven teens dealing with problems such as pregnancy, homosexuality, and abuse describe in verse what led them to leave their homes and find shelter at an adolescent safe-house in their city. With the help of Keesha, a fellow runaway, characters find a new *home* in this safe *house*. With lots of line breaks that make for easy reading, readers will be drawn to characters portrayed with aching realism who speak the poetry in ordinary words.

**Roy, Jennifer. *Yellow Star*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2006. Grades 5-8.**

Inspired by the real experiences of the author’s aunt, this story takes readers into the Lodz ghetto at the start of WWII. Following Syvia from the time she is 4 ½ to the time of her rescue when she is ten, this book shows the Holocaust and is atrocities through the eyes of child who struggles to understand what is going on and why her world has suddenly been turned upside down. In simple free-verse, Syvia’s voice naturally matures as she grows from a very young child who does not understand what is happening around her to a young girl who is consciously fighting for survival.

**Rylant, Cynthia. *God Went to Beauty School*. New York: HarperTempest, 2003. Grades 6-12.**

This *Horn Book* starred book explores the question, “What if God is just a guy who plays poker, watches movies, and owns his own nail salon?” In this collection of thought-provoking and insightful verse, each poem begins lightheartedly with God attempting some normal, everyday activity – like getting a desk job – but the poems wind up providing some serious food for thought.

**Sones, Sonya. *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*. New York: Simon and**

**Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004. Grades 6-12.**

In this solid and well-written novel in verse, after fifteen-year-old Ruby’s mother dies, she is forced to leave her home, her school, and her friends to live with her father – whom she’s never met and knows almost nothing about. Her father turns out to be Whip Logan, a famous movie actor in Hollywood. As Ruby comes to really know her father and learn why he really divorced her mother before Ruby was born, secrets will be revealed, and acceptance won’t be far behind. Although some parts of the plot are predictable, Ruby’s story is gripping and enjoyable.

**Turner, Ann Warren. *Hard Hit*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2006. Grades 6-12.**

Sophomore Mark Warren has it all – great friends, a beautiful girlfriend, and he’s a star-pitcher for his high school baseball team. But all of this suddenly means nothing when Mark learns his hero – his father – has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Turner uses her intense and lyrical poetry to paint the reality of gradual loss and the guilt that often accompanies it.

**Wild, Margaret. *Jinx*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2002. Grades 8-12.**

Connected poems tell this story of Jen. The always reliable, dependable, and predictable girl at school finds her perfect world turned upside down when her first boyfriend dies. But when her second boyfriend dies as well, Jen begins calling herself Jinx – for that must certainly be what she is. With the help of her understanding mother and a good friend, however, Jen learns to deal with the death of these two boys and outgrows her self-imposed nickname.

**Woodson, Jacqueline. *Locomotion*. New York: Putnam’s, 2003. Grades 5-8.**

Eleven-year-old Lonnie Collins Motion, “Locomotion,” has had a rough life. At seven, his parents died in a fire, and his little sister Lily was adopted while he was sent to live in a foster home. Inspired by his teacher to put this thoughts and emotions down on paper, Locomotion finds poetry is the best way to do it. As Lonnie experiments with forms including sonnets, haiku, and epistle poems, although most poems are simple free-verse, readers will laugh, cry, sigh, and grow as Lonnie finds love and acceptance at his foster home and while finding a way to stay in contact with the little sister he thought he had lost.