**Love That Dog** by Sharon Creech

Plot Summary: *Love That Dog* is the humorous, endearing story of second grade boy who discovers a hidden potential and love for poetry. Jack starts out explaining to Mrs. Stretchberry, his teacher that boys do not write poetry, and that he has no desire to do so. He starts out not understanding the importance of some classic poems she read to them, and begins to imitate them for fun. Jack is shocked when Mrs. Stretchberry asks him if she can put one of his poems on the blackboard. At first he refuses, but she convinces Jack on another poem. As Jack’s exposure to poetry continues, he begins to write more and more poems, which are put on the blackboard for the class to see. He eventually opens up and begins to tell of his love for his dog Sky, that has passed away. Eventually, Jack allows Mrs. Stretchberry to put his name on the poem that is on the board. He feels embarrassed, yet pleased at the compliments of his classmates. Mrs. Stretchberry asks Jack to write to Mr. Walter Dean Meyers, one of the poets they read from (and that Jack imitated), to ask him to come visit their school. Mr. Meyers wrote a poem titled, “Love That Boy”. Jack hesitantly writes back, not expecting him to care about the request of a young schoolboy. To his class’s delight, Mr. Meyers comes to their school, and the entire class enjoys poetry and brownies with the author. The book ends with a thank you letter from Jack to Mr. Meyers, thanking him for the visit, and a copy of his poem, “Love that Dog”.


**Schooled by Gordon Korman**

Plot Summary: Capricorn Anderson has been raised by his hippie grandmother, Rain, on a farm commune his whole life. He knows nothing of modern technology, and has had little or no social interaction with the outside world. That all changes when his grandmother is seriously injured and has to stay in the hospital. Cap, as he is called, is forced to move in with a guidance counselor, Mrs. Donnelly, and her moody daughter, Sophie. He is enrolled in the local middle school where school politics rule and weirdness is shunned. Zach, a fellow student, has climbed the popularity ladder and sees Cap as an opportunity to become the next legend of Claverage Middle School. As the school’s tradition goes, the oddest nerdiest student is elected eighth grade president and always wins. Zach nominates Cap for the job and sees to it that he wins. Innocently, Cap becomes the butt of all of his pranks and jokes but not for long. Cap's unique non-violent and non-competitive upbringing helps him through it all. Cap’s popularity at school rises two-fold. One day on the school bus the bus driver Mr. Rodrigo keels over, sending the bus veering towards a dump truck. Cap responds immediately, pulling Mr. Rodrigo off of his chair and steering the bus away from the truck. Despite his arrest at the hospital, the students hail him as a hero and begin helping him out with his duties as president. In particular everyone is keen to help out with the Halloween bash. Even the principal Mr. Kasagi gives him 12 blank checks to pay for everything. However, he tells Cap, he must use the checks responsibly. Cap has no idea what he is talking about until he remembers what Rain once said to him: being responsible is helping others. With the checks Cap buys and engraves a bracelet for Sophie, pretending it is from her father and donates money to lots of charities, including $1000 to Naomi’s charities. His generosity makes him even more popular.Students begin to admire his weirdness when they see that it is genuine kindness with a hippie flare. Zach’s plan to humiliate Cap and regain popularity backfires when Cap is injured and believed to be dead. Capricorn Anderson wins over the student body and helps Rain to see a way to balance the past with the future.

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**A Long Walk to Water** by Linda Sue Park

**Plot summary:** Salva, Southern Sudan, 1985 - 2009: Salva’s life was turned upside down when soldiers invaded his home town, Loun Ariik, in southern Sudan. His teacher told the boys to run-away from home. He fled into the bush, along with another 15 or so people, and as they walked, their numbers grew into the thousands. Many others were displaced from their homes due to war. It took them across the desert, through Ethiopia, and finally into Kenya. Along the way, people died, got lost, or wandered off. His group had dwindled to a couple of hundred, and Salva became the new leader. Salva and his group landed in Itang Refugee Camp, in Ethiopia. Salva stayed there for another 6 years. When he was almost 17, the Ethiopian government came along and closed down the camp. Soldiers forced everyone to leave Ethiopia. Salva began another dangerous walk, which took a year and a half, to reach a refugee camp in Kenya. Salva spent the next 5 years in refugee camps. First Kakuma, and then Ifo, before he had a chance to escape to freedom. A lucky 3,000 people out of 100,000 were selected to travel to America. Salva flew to America and lived there with his adoptive family. 6 years later, Salva got an email from a cousin that told him that his father was alive in a hospital. Salva immediately went to see his father. After he saw all of the sick people, he decided to create a campaign named, “Water for Sudan’’ to help raise money for wells to be built in Sudan.

**Nya: Southern Sudan, 2008 - 2009:** Nya lived in Southern Sudan with her mom, dad, brothers, and little sister, Akeer. Everyday Nya walked for 2 hours to collect water from a muddy pond, then 2 hours back again to her village. She would do this twice a day. Unlike her brothers, Nya didn’t go to school, only boys could go. Her brothers helped with the cattle and worked with their father. Nya spent her life getting water for her family. One day, Akeer got sick, so the family walked to a hospital many miles away. The doctor said the illness was due to the water. Soon after, a man arrived in her village with a plan to build wells and bring fresh water to her village. This man was Salva. From the day the well began to pump water, Nya no longer had to spend the day walking, instead she could go to school.

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**The Brooklyn Nine** by Alan Gratz

**Plot summary:** Each inning tells the unique story of each family member and their equally unique connection to baseball. Felix Schneider happens to be cheering on his favorite New York Knickerbockers, and his idol Alexander Cartwright, in 1845 when the unthinkable happens: a fire breaks out across the city, and it’s up to the volunteer fire brigade to stop the spread before it engulfs the city. Felix somehow becomes entangled and gets more than he bargained for. Union Soldier Louis Schneider is taking a break from the toils of war by playing baseball when shots ring out and the heat of battle ensues. When Louis goes looking for his lost baseball, he strikes up a friendship with the most unsuspecting baseball fan. Arnold Schneider gets caught up in a vaudeville show featuring one of his baseball heroes, King Kelly. After the show, Arnold comes to realize that even heroes aren’t always perfect. Walter Snider is on vacation with his family on Coney Island, one of his favorite places. While there, he catches a makeshift baseball game featuring a black pitcher with a blazing fastball. Walter, however, meets resistance from the major leagues over the suspect pitcher.

Frankie Snider has a gift with numbers and a love of the Brooklyn Robins. She meets a fellow fan at a game, and together they use Frankie’s smarts to stop a con man. Kat Snider leaves home during the Second World War to play baseball for the All-American Girls Baseball League. She learns about life and the reality of war while playing baseball on the road. Jimmy Flint is up against more than he thought possible. The Russians have launched Sputnik into space, and a bothersome bully is making life miserable at school. Michael Flint is pitching another game in Little League Baseball. He jokes about Star Wars and Indiana Jones with his friends until baseball takes over. Michael has a chance to pitch an improbable perfect game. Snider Flint’s reality is less than desirable. He is forced to live in an antique shop with his uncle after a fire destroyed his home.

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http://www.kidsreads.com/reviews/the-brooklyn-nine-a-novel-in-nine-innings