

Meet the Reviewer | Sabrina Carnesi

by [SLJ](#)

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Who are the brilliant and passionate librarians behind *SLJ*'s reviews? Each month we take a peek behind the books and learn about the folks who help us read and evaluate thousands of books every year.

How long have you reviewed for *SLJ* and what kinds of books do you review?

Two years. I'm a sucker for really good historical fiction, especially set in the late 60s to mid 70s. I appreciate and collect contemporary biographies and all things by and about Nigerian author Buchi Emecheta. I also really get my geek on with a good post-apocalyptic dystopian fantasy. However, a good psychological thriller is the be all, end all!

What do you do at your library?

I am a solo librarian at Crittenden (VA) Middle School, a STEM magnet that is chock full of urban geeks. Our school allows students broadband access with their personal devices and I utilize emerging tech to work for me anytime, anywhere for access and retrieval.

Tell us something surprising about yourself.

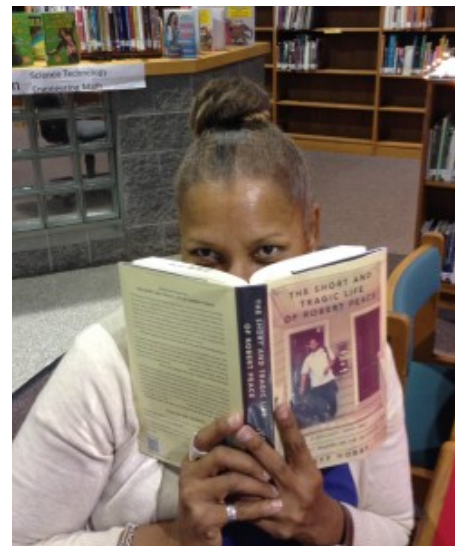
I used to sing professional jazz and I've traveled to Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia as a performer.

What are you reading (and loving) right now?

I'm currently reading *The Short and Tragic Life of Edward Peace* by Jeff Hobbs. It's about a brilliant young black male who went to Yale on a full ride only to return to the mean streets of Newark, NJ. It's a perfect comparative read to Samson Davis's *The Pact* and *We Beat the Streets*. I also just finished reading *Schizo* by Nic Sheff and love the ending of this book! OMG! No spoilers available from me...It's a "gotta read."

Are you involved in any professional organizations and committees?

I am the immediate past committee chair for the National School Library Program of the Year Award which rewards \$10,000 to the winning school library program. I have served on YALSA's Popular Paperbacks Committee which was sheer heaven for me. I am my state Intellectual Freedom Committee chair and am currently a member of "In the Margins," a selection committee that focuses on library services for youth in custody...and I am a Information and Library Science doctoral student! Some people think I'm a little addle-minded but, as the kids say..."That's how I roll!" Add to that my addiction to knitting and you've got me in a nutshell.



Why do you review for *SLJ*?

I like the challenge of *SLJ*'s expectations which are literally generated from the quality and in-depth writing abilities of the corp of reviewers. It is one of the most knowledgeable collectives of professionals in the field and it's an honor to be a part of the collective.

How and why did you first get into librarianship?

I went into the field in 2005 with my initial foray into the school library certification program at Old Dominion University after two decades in the classroom. Having been the grandchild of one of Samuel Clemens' greatest fans, whose father was one of Mr. Clemens' greatest fans, it was an innate move to choose a field that provided space for total submergence into contemporary children and young adult literature. My entire classroom career revolved around literature-based inquiry and individualized reading. I was a miserable pre-med student in undergrad who preferred to read and converse about Toni Cade Bambara's *Salt Eaters* rather than discuss the latest chemical process for busting up a carbon ring. As a promoter of literature-based holistic learning, I used every opportunity I could to put a book in a child's hand. The magnitude of empowerment that the joy of reading and the opportunity that literary discussion brought to the life child was and still is life's breath for me because I remember what that felt like for me as a child. It was one of the earliest memories I have of being accepted for me and, like the writings of Samuel Clemens, surpassed age, gender, and ethnicity.

Is there a book that made you fall in love with reading?

Oh my gracious! I honestly can't remember not being in love with reading! I have such a vivid imagination—and books haven't helped the situation! I'd have to say it is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* partially because my grandfather loved and discussed this book's intended purpose to expose social issues in literary form to encourage debate on the issue. ..and the other part is because it was after a marathon reread of this book the summer of my 10th year that I decided to walk down to the banks of the White River in my Northeast Arkansas town, get in a docked boat, and attempt to row from the Mississippi to the Missouri! Little did I know that the boat had dry rot until it fell apart a couple of feet from shore. In my attempt to stay afloat I grabbed a floating piece of debris from the row boat and cut a gash in my right hand from an exposed nail. I carry that scar with me to this very day and every time I look at it I think of the window to the world that book brought into my life...and how lucky I was that my cousin Lewsie was on the opposite bank fishing and was able to get to me before the current took my wild, imaginative self down river. This is my most memorable read and caused me to fall in, literally.

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