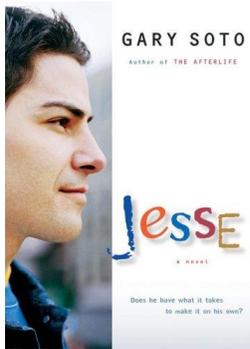


2014 Phoenix Award

Jesse

by **Gary Soto**

(Scholastic, 1994)



Gary Soto's *Jesse* is both a coming-of-age story of one Mexican-American boy with a poetic sensibility and the story of a community and a country at a difficult time – facing poverty and prejudice and war, problems we are still facing today. *Jesse* offers an unembellished slice of life in Vietnam-era Fresno, California. In the backdrop are Governor Reagan, President Nixon, and Cesar Chavez. In the foreground are 17-year-old Jess, his older brother Abel, and their family and friends. To escape an increasing drunk and violent stepfather, Jesse leaves high school six months before graduating, moves into an apartment with his brother, and enrolls at a junior college. To afford rent and food, Jesse and Abel work

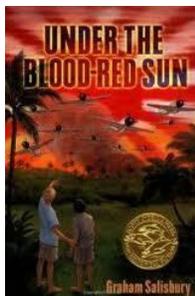
cotton and fruit fields, collect discarded items to sell at garage sales, and do laundry at their mother's home. Their life is often bleak, especially when they least expect it: a planned spring break trip to Pismo Beach ends in cold and misery as they camp by the side of the road, unable to find rides: and a rare date for inexperienced Jesse ends up in a confrontation with a high school bully. Friendships with single mom Glenda and with Leslie, an artistically talented Vietnam veteran-classmate of Jesse's, bring them some comfort; and Glenda's mom and baby, as well as Jesse's naïveté, provide poignant humor. The power of this book lies in Jesse's response to a life where "no one was smiling and no one was getting up to set the crooked world straight."

2014 Phoenix Honor Book

Under the Blood-Red Sun

By Graham Salisbury

(Delacorte, 1994)



Graham Salisbury's gripping adventure explores a range of feelings at a time of terror and uncertainty. Tomi's life in 1941 Hawaii has its ups and downs. His crotchety grandfather's Japanese patriotism frequently embarrasses the eighth-grader. Encounters with a local bully are balanced against the pleasures of baseball and of fishing on his father's boat with his best friend. Pearly Harbor changes everything. His grandfather's attachment to Japan now looks not just embarrassing but dangerous. The bully starts spying on Tomi's family, carrying a rifle as he watches.

Worst of all, his father is arrested as a possible spy because of his fishing activities, and his mother loses her job a maid because she is Japanese. Tomi needs all of his courage and ingenuity to help his family survive in the face of intense anti-Japanese prejudice. Fortunately, in Salisbury's sensitive portrayal, some children and adults make choices that transcend the mass hysteria of that time.