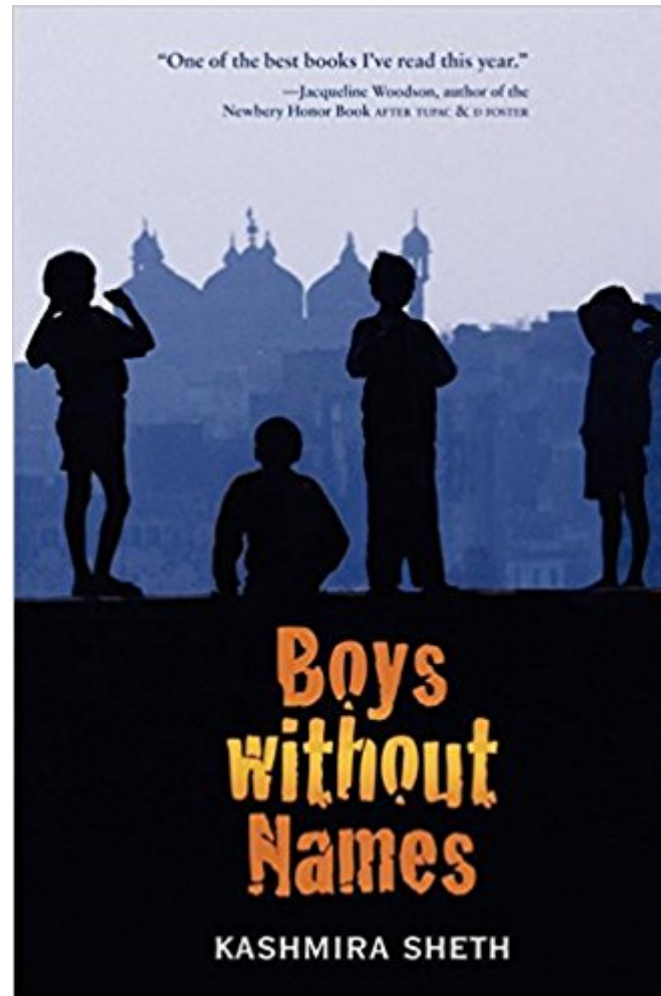




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# Boys Without Names



## Synopsis

Trapped. For eleven-year-old Gopal and his family, life in their rural Indian village is over: We stay, we starve, his baba has warned. They flee to the big city of Mumbai in hopes of finding work and a brighter future. Gopal is eager to help support his struggling family, so when a stranger approaches him with the promise of a factory job, he jumps at the offer. But there is no factory, just a stuffy sweatshop where he and five other boys are forced to work for no money and little food. The boys are forbidden to talk or even to call one another by their real names. Locked away in a rundown building, Gopal despairs of ever seeing his family again. But late one night, when Gopal decides to share kahanis, or stories, he realizes that storytelling might be the boys' key to survival. If he can make them feel more like brothers than enemies, their lives will be more bearable in the shop—and they might even find a way to escape.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 4—Eager to find work after his hungry family arrives in Mumbai, 11-year-old Gopal ends up locked in a one-room "factory" making beaded frames with five other boys so beaten down they don't even talk to one another. Gopal's story is not uncommon: a bumper crop year drove prices down, money was borrowed to pay for medicine, the farm was lost but the

debt remained, and the family was forced to flee to the city to find work. Gopal stores up his memories of his rural Indian village, with its pond, fruit trees, and bird songs, contrasting them with the noisy stink of their new home at the end of a sewage-laden lane in an overcrowded shantytown. Readers quickly come to care for this clever, perceptive boy who tries hard to do the right thing. Suspense mounts as it becomes clear that escape from the sweatshop will not be easy: the other boys need to be convinced. Storytelling is the key to winning them over, and Sheth includes bits of tales both familiar and new. The author includes more about child labor at the end of this well-told survival story with a social conscience. —Kathleen Isaacs, Children's Literature Specialist, Pasadena, MD Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Set in contemporary Mumbai, this novel from the author of *Keeping Corner* (2007) tells a harrowing story of child slavery. Indebted to ruthless moneylenders, 11-year-old Gopal's family flees to Mumbai, where they hope to find work. On the way, Gopal's father goes missing, and Gopal guides his mother and siblings to an uncle's house, where they worry and wait for Baba to find them. Eager to help his family earn money, Gopal follows a local boy to what he thinks will be a day's work at a factory. Instead, he is pulled into a sweatshop—a single room where five boys are held against their will and forced to produce decorative items with toxic materials. As Gopal dreams of escape, he builds tenuous friendships with his fellow workers. Those wary bonds form a dramatic counterpoint to the children's daily misery, described in moving, palpable detail, and skillfully steer the story away from docu-novel territory to its hopeful conclusion. Pair this eye-opening title with Susan Kuklin's *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders against Child Slavery* (1998). Grades 4-7. --Gillian Engberg --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

We could not put this book down! For several days, my children went to bed two hours late each night, because once we started "Boys without Names", we could not bear to close it! It took so much longer to get through it because of the discussions that occurred while reading it. This is exactly the kind of legitimate, "human" literature we are searching for, for our children (ages 8-10). My daughter cannot wait to do a presentation on it at school, and I'm passing it on to their teachers, who are also searching for powerful books that are all too rare in elementary classrooms. The author was able to portray the maddening state of being imprisoned without adding explicit violence. We cannot wait to find more books of such caliber as this by Mrs. Sheth. Thank you for revealing some of the

experiences happening now to children around the world. There is no force more powerful than children whose eyes and hearts are opened to wanting to create change for the better, and Mrs. Sheth's book serves to open the hearts of her readers to the plight of those suffering. We highly recommend this book!

This was a wonderful read! I first used it with a seventh grade class and decided to use it again this year. The students loved the story of a young boy trapped in a bad situation, yet clever enough and optimistic enough to survive. It lends itself well to great conversation!

I read this book for as the fall selection for our middle school's local reading program. It was an excellent choice. Unique & well written, it brings the characters to life and makes you care about their situation & root for them to succeed. I especially liked the glossary and additional information about child labor/slavery.

Gopal will inspire many from around the world. His desire to help his family puts him into a more difficult circumstance that frees other boys while also freeing him.

This book was really interesting and entertaining though at times depressing which is what the author wanted to evoke from readers, such as myself, so we could have a sense of what it feels like for children to be factory workers and the cruel life of it all.

Live this book about these guys and how they come together, talk about their lives and change leadership positions and seemingly double cross each other all while in the confines of a small room. Lifelong examples of real life situations and choices. Already bought my copies to share with the kids in school. I cannot wait.

I purchased the book for my 11 year old who was assigned this in her Geography class. It was an interesting read as it shows one example of how India uses children as slaves for profit. The treatment was harsh but did in the end broaden my daughter's eyes to what can happen to children in poor countries.

I really love this book. Gopal is a compelling, positive, and compassionate character even in the face of horrific circumstances. I also like the way the author uses so many sensory details to

immerse the reader in the culture.

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