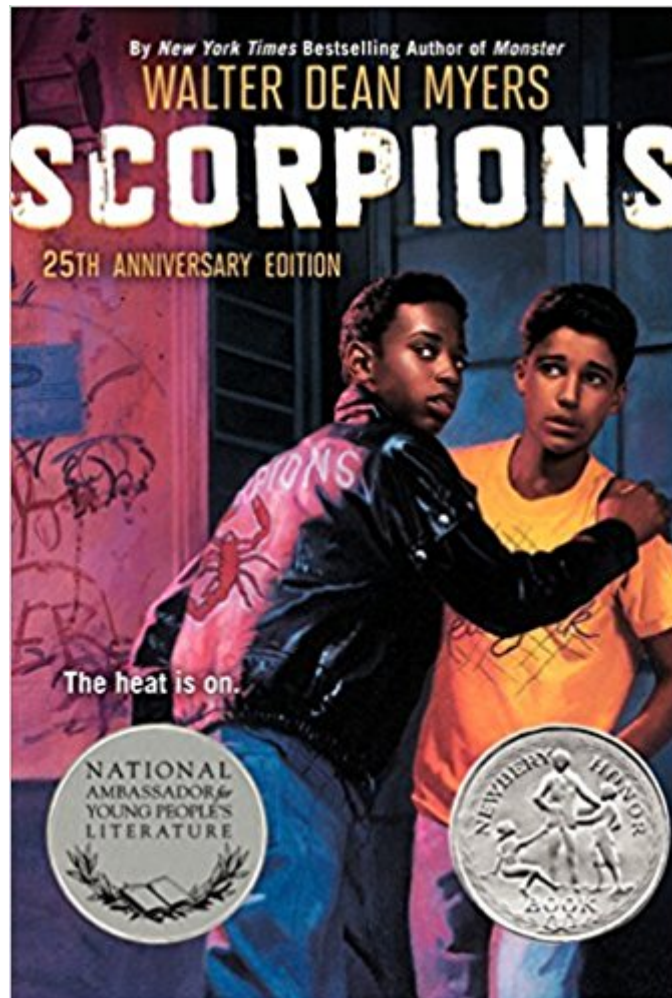




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# Scorpions, 25th Anniversary Edition



## Synopsis

The Scorpions are a gun-toting Harlem gang, and Jamal Hicks is about to become tragically involved with them in this authentic tale of the sacrifice of innocence and the struggle to steer clear of violence. This Newbery Honor Book will challenge young men to consider their own decisions as they come of age in a complex and often frustrating society. Pushed by a bully to fight and nagged by his principal, Jamal is having a difficult time staying in school. His home life is not much better, with his mother working her fingers to the bone to try to earn the money for an appeal for Jamal's jailed older brother, Randy. Jamal wants to do the right thing and help earn the money to free his brother by working, but he's afraid to go against the Scorpions. Jamal eventually pulls free of the gang's bad influence, but only through the narrowest of escapes. Walter Dean Myers, a five-time winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, sensitively explores the loyalty and love between friends faced with hard choices. Scorpions is 25 years old, but the issues of poverty and violence make it a timeless powerful read—sadly as relevant as ever. This special twenty-fifth anniversary edition contains the original Scorpions novel, plus an extra Q&A with New York Times bestselling author Walter Dean Myers—including questions about juvenile detention facilities, gang life today, and friendship. Also included are a sneak peek at Kick, by Walter Dean Myers and Ross Workman, and an excerpt from Myers's New York Times bestselling novel Monster.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jamal, who is pressured to become leader of the Scorpions gang, worries about school, family, and

the rough kids on the street. When a fellow gang member gives him a gun, Jamal suddenly gains a new level of respect from his enemies. A realistic look at a boy who wants to do the right thing but gets caught up in the culture of violence. A Newbery Honor selection. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Once more, readers have Myers to thank for giving them a greater understanding of the difficulty of life in today's inner city." --" SLJ." "A book honored for its honesty, realism, and vitality."-- "1989 Newbery Award Committee."

Two thousand dollars. The price tag for his brother's freedom hung in the air, an invisible but inescapable presence. Randy Hicks was in prison for murder. Mama's heart was cut to pieces. What was a twelve year old brother to do? When Jamal glanced out his window into the streets of Harlem, even live birds seemed like grey stones. Mama worked late, scrambling to get the money together for Randy's appeal. Without legal help, Randy was looking at fifteen to twenty years, and at least seven before he'd be out on parole. After his arrest, Randy announced that Jamal was now the man of the house—a position that had been vacant a long time. When Jamal was a little boy, his father used to take him outside the projects to the park. Then his dad lost his job and sat around getting drunk. When he got nasty to Mama, they'd all fled to a cousin's. Some days he'd still drop by, threatening Jamal with a whipping if the boy didn't start acting like a man. Jamal knew what had happened to the men in his life. They'd taken a part of Mama away, and that part of her was never coming back. Randy's friend Mack held out a solution to their financial woes. Mack spent most of his time high on crack or drunk on wine, running the Scorpions gang. The youths ran crack through Harlem, and Jamal could become their leader. Jamal would get the cash to fund Randy's appeal. The cost was high, but the alternatives were few. His school principal had decided he was a problem kid long ago. He'd told the other students that if they made friends with Jamal, they'd be in trouble if they liked it or not. For Jamal, school was all about teachers telling him what he couldn't do. When a gun landed in Jamal's hand, it looked like his destiny was sealed. Death or prison rose up inescapably before him. With all the cards stacked against him, what other road remained? But life has a way of changing the rules. Walter Dean Myers was a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. He's won Newbery Honors, Coretta Scott King Award/Honors, the first-ever Michael L. Printz Award, and is a recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement. He frequently met with incarcerated

teens in juvenile detention centers. One of the most important lessons he shared with them was to never give up on life. Learn more about him at: [walterdeanmyers.net](http://walterdeanmyers.net)--Kate Calina

I used this book as a middle school English teacher in the inner city with kids who hated to read, and it was always a unanimous success. *Scorpions* is a story about a 12 year old boy named Jamal who lives in NY city. His family is struggling and faces lots of pressures. Jamal's absentee father pops in only long enough to borrow money and belittle Jamal. At the same time, Jamal's brother is in jail for taking part in an armed robbery. Jamal's little sister Sassy loves needling her brother, but she can also sometimes thoughtlessly hurt her mother with the things she does and says. Jamal is getting mercilessly bullied at school and the principal, instead of helping, seems determined to only see the worst in Jamal. "I'd have your mother come in and talk about your behavior, but I doubt she cares." (paraphrase) But the worse pressure on Jamal is the pressure to join the "Scorpions," the gang his brother ran before he went to jail. Jamal is tempted. It seems like joining the gang will solve his problems. His family would have enough money for food and hot water, the bully at school would leave him alone, his father would show him respect and stop belittling him. But then once Jamal starts getting involved, things start falling apart...This is an honest look at the pressures a young African American boy faces in the inner city. The story uses a lot of slang, and occasionally a swear word. I read other reviews that criticized the book for both, and I have to respectfully disagree. This book is an honest look at what life is like in the inner city. As someone who lived in the inner city for 10 years and crawled out of that environment through luck and hard work, I have to strongly object to people who criticize a portrayal of a place they have never lived in and never experienced. If you have never walked in Jamal's shoes, I wish you'd keep your opinion of the way the place is depicted to yourself.

I am a reading teacher, and I work with at risk teens that have low reading levels, who hate books. I introduced this book to a young male teen that had a history with gangs, and he took an interest in it immediately. We read it together, and he was engaged, extremely interested in the characters and events, and he wanted to read it again when finished. I recommend this book to anyone who's trying to engage young urban teens into loving books. Walter Dean Myers knows how to get there attention, and teach them a lesson at the same time.

My son loved this book, it was his summer reading assignment for going into the 8th grade! Interesting, time relevant, and age appropriate for what young men of his age face in today's world!!

Everything my niece needed for class. She loved it and it was very entertaining.

I like this book because of the descriptiveness and the language and the mystery its really interesting its the best

I have read this book the last two years with students in my 7th grade literature class. They always love it. Even though it is a bit dated, the problems are very similar to some of the issues facing teens today. There are so many lessons about friendship, loyalty, honesty and values that you can spark endless discussion by reading together with kids. Even the audio book is great.

Super book for early teens and adults that like a good and fast read. Excellent book to use as a whole-class novel grades 7 -10.

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