

Reviews:

"This is a lovely story about following your heart and working hard to achieve your goals. Neema's journey is a compelling one that should engage even reluctant readers."

—*School Library Journal*

"Neema's happy story is brought to life with lush multimedia illustrations that feature traditional fabric and weaving textures. Though fictional, this story is based on the author's connections with the women at the Jambo Jipya School in the town of Mtwapa, Kenya."

—*Booklist*

"Lyrical and lovely, Neema's Reason to Smile reminds us that education is the greatest gift we can give a child, and that with enough love and determination, dreams sometimes do come true. Moving, important, and inspiring."

—*Katherine Applegate, Newbery Medal Winning Children's Author*

"With vivid, flowing prose and wonderfully vibrant characters, Neema's Reason to Smile takes on a complicated topic—girls overcoming global obstacles to education—yet delivers a poignant example of how dreams can be realized through community. Although this tale is set in Kenya, it represents stories that unfold in real life in more than 50 countries around the world where school is not free."

—*Tanya Lee Stone, author of "Girl Rising: Changing the World One Girl at a Time," NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work—Youth/Teens; Golden Kite Award for Nonfiction*

"You will never know the potential of any child, youth, and adult until that person is given an opportunity to acquire education. When you don't educate the people, you're crippling them! you are not giving them ways to fend for themselves. *Neema's Reason to Smile* reinforces how education creates conscious awakening for peace to happen in ourselves and around us."

—*Emmanuel Jal, Peace activist, musician, former child soldier, actor, and entrepreneur*

"The story resonates with me because I come from a country where many children have to work in order to support their families from a very early age. As a result they are deprived of a normal life and access to education. Seeing them in big cities cleaning the car's windows behind the traffic lights, selling trinkets or simply begging is a regular, heart wrenching sight that unfortunately people have got used to. My wish for the "dream basket" is to see these hardships come to an end. That all children have the opportunity for an education and a safe life. Books like Neema are great movements for change and raising awareness about this issue."

—*Mehrdokht Amini, Illustrator of Neema's Reason to Smile*