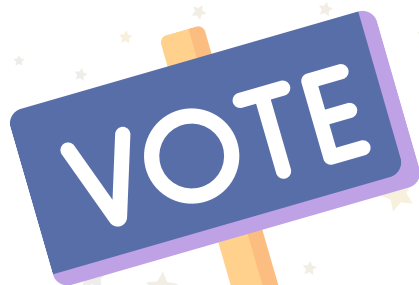


ONE STEP FORWARD

Educators' Guide



www.marcieatkins.com/one-step-forward/



ABOUT THE BOOK



ISBN: 978-0063339316
VERSIFY/
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One Step Forward is a compelling debut YA historical fiction novel in verse about Matilda Young—the youngest American suffragist imprisoned for picketing the White House to demand women’s right to vote.

Raised in a politically divided family, Matilda wondered if she could be as courageous as her older sister who fought for suffrage. Joining the radical protest movement came with plenty of risk. Women were routinely scorned, harassed, arrested—and worse. And taking a stand for her rights could tear her family apart.

Told in powerful verse, One Step Forward follows Matilda’s coming-of-age journey as she takes her first step into action. Amid the backdrop of World War I, Matilda’s story vividly highlights the extreme mental, physical, and emotional battles faced by the protestors leading up to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. It also reveals the bravery, hard work, and spirit of the women who paved the way for future generations to use their voices and votes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marcie Flinchum Atkins has spent over twenty-five years as a public school educator and holds an MA and MFA in children’s literature. She is a teacher-librarian by day and a writer in the wee hours. One Step Forward is her YA debut. She also writes nonfiction and poetry for young readers. She lives on the outskirts of Washington, DC. You can find her online at: www.marcieatkins.com.



Photo credit: Sanya Chopra

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Matilda’s story was one I found in my own backyard. Not too far from my house is the Workhouse Arts Center and the Lucy Burns Museum. It used to be the Occoquan Workhouse, where suffragists protesting at the White House for the right to vote were imprisoned. When I first found out about their story, I couldn’t believe it. Women were arrested for “blocking the sidewalk.” At the Occoquan Workhouse they were abused and force-fed. I had heard of Alice Paul, but I hadn’t heard about the other women, and I certainly didn’t know the details. This led me to a years-long research rabbit hole to tell their story.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the title ONE STEP FORWARD reflect the theme of the book?
- What choices did the poet make with poetic form? How do those choices impact the story?
- How does the author use white space? How did that impact you as a reader?
- The slips of paper that Sophie sneaks to Matilda are her way of communicating with her sister and sharing wisdom. If you could write a bit of wisdom to a friend or family member, what would it say?
- Throughout the book, Atkins uses physical objects as touchstones. Some touchstones include: Hershey's Kisses, additions to her collections, and the notes from Sophie. How do these touchstones impact the story and how do they affect you as a reader?
- There are many ways to tell a story. Atkins chose to use historical fiction and verse. Shaina Taub told the suffrage story through her Broadway musical "Suffs." Susan Campbell Bartoletti wrote a nonfiction picture book, How Women Won the Vote, and Winifred Conkling wrote a nonfiction book for older readers called Votes for Women. If you told a local-to-you story, through what medium would you tell the it?

POET'S CHOICES

Throughout the book Atkins utilizes form and white space to impact the reader. Here are a few examples from the book. In most cases there are several poems that utilize these forms. Take a look at some of these poems.

- Docupoetry – "Valentines" p. 35
- Centered Banner Poem – "I Stand" p. 80
- Line Breaks – Walking Poems/One word per line – "The Effect of Stillness" p. 135
- White Space – "Respect for the Elderly" p. 179
- Concrete Poems – "Walk in a Jail Cell" p. 190

How do these choices illustrate Matilda's journey?



WRITING PROMPTS

HISTORY IN YOUR BACKYARD

Research history in your backyard (or your area). Are there people who have had historical impact? Are there places that are known for important events? Learn more about the person or the place or event. Write a poem.

DOCUPOETRY

Docupoetry: “a kind of socially engaged poetry that often uses nonliterary texts—news reports, legal documents, and transcribed oral histories, for example—and sometimes incorporates original reporting. Also called docupoetry, the genre historically tends to focus on relating the experiences of people whose stories might have been misrepresented or overlooked.”

Definition from [“Where Poetry Meets Journalism”](#)

Give your students a primary source that is relevant to current events or history they are currently studying. Encourage them to create a poem based on the text. Possibilities include:

- 1) Found poem
- 2) Persona poem that takes on the POV of a person in a photograph
- 3) Free verse reflection
- 4) Other

Brainstorming words and phrases they associate with the primary source or words or phrases that jump out at them from a primary source can be a powerful way to start. For photographic examples, the Library of Congress has phenomenal [primary source Collections](#). Here is one example from the [National Woman’s Party Collection](#) that I used for my book, *[One Step Forward](#)*.

For a bibliography of texts that use docupoetry, [click on this link on my website](#).



WHAT REVIEWERS ARE SAYING...

ONE STEP FORWARD IS A JUNIOR LIBRARY GUILD GOLD STANDARD SELECTION

KIRKUS, STARRED REVIEW

“The verse structure successfully conveys the grit, trauma, and violence of the times, adeptly emphasizing the activists’ doubt, pride, persistence, and exhaustion . . . Powerful, necessary reading.”

BOOKLIST

“Atkins’ excellent novel in verse brings the 15 days Matilda spends in jail to vivid life, dramatizing the inhumane treatment the suffragists received. [She] has done a superb job of research, bringing her material to life in an important book.”

PUBLISHER’S WEEKLY

“The plight of 19-year-old Matilda Young, the youngest suffragist arrested after picketing at the White House in 1917, is brought to life. This inspiring historical tale of perseverance experiments with formatting to connote mood. Imagined versions of suffragists such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell feature alongside Matilda.”

SIGNED COPIES

To order a signed copy of *One Step Forward*, you can order through [One More Page Books](#).
To order signed bookplates, [you can fill out this form](#).

This educator’s guide was prepared by Marcie Flinchum Atkins

www.marciatkins.com

