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# Sharon Draper named 2015 Zarrow Award honoree

Novelist Sharon Draper, winner of the Young Readers Literature award for 2015, will be recognized in August.

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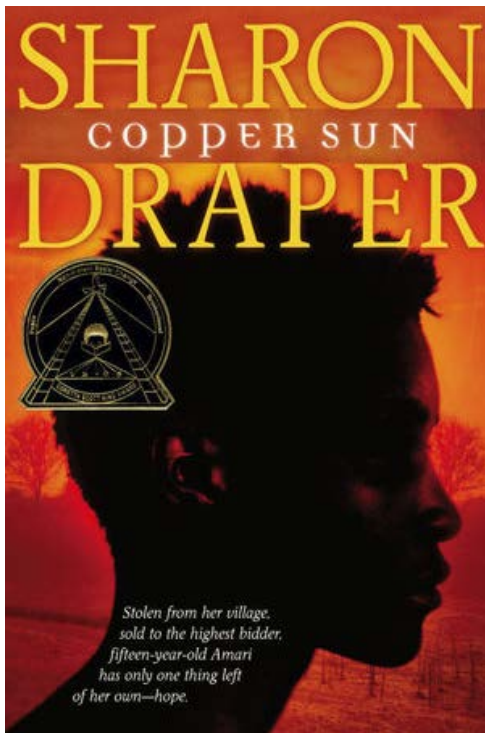
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Sharon Draper, who has balanced her career as a best-selling novelist with equally acclaimed work as an educator, is the winner of the 2015 Anne V. Zarrow Award for Young Readers Literature.

Draper will be presented the award — a \$7,500 cash prize and an engraved crystal book — at a ceremony to be held Aug. 28 at the Hardesty Library. Draper also will present prizes to the winners of the Tulsa Library's annual Young People's Creative Writing Contest.

The Anne V. Zarrow Award for Young Readers' Literature gives formal recognition, on behalf of the Tulsa County community, to a nationally acclaimed author who has made a significant contribution to the field of literature for young adults.

Draper, who was named the National Teacher of the Year in 1997 for her work as a language arts teacher in Cincinnati public schools, began writing fiction when she was challenged by one of her students to enter a literary contest. Draper's story, "One Small



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### PROLIFIC WRITER

**Sharon Draper:** The author/educator has published more than 30 books, including novels for young readers, poetry and

nonfiction.

Torch," won first prize.

Since then, Draper has published more than 30 books, including novels for young readers, poetry and nonfiction.

Her first novel, "Tears of a Tiger," about the aftermath of a car accident that killed a high school athlete, was published in 1994, and earned Draper the first of five Coretta Scott King Awards from the American Library Association.

It became the first volume in what is known as the "Hazelwood Trilogy."

In an interview on her website, Draper said, "I don't think I had a grand plan in mind when I wrote it. I just wanted to write a good book.

"When students ask me today 'What do you think we should learn from this book?' I tell them, 'Whatever you got out of it,'" Draper said. "A good book ought to bring out lots of different responses from those that read it —

none of them pre-planned, and all of them very personal. Whatever they take away from the reading of the book is valuable."

Draper's other novels include "The Jericho Trilogy," a series of stories that explore the effects of peer pressure and bullying; "Out of My Mind," about a girl whose brilliant mind is trapped within a physically disabled body; "Panic," a thriller about two girls kidnapped by a predator; and the award-winning "Copper Sun," a historical novel about a young African girl who is taken from her home to be a slave in the United States.

She also has written more light-hearted books, such as her series of mysteries featuring "Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs," and the "Sassy" series.

"Writing for me is a very fluid process," Draper said in an interview on her website. "I sit down and wait for the words to come. They usually do — in buckets and waves. I look upon it as a blessing because the words come so easily.

"I start with an idea, or a problem or a conflict, or even a situation that might be pertinent to the lives of young people, then the characters grow from that point," she said. "I try to make strong characters that change and develop and learn from their mistakes."

James D. Watts Jr. 918-581-8478

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