

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: <i>Sold</i>	Synopsis When she is tricked by her stepfather and sold into prostitution, thirteen-year-old Lakshmi becomes submerged in a nightmare where her only comfort is the friendship she forms with the other girls, which helps her survive and eventually escape. <i>Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus</i>
Book Author McCormick, Patricia	
Copyright Year: 2006	

Professional Reviews of *Sold*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (September 15, 2006 (Vol. 103, No. 2))

Lakshmi, 13, knows nothing about the world beyond her village shack in the Himalayas of Nepal, and when her family loses the little it has in a monsoon, she grabs a chance to work as a maid in the city so she can send money back home. What she doesn't know is that her stepfather has sold her into prostitution. She ends up in a brothel far across the border in the slums of Calcutta, locked up, beaten, starved, drugged, raped, "torn and bleeding," until she submits. In beautiful clear prose and free verse that remains true to the child's viewpoint, first-person, present-tense vignettes fill in Lakshmi's story. The brutality and cruelty are ever present ("I have been beaten here, / locked away, / violated a hundred times / and a hundred times more"), but not sensationalized. An unexpected act of kindness is heartbreaking ("I do not know a word / big enough to hold my sadness"). One haunting chapter brings home the truth of "Two Worlds": the workers love watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* on TV though in the real world, the world they know, a desperate prostitute may be approached to sell her own child. An unforgettable account of sexual slavery as it exists now.

Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2006)

In her village in Nepal, Lakshmi's life is more than difficult and requires her to endure hunger, harsh weather and poverty. When she is sold to an itinerant "Auntie," she thinks she'll be working as a maid in the city. She's determined to excel, even though she can't imagine the place. She arrives in a brothel, working in guaranteed slavery until she is broken or dies, astonished at the charges beyond what she could possibly earn for everything she touches. The harshness of her life in this new country of India, feeling torn from all that is familiar, comes close to crushing her, yet she endures. The tiny moments of peace, learning the words in books, the friendships and respect that develop provide a relief for readers even as admiration for Lakshmi's strength and capacity for sorrow grows. Written as a prose poem, *Sold* focuses on the essential question of whether it is possible to trust when all that one has trusted has been proven untrustworthy. McCormick provides readers who live in safety and under protection of the law with a vivid window into a harsh and cruel world-one most would prefer to pretend doesn't exist. (Fiction. YA)

Publishers Weekly (August 28, 2006)

This hard-hitting novel told in spare free verse poems exposes the plight of a 13-year-old Nepali girl sold into sexual slavery. Through Lakshmi's innocent first-person narrative, McCormick (Cut) reveals her gradual awakening to the harshness of the world around her. Even in their poverty-stricken rural home, Lakshmi finds pleasure in the beauty of the Himalayan mountains, the sight of Krishna, her betrothed, and the cucumbers she lovingly tends, then sells at market. After a monsoon wipes out their crops, her profligate stepfather sells

Lakshmi to an "auntie" bound for the city. During her journey, the girl acquires a visual and verbal vocabulary of things she has never seen before: electric lights, a TV. Soon a hard-won sense of irony invades her narrative, too. Early on, a poem entitled "Everything I Need to Know" marks her step into womanhood (after her first menstrual cycle); later, "Everything I Need to Know Now" lists her rules as an initiated prostitute. In her village, Lakshmi had rebelliously purchased her first Coca-Cola for her mother, after her stepfather sold her; later, in Calcutta, she overhears two johns talking and realizes, "the price of a bottle of Coca-Cola at Bajai Sita's store./ That is what he paid for [a turn with] me." The author beautifully balances the harshness of brothel life with the poignant relationships among its residents; especially well-drawn characters include the son of one of the prostitutes, who teaches Lakshmi to read and speak some English and Hindi, and clever Monica, who earns her freedom but gets sent back by her shamed family. Readers will admire Lakshmi's grit and intelligence, and be grateful for a ray of hope for this memorable heroine at book's end. Ages 12-up. (Sept.) Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

School Library Journal (September 1, 2006)

Gr 9 Up-As this heartbreaking story opens, 13-year-old Lakshmi lives an ordinary life in Nepal, going to school and thinking of the boy she is to marry. Then her gambling-addicted stepfather sells her into prostitution in India. Refusing to "be with men," she is beaten and starved until she gives in. Written in free verse, the girl's first-person narration is horrifying and difficult to read. "In between, men come./They crush my bones with their weight./They split me open./Then they disappear." "I hurt./I am torn and bleeding where the men have been." The spare, unadorned text matches the barrenness of Lakshmi's new life. She is told that if she works off her family's debt, she can leave, but she soon discovers that this is virtually impossible. When a boy who runs errands for the girls and their clients begins to teach her to read, she feels a bit more alive, remembering what it feels like to be the "number one girl in class again." When an American comes to the brothel to rescue girls, Lakshmi finally gets a sense of hope. An author's note confirms what readers fear: thousands of girls, like Lakshmi in this story, are sold into prostitution each year. Part of McCormick's research for this novel involved interviewing women in Nepal and India, and her depth of detail makes the characters believable and their misery palpable. This important book was written in their honor.-Alexa Sandmann, Kent State University, OH Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2006)

McCormick's searing novel, told in a series of poetic vignettes, gives voice to a child forced into prostitution in India. Lakshmi, a thirteen-year-old girl from a poor mountain village in Nepal, thinks she is being hired as a maid when her stepfather "trades" her to a woman for eight hundred rupees. Thus begins a journey to the city, during which Lakshmi's naivete becomes heartbreakingly apparent. At one point her new "auntie" seems to sell her to a man who says she must call him her husband. As the payment changes hands, she thinks, "I do not know what they have agreed to. / But I do know this: / he gives her nearly enough money to buy a water buffalo." But Uncle Husband turns out to be just a middleman shepherding Lakshmi to Happiness House, where the colorful dresses, jewelry, and makeup worn by the girls there lead her to wonder if "Happiness House is where the movie stars live." Of course she soon learns the folly of this first impression. Lakshmi's education into prostitution at the hands of Happiness House's cruel madam, Mumtaz, is brutal. Readers will admire Lakshmi's bravery and be enormously relieved when she risks trusting the American man with "the pink skin of a pig" who promises to take her to a "clean," safe place.

Library Media Connection (January 2007)

Sold is another outstanding realistic fiction title by Patty McCormick set in today's world. Lakshmi is a 13-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. She is sold by her stepfather to cover his debts. Lakshmi is led to believe that she will work for a wealthy woman but in reality it is a ruse; she is sold into prostitution in Calcutta. In the never ending circle of slavery prostitution Lakshmi is led to believe that she can pay off her family's debt, but soon learns that she will never be allowed to leave. Readers can feel

Lakshmi's hope, pain, and determination, but can also feel her emotions of joy and happiness. Then the day comes when she must make a decision to risk everything for a chance to reclaim her life. *Sold* is written as a series of vignettes narrated by Lakshmi. The chapter headings also provide another story. This is a very moving and emotional story and readers will not be able to put it down. McCormick traveled to India and Nepal to research this book. One person's humanity to another person keeps Lakshmi's hope alive amidst her new life. Recommended. Terry Young, Library Media Specialist, West Jefferson High School, Harvey, Louisiana

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Sold*

Source: Author Website, Novelist Plus

American Library Association Amelia Bloomer Book List - Young Adult Fiction: 2007
American Library Association Top Ten List - Best Books of the Year: 2006
Booklist Editors' Choice - Books for Youth - Older Readers Category: 2006
Gustav-Heinemann Peace Prize: 2009
National Book Award Finalist: 2006
National Council for the Social Studies' Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People: 2007
National Public Radio's Best Books of the Year: 2006
New York Public Library Best Books for the Teen Age: 2006
Publisher's Weekly Best 100 Books of the Year: 2006
South Carolina Young Adult Book Award Nominee: 2009
YALSA Best Books for Young Adults: 2007
YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers: Fiction: 2007