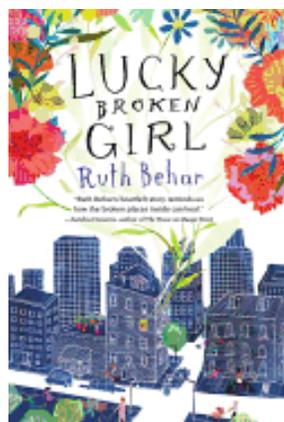




## Books & Books Issue for Friday, April 14, 2017

### Children's & Young Adult



#### Lucky Broken Girl by Ruth Behar

When Ruthie Mizrahi moves from Cuba to Queens, N.Y., and starts fifth grade, she has two goals: get out of "the dumb class," and get a pair of go-go boots like Nancy Sinatra's. But after a car accident leaves her in a body cast, her new goal is just to be a normal kid again. Ruthie's Jewish Cuban family, financially strapped and still adjusting to life in a new country, is strained by her injury. But the support of family, friends and neighbors buoys Ruthie and the Mizrahis through their challenges. "I've been through a metamorphosis," Ruthie tells a friend at the end of her recovery; for although this is a story of physical confinement, it is also a story of a young mind expanding and finding unexpected freedom.

Cuban-American cultural anthropologist and poet Ruth Behar, who based her first middle-grade novel, *Lucky Broken Girl*, on her own childhood, vividly outlines 1966 Queens with Ruthie's observations. Peppered with Spanish and Yiddish and the stories of every person she meets, her world is so tangible that readers will feel they're sitting on the stoop of the Mizrahis' apartment building. But even these details pale beside the emotional clarity of Ruthie's voice. In particular, her prayers (first to God, with Shiva and Frida Kahlo added along the way) at the end of most chapters recall the candid petitions of Judy Blume's Margaret. Equal parts heartbroken and hopeful, Ruthie is a middle grade heroine for the ages. --Stephanie Anderson, assistant director for public services, Darien Library (Conn.)

**Discover:** This emotionally true and unexpectedly funny chapter book about a Jewish Cuban-American fifth grader who spends a year in a body cast has wide appeal.

Nancy Paulsen Books, \$16.99, hardcover, 256p., ages 10-up, 9780399546440