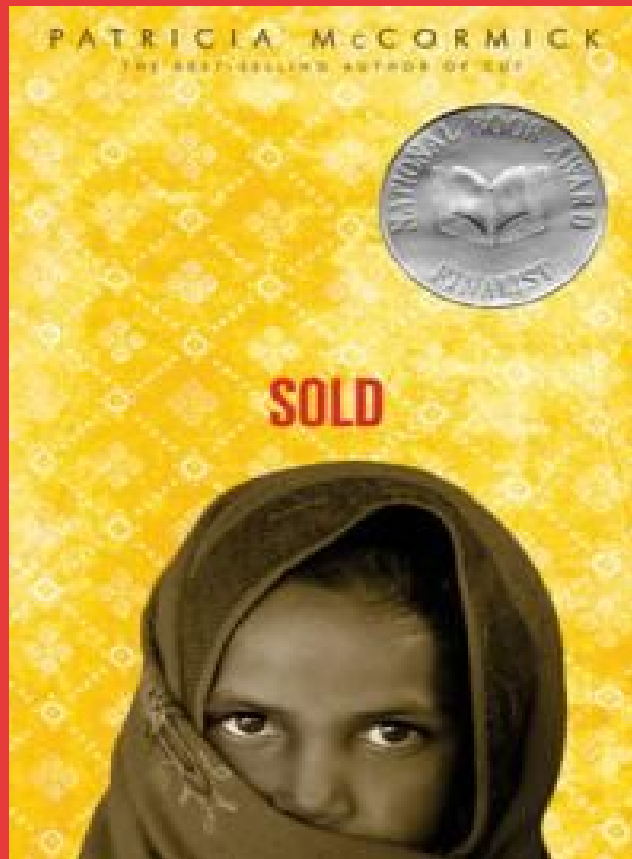


# SOLD

By Patricia McCormick



“An unforgettable account of sexual slavery as it exists now.”

– Booklist

“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.”

– Kirkus

“Let us remember: what hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander.”

– Eli Weisel





## About the Author

Patricia McCormick is a National Book Award finalist. She is the author of several critically acclaimed novels such as *Never Fall Down*, *SOLD*, and co-author of *I am Malala*.

She graduated from Rosemont College, the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and has an MFA from the New School. She currently lives in New York.

Her books have been recognized in the ***New York Times*** Notable Books list. *SOLD* was released as a film on April 1, 2016.

Find out more about McCormick at <https://www.patriciamccormick.com/>

## Summary

***SOLD*** depicts young Lakshmi seeking to find wealth and prosperity for her family on the mountainside. However, her step-father had a different future for her, and sold her into a sex slaving trade. Lakshmi lives through this brutal reality, but she doesn't do it alone. Companions and allies bring her hope in the midst of a dark and disgraceful life. Lakshmi must learn to be confident and speak up for herself in order to survive. Watch as her world unravels into despair, and how she overcomes her enslavement.



## Quotes and Analysis:

<p>“This is the season when the women bury the children who die of fever [...] This is also the season when the women drink the blue-black juice... to do away with the babies in their wombs - the ones who would be born only to be buried next season” (10-11).</p>	<p>Women are burdened with the burial of their children. It is so common that it is highly predicted that most children will suffer by natural causes or by their mother. Thus, women are enslaved throughout motherhood.</p>
<p>“If he turns to you in the night, you must give yourself to him, in the hopes that you will bear him a son” (15).</p>	<p>It is a woman’s obligation to give herself away to her husband whenever <i>he</i> deems it necessary. The objective is to bear a <i>son</i> in order to reap wealth. Sons are unlimited in their social class. This signifies the dehumanizing actions against women and the bias towards men.</p>
<p>“Why must women suffer so?” (16).</p>	<p>Women suffer, so men can prosper. There is a dimmed hope that women may also prosper along with men if they are married. However, women must sacrifice terribly to gain little benefits.</p>



“You will make us proud as the first member of our family to leave the mountain. And perhaps at festival time next year [...] you can tell us all about the world beyond this one” (51).

This illustrates the relationship dynamic between first generation parents and second generation children. The second generation of children have a chance to leave traditional values and customs, so they can assimilate into a *superior* culture or customs. Thus, second generation children are able to climb the social ladder and move beyond the border of their homes.

“Her scalp has been freshly shared [...] her long dark hair lies in coils at her feet [...] one of the men in the crowd throws his cigarette butt at her feet. Another one spits in her direction. Then another - a fat old man with a boil on his neck - picks up a handful of gravel and flings it at her. She winces, then begins to cry” (85).

When a woman deters from her duties and obligation she becomes a disgraceful figure. Thus, she is enslaved at the lowest social class as *nothing*. This quote captures the brutality of women when they step out of character within their society. The cut of her hair illustrates her exile and disgrace as a woman. Her hair is a part of her *feminine* beauty, and once that is taken away she is no longer needed.

“She flings me onto the bed next to the old man. And then he’s on top of me, holding me down with the strength of ten men. He kisses me with lips that are slack and wet and taste of onions. His teeth dig into my lower lip. Underneath the

The imagery depicts the heaviness and struggle of sexual assault. It portrays the physical experience and the burden that is carried by victims.



weight of him, I cannot see or move or breathe. He fumbles with his pants, forces my legs apart, and I can feel him pushing himself between my thighs” (103).

“Then he is on top of me and something hot and insistent is between my legs. He grunts and struggles, trying to fit himself inside me. With a sudden thrust I am torn in two” (120-121).

“...no matter how often I wash and scrub and wash and scrub, I cannot seem to rinse the men from my body” (129).

“I hate him more than ever now. For catching me at my make believe game. For seeing that I want his life for my own. And for the

The imagery shows the uncomfortability and invasive truth of sexual assault. Lakshmi states the struggles of a man raping her as he tries to “fit himself inside” her, but it is within this moment that she accepts her enslavement. Her attitude is numbing and contained when she is “torn in two,” which signifies her loss of control over her own body and livelihood.

The aftermath of the rape highlights the obsesiveness to clean herself. The repetition of washing and scrubbing shows the need to clean off what she experienced. The physical nature of cleaning herself shows her need to escape the emotional despair she feels.

Lakshmi learns to hate as she unravels. She begins to hate the truth about her own life that she will never have an education or an



pity in his eyes as he offered to share it with me” (158).

“Policemen are supposed to stop people like Mumtaz from selling girls, but she gives this one money each week, and he looks the other way” (159).

“‘Please’ I beg her. ‘Come with me. If you stay here, you will die’ [...] I cannot move. I cannot go to my American. And I cannot walk away from my crooked-faced friend” (262).

honorable life like the boy. She understands her fate as a woman, but she continues to relish under the hope of his life being her own. Yet, her immediate reaction of being caught portrays her pride.

The reality of policemen undeserving the community highlights that no one can be trusted. It’s easier to buy off policemen, since they are local enforcers. However, Lakshmi’s world begins to warp around this truth that there are only a few people that care about her.

The literal and metaphorical situation highlights Lakshmi’s struggle to be free for herself or suffer amongst other women. The choices are tragic because either choice could lead her to be free and alone or enslaved and among allies. Lakshmi has survived through the brutality of sex trafficking, but her next choice could lead her to finally live her life.



## **SOLD in the Classroom**

*SOLD* captures the essence of family, sexual assault, oppression under gender roles and marginalized minorities, and the benefits of freedom. These major themes are *universally* relatable and explore the truth of *imbalanced* power structures. It is important to understand and value the *privileges* we have today within this country. The power structures within this novel highlights similar power structures within the government, classrooms, family homes, and work. Thus, students can understand how society works *with* power structures and how it can either be *detrimental* or *successful* towards certain groups of people.

## **Teaching Ideas in A Classroom**

1. Take about 10 minutes for a short writing prompt in the beginning of class regarding their own oppression/privilege associated with their freedom.
2. Investigate the novel through critical lenses of Race/Ethnicity, Feminism, and Gender theory.
3. Discuss the power structures within our own society. How do these power structures work? What doesn't work? Apply this knowledge to the power structures in the novel and the main character's experiences.

## **Why Should Young Adults Read This Novel**

Young adults should read this book because it is important to understand how the pressure of authoritative figures can lead to uncomfortable and violent situations. This book explores how freedom is fractured and warped into enslavement, but the redemption brings hope for the oppressed.

1. Because young adults may feel the pressure to do things they do not want to do.
2. Because they will read about tremendous courage.



# Text Complexity

Qualitative:

Lexile Range: 610-820L

New Dale-Chall: Readability Formulas (7th-8th Grade reading)

ATOS Level: 5.2 Quantitative

**Exeter Quality #6:** “Themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns”.

Sex trafficking is a major issue globally. This novel covers the reality and experiences victims go through to survive. The themes can be portrayed to relatable interests of sex, consent, and rape. Also, the bigger issues of enslavement and the abuse of children and women provokes the conversation of how to keep this group of people safe.

**Exeter Quality #7:** “Themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through entanglement of personal lives”

The style of the book is lyrical, which makes it easy to read and possible for readers to concentrate further on the themes. This allows students to discover the unhinged world beyond the classroom. The graphic nature and imagery depicted in language creates an emotional peak for the reader. Young adults will be able to evolve emotionally and find empathy for these characters. Thus, students will be able to grow personally due to the universal struggles oppressed people experience.