

# Local author raises 4 kids, writes Newbery Medal winning book at same time

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Twelve-year-old Abilene Tucker isn't sure what she's looking for as she jumps from a train on the Santa Fe Railway and into the town of Manifest, Kan., her father's hometown. Recalling a story from her father, Abilene is on the look out for a sign with big blue letters: "MANIFEST: A TOWN WITH A RICH PAST AND A BRIGHT FUTURE."

The sign, however, is not bright blue but instead chipped and bent, reading: "MANIFEST: A TOWN WITH A PAST."

Abilene is a character in Kansas author Clare Vanderpool's Newbery Medal-winning book, "Moon over Manifest."

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CLARE VANDERPOOL

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Vanderpool read from the children's book Sunday afternoon in the basement of Ablah Library as part of Wichita State's Eighth Annual Poetry and Fiction Reading Series.

Abilene has been on the road her whole life, standing in contrast to Vanderpool, who is a Wichita native.

Living in the College Hill area within walking distance of her parents' house, her sister's house, a pool, a sledding hill and two bookstores, she began to explore the idea of what life would be like without the constant comfort of a place to call home.

This idea was the catalyst for the book, which Vanderpool began to write while a stay-at-home mom raising four kids ages 1, 3, 5, and 7 who are now 11, 13, 15, and 17.

"My dream was to write a book and have it be a story I'd be proud of," Vanderpool said.

She didn't expect others to be proud of her story, too.

"I would have to say that one of the most unexpected and most wonderful results of winning the Newbery has been the way my local community in Wichita and people across Kansas have embraced the book and celebrated this wonderful honor with me. It's like there's this big Newbery train and everyone feels free to jump on," Vanderpool says on her website,



Clare Vanderpool

[www.clarevanderpool.com](http://www.clarevanderpool.com).

A line from Herman Melville's "Moby-Dick" inspired Vanderpool, who has always held a strong connection to places:

"It is not down in any map; true places never are."

The novel not only follows Abilene's search but also overlaps the story of a boy from another era but in the same town. Abilene begins to hear about the boy—Jinx—after a chance encounter with Miss Sadie, the town's diviner. Miss Sadie's third-person account is supplemented with newspaper clippings and letters from the era found by Abilene.

With compass in hand, a traveling pack on her back and a good head on her shoulders, Abilene seeks out clues to unlock her past and future. To solve the mystery, one will just have to read the book.