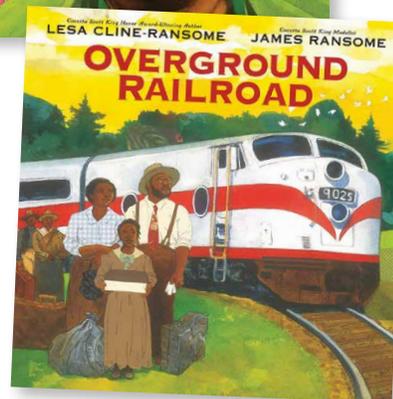
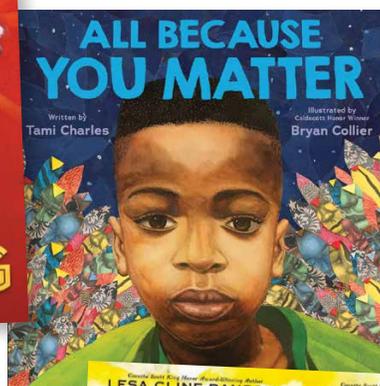
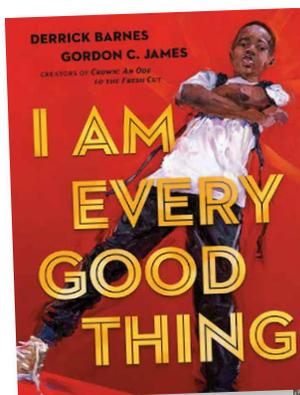


Best Books 2020





SELECTING THE YEAR'S BEST BOOKS has always been a challenge. Sifting through the stellar titles that have graced our monthly Stars list. Meetings upon meetings of (sometimes heated) discussions about the merit of this work and the timeliness of that one. And of course, reading, reading, and more reading.

But challenge doesn't even begin to describe the year that 2020 has been—a horrific pandemic, economic upheaval, and the painful but necessary reckoning with our country's hateful history of racism and oppression. And still, we forged on because, more than anything else, books have the ability to heal, empower, and galvanize. Art can give us a language to interpret the chaos of this world. We're librarians, writers, editors, book lovers. We wouldn't read through hundreds of contenders if we didn't believe this was true.

Most of all, we believe that the most important thing we can give the young people who will read these 108 titles is the message that there is still hope in these times of uncertainty. The following selections offer a way to share the message that rings through Tami Charles's revelatory book: "You, dear child, matter."

We are supremely privileged to have had the great Bryan Collier, illustrator of Charles's *All Because You Matter*, create our Best Books cover. Check out our interview with him (p. 14) about his creative process.

By Mahnaz Dar, Shelley Diaz, Kimberly Fakh, Katy Hershberger, Ashleigh Williams & Vanessa Willoughby

ILLUSTRATION BY BRYAN COLLIER

Picture Books

Ramarie Beaver, Kimberly Fakh, John Scott, Allison Tran

BARNES, Derrick. *I Am Every Good Thing*. illus. by Gordon C. James. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. ISBN 9780525518778.

PreS-Gr 3—Oil paintings bursting with energy and exuberance are the foundation for a layered manifesto of affirmation and industry, celebrating an empowered Black child while also briefly addressing and rejecting the painful sting of others' insults and dismissals.

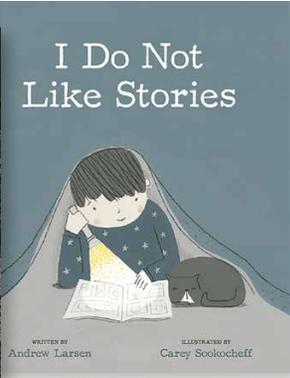
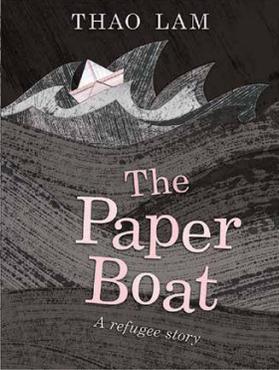
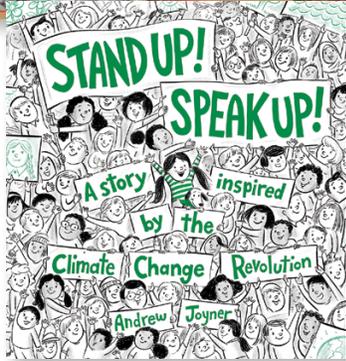
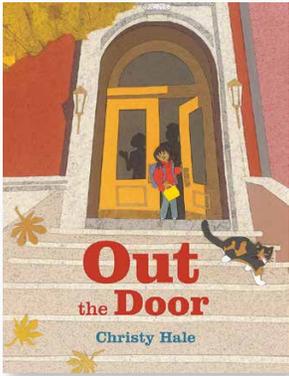
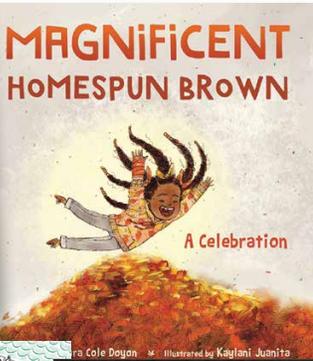
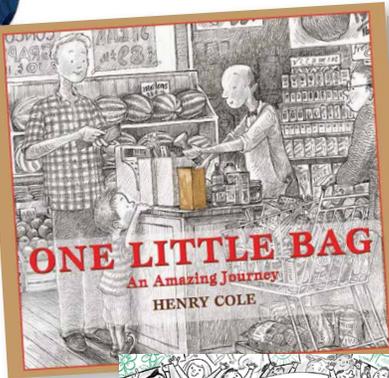
CHARLES, Tami. *All Because You Matter*. illus. by Bryan Collier. Scholastic/Orchard. ISBN 9781338574852.

K-Gr 3—A parent conveys a loving message to a Black boy who will be challenged by school, injustice, and more. Still, as a descendant of kings and queens, he is ready to take on his destiny and grow. Spirited, thoughtful illustrations depict a luminous journey from past to present.

CLINE-RANSOME, Lisa. *Overground Railroad*. illus. by James Ransome. Holiday House. ISBN 9780823438730.

K-Gr 2—In this picture book that spotlights a relatively unsung part of American history, the Ransomes focus on details large and small, in resplendent scenes that don't gloss over the sober-

Best Books 2020



ing facts of the Great Migration but show the promise ahead through the eyes of a young girl, a daughter of sharecroppers.

COLE, Henry. *One Little Bag: An Amazing Journey.* illus. by author. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338359978.
Gr 1-3—*Wordless, accessible, and eco-friendly* all apply to this lovely invitation to one small gesture—reusing a humble lunch bag—that, repeated over decades, holds the story of a boy’s life, his family, his future. An economy of line and storytelling sets this tale in a resilient, diverse America.

DOYON, Samara Cole. *Magnificent Homespun Brown.* illus. by Kaylani Juanita. Tilbury House. ISBN 9780884487975.
PreS-Gr 3—Small girls (some in hijabs, others who use wheelchairs) romp in Juanita’s radiant world that includes golden leaves and steaming hot chocolate. This book features tones of honey and amber, the gray brown of snow shadows, and more. A joyful ode to childhood.

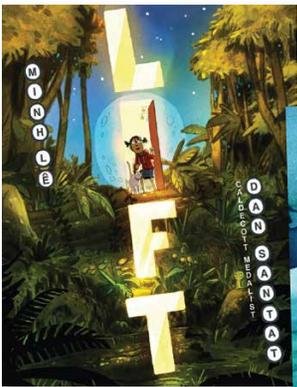
HALE, Christy. *Out the Door.* illus. by author. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823446445.
K-Gr 2—In a journey through New York, a blend of illustrations and simple text provides a great lesson in prepositions and so much more. The protagonist is an energetic brown-skinned child, and the city is vast, as readers find out that words give a journey its direction and its heart.

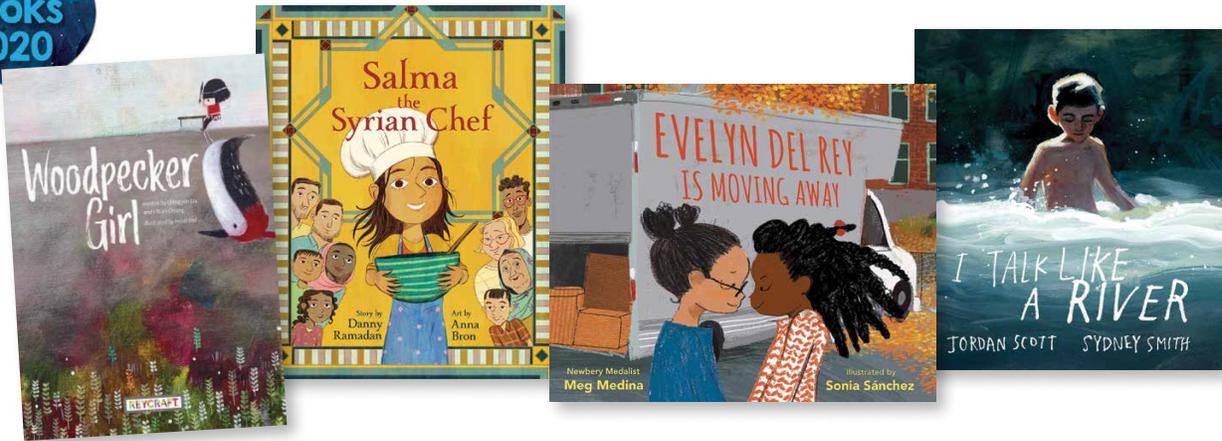
JOYNER, Andrew. *Stand Up! Speak Up!* illus. by author. Random/Schwartz & Wade. ISBN 9780593301586.
Gr 2-4—Relying on a limited palette with seemingly unlimited energy, this guide to believing in a cause addresses emo-

tions effectively, showing kids what it means to take part in something that’s meaningful and the pain of being discouraged, while always emphasizing perseverance.

LAM, Thao. *The Paper Boat: A Refugee Story.* illus. by author. OwlKids. ISBN 9781771473637.
K-Gr 2—A deeply personal, soul-baring story showcasing a mother’s love at the face of horrific events, never shying away from the truth that has happened. In emotional cut-paper scenes, the plight of immigrants today connects with the harrowing refugee stories from the past.

LARSEN, Andrew. *I Do Not Like Stories.* illus. by Carey Sookocheff. OwlKids. ISBN 9781771473781.
K-Gr 2—The curmudgeonly title and overlapping story lines





in this heir apparent to David Macaulay’s *Black and White* invite readers to interpret subtexts accordingly. While a small boy disparages stories, the evidence that he is an honest-to-god smoke-and-mirrors storyteller of the first order surrounds him in panel illustrations.

LÊ, Minh. *Lift*. illus. by Dan Santat. Little, Brown. ISBN 9781368036924.

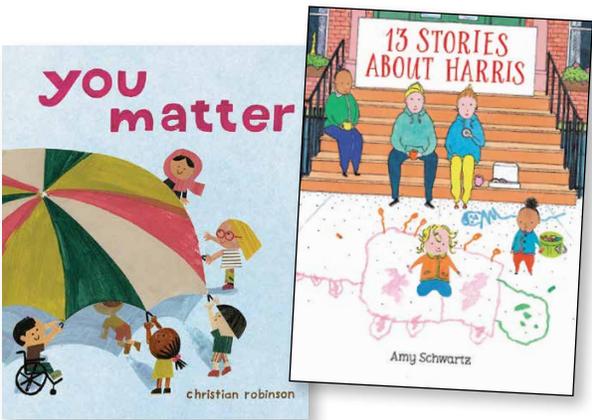
Gr 1-3—Panel art and spare text bring to vivid life the many meanings of the word *lift*, from an elevator to weightlessness in a space station to the act of picking up and soothing a new sibling.

LINDSTROM, Carole. *We Are Water Protectors*. illus. by Michaela Goade. Roaring Brook. ISBN 9781250203557.

K-Gr 3—With the line “We are still here,” readers are firmly reminded that Indigenous people are centered in the present. Water-hued, captivating colors and a lyrical, resounding text guarantee this title a spot on every shelf.

LIU, Chingyen & I-Tsun Chiang. *Woodpecker Girl*. illus. by Heidi Doll. Reycraft. ISBN 9781478869542.

K-Gr 4—“Woodpecker Girl” has a limb difference and uses a paintbrush attached to her head with a band to peck away at paper, creating exuberant pieces of art. The message that personal expression knows no boundaries will speak to all children in a true story that reverberates with emotion and freedom.



MEDINA, Meg. *Evelyn Del Rey Is Moving Away*. illus. by Sonia Sánchez. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536207040.

K-Gr 4—Part friendship tale, part meditation on grief, but, mostly, a love story—two BIPOC girls face the unbearable loss of one of them moving away. The storytelling has the spare emotional weight of Ezra Jack Keats’s work, and the details affirm the depth of feelings they share.

RAMADAN, Danny. *Salma the Syrian Chef*. illus. by Anna Bron. Annick. ISBN 9781773213750.

K-Gr 2—Facing loss and change, Salma wants to cheer up her mother, who is working hard in Vancouver while Salma’s father is still in Syria. Members of a community center rally around her, and a message of love and acceptance is served up right on schedule.

ROBINSON, Christian. *You Matter*. illus. by author. S. & S./Atheneum. ISBN 9781534421691.

PreS-Gr 1—A hug you can read! From microorganisms going their own way under a microscope to a dog separated from its owners by a busy street, Robinson’s message is emotional and resounding—you matter. The pacing is impressive, the message simple and ringing.

SCHWARTZ, Amy. *13 Stories About Harris*. illus. by author. Holiday House. ISBN 9780823442492.

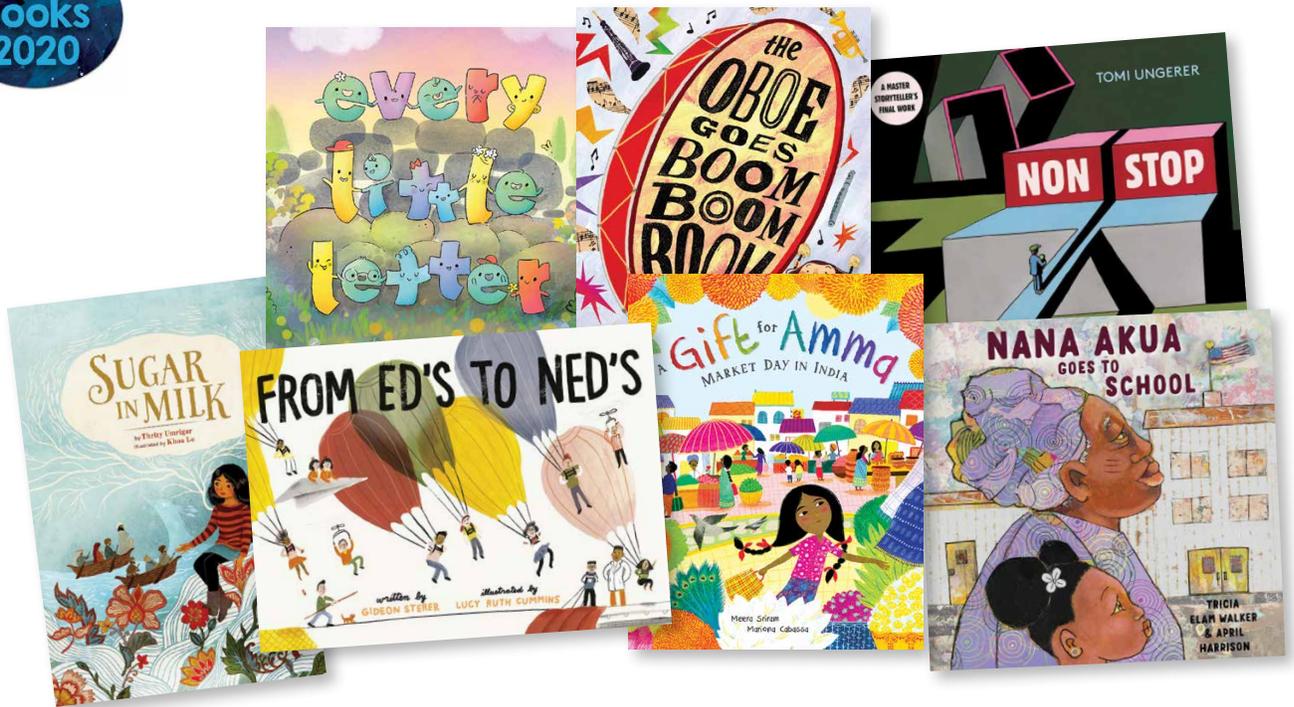
Toddler-PreS—An impervious toddler named Harris, in 13 exquisite stories from his point of view, creates chapter after chapter about the here and now as a wonderful place to live. The book is told in short, pithy prose, and sometimes the illustrations have the punch line.

SCOTT, Jordan. *I Talk Like a River*. illus. by Sydney Smith. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823445592.

Gr 1-4—While the hero’s challenge is stuttering, a loving father and glorious natural surroundings create the resonant message that not everything expressive is a straight line, but can be a tumble of water, words, even ideas in streams. This title is for every outsider who has ever been teased—it’s for everyone.

SRIRAM, Meera. *A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India*. illus. by Marion Cabassa. Barefoot. ISBN 9781646860616.

K-Gr 1—Visit an Indian market for its vibrant hues, scents,



and sights through the stalls as a young girl searches for the perfect gift for her Amma. It's a picture book extraordinaire with a glossary about the evocative marketplace. An armchair shopping trip, just right for pointing and sharing.

STERER, Gideon. *From Ed's to Ned's*. illus. by Lucy Ruth Cummins. Knopf. ISBN 9780525648062.

PreS-Gr 2—A valentine to adventure, this raucous, rhyming, spot-on collaboration has a ready audience of first graders who recognize the many imaginative modes of transport in these pages. The rhyme inspires, the illustrations transport, and everyone ends up safe at home.

UMRIGAR, Thrity. *Sugar in Milk*. illus. by Khoa Le. Running Pr. ISBN 9780762495191.

K-Gr 4—Part folklore, part immigrant story, all contemporary in addressing a young Parsi girl's adjustment to her new home in America. This story will resonate with children of all backgrounds, especially those facing change and misunderstandings and struggling with outsider status.

UNDERWOOD, Deborah. *Every Little Letter*. illus. by Joy Hwang Ruiz. Dial. ISBN 9780525554028.

K-Gr 3—This gem of a story starts with a "hi" and ends with a party, and that's all the invitation readers need. This alphabet book spells world peace and provides a light, sparkling, even fizzy sense of well-being.

UNGERER, Tomi. *Nonstop*. illus. by author. Phaidon. ISBN 9781838661595.

K-Gr 3—The late Ungerer was often called visionary and prescient, even avant-garde, and for this tale of seeking shelter in a world gone mad, he's left us a map of jarring angles, sinister alleys, and a pop art color scheme.

VENABLE, Colleen AF. *The Oboe Goes Boom Boom Boom*. illus. by Lian Cho. HarperCollins/Greenwillow. ISBN 9780062494375.

PreS-Gr 2—If Lloyd Moss's *Zin! Zin! Zin!: A Violin from kawaii*, a term that describes a Japanese-style aesthetic that is cute and childlike, this would be the silly, informative result. Music education is not part of every school, but this glimpse should be on every shelf.

WALKER, Tricia Elam. *Nana Akua Goes to School*. illus. by April Harrison. Random/Schwartz & Wade. ISBN 9780525581130.

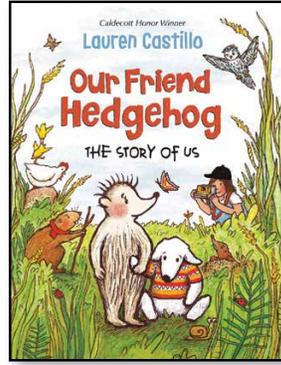
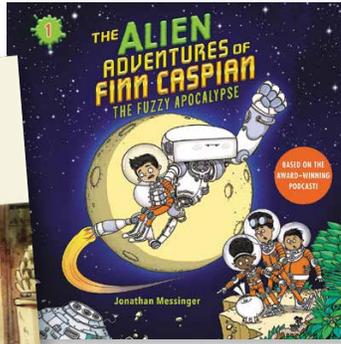
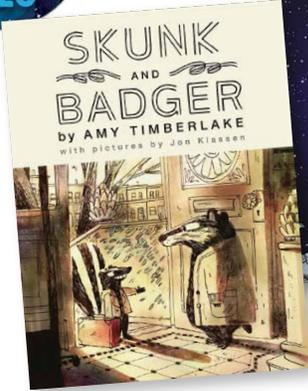
K-Gr 2—Nana Akua bears the ritual marks of her family back home in West Africa, and her loving granddaughter finds a way to bridge the reactions of others to these raised scars in a story soaked with symbols and grace. A generous look at acknowledging and celebrating differences.

Chapter Books

Emily Beasley, Monisha Blair,
Myiesha Speight, Ashleigh Williams, Taylor Worley

CASTILLO, Lauren. *Our Friend Hedgehog: The Story of Us*. illus. by author. Knopf. ISBN 9781524766719.

K-Gr 3—A delightful chapter book, strongly reminiscent of Winnie-the-Pooh, invites readers into a forest filled with anthropomorphized critters as they share friendship stories. While enjoyable as an independent read, this lovely volume can be shared with adults, as they are likely to pick up on more subtle themes and can guide discussion. Sweet but on the safe side of saccharine, *Hedgehog* charms.



MESSINGER, Jonathan. *The Fuzzy Apocalypse*. illus. by Aleksei Bitskoff. HarperCollins/Harper. ISBN 9780062932150.
Gr 1-3—Finn Caspian and his troop of interstellar space scouts are in search of an inhabitable planet when they are drawn to a planet that is about to explode. Once there, they receive conflicting stories from the planet's inhabitants and it is unclear whom they can trust. Funny moments and genius plans abound in this early chapter book about friendship and teamwork.

OHLIN, Nancy. *Alicia Alonso Takes the Stage*. illus. by Josefina Preumayr. Rebel Girls. ISBN 9781733329224.
Gr 1-3—This historical fiction installment chronicles Alicia Alonso's story, from her love of dancing as a child to a visual impairment that could have threatened her career. With grace and poise, Alicia overcomes every obstacle sent her way. While ballet and dance lovers may especially enjoy Alicia's journey, the full-page illustrations and inspiring tone will draw readers of all interests.

TIMBERLAKE, Amy. *Skunk and Badger*. illus. by Jon Klassen. Algonquin. ISBN 9781643750057.
Gr 2-5—An odd-couple redux featuring introverted rock collector Badger and extroverted gourmand Skunk. Ideal for read-alouds and discussion, this title subtly covers myriad topics including homelessness, racism, prejudice, friendships, and communication. With well-developed, relatable characters and superb illustrations, this deceptively simple entry is a most welcome series opener.

Middle Grade

Emily Beasley, Monisha Blair,
Myiesha Speight, Ashleigh Williams, Taylor Worley

ALI, S.K. & Aisha Saeed, eds. *Once Upon an Eid: Stories of Hope and Joy by 15 Muslim Voices*. Abrams/Amulet. ISBN 9781419740831.

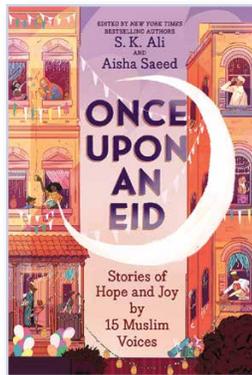
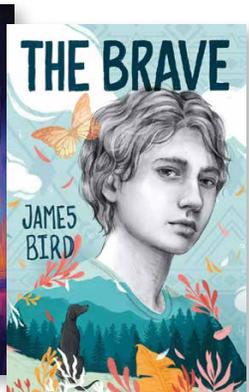
Gr 3-6—Readers are welcomed into a celebration of Eid in this compilation of 15 #OwnVoices short stories that show a diverse set of holiday experiences from various settings, family structures, races, and cultures. Whether familiar with Eid traditions or not, tweens will enjoy this collection that radiates the love and joy of the holiday season.

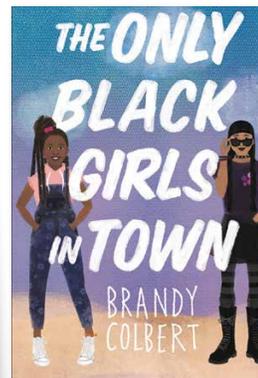
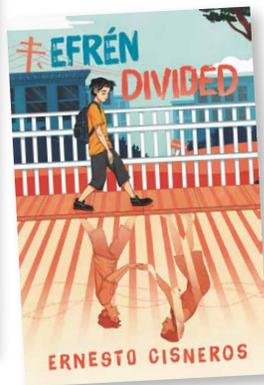
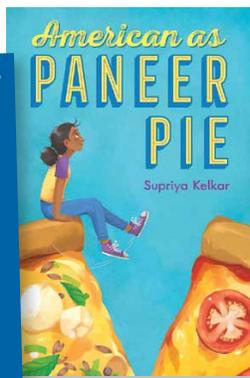
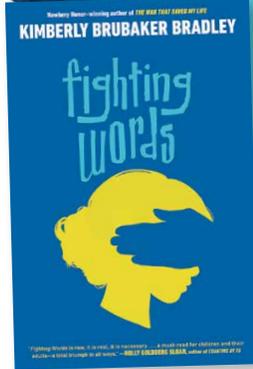
BARRON, Rena. *Maya and the Rising Dark*. HMH. ISBN 9781328635181.

Gr 5-7—Comic book-loving Maya discovers that she is no ordinary girl from South Side Chicago, but a godling and half-orisha; her father is the Guardian of the Veil that separates the worlds. When he suddenly goes missing, it is up to Maya and her two best friends to save him from the Lord of Shadows. Barron expertly weaves a nail-biting adventure featuring a diverse cast and elements of African folklore that is sure to excite any reader.

BIRD, James. *The Brave*. Feiwel & Friends. ISBN 9781250247759.

Gr 5 Up—Collin has been bullied his whole life for counting every letter that is spoken to him and compulsively saying the number out loud. When he fights back, his dad sends him to live with his mother, whom he has never met, on an Ojibwe reservation in Minnesota. Collin quickly forms warm relationships with his new family and learns more about the community. With touches of magical realism, this beautiful story of first love, acceptance, strength, and loss will appeal to a wide audience.





BRADLEY, Kimberly Brubaker. *Fighting Words*. Dial. ISBN 9781984815682.

Gr 5 Up—Sisters Della, 10, and Suki, 16, are put in foster care after escaping a sexually abusive home. Readers experience their initial recovery through Della’s perspective as she finds strength in herself but sees Suki declining. This book is searingly honest with an ultimately hopeful resolution. Readers are strongly urged to experience this text with a trusted adult, as there is a great deal to unpack in the narrative. Gut-wrenching, hopeful, and necessary.

CALLENDER, Kacen. *King and the Dragonflies*. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338129335.

Gr 4-9—The sudden and inexplicable loss of his older brother consumes King as he attempts to navigate his changing relationships and connect with the dragonfly he believes Khalid has become in the afterlife. When his former friend goes missing, only King knows the real reason, and he struggles to balance his emotions with his desire to help. Callender deftly ties sexuality, abuse, racism, grief, and the hard parts of friendship into this fast-paced tale of self-discovery and hope.

CISNEROS, Ernesto. *Efrén Divided*. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780062881687.

Gr 5-7—Efrén sometimes wishes that he didn’t have to share a bed with his younger twin siblings, but he knows that they are all loved and well cared for. When his mom is suddenly deported to Mexico, Efrén takes on the heavy mantle of caregiver as his father works round the clock to support them. But things inevitably start to slip, and Efrén must find a way to get Amá back. This timely debut about family, resilience, and injustice will resonate with readers of all ages.

COLBERT, Brandy. *The Only Black Girls in Town*. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316456388.

Gr 3-7—Alberta was the only Black girl in town until Edie and her mom moved into the bed-and-breakfast down the street. Though Edie and Alberta don’t have much in common, their shared experience as Black girls, and a mystery surrounding the journals found in Edie’s attic, brings them together. This book bravely takes on conversations of race

and racism, with a cast of dynamic characters and a plethora of nontraditional family structures.

KELKAR, Supriya. *American as Paneer Pie*. S. & S./Aladdin. ISBN 9781534439382.

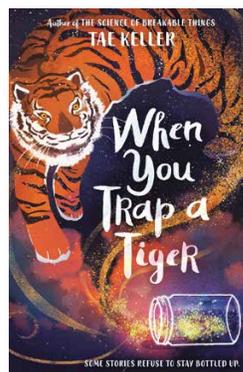
Gr 4-6—Lehka, 11, spends her days navigating the micro- and macroaggressions from her classmates and feeling like she has to hide who she is as an Indian American kid in suburban Detroit. When a new girl from India joins her class, Lehka learns more about herself, her culture, and standing up for what’s right. Through rich characters and strong friendships, Kelkar conveys the importance of embracing your true self—a message that will speak to many.

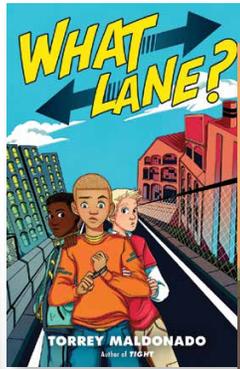
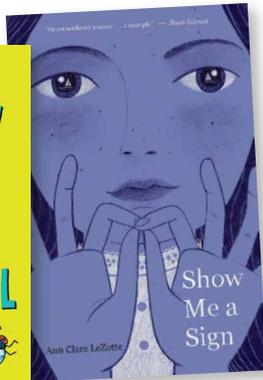
KELLER, Tae. *When You Trap a Tiger*. Random. ISBN 9781524715700.

Gr 4-7—Lily has always known, thanks to her Halmoni’s stories, that tigers can’t be trusted. Even so, when a magical tiger appears in her grandmother’s basement with a deal to heal the ailing woman, Lily is willing to do whatever it takes—even if that means trapping the tiger. What follows is a glorious tale of self-discovery and family overflowing with Korean folklore and magical realism. Thought-provoking and deeply moving.

KELLY, Erin Entrada. *We Dream of Space*. HarperCollins/Greenwillow. ISBN 9780062747303.

Gr 4-6—Set against the *Challenger* launch in 1986, the nov-





el features the changing Thomas family. Cash is in seventh grade (again) with twin siblings Bird and Fitch. Cash is lost, Fitch is angry, and Bird nurtures aspirations far beyond societal and familial expectations. Meanwhile, their parents fight—a lot. Kelly expertly articulates tween experiences while discussing prevalent issues like gender inequality. In an engrossing 1980s setting, the Thomas siblings navigate difficult situations that are likely to feel familiar to many.

LAI, Remy. *Fly on the Wall*. illus. by author. Holt. ISBN 9781250314116.

Gr 4-7—Henry Khoo’s desire for independence from his helicopter family leads him on a solo plane trip to Singapore, where his father lives. On Henry’s journey of self-discovery, he learns that nothing is as simple as it seems and there are consequences to his actions—especially for the rumor blog he created, “Fly on the Wall.” Henry’s development throughout is flawlessly accented by Lai’s illustrations, resulting in a dynamic and engaging reading experience.

LEZOTTE, Ann Clare. *Show Me a Sign*. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338255812.

Gr 3-7—Mary Lambert is struggling with guilt due to her brother’s accidental death and also seeks to find her place in her tight-knit Martha’s Vineyard community. When an outsider comes to study the deaf community and kidnaps her as a “live specimen,” Mary must find strength within herself to escape. LeZotte packs this historical fiction novel with cultural information regarding 19th-century Martha’s Vineyard, addressing treatment of Native Nations, disability, grief, and prejudice in this slow-burn, occasionally dark #OwnVoices novel.

MALDONADO, Torrey. *What Lane?* Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. ISBN 9780525518433.

Gr 5-8—Stephen is a biracial kid growing up in New York City who feels like life is constantly challenging him to pick a lane—Black friends or white friends? He doesn’t want to choose, but he’s finding it increasingly hard not to see racism in how he and others are treated. Maldonado’s story of identity, friendship, and justice will strike a chord with young audiences.

MARKS, Janae. *From the Desk of Zoe Washington*. Harper/Katherine Tegen. ISBN 9780062875853.

Gr 4 Up—Zoe’s life is dominated by her dream of competing on her favorite cooking show—until she receives a letter from the dad she has never met, who is incarcerated for committing a horrific crime. He tells her he is innocent, so Zoe begins a journey to uncover the truth about her dad, about her world, and especially about herself. Marks’s recipe of discovery and mystery—mixed with adventure and seasoned with excellent discussions on wrongful conviction, racism, and blended families—produces quite a treat for readers.

MESSNER, Kate. *Chirp*. Bloomsbury. ISBN 9781547602810.

Gr 4-6—When Mia moves to Vermont with her family the summer after seventh grade, the former gymnast navigates new friendships and tries to save her grandmother’s cricket farm, all while nursing a painful and confusing secret. This engaging, humorous, and heartfelt work is an excellent introduction to consent and the #MeToo movement, with a fun family mystery to boot.

OLIVER, Lauren. *The Magnificent Monsters of Cedar Street*. illus. by Ethan Alridge. HarperCollins. ISBN 9780062345073.

Gr 4-6—Cordelia Clay’s father is a veterinarian for monsters, and she spends her days helping him nurse creatures like filches, dragons, and squelches back to health. When her father disappears with their monsters, Cordelia is determined to find them. Along the way, she meets new companions, rekindles old friendships, and learns who the true monsters are. Oliver’s invigorating tale packs a surprise at every turn and is a thoroughly entertaining read.



PINKNEY, Andrea Davis. *Loretta Little Looks Back: Three Voices Go Tell It*. illus. by Brian Pinkney. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316536776.

Gr 5 Up—The Littles—Loretta, Roly, and Aggie B.—each grew up facing different obstacles, from sharecropping

and living under Jim Crow laws to fighting for civil rights. The family members take turns boldly voicing their stories and experiences in this deeply emotional and powerfully hopeful “stage on a page” novel. Andrea Davis Pinkney’s narrative is complemented by Brian Pinkney’s evocative illustrations in this fresh and invigorating historical fiction come to life.

RESPICIO, Mae. *Any Day with You*. Random/Wendy Lamb. ISBN 9780525707578.

Gr 4-6—Kaia’s summer revolves around completing a bucket list with her Tatang (great-grandfather) and creating a short film honoring her Filipina heritage with her best friends. So many things in Kaia’s life are changing, yet her family always pulls together and supports her as she discovers herself. Respicio’s infectiously happy and wise characters are a burst of sunshine in this upbeat story about family, mindfulness, chasing your dreams, and growing up.

SAGE, Angie. *Twilight Hauntings*. Harper/Katherine Tegen. ISBN 9780062875143.

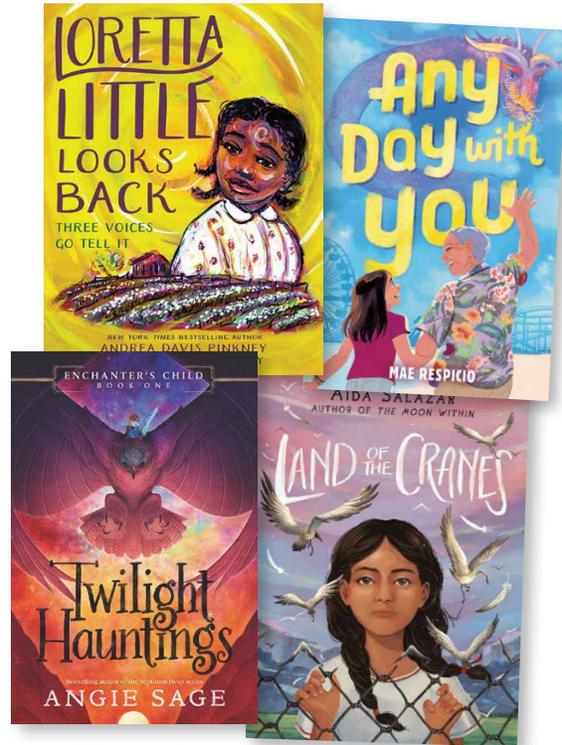
Gr 4-7—Enchanters are banned in Luma, which is unfortunate for Alex because she just might be one. Having lived with a foster family for 10 years, Alex secretly reads magical cards until she’s discovered and must escape. What follows is a series of fantastic events exploring greed, discrimination, and power in a tween-friendly high fantasy setting. Readers witness not only the compelling elevation of heroes but also the birth of a villain. At once comfortably familiar and surprisingly refreshing, this is a fantasy world readers will be sure to revisit.

SALAZAR, Aida. *Land of the Cranes*. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338343809.

Gr 3-7—This novel in verse explores family separation, deportation, and detention at the U.S.-Mexico border through the eyes of Betita Quintero. Betita loves to write, and it’s through her words that readers experience the abounding emotions of a fourth grade girl trying to understand her family’s situation. Salazar trusts her readers with complex issues, and while the story doesn’t provide the closure they may expect, Betita finds hope and her own kind of happiness in the end. A potent book with many opportunities for discussion.

SOONTORNVAT, Christina. *A Wish in the Dark*. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536204940.

Gr 4 Up—Pong escapes the prison where he was born in search of meaning and a chance to be near the Governor, the creator of all the light in the kingdom. He is relentlessly pursued by Nok, a young woman bent on bringing Pong to justice, but the further the chase goes, the more they each discover injustice all around them. Soontornvat transforms the timeless tale of *Les Misérables* into a Thai-inspired fantasy addressing equality, bravery, and how to find one’s own path amid cultural expectations.

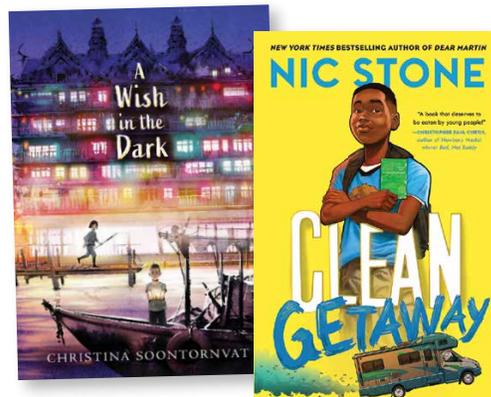


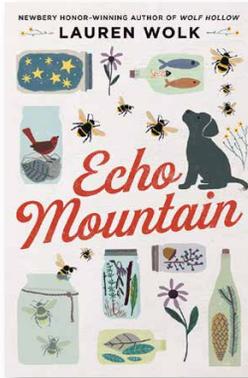
STONE, Nic. *Clean Getaway*. Crown. ISBN 9781984892973.

Gr 3-6—When Scoob’s grandmother offers him the chance to escape grounding by going on a road trip with her, he leaps at the chance. The duo are guided by the *Green Book*, which helped Black Americans travel safely in the era of Jim Crow. But they are also haunted by Grandma’s memories, which slowly unfold during their journey. A cleverly told mystery, with a good dose of history; readers will be deeply invested in this intergenerational adventure.

SUMNER, Jamie. *Tune It Out*. S. & S./Atheneum. ISBN 9781534457003.

Gr 5 Up—Lou can sing like an angel, yet she lives in fear of loud noises and high fives. Her free-spirited mother hopes that Lou’s talents will result in her big break. Then Child Protective Services sends the girl to live with her aunt and uncle, and everything in her world shifts—including her inability to speak up for herself. A raw and uplifting story addressing invisible disabilities, homelessness, and poverty, with dignity and hope.





a lovely setting, and an innovative narrative style (Amir and his family tell the story while being questioned at the airport), this book exists at the intersections of sexuality and culture, as well as humor and pain.

ATTA, Dean. *The Black Flamingo*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780062990297.

Gr 9 Up—Biracial Michael works through his identity, race, and sexuality as he finds himself through his drag persona, the Black Flamingo, in this novel in verse. Michael's story reminds readers that being true to who you are is what makes you truly fabulous.

WATSON, Renée. *Ways To Make Sunshine*. illus. by Nina Mata. Bloomsbury. ISBN 9781547600564.

Gr 3-5—Ryan is a ray of sunshine whose positivity is infectious, even during challenging times. Watson takes a look at the everyday ups and downs of kid life in this series debut following a young Black girl in Portland, OR. Readers are bound to fall in love with enthusiastic Ryan and her warm, loving family.

WOLK, Lauren. *Echo Mountain*. Dutton. ISBN 9780525555568. **Gr 4 Up**—When Ellie and her family move to the mountains of Maine after suffering significant losses during the Great Depression, Ellie's father is injured in an accident and becomes comatose. With natural skill, the protagonist steps up to help her family, but conflict boils. Ellie tries myriad cures for her father to no avail, until she meets Cate, a "hag" who is herself gravely injured. Subtle supernatural elements tint this rich, historical novel about family relationships, friendships, and finding your own power.

BROWN, Echo. *Black Girl Unlimited: The Remarkable Story of a Teenage Wizard*. Holt/Christy Ottaviano. ISBN 9781250309853.

Gr 9 Up—Echo is a poor Black teenage wizard in a world that is not set up for her success. She narrates her story of harnessing her powers and carving out space for herself in the world. This novel is packed with magical realism, sharp observations, and revelations about addiction, depression, race, sexual abuse, and class that unfurl slowly and complicate one another. Readers will be gutted, then changed.

CHEE, Traci. *We Are Not Free*. HMH. ISBN 9780358131434. **Gr 7 Up**—Fourteen narrators, all born in the United States and of Japanese descent, provide viewpoints after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They and their families are no longer trusted, and the Exclusion Orders mean forced relocation. This novel is moving, personal, and well researched, with

Young Adult

Susannah Goldstein, Katy Hershberger, Maggie Knapp, Ashley Leffel, Carla Riemer

ACEVEDO, Elizabeth. *Clap When You Land*. HarperTeen. ISBN 9780062882769.

Gr 9 Up—Camino and Yahaira, two teenagers in different countries who have never met, are suddenly thrust into each other's lives when their biological father dies in a plane crash. They piece together their Papi's life in New York and the Dominican Republic, joining their partial memories to finally see the whole person. Told in alternate narratives, this novel in verse is a cathartic exploration of grief, love, and family secrets.

AHMADI, Arvin. *How It All Blew Up*. Viking. ISBN 9780593202876.

Gr 9 Up—When Amir is blackmailed with being outed to his Iranian Muslim family, he hops on a plane to Rome and falls in with a group of friends who help him discover what it means to be a gay man. With realistic characters,



Best Books 2020



abundant curricular tie-ins and a realistic range of authentic character reactions, from “Don’t make trouble” to “How dare they require this of us?”

DEONN, Tracy. Legendborn. S. & S./Simon Pulse. ISBN 9781534441606.

Gr 8 Up—Bree is driven to find the truth about her mother’s death and its connection to a college secret society rooted in the centuries-old legends of King Arthur, and she will need to call on her own magic to find answers. The detailed world-building, fast-paced plot, and richly drawn diverse characters successfully bring to life a world where medieval magic meets African American root work.

GILES, Lamar. Not So Pure and Simple. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780062349194.

Gr 8 Up—Del attends church to get his crush Kiera’s attention. When she and other teens approach the altar during a service, Del joins them to get close to Kiera, then realizes he just became a Purity Pledger, promising to stay sexually pure until marriage. With humor and honesty, this novel addresses the impact of sexism, social media, religion, and adults’ fears of teen sexuality, adeptly showing how even “good guys” indulge in toxic masculinity.

IFUEKO, Jordan. Raybearer. Abrams/Amulet. ISBN 9781419739828.

Gr 7 Up—When Tarisai successfully earns a place on the Council of 11, she is happy to be one among others, with little interest in the higher honor of being bonded to the Crown Prince through the Ray and carrying out her mother’s plan of assassination. Blending fantasy, Nigerian folklore, and a complex and engaging set of relationships, debut author Ifueko pits loyalty to self against family obligations, newfound friendships, and love.

MABRY, Samantha. Tigers, Not Daughters. Algonquin. ISBN 9781616208967.

Gr 7 Up—A year after the death of their eldest sister, the three remaining Torres girls still long to escape their hometown and the problematic men in their lives—their father, a boyfriend, and the neighborhood boys who obsess over them—as Ana’s ghost returns. Inspired in part by Jeffrey Eugenides’s

The Virgin Suicides, this beautiful story of the love among sisters gives the girls agency and turns the male gaze on its head.

MCSMITH, Tobly. Stay Gold. HarperTeen. ISBN 9780062943170.

Gr 9 Up—Pony moves to a new school hoping to lead a normal life without being known as the “trans kid.” Romance, self-discovery, strong secondary characters, and references to *The Outsiders* make this a great read for anyone who has ever felt different.

MENDOZA, Paola & Abby Sher. Sanctuary. Putnam. ISBN 9781984815712.

Gr 7 Up—Undocumented siblings Valentina and Ernesto confront life-threatening dangers as they try to get from the East Coast to California, a sanctuary state. Set in the near future, many elements of the story—border walls, raids, abusive human smugglers—already exist today. Rooted in Mendoza’s work with undocumented people, this chilling



narrative is a realistic exploration of the diversity and trauma of undocumented immigrant experiences.

NIVEN, Jennifer. *Breathless*. Knopf. ISBN 9781524701963.

Gr 9 Up—After Claudine’s parents announce their separation, she and her mother spend the summer after high school on a remote island, where Claude meets Jeremiah and rediscovers herself and her feelings about love. The discussions of sex are refreshingly frank and positive, and Niven expertly examines common YA themes—the desire for independence, evolving friendship, new romance, family tensions—with standout authenticity and heart.

PHILIPPE, Ben. *Charming as a Verb*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780062824141.

Gr 9 Up—Haitian American Henri will do just about anything to achieve his dream of going to Columbia, even if it means betraying the girl he loves. A diverse cast of characters, racial tensions, and ethical dilemmas make this so much more than just a simple romance.

REED, Christina Hammonds. *The Black Kids*. S. & S. ISBN 9781534462724.

Gr 9 Up—Los Angeles, 1992: While the city is consumed with protests after the beating of Rodney King, wealthy Black high school senior Ashley contemplates her own perceptions of her race and those of her classmates as she attends a predominantly white school—a realistic journey to action filled with detours and new discoveries. This is a nuanced and authentic coming-of-age story with pitch-perfect historical details and timeless themes.

ROSEN, L.C. *Camp*. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316537759.

Gr 9 Up—Campy humor and self-discovery collide as Randy trades his dramatic flare for straight-acting masculinity to win the heart of his crush at a camp for queer-identifying teens. This LGBTQIA+ book goes beyond queer coming-out stories, instead showing teens a world where everyone is accepted for who they are and where sexuality can be discussed freely and honestly.

SANCHEZ, Jenny Torres. *We Are Not from Here*. Philomel. ISBN 9781984812261.

Gr 9 Up—Concluding that there is no future for them in Guatemala, Pequeña and brothers Pulga and Chico take off north, following the tracks of La Bestia and risking everything, including their lives, to reach the U.S. border. Desperation permeates the pages, as Sanchez’s richly drawn characters confront the lack of legal options and the undaunted hope of those compelled to attempt the journey.

TOKUDA-HALL, Maggie. *The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea*. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536204315.

Gr 9 Up—A sea voyage turns violent for Evelyn, Lady Hasegawa, on her reluctant way to meet her betrothed. Her escape with crew member Florian, along with a mermaid they plan to release, creates as many problems as it solves. Though dark at times, Tokuda-Hall’s lyrical writing balances harsh passages with themes of rescue, retribution, and the healing power of accepting and loving yourself.

YOON, David. *Super Fake Love Song*. Putnam. ISBN 9781984812230.

Gr 7 Up—Live action role-play aficionado Sunny maintains a case of mistaken identity so that the beautiful new girl Cirrus will think that he is a rock star. Sunny studies and imitates his big brother in an attempt to woo Cirrus, but ultimately has to figure out who he really is and what he values. This romantic comedy explores identity, familial relationships, high school politics, and first loves with wit and emotional honesty.

ZOBOI, Ibi & Yusef Salaam. *Punching the Air*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780062996480.

Gr 8 Up—Amal is a Black teen incarcerated for assaulting a white teen. With spare but forceful words, this novel in verse examines the dehumanization of young people caught in the school-to-prison pipeline. Through Amal’s experience, readers see how young people are left at the mercy of racist, broken educational and criminal justice systems that stifle talents and silence voices.





Nonfiction

Alicia Abdul, Heidi Grange,
Kacy Helwick, Jennifer Knight, Vanessa Willoughby

BARTON, Chris. *All of a Sudden and Forever: Help and Healing After the Oklahoma City Bombing.* illus. by Nicole Xu. Carolrhoda. ISBN 9781541526693.

Gr 2-5—In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, the survivors and loved ones of the 168 people who were killed embarked on the long process of healing. Their journey was mirrored by that of a tree now known as the Survivor Tree that was damaged by the blast. This title focuses on how people come together and create communities rather than on the specifics of the tragedy and perpetrator. Barton and Xu provide an important resource centered on resilience and grief.

BROWN, Monica. *Sharuko: El Arqueólogo Peruano Julio C. Tello/ Peruvian Archaeologist Julio C. Tello.* illus. by Elisa Chavari. Lee & Low. ISBN 9780892394234.

Gr 3-6—After a childhood of exploring the foothills of the Andes, Julio C. Tello (aka Sharuko) became the first Indigenous archaeologist in America and a champion for Native Peruvians. Engaging illustrations with details from art found in highlighted archaeological sites complement an action-packed bilingual narrative.

BROWNE, Mahogany L., Elizabeth Acevedo & Olivia Gatwood. *Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice.* illus. by Theodore Taylor III. Roaring Brook. ISBN 9781250311207.

Gr 3-6—This evocative poetry collection examines a wide range of issues including social justice, identity, racism, activism, police brutality, inclusion, immigration, and human rights. Bold, striking illustrations illuminate a powerful and necessary call to action.

CHIN, Jason. *Your Place in the Universe.* illus. by author. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823446230.

PreS-Gr 4—This wondrously illustrated guide explores the size of the universe and our place in it. Using the height and location of an eight-year-old child looking at the night sky as a gauge, Chin creates a cosmic nesting doll. Size and distance throughout the universe are compared, and the text incorporates basic astronomical information.

COOPER, Candy with Marc Aronson. *Poisoned Water: How the Citizens of Flint, Michigan, Fought for Their Lives and Warned the Nation.* Bloomsbury. ISBN 9781547602322.

Gr 8 Up—A multisystem failure created an atrocity, but no one was listening. Cooper and Aronson skillfully document the plight of the residents of Flint, MI, in a heart-pounding narrative that reads better than any fictional thriller.

DIONNE, Evette. *Lifting as We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box.* Viking. ISBN 9780451481542.

Gr 5-7—The literature written about the suffrage movement tends to focus on the efforts of white women. This eye-opening book spotlights the experiences of Black women who contributed to the movement. Though they faced sexism and racism, they refused to back down, working hard to make their voices heard.



FLEMING, Candace. *Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera.* illus. by Eric Rohmann. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823442850.

K-Gr 4—This stunning picture book combines poetic nonfiction text with gorgeous paintings to tell the story of a honeybee. The narrative starts with her birth, then charts her growth and development. An incredible look at the life cycle of a bee.

FLEMING, Candace. *The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh.* Random/Schwartz & Wade. ISBN 9780525646549.

Gr 7 Up—This balanced biographical account centers on Charles Lindbergh, the first pilot to complete a solo transatlantic flight. Fleming examines Lindbergh's complicated life, including his rather unusual childhood, his years flying in obscurity, the kidnapping of his son, and his pro-Nazi Germany and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

GADDY, K.R. *Flowers in the Gutter: The True Story of the Edelweiss Pirates, Teenagers Who Resisted the Nazis.* Dutton. ISBN 9780525555414.

Gr 7-10—The Edelweiss Pirates were loosely affiliated groups of German young people who opposed the SS and the Hitler Youth through nonconformity, mischief, the dissemination of anti-Nazi messages, and sabotage. This extensively researched title spotlights three teenagers from working-class socialist and communist families in Cologne and their lesser-known associates. An essential addition to the narrative canon of World War II resistance fighters.



HUBBARD, Rita Lorraine. *The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read.* illus. by Oge Mora. Random/Schwartz & Wade. ISBN 9781524768287.

PreS-Gr 3—Charming illustrations, photographs, an author's note, and text work in tandem to tell the inspiring story of Mary Walker, a formerly enslaved Black woman, sharecropper, maid, and mother who learned to read at the age of 116.

HUDSON, Wade & Cheryl Willis, eds. *The Talk: Conversations About Race, Love & Truth.* Crown. ISBN 9780593121610.

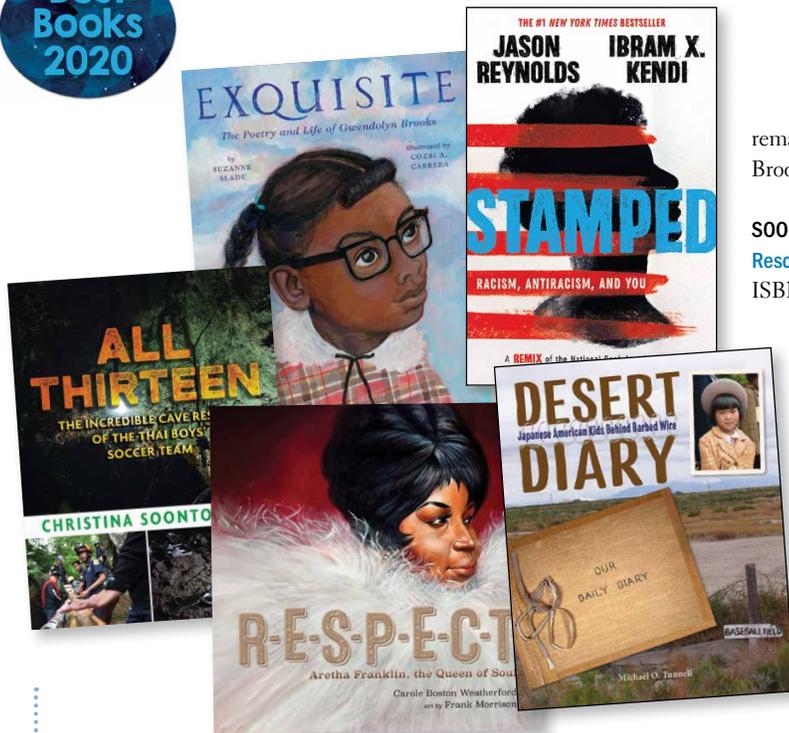
Gr 5 Up—Noteworthy authors and familiar illustrators contribute to a powerful work that examines topics such as racism and cultural identity. The emotionally engaging content uses a variety of formats to illuminate antiracist advocacy.

IFTIN, Abdi Nor. *Call Me American: The Extraordinary True Story of a Young Somali Immigrant.* Delacorte. ISBN 9781984897114.

Gr 7 Up—A Somali immigrant recounts his experiences in harrowing detail. Born six years before the beginning of the Somali tribal civil war, Iftin grew up in the city of Mogadishu. Later, a lottery allowed him safe passage to the United States. This stirring adaptation teaches young adults about global issues and the reality behind the American dream.

GURTLER, Janet, ed. *You Too?: 25 Voices Share Their #MeToo Stories.* Inkyard. ISBN 9781335929082.

Gr 9 Up—Authors detail their experiences of sexual harassment, trauma, exploitation, and assault in this revelatory, empowering collection that emphasizes speaking up and the importance of the support and community that many have found in the #MeToo movement.



JENSEN, Kelly, ed. *Body Talk: 37 Voices Explore Our Radical Anatomy.* Algonquin. ISBN 9781616209674.

Gr 10 Up—Book Riot editor Jensen rallies a cadre of compelling voices to tackle body representation alongside vivid artwork. This anthology fills a niche for an older teen audience and oozes authenticity.

JEWELL, Tiffany. *This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How To Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work.* illus. by Aurélia Durand. Quarto/Frances Lincoln. ISBN 9780711245211.

Gr 6 Up—Jewell offers a compact but mighty 20-step approach to becoming antiracist by empowering young readers with probing questions and vocabulary. The vibrant illustrations enhance the book's purpose as a social justice primer.

REYNOLDS, Jason & Ibram X. Kendi. *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award–Winning Stamped from the Beginning.* Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316453691.

Gr 7 Up—Although billed as “NOT a history book,” this timely and accessible work examines the history of anti-Black racism and U.S. policies that have been used to justify slavery, genocide, and oppression. This reimagining of Kendi’s *Stamped from the Beginning* teaches readers to think critically about race and investigates the ideologies of significant segregationists, assimilationists, and antiracists.

SLADE, Suzanne. *Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks.* illus. by Cozbi A. Cabrera. Abrams. ISBN 9781419734113.

K-Gr 3—Poet Gwendolyn Brooks, the first Black person to win the Pulitzer Prize, was determined to realistically capture the world she saw. Her indomitable pursuit of cloudlike dreams, even as the lights are being turned off at her home again, is

remarkable. Elegant acrylic paintings and text reflect Brooks’s exquisite poetry.

SOONTORN VAT, Christina. *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys’ Soccer Team.* Candlewick. ISBN 9781536209457.

Gr 4-7—In 2018, 12 young soccer players and their coach were hiking through the caverns of Tham Luang Nang Non, the Cave of the Sleeping Lady, when the cave flooded and they were trapped inside for two weeks. People from all over the world worked hard to rescue them. This captivating narrative includes numerous photographs and firsthand accounts.

TUNNELL, Michael O. *Desert Diary: Japanese American Kids Behind Barbed Wire.* Charlesbridge. ISBN 9781580897891.

Gr 4-7—Diary entries written by Japanese American children imprisoned at Topaz Camp in Utah during World War II provide insight into a dark event in U.S. history. The entries describe everyday routines and convey the stress and confusion these children lived with every day for years.

WEATHERFORD, Carole Boston. *RESPECT: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul.* illus. by Frank Morrison. S. & S./Atheneum. ISBN 9781534452282.

PreS-Gr 3—Aretha Franklin’s childhood, rising stardom, and political activism are illuminated in this poetic tribute to the late singer. Morrison’s rich illustrations pair perfectly with Weatherford’s rhythmic text, resulting in a beautiful read-aloud.

Graphic Novels

Mahnaz Dar, Thomas Maluck, Alea Perez, Steve Thompson

Be Gay, Do Comics: Queer History, Memoir, and Satire from the Nib. ed. by various. illus. by various. IDW. ISBN 9781684057771.

Gr 8 Up—In the disturbingly recent past, YA lit’s queer stories have been cautionary tales, rife with unhappy endings; by contrast, this anthology resounds with triumph. Hilarious, poignant, and enlightening, it offers a nuanced look at queer history—one that starts far earlier than the Stonewall riots—and intimate perspectives from cartoonists grappling with identity.

BRIAN, Rachel. *Consent (for Kids!): Boundaries, Respect, and Being in Charge of You.* illus. by author. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316457736.

Gr 2-5—Engaging and emotive stick figure friends expound

on bodily autonomy in this simply drawn but unexpectedly thorough guide. Straightforward, green-tone artwork and a respectful but humorous narrative keep the content light, accessible, and age-appropriate.

CRAFT, Jerry. *Class Act.* illus. by author. HarperAlley/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780062885517.

Gr 4-8—The fast-paced, riotously funny sequel to *New Kid* follows aspiring artist Jordan and best friends Liam and Drew as they begin eighth grade at New York City’s upscale Riverdale Academy Day School. This time, the narrative prioritizes darker-skinned Drew’s perspective, juxtaposing full-color artwork with Jordan’s grayscale cartoons to illustrate issues of race, class, and plain old pubescence.

CULLUM, Jared. *Kodi.* illus. by author. Top Shelf. ISBN 9781603094672.

Gr 3-5—An outcast named Katya stumbles upon a bear, Kodi, who is caught in a trap. After Kodi is saved, he returns the favor to his lonely friend. Dreamy watercolors set the tone in this intimate, touching read about discovering friendship and belonging in unexpected places.

CURATO, Mike. *Flamer.* illus. by author. Holt. ISBN 9781627796415.

Gr 8 Up—Boy Scout camp is a double-edged sword for Aiden, a gay, biracial teen—though he finds friendship and a



crush, the racism and homophobia of his fellow campers cut deeply. Relying on raw, grayscale art, “Little Elliot” author Curato’s visceral graphic novel debut urges teens to look for slivers of hope even amid despair.

FEDER, Tyler. *Dancing at the Pity Party: A Dead Mom Graphic Memoir.* illus. by author. Dial. ISBN 9780525553021.

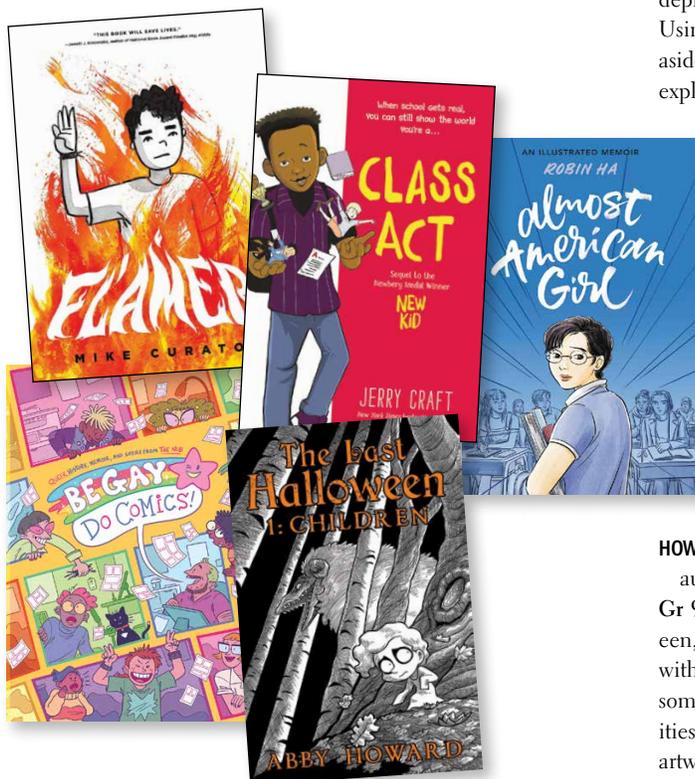
Gr 8 Up—Feder manages the near impossible—a memoir about joining “the Dead Moms Club” that’s palpable in its depiction of grief yet also exuberant, uplifting, and funny. Using a pastel-infused palette and creatively placed lists, asides, and diagrams, she lovingly remembers her mother, explores the less talked about aspects of loss, and offers a balm to anyone confronting the death of a parent.

HA, Robin. *Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir.* illus. by author. HarperCollins. ISBN 9780062685100.

Gr 7 Up—When Chuna’s mother moved them from South Korea to the American South, the teen’s life became a seemingly hopeless struggle to regain her footing. An enduring love of art led the newly named Robin to social lifelines, confidence, and a maturing appreciation of the highs and lows of American and Korean culture. An intimate, contemplative take on forging identity.

HOWARD, Abby. *The Last Halloween: Book 1; Children.* illus. by author. Iron Circus. ISBN 9781945820663.

Gr 9 Up—Left home alone during an apocalyptic Halloween, 10-year-old Mona stumbles into an unlikely alliance with some morbidly strange friends. With sarcasm, grit, and some magical assists, they fight back against the monstrosities that emerge during the violent night. Black-and-white artwork mixes visual gags and constant guffaws with thrilling turns into horror.





JAMIESON, Victoria & Omar Mohamed. *When Stars Are Scattered.* illus. by Victoria Jamieson. Dial. ISBN 9780525553915.
Gr 4-8—Based on Mohamed’s experiences, this honest yet hopeful story of Somali brothers Omar and Hassan sheds light on the life in limbo they faced in the Kenyan camps of Dadaab after being uprooted by civil war. A varied and colorful palette lightens, though never undermines, the uncertainty of the boys’ future as they long for a reunion with their mother and a chance to escape the monotony and dangers of the refugee camp.

JOHNSON, Varian. *Twins.* illus. by Shannon Wright. Scholastic/Graphix. ISBN 9781338236132.
Gr 3-7—Bold artwork accompanies authentic characters in this pitch-perfect look at sibling rivalry and adolescent self-discovery during the dreaded middle school years. Heading into sixth grade with different hopes and expectations, twins Maureen and Francine find their once close relationship threatened—but their biggest challenge arrives when both decide to run for class president.

LAYNE, Aliza. *Beetle & the Hollowbones.* illus. by author. S. & S/Atheneum. ISBN 9781534441538.
Gr 4-8—This spook-tacularly sweet, anime-inspired story follows 12-year-old goblin/witch Beetle and her best friend Blob Ghost, who uses *they/them* pronouns and cannot leave a soon-to-be-demolished mall. Life grows more complicated when Beetle’s former best friend, Kat Hollowbone, resurfaces

and feelings—yes, those feelings!—bubble over. Narratives overlap like gentle waves across a sumptuous orange and purple palette in this silly, life-affirming LGBTQIA+ romance.

LEYH, Kat. *Snapdragon.* illus. by author. First Second. ISBN 9781250171115.
Gr 5-8—Spunky and empathetic teenager Snapdragon becomes an apprentice to a local witch, Jacks, gaining responsibility and learning magic, all of which comes in handy as she faces changes, including her friend’s gender transition, bullies at school, and the discovery that Jacks was once romantically involved with Snap’s grandmother. Vibrant colors bring a lovable cast and more than a few spells to life.

SMITH, Brian “Smitty.” *Pea, Bee, & Jay: Stuck Together.* illus. by author. HarperCollins/HarperAlley. ISBN 9780062981172.
Gr 2-4—A rebellious pea rolls away from the familiarity of his farm on a dare and gets lost, finding help from a bespectacled, know-it-all honeybee and a blue jay who’s a nervous flier. Smith infuses his gentle tale of friendship with word-play, a sense of the absurd, and a smattering of the subversive.

YANG, Gene Luen. *Dragon Hoops.* illus. by author. First Second. ISBN 9781626720794.
Gr 8 Up—Yang’s memoir-cum-sports odyssey follows twin narratives: The author, mired in writer’s block, returns for his 17th year as a math teacher at Bishop O’Dowd High School while its basketball squad pursues its first state championship. This backboard-shattering slam dunk examines art, sports, politics, identity, storytelling ethics, and more with sharp, animated artwork sure to draw cheering readers out of their seats.

YANG, Gene Luen. *Superman Smashes the Klan.* illus. by Gurihiru. DC Comics. ISBN 9781779504210.
Gr 7 Up—Roberta and Tommy Lee’s family moves from Chinatown to Metropolis only to encounter threats from the Klan of the Fiery Cross. The Lees have a friend in Superman, who grapples with his own sense of belonging, but they’ll need more than superpowers to prevent their community from falling under the sway of xenophobia. Nuanced writing and fluid artwork sell the bombastic moments as well as the heartfelt ones. ■

