


# BEST BOOKS 2023







**T**ONI MORRISON WROTE, “Efforts to censor, starve, regulate, and annihilate us are clear signs that something important has taken place. The thought that leads me to contemplate with dread the erasure of other voices, of unwritten novels, poems whispered or swallowed for fear of being overheard by the wrong people, outlawed languages flourishing underground, essayists’ questions challenging authority never being posed, unstaged plays, canceled films—that thought is a nightmare.”

You are the ones doing the important work—giving children access to the life-changing books that will inspire them to create the unwritten novels, unstaged plays, and essays that challenge authority and the powers that be.

We hope that our choices help you do that important work.

THE BEST BOOKS PROCESS is a long one. It begins even as we finalize the prior year’s list, as we’ve already begun assigning books to review in advance of the new year. The editors keep track of every title we have starred, because our contenders are selected from among them. In the summer, we start the process in earnest, selecting committee members from our talented reviewers. They help us identify books we may have missed or gems that may have not been starred but deserve a second look. Then, after months of reading, discussion, and deliberation, each committee makes their selections, with 15 to 25 titles per category.

Thanks to the awesome reviews editors for their stewardship, discernment, and acumen in building their committees and leading the charge: Jasmine Amiri, Kimberly Olson Fakih, Amanda Mastrull, Florence Simmons, and Ashleigh Williams.

Kudos to our committee members, all reviewers and working librarians, for their dedication and hard work. Their insight on not only the excellence of each selection but also how these picks will be embraced by their fellow librarians and the readers they serve is invaluable: Alicia Abdul, Jenny Arch, Emily Beasley, Karen Bilton, Monisha Blair, Kristin Brynsvold, Lisa Buffi, Kristyn Dorfman, Jonah Dragan, Vi Ha, Bob Hassett, Kelly Kingrey-Edwards, Ashley Leffel, Andrea Lipinski, Kerra Mazzariello, Emmy Neal, Carla Riemer, John Scott, Myiesha Speight, Allie Stevens, and Emily Walker.

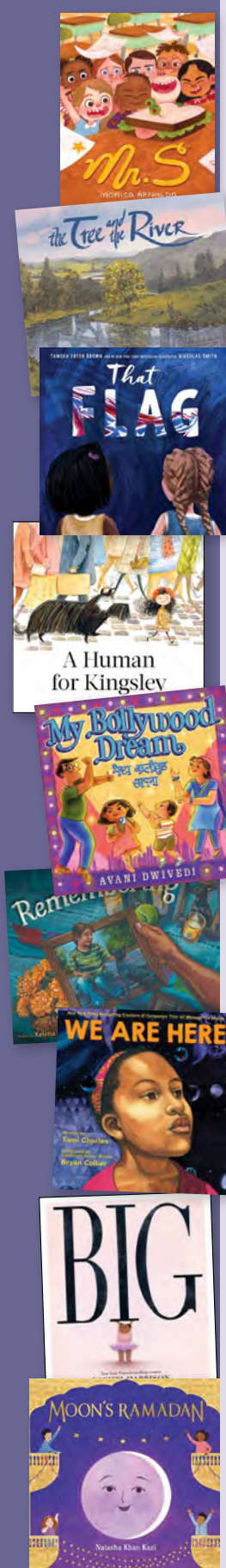
This list wouldn’t be as rich and relevant without them.

Much appreciation to the indomitable Michaela Goade for her incredible artistry and breathtaking art. Just, wow. She stands in for all the authors and illustrators represented on this list.

Last, behind the scenes, this issue and all year long, thanks to the creative team of Mark Tuchman and Josephine Marc-Anthony (with editorial assistant Andrew Giakoumis’s help), who set covers and illustrations into the text like jewels and make the entire magazine the accessible, beautiful volume it is.

**By Jasmine Amiri, Shelley M. Diaz, Kimberly Olson Fakih,  
Amanda Mastrull, Florence Simmons, and Ashleigh Williams**

**Illustration by Michaela Goade**



## PICTURE BOOKS

Committee: Kimberly Olson Fakh, Kerra Mazzariello, John Scott (co-chair), Myiesha Speight

**ARNALDO, Monica.** *Mr. S.* HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. ISBN 9780063003958.

**K-Gr 3**—Is it a mystery? A story of classroom rebellion, or even a coup? When a silent but imperious sandwich on their teacher's desk seems to substitute for the day, the students are only too willing to comply—or else. A sidesplitting take on classroom dynamics.

**BECKER, Aaron.** *The Tree and the River.* Candlewick. ISBN 9781536223293.

**PreS-Gr 2**—Nature bites back after a tree and a river cohabit in a bucolic and wordless setting as humans overbuild. A catastrophic event wipes the slate clean, while tiny acorns reboot the process by the last page. This meditation on time, climate change, and humanity presents an otherworldly command of watercolor-like paintings for children.

**BROWN, Tameka Fryer.** *That Flag.* illus. by Nikkolas Smith. HarperCollins. ISBN 9780063093447.

**K-Gr 4**—It's the Confederate flag, a point of pride for one family, but tragedy and heartbreak for the other at the center of Brown's book. How two children find the grace, good will, and courage to have a conversation is a lesson that readers will not see coming. Important in a polarized world.

**CHARLES, Tami.** *We Are Here.* illus. by Bryan Collier. Scholastic/Orchard. ISBN 9781338752045.

**K-Gr 3**—If *All Because You Matter* was an anthem to Black childhood, this companion piece is a march of ancestral pride, highlighting how Black history is one with world history, and that the long, steady train of accomplishment continues. Luminous paintings, glorious writing.

**DWIVEDI, Avani.** *My Bollywood Dream.* Candlewick. ISBN 9781536228427.

**PreS-Gr 3**—Nothing about this book should have worked, yet just as Bollywood musicals come together to celebrate spectacle and love, so does Dwivedi's story. Her aspirations to direct the tale of her life have begun, in colorful pages in and out of the cinema, cast with everyone she encounters in her daily life.

**EVANS, Gabriel.** *A Human for Kingsley.* Little Hare. ISBN 9781760506919.

**PreS-K**—Kingsley, a large hairy dog, has decided to "own" a human and goes out in search of the right one. He becomes intrigued by a girl in a red beret who needs him just as much as he needs her. A funny and unique tale.

**GONZÁLEZ, Xelena.** *Remembering.* illus. by Adriana M. Garcia. S. & S. ISBN 9781534499638.

**PreS-Gr 3**—When a family's dog dies, the family gathers stories, photos, and the dog's favorite things to create an ofrenda for Día de Muertos. A gorgeously illustrated book that acts as both a thank-you and a celebration for the animal friends that have passed on.

**GORMAN, Amanda.** *Something, Someday.* illus. by Christian Robinson. Viking. ISBN 9780593203255.

**PreS-Gr 3**—A child notices trash piles and resolves to do something about them to help beautify the community. With delightful collage illustrations, this book reminds readers that everyone has the power to come together and make a change.

**GRAY, Gary R., Jr.** *I'm From.* illus. by Oge Mora. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780063089969.

**K-Gr 2**—A Black boy asked the question "Where are you from?" answers in the best way possible by highlighting his home and culture, as well as all the things that make him who he is. Heartfelt text and vibrant illustrations work together in this beautiful story about embracing one's identity.

**HARRISON, Vashti.** *Big.* Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316353229.

**PreS-Gr 2**—Being called a "big girl" was once a compliment, but starts to feel less so when a girl gets mocked for her size. After she tells people that their words hurt her, she says proudly that she likes herself the way she is. A lovely proclamation of self-love and speaking up for yourself.

**KAZI, Natasha Khan.** *Moon's Ramadan.* HarperCollins/Versify. ISBN 9780358694090.

**PreS-Gr 3**—The Moon travels around the globe from Egypt to New Zealand showing how



different countries observe Ramadan and Eid. An insightful look at the significant traditions and practices.

**LEE, Sophia N.** *Lolo's Sari-Sari Store*. illus. by Christine Almeda. S. & S./Atheneum. ISBN 9781534494473.

**Gr 1-4**—A Filipina girl fondly remembers summers spent helping her grandfather run his corner sari-sari store. The store provides more than nostalgia, however; when the girl moves to the United States, these memories help her find ways to connect with her new community. Illustrations brim with love and connection.

**LEUNG, Julie.** *The Truth About Dragons*. illus. by Hanna Cha. Holt. ISBN 9781250820587.

**Gr 1-2**—Gorgeous illustrations full of detail and movement present the adventure of a child learning about dragons from his diverse family background incorporating Eastern and Western dragon folklore. A wonderful embrace of both traditions in one child's identity.



**LINDSTROM, Carole.** *My Powerful Hair*. illus. by Steph Littlebird. Abrams. ISBN 9781419759437.

**K-Gr 4**—Hair carries a powerful legacy and connection in Native/Indigenous cultures. Lindstrom's sparse, poetic language ("Our ancestors say: Our hair is our memories. Our source of strength") and Littlebird's bright palette capture both serenity and hope.

**MEHRA, Namita Moolani.** *The Light Within You*. illus. by Kamala Nair. Two Lions. ISBN 9781542039123.

**PreS-Gr 3**—A Diwali story that also tackles the hardship faced when a child has to move to another country. The sparkle of light on the pages brings an energy and a sense of wonder. A positive message about the light within that transcends the holiday.



**MEZA, Erika.** *To the Other Side*. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. ISBN 9780063073166.

**Gr 2-4**—A splendidly rendered migrant story that is awash in contrasts: light and dark, white space and ghostly shadows, bright colors and stark fences, peril and hope. Siblings play what begins as a game with three overarching rules:

"Avoid the monsters. Don't get caught. And keep moving." Relatable and child-centered.

**NORMAN, Lissette.** *Plátanos Go with Everything*. illus. by Sara Palacios. HarperCollins. ISBN 9780063247789.

**Gr 2-4**—Yesenia is a small girl who narrates everything plátanos stand for in her family from the Dominican Republic. Of course, Norman and Palacios ensure that readers are desperately hungry when they close this book, but they also elevate a comfort food to a cultural icon, a path to memory, and a welcome home.

**NIEBUHR-SIEBERT, Sandra.** *Mina Belongs Here*. illus. by Lars Baus. Floris. ISBN 9781782508113.

**PreS-Gr 2**—A young immigrant's experience starting at a new school in a new language is captured in expressive illustrations that use a slow introduction of color to mimic how Mina adapts to her new life. As she grows more comfortable, her world becomes more vibrant and less isolated.

**QUANG, Phùng Nguyễn.** *My Grandfather's Song*. illus. by Huynh Kim Liên. Random. ISBN 9780593488614.

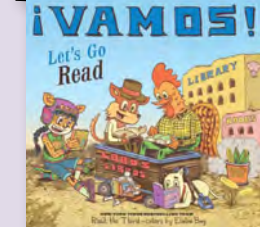
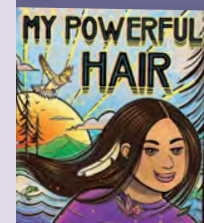
**K-Gr 3**—A unique book about migration sprinkled with Vietnamese mythology as seen through the eyes of a little boy and his grandfather as their special relationship unfolds. Breathtaking illustrations steal the show as the significance of animals, family, and nature are captured on each page.

**RAÚL the Third.** *¡Vamos! Let's Go Read*. HarperCollins/Versify. ISBN 9780358539360.

**Gr 1-4**—A book festival celebration presented in a graphic novel style as English and Spanish words are intertwined throughout. This story is a great representation of all the wonderful services a public library can offer, from a map room and books on tape to video games and everything in between.

**REYNOLDS, Jason.** *There Was a Party For Langston*. illus. by Jerome Pumphrey & Jarrett Pumphrey. Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy. ISBN 9781534439443.

**K-Gr 2**—This brilliant story shares the positive impact Langston Hughes had on so many—big and small—through music, dance, and, of course, words. The Pumphreys strike again as they expertly weave text through their illustrations like streams of poetry in this incredibly eye-catching picture book.





**SCOTT, Jordan.** *My Baba's Garden.* illus. by Sydney Smith. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823450831.

**K-Gr 2**—A little boy visits his Polish grandmother, Baba, every morning, and although there is a language barrier, they communicate beautifully through the simple acts of sharing food, humming, and gardening. Iridescent art amplifies a heartwarming intergenerational gem.

**TAKAHASHI, J.P.** *Tokyo Night Parade.* illus. by Minako Tomigahara. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. ISBN 9780063224964.

**K-Gr 3**—Little Eka anxiously awaits the the Night Parade of One Hundred Demons, her favorite celebration in her native Japan. Tomigahara's stunning illustrations capture the whimsical night and what makes a good and bad spirit. A truly fascinating cultural experience for readers.

**WEISSMAN, Elissa Brent.** *Hanukkah Upside Down.* illus. by Omer Hoffmann. Abrams. ISBN 9781419762963.

**K-Gr 2**—Cousins Nora and Noah live in opposite parts of the world. As Hanukkah approaches, the two begin a friendly battle over who will celebrate it best. This glowing book shows family connections across the globe and remains true to the traditions of the Jewish holiday.

**WILKINS, Ebony Joy.** *Zora, the Story Keeper.* illus. by Dare Coulter. Penguin/Kokila. ISBN 9781984816917.

**K-Gr 3**—Zora's love for Aunt Bea's storytelling runs deep in this beautifully crafted picture book about family and keeping memories alive between different generations. Warm but heartbreaking, Coulter's bold illustration technique complements Wilkins's graceful ability to tackle the subject of death through her delicate words.

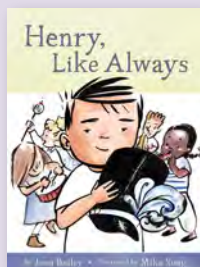
## TRANSITIONAL BOOKS

Committee: Shelley M. Diaz, Florence Simmons, Ashleigh Williams



**BAILEY, Jenn.** *Henry, Like Always.* illus. by Mika Song. Chronicle. ISBN 9781797213897.

**Gr 1-4**—Bailey and Song have created a goes-his-own-way hero in Henry, resistant to conventional paths to learning and participating, possibly neurodivergent, and perfectly creative in his own right. Classroom scenes and spare writing give emerging readers a glimpse of inclusion that truly makes room for everyone.



**CORDELL, Matthew.** *Evergreen.* Feiwel & Friends. ISBN 9781250317179.

**K-Gr 2**—In a remarkable chapter book that teaches problem-solving skills, a kind squirrel faces her fears. Cordell's art is detailed, emotional, and action-packed; the heroine is brave; and the storytelling is outstanding. Delightful.

**DAVID, Aarihonni.** *Who Will Win?* Holiday House. ISBN 9780823449484.

**PreS-Gr 1**—A story based on a Native American tale about a bear and a turtle racing across a stretch of ice. Written and illustrated by David

(Mohawk), this should find a place in all collections, especially given the lack of Indigenous voices and representation in early readers.

**FANG, Vicky.** *A Pie for Us!: An Acorn Book.* illus. by Luisa Leal. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338865585.

**PreS-Gr 1**—A dog and cat explore their world with laugh-out-loud results. Text is simple, following a pattern; beginning readers will confidently read high-frequency words and learn new vocabulary. Cartoon illustrations vibrantly showcase the story. This engaging early reader stands out for all the right reasons.

**FARUQI, Saadia.** *Ali the Great and the Market Mishap.* illus. by Debby Rahmalia. Capstone/Picture Window. ISBN 9781484681138.

**Gr 1-3**—This delightful early chapter book features Pakistani American second grader Ali Tahir and his family. Ali, his Dada, and little brother head to the market, where mishaps ensue.

The sweet family dynamic, pitch-perfect text, and appealing illustrations will resonate with those not yet ready for longer chapter books.

**GREENWALD, Tommy & Charlie Greenwald.** *The Rescues Finding Home.* illus. by Shiho Pate.



Red Comet. ISBN 9781636550763.

**K-Gr 2**—This heartwarming transitional book follows Moose, who has one eye, and Bear, who has three legs, two shelter dogs who befriend each other while waiting for a new home. With cozy illustrations, this tale will charm readers and show them all about acceptance and seeing differences as strengths.

**HALE, Shannon & Dean Hale.** *The Princess in Black and the Prince in Pink.* illus. by Leuyen Pham. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536209785.

**Gr 2-4**—Princess Magnolia/The Princess in Black is back, and this time she's aided by the mysterious Prince in Pink/Prince Valerian in saving their party from a rampant giant emu. As ever, the series' signature themes of identity, friendship, and teamwork ring true. Candy-colored art makes this irresistible to burgeoning readers.

**LERNER, Jarrett.** *Nat the Cat Takes a Bath.* S. & S./Spotlight. ISBN 9781665918930.

**K-Gr 2**—Nat the Cat doesn't like baths and will do whatever it takes to delay them. Straightforward, repetitive phrases enhance confidence as children begin reading on their own. This funny, heartwarming, accessible book will encourage and entertain fledgling readers as they improve their independent reading skills.

**LAROCHELLE, David.** *See the Ghost: Three Stories About Things You Cannot See.* illus. by Mike Wohnoutka. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536219821.

**PreS-Gr 3**—With spare text, ample white space, speech bubbles, and simple illustrations that put emphasis on the words, these three humorous stories about a ghost, the wind, and a fairy are reminiscent of Mo Willems's "Elephant and Piggie" titles. This collection also works as a fun read-aloud.

**MEDINA, Juana.** *Elena Rides.* Candlewick. ISBN 9781536216356.

**PreS-Gr 1**—Elena the elephant is riding a bike, but her confidence falters after some falls. Still, she won't give up. Elena's persistence offers an important message in spare, engaging prose to anyone attempting to master a new skill—including learning to read.

**MORA, Julissa.** *Baking with Mi Abuelita.* Random. ISBN 9780593651971.

**Gr 1-3**—For Papi's birthday, a girl is excited to help Abuelita make his favorite tres leches cake. It's fun to spend time with family, continuing

traditions. The English narrative contains Spanish words. A fabulous example of Rudine Sims Bishop's mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors metaphor, this sweet work has bright art and digestible text.

**PLATT, Christine.** *Frankie and Friends: Breaking News.* illus. by Alea Marley. Candlewick/Walker. ISBN 9781536222098.

**Gr 1-5**—Frankie is a young reporter inspired by her journalist mom. While her mother is away chasing a story, Frankie makes her own news crew and reconnects with her sister. This adorable series debut has STEM elements and a wonderful depiction of family relationships. Fun illustrations add to its charm.

**QUIGLEY, Dawn.** *Jo Jo Makoons: Snow Day.* illus. by Tara Audibert. HarperCollins/Heartdrum. ISBN 9780063015432.

**K-Gr 3**—Lovable, guileless Jo Jo returns in this snow day adventure that centers kindness and community. Jo Jo and friends create winter Olympics on her Ojibwe reservation. This chapter book includes engaging material about Ojibwe culture, delightful illustrations, and a spunky heroine kids will embrace.

**RANSOM, Candice.** *Graduation Day!* illus. by Ashley Evans. Random. ISBN 9780593643655.

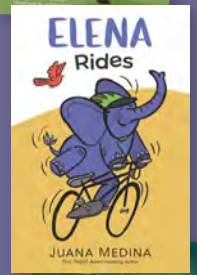
**PreS-K**—A young brown boy attends his last day of kindergarten—graduation day. Kids beginning to read will feel the excitement in this rhyming, easy-to-read book that features a diverse classroom. Whether at home or the library, this tale will resonate with emerging readers.

**RUBINSTEIN, Elana.** *The Royal Recipe: A Purim Story.* illus. by Jennifer Naalchigar. Apples & Honey. ISBN 9781681156071.

**Gr 3-6**—Saralee, a 10-year-old with a "super-nose," uses her gift to save her family from biblical villain Haman, whom she has accidentally conjured up from the ancient past. The theme of Purim will enhance multicultural literature collections of early reader chapter books.

**TRINH, Linda.** *The Mystery of the Painted Fan.* illus. by Clayton Nguyen. Annick. ISBN 9781773217710.

**Gr 1-4**—Jacob wants to have a pink hockey helmet, join the girls' fan dance, and paint his nails, but he is teased and discouraged. With family support and Grandma's fan, Jay is embraced for who he is. This book deftly depicts resisting gender norms and the richness of Vietnamese culture.



## MIDDLE GRADE

Committee: Emily Beasley, Monisha Blair, Kristin Brynsvold, Kristyn Dorfman, Ashleigh Williams

**AHN, Flora.** *A Spoonful of Time*. Quirk. ISBN 9781683693185.

**Gr 4-7**—Maya discovers her Hahnmuee, who has dementia, can use food to travel through memories. Maya uses this gift to learn more about her past and her Korean heritage but uncovers many secrets and realizes nothing is what she knew. A charming story filled with recipes.

**ALKAFF, Hanna.** *Hamra and the Jungle of Memories*. HarperCollins. ISBN 9780063207950.

**Gr 4-8**—Hamra has a lot of anger, from the way the pandemic has affected her family to her sadness over her grandmother's illness. When she foolishly takes from the jungle, a weretiger begins haunting her dreams. This beautiful, poignant fantasy novel hits all the right notes.

**BIRD, James.** *No Place Like Home*. Feiwel & Friends. ISBN 9781250877628.

**Gr 4 Up**—Ojibwe tween Opin lives out of his car with his mother and older brother, passing through towns in hopes of escaping Child Protective Services. When Opin finds a stray dog, he believes stability is within reach, even as things get harder. A moving exploration of keeping hope and culture alive amid incredible challenges.

**BOW, Erin.** *Simon Sort of Says*. Disney-Hyperion. ISBN 9781368082853.

**Gr 5 Up**—Simon and his family move to a small town after a horrific tragedy, but things like PTSD and the press refuse to be made part of the past. This realistic fiction title is equal parts hilarious and heartfelt, with strong, supportive characters and themes of friendship and trauma.

**BRADEN, Ann.** *Opinions and Opossums*. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. ISBN 9781984816092.

**Gr 3-7**—Agnes is required to go through confirmation with her church, but what if she doesn't know what she believes? This short but powerful novel compares Agnes's growing knowledge of opossums with her ability to think for herself. A quick but deep dive into critical thinking and helping others do the same.

**BROWN, Waka T.** *The Very Unfortunate Wish of Melony Yoshimura*. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780063230767.

**Gr 4-7**—Melony Yoshimura feels stifled by her

overprotective parents. When an evil Amanjaku promises to make Melony's wishes come true, she's thrilled, until the Amanjaku wants more and more. A fresh take on a Japanese folktale that's just the right amount of creepy.

**CURRIE, Lindsay.** *It Found Us*. Sourcebooks. ISBN 9781728259499.

**Gr 4-8**—When a teen goes missing in the cemetery, Hazel uncovers the cemetery's connection to a horrific accident. Can she put its ghosts to rest and save the missing boy? Based on real-life events, this intriguing horror story has enough scares to satisfy without being terrifying.

**DAIRMAN, Tara.** *The Girl from Earth's End*.

Candlewick. ISBN 9781536224801.

**Gr 4-7**—Henna lives with her papas on Earth's End, where she spends her days gardening and learning. When Papa Niall gets sick, Henna must do the unthinkable: leave Earth's End to find the only cure, an extinct plant. A moving story about love, grief, and hope.

**DAY, Christine.** *We Still Belong*. HarperCollins/Heartdrum. ISBN 978006 3064560.

**Gr 4-8**—It is Indigenous People's Day, and Wesley has written a poem to mark the occasion. This important story sheds light on contemporary Native American life and discusses discrimination and Wesley's struggles with family, social, and identity issues as an Indigenous student in Washington state.

**ELIOPULOS, Andrew.** *Will on the Inside*. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780063228702.

**Gr 5 Up**—Will excels at soccer, until he is diagnosed with Crohn's disease and must take a break. He learns he loves video games, but what will his friends think of him connecting with Griffin? Friendships, shifting beliefs, sexual identity, and chronic illness are deftly explored in this coming-of-age novel.

**EVERETT, Sarah.** *The Probability of Everything*. HarperCollins/Clarion. ISBN 9780063256552.

**Gr 3-7**—Kemi loves probability, but when she learns an asteroid has an 84.7 percent chance of crashing into Earth in four days, she is determined to create a family time capsule. With a heartrending surprise twist, Everett masterfully, and realistically, explores grief.



**GOW, Robin.** *Dear Mothman*. Abrams/Amulet. ISBN 9781419764400.

**Gr 5 Up**—After losing his best friend, Noah tries to find and befriend the local cryptid, Mothman. In the process, he finds himself a group of supportive new friends. This beautiful look at gender identity, neurodiversity, strength, and friendship will resonate with readers young and old.

**MARSH, Katherine.** *The Lost Year: A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine*. Roaring Brook. ISBN 9781250313607.

**Gr 5 Up**—Because of COVID-19, Matthew is isolated with his mother and great-grandmother. He uncovers a riveting story of his great-grandmother's past, a family secret hidden since the great Ukrainian famine in the 1930s. This historical fiction mystery introduces readers to a forgotten piece of history while showing multi-generational relationships at their finest.

**MAUNAKEA, Malia.** *Lei and the Fire Goddess*. Penguin Workshop. ISBN 9780593522035.

**Gr 4-7**—Anna Leilani spends summers in Hawaii with her tūtū learning her family's mo'olelo—stories. She really wants to act touristy to impress her Colorado friends, but accidentally enrages the Fire Goddess and now must save her best friend while learning to be true to herself.

**MENDEZ, Jasminne.** *Aniana del Mar Jumps In*. Dial. ISBN 9780593531815.

**Gr 4-8**—Swimming is everything to Dominican American Aniana, but she must hide it from Mami, whose trauma around the ocean runs deep. When a juvenile arthritis diagnosis reveals her secret and hinders swimming, Ani rebuilds herself. This novel in verse thoughtfully tackles family dynamics, chronic disability, and coming of age.

**MITCHELL, Jane.** *Run for Your Life*. Little Island. ISBN 9781912417858.

**Gr 4 Up**—Azari is an asylum seeker in Ireland who tries to find a balance among the instability of her new home, making friends, xenophobic school-mates, and freedom in her ability to run for pleasure. This is a compassionate and unique look at the Direct Provision system in Ireland.

**PENNYPACKER, Sara.** *Leeva at Last*. illus. by Matthew Cordell. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780063114425.

**Gr 4-7**—Leeva's mother says people are for fame;

her father says they're for money. But surely there's more, thinks Leeva, who braves leaving her yard to discover the wonders of the world past the hedge. This Roald Dahl—esque novel is laugh-out-loud funny and deeply heartfelt.

**POLONSKY, Ami.** *World Made of Glass*. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316462044.

**Gr 5 Up**—Iris wants change when her father dies of AIDS, so she joins his partner at one of the ACT UP protests demanding help for AIDS victims. This heartrending novel showcases the fear, ignorance, prejudice, and anger surrounding the AIDS crisis in the 1980s.

**JOHNSON, Leah.** *Ellie Engle Saves Herself*. Disney-Hyperion. ISBN 9781368085557.

**Gr 4-8**—Ellie has always been fine getting by as an unremarkable girl. Then a magical earthquake imbues her with powers, and she finds herself thrust into the strangest of spotlights. This sweet novel uses a superpower plot to explore eminently relatable coming-of-age topics with humor and heart.

**KUYATT, Meg Eden.** *Good Different*. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338816105.

**Gr 5 Up**—Selah's rules for being normal have always protected her, but when things become too much and she lashes out, she has to confront her differences. This novel in verse opens a door into the experience of living with autism, both the challenges and the joys.

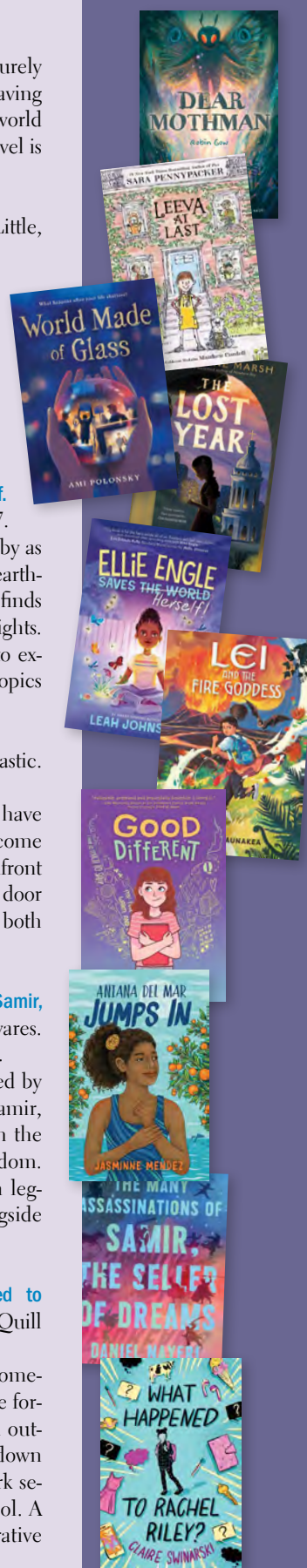
**NAYERI, Daniel.** *The Many Assassinations of Samir, the Seller of Dreams*. illus. by Daniel Miyares. Levine Querido. ISBN 9781646143030.

**Gr 4 Up**—Monkey escapes being murdered by monks only to find himself indebted to Samir, the Seller of Dreams, and traveling down the 11th-century Silk Road trying to find freedom.

This masterly tale is packed with legends, high jinks, and humor alongside deep ponderings on life and love.

**SWINARSKI, Claire.** *What Happened to Rachel Riley?* HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780063213098.

**Gr 5 Up**—New girl Anna knows something has happened to Rachel, the formerly popular girl who is now an outcast. This burning question leads Anna down a road of deep research and opens up dark secrets about sexual harassment at her school. A compelling, age-appropriate #MeToo narrative for tweens.







**THOMAS, Angie.** *Nic Blake and the Remarkables: The Manifestor Prophecy.* HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780063225138.

**Gr 4 Up**—Nic’s father has always been reluctant to teach her how to use her Gift. But when some shocking truths come to light, Nic must hunt down a mysterious, powerful magical object to clear her father’s name. This fresh fantasy is impossible to put down.

**THOMSON, Pari.** *Greenwild: The World Behind the Door.* Farrar. ISBN 9780374391379.



**Gr 5 Up**—When world-traveling Daisy’s mother goes missing, it is up to Daisy to save her. Daisy discovers a magical world filled with “botanists” (plant magicians), and realizes there is so much more to herself than she ever imagined. A fast-

paced, worldbuilding fantasy with lush settings and strong conservation messages.

**YANG, Kelly.** *Finally Seen.* S. & S. ISBN 9781534488335.

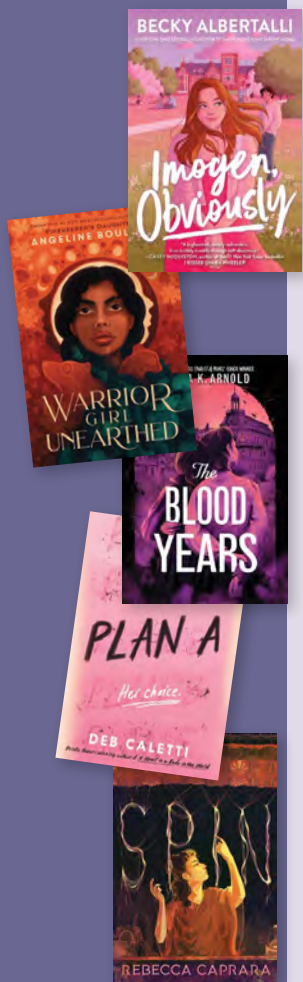
**Gr 4-8**—When Lina’s family immigrated to the United States from China, Lina stayed behind with her grandmother. Now it’s Lina’s turn to join her family, but she’s shocked to discover how hard her new life is. This novel deftly deals with big, timely topics.

**YOUNG, Suzanne.** *What Stays Buried.* HarperCollins. ISBN 9780063257122.

**Gr 5-8**—Calista can speak to ghosts, but a family curse means she loses the ability on her 13th birthday. When a vengeful spirit begins abducting children, Calista must defeat it to save her sister and break the curse. An eerie and emotional story with vivid scares and heartfelt depictions of grief.

## YA

Committee: Ashley Leffel, Amanda Mastrull, Emmy Neal, Allie Stevens, Emily Walker



**ALBERTALLI, Becky.** *Imogen, Obviously.* HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780063045873.

**Gr 9 Up**—When Imogen spends spring break visiting her best friend Lili at college, a white lie leads Imogen to restlessly question new romantic feelings. Filled with character dynamics that reel readers in, Imogen’s journey is a highly relatable one of introspection, embracing truth, and letting go.

**ARNOLD, Elana K.** *The Blood Years.* HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780062990853.

**Gr 9 Up**—Jewish teen Rieke’s happy life in Romania changes in horrible, unimaginable ways during the Holocaust in this compelling novel based on Arnold’s grandmother’s experiences. It’s a heartbreaking, exquisitely written exploration of the bonds of sisterhood, love, and morality amid persecution, illness, and hunger.

**BAKER, Kylie Lee.** *The Scarlet Alchemist.* Inkycard. ISBN 9781335458018.



**Gr 9 Up**—In an alternate Tang dynasty China, aspiring royal alchemist Zilan takes the imperial exams—and secretly raises the dead. Pulled into court politics, she connects with the Crown Prince as the Empress seizes power. An inventive, competition-

based plot and exceptional worldbuilding will propel readers.

**BOULLEY, Angeline.** *Warrior Girl Unearthed.* Holt. ISBN 9781250766588.

**Gr 9 Up**—Set 10 years after *Firekeeper’s Daughter*, this novel follows Perry Firekeeper-Birch during a summer internship, where she discovers a local college is keeping remains and artifacts that belong to her tribe—and decides what she’ll do to get them back. It’s important, thought-provoking, and captivating.

**CALETTI, Deb.** *Plan A.* Random/Labyrinth Road. ISBN 9780593485545.

**Gr 9 Up**—A classmate’s unwanted advances lead 16-year-old Ivy on a cross-country road trip to get an abortion. Caletti’s examination of the stigma surrounding abortion, small-town conservative attitudes, and support from sometimes unlikely places make Ivy’s journey a must-read for all young adult readers.

**CAPRARA, Rebecca.** *Spin.* S. & S./Atheneum. ISBN 9781665906197.

**Gr 8 Up**—This novel in verse retells the Greek myth of Arachne from her perspective as she becomes an excellent weaver, develops a crush on a neighborhood girl, and sparks the ire of Athena. With excellent pacing and an enchanting story, it’s sure to engage readers.

**COLE, Olivia A.** *Dear Medusa*. Random/Labyrinth Road. ISBN 9780593485736.

**Gr 10 Up**—It's been nearly a year since Alicia was first assaulted by her teacher when a note appears in her locker hinting that there may be another victim. This is a brutally beautiful survival story that explores moving forward after horrific tragedy and judgment befalls a young teen.

**EDDINGS, Mazey.** *Tilly in Technicolor*. Wednesday Bks. ISBN 9781250847065.

**Gr 9 Up**—Two neurodiverse teens find love together over the course of a summer internship in Europe. Tilly's spunk, quirky attitude, and search for understanding in this opposites-attract rom-com make this a perfect match for fans of happily-ever-afters and realistic fiction.

**EDGMON, H.E.** *Godly Heathens*. Wednesday Bks. ISBN 9781250853615.

**Gr 9 Up**—Transmasc Gem moved to small-town Georgia—closer to their Seminole roots—but fears they're losing their mind, until the new girl informs them they're both reincarnated gods—and soulmates. Intersectionally diverse with strong Native representation, the inventive mythos features deep, vivid characters and an action-packed plot.

**FORREST, Claire.** *Where You See Yourself*. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338813838.

**Gr 9 Up**—Determined to enjoy all her senior year has to offer, Effie embraces moving out of her comfort zone and speaking up. A fantastic contemporary tale filled with authentic moments about the daily life of a wheelchair user who is finding her voice while navigating an ableist world.

**HATZOPOULOU, Kika.** *Threads That Bind*. Penguin/Razorbill. ISBN 9780593528716.

**Gr 9 Up**—In a noir dystopian world where gods' descendants have their powers, Io uses her abilities as a private investigator, tracking people's Threads and connections, when she accidentally witnesses a murder. A searing slow-burn romance, complex characters, and propulsive plot make for a vivid page-turner.

**IBÁÑEZ, Isabel.** *What the River Knows*. Wednesday Bks. ISBN 9781250803375.

**Gr 8 Up**—When her parents disappear, Inez

abandons her future as a high-society socialite in Argentina to find answers in Egypt and discovers their dangerous expedition to Cleopatra's Tomb. Magic and an excellent rivals-to-lovers romance add layers to the tightly woven plot and intricate historical worldbuilding.

**LA SALA, Ryan.** *Beholder*. Scholastic/PUSH. ISBN 9781338745344.

**Gr 9 Up**—As Athan races through an absolutely unhinged mystery on the hunt for his missing Yia-yia, the spirit that has always followed him through the mirrors is catching up. La Sala invites readers to examine the space between self and other, reality and its distorted reflection.

**LEVITHAN, David.** *Ryan and Avery*. Knopf. ISBN 9780399553097.

**Gr 7 Up**—Over the course of 10 dates, Ryan and Avery fall in love. Fans of Levithan's *Two Boys Kissing* will recognize Ryan and Avery and rejoice in learning more about their story. A swoonworthy romance that will have readers reminiscing on their first love.

**MCBRIDE, Amber.** *We Are All So Good at Smiling*. Feiwel & Friends. ISBN 9781250780386.

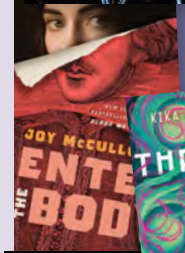
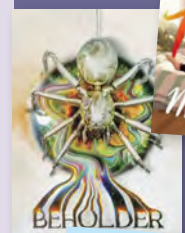
**Gr 9 Up**—When Whimsy and Faery meet during in-patient treatment for clinical depression, they recognize the magic within each other but are unsure what their connection may be. Beautifully written verse and a fairy-tale metaphor give readers a better understanding of the struggles of living with clinical depression.

**MCCULLOUGH, Joy.** *Enter the Body*. Dutton. ISBN 9780593406755.

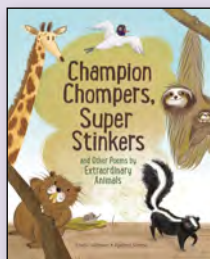
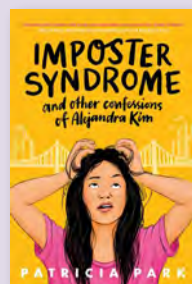
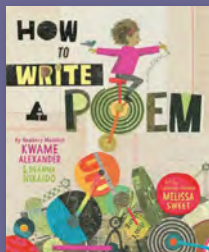
**Gr 7 Up**—Under a stage in a theater somewhere, some of Shakespeare's beloved and betrayed female characters retell their own stories, taking agency over the things they wish could've happened differently. McCullough reinvigorates the canon and provides new entry points for modern students with compelling and deeply thinking characters.

**METOU, Meriam.** *A Guide to the Dark*. Holt. ISBN 9781250863218.

**Gr 8 Up**—Mira experiences visions of her late brother when she and best friend Layla check into a roadside motel after a derailed road trip; they may be connected to the numerous deaths that have occurred in the room. Slow-burn sapphic sweetness and photographs add sparkle to a haunting read.







**OSHIRO, Mark.** *Into the Light*. Tor Teen. ISBN 9781250812254.

**Gr 9 Up**—Manny, a queer teen cast out of his devout religious family, is determined to reunite with his younger sister, who is still living with their adoptive parents. Oshiro uses a nonlinear time line to tell a compelling story that explores trauma, abuse, and white saviorism.

**OWEN, Margaret.** *Painted Devils*. Holt. ISBN 9781250831163.

**Gr 9 Up**—Vanja's been a hero and a villain, but when her newest con accidentally wakes a sleeping goddess, she'll have to work with new and old friends to keep from becoming a martyr. Thoughtful representation of asexuality and consent is woven in as Vanja and Eimeric's romance evolves.

**PARK, Patricia.** *Imposter Syndrome and Other Confessions of Alejandra Kim*. Crown. ISBN 9780593563373.

**Gr 8 Up**—Being Korean Argentinian, Alejandra Kim has always felt at odds with her peers, and fitting in becomes more of a hurdle when microaggressions at school pull Alejandra into the spotlight. An excellent teen journey exploring stereotypes, friendship, family dynamics, and what it means to belong.

**SHUKAIRY, Ream.** *The Next New Syrian Girl*. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316432634.

**Gr 9 Up**—Khadija struggles to be the model daughter, but all that changes when Syrian refugees Leene and her mother come to live with Khadija's family. Told in alternating viewpoints, with an unforgettable connection between two young women and the friendship that blooms through challenges, loss, and hope.

**TISON, Ari.** *Saints of the Household*. Farrar. ISBN 9780374389499.

**Gr 8 Up**—Tison's debut explores the lives of two Bribri American brothers living with PTSD from their father's abuse; after they commit an act of violence, each deals with the fallout in different ways. Told via the teens' dual perspectives, partially in verse, this novel is heartrending and compelling.

**WELLINGTON, Joelle.** *Their Vicious Games*. S. & S. ISBN 9781665922425.

**Gr 10 Up**—Adina loses her Ivy League acceptance due to fighting, but competing in the Finish is a way to regain her future. A rich family with sinister secrets, competitors willing to kill, and a competition that is not what it seems make this a must-read thriller.

**WHITE, Andrew Joseph.** *The Spirit Bares Its Teeth*. Peachtree Teen. ISBN 9781682636114.

**Gr 9 Up**—Resistance to life as a wife and mother lands Silas a diagnosis of Veil sickness and conscription to a torturous conversion facility masquerading as a boarding school. Horrific fictional violence parallels the real psychological violence of forced conformity, but Silas finds redemption in community.

**ZIMMERMANN, Laura.** *Just Do This One Thing for Me*. Dutton. ISBN 9780593530337.

**Gr 8 Up**—Brimming with humor and absurdity, Zimmermann's latest follows two sisters desperate to keep what remains of their family intact after their mother tries to abandon them for a Justin Timberlake concert and instead ends up dead in the shed. Witty, unexpectedly emotionally powerful, and unforgettable.

## POETRY

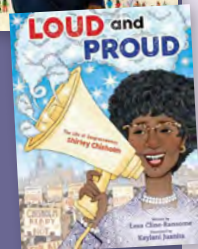
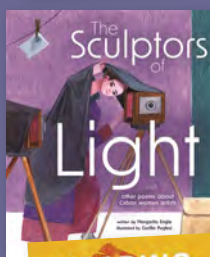
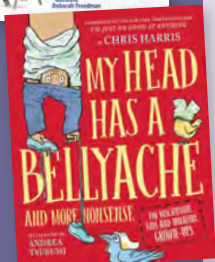
Committee: Florence Simmons

**ALEXANDER, Kwame & Deanna Nikaido.** *How to Write a Poem*. illus. by Melissa Sweet. Harper-Collins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780063060906.

**Gr 3 Up**—In this title written as a step-by-step guide, the authors teach the art of poetry by tasking students with exploring nature, questions, and ideas in unique ways. Both a teaching tool for writing poetry as well as an ode to poetry itself.

**ASHMAN, Linda.** *Champion Chompers, Super Stinkers and Other Poems by Extraordinary Animals*. illus. by Aparna Varna. Kids Can. ISBN 9781525303500.

**Gr 3-5**—Poetry meets nonfiction in this skillfully designed and fun-to-read compendium. The intriguing theme of "astounding feats and features" of animals and the nice flow of text invite reading. This multifaceted package belongs on science shelves.



**DOTLICH, Rebecca Kai & George Heard.** *Welcome to the Wonder House.* illus. by Deborah Freedman. Astra/Wordsong. ISBN 9781635927627.

**Gr 4-6**—This collection of 29 brief poems and numerous mixed-media illustrations is arranged into 12 “rooms,” topics that range from curiosity and wishes to science, nature, and ordinary things. Crisp and concise, with internal rhymes and alliteration, these poems beg to be shared and read aloud.

**ENGLE, Margarita.** *The Sculptors of Light: Poems About Cuban Women Artists.* illus. by Cecilia Puglesi. Reycraft. ISBN 9781478879602.

**Gr 3-5**—Eleven poems of varying forms about Cuban women artists showcase the achievements of their subjects across a variety of disciplines, including handcraft, photography, sculpture, and more. A thoughtful, lovely collection for anyone who has an interest in the breadth of women’s artistic achievements.

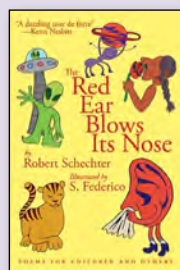
**HARJO, Joy.** *Remember.* illus. by Michaela Goade. Random House Studio. ISBN 9780593484845.

**PreS-Gr 3**—U.S. Poet Laureate Harjo (Mvskoke Nation) urges readers to remember they are of the earth, indebted to and intertwined with the natural world. Goade’s (Tlingit) watercolor illustrations incorporate icons of Northwest Coast art. This paean to nature and Indigenous culture belongs in every school and public library.

**HARRIS, Chris.** *My Head Has a Bellyache: And More Nonsense for Mischievous Kids and Immature Grown-Ups.* illus. by Andrea Tsurumi. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316592598.

**Gr 2-6**—This poetry collection includes words of wisdom, absurdist digressions, and laughs galore. In the tradition of Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky, poems cleverly tackle themes both serious and silly, and are paired with cartoonish black-and-green digital illustrations. An appealingly ridiculous book, recommended for poetry and humor fans.

**SCHECHTER, Robert.** *The Red Ear Blows Its Nose: Poems for Children and Others.* illus. by S. Federico. Word Galaxy. ISBN 9781773491349.



**Gr 1-5**—This volume of playful poetry includes entries that twist up language, sensory poems about the world and our bodies, and several recurring themes. Monochromatic pen-and-ink illustrations are bold and full of movement. A collection sure to appeal to a wide range of poetry lovers.



**THAKUR, Sophia.** *Wearing My Mother's Heart.* Candlewick. ISBN 9781536230161.

**Gr 9 Up**—Free-form and rhyming verse poems make up this collection of reflections on tradition, family, and friendship; perseverance and resilience; and first love, grief, belief, and resolution. This book will resonate with readers who enjoy the poems of Naomi Shihab Nye and Elizabeth Acevedo.

## NONFICTION/ELEMENTARY

Committee: Jonah Dragan, Kimberly Olson Fakh, Vi Ha, Florence Simmons

**BACKHOUSE, Frances.** *Grizzly Bears: Guardians of the Wilderness.* Orca. ISBN 9781459828544.

**Gr 4-8**—Backhouse spent five months in British Columbia’s North Coast, located in Ts’msyen territory, learning “from the Gwich’in to the Diné, and from the Niitsitapi to the Yup’ik, each group has its own grizzly-bear stories, songs, and dances.” This defining text on a misunderstood species blends science, heart, and deep knowledge.

**CHARLES, Tami.** *Ketanji Brown Jackson: A Justice for All.* illus. by Jemma Skidmore. S.&S. ISBN 9781665935265.

**Gr 2-4**—Charles and Skidmore unveil the per-

sonality behind her calm demeanor while grounding Ketanji Brown Jackson’s story in hard work, focus, and the support system that readers may have witnessed in her confirmation hearings. The paintings are a glorious match for the biography.

**CLINE-RANSOME, Lesa.** *Loud and Proud: The Life of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.* illus. by Kaylani Juanita. S.&S./Paula Wiseman. ISBN 9781534463523.

**Gr 2-5**—So much of Chisholm’s historic time in office was about creating different frameworks of resistance and bringing to the table voices previously unheard. Engaging writing with a brilliant



use of visual metaphor in Juanita's extraordinary artwork, plus a divine afterword—this is playful, approachable, important.

**GIANFERRARI, Maria.** *Fungi Grow.* illus. by Diana Sudyka. S&S./Beach Lane. ISBN 9781665903653.

**K-Gr 4**—There are too many reasons to thank Gianferrari this year, for elegant nonfiction that becomes unforgettable, as in this compelling look at the life cycle of a mushroom. Sudyka, in lockstep, provides vibrant colors in saturated spreads, in a book about safety and surprises in the wild.

**GUILLAIN, Charlotte.** *The River that Flows Beside Me.* illus. by Jo Empson. words & pictures. ISBN 9780711283497.

**K-Gr 3**—Young readers, from babies to younger elementary students, will never see a river in the same way; Guillain has devised a vibrant concertina with Empson's bright, semi-realistic illustrations that ingeniously follow a river coursing to the sea. This is an absolutely sensational piece of creativity.

**HODGSON, Rob.** *When Moon Became the Moon.* Penguin Workshop/Rise. ISBN 9780593523629.

**PreS-Gr 1**—Hodgson was ahead of neo-nonfiction that reads like a story but delivers hard science with *When Cloud Became a Cloud*. This second work is even stronger, placing the sun, moon, and earth in the sky like perennial budies, and letting the facts about our skies shine.

**IGNOTOFSKY, Rachel.** *What's Inside a Caterpillar Cocoon?: And Other Questions About Moths & Butterflies.* Crown. ISBN 9780593176573.

**K-Gr 3**—In small, clever chunks of information, Ignatofsky takes a primary level standard and elevates it into a bright, appealing, comprehensive, and beautiful volume. For classroom or story hours, this offers resources, activities, and inspiration on every page.

**LARSON, Kirsten W.** *The Fire of Stars: The Life and Brilliance of the Woman Who Discovered What Stars Are Made Of.* illus. by Katherine Roy. Chronicle. ISBN 9781452172873.

**Gr 2-6**—Committee member: "This has everything I dream of: the pairing of an artistic rendering of a birth of a star with the birth of a scientific mind." Roy's visuals perfectly capture the parallel stories, star and scientist, with

the two texts interlocking into a seamless, dazzling whole.

**OBUCHOWSKI, David.** *How Birds Sleep.* illus. by Sarah Pedry. miniedition. ISBN 9781662650970.

**K-Gr 4**—In their debut picture book, Obuchowski and Pedry poetically but scientifically answer the question all young children need to know—where do birds sleep? From Bolivia to El Salvador, South Korea to Finland, this global journey is nature writing and illustration at its best, fearlessly addressing climate change as well.

**PEARSON, Carrie A.** *Virginia Wouldn't Slow Down: The Unstoppable Dr. Apgar and Her Life-Saving Invention.* illus. by Nancy Carpenter. Norton. ISBN 9781324003939.

**Gr 1-3**—Recommended reading for all parents with a fidgety, "quirky" child. The possibly dry subject of a five-step evaluation for newborns, a standard today, is leavened by a spirited telling and wonderfully borne out in friendly, even comical scenes. This STEM/STEAM title fits in as Apgar perhaps did not.

**RACZKA, Bob.** *You Are a Story.* illus. by Kristen & Kevin Howdeshell. Holiday House/Neal Porter. ISBN 9780823449149.

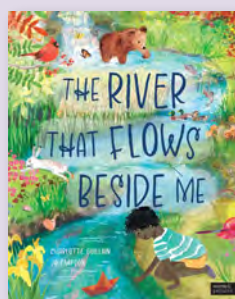
**Gr 1-5**—A fantastic way of teaching ecology, but more, this book expresses very high-level concepts about humanity and personhood within a positive framework of individuality. In accessible language and pictures, the visual and spoken narratives connect kids to different tangible and intangible ideas to grasp now or later.

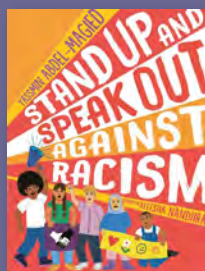
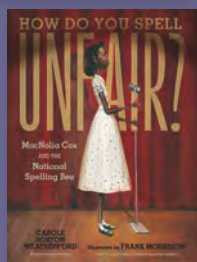
**ROY, Katherine.** *Making More: How Life Begins.* Norton. ISBN 9781324015840.

**Gr 3-6**—Roy is having a great year (Larson's *The Fire of Stars*), but this is her breakout book on how life begins and why reproduction is as essential to survival as light and water. Whether spawn, offspring, or propagation of the species, matter-of-fact answers are supported by extraordinarily detailed illustrations and diagrams to make the biology specific. Essential for all shelves, everywhere. Splendid.

**SALAZAR, Aida.** *Jovita Wore Pants: The Story of a Mexican Freedom Fighter.* illus. by Molly Mendoza. Scholastic. ISBN 9781338283419.

**Gr 2-5**—A gripping, cinematically presented biography of a spirited heroine who always wanted pants so she could ride like the men. When she took up the cause of religious freedom dressed





as a boy, she became Juan, known as Mexico's Joan of Arc. Dynamic, vibrant illustrations accompany a poetic text for a thrilling story about a remarkable person.

**STELSON, Caren.** *Stars of the Night: The Courageous Children of the Czech Kindertransport.* illus. by Selina Alko. Carolrhoda. ISBN 9781541598683.

**Gr 3-5**—In an uplifting narrative standing in for the voices of young Jewish children, Stelson documents the breathtaking effort to move the children from Prague to England for safety during WWII, saving their lives. Alko's glorious illustrations give life to history; children will be poring over every page.



**WALKER, Cameron.** *National Monuments of the U.S.A.* illus. by Chris Turnham. Wide Eyed Eds. ISBN 9780711265493.

**Gr 2-4**—A fabulous compendium that leaves other monument books in the dust. Walker challenges readers to think about how a monument reflects what we value as a culture. A scrapbook format, a blend of modern facts and history, and delightful illustrations all stand out because of Walker's examination of the monuments through an equitable lens.

**WEATHERFORD, Carole Boston.** *How Do You Spell Unfair?: MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee.* illus. by Frank Morrison. Candlewick. ISBN 9781536215540.

**Gr 2-4**—Ridiculous obstacles, open racism, and more were put before Cox, whose study habits and grace under pressure pulled her into first place. The storytelling in verse flows beautifully across Morrison's sculptural scenes of this lanky, unflappable scholar, in the spotlight and behind the scenes, moving toward her inevitable triumph.

## NONFICTION/MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

Committee: Alicia Abdul, Karen Bilton, Lisa Buffi, Shelley M. Diaz, Bob Hassett, Kelly Kingrey-Edwards, Amanda Mastrull, Ashleigh Williams

**ABDEL-MAGIED, Yassmin.** *Stand Up and Speak Out Against Racism.* illus. by Aleesha Nandhra. Candlewick/Walker. ISBN 9781536231335.

**Gr 4 Up**—UK writer and activist Abdel-Magied and illustrator Nandhra deliver an eye-catching, comprehensive, and accessible overview of racism and its roots. Brightly colored infographics, charts, and glossaries parse difficult topics and provide helpful, actionable guidance for discussing racism and challenging inequality.

**ABERG-RIGER, Ariel.** *America Redux: Visual Stories from Our Dynamic History.* HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray. ISBN 9780063057531.

**Gr 8 Up**—In this illustrated work that features collage and unconventional text formatting, Aberg-Riger explores different facets of American history and their lasting effects on society. Including stories often untold and highlighting the contributions of diverse individuals, this unique title is compelling and thought-provoking.

**BROWN, Daniel James.** *Facing the Mountain (Adapted for Young Readers): A True Story of Japanese American Heroes in World War II.* Viking. ISBN 9780593465660.

**Gr 5 Up**—This focuses on four young Japanese

Americans who fought for their country during World War II, three on the warfront and one as a protester in the courts—all despite the treacherous Executive Order 9066, which incarcerated all people of Japanese descent. Equal parts enraging and inspiring, this is narrative nonfiction at its best.

**DAY, Nicholas.** *The Mona Lisa Vanishes: A Legendary Painter, a Shocking Heist, and the Birth of a Global Celebrity.* illus. by Brett Helquist. Random House Studio. ISBN 9780593643846.

**Gr 5 Up**—Readers will be mesmerized by this gripping account of the 1911 theft of what would later become the most famous painting in the world. Day's sly narrative, Helquist's expressive drawings, and the mystery of *La Joconde's* fate captivates until the last page.



**DONNELLY, Rebecca.** *Total Garbage: A Messy Dive into Trash, Waste, and Our World.* illus. by John Hendrix. Holt. ISBN 9781250760388.

**Gr 4-8**—Donnelly makes garbage absolutely fascinating. Facts about what and how much we throw away, past solutions for waste, and how we can do better for our planet are all discussed in a light,



conversational tone. An excellent read with a lasting impact.

**DRONFIELD, Jeremy.** *The Boy Who Followed His Father into Auschwitz: A True Story Retold for Young Readers.* HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780063236172.

**Gr 7 Up**—This biography portrays the astonishing survival story of Jewish teenager Fritz and his father, determined to stay together in the Nazi death camps. Intertwined is the story of younger brother Kurt, who escaped to the United States. With elegant prose, this is a heart-pounding read of steadfast devotion in the face of almost certain death.

**EDINGER, Monica & Lesley Young.** *Nearer My Freedom: The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano by Himself.* Zest. ISBN 9781728464077.

**Gr 7 Up**—This adaptation of Olaudah Equiano's 1789 autobiography creatively and effectively utilizes the found verse poetic form. Combining the autobiography of this formerly enslaved man who rose to be one of England's foremost abolitionists with explanatory sidebars puts Equiano's story in the context of historic events.

**FITZHARRIS, Lindsey & Adrian Teal.** *Plague-Busters!: Medicine's Battles with History's Deadliest Diseases.* illus. by Adrian Teal. Bloomsbury. ISBN 9781547606030.

**Gr 6 Up**—A thoroughly engaging—albeit sometimes gross—dive into the history of medicine and deadly diseases. Packed with little-known facts about ailments that have haunted the human population for centuries, this well-researched title will fascinate readers.

**FLORIO, John & Ouisie Shapiro.** *Doomed: Sacco, Vanzetti & the End of the American Dream.* Roaring Brook. ISBN 9781250621931.

**Gr 8 Up**—This compelling history tells the story of the conviction of Italian immigrants Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti through a host of primary source documents and images. The meticulously detailed, thoroughly sourced, gripping narrative compassionately contextualizes this story while vividly explaining its historic significance.

**HAVRELOCK, Deidre & Edward Kay.** *Indigenous Ingenuity: A Celebration of Traditional North American Knowledge.* Little, Brown/Christy Ottaviano. ISBN 9780316413336.

**Gr 5 Up**—A thorough exploration of the histori-

cal and ongoing innovations of Indigenous North Americans from the realms of agriculture to thermodynamics, and how colonialism and persecution have necessitated adaptation. An interactive text that shines a light on essential, underrepresented Indigenous history in STEM and beyond.

**HOPKINSON, Deborah.** *Race Against Death: The Greatest POW Rescue of World War II.* Scholastic/Focus. ISBN 9781338746167.

**Gr 4-6**—Hopkinson's gripping narrative of the rescue of World War II prisoners from Cabanatuan Camp in the Philippines is beautifully told through individual stories. Amply illustrated with maps and photos, and with extensive source notes, this is a high-interest read and a superb resource.

**LEVY, Dana Alison.** *Breaking the Mold: Changing the Face of Climate Science.* Holiday House. ISBN 9780823449712.

**Gr 3-8**—Levy profiles 16 boundary-pushing scientists of marginalized backgrounds from all over the world. Gorgeously designed, this volume sports stunning photos, engaging pull quotes, vibrant colors, and impeccable back matter. An inspirational text about underrepresented folks in STEM fields.

**MCANULTY, Stacy.** *Where Are the Aliens?: The Search for Life Beyond Earth.* illus. by Nicole Miles. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780759553996.

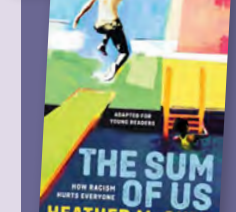
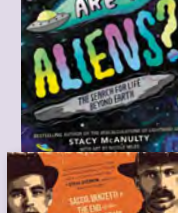
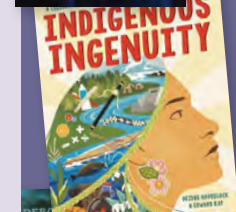
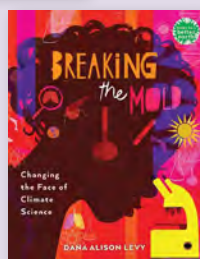
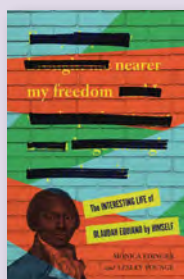
**Gr 4-8**—In a tone that's consistently friendly, McAnulty deftly conveys many weighty ideas from mathematics and philosophy that underpin the search for intelligent life outside Earth. Cheerful illustrations, sidebars, and boxes of "fun facts" will appeal to a wide range of readers.

**MCGHEE, Heather.** *The Sum of Us (Adapted for Young Readers).* Delacorte. ISBN 9780593562628.

**Gr 5 Up**—Economic and social policy expert McGhee blends narrative with research to explain the systemic pitfalls of the zero-sum "us versus them" racial hierarchy, a result of white supremacy. This deep dive advocates for solidarity with concrete examples and metrics of success.

**MILLER, Ron.** *The Big Backyard: The Solar System Beyond Pluto.* Lerner/Twenty-First Century. ISBN 9781728475349.

**Gr 8 Up**—In seven quick chapters, Miller





makes the complexities of outer space accessible and compelling. Through stimulating text and dynamic photographs, readers learn about the outer reaches of the solar system beyond Pluto. Fascinating and informative, an excellent resource that will keep even non-space-loving teens turning the pages.

**MUFLEH, Luma.** *From Here*. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. ISBN 9780593354452.

**Gr 9 Up**—Raised in 1980s Jordan, Mufleh knew she would be killed if discovered to be a lesbian. While in college in the United States, she makes the agonizing decision to apply for asylum and give up the family she loved. This gripping memoir beautifully portrays the palpable urgency of a young woman who had to save her own life to be true to herself.

**OSBORNE, Linda Barrett.** *Who's Got Mail?: The History of Mail in America*. Abrams. ISBN 9781419758966.

**Gr 4-8**—An offbeat subject is treated here with deep research and highly engaging text, focused on the history and mission of the mail, but also on the broad diversity of the workforce. With vibrant page design and copious illustrations, this will be a quirky favorite.

**PINKNEY, Jerry.** *Just Jerry: How Drawing Shaped My Life*. Little, Brown. ISBN 9780316383851.

**Gr 3-7**—This illustrated memoir centers the late Caldecott Medalist's childhood in 1940s Philadelphia, capturing his voice and heart through the sepia-toned sketches and earnest recollections. Perhaps we didn't get to read this as Pinkney had envisioned it, but for his admirers and kids everywhere, this is just perfect.

**RODGERS, Allison K.** *We Need to Talk About Vaginas: An Important Book About Vulvas, Periods, Puberty, and Sex!* illus. by Annika Le Large. Macmillan/Neon Squid. ISBN 9781684492848.

**Gr 4 Up**—A gynecologist discusses everything anyone would ever want to know about vaginas. In this brilliant and illustrated title, Rodgers makes all the facts about periods, pregnancy, and more accessible to children and young adults. A phenomenal work that answers the questions most kids are too nervous to ask.

**SANCHEZ, Anita.** *The Monkey Trial: John Scopes and the Battle Over Teaching Evolution*. HarperCollins/Clarion. ISBN 9780358457695.

**Gr 8 Up**—This account of the Scopes Monkey Trial seems perfectly designed to engage readers. Yet the narrative's true genius is that it situates this almost 100-year-old trial over the

teaching of evolution in schools within today's controversies surrounding intellectual freedom, faith, and the media.

**SANDLER, Martin W.** *Shipwrecked!: Diving for Hidden Time Capsules on the Ocean Floor*. Astra. ISBN 9781662602047.

**Gr 5 Up**—Blending adventure, history, marine science, and archaeology with a dose of technological gee-whiz, Sandler sketches the findings from seven historic shipwrecks ranging from South Africa to the Northwest Passage. Eye-catching illustrations are smoothly integrated with the dense text. This makes for excellent research or independent reading.

**SEPETYS, Ruta.** *You: The Story: A Writer's Guide to Craft Through Memory*. Viking. ISBN 9780593524381.



**Gr 6 Up**—Taking advice on writing from a masterful storyteller like Sepetys makes sense. Personal memoir and writing prompts are woven together seamlessly for readers to tackle cover to cover or in sections in this book that will certainly inspire the next generation of writers.

**SHEINKIN, Steve.** *Impossible Escape: A True Story of Survival and Heroism in Nazi Europe*. Roaring Brook. ISBN 9781250265722.

**Gr 8 Up**—In vivid language, Sheinkin recounts Rudi Vrba's harrowing escape from the camps during World War II while contextualizing history appropriate for the intended audience. The narrative also tells of the survival of classmate Gerta Sidonová, living under an assumed identity. Dual stories build suspense while championing the teens' survival.

**SHEPARD, Ray Anthony.** *A Long Time Coming: A Lyrical Biography of Race in America from Ona Judge to Barack Obama*. illus. by R. Gregory Christie. Calkins Creek. ISBN 9781662680663.

**Gr 7 Up**—This collective biography told through "story-poems" explores the lives of six important Black Americans and their work fighting for racial justice. With illustrations that bring to life the figures and the times they lived in, it's a compelling work that includes extensive back matter.

**SIBLEY, David Allen.** *What It's Like to Be a Bird (Adapted for Young Readers): From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds Are Doing and Why*. Delacorte. ISBN 9780593430187.

**Gr 4-8**—More than a compendium of bird species, Sibley's superior volume captures the essence of



each bird, delving into the particularity of each one. His exquisitely illustrated book offers incredible yet digestible details and fascinating insights that will intrigue kids from urban to rural communities.



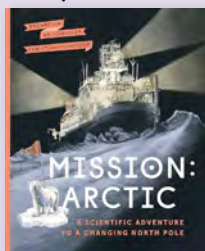
**SLATER, Dashka.** *Accountable: The True Story of a Racist Social Media Account and the Teenagers Whose Lives It Changed.* Farrar. ISBN 9780374314347.

**Gr 9 Up**—A riveting social media firestorm at a high school in California in 2017 sets the stage for a new book by Slater, this time focused on school discipline and freedom of speech. Captivatingly crafted from interviews, news reports, and courtroom documents.

**SPICER RICE, Eleanor.** *Unseen Jungle: The Microbes That Secretly Control Our World.* illus. by Rob Wilson. Candlewick/MIT Kids. ISBN 9781536226461.

**Gr 4 Up**—Spicer Rice takes readers on a captivating journey through the best and worst of microbes that live in homes, yards, food, and people. Entertaining, often amusing, and sometimes disgusting, this work is a superb choice for research or leisure. A thorough bibliography is also included.

**WEISS-TUIDER, Katharina.** *Mission: Arctic: A Scientific Adventure to a Changing North Pole.* illus. by Christian Schneider. tr. by Shelley Tanaka. Greystone. ISBN 9781771649568.



**Gr 3-7**—Weiss-Tuider, a MOSAiC team member aboard the *Polarstern*, shares her compelling observations of the Arctic expedition, how they impact climate research, and what they reveal about humanity's future.

The text resembles a logbook packed with stunning mixed-media images that will inspire young people to climate activism.

## GRAPHIC NOVELS

Committee: Jasmine Amiri, Jenny Arch, Shelley M. Diaz, Andrea Lipinski, Carla Riemer

**ALSAQA, Jordan.** *Cooking with Monsters: The Beginner's Guide to Culinary Combat.* illus. by Vivian Truong. IDW. ISBN 9781684059836.

**Gr 8 Up**—New students at the Gourmand Academy of Culinary Combat learn how to battle monsters and become great chefs, while dealing with school stress as well as friendship and family drama. A fun, action-packed, and engaging story that would be a great choice for reluctant readers.

**ANNABLE, Graham.** *Eerie Tales from the School of Screams.* First Second. ISBN 9781250195043.

**Gr 6 Up**—Students take turns standing up in front of the class to share eerie stories. Each tale is terrifying in a different way, but the school itself has its own scary secrets. Great for readers who love suspenseful and chilling stories with a *Twilight Zone* vibe.

**BELL, Darrin.** *The Talk.* Holt. ISBN 9781250805140.

**Gr 10 Up**—Bell's experiences illustrate racism's effect on the way Black youth learn to navigate the world and also on society



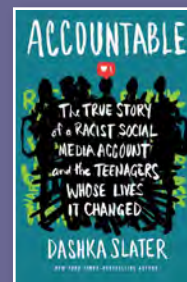
at large. Dramatic art breaks out of a confining panel structure, making the story bigger yet more personal. The final result is a beyond powerful memoir.

**BROWN, Don.** *83 Days in Mariupol: A War Diary.*

HarperCollins/Clarion. ISBN 9780063311565.  
**Gr 9 Up**—Brown chronicles the Russian army's 2022 invasion and capture of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. The black-and-white illustrations bring the city's devastation to life, while the story shines a light on the horrors people experienced while trying to survive the relentless Russian attacks.

**CHANTLER, Scott.** *Squire & Knight.* First Second. ISBN 9781250249340.

**Gr 3-5**—When a bold-but-brainless knight and a slight-but-smart squire arrive in Bridgetown, they find it's missing its bridge. While the knight rushes off to find and fight a dragon, the squire (the true hero) pursues the problem from another direction. Chantler's palette of Halloween neutrals sets the perfect mood for this clever story





in which moments of tension and danger are balanced by humor.

**COHEN, Emily Bowen.** *Two Tribes*. Harper/Heartdrum. ISBN 9780062983589.

**Gr 5 Up**—Mia lives in Los Angeles with her Jewish mother and stepfather. Using money from her bat mitzvah, she sneaks away to Oklahoma to see her birth father and learn about their shared Muscogee heritage. Through narrative and art, key aspects of Jewish and Muscogee traditions are explored, giving a fresh look at honoring multicultural identities.



**CRAFT, Jerry.** *School Trip*. Harper/Quill Tree. ISBN 9780062885531.

**Gr 4-8**—As Jordan enters his last year of middle school, he receives an acceptance letter from an art school. Does he really want to be the new kid again? This heartfelt, must-read conclusion perfectly complements Craft's previous titles. Readers will be reluctant to let these characters go.

**ESTRELA, Joana.** *Pardalita*. tr. from Portuguese by Lyn Miller-Lachmann. Levine Querido. ISBN 9781646142552.

**Gr 8 Up**—Raquel has a crush on classmate Pardalita, admiring her from afar, and finally connects with her through theater. The quiet pace of this sweet romance mirrors Raquel's growing attraction. The art shines, especially in moments when it's more evocative than literal in expressing movement and emotion.

**GLASHEEN, Kate.** *Constellations*. Holiday House. ISBN 9780823450718.

**Gr 10 Up**—Vulnerable and piercing, Glasheen's debut follows a nonbinary teen in the 1980s who faces pressures of gender conformity and begins misusing alcohol, landing them in a rehab program. Dynamic watercolor pages unveil a healing story about recovery, friendship, and being true to one's self—one that leaves a lasting impression.

**GRIMES, Nikki.** *Garvey's Choice: The Graphic Novel*. illus. by Theodore Taylor III. Wordsong. ISBN 9781662660023.

**Gr 4-9**—Garvey is not an athlete like his older sister, which makes it hard to bond with his dad. But Garvey's friends help him find his voice—figuratively and literally—by joining chorus, which helps them connect through music. Grimes's tanka poems from the original book translate

beautifully in the graphic novel format; Taylor's night sky illustrations are especially striking.

**HATKE, Ben.** *Things in the Basement*. First Second. ISBN 9781250909541.

**Gr 3-5**—A trip to the basement laundry to retrieve a missing sock turns into an epic journey as Milo ventures through the never-ending cavern, making unusual friends and encountering danger. Hatke displays a genius for setting as well as character; each level Milo descends features a different style of art, architecture, and sculpture. A stellar story about courage and friendship.

**KROSOCZKA, Jarrett J.** *Sunshine*. Scholastic/Graphix. ISBN 9781338356328.

**Gr 7 Up**—Krosoczka's tender follow-up to *Hey, Kiddo* depicts a life-changing experience at Camp Sunshine, a summer camp for children with severe illness, and their accompanying families. The warmth from the relationships formed throughout the story radiates off the pages. This book has a lasting impact.



**LAI, Remy.** *Ghost Book*. Holt. ISBN 9781250810410.

**Gr 4 Up**—July Chen has a secret: she can see ghosts. When she meets a boy who's trapped between life and death, she tries to save him, only to find their fates are more intertwined than either could imagine. This touching and emotional story contains an enticing mix of friendship, love, Chinese mythology, and magical dumplings.

**LEE, Deb JJ.** *In Limbo*. First Second. ISBN 9781250252654.

**Gr 8 Up**—In this breathtaking memoir, Lee masterfully portrays the experience of being in between worlds and cultures as a first-generation Korean American navigating high school. Emotion and detail fuel the ink-washed pages as adolescence, mental health, loneliness, and a fragile mother-daughter relationship are explored with nuance and raw honesty. A stunning piece of work that takes the comics medium to new heights.

**MARTÍN, Pedro.** *Mexikid*. Dial. ISBN 9780593462287.

**Gr 5-8**—Pedro's family embarks on a road trip from California to Mexico to help his abuelito before bringing him back to the U.S. to live with them. An unpredictable fusion of humorous and reflective moments that gives fascinat-



ing insights into one family's many stories while hinting at larger cultural questions.

**MYER, Sarah.** *Monstrous: A Transracial Adoption Story.* First Second. ISBN 9781250268792.

**Gr 8 Up**—Myer's immersive memoir recounts the feeling of not belonging as a South Korean child who was adopted at birth by a white family in rural Maryland, and the monstrous anger and anxiety that formed as a result of bullying. Doubling as a love letter to anime, the book features dynamic artwork throughout in this validating read about identity.

**NGUYEN, Trang & Jeet Zdung.** *Saving H'Non: Chang and the Elephant.* illus. by Jeet Zdung. tr. from Vietnamese by Trang Nguyen & Jeet Zdung. Dial. ISBN 9780593406731.

**Gr 4-8**—Young wildlife conservationist Chang and her boss, who work at a national park in Vietnam, rescue abused and injured elephant H'Non from her handler and work to rehabilitate her so she can enjoy the "five freedoms" all elephants deserve. Done in a journalistic sketchbook style, the art is lush and detailed. This story has the power to inform, engage, and engender great empathy.

**PHAM, Thien.** *Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam.* First Second. ISBN 9781250809711.

**Gr 9 Up**—Pham's memoir entwines food with memory as he recounts his journey from Vietnam to America. Told with humor and heart, his life story from childhood through adulthood shines a light on the challenges and joys of his immigrant experience. Evocative art adds warmth and emotion.

**RAMM, Meggie.** *Batcat.* Abrams/Amulet. ISBN 9781419756573.

**Gr 2 Up**—When Batcat leaves home to find magic spell ingredients, they meet other creatures, such as ghosts, bats, and cats, who question their unusual appearance. This story is a funny yet thoughtful exploration of a nonbinary character, who is neither bat nor cat, discovering that you can be different and be awesome all while staying true to yourself.



character, who is neither bat nor cat, discovering that you can be different and be awesome all while staying true to yourself.

**SANTAT, Dan.** *A First Time for Everything.* First Second. ISBN 9781626724150.

**Gr 5-9**—A heartwarming memoir about an awkward student who emerges from his self-imposed shell over the course of a trip to Europe in 1989.

Humor and sentiment take center stage as the expressive artwork demonstrates his world expanding and his identity emerging. A poignant self-discovery story.

**SINDU, SJ. Shakti.** illus. by Nabi H. Ali. Harper-Alley. ISBN 9780063090132.

**Gr 3-7**—Featuring rich, expressive illustration, Sindu and Ali's enchanting graphic novel follows Shakti who calls upon a Hindu goddess to help save her new town of Amherst, MA, after she discovers it has been cursed by school-bully witches. The result is a high-stakes narrative that braids mythology, family, and harmony into an enthralling coming-of-age story.

**STEINKELLNER, Emma.** *Nell of Gumbling: My Extremely Normal Fairy-Tale Life.* Random/Labyrinth Road. ISBN 9780593570661.

**Gr 4 Up**—Nell lives in the magical town of Gumbling, but to the folks who nest there, it's just home—until a pair of siblings arrive to transform it into Castletown, setting up a "small town vs. big development" conflict. This sweet and quirky story of magical adventures, friendship angst, and the challenges of growing up is told through Nell's illustrated journal and will charm readers.

**STERLING, Zachary.** *Mabuhay!* Scholastic/Graphix. ISBN 9781338738643.

**Gr 4 Up**—In this love letter to food trucks and Filipino culture, siblings JJ and Althea pay little attention to their family's folktales—until they start coming true. Weaving humor throughout, this heartwarming story gives new meaning to embracing one's heritage. A high-energy delight that gives folklore, family, and food center their due.

**TANG, Betty C.** *Parachute Kids.* Scholastic/Graphix. ISBN 9781338832686.

**Gr 4 Up**—A family trip from Taiwan to California in 1981 turns from American Dream to nightmare when Feng-Li's parents tell her and her two siblings that they will be staying—on their own. Feng-Li plays peacemaker between her brother and sister as they face overwhelming challenges. A memorable and compelling immigration story.

**WHEELER, Kate & Trent Huntington.** *Team Trash: A Time Traveler's Guide to Sustainability.* Holiday House. ISBN 9780823452279.

**Gr 3-6**—Science fair partners Charlie and Oliver accidentally activate a time machine that whisks them away to different ages and places to learn about trash and recycling. A cute, smart, and incredibly informative book about recycling, upcycling, composting, and other STEAM topics.

