



GORDON SCHOOL



**Middle School
Summer Reading List
2020**

Dear Families,

In December of 2019 Gordon Middle School was blessed with presentations and workshops by Kirkus Prize Winning graphic novelist Jerry Craft. In January of this year he added the Coretta Scott King, and the Newbery Medals to the front of his groundbreaking graphic novel *New Kid*. Our students in Middle School (or Lower School) could not get enough of his work and adults too requested *New Kid* more than any other book from January through mid-March.

We are fortunate to be at a school that brings authors and illustrators to its community whose work informs our daily practice and to be readers from a library that values diverse authorial voices Pura Belpre winner and Americas winner (to name a few accolades) Monica Brown was our 2019 Karla Harry Visiting Author she worked with Middle Schoolers on the picture book biography, met with Spanish language arts strand students and brought her role as an activist to the foreground.

Please join us in reading this summer from a reading list that includes a variety of titles that will appeal to a broad range of readers. The focus this summer has to been to select books that offer a “rattling good narrative,” and also the power of a culturally responsive immersive read.

This list was curated with suggestions from the library stewards and many other Middle Schoolers, faculty and the leadership team. Please use this resource as a guide and even as a jumping off point to give you ideas about what to read. We have detailed genres and authors that are popular with our students, as well as some that are very newly published. Kwame Alexander’s beautiful picture book, *The Undefeated* heads our second year of the Stand Up Stand Out Speak Up section in which students, advisors and school leadership recommend specific titles that challenge, celebrate and affirm our experience and humanity. Unless specified, all of the reviews are adapted from Booklist.

On the first page, you will see the required reading assignments divided by grade level. Please encourage your children to read the required books from the middle towards the end of the summer as the teachers will use these books in September for a variety of assignments. You can find these titles at your local public libraries, bookstores, and through online vendors.

Students should complete the Middle School reading log (found in the back of this packet) with the assistance of a parent. Please make sure to add your signature as your child completes each book!

We are honored to announce that in 2020-2021 our Karla Harry Visiting Author will be Grace Lin. Grace is a New York Times bestselling author and illustrator who won the Newbery Honor for “Where the Mountain Meets the Moon” and the Theodor Geisel Honor for “Ling and Ting.” Her novel “When the Sea Turned to Silver” was a National Book Award Finalist and her picture book, “A Big Mooncake for Little Star” was awarded the Caldecott Honor. Grace is also an occasional commentator for New England Public Radio, a reviewer for the NY Times, a video essayist for PBS NewsHour, and the speaker of the popular TEDx talk, “The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child’s Bookshelf,” as well as hosting the two podcasts: *kidlitwomen** and *Kids Ask Authors*. In 2016, Grace’s art was displayed at the White House where Grace, herself, was recognized by President Obama’s office as a Champion of Change for Asian American and Pacific Islander Art and Storytelling.

A list of her pertinent books for middle school students are included in this reading list.

Many of the books designated as ‘eBook’ or ‘digital audiobook’ on this list are available through the Destiny Discover portion of the online Gordon library catalog, from your online local library or from a platform like Audible or LearningAlly. Please find the instructions for accessing the Gordon eBook collection in the following pages.

Have a wonderful summer of reading and be sure to share your favorite books with friends and family. Our incoming sixth graders selected books for book circles and these can be found in multiple copies in eBooks our library and have been purchased to encourage family and Zoom book club exchanges.

Sincerely,

Frances Martindale

Librarian

Required summer reading

Entering fifth grade

Please read two titles that are from these ten genres:

Realistic fiction / Science Fiction / Mystery & Horror / Historical fiction / Nonfiction / Fantasy / Novel in Verse / Autobiography & Biography / Eco-Fiction / Graphic Novel

Please choose books that you have not read before and make sure your two choices are not from the same genres (like two graphic novels for instance). Of course, you can read more than two books over the summer!

You can use the booklet as a guide to make your choices or not. Whichever titles you choose, please have a parent help you so that you are sure it is a 'just right' book (not too easy, not too hard) for you.

Remember to record your choices in the log at the back of this booklet.

Spanish: *La Piñata de Renata*, Craig Klein

Spanish language arts strand: *Mata la piñata*, Kristy Placido

Spanish books can be ordered from fluencymatters.com

Entering sixth grade

Please read *Heroes of the Environment: True Stories of People who are Helping to Protect Our Planet* by Harriet Rohmer and two additional books of your own choosing from the list or other approved sources by parents.

Spanish: *La llama en Lima*, Katie Baker

Spanish language arts strand: *Mata la piñata*, Kristy Placido

Spanish books can be ordered from fluencymatters.com

Entering seventh grade

Please read *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism and You* by Jason Reynolds, a remix of Ibram Kendi's book *Stamped from the Beginning*

Please read either *The Cartoon Guide to Chemistry* by Larry Gonick or *The Disappearing Spoon and other true tales of madness, love, and the history of the world from the periodic table of the elements* (YA version) by Sam Kean

Spanish: *Peter va a Colombia*, Craig Klein

Spanish language arts strand: *Las Aventuras de Don Quijote de la Mancha: La Historia Según Sancho Panza* by Katherine Lupton

Spanish books can be ordered from fluencymatters.com

Entering eighth grade

Please read *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism and You* by Jason Reynolds, a remix of Ibram Kendi's book *Stamped from the Beginning*

Please read either *The Cartoon Guide to Chemistry* by Larry Gonick or *Evolution: How We and All Living Things Came to Be* by Daniel Loxton

Spanish: *Bianca Nieves y los Siete Toritos* by Carrie Toth

Spanish language arts strand: *Las Aventuras de Don Quijote de la Mancha: La Historia Según Sancho Panza* by Katherine Lupton

Spanish books can be ordered from fluencymatters.com

Accessing the Joukowsky Family Library's eBooks and audiobooks

From desktop or laptop:

- 1) Use this direct link: www.gordonschool.org/onlinecheckout
- 2) A blue page with "Destiny Discover" in the upper left-hand corner will open. Use the navigation suggestions at the top to help you locate a book you'd like to read.
- 3) To log in: a student's username is their graduation year followed their first initial and last name. For example, the username for Gordie Gator in the Class of 2028 would be 2028ggator. Password is: bookshelf.
- 4) Click on the book you'd like to read. When possible, select Open rather than Checkout. When you select Open, other people can also read the book. When you select Checkout, no one else can read the book until you remember to return it!

To see what books you have checked out and to return books: While logged in, go to the Main Menu by clicking the three horizontal lines in the upper left-hand corner of the page. Select Checkouts. Select Return for all titles you are ready to return.

From tablet devices or smart phones:

- 1) Go to your device's app store.
- 2) Search for **Destiny Discover** and download this **free** app.
- 3) To log in: a student's username is their graduation year followed their first initial and last name. For example, the username for Gordie Gator in the Class of 2028 would be 2028ggator. Password is: bookshelf.
- 4) Click the blue login button.
- 5) You now have the option to search for a specific item or browse eBooks or audiobooks.
- 6) Once you have selected a title from those available in Destiny Discover, click the green "Checkout/Hold" button to check out and begin reading/listening.
- 7) Once you have checked out an eBook/audiobook, you can access the title by pressing the "Open" button.
- 8) You may return the title early by clicking on "Bookbag" from the main menu in the upper right corner. Select Checkouts and then Return.
- 9) Most eBooks can only be checked out by one person at a time. eBooks with the infinity icon are available for check out by an unlimited number of readers.
- 10) The circulation period for eBooks and digital audiobooks is fourteen days.

by Grace Lin

2020 Karla Harry Visiting Author

Mulan Before the Sword

Family is important to Hua Mulan even if her parents don't understand why she would rather ride her horse, Black Wind, than weave, or how her notorious clumsiness can be so different from the graceful demeanor of her younger sister, Xiu. But despite their differences, Mulan has a deep love for her family, especially Xiu. So when her sister is bitten by a poisonous spider, Mulan does everything she can to help, including seeking out a renowned healer. However, it quickly becomes apparent that there is more to both the mysterious spider bite and the healer than meets the eye. On a quest with the Jade Rabbit of legend, Mulan visits extraordinary places, meets Immortals, and faces incredible obstacles while searching for an antidote for her sister. And the danger only rises when Mulan learns of a prophecy foretelling that a member of the Hua family will one day save the Emperor and of the powerful enemies who will stop at nothing to prevent it from coming to pass. This prequel to the upcoming film of Mulan was especially written by award-winning author Grace Lin. (From the publisher)

Fifth to eighth grade

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

In this enchanted and enchanting adventure, Minli, whose name means "quick thinking," lives with her desperately poor parents at the confluence of Fruitless Mountain and the Jade River. While her mother worries and complains about their lot, her father brightens their evenings with storytelling. One day, after a goldfish salesman promises that his wares will bring good luck, Minli spends one of her only two coins in an effort to help her family. After her mother ridicules what she believes to be a foolish purchase, Minli sets out to find the Old Man of the Moon, who, it is told, may impart the true secret to good fortune. Along the way, she finds excitement, danger, humor, magic, and wisdom, and she befriends a flightless dragon, a talking fish, and other companions and helpmates in her quest. With beautiful language, Lin creates a strong, memorable heroine and a mystical land. Stories, drawn from a rich history of Chinese folktales, weave throughout her narrative, deepening the sense of both the characters and the setting and smoothly furthering the plot. Children will embrace this accessible, timeless story about the evil of greed and the joy of gratitude. Lin's own full-color drawings open each chapter.

Fantasy

Fifth to eighth grade

The Starry River of the Sky by Grace Lin

This mesmerizing companion to the Newbery Honor Book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (2009) does not disappoint. Rendi has run away from home, stowed in the back of a merchant's cart, until he is discovered and left stranded in the scarcely populated Village of Clear Sky. There he becomes the innkeeper's chore boy and is introduced to a cast of characters, including Mr. Shan, a wise older man; Madame Chang, a mysterious out-of-town guest with a gift for storytelling; and a toad whom Mr. Shan calls Rabbit. All the while, the moon is missing, and it seems only Rendi is tormented by the sky's sad wailing noises at night. Madame Chang insists that for each story she tells—including one about ruler Wang Yi's wife, who transformed into a toad and lived out the rest of her days on the moon—Rendi must tell one of his own. Unlike its predecessor, this novel is stationary in setting, but it offers up similar stories based on Chinese folklore that interweave with and advance the main narrative. Each of the tales reveals something important about the teller, and most offer a key piece of the mysterious puzzle: what happened to the moon? A few characters from *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, including Magistrate Tiger, appear on the periphery of the action. Lin's writing is clear and lyrical, her plotting complex, and her illustrations magical, all of which make this a book to be savored.

Fantasy

Fifth to eighth grade

When the Sea Turned to Silver

(Companion book to *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*)

Pinmei's gentle, loving grandmother always has the most thrilling tales for her granddaughter and the other villagers. However, the peace is shattered one night when soldiers of the Emperor arrive and kidnap the storyteller. Everyone knows that the Emperor wants something called the Luminous Stone That Lights the Night. Determined to have her grandmother returned, Pinmei embarks on a journey to find the Luminous Stone alongside her friend Yishan, a mysterious boy who seems to have his own secrets to hide. Together, the two must face obstacles usually found only in legends to find the Luminous Stone and save Pinmei's grandmother--before it's too late. (from the publisher)

Additional titles

(Reviews adapted from *Booklist* publication)

The Adventures of Nanny Piggins by R. A. Spratt
If you are looking for something that reminds you of an earlier age look no further. This book was recommended by an incoming seventh grader: Mary Poppins, move over—Nanny Piggins has arrived. Most recently employed at the circus as the pig shot out of a cannon, she assumes the title Nanny when she spies a Help Wanted sign on the lawn of the Green family. Mrs. Green is dead, and Mr. Green is so tightfisted he refuses to pay a human nanny. So when a pig applies But as the three Green children soon realize, Nanny Piggins is a jewel. Extraordinarily clever, she knows when to morph that quality into deviousness, which certainly becomes necessary when dealing with the dull, pompous Mr. Green. The children—Derrick, Samantha, and Michael—promptly fall in love with Nanny Piggins because she lets them eat sweets all day and comes up with the most marvelous ideas, like taking a boat to China to get Chinese takeout. Even when things don't exactly work out as planned (and they rarely do), the high jinks and hilarity make them excellent adventures. Stuffing adjectives into this review is as easy as watching Nanny Piggins stuff pies into her mouth. This is smart, sly, funny, and marvelously illustrated with drawings that capture Nanny's sheer pigginess. Readers may worry that this first novel is so full of stories about Nanny Piggins there won't be enough left for sequels. Never fear. The last line of the book predicts Nanny will be stirring up more adventures, possibly even before breakfast.
Humorous fiction
Fifth and sixth grade

American as Paneer Pie by Supriya Kelkar
Eleven-year-old Lekha doesn't think she has a lot going for her, especially not when being Indian in her part of Detroit feels unsafe and when there's a bindi birthmark on her forehead begging to be used as a marker for ignorant remarks. When Avantika, another Indian girl Lekha's age, moves into the neighborhood with her family, Lekha feels burdened with having to befriend her. Although she is a new immigrant, Avantika proves to be nothing like Lekha expects. Kelkar (*Ahimsa*, 2017; *The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh*, 2019) has written a story that desi outcasts throughout the country can empathize with. Lekha easily succumbs to peer pressure, supporting the ongoing theme that silence is the same as complacency in the face of racism and microaggression. Avantika brings out the best in Lekha, and Lekha's evolution, though slow, is as sweet as burfi. Author Supriya Kelkar returns to Gordon this Summer for an online workshop during the fifth and sixth grade book club with Mimi Roterman.
Fiction
Fifth to seventh grade

Akata Witch by Nnedi Okorafor
Who can't love a story about a Nigerian-American twelve-year-old with albinism who discovers latent magical abilities and saves the world? Sunny lives in Nigeria after spending the first nine years of her life in New York. She can't play soccer with the boys because, as she says, "being albino made the sun my enemy," and she has only enemies at school. When a boy in her class, Orlu, rescues her from a beating, Sunny is drawn into a magical world she's never known existed. Sunny, it seems, is a Leopard person, one of the magical folk who live in a world mostly populated by ignorant Lambs. Now she spends the day in mundane Lamb school and sneaks out at night to learn magic with her cadre of Leopard friends: a handsome American bad boy, an arrogant girl who is Orlu's childhood friend and Orlu himself. Though Sunny's initiative is thin—she is pushed into most of her choices by her friends and by Leopard adults—the worldbuilding for Leopard society is stellar, packed with details that will enthrall readers bored with the same old magical worlds. Meanwhile, those looking for a touch of the familiar will find it in Sunny's biggest victories, which are entirely non-magical (the detailed dynamism of Sunny's soccer match is more thrilling than her magical world saving). Ebulliently original. Recommended by Ms. Samuel
Fantasy
Seventh and eighth

Akata Warrior by Nnedi Okorafor

This highly anticipated sequel to *Akata Witch* (2011) begins a year after Sunny unearthed secrets pertaining to her heritage and joined the secret Leopard Society. Plagued by strange dreams, Sunny endeavors to increase her magical powers by studying with her demanding mentor, and she continues to grapple with secrets that lie within her peculiar and wondrous Nsibidi book. However, the fate of humanity rests on her shoulders and time is not a luxury she has. Soon, she must step into her destiny and fight a looming, apocalyptic battle. If she loses or isn't up to the task, it will spell catastrophe for all. While the story's beginning is a bit jarring and doesn't immediately sweep you away, the feeling is fleeting. A few chapters in, the reader gets tangled up in Sunny's journey in the most delicious of ways. The lush world and high-stakes plot are fun, imaginative, timely, and authentic. Sunny as a character is beautiful, strong, and resilient, and her host of friends and allies are well-drawn and compelling, adding to the magic of the story. Okorafor's novel will ensnare readers and keep them turning pages until the very end to see if and how Sunny fulfills the tremendous destiny that awaits her. Recommended by Ms. Samuel

Fantasy

Seventh and eighth

Aru Shah and the End of Time by Roshani Chokshi

Aru Shah is a lover of tales, and was hoping to survive seventh grade through spinning slightly altered tales about her life to classmates. When a group of friends confronts her at the Museum of Ancient Art and Indian Cultures about her lies, Aru Shah would do anything to get them to believe her. Even if that means taking their dare to light a lamp that—wouldn't you know it?—might bring about the end of the world. Readers will be delighted by this adventurous dive into Hindu mythology and the chance to cheer along a heroic young protagonist. Chokshi makes it easy to connect with Aru by showing her learn from her mistakes (with the help of a sarcastic sorcerer pigeon), and readers will experience wonder as they are met with such surprises as a forest of giant fireflies. This series starter also doesn't skimp on important lessons about friendship, family, and love. Chokshi is a talented writer who breathes fresh air into her mythological world

Fantasy

Fifth to seventh grade

Augie and Me Three Wonder Stories by R. J. Palacio

As Palacio explains in the introduction to this collection of three previously published e-book stories, calls for a sequel to *Wonder* (2012) are both frequent and ineffective—it's not going to happen. Instead, she offers these deeper looks at three minor characters. In the abstract, it makes sense; the point of *Wonder*, after all, was about looking behind surfaces to find the nuance. "The Julian Chapter" is the strongest story and, most readers will agree, the most necessary, as Julian was the closest thing to a villain to our facially deformed fifth-grade hero, Auggie. Here, his bullydom is revealed to be a cog in a much larger familial machine out of his control. "Pluto" looks at Auggie's old friend, Chris, showing how his failures as a friend to Auggie inspire him to do better. "Shingaling," meanwhile, follows classmate Charlotte as she navigates friend-gaining and friend-losing with a bevy of handmade Venn diagrams. Auggie feels shoehorned into the latter stories, making them feel a bit typical. Even so, Palacio's strength remains her straightforwardness, especially when it comes to children's instinctive fear of Auggie. Mostly for superfans, of which there are plenty.

Short fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

Ban This Book by Alan Gratz

For biracial fourth-grader Amy Anne Ollinger, the school library is a quiet respite from her boisterous house, with two little siblings who often take center stage. But when her favorite book, *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, disappears because a classmate's mom thought it was inappropriate, she takes action by running a banned-book library out of her locker. As the stakes escalate, so does Amy's risk-taking, deepening bonds with her classmates as they fight against censorship. She even gets suspended. A school assignment about the Bill of Rights provides additional context for their efforts. While in less capable hands, the story could become didactic, here it is deeply entwined with Amy's growth, from shy and reserved to speaking up for herself on a large stage. Quick paced and with clear, easy-to-read prose, this is a book poised for wide readership and classroom use. As Amy's school librarian Mrs. Jones says, "Well-behaved women seldom make history." An inspiring story about "good trouble" that's worth the consequences.

Realistic fiction

Fifth grade

Belly Up by Stuart Gibbs

Henry the hippo is dead. Yes, the signature denizen of America's newest and largest zoo has been found belly up in his highly, uh, unsanitary habitat (hippos are extraordinarily regular in their habits, so to speak). But there's worse to come when 12-year-old Teddy begins to suspect it's murder most foul and—in the fine tradition of mysteries for youth—sets out to solve the crime by himself. Well, he does have some help from beautiful Summer, the 13-year-old daughter of the zoo's fantastically wealthy owner. Who could have dunnit? Large Marge, the surly security guard who has a cold spot in her heart for Teddy? Charlie Connor, the clown who's hated Henry ever since the testy hippo took a bite out of him? Or could it be a guerrilla act perpetrated by the anti-zoo Animal Liberation Front? First-novelist Gibbs offers no shortage of suspects in his fast-paced story, which deftly mixes humor and suspense. Cleverly plotted—aside from one hippo-sized deus ex machina moment—this book is an auspicious debut that will leave readers clamoring for more
Fifth to seventh grade

Born to Fly: The First Women's Race Across America
Steve Shienkin

Scrappy, determined, and fearless. That's what the twenty fliers, including Louise Thaden, Pancho Barnes, Ruth Elder, and Amelia Earhart, who entered the Women's Air Derby in 1929 had in common. Award-winning author Sheinkin (*Undeclared*, 2017) sets the stage for this first female transcontinental air race, from Santa Monica, California, to Cleveland, Ohio, with brief stories of the fliers' formative years and profiles of Bessie Coleman and other pioneering aviators. The heart of the book, however, is the tension-filled race. In addition to the sexism surrounding the event, there was extreme risk. Without modern GPS, autopilots, and control towers, fliers navigated with road maps, their own sight, and plenty of nerve and luck. The race was punctuated with a fire aboard a wooden plane, "crack-up" accidents, unbelievable repairs, sabotage, and even death. Sheinkin's story like narration puts readers right into the action, making them gasp and cheer along with the fliers. Period photographs and illustrated scenes heighten the interest. While rivalry drove the women's ambition, the author also emphasizes how their determination in a male-dominated society drove their camaraderie. Concluding chapters follow the fliers' lives after the race, explain why readers often remember Amelia Earhart above others, and impart the impact they had on future women in aviation and in space. This book soars as it details these often overlooked figures from history.
Nonfiction
Sixth to eighth grade

The Brave by James Bird

Perfect for fans of *Rain Reign*, this middle-grade novel is about a neurodiverse boy with OCD and his move to a reservation to live with his biological mother. Collin has a counting condition that finds him counting every letter spoken to him. It's a quirk that makes him a prime target for bullies, and a continual frustration to the adults around him, including his father. When Collin is asked to leave yet another school, his dad decides to send him to live in Minnesota with the mother he's never met. She is Ojibwe, and lives on a reservation. Collin arrives in Duluth with his loyal dog, Seven, and quickly finds his mom and his new home to be warm, welcoming, and accepting of his condition. Collin's quirk is matched by that of his neighbor, Orenda, a girl who lives mostly in her treehouse and believes she is turning into a butterfly. With Orenda's help, Collin works hard to overcome his challenges. His real test comes when he must step up for his new friend and trust his new family.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grade

Braced by Alyson Gerber

Rachel's life is going really well. She's twelve and totally crushing it on the soccer field (which means more time with her best-friend teammates), and everyone agrees that the ridiculously cute Tate is within days of asking her to be official BF/GF. All of that comes to a crashing halt when her Boston specialist reveals she has scoliosis. In fact, the curvature of her spine is so extreme that she'll have to wear a back brace—a heavy hulk of white padded plastic stretching from armpits to tail bone—for 23 hours a day. She tries to keep her spirits up but feels like a freak. Her soccer game plummets, and it seems like everyone—even her friends and Tate—are whispering in the halls. How can everything turn upside down so quickly? And where can she possibly find the strength to power through? Rachel's first-person narration relays her story in a surprisingly intimate, beautifully earnest voice, likely attributable to Gerber herself suffering from scoliosis and wearing a fitted brace in her formative years. Here she captures the preteen mindset so authentically that it's simultaneously delightful and painful. Every hallway whisper and direct insult will cut to the reader's heart, and the details about the process of wearing a brace in all its agonies—and, yes, benefits—are a natural and enlightening thread through the story. A masterfully constructed and highly empathetic debut about a different kind of acceptance.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grade

The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman

In India, eleven-year-old Viji and her twelve-year-old sister, Rukku, run away to Chennai after their violent father strikes out at them. Unprepared for living on the streets, they befriend two homeless boys: Arul, who lost his family in a tsunami, and Muthu, who escaped from a so-called school where he was confined and forced to work. Together they pick through garbage dumps for glass and metal scraps to sell, sleep on an abandoned bridge, and form their own family. Rukku's intellectual disability has made her dependent on Viji, who gradually learns that her sister is more capable than she had thought. When Rukku and Muthu fall ill, Viji makes tough decisions in hopes of saving their lives and later must cope with her grief before she can move on. The four children and their tight-knit relationship are portrayed with conviction and finesse. Written in the form of a letter from Viji to her sister, the affecting narrative transports readers to a faraway setting that becomes vivid and real. Although the young characters face unusually difficult challenges, they nevertheless find the courage they need to move forward. The author of *A Time to Dance* (2014), Venkatraman offers an absorbing novel of love, loss, and resilience.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh

Bud Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

This Coretta Scott King and Newbery medal winning novel tells the story of Bud, a ten-year-old boy searching for "his place" and his family in the 1930s. Curtis, who is the author of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (Delacorte, 1995), has created a story that is adventurous, touching, funny, and heartwarming all in one. Bud has been living in an orphanage since his mother died when he was six. The boy bases all his decisions on his "rules and things to have a funner life and make a better liar out of yourself." Everywhere he goes, he carries his suitcase full of clues about his family that he got from his mother. His expressions are comical and mature for his ten years. After a disastrous situation in a foster home, Bud decides to find his real father. His journey takes him to what turns out to be his grandfather's hometown and his band. He comes across danger, fun, sadness, and, eventually, true happiness. At the end of the book, the author explains that the story is based on some of the characters in his own family and includes pictures of them.

Historical fiction

Fifth grade

eBook

Cape the League of Secret Heroes by Kate Hannigan

In her first series, Hannigan (*The Detective's Assistant*, 2015) deposits readers into WWII-era Philadelphia, where they'll encounter the women mathematicians known as the ENIAC Six, female superheroes from early comic books, and a real Nazi spy ring. Twelve-year-old Irish immigrant Josie O'Malley feels the pinch of wartime living, picking up shifts at a diner and caring for her younger siblings while her mother works and her father fights in the Pacific. She desperately wishes the superheroes from her beloved comics would help her troubled city, but little does she suspect that she's about to become one herself. After responding to a newspaper ad calling for puzzlers (she's an ace at math and pattern recognition), Josie is recruited with two other girls—African American Mae and Japanese American Akiko—into a secret organization. Incredibly, the girls manifest superpowers just as a supervillain begins terrorizing the city. Prejudice against girls and women and racism directed at Mae and Akiko provide a more serious side to the action-packed plot. Humorous touches emerge as Josie and her friends hone their new powers, and some cheesy one-liners give a wink to vintage comic books—as do illustrated comics spreads. Readers across genres will be enamored by this blend of history, mystery, and superpowered action. A thorough author's note supplies historical context for the trio's first adventure in *Cape the League of Secret Heroes* by Kate

Hannigan

Fantasy adventure

Fifth to seventh grade

Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation by Stuart Gibbs

At first glance, twelve-year-old Charlie Thorne might appear reckless, especially when skiing off of Deadman's Drop, but Charlie is always running the numbers. Her genius-level IQ lets her precisely calculate her landing, as well as the odds that two of the people on the slopes below are waiting to apprehend her. After an intense chase, CIA agents Dante Garcia and Milana Moon capture Charlie and convince (i.e., blackmail) her to help them find Pandora, a powerful equation believed to have been developed and hidden by Einstein—a terrorist group is also on its trail. Gibbs deftly pens an *Alex Rider*-level adventure with this series starter, as the trio races to solve clues and find Pandora before it falls into the wrong hands. Issues of racial and gender diversity are nicely folded into the plot, which moves at breakneck speed from start to literal cliff-hanger finish. Charlie is a wildly entertaining protagonist whose intelligence is balanced by normal preteen rebellion. It doesn't take a theoretical physicist to predict that this series will be popular own right!

Adventure

Fifth to eighth grade

Clean Getaway by Nic Stone

Stone's (*Odd One Out*, 2018) heartwarming, character-centered, and humorous middle-grade debut is a sure-fire winner in this timely story about a boy retracing the South's segregationist past with his grandmother. Black middle-schooler and computer whiz William "Scoob" Lamar is looking forward to being grounded for the entirety of spring break when his grandmother, an octogenarian white woman, whisks him away in a brand-new Winnebago on a trip to retrace her history. The ways in which G'ma's days of old dovetail with the American civil rights movement do more than teach Scoob about the injustices of Jim Crow and the fight for equality; each stop provides clues to deciphering the mystery surrounding his grandfather's life in prison and estrangement from Scoob's father. Adding Scoob's wry conversational observations about the odyssey to maps and a Green Book, an essential travel guide for African Americans designed to help them find accommodations willing to admit them and avoid towns known for terrorizing Black people, contributes levity and realism at the same time. Instead, The book explores an integral part of America's past through the lens of one family's journey to mutual understanding and eventual generational acceptance. An engaging family read aloud.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth

Circus Mirandus by Cassie Beasley

Micah's parents died when he was just a toddler, and now he happily lives with Grandpa Ephraim, who tells him fantastic stories, the best of which are about Circus Mirandus, a circus kids can only attend if they believe in magic. When Ephraim was a boy, he came upon the magical circus and met the Man Who Bends Light, who was so impressed by Ephraim's knot-tying skills that he promised him a miracle. Now, many years later, Ephraim is dying, and Micah is determined to make sure he gets his miracle. Joined by his skeptical, brilliant friend Jenny, Micah seeks out Circus Mirandus to see its wonders for himself and to confront the Lightbender, though in the process, he learns more about himself than he ever expected. Debut author Beasley has built an imaginative world in evocative, painterly prose and she's filled it with compellingly multifaceted characters.

Fantasy

eBook

City Spies by James Ponti

Caught hacking into the NYC juvenile justice system's computers, twelve-year-old Sara Martinez faces years in detention centers, but a British secret agent rescues her and takes her to Scotland. There she joins his small, top-secret team of gifted young spies, each recruited from a different continent. Sara, renamed Brooklyn, trains with Paris, Rio, Kat, and Sydney for a few short weeks before joining the team for a mission in Paris. They are realistically wary of their newest member until she earns their trust. Working undercover as students attending a summit on the environment, they plan to break into a secret research facility and outwit an evil genius. A television writer and producer as well as the author of *Framed* (2016) and its sequels, Ponti writes a well-paced story laced with suspense, wit, and entertaining dialogue. Events unfold within colorful Parisian settings that include the Eiffel Tower, the Catacombs, and a deceptively shabby-looking hotel run by British Intelligence. Laying the groundwork for a new series, this brisk adventure features mysteries, intrigues, and five clever young heroes.

Mystery

Fifth to eighth grade

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander

This adaptation of Alexander's Newbery-winning novel in verse brings each character and event to life through Anyabwile's dynamic line work and portions of Alexander's beautiful poetry. The artwork, in a palette of black, white, gray, and orange, evokes the imagery of the basketball, ensuring that readers feel Josh Bell's experiences come to life. Josh and his brother, Jordan, sons of a basketball legend, rule the court, especially when they cooperate. But when the two find themselves growing further apart, as hormones increase and a girl enters the picture, life on and off the court falls into chaos. Although larger portions of the text in this adaptation exist in prose form, the poetry of the novel still exists at various stages to bring readers back to Alexander's original lively style. An energetic and lively re-envisioning, this transformation of the original text into a combination of visuals, poetry, and changing font styles will be sure to engage young readers who are both familiar and unfamiliar with Alexander's original work.

Graphic novel

Fifth to eighth grade

Dragon Hoops by Gene Luen Yang

There's a line between sports and American comics that is seldom crossed. Leave it to Yang to take the crucial step, capturing not only the excitement of basketball but something deep and universal about it, even as he parallels it with his own journey. Yang teaches at California's Bishop O'Dowd High School, home to the Dragons, a basketball team with a hallowed and, as it turns out, complicated history. Over and over again, the team almost wins State. Pursuing material for his next graphic novel, Yang surprises himself by latching onto the team and its long-time coach, Lou Richie. Yang traces the team's high-stakes season through the players but also delves into the history of basketball itself, touching on the sociopolitical forces that shaped it and—to no surprise for Yang's readers—the way race figures into both. Yang is an extraordinary cartoonist; his clean, clear, deceptively simple figures and compositions transmit emotions both subtle and powerful. Combining visual flair, like speeding backgrounds, with nearly diagrammatic movement, he creates pulse-pounding game sequences. Most important, through recurring visual motifs that connect a champion basketball player to a self-questioning artist to a Russian immigrant with a new idea, he illuminates the risks that every one of us must take and has, once again, produced a work of resounding humanity.

Graphic novel

Seventh and eighth grade

Demigods and Monsters by various authors

Filling in the mythological—and, in some cases, psychological—background of the Percy Jackson novels, 15 writers, most of them fantasy authors, weigh in on such diverse topics as how to recognize monsters (Rosemary Clement-Moore), the ins and outs of being one of Artemis' virgin huntresses (Carolyn McCullough), parent issues (several contributors), and why hero/monster tales have such resonance in our lives (ditto). This version of a title originally published in 2008 includes original entries revised to encompass the entire series, plus three new essays—most notably Hilari Bell's comparison of Percy with his far less upright namesake, Perseus: The Greek Hero—New and Improved! Elizabeth Wein and Riordan himself explore the origin and significance of Percy's dyslexia and ADHD. The role of Dionysus in both the series and in Greek myth receives a searching analysis by Ellen Steiber, and in the last and longest entry, scholar Nigel Rodgers offers an entire alphabetical glossary of ancient Greek gods, heroes, monsters, and tales and lists sites that extend the series. The high-profile authors will get readers to pick this up. Along with reference value, the collection should afford both fans and curious readers some insight into the series' appeal.

Fantasy/Mythology/critical theory

Fifth to eighth grades

eBook

Emmy in the Key of Code by Amiee Lucido

Twelve-year-old Emmy is the new kid, transplanted from Wisconsin to San Francisco. Despite a musical upbringing (Mom sings opera; Dad is a concert pianist), Emmy doesn't have any musical talent and even blacked out on stage during her last recital. When it's time to sign up for electives, all the cool girls take music, so intimidated Emmy winds up in computer science. After a rocky start, Emmy makes friends, becomes immersed in coding, and develops a special bond with her computer teacher, Ms. Delaney. Inevitable middle school drama ensues, including the devastating news that Ms. Delaney is ill. By the book's end, Emmy has developed a passion for coding music and found new social confidence, despite Ms. Delaney's worsening prognosis. The book features a free-verse format that perfectly captures Emmy's seesawing emotions and allows for the seamless incorporation of lines of code that show how composing music and creating code follow similar patterns. Music, coding, strong female techie role models—this engaging first novel should attract a wide audience. Recommended by incoming sixth and seventh graders.

Realistic fiction/STEAM

Fifth to seventh grade

eBook

Explorer Academy The Nebula Secret by Trudi Trueit
The first fiction series from National Geographic's new *Under the Stars* imprint features Cruz Coronado, 12, who's selected to attend the elite Explorer Academy in D.C. in this action-packed illustrated adventure. Cruz and 23 other kids from around the world are training to become explorers aboard the academy's flagship, which travels around the globe doing research. As if the training—and having an aunt on the faculty—isn't hard enough, a scarred man in snakeskin boots is stalking Cruz. He warns Cruz to leave or Nebula will kill him like they did Cruz's mother, who died mysteriously in the academy's synthesis lab when Cruz was five. Who or what is Nebula? Can the codes that Cruz loves to decipher help him solve his mother's death? The students' training includes lessons on cool technologies available now or in the near future, plausibly incorporated into the plot. Not all the characters are fleshed out, but there's potential to learn more about them in future installments. Sure to appeal to kids who love code cracking and mysteries with cutting-edge technology.

Science fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

The Expeditioners by S.S. Taylor
As the world teeters on the edge of war, Explorer-in-Training Kit West finishes his spy training and is sent on his first secret mission: a dangerous journey across the Simerian Desert to retrieve a secret map that will allow his government to fend off an invasion. But things are not as they seem and Kit must battle deadly sandstorms, ruthless spies, and government agents to find the map and stay on the trail of his father, the famous Explorer Alexander West. Will Kit have what it takes to find the map and a secret desert city known only in legend? And will he have the courage to finally find out where his father is leading him? Recommended by an incoming seventh grader.
Sixth to eighth grade

The First Rule of Punk by Celia Perez

In her story of seventh-grader Malú, debut author Pérez harnesses the spirit of School of Rock and gives it a punk rock spin. Malú isn't happy about her recent move to Chicago, because it meant leaving her dad (her parents are amicably divorced) and his record store behind. She tries to assume a brave punk attitude, but she can't help being anxious on her first day of school, especially when she gets on the wrong side of the class mean girl. When Malú learns about the upcoming Fall Fiesta talent show, she decides to form a band, with the hopes of finding "her people" in the process. While this plan hits a few snags, it results in friendships and a Mexican punk mentor. Like any good riot grrrl, Malú finds a creative outlet in making zines, several of which appear in the novel and call attention to Malú's passions, heritage (she is half Mexican), and private concerns. Pérez delivers an upbeat story of being true to yourself and your beliefs. Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Finding Wonders: Three Girls Who Changed Science
by Jeannine Atkins

From the author of *Borrowed Names* (2010), this three-part novel in verse vividly imagines the lives of three girls who grew up to become famous for their achievements in science. "Mud, Moths, and Mystery" opens in Germany in 1660 with Maria Merian as a girl, closely observing insect metamorphosis. Pursuing her interest in nature throughout her life, she even traveled to South America to observe wildlife. "Secrets in Stones" tells of young Mary Anning, who in the early 1800s began collecting fossils from cliffs near her home in Lyme Regis, England. Despite poverty and limited education, her significant discoveries and observations contributed to paleontology at a pivotal time. "Mapmaker's Daughter" begins in 1831 with Maria Mitchell stargazing through her father's telescope on Nantucket. Later, she discovered a comet and became a college astronomy professor. Atkins has a knack for turning a phrase, such as "Certainty is like a pillow / she learned to live without," or "Coughs scrape the air, as if Pa breathes through a grater." Science is woven through the narratives, but within the fabric of the characters' daily lives and family struggles. While the Mary Anning narrative is the most haunting, each of these three perceptive portrayals is original and memorable.

Verse novel

Fifth to seventh grade

Five Feet Apart by Rachael Lipincott

Stella Grant has control issues. She also has breathing issues because of cystic fibrosis, and she must remain six feet away from anyone who could give her an infection. She has spent years in and out of the hospital, and now, instead of joining her friends on their senior trip, she's fighting a simple sore throat that could ruin her chances for a lung transplant. Nevertheless, she hosts YouTube videos about CF and works diligently on her medicine-treatment reminder app. When CF patient and rich kid Will Newman arrives as part of a clinical trial for a drug, Stella knows there will be trouble. He doesn't care about the trial or his regimen, so she forces him to help test her app. Eventually, Stella decides moving one foot closer to Will is worth the risk, and both find their worlds expanding as a result. The characters' backstories are complex and moving, and the unpredictability of the disease will break readers' hearts.. recommended by an incoming seventh grader

Realistic fiction

Seventh and eighth grade

Forest of Wonders Wing and Claw series Book 1 by

Linda Sue Park

Raffa is a gifted apothecary who uses his synesthesia-inflected intuition to make the best poultices and tonics. When an injured bat flies in his window, he's determined to prove himself to his parents, so he and his cousin, Garith, seek out a legendary healing scarlet vine. When he uses it on the bat, he discovers an unexpected consequence: his bat can talk! Meanwhile, Raffa's uncle is summoned to work in the fancy city apothecary, and he and Garith move away. Raffa sneaks out to visit them, and once there, he's wowed by their fancy new digs, though the sheen dulls when he learns about their troubling secret project. Though most of the pivotal events of Park's series opener occur toward the end, the world building and rich characters, not to mention a bevy of comical talking animals, will lure in middle-grade fantasy fans, and the gentle message of conservation and kindness to all creatures will resonate with young animal lovers. A cliff-hanger ending leaves plenty to cover in the forthcoming follow-up.

Fantasy

Fifth and sixth grade

The Fourteenth Goldfish by Jennifer L. Holm

It's a little strange for eleven-year-old Ellie when her mother brings home a boy who looks to be about thirteen but dresses like Ellie's grandfather. But it's a shocker when Ellie realizes that the kid is her grandfather, a scientist who has suddenly succeeded in reversing the aging process. Now sleeping in their den and newly enrolled in Ellie's middle school, Grandpa connives with her to sneak into his old lab and swipe what he needs to continue his research. Meanwhile, Ellie comes to admire the grandfather she has barely known, listens to his stories of famous scientists, and discovers her own passion for science. Written in a clean, crisp style, with lively dialogue and wit, this highly accessible novel will find a ready audience. The idea of an adult in a young teen's body may not be new, but Ellie's first-person narrative makes good use of the situation's comic potential, particularly in the fractious, role-reversed relationship between Mom and Grandpa. Along with the comedy, the story has a reflective side, too, as Ellie thinks through issues such as death and immortality and confronts Grandpa with the social consequences of his research. A three-time Newbery Honor-winning author, whose books have also ranked on the New York Times bestseller lists.

Science fiction

Fifth and sixth grade

Game Changer by Tom Greenwald

Freshman football player Teddy Youngblood, 13, is seriously injured during a practice session before the upcoming football season. Teddy's family, friends, and neighbors are distraught about it—it may be Teddy's favorite sport, but it just put him into a coma. Soon, rumors begin circulating around town that Teddy's accident was not an accident; rather, there is something suspicious afoot. Worried, Teddy's family and friends clamor to find the truth behind the accident. Greenwald's latest takes a fresh approach, telling the story through multiple characters and an almost free-verse style that combines inner thoughts, texts, social media feeds, newspaper articles, interview transcripts, and dialogue. Example: "Can you squeeze my hand? / Oh man / Oh man that's perfect / Great job, Ted / Look at that." The format presents no barrier for readers, who will rapidly adapt. Reminiscent of Mike Lupica's *Lone Stars* (2017), Greenwald's novel entertains while exposing readers to the potential risks and consequences inherent in the sport of football.

Realistic fiction

Mixed verse, text and narrative

Fifth to eighth grade

Goodbye Mr. Spalding by Jennifer Robin Barr
His whole life, twelve-year-old Jimmy Frank has been able to see into Philadelphia's beloved Shibe Park from his bedroom window. But when the owner of the Philadelphia Athletics fears sales on the rooftop bleachers atop homes like Jimmy's are cutting into profits, they plan to erect a wall. The Great Depression has already tightened Jimmy's family's finances and the so-called "spite wall" is sure to further jeopardize their well-being. Jimmy is willing to do just about anything to stop the Athletics from building the wall, but is his partner in crime, his neighbor and BFF Lola, just as willing? Or is the spite wall also erecting a wall in their friendship? This appealing historical middle-grade novel is perfect for fans of beloved baseball-centered novels like Linda Sue Park's *Keeping Score* (2008). Barr knows her baseball history and brings rich detail to mid-1930s Philadelphia. While the plot may follow a predictable arc, sports fanatics will eat up the appended material. A sweet debut about friendship and the love of the game.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

Great Basketball Debates by Andres Ybarra
Team USA: Pro or College Players?; Should High School Players Be Able to Turn Pro? Should the Draft Lottery Be Eliminated—these chapter headings and more offer intriguing debate and critical thinking possibilities for students and families alike. A book especially selected by fifth graders for a possible Book Circle as it is available for reading and viewing on the Gordon Library ebook platform.

Nonfiction sports

Fifth to eighth grade

eBook

Greenglass House by Kate Milford

It's Christmas break and adopted Milo and his parents are looking forward to a vacation all to themselves at Greenglass House, the inn where they live and routinely host benevolent passing smugglers. When five unusual guests unexpectedly arrive, and their belongings—which all have something to do with the house—start disappearing, Milo finds himself at the heart of a real mystery. With the help of Meddy, the oddball girl who arrives with the cook, and a role-playing game that gives him the courage to poke around where he knows he is not supposed to, Milo uses his knowledge of the house and his skills of observation to find the missing objects, piece together the mystery of the house, and discover a secret about the legendary folk hero who used to live there. The puzzling mystery is perfectly matched by the offbeat world of Nagspeake, a fictional harbor town enhanced by folklore and history rich enough to sound convincingly real, and the dreamy Greenglass House, with its enviable attic, snug corners, and thrilling past. Milford (*The Boneshaker*, 2010) weaves together compelling clues, crackerjack detective work from Milo and Meddy, and well-rounded characters to reveal heartwarming truths about Greenglass House and its residents. An enchanting, empowering, and cozy read. Recommended by incoming sixth and seventh graders.

Mystery / fantasy / time travel

Fifth to eighth grade

eBook

Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World by Ashley Herring Blake

Ivy Aberdeen is not in a good place. She's lost her house to a massive tornado, her mother seems to barely notice she exists (because of the new twins), and her sister is being really mean. In the aftermath of the storm, Ivy and her family must decide what to do, and one solution means leaving Ivy with a new family until their house can be rebuilt. But when she begins to develop romantic feelings for a girl in her class, and her private notebook of sketches goes missing, everything starts to unravel. Blake (*How to Make a Wish*, 2017) brings Ivy and her family to life in her examination of familial connections, friendships, art, and first-time crushes, which is poignantly set against a background of destruction and displacement. This necessary and emotionally complex addition to the body of middle-grade literature offers readers a positive, complex, and courageous portrayal of burgeoning relationships within the world of junior high.

Realistic fiction

Fifth and sixth grade

Jade Hameister Polar Explorer by Jade Hameister
At 17, Australian teenager Jade Hameister became the youngest person to complete three grueling skiing expeditions called the Polar Hat-Trick. She skied to the North Pole, across Greenland, and from Antarctica's coast to the South Pole. In this exciting and inspiring story, Hameister recounts how she accomplished these amazing feats at such a young age. She survived a mysterious illness when she was just months old and was inspired by her father, who'd successfully climbed the Seven Summits. Unbelievably, she said she hadn't really skied before her first expedition, but she trained hard to make up for it. This photo-illustrated account examines Hameister's teammates in addition to her father, her supplies, and the challenges she faced (frigid temperatures, dangerous ice rubble and crevasses, polar bears, rain blizzards, heat, sunburn, dehydration, even peeing in frigid temperatures). Hameister saw the effects of climate change firsthand and advocates for ways to help save the planet. She thrillingly creates a "you are there" experience and inspires other young women to follow their own dreams.

Memoir

Seventh and eighth grade

Just Jaime by Terri Libenson

It's the last day of seventh grade, and Jaime just wants everything to go well. Her best friend since kindergarten, Maya, has been hot and cold lately, spending more and more time with charismatic Celia and gossipy Grace, but all they seem to want to do is put on makeup and talk about, ugh, boys. Meanwhile, Maya is frustrated that Jaime can't see that they've all changed and matured, while Jamie's still kinda, well, babyish. I mean, she's still in a training bra and not even into kissing boys! She's basically stuck in fifth grade. Told skillfully in alternating dual narratives from both girls' points of view—Jaime in handwriting font and funny illustrations, Maya in traditional graphic-novel format—this story is simultaneously incredibly original and utterly universal. The emotional roller-coaster of navigating friendships as they change shape, particularly in middle school, is portrayed with admirable sincerity, gentle humor, heartbreaking pain, and of course plenty of texts and emojis. Libenson weaves a beautiful, accessible, layered story yet again.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

The Last Day of Summer by Lamar Giles

The last Monday in August may not be the last official day of summer, but Otto and Sheed know it's the last day that counts: on Tuesday, they go back to school, and their days of freedom are over. The two African American cousins, known to all in Logan County as the Legendary Alston Boys, have spent their summer solving mysteries and competing with their rivals, the Epic Ellison Girls, to win keys to the city. But their wish for more summer comes startlingly true when a man appears out of nowhere with a strange, not-quite-right camera, and with one press of a button, he mysteriously freezes time. Except for Otto and Sheed, it seems everyone in town is trapped in a single moment. But the boys are on the case, and as they investigate, they get to know some very interesting concepts, meet people from out of time, and begin to understand how deeply a single missed opportunity can alter a life. Not all YA authors transition seamlessly to middle grade, but Giles (*Spin*, 2019) manages it with aplomb, spinning a zany, clever adventure filled with surreal humor that never feels forced. Anchored by its genuine characters and buoyed by its true fun, this is an adventure with staying power.

Science fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

The Line Tender by Kate Allen

Novels dealing in loss and grief often result in potent stories, not because they're "serious" or "sad," but because—if done right—they dig into a character's complexities. Death alters characters' landscapes in unfathomable ways, plunging them into uncertain waters and challenging them, first to stay afloat, and then to swim with new purpose. At the start of Allen's probing debut, Lucy and her father have carved out an imperfect but happy life together after the death of Lucy's mother, Helen, five years earlier. Lucy spends most of her time with her best friend and neighbor, Fred, and their summer has been largely devoted to a school project: creating a field guide to Cape Ann, their coastal New England town. Together, they make up the perfect team: science-minded Fred supplies the guide's facts and data, and Lucy uses her artistic talents to illustrate each specimen. When Sookie, a family friend and fisherman, catches a great white, the two kids race to the harbor to get a close look at the shark in order to add it to their guide. Its presence stirs up reporters, as well as Lucy's interest in her mom's work, which was devoted to studying sharks. An unpublished proposal by Helen to study great-white populations in New England captures Fred and Lucy's attention and takes on a greater significance for Lucy after a tragic swimming accident claims Fred's life. In her efforts to cope, Lucy begins writing Fred postcards since they can no longer talk. She also immerses herself in understanding Helen's proposal and perfecting her shark drawings, wanting to figure out what had utterly captivated her mom and Fred about the great whites—the spike in sightings that summer only spurring her on. Because, to Lucy, making sense of this thing will mean making sense of her world and two people she loves who are no longer in it. While Allen packs a lot into this story, it never feels overstuffed. Its pieces have purpose, and just as many speak to the average tween experience—getting your period, the confusion of first crushes—as they do to navigating grief and the panic absence can bring. The latter two points put an interesting number of responses on display outside of Lucy's experiences, underscoring how the deaths of Helen and Fred impact many characters, including Lucy's dad, who she comes to understand is still struggling with both. Lucy's efforts to get to the bottom of the study inadvertently help several others reconnect with important parts of their lives and take steps toward healing. Likewise, something in Lucy clicks when her teacher looks at hers and Fred's field guide and observes, "But artists and scientists aren't really that different, you know. They both want to figure out

how things work." This idea helps Lucy trace lines between herself and those she lost, like the observant line tender on a search-and-rescue team, and see the parts of them in herself. Lucy's shark sketches swim throughout the book, just as they do in her field guide and her mind, and it's only when she internalizes her mother's reminder that, as frightening as sharks can be, their threat is diminished when they're treated with respect, that Lucy begins to tame the fearful.

Eco-Fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

The escapades of the Greek gods and heroes get a fresh spin in the first book in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, about a contemporary 12-year-old New Yorker who learns he's a demigod. Perseus, aka Percy Jackson, thinks he has big problems. His father left before he was born, he's been kicked out of six schools in six years, he's dyslexic, and he has ADHD. What a surprise when he finds out that that's only the tip of the iceberg: he vaporizes his pre-algebra teacher, learns his best friend is a satyr, and is almost killed by a minotaur before his mother manages to get him to the safety of Camp Half-Blood--where he discovers that Poseidon is his father. But that's a problem, too. Poseidon has been accused of stealing Zeus' lightning bolt, and unless Percy can return the bolt, humankind is doomed. Riordan's fast-paced adventure is fresh, dangerous, and funny. Percy is an appealing, but reluctant hero, the modernized gods are hilarious, and the parallels to Harry Potter are frequent and obvious.

Fantasy fiction mythology

Lizzy Legend by Matthew Ross Smith

Eighth-grader Lizzy Trudeau falls asleep beneath a poster of LeBron James every night, and she never dreamed in a million years that she'd ever be able to actually play against him. But when a strange phone call prompts her to make a wish, she's suddenly trading the blacktop near her home for the bright lights of a real basketball arena. She can't miss a single shot—not even if she tries. Debut author Smith firmly roots this story of wish fulfillment in the contemporary basketball world, with all of the fast-paced excitement and chance for individual glory. Though tales of fame and fortune all too often pit BFFs against each other, Lizzy's best bud Toby is instead along for the ride, nearly stealing every scene he's in with his comic banter. Documentary-style cutaways to interviews with key players, along with short chapters and a balance of well-paced action and heart, give this sports story wide appeal.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Love Like Sky by Leslie C. Youngblood

Living in a blended family is not easy, especially for a girl whose parents have both remarried and moved on to build new families. G-Baby's world centers around her little sister, Peaches; however, since their mother remarried, G-Baby has become obsessed with having a relationship with her new teenage stepsister, Tangie. When Peaches' health takes a turn and she is hospitalized, G-Baby feels guilty and desperately tries to visit her, learning some hard lessons about doing the right thing and listening to adults in the process. Using beautiful prose, Youngblood's debut explores the expansive love only siblings can have for one another, while capturing the heart and soul of what it means to be a blended family. The multilayered characters and compelling story will resonate with readers, many of whom will find parallels to their own families, whether in terms of dealing with bullies, first crushes, friendships, or blended families. Young readers will fall in love with these characters and gain a new favorite author.

Realistic fiction

Lu by Jason Reynolds

Lu is the man, the kid, the guy. The one and only. Not only was he a miracle baby but he is albino. He's special down to his gold chains and diamond earrings, but he feels a little less once-in-a-lifetime when his parents tell him they're pregnant again. On top of this sobering news, he's leading the Defenders alongside a co-captain who isn't pleased about sharing the title; and he's training for the 110-meter hurdles, choking at every leap. As the championship approaches, can he prove his uniqueness one final time? As with the prior titles, the final installment in the four-book Track series is uplifting and moving, full of athletic energy and eye-level insight into the inner-city middle-school track-team experience. Reynolds wraps up his powerful series with a surprising ending, all while scattering rewarding details about Ghost, Patina, and Sunny to let the reader truly revel in this multidimensional world as it comes to a close.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Machines That Think! by Don Brown

How rows of rocks evolved into the intricate circuitry that runs our homes, drives our cars, and orders our pizza. Brown lets al-Khwārizmī, the Muslim mathematician who popularized Arabic/Hindu numbers (most notably, for Brown's purposes here, "0" and "1"), take the role of tour guide. He squires readers through centuries of watershed developments from the abacus and mechanical Pascaline calculator to the punch cards of Joseph-Marie Jacquard, ENIAC, IBM, the transistor, and robots. Closing with an explanation of the Turing test, he offers a mildly cautionary view of the increasingly pervasive roles computers play in our daily lives ("will they be doing all the thinking for us?") and an appended disquisition on binary numbers. Along the way he chronicles both major and incremental advances as well as offering nods to significant thinkers and doers familiar (Ada Lovelace, Steve Jobs) or otherwise—notably Jean Jennings and six other women charged with figuring out how to program ENIAC but not invited to its unveiling. Though he acknowledges in an afterword that his cast is largely white, European, and male he does what he can throughout to diversify it...and cogently observes at the end that the "domination of the West in the sciences has ended." Panels are drawn in a loose style that lightens the substantial informational load. Another terrific case study on the power of a big idea to work profound changes in our lives.

Graphic nonfiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Merci Suarez Changes Gear by Meg Medina

Merci Suárez loves painting with her Papi, playing on his soccer team, telling her Abuelo Lolo about her days at school, and taking pictures of her family when they are together. But lately Lolo has been acting different—he wanders off, forgets things easily, and has even gotten angry. To add to Merci’s worries, sixth grade at Seaward Pines Academy has gotten off to a rocky start. To make up her school tuition, Merci has been assigned community service as a Sunshine Buddy to new student Michael Clark, and, as the weeks go by, popular Edna Santos only gets meaner as Merci and Michael become friends. Merci isn’t sure what to make of this new world where “maybe like” is not the same as “like like,” and where “popular” is not the same as having friends. As she navigates her way through the year, she discovers that, even though change is scary and even though it may mean things will never be the same, sometimes it is unavoidable. Medina’s breathtaking coming-of-age story features a strong, deeply honest protagonist whose insights will make readers laugh, as well as dynamic secondary characters who reveal glimmers of profound depth. Medina capably gets to the heart of middle-school experiences in this engrossing story of a kid growing into herself. A must-read.

The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl by Stacy McAnulty

When Lucy, 12, was struck by lightning, she gained extraordinary math skills, and her grandmother, Nana, who raised Lucy after her parents’ death, has homeschooled her ever since. Lucy is content to fill her hours with online college classes and chats on math forums where no one knows her real age, but Nana decides that Lucy needs to experience a world outside of a computer screen. If Lucy goes to middle school for one year, Nana promises, she’ll be allowed to apply to college, and reluctantly, Lucy agrees. At first, her germophobia and mild obsessive behavior make a difficult situation more difficult, but eventually, she acquires two friends, finds useful work to do at an animal shelter, and has her life changed by a little dog she calls Pi. McAnulty captures the drama and trauma of middle school with well-rounded and believable characters and a convincing and appealing story.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Digital audiobook

Monstrous, The Lore, Gore, and Science Behind Your Favorite Monsters by Carlyn Beccia

Extraordinarily clever and phenomenally entertaining, this graphics-forward resource intrepidly investigates the science behind eight monsters and cryptids, digging into the possibilities of their existence, exploring ways to react in case of a hypothetical encounter, and drawing real-world parallels. Each scenario is loaded with data: chapters describe why King Kong’s size makes him a mathematical impossibility (the square-cube law!), note that the mechanics of bodily decomposition might have made people a few centuries ago inclined to believe in vampires, and map the places in the world where Godzilla might like to stop and take in some radioactivity. Beccia’s tone is as accessibly irreverent as it was in *They Lost Their Heads!* (2018), and she plays no games here, cheerfully admitting that, while Bigfoot is almost surely a hoax, it’s best to be prepared to know how to make a cast of his footprint should you happen upon one (instructions included). The saucy cartoon illustrations are packed with hilarious dialogue asides, comparative size charts, and diagrams with helpful tips galore (need to know what to pack for the zombie apocalypse? Even the sillier segments have practical applications—the advice on what to do when a werewolf attacks can also be used for dogs—and the secondary resources are extensive. A fantastically researched, absolutely delectable approach to science education.

Non-fiction science miscellanea

Fifth to seventh grade

Noisemakers twenty-five Women Who Raised Their Voices & Changed the World by “Kazoo”

From the creators of Kazoo magazine, a quarterly magazine for girls ages 5-12, which Amy Poehler’s Smart Girls called “required reading,” comes a graphic novel anthology of women who are not afraid to make some noise!

Did anyone ever get anywhere by being quiet? To change anything, you have to make some noise!

A look at the lives of twenty-five extraordinary women through the eyes of twenty-five extraordinary comic artists. In chapters titled Grow, Tinker, Play, Create, Rally, and Explore, you’ll meet Eugenie Clark, who swam with sharks, Raye Montague, who revolutionized the design process for ships, Hedy Lamarr, a beautiful actress and brilliant inventor, Julia Child, a chef who wasn’t afraid to make mistakes, Kate Warne, the first female detective, who saved the life of President-Elect Abraham Lincoln, and many more.

Graphic novel

Fifth to eighth grade

The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate

This companion to Newbery-winning *The One and Only Ivan* (2012) takes the same form—short sections of sparse, first-person narration—this time centered on Bob, Ivan the silverback’s scrappy little dog friend. While Bob supplies a sharp, lively voice that young readers will enjoy, he can’t quite live up to the charm and gentle otherness of the soft-spoken gorilla. The story picks up with Bob enjoying domestic life and Ivan comfortable in a zoo, along with Ruby the elephant. The plot drags in the first half, heavy with digressions as it catches readers up and fleshes out Bob’s origins. A traumatic event as a pup (safe for young readers), it turns out, largely informs Bob’s attitude. After a hurricane rolls in, wreaking havoc on the zoo and surrounding town, Bob is pushed to confront his guilt and become the big-hearted hero we know he can be. Fans of the first book will love catching up with cherished friends, and newcomers, too, will enjoy this heartfelt story of survival.

Fiction

Fifth and sixth grade

eBook

Orphan Island by Laurel Synder

Nine orphans live by themselves on an idyllic island, which provides them with everything they need as long as they follow a few rules: learn to swim, learn to read, and there can never be more than nine children on the island. Each “year” (time is only measured in “sleeps”), an unpiloted green boat arrives from across the ocean with a new youngest child and departs with the oldest. When Jinny rebels and refuses to leave and the balance is skewed, the island responds in kind, and when disaster strikes, Jinny has only one choice if the rest are to survive. Snyder’s well-realized and distinct characters are a distinguishing feature. Even the island, with its magical elements, becomes a sort of character, as it responds to events. With the book’s lovely, absorbing narrative and an enigmatic plot, readers willing to suspend their disbelief will enjoy this deceptively simple story.

Fantasy fiction

Fifth to sixth

eBook

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper

Fifth-grader Melody has cerebral palsy, a condition that affects her body but not her mind. Although she is unable to walk, talk, or feed or care for herself, she can read, think, and feel. A brilliant person is trapped inside her body, determined to make her mark in the world in spite of her physical limitations. Draper knows of what she writes; her daughter, Wendy, has cerebral palsy, too. And although Melody is not Wendy, the authenticity of the story is obvious. Told in Melody’s voice, this highly readable, compelling novel quickly establishes her determination and intelligence and the almost insurmountable challenges she faces. It also reveals her parents’ and caretakers’ courage in insisting that Melody be treated as the smart, perceptive child she is, and their perceptiveness in understanding how to help her, encourage her, and discourage self-pity from others. Thoughtless teachers, cruel classmates, Melody’s unattractive clothes (“Mom seemed to be choosing them by how easy they’d be to get on me”), and bathroom issues threaten her spirit, yet the brave Melody shines through. Uplifting and upsetting, this is a book that defies age categorization, an easy enough read for upper-elementary students yet also a story that will enlighten and resonate with teens and adults. Similar to yet the antithesis of Terry Trueman’s *Stuck in Neutral* (2000), this moving novel will make activists of us all.

Fifth to sixth grade

eBook

The Parker Inheritance by Varian Johnson

From the author of *The Great Greene Heist* (2014) comes the exciting adventure of two kids searching for a hidden treasure. Candice's summer has been the worst, until she finds a letter in her grandma's attic that leads to her grandma being driven out of their town of Lambert, South Carolina. The letter offers clues about the untold history of a young African American woman named Siobhan Washington and about a secret game of tennis. Candice teams up with Brandon, the boy next door, and dives into the hidden history of Lambert to finish what her grandma started. Following each new discovery, Johnson reveals a key moment in the past that uncovers a secret love and a great injustice. While Candice works through her parents' divorce and moving, Brandon deals with being bullied by a boy from school. The mystery offers them a way to seek justice for Candice's grandma, but it also helps them deal with their own struggles. A dazzling and emotional read that deals with serious topics such as bullying, racism, and divorce.

Detective mystery fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

The Perfect Horse: The Daring Rescue of Horses Kidnapped by Hitler, adapted for young people by Elizabeth Letts

In this young-readers' edition of her New York Times best-seller, Letts captivates readers from beginning to end. Even before WWII, Hitler's Nazi agenda to make everything German "the best" involved confiscating champion horses from countries in Eastern Europe. Thoroughbred Arabians and Lipizzaners were especially prized. Under the leadership of Gustav Rau, Hitler's choice for leading a eugenics horse-breeding program, the horses were held in Hostau, Czechoslovakia. As the war's end approached, the Germans in charge of the horses realized that in order to protect them they must surrender the horses to the Americans. The glitch in this arrangement was that the Americans couldn't cross into Czechoslovakia, but, under the command of Colonel Hank Reed (with General George Patton's tacit approval), they did. Letts traces the dangerous mission of rescuing the horses, transporting them to the U.S., and transferring the horses to the Department of Agriculture, after which they were sold to private owners. This account of the heroism and cooperation of unlikely people to protect these horses is spellbinding. The author's impeccable attention to detail and exhaustive sources make this a must-read.

Narrative nonfiction

Fifth to eighth grade

The Prince and the Dressmaker by Jen Wang

Frances, a seamstress living in Paris at the turn of the century, causes quite a stir when she designs a daring, avant-garde ballgown for a count's daughter, who blithely asks to be dressed "like the devil's wench." Though the countess is displeased, her daughter is enchanted, and so is the crown prince, Sebastian, who immediately hires Frances with an unusual request: he wants her to make him a wardrobe of bold, glamorous gowns. Secrecy, of course, is paramount, but Frances loves having the freedom to design the dresses of her dreams, which are making quite a name for the prince's au courant alter ego, Lady Crystallia. Wang's buoyant, richly colored artwork beautifully envisions Frances' designs against an already captivating background. It's not that the de rigueur fashions are ugly or boring—rather, everything is beautiful—but Frances' ensembles stand out stunningly. As Lady Crystallia gains notoriety, and Frances gets closer to meeting her idol, a designer of ballet costumes, elements of Frances' designs trickle subtly into the wider fashion world. But fame brings attention, and Seb's worries about being exposed surpass his loyalty to his friend. Though the conclusion is perhaps too rosy given the suggested time period, that's an easy quibble to forgive, thanks to the gorgeously dense artwork, lively sense of movement, effervescent fashions, sweet romance, and heartwarming denouement

Graphic novel

Sixth to eighth grade

The Prodigy by John Feinstein

From award-winning sportswriter John Feinstein, a YA novel about a teen golfer poised to blaze his way into Masters Tournament history—and he'll face secrecy, sacrifice, and the decision of a lifetime to get there. Seventeen-year-old Frank Baker is a golfing sensation. He's set to earn a full-ride scholarship to play at the university of his choice, but his single dad wants him to skip college and turn pro; golf has taken its toll on the family bank account, and his dad is eager to start cashing in on his son's prowess. Frank knows he isn't ready for life on the pro tour—regardless of the potential riches—so his swing coach enlists a professional golfer turned journalist to be Frank's secret adviser. Pressure mounts when, after reaching the final of the U.S. Amateur tournament, Frank wins an automatic invite to the Masters. And when the prodigy, against all odds, starts tearing up the course at Augusta National, sponsors are lined up to throw money at him—and his father. But Frank's entry in the Masters hinges on maintaining his standing as an amateur. Can he and his secret adviser—who has his own conflicts—keep Frank's dad at bay long enough to bring home the legendary green jacket?

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Rebel Seoul by Axie Oh

In her brilliantly crafted debut, Oh brings us to the year 2199. The planet's East and West have been consumed by war for the past 50 years, and the newly formed Neo Alliance (Korea, Japan, and China) are ruthless in their ambition to control the world. Enter Lee Jaewon, fresh off his military placement exam from one of Neo Seoul's elite military academies and assigned to the Tower—home of the government's most top-secret project. Here Jaewon meets Tera, a teenage girl who has undergone years of military testing to turn her into a supersoldier with the ability to pilot one of Korea's advanced God Machines, a weapon capable of leveling a city block in one blow. Abandoned by those who were meant to love him the most, Jaewon is committed to doing his part to contribute to the war effort. But as he and Tera grow closer, and the mystery of his father's death comes to light, Jaewon begins to question his loyalties. Will love for another open his eyes to the true nature of war? Equal parts K-drama (Korean drama) and sci-fi blockbuster, Oh blends futuristic tech, authentic Korean culture, and romance in this complex, utterly engrossing, and wholly fresh story that is sure to entice a wide array of readers.

Science fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Rebound by Kwame Alexander

It's the end of the school year in 1988, and Charlie Bell is flattened by the death of his father. Charlie tries to hide in the pages of his comic book collection, much to his mother's despair. Finally she ships him off to stay with his grandparents for the summer. At first it's just a fresh form of misery, as Charlie's acidic grandfather goads him into physical activity in the stifling heat. Then his cousin Roxie coaxes him onto the basketball court. It's the combination of family, friends, and mad new skills that finally help Charlie begin to rebound from his father's death. Charlie Bell is the father of twins Jordan and Josh Bell, stars of Alexander's Newbery Medal-winning novel *Crossover* (2014). Fans of *Crossover* will remember that Chuck "Da Man" Bell played professional basketball, and they'll be intrigued by his initial resistance to learning the game. But this is an Alexander production, so the plot, as rich and satisfying as it is, is outdazzled by the brilliance of wordplay and syntax. There is a rhythm to each page, whether it's the snappy give-and-take of dialogue, the throbbing of Charlie's bottomless melancholy, or the rushing excitement of a basketball game. In addition, comics-style illustrations by Emmy-winning artist Anyabwile bring Charlie's fantasies of basketball glory to life. One of many award titles by award winning poet and novelist, Kwame Alexander, 2018 Karla Harry Visiting Author.

Novel in verse

Fifth to eighth grade

ebook

Robots and Drones: Past, Present and Future by Scott Mairghread

Taking a broad definition of robot—“a machine that senses something in its environment, makes a choice about what it senses, and performs an action in response”—Scott and Chabot’s lively, humorous panels offer up a surprising range of robots. Robots that walk, assemble cars, and perform surgery are all a given; but what about a coffee maker, thermostat, or touch lamp? They all fit the definition and are easy illustrations for concepts such as sensors, input, and output. In precise, colorful artwork, the pair cover the history of robots and automatons, programming languages, and some components of robot construction, among other topics. A section addressing robot ethics, concerns about advancements in artificial intelligence, and controversy over military drones will get readers thinking critically, too. It’s a dizzying array of thought-provoking facts, and the enthusiastic tone and obvious excitement about the field is infectious—luckily, there’s a section about building robots from kits and joining robotics clubs at school for readers who want to get more involved.

Graphic novel nonfiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Right as Rain by Lindsey Stoddard

It has been almost a year since that night, and Rain’s family needs a new start in a totally new town. Rain’s new neighbor and classmate, Frankie, is chilly at first, until Rain realizes she’s taken the place of Frankie’s best friend, Reggie, in her home, her classroom desk, and even her place on the track team. However, Frankie respects Rain as a runner and introduces her to Ms. Dacie, who runs a makeshift teen center. When she learns Ms. Dacie’s funding has been cut, she puts all her efforts into a fund-raising project in hopes of ignoring the challenges of her homelife: her mother pretends everything is OK, while her father can barely get out of bed, and Rain is weighed down by the fact that she’s been keeping a secret since that night—the night her brother died. Stoddard has written a beautiful story about a resilient girl many readers will be able to relate to, and she gently hits on tough topics, such as death and divorce, in a tender and truthful manner.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

Seafurrers: The Ships’ Cats Who Lapped and Mapped the World by Philippa Sandall

A cat’s-eye view of maritime history We remember the bold seafarers of yore—from Magellan to Shackleton—for their extraordinary exploits: new lands discovered, storms weathered, and battles won. But somehow history has neglected the stalwart, hardworking species who made it all possible...’es, the noble cat! In *Seafurrers*, able sea cat Bart sets the record straight at last. “Fear of water” aside, cats were indispensable at sea—both as pest controllers and as beloved mascots. Thirty-eight tales recount the adventures of Trim (who circumnavigated Australia), Tom (the sole feline survivor of the sinking of the USS Maine), celebrity cat Simon (a veteran of the Yangtze Incident), and other furry heroes. Filled with nautical trivia, rare photographs, and whimsical illustrations, this deft genealogy of human-feline friendship will stir your regard for the incomparable cat—whether on the couch or in the crow’s nest!

Recommended by an incoming seventh grader.

Nonfiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Slacker by Gordon Korman

Though Cam’s parents have put up with his gamer “lifestyle” for years, things change after his inattention to a simple request leads to burnt pasta, billowing smoke, and firemen axing their way through the front door. Responding to his parents’ ultimatum that he take up a new interest, 13-year-old Cam starts the Positive Action Group, a fake middle-school club for good-deed doers. There’s just one problem: when the club takes off despite his efforts to sabotage it, this champion slacker becomes the reluctant president of a wildly successful organization. After the funny opening chapter, in which Cam relates the oven-fire fiasco, the narration rotates among many characters. The technique works well, showing varied points of view without giving away secrets that will keep readers guessing for quite a while: Who is the mastermind continually undermining Cam’s plans, and who is Cam’s online nemesis? Korman makes comedy look deceptively easy in this page-turner of a chapter book, which features a strangely sympathetic character in a memorable predicament.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

Side Tracked by Diana Harmon Asher

It's an all-too-familiar scenario for Joseph: Charlie, the maniacal class bully, thundering down the soccer field toward him. But just before impact, Heather hip checks Charlie, sends him sprawling, steals the ball, and scores. The new girl in town, she doesn't seem to mind that Joseph has learning issues (attention deficit disorder) or that he's no athlete. Her strength and her outsider perspective are valuable to him as they navigate seventh grade as friends, both in school and on the newly formed track team, where he unexpectedly finds that he belongs. An entertaining mix of events, conversations, anxieties, and reflections, Joseph's first--person narrative engages readers on page one and never lets up. The combination of acute observation and wry humor is disarming, and Joseph isn't one to shy away from mulling over his own shortcomings. In the end, his big heart outweighs any number of supposed defects and enables him to help others in his family, on his team, and in his wider circle of friends. Justice is sweet when bullies get their comeuppance in this rewarding first novel.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to seventh grade

ebook

The Sixth Man by John Feinstein

Alex Myers returns in the second installment of the Triple Threat trilogy, and this time he is aiming for the hoop. After a heart-wrenching defeat in postseason play with the football team, Alex has missed the first few weeks of basketball practice and must start as a JV player. He quickly proves his worth and moves up to varsity, where he and superstar newbie Max Bellotti turn heads. But things aren't as simple off the court, as the team grumbles about older players being displaced by these young upstarts, the coach draws criticism by dating a player's mom, and the school community explodes over the news that Max is gay. In true Feinstein fashion, the game provides a reason for Alex and his teammates to put differences aside in favor of pulling together. The realistic social situations are interspersed with sports strategy, practices, and plenty of action. Alex's romance with reporter Christine provides an interesting assist to Max as he draws strength from other out athletes and publishes his story in the school newspaper. Fans will cheer for more of Alex's story as he inches closer to spring and the dugout.

Sports Fiction

Sixth to eighth grade

Renegades by Marissa Meyer

Nova Artino believed the "good guy" superheroes, known as the Renegades, would save her family from an unknown assassin; but at the end of the day, her parents and younger sister are dead, and she's no longer a fan. Her uncle, a villain in this futuristic society with a good number of supernaturally talented people, takes her in, and Nova discovers her own talent, becoming Nightmare. Her goal: to infiltrate the Renegades and bring them down. She just doesn't count on a surprising reluctance to kill people.

This series opener establishes the central question of what makes someone good or bad, and whether the distinction is just a matter of perspective. The Renegades represent the rule of law, but their methods are sometimes suspect, while the anarchists see a society weakened by dependence on superheroes. It is a timely, thought-provoking, discussion-worthy premise wrapped in a narrative bogged down in too much description and explanation—though the author's skills are apparent. For another reflective hero and action story, try Michael Carroll's *Quantum Prophecy* series.

Dystopian fantasy

Eighth grade

Snapdragon by Kat Leyh

Lumberjanes comic books collaborator Leyh expertly blends fantasy and realism in her energetic debut solo middle-grade graphic novel. “Our town has a witch. She fed her eye to the devil. She eats roadkill and casts spells with the bones.”

Snapdragon knows the rumors, but after the “roadkill witch” rescues Snap’s beloved dog and agrees to foster abandoned possum babies, Snap starts to think all may not be as it seems. And it’s true: The town’s “witch” is actually Crocs-wearing, white-haired, one-eyed Jacks. Gruff but nurturing, Jacks takes Snap under her wing, teaching Snap her work of using bones from roadkill to build and sell anatomically correct skeletal systems. But it also turns out that Jacks is a witch, using magic to release the souls of roadkill back into nature, and Snap is desperate to find out if she can also channel magic. Leyh’s characters are fully realized, from Snap’s simultaneously overflowing skepticism and enthusiasm to her dynamic with her single working-while-in-school mom, from Jacks’ quiet history with Snap’s grandma to Snap’s new best friend’s transition to wearing skirts, loving nail polish, and being called Lulu. Their world isn’t perfect: Snap and Lulu are bullied at school, economic struggles are apparent, and Snap’s mom’s abusive ex-boyfriend shows up more than once (including in a finale that has a twinge of *deus ex machina*). Jacks is white while Snap, her family, Lulu, and most secondary characters are coded as black—all, refreshingly, presenting with a realistic variety of skin tones and hair colors and textures. Sweet and fierce, this is a must-have.

Fantasy graphic novel

Fifth to eighth grade

Snow and Rose by Emily Winfield Martin

Martin’s illustrated rendition of *Snow White* and *Rose Red* brings this lesser-known Grimm fairy tale out of obscurity. Taking a few creative liberties—there’s no prince, nor any mention of marriage—Martin ventures into an enchanted wood where bandits and monsters prowl, people go missing, and a widow resides with her two daughters: Snow, who is wild and fair, and Rose, who is gentle, with dark hair and rose-petal cheeks. Still grieving their father, the girls find comfort in nature and spend their time exploring the woods, which holds an unimaginable secret. Like most of the Grimm brothers’ tales, this peculiar story carries sinister overtones, but Martin does a nice job of keeping the dark atmosphere from overwhelming younger readers, largely through her whimsical touches. A quirky librarian who offers objects rather than books; a boy with an encyclopedic

knowledge of mushrooms; a protective bear companion (though that is in the original); fairies; and lovely full-color illustrations—all these elements lend charm and balance to this tale, where avarice and cruelty fall to kindness and love.

Fairytale

Fifth and sixth grade

eBook

Shuri A Black Panther (Marvel) novel by Nic Stone
Shuri, 13, may be the baby sister to T’Challa, king of Wakanda, but her knowledge of all things science and technology deem her a force in her own right.

The queen thinks Shuri should spend less time in her lab and more time socializing, but Shuri’s convinced that she’s better off tinkering with new gadgets and Vibranium experiments. With the challenge ritual coming up, Shuri has been busy with just that—designing a new Black Panther habit for her brother, infused with the Heart-Shaped Herb. She soon finds, however, that she must stop an invasion of her beloved Wakanda or else the nation and their supply of Heart-Shaped Herb (which gives the Black Panther their powers) is doomed. Together, Shuri and her Dora Milaje—in-training, K’Marah, set out on a quest that begins what readers will hope to be an ongoing series. Seasoned Marvel fans will delight in Ororo Monroe’s big-sister role to a young Shuri, while all will appreciate getting into the head of Wakanda’s resident genius and (hopefully) soon-to-be Black Panther. While we do hear directly from Shuri in her mission-log notes, the action of the story feels muted at times by third-person narration. Nevertheless, the science, comedy, and unapologetic Black girl magic will make this title a surefire hit.

Fantasy

Fifth to eighth grade

Some Places More Than Others by Renee Watson
Amara, almost 12, leads a comfortable life in Beaverton, Oregon. Her dad works for Nike, and that brings perks. Her mom owns a boutique and is pregnant with Amara's soon-to-be sister. But when her teacher assigns a family history project, she realizes there's a lot she doesn't know: Why is her father estranged from Grandpa Earl? Does it have something to do with her birthday being so close to her grandmother's death? After much pleading, Amara is allowed to accompany her father on a business trip to New York, where she visits with relatives, tries to mend old feuds, starts a new one, and unravels family secrets. Though there are few surprises here, Watson creates characters that pop, especially Amara, who, through her first-person narration, demonstrates how past events affect the present. The Harlem setting makes a good background for Amara's growing awareness of Black history and how her privileged existence (a source of irritation to her cousin Ava) has been built on the shoulders of those who came before—some historical figures, others closer to home. Books from Watson, a Newbery Honor winner and Coretta Scott King–award winning author, always generate a buzz.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grade

Stand Up Yumi Chung by Jessica Kim
Yumi, 11, has plenty on her plate. She helps out at her parents' restaurant in L.A.'s Korea town, she's taking prep classes to win a scholarship her private school offers, and almost every moment involves living up to her parents' high expectations. Yumi's passion, however, is comedy, and when she accidentally finds herself in a kids' comedy class—taught by her YouTube idol, no less—she decides to take full advantage. This, of course, leads to a web of lies from which Yumi tries to untangle herself with varying degrees of effort. Author Kim is juggling a lot here, but she does so with aplomb. Along with Yumi's comedy joys and woes (one of her jokes is that she's a zoo animal now because she's a "lion cheetah"), she's dealing with the family restaurant's slow demise, her older sister's anxieties, and her desire to leave prep school for a new public school centered on the arts. Kim has taught school, and it shows, both with the spot-on dialogue and the up-to-date social media references. She also offers readers solid suggestions on building self-esteem. This will certainly remind readers of Kelly Yang's *Front Desk* (2018), but instead of a deus ex machina solving the family's problem, Yumi does it herself.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to seventh grade

The Sun is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon
On a summer morning in New York City, Daniel and Natasha wake up as strangers. This is a day that could catapult their lives into entirely new directions that neither of them wants to take. Natasha has only hours left to prevent her family's deportation to Jamaica, after a minor legal infraction jeopardizes their stay in the U.S. Daniel dreads sealing his fate with an alumni interview that will pave his way to a career in medicine, as his Korean family expects. Despite a day packed with Natasha's desperate race against time and a tangled system, and Daniel's difficult tug-of-war between familial pressures and autonomy, love finds a way in, takes hold, and changes them both forever. Yoon's sophomore effort (*Everything, Everything*, 2015) is carefully plotted and distinctly narrated in Natasha's and Daniel's voices; yet it also allows space for the lives that are swirling around them, from security guards to waitresses to close relatives. It's lyrical and sweeping, full of hope, heartbreak, fate, and free will. It encompasses the cultural specifics of diverse New York City communities and the universal beating of the human heart. Every day—like every book—begins full of possibility, but this one holds more than others.
Realistic fiction
Eighth grade and up

Sundown Rule by Wendy Townsend

This spare, lovely novel concerns that moment in childhood, at once universal and utterly lonely, when one is forced to recognize that all life is mortal. Living in rural Michigan with her naturalist father and her beloved cat, Cash, Louise has developed a deep affinity for the natural world and its creatures, rescuing baby animals and injured wildlife, like the heron bitten by a snapping turtle. But she abides (sometimes reluctantly) by Dad's Sundown Rule: At day's end, she must return the animals where she found them. When Dad lands a National Geographic assignment in Brazil, he leaves Louise with his sister and her husband in the suburbs. Both are kind, but Aunt Kay is allergic to animals, so Cash must stay behind and Louise can't bring the baby rabbit and raccoon she rescues into their house. Louise finds a sympathetic friend in Sarah but resists the teaching of Sarah's church that animals have no souls, which Louise finds especially cruel after she experiences a devastating loss. Her efforts to understand and make peace with what has happened will give new meaning to the Sundown Rule. Unfolding with the implacable clarity of the natural world Louise reveres, the novel proves that a quiet story can be as gripping as the busiest action-packed narrative—and with more staying power.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

The Time Museum by Matthew Loux

Delia knows the kiwi bird she's following doesn't belong in New England, but when it leads her to a mysterious gate in the wilderness, suddenly the bird isn't the most unusual thing in her afternoon. Behind the gate is a miraculous museum that connects researchers to every place and every time. Not only is Delia's beloved uncle its director, but she's been picked to try out for their intern program. Loux's loopy, swooping full-color artwork adds a bold, cartoonish flair to the time-travel tale, and as the group of six kids, all aspiring interns, learn how to work together on various missions to several time periods, he throws in plenty of comical visual references to bygone eras, such as the gym teacher who's always dressed in a suit of armor. Charming Delia is a relatable protagonist with believable triumphs and falters, and her ultimate transformation into an able leader is cheer worthy. Comical antics, cinematic pacing, heartwarming friendship, and a fast-moving, wacky plot for middle-grade fans of adventure comics.

Fantasy

Fifth to seventh grade

Thorhill by Pam Smy

Dual stories set decades apart unfold together in this hybrid novel told in diary entries and eerie grayscale illustrations. More than 30 years ago, Mary Baines kept a diary about her life at Thornhill, an orphanage, and the cruel torment she experienced at the hands of another girl there. Meanwhile, in the present, Smy's cinematic artwork shows lonesome Ella curious about the dilapidated former orphanage outside her window and the newspaper clippings she finds about a girl who went missing there, named Mary Baines. As Mary becomes more and more tormented for her love of books and the strange puppets she makes in her room, Ella sneaks onto Thornhill's grounds and finds remnants of Mary's dolls, which she takes home and lovingly repairs before returning them. The interplay between Mary's diary entries and the images of Ella's investigation builds depth in both girls' narratives, though Ella's can be a bit harder to decipher. Still, the enigmatic narrative, believable horrors, and haunting conclusion will be riveting for fans of ghost stories.

Fantasy and horror graphic novel hybrid

Sixth to eighth grade

When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

Omar Mohamed was a child when soldiers attacked his village in Somalia. Separated from his parents, he and his younger brother, Hassan, eventually made their way to Dadaab, a crowded refugee camp in Kenya where he now spends his days scrambling for food and taking care of Hassan, who is nonverbal and suffers from debilitating seizures. A chance to attend school is a dream come true, but the opportunity weighs heavily on Omar; school is a selfish choice when you have no parents and a brother who needs constant looking after. Debut author Mohamed shares his absorbing story with absolute honesty, laying bare every aspect of his life's many challenges; even after surviving unimaginable circumstances, he remains compassionate—to others as well as himself. While Mohamed's story is riveting in its own right, the illustrations bring warmth and depth to the tale. Drawing with evident empathy and deep respect, Jamieson captures the many significant moments in Mohamed's life with charming detail. Wonderfully expressive figures convey complex and conflicted emotions, and the rich colors imbue the story with life. Mohamed's experience is unfortunately not unique, but it is told with grace, humility, and forgiveness. This beautiful memoir is not to be missed

Graphic novel

Memoir

Sixth to eighth grade

Winterhouse by Ben Guterson

Eleven-year-old Elizabeth isn't surprised to learn that her aunt and uncle are going on Christmas vacation without her, but she's shocked that they're sending her to a fancy resort while they're away. Solitary and bookish, Elizabeth sets off for Winterhouse for what turns out to be a holiday filled with intrigue, magic, surprise, and—perhaps best of all—friendship. She is quickly made to feel at home in the grand old hotel by the warm welcome of Norbridge Falls (Winterhouse's eccentric proprietor), Miss Leona (resident librarian), and her new friend Freddy. A creepy couple and a legend of a hidden book attract Elizabeth's attention, fueling her desire to solve the Winterhouse's long-standing mystery. Guterson's debut is a natural fit for readers with a penchant for puzzles and wordplay in the vein of the Mr. Lemoncello's Library series and Pseudonymous Bosch.

Mystery

Fifth and sixth grade

Digital audiobook

The Witch Boy by Molly Ostertag

The Witch Boy explores what it means to go against expectations and overcome gendered prejudice, in this case related to magic and witchcraft. In her middle-grade graphic-novel debut, Ostertag uses bold colors and diverse skin tones to beautifully illustrate a brief time in the life of Aster, a young man who is supposed to be a shape-shifter but is instead more inclined toward witchcraft. Unfortunately, witchcraft is seen as feminine in his community, and therefore not something boys are meant to dabble in. When several other boys go missing over the next few days, Aster and his community become alarmed, unsure of who or what is to blame. In an effort to help his family and friends and prove himself to his mother and father, Aster begins testing his magical abilities, much to their chagrin. Aster's journey of self-discovery, particularly as he learns to take a stand against assumed gender roles, will resonate with many young readers working to assert themselves within their own communities.

Graphic novel

Fifth to eighth grade

Wolf Hollow: A Novel by Lauren Wolk

Eleven-year-old Annabelle is living a relatively idyllic life on her family's Pennsylvania farm, until its normalcy is interrupted by Betty Glengarry, who has been sent to live with her grandparents because she is "incorrigible." Betty's sullen presence quickly upsets the one-room school's traditional pecking order, and Annabelle and her younger brothers are Betty's favorite targets—until Annabelle stands up to her. Not to be outdone, Betty shifts her attention to Toby, a strange WWI veteran already saddled with a dubious reputation within the community. Wolk conjures an aura of unease and dread from the first chapter, even as her pastoral setting and Annabelle's sunny family life seem to suggest that a happy ending is possible. The spare but hauntingly beautiful language paints every early morning walk to school, household chore, emotion, and rational and irrational thought in exquisite detail, while remaining true to Annabelle's early-adolescent voice. Her craft notwithstanding, Wolk is relentless in her message: lies and secrets, even for the most noble of reasons, have unintended consequences, as Annabelle's poignant dilemma reminds us long after the last page is turned. Newbery Honor Winner and a first novel of a former Gordon student!

Historical fiction

Fifth and sixth grade

Zenobia July by Lisa Bunker

The critically acclaimed author of *Felix Yz* crafts a bold, heartfelt story about a trans girl solving a cyber mystery and coming into her own. *Zenobia July* is starting a new life. She used to live in Arizona with her father; now she's in Maine with her aunts. She used to spend most of her time behind a computer screen, improving her impressive coding and hacking skills; now she's coming out of her shell and discovering a community of friends at Monarch Middle School. People used to tell her she was a boy; now she's able to live openly as the girl she always knew she was. (from the publisher)

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

#standupstandout

In this section of the reading list, students, advisories and adults in the Gordon community recommend specific titles that challenge, celebrate and affirm our experience and humanity and which above all express our commitment to combatting racism. Unless specified, all of the reviews are adapted from Booklist.

The Undefeated by Kwame Alexander and Kadir Nelson

Alexander and Nelson combine their considerable talents in this ode (in picture book format) to inspiring African American heroes in the fields of sport, the arts, and political activism, as well as everyday champions whose very survival exemplifies success. In elegiac-style verse, Alexander celebrates “the swift and sweet ones / who hurdled history . . . / the ones who survived / America / by any means necessary,” and those “who shine / their light for the world to see / and don’t stop / ‘til the break of dawn.” Nelson’s photo-realistic illustrations, rendered in oil, include action shots (Jesse Owens, mid hurdle), portraits (Martin Luther King Jr. and an African American Union soldier), composites (of jazz and sports greats), and iconographic compositions that depict the unspeakable (bodies lined up representing abducted Africans en route to America, part of the Middle Passage). Designed for reading aloud, the text also makes use of several typographic cues that signal meaning: emphasized words appear in larger font, while references to the words of others (“we shall not be moved”) appear in italics. And, while the content references several tragic events (slavery and police brutality, among others), the poem closes with a hopeful nod to the rising generation. Appended with notes on the historical figures cited, this is a beautiful volume that encourages multiple viewings and further research.

Poetry

Fifth to eighth grade

Solo by Kwame Alexander and Mary Rand Hess
Blade Morrison begins his story by disclosing, “I am / the wretched son / of a poor / rich man.” Master storytellers and poets Alexander (*The Crossover*, 2014) and Hess (*The Day I Met the Nuts*, 2009) have joined forces to pen a rhythmic, impassioned ode to family, identity, and the history of rock and roll. The only things 17-year-old Blade can count on as the wealthy but neglected son of famously erratic rock god Rutherford Morrison are his soulful guitar ballads and his girlfriend, Chapel. When Rutherford disappoints Blade one time too many and they end up fighting, Blade’s sister reveals a long-guarded family secret. Suddenly the music leaves him; when Chapel is no longer there to anchor him either, Blade sets out to discover more about his own past. A mix tape of classic rock hits guides him from Los

Angeles all the way to the small village of Konko, Ghana, where a delay in his journey brings him unexpected fulfillment. Scattered throughout the novel in verse are some of Blade’s original rock ballads, though every poem feels like a song, pulsing with Alexander’s signature lyrical style. Blade ends up finding much more than what he expects: self-discovery, community, and a deeper understanding of what family means.

Recommended for the Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Verse novel

Fifth to eighth grade

Fred Korematsu Speaks Up: Fighting For Justice series by Laura Atkins

The last name Korematsu may be familiar to readers in the context of the infamous Supreme Court case of Fred Korematsu, a resister of U.S. attempts to intern Japanese Americans during WWII. His story is an absolute keystone in the history of civil liberties in the U.S. Drawing heavily on the recollections of two of Fred’s children, the book details Korematsu’s upbringing in Oakland, California, his imprisonment for resisting internment, his quest to legally marry his white wife, and his 40-year legal battle. The layout is stellar, utilizing a multimedia approach that includes photographs from the camps, family portraits, illustrations and letters from prisoners, and government documents. Focus groups of teachers, librarians, and young readers provided feedback about the book’s design, and its appeal and user-friendly presentation are undeniable. The end matter includes practical strategies for kids to take action against injustice in their own communities. This book honors the legacy of an oft-forgotten champion of human rights in America.

Nonfiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice by Mahogany L. Browne and others

What does it mean to be woke? Simply put, “to be WOKE is to understand that equality and justice for some is not equality and justice at all.” In this poetry collection, Browne, accompanied by Elizabeth Acevedo and Olivia Gatwood, unpacks the weight of social inequities in 23 standalone poems in a variety of forms. Topics include activism, community, joy, prejudice, and resourcefulness, to name a few, blending the hard lines of fighting and resisting injustice with sweet moments of peace in our shared humanity. Aimed toward the middle grades, each poem offers lyrical strength and resolve that will encourage budding activists to develop an ever-important ethical and justice-oriented muscle. Taylor’s cartoon like digital art embraces each poem, though depending on the reader, the strength of the illustrations may at times compete with the text. A title worth adding to any youth poetry collection, *Woke* will call out to and empower its readers with a reminder that “our voice is our greatest power.

Nonfiction poetry

Fifth and sixth

Stories for Boys Who Dare to be Different: True Tales of Amazing Boys Who Changed the World by Ben Brooks, illustrated by Quinton Winter

Joining a list of recently released books for young readers about children who have changed the world is this title with a focus on boys who performed incredible feats and conquered their own hurdles to change the world in their own way. Some, like Mohed Altrad, overcame extreme poverty and challenges to pursue education and accomplish their dreams. Others, such as Christopher Paolini, found a passion and pursued it. Historical figures such as Louis Braille and Frederick Douglass join currently living figures such as Bill Gates and Lionel Messi, making this title perfect for readers with different interests. Each spread contains a brief biography of an individual, accompanied by both realistic and creatively illustrated images, some of which are reminiscent of the *Who Was?* book series, while others reflect a more serious tone that goes well with their subjects. Filled with interesting stories about boys (and men) that contributed to and changed the world in their own ways, this text is sure to inspire young readers and show them that there are many, many different ways to make a difference. Recommended first for 2019 Stand Up Stand Out by Middle Schoolers.

Biography

Fifth to eighth grade

Poisoned Water: How the Citizens of Flint Michigan Fought for Their Lives and Warned the Nation by Candy J. Cooper and Marc Aronson

People in Flint, Michigan first noticed their tap water turning brown in 2014. This coincided with their state-appointed city manager’s decision to save money by using water from the Flint River instead of more expensive water from Lake Huron. Thus began two years of worsening health issues: rashes, infections, and spikes in lead poisoning and Legionnaires’ Disease, all compounded by continuing denials from local authorities. It was early 2016 before state and national emergencies were declared and donations of bottled water began to flow into the city. This is a story with heroes, from a mom-turned-investigator to an EPA whistle-blower to a pediatrician who finally caught the attention of the national media. And villains? So far the residents of Flint have seen denials, claims of ignorance, and over \$30 million spent on various politicians’ legal defenses. Accessible background text fills in Flint’s history as a once-thriving city abandoned by General Motors, and poignant personal stories, many featuring teens, put faces on the crisis. This detailed offering, the first specifically intended for young audiences, has multiple curriculum applications (man-made disasters, ecology, racial discrimination, economics, biology, the roles of local and state government). It’s also a modern-day horror story, one we can only hope will never be repeated

Sixth to eighth grade

New Kid by Jerry Craft

Seventh grader Jordan Banks may be the new kid at his upper-crust private school, but this remarkably honest and accessible story is not just about being new; it's unabashedly about race. Example after uncomfortable example hits the mark: casual assumptions about black students' families and financial status, black students being mistaken for one another, well-intentioned teachers awkwardly stumbling over language, competition over skin tones among the black students themselves. Yet it's clear that everyone has a burden to bear, from the weird girl to the blond boy who lives in a mansion, and, indeed, Jordan only learns to navigate his new world by not falling back on his own assumptions. Craft's easy-going art and ingenious use of visual metaphor loosen things up considerably, and excerpts from Jordan's sketch book provide several funny, poignant, and insightful asides. It helps keep things light and approachable even as Jordan's parents tussle over the question of what's best for their son—to follow the world's harsh rules so he can fit in or try to pave his own difficult road. A few climactic moments of resolution feel a touch too pat, but Craft's voice rings urgent and empathetic. Speaking up about the unrepresented experience of so many students makes this a necessary book, particularly for this age group. Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Graphic novel

Fifth to eighth grade

More Than A Game: Race, Gender, and Politics in Sports by Matt Doeden

In a departure from his more tightly focused sports books, such as *The World Cup* (2017), *The NBA Playoffs* (2019), and *Coming Up Clutch* (2019), Doeden looks at the intersection of sports, politics, and social change in America. The book opens with quarterback Colin Kaepernick taking a knee while the national anthem is sung. The first chapter details the history of racial issues involving athletes who mounted protests, suffered discrimination, or broke barriers in particular sports. Broader in focus, the second chapter includes a wide array of gender- and sexuality-related topics in sports, such as Title IX, the 1999 U.S. Women's soccer team winning the World Cup, the first openly gay NFL player, and the #MeToo movement. The final chapter considers "Patriotism and Protest." Exploring controversies past and present, the text is concise, evenhanded, and informative. Large, well-captioned photos, from archival black-and-white pictures to recent color shots, illustrate the book. Discussing social

issues as they have played out in the field of sports, this engaging presentation places them within a broader historical context. Packed full of incredible stories and photos, this book introduces readers to controversial athletes in moments in sports history and details their impact on society. Take a journey through sports history to learn how games and athletes have the power to make change and help to create a more level playing field for all people.

Nonfiction Sports

Fifth to eighth grade

Standing Up Against Hate: How Black Women in the Army Helped Change the Course of WWII by Mary Cronk Farrell

African-American women fought for freedom at home and abroad as they served their country during World War II. When the United States Army found itself in need of personnel who could do work that would free men to report to combat, it established first the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and then the Women's Army Corps. Black leaders were already encouraging more wartime opportunities for African-Americans and sought to use this innovation to help end segregation. Civil rights activist Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune pushed for integration of the corps, but the country's official "separate but equal" policy stood, although a quota of black women received officer's training. The women who responded to the call were well familiar with the racial mores of the times, but the insults they endured hurt. Nevertheless, they worked and trained hard and put forth every effort to succeed, sometimes risking court martial for standing up for themselves. When they were called for overseas duty, the 6888th Central Postal Battalion performed their duties so well in Birmingham, England, that they went on to another assignment in France. Importantly, Farrell brings in the voices of the women, which provides clarity and understanding of what they experienced. She also highlights the role of black newspapers in keeping the community informed about the difficulties they often faced. The text is richly supported with archival photographs. The importance of this story is amplified by the inspiring forward by Maj. Gen. Marcia M. Anderson, Army (Ret.), who makes a direct link between the determined struggles of those described and the achievements of African-American women in today's U.S. military. The stories in this valuable volume are well worth knowing.

Nonfiction

Seventh and eighth

#standupstandout

Rick by Alex Gino

Eleven-year-old sixth-grader Rick's best friend ever is Jeff, who, let's face it, is a bit of a jerk. Aside from being a troublemaker, Jeff objectifies girls, one of them being a new girl, Melissa. At least Rick thinks she's new, until he realizes that he has known her since she was the protagonist of Gino's first novel, *George* (2015). "I'm a girl," she tells Rick, "a transgender girl." Rick realizes he isn't sure what he is, though. Is he gay? He doesn't like boys that way, but then, he doesn't like girls that way either. Thinking it might help him decide, he attends a meeting of the Rainbow Spectrum, a club for LGBTQIAP+ rights. He keeps this a secret from Jeff, of course. Meanwhile, Rick begins spending time with his grandfather, who, it turns out, has a secret of his own. Grandpa Ray tells him that Jeff is, indeed, a jerk, and then Jeff does something that proves it. Will that end his friendship with Rick? And what is Grandpa Ray's secret? Gino handles the answers deftly and manages their material about children's identities beautifully. Like *George* (2015), this is an important, innovative, well-plotted book that invites a large readership.

My Family Divided by Diane Guerrero

In her "Call to Action" at the end of *My Family Divided*, Guerrero states that 7 percent of school-age children in the U.S. have at least one undocumented parent, a staggering number. When she lost her parents to deportation, she felt utterly alone. As an adult, she knows that isn't the case, and this young readers' adaptation of her adult memoir, *In the Country We Love* (2016), her moving account—which addresses her heartbreak, her struggles after losing her parents and being forgotten by the local government, her depression, and her resolve to succeed—should help young readers in similar situations find the reassurance she missed out on. Though her story is occasionally difficult to bear, Guerrero and Moroz's conversational tone makes it digestible, and the many photographs throughout lighten things up between chapters. As an activist, Guerrero also gives readers a path to action themselves, whether they're in her shoes or simply want to help, writing, "I've chosen to view my ordeal as an opportunity to be a voice for millions." Truly a book of our generation.

Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Ahimsa by Supriya Kelkar

Kelkar's first middle-grade book is filled with female empowerment, hope, family, and the power of nonviolent resistance. It is a tumultuous time: India, 1942. India's freedom fighters, led by Mahatma Gandhi, are trying to overthrow British rule. When her mother takes Gandhi's teachings to heart, Anjali's world is turned upside down. She balks at first as her mother joins the movement and makes the family participate in acts of protest, like burning their clothes or becoming friends with the lowest caste system, the untouchables. Anjali tries to make sense of it, gradually opening her mind to her mother's place in the movement. As she learns about equality and civil liberties, riots erupt around her. When her mother is put in jail, Anjali has to decide if she has the emotional fortitude to practice Gandhi's teachings and continue with the freedom movement. Drawing from her own family history, Kelkar doesn't shy from the reality that progress is slow and that one must persist even when all hope seems gone. Readers will empathize with this heartbreakingly charming debut about the universal struggle of overcoming fears and biases in order to make the world a better place. Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Darius the Great is Not Okay by Adid Khorram

Darius Kellner has more than his share of teen troubles to manage: racist bullies, clinical depression, complications with his father, and feeling like a misfit. So he does not expect much when his family travels to Iran to visit his maternal grandparents. Darius is a keen observer of life and very much aware of his emotional mechanisms. He is loving, sensitive, and a connoisseur of tea: steeping, drinking, sharing with family. He views the world through analogies to *Star Trek* and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in ways that are sometimes endearing and other times cumbersome. The trip to Iran opens new places of tenderness as Darius connects with people, places, and history that feel simultaneously familiar and new. But most significant is his friendship with Sohrab, which is tinged with an intimacy that suggests it is something more than platonic. This is a refreshing bildungsroman and an admirable debut novel that will leave readers wanting more.

Fiction

Eighth grade

Raise Your Voice Twelve Protests that Shaped America by Jeffery Kluger

The author of *To the Moon!* (2018) and *Disaster Strikes!* (2019), Kluger introduces 12 protests and demonstrations throughout U.S. history. While his audience may know something about the Boston Tea Party, Earth Day, the March on Washington, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, they're less likely to be familiar with the Seneca Falls Convention, the union workers' strikes triggered by the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the 1968 Democratic Convention, the Stonewall uprising, the 1982 March against Nuclear Weapons, the ACT UP movement in response to the AIDS crisis, or the Dakota Access Pipeline protests. Some readers may have even participated in the 2017 Women's March without understanding its origins and timing. In this well-researched book, Kluger offers a straightforward account of each protest, while also explaining historical context as well as main issues, events, and outcome. His appended "Note on Sources" provides practical tips on researching the past, including a discussion of the real but limited usefulness of Wikipedia. An informative introduction to the history of American protests and their ongoing role in our society.
Sixth to eighth grade

Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom: My Story of the 1965 Selma Voting Rights by Lynda Blackmon Lowery

"By the time I was fifteen years old, I had been in jail nine times." So opens Lowery's account of growing up in Selma, Alabama, during the troubled 1960s, as the African American community struggled for voting rights. At 13, Lynda and other students began slipping out of school to participate in marches. At 14, she was first arrested. After many peaceful protests, Lynda and others marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge into a violent attack by state troopers and sheriffs' deputies on what became known as Bloody Sunday. Though beaten on the head, she returned two weeks later for the march from Selma to Montgomery—and the Voting Rights Act was passed later that year. The plain-spoken language of this memoir makes it all the more moving, while Lowery's detail-rich memories of her community, their shared purpose, and her own experiences make it particularly accessible to young readers. Illustrations include archival photos and original artwork that uses line and color expressively. A concluding page comments that the Supreme Court recently struck down part of the Voting Rights

Act, and notes that "who has the right to vote is still being decided today." This inspiring personal story illuminates pivotal events in America's history. Recommended for the Stand Up Stand Out list by Dr. Noni Thomas López.
Narrative nonfiction
Fifth to eighth grades

The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano by Sonia Manzano
Starting with the title, this wry, moving debut novel does a great job of blending the personal and the political without denigrating either. Growing up in the Puerto Rican East Harlem barrio in 1969, Rosa, 14, changes her name to Evelyn and tries to be more mainstream. Then her activist abuela arrives from Puerto Rico and moves in, and Evelyn feels as if she's found "an older overdone version of me." Abuela inspires Evelyn to join the Young Lords, the political activists who are working closely with the Black Panthers and fighting for Puerto Rican rights. But Evelyn's mama does not approve, especially when the activists occupy the neighborhood church to demand food and shelter for the poor. Evelyn's first-person narrative is filled with irreverent one-liners, but it never denies the realism of daily struggle: the "heat and stink of our neighborhood." Rooted in the author's own experience, the teen's intense narrative is set against real-life political events (reports from the New York Times are documented in an appendix), while the family drama and revelations continue right up to the end.
Identity fiction
Fifth to eighth grades

#standupstandout

We Rise: The Earth Guardians' Guide to Building a Movement that Restores the Planet by Xiuhtezcatl Martinez

Challenge the status quo, change the face of activism, and confront climate change head on with the ultimate blueprint for taking action. Xiuhtezcatl Martinez is a 19-year-old climate activist, hip-hop artist, and powerful new voice on the front lines of a global youth-led movement. He and his group the Earth Guardians believe that today's youth will play an important role in shaping our future. They know that the choices made right now will have a lasting impact on the world of tomorrow, and people-young and old-are asking themselves what they can do to ensure a positive, just, and sustainable future. *We Rise* tells these stories and addresses the solutions. Beginning with the empowering story of the Earth Guardians and how Xiuhtezcatl has become a voice for his generation, *We Rise* explores many aspects of effective activism and provides step-by-step information on how to start and join solution-oriented movements. With conversations between Xiuhtezcatl and well-known activists, revolutionaries, and celebrities, practical advice for living a more sustainable lifestyle, and ideas and tools for building resilient communities, *We Rise* is an action guide on how to face the biggest problems of today, including climate change, fossil fuel extraction, and industrial agriculture. If you are interested in creating real and tangible change, *We Rise* will give you the inspiration and information you need to do your part in making the world a better place and leave you asking, what kind of legacy do I want to leave? (From the publisher)

Nonfiction

Fifth through eighth grade

It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood: adapted for young readers

A television host, political commentator, and comedian, Trevor Noah has a reputation for wit. In this insightful memoir, adapted from the adult volume *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* (2016), his clever mind and grasp of languages are unveiled. Noah intersperses his life experiences with a layered look at the history of South Africa. Growing up at the end of apartheid, he was evidence of a crime—his mother was Black and his father was white, and mixed-race children were illegal—and it made him an outsider. Noah grew up understanding that many aspects of his upbringing

were fundamentally different: his mother raised him with an imagination and showed that there were no barriers to whatever he wanted to be. Readers will find this journey through Noah's formative years humorous and exciting. He has lived during a tumultuous time in South African history and come through it to become one of the most prominent voices in the world. An engrossing read on one of the most oppressive times in history for people of color. Read by seventh and eighth grades as assigned Middle School reading in 2019-2020 school year. Autobiography
Seventh and eighth grade

Becoming by Michelle Obama

An intimate, powerful, and inspiring memoir by the former First Lady of the United States In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America—the first African-American to serve in that role—she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world, dramatically changing the ways that families pursue healthier and more active lives, and standing with her husband as he led America through some of its most harrowing moments. Along the way, she showed us a few dance moves, crushed Carpool Karaoke, and raised two down-to-earth daughters under an unforgiving media glare. In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her, from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it, in her own words and on her own terms. Warm, wise, and revelatory, *Becoming* is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations - and whose story inspires us to do the same. Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers. Autobiography
Sixth to eighth grade

A Good Kind of Trouble by Lisa Moore Ramée

In her first novel, Ramée explores the concept that fear can stop you from doing the right thing. Shayla is a shy, bright middle-school student who deals with unwanted advances from boys, racial tensions, academic competition, and finding her own voice. Middle school is quite an adjustment for Shayla and her friends, a diverse trio dubbed “the United Nations,” but she decides to stand up for the rights of African Americans after a ruling is made in a controversial court case involving the shooting of a black man by a white police officer. Encouraged by her sister and peers, she joins the Black Lives Matter movement and passes out black armbands at school, an act that puts her at odds with her friends, principal, and students of different races. As civil unrest spreads, Shayla must determine whether creating awareness by causing trouble is worth risking her academic standing. This is a solid story for middle-schoolers dealing with issues such as friendship across racial lines, being strong girls, #BLM, #MeToo, civil rights, diversity, and justice.

Realistic fiction

Fifth and sixth grade

Mike Morales: Spider Man by Jason Reynolds

In his first adventures in a non graphic format, Peter Parker’s multiethnic successor struggles with foes and feelings alike. Outbreaks of rage, a bumbling attraction for classmate Alicia, and family issues combine with a constant but nebulous sense of imminent danger to leave him an emotional wreck. Though this features web-slinging and a climactic battle with a supernatural villain, the action takes a backseat to more generally applicable explorations of self and racial identities, developing relationships, and life choices—plus some great banter. Coretta Scott King honoree Reynolds builds on a comic book plot and neatly ties in Miles’ Marvel Universe background, but he focuses more on his 16-year-old protagonist’s struggle with self-doubt in a vividly rendered urban setting stocked with engaging supporting characters.

Recommended for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers as a way in which old heroes are reimagined with cultural relevance for today.

Realistic fiction.

Sixth to eighth grade

Stamped : Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds, A Remix of Ibram X. Kendi’s *Stamped from the Beginning*

Reynolds continues his prolific streak with an absorbing young reader’s adaptation of Kendi’s National Book Award–winning title, *Stamped from the Beginning* (2016). “This is not a history book” declares Reynolds at the outset, an announcement that instantly absorbs readers, displaying the author’s singular way of communicating with young people. Reynolds’ “remix” begins in 1415 and travels into the present in five well-paced sections, following the general outline of Kendi’s comprehensive title. Through figures like Cotton Mather, W. E. B Du Bois, and Angela Davis, among others, the thought patterns of segregationists, assimilationists, and antiracists, respectively, are elucidated, along with the impact such ideas have on all aspects of American life. Throughout the book, Reynolds inserts literal pauses (“Record scratch”), and interjects with commentary (“Let that sink in”) and clarifications, a way of insisting that the pages are not merely text, but a conversation. Readers will undoubtedly experience a mixture of feelings after finishing this book, but the encouragement to emerge as critical thinkers who can decipher coded language and harmful imagery stemming from racist ideas, which still linger in modern society and popular culture, will be the most empowering result. Thankfully, extensive back matter is included, with source notes and a dynamic further reading list. Required reading for everyone, especially those invested in the future of young people in America.

Seventh and eighth grade

#standupstandout

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

Two teenage boys, one black (Rashad) and one white (Quinn), are inextricably linked when Quinn witnesses Rashad being savagely beaten with little or no provocation by a policeman who has served as Quinn's de facto big brother since his father was killed in Afghanistan—and whose younger brother is one of Quinn's best friends. Can Quinn simply walk away from this apparent atrocity and pretend he hasn't seen what he has seen? And what of Rashad? Hospitalized with internal bleeding, all he wants is to be left alone so he can focus on his art. The challenge for both boys becomes more intense when the case becomes a cause célèbre dividing first their school and then the entire community. The basketball team becomes a microcosm of split loyalties and angry disputes that come to a head when a protest march powerfully demonstrates the importance of action in the face of injustice. With Reynolds writing Rashad's first-person narrative and Kiely writing Quinn's, this hard-edged, ripped-from-the-headlines book is more than a problem novel; it's a carefully plotted, psychologically acute, character-driven work of fiction that dramatizes an all-too-frequent occurrence. Police brutality and race relations in America are issues that demand debate and discussion, which this superb book powerfully enables.

Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Realistic fiction

Seventh and eighth grade

Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Jerome, a young black boy gunned down while playing in a park with a toy gun, invites readers to bear witness to his story, to the tragedy of being dispatched simply because of a policeman's internalized prejudice masquerading as fear. One day at school, while he and his new friend Carlos are being bullied, Carlos pulls out a toy gun to scare their attackers. Afterward, he gives it to Jerome so he can have a chance to play with it, to pretend that he is in charge. But when he is shot in the back while running from the police, his soul leaves his body and he becomes one of the army of ghost boys hoping to communicate with those still consumed with racial bias. While looking in on the preliminary court hearing, Jerome realizes that the police officer's daughter can see and talk to him, and together they try to understand how the world around them could be so cruel. Rhodes (*Sugar*, 2013; *Towers Falling*, 2016) beautifully weaves together the fictional and

the historical—Jerome comes across the ghosts of real-life individuals like Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin—in this gripping and all-too-necessary novel about police brutality, injustice, and the power of bearing witness to the stories of those who are gone. Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Realistic fiction and magical realism

Fifth to eighth grade

After the Shot Drops by Randy Ribay

After his best friend basketball superstar Bunny Thompson transfers schools for a better shot at college scholarships, Nasir is left angry and alone, abandoned for bigger and better things. When Nasir's cousin Wallace gets into serious trouble trying to raise money to prevent his grandmother's eviction, Nasir sees only one way out—asking his former best friend to throw the state championship game. Bunny must choose between losing his best friend and throwing away everything he has ever hoped for. Ribay's depictions of Bunny's and Nasir's lives are beautifully—if not tragically—drawn using alternating points of view, allowing Ribay to revisit the same scenes from alternate angles. He painstakingly shows the state of desperation for many young men of the inner city, buoyed only by the distant chance of a better life through stardom. Despite its downbeat aspects, the story nevertheless manages to infuse humanity into the boys' lives by showcasing the importance of family, the value of friendship, and the role of courage in the face of difficult situations.

Recommended first for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

Give us the Vote! Over Two Hundred Years of Fighting For the Ballot by Susan Goldman Rubin
After a prologue describing the response after a North Dakota law disrupted registration and voting for Chippewa Indians on reservations, Rubin retells the inspiring story of America's most dramatic voting rights movement during the 1960s. Nonviolent resistance to state-sanctioned intimidation and disenfranchisement of Black citizens climaxed in Alabama in 1965 and led to the Voting Rights Act later that year. Next, Rubin discusses how America's founders limited voting rights to white men of property and how later generations extended those rights to other groups, including women. But even today, as the prologue notes, certain factions are working to undermine voting rights and manipulate election results. The discussion concludes with a recent movement to give voting rights to 16-year-olds. Rubin distills and organizes a great deal of information into an engaging, accessible narrative that seems particularly pertinent in a presidential election year. Quotes from different eras and movements help readers sense the moods and attitudes of various historical periods, while well-chosen photos, drawings, paintings, and political cartoons illustrate the presentation. A concise, informative introduction to voting rights in America.
Nonfiction

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangmember. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.
Recommended for the Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grades

On the Come Up by Angie Thomas
Thomas follows up her blockbuster, *The Hate U Give* (2017), with a sophomore novel that's just as explosive. *On the Come Up* tells the story of talented Bri, daughter of a deceased underground rapper, who's pursuing her own rap career. Bri is more than her dreams of making it out of the hood and reaching rap stardom; she is a girl who loves her family and friends fiercely. Bri's chance at fame comes after a rap battle in which the song she pens garners massive attention. When Bri's mother loses her job, Bri's rap ambitions become more crucial than ever. They could be her and her family's ticket to a better life unthreatened by poverty. Bri is a refreshingly realistic character with trials and triumphs, strengths and flaws. She's also a teen with a traumatic past who is still going through things in the present. She still, however, manages to find the beauty and joy in life despite her tribulations, and this is where *On the Come Up* truly shines in its exploration of Bri's resilience, determination, and pursuit of her dreams. In this splendid novel, showing many facets of the Black identity and the Black experience, including both the highs and the lows of middle-class and poor Black families, Thomas gives readers another dynamic protagonist to root for.
Recommended for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grade

Piecing Me Together by Renee Watson
"Who owns the river and the line, and the hook, and the worm?" wonders Jade, a scholarship kid at Portland's prestigious St. Francis High. Through her first two years of school, she's had to balance her home life in a poor neighborhood with her life at a school populated mostly by rich white kids. When offered a mentorship for at-risk girls (which includes a full college scholarship), she jumps at the opportunity to learn how to be a successful black woman. However, she soon suspects that her mentor, Maxine, may only have a superficial understanding of Jade's challenges and that there may be things Jade can teach her. Watson is unafraid to show Jade as a young woman who is resilient and mature for her age, but also plagued by self-doubt. The book itself is a balancing act between class, race, and social dynamics, with Watson constantly undercutting stereotypes and showing no fear in portraying virtues along with vices. The book's defiance of a single-issue lens will surely inspire discussion and consideration.
Realistic fiction
Fifth to eighth grade

#standupstandout

Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson

Six fifth- and sixth-graders, all in a class for those who learn differently, are suddenly given, by their beloved teacher, an extra hour of safe space—an empty classroom where they are told they can talk about anything or nothing. At first, it's nothing. Then, Haley, the book's narrator, describes how each child begins to unfold. Esteban's story demands to be told first; Immigration Services have taken his father away. The others lend sympathy and support, and then, over the course of a school year, more confidences are shared. Ashton, one of the school's few white kids, is bullied. Amari sketches guns and worries about being shot. Puerto Rican Tiago struggles with being American, yet not American. Haley's own story is intertwined with that of her best friend, Holly. Haley's red hair comes from her father, but he's in jail and Haley's mother is dead; an uncle cares for the hyperactive Holly. The plot, at times, creaks, especially the setup. But the magic is in the writing. Woodson tells stories torn from headlines but personalizes them with poetry and memories, blunting their trauma with understanding and love. Haley's history weaves in and out, drawing readers close. These children become each other's safe harbors, and Woodson brilliantly shows readers how to find the connections we all need.

Realistic fiction

Fifth to eighth grade

What the Eagle Sees: Indigenous Stories of Rebellion and Renewal by Eldon Yellowhorn and Kathy Lowinger.

In *Turtle Island*, Yellowhorn and Lowinger detailed North American Indigenous history up to 1492; here they document the resistance and resilience of Native peoples from European contact to the present. Thematic chapters explore early Viking settlements, slavery (especially as practiced by the Spanish), the prevalence of confederacies allying Indigenous groups, participation in wars (particularly the WWII Navajo code talkers), the changes horses brought to Indigenous society, forced migrations and massacres, attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples into white society, prohibitions of Indigenous cultural activities, contemporary efforts toward reconciliation, and recognition of traditional knowledge. The tone is informative without becoming accusatory; indeed the facts (many of which will be new to young readers) speak clearly on their own. The choice of narrative style, inclusion of examples from all parts of North America, and an emphasis on personal stories over court decisions all result

in a work that is highly accessible (and of interest) to a wide audience. Colorful, captioned illustrations (a mix of contemporary photographs, maps, and period reproductions) appear on almost every page, and numerous sidebars highlight topics of special interest. Framed with a discussion of the eagle and its importance to many Indigenous groups, Yellowhorn (a member of the Piikani Nation) and Lowinger have crafted a worthy and important addition to the historical record.

Sixth to eighth

I am Malala: How One Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Changed the World by Malala Yousafzai

The young reader's edition of Malala Yousafzai's 2013 memoir for adults loses none of its power in its transition to a new audience. At times earnest and somber, at others irreverent and playful, the 17-year-old details her experiences as an advocate for education in Pakistan—especially for women—both before and after she became a target of the Taliban. Although her efforts to attend school, and the subsequent attack she endured, make for a powerful story, Yousafzai writes just as vividly about her daily life as a child in Pakistan. As young readers draw parallels between their own lives and the everyday experiences of Yousafzai and her friends, they'll gain invaluable perspective on a country so often stigmatized by the media. Yousafzai's fresh, straightforward voice creates an easily read narrative that will introduce a slew of younger readers to both her story and her mission. Recommended for the 2019 Stand Up Stand Out list by Gordon Middle Schoolers.

Pride: A Pride and Prejudice Remix by Ibi Aanu Zobo

With a razor-sharp remix of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* that deals in gentrification, racism, love, culture, and heritage, all helmed by intelligent teens in New York's Bushwick neighborhood. From the first sentence, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that when rich people move into the hood..." the reader can anticipate a creative, clever retelling. All the key elements of Austen's beloved literary tome are here, from the five Benitez sisters, with differing opinions on love and dating, to Darius Darcy, the mysterious (and gorgeous) rich boy who just moved in across the street. Zuri Benitez pops with confidence, poetry, and, naturally, pride, and her transformation during the story will click with modern teens and culturally diverse readers, in particular. Afro-Latino and African American elements pulse throughout Zobo's fresh, imaginative, and honest rendition of a timeless classic, giving its enduring themes renewed relevance and appeal. (From the publisher)

Realistic fiction

