



MONROE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**Monroe Township Middle School**  
1629 Perrineville Road • Monroe Township, NJ 08831  
Telephone (732) 521-6042 Fax (732) 521-2846  
E-mail [www.monroe.k12.nj.us](http://www.monroe.k12.nj.us)

*James F. Higgins, Jr.*  
*Principal*

*Jaclyn Abruzzese-Lithgow*  
*Assistant Principal*

*Kristie Francis*  
*Assistant Principal*

*Eric Lurie*  
*Assistant Principal*

June 2025

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Middle School summer reading program focuses upon building a reading life. To promote reading, we invite students to read books of their choice by authors they love. Research tells us that students who regularly spend time reading independently have higher levels of academic success. We also know that in order to engage in sustained independent reading, students should be able to choose what they read. To help narrow the search, the attached recommendations have been prepared, though students are able to read any books they choose, provided they are of the appropriate level. Students in middle grades vary in maturity and interests. The books on the following pages feature middle grade and some young adult titles. We strongly encourage parents to take an active role in helping their children select literature, as well as discussing the topics and themes in the books they choose. In order to do this effectively, we recommend Good Reads ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)), Common Sense Media ([www.common Sense Media.org](http://www.common Sense Media.org)), and School Library Journal ([www.slj.com](http://www.slj.com)). These sites contain synopses, reviews, and recommended discussion points for thousands of titles. The librarians at the Monroe Township Public Library are also valuable resources to help find engaging titles that are appropriate for your child.

Both quantity and quality of books are important. Students should read a volume of text, and also engage actively with their reading. This means exercising the habits of a good reader: discussing what they've read, asking questions, marking the text, maintaining a reading log or reader's notebook, reading and writing reviews of books, having favorite books and authors, reading books in a series, and having reading routines. Listening to books and podcasts is also a form of reading that we strongly encourage. To support reading engagement, the choice list on the next page offers a choice of activities. Students should come to class in September ready to engage in learning activities that will utilize the various books read over the summer.

Books are available at the Monroe Township Library, local bookstores, or internet booksellers. This list is accessible to all learners, and parents of students who have IEPs may also reach out to case managers for a supplemental summer reading list. Many titles are also available through Learning Ally for those students who qualify for accounts (noted with \*).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you, and have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Dr. Kelly F. Roselle, Supervisor of Language Arts, World Language, ESL/Bilingual and Media  
Dr. James Higgins, Principal

**SUCCESS IS ALWAYS A TEAM EFFORT!!**

## Interacting with Reading

To help maintain a record of what you have read, complete one of the activities below for each book completed. Maintain a record of this in order to engage in back-to-school classroom activities.

### Activities About the Book

- Keep a book journal with notes, ideas, favorite quotes, doodles, and questions.
- Create a digital storyboard that captures key details of the book.
- Create a vision board for the main character of your book. Include images, quotes, etc. that represent the character's goals.
- Create a 10-question interactive quiz and answer key for the book.
- Write a book review.

If you have questions about summer reading, please contact Dr. Kelly Roselle at [kelly.roselle@monroe.k12.nj.us](mailto:kelly.roselle@monroe.k12.nj.us).

# Suggested Reading

The titles on these pages are organized by genre and feature both middle grade and young adult titles. These are suggestions based upon student interest, recommendations, and award winning books. Students may read any books of their choice. Please review the synopsis provided, and for further details read reviews online or consult with one of our public librarians.

## Realistic Fiction

### *From the Desk of Zoe Washington*

Janae Marks

After receiving a letter from her incarcerated father, whom she's never met, 12-year-old Zoe sets out to prove his innocence. It's the summer before seventh grade, and aspiring pastry chef Zoe sets her sights on perfecting her baking skills to audition as a contestant on Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge. But with bakery confections on one part of her mind, and her father's conviction weighing heavily on the other, this is one recipe Zoe doesn't know how to balance. The only thing she knows to be true: Everyone lies.

### *A Good Kind of Trouble\**

Lisa Moore Ramée

Twelve-year-old Shayla is just starting middle school. She and her friends, Isabella and Julia, aka "The United Nations" because of their diverse backgrounds, want to stick together just like they did in elementary school. They soon discover that middle school is different and conflicts with friends and crushes ensue. In the midst of the typical middle school angst, a not guilty VERDICT in a legal case concerning a police officer shooting an African American man is announced and Shayla begins to relate to the Black Lives Matter movement in a way she never has before. Shayla, always trouble-averse, ends up challenging her school's administration when black armbands are banned. She grows through the experience and becomes more comfortable in her own skin.

### *Rick*

Alex Gino

Rick and his best friend Jeff start middle school together, but Rick is increasingly troubled by Jeff's bullying and homophobia. Rick finds refuge in his school's Rainbow Spectrum club, a group supporting LGBTQ students and their allies, but struggles in his desire to stand up to Jeff. Readers will become familiar with a number of gender and sexuality identity terms alongside Rick. Positive messages affirm characters' various and diverse identities, emphasize the importance of doing the right thing, and encourage kids to find friends and supporters who they can be authentic with.

### *Same Sun Here\**

Silas House and Neela Vaswani

A twelve-year-old Indian immigrant in New York City and a Kentucky coal miner's son become pen pals, and eventually best friends, through a series of revealing letters exploring such topics as environmental activism, immigration, and racism.

### *That Thing About Bollywood*

Supriya Kelkar

Bollywood takes over in this "effervescent" (Booklist) and magical middle grade novel about an Indian American girl whose world turns upside down when she involuntarily starts bursting into glamorous song-and-dance routines during everyday life.

### *Haven Jacobs Saves the Planet*

Barbara Dee

Twelve-year-old Haven Jacobs's anxiety about climate change turns into an opportunity for action when a science project shows the local impact of pollution. Dee gets at the heart of anxiety, friendships, and taking an active role in one's life in this resonant contemporary novel.

### *New From Here*

Kelly Yang

Moving to a new school in a new country is difficult, but doing all of that in the middle of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic makes it all a hundred times worse. Ten-year-old Knox struggles to stand up to racism, hate and bullying at his new school in California where he recently moved with his Mom and siblings. He finds courage and the strength by embracing his unique qualities and attributes.

## Science Fiction & Fantasy

### *The Oddmire: Book One, Changeling\**

William Ritter

Tinn and Cole Burton have been raised as twins their entire lives, living with their mom, Annie, in the town of Endsborough at the edge of the Wild Wood, dark woods the townsfolk avoid for fear of the creatures that live there. What Tinn and Cole don't know is which one of them is actually a goblin mimicking the other. As babies, a goblin, Kull, tried and failed to swap a changeling for a human baby, leaving both Tinn and Cole in the human world. Now, almost 13 years later, Kull is attempting to return the changeling to the Wild Wood before all goblinkind and the Wild Wood itself perishes completely. As Tinn and Cole enter the woods in an attempt to cross the murky Oddmire and find out the truth once and for all, they encounter other creatures and must keep an eye out for the Witch of the Wood, all while unaware of a much darker, sinister force that has already sensed their presence. Set in a magical world filled with incredible creatures from folklore, this fast-paced fantasy will keep readers turning the pages as they follow the twins through the dark and mysterious woods.

### *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky\**

Kwame Mbalia

Seventh grader Tristan Strong feels anything but strong ever since he failed to save his best friend when they were in a bus accident together. All he has left of Eddie is the journal his friend wrote stories in. Tristan is dreading the month he's going to spend on his grandparents' farm in Alabama, where he's being sent to heal from the tragedy. But on his first night there, a sticky creature shows up in his bedroom and steals Eddie's notebook. Tristan chases after it--is that a doll?--and a tug-of-war ensues between them underneath a Bottle Tree. In a last attempt to wrestle the journal out of the creature's hands, Tristan punches the tree, accidentally ripping open a chasm into the MidPass, a volatile place with a burning sea, haunted bone ships, and iron monsters that are hunting the inhabitants of this world.

### *A Rover's Story\**

Jasmine Warga

Meet Resilience, a Mars rover determined to live up to his name.

Res was built to explore Mars. He was not built to have human emotions. But as he learns new things from the NASA scientists who assemble him, he begins to develop human-like feelings. Maybe there's a problem with his programming....

Human emotions or not, launch day comes, and Res blasts off to Mars, accompanied by a friendly drone helicopter named Fly. But Res quickly discovers that Mars is a dangerous place filled with dust storms and giant cliffs. As he navigates Mars's difficult landscape, Res is tested in ways that go beyond space exploration.

### *Lalani of the Distant Sea\**

Erin Entrada Kelly

There are stories of extraordinary children who are chosen from birth to complete great quests and conquer evil villains. This is no such story. Sometimes, you are an ordinary child. Sometimes, you have to choose yourself. This is the story of Lalani Sarita, a twelve-year-old girl who lives on the island of Sanlagita in the shadow of a vengeful mountain. When she makes a fateful wish that endangers her already-vulnerable village, she sets out across the distant sea in search of life's good fortunes. Grown men have died making the same journey. What hope does an ordinary girl have? Inspired by Filipino folklore, *Lalani of the Distant Sea* introduces readers to a landscape of magical creatures, such as Bai-Vinca, the enormous birdwoman; Ditasa Ulod, part woman, part eel; the mindoren, a race of creatures modeled after the water buffalo; and the whenbo -- trees that eat the souls of the dead.

### *The Hidden Oracle (The Trials of Apollo #1)\**

Rick Riordan

After angering his father Zeus, the god Apollo is cast down from Olympus. Weak and disoriented, he lands in New York City as a regular teenage boy. Now, without his godly powers, the four-thousand-year-old deity must learn to survive in the modern world until he can somehow find a way to regain Zeus's favour.

### *The Last Adventure*

Ryan Dalton

Archie and his grandfather have always had a close relationship, but when Grandpa is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Archie seeks to help through invented fantasy stories based on the older man's past. The harsh realities of this devastating disease are dealt with gently and honestly in this mix of realistic fiction and fantasy.

# Graphic Novels

## *Dragon Hoops\**

Gene Luen Yang

An introverted reader starts understanding local enthusiasm about sports in his school when he gets to know some of his talented athletic peers and discovers that their stories are just as thrilling as the comics he loves.

## *The Faithful Spy: Dietrich Bonhoeffer And The Plot To Kill Hitler\**

John Hendrix

Presents the life of the German theologian and hero, who formed a breakaway church in opposition to the Nazi regime, participated in an assassination plot that targeted Adolf Hitler, and was captured and executed by the Nazis.

## *First Time for Everything*

Dan Santat

A middle grade graphic memoir based on bestselling author and Caldecott Medalist Dan Santat's awkward middle school years and the trip to Europe that changed his life.

## *Speak (Graphic Novel Edition)\**

Laurie Halse Anderson

The summer between 8th grade and her freshman year, Melinda is a typical teen. After a sexual assault ends up in her busting the end of a summer party, Melinda is ostracized by her peers because she will not say why she called the police.

## *Pashmina\**

Nidhi Chanani

A teen travels to India thanks to the help of a magical pashmina! There she seizes the opportunity to learn more about her heritage.

## *Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina & New Orleans*

Don Brown

Presents a graphic account of the events of Hurricane Katrina and its effects on the city of New Orleans and its people, detailing the selflessness, heroism, and courage, while also noting the incompetence, racism, and criminality.

## *Twin Cities*

Jose Pimienta

Growing up in Mexicali, Mexico, twins Luis Fernando and Luisa Teresa attend seventh grade on opposite sides of the border and learn to navigate the trials of middle school—peer pressure, friendships, and identity-searching. A nuanced look at family dynamics and connecting with culture with realistic tween dialogue and bright, hand-drawn illustrations.

## *Drama: A Graphic Novel*

Raina Telgemeier

Callie loves theater. And while she would totally try out for her middle school's production of *Moon over Mississippi*, she can't really sing. Instead she's the set designer for the drama department's stage crew, and this year she's determined to create a set worthy of Broadway on a middle-school budget. But how can she, when she doesn't know much about carpentry, ticket sales are down, and the crew members are having trouble working together? Not to mention the onstage AND offstage drama that occurs once the actors are chosen. And when two cute brothers enter the picture, things get even crazier!

## *Little Monarchs*

Jonathan Case

In 2101, when most of humanity has been forced underground to avoid lethal sun exposure, Elvie accompanies scientist Flora on a daring journey to find Elvie's parents while working to develop a life-saving vaccine. Riveting action sequences, rich character development, and wholly believable worldbuilding combine for an unforgettable adventure.

## *Timid*

Jonathan Todd

Cecil Hall and his family have just moved from Florida to Massachusetts, near Boston. Cecil is anxious about making friends because he doesn't know where he'll fit in. His older sister, Leah, thinks he should befriend the other Black kids at his new school, but Cecil isn't sure how he'd go about doing that. He wants to be known for his comics-making talent, anyway. But the few kids who are impressed by Cecil's art aren't always nice to him. When one of his drawings is misused and gets him into serious trouble, can Cecil stand up for himself and figure out who his real friends are?

## Biography & Memoir

### *Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers*

Deborah Heiligman

The deep and enduring friendship between Vincent and Theo Van Gogh shaped both brothers' lives. Confidant, champion, sympathizer, friend--Theo supported Vincent as he struggled to find his path in life. They shared everything, swapping stories of lovers and friends, successes and disappointments, dreams and ambitions. Meticulously researched, drawing on the 658 letters Vincent wrote to Theo during his lifetime, Deborah Heiligman weaves a tale of two lives intertwined and the extraordinary love of the Van Gogh brothers.

### *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* (Adapted for Young Readers)

Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah shares his story of growing up in South Africa, with a black South African mother and a white European father at a time when it was against the law for a mixed-race child like him to exist. But he did exist--and from the beginning, the often-misbehaved Trevor used his smarts and humor to navigate a harsh life under a racist government.

### *Becoming Muhammed Ali*

James Paterson and Kwame Alexander

A biographical novel tells the story of Cassius Clay, the determined boy who would one day become Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all time.

### *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen*

Jazz Jennings

The author recounts how her public experiences have influenced her attitude towards the transgender community, as she works to educate others about transgenderism while navigating the challenges of being a teenager.

### *Free Lunch\**

Rex Ogle

Free Lunch is the story of Rex Ogle's first semester in sixth grade. Rex and his baby brother often went hungry, wore secondhand clothes, and were short of school supplies, and Rex was on his school's free lunch program. Grounded in the immediacy of physical hunger and the humiliation of having to announce it every day in the school lunch line, Rex's is a compelling story of a more profound hunger -- that of a child for his parents' love and care.

### *Ten Days a Madwoman\**

Deborah Noyes

An introduction to the life and times of pioneering female journalist and adventurer Nellie Bly recounts how she convinced doctors that she was insane in order to expose the horrific treatment of patients confined in the late 19th-century Blackwell's Island Asylum.

### *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir*

Thi Bui

This beautifully illustrated and emotional story is an evocative memoir about the search for a better future and a longing for the past. Exploring the anguish of immigration and the lasting effects that displacement has on a child and her family, Bui documents the story of her family's daring escape after the fall of South Vietnam in the 1970s, and the difficulties they faced building new lives for themselves.

### *Permanent Record: Young Readers Edition*

Edward Snowden

PERMANENT RECORD traces Edward Snowden's life from his childhood in North Carolina to his exile in Moscow. Entranced by his father's computer, Snowden learned how to program at an early age and worked for the CIA and the National Security Agency in his 20s. When he discovered that the NSA and other government agencies were secretly recording texts, emails, and phone calls of U.S. citizens, he decided to make his findings available to the public and the media. In 2013, he went on the run, desperately searching for someone to trust.

### *Knots in My Yo-Yo String: The Autobiography of a Kid*

Jerry Spinelli

A master of those embarrassing, gloppy, painful, and suddenly wonderful things that happen on the razor's edge between childhood and full-fledged adolescence" (The Washington Post), Newbery medalist Jerry Spinelli has penned his early autobiography with all the warmth, humor, and drama of his best-selling fiction. From first memories through high school, including first kiss, first punch, first trip to the principal's office, and first humiliating sports experience, this is not merely an account of a highly unusual childhood. Rather, like Spinelli's fiction, its appeal lies in the accessibility and universality of his life. Entertaining and fast-paced, this is a highly readable memoir-- a must-have for Spinelli fans of all ages.

## Dystopian Fiction

### *The Ballad of Songbird and Snakes\**

Suzanne Collins

The prequel to the Hunger Games series - It is the morning of the reaping that will kick off the tenth annual Hunger Games. In the Capitol, eighteen-year-old Coriolanus Snow is preparing for his one shot at glory as a mentor in the Games. The once-mighty house of Snow has fallen on hard times, its fate hanging on the slender chance that Coriolanus will be able to outcharm, outwit, and outmaneuver his fellow students to mentor the winning tribute.

### *The Selection Series\**

Kiera Cass

For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape the life laid out for them since birth. To be swept up in a world of glittering gowns and priceless jewels. To live in the palace and compete for the heart of the gorgeous Prince Maxon. But for America Singer, being Selected is a nightmare. It means turning her back on her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her. Then America meets Prince Maxon. Gradually, she starts to question all the plans she's made for herself—and realizes that the life she's always dreamed of may not compare to a future she never imagined.

### *The Giver\**

Lois Lowry

At the age of twelve, Jonas, a young boy from a seemingly utopian, futuristic world, is singled out to receive special training from The Giver, who alone holds the memories of the true joys and pain of life.

### *Among the Hidden\**

Margaret Peterson Haddix

In a future where the Population Police enforce the law limiting a family to only two children, Luke has lived all his twelve years in isolation and fear on his family's farm, until another "third" convinces him that the government is wrong.

### *Legend\**

Marie Lu

In a dark future, when North America has split into two warring nations, fifteen-year-old Day, a famous criminal, and prodigy June, the brilliant soldier hired to capture him, discover that they have a common enemy.

### *Cinderella Is Dead*

Kalynn Baron

Love dystopian stories and fairytale retellings? I've got the perfect new novel for you. Author Kalynn Bayron sets her dystopian story 200 years after the original Cinderella found her prince. Teen girls must attend a ball in order to find a husband, and if none of the eligible bachelors choose them, the girls are never heard from again. For 16-year-old Sophia, the ball seems like a raw deal. She's much more interested in being with her best friend Erin. But since same-sex relationships are not allowed in this world, she makes a desperate decision to run away before her fate can be decided for her.

### *The Last Cuentista*

Donna Barba Higuera

Había una vez . . .

There lived a girl named Petra Peña, who wanted nothing more than to be a storyteller, like her abuelita.

But Petra's world is ending. Earth has been destroyed by a comet, and only a few hundred scientists and their children – among them Petra and her family – have been chosen to journey to a new planet. They are the ones who must carry on the human race.

### *One Small Hop*

Madelyn Rosenberg

Ahab Goldstein is a seventh-grader living in an United States (specifically Maine) where the environment has turned toxic, and the corrupt Environmental Police Force is in control, limiting access to natural resources like gas and water, issuing fines, and transporting "fragile" species (pretty much all of them) to the Center for Species Rehabilitation in New Arcadia (a dubious refuge at best); so when Ahab and his friends find a real live bullfrog on an island in the toxic harbor, possibly the last one in America, they are faced with a choice--turn it over (NO!), leave it alone, or bike to Canada to find it a mate.

## Historical Fiction

### *Ground Zero\**

Alan Gratz

Brandon is visiting his dad on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 when the attack comes; Reshmina is a girl in Afghanistan who has grown up in the aftermath of that attack but dreams of peace, becoming a teacher and escaping her village and the narrow role that the Taliban believes is appropriate for women--both are struggling to survive, both changed forever by the events of 9/11.

### *Finding Langston\**

Lesa Cline-Ransome

Discovering a book of Langston Hughes' poetry in the library helps Langston cope with the loss of his mother, relocating from Alabama to Chicago as part of the Great Migration, and being bullied.

### *Echo\**

Pam Muñoz Ryan

Lost in the Black Forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and finds himself entwined in a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica--and decades later three children, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California find themselves caught up in the same thread of destiny in the darkest days of the twentieth century, struggling to keep their families intact, and tied together by the music of the same harmonica.

### *Code Name Verity\**

Elizabeth Wein

In 1943, a British fighter plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France and the survivor tells a tale of friendship, war, espionage, and great courage as she relates what she must do to survive while keeping secret all that she can.

### *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing; Traitor to the Nation (Pox Party Volume 1)\**

Matthew Tobin Anderson

Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, from birth to age sixteen, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War.

### *One Crazy Summer\**

Rita Williams

In *One Crazy Summer*, eleven-year-old Delphine is like a mother to her two younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern. She's had to be, ever since their mother, Cecile, left them seven years ago for a radical new life in California. But when the sisters arrive from Brooklyn to spend the summer with their mother, Cecile is nothing like they imagined.

While the girls hope to go to Disneyland and meet Tinker Bell, their mother sends them to a day camp run by the Black Panthers. Unexpectedly, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern learn much about their family, their country, and themselves during one truly crazy summer.

### *How to Find What You're Not Looking For\**

Veera Hiranandani

Twelve-year-old Ariel Goldberg's life feels like the moment after the final guest leaves the party. Her family's Jewish bakery runs into financial trouble, and her older sister has eloped with a young man from India following the Supreme Court decision that strikes down laws banning interracial marriage. As change becomes Ariel's only constant, she's left to hone something that will be with her always--her own voice.



## Mystery and Horror

### *Small Spaces\**

Katherine Arden

A mysterious book, a watch displaying messages from the beyond, and a bus broken down on the outskirts of a historic farm kickoff this creepy adventure.

### *Death Sets Sail*

Robin Stevens

Daisy Wells and Hazel Wong are in Egypt, where they are taking a cruise along the Nile. They are hoping to see some ancient temples and a mummy or two; what they get, instead, is murder.

### *When You Reach Me\**

Rebecca Stead

As her mother prepares to be a contestant on the 1980s television game show, "The \$20,000 Pyramid," a twelve-year-old New York City girl tries to make sense of a series of mysterious notes received from an anonymous source that seems to defy the laws of time and space.

### *Spirit Hunters\**

Ellen Oh

Harper Raine is a 7th grader who's just moved into a new home with her family. From the moment she steps foot in this house, she knows something strange is going on. The place gives Harper a strange sense of déjà vu that she can't explain, and her brother is acting very much unlike himself. It doesn't help that there are rumors that the family's new home is haunted. Harper feels like there's something she should remember that would help her uncover the secrets of the house, but for some reason she's having trouble unlocking those memories. Will Harper be able to put together the mysteries of the house in time to save her brother?

### *The Forgotten Girl*

India Hill Brown

Iris and her best friend Daniel are playing in the freshly fallen snow when they come across something unexpected: the crumbling gravestone of a young girl named Avery Moore. From that moment forward, strange things start happening to Iris. She has vivid nightmares, and she's certain she's seeing the shadow of Avery lurking in the woods. When Iris and Daniel start a school project researching the area, they discover that Avery's grave is part of a forgotten Black cemetery, from a time when cemeteries were segregated. And they become determined to restore Avery's grave to pay proper respect to the young girl and others buried there.

### *The Absence of Sparrows*

Kurt Kirchmeier

In the small town of Grier's Mill, eleven-year-old Ben Cameron is expecting to finish off his summer of relaxing and bird-watching without a hitch. But everything goes wrong when dark clouds roll in. Old Man Crandall is the first to change—human one minute and a glass statue the next. Soon it's happening across the world. Dark clouds fill the sky and, at random, people are turned into frozen versions of themselves. There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, and no one knows how to stop it. Ben must hold out hope that his town's missing sparrows will return with everyone's souls before the glass plague takes them away forever.

### *OCDaniel*

Wesley King

Daniel is the back-up punter for the Erie Hills Elephants. Which really means he's the water boy. He spends football practice perfectly arranging water cups—and hoping no one notices. Actually, he spends most of his time hoping no one notices his strange habits—he calls them Zaps: avoiding writing the number four, for example, or flipping a light switch on and off dozens of times over. He hopes no one notices that he's crazy, especially his best friend Max, and Raya, the prettiest girl in school. His life gets weirder when another girl at school, who is unkindly nicknamed Psycho Sara, notices him for the first time. She doesn't just notice him: she seems to peer through him.

Then Daniel gets a note: "I need your help," it says, signed, Fellow Star Child—whatever that means. And suddenly Daniel, a total no one at school, is swept up in a mystery that might change everything for him.

## Novel in Verse/Poetry

### *Redwood and Ponytail*

K.A. Holt

Told in verse in two voices, with a chorus of fellow students, this is a story of two girls, opposites in many ways, who are drawn to each other; Kate appears to be a stereotypical cheerleader with a sleek ponytail and a perfectly polished persona, Tam is tall, athletic and frequently mistaken for a boy, but their deepening friendship inevitably changes and reveals them in ways they did not anticipate.

### *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*

Ronald Koertge

When a fourteen-year-old baseball player catches mononucleosis, he discovers that keeping a journal and experimenting with poetry not only helps fill the time, it also helps him deal with life, love, and loss.

### *Garvey's Choice\**

Nikki Grimes

Preferring science and reading to the sports his father wants him to play, Garvey comforts himself with food and endures bullying before joining the school chorus, where he learns how to accept himself and bond with his father.

### *Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems*

Kristine O'Connell George

Award-winning poet Kristine O'Connell George, author of several successful picture books, now turns her attention to the middle school experience. The first year brings an array of challenges: making new friends, moving from class to class, tests and homework, changing for PE, gossip, school dances, and, of course, budding romance. Short, accessible poems in a variety of forms, but all in a single voice—that of a new middle schooler—evoke the memorable moments of the school year, exploring situations and emotions that will resonate with preteens. Lively illustrations complement this perceptive, humorous, poignant record of an important transitional year.

### *Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings\**

Margarita Engle

Offers an account of the first fourteen years of the author's life in poems, telling of her time spent between Cuba and her home in Los Angeles, until the revolution in Cuba dramatically alters relations between the two countries she loves.

### *Booked\**

Kwame Alexander

In this follow-up to the Newbery-winning novel *THE CROSSOVER*, soccer, family, love, and friendship, take center stage as twelve-year-old Nick learns the power of words as he wrestles with problems at home, stands up to a bully, and tries to impress the girl of his dreams. Helping him along are his best friend and sometimes teammate Coby, and The Mac, a rapping librarian who gives Nick inspiring books to read.

### *Locomotion*

Jacqueline Woodson

When Lonnie was seven years old, his parents died in a fire. Now he's eleven, and he still misses them terribly. And he misses his little sister, Lili, who was put into a different foster home because "not a lot of people want boys—not foster boys that ain't babies." But Lonnie hasn't given up. His foster mother, Miss Edna, is growing on him. She's already raised two sons and she seems to know what makes them tick. And his teacher, Ms. Marcus, is showing him ways to put his jumbled feelings on paper.

Told entirely through Lonnie's poetry, we see his heartbreak over his lost family, his thoughtful perspective on the world around him, and most of all his love for Lili and his determination to one day put at least half of their family back together. Jacqueline Woodson's poignant story of love, loss, and hope is lyrically written and enormously accessible.

## Nonfiction

### *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team*

Christina Soontornvat

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

### *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind\**

William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

Presents a story of how an African teenager built a windmill from scraps to create electricity for his home and his village, improving life for himself and his neighbors.

### *On the Horizon\**

Lois Lowry and Kenard Pak

From the author of *The Giver* comes this account, written in verse, of World War II and the tragic events of Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor. Drawing on her own time in Hawaii and Japan as well as extensive research, Lowry retells the horrors of war and their effects on soldiers and civilians. Artist Kenard Pak adds illustrations of real life people, places, and events.

### *The Sea Ringed World: Sacred Stories of the Americas*

María García Esperón, Amanda Mijangos, and David Bowles

Originally published in Mexico, this beautiful illustrated collection gathers stories from Argentina up to Alaska, retelling the stories from indigenous and Native cultures.

### *The Sun Does Shine (Young Readers Edition): An Innocent Man, A Wrongful Conviction, and the Long Path to Justice.*

Anthony Ray Hinton, with Lara Love Hardin & Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

Hinton's story of incarceration for 30 years on Death Row as a wrongfully convicted Black man in 1985 highlights this miscarriage of justice. The powerful words of a man who came to be respected for his decency and resolve are a force for change and hope.

### *Abacadabra : The Story of Magic Through the Ages*

H. P. Newquist

An illustrated history of magic and famous illusionists shares step-by-step explanations for eight classic tricks and includes profiles of notables ranging from the oracles of ancient Egypt and the wizards of medieval Europe through the great Houdini and modern practitioner Criss Angel.

### *Warrior Dog: The True Story of a Navy SEAL and His Fearless Canine Partner*

Will Chesney with Joe Layden

Written in smooth first-person narration, this book tells the often sad story of Chesney and his best friend Cairo, a 70-pound Belgian Malinois. Chesney, who had been a SEAL for most of his six years in the Navy, became the handler of Cairo, a military working dog. They trained together, along with Chesney's team, and became a cohesive duo.

### *Stand Up and Speak Out Against Racism*

Yassmin Abdel-Magied

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

### *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI : Adapted for Young Readers*

David Grann

The Reign of Terror against the Osage people was one of history's most ruthless and shocking crimes. As the Wild West was dying, someone was killing members of the Osage nation who had gotten rich off the oil under their land. Investigators who tried to uncover the truth were disappearing, but still J. Edgar Hoover asked a former Texas Ranger to work with the Osage to unravel the mystery.

***The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales of Rivalry, Adventure, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements (Young Readers Edition)***

Sam Kean

Explore the wacky, weird, and wonderful true stories behind one of the greatest scientific tools in history—the periodic table!—in this young readers edition of the New York Times bestseller *The Disappearing Spoon*.

Why did Gandhi hate iodine?

How did radium nearly ruin Marie Curie's reputation?

Why did tellurium lead to the most bizarre gold rush in history?

The periodic table is a crowning scientific achievement, but it's also a treasure trove of adventure, greed, betrayal, and obsession. A series of fascinating tales in *The Disappearing Spoon* follow the unassuming elements on the table as they play surprising roles in human history, finance, mythology, conflict, art, medicine—and of course the lives of the (frequently) mad scientists who discovered them!

With line-drawings and side-bars throughout, students, teachers, and burgeoning science buffs will love learning the often unbelievable history behind the chemistry.

## **Humor (New in 2025)**

### ***Middle School Bites***

Steven Banks illus. by Mark Fearing

When 11-year-old Tom Marks is bitten by a bat, a wolf, and a zombie, his plans to survive middle school by flying under the radar are dashed. This new novel by the head writer of *SpongeBob SquarePants* combines typical middle school angst with a hilariously over-the-top monster movie premise.

### ***Homer's Excellent Adventure***

P.J. Hoover

An origin story for the ages takes readers on an epically hilarious adventure. Meet Homer, a lackluster 11-year-old student in ancient Greece. He's on the brink of flunking out of school, which for him is more than just embarrassing. For fans of Percy Jackson, epic stories, and mythology, or anyone looking old stories with a new twist.

### ***Fly On the Wall***

Remy Lai

Henry Khoo is tired of being babied by his family and invisible at school. Trying to declare independence from both, he starts the infamous "Fly on the Wall" blog, which spreads gossip about his schoolmates, and is currently on his way to the airport for an unauthorized trip from Perth, Australia, to Singapore for a surprise visit to his dad. Near-misses and laugh-out-loud moments abound in this illustrated novel, which will endear it to readers who like "Big Nate" and "Wimpy Kid."

### ***The First Rule of Punk***

Cecelia Pérez

A fun romp through the awkward years of middle school that examines themes of identity and culture. When Malu has to move away from her dad and everything she knows, she takes her love of punk music with her. Following the rules of punk, she embarks on a new school journey, full of misadventures and hilarious life lessons.

### ***Stand Up, Yumi Chung***

Jessica Kim

On the outside, Yumi Chung suffers from #shygirlproblems, a perm-gone-wrong, and kids calling her "Yu-MEAT" because she smells like her family's Korean barbecue restaurant. On the inside, Yumi is ready for her Netflix stand-up special. Her notebook is filled with mortifying memories that she's reworked into comedy gold. All she needs is a stage and courage.

Instead of spending the summer studying her favorite YouTube comedians, Yumi is enrolled in test-prep tutoring to qualify for a private school scholarship, which will help in a time of hardship at the restaurant. One day after class, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favorite YouTube stars. The only problem is that the instructor and all the students think she's a girl named Kay Nakamura—and Yumi doesn't correct them.

As this case of mistaken identity unravels, Yumi must decide to stand up and reveal the truth or risk losing her dreams and disappointing everyone she cares about.