Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
2023 book of world records	O'Brien, Cynthia	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
2024 book of world records	O'Brien, Cynthia	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
A day at the beach	Schmidt, Gary D	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (April 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-Schmidt's latest takes readers through a single day at a popular beach boardwalk following numerous characters and their perspectives. Readers hear about concurrent events through multiple lenses as each chapter highlights a new person and their experiences. Although there is some crossover of characters, most only get one chapter. Themes of family, coming of age, death, cancer, body image, and more are discussed through the windows into the culturally diverse group of characters' lives. Readers will not be bored as the story shifts from character to character. The scenes and interactions will be relatable to middle grade readers. Although there is no central story to follow, tweens will enjoy seeing how the characters' paths cross throughout the day. VERDICT This multi-viewpoint narrative highlighting tween interactions among family and friends will be enjoyed by many readers.-Anna Kambach © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 4-8. A day at Rockcastle Beach unfolds through the POVs of over two dozen characters while the tide rushes in and out and families and friends pass the hours. Heart-wrenching and robust characterizations and propulsive pacing make this episodic novel feel interwoven but not contrived. From spoiled kids losing their phones to abandoned dogs under the bridge to losing your shorts in front of your crush, the array of stories asks the reader to laugh, worry, and love while also providing a realized community that invites them in. Schmidt's usual tugging of the heartstrings resonates in quiet chapters of loneliness and hunger. The interplay between the two authors allows the story to feel cohesive while every POV switch still feels like a fresh start. While the book concludes with a happy, community-centric ending, it's not a pat ending that ties every single thread together. Some friends are those you see on the beach for just a second and never see again, and the inclusion of such moments makes this a nice addition to realistic fiction shelves.	Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2025) Two veteran novelists chronicle life-altering moments and meetings for an ensemble cast of young visitors to a New Jersey beach. Twenty-eight named children and two dogs may seem like a lot, but each one is so individually distinct that readers should have little trouble keeping them straight. The entries are arranged from dawn to dark, with Ma Van As' grayscale art, which is reminiscent of animated features, offering occasional views of people lounging on blankets and similar emblematic beach scenes as visual breaks. The co-authors relate the incidents in an understated way that infuses even the seemingly minor or common ones with special "kid magic." An impromptu group pretends that a stray dog can talk, for example. Events take a dramatic turn when a father yelling at his small son draws a flash mob of young people who circle him and stare silently until he stops. Meanwhile, in a lighter vein, Octavio's secret crush offers help (along with some gentle mockery) when he loses his trunks, and Leslie forgets to be bored when an elderly beachcomber teaches her how to look closely at a wondrous queen conch shell. Young people take steps toward promising futures by laughing together, dealing with anxieties, and showing insight or compassion; their stories are individually entertaining and uplifting, with a cumulative effect. Names, references to food and homelands, and illustrations cue ethnic and racial diversity in the cast. A sandy slice-of-life treat, rich in feeling and insight from dawn to dark. (Fiction. 9-13)	
A for effort	Greene, Jarad	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (May 24, 2024) Gr 8 Up-Not only is Jay entering high school as a freshman, he's also been assigned to take theater class, which he has no experience with. Rather than try to change it, he stays and realizes that he doesn't have to be perfect to succeed. Instantly, he meets a group of friends who are competitive high achievers who welcome him into their circle. However, their hyper-focused studying and perfectionism pose a threat to Jay's life balance as pressure builds from his parents and now his friends to gain a competitive edge. How can Jay strive but not become overstressed? Books featuring the ups and downs of characters who measure their success by their grades are less frequent but much needed. Jay's daily observations in this graphic format will stand the test of time; readers will relate to how he wants to learn and grow, but also have fun. This satisfying, standalone story is the follow-up to Greene's A-Okay, which is based on his middle school years, though not a prerequisite to fall in love with this title. VERDICT This slice-of-life graphic novel is a heartfelt, personal snapshot of an authentically human experience and will have appeal.-Alicia Abdul © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2024) This sequel to A-Okay (rev. 11/21) finds Jay, who previously attended a magnet school across town, starting high school without any friends, a situation made worse by his inherent shyness and lack of confidence. Due to scheduling constraints, he's unable to register for his preferred art class. The counselor convinces him to give theater class a go: the public speaking aspect will satisfy his overbearing parents, and he will be able to indulge his creative impulses in set design. While the class pushes him out of his comfort zone, it also creates a safe space with supportive peers and a warm, if demanding, teacher. This graphic novel is told almost exclusively in dialogue with some brief internal monologue, creating an engaging pace that is further enhanced by varied panel layouts, bright colors, and generous use of white space. A relatable story about a shy, awkward kid coming out of his shell and finding his crowd, this is also a bit of a love letter to the community and camaraderie of youth theater. An author's note suggests the tale is semiautobiographical, while another interesting appendix delves into Greene's creative process for comics. Jonathan Hunt March/April 2024 p.91	Kirkus Reviews (January 15, 2024) High school freshman Jay Violet steps out of his comfort zone and onto the stage in this semiautobiographical graphic novel. Apart from his older sister, Jay doesn't know anyone at his new high school. To make matters worse, he gets stuck with theater as his elective instead of art. At first, he hopes it will be an easy A, but all his classes, including theater, require way more work than last year. Jay's parents pressure him to start preparing for college, and his new friends pressure him to compete for the highest grades. Despite how anxious Jay feels speaking in front of a crowd, the challenge of becoming better at theater draws him in more than he expects. On top of Jay's academic woes, he's also grappling with friendships and with finding the confidence to express himself. This sequel to A-Okay (2021) introduces a new conflict and a new cast of characters, apart from Jay and his family, but familiarity with the first book will provide helpful background, particularly for the continued exploration of Jay's asexuality. The art reflects racial diversity in the student body around Jay, but most of the central characters read white. The varied panel layouts and animated character movements balance the introspective nature of the conflict. A vulnerable and encouraging school drama. (process notes, author's note) (Graphic fiction. 11-14)	

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A high five for Glenn Burke	Bildner, Phil	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (January 24, 2020) Gr 5-7-The author of the "Rip and Red" series tells the story of baseball-obsessed Silas, a 6th-grader whose journey to self-acceptance begins with a school presentation on Glenn Burke, the 1970s baseball player who invented the high-five, who was gay, and whose real-life story did not have a happy ending. Soon Silas is coming out to his best friend, Zoey, and to his favorite baseball coach. But things get complicated when a couple of his teammates use "gay" as an insult, and he finds himself lying about Zoey being his girlfriend. With Coach Webb's support, he learns to take responsibility for his actions and strive for authenticity as he sorts out the mess he has created with his lie. As the novel ends, Silas has not yet come out to his family, but readers can be sure that when he does, they will respond with love and support. VERDICT The baseball-heavy plot may deter readers who aren't interested in sports, so librarians may need to be prepared to hand-sell this compassionate, well-written story to ensure a wider audience.-Laurie Slagenwhite Walters, Brighton District Library, MI © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (February 1, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 11)) Grades 5-8. When Silas has to do a presentation on a famous inventor for his sixth-grade class, he chooses Glenn Burke, the baseball center fielder credited with inventing the high five. “When Glenn Burke arrived in the big leagues in 1976, the Los Angeles Dodgers thought he was going to be the next Willie Mays,” Silas explains, but there’s one thing he doesn’t share with his class, friends, or teammates: Burke was pushed out of baseball because, like Silas, he was gay. Even as he considers coming out, Silas worries about his secret being revealed. As he becomes increasingly nervous, he distances himself from baseball and, worse, tells a lie about his best friend Zoey, which causes her to stop speaking to him. Bildner’s (Martina & Chrissie, 2017) latest is a middle-grade book that will have broad appeal. Young readers will relate to Silas and cheer him on as he navigates longstanding relationships that suddenly seem new and awkward. Muted problems at home, seen through Silas’ eyes, encourage communication with and trust in parents. The story also speaks to the importance of creating a welcoming community—whether on a baseball field or in a classroom—that embraces differences with not only tolerance but also complete and unrelenting support. An essential book for all readers, not just baseball fans, about friendship, acceptance, and self-confidence.	Kirkus Reviews (December 1, 2019) A gay black baseball player posthumously inspires a sixth grade white boy who is ready-ish to come out.Baseball enthusiast Silas Wade opens the book by giving a colorful class presentation about Glenn Burke. Burke was a once-well-known major league player who invented the high-five and eventually left the sport after enduring isolation and harassment for being gay. Silas leaves that last part out, but heralding his hero in front of a crowd is the silent start of his own coming out. Further testing the waters, he tells his best friend, Zoey (a champion robot builder), he’s gay and finds that there’s a bouncy kind of freedom that comes from saying who he really is. Inspirational YouTube videos encourage Silas to come out to Coach Webb, an adult who embodies the understanding, guidance, protection, and encouragement that all queer kids should have. But when Silas gets nervous about everything changing and wants to backpedal into the closet, circumstances put him at a crossroads: continue to lie for self-preservation or live out loud like Glenn Burke wasn’t able to. Silas is white, but Zoey has a Spanish surname, and his baseball teammates and one coach are black and brown. (One notable moment includes an explanation from the coaches about why monkey insults are racist.) As the narrative foundation is established, there are overt explanations of settings and characters that aren’t additive, but these superfluous tendencies dissolve about 50 pages in. Insights into Silas’ home life feel bittersweet and real with parents fumbling to do the best they can, but Silas’ struggle is the central story. Beleaguered tolerance strikes out; loud, proud love wins the game. (Fiction. 10-12)	
A light in the mist	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
A risky game	Gerber, Alyson	Upper Elementary	3-6	Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2025) A group of friends compete for membership in their school’s secret society, Last Heir—but they’re playing by their own rules. School chums Weatherby, Jack, and their pals learned that the raison d’être of the Boston School’s most exclusive society seemed to be keeping atrocious acts buried: “Last Heir. Rearrange the letters and you get The Liars.” As a corrective, the kids formed the Liars Society. Readers need to be familiar with the series opener to fully appreciate this entry; in Volume 1, the Liars Society exposed Hunt International, run by Jack’s dad, Charlie, for illegally dumping chemicals. They also discovered that Weatherby’s estranged father is Yates, Charlie’s brother who moved away after their falling-out. Because the Hunts founded Last Heir, Weatherby and Jack desperately seek membership, hoping to locate Weatherby’s dad and learn how deep the family’s secrets go. Weatherby and Jack turn the group’s initiation process—the path to being admitted—on its head by working as a team. Their cohesion amid a toxic environment is heartening. After solving gambits and following clues, the Liars Society members explore hidden tombs, secret bunkers, and Hart Isle. The tension heightens as they uncover a past crime and realize that someone’s trying to kill Weatherby. Is history repeating itself? And how are Charlie and Yates involved? Jack and Weatherby read white; contextual clues point to some diversity in the supporting cast. A compelling thriller that promises more chilling drama to come. (Mystery. 9-13)			
A tale of sorcery...	Colfer, Chris	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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Ain't it funny	Gurevich, Margaret	Middle School	5-8	Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2025) Sixth grader Maya doesn't know when the anxious thoughts and the "hot-hot-hot" feeling started, but ever since her dad moved out, they seem to have gotten worse. Her germaphobia makes school a challenge and makes working in her family's deli, the Russian Gourmet, nearly unbearable. Maya tries explaining her discomfort to her family but is met by her babushka's unsympathetic reminder: "Slozi goryu ne pomozhet," or "tears won't help sorrow." When Maya's standup-comedian father is asked to emcee her school's talent show, Maya decides to perform her own comedy routine in hopes that the hours spent rehearsing with her dad, plus a successful performance, will bring her family back together again, thereby curing the hot-hot-hot. Gurevich balances the seriousness of Maya's anxiety with laugh-out-loud humor. Alongside writing jokes and learning about comedy from her father, Maya witnesses a beloved teacher's distressing emotional episode and is taught coping strategies by a school nurse and therapist. Maya's story speaks directly to the stigma of mental health and the ways those attitudes can harm people of all ages. Readers familiar with Russian dishes may find their stomachs growling; luckily, the author includes recipes in the back matter. Hill Saxton January/February 2025 p.83	Booklist (October 15, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 4)) Grades 4-6. Lately, life has been a cruel joke for Maya, 11, as she navigates her parents' recent separation, helps out at the family's Russian deli, and manages her increasing anxiety and obsession with germs. Maya's dad, an aspiring stand-up comedian, isn't around often, so when the sixth-grade talent show is announced, Maya believes that performing her own stand-up routine is the perfect opportunity to reunite her family. The text blends helpful joke-crafting tips with Maya's anxious descent (described as "hot-hot-hot" and "whoosh and tingle" feelings), embodying the adage, comedy is tragedy plus time. When Maya's teacher has an OCD-induced breakdown that goes viral, they bond, especially after Maya's own panic attack leads to a diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) with OCD tendencies. Beyond mental health representation, Gurevich imbues the narrative with Russian Jewish heritage by featuring some traditional Russian dishes, Chanukah, and Russian cultural beliefs, such as adhering firmly to reserved displays of emotions. Gurevich has created an earnest but nervous protagonist in Maya, reflective of anxious adolescents today. Back matter includes family recipes.	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2024) Maya Greenspan, a sixth grader living in New Jersey, finds herself navigating her parents' separation and school pressures, all while helping at her family's deli and grocery store. Maya's dad has moved to New York City to work on his stand-up comedy career, while Maya, her mother, and Baba (her grandmother) live together above the Russian Gourmet, selling traditional Russian dishes. Driven to reunite her parents, Maya devises a plan: She'll perform a stand-up routine at the school talent show in hopes that it will draw her father to reconnect with her and her mom. A sprinkling of Russian phrases and words throughout the text, as well as descriptions of the preparation of foods like piroshki, pelmeni, sufganiyot, and fried mashed potatoes, add to the cultural experience and immersion in Maya's world. Themes of bullying, friendship difficulties, and mental health support are handled with sensitivity and authenticity. Budding comedians will also enjoy the humor and the useful sections that explain the process of creating a joke, along with tips for performing stand-up routines. There' s no unrealistically tidy resolution, but after a panic attack at school, Maya has an honest talk with her dad and starts seeing a therapist, where she begins receiving essential support for generalized anxiety and "OCD tendencies." Maya's family is Jewish. Pages from a notebook with a few family recipes follow the final chapter. A culturally textured, heartfelt story of dislocation and growth. (mental health resources) (Fiction. 9-12)	
All ears	Gibbs, Stuart	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Almost sunset	Algarmi, Wahab	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (February 1, 2025) Gr 5-8-Seventh grader Hassan is fasting for the month of Ramadan, which means no burgers at lunchtime, accidentally dozing in math class, and leaving soccer practice early to nap. Despite the challenges of balancing his faith with school and extracurricular obligations, Hassan is dedicated to fasting throughout the month. To make things even more stressful, Hassan's friends are not Muslim, so he feels increasingly isolated as the days progress. With his grades slipping and his soccer position in jeopardy, will he be able to make it to Eid? Algarmi pens a moving middle grade tale of adolescent Muslim identity that will find purchase with any tween, especially those overwhelmed with the demands of school, family, and activities. The illustrative focus is emotion and action, thus characterization takes precedence over elaborate dress and detailed backgrounds. VERDICT A necessary mirror for middle grade Muslim readers, and a tremendous window into the customs of Ramadan for peers and educators to learn more about Islamic traditions.-Sarah Simpson © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 4-7. This debut graphic novel centered around Ramadan shows the toll of compartmentalizing our identities, the value of living authentically, and the importance of taking accountability for ourselves and our choices. It's Hassan's third year fasting for Ramadan, but this year feels so much harder. Everyone expects more from him now, especially himself. When his grades and friendships start to slip, Hassan must decide how he will manage his time and his priorities. Illustrations and panel sizes help communicate the repetitiveness of Hassan's daily routine or the extent of his hunger, such as when his peers suddenly appear as pizza and hamburgers. Tension also exists when Hassan feels pressured to outperform a girl in his friend group. Hassan's story will resonate with readers familiar with Ramadan while relating across cultures. Hassan and his family are practicing Muslims from Yemen, and other characters are diverse in skin tone and body types. Based on the author's own family and experiences, this enjoyable coming-of-age story embraces the importance of community and honoring all facets of the self.	Kirkus Reviews (December 15, 2024) A Yemeni American boy struggles to find balance during Ramadan. Hassan is preoccupied during the first days of Ramadan—he falls asleep in class and sidesteps questions about why he's not eating lunch. Things get harder at soccer practices when he leaves early, much to the consternation of his coach. Other than one friend, he doesn't tell anyone about his fasting. Meanwhile, Hassan's nights are busy with prayers at the masjid; his grades slip, and he fears he'll be replaced on the soccer team. Hassan and his cousins secretly break their fast, gorging on sweets, a lapse that weighs heavily on his conscience. His frustration wells up, leading Hassan to fall apart and act out at school. In response, his parents ground him, but the crisis also results in a conversation with his mom that allows Hassan to consider why he's choosing to continue fasting. As Ramadan progresses, Hassan gains more control over his life—and when he opens up to others about fasting, there are some surprises in store for him. This uplifting story highlights the struggles of some fasting Muslim kids, but Algarmi focuses on Hassan's perseverance and ability to own up to his mistakes and turn things around. Action-packed panels showing Hassan's school days contrast with quieter moments with family. Many wordless sequences offer glimpses of the Yemeni community. An inspiring look at the challenges and courage needed to be true to one's faith. (Graphic fiction. 8-12)	
American Sign Language : 200 essential words and phrases		Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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Amil and the after	Hiranandani, Veera	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (February 9, 2024) Gr 4-6-Hiranandani's Newbery Honor-winning The Night Diary is a family's story of survival. This companion novel is about their struggle to recover after life-changing trauma. Amil, twin sister Nisha, their father, grandmother, and family cook Kazi endured a harrowing flight from their home after the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan. Now living in Bombay, the family struggles to build a new life amid social and political unrest. While Nisha finds solace through writing, Amil expresses himself through drawing. Miranda's spot art effectively conveys Amil's longing for all that he has lost. But at 12, he'd also love to have a bicycle and a friend. How he gains both embodies the novel's themes of hope amid chaos and how kindness can save a life. Kazi advises Amil and Nisha: "Imagine if every person who wasn't suffering helped one person who was." A glossary of South Asian terms, words, and names is included but hardly needed as Hiranandani effortlessly incorporates the tastes, sights, sounds, and history of India in engaging prose. Flashbacks to the first novel round out the narrative and allow this sequel to stand on its own. VERDICT Accessible and engrossing, readers unfamiliar with the historic partition of India and Pakistan will nevertheless readily relate to a boy's yearning for stability in tumultuous times. A first purchase for all middle grade collections.-Marybeth Kozikowski © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2024) In this companion to Newbery Honor Book The Night Diary (rev. 7/18), Nisha's twin brother, Amil, resumes the story. Everything was supposed to get better after their family survived the terrifying journey from Mirpur Khas to Bombay following the partition of India in 1947. Now they have a new flat, their father has a job at the hospital, and the twins are attending school. But Amil keeps flashing back to the terrible things he saw and experienced. He tries to quell his anxieties by drawing in his sketchbook (exuberantly depicted by illustrator Miranda), but what he really wants are "a friend and a bicycle." Part of those wishes comes true when he meets Vishal, a mysterious boy from a local refugee camp. When Vishal suddenly disappears, Amil discovers that the point of his own survival may be to help ensure the same for someone else. Fans of the previous title will appreciate this compassionate and thoughtful continuation of the family's story, while new readers can experience Amil's account of hope and survivor guilt as a standalone volume. A glossary and author's note are appended. Jennifer Hubert Swan January/February 2024 p.94	Booklist starred (December 1, 2023 (Vol. 120, No. 7)) Grades 4-6. Life is quite complicated for 12-year-old twins, Amil and Nisha. Their mother died when they were babies, leaving them in the care of their emotionally distant father and ailing grandmother. Then, the partition of India and Pakistan meant they had to leave their home in Pakistan and move to an apartment in Bombay. Both children exhibit signs of PTSD as a result of the arduous journey through the desert. Making friends in a new place is hard enough, but it is even harder in their context, when Hindu-Muslim tensions crackle in the air and neighbors eye one another suspiciously. Amil struggles in school, and readers might recognize his perception of letters and numbers as akin to dyslexia. He is, however, a talented artist and documents his days by drawing, hoping that somehow his mother can see his sketches and know how his life is unfolding. Amil and the After is a searingly emotional middle-grade novel that effectively captures the turmoil and joys of being a kid adjusting to all manner of life changes, all while providing the reader a tangible experience, replete with the tastes, sounds, and atmosphere of bustling post-Partition Bombay. Pencil sketches, supposedly from Amil's journal, add a charming visual dimension. The fast-paced, multifaceted plot will keep readers engaged while bringing them to a satisfying resolution.	
Aniana del Mar jumps in	Mendez, Jasminne	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2023) Gr 5-9-Mendez makes both her middle grade fiction and narrator debuts, reciting her verse novel comprised of "several poetic forms"-including haiku and tanka, and also concrete/shape poems (albeit the page might be better suited for appreciating "Turtle Shell," "Fish Food," as examples). Aniana and Papi's "daddy-daughter dates" enable Aniana to secretly attend swim practice and meets without Mami knowing. Since losing her brother to drowning as children, Mami's forbidden Aniana from the water, never mind that Coast Guard-employed Papi is seabound for weeks at a time. When a mysterious illness debilitates Aniana's mobility, Mami insists she's being punished for lying. Her diagnosis says otherwise: juvenile idiopathic arthritis. Aniana knows-supported by doctors-that swimming is her best medicine, physically and mentally. Improvement will require she boldly claim that del Mar-"of the sea"-moniker. VERDICT Mendez reads rather than performs her girl-power story, but she ensures her characters are affectingly heard. © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2023) Aniana (Ani) del Mar lives on the Gulf Coast in Galveston, Texas, and the pull of the ocean is in her blood. But she must keep her passion for swimming secret from her devout Dominican mother, who lost a twin brother to a hurricane and deeply fears the water. A loving father, a preschool-age sibling, and a steady best friend help Ani keep her balance -- most of the time. But when she begins to suffer pain and swelling and is diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis, she questions everything -- her gift for swimming, her family relationships, and her own identity. Incorporating some Spanish words and phrases, Mendez weaves together free-verse poetry, concrete poems, haiku, tanka, and even texting and dialogue poems to capture character voice and emotion and propel the story forward. She uses the shape and structure of the poem on the page to add weight to the text, as when □New Ani□ offers a list of ways in which the character feels she has changed and has come to accept herself. The story moves quickly as Ani competes in swimming and keeps it secret, then bogs down a bit as she grapples with her illness, but the poetry keeps the plot afloat as we engage with Ani in her struggles. Sylvia Vardell March/April 2023 p.74	Booklist (January 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 9)) Grades 4-8. If Ani could become a dolphin and live in the water for the rest of her life she would, but she and Papi have been keeping her swimming practices a secret from Mami. Her mother still hasn't healed from losing someone close to her many years ago, and she's afraid that the water will betray her again. When Ani experiences increasing joint pain to the point that she can no longer move, the secrets come spilling out. After receiving a diagnosis of juvenile idiopathic arthritis, she is forbidden from swimming. Ani starts to feel her happiness slowly drain from her body, but if she is ever to swim again, she must regain her strength both physically and mentally. Aniana del Mar Jumps In is a story of love, loss, and growth that explores how our actions can unintentionally harm those who we love, how we learn to heal from that pain, and how we grieve not only those who we've lost but the people we once were, as well as embracing who we are becoming.	
Apocalypse taco	Hale, Nathan	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (March 1, 2019) Gr 3-7-On a late-night food run for their mother's high school theater group, middle schoolers Axl and Ivan, accompanied by high schooler Sid, grab Mexican fast food from a disturbing drive-through and find that they're in a new dimension. Mysterious creatures have created copies of everything, but with a bizarre twist. Tacos with tentacles and goopy, sentient buildings and cars are out to get our heroes, who must use all their cunning (and a windshield scraper) to save the world and avoid being copied themselves. The characters are expressive, with the same mix of slapstick and swagger found in Hale's other popular graphic novels. The monsters are unsettling-exaggerated and drawn with a fluid, boneless grace that maximizes the creep factor and wonderfully evokes peril. Creatively positioned and sized panels move the action along at breakneck speed. Rendered in grayscale with burnt orange accents, the illustrations are inventive and intricate. The lack of a clear ending will frustrate some but leave most readers clamoring for more. VERDICT Hale has done it again-another graphic novel that offers a terrific blend of the eerie and the humorous that will captivate new readers and delight dedicated fans.-Kelley Gile, Cheshire Public Library, CT © Copyright 2019. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (March 15, 2019 (Vol. 115, No. 14)) Grades 4-7. In a similar vein to his One Trick Pony (2017), Hale brings his unique brand of grotesque, dizzyingly intricate art to another story of potentially world-ending otherworldly creatures. This time, the plot involves tacos, bees, and a biomatter copier invented by a maniacal grad student. Sid, Ivan, and Axl are picking up a snack for an all-night set-building crew at the high school when Sid's truck starts sinking into the drive-through pavement, and their boxes of tacos start sprouting insectlike, aggressive legs. Then they find they're not in their town at all but a strangely soft and sticky replica that seems intent on consuming them. The plot doesn't quite hold up under close scrutiny, and the ultimate solution is a bit of whimper, but Hale's captivating artwork—composed of shattering, goopy fractals of arms, tentacles, and teeth that slither and plop in organic, visceral motion—manages to carry the narrative forward. Perfect for fans of weird fiction, with a visual style that will appeal to fans of horror comics.	Kirkus Reviews (February 15, 2019) While on a food run, 11-year-old twins Axl and Ivan find themselves in an apocalyptic world run by hives of replicator bees. When their mother sends them on a post-midnight snack run to feed the hungry middle school theater crew preparing for the next day's dress rehearsal of Brigadoon, Axl and Ivan aren't too excited to go to McDonald's, as they believe it is not Scottish enough. However, they depart from the theme even further when they are forced to settle for tacos since the Taco Bear drive-thru is the only place they find open. Soon, they realize the tacos are more alive than they hoped and find themselves in a reality with the same consistency as a tub of nacho cheese. When they encounter Wendy, a library school student who initially has the form of a tangled mass of arms, they learn that in an attempt to solve world hunger, one of her bioenginеer roommates created replicator bees that have made the world their hive, from which the gang must escape with the help of a windshield scraper. Hale positively revels in the weirdness of his premise. The two-color orange palette he uses adds to the surrealistic feeling of the illustrations, the cheesy ooziness of which could trigger any typophobic. Axl and Ivan have dark skin, and Wendy presents Asian. A well-balanced mix of sci-fi, horror, and humor. (Graphic science fiction. 10-14)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Bad best friend	Vail, Rachel	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (March 1, 2020) Gr 5 Up-Eighth grader Niki Ames is trying to navigate the complexities of middle school friendship and feelings. Early on, she discovers her best friend, Ava, might not be her best friend after all. This sad realization prompts Niki to second-guess herself and her behaviors as she weighs each of her words and actions against how Ava may perceive her. She deals with the push-and-pull of texting; she regrets there isn't a delete for sending a message. She worries she'll tell people too much about her family, especially about her younger brother, who is on the autism spectrum. She has a loving and supportive family, but her brother's behavior can be challenging for both her and her parents. There is a plethora of middle school concerns that will prompt thought and discussion, including a first, and unwanted, kiss; maintaining and acquiring friendships; being and feeling left out; supporting siblings; and more. All are handled with Vail's deft hand and balanced with keen insight and a splash of humor. The story unfolds in Niki's authentic voice. The conflicts, though numerous, do not make this a "problem" novel but rather an insightful look at the dramas surrounding students in middle school. Readers will see good and bad elements of the many characters, just like real life, and will be curious to understand their behaviors. VERDICT This page-turning, solid friendship story will be savored by middle grade students. A welcome addition to library collections. -Helen Foster James, University of California at San Diego © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (December 1, 2019) An eighth grader's world is thrown into turmoil when her best friend publicly identifies another girl as such instead. Required to team up with a best friend in gym class, Niki's mortified when Ava chooses Britney, leaving Niki by default with "wonky, nerdy, wholesome" Holly, her best friend in third grade (before Ava moved here to Snug Island, Maine). Bonding with Holly and her friends holds little appeal. Niki's desperate to restore the status quo, but Ava won't answer her texts and now hangs out with the superpopular Squad. Confronted, Ava defends her behavior by attacking Niki, who's still mourning their lost friendship. Niki's social anxiety echoes her mother's. (She exhausts herself pretending that Niki's little brother, Danny, is doing fine; later, testing places him on the autism spectrum.) Niki feels guilty for repeatedly blowing off Holly, who single-handedly saves Danny's ninth birthday party. While Danny's needs and crises increasingly demand parental attention, Niki herself becomes a person of interest to neighbor and classmate Milo. Occasionally, the plot spirals into melodrama; Holly's mature intelligence and Ava's manipulative selfishness can seem excessive next to the perfect-pitch presentation of other characters, Niki especially. Danny—high-functioning but self-absorbed, sweet but annoying, impervious yet vulnerable—is an appealing standout among fictional characters on the spectrum, a fully rounded individual. Niki and her family are white, as are most—but not all—of her classmates. Vail's gift for channeling adolescent angst is the icing on this funny, moving tale. (Fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly (February 24, 2020) Eighth graders Niki and Ava have been best friends since Ava moved to Snug Island, Maine, in third grade and claimed Niki from then-friend Holly. But now critical Ava needs a break. Niki strives to be what Ava wants, even as Ava begins hanging out with their class’s most popular girls. Holly works to befriend Niki again, despite their past, but Niki only wants Ava back-that and maybe to spend more time with her crush, Milo. Things at home are charged, too: Niki’s nine-year-old brother, Danny, has meltdowns that have led to the school asking that he be tested, while their mother tries to pretend everything is fine. It’s not until Niki attends a party where things go very wrong that she realizes what a good friend really is. The story contains powerful moments, and Niki is a relatable character, but it can be difficult to understand why she would want to remain friends with someone who is repeatedly unkind to her, and Ava’s sometimes overly explanatory dialogue makes her feel less developed than her counterpart. Ages 10-up. (Mar.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
Band nerd	Willis, Sarah Clawson	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2025) Gr 5-8-Seventh grade flutist Lucy is nervous about starting at a new arts-focused school. The flute is the one thing that makes her feel special-she's never been the best student, and her home life is far from stable. When she's placed as second flute instead of first, Lucy becomes obsessed with proving herself, pushing herself to unhealthy extremes. At home, her father's alcoholism creates chaos, turning him into a volatile and embarrassing presence. His behavior, whether showing up drunk to her birthday sleepover in his underwear or needing to be wrestled out of the bathtub, makes it hard for Lucy to maintain friendships. As the pressures of home and school begin to overwhelm her, Lucy must learn to ask for help. This graphic novel explores difficult issues with empathy and honesty. Lucy's friends face struggles too; Malia, who lives with her grandmother, hides a painful family secret, while Lucy's frenemy Tolli has a mother who pressures her to be the best flutist and diet to lose weight. Despite the conflict, the story is full of hope and resilience. Lucy finds support from her band teacher, guidance counselor, friends, siblings, and eventually her mother. Cormarie's expressive artwork enhances Willis's storytelling, adding emotional depth to every character. VERDICT A moving and ultimately uplifting story, this is a must-read for middle school libraries.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2025) A graphic novel that tackles issues of alcoholism and family dysfunction. Lucy, a seventh grade flutist, nervously enters North Carolina's Windley School of the Arts. But before she can even leave for her first day of school, her parents descend into fighting. Thankfully, on the bus Lucy meets Malia, who becomes her first friend at Windley. Their friendship deepens—Malia also has family secrets, which allows them to bond. Over the next few months, Lucy's father does two stints in rehab. But unbeknownst to the school and her band friends, he's spiraling, and the fights between Lucy's parents are escalating. Meanwhile, making first chair in the band becomes an obsession for Lucy, a way to control her chaotic home life, but her overwhelming need to be the best creates conflicts in her friendships, and her plummeting grades lead to more stress. Cormarie's illustrations of the characters contrast their bright and expressive facial expressions when things are going well with the pain of interpersonal conflict. Willis' treatment of Lucy's father's personality when sober reveals an empathetic glimpse of the genuine love he feels for his children, showing the tragic impact that alcoholism and depression can have on a family. The regular panels feature clean, minimalistic backgrounds, emphasizing the largely white-presenting characters and their feelings. An insightful and optimistic yet realistic portrayal of coping with parental addiction. (Graphic fiction. 9-13)	Publishers Weekly (April 7, 2025) A music student navigates competing school pressures alongside a parent's addiction in this hard-hitting double graphic novel debut from Clawson Willis and Cormarie. As Lucy Carver, a flautist and avid baker, starts seventh grade at an arts school across town, the strain of demanding academics and fierce competition begin to weigh heavily on her. Emotionally charged scenes show Lucy's ardent desire to make first chair and internalized fears about not being "good enough" for the new school compounded, at home, by her father's alcohol reliance and her parents' intensifying arguments. When her father twice enters rehab, her grades take a nosedive, and a burn from baking sidelines her flute-playing, Lucy feels increasingly desperate to move from second chair to first. Minimally detailed, figure-focused cartooning depicts Lucy's family and home life. Though a closing reconciliation feels abruptly paced, uplifting moments of friendship and encouragement-especially involving Lucy's relationships with teachers and peers-offer emotional depth while balancing serious themes and straightforwardly presented difficulties throughout this sincere look at a student pursuing her dreams amid life's turmoil. Most protagonists present as white. An author's note concludes. Ages 8-12. Author's agent: Sara Crowe, Pippin Properties. Illustrator's agent: Maria Vicente, P.S. Literary. (Apr.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Beasts	Bjerkeland, Ingvild	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (April 4, 2025) Gr 7 Up-This Norwegian novella opens deep in the action, as 13-year-old Abdi treks through a catastrophic landscape that has been ravaged by beasts with his five-year-old sister Alva in tow. Their mother has been killed, and the siblings are trying to reach Djupevik so they can flee by boat to the island where their father was working when everything collapsed. On their journey, they narrowly escape the vicious beasts with their sleek coats, crooked necks, and terrifying claws; but sometimes it's the other people trying to survive who are even more dangerous. In her first novel translated into English, Bjerkeland paints a bleak picture of postapocalyptic monster survival reminiscent of media like 28 Days Later and The Last of Us. Clocking in at under 200 pages, the plot maintains an engaging and brutal pace as Abdi struggles to keep his sister and himself alive. The children encounter trustworthy and untrustworthy adults, experiencing the best and worst of humanity in crisis. The abrupt, open ending may seem hopeful to some readers and dissatisfying to others hoping for any sort of closure to Abdi and Alva's harrowing tale. Though the brutality of the circumstances does not ease up, the explicit violence and gore in this text are minimal, making this a suitable introductory genre text for young teens. VERDICT A simple yet effective monster story that will appeal to fans of postapocalyptic fiction.-Ashleigh Williams © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2025) Beasts have invaded thirteen-year-old Abdi's homeland. With their hoofed feet, long arms, slender hands, and razor-sharp claws, the beasts pursue and kill every living creature. The government has collapsed; there's no electricity; supermarkets are empty. What's even worse is the way people have turned against one another, fighting for survival. When their mother is killed, Abdi flees through open country with his little sister, hoping to reach the coast and find a boat to take them overseas to their father. Bjerkeland's propulsive tale is sleek and elegant, a subtle blend of fable and realism that increasingly reflects many of today's desperate refugees' experiences. Every sentence is direct and brief, vivid with eventfulness, uncertainty, and Abdi's deep sense of responsibility for his sister. Even moments of rest and relative safety -- the pleasure of food or the solace of finding one trustworthy adult -- are highly charged. "I missed grown-ups," Abdi laments, and in these few words Bjerkeland evokes the failed adult world, the injustice that plays itself out on children. The story's brevity and abrupt forcefulness, and the characters' stalwart courage and love, make this tale unusually compelling. Deirdre F. Baker July/August 2025 p.91	Booklist (February 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 11)) Grades 6-9. This tense survival horror follows siblings Abdi and Alva as they sneak through the Norwegian forest on their way to a distant port town, where they hope to be able to catch a boat to a small island—the last place they knew their father was alive. As they try to travel unseen and keep themselves fed and warm, they try to avoid both the monstrous beasts that have taken over the country and killed their mother and the menacingly selfish adults unwilling to help them. Bjerkeland's short novel, an award winner in Norway, drips with eerie atmosphere and moves at a taut pace. Abdi's first-person narrative balances the unsettling events with his poignant thoughts and feelings about caring for his younger sister, whose irrepressible attitude is a welcome lightness in this disquieting tale. While the abrupt ending might frustrate some and there are many questions left unanswered, tween readers looking for something scary but not too gory will appreciate the mood cultivated here.	
Besties Set Sail	Miller, Kayla	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Besties. Find their groove	Miller, Kayla	Upper Elementary	3-6	Kirkus Reviews (October 1, 2022) Pressures mount as a school dance approaches. Twelve-year-old best friends Chanda and Beth can hardly wait: It's nearly time for their first dance at Bushmiller Middle School! After seeing her seemingly perfect older sister's high school dance pics, Chanda decides she and Beth must find dates. They begin their "Boy Safari" but find things do not go as planned when their prospects see their insincerity. The girls also have a hard time finding dresses: Beth, who is fat, cannot find a dress that fits as she'd like, and Chanda wants something that encapsulates the desi fashion she loves. When Beth eventually gets asked to the dance and Chanda does not, a rift opens up between them. Miller and Canino's sequel to Besties Work It Out (2021) explores not only Beth and Chanda's friendship, but also their dynamics with their mothers and sisters. Those familiar with Miller's other books will recognize her trademark gentle conflict resolution; the novel also gently probes themes like embracing one's cultural heritage and body positivity (all culminating in a delightful school dance scene. Luu's illustrations (with color by Beatty) are reminiscent enough of Miller's from her Click series but also have their own unique panache to set this series apart and give it its own flair. Beth is White; Chanda is Indian American. Insightful and affirming. (Q&A with Miller, Canino, Luu, and Beatty; sketches and color samples for the book cover; character design sketches; step-by-step creation of a sample page) (Graphic fiction. 8-12)			
Besties. Prank war	Miller, Kayla	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (February 1, 2025) Gr 4-7-Trent and Sawyer, sixth grade best friends and self-proclaimed prank experts, are always on the lookout for their next big laugh. When their idol, skater and internet sensation Trixie Sampson, announces a prank competition with an unbelievable prize, the duo is determined to take the crown. Their half-baked pranks, featuring slime, confetti, and other classics, leave no friend safe-or happy. But when they set their sights on Natasha, their cool and dramatic friend, they quickly find themselves in over their heads. Nat's retaliation ignites an all-out prank war, leaving chaos and some unintended casualties in its wake. Trent and Sawyer are charming and well-meaning, but their obsession with winning blinds them to the impact their antics have on their friendships. Sawyer often acts as Trent's moral compass, but even he gets quite carried away. Tyler, whose kindness and easygoing nature make him an easy target for neglect, is especially compelling. As the prank war escalates, Trent and Sawyer are forced to confront the consequences of their actions. This graphic novel is a lighthearted, entertaining read, though it sometimes strains believability with parents joining in on the pranking. Turner adeptly stays true to the "World of Click" art style. VERDICT Fans of the series will enjoy the humor, mischief, and heart at the core of this story.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (January 15, 2025) Sixth grade buddies Trent and Sawyer bite off more than they can chew when they trick a clever and relentless classmate. The boys become wrapped up in plotting pranks to submit to an internet contest run by pink-haired Trixie Sampson, a professional skateboarder with a web series called "Trixie's Tricks." They pick classmate Natasha as their next target, but the foolishness of that choice quickly becomes clear. Nat enlists their previous victims, even including their own family members, in a nonstop barrage of harmless but rousingly ingenious and messy counter-"prankening" at school and at home, which quickly leaves them exhausted, humiliated, and jumping at shadows. So perfectly does Turner capture their haunted expressions in her neatly drawn panels that even readers who are inspired to try a few slime- and glitter-filled hijinks for themselves may well feel sharp twinges of conscience. If not, at least the implicit cautionary note about the hazards of online influencers may be well taken. Better yet, in a final scene following their warring parties' sincere expressions of regret and a mutual détente, Miller and Canino suggest that the best pranks end not in pain or upset, but in laughter—even from the victim. The cast, depicted in animated and sometimes-dramatic poses to reflect the lively dialogue, is diverse in skin tone. Lessons to learn, friendships to mend, and "prankening" aplenty to chortle over. (artistic notes) (Graphic fiction. 9-13)		

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Besties. Work it out	Miller, Kayla	Upper Elementary	3-6	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2021) A bad decision over tweenage responsibilities creates a friendship rift. Sixth graders Chanda and Beth are best friends looking for quick cash. Chanda Basu, a dark-haired girl who is cued as Indian American, yearns for respect from her overtly critical parents, who favor her successful college student older sister. Beth Wagner, who presents White, has a demonstrative, loving family with hardworking parents and a supportive older sister. When a dogsitting opportunity for a fancy client arises, the girls enjoy being in luxurious surroundings, trying on the dog owner's clothes and taking photos for social media. This lapse in judgment brings chaos to the job and, in the subsequent fallout, puts their friendship at risk. Even as they work hard to solve the crisis, the storyline conveys value judgments, as Chanda repeatedly makes less mature choices, while Beth displays a stronger moral compass. The ultimate lesson, however, is about communication and working through conflict, because friendships are worth nourishing. A spinoff from Miller's Click series, this graphic novel features BFFs whose emotional highs and lows propel the story forward. The full-color cartoonlike illustrations capture the energy and drama of middle school life and, notably, highlight body positivity through Beth's family. Unfortunately, the stark contrast between Beth's warm, convivial home life and Chanda's lonelier, pressure-filled one feeds into negative stereotypes about Asian American families. A not-so-subtle look at faulty decision-making. (Q&A, character sketches) (Graphic fiction. 8-12)			
Big game hunting	Peterson, Judy Monroe	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2011) Gr 5-8-Each volume in this comprehensive series includes information on hunter education and responsibility and suggests ideas such as a pre-planning checklist before the day of the event. The books also relate strategies for hunting specific game. For example, Canino provides tips and a photograph to explain how to close someone needs to be to shoot a wild turkey with a shotgun versus with a bow and arrow. Chapters describing what happens after the hunt include facts about taxidermy. Even though a few pages are dense with text, others are broken up with spectacular color photographs, some of which are more successful than others at elucidating the text. Men, women, and children appear in them. Varmint Hunting, which discusses animals such as raccoon and opossum, could be useful to those living in more suburban areas, where these animals are considered pests. These titles will work well in libraries that have had success with the "Wild Outdoors" (Capstone, 2010) or "Open Season" (PowerKids, 2010) series. (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (September 1, 2011 (Vol. 108, No. 1)) Grades 5-8. Hunting, to say the least, is not for everyone, and it's hard to convey the sense of communion shared between hunters unless you've seen it yourself. Peterson makes gestures toward elucidating this phenomenon, particularly in a three-page introduction, but she mostly sticks to the facts in this one-size-fits-all explainer. In dense paragraphs arranged without much white space, Peterson displays an impressive grasp of the pastime by throwing in almost everything: types of guns and bows, safety laws, licenses, land access, animal behavior, clothing, methods of hunting, and preparing the harvested meat. There is not a lot of art to the prose—there is little sense given of the excitement or tranquility of the hunt—but it is jam-packed with info. Peterson even talks about the importance of hunters maintaining a positive public image and uses sidebars to cover such interesting topics as the hunter's code. A green-heavy design, bright photos of hunters (including females) and prey, and above-average back matter close out this solid entry in the Hunting: Pursuing Wild Game! series.	Horn Book Guide (Spring 2012) These overviews emphasize the process of hunting successfully, responsibly, and lawfully. It's categorized as a satisfying sport that provides many benefits both to participants and to society (there's no discussion of its cons). Dense texts examine the target animal population, preparation, details of the hunt itself, and the "harvesting" of meat. Vivid photos of hunters and their equipment accompany the texts. Reading list. Bib., glos., ind. [Review covers these Hunting: Pursuing Wild Game titles: Wing Shooting, Turkey Hunting, Big Game Hunting, Small Game Hunting, Varmint Hunting, and Waterfowl.]	
Big Nate. Attack of the cheez funk breath!	Peirce, Lincoln	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Big Nate. No harm done!	Peirce, Lincoln	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Big Nate. Remain calm!	Peirce, Lincoln	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Bones and berserkers : 13 true tales of terror	Hale, Nathan	Upper Elementary	3-6	Kirkus Reviews (August 1, 2025) Author Hale's namesake—spy and Revolutionary hero Nathan Hale—huddles with compatriots beneath a gallows as they regale one another with ghoulish tales drawn from history, literature, and legend. Hale's latest set of Hazardous Tales begins, as it really needs to, with a cautionary note: "Are you a second grader reading way above your age level? If so, set this book down. It's not for you." Indeed, the book doesn't skimp on the disturbing bits. With evocative titles like "The Demon Cat" and "The Head in the Jar" to provide at least a little warning, the author gathers a variety of terrifying tales; three involve the Jersey Devil, while one centers on a butler going bloodily berserk in a house built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Others feature the discovery of a haunted well filled with the corpses of soldiers killed in a Civil War battle, gruesome revenge, and monsters like the Boo Hag, a skin changer who sucks blood through sleepers' noses. All these tales, eerie as they are on their own, are cranked up into screamer territory by Hale's two-tone illustrations, which, with indecent relish and fanatical attention to realistic detail, depict fresh and not-so-fresh corpses, a radiation victim's rotted face, a man's buttocks being hacked off with a sword, leering skeletons, chopped-off limbs, and creepy night creatures with big, sharp teeth. The cast of storytellers, horrified onlookers, and all-too-often mutilated victims is racially diverse. Not all true, but truly nightmarish. (bibliography) (Graphic nonfiction/horror. 10-14)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Buffalo dreamer = Paskwawimostos opowatam	Duncan, Violet	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (August 16, 2024) Gr 3-7-An important middle grade novel about a family reunion, as well as the histories of the Indian residential schools that were set up across the U.S. and Canada. Summer, 12, and her little brother Sage have traveled from their home in Arizona to visit their grandparents in Canada. Summer's mother is Cree and her father is Apache Indian. Upon arrival at Kokom and Mosom's (her grandma and grandpa) home, Summer is reunited with beloved family members including her favorite cousin Autumn. While on her travels, Summer has been dreaming about Buffalo Dreamer, a girl who is running to escape the horrors of residential school. Summer is puzzled and ponders their relevance to the excavation that is currently happening at the site of the old residential school that her grandfather attended as a child. When unmarked children's graves are unearthed at the site, it devastates Summer while leading to more people in her life opening up about their experiences at these traumatic institutions. Based on Duncan's family history, this novel balances an exploration of painful events with idyllic scenes of intergenerational love and connection. Beautiful descriptions of traditional Native American culture and dress make scenes vivid for readers as Summer's family rides horses, picks berries, prepares meals, and shares stories, even ones that have remained unspoken. VERDICT A powerful addition to all middle grade library shelves highlighting a time in history that has been hidden and often forgotten in both Canada and the U.S.-Tracy Cronce © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2024) Twelve-year-old Summer is excited for her annual visit to her maternal grandparents and extended family on a Cree reservation in Canada. After crossing the border, Summer falls asleep in the car and dreams that she is a young Cree girl trying to escape a residential school. Shortly after she wakes up, she and her mother pass the residential school the government once forced her mosom (grandfather) to attend. The strange dreams continue while she's on the rez; Summer learns that the young Cree girl's name is Buffalo Dreamer, but the school calls her Mary. When Summer tells her cousin Autumn about her dreams, the two decide to investigate what became of Buffalo Dreamer. Along with providing a glimpse into life on a Cree reservation today, Duncan's middle grade□friendly narrative introduces readers to the devastating impact of residential schools. For example, readers learn that Mosom had to learn Cree customs from his wife because the school prohibited him from engaging in them. The chapters that follow Buffalo Dreamer reveal the dangers of trying to escape from the school. An author's note adds personal context; a glossary (unseen) is appended. Nicholl Denice Montgomery September/October 2024 p.72	Booklist (June 1, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 19)) Grades 5-8. Past and present converge in Duncan's novel about an extended Canadian Cree family spending vacation time together. Summer, from the U.S., has traveled to her mother's homeland, where she's looking forward to being with her cousin, collecting sweetgrass and wild berries, swimming, and riding her horse. However, just after crossing the border, she locks eyes with an elderly Cree woman and begins having disturbing dreams of a girl running away from a residential school that Indigenous children were once forced to attend, cutting them off from family and culture. The dreams blend, and reflect on, local and family history. Nearby is an old school whose grounds are being dug up as a gruesome secret is exposed. Using Summer's dreams to spur them toward learning about the school and their grandfather's youth, the girls also join a protest of what the school represents, and Summer once again crosses paths with the woman, Buffalo Dreamer, who has haunted her sleep. This story of maturation and involvement in community will appeal to readers interested in the past and in present-day social action.	
Bye forever, I guess	Meadows, Jodi	Middle School	5-8	Booklist starred (October 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 3)) Grades 5-8. Insecure middle-school student Ingrid is a gamer girl who just happens to have an extremely popular (but anonymous) Scrollr account, called Bye Forever, I Guess, on which she posts text conversations she's carried out with wrong numbers. Only her best friend (Rachel), her online friend, and her grandmother know the truth about it—that is, until Rachel betrays her. Meanwhile, Ingrid's favorite author is coming to town, and she and the mystery boy she's been texting decide to finally meet at the bookstore for the event. Meadows, one of the creative forces behind the YA Lady Janies series, proves a dab hand at writing for middle-grade readers, harnessing the drama of shifting friendships and popularity hierarchies, embracing nerd culture, and injecting everything with the perfect amount of awkward. Yes, parts of the book seem entirely too convenient, but it's such a fun read that no one will care. A hilarious enemies-to-something-more tale, told equally in prose and text messages, this book is sure to please any middle schooler in need of a sweet romance. Hand to fans of Cory Doctorow's In Real Life (2014) and Alexis Nedd's Don't Hate the Player (2021).	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2024) Thirteen-year-old Ingrid never wanted to be anything but invisible. In person, Ingrid Ant is shy, introverted, and content to let her real-life best friend, Rachel Allan, have the spotlight. But online, her Scrollr page "Bye Forever, I Guess" is ridiculously popular. Known as Anony Mouse on Scrollr, Ingrid maintains her anonymity and keeps her popularity under wraps while sharing the hilarious wrong number texts she receives. Ingrid's life is a careful balance of school, a largely nonexistent social life, posting to Scrollr, and playing her favorite MMORPG, Ancient Tomes Online, with her online best friend, Lorren Watson, who lives in Michigan, far from Ingrid in Virginia; the two have never met in person. When a new family moves to town, Ingrid's awkwardness causes a rift with her friend group. Lonely and isolated, Ingrid finds that a new wrong number text blossoms into a desperately needed friendship. This mysterious texter—known only by his ATO username, Traveler—gives her a chance to not only make a new friend, but to find her way forward after being isolated by her peers. And who knows—maybe this chance wrong-number encounter will turn into something beyond friendship. This online-savvy tale of friendship uses text message chains to add a digital dimension that perfectly matches Ingrid's life. Ingrid's experiences with navigating middle school, friendships, and the online world provide important lessons about online safety and boundary setting in relationships. Characters largely present white. Charming, funny, and endearing. (Fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly starred (July 22, 2024) As the best friend of popular, self-absorbed Rachel, Ingrid is used to feeling invisible. But the guarded Virginia eighth grader has a vibrant online life, where she's built a supportive community via the MMORPG Ancient Tomes Online and her secret blog Bye Forever, I Guess, a compilation of the wrong-number texts she frequently receives. After Rachel humiliates Ingrid in front of new kids Oliver and Alyx, Ingrid decides she's had enough and drops her. She retreats further into her online life by getting to know Traveler, the anonymous sender of a recent misdirected text. In contrast to her increasingly awkward interactions with Oliver, who has a "strange ability to notice me," Ingrid and Traveler have an easy, sweet rapport as they chat and play ATO-until she starts suspecting that he may be closer than she thought. Even worse, his initial text may have been meant for Rachel. Interspersing Ingrid's delightfully snarky narration with chat transcriptions, Meadows (the Salvation Cycle) presents an earnest and laugh-out-loud middle grade debut that's both a winning exploration of tween friendship and a pitch-perfect paean to fan culture and the thrill of finding one's community. Main characters default to white. Ages 10-14. Agent: Lauren MacLeod, Aevitas Creative. (Oct.)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Camp Sylvania	Murphy, Julie	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (September 8, 2023) Gr 4-7-Fifth grade is over, and this is the summer Maggie and her best friend, Nora, have been waiting for. Finally, it's time to go to Camp Rising Star, where Maggie hopes to get over her stage fright and perform in the camp musical. Maggie's parents spring different plans on her and insist she go to Camp Sylvania, a fat camp founded by the famous Sylvia Sylvania, with whom Maggie's mom attended fat camp as a girl. At Camp Sylvania, Maggie and her bunkmates become fast friends, and there's even a theater production to look forward to. However, things quickly become weird with a diet of strictly red foods, daily required blood donations, and creepy, mean counselors. When campers begin disappearing, and ghostly and vampiric appearances start happening, Maggie and her friends must stop the sinister plan. As the story unfolds, difficult topics of family acceptance and friendship issues are explored fully and satisfactorily. Murphy (Puddin', Dumplin') has created characters who experience all the usual tween feelings, from first crushes to confidence issues, with tenacity and determination. VERDICT Readers looking for a slightly spooky, fast-paced adventure with fully developed characters will delve into this one.-Michele Shaw © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2023) Maggie knows the summer after fifth grade will be amazing because she's finally going to the performing arts camp of her dreams...until her parents send her to weight loss camp instead. While enduring inedible food and exhausting workouts, Maggie befriends her bunk mates -- Kit, an excitable Girl Scout; and Evelyn, a posh British girl -- and tries out for the camp production of The Music Man, for which she scores the title role. But the camp's owner, the glamorous influencer Sylvia, seems determined to suck as much fun from camp as possible, and some of her ideas are downright creepy, like forcing the underage campers to donate blood. When campers start disappearing, Maggie realizes it's up to her to uncover Sylvia's secrets. For starters, what is she doing with all the blood? The characters' quirkiness makes them engaging and memorable, especially Kit with her great enthusiasm for all things outdoors. Humor is woven throughout, from Maggie's frequent sass to a scene of vampires on a Zoom call. The central focus is on Maggie's journey to overcome her personal fears, but the diet cultureâç□obsessed vampires also allow for some moments of biting satire. Bodie Shanis July/August 2023 p.119	Booklist (April 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 15)) Grades 3-7. Maggie's finally ready to leave for her longed-for performing-arts camp, but her parents have made other plans: she's going to Camp Sylvania, a "wellness" (i.e., fat) camp. Maggie is furious, of course, but thankfully, her bunkmates are fantastic and she gets the lead in the camp production of The Music Man opposite her crush. But the counselors have some strange rules (they can't enter cabins unless they're invited in), campers start going missing, and there's an unusually alluring blood bank near the cafeteria. Yes, it's vampires, and Maggie and her friends must save the day! While the vampire plot drives the story, Maggie's personal growth absolutely steals the show: instead of any weight-based bullying, Murphy focuses on the cheerworthy solidarity Maggie feels with her fellow campers, especially when they work together to push back against some of the camp's more fatphobic practices, like public weigh-ins and banning the word fat. Readers of gentle horror will enjoy the eerier elements, and fans of contemporary middle-grade fiction will be delighted by Maggie's realization that she's perfect just the way she is.	
Candle Island	Wolk, Lauren	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (April 4, 2025) Gr 4-8-It is the late 1960s, and Lucretia "Lucy" Sanderson and her mother have moved to Candle Island for some peace, unaware of the mysteries and drama they would find-and not just from the secret they brought with them. Candle Island has a winter population of 315, which more than doubles in the summer when the wealthy folk come for vacation; and while Lucy and her mother are here to stay, they find themselves not exactly welcomed by everyone on the island. All they wanted was a place to escape the memory of Lucy's father's death and the journalists who are looking for an interview with the famous Sanderson artist. Life on the island isn't so simple; they find an injured bird, a secret room, and a lost cat between them, among other mysteries. What was supposed to be a peaceful move is met with rocky waves and complicated relationships. Wolk's latest novel wonderfully portrays new relationships while tackling grief and self-discovery. The characters are well developed, and readers can see parts of themselves and those they know. The book also has several small mysteries that readers will be itching to solve. While a work of historical fiction, the story has the modern feel of a quiet life without current technology and trends. VERDICT A worthy purchase for library shelves that would also serve well as a selection for group discussions.-Amanda Borgia © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2025) After the accidental death of Lucretia's father, she and her mother move to an island off the coast of Maine, where they buy a small farm. Their first summer there is full of drama -- tensions between locals and summer people, Lucretia's adoption of an injured osprey chick, a suspicious fire that destroys the town's wharf, the inexplicable hostility of a local girl toward Lucretia, mysterious operatic arias that seem to have no source, the theft of a valuable artwork -- and, tying it all together, a secret that Lucretia and her mother are keeping from the islanders and, indeed, from everyone. Lucretia is a child prodigy in painting, and Wolk believably inhabits a gifted character who experiences the world (sounds, relationships, emotions, textures, smells) in distinctive and specific colors. The contrast between the year-round islanders (wise, close to nature, hardscrabble, competent) and the seasonal visitors (rude, arrogant, rich, entitled) is a bit on the nose, but the examination of a highly original mother-daughter relationship, with a unique power dynamic, is intriguing and thought-provoking. Their big secret is deftly revealed, prompting members of this multifaceted community to re-evaluate their judgments concerning one another. Sarah Ellis March/April 2025 p.88	Booklist starred (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 5-8. The animosity between Candle Island's locals and the summer folk vacationing there is evident to Lucretia Sanderson before she even alights the ferry. As new residents, she and her mother don't fit into either camp, but all they really want is to be left in peace so that they can settle into their new house, paint without distraction (mainly from art critics seeking interviews with Mrs. Sanderson), and learn to move forward from the death of Lucretia's father. Many impediments to these modest desires arise, yet each obstacle leads Lucretia to learn more about the island and, most importantly, herself, considering all the inner changes she's been experiencing lately. Central to these desires is her wish to befriend a curmudgeonly girl with ties to her house and a kind boy with a secret. Wolk writes with a beautiful serenity reflective of Lucretia's unconventional artist's view of the world, and she gradually peels back layers that expose surprising revelations and enrich the character-driven story. Sensory language brings the New England setting to life, whether in the sound of lobster boats passing by or the stabbing cold of the water surrounding the island. Readers who enjoy good writing for its own sake and meeting characters who feel like friends by story's end will revel in losing themselves on Candle Island.	
Catch me if I fall	Jonsberg, Barry	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (April 1, 2023 (Online)) Grades 4-7. Identical twins Ash and Aiden live in a near-future Australia where climate change has brought on severe weather and the decimation of countless organisms. The siblings are highly privileged and want for nothing, while many are starving or living in poverty. Their horizons start to expand when they attend school, though. Then, following a freak accident wherein Aiden, the protector, saves Ash's life, his personality inexplicably starts to change. As Aiden begins to question what he has always taken for granted, their roles reverse. This timely story featuring artificial intelligence depicts a society that depends heavily on technology juxtaposed with personal and community farms struggling due to food scarcity and a constant need for security. It is told entirely from Ash's perspective and has a timeless theme of what it means to love and take care of your sibling, all set in this probable future. The strong ecological message is in the background of every scene, illustrating where humanity went wrong, while Ash tries to make sense of this new side of her brother.	Publishers Weekly starred (January 30, 2023) A dystopian future Australia provides the backdrop for this smart speculative read revolving around the profound love of a twin brother and sister. Twelve-year-old siblings Aiden and Ashleigh Delatour live privileged existences in Sydney, where they attend an elite private school and have the best of everything courtesy of their tech-mogul mother, an AI engineer. "Siblings are there to catch you when you fall," they are taught, representing a vital bond in a climate change-ravaged world in which many people suffer and die beyond enclave walls. Quiet Aiden, who's "a bit of a loner," has a genetic condition that impedes digestion; first-person narrator Ashleigh, quick to brag about their expensive home, struggles to make friends. After he sustains a grave injury while kayaking, Aiden begins to change in radical ways, becoming argumentative around an increasing awareness of the larger world's grim realities. Though Ashleigh questions their relationship, Aiden's awareness of the duo's privilege eventually causes Ashleigh to open her eyes, culminating in a deftly handled conclusion that compassionately examines the intersection of ethics and familial love. Jonsberg (A Song Only I Can Hear) creates a timely, disturbingly plausible future of haves and have-nots that examines mature concerns through a savvy middle grade viewpoint. Ashleigh and Aiden have black hair and pale skin. Ages 9-12. (Mar.)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Causes of World War II	Hudak, Heather C	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Cincinnati Lee, curse breaker	Heilig, Heidi	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress (February 28, 2025) Gr 4-6-Twelve-year-old Cincinnati Lee is a thief, but for a good reason. Her great-great-great grandfather, a famous archeologist, put a curse on the family through his looted goods and now, following his diary, Cincinnati must break it. Cin's mom, who is Chinese and white, is a fundraiser for the Cosmopolitan Museum of New York, where Cincinnati spends much of her time with brilliant forger (and best friend) Felix. She discovers an evil villain is conspiring with a well-known collector to find the Spear of Destiny, an artifact with ultimate power to reverse her curse-or destroy the world! Cin's new friend Parsley, a fashion-forward Black girl, becomes her willing (and sometimes unwilling) accomplice as she sneaks into art auctions, scales rooftops to warehouses, and finds her way to a houseboat in Paris to recover the spear and perhaps change her destiny. With a mix of reality, the supernatural, and unbelievable situations, this story makes an entertaining read. The first-person narration highlights Cin as an erudite tween trying to save her family and figure out friendships. Some references might go over the heads of the intended readership with their focus on the illegal artifact trade, referencing real museums and cases, such the Hobby Lobby scandal and the legendary Indiana Jones. These are explained in the author's note, so unfamiliar topics could spark conversations. VERDICT An adventure heist that tries to emulate the excitement of Indiana Jones, while adroitly opening their eyes to the problematic issues of smuggling and looting ancient artifacts for tweens who like a rollicking story.-Clare A. Dombrowski © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 4-7. Cincinnati Lee loves archeology as much as her great-great-something-grandfather did, and he dedicated his life to recovering ancient artifacts for preservation and display in museums. But Cincinnati is certain that her ancestor's work, however well intentioned, has left their family cursed, and she feels it's her responsibility to return all the artifacts to their places of origin. Luckily, her mom's work at a New York City museum puts her in proximity to plenty of relics. But a rumor about the hunt for the Spear of Destiny sees Cincinnati sucked into a race against older, more-experienced treasure hunters who want the relic's supposed powers for their own gain. Can Cincinnati (and a few unexpected allies) find a way to beat them to the spear while staying true to their own moral code? It's a terrific tale, worthy of its Indiana Jones inspiration (fedora included) yet still fresh, and Cincinnati feels like a fully realized friend, flaws and all. There are surprises aplenty, real danger, and lots of laughs, and Heilig pulls no punches in her thoughtful discussions of museum ethics and lightly disguised Hobby Lobby scandals. Any amateur archaeologist or adventurer-appreciator will adore the brisk pace, delightfully well-rounded cast, and deepening mystery that whisks readers around the world and into high-stakes situations. A fantastic, adventurous foray into the ethics of archaeology.	Kirkus Reviews starred (February 1, 2025) A spirited 12-year-old embarks on an action-packed globe-trekking adventure to collect and repatriate stolen artifacts. After Cincinnati Lee, an American girl who has some Chinese heritage, snags her ailing 135-year-old archaeologist great-great-great-grandfather's diary, she learns about a clay idol from Peru that he looted (and which has cursed the family) and the legendary Spear of Destiny (a relic rumored to grant immense power, but at great peril). Determined to right past wrongs, Cincinnati works to recover the idol. In doing so she unravels an international web of secrets involving corporate art smugglers, curse-bearing relics, and her own family history. Along the way, Cincinnati is supported by friends: Parsley, a Black classmate at her posh private school and the daughter of a celebrity musician, and Felix, who presents Latine and is an amateur forger whose father works with Cin's mom at the Cosmopolitan Museum of New York. The settings and characters are well developed, and laugh-out-loud dialogue accompanies the bold, fast-paced narrative. References to other adventure stories, real places, and true-to-life political controversies (such as the Hobby Lobby smuggling scandal) abound, adding depth and inviting readers to reflect on questions of cultural heritage and museum ethics. As Heilig writes in her author's note, "When the treasure we put on display is evidence of a crime, what will future generations believe about our values?" This story is hilarious, smart, and respectfully rendered, and the writing is accessible while still feeling literary. A thrilling, thoughtful, and layered adventure story with fantastical elements. (Adventure. 8-12)	
Clutch time	Butler, Caron	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews starred (September 15, 2024) Being the best on the court doesn't mean you don't have a lot to learn about playing the game of life. Being a top-ranked player comes with a lot of new pressures for 14-year-old basketball phenom Kofi Douglass. Though their Milwaukee community has suffered a recent tragic loss, Kofi and his mother are also still reeling from the day his father was arrested seven years ago—and basketball has become a complicated way of coping. Through all the challenges, Kofi has a staunch best friend in Mecca, but even she's beginning to recognize how he's started to let basketball and his ego get in his own way. Meanwhile, former friend (now bitter rival) Ripp Ransom will take advantage of any misstep to get ahead of Kofi, leading to some action-packed showdowns on the court. These scenes, coupled with flashbacks that contextualize Kofi's story, make for a compelling sports drama with a lot of heart. In this stand-alone companion to Shot Clock (2022), the authors believably frame Kofi's slow path toward maturity on and off the court, presenting it as the real key to his overall success. Ballplayers will appreciate the hoops details, playful slang, and healthy dose of trash talk, while the images of healing from loss and unfairness will be accessible and refreshing for any readers. The cast members predominantly read Black. Thoughtfully portrays a boy who's balancing hoop dreams and emotional maturity to achieve impressive ends. (Fiction. 10-14)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Coach	Reynolds, Jason	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (October 3, 2025) Gr 5 Up-The final novel in Reynolds's "Track" series jumps back to 1988. Readers meet the crew's coach as seventh grader Otis (Otie), busy navigating school, bullies, and friends while pursuing his passion of becoming an Olympic track star like his hero Carl Lewis. Otie and best friend Torrie are the two fastest sprinters for the Defenders, an after-school track team started to keep kids off the streets. There are things happening in Otie's neighborhood that he is told to avoid but as the story develops, it becomes clear that it's not just the "bad" kids causing trouble; even Otie's dad seems to be having issues. Otie hopes the time machines he's drawing can propel him away from his problems, but when his beloved Air Jordan 3s and his father both go missing, he has to face some hard truths. Reynolds is a master at hooking even the most reluctant of readers with witty and conversational dialogue that will have tweens feeling like they're on the track or in the classroom with Otie. Reynolds poignantly portrays how addiction affects families, including the cycle of improvement and relapses, and the role community plays. Otie learns life lessons from Coach Marvin; it's not the shoes, but who is in the shoes that matters. Otie and most main characters are Black. VERDICT A stellar companion novel about one tween's struggles and ambitions that can stand alone but will have newer readers sprinting to the rest of the books in this excellent series.-Michele Shaw © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2025) Middle-school athletes Ghost, Lu, Patina, and Sunny each have their own titles in Reynolds's Track series (most recently Lu, rev. 11/18); now it's Coach's turn. Who was he before he was an inspiring leader? How did he grow up to be so committed to his athletes' lives? Reynolds delineates how track star Carl Lewis guides Otis (Otie) Brody's path in his youth. Watching the 1984 Olympics on television with his father and witnessing Lewis winning the gold medal for the hundred-meter event took a boy who "wasn't the athletic type. Couldn't catch a ball, or dribble, or tackle" and made him a runner. Now, four years later, he's a sprinter, with "9.99," Lewis's medal-winning time, written on his hand before each race. In Ghost (rev. 11/16), sprinter Castle Cranshaw says of his troubled home life, "You don't know what it's like, Coach. You don't know." But in this installment, we learn that Coach Brody does know. At the conclusion of the story, when young Otie is talking about his Olympic dreams, his mother says, "I think you gon' make it. But if for some reason you don't, guess what? I think you'd make a pretty good coach." A strong entry in the series that provides backstory for the coach who has been there from the beginning. Dean Schneider November/December 2025 p.76		
Code girls : the true story of the American women who secretly broke c	Mundy, Liza	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews (September 15, 2018) When the United States entered World War II, it quickly became clear that, in order to win the war, the military must break enemy code. With so many men serving as soldiers, smart women were called upon to join this secret effort. Initially, upper-level female college students were invited to apply. As the need for codebreakers grew, schoolteachers, especially those skilled in mathematics and sciences, were also called upon. The work was top secret. For many participants, these jobs offered opportunities that far surpassed their culturally circumscribed expectations, since young white women were, at the time, mostly viewed as destined for lifelong roles of wives and mothers. While the text acknowledges the existence of the Army's segregated, black codebreaking unit, it focuses on the work of the white women. In this adaptation of Mundy's book for adult readers, the text alternates between descriptions of the progress of the war and the lives of a few of the codebreakers. Sidebars offer additional information, but much of it is later repeated in the narrative. Well-integrated black-and-white period photographs (the adult version's are presented in one sheaf of plates) and the additions of a timeline, glossary, and further reading in the backmatter round out this adaptation. It's an entertaining presentation on a fascinating topic, but given its length, it doesn't extend the audience too much beyond what its original could expect to reach. (timeline, glossary, bibliography, further reading, index) (Nonfiction. 11-15)			
Code name Kingfisher	Kessler, Liz	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (April 1, 2024) Gr 4-8-In the present day, middle schooler Liv is dealing with heavy friend drama, as well as moving her frail Bubbe into an elder community. In 1942 Amsterdam, similarly aged Mila and older sister Hannie are trying to maintain a semblance of normal while living under false identities during the Nazi occupation. When Liv gets a school assignment to explore her family tree, she and new friend Gabi begin probing secretive Bubbe's past. The two stories, wartime and present day, intertwine as events and artifacts from Mila's and Hannie's lives turn up in Liv's exploration of Bubbe's past. Mila, or Mimi, is Bubbe. Much of the plot is revealed through letters and narration by various characters, in addition to journal entries written by Hannie as letters to her lost mother. In helping reunite Bubbe with a friend who was with Hannie at the time she disappeared and who has her journal, Liv learns that Hannie had been a resistance worker murdered by a Nazi patrol. Reading the journal, Bubbe realizes Hannie had forgiven her for her role in mistakenly exposing several Jewish children to capture and releases a lifetime of shame and regret. In an author's note, Kessler writes that, though fictional, the novel is inspired by a tale of real-life sisters. VERDICT A narrative that is at times almost overpoweringly emotional; an intense story, gorgeously told. With World War II books perennially in demand, especially Shoah stories, this one is highly recommended for elementary and middle school libraries.-Bob Hassett © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2024) Thirteen-year-old Liv lives with her parents in England. When she's tasked with a family history assignment for school, she decides to investigate her ninety-two-year-old grandmother. While helping Bubbe move into an assisted living facility, Liv discovers a secret chest from her grandmother's past and learns more than she bargained for. A second story unfolds in alternating chapters: twelve-year-old Mila and her older sister, Hannie, live in Holland in 1942, but since they are Jewish and the Nazis have taken over the country, they do not live with their parents. Rather, they have assumed different identities, hiding in plain sight with a non-Jewish foster family in Amsterdam. Hannie gets drawn into the Dutch resistance with grave consequences; she is the titular Kingfisher. It's quickly revealed that Mila is, in fact, Liv's grandmother, but Kessler makes readers wait to learn the entire story, using lots of dialogue, a notably fast pace, four viewpoint characters, and several dozen short chapters to further develop suspense. An engrossing read, one that provides depth to the Dutch experience during the Holocaust beyond Anne Frank and her famous diary. Jonathan Hunt May/June 2024 p.143	Booklist (May 15, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 18)) Grades 5-8. Liv has been tasked with filling out a family tree, but her grandmother, Mila, won't discuss the past. Following a chance find by Liv in Mila's attic, readers are transported back to 1940s Holland via letters and diary entries. A young Mila and her older sister, Hannie, are Jewish siblings contending with the Nazi occupation, and the burgeoning underground resistance movement is calling Hannie's name, testing their deep connection. Liv works to detangle her family's complicated past while sorting out an equally confusing present (drifting friends and school bullies), and what she uncovers will change her family forever. The stunning story soars when recounting the sisters' troubled time in Amsterdam, and the dramatic descriptions of high-stakes situations will have readers glued to the page. Alternating points of view and time jumps add compelling perspectives, and though there are truly tough moments, the fierce familial bonds and loving friendships lighten the load. A stirring story that will give any reader a boost of bravery in the face of adversity.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Come see the fair	Savit, Gavriel	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (March 1, 2023) Gr 3-7- Come see the Fair! is what Eva keeps hearing the voices tell her. Unsure of what this means, her psychic powers lead her onto a train headed for Chicago where the World's Fair is taking place. She does not know the purpose for this trip, and readers don't really find out until the very end. The vivid description of the characters and setting is alluring and feels perfectly surreal, which will keep readers engaged. The more complex vocabulary makes this perfect for younger, strong readers. VERDICT This story, intended for middle school readers, combines magic mixed with adventure and mystery and throws a little bit of historical fiction into it, would also attract high school and adult readers as well.-Cassandra Bland © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2023) Savit (The Way Back, rev. 9/20) skillfully blends historical fiction, fantasy, and murder mystery in his novel about Eva Root, billed by her traveling con-artist guardian as a medium. In the opening scene, Eva is interrupted mid-seance by a voice imploring her to □ come see the fair.□ Sharp-witted Eva realizes she needs to take her chance and run away, and she randomly gets on a train to Chicago -- not knowing that it is where the magnificent Chicago World□s Fair is currently being held. On the train she meets Henry, who also feels he is being □called,□ through his drawings. The two visit the fair, where Eva begins to have strange experiences and where she meets the mysterious Mr. Magister, who calls himself the □Baron of American Magic.□ Savit conveys the wonders of the fair and the grittiness of post□Great Fire Chicago as he gradually adds more threatening elements to the story; occasional sketchlike black-and-white illustrations by Mildred Hankinson add atmosphere. Savit layers the fantasy elements onto real-world historical details, so that Eva moves between Mr. Magister□s fantastical world and the fair without leaving the pavilion; in a thrilling chase sequence the author conveys speed, action, and surprise through stacatto phrasing and a stream-of-consciousness style. Eva is a strong heroine, and the villain (with several child murders in his past) is genuinely menacing. Susan Dove Lempke March/April 2023 p.80	Booklist (March 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 13)) Grades 5-8. Orphaned Eva speaks to the dead during her nightly shows—or that's what her caretaker would have their audiences believe. She doesn't believe real magic exists, until a performance when she hears a voice whisper that she must come see the fair. A fortunate run-in with an unusual boy, Henry, on a Chicago-bound train suggests that the fair may be the 1893 World's Fair. Eager to explore the remarkable event, Eva and Henry meet a mysterious Mr. Magister, keeper of the enchanted Pavilion of Magic. Though initially the two are taken in by the endless wonders, it becomes increasingly clear that real magic may require more than they can give, and the seemingly sweet Mr. Magister may have something sinister up his sleeve. It's a terrific premise with a strong start, and the incredible fair springs to life via gloriously evocative descriptions. The ambitious story may become tricky to follow, however, thanks to repetitive incidents of magically muddled memories. Still, those who enjoy magic mixed in with their history will be rewarded with a remarkable visit to this World's Fair.	
Danilo was here	Burgess, Tamika	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (January 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up- It has been months since Danilo has seen or heard from his father. Going to the United States to explore new opportunities, his father leaves behind a family struggling to make ends meet. The situation gets even more desperate for Danilo's family when American forces invade Panama, forcing their displacement from a crumbling apartment to a makeshift shelter. When Danilo, a skilled baseball player, is presented with a unique opportunity to train in the U.S., he makes a call that could change his future, the fate of his family, and give him a chance to find his father. Set in Panama and the U.S. at the end of Operation Just Cause in 1990, Danilo's story is briskly paced and shines a light on the challenges of navigating family trauma, especially through the dual lenses of PTSD and microaggressions. These themes are handled with sensitivity and care, making the story accessible to a middle grade audience. Though at times the dialogue can be unnatural and the plot resolves too neatly, the story has heart and hope shines through. Highly engaging and set during events that may be unfamiliar to most readers, this is a poignant tale of resilience, family, and self-discovery. VERDICT An excellent purchase for middle grade collections looking for unique historical fiction perspectives and sports fiction.- Louie Lauer © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2025) In this fast-paced historical novel, Danilo is a Black Panamanian living in a neighborhood destroyed by the United States' invasion of Panama in 1989. Since the first night of the attack, life has become more and more difficult for him and his family. Papa left them prior to the military action in search of better opportunities in the States, but lately he hasn't been calling or sending money home. As a former baseball player, Papa introduced Danilo to the game and nurtured his considerable talent, but in his absence, Danilo decides to stop playing. But then, ironically, Danilo's skill as a baseball player provides him with the chance to reconnect with his father by playing and training in California for a few months. Ultimately, he must decide if he wants to follow in his dad's footsteps to become a baseball player or pursue a different dream. Burgess has created a sympathetic character in Danilo, a kind, hardworking boy who has PTSD and copes with microaggressions and stereotyping in the U.S. The scenes involving baseball are particularly well written and feel authentic. This novel may hold special appeal for baseball fans, but one needn't be an aficionado to enjoy the story. Marva Anne Hinton March/April 2025 p.64	Booklist (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 4-7. In 1989 Panamá, middle-schooler Danilo Osorio cares for his younger sister in their dilapidated apartment while his mother works multiple jobs. Danilo's family hasn't received a letter or money from Papá since he left to find work in America months ago. It isn't long until their apartment building is condemned and his family is sent to a refugee camp. When a baseball recruiter shows interest in Danilo's talents on the field, Danilo accepts an offer to join a baseball team in the U. S. in the hopes of reuniting with his father. In the States, Danilo encounters microaggressions from his host family, hostility from predominantly white and wealthy teammates, and gruff instruction from his coach. Burgess brings to light the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panamá, aka Operation Just Cause, which deposed Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega, and deftly explores Danilo's culture shock and the emerging signs of PTSD left from the invasion. This coming-of-age story highlights the Black Panamanian experience while touching upon an important but often glossed-over moment in history.	
Darkness within	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Dear Jackie	Bagley, Jessixa	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (September 12, 2025) Gr 4-8-A diverse group of sixth graders battle the challenges of fitting in at junior high. Best friends, Jackie, who presents Black, and Milo, who is Asian American, are both excited and worried. Jackie is not into "girlie stuff," such as clothes and boys. Her nonbinary college bound sibling is very supportive as they understand what being different can mean. As the school year progresses, Jackie hatches a plan to make herself more popular. Using her sibling's typewriter, she writes herself secret admirer notes, leaving them near her locker. The group, including frenemy Adelle, pay more attention to her, but the plans to improve her social standing ramp up. The notes continue, stoking the kids' quest to uncover the writer, which eventually culminates at the May dance with the group pressuring Jackie to attend in hopes that the writer will reveal themselves. Readers will relate to Jackie and how, even though her parents give her sound advice, she has to level with them about their outdated norms of appearance and behavior. Jackie truly grows once her sibling returns home for the summer and provides perspective on her friendships. Realistic drawings assembled in a nice flow accurately bring this well-paced story to life. Some key features are the close-ups of the typewritten notes and the kids' expressions. The dialogue of all the characters is pitch perfect. VERDICT A realistic read that will make readers want to know what happens next. Give this to fans of Terri Libenson's "Emmie & Friends" series and Maria Scrivan's "Nat Enough" books. Highly recommended.-Elisabeth LeBris © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (September 1, 2025 (Vol. 122, No. 1)) Grades 3-7. Jackie and Milo were born on the same day in the same hospital and have been best friends ever since. But now that they're in middle school, Milo suddenly has friends on the soccer team who think Jackie's a weirdo for dressing "like a boy" and not wearing makeup. Jackie's mom wants her to hang out with Adelle, a popular girl and the daughter of a friend, but Adelle's friends don't get Jackie, either. In an impulsive effort to fit in, Jackie starts to write secret-admirer notes to herself on a typewriter, and suddenly she has a mystery everyone wants to solve. While Jackie tries to figure out how to be herself when it seems like everyone is trying to change her, she's also trying to keep her secret from getting out of hand. Jessixa and Aaron Bagley's relateable middle-school graphic novel pairs approachable, expressive cartoon artwork with a story that will resonate with kids who feel different, particularly when it comes to gender expression. A solid pick for elementary- and middle-schoolers who love Raina Telgemeier, Jerry Craft, and Shannon Hale.	Kirkus Reviews (July 1, 2025) Middle school pulls best friends in different directions in this latest collaboration from husband-wife duo the Bagleys. Jackie and Milo have always been inseparable, spying on neighbors (and their dogs) and hiding from the world in their HQ. But as they enter sixth grade, middle school hits fast. The two begin to drift apart, with Milo joining the soccer team and making friends with the “dude brahs,” while Jackie is thrown together with Adelle, her mom’s friend’s daughter, who’s into fashion and makeup. As her classmates obsess over who likes whom, Jackie, who prefers video games and comics and appreciates a comfy hoodie, starts to feel like she’s doing girlhood all wrong. Her parents—loving but stuck in old-school ideas of femininity—aren’t much help. Jackie turns to Jabari, her college-age gender-nonconforming sibling, for advice on how they came to accept themself. Jackie also tries to alleviate the pressure from peers by typing herself a fake love letter on Jabari’s old typewriter—but her scheme causes more problems than it solves. With lively, expressive art and the creative use of typewritten narration boxes to reflect Jackie’s unspoken thoughts, this graphic novel captures the cringey, confusing mess of early adolescence. A diverse cast of side characters brings depth to a story that champions self-acceptance and individuality. Jackie and her family appear Black, and Milo presents East Asian. A funny, heartfelt look at growing up and pushing back against narrow expectations. (author’s note, illustrator’s note) (Graphic fiction. 8-12)	
Deep-sea fishing	Thomas, William David	Middle School	5-8	Library Media Connection (August/September 2008) This series brings to life lesser known career opportunities for the adventurous soul. Using simple language geared for a third grade reading level, the call-out boxes and bright photographs bring the brief chapters to life. Vivid colors, judicious use of whitespace, and clear typefaces engage the reluctant or lower-level reader, while the topics are of sufficient interest and knowledge for the middle school reader. Indicating words included in the extensive glossary through the use of boldface, each book also includes a list of books and Web sites to find out more about the career option explored. A wonderful introduction to careers rarely explored in depth for this age level, this series will help a child who hears about these occupations on television or elsewhere to learn more about what these careers truly entail. Index. Recommended. Sara Rofofsky Marcus, Librarian, Yeshiva Har Torah, Little Neck, New York [Editor's Note: Also available in paperback.]			
Did anything good come out of World War II?	Marriott, Emma	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2016) Gr 4-8-Each title begins with a focused crash course, allowing readers to dive in without much prior knowledge of the featured epoch. The remainder of each volume describes innovations that occurred in the days and decades following. Though the series' title suggests otherwise, not all of the changes were favorable. Without minimizing relevant horrors, the authors point out how tragedy inspired revolutions in arts and the media and led to positive change (in most cases) via new technologies and the reworking of government policies. Each volume is packed with illustrations. VERDICT Solid purchases. © Copyright 2016. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.			
Did the World War II spies have super cool gadgets?		Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Dive	Anderson, John David	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (June 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-Anderson's latest realistic fiction delves into the world of diving, both aquatic and dumpster. Thirteen-year-old Kass, who is cued white, was content at her shabby school with her best friend, but her mother believes Kass's diving talents can be better developed at a private Catholic school. Anxious about missing her friend and the tension between her parents regarding finances, Kass is lonely until one day she hears a voice coming from a dumpster. Miles, a high school dropout, shares the world of scavenging with Kass and challenges her to look at discarded items in a new light. Told in economical sentences, the book reads quickly as it covers a few weeks in Kass's life. The characters are well drawn: the "mean girl" has depth and a believable redemption. Miles, whose motives regarding Kass are questioned by multiple characters, is also shown as an isolated, hurting kid. The story additionally succeeds in teaching lessons without moralizing. Kass acknowledges to herself that some of her choices are strange or unsafe, which are later reinforced by other characters when she explains what is going on. VERDICT Anderson reliably provides thoughtful stories, and Dive fits right in.-Elissa Cooper © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (July 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. Thirteen-year-old Kass' parents have recently taken her out of public school and enrolled her in a challenging, expensive private school, where she feels more like a loner than ever. She seldom sees her best friend anymore, and her new classmates aren’t exactly welcoming. While her parents encourage her to join the diving team and make friends, Kass isn’t sure whether she even wants to continue with the sport. She can’t trust her mother’s biased assessment of her talent, and her confidence is eroding, along with her interest level. Then, just as Kass reconnects with her best friend and befriends a former rival, she meets Miles, a 17-year-old dumpster-diving, high-school dropout whom she comes to admire as she learns more about his difficult family life and his attempts to help others. The author of middle-grade fiction such as Ms. Bixby’s Last Day (2016), Posted (2017), and One Last Shot (2020), Anderson creates a number of interesting characters and complicated relationships in this absorbing story. Writing in first person from Kass’ viewpoint, he shows her to be somewhat naive but fairly level-headed, and her two friends help to keep her safely grounded in reality. A perceptive story about a girl who is struggling to find her way.	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2025) A middle schooler tries to find her place in the world. Thirteen-year-old Kassandra Conner is a talented diver and a new student at a private Catholic school. Her parents chose it for its academic rigor and the sports opportunities her old school didn’t have. But Kass, who lives in an apartment above her family’s struggling restaurant, is lost. She doesn’t fit in with the wealthy kids, her best friend is increasingly distant, and her parents are arguing about money. Her lackluster dives show the toll of all this stress. By chance, Kass meets 17-year-old Miles Dempsey, a high school dropout and fellow outsider who seems to understand her. He dumpster dives, and Kass, who’s intrigued, joins him. Soon, Miles’ “lessons” expand beyond dumpsters to places he visits for free necessities and community. Kass learns there’s more to both Miles and the world than her initial assumptions led her to believe. But she gets in over her head with the lies she tells her parents, ultimately endangering the people she cares about. Irreverent teenage humor blends with reflective third-person narration to create a cast of genuine-feeling characters, including well-meaning adults, whose worries and interactions feel true to life. Anderson gives his characters room to make mistakes but also to grow, experience consequences, and forgive. Main characters are cued white. A well-written, introspective story about the assumptions people make and the journey to belonging. (Fiction. 10-14)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Don't cause trouble	Chung, Arree	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (March 1, 2025) Gr 5-7-As 12-year-old Ming starts his first day of middle school, his parents leave him with one clear message: don't cause trouble and get good grades. Ming typically worries about his hair, which his mother cuts, and his shoes and clothes, which come from the thrift shop. Chung's graphic novel eloquently portrays Ming's feelings as a child of immigrants. He wants to be like all the other kids at school and struggles to understand his parents' different approaches to being American and the American Dream. Ming and his two new friends, Vikrum and Marcus, begin to navigate the middle school student body hierarchy, finding their social positions with awkward interactions aplenty. Ming, like all kids, makes poor choices and must face the consequences head-on. Because the story is somewhat autobiographical, it is no surprise that Ming likes to draw. Chung's illustrations capture Ming's feelings of being an outsider after Ming discovers his father's Resident Alien card and begins to draw himself as an actual alien from outer space in his journal. Chung thoughtfully includes notes at the end of the book to show what goes into writing and illustrating a graphic novel. VERDICT Perfectly capturing the experience of navigating middle school as the child of immigrants, this heartfelt and funny title is a must-have for all middle grade graphic novel collections. -Kim Gardner © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2025) In this graphic novel that blends serious themes and humor, the parental mantra "don't cause trouble" has been drilled into twelve-year-old Ming Lee's head for as long as he can remember. As a child of Chinese immigrants, he yearns to embrace the American dream but finds himself missing the mark. His mom insists on giving him the same bowl haircut year after year, shopping at thrift stores for clothes, and packing homemade dumplings for his school lunch, all of which sets him apart from his classmates and ruins his chances of being part of the in-crowd. Filled with episodes revolving around fitting in, encountering microaggressions and outright racism, maintaining religious faith, and grappling with self-acceptance, along with lighter moments, the book captures the ups and downs of middle school, largely drawn (per an author's note) from Chung's own life. The crisp line drawings are infused with vibrant colors and punctuated by Ming's sporadic doodles. Jerry Dear July/August 2025 p.93	Booklist starred (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 3-6. “Tomorrow is the first day of middle school. I was hoping for a fresh start,” announces 11-year-old Ming Lee. But Mom’s giving him the same old “bowl” haircut and still limiting his wardrobe to thrift store “red-dot sales” items. Mom and Dad—Chinese speaking immigrants via Thailand where they met and married—don’t seem to understand Ming’s desire to just fit in. Dad expects Ming to study hard, get good grades, and go to Stanford. “Don’t cause trouble” is a constant parental refrain. “But I’ve got different dreams,” Ming silently insists. Middle school doesn’t start particularly well when he’s placed in an ESL class, even though English is his only language; “Dad didn’t want me to learn” Chinese, he thinks, but, on the plus side, “At least I’m on my way to an easy A!” What Ming enjoys most, though, is drawing—it’s “never boring”—and (aspirationally) playing basketball (wearing Air Elevates, of course). He eventually jumps from ESL to Honors English and makes good friends, but, alas, doesn’t manage to avoid that dreaded trouble. “Real life” inspired Chung’s graphic novel debut, which uses vibrant, vivacious, full-color panels. His dynamic characters’ expressions are particularly affecting, although Mom just might be the title’s star player. For wannabe cartoonists, Chung appends an accessible, meticulously detailed “How to Make a Graphic Novel” instructions, complete with well-deserved back pats.	
Dream	O'Connor, Barbara	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (August 1, 2025) Gr 4-6-The strength of unexpected friendship and the hopefulness of a dream is explored in this middle grade novel. Eleven-year-old Idalee Lovett comes from a long line of musicians, and all she wants is to become a country music songwriter. When the local radio station hosts a songwriting contest, she begins to dream about what it might feel like to win; but as she presses forward, the fear of failure creeps in, leading her to make an out-of-character decision regarding the contest. As the award announcement date approaches, Idalee's anxiety increases, resulting in an admission to her mother of what she has done. Although this brings her some relief, she continues to agonize over the possible ramifications of her actions. When the contest results in an unexpected outcome, Idalee learns about the power of friendship and honesty. The ragtag group of characters are endearing, adding to the general warmth of the story. Idalee's anger at her situation is somewhat glossed over, making parts of the story feel a bit inauthentic; however, readers familiar with O'Connor's Wish will enjoy the appearance of some familiar faces. Main characters are cued white. VERDICT A tender story of the strength of friendship and the power of a dream, this page-turner captures the heart.-Misty Schattle © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2025) O'Connor takes readers back to Colby, North Carolina, in this standalone companion to Wish (rev. 11/16). Eleven-year-old Idalee Lovett, descended from a long line of musicians, stars here. An aspiring country songwriter, Idalee lives with her mother in their family home, now converted into a boardinghouse whose lodgers include several distinct and well-developed secondary characters. When Joey's All-American BBQ Shack announces a song-writing contest, with the winning song to be performed on the radio by a rising country singer, Idalee is all in. She figures her chances of winning would be better if she could purchase a guitar. Without the funds to do so, Idalee enlists Charlie and Howard (who will be familiar to readers of Wish) as well as temporary boarder Odell to find her grandfather's bounty, rumored to be hidden somewhere in her home. The treasure turns out to be a collection of never-published, and terrific, country songs, which fill Idalee with self-doubt about her own skills and present her with a moral dilemma: perhaps she could just enter one of these gems. But such a move would belie her song, "Dream," in which Idalee eschews gold and riches for life's everyday pleasures. In a leisurely narrative that reflects the small-town atmosphere of Colby, O'Connor gives readers much to ponder. Betty Carter September/October 2025 p.71	Booklist (July 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. Readers who enjoyed Charlie’s story in Barbara O’Connor’s Wish (2016) will enjoy this return to her small town in North Carolina, narrated by Charlie’s classmate Idalee, whose mother hopes for stardom as a country singer. Mama departs with her band for a road trip that might make her famous. Meanwhile, Idalee is staying with neighbors and hoping to stay out of trouble. Like her grandfather, Idalee writes songs. When a radio station sponsors a songwriting contest, her friends urge her to submit some of her songs. Idalee longs to win the cash prize, which will buy her a new guitar, but after she uses a ruse to gain an advantage, her moral compass responds with realistic guilt and makes her dreams seem far beyond her reach. In this stand-alone book that features several returning characters and a familiar setting, the strongest asset is O’Connor’s ability to let Idalee tell her story in her own, distinctive voice, while creating secondary characters who are interesting and equally true to life. An involving chapter book, set in the Blue Ridge Mountains.	
Dreamslinger	Kim, Graci	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-Kim's new novel offers a whimsical fantasy for readers. Ten years ago, 14-year-old, Aria Loveridge's mother died in the Great Outburst. Raised by her father, she now lives at the Resthaven Home for Dreamslingers. Cursed with the Dreamslinger gene, her father is an expert on Dreamslinger Welfare. When the Royal Hanguk's Dreamslinger League announces the opening of trials for teenage slingers, Aria knows she must go, not only to learn about her powers but to also spy for her father. Things, however, at the trial aren't quite going as planned. Her dreampanion Rio is born missing part of its tail and struggles with flying, and the two have trouble seeing eye to eye. As she uncovers dark secrets from her mother's past. Aria starts to question everything she's known. Who was her mother really? The plot is engaging, well written, and full of adventure, while the characters are entertaining and multifaceted. The worldbuilding is imaginative and draws readers into the novel. Although they are a key part of the story's subplot, heavy themes of government oppression of Dreamslinger powers and radical rebellion often overshadow the main plot, leading to bouts of exposition that render the pacing uneven. Aria is half-Korean, half-white. VERDICT Readers who like Rick Riordan titles, Korean culture, fantasy, and adventure will want to pick this one up. Recommended for most library collections.-Kira Moody © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 4-8. Ever since her genetic mutation revealed itself on her thirteenth birthday, Aria Loveridge has abided by Resthaven Home's motto: restrain, contain, maintain. If she doesn’t manage her dream-induced powers, they may cause a deadly magical outburst like the one that killed her mother 10 years ago. Society mistrusts the powerful Dreamslingers, but one royal kingdom, situated within in Seoul, promotes the harnessing of those powers rather than their suppression. Aria holds that kingdom’s ambassadors responsible for her mother’s death, so when a rare training invitation is extended, Aria finds herself headed to Korea to infiltrate their ranks and find a way to dismantle the murderous league. But the deeper she delves into the Dreamslinger world, the more Aria suspects that she might not have the whole story, and what she uncovers will change her own fate—and that of the world’s—forever. This thrilling series opener takes familiar components (a magical school, untapped powers, found family) and blends them into something both fresh and unforgettable. Strong world building, an inventive magic system, and rich Korean cultural elements conjure a truly wondrous world of high-stakes competition and fierce friendship. The delightfully diverse cast, including Korean American Aria and Maori teenager Tui, is a treasure, and overarching themes of prejudice and power are thoughtfully presented. Startling but satisfying final twists will have readers dreaming of the sequel to this fantastic first installment.	Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2025) An American teen’s powers make her dangerous—to some, anyway. Ever since the Great Outburst 10 years ago that killed Aria Loveridge’s mother, the world has known that dreamslingers are a threat. Fourteen-year-old Aria has learned to control her dreamslinger powers by keeping her emotions in check, demonstrating her father’s argument that those who share this genetic mutation might be dangerous but are “patients who [deserve] society’s care.” When the secretive Kingdom of Royal Hanguk, located on an island in Seoul, announces that its Annual Royal Slinger Trials will for the first time be open to teenagers from every nation, Aria, who’s cued Korean and white, agrees to participate. She’s on a secret assignment for the governor of Texas, who wants her to find out what threats Royal Hanguk might be planning to unleash on the world. But when she arrives, Aria finds a place that accepts dreamslingers, and she begins to make friends. As she learns about her abilities, she discovers more about her past and what it means to be a dreamslinger, secrets that tie her both to her father’s philosophies and to Royal Hanguk. As she becomes more invested in the training, Aria must decide where her loyalties lie. The worldbuilding is fun but contains emotional depth, and the perennially appealing magic school setting contains a healthy dash of familial and political drama. This deftly executed work successfully addresses serious coming-of-age themes with optimism. An intriguing series opener that explores emotional themes through a magical lens. (Fantasy. 10-14)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
El Nino	Ryan, Pam Munoz	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress starred (May 30, 2025) Gr 3-7-This is a stirring and emotionally rich story that dives deep into grief, healing, and the powerful connection between memory and the sea. The story follows Kai Sosa, a young swimmer burdened by the emotional weight of his family's legacy, and unresolved feelings when it comes to the loss of his sister, Cali. As he pushes forward, trying to stay focused on competition and performance, Kai's dreams and visions begin to pull him into something deeper-a mystical world where love and sorrow intertwine. Ryan's storytelling is beautifully atmospheric, layering magical realism with very real grief and longing; vivid descriptions connect readers to what Kai goes through. The ocean becomes both mystery and metaphor, a space where Kai begins to unravel not only the secrets of the past but also the emotions he's tried to keep buried. As Kai connects with an otherworldly sea creature and discovers pieces of Cali's past, the novel shines, connecting themes of the heart and showing us how it is to go through a journey to find meaning. El Niño is more than a coming-of-age story, it's a tribute to the unspoken bonds that remain after loss, and a moving reminder that sometimes, letting go is the bravest act of love. VERDICT Emotionally powerful and quietly magical, this is a story that lingers and one that readers will find themselves drawn to from the start.-Aurora Dominguez © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2025) Spanish ed. 978-1-5461-7647-3 $8.99 Thirteen-year-old Kai is anxious to continue the family legacy on his new elite swim team. Since his superstar older sister, Cali, disappeared while surfing two years before, swimming has felt bittersweet. Authorities have moved on from the search, but Kai receives signs that Cali is still out there: a dolphin with unique markings that the two of them had spotted together visits when he surfs, and Kai even hears Cali call out to him from their backyard beach in the middle of the night. When Kai discovers his sister's favorite book about an ancient, underwater Realm, the mythical sunken Island of California, ruled by Queen Califia (for whom Cali is named), he becomes convinced that's where she has gone. The novel is divided into four sections -- Above, Below, Between, Beyond -- and excerpts from the mythology book are interspersed, mirroring the plot's blend of fantasy and realism. Kai tries to keep his grief distant, but it permeates his life, both with his newfound obsession with mythology and with more earthly concerns such as awkward interactions with peers addressing his loss and the worrying drop in his swimming performance. Whimsical pencil-style digital drawings bring the elaborate Realm to life in a way that feels cathartic, and for anyone who has experienced the call of the water, this book is a thoughtful exploration of the wonders of the ocean -- real, imagined, and unexplained. Monica de los Reyes July/August 2025 p.104	Booklist (April 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 15)) Grades 4-6. Kai Sosa still grieves for his older sister, Cali, who disappeared while surfing two years ago. Popular and a swimming phenom, Cali made a mark on the world around her, and Kai struggles to shoulder the weight of stepping into her place on the elite Aquarius swim team. Nevertheless, he's determined to succeed, largely because he knows Cali believed in his ability. Ryan blurs the finality of Cali's presumed death by blending reality with myth and magic. Harnessing elements of the legendary, gold-encrusted island of California and the myth of the island of Amazons, Ryan fashions a secondary tale of an underwater kingdom inhabited by merpeople (here called mermaliens). This original myth is threaded through the story via passages from a book of folklore that Cali loved, as well as by Ryan's deliberate bleeding of it into the main narrative. No clear answers are delivered to Kai or the reader, but touchstones within the mermalien story help Kai move forward from his sadness. An original exploration of grief that casts the difficult emotions it brings as precious treasure.HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Recently honored with the Children's Literature Legacy Award, Ryan has clout with readers old and young.	
Everyday hero Machine Boy	Kniivila, Irma	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (July 2022 (Vol. 118, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. The city of Mega 416 is guarded by a protective dome from the regular barrage of meteorites that strike from the asteroid field intersecting the planet' s orbit. When, instead of a meteor, Machine Boy crashes down, his destructive nature is corrected by an elderly karate instructor, who takes a beating at Machine Boy's hands and promptly dies—but not before activating the boy's kind heart. The man's wife adopts Machine Boy, and this sweet Supermanesque origin story is followed by a frenetic series of adventures, as the boy races to claim concert tickets, adopts a mysterious bit of living meteorite, struggles to make friends, and is pulled into a powerful boy band's quest to protect the city from being destroyed for the 416th time. The anime-inspired blend of martial arts, sf dystopia, and cosmic fantasy is energized by high-octane action and character expression. Fast-paced storytelling adds oomph to the many fight scenes, though some of the logistics get lost in the brisk paneling. Good, weird fun that middle-grade readers will adore.	Publishers Weekly starred (July 18, 2022) A weaponized robot resembling a 14-year-old human, the titular Machine Boy, struggles to navigate mortal life in Kniivila and Vuong's quirky, action-packed graphic novel. Though Machine Boy's destructive emergence resulted in her husband Goh's death, retired dojo owner Mei takes Machine Boy in after he crash-lands in the domed city of Mega 416. There, he learns karate, runs various errands, and attempts to acquire concert tickets for a mysterious rock-star group-his favorite band, Orphan Universe. Mei eventually enrolls him in high school, where he befriends reclusive Bea Sharpe, who wears a pink hoodie that covers most of her face. But Machine Boy's misadventures are plagued by emotional upsets, including his and Mei's occasionally tense relationship as they manage grief over Goh, citizens' continued wariness regarding Machine Boy's sudden appearance, and Bea's seemingly nefarious ulterior motives. Clever framing-such as panels spelling out "BOOM!" simultaneously depicting bombastic action and onomatopoeia-blends together seamlessly with soft, rounded linework, a bold color palette, and distinct character designs. The creators' warmhearted tale and its gentle robot protagonist are a balm for those seeking connection, belonging, and hope. Ages 9-12. (Sept.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	Library Journal starred (February 1, 2022) A powerful robot called Machine Boy falls from the sky and proceeds to rampage across the domed city of Mega 416, destroying everything in his path. The city's inhabitants (a mix of humans and anthropomorphic animals) despair, until a retired karate instructor rushes to the rescue and, after defeating Machine Boy, manages to alter the robot's programming so his demeanor shifts to that of a sweet young boy. Thus transformed, Machine Boy is plagued by guilt for his destructive abilities and sets out to redeem himself through service to his new neighbors. Complications accrue: Our hero adopts a tiny, adorable robot, only to discover it possesses an insatiable appetite and no impulse control; he begins attending public school but ends up battling hideous beasts in the sewers beneath the building; and he runs afoul of Orphan Universe, Mega 416's premier musical group/superpowered defenders. VERDICT Creators Kniivila (Year of the Dog) and Vuong (The Strange Tales of Oscar Zahn) present a funny, uncommonly charming mash-up of martial arts, superhero, and sci-fi comics. The rare all-ages title that will entertain, and perhaps even enthrall, adolescents and adults alike. © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	
Faker	Korman, Gordon	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress (December 13, 2024) Gr 4-8-Twelve-year-old Trey Whitfield-no, wait, now he's Trey Kirkwood-has a problem. His father's business as a high-rolling con man means that Trey and his younger sister are always one disappearing act away from leaving their newly made friends and home. When the marks start getting suspicious, Trey and his family pull a Houdini, dump their current identities, create new lives, and move on to the next big job. Trey has always been okay with his dad's schemes because they only target the super-rich who will not miss the money anyway. But are all the marks really uber-wealthy? While the ground is being laid for the next con, Trey begins to question his dad and his swindling ways. A teacher helps him think about the ethical issues involved in his family's line of work; isn't what the family does just sophisticated stealing? They are taking the life savings of friends and neighbors who will be destitute. This is a highly readable, slightly dated middle grade book with a predictable ending. Trey is a well-developed character, but most of the secondary characters are flat. The minor love story between Trey and a classmate is very contrived. VERDICT This will be popular with Korman's many fans, but it is not one of his best.-Lisa Crandall © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (July 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 21)) Grades 4-8. How would you feel if your life was just one con after another? For Trey, scoping out his rich classmates and identifying who's the best "mark" for his family's next "job" is just a typical day in his life. Who wouldn't want to invest in the hottest too-good-to-be-true opportunity? And if anyone takes exception to being taken for a fool, well, then it's time for the fam to bug out to an offshore island to chill and plan the next great scam. But when Trey, Dad, and Trey's younger sister land in a regular kind of town, Trey starts to crave a normal life, one with sincere friendships, community roots, and no more secrets. As Trey's moral compass shifts, he must either figure out how to get his dad to shift gears . . . or how to break with him. Fast-paced, kid-edgy, humorous, a bit predictable, and ultimately satisfying writing: Korman once again delivers a witty middle-grade tale that his dedicated readers will gravitate to.	Kirkus Reviews (May 1, 2024) A con man's son yearns for a different way of life. Having helped his single dad fleece wealthy marks since kindergarten, Trey is adept at spotting their rich offspring in each new school he attends and cultivating them until the time comes for a quick getaway. Now that he's 12, though, the urge to make real friends and put down some roots has become insistent—particularly since he's drawn to Kaylee, a new classmate in his latest middle school. How can he convince his dad, who's in the midst of luring local investors into a fantastically lucrative scheme involving a fictive electric car, that it's time to bag the family profession and settle down? Korman goes more for ironic humor than the physical or stand-up sort in this book, as shown by Trey's enrollment in an ethics class that forces him into some decidedly hypocritical stances. Much like Trey himself, instant new bestie Logan and his parents turn out to be not at all who they seem. And though there are no bullies or real baddies in the cast on the way to the story's rosy but implausible resolution, Trey's malign, high-strung, and wildly reckless huckster of a little sister from hell definitely adds both conflict and suspense to this provocative outing. Main characters read white. Glitzy glimpses of life on the make, lightened by a focus on alternatives rather than consequences. (Fiction. 9-12)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Farewell Cuba, mi isla	Diaz, Alexandra	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (September 29, 2023) Gr 4-7-Twelve-year-old Victoria Pino del Mar would love to spend the rest of her life living on Papalfonso's finca, where she could spend her days enjoying the beauty of nature, horseback riding, and delicious fruits. Papalfonso promised Victoria that his land would one day be hers, but that was two years ago, when Papalfonso was still alive. Now in 1960, Victoria is boarding a plane to Miami, leaving behind family members, including her best friend and cousin Jackie, as Fidel Castro's Cuba becomes an even more uncertain and dangerous place. Victoria and Jackie narrate the chapters, showing the differing viewpoints of the girls as Victoria navigates a new and different city and takes on more responsibilities to care for her family, and Jackie sees the world change around her as school becomes a dangerous place and the future is even more uncertain. When Jackie finally joins Victoria, they work together to try to get the rest of their family to Miami. Readers will become part of each family's dynamic and witness as the protagonists come face to face with hardships such as bullying, loss, and the unraveling of Cuba in the 1960s. VERDICT Heartfelt and beautifully written, this middle grade novel is perfect for fans of Margarita Engle and of impactful historical fiction.-Selenia Paz © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2023) Fleeing Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1960, Victoria's family is sure they will be in Miami for only a few weeks -- a few months, max -- until the United States helps topple Castro's regime. Still, soon-to-be-thirteen-year-old Victoria is devastated to leave her home country and her "prima hermana," Jackie, behind. Diaz alternates focus between the cousins to describe this fraught moment in history. For Victoria, life in America is not easy, and she has to take on adult responsibilities to help feed her family. When communication with Cuba is almost completely cut, Jackie fears that Victoria has forgotten her. Jackie is eventually sent to live in Miami through Operation Peter Pan, and the girls struggle to deal with the challenges of their new reality -- which, it increasingly becomes clear, will be permanent -- as well as navigating the social landscape of junior high. Using personal interactions among Victoria, Jackie, and their new peers, Diaz does not shy away from addressing intertwined issues of the time period, including school integration, Cold War anti-Russian prejudice, and racial and gender dynamics within the family. The book's ending, if somewhat far-fetched, allows for a happy, hopeful reunion in Miami with Jackie's parents and baby brother and the girls' grandmother. An author's note and extensive Spanish glossary are appended. Spanish-language edition, Hasta siempre Cuba, mi isla, forthcoming (12/23). Monica de los Reyes November/December 2023 p.80	Booklist (August 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 22)) Grades 4-7. This novel is a sweeping love letter to Cuba, a country that hundreds of thousands of its people never saw again following the Revolution. Drawing from the experiences of her family and other exiles, Diaz offers a story following two cousins, Victoria and Jackie, who are both forced to emigrate from Cuba and start a new life in the U.S. with their families. The hardship they face as refugees is a common story among Cubans in exile, but this timely story is told with middle-grade and tween readers in mind. Though the girls shouldn't have to worry about anything beyond enjoying their childhood, Victoria and Jackie find the strength in each other to step up and do whatever is necessary to support their family. Since the tale takes place in the 1960s, readers also get a glimpse of what race relations in the U.S. were like at the time, as well as attitudes toward Russians and other groups. Whether as a novel in itself or a framework for understanding a place and time in history, this is a moving, poignant read.	
Fighting to survive World War II : terrifying true stories	Dickmann, Nancy	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Fishing	Newman, Gary	Middle School	5-8	Library Media Connection (August/September 2009) This unique series helps students find answers to questions they may not readily find elsewhere at this level. The authors relate the subject matter to experiences the reader may be familiar with. Full-color photographs illustrate the topics in each book, making them appropriate for a wide range of students, including those who may not enjoy reading. There are few sentences on the pages, but the clearly presented information is comprehensive and informative. A large font is used and unfamiliar words are bolded and then defined on a ?Need-to-Know Words? page. Each book can be read independently, but because the authors follow the same format, this series would be useful for beginning research projects. Websites. Table of Contents. Index. Recommended. Janet Luch, Educational Reviewer, Adjunct Professor, SUNY New Paltz, and Touro College [Editor?s Note: Also available in paperback.]			
Fishing in lakes and ponds	Peterson, Judy Monroe	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (November 1, 2011) Gr 5-8-Similar to the "Hunting: Pursuing Wild Game!" series (Rosen Central), each book in this set begins by covering the basics of a particular type of fishing. Readers will learn about the differences between fishing for bass or catfish and where to find their habitats. Details about catch-and-release practices, rules and regulations, and how to prepare different types of fish for eating are delineated. Catfish includes a simple recipe. All of the books provide safety advice, such as staying alert to changing weather conditions and being careful around other anglers. The various chapters about fishing and the environment are especially laudatory. Both genders are portrayed in the text and in the color photographs, working with environmental organizations and supporting their favorite sport. Useful updates where fishing is popular. (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.			
Fly fishing	Crockett, Sally	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (November 1, 2011) Gr 5-8-Similar to the "Hunting: Pursuing Wild Game!" series (Rosen Central), each book in this set begins by covering the basics of a particular type of fishing. Readers will learn about the differences between fishing for bass or catfish and where to find their habitats. Details about catch-and-release practices, rules and regulations, and how to prepare different types of fish for eating are delineated. Catfish includes a simple recipe. All of the books provide safety advice, such as staying alert to changing weather conditions and being careful around other anglers. The various chapters about fishing and the environment are especially laudatory. Both genders are portrayed in the text and in the color photographs, working with environmental organizations and supporting their favorite sport. Useful updates where fishing is popular. (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Fresh start	Galligan, Gale	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal starred (December 1, 2024) Gr 3-8-Seventh grader Ollie is used to starting over thanks to her diplomat father's job-she's always moving to a new school, or a new country. But when her Thai mother and white American father decide to settle permanently in Chestnut Falls, VA, Ollie faces higher stakes. She can't just ignore what people think anymore, as she has to face the reality of staying put. Determined not to hide her love for manga or pretend play just to fit in, Ollie discovers a group of students who share her interests. Now she must navigate the challenge of building and maintaining lasting friendships. Galligan's characters are vivid and relatable. Ollie's younger sister Cat becomes obsessed with popularity, disappointing her parents and making her the perfect foil to Ollie's more independent nature. Their mother works hard to connect her daughters to their Thai heritage, even when it means making Ollie wear traditionally feminine clothes that don't feel right. Meanwhile, Ollie's friend Nina struggles with her Thai identity, as others assume she's white. This graphic novel beautifully tackles complex friendships, sibling dynamics, racial identity, and gender expression. The manga-inspired art is filled with exaggerated expressions, adding humor and energy to the story. VERDICT This graphic novel about friendship and identity is a must-have for libraries serving elementary and middle school readers.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2025) In this engaging graphic novel, Ollie Herisson (whose father is German and mother is Thai) has always made friends easily at the international schools she attends, but those friendships have been short-lived because of her family's frequent moves. Wanting their daughters to experience a more typical childhood, however, Ollie's parents move the family from Germany to Virginia, hoping this move will be their last. While her younger sister, Cat, quickly makes friends, seventh grader Ollie has a harder time. Pushed over the edge by the embarrassment of having her first menstrual period at school and deflated by her mother's disappointment with her refusal to wear dresses and be more obedient ("I should have raised you more Thai"), the imaginative and outgoing Ollie gives up on her social life and finds solace in immersing herself in drawing, manga, and role-playing games. Her interests lead to unexpected friendships, particularly with the popular Nina, as they bond over their shared mixed heritage; and Zoe, who shares Ollie's love of anime. When friendship drama ensues, Ollie reconnects with Cat and learns to admit her mistakes and confront conflict. Galligan's exuberant manga-influenced style showcasing exaggerated features humorously reflects the emotional complexities of her characters. Told with sincerity and charm, this story is a relatable exploration of friendship, identity, and personal growth. Kristine Techavanich March/April 2025 p.70	Booklist starred (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 3-6. Twelve-year-old Ollie loves moving every couple of years for her dad's diplomatic job, because new adventures and the opportunity to leave embarrassing moments behind are great. So she's unsettled when, after moving back to the U.S., her parents say they're planning to stay until she and her younger sister, Cat, graduate. Now Ollie has to navigate middle school, evaluate classmates as possible long-term friends, and discover if the most popular girl in her grade is secretly a soul stealer. All while dealing with her mom's disappointment that Ollie loves manga and hates dresses. Can Ollie make new friends? Will she survive the language and dance lessons her mom signs her up for to get in touch with her heritage? What's going on with the crowd Cat has fallen in with? The answers are all here in this funny, heartwarming story about belonging, family, compromise, and not rushing to judgment. The vibrant art wonderfully captures Ollie's energetic nature and frequent dramatic asides. At the end of the book is additional information about the Thai festivals Ollie attends and how Galligan approached including Thai language in the speech balloons. All in all, this is a great read for any kid unsure of where they fit in.	
Garfield fat cat 3-pack. Volume 1	Davis, Jim	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Garfield fat cat 3-pack. Volume 10	Davis, Jim	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Garfield fat cat 3-pack. Volume 2	Davis, Jim	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Garfield livin' the sweet life	Davis, Jim	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Garfield, road pizza	Davis, Jim	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Ghost Boys The Graphic Novel	Rhodes, Jewell Parker	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (August 1, 2025) Gr 4-8-In this graphic novel adaptation of Rhodes's acclaimed novel, readers meet the ghost of 12-year-old Jerome, a Black kid, as he navigates his untimely death at the hands of a white police officer. As a ghost, Jerome befriends the spirit of real-life victim Emmett Till, a Black boy who endured a similar injustice, and Sarah, the still-alive daughter of the police officer who killed him. Like the original novel, the adaptation tackles themes of police brutality, prejudice, justice, and other issues that remain relevant for readers across a range of ages. While it takes some time for the graphic novel to deliver the same emotional impact as the original novel, it ultimately succeeds, with Jerome's grief becoming raw and palpable. The artwork is at times abstract but always vibrant and puts a glowing aura around the ghost characters, which ultimately complements the story well. VERDICT Although the adaptation doesn't replace the original, it will introduce a whole new audience to this powerful and pivotal story.-Esther Keller © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (October 15, 2025) In this graphic adaptation of Rhodes' award-winning 2018 novel, the spirit of a 12-year-old, who was killed by a white police officer while playing outside, is tethered to that of other murdered Black boys. Jerome Rogers' parents work long hours, and his grandmother takes care of the house. He's a loving child who follows the grown-ups' admonitions as he walks to school with his sister through their perilous Chicago neighborhood. Being a good student makes Jerome a target for bullies, and he befriends new student Carlos, who' s also a target. Carlos offers Jerome a toy gun to defend himself from his persecutors, a spontaneous gesture that has tragic consequences. Now a spirit who can only be seen by Sarah, the daughter of his killer, Jerome witnesses his family's agony while attempting to process his own grief and stolen dreams. The ghost of Emmett Till appears, showing Jerome his own story and telling him to "bear witness," but Sarah, who struggles with the fallout from her father's actions, doesn't know how to help. Fiadzigbey's panels are interestingly varied: On the opening page, readers look down from above as the cop stands over Jerome's small, dead body, unaware that Jerome's spirit is looking on, too. Paradis effectively uses colors to deepen the emotional impact of the text. Readers will emerge with a more nuanced view of the impact of generations of racism and the ways our actions affect our social systems. A layered exploration of grief. (Graphic fiction. 10-14)		
Gloom town	Smith, Ronald L	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (January 1, 2020) Gr 5-7-Rory has lived in Gloom, a small, bleak fishing village all his life. His single mom can barely make ends meet, so when Rory sees that there's a job available at notoriously creepy Foxglove Manor, he decides the benefits outweigh the risks and applies for the position. Given a huge advance on his salary, he's initially ecstatic that he's able to help his mom pay the rent. However, he soon finds out that Lord Foxglove is even more evil than the rumors say. In fact, the whole town is in danger! Rory enlists his best friend Izzy to help defeat the supernatural forces that reside in the manor. While the town itself is a big part of the story, world-building is lacking, and everything wraps up way too neatly. A full cast of eccentric characters has potential, but none are fully developed. Despite all this, the story is far darker than the cover suggests, so budding horror fans may overlook some of the flaws for the chills it provides. Nonstop action also propels the story, making for a quick and relatively engaging read. VERDICT Despite some structural bumps along the way, this creepy adventure has promise. Recommended for general purchase.-Mandy Laferriere, Fowler Middle School, Frisco, TX © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (December 1, 2019 (Vol. 116, No. 7)) Grades 4-6. Rory, a good lad, lives with his hardworking mother near the docks in a town called Gloom. When he realizes that Mum's earnings will no longer cover the rent, he takes the only job available: gentleman's valet at sinister Foxglove Manor. Soon he's responsible for every menial task in the monstrous house. Terrified of Lord Foxglove, Rory works very hard, yet he awakens in the night to the sounds of weird chanting. After he and his best friend Izzy uncover disturbing clues to an ongoing mystery, they marshal their wits, their allies, and all the unexpected magic within them to set things right. Smith, who won the 2016 Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award for New Talent after writing Hoodoo (2015), spins a new, spine-tingling tale of good people facing down supernatural forces of evil. Once the well-drawn characters and distinctive setting are established, the story becomes increasingly involving, fast-paced, and imaginative. The final chapters will leave readers wondering what other riveting adventures await Rory and Izzy and hoping that sequels will follow.	Kirkus Reviews (December 1, 2019) Two friends team up to save their town from an ancient supernatural evil in this suspenseful middle-grade novel. In his latest work, Smith (The Owls Have Come To Take Us Away, 2019, etc.) weaves together an eerie adventure narrative as nail-biting and mysterious as Roald Dahl's The Witches. Set in a downtrodden seaside town appropriately named Gloom, the tale follows a single mother and her son. Desperate to help in the endless struggle to make ends meet, Rory, a young dark-skinned biracial boy who takes after his father instead of his white mother, regards a job notice advertising a valet position at the opulent Foxglove Manor as a godsend. He's so eager he overlooks the townwide speculation that the manor contains some malevolent spirit. Before long, Rory can no longer ignore the sinister butler whose face looks inhuman, the mysterious dinner guests who aren't served food yet leave behind a pile of bones with the marrow sucked out, and a human heart found buried in the back garden. When Lord Foxglove, his enigmatic employer, discovers Rory snooping, he is forced to flee for his life. Together with best friend Izzy, a white girl who lives next door, Rory sets out to unravel the mystery of the manor and save Gloom from whatever lurks inside. Anchoring this well-paced story is a solid cast of characters whose central relationships feel authentic and grounded. A yarn as full of magic and intrigue as any fairy tale or pirate song. (Suspense. 10-12)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Graciela in the abyss	Medina, Meg	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (May 1, 2025) Gr 4-7-Once upon a time, Graciela was an ordinary girl who fell to a tragic death. But her story didn't end there: 100 years later, she awoke on the seafloor as a ghost, becoming part of the ocean's vast ecosystem of spirits. On land, 12-year-old Jorge works for his awful parents in their forge, and he's heard stories of the sea spirits. When he discovers a long-buried, ghost-killing harpoon near the forge and tries to destroy it, he unwittingly reunites the weapon with its wrathful owner. Graciela grudgingly accepts Jorge's help in racing to stop the old sailor from using the harpoon to create chaos and destruction in the worlds of both the living and the dead. Medina is a masterful storyteller, and this novel is no exception. The writing style feels reminiscent of old forms of oral storytelling, and readers might imagine themselves sitting around a fire near the ocean, hearing tales of old. The underwater world is complex and layered, mirroring the dynamics of real civilizations while having its own social rules and eccentricities. Frequent illustrations add to the mysticism and magic of the story. While Jorge and Graciela are fully realized characters with their own growth arcs, readers may find themselves wishing for more complex secondary characters, as they get only a taste of some of their personalities and stories. VERDICT An excellent fit for readers of fantasy and ghost stories, Graciela will make readers feel near the sea, hearing old stories passed around a campfire.-Kristin Brynsvold © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2025) When Graciela fell to her death into the sea as a girl, she became, after a one-hundred-year sleep, a sea spirit. Now she's impatient to earn the markers of experience in this watery realm as she learns from Amina, her Spirit Guide and friend. In the world on shore, Jorge toils as a blacksmith alongside his antagonistic parents but longs to create metal toys. His family is hated for the magic sea-spirit-slaying harpoon his great-grandfather made that sent a fisherman to his watery grave nearly a century before -- and Jorge has just discovered the weapon. In a quick-paced chain of events, Graciela hides a huge secret from Amina; the fisherman awakens as a sea spirit; and Jorge tries to destroy the harpoon, in the process tumbling into the water and striking Amina accidentally. Jorge and Graciela must team up to save Amina and the rest of the sea spirits from the evil harpoon and the fisherman's band of Needlers -- menaces of the spirit world. Medina has devised an intricate underwater world full of fanciful explanations for ocean-related phenomena and unusual characters who would feel at home in Baum's Oz (especially the taunting Needlers), matched by the Balbussos' gorgeous, layered, mixed-media illustrations in grayscale. Graciela is imperfect and relatable as she learns to process loss from both her life before and now, and Jorge is endearing, from the book's start through its heartwarming conclusion. Monica de los Reyes September/October 2025 p.69	Booklist starred (May 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 17)) Grades 5-9. Graciela Lima was 12 years old when a gust of wind knocked her into the sea, where she sank and slept for 100 years before awakening as a sea spirit. Under the tutelage of a Spirit Guide, Graciela begins to learn the ways of the deep and takes on work as a glazier, grinding broken bottles into beautiful sea glass. On land, in a nearby fishing village, the blacksmith's son secretly works metal into delicate, whimsical creations. While Jorge Leon's artistic endeavors suit his gentle disposition, his cruel father and mother don't approve. Indeed, Jorge is searching the brush for his latest project, which had been thrown out the window by his mother, when he uncovers an old harpoon. Instinctively, he knows this must be the cursed weapon forged by his great-grandfather and once used to kill a sea spirit. Jorge's attempt to dispose of the harpoon in the harbor coincides with the awakening of the very same drowned souls who killed the sea spirit all those years ago. This full-circle moment binds Graciela and Jorge together in a mission to save the underwater realm. Medina effortlessly builds a magical marine world that feels fished from folklore, and the manner in which each story in the narrative informs the others is beautifully crafted. Rich in compelling characters, complicated emotions, and originality, this epic writ small will dazzle its readers.	
Guinness World Records, 2026		Young Adult	YA	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Guinness World Records. Gamer's edition.2026		Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Hamra and the jungle of memories	Hanna Alkaf	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (April 1, 2023) Gr 3-6-Alkaf brings Malaysian folklore into the modern day through this quest of Hamra, a girl just turning 13 who lives on the edge of the Langkawi jungle. The jungle can be dangerous, and so there are six rules her family has taught her about entering (such as asking permission and never taking what's not yours). On her birthday, in an angry tantrum, Hamra purposely disobeys all the rules and takes a magical fruit home to give to Opah who is suffering from dementia. The fruit seemingly cures Opah, but at what cost? This event prompts a magical journey that Hamra must go on to fix the consequences of her disrespect to the enchanted jungle. Hamra, with her neighbor and friend Ilyas and the ambiguous weretiger Pak Belang, set out through the jungle into the realm of fae and creatures, some helpful and some harmful. While making deals with magical favors, Hamra learns lessons about family and friendship. The COVID-19 pandemic and its global effects are also mentioned throughout the story, as Hamra's frustration is driven by the lockdown and her parents' stressful work on the front lines. During the journey, they question what it means to be human, what happens to those who are not the hero of the story, and what it means to pay debts and take care of your community. Alkaf also uses family events to bring the story full circle. The reluctant hero Hamra will appeal to young and older readers alike, and the action will keep tweens engaged. VERDICT A welcome addition to libraries that serve children and tweens. This fresh take on Little Red Riding Hood is a necessary purchase for libraries and fantasy shelves.-Helen Prince © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2023) Hamra has just turned thirteen, though no one in her family seems to have noticed. Due to COVID-19, her home country of Malaysia is under quarantine, leaving her mother working long hours in an overrun hospital hours away, her father distracted by his duty to get supplies to those in need, and Hamra at home to care for her grandparents. While her grandfather often annoys her with his many far-fetched stories, her grandmother's increasing dementia worries and even angers her. Adults are supposed to take care of children, after all. To escape the pressures of caring for elders, Hamra goes to the jungle. When she recklessly takes fruit from the magical jambu tree, a weretiger demands she accompany him on a quest as payment for stealing. If she succeeds, the weretiger will remember his humanity, and her grandmother's dementia will be cured. Accompanied by her best friend, Ilyas, Hamra embarks on a quest where she must face her fears and find the courage to save her family and herself. A compelling story about family, friendship, and the power of memory, filled with Islamic traditions and Malay folklore. S. R. Toliver May/June 2023 p.131	Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2023) There are rules for children who go into Malaysian jungles, and they shouldn't be broken. On Hamra's 13th birthday, Malaysia is under lockdown because of the pandemic, leaving her mother working long hours at the hospital, her father preoccupied with the vulnerable people his aid organization serves, and Hamra stuck at home looking after her grandparents. Hamra' s grandmother has begun forgetting things, wandering farther and farther away from home and leaving Hamra upset and perpetually concerned. In the middle of all this, Hamra stumbles upon a beautiful jambu air tree in the forest, but when she plucks a fruit from it, she angers the weretiger of Langkawi, leading her to make a deal to settle her debt and perhaps help her grandmother at the same time. Accompanied by the weretiger and Ilyas Chang Abdullah, her best friend and neighbor, Hamra sets out on a quest that will bring her face to face with creatures from Malaysian legends as well as her own fears and flaws. A retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood” that manages to both feel distinctly Malaysian and capture and interrogate contemporary concerns, this is a tale of family, friendship, and sacrifice. Hamra's journey to find strength and understanding within herself is well matched with her physical journey through the jungle. Hamra is Malay; Ilyas is cued Malay and Chinese. Both mature and whimsical, demonstrating how magic and modern-day anxieties can intersect. (Fantasy. 9-13)	
Hands	Maldonado, Torrey	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (December 9, 2022) Gr 5 Up-Maldonado's latest tells a story many middle grade kids will have an immediate personal connection to: shouldering adult problems and taking them on as their own. Trev is scared after his abusive stepfather is sent back to jail and tries to prepare for the man's imminent release by learning to box so he can defend himself and his family by fighting with his hands. Trev is a gifted artist and is constantly being told by the adults around him that he has promise and a future; fighting is not intuitive to him. He dreams of taking his mother and sisters away from the projects to a place that he will not have to "throw hands" as a method of defense. Maldonado's story moves quickly, but it packs a punch with a rapidly progressing plot and short chapters. Tweens will appreciate the tight prose. When the novel concludes, readers will feel a sense of the real community Trev has beyond his immediate family. They will also appreciate the complex supporting characters and feel hopeful for Trev's future. Those who have enjoyed Maldonado's earlier books as well as fans of Jason Reynolds "Track" series will love this one too. VERDICT This is an absolute must-have for every middle grade library collection.-Kim Gardner © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2023) Twelve-year-old Trevor is a gifted comic-book artist, a good student, and a kind brother to his three sisters. But two years earlier, his stepdad was sent to prison for hitting Trevor's mother, and Trevor fears what will happen when his stepdad returns. He figures he had better learn to "throw hands," taking inspiration from the posters of Muhammad Ali and Creed on his bedroom wall. He bulks up, learns to box, and, at almost six feet tall, feels he might be able to protect his mother. But he has uncles -- some "blood uncles," some not -- who guide him in another direction. Uncle Larry tells Trevor that his mother is stronger than he realizes: "You know the Jedi have the Force? Well, your mother is a force." And he says that fighting his stepdad would be like Luke Skywalker fighting Darth Vader: where would that lead? With such guidance, Trevor comes to realize that he may not have all the answers, but he does have the support of family and friends who care about him as he makes his own way in life. Based on Maldonado's own experience of growing up in Brooklyn's Red Hook Houses, this is an accessible, engaging, and heartfelt story. Dean Schneider January/February 2023 p.87	Booklist (December 1, 2022 (Vol. 119, No. 7)) Grades 5-8. The last time Trev saw his stepfather was the day he got arrested for hitting Trev's mother. His stepfather swore that day that he'd get Trev's mother back for putting him in jail. That was years ago, and Trev has been counting down the weeks until his stepfather is released from prison. To prove that he's not “soft,” Trev starts teaching himself to fight. As he grows stronger, those around him become concerned about the path he may be going down. The same hands that Trev is planning on using for violence are the hands that could allow Trev to become a great artist. Can those who care for him guide Trev towards the right path before it's too late? This coming-of-age story is about the choices one can make and how they can affect one's future, as well as the importance of family, even those who may not be related by blood. This has a powerful plot and an immersive text, and it' s packaged in a short format perfect for impatient readers.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Happy & sad & everything true	Thayer, Alex	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (January 1, 2025) Gr 5-7-Prolific aural expert Kelly empathically ciphers Thayer's debut novel with spunky charm, enhancing protagonist Dee's struggles with inspiring tenacity and celebrating Dee's triumphs with humorous delight. Sixth grade is off to a horrible start-bff Juniper is drifting away, while laughing with the whole school at Dee's embarrassing mother with her too-short dress that doesn't cover her lacy, blue-flowered underwear during Parent PE Day. Dee's taken to hiding in the bathroom but finds she's not alone-and maybe her own travails might help others through theirs, from classmate Harry struggling with his own parent, to other kids, both younger and older. While Thayer's narrative occasionally veers toward paralyzing naval-gazing, Kelly's bubbly energy manages to keep listeners actively, entertainingly engaged. VERDICT Kelly convincingly provides a soothing balm to navigating the precarious pitfalls of middle school dramas. © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2025) Dee is struggling in sixth grade: she hears other girls gossiping about her appearance, sees her single mom flirting with her gym teacher, and feels like her best friend is ignoring her. Thayer dictates Dee's stream-of-consciousness observations through occasional mental lists that read like free verse ("in the future / stop asking so many questions! / stop talking so much!") and heightened sensory details (her school-bathroom refuge features cool-to-the-touch "wet-noodle" wall tiles and a leaky faucet's refrain of da-wip, da-wip) that define her perceptive, sensitive mindset. Dee finds unexpected comfort in commiserating with classmate Harry through a grate connecting the girls' and boys' bathrooms, and the vent inadvertently turns into a confession booth where students ask for Dee's help coping with their fears. These amateur advice sessions allow her to offer her classmates -- whose problems are mostly mundane and easily fixed -- some of the comfort and direction for which she also longs. Thayer champions the positive impact of Dee's kindness while demonstrating how ignoring her own anxieties only makes helping others more difficult. Most touching is an investigation of the parental impact on a child's views: after witnessing the negative behaviors that her peers inherited from their parents, Dee grows to appreciate her unconventional mother's support and the empathy she's been taught. Emma Shacochis January/February 2025 p. 93	Booklist (November 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 5)) Grades 5-7. It' s tough to start sixth grade without your best friend. Dee and Juniper have always had each other for support, but, this year, they've been separated into different homerooms. Juniper has taken up with new friends who think Dee is stinky and weird, and Juniper isn't doing much to change their minds. Taking to hiding in the bathroom, Dee starts to hear voices—but never fear, she's not losing it. The voices belong to other kids hiding from their own problems. When Dee reaches out with advice, it turns out she is pretty good at helping others and develops a following. But where will it lead, and will she be strong enough to keep it up? Thayer's debut novel brings readers to an authentic view of junior high, with its daily drama and moments of discovery. While secondary characters could be more fully fleshed out, this story's appeal is its quirkiness and heart which are sincerely presented. A solid purchase for libraries with a following for authors like Kate DiCamillo and Rebecca Stead.	
History of golf	Abdo, Kenny	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
How to stay invisible	Rudd, Maggie	Middle School	5-8	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2023) "Most people didn't live in hollowed-out trees behind their middle school," but twelve-year-old Raymond does. A seventh grader at River Mill Middle School in North Carolina, he had lived in a rented trailer with his feckless parents three miles from school. But one day he comes home to discover that they have abandoned him, and now here he is living in the woods with his dog and doing his best to fly under the radar. He saves food from cafeteria lunches, does nighttime dumpster dives, and sometimes has luck fishing. He does have a new friend in Harlin, who in an act of kindness chooses as a bingo prize a sleeping bag for Raymond instead of the NASCAR tickets he'd wanted. Gradually, Raymond finds a circle of caring people (and a coyote) in his orbit: Lexi, his first girlfriend; Stigs, a former army surgeon who lives in a cabin nearby; and various teachers who don't let Raymond remain invisible. The third-person narrative allows for fully realized secondary characters who play important roles in Raymond's life and, ultimately, in his rescue. Rudd's straightforward, meticulous prose perfectly captures the daily routines and occasional drama of life in the woods. A worthy match for My Side of the Mountain and Hatchet, the book Raymond checks out of the library toward the end of the novel. Dean Schneider July/August 2023 p.125	Booklist (November 1, 2023 (Online)) Grades 4-6. Survival tales generally take place in remote locales, but this one hits closer to home. Suddenly abandoned once again by his deadbeat parents, Raymond takes up residence in the woods behind his latest middle school—determined to make a go of it and actually doing a creditable job of keeping his head down in class while, often, going hungry or barely subsisting on dumpster produce and fish from the local stream as days turn into weeks and then months. While Rudd makes it clear that Raymond is far from safe or comfortable, as points of reference she name checks both Hatchet and The Outsiders and lightens the load by giving him an unusually intelligent dog and a playful young coyote, two loyal but not too inquisitive friends in school, and an elderly loner who is willing to respect his refusal to contact social services while providing help and temporary shelter at need. Rather than even try to explain the behavior of her protagonist's parents, the author just focuses on Raymond's realistic hurt, incomprehension, and resulting lack of trust in any grownup's motives, all of which many young readers may, sadly, find easy to understand. Still, following a nearly fatal reversal of fortune, she closes the tale on a hopeful note by leaving him in the care of adults who do at least seem to have his best interests at heart.	Kirkus Reviews starred (April 1, 2023) When 12-year-old Raymond's parents abandon him, he takes to the woods to survive. The Outsiders meets Hatchet in this story that follows Raymond's ordeal to both survive in the winter woods of North Carolina and attend middle school without anyone finding out how he lives. Trying to balance keeping up his grades with living in a hollow, overturned tree with his dog, Rosie, existing on fish he catches and food he scavenges from the dumpster outside his school, Raymond stoically accepts his reality even as he wishes for parents who cared for him. The narrative poignancy of Raymond's being cold, hungry, and doing homework by the light of a fire is grounded by descriptions of creative survival techniques: how to catch minnows using a plastic water bottle, how to make fire with a battery and foil gum wrappers, and how to build a lean-to with branches. Completely devoid of cheap drama, this tightly written, understated narrative tells its story through finely drawn characters, intensely realistic atmosphere and setting, and a protagonist who will capture readers' hearts with both his courage and his creative survival skills. All secondary characters—irrepressible NASCAR-loving classmate Harlin; red-haired love interest Lexi; emotionally torn old man Stigs, who offers friendship; and the teachers, both callous and obtuse—are drawn with originality and verve. Characters read default White. An exceptional story of courage. (Fiction. 8-12)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
I witnessed. The Lizzie Borden story	Kraatz, Jeramey	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (January 1, 2025) Gr 7 Up-We all know the rhyme "Lizzie Borden took an ax," which has stubbornly persisted in popular memory since shortly after the grisly 1892 murders of Andrew and Abby Borden, despite being blatantly inaccurate-Borden was not found guilty, Abby was not her mother, and there were not as many whacks as the rhyme suggests. Kraatz's and Jayme's well-researched historical fiction examines the case and provides detail and context that is missed by the generally accepted narrative of the tragedy. Told through the experience of Borden's neighbor, 14-year-old Charlie Churchill, this blend of fiction and history is less an indictment of Borden or any other possible murderers, and more an exploration of an event that became a viral sensation, predating memes by about a hundred years. Once she is arrested, the country is divided, and everyone, it seems, has an opinion based on very little information. Readers gain a nuanced view through Charlie as he tries to sort out the events of that horrible day, torn between the sensationalism of it all and his levelheaded mother's gentle admonitions that an opinion cannot be formed without having all of the facts. VERDICT Borden's persistently compelling story lends a perfect background for a graphic novel about sensationalism, murder, media, high-profile court cases, and the effect they can have on communities.-Sarah Maciejewski © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 4-7. Kraatz retells the story of the 1892 Borden murders through the eyes of the Bordens' 14-year-old neighbor, Charles Churchill. While Churchill was the Bordens' neighbor in real life, his story here is largely fictitious. However, his teenage detective work through his interactions with the Borden family fits the interests of young readers who can put themselves in his shoes. Charlie details his conversations with Lizzie Borden and the members of her household, his curtain-shrouded view of the murder of Abigail Durfee Borden, and his involvement in the crime: finding the handle of the murderer's hatchet in the woods and planting it inside the house. Charlie's mother, Adelaide Churchill, testified in Lizzie Borden's trial, and her discussions with Charlie portrayed here bridge the gap between fact and fiction. In crisp, monochromatic artwork, the gruesome story is appealingly presented to a younger audience and includes details about the media circus and social circumstances of Fall River in the wake of the murders. Young readers interested in history and true crime will be engrossed by Charlie's narrative about one of America's most notorious murders.	Kirkus Reviews (December 15, 2024) The story of the 1892 murders of Andrew Jackson Borden and his wife, Abby, and the subsequent trial of daughter Lizzie, told from the perspective of their young neighbor. Adding a light wash of invented detail to an account otherwise closely based on historical records, Kraatz presents a subtly nuanced view of the gruesome, controversial case. Despite his determination to get to the bottom of things, which leads him into some frightening situations, all 14-year-old Charlie knows about the Bordens next door is that they are a tense and unhappy family, and all he sees is a hatchet-wielding shadow in a covered window. But even though Lizzie is ultimately acquitted of the murders of her father and stepmother, in Charlie's mind a residue of fear and suspicion remains—which Lizzie's own remote, collected manner in chance encounters before and after the killings does nothing to dispel. Indeed, nearly everything she and her equally reserved younger sister, Emma, say seems freighted with double meanings that carry suggestions of secrets, buried emotional currents, and perhaps even complicity. The enigmatic expressions on their faces in Jayme's somber, two-color scenes brilliantly underscore this ambiguity. Readers can't help but come away less titillated by the case' s sensational aspects than disquieted by feelings that one or both of the surviving sisters knew things about that day that they silently carried to their graves. A true whodunit, rich in ambiguities and suggestive hints. (Graphic historical fiction. 11-13)	
Indigo & Ida	Murphy Capps, Heather	Middle School	5-8	Booklist starred (February 15, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 12)) Grades 5-7. Indigo, a biracial Minnesotan eighth-grader and aspiring journalist, deliberately vandalizes school property to get detention in this moving and inspiring debut that champions fighting against injustice. Her best friends, Abbie and Manning, have ditched her for the school's popular group, and Indigo hopes that they'll be so impressed with her getting detention, they'll want to be friends again. But then Indigo finds a book about Ida B. Wells in detention that includes letters with Wells' personal notes written in the book's margins, and she's inspired to investigate her school's unfair disciplinary policies when it comes to BIPOC students: only students of color, like her, are being sent to detention. Indigo also runs for student council president even though she's furious that Manning is running against her. In a secondary story line, community protests begin at the Minneapolis hospital where her doctor parents work after a Black man with mental health issues is denied treatment by a white doctor—a friend of Indigo's family. The book provides well-rounded glimpses into the lives of other characters, like Indigo's neurodivergent little brother and Abbie's nonbinary younger sibling. Indigo is a relatable and sympathetic character, and the social justice issues she champions at her school are timely and ring true. Readers will be inspired by Indigo's passion and compelled to read more about Wells, too. An author's note and discussion questions round things out.	Kirkus Reviews (February 1, 2023) A middle schooler learns important lessons while running for office. Eighth grader Indigo Fitzgerald is willing to try anything to get her old friends back. An aspiring investigative journalist whose exposé videos get a lot of views, she attempts to change her squeaky-clean reputation by spray-painting a wall at school—which only lands her in detention. There, she encounters the autobiography of trailblazing Black journalist Ida B. Wells. While reading it and observing racial disparities between the student body as a whole and those present in detention, Indigo decides to expand her platform by running for student council president. Other issues in her family and community claim her attention as well. As her campaign progresses, she realizes she is being judged as intense, militant, and unlikable rather than as a crusader for justice. Indigo becomes more aware of how race impacts the way she is perceived and has a brave and honest conversation with her White mother about whether she can truly understand what Indigo, her brother, and her Black father experience. This lively middle-grade novel successfully captures the turmoil of finding one's place while navigating the various demands of growing up. The fictional letters informed by research on Wells' life show how learning about real-life figures can inform a young person's development. Indigo is an intriguing character surrounded by a realistic supporting cast of peers and adults. A satisfying story that demonstrates how the past can shed light on the present. (author's note, discussion questions) (Fiction. 10-13)	Publishers Weekly (February 13, 2023) In Capps's endearing debut, biracial (white and Black) eighth grader Indigo Fitzgerald faces scrutiny and microaggressions from her peers during her campaign for class president. When Indigo, an investigative vlogger, intentionally lands herself in detention to interrogate her school's detention policy, which she believes is disproportionately harsh against students of color, she borrows a copy of the autobiography of journalist and activist Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), which contains letters between the pages written by Wells to an unnamed friend. Inspired by Wells's drive and determined to better her own school, Indigo decides to run for class president. But when she posts a vlog about her detention policy findings ("No white students are being sent to after-school prison," she says), her initially supportive classmates accuse her of disregarding "important issues" such as a no-homework mandate, claiming that "not everything is about race." Wells's fictional letters-created by Capps, who "used real stories from Ida's life to shape them," as outlined in an author's note-appear throughout, focusing on historical aspects of the story. In particular, they shed light on the figure's accomplishments and explore how her legacy bolsters contemporary advocacy pursuits. Forthright conversations surrounding privilege between Indigo and her white mother further elevate this complex depiction of race and discrimination. Ages 10-13. Agent: Shannon Hassan, Marsal Lyon Literary. (Apr.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
Insider tips for fishing in lakes and ponds	Katirgis, Jane	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Insider tips for hunting big game	Uhl, Xina M	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Into the rapids	Braden, Ann	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (May 9, 2025) Gr 5 Up-After a storm upends their world and leads to her father's death, Addy and her mom learn to depend on each other, isolating themselves literally and figuratively from their rural Vermont community. Addy doesn't mind; she loves her life building fires, chopping wood, and navigating rugged terrains, skills she has inherited from her nature-loving parents. Addy adores her mother, and the duo take pride in their ability to be self-sufficient. However, Addy's mother struggles with grief, anxiety, and panic attacks, and Addy worries about dealing with those mental health issues alone. She looks at the townspeople's connections with one another and wonders what it would be like if she were a part of their community. Addy's emotional connection to the outdoors is expressed by her determination to attend Camp Survival, which encourages kids to hone their survival skills. Multiple traumatic events, including a superstorm reminiscent of the one that took her dad's life, as well as an unexpected friendship with a childhood nemesis, encourage Abby to branch out as she learns to trust other people and accept them in her life. Addy is a likable character who readers will identify with and want to succeed. Her outdoor activities are presented in an exciting and interactive way that is utterly engaging. Friendships are genuine and relatable, and Braden powerfully expresses the importance of relationships and community. The depiction of mental health struggles will be helpful for young readers, and practical strategies are offered to understand and manage them. VERDICT A heartfelt, feel-good story about the importance of emotional connections set against outdoor adventures.-Margaret Auguste © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (April 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 15)) Grades 4-7. After the tragic death of her father several years earlier, Addy, 12, and her mother try to live a normal life in their isolated Vermont community. Mom lives with long-term PTSD, and her symptoms appear in full force as she and Addy find themselves cut off from communication and basic supplies by recent flooding. Simultaneously, Addy is grappling with her own panic over whether she'll be able to get to her much-anticipated Survival Camp, where she'd hoped to do her father's memory proud. Does she dare to step outside her comfort zone to achieve this? She'll need to open herself up to a boy who once hurt her and to locals whom she doesn't even know. Braden successfully explores the inner determination and strength of her characters, accomplishing in under 200 pages what many longer books fail to achieve. Each sentence holds a nugget of wisdom that will touch the reader. But don't blink, or you'll miss details that will take you through the rapids to a satisfying conclusion.	Kirkus Reviews (March 15, 2025) Twelve-year-old Addy's goals change when a prolonged storm washes out the bridge that connects her small Vermont town to the outside world. The bridge's loss jeopardizes Addy's long-held dream of attending the same summer survival camp where her mother and her now-deceased father met when they were her age. To her surprise, her long-shunned classmate Caleb offers to help, which opens the floodgates—not only to a workaround that just might get her to the camp, but to ways of moving past the grief and self-imposed isolation that have mired her and her even more traumatized mom ever since her father died in a flash flood. Braden spins a fairly taut natural disaster tale that sees Addy relying on the survival skills that she's diligently practiced for camp. Overall, though, the narrative takes on a heavy-handedly therapeutic cast. Along with mentioning the background reading she's done on trauma since the accident, Addie helps her mom get through depressive fugues, helps Caleb deal with both his own fears of death and an explicitly described panic attack, and interrogates her own feelings and attitudes—all at relative length and all by the end with reassuringly positive results. In her acknowledgments, the author thanks her therapist for helping her through a similar childhood brush with death. Physical descriptors are minimal. Suspenseful, if somewhat didactic. (Fiction. 10-13)	
Island of whispers	Hardinge, Frances	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (January 10, 2025) Gr 4-8-Hardinge's latest read delivers suspense, adventure, mystery, and fantasy all in one beautifully illustrated novel. Milo never imagined that he would be the one to fill his father's big shoes of being the Ferryman, taking their island's departed souls to the afterlife. Being a Ferryman required the ability to focus and to stay unmoved by death, and his father made it clear that Milo's older brother was his top choice. But when his father is killed and Leif is kidnapped, Milo knows it's up to him to ferry the spirits and their shoes across the seas to their final resting place on the Island of Broken Tower. Hot on his heels are two malevolent magicians, hired by the Lord of Merlank who believes they can revive his dead daughter. As he races to complete his seafaring journey on his father's terms, Milo falters in the rule to not communicate with the dead but learns a lot about grief and loss in the process. Readers will root for Milo as the plot thickens and he makes some exciting discoveries about his new role. Stunning black, white, and light blue illustrations pepper the pages of this nail-biter that has action and tenderness in equal measure. Characters pictured are white, and their clothing seems indicative of the Renaissance era. VERDICT A perfect read for fans who love fast-paced unconventional stories with good triumphing over evil and a feel-good ending.-Tracy Cronce © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2024) Milo's father has a vital role to play on the island of Merlank: he's the Ferryman, responsible for transporting the Dead to a place where their spirits are free to depart, no longer hampered by Merlank's clingy mist. Otherwise, the Dead would linger, blighting the land and killing others with their fatal gaze. Thus, when the grieving Lord of Merlank causes Milo's father's death, Milo must become the Ferryman and sail the Evening Mare, despite what his father always deemed the dangers of Milo's sympathetic, imaginative spirit. Don't listen to them; don't look at them, was his father's self-protective way with the Dead. But when the Lord's daughter writes a poem on the deck, desperate for her words to go on living despite her early demise, Milo realizes that listening, recording, and sharing can also be part of the Ferryman's job. Gravett's spectacularly misty, atmospheric illustrations, all in shades of indigo, heighten what is most elusive and poignant about Hardinge's story -- the sorrow of endings, the significance of last messages, and the inexorability of mortality. Hardinge's own poetic language (most clearly visible in the girl's poem: "The gnats sing the sun to sleep / Over the lake the air cools / Twinned birds fly through two pink skies") brings multiple shimmering layers to both plot and imagery in this melancholic, fantastical tale. Deirdre F. Baker July/August 2024 p.127	Booklist (August 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 22)) Grades 3-7. This illustrated novella follows Milo, son of the Ferryman, a local figure tasked with collecting the shoes of the dead and through those items helping souls along to the Island of the Broken Tower, "the passing place of the dead." When the daughter of a lord dies, the distraught father employs magicians to extend her life through twisted arts. In an attempt to reclaim her shoes, they kill the resistant Ferryman, and Milo finds himself in a race to complete his father's work, fleeing by ship with the girl's shoes—as well as those of his father, whose own spirit now shadows him. There's an intense quiet about Hardinge's controlled prose that perfectly suits Milo's character and circumstances, well complemented by Gravett's illustrations, which are by turns heavy with black inks and ethereal with light washes of blue. The moody story, with all the feel of a real folktale, deftly manages to be both a thrilling sea chase and a touching story of loss and coming of age. Sweetly macabre.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Isle of ever	Calonita, Jen	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (March 1, 2025) Gr 5-7-The game is afoot! Can Benny, 12, solve the riddles left by her great-great-great-great-great grandmother before it's too late? Everly "Benny" Benedict, who is white, has always dreamed of a place to call home, and when a lawyer from Long Island explains her surprise inheritance from her successful ancestor Evelyn Terry, she jumps at the chance to claim it. But there's a catch: Benny must complete a series of riddles left by Evelyn and find a mysterious and seemingly magical island off the coast of Greenport before the Blood Orange Moon. Can she finish the game before the two-week deadline? Calonita's latest offers a page-turning mystery that will have readers on the edges of their seats. Throughout the game, Benny must reckon with Evelyn's past mistakes while trying to navigate newfound friendships, financial responsibility, and the road map to the utterly fantastical "Evelyn's Island." The fast-paced and satisfying collection of riddles through clues and diary entries are a feast for avid puzzle lovers. The stakes just get higher, and by the end, readers will be anxiously awaiting the sequel. The pacing is excellent, the character development enticing, and the finale positively nail-biting. VERDICT This thrilling adventure mystery will capture the spirit of play in every reader, making it a perfect addition to any library's middle grade collection.-Ashton Conley © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (February 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 11)) Grades 4-7. Everly and her mother have always lived on the move and low on funds. Then Everly receives unexpected news of an incredible inheritance that could change their lives, but there's a catch: she'll inherit the family fortune only if she successfully locates a hidden island that's missing from every map. To make matters more mysterious, the documents guiding Everly in her quest were clearly written with her in mind, but they were composed more than a century earlier. Now Everly has two weeks to crack the case, claim the prize, and change her family's fortune forever. The suspenseful series opener immediately enthralls, and though there are plot points aplenty (pirate treasure! a pandemic! an immortal cat!), it all carefully connects in a dramatic cliff-hanger ending that will leave readers scrambling for a sequel. Clever clues embedded in journal entries, letters, and newspaper clippings fill in the backstory, making it particularly appealing to anyone with a penchant for puzzles. A nail-biter of a novel for readers who like their mysteries with a touch of magic.	Kirkus Reviews (January 15, 2025) A tween enters into a high-stakes and high-rewards hunt for a life-changing treasure. After years of financial instability, and moving from place to place with her mother, Everly “Benny” Benedict, 12, is poised to come into a large inheritance from her great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, Evelyn “Sparrow” Terry of Greenport, Long Island—but only if Benny can solve Evelyn’s riddles and find a mysterious island within the deadline, less than two weeks away. If she fails, Benny will lose the entire estate. As the pressure mounts, Benny and her newly acquired Greenport friends, Zara and Ryan, unravel clues tied to a rare Blood Orange Moon, a deadly 1825 Yellow Fever epidemic, and family connections spanning generations; in addition, events from Evelyn’s timeline shed light on the present day. Incorporating text messages, the young detectives’ notes, and 19th-century newspaper articles, journal entries, and letters, Calonita deftly transitions between the past and the present. Greenport is rich in magical elements that gradually play a larger and larger role in the plot, setting this book apart from other inheritance treasure-hunt stories and creating an added layer of interest. Severe weather phenomena and other challenges contribute to the building tension. The worldbuilding contains several unexplained developments, and the book ends on a frustratingly major cliffhanger, but this series opener is clearly setting up for a sequel in which more answers will hopefully be forthcoming. Main characters are cued white. An engaging, puzzle-centered page-turner. (Fantasy adventure. 8-12)	
It found us	Currie, Lindsay	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (October 6, 2023) Gr 4-8-Twelve-year-old Hazel considers herself an amateur detective of sorts, and is planning to start a podcast about mysteries she solves around her town. The cemetery is rumored to be haunted, so when she hears her brother Den and his friends talking about a sneaky game of nighttime hide-and-seek there, she follows him. But when Den's friend Everett doesn't get found by the seeker, and doesn't turn up hours later, Hazel realizes she has a real high-stakes mystery on her hands. As she tries to follow the clues to find Everett, strange and creepy things start to happen. Hazel smells smoke where there isn't any, and they encounter a terrifying presence with red and white clothes and a stitched-up mouth. As Hazel digs into the cemetery's past looking for clues, she uncovers a connection with a horrific accident from many years ago. Can she learn enough to put the ghost to rest and save Everett? Once again, Currie has taken a real-life historical tragedy and created an engaging supernatural tale around those events. Students will be fascinated by the true story outlined in the epilogue. Perfect for young horror fans, there are just enough scares to satisfy without being terrifying. VERDICT Well-written scary novels are few and far between for this age group. All libraries serving middle grades should have this on the shelf.-Mandy Laferriere © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (August 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 22)) Grades 5-8. In the suburb of Forest Park, Illinois, Hazel is known as something of a snoop, to her family’s chagrin. Overhearing that her brother, Den, and his friends will be playing hide-and-seek in Woodlawn Cemetery, Hazel decides to sneak along and expose the secrets of the spooky graveyard, proving her skills as a detective (and for other personal motives). During the game, everyone is found except for Den’s annoying best friend, Everett. A panic-stricken town commences to search for the missing child. As Hazel; her best friend, Maggie; and Den seek to uncover the missing boy, they also expose the truth about an ominously smiling ghost haunting Woodlawn. Scritch Scratch (2020) and What Lives in the Woods (2021) author Currie delivers another frightful tale centered around the Chicagoland area. Currie builds suspense through paranormal activities that will leave readers jumping. Middle-graders will admire Hazel’s gumption and her journey to becoming an altruistic detective. A solid chiller for fans of Louise Fitzhugh's Harriet the Spy.	Kirkus Reviews (August 1, 2023) A 12-year-old girl pits her detective skills against a ghost to find a missing boy. Despite her parents’ warnings against getting involved in the neighbors’ business and refusal to let her start a mystery-themed podcast, Hazel, who is cued white, can’t quell her passion for sleuthing. When Dennison, her older brother, sneaks out to play hide-and-seek in the cemetery, Hazel secretly follows. There, she hears chilling screams and howling—and is horrified when Den’s friend Everett disappears. The police are called, volunteers form a search party, and Hazel begins to investigate herself, leading her and Den to encounter a terrifying ghost with its mouth sewn shut. Who this ghost is and what drives its actions become the focus of Hazel’s investigation. An occasionally flippant tone undercuts genuinely creepy moments, while the mystery elements inconsistently mesh with the paranormal aspects to produce unfounded assumptions about the haunting. Excessive repetition comes across as not trusting readers’ abilities and insights. Hazel’s superior sleuthing abilities feel unsubstantiated when internet searches that should have occurred earlier in the story immediately yield vital clues late in the novel, and another character presents facts about the cemetery that most people in the community would know. The author’s note describes the real historical events behind the haunting. A muddled mystery combined with horror elements. (Paranormal. 9-13)	
Joe Biden	Britton, Tamara L	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Junius Leak and the spiraling vortex of doom	Wolf, Allan	Middle School	5-8		Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2025) Junius Leak, nearly thirteen, is "exiled to a strange, watery land" in Louisiana. He's a timid and anxious boy, afraid of yet fascinated by what he calls "waterbodies" and reluctant to spend twelve days on a houseboat on Lake Peigneur with Uncle Spot, whom he has never met, while his parents "figure things out" at a "marriage boot camp." Based on an astounding true story of a day in 1980 when Lake Peigneur disappeared, the tale is told from the alternating viewpoints of Junius and the lake. The twin narratives converge at the mining disaster scene, though it takes four-hundred-plus pages to get to the chapter titled "And Now, What We've All Been Waiting For." It is worth the wait, as events are relayed with all the liveliness of a disaster-thriller movie. But readers will realize that this is not just about waiting for disaster to strike -- it is Junius's story, too, and if the lake changes, so does he, as these circumstances require heroism. Bold action, solid characterization, and an adept handling of subjects ranging from neurodivergence and environmental science to the slave trade and the origins of Cajun culture along the Gulf of Mexico make this an example of dramatic storytelling with substance. Back matter includes a map of Lake Peigneur and the surrounding area, an author's note, lists of "Amazing Words of Southern Louisiana" and "Amazing Waterbodies of the World," and suggested reading about the real event. Dean Schneider September/October 2025 p.79	Booklist starred (May 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 17)) Grades 4-6. Based on an actual 1980 event, Wolf's latest weaves a dazzling tale out of environmental themes, historical backstories in a Louisiana community, buried pirate treasure, and a neurodivergent 12-year-old's vertiginously life-changing stay with a loving but unfamiliar relative. Junius arrives aboard his uncle Spot's houseboat on the shores of Lake Peigneur with a handle—mostly—on his emotional meltdowns but not his fear of being on water. Over the next dozen days, he works on both while meeting a colorfully engaging cast of local residents, experiencing the pleasures of their weekly fais-dodo, learning shocking facts about his family that his reticent mother never shared, and forming new friendships—notably, with teen eco-activist Victoria, who is protesting the oil well being drilled in the lake. Junius shares narrative duties with the lake itself, which, as a tongue-in-cheek alternate ("I am a lake, so let me be clear") slips in historical flashbacks, including a surreptitious 1820 visit by pirate Jean Lafitte; and which, at what becomes a breathlessly suspenseful climax, describes how the oil drillers hit a tunnel in a huge nineteenth-century salt mine—and turned the whole lake into a colossal drain, then a sinkhole that led to a massive flood. Considering the vividly depicted events, the strong cast, and the young protagonist's personal triumphs, there's wow-worthy content aplenty here.	
Kareem between	Safadi, Shifa Saltagi	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (October 1, 2024) Gr 5 Up-Stuck between his Syrian heritage and his American citizenship, a boy looks for meaning in this powerful novel in verse. It's the end of 2016's summer, and huge Chicago Bears fan Kareem has lost the chance to play quarterback for the school team. When the coach's son and reigning bully strikes a sketchy deal with him, Kareem is stuck lying and cheating in hopes of securing a spot during spring training. His parents welcome a new Syrian family into their community and start pushing for a friendship between their son and Kareem, and it becomes apparent how reluctant he is to embrace where he comes from. His mom travels to Syria to aid her ailing parents but is prevented from returning by the executive order known as the "Muslim Ban," upending their household and leaving Kareem feeling even more lost. Kareem finds meaning in fighting against prejudice and ignorance; however, he'll have to look inward to straighten his own moral compass. This novel seamlessly merges all-American football and NFL terms with Arabic language and Syrian culture. The nonlinear text makes the story dynamic and engaging, drawing readers in from page one. Safadi weaves a story of identity, growing up, standing up for what's right, and boyhood. VERDICT A first purchase for middle school libraries, especially where fresh approaches to sports fiction are in high demand.-Carol Youssif	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2024) Seventh grader Kareem dreams of becoming the first Syrian American NFL player. He hopes to make the middle school football team as quarterback -- not likely since the coach's son, Austin, is up for that position, though Austin offers to get Kareem on the team if he'll do his homework for him. Conflicts with Austin propel the story, and Kareem must learn to stand up against him and for his new friend Fadi, a recent Syrian refugee. Kareem is a reader, and his books -- Holes, Locomotion, Hatchet -- help him make sense of his world. The story turns dark when Kareem's mother travels to Syria in order to bring her parents to America, but then President Trump's Executive Order 13769 -- the "Muslim ban" -- goes into effect at the same time, trapping them in Syria. Kareem joins protests against the ban and is bolstered by how widespread those demonstrations are, showing him the power of people taking a stand. Safadi's verse is at times somewhat wordy and didactic, but the story itself is heartfelt and personal, anchored in one boy's perspective and the author's own experiences. From midpoint on, it gathers momentum, becoming a tale of true depth, with characters to care about and a solid resolution. An author's note is appended. Dean Schneider November/December 2024 p.97	Booklist (September 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 1)) Grades 5-8. Syrian American Kareem sees the world through the lens of football, and he's fumbling hard when he doesn't make the middle-school football team. He ends up agreeing to do the homework of the quarterback in hopes of making the spring squad, which puts his honesty and friendship with a new kid (a refugee) in school on a path toward trouble. When his mother travels back to Syria to bring Kareem's grandfather to the U.S., she gets caught up in the 2017 Muslim Ban. As Kareem's life plunges into chaos, he struggles—both on and off the field—to know who he is as a student, a friend, and a son. The story is told in quick-paced verse threaded with NFL facts that relate to the poems and provide a unique insight into his thoughts, and Kareem's voice effectively expresses the lived experiences of many children of immigrants in a post-2016 world while also incorporating classic middle-grade drama and abundant literary allusions. For fans of Kwame Alexander, Daniel Nayeri, and sports-heavy books with broad appeal.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Kyra, just for today	Zarr, Sara	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (March 15, 2024) Gr 5 Up-With playful banter, Kyra helps her single mother clean houses before the start of the school day. After school, she cooks, frets about bills, and functions more as a peer than a daughter, all while struggling to fit in with her actual peers in seventh grade. Kyra finds refuge in her weekly support group for teens whose lives are affected by a family member with alcoholism. Her best friend attends the same meetings, and Kyra grows insecure when the social pressures of middle school collide with her safe space. Afraid her friend is drifting away from her, Kyra becomes withdrawn and reluctant to participate at meetings. This leaves her feeling she has nowhere to turn when she suspects that her mother is drinking after five years of sobriety. Kyra's voice is raw and believable as she grapples with shame, self-doubt, and the belief that she is somehow to blame for her mother's relapse. The novel's account of middle school social dynamics will resonate broadly, and its unflinching depiction of life with an alcoholic parent offers an important perspective. Readers will root for Kyra as she learns to trust herself and those around her. Several secondary characters provide unexpected support, but Kyra's resilience and growth are center stage. Kyra and her mother are both white.VERDICT Zarr shines a harsh light on a child's experience growing up in a family affected by alcoholism. For readers in similar situations, that light may offer an essential ray of hope.-Amy Reimann © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (February 1, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 11)) Grades 4-7. With her dad out of the picture and an overly judgmental maternal grandmother, Kyra and her mom, Meg, have had only each other to lean on. This hasn't been quite a fair balance, however: Meg has struggled with an addiction to alcohol and could not always care for her daughter appropriately. Five years into Meg's recovery, Kyra continues to prioritize her mother's needs. Viewed one way, the 13-year-old is simply being helpful—making sure her mom has snacks throughout the day, preparing dinner if Meg's been slammed with work. Kyra knows deep down that her mom is trying her best, but she doesn't yet have the language—nor has she given herself permission—to ask for more. The same goes for her social life. Her best friend, Lu, seems to be outgrowing their friendship, leaving Kyra confused as to whether she'll fit in with Kyra's new crew. Rather than portraying a big blowup, this tender middle-grade novel underscores the beauty of uncertainty and having enough faith in one another to try over and over again.	Kirkus Reviews starred (January 1, 2024) A middle-grade novel showing how children pay the price of living in families where alcohol is abused. Thirteen-year-old Kyra lives with her mother in Pacifica, a coastal suburb south of San Francisco. Mom, who's in recovery from alcoholism and has been sober for more than five years, has a house-cleaning business. Kyra often helps her out around the holidays—even skipping school (with her mom's permission) so she can pick up more jobs. Kyra also makes her mother breakfast, packs her lunch and snacks, tidies the house, and prepares dinner—in addition to negotiating her self-consciousness at school over being "taller and bigger than most of the other seventh-grade girls" and worrying that her best friend is drifting away. When Mom starts coming home late and acting erratically, Kyra doesn't want to think about why or even share her worries at the support group for children of alcoholics that she attends weekly. Eventually, though, she's forced to confront both her mother's behavior and the effect it's had over the years. Informative and validating, this story is all the more powerful for Kyra's first-person narration, which underscores her love for her mother and her desire to take care of her, as well as her confusion as she confronts feelings of guilt, resentment, and anger. For anyone affected by an alcoholic family member, this story will resonate with searing truth. Most characters read white. Authentic and heartbreaking but hopeful. (author's note) (Fiction. 9-13)	
Land of broken promises	Kuo, Jane	Middle School	5-8	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2023) In this sequel in verse to In the Beautiful Country (rev. 7/22), we follow Ai Shi Zhang -- American name, Anna -- and her family in the suburbs of Los Angeles as they struggle to carve out a place in the American Dream. They buy an American-made Buick. They sign a lease on their store. Then the Zhangs discover that they missed their window to renew their immigration visas. A summer free of plans is quickly altered: Ai Shi's mom must go to San Diego to work and save enough money to pay for an immigration lawyer, while Ai Shi must spend every day working at the family's shop. In order to join Speech Club at junior high next year she has to write a speech; the prompt, "What America Means to Me," serves as the theme of the novel as Ai Shi grapples with that very question. Despite their difficult circumstances, Ai Shi and her parents navigate their world with relentless optimism, perseverance, and an earnest belief in their dreams. Gabi Kim Huesca July/August 2023 p.112	Booklist (April 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 15)) Grades 4-7. A sequel to In the Beautiful Country (2022), which told of Anna and her mother leaving Taiwan and joining her father in America, this story opens 18 months later, during Anna's sixth-grade year. She has adjusted well, and the family business, a fast-food place, is supporting them. But later that year, she learns that her family's visa has expired and that, no matter how hard they work, they have no path to citizenship. To someone who increasingly sees herself as an American, this comes as a devastating revelation, but by the story's end, Anna has confided in her best friend, worked through her initial emotional turmoil, and found a way to move forward. Based on Kuo's experiences within a family of undocumented immigrants who were granted amnesty and, eventually, American citizenship, Anna's first-person, free-verse narrative unfolds with simplicity, precision, and insights into what drives the people around her as well as herself. Written in short chapters, this inviting novel in verse offers a rewarding reading experience for young people.	Kirkus Reviews (July 1, 2023) In 1980s California, a girl navigates her way through her family's pursuit of the American dream. Ai Shi continues to adjust to living in the small town of Duarte after her family emigrated from Taiwan, as relayed in 2022's In the Beautiful Country. Despite help from best friend Tiffany, she cannot help but feel she falls short of being "a real American"—standing out among white kids at school and also among American-born kids at her Chinese church. Ai Shi is ambivalent about the approaching summer break, assuming she'll be helping out her parents at their diner as usual since they can't afford camp. At least her teacher notices her way with words, encouraging Ai Shi to write a speech on the topic of "What America Means to Me" for junior high speech club in the fall. But then her family discovers they have overstayed their visa and need to get a lawyer they can't afford. Ai Shi's mother gets a summer job in San Diego, and Ai Shi will officially work at the diner for $5 a day. Amid the challenges, she savors unexpected pockets of joy, grows in understanding her parents' wishes for her ("You have so many choices, Ai Shi. / You get to decide"), and finds her own American dream. Kuo's verse is artfully balanced in tone, never sugarcoating the struggles of the immigration experience but acknowledging the good times as well. An unabashedly heartfelt search for belonging. (Verse historical fiction. 9-12)	
Lifeboat 5	Hood, Susan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (October 18, 2024) Gr 4-8-Hood's latest is a companion story to Lifeboat 12 that highlights the powerful strength of friendship and family in the most perilous of events. Bess, 15, is desperate to escape the German airstrikes in London and the personal attacks made by school bullies. She convinces her parents to allow her and her 10-year-old brother, Louis, to apply to the evacuation lottery provided by the Children's Overseas Reception Board. When they win a spot on the SS City of Benares traveling to Canada, Bess is ready for the fresh start. Life on a luxury liner is exciting for the 90 children and their chaperones. Bess even finds a friend who finally understands and accepts her wholeheartedly. But when a German U-Boat torpedo strikes their ship, it becomes a race against time to evacuate and survive in the frigid water until help arrives. This novel-in-verse evokes the raw emotions of a teenager, her curious brother, and the relentless sea all struggling to find peace and safety in this lesser-known tragic World War II nautical event. Extensive research, notes, and photographs offer readers a closer look at understanding the sinking of the Benares and the effects it had on the war effort and survivors. VERDICT A highly recommended purchase for all libraries who cherished Lifeboat 12 and seek another inspiring true story of a young girl's extraordinary resilience.-Lindsey Morrison © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (August 15, 2024) Nazi bombs are falling on London. Trapped in the shelter, 15-year-old Bess feels under attack from bombers on the outside and bullies on the inside. She convinces her parents to apply for a program that will evacuate children to Canada, and she and little brother Louis are accepted. They set off on the SS City of Benares accompanied by a convoy of armed ships. Their escorts and the crew are kind, but the life jackets and lifeboat drills are reminders that danger is always lurking. Bess befriends fellow passenger Beth, and when a German torpedo strikes and the ship sinks, they help one another to safety but feel overwhelmed by stormy weather, loss, and despair. Is there any hope of finding Louis? Bess narrates her tale in free verse that uses short, staccato lines to describe the unfolding events in sharp detail. Hood intersperses verses narrated by the sea, and others that follow Louis' experiences. Bess' stream-of-consciousness style expresses all her doubts, fears, and hopes, bringing readers along on her torturous adventure. The girls are ultimately rescued by the HMS Hurricane and find Louis, but only a few of the other children survive. This verse novel is inspired by unforgettable real events that will leave a lasting impression on readers. A hopeful story about devastating events written in clear, accessible verse. (author's note, Lifeboat 5 facts, poetry notes, sources, appendix, photographs) (Verse historical fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly (August 19, 2024) When Nazis begin bombing 15-year-old Bess's East London neighborhood, she persuades her parents to apply for the opportunity for Bess and her younger brother Louis to escape on one of the children's evacuations to Canada. Bess, Louis, and 88 other children ages five to 15 are cosseted by the kind crew of the SS City of Benares, where she befriends Beth, also 15 and from Liverpool. On their fifth day at sea, the ship is torpedoed by a Nazi U-boat; separated from Louis, Beth and Bess rush to their assigned lifeboat, which overturns upon hitting the water. For the next 19 hours, the white-cued girls clutch to the side of the vessel, holding hands and refusing to give up, on rescue or each other. Beth and Bess-who are based on real-life survivors of the same name, two of only 13 children who lived through the ordeal, as addressed in an author's note-would forever credit their unshakable friendship for saving their lives. In this gripping, harrowing novel by the author of Lifeboat 12, Hood uses thrilling first-person verse to entrance young readers and deliver a tale of perseverance, fortitude, hope, and companionship. Ages 8-12. Agent: Brenda Bowen, Book Group. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Lolo's light	Scanlon, Liz Garton	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (October 1, 2022 (Vol. 119, No. 3)) Grades 5-8. This poignant look at grief and loss is a perfect opening for conversations about death, depression, and therapy for middle-grade readers. Seventh-grader Millie's first night of babysitting her next-door neighbor, Lolo, seemed to go OK, but sometime during the night, baby Lolo passed away of unknown causes. What follows is a black hole of despair that Millie falls into–losing her sparkle and becoming robotic, as her sister notes. The only saving grace is what she calls Lolo's Light, a light in her bedroom window that Millie fixates on, hoping that means the baby isn't really gone. The annual science class experiment to hatch chicks, however, sends overly cautious Millie teetering toward the brink. Scanlon's stark prose depicts Millie's mental state well, and the school story aspect will appeal to most middle-grade readers, while also serving up a healthy dose of mental health education and insight into loss and grief. This is a great pick for tween book groups, sure to leave readers' eyes wet with tears by the end.	Kirkus Reviews starred (August 15, 2022) Millie is a genuinely happy person; she's a comedian who loves making other people laugh—until the day she cannot laugh anymore. Twelve-year-old Millie Donally feels so mature when their neighbors the Acostas ask her to watch their baby daughter, Lolo, when they go out to dinner. Millie's older sister is their usual sitter, but she can't make it. Everything goes well, and Millie goes home happy and proud of herself only to wake in the morning to find out that Lolo passed away during the night. Even though the sudden infant death syndrome is not her fault, Millie is transformed overnight from carefree to guilt-ridden and depressed. The only bright spot (figuratively and literally) is the warm yellow light shining from Lolo's room. Millie swears she feels a warm electrical hum as well, although no one else seems to notice it. Millie attempts to move forward, but how do you go on after something like this? How can she be with her friends, who can't truly understand what she's feeling? Even the class project she had looked forward to, incubating chicken eggs, is now in Millie' s eyes rife with potential for disastrous failure. Millie' s slow process through grief and guilt—with help from a family therapist—is extraordinarily well written, taking readers on the heartbreaking, difficult, and necessary journey that follows unthinkable loss. Characters are minimally described and read White. A poignant coming-of-age story that explores the ripple effects of death, loss, and forgiveness. (Fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly starred (September 5, 2022) Garton (The Great Good Summer) treats the topic of grief with wisdom and tenderness in this slice-of-life novel set on the North Shore of Chicago. Everything seems to go fine on the evening that 12-year-old Millie Donally babysits for the very first time, but she learns the next morning that sometime during the night, her four-month-old charge, Lolo Acosta, died from sudden infant death syndrome. No one blames Millie for the baby's death, but the rising seventh grader, who attends comedy camp and practices improv, nevertheless feels guilty and soon experiences depression. Her only comfort is a warm, yellow light burning continuously in Lolo's window. When Millie reads about bioluminescence, "light that is both produced and emitted by a living organism," she starts to wonder if the glow means that Lolo is partially "still here, on Earth." The memory of the light's warmth helps Millie get through a school chicken-hatching project that requires her to carefully tend fertilized eggs. Divided into tonally discrete "before" and "everything after" sections that convey the tween's transformation, the narrative economically and movingly renders Millie's inner turmoil-and work with a therapist-in the wake of a sorrowful event. Characters default to white. Ages 10-up. Agent: Erin Murphy, Erin Murphy Literary. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
Lucy in the sky	Brinkman, Kiara	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2021) A seventh grader and her friends form a band. Will it all come together? When Lucy Sutcliffe comes across her parents' old vinyl records, it's the start of Beatlemania for the young drummer. Inspired by the Fab Four, Lucy and her best friends, Vanessa Takahashi and Rupa Khanna, are three-fourths of the way toward having a rock band. They just need a guitar player—and classmate Georgianna Birk might be it. While Lucy bonds quickly with the new member, the rest of the band does not click as easily. Beginning in the fall of 2012 and taking place over the course of the school year, readers see all the day-to-day ups and downs of middle school life. Brinkman deftly captures how friendships ebb and flow. In addition to changing friendship dynamics and tensions, family is a strong focus, and bridging it all and providing comfort is music. Snippets from The Beatles' catalog and other classics often reinforce the narrative. The vibrant color palette of Chiki's art feels contemporary while also evoking the 1960s. Effective, dynamic use of panel variations and white space complement Brinkman's text. Lucy and Georgianna present White; Vanessa and Rupa are cued as Asian. An honest coming-of-age story with extra appeal for music lovers. (afterword, soundtrack) (Graphic fiction. 9-13)	Publishers Weekly (May 10, 2021) Twelve-year-old Lucy, who is white and has red hair, navigates impermanence over the course of seventh grade. In fall 2012, Lucy's friend group begins drifting apart-Vanessa Takahashi becomes interested in boys, while Rupa Khanna struggles with her immigrant family's expectations. Lucy, meanwhile, copes with her own familial situation-her photojournalist mother travels nonstop, her divorced father avoids dating, and her vibrant grandmother, Cookie, who's Lucy's best friend, grows weaker during chemo treatments. When Lucy discovers an old Beatles album among her parents' things, Vanessa spurs the group to form a band with classmate Georgianna, whose presence causes friction during practice. In this work by a married creator pair, Chiki's bandes dessinées-style illustrations feature thin lines, flat colors, and character close-ups. Though the story rarely pauses for dramatic moments, Brinkman's (Up High in the Trees, for adults) characters wade through tender interactions, resulting in a soft and endearing look into a preteen world. Ages 10-14. Agent: Alice Tasman, Jean V. Naggar Literary. (July) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.		
Lulu Sinagtala and the city of noble warriors	Villanueva, Gail D	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (February 16, 2024) Gr 4-7-The first in what is sure to be a hit series full of magic, mythical beings, and an endearing cast of characters. Lulu was adopted when she was just a baby and has been brought up in a warm family consisting of her mom and sister Kitty. She has a relatively normal life in the City of Caloocan, learning about her Filipino heritage and spending time with an amazing array of people on her lively street. But one day, everything changes. When an earthquake hits, Lulu and Kitty are thrust into a new world full of magic and Tagalog deities, and a wakwak has kidnapped their mother. Along with their friend Bart, as the sisters embark on an epic journey to save their mother, they must rely on each other to stay safe in a world full of danger. Villanueva is a spectacular worldbuilder and does a remarkable job of depicting Tagalog mythology and Filipino history that is riveting, and also accessible to readers with no background in either. VERDICT A solid magical thriller that will leave readers anxiously awaiting Lulu's next adventure.-Tara Peace © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (December 1, 2023 (Vol. 120, No. 7)) Grades 3-6. This latest middle-grade novel from Filipino writer Villanueva is inspired by the legends of her childhood. Eleven-year-old Lulu lives with her adoptive family in Silanganan Village, a subdivision of Manila. After an earthquake erupts, Lulu starts seeing some recognizable creatures from Philippine mythology, like the tikbalang, wakwak, and aswang. Lulu and her sister, Kitty, must rescue their mom after she is taken by a wakwak. Villanueva's fun fantasy adventure takes us on a quest through the urban landscape of metropolitan Manila and includes details of street life in Silanganan: aromatic food vendors, high-speeding bucket trucks, and sari-sari stores. Tagalog words and phrases are sprinkled throughout the book and add to the overall atmosphere and world building. There's plenty of humor in this story, and it also touches on epilepsy and adoption in mixed-race families (Chinese and Filipino). A good pick for fans of Rick Riordan–style mythological fantasies, especially those who liked Erin Entrada Kelly's Lalani of the Distant Sea (2019) or Tracy Badua's Freddie vs. the Family Curse (2022).	Kirkus Reviews (November 1, 2023) A Manila tween learns of her magical powers in this duology opener steeped in Tagalog mythology. Lulu has always known that she was adopted; the physical differences between her and her Chinese Filipina mother and sister, Kitty, are clear. Lulu's painfully aware that to the outer world, her darker skin and hair, flatter nose, and shorter stature make her "not 'pretty,' " unlike them. Still, Lulu and Kitty, both 11, are extremely close. Lulu's inner circle also includes best friend Bart and supportive adult friends. But her life is suddenly shattered by a violent earthquake, the revelation that she's a salamangkero (someone with the power to "save the universe from falling into chaos"), and the kidnapping of her mother by a wakwak, a sharp-toothed flying creature. It also emerges that Lulu's adoptive and chosen family are deities and that Bart is an aswang, or were-dog shape-shifter. They' re all trying to protect her from malicious spirit Maligno, who seeks to bring chaos to all three Realms: the Upperworld, the Middleworld, and the Underworld. Lulu, while trying to make sense of everything and explore her new powers, must now rescue her mom. Readers will be completely immersed in the book's fantastical and culturally and historically rich world, which features inclusive representation; Lulu's bisexuality is naturally woven into her characterization. Villanueva deftly balances complex worldbuilding, plot twists, and moments of levity while touching on serious themes such as colonization. Rich in adventure, intrigue, and magical fun. (author's note, glossary) (Fantasy. 9-12)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Make a move, Sunny Park!	Kim, Jessica	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (December 2, 2023) Gr 5-8-A relatable story for tweens that illustrates the struggle of ending a toxic friendship and the triumph of being unapologetically yourself. Sunny Park is a Korean American seventh grader who has learned to make herself small. While Sunny loves K-pop and dancing, her best friend Bailey does not, and she shames Sunny for her "immature" hobbies. Sunny is afraid to face Bailey's anger if she goes against her wishes or fails to be completely available to meet Bailey's needs. After joining the school's dance team and making new friends who are part of the same K-pop fandom, Sunny begins to work through her social anxiety and realizes how much Bailey has been holding her back. This slice-of-life, character-driven story is a quick read, mostly conveyed through dialogue. Sunny is an empathetic and complex character who grows from her mistakes. VERDICT A potential mirror for tweens who are struggling with their sense of self-worth and navigating the complexities of friendship. Recommended for middle school collections.-Maria Bohan © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2023) Korean American Sunny Park wants to support her best friend, Bailey, whose parents are getting divorced (she also wants to avoid Bailey's resentment). Although Sunny experiences social anxiety, she agrees to endure the judgment of fellow seventh graders by auditioning for the middle-school dance team with Bailey. When Sunny makes the team and Bailey doesn't, their friendship becomes strained. Sunny bonds with teammates who share her love of the same K-pop group, an interest that Bailey has derided as immature. Finding solace in her supportive family, Sunny is especially close to her halmoni, who moved in after Sunny's grandfather passed away. Sunny shares the joy of K-pop while her grandmother shares advice and stories of her own childhood as she prepares (vividly described) Korean dishes. Despite the challenges of navigating social interactions, making mistakes, and reflecting on relationships, Sunny finds personal growth and leadership through the dance team. Kim offers humor, tween drama, and a satisfying conclusion in this well-paced story of self-discovery. Kristine Techavanich September/October 2023 p.75	Booklist (July 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. Seventh-grader Sunny Park is feeling pressure from many directions. Her mother urges her to get over her social anxiety. Sunny's longtime best friend, Baily, who is having trouble adjusting to her parents' divorce, demands Sunny's companionship and support while disparaging her friend's enthusiasm for Supreme Beat, a K-pop band. Baily presses Sunny to try out for the school dance team. Sunny is chosen, but Baily is not. After befriending two fellow dancers who love Supreme Beat, Sunny honors a commitment to them instead of attending her friend's mother's wedding. Baily retaliates online with a video aimed at destroying Sunny's reputation. Taking responsibility for her actions, Sunny brings this hurtful episode to a close and moves forward. Kim, a former teacher and the author of Stand Up, Yumi Chung! (2020), is equally adept in portraying the members of Sunny's three-generation Korean American household and realistically recreating the shifting dynamics of middle-school friendships. Sunny's first-person narrative becomes increasingly involving as characters and events create rising tension. The appealing jacket art will help this heartening story find its audience.	
Mascot	Waters, Charles	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (November 17, 2023) Gr 3-7-Waters and Sorell's novel in verse, told in alternating perspectives, tackles the relevant topic of racist imagery in mascots. In the football town of Rye, VA, Callie, who is Black and a member of the Cherokee Nation, shares her earnest poem in eighth-grade honors English class about using Indigenous peoples as mascots. Their teacher then sets up a formal debate to address the pros and cons of the school's Indigenous mascot. The diverse group of students have varied backgrounds and strong feelings about the issue. As they work through their debate, questions about what is right emerge, friendships are tested, and what it means to be an ally is brought forth. Each character grows throughout the book. However, as in life, the issue remains sensitive and unresolved. VERDICT Highly recommended as a pick for classrooms to use in debate and conversations; a timely and important novel.-Amy Zemboroski © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (July 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 21)) Grades 5-8. Mrs. Williams tasks her eighth-grade honors English students with a persuasive writing and oral presentation assignment arguing the pros and cons of using Indigenous peoples as mascots. Throughout the course of a school year the story unfolds in a series of poems that detail the perspectives of six students: Callie (Cherokee African American), Franklin (African American), Priya (Indian American), Luis (Salvadoran American), Tessa (white and previously homeschooled), and Sean (white and living in generational poverty). Predictably, Callie, Priya, and Tessa (who sees herself as a committed antiracist) oppose Indigenous mascots, while the boys, who enjoy war paint and tomahawk chops at Rye Braves games, claim the mascot depicts pride in the team and their school. While the discord around the mascot is a long-standing one in the Virginia community, the assignment empowers the students to take the issue to the school board. After further research, one student switches sides, losing a friend in the process. While the plot requires a fair amount of exposition detailing history and arguments on both sides, the characters are well developed and believable, and the story flows smoothly. A valuable classroom pick that demonstrates the importance of debate.	Kirkus Reviews starred (July 15, 2023) Waters and Sorell (Cherokee Nation) join forces to write about the power of being true to oneself. In a middle school in Rye, a fictional town near Washington, D.C., a racist mural and offensive pep rally chants shock new student Callie Crossland, who is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and African American. Callie shares a heartfelt poem with her seventh grade honors English class, reminding everyone that the "stupid tomahawk-chop chant" and the "cheap chicken-feather headdress" are nothing less than symbols of "white supremacy." Afterward, Ms. Williams, her teacher, assigns a persuasive writing and oration project entitled "Pros and Cons of Indigenous Peoples as Mascots." The small, broadly diverse group of students is assigned to work in pairs; Callie is matched with Franklin, who is Black and a proud fan of the Rye Braves football team. Franklin insists, "I wish we could Lysol racism away. / It's a bad odor," but he feels conflicted: "I still don't think our mascot is racist though. It brings so much joy. / ...what's the big deal?" This clever novel unfolds in poems told in multiple voices showing the wide range of students', families', and community responses to the controversy; for some, initial feelings of opposition, hesitation, or indifference change and friendships are tested. The compelling, highly relevant subject matter and accessible text invite readers to understand different perspectives and witness individual growth. A brilliant story not to be missed; deeply engaging from the first page. (glossary, additional information and resources) (Verse fiction. 10-14)	
Masks : a graphic novel	Rae, Margaret	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (August 1, 2025) Gr 6-8-Set in a world where monsters exist but must remain hidden, this graphic novel tells the story of Poe, a gentle, green-skinned, horned monster, and her found family. Poe lives in an abandoned building with blue-skinned Rice and pink, fang-toothed Shelley, where together they can escape the monster-hunting organization known as the Knights of the Night. When they learn their home is about to be demolished, the trio sets out on Halloween night, when they can pass for costumed humans, to search for a rumored sanctuary called Haven. As they navigate the journey, Poe wrestles with fear and caution, while Rice longs to live more openly. Young Shelley adds comic relief by eating everything in sight, including street signs. Along the way, they meet Vaughn, a kind human outcast with tan skin and brown hair who is teased for his love of a nerdy game and who agrees to help them. This touching graphic novel uses monsters as a metaphor for any marginalized community seeking safety and acceptance. The monsters are feared not for their actions but how they look, and the story highlights themes of identity, chosen family, and resistance. It also thoughtfully explores why some people are drawn to hateful groups like the Knights. The muted illustrations reflect the characters' emotional lives with appealing subtlety. VERDICT A moving read and an excellent addition to middle school collections.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (May 15, 2025) Three young monsters leave their hiding place after it's no longer safe, seeking shelter and community. Poe, a horned, green-skinned monster, was almost captured as a child by the centuries-old monster-hunting society the Knights of the Night. But a compassionate Knight helped her escape, and she was later found by Stoker, a young adult monster, who taught her how to survive in the shadows of the human world. He also shared a "silly urban legend" about a place "deep downtown, where monsters could live in peace." Ever since Stoker's sudden disappearance, Poe has been living with two young monsters named Rice (who has blue skin) and Shelley (who has pink skin, orange hair, and sharp fangs). When neighborhood gentrification means the empty house they're squatting in will be destroyed, they venture out on Halloween—which provides the perfect cover for their unusual appearances—in search of the rumored haven. But their quest is far from easy, and they encounter danger along the way. Found family and good human allies (diverse in skin tone) who offer support in the face of the actions of corrupt, greedy people lie at the core of the story, offering parallels to the experiences of marginalized groups who must fly under the radar to live safely. The illustrations, which are full of emotion, feature muted colors and loose linework. A heartfelt twist on tales of monsters and bad guys. (Graphic fantasy. 9-13)	Publishers Weekly (June 9, 2025) Young, green-skinned monster Poe and her found family of fellow creatures, Rice and Shelley, live in an abandoned building to stay hidden from human monster-hunting organization the Knights of the Night. When the youths' hideout is scheduled to be demolished, however, they're forced to vacate. On Halloween night, they set out to find a rumored safe place called the Haven. And though they hope to remain concealed among the costumed revelers celebrating the holiday, they could still be discovered at any moment. After bespectacled, brown-skinned human Vaughn gains the monsters' trust, he promises to aid them on their quest. Using a trio of fantastical creatures as a proxy, Nathanson and debut author Rae examine the plight of and dangers faced by marginalized individuals in contemporary society. Kubrick utilizes thin line art and a bold color palette to render the sweet-dispositioned protagonists of this suspenseful graphic novel, which plumbs sophisticated themes across an entertaining and visually playful adventure. Ages 10-up. (July)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy : a graphic novel	Terciero, Rey	Upper Elementary	3-6	Booklist (February 15, 2020 (Online)) Grades 7-10. In this graphic novel retelling of Louisa May Alcott's Little Women, readers will revisit the family that has charmed generations since its original publication 150 years ago. This new adaptation, set in contemporary times, finds the Marches, now a blended interracial family, dealing with modern concerns and problems. After Meg's dad meets Jo's mom, they fall in love, get married and soon after welcome Beth and Amy to their family in New York City. After their father is deployed overseas, their mother works overtime to keep them afloat, and the sisters struggle to support each other, especially when Beth falls ill, though her sickness ultimately brings the family closer together. This warmly illustrated book keeps all of the charming character and most of the major plot turns of the original story while updating it for modern readers by touching on issues of racism, bullying, homophobia, and more. The panels are easy to follow, and the lettering is clear and crisp. Readers both familiar and not with the March sisters journey will enjoy this rosy take on their well-loved story.	Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2019) In this modern, graphic retelling, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy are all offspring of a blended, interracial family that lives in a New York City apartment. It works surprisingly well, both in Terciero's colloquial dialogue and Indigo's clean, well-paced sequential panels (her pencils were inked and colored by a team), and lovers of the classic will enjoy seeing how the reboot corresponds to the source text. Their white mother struggles, working double shifts while their father, who is black, is deployed in the Middle East. Both Meg, who is black, and Jo, who is white, were born to their parents prior to the marriage. Beth and Amy are the biracial younger sisters of the family. Dispersed throughout the story are entries from Jo's journal and emailed exchanges between the girls and their dad, who affectionately refers to his daughters as "little women." Wealthy Laurie and his grandfather are their Latinx neighbors. Meg and Jo take on the responsibility of the household, caring for their younger sisters. Meg works as a nanny, while Jo works as a personal assistant for her aunt. The March sisters squabble over chores, tease one another, and tackle school, where Amy silently endures racist bullying by white girls who tease her about her nose size and hair texture, even calling her "Africa" and hitting her. While the elder sisters navigate boys, fragile Beth is diagnosed with leukemia, spawning the best scene, in which the sisters all shave their heads when Beth loses her hair during chemo. It is regrettable that the racism Amy endures is resolved far too easily and is sidelined by other events in the book. Sticking to the original storyline, this tale offers a contemporary vision of sisterhood that will appeal to a diverse audience. (Graphic fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly Annex (March 25, 2019) This graphic novel retelling of Little Women reimagines the March sisters as a blended family-Meg and her father are black, Jo and her mother are white, and their younger siblings, Beth and Amy, are biracial-in a modern-day Brooklyn setting. With their father in the military, fighting in the Middle East ("making the world a safer place" for "my little women," he writes), and their mother struggling with the emotional and financial stress of single parenthood, the girls vow to think beyond themselves to help their mother and "be strong," like her. Readers familiar with the original will find the sisters' personalities familiar, but Terciero and Indigo give the sisters timely concerns. Eldest sister Meg must make serious decisions about her future, youngest sister Amy faces racist bullying at school, and Jo is hiding her queer identity from her family and friends, including neighbor Laurie. And for shy budding musician Beth, recent tiredness hints at an illness that can't be ignored. Journal entries and emails to their father give readers a deeper understanding of the siblings' inner emotions and turmoil while adding dimension and realism to comfortable sibling banter. Smart and thoughtfully rendered, this modern retelling will resonate with today's readers. Ages 9-12. (Feb.)	
Men's soccer legends 2025	Ballheimer, David	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Mirror to mirror	LaRocca, Rajani	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (March 1, 2023) Gr 4-8-Chaya and Maya are identical twins with a strong bond. Maya has been keeping a secret since they were six years old, something even her twin doesn't know about. Chaya picks up on Maya's anxiety and wants to tell their parents, but Maya asks her to keep it undercover. When Chaya discovers Maya is harming herself by digging into to her hand with her own fingernails, seeing the blood shocks her into action. Blaming herself for the anxiety her twin is experiencing, Chaya changes her interests and activities to those different from Maya, to give her space to shine. Unfortunately, Maya sees this as her sister pulling away from her and feels isolated. Each sister feels like the other twin has it easier, so they swap places while at camp-à la The Parent Trap-style musical Long Lost, which they both adore. This novel-in-verse is told in alternating, dual perspectives of Chaya and Maya, which give readers insight into their thoughts and Maya's superstitious secret. LaRocca has created each sister with her own clear voice that is easy to discern as the point of view shifts. The cadence of the lyrical free verse lends itself beautifully to the musical talents of both girls. Family dynamics give readers more understanding and compassion for Maya's perfectionist ways when another family member seems to experience similar pressure that sometimes results in tense situations. Anxiety is presented respectfully, with the goal of helping to remove stigma. VERDICT This engaging verse novel opens doors to more conversations about mental health and deserves a place on every middle grade shelf.-Lisa Krok	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2023) In this novel in verse, Maya and Chaya are identical seventh-grade twin sisters. Maya is hard on herself, always demanding perfection, while Chaya, chatty and impulsive, is □the goofball.□ Both have a passion for music, are advanced in classical piano, love their summer music camp, and have serious □ twin telepathy.□ While these twins may seem like mirror images of each other, there are cracks in the surface: Maya experiences severe anxiety and believes that, because she broke a mirror, she□s at fault when bad things happen, while Chaya feels unseen in her more accomplished sister□s shadow. When Chaya decides that Maya□s anxiety is due to sibling competition, she quits all the activities they did together, causing a rift between the once-inseparable duo. LaRocca (Red, White, and Whole, rev. 5/21) explores the irony in the fact that, in trying to help and support the ones we love, we may actually hurt them. The book alternates emotionally intense, earnest poems between the two sisters□ perspectives. The poems have many memorable lines and engage with sophisticated formal elements such as thoughtful line breaks, italics, white space, and concrete poetry. A shocking twist ending reveals the lengths to which the twins will go to preserve their unique bond. While all eventually ends well, this nuanced novel explores complex aspects of family and sibling dynamics and will give readers much to ponder. Julie Hakim Azzam March/April 2023 p.70	Booklist (January 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 9)) Grades 5-8. Twelve-year-old identical twins Maya and Chaya enjoy playing classical piano, challenging each other, and being best friends. But while Chaya can accept small imperfections in herself, Maya cannot, leading to much stress and anxiety. In an effort to lessen competitive pressure, Chaya changes all her activities, but rather than growing closer, the girls become increasingly estranged. Things finally change at summer camp, where they attempt the ultimate challenge: trading identities for the entire six weeks. LaRocca, who received a Newbery Honor for Red, White, and Whole (2021), offers readers a new novel in verse, employing ghazels (a poetic form popular in Arabia and South Asia) alternately narrated by Maya and Chaya. This form enables readers to fully understand Maya's intense anxiety as well as the mirror-related incident that led to her fears. Secondary themes involving their parents' marital discord and the twins' best friends (who each have their own issues) are also well handled. Although Maya's recovery without therapy or medication feels a bit unrealistic, this likable South Asian family is sure to draw in readers.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Mischief and Mayhem. 1,Born to be bad	Lamug, Ken	Middle School	5-8	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2021) Meet Missy and Gizmo, a bookish young girl and her trusty cat sidekick, stars of this graphic novel. Missy loves science and building gadgets while searching for fun and excitement in the ho-hum town of Idleville. Hungry for adventure, Missy and Gizmo join a superhero boot camp and befriend a group known as the "League of Heroes" -- only to be kicked out after activating a robot that wreaks destruction. Shifting to a life of mischief, the disheartened duo masquerades as supervillains Mischief and Mayhem, committing pranks such as stealing toilet paper and revealing spoilers at movie theaters. Amidst their zany exploits, a devious mastermind emerges, with intentions to rid the world of all things super. In his debut graphic novel, packed with thrills and quirky humor, Lamug has created characters whose personalities burst with energy. Individual panels capture their vibrant personas through animated facial expressions. Shaded hues of pink, purple, and gray rendered against the violet backdrop of the city enliven the mood. This fast-paced story breathes life into a young, inventive female character who learns that sometimes the greatest powers lie within. Jerry Dear July/August 2021 p.117	Kirkus Reviews (May 15, 2021) First exploits of a would-be superhero and her doughty side-cat. Missy Go's mother works outside the home and supports the family financially while her father runs the household. Rafi, her little brother who is adopted, is a straight-A student, unlike Missy. Afflicted with a mischievous streak but yearning to be a superhero, young gadgeteer Missy and her orange tabby cat Gizmo hie off to superhero boot camp—where, alas, she falls in with fellow camper Melvira, who uses her superpowers (or does she?) to make Missy think she's a good friend, gets them both kicked out, and persuades her that it's more fun to be a villain. The two have very different ideas about what constitutes villainy, though, and when pranks like stealing all the toilet paper in town don't float her boat, Melvira trots out both a giant robot and a weapon that sucks the powers out of superheroes. At this, Missy, suited up as "Mischief," with costumed kitty "Mayhem" attending, reluctantly switches sides. Framed mostly as a flashback, the action hurtles along through irregular panels of hyperkinetic cartoon action and snarky banter to a climactic face-off featuring epic robot battles, lots of slime and toilet paper, and, at the end, drawing lessons and space to create your own characters. Missy and her parents appear Asian; Rafi reads as Black, and the supporting cast is broadly diverse. A rousing kickoff for the Captain Underpants crowd. (Graphic fantasy. 7-10)		
Mission Manhattan	Ponti, James	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Natalie Babbitt's Tuck everlasting : the graphic novel	Woodman-Maynard, K	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (July 1, 2025) Gr 4 Up-Much like with her graphic novel adaptation of The Great Gatsby, Woodman-Maynard achieves the seemingly impossible task of enhancing a much beloved classic novel. Adapted from Babbitt's original text, with the encouragement and support of Babbitt's family, this graphic novel features the story of Winnie Foster, a 10-year-old girl trapped in a rigid life of societal and familial expectations. When Winnie tries to run away from her gilded cage, she stumbles across the Tuck family and discovers their unbelievable secret-immortality after drinking from a magical spring. Through lush, atmospheric watercolors, Babbitt's lyrical and descriptive language is brought to life, creating palpable visualizations of abstract concepts, like the imagery of a wheel to represent story structure, the cyclical nature of life, and the ticking of a clock. Also included in this edition is a conversation between the artist and Babbitt's daughter, Lucy; a "making of" vignette on the process of creating the graphic novel; and primary sources of Babbitt's handwritten drafts, paintings, and life. Winnie, her family, and the Tuck family are white. VERDICT Enhancing a classic and empowering readers to better understand complex imagery, this faithful and beautiful adaptation is a must purchase for all graphic novel collections.-Kasey Swords © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (August 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 22)) Grades 4-8. Marking the fiftieth anniversary of the original novel, this graphic adaptation of the beloved classic will introduce new readers to the extraordinary story of Winnie Foster and her encounter with the Tuck family. Spurred into rebellion after a one-sided argument with a toad, Winnie takes off for the woods surrounding her home and comes across 17-year-old Jesse Tuck drinking from a mysterious spring. This chance meeting and the accidental kidnapping that follows bring her right into the bosom of the Tuck family and their secret: they never age or die. Lines from the original work are woven right into the illustrations, the opening lines painted into rays of sunlight. Warm pastel shades of ink and watercolor transport the reader into the sweltering summer days of August. A beautiful reintroduction to this timeless tale of beauty in life's fleeting moments that closes with an image of an early draft in Babbitt's hand and a conversation between the author-illustrator and Babbitt's daughter, Lucy.	Kirkus Reviews starred (July 1, 2025) This 50th-anniversary celebration of a literally timeless classic brings Babbitt's novel to life in a graphic novel format. Sticking closely to the storyline as she visually fleshes out its themes and characters, Woodman-Maynard serves up a sensitive reworking that invites readers to think about what they would do if they were given the choice between a normal, finite life and an endless one. It's a choice that lonely, 10-year-old Winnie Foster is left to make after she meets the Tucks (who stopped aging after drinking from a hidden spring near her house 87 years before) and hears their perspectives on what it's like to watch everyone and everything they know change and die. The woodsy, small-town setting and the white-presenting cast—from exuberant, ever-17-year-old Jesse Tuck and his resigned mother, Mae, to the distinctively angular villain known only as "the man in the yellow suit," and even a certain significant golden toad—are beautifully realized in the finely drawn watercolors. Along with incorporating atmospheric expository lines from the book into her scenes, the artist tucks in pinwheels and other circular imagery to evoke what melancholy father Angus Tuck describes as the ever-moving wheel of life and death: "You can't have living without dying. So you can't call it living, what we got." The book closes with a conversation between Babbitt's daughter, Lucy, and the adapter, as well as illuminating photos and process notes. An homage navigated with confidence and care, as wise and wonderful as the original. (Graphic fantasy. 10-14)	
North! or be eaten	Peterson, Andrew	Upper Elementary	3-6	Library Journal (June 1, 2009) This fantasy continues the story from On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness and the characters of Janner, Tink, Leeli Igiby, and Nugget, the dog. A delightful tale from the best-selling Christian recording artist. Copyright 2009 Reed Business Information.			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
One crazy summer : the graphic novel adaptation of the Newbery Hono	Williams-Garcia, Rita	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (April 1, 2025) Gr 3-7-A summer trip from New York to California offers three sisters profound, funny, and sometimes difficult lessons in the nature of family and the complexities of racial identity. In the late 1960s, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern live with their father and their proper, strict grandma, but embark on a trip to visit their estranged mother on the opposite coast. On arrival, they find their mother distant and harsh-she doesn't cook, she doesn't hug, and she sends them off most days to the Black Panther's free breakfast and summer camp program. Each sister reacts differently: Delphine acts as a surrogate parent, upholding Grandma's old-fashioned values; Vonetta longs to fit in with kids with radically minded parents; and Fern, who was an infant when their mother left, wonders why her mom won't call her by her name. This graphic adaptation of Williams-Garcia's novel of the same name captures the intricacies of an essential cultural moment in Black history, while remaining intimate, humorous, and heartrending. In particular, the girls' realization of how much their mother's political convictions matter to the local community will deeply affect readers as well. Miller's bright, energetic illustrations work perfectly to help readers experience the story through a child's watchful eyes. VERDICT The personal is profoundly political, and a specific experience feels universally meaningful in this fantastic graphic novel, highly recommended for all middle grade readers.-Emilia Packard © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (June 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 19)) Grades 4-8. From Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Book Award–winning author and the author-illustrator of Curlfriends comes the graphic-novel adaptation of Williams-Garcia's story about three sisters reuniting with their mother, Cecile, and attending a Black Panther summer camp in 1968. Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern have not seen their mother in seven years when they are sent to California to spend the summer with her. While reconciling vague memories of their mother with the seemingly unfeeling poet housing them is challenging enough, the girls are also navigating the universal experiences of adolescence—like first crushes and competitive friends—against a backdrop of societal, racial, and familial tensions. Delphine is struck by the conflicting images of Black Panthers in the media versus the Black Panthers serving them free breakfast every morning. Racial slurs and curse words are present, though indicated with symbols, and the illustrations depict the death of Bobby Hutton. Perfect for pairing with the original work or as an alternative for readers who struggle with full-text novels. An important coming-of-age story about social justice, community, family, and forgiveness.	Kirkus Reviews starred (March 15, 2025) Three sisters travel cross-country to reconnect with the mother who left them behind years ago in this graphic novel adaptation of Williams-Garcia's highly acclaimed, award-winning 2010 novel. In the summer of 1968, the Gaither sisters—Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern—leave Brooklyn to visit their mother in Oakland. When they arrive, their mother, Cecile, isn't particularly welcoming, and Delphine finds herself advocating for her younger sisters' needs. On their first morning, Cecile sends them to the People's Center for breakfast and lessons provided by the Black Panthers. Interacting with the other children leads to some sisterly friction, and once again Delphine wishes Cecile would assume a motherly role. But Delphine continues to find ways to keep her sisters engaged, as Cecile expects. After an excursion to San Francisco, the girls return to find the police arresting Cecile and some of her Black Panther acquaintances. Community members help the girls, and adults at the People's Center plan a rally in the local park, where youngest sister Fern speaks up and surprises the entire community with her revealing insights. As the girls prepare to return home, Cecile and Delphine finally speak frankly, and Delphine begins to understand her mother. Retaining the lively dialogue and strong characterization of the original, this version is enhanced by the wonderfully expressive drawings and use of vibrant color as well as black-and-white panels that highlight the storytelling. A fresh take for a beloved story that will introduce it to a wider audience. (Graphic historical fiction. 8-12)	
Outside	Holm, Jennifer L	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (July 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. Life at the Refuge is strict, but that's exactly what keeps everyone alive. Since the Great Poisoning, exposed humans turned vicious and must be kept outside the compound walls at all costs. As a result, Razzi and the other children aren't allowed outdoors, but they make the most of the small, safe world their parents have made them. A pervasive sense of unease filters through the narrative as the kids move through their days and details are dropped that something is amiss with this whole setup. Razzi is known for being the responsible one, but after receiving a heart transplant, she begins pushing back on the rules and yearning to venture beyond the Refuge. Seen through Razzi's eyes, Holm's near-future world feels threatening and plausible, and when Razzi finally steps outside the Refuge's confines, her discoveries are viscerally shocking. The story's one questionable element is the supernatural connection Razzi feels with her heart donor—a greyhound named Wind. Whether or not readers buy into this part of the tale, they will find Razzi's journey thrilling and find comfort in its hopeful conclusion.HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Holm is a best-seller with more than one Newbery Honor under her belt for a reason. She brings the goods, and readers know it.	Kirkus Reviews (August 1, 2025) A spirited 12-year-old contends with her cloistered life after an apocalypse. Over 10 years ago, the Great Poisoning killed most humans. Razzi lives in an old mansion named the Refuge with her parents, 7-year-old brother, Bing, and a handful of other adults and children. The kids are rarely allowed Outside, especially not since 12-year-old Ollie, a curious risk-taker, had a terrible accident and died while trying to explore. Razzi injures her knee during a game of Chase, which leads to a checkup and a serious diagnosis—she learns that she must have a heart transplant. Luckily, Refuge resident Saul is a Surgeon, and he successfully implants a greyhound's heart into Razzi. After the surgery, Razzi feels different: Her senses of hearing and smell are keener, and foods she used to love, like chocolate, now sicken her. When Razzi makes the momentous decision to run away, she learns that the world outside the Refuge is bigger than she could ever have imagined. Holm's adventure is riveting and appealing, featuring a relatable cast of characters and unfolding against a post-apocalyptic backdrop with zombie story vibes. Holm's mastery of pacing and her explorations of intergenerational trauma and forgiveness resonate, ensuring that they'll stay with readers long after the final pages. Razzi presents white, and names cue ethnic diversity in the supporting cast. An ambitious and thrilling examination of survival, trauma, and connection. (author's note) (Speculative thriller. 9-12)	Publishers Weekly starred (July 14, 2025) In this riveting survival novel by Newbery Honoree Holm, a white-cued 12-year-old ventures for the first time beyond her secluded doorstep. A decade before this book's start, "some stupid country decided to start a war" via venomous missile, prompting Razzi's parents to create an isolated compound called the Refuge. As the oldest, Razzi is expected to set an example for other kids, a responsibility she takes seriously. But the death of a peer, Ollie, a few months prior weighs heavy on her mind: desperate to see outside the Refuge's walls, Ollie scaled and fell from the building's roof. When a doctor's visit reveals that Razzi needs a heart transplant, she receives the heart of a greyhound named Wind, and she soon feels that the surgery has changed her, prompting her to forgo her typical rule-abiding tendencies. Upon stowing away on a Refuge truck bound for a supply run, she makes a discovery that changes everything. Fascinating, intimately detailed characterization and worldbuilding makes everything from Razzi's motivations and reactions to the children's carefree games to the community's fear of the outside world feel palpable across a white-knuckled adventure about autonomy and cultivating one's own inner strength. Ages 9-12. Agent: Jill Grinberg, Jill Grinberg Literary. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Outsider kids	Tang, Betty C	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (March 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-This companion to Parachute Kids begins on Halloween 1981 with Ann, the Taiwanese youngest sibling of three, trick-or-treating with her sixth grade friends, who are kind and patient with Ann's developing English-language skills. English text is in black inside white speech balloons; Chinese is in red on a yellow background. The Li siblings' relative peace and stability is broken by the arrival of their auntie and cousin Josephine, who attended a European school in Taiwan and has been accepted to music school in Los Angeles. Ann is excited to see her cousin again and practice music together, but Josephine is horrible to her, and it gets worse when Auntie returns to Taiwan. Readers will commiserate with oldest sister Jessie, who is left to manage everything, including studying for her SATs and working at a restaurant where she's being cheated out of wages due to her illegal status. The other siblings also have their own storylines with middle brother Jason finding a friendship-to-romance with Jessie's best friend's brother, Alex. Meanwhile, Ann misses her parents and keenly feels the fragility of her American life, and her lack of control over it, which is highlighted when Josephine betrays them. Throughout the book, these characters face real challenges and subsequently show real growth. Readers will cheer on the siblings as they band together to overcome every obstacle, proving they can make their American life work. VERDICT As powerful and triumphant as the first book, this eye-opening read belongs on all shelves.-Jenny Arch © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2025) Tang continues the saga of the Lin family begun in the graphic novel Parachute Kids (rev. 5/23). In 1981, the family left Taiwan in search of a better life, making their home in a Los Angeles suburb. When the parents returned to Taiwan to earn a living, the children -- Feng-Ling (Ann), Ke-Gang (Jason), and Jia-Xi (Jessie) -- were forced to fend for themselves and adapt to American culture. Here the three siblings face challenges including complicated relationships rife with drama and an overshadowing and persistent anxiety due to their undocumented immigration status. Sixth grader Ann auditions for a summer music youth band; high-schooler Jason develops a crush on classmate Alex; and Jessie stresses over getting into Harvard. Meanwhile, their spoiled cousin Ting-Ting (Josephine), a violin virtuosa, arrives from Taiwan and flaunts her cosmopolitan education, stylish fashion, linguistic fluency, and acceptance into the prestigious Music Institute of Los Angeles. However, Josephine must give up her place at M.I.L.A. and return to Taiwan when her parents decide to divorce; she takes out her disappointment on the Lins, creating a very tense situation for her cousins and necessitating a nerve-wracking overnight move. Vibrantly colored panels add occasional comic relief while exploring themes of family, friendship, belonging, queer sexuality, and the sense of loss that reflects true-to-life immigrant experiences. Overall, perseverance and the enduring triumph of the human spirit propel the Lin siblings on their journey to realizing the American dream. Jerry Dear May/June 2025 p.101	Kirkus Reviews starred (March 1, 2025) Three siblings continue their immigrant journeys in 1980s California. In this sequel to Parachute Kids (2023), sixth grader Feng-Ling (Ann), older brother Ke-Gāng (Jason), and oldest sister Jia-Xi (Jessie) share their first experiences of Halloween trick-or-treating, a Thanksgiving turkey dinner, and a Christian church service, allowing them to socialize even as they hide their status as undocumented minors whose parents back in Taiwan are still awaiting travel visas. Life gets even more complicated when a visit by two relatives introduces unwelcome dynamics and triggers plot twists and turns that force the siblings to reevaluate their actions, circumstances, and relationships. The central conflict sparking from Ann's falling-out with their 11-year-old cousin, Ting-Ting (Josephine)—a violin prodigy bound for an elite music school in Los Angeles who also speaks four languages—climaxes in a dangerous situation that the siblings must face as a team. The resourceful trio adapt to their latest challenge and resolve to "make it work." The closing dedication—"To all kids facing adversity"—boosts the can-do message. The brisk, well-crafted dialogue and attractive, comic-style drawings support the narrative flow, weaving in intercultural perspectives that are at once humorous and relatable while candidly addressing difficult issues, societal controversies, and sensitive interpersonal matters: teenage romance, bullying, racism, gender stereotypes, undocumented immigration, and exploitation of the vulnerable. Tugs at the heartstrings and will spark important, age-appropriate conversations on pertinent, broadly relevant topics. (author's note) (Graphic fiction. 9-13)	
Patrick Mahomes	Luke, Andrew	Young Adult	YA	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Puzzled : a memoir of growing up with OCD	Cooke, Pan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2024) Gr 6-8-A vulnerable account of trying to fit in, finding your place in the world, and the experience of being a regular teen while living with chronic intrusive thoughts. The vivid graphic representations of these intrusive thoughts in the main character Pan's mind tangibly illustrate the struggles that they face, while the supporting text demonstrates how they operate outwardly in the public sphere. Pan's thoughts, set in a blue-gray palette, become known as the Puzzle, which they try to solve through different regimens that seemingly overtake them. In contrast, Pan's public life is shown in brighter, more vibrant shades. In such an authentic representation, the content surrounding OCD may be triggering to some readers; however, the author gives a realistic and frank perspective to symptoms and signs of the disorder, while also dispelling the myths and stereotypes that are often associated with it. Puzzled includes other heavy topics, such as mental health, peer pressure, eating disorders, bullying, anxiety, faith, and family. VERDICT A powerful graphic novel memoir that gives readers an authentic account of life with OCD; for collections that include Sunshine by Jarrett J. Krosoczka and A Work in Progress by Jarrett Lerner.-Cat Miserendino © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (February 1, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 11)) Grades 5-8. At the age of 10, Cooke began experiencing anxious thoughts. One moment his mind could be on track, and the next it could be uncontrollably fixated on a certain thought or idea, regardless of how logical or illogical it might be. Ritualistic things like praying before bed and brushing his teeth started to become all-night affairs. He struggled with his thoughts in church, where he feared he would blurt out curse words because his mind was so fixated on the thought that he might. These obsessions followed Pan to school, where they began interfering with his productivity in class and ultimately his best friendship. After a handful of internet searches, he learns about obsessive compulsive disorder; it's a term he's heard before but has never associated with himself. Could this term help lead to a better understanding of himself? Cooke's memoir follows the formative years of his life as he navigates his thoughts and seeks to better understand the puzzle in his head. It is a thoughtful, genuine story with illuminating insight into the mind of a young person living with OCD. Visual metaphors nicely encapsulate his experience of the disorder, and a coda about finally seeking cognitive behavioral therapy to help manage his OCD will be particularly useful for readers who recognize themselves in his story.	Kirkus Reviews (February 15, 2024) An Irish boy navigates coming of age while living with OCD in this graphic memoir. At 10, Pan realized he was different from his friends. While they obsessed over Pokémon cards, Pan, who has light skin and a mop of tousled brown hair, found that he battled intrusive thoughts that kept him awake well into the night. He calls these thoughts "the Puzzle." His efforts to find solutions included repetitive prayers, compulsive counting, and an eventual descent into disordered eating, all while navigating his school career. Pan attends a Catholic school and questions whether he's possessed by the devil, if God is speaking to him, or if he's just plain "crazy." When his symptoms turn physical, he seeks help from myriad specialists. The doctors find nothing physically wrong with him, so he takes to the internet for assistance and stumbles upon his eventual diagnosis of OCD. The cheery colors in many of the panels serve as a stark contrast to the dark thoughts in Pan's head, while the blue-gray panels illustrating Pan's thought spirals emphasize his distress. Pan' s striking story handles mental health with care and precision, dispelling myths about OCD and providing readers with the language necessary to discuss its signs and symptoms. Readers will also appreciate the quick yet comprehensive overview of cognitive behavioral therapy treatment toward the end. A harrowing yet ultimately hopeful look at the manifestation of mental illness. (content warning) (Graphic memoir. 10-14)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Rebellion 1776	Anderson, Laurie Halse	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (March 1, 2025) Gr 4-7- Another masterly account of colonial life from Anderson. After losing her mother and siblings to smallpox, 13-year-old Elsbeth and her loving but distant father relocate to Boston, currently under British occupation. During a chaotic evacuation of the city in the spring of 1776, Elsbeth's father goes missing. Meanwhile, smallpox once again rears its ugly head, ravaging the war-torn city even further. The plucky Elsbeth starts working as a maid for the rambunctious Pike family, weaving several lies to keep up appearances and avoid the orphanage. But in a town where no one can be trusted, how long can she survive? The plot is action-packed, reflecting the unprecedented times of the era. Each chapter opens with a quote from a contemporary historical figure, cementing the sense of time and place. Colorful dialogue, including period-accurate insults, i.e., "dunderhead" and "numbskull," add authenticity. Depictions of violence and death are handled in an appropriate way for middle grade readers. Interspersed throughout the tension are moments of levity, mostly centered around the little dramas of living with a big family. Readers can draw several parallels between Elsbeth's life and modern times, such as the debate over smallpox inoculation. The page count may be daunting, but the short chapters and urgency conveyed in the writing make for a compelling read. Major characters are assumed white; there are brief allusions to slavery. VERDICT A must-buy for historical fiction collections, especially where Anderson's Chains and Fever 1793 are popular.-Hannah Grasse © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2025) Thirteen-year-old Elsbeth Culpepper, maid to a judge, lives through the Siege of Boston only to find herself in a precarious situation when British troops depart the city, her Loyalist employer leaves with them, and her father goes missing. She lies her way into the employment of a Patriot spy, Mr. Pike, whose large household includes his wealthy ward, Hannah. But what Elsbeth doesn't count on is the smallpox epidemic that ravages Boston from spring until fall of 1776. As she continues her search for her father and contends with the housekeeper's displeasure, Elsbeth, who previously survived smallpox, nurses five of the Pike children and their mother through the inoculation process; she also gets swept up in Hannah's personal affairs and develops romantic feelings for a friend. War and disease speed up Elsbeth's maturation, as does an unexpected loss before the book's conclusion. Often a footnote in Revolutionary War history, the smallpox epidemic is the focus of Anderson's (Chains, rev. 11/08, and sequels) compelling and well-researched tale of human frailty and perseverance, fear and courage amid dire circumstances. Through Elsbeth's whip-smart first-person narration (with asides to readers in parentheses) plus quotes from historical letters opening each chapter, readers learn about the disease, its symptoms and deadliness, the measures taken to contain it, and people's fear of inoculation. Anderson's return to historical fiction highlights her mastery of the genre, with well-rounded characters, detailed storytelling, and timely subject matter that make it a must-read for today's youth. Cynthia K. Ritter May/June 2025 p.79	Booklist starred (February 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 11)) Grades 5-9. Boston isn't the safest place to live in 1776, as anyone—even 13-year-old Elspeth—could tell you. British troops still occupy the town, but now that rebels have set up an array of cannons aimed at Boston, death by friendly fire seems likely and is frightening to the town's residents. Most feared, though, is the smallpox epidemic surging through Boston, killing people without regard for age, social status, or political leanings. Elspeth, who ably narrates the story, had been diagnosed with smallpox two years earlier and lived. She became a maid in a large family's household and often oversaw their youngest children. Meanwhile, she longs to hear from her father, who had also survived the smallpox outbreak that killed Elspeth's mother and siblings, but he has recently disappeared. One of the narrative's strengths is Anderson's ability to create realistically flawed yet often appealing characters and relationships; another is how fully and sensitively she portrays the female characters' reactions to the limited rights and roles of women in their society. Each chapter opens with a short, relevant quote from the correspondence, journals, or diaries of a notable such as Abigail Adams, John Adams, Ben Franklin, or George Washington. A thoroughly researched, emotionally resonant historical novel.	
Refugee, the graphic novel	Gratz, Alan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (September 1, 2025) Gr 4-8-In 1939, Josef's Jewish family flees Berlin to escape the Nazi regime. In 1994, Isabel's family sails toward Miami, leaving Castro and Cuba behind. In 2015, Mahmoud and his family run from Syria as civil war rages. Decades and thousands of miles separate them, but Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud share one thing in common: they are refugees, and their stories converge in surprising ways. This graphic novel adaptation is faithful to the original book, omitting only minor details from the main plotlines. The illustrations, which resemble the superhero comics art style, effectively heighten the drama. For example, when Josef's apartment is trashed by Nazi storm troopers, dark shadows in each panel convey the abruptness of the nighttime raid and the family's terror. The coloring is exquisite, showcasing the beauty of Isabel's Havana and the despair of Mahmoud's Aleppo. Maps are helpfully placed at the beginning of the chapters, showing each character's place in their journey. While the illustrations add excitement, the original novel's emotional heft can get lost in the graphic novel format, and the cliff-hanger chapter endings are not as riveting. The author's note has been updated to reflect new information about Syrian and Cuban refugees since the prose novel's publication. VERDICT The original Refugee remains an important and timely book; this graphic novel adaptation brings the moving stories of Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud to life for a new generation of readers. A good choice for where the original is popular.-Danielle Sachdeva © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (August 1, 2025) In this graphic version of Gratz's bestselling 2017 novel, three groups of refugees in different eras face bitter hardship and persecution in the course of desperate searches for safety. Set respectively in 1938, 1994, and 2015, the accounts involve a passenger ship full of German Jews, a thrown-together group of Cubans on a leaky boat, and a bombed-out Syrian family striking out for the E.U. The original novel folded in actual experiences and, in some cases, real people, unspooling three storylines in short, interleaved chapters; this new edition preserves that structure. It's a tossup whether the change in format offers any real advantages. On the one hand, actually seeing expressively posed characters and the period details around them brings both the cast and the settings sharply to life, moments of crisis and terror have cinematic impact, and racial and cultural differences remain strongly present. On the other, though, because the graphic "chapters" are only three to five pages each, and all the art is done in a similar style and palette, the dozens of switches from one storyline to the next come with dizzying frequency and can't help but impede the narrative flow. Still, after skillfully interweaving his three powerful stories together at their ends, the author urgently invites readers to contemplate their contrasts, parallels, and ever-cogent common themes. An effective adaptation, still relevant and likely to find a fresh audience. (afterword) (Graphic historical fiction. 10-13)		
River	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2022) While younger, apprenticed cats in feral-cat clans hone their skills, older cats mostly quibble over territories and rules. The main plot follows the cats of RiverClan, who, after trying unsuccessfully to resuscitate dying leader Mistystar, send a patrol to retrieve Reedwhisker, their missing deputy. But the patrol cats instead find Reedwhisker's mutilated corpse in a canyon. Was it just a fall onto rocks, or was a badger involved? Numerous subplots include—but are not limited to—the following situations involving younger cats: Flamepaw striving to capture prey, Frostpaw communing with dead ancestors, and Sunbeam struggling with angst-y friendship problems. A major theme involves changing the warrior code to include clan-switching whenever a feline Romeo-and-Juliet situation arises. Although the latter issue successfully resolves the earliest in the legion of subplots, those who read through to the end may feel cheated by RiverClan's unresolved dilemma. The text maintains some of the charm of the series; the cats exhibit a balance of catlike and human behaviors, emotions, and vocabulary. Sadly, however, this book tries to pack too much into each chapter. Only die-hard fans will have the ability or will to cope with the barrage of characters from different clans plus their current dilemmas, on top of their backstories. A description of a mother cat being torn apart by ferocious dogs may be disturbing to sensitive readers. For cat herders only. (lists of clan members, maps) (Fantasy. 9-12)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Rolling on	Sumner, Jamie	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2024) As 13-year-old Ellie Cowan faces high school, her relationships undergo difficult changes. Months after the events of Time To Roll (2023), Ellie, Coralee, and Bert are entering "the grand finale of middle school." Ellie dreads high school, with new therapists and new classrooms that might not be wheelchair accessible. Even worse, Bert, for whom she's developed "fish-swishy" romantic feelings, might be attending boarding school in Kentucky next year—nine hours from Oklahoma. And while Mema always has wise advice, Grandpa's worsening Alzheimer's disease is taking a toll on the family. Ellie just wants everything to stay the same. Sumner poignantly explores complicated emotions ranging from crushes to grief, and readers will sympathize with Ellie as she struggles to express herself. The depiction of Grandpa's decline is particularly heart-wrenching. The bond between the friend trio remains strong, and Ellie and Bert's relationship brims with sweetness. Unfortunately, the author's handling of bullying is less successful; bullies' violent treatment of Bert, who's cued as neurodivergent, goes unreported, setting a troubling example for bullied readers and their peers. Though Bert retains his uber-logical charm, his lack of self-confidence remains largely unaddressed, which is particularly disappointing, given the increased focus on his character. While his persecution may, sadly, reflect reality, readers will likely wish his character arc would more clearly convey that he realizes he doesn't deserve to be bullied. Those facing life changes like Ellie's will find her experiences resonant and, ultimately, comforting, however. Most characters read white. Equal parts heartbreaking and heartwarming. (Fiction. 10-14)			
Rube Goldberg's big book of building : make 25 machines that really wo	George, Jennifer	Middle School	5-8	Booklist starred (November 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 5)) Grades 3-7. This enticing compendium offers step-by-step directions for creating 25 Rube Goldberg contraptions designed to ease the hardships of implementing everyday kid tasks, such as squeezing toothpaste onto toothbrushes or placing napkins in laps. Readers are warned upfront that these projects require lots of tenacity and tinkering, but those who show grit will be rewarded with actual working models (usually constructed with ordinary household objects) and a new appreciation for somewhat skewed physics. The book is a visual delight, with page-filling, bright, cartoon illustrations showing required materials, processes and procedures, fact boxes and horrible puns, simple machine and energy-transfer applications, and humorous scenarios where the machines work—or don't. Blank pages for recording notes and test results inspire experimentation, and the final chapters, filled with biographical data on Goldberg, his inventions, and legacy, plus detailed explorations of chain reaction models, flowcharts, and suggestions for substitutions and adaptations, will encourage inquiry. Rich back matter provides additional assistance for further research and extended manipulations. Most projects require adult input, and some require extended time commitments, but this will attract casual browsers and inspire wannabe makers. This is a fun, eye-catching addition for most STEM collections.	Kirkus Reviews (October 15, 2024) A compilation of zany Rube Goldberg machines for the dedicated aspiring inventor. This book, co-authored by George, Rube Goldberg's granddaughter, and Rube Goldberg Machine Contest champion Umperovitch, offers suggestions for everyday inventions in the spirit of Goldberg's time-consuming machines that do simple tasks. The introduction describes simple machines and types of energy and offers tips and tricks for building. Each invention is broken down over several spreads that cover a description of the task it will perform, step-by-step illustrations and instructions, and a blank ruled page for readers' building and testing notes. The projects are divided into chapters organized by level of difficulty from "Beginner (3-step)" to "Advanced (7+step)," with names such as (in increasing level of difficulty) "Apply a Band-Aid," "Pour a Glass of Water," "Dunk a Cookie," and "Serve Fresh Popcorn." The extensive backmatter includes facts about Goldberg, safety tips, suggestions for alternate materials to use, a glossary, and further resources. Steckley's full-color artwork is fun and engaging and clearly depicts how the machines are supposed to work. While it's debatable whether most of these projects will function in the real world, even with repeated tries, creative inventors may enjoy trying them anyway or coming up with their own improvements. A decent selection of inventions for patient kids who enjoy tinkering. (Nonfiction. 8-12)		
Scholastic book of world records, 2026	Bouza, Blythe	Upper Elementar	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Schoolbot 9000	Hepburn, Sam	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (July 1, 2025) Gr 4-6-This timely, engaging, and funny story looks at the intersection of AI and one kid's daily life. Fifth grader James recently lost his dad and now lives with his mom in a big city with robots everywhere. James does not like robots but must contend with one at home that cooks, cleans, and monitors his behavior and moods. To make matters worse, his school has been chosen to test a new teaching robot: the SchoolBot 9000. Red flags begin to appear quickly as the AI models are given complete access to records and private information. Questionable pedagogy based solely on test outcomes becomes the guiding norm, and James's worst fear comes true when beloved teachers are replaced by the AIs. Themes of big tech vs. free will are explored as mounting opposition inside and outside the school results in protests about the robot manufacturer's true intentions. Hint: they are not altruistic. Meanwhile, at home, James's family robot reads his journal and becomes more humanlike, nudging the narrative into Turing Test developments. Full-color panels are loaded with realistic dialogue and clever diagrams. James and his family are white with more diversity among the students and teachers at school. VERDICT An exploration on humans vs. machines combines with a student navigating middle school life. Graphic novel fans will gobble this up and be eager for the next installment. Highly recommended. -Elisabeth LeBris © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (May 15, 2025) It takes a village to resist a technology mega-corporation's AI takeover of education. Eleven-year-old James Lee likes making art, an activity he used to enjoy with his late father. Now, his single mom uses an autonomous HomeBot to help raise James, and she encourages him to think of it as family. Is it any wonder that he's the first to question his middle school's adoption of tech company Bux Global's SCHOOLBOT? While SCHOOLBOT is able to make a convincing sales pitch to parents and promises to provide virtual tutoring, it also interferes with the classrooms it's ostensibly meant to monitor. Students and teachers alike notice the would-be helper emphasizing students' future employability, excessively criticizing their art projects, and violating their privacy. The CEO of Bux Global tries to suppress criticism of the company's AI, but a growing coalition of protesters and activists (including teachers and parents) provides crucial checks and balances on their corporate influence. SCHOOLBOT and HomeBot, with their mechanical bodies and reflective eyes, frequently steal the show with their attempts to relate to or improve their human hosts. The flow chart depicting HomeBot's drily logical attempt to provide emotional support to James is attractive and narratively compelling. The cartoon-style panels in soft, muted pastels are visually pleasing and interestingly varied. James has light tan skin and curly brown hair, and supporting characters are diverse in appearance. A timely tale to inspire rumination on the promise and dangers of AI. (Graphic science fiction. 9-12)	Publishers Weekly starred (April 21, 2025) Hepburn's debut graphic novel is a timely, hilarious take on the increasing presence of artificial intelligence in everyday life. Eleven-year-old James Gordon is surrounded by robot assistants like his mother's new HomeBot, which she hopes will help her keep house following James's father's death. James's only refuge is at City Square Middle School, where teachers encourage his love of learning and art-until his district is selected to participate in tech conglomerate Bux Global's Schoolbot program, which aims to replace human teachers with robots. As incoming Schoolbots eliminate class projects and break musical instruments in pursuit of perfect test scores, James realizes that something sinister is afoot. James's artist father's death is handled with a light and empathetic touch; his impact on James, felt keenly throughout the novel, proves influential in the protagonist's determination to stop the robots from taking over his school. Abstract concepts such as AI and technological interfaces are grounded by Hepburn's brightly colored art, while flat, blue-hued panels highlight James's growing feelings of isolation. It's a tender and approachable work that emphasizes the importance of human ingenuity and community over mechanical efficiency. James has pale skin. Ages 9-12. (July)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Secrets of Camp Whatever. 1	Grine, Chris	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (May 7, 2021) Gr 4-7-Willow, a Latinx biracial tween with purple hair, is not pleased to be moving with her family to the town of "Nowhere." To make matters worse, she is being dropped off at the same weeklong summer camp her dad used to attend. Willow also has to deal with an odd camp director who patronizes her once he finds out she is deaf and wears hearing aids. But all those troubles fade when she and her cabinmates discover that the foggy island is inhabited by supernatural creatures. Friendship, humor, and teamwork help them grapple with Bigfoot, a witch, gnomes, and a vampire. Grine's clean and appealing illustrations flow well. The art suits this whimsical mystery. Backgrounds are minimal, with more detail paid to the strange creatures and eerie woods than to the campers, and the palette is subdued, dominated by grays, lavenders, and blues. VERDICT Sure to be a hit with young readers, especially fans of the "Lumberjanes" books and the TV series Gravity Falls. The conclusion hints that more magical adventures await Willow and her friends, which makes this new series one to invest in.-Nancy McKay, Byron P.L., IL © Copyright 2021. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (March 15, 2021 (Vol. 117, No. 14)) Grades 4-7. In a town called Nowhere, scary creatures are all part of the local folklore residents tell to folks passing through. None of it could possibly be true . . . or could it? Willow and her family just moved to Nowhere, and she's not thrilled. She's also not thrilled about having to spend the week at Camp Whatever, especially after she hears about a camper who went missing years ago. Willow, who is Deaf, quickly makes friends with other new kids at the camp (and bristles at the camp director, who is ableist about her Deafness), but when she starts seeing odd things at all hours, she realizes all the strange stories she's heard just might be true! Grine's bright, colorful artwork contains just the right amount of spookiness, with easy-to-read lettering well positioned within each panel. He playfully and gently incorporates some common horror movie tropes, and the story features a refreshingly inclusive group of campers and staff. A cute and creepy comic ideal for middle-graders hungry for breezy scares.	Kirkus Reviews (January 1, 2021) A young girl unwillingly goes to a camp filled with fantastical creatures. After they inherit an old family property and move to the strange town of Nowhere, Willow, a purple-haired middle schooler, is sent off to Camp Whatever. Rumors of the eeriness and potential dangers of the camp (not to mention the possible haunting of their new home) begin as soon as Willow and her family set foot in a local diner. Unenthused Willow feigns being scared—but even that isn't enough to change the minds of her somewhat apprehensive parents, due in part to her father's fond childhood memories of attending said camp. When Willow arrives, she soon realizes that the outrageous tales are not unfounded. Her camp experience quickly becomes one filled with adventure, friendship, mystery—and a permanent, creepy fog. Grine's protagonist is daring and bold, and the cast of characters is diverse in both ethnicity and mythical makeup. The narration is straightforward and easy to follow, making it suitable for reluctant readers. The color illustrations are sharp, vivid, and eye-catching and serve to convey the personalities of characters while helping to telegraph the mood of the story. Willow, who is Deaf, uses hearing aids and sign language; she is cued as biracial, with a Spanish-speaking Latinx mother and White-appearing father. Just the right amount of chills for tweens who enjoy supernatural suspense. (Graphic horror. 8-12)	
Sign Language	Xiong, Keng	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Sisters of the mist	Spaaij, Marlyn	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (August 26, 2022) Gr 3-8-Spaaij, a known name in Dutch animation, has written and illustrated a charmingly fantastical coming-of-age tale. At the beginning of our story, sisters Janna (youngest), Kyra, and Margot (the eldest, 12 years old) drive to visit their grandmother, sharing stories about the magical creatures who live in the forest along the way. The reader quickly realizes that the stories are real, as the girls see the spooky "Fog Furies" swirling in the air. Soon, the girls are playing with the fairy-like "Alfs," finding talking turnips, and evading trolls-not to mention the local Hellhound. The girls may be familiar with the mysterious creatures in the forest, but they are less familiar with the confusing perils of growing up. When Margot begins menstruating during the visit, Kyra must grapple with the growing divide between her and Margot. Even as she tries to come to terms with this, Kyra must also protect her older sister from the dangers of the forest when Margot participates in a magical coming-of-age ceremony with the Fog Furies. The art throughout juxtaposes solid line work with soft watercolors that underline the mysterious feel of the story. Those who rejoiced to see period products on display in the recent movie Turning Red will appreciate the straightforward representation of menstruation in this story. VERDICT A sweet story that explores the changing relationships between siblings wrapped in a beautiful fantasy world. A solid read both for those coping with puberty as well as with their younger siblings.-Tammy Ivins © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (May 15, 2022) The eldest of three sisters undergoes a change in an enchanted forest. Margot, Kyra, and Janna are on their way to spend two weeks with their Gran at the edge of the Frygea Forest. It's Margot's last summer before high school, and she's beginning to change in ways that confuse and frighten middle sister Kyra. Mom leaves with the classic warning not to wander too deep into the forest, so naturally the girls do just that, facing trolls, Hellhounds, and, most powerful of all, the Fog Furies, which seem intent on stealing Margot away—and Margot seems to want to go, baffling Kyra, who is determined to save her. When Margot gets her period (which steady Gran handles in a positive, straightforward manner), the puberty metaphor becomes clear: Margot is transforming in real-world ways as well as magical ones. The three fair-skinned sisters have distinct personalities: Tall, long-haired Margot wants to read her vampire romance novel; stout Kyra is stubborn and brave; and Janna, with her dark hair in puffy pigtails, is oblivious to the drama as she befriends tiny Root Goblins. Though the puberty/magic metaphor isn't always that compelling, the depiction of the sisters' relationship will hold readers' attention, as will the illustrations. Beautiful, watercolorlike art employs warm colors for indoor and garden scenes and spooky blues and greens for the deep forest; the Fog Furies are translucent swirls of pale gray, with human faces and elongated bodies. A magical, moving celebration of sisterly bonds. (Graphic fantasy. 10-15)	Publishers Weekly (May 30, 2022) Otherworldly creatures, including the literalized specter of puberty, prowl this mercurial comic. As pale-skinned sisters Margot, Kyra, and Janna arrive for a two-week visit to their grandmother's farmhouse near "old and ancient" Frygea Forest, middle sister Kyra excitedly anticipates snaggle-toothed Trolls, a slavering Hellhound, and wraithlike Fog Furies-"mist creatures who lure young girls into the fog." Youngest sister Janna, meanwhile, attracts sprites with a song and harvests a carroty-looking Root Goblin to be her sidekick. But the perils prove child's play until 12-year-old Margot encounters the Fog Furies and begins keeping apart from the others, her nose in a romantic vampire novel. At the sight of blood on Margot's sheets, pragmatic Granny Annis observes, "Congratulations, your uterus is working." Even if menstruation is "the most normal thing in the entire world," according to their earthy grandmother, Kyra worries about Margot's newfound tendency to reject her juniors and wander the hazy woodland. In swirling, bold-hued panels, animator Spaaij conjures a liminal space as Margot hovers on the brink of a mystical womanhood in this alluringly high-pitched drama. Ages 8-12. (July)	
Sky	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	Kirkus Reviews (December 1, 2022) The saga of feral cats trying to survive in a complex world continues. This entry will please intrepid readers of the subplots in River (2022), the first installment of the series. Two cats from different clans—Sunbeam and Nightheart—who had been feeling uncomfortable with their respective clan members for strikingly different reasons begin a warm relationship. Frostpaw, who lost her mother in the first volume, moves closer to self-realization as she continues trying to find a new leader for her vulnerable RiverClan. The primary plot notably presents some of the issues that arose in the human world when Covid-19 first surfaced, including xenophobia. Faced with the dreaded, contagious greencough, cat leaders make the admirable choice to send a coalition of warriors and medicine cats from each clan to brave a journey to the Twolegs' gardens to acquire necessary, healing catmint. Their journey includes a funny, feline look at a carnival. There are also plenty of unpleasant rumors, actions, and occurrences, culminating in a literal catfight when Tigerstar of ShadowClan shows up at the still leaderless RiverClan with several warriors. The text skillfully uses the cats' conversations to fill in gaps for readers unfamiliar with the series, making this work broadly accessible, and it effortlessly balances character traits and job descriptions equally among genders and ages. One mother-daughter dialogue is particularly poignant. Uneasy alliances and uncertain decisions demand another installment. Put your paws together for this one. (lists of clan members, maps) (Fantasy. 9-12)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Snoop	Korman, Gordon	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress (July 18, 2025) Gr 4-7-Korman's latest delivers a Rear Window premise for the middle grade set, complete with exotic animals, amateur sleuthing, and a screen-addicted protagonist stuck at home. After a ski accident leaves 12-year-old Carter Peregrine with two broken legs, he discovers he can access public surveillance cameras around his small town...and then goes a step further. What begins as boredom-fueled snooping escalates into a full-blown investigation involving cryptic vans, a red panda, and a suspected animal-smuggling ring. The plot moves at Korman's trademark, brisk pace, building to a suspenseful climax involving a high-speed wheelchair chase and a loose snow leopard. Carter's voice is believably tween, and the relationship with his guilt-ridden younger brother, Martin, adds warmth and humor. While the mystery is engaging and the stakes feel real, Carter's moral reasoning remains murky; his passionate defense of endangered animals is never balanced against the ethical implications of tapping into private camera feeds. His uncritical infatuation with classmate Lacey also feels strained. The supporting cast, while serviceable, lacks depth and appears to default to white, with little cultural specificity. Though the character development doesn't reach the depth of Ungifted or Schooled, fans of Korman's accessible, fast-moving stories will find plenty to enjoy. VERDICT A high-interest mystery with broad appeal for existing Korman fans; an easy addition to shelves where his titles are popular.-Rose Garrett © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (June 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 19)) Grades 4-7. After a ski-slope collision leaves 12-year-old Carter with two broken legs, he finds himself grounded for weeks. His mother points out that if he hadn't been checking his cell phone just prior to the collision, he might have seen his little brother coming and avoided the accident. His parents have taken away his access to "assorted devices" for the duration of his confinement. Stuck at home with his little brother, Carter discovers "public safely feeds," videos created by cameras in set locations, that run day and night. Convinced that he has discovered a criminal gang that imports endangered animals, Carter contacts the police, who scoff at him. Ultimately, Carter leaves the house one night in his wheelchair to confront the enemy on his own. Known for his first-person narratives of sympathetic kids and teens in challenging situations, Korman introduces readers to another smart, likable protagonist who is doing the best he can despite significant obstacles. Droll humor enlivens the story as Carter considers and reconsiders his options before finally taking action. An engaging, enjoyable novel.	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2025) A laid-up and bored seventh grader discovers that his seemingly ordinary North Carolina town is a hotbed of puzzling mysteries. Taking his classes remotely while confined to his home with two broken legs in the wake of a skiing accident, Carter quickly discovers that it's easy to hack local security cameras—but somewhat less easy to believe what he sees. Is his longtime crush Lacey really going out with sneering A-lister Maddox? Why is a stranger in a red Maserati parking in different spots all over town, day after day? Most startling of all, why are a red panda and other endangered creatures roaming the streets at night? Getting answers looks to be impossible, considering Carter's lack of mobility, particularly after an urgent call to the police about a supposed crime in progress only gets a bunch of classmates in trouble, which sends his reputation so far down the toilet that even his best friend ghosts him. Korman dishes up an expert mix of entertaining foolery, peer and family dynamics, and cautionary messages about both the ethical nuances of online snooping and the hazards of jumping to conclusions. Names cue some diversity in the cast. Funny and thought-provoking, no bones about it. (Fiction. 11-13)	
Sona and the golden beasts	LaRocca, Rajani	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress starred (March 29, 2024) Gr 3-7-Tension and unrest roils between the golden-eared Indigenous population of Devia and the Malechs who are mining the land for its jewels. Songs are powerful to the Devans and help them connect with the five magical beasts. The Malechs have outlawed singing and mixed marriages. Sona, raised in a Malech home, is a girl who has an affinity for animals, frequently caring for strays. When she finds a wolf pup with golden ears, she knows she must protect it from the Hunter. Sona and a Devan boy named Raag embark on an adventure to save the wolf, find nectar that will save the life of a woman important to both of them, and possibly summon the sixth beast who according to lore will appear at the time of a Devia's greatest need. Fantasy, action, and a quest drive the story. Flawed adults controlled by anger and greed are among the many obstacles the main characters and their trusty animal companions face. Between chapters there are historical writings, song lyrics, letters, and missives that contribute to the worldbuilding. Commentary on colonialism, natural resources, and power add depth to the tale. With a free-Devia movement growing, the story looks for a path forward with reconciliation and healing. VERDICT A compelling read set in a richly developed world with two young characters on a quest to save the Golden Beasts, discover their family secrets, and make their beloved country better for the people living there.-Erin Wyatt © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (February 15, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 12)) Grades 4-7. Sona lives a quiet life in Devia as the daughter of a Malech farmer, part of the colonial ruling class in a country conquered long ago. She knows that music is forbidden in Devia, as the local population of Devans used it to spin their magic, but Sona can't help herself from singing; she hears melodies all around her, emanating from and connecting her to every living thing and corner of nature. This gift leads her to rescue an orphaned golden-eared wolf pup, but when a determined hunter comes calling to finish off the enchanted creature, Sona and her ailing ayah's Devan grandson go on the run to protect the pup and find a fabled cure to restore the beloved woman's health. Earth-shattering secrets are revealed, fabled creatures appear at every turn, and Sona must face the truth about the Malech rule of her cherished homeland. The stellar South Asian–inspired story is rich in historical detail and mythical lore, offering a rip-roaring adventure story while also gently introducing readers to matters of entrenched racism and the costs of colonialism. The already engrossing narrative is cleverly embellished with a smattering of extremely telling advertisements, historical documents, personal letters, and song lyrics, all highlighting the different views and experiences of the Malech and Devan communities. A meaningful and magical exploration of tough topics through a memorable lens.	Kirkus Reviews starred (January 15, 2024) A bold girl's secret family history and her care for an orphaned wolf pup lead her on a legendary quest. After a Hunter from Malechia demands shelter at her home in Devia, 13-year-old Sona Kalpani learns a shocking secret. The Hunter's suspicious gaze forces Sona's Malech farmer father to reveal the truth: She's the daughter of his late sister, who was killed by the Goldstorm that also claimed Sona's real father, a Devan. The gem-seeking Malechs, who've colonized Devia for hundreds of years, have outlawed interracial marriage and banned music, which is how Devans wield magic and communicate with animals. Sona realizes she must act, since the Hunter is seeking the injured wolf she rescued, and her loving Ayah is ill from a Goldstorm. Sona sets off with Raag, a boy from a nearby village; Willa, her beloved gray pony; and Swara to journey to Mount Meru, which is sacred to Earth Goddess Bhoomi and is the source of amrita, "the golden nectar of life." Raag is sure that Swara's one of the five magical beasts from Devan legend, and Sona and Raag find connections to a prophecy that may free Devia. LaRocca's intricate South Asian–inspired world is richly developed. The tightly written narrative is interspersed with folklore, letters, songs, and other writing that flesh out the troubled history and wounds of colonization that can only begin to be healed with truth-telling and love. A fully immersive and enchanting fantasy that readers will get lost in. (map) (Fantasy. 8-12)	
Space case, the graphic novel	Gibbs, Stuart	Upper Elementary	3-6	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2025) A murder on a lunar colony turns a bored 12-year-old into a master sleuth in this graphic adaptation of Gibbs' 2014 novel. Dashiell Gibson, who has a Black mom and white dad, lives with his family on Moon Base Alpha, where life is actually pretty dull. Dash must contend with terrible food and an obnoxious billionaire tourist family. While using the annoying space toilet one night, he overhears scientist Dr. Holtz discussing a history-making project with an unseen person; it's to be announced the next day. But Dr. Holtz dies that night in an apparent accident that Dash is convinced was murder. None of the adults believe him, so Dash takes it upon himself to investigate, leading him into a complex tangle of secrets. Base commander Nina Stack wants Dash to stop sharing his theories and even makes veiled threats against him. Fortunately, new arrivals Kira, a girl his age, and Zan, a security specialist, believe him and want to help. Ultimately, Dash and Kira end up in danger while trying to solve the mystery. Jenkins' dynamic panel layouts, expressive character designs, and immersive depictions of life on the moon, combined with Gibbs' crisp, fast-paced dialogue and well-timed humor, seamlessly translate the original into this visual medium. While some plot points feel condensed, this adaptation retains the original's sharp wit, engaging mystery elements, and educational tidbits about space travel. An accessible, engaging read for those who love adventure, space, and mysteries. (Graphic science-fiction mystery. 8-12)			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Space chasers by Leland Melvin	Melvin, Leland	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (January 1, 2025) Gr 4-7-Tia, 11, never thought she would get accepted into the NASA school program, believing it wasn't for someone like her-a girl with absentee parents, raised by her brother, and much more comfortable working on cars than sitting in a middle school classroom. But against the odds, Tia is in, and is soon bonding with new teammates, enjoying zero gravity, struggling through endurance trainings, and enjoying space simulations all in preparation for a real trip to a space station. When things go awry during takeoff and only half the team (and no adults!) make it to the space station, Tia and her friends must band together using their wits and training to save the space station and themselves. Using a clever narrative countdown, this full-color graphic novel uses dynamic panel layouts and speech bubbles to good effect. Main characters have diverse ethnicities and abilities, complete back stories, and show growth throughout their adventures. VERDICT A story of personal growth and teamwork; hand this to middle school kids who are looking for a STEM adventure.-Melisa Bailey © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (January 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 9)) Grades 3-6. Creative, capable Tia spends most of her time fixing cars at her brother's automotive repair shop rather than at school, but when a group of her classmates show up and taunt her with a flyer advertising NASA's all-new STEAM Team program for middle-schoolers, her interest (and competitive nature) is piqued. Despite her typically low grades, Tia is surprised to land a spot on the team alongside a handful of other brilliant middle-schoolers from around the country. The kids spend months training for their mission—and thankfully so, because on launch day they find themselves stranded in space with no adults. Melvin, a former astronaut and advocate for STEAM education, brings his expertise to bear in this story about the variety of strengths and abilities that potential astronauts can bring to space missions. The capable cartoon art clearly depicts the various equipment involved in the kids' training process, and the scenes aboard the international space station are particularly strong. Space-obsessed middle-graders who dream of traveling to space will appreciate this optimistic and inspiring story that emphasizes the importance of resilience and teamwork.	Kirkus Reviews (December 15, 2024) Kids from around the U.S. join a space mission that tests their physical, mental, and interpersonal abilities. Tia is a Latine tween working at her older brother Hector's car shop when she learns about a new NASA initiative. The program, run by renowned Black astronaut (and co-author) Melvin, will send kids into space to intern at a research facility. Uber-responsible Indira, who's cued Indian American, also tries out, but she's seated near Tia during the test and is convinced Tia cheated by looking at her paper. Despite her frequent absences and failing grades, Tia is selected, while Indira is made an alternate. At space camp, Tia meets football player Bradley (who reads white), space-obsessed Andromeda (who appears East Asian), and Steven, a Black-presenting boy who has cerebral palsy and is an aspiring research biologist. Melvin's STEAM Team members pair up for physical conditioning and training for living in space, running laps and using a multi-axis trainer. After Steven is injured and goes home temporarily to recover, Indira becomes Tia's new partner (fortunately, Steven is later able to return). As the spaceships are prepped for launch, Melvin reinforces the message that "there are no useless skills. There are only skills that aren't being used to their full potential." The strong pacing and Acton's vibrant color palette make this an engaging science-based adventure that also explores friendship, team-building, overcoming personal insecurities, and other emotional themes. An entertaining and heartwarming journey into space. (Graphic fiction. 8-13)	
Speechless	Steinke, Aron Nels	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress (February 14, 2025) Gr 4-7-In sixth grade, socially anxious Mira is determined to finally speak at school, but no matter how hard she tries, the words won't come. Her classmates mock her, dismissing her cruelly. At home, Mira is a different person-chatty, confident, and a skilled stop-motion filmmaker who spends hours perfecting her claymation projects while bickering with her nosy little sister. Mira's world turns upside down when her parents invite Chloe, her ex-best friend and biggest bully, to stay with them during a family emergency. Chloe acts sweet in front of Mira's parents, but Mira knows better. As tensions rise, Mira begins therapy and connects with a new friend and crush, Alex, who uses they/them pronouns. With their support, Mira learns to communicate through writing and filmmaking while working toward her goal of speaking at school. Steinke's signature cartoon-style illustrations and diverse cast make this visually appealing and engaging. The exploration of selective mutism is thoughtful and relatable. However, readers might find Mira's parents frustratingly oblivious, particularly for their disbelief in Chloe's behavior and ignorance of Mira's silence at school. Despite this, the graphic novel offers an empathetic portrayal of Mira's journey to self-expression. The author's note, which elaborates Steinke's own experiences with selective mutism, is welcome. VERDICT A heartfelt and relatable portrayal of selective mutism; recommended for all libraries serving upper elementary and middle school readers.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 3-7. On her first day of middle school, Mira strikes out: in class after class she is unable to speak. Worse, Chloe, her former friend and current enemy, is there ready to "help" by telling everyone that Mira doesn't talk. But Mira speaks just fine when she's at home. She also communicates through stop-motion animation, her passion/obsession and the activity that keeps her from doing her homework—and pretty much everything else. When Chloe moves in with Mira's family and Mira's crush fails a group assignment because Mira refuses to focus, Mira must make changes if she wants to move forward. The adults in Mira's life are supportive: teachers adjust assignments to accommodate Mira's needs, and Mira's parents take her to see a therapist. The book also shows that some of Mira's issues are of her own making and that her feud with Chloe is a two-way street. Drawn in a deceptively simple style, with bright colors and easy-to-follow storytelling, this book will appeal strongly to fans of realistic and biographical fiction.	Kirkus Reviews (January 1, 2025) At the start of sixth grade, Mira Toledano-Stone, an aspiring animator with social anxiety, decides this will be the year she conquers her fears and starts speaking in school. In the comfort of her home, Mira has no problem talking, but no matter how much pressure she puts on herself, she can't find her voice at school. On the first day of middle school, her plan to start fresh falls apart, and soon she's become a target of bullying once again. Making stop-motion animation films is Mira's outlet, but her younger sister always invades her space. To make matters worse, Mira's parents betray her when they invite Chloe, her "pretend nice" former best friend, to live with them while her family deals with a crisis. With the help of a therapist, Mira navigates middle school woes and confronts her social anxiety. This coming-of-age graphic novel depicts a diverse world around Mira (who's Jewish and has light-brown skin and dark hair), including her crush, who uses they/them pronouns. The relationship-focused plot has high appeal, but Mira's parents' complete lack of awareness—until a teacher calls home—that she hasn't been speaking in school stretches the limits of believability. Additionally, the narrative, which Steinke explains in an author's note reflects some of his own experiences, primarily focuses on Mira's acquiring speech without acknowledging other forms of communication. A compelling school story that could have explored its central topic with greater depth. (Graphic fiction. 9-12)	
Spy school blackout	Gibbs, Stuart	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Spy School Secret Service the Graphic Novel	Gibbs, Stuart	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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Spy ski school, the graphic novel	Gibbs, Stuart	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Star	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Star quality	Ure, Jean	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Stories of women in World War II : we can do it!	Langley, Andrew	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2015) Gr 4-6-These titles are filled with the stories of extraordinary women who by dint of their courage, intellect, creativity, and tenacity revolutionized their professions or other realms of influence. However, the women's histories, while significant, are given inadequate treatment. The design will be off-putting to students: the books include long blocks of texts with illustrations that appear only every few pages and no headings. Most of the images are awkward-looking modern-day paintings or collages, with few period photos. VERDICT Skip these volumes.			
Sunny figures it out	Holm, Jennifer L	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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The beat I drum	Bowling, Dusti	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (March 28, 2025) Gr 3-7-A poignant reminder of the power of friendship, forgiveness, and self-love. Connor, who readers may recognize as Aven's best friend from Bowling's Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus, is facing challenges due to multiple stressors: his parents have separated, he has a new living situation, he's had to move schools and leave his old friends behind, his relationship with his dad is failing, he's being bullied at school, and on top of that-he barks. A lot. As readers follow Connor's journey, they are immersed in his world where the challenges of Tourette syndrome and everything else become a relatable and heartfelt exploration of resilience. One of the standout aspects of this novel is its ability to shine a light on the experiences of those who are viewed as different: Connor, with Tourette syndrome; Aven, who has no arms; and Rory, who has a large birthmark over half of her face. The writing is masterly, weaving a narrative that is moving, entertaining, and thought-provoking, while highlighting middle school concerns and the beauty of uniqueness. Bowling's voice is authentic thanks to her personal experience with a daughter living with tics and her own childhood, and that makes it impossible to not feel connected to these characters from the start. VERDICT This novel is truly a door to empathy, understanding, and self-reflection. Highly recommended as a great choice to any public or school library collection.-Jessica Clark © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (September 1, 2025 (Online)) Grades 5-9. In Bowling's popular Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus (2017) and its sequel, readers meet Aven's friend, Connor, who has Tourette's syndrome. Connor tells his own story in this spinoff. Once again, the author takes a traditional trope—in this case, because of his parents' separation, Connor moves across town and starts a new high school—and makes it fresh. As Connor explains Tourette's and continues his friendship with Aven, filling in gaps from the related books, he makes new friends with neurodivergent and physical differences, recognizing even more human diversity. While his most obvious tic is a vocal barking, he meets Amanda, who also has Tourette's but with less noticeable motor tics, emphasizing the spectrum of the disorder. With encouragement from Amanda and Rory, a potential girlfriend with an unusual facial birthmark, he discovers how music can help alleviate his anxiety and tics. By playing to his own beat as a drummer, Connor finds self-acceptance and forgiveness in the wake of change and bullying. Bowling delivers another hit about this community of friends.		
The Bellwoods Game	Krampien, Celia	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (July 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 21)) Grades 4-7. Every Halloween night in Fall Hollow, it's up to the sixth-grade class to keep their town safe from the vengeful spirit of Abigail Snook. To do this, they play the Bellwood Game, sending some of their own into the forest to ring the bell that will keep Abigail at bay—as long as she doesn't catch them first. On the day of the game, Bailee feels overwhelmed by her nan's recent health scare and her own status as class pariah for supposedly tattling on her peers. Nevertheless, Bailee finds the courage to participate in the long-anticipated game, knowing if she rings the bell, she also gets to make a wish. In the woods, Bailee teams up with four unlikely classmates and a benign spirit to try to defeat the shape-shifting specter. Krampien's eerie story cleverly focuses on themes such as bullying, and Bailee's motley crew discovers the importance of having the facts before making assumptions. This supernatural tale will chill readers while reminding them that real friendship can brave any situation.	Kirkus Reviews (May 15, 2023) Sixth grader Bailee Heron must win a ghostly game to keep her town, her family, and herself from losing everything. On Halloween in 1982, sixth grader Abigail Snook disappeared in the Bellwoods forest behind Beckett Elementary. Now, every Halloween, Beckett's sixth graders have to play the Bellwoods Game, or her ghost will terrorize the town for the next year. If she catches you, and you don't have a gift to sacrifice, the ghost will take something else—like your tongue. But if you manage to ring the old bell in the woods first, you'll banish her for another year, and she'll give you anything you want. Bailee, lover of all things horror, just wants things to go back to normal. Ever since the factory closed two years ago, her parents have worked long hours to make ends meet, often leaving Nan and Bailee alone. Then Nan got sick at the same time a vicious rumor ostracized Bailee from the rest of the class. Winning the game is Bailee's only chance to set things right, but she soon learns everything is not as it seems in the town of Fall Hollow, where stories are weapons, friends come from strange places, and Abigail Snook isn't the scariest thing hiding among the trees. This gorgeously illustrated, atmospheric, and evocative debut captures the fun of being scared and the hard truths of middle school. Bailee presents White; names and illustrations point to some racial diversity in secondary characters. Beautifully creepy. (Supernatural. 9-13)	Publishers Weekly (July 31, 2023) On Halloween 1982, sixth grader Abigail Snook vanished from the Bellwoods while playing a game with her bully. As October 31 approaches in present-day Fall Hollow, the sixth graders of Beckett Elementary are preoccupied with that legend, which annually lures a group of classmates into the forest to play the Bellwoods Game. Horror fan Bailee Heron would rather stay home with her beloved Nan than head into the woods, but she decides that playing is the only way to clear up a misunderstanding that ostracized her from her class. According to the legend, Abigail's spirit reappears in the forest each year on the anniversary of her vanishing; per tradition, three tweens must play the game to its end in order to help her rest and save the town from chaos. The player who first rings an old bell in the woods banishes the spirit for another annum, but anyone caught by the spirit who lacks a gift to trade will be forced to sacrifice something truly dear. Once the game begins, however, Bailee realizes that the stories belie the game's complexity. Krampien (Sunny) intersperses atmospherically eerie b&w art throughout a tense friendship novel steeped in local lore. Bailee presents as white; secondary characters suggest racial diversity. Ages 8-12. Agent: Andrea Morrison, Writers House. (July) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The better to eat you with	Mejia, Tehlor Kay	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (August 29, 2025) Gr 6-Summer trips to the quiet resort town of Sonrisa were always a source of family fun for 12-year-old Evan, and a chance to reconnect with friends Billie and Jackson. But Evan can't enjoy herself this year amid pressing worry over the disintegration of her parents' marriage and scrutiny from her mother Moira over everything Evan eats. Moira says it's all about building healthy eating habits, but the restrictiveness of the diet leaves Evan feeling faint and spent. Additionally, the quiet of Sonrisa is disrupted by a mysterious nocturnal beast that kills animals and leaves strange tracks and marks around the camp. Evan and her friends sneak out to find answers, and Evan is disquieted by the connection she seems to share with the creature. While this presents a light horror element, the book's scare factor lies in how Moira has pushed her daughter into anorexia. The pressure and worry that Evan feels every time she strays from her diet is palpable, and her body's weakness leads to a couple of dangerous situations while swimming and hiking. Helpfully, author Mejia provides a compassionate voice in Billie, who shows herself to be a true friend as she begins to understand what Evan is dealing with. The creature ultimately reveals itself to be an empowering force for Evan and guides her to understand her body's needs. VERDICT Mejia's deft exploration of a distressing topic provides a window into disordered eating and shows the importance of providing help to someone in crisis. Highly recommended.-Michael Van Wambeke © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (August 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 22)) Grades 5-8. With her parents' marriage crumbling, Evan's spending the summer with her best friend, Billie, at their usual lakeside campground. Her mom's obsession with "healthy eating" (a thinly veiled disguise for weight loss) has driven Evan to have severe anxiety about food and exercise, especially as she seeks her mom's approval. Evan's looking forward to being away from her mother's scrutiny while with Billie's family, who believes that any food can be good food, but she can't stop obsessing over what her mom will think. Meanwhile, signs of a large creature are making everyone at the lake uneasy, and Evan starts hearing an insistent voice that seems to be related to the monster. Mejia thoughtfully explores issues of disordered eating (both anorexia and orthorexia), anxiety, and divorce while folding in some eerie monster-horror vibes as Evan learns how to trust not only the people trying to help but also her own intuition. Occasionally this comes across a bit like an after-school special, but there are enough creepy moments of monster scares that kids on the hunt for that will be satisfied.	Kirkus Reviews (August 15, 2025) A summer vacation turns sinister as a monster grows hungry. Every summer, Evan Rio and her parents escape to the lakeside town of Sonrisa for a big reunion. But this summer is different. Evan's parents aren't coming; they've been fighting. Billie and Jackson—Evan's long-distance best friends—have hit puberty and are changing. Evan's changing, too: Her mom's dieting rules are leading her to skip meals and obsess over her appearance. When a strange creature starts wreaking havoc, the trio decide to track the beast and reclaim their perfect summer. Can they stop it before someone gets hurt? Mejia's latest powerfully links eating disorders with body horror, drawing parallels between the monster and Evan's own appetites. Frequent references to calories, meal skipping, and buzzing hunger provide a vivid window into Evan's internal struggles. The story's tone avoids shame and is hopeful, even affirming, as Evan confronts her own perceived monstrosity. Evan is biracial (her mom is cued white, and her dad has deep brown skin), Billie, who's queer, has golden-brown skin, and Jackson, who has asthma, is racially indeterminate. While Evan's mom is awful and abusive (but not without redemption—"We can have empathy for those who lead us astray, but we cannot allow them to continue leading," the monster observes), Billie's mom provides a necessary foil, showing what it might look like to support a child with anorexia. An author's note provides essential context and encourages readers to seek help. Intriguing and not for the faint of heart. (Horror. 10-14)	
The book of stolen dreams	Farr, David	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (March 1, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 13)) Grades 4-8. Siblings Rachel and Robert live in Krasnia, a country ruled by the tyrant Charles Malstain. One fateful night, their father sneaks them into the library where he works to steal The Book of Stolen Dreams, a book long rumored to be capable of magic, before it is destroyed the next day. Just as they are about to escape unseen, they are ambushed by soldiers who apprehend their father. With this mysterious book now in their possession, the siblings are the only thing stopping Malstain from getting the book and gaining the power to control Krasnia forever. Rachel and Robert find themselves in a race against time to reveal the secrets of the book, stop Malstain, and save their father. Farr's action-packed adventure will keep you on your toes as readers get both Rachel's and Robert's points of view with whimsical narration. While the mention of death and violence creates a dark atmosphere throughout the book, it is ultimately a hopeful tale of bravery and resilience.	Kirkus Reviews (March 15, 2023) A high fantasy of adventure and bravery originally published in Great Britain. Mythical country Krasnia has been taken over by tyrant Charles Malstain. The once-thriving city of Brava is reduced to poverty and fear. But on Rachel Klein's 11th birthday, her father invites her and her 12 1/2-year-old brother, Robert, to come to the North Brava Public Lending Library where he works. It is after closing hours, children (in particular) are not supposed to be outside after the 7 p.m. curfew, and Rachel wonders what her father is up to. In the Rare Books Room, Father hands Rachel an ancient, beautifully illustrated leather-bound book. Then soldiers arrive, and they must flee. Father hastily instructs the children to give the book to a particular person the next morning. As Rachel and Robert escape through a ventilation shaft, their father is beaten and arrested. So begins this intriguing, entertaining tale. With nods to both His Dark Materials and Lemony Snicket, the narrative spins a tale of good and evil, all the while interposing snippets of humor to keep things just a bit sardonic. As the siblings navigate the mystery of the book they have been given and learn its secret, they encounter new worlds and both brave and cowardly people. While an effervescent adventure, the story never loses sight of its timely theme: the essential need for a moral compass. Chapters open with enchanting spot art. Characters read default White. Sparkling and timely. (Fantasy. 9-13)	Publishers Weekly (March 13, 2023) Two siblings are tasked with keeping a magical text out of a despotic ruler's hands in this bustling children's debut, a duology opener, from playwright and screenwriter Farr. Following the invasion of Krasnia, the militarized New World Order led by Charles Malstain results quickly in censorship and regulation-especially of children. On Rachel Klein's 11th birthday, she and her brother Robert witness the arrest of their librarian father after he takes The Book of Stolen Dreams, a magical tome "hundreds of years old and the strangest and most beautiful book in the whole library," from his workplace. Their mother's death soon follows, and now-12-year-old Rachel and 13-year-old Robert, subsequently separated, risk everything to keep the powerful book from Malstain and to find a missing page. While Robert is ensnared in political intrigue, Rachel seeks to find him, with help from a mysterious family of illustrators. Alternating between the siblings' perspectives, third-person narration breaks the fourth wall, leavening fittingly dark matter with humor and whimsical details that will appeal to readers of Kelly Barnhill and Lemony Snicket, while a poignant finale revives the plot' s uneven momentum. Protagonists read as white. Ages 8-12. Agent: Stephanie Thwaites, Curtis Brown (U.K.). (May) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
The book smugglers	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The bookwanderers	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress (October 4, 2019) Gr 5-7-Tilly is an 11-year-old orphan who lives with her grandparents, owners of the magical bookstore Pages & Co. Her adventure begins during winter break when she explores the bookstore and notices unusual characters among the stacks. Her grandparents are alarmed at these sightings because they know these characters materialize out of books-they are fiction made real. They soon suspect that Tilly is able to bookwander, which means she can travel back and forth between the real world and the world of fiction. She especially likes to bookwander with Anne Shirley, of "Anne of Greene Gables," because she feels kinship with her as an orphan. But can Tilly bookwander to find her long-lost family? Readers will want to become familiar with the literary characters Tilly meets. Tilly's grandfather succinctly puts the importance of books into perspective. He says, "The books we love when we're growing up shape us in a special way...The characters in the books we read help us decide who we want to be." VERDICT James's debut will speak to the heart of bibliophiles and is highly recommended for readers young and old. An important reminder of the centrality of stories in shaping our lives.-Lisa Gieskes, Richland County Public Library, Columbia, SC © Copyright 2019. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (July 2019 (Vol. 115, No. 21)) Grades 3-7. Since her mother's disappearance, 11-year-old Tilly Pages has been raised by her grandparents in their London bookshop, Pages & Co. She doesn't question her origins until the day she witnesses her grandma speaking to one Lizzie Bennet. Soon afterwards, she comes upon her grandad sitting with Sherlock Holmes. After Tilly herself is visited by Anne Shirley (of Green Gables) and Alice (of Wonderland fame), she learns that she comes from a family of bookwanderers, people so intensely connected to books that they can enter story worlds and interact with fictional characters. As Tilly delves deeper into the secret—and increasingly dangerous—world of bookwanderers, the mysteries of her parentage unravel. Well-read youngsters will thrill in joining Tilly as she visits such beloved classics as Treasure Island and A Little Princess. Steeped in magical world building, James' debut pays loving testament to the power of books, and it functions well as a stand-alone adventure while setting the stage for future installments of enormous potential.	Kirkus Reviews (June 1, 2019) This debut is the first in a new series about an English girl with a special ability. Matilda Pages' mother disappeared without a trace when she was a baby, and her father died before she was born. The 11-year-old bibliophile has been raised by her maternal grandparents, proprietors of Pages & Co., a cozy north London bookshop. The school holidays stretch out before her, and Tilly wants some excitement, but, as she laments, "No one has proper adventures in real life." Tilly gets the adventure of a lifetime when Anne Shirley and Alice, her favorite book characters, appear in the shop. Visits to Avonlea and the famously wacky Wonderland tea party lead Tilly to the truth: She comes from a family of bookwanderers, people who use the "natural magic of books" to travel inside works of literature and bring characters into the real world. Inquisitive and intelligent, Tilly is exceptional among bookwanderers: Some of the rules don't apply to her, but why? Tilly's literary adventures thrill, and Anne's characterization in particular is pleasingly congruent with the original character. Escobar's literary-themed silhouettes, reminiscent of Arthur Rackham's, add whimsical flourishes, although the few full-page illustrations do little. Its premise makes it an obvious, wonderful choice for book-loving readers who aren't quite ready for Inkheart's heft. Characters default to white. A loving testament to the powerful magic of books and imagination. (Fantasy. 8-12)	
The Cartoonists Club	Telgemeier, Raina	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal starred (February 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-A powerful team of comics creators have joined forces to inspire and educate young people to better understand the medium and provide a base of sequential storytelling tools for readers to write their own comics. This informative graphic novel is fashioned around a group of students who gather for an afterschool cartooning club led by their school librarian. Through the framework of the students learning about how comics are made, the creative team provides a great and approachable interpretation of McCloud's previous book, Understanding Comics-a classic tome in graphic novel education-and get the same points across for a younger audience without dumbing things down. Telgemeier and McCloud cleverly use panels and an art style that pops to explain the depth of comics art, and make many sophisticated ideas accessible to young readers. VERDICT A powerhouse team-up from two of comic's very best creators. Young readers who have an interest in making comics or who love to read them will benefit from understanding the process behind the format.-Esther Keller © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2025) In this clever graphic novel about comics and creative collaboration, story-loving middle-schooler Makayla makes a deal with classmate Howard, who would rather sketch caricatures than pay attention in class: Makayla will make up stories to accompany Howard's many funny drawings. The pair meets up in the school library, and when they learn that Ms. Fatima, the media specialist, adores comics, too, the Cartoonists Club is born. They are joined by two more classmates: Art, who is excited to bring their versatile creativity to writing and drawing comics, and Lynda, a constant presence in the library who eventually gains the courage to share a notebook full of detailed, realistic drawings. Each of the multilayered characters in this diverse group has a distinct personality and approach to their art. Cartoon-style illustrations in cool, pale hues with occasional splashes of canary yellow effectively portray the characters' quirks as well as the nuts and bolts of comics-making. Through Ms. Fatima as advisor and Art's dad, a professional animator, as mentor, the Cartoonists learn the "magic of comics" and pass that knowledge on to readers. Back matter includes an interview with the book's creators (where readers learn that Telgemeier was inspired by McCloud's Understanding Comics as a teenager), a glossary, descriptions of comics careers, details about this book's production, and suggested reading. Alicia Rogers May/June 2025 p.101	Booklist starred (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 3-7. A collaboration between McCloud, the man who defined the art form of comics with Understanding Comics, and Telgemeier, the woman who redefined the format's audience and thus the industry itself with Smile (2010), might lead you to expect something overtly startling. Instead, by hewing closely to what made them luminaries to begin with, they have created something warmly comfortable in its presentation, quietly fascinating in its information, deeply accessible in its humanity, and excitingly perfect in its execution. Appropriately, it's both a primer on what comics are and do and the story of a group of burgeoning cartoonists coming together. The impossibly friendly roundness and profoundly expressive faces of Telgemeier's characters bring home the story of four kids and their distinct, heartfelt journeys, each actualized through the magic of creating together. McCloud's perspective-expanding acumen is delivered with total clarity, made hilarious by some fourth-wall-breaking high jinks and made exciting by the creative possibilities it opens for characters and readers. Lots of back matter supports this creative end as well. Remarkably, neither through line distracts from the other, but—like the unity of words and art that makes comics run—the parts become a seamless whole that offers readers more than a single experience. A real showpiece of what happens when two masters find a way to combine their mastery.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The chance to fly	Stroker, Ali	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (May 28, 2021) Gr 3-7-Thirteen-year-old Natalie Beacon, who is white and has used a wheelchair since she was little, isn't happy to be leaving behind her best friend and moving across the country for her mom's new job. Nat's parents are eager for her to adjust; her father has already found her a wheelchair-racing team, a sport she enjoyed in California. She spots a poster during practice announcing auditions for a young performer's version of the musical Wicked. Musicals are Nat's passion and performing is her professional dream. When she can't convince her parents to let her audition, Nat decides to secretly audition anyway and is thrilled to get a part, ultimately convincing her parents to let her participate. She instantly falls in with a group of theater geeks who become her best friends. But she experiences alienating challenges in the production: She is asked to only sing and not dance, which leaves her feeling "half cast," and then the bus for their weekend retreat doesn't have a wheelchair lift. When a theater fire cancels the production, it's up to Nat to convince her new friends that the show must go on. Written by Tony Award-winner Stroker, who uses a wheelchair, and Davidowitz, this fast-paced novel features an extensive and diverse cast of characters. The descriptive third-person narrative helps readers visualize the characters and the production, though the sheer number of characters may require some backtracking, and the depth of character development can be inconsistent. Seeing the obstacles Nat faces daily and watching her learn to advocate for herself may inspire readers to do the same. Serious scenes, like Nat's crush Malik discussing his experience as the only Black student in school, and learning why Nat uses a wheelchair, are poignant, as is Nat's evolving relationship with her parents. VERDICT Though the novel leans heavily on musical history and theatre terminology, young readers do not need a knowledge of musicals and theater to enjoy this #OwnVoices novel. Young disabled performers will be excited to see representation, and all readers will be rooting for Nat.-Juliet Morefield, Multnomah County Lib., Portland, OR © Copyright 2021. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2021) An aspiring actor who uses a manual wheelchair is determined to land a part in a community theater production. Moving cross-country from California to New Jersey and leaving her best friend, Chloe, behind is hard enough for Nat. Even worse, the new house doesn't feel like home, and her parents are as overprotective as ever. When Nat, an avid fan of musicals, spots an advertisement for the local theater's production of Wicked, she's sure that nabbing a part will make her feel at home. But her father wants her to focus on wheelchair racing, and her mother doubts her ability to fit in; it's up to Nat to prove she can take the stage. The authors know their stuff—Tony Award–winner Stroker was the first wheelchair user to be cast in a Broadway play, and Davidowitz is a playwright—and it shows. Nat's relationship with her loving but overbearing parents rings perceptively and painfully true, as does her frustration with inaccessible venues and patronizing attitudes. Her enthusiasm for the theater is infectious, but readers needn't be theater buffs to relate to her fear of growing apart from Chloe and her desire for independence. A quirky cast of secondary characters lends humor, support, and a little romance as they illustrate the fun and rigor of acting. Nat defaults to White; the secondary cast is somewhat diverse. Fun, honest, and uplifting: applause! (authors' note) (Fiction. 9-12)	Publishers Weekly starred (April 19, 2021) Tony Award-winning Broadway star Stroker and veteran author Davidowitz (Freefall) combine their talents in this resonant middle grade debut. White musical theater aficionado Nat Beacon, 13, has just moved from San Francisco to Saddle Stream, N.J., with her parents, leaving behind her lifelong best friend, Chloe Suarez. While wheelchair racer Nat misses the camaraderie of her former team, her soul-deep dream of performing onstage, in a role epitomizing acceptance and friendship, drives her to audition for a community theater youth production of Wicked. Despite initial reserve-due in part to her burgeoning independence and past accessibility issues-she's quickly absorbed into the cast, which includes handsome Malik Young, who has dark skin and locs, and whom she quickly develops feelings for; nurturing white dance captain Hudson, who is gay; outrageous white starlet Savannah Alexis; and sweet, multitalented Indian American athlete Rey Joshi. Navigating being onstage for the first time, Nat works with her new friends to translate obstacles into opportunities. Bolstered by realistic dialogue and Nat's engaging internal narrative, this endearing novel will entrance a new generation of theater lovers and charm older ones with its allusions to beloved shows. Ages 12-up. Agents (for Stroker): KMR Agency; (for Davidowitz) Hannah Mann, Writers House. (Apr.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
The color of sound	Isler, Emily Barth	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (January 1, 2024) Gr 3-7-Rosie is a 12-year-old violin prodigy, but she is hiding her feelings, her fears, her hopes, and her synesthesia-she experiences sound as colors. Rosie and her mom go to Connecticut for the summer to stay with grandparents she barely knows; her grandmother is dying of dementia and often doesn't know her. Rosie refuses to continue the grueling violin practices and performances that she believes prevent her from being a regular tween girl enjoying sleepovers and crushes. But she doesn't throw a tantrum; it is a considered decision that her parents might better understand if they truly listened to her. As a result of tensions with her mom, Rosie spends time with her grandfather who shows her their family history, decimated and traumatized by the tragedies of the Holocaust. Encounters with a young girl, Shanna, on the farm lead to a tentative friendship and gives Rosie an understanding of the impact of growing up in an entirely different family structure. Rosie is able, in her gracious way, not only to learn from Shanna but to also help teach and guide her mother to a place of better understanding. Isler crafts an exceptionally honest portrayal of complicated mother-daughter dynamics, and a protagonist whose independence and kindness is a stunning solo. VERDICT A top pick for any middle school collection; a perfect book club pick and a reminder to all that patience and understanding can change lives.-Lee De Groft © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2024) At twelve years old, Rosie is a violin prodigy who can hear whole works of music in her head and has played Carnegie Hall twice. She also has synesthesia and can see music in colors, textures, temperature, and taste, but she keeps it to herself, because her mother already finds her prodigy brain "weird" and "dangerous." Their relationship is strained, as Mom is overly involved in managing Rosie's musical career. Tired of being known as "the girl with the violin," Rosie decides to quit playing in order to find herself and spends the summer at her grandparents' home in Connecticut, where her grandmother is dying. Wandering the property, she enters an abandoned shed, where she discovers a girl who turns out to be her mother when she was Rosie's age. Through repeated encounters, Rosie learns more about her family's history, including her great-grandparents' experience in Auschwitz and in a displaced persons camp after WWII. Suddenly, her mother's obsession with the violin is put into a larger family context that intersects with a hidden history of musical talent, neurodivergence, and a Jewish identity that was kept secret. An emotionally moving story about the ways that generational trauma can affect parent-child relationships and how the past persists into the present. Julie Hakim Azzam May/June 2024 p.141	Booklist (February 15, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 12)) Grades 5-8. Everyone knows that Rosie is a musical prodigy. At 12 years old, she's already played her violin at Carnegie Hall—twice. But no one knows that Rosie is also a synesthete who sees music as colors and is overstimulated by the sounds and colors of everyday experiences. Overwhelmed by her endless music responsibilities, Rosie goes on strike: no more violin for the summer. Instead, she visits her grandparents with her mother, who is obsessed with getting Rosie to play the violin again. Rosie also meets a girl in her grandparents' shed who claims she's from the 1990s and who has the same name as her mother, Shanna. This Shanna, however, is more emotionally open than Rosie's mother and feels similarly stifled by her own parents. As Rosie and Shanna bond, Rosie reconciles the idea that the crestfallen preteen before her will eventually turn into the strict mother she knows today. Tweens should pair this moving and pensive read with a viewing of Disney's Turning Red for similar themes of intergenerational trauma and overbearing yet sympathetic mothers.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The curse of Madame Petrova	Hof, Marjolijn	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (September 1, 2024) Gr 5 Up-Tarot reader Madame Petrova's prediction frightens a family so terribly that they choose to exile twins Silke and Janis, separating them at birth to avoid realization of the prophecy. After the deaths of the sibling's parents, greedy cousins take the kids in and hope to profit on their misfortune. Silke and Janis escape, embarking on a whirlwind quest to unravel the curse that brings them right to the enigmatic Madame Petrova herself. Hof establishes an empowering cross-generational tale that embeds wise life lessons subtly with mystery and intrigue. Old-fashioned vocabulary infuses Hof's work, and illustrator Fienieg eerily opens each chapter with etched tarot images. While English teachers could use Hof's text in lessons on figurative language, this title, originally written in Dutch, does not have a glossary to aid the translations. VERDICT An eccentric fantasy set in the pastoral Middle Ages; fans of Lemony Snicket's "Series of Unfortunate Events" will be drawn to this tale of wise and resourceful siblings trying to escape their fate.-Laura Dooley-Taylor © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2025) Silke and her twin brother, Janis, are fated to cause each other's demise, or so predicted Madame Petrova when she read the cards for Papa and Mama before the children's birth. Now orphaned and afraid their grasping cousins will make them fulfill this terrible destiny, Silke and Janis flee. With only a handwritten volume of their mother's juvenile poems as a guide, Silke tries to lead Janis through an uncertain world, but to where? A spell with a traveling fortuneteller entangles them in debt; a rural innkeeper is happy to enlist their help cleaning up after rowdy soldier guests, but she can't keep them forever. Then Silke thinks to send a letter to the grandparents whose names conclude their mother's book of verse. The story's preindustrial rural setting, with its wandering orphans, fortunetellers, and snowy forests, hints at the magic of a fairy tale, but Hof's Silke is the work of realism -- in her burden of anxious responsibility, her intermittent fractiousness, and especially her yearning for care. "Never to have to think about anything again," is her desire when she finally finds a home. The disassembling of Madame Petrova's curse is skillfully rendered and surprising, but no more so than the dismantling and reassembling of Silke's understanding of her very being. Hof entices us with the winsomeness of folklore and offers canny humor and a valiant, persistent love that emerges from loneliness and neglect. Deirdre F. Baker January/February 2025 p.83	Booklist (September 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 1)) Grades 7-10. The story opens with twins Silke and Janis scraping by in the mountains, one month since fleeing their family's estate. After their parents died, the kids' malicious cousins had arranged for the twins to be reunited for the first time since one Madame Petrova foretold "It," a disastrous prophesy that they would each be the death of the other. Now, desperate to survive, the twins fall in with another traveling card reader, and Silke herself learns the craft—which, of course, is a con. A theme of dishonest manipulation is threaded throughout the pair's journey as they ultimately find their way to their mother's hometown, where answers await them about the true origins of "It." Fienieg's intriguing cover and endpaper artwork is bound to lure readers in search of a fantastical or at least folkloristic tale, but—as happens with Silke—they will find beneath the surface only gritty, humorless realism. It's a stark tale, and the vague setting doesn't help, but the momentum generated by the survival story and maintained by Hof's nimble pacing keeps the pages turning till the end.	
The death and life of Benny Brooks : sort of a memoir	Long, Ethan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (December 1, 2023) Gr 4-7-A fictionalized coming-of-age story of Long during the 1970s. Benny's parents are going through a divorce, and his father is dying of lung cancer. Benny is struggling at school and is failing in his ability to fall asleep and control his anger. Luckily, he has a best friend who supports him, a teacher who is helping him with fifth grade, and a therapist helping him learn how to navigate the end of his father's life and socializing with his friends. The book is prose interspersed with cartoony black-and-white line drawings dramatizing the events in Benny's life, such as his brother's bullying during dinner time, father's failing health, and mother's moving into her new home. The people illustrated look mostly white, reflecting the community that Benny Brooks lives in. The book's tactful handling of mental health and therapy is balanced, respectful, and representative of the actual process; blame is not placed on the child, but a framework is given that places Benny's mental health issues at the nexus of multiple traumatic life events compounding one another. VERDICT Recommended purchase for libraries seeking nuanced depictions of divorce, death in the family, and trauma.-Vi Ha © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (August 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 22)) Grades 5-8. In this fictionalized memoir, Long recalls his life as a 10-year-old boy. After a period of anger and arguments, Benny's parents divorce and Mom moves out. Dad can't stop smoking, despite a recent diagnosis of terminal lung cancer. For Benny; his often-bullying, sometimes amusing older brother; and their little sister, household routines become unstable and chaotic. And although Benny attends counselling sessions, he sits silently, unable to talk about his anxiety and loneliness. When his father's condition worsens, Benny punches a classmate. But he makes a breakthrough in counseling, and, with help from a teacher, a friend, and family members, he is ready for his father's death and the increased sense of awareness that follows. As a writer/illustrator, Long is known for his wit, and it emerges in this captivating story as well, particularly in his expressive grayscale drawings, which appear throughout the book. The cartoonlike illustrations keep the tone from becoming unbearably dark, even when the topic is death. Written from Benny's viewpoint, the first-person narrative begins with reflections on who annoys him, but toward the end, he starts reflecting and acting on his own rather than reacting to others. Long's heartening memoir portrays a boy facing challenging situations with hard-won hope and increasing maturity.	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2023) A fifth grader's tragicomic view of death, divorce, sibling relations, and emotional turmoil. The acrid divorce is the first trauma as middle child Benny sees his plainly incompatible parents split up and his chain-smoking, self-centered dad failing to be a competent single parent. Then a second blow lands, and he must watch his father lose a battle with lung cancer. Meanwhile, in a Wimpy Kid–style mix of first-person narrative and cartoon drawings that adds twists and punchlines, he records his own growing anger issues and, later, therapy sessions. This heavy material is interspersed with less fraught accounts of, for instance, what it's like to get a huge loogie in the face from a big brother, fend off the advances of an overly enthusiastic classmate with a crush, always be the last one picked for street games, and get a ludicrously inappropriate plush toy rather than a coveted bike for Christmas. Long's loosely autobiographical tale is never going to be a happy story, but ultimately the therapy begins to pay off, and a seemingly hostile teacher helps Benny get his schoolwork back up to snuff. Finally, after Benny bids goodbye to his dad at home (where he goes to die) and experiences a rush of big feelings outside the crematorium, the emotional roller coaster glides to a stop in Benny's closer relations with his siblings and dutiful, if not exactly maternal, mom. Most of the cast appears white. Sometimes biting, often intense, and marked by moments both of comical awkwardness and grace. (author's note) (Fiction. 9-12)	
The dragon path	Young, Ethan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (June 18, 2021) Gr 4-7-A prince sets in motion the fulfillment of a prophecy. The Wong Clan is returning to the Old Land via the Dragon Path. Before too long, the Wong Clan's roadpods (motorized buildings) are ambushed by bipedal, draconic humanoids known as the Dragon Tribe. Clan leader Lord Wong orders that Prince Sing be protected at all costs. But when it looks like the Dragon Tribe's leader is going to take down Sing's aunt Hu, the young prince leaps into battle and narrowly escapes death when Ming the Mystic and a giant unicorn-cat named Midnight come to his rescue. The pair take Prince Sing back to the Old Land, and the truth about his heritage and purpose is slowly revealed. But the Dragon Tribe still has the rest of the Wong Clan hostage-and they have a missing piece of the puzzle. Who will win the next battle? Young's detailed visuals feature textured lines and a distinct, earthy, desert sunset palette. Dropping readers right into the action, Young offers little exposition. But the fast pace, epic battle scenes, and narrative flashbacks carry the archetypal "chosen one" plot. The art style, steampunk technology, and creatures give off He-Man meets Faith Erin Hicks's The Nameless City vibes. The human cast is coded as Chinese, and the cultural specificity makes this title a standout. VERDICT Fantasy fans will dive right into this world and clamor for more. A strong purchase for all graphic novel collections.-Alec Chunn, Eugene P.L., OR © Copyright 2021. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (May 15, 2021 (Vol. 117, No. 18)) Grades 4-7. Prince Sing, heir to the Wong Clan, is travelling along with his father, Lord Wong, and others as their clan attempts a passage through the Dragon Path. This is Dragon Tribe territory and the fastest route to Old Land, where Lord Wong and his advisor, Quan, think a prophecy will be fulfilled and the Wong Clan will rule the Old Land once again. But Komodo Khan, General of the Dragon Tribe, has other plans for the Wong Clan; Khan will make them pay for the losses suffered because of the Phoenix Wars. Along with his new friends Ming the Mystic and Midnight, a giant cat monster with a unicorn horn, Prince Sing must learn the stories about the Old Land and save his clan from the dragons and a traitor. The vibrantly colored and action-packed illustrations bring this fantastical story to life. Splash pages and block paneling make this an easy tale to follow with clearly lettered speech balloons. A fantastic and engaging story ideal for fantasy-adventure fans that is hopefully one of many.	Kirkus Reviews (April 1, 2021) A family prophecy and long-kept secrets spell out a new destiny for a Chinese clan. Young throws readers right into the fray in his latest steampunk graphic novel. A motorized village, revealed to be the Wong Clan's, is returning to their ancestral home, the Old Land. With the encouragement of his dubious adviser, Quan, Lord Wong believes that in returning they will fulfill a prophecy. Meanwhile Lord Wong's willful young son, Prince Sing, has been seeing visions about his mother's death and what initiated his ancestors' exodus from their homeland. When the clan is attacked by the reptilian Dragon Tribe for trespassing and past injustices, Sing is lost. Presumed dead, Sing is in fact in the company of Ming the Mystic and a colossal black-and-white feline with a single horn. Themes of betrayal and true identities, with magic woven throughout, create an action-packed adventure. The neatly aligned panels are filled with movement thanks to Young's definitively lined, bold, cartoon style. Young's choice of a neon color palette and artful use of shading bring a vibrancy and heightened emotional depth to each scene. Though the plot teems with characters and complicated interwoven backstories, an even pace and balanced story are maintained. A few lingering questions at the end are a small price to pay for the fun. This eclectic world of Chinese culture, fantasy, and nonstop action is worth exploring. (Graphic steampunk. 10-14)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The experiment	Stead, Rebecca	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal Xpress starred (September 5, 2025) Gr 3-7-Nathan is just your ordinary kid-except for the fact that he's an alien from the planet Kask. He's trying to navigate life both as a sixth grader and as part of an experiment involving his family. Nathan has a beloved cat and "nine good friends," as is customary among the Kask. While he interacts with them over Zoom, he has only met one in person: Izzy. When his friends and fellow experiments begin to disappear, Nathan becomes determined to uncover the truth behind what is really happening and the nature of this experiment. At the same time, Nathan experiences unexpected changes, like growing a tail. With Nathan as the narrator, this coming-of-age story explores the timeless questions of identity and purpose. The fast-paced and engaging narrative is full of humor and warmth, delving into themes of friendship, family, and self-understanding. The diverse characters and story are well developed, ensuring that readers remain captivated from start to finish. Overall, this book is a delightful addition to the genre that will fly off the shelves. Its relatable themes and imaginative elements ensure it will resonate with readers long after they turn the last page. VERDICT A middle grade must-read, this is highly recommended for fans of science fiction and books like A Wrinkle in Time.-Katie Loomis © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (August 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 22)) Grades 3-6. As section headings count down to an unknown "liftoff," we get the story of Nathan, a pretty regular kid growing up in New York—except that he and his parents are alien explorers from another planet, tasked with passing as humans in service of a mysterious experiment on behalf of their kind, the Kast. At least, that's what they've been told their entire lives. Nathan never questioned it, but after other Kast children begin to disappear and a tail appears on his caboose, he finds himself heading to the grounded alien mothership, where the mysteries only thicken as they hint at something sinister. Stead takes her deepest dive yet (as a solo author) into the world of science fiction, presenting a grounded but at-times thrilling story, inspired by the likes of E.T. and other Hollywood alien flicks. Her prose is as accessible and compulsively readable as ever, with keen insights and wry humor coloring the short chapters that keep the pages turning to the end. Fun, light alien fare.HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Stead won a Newbery for her last foray into science fiction, and her first solo novel in years will garner great interest.	Kirkus Reviews (July 1, 2025) What if almost everything you knew about your life was part of a different story? Sixth grader Nathan's existence is disrupted when something unusual happens: He grows a tail. It seems to have a mind of its own, and he names it Tuck. Nathan's parents refuse to call themselves aliens—they're "Visitors" from the planet Kast. They've had extensive training in Earth culture, language, and gestures, and they closely monitor Nathan, logging his food and controlling his activities. Nathan's best friend, Victor (who's the Calvin to Nathan's Hobbes in their favorite comic book character alter egos), knows nothing about any of this until Nathan and his parents are suddenly recalled to the Wagon, the place where they were raised on their journey to Earth. The family's visit to the Wagon—which is disguised as a storage unit facility outside Altoona, Pennsylvania—leads Nathan to suspect that something is very wrong. His discovery of the exploitation of sentient beings by a coldhearted experimenter nearly leads to his permanent expulsion from Earth. Stead's narrative focuses on the likable, gentle Nathan, but also offers perspectives from Victor, Nathan's mother, family cat Toto, Tuck, and even the villain. The pacing is superb, neatly blending family dynamics, friendship, and tween romance with page-turning mystery, adventure, and horror. Nathan's people have assumed "all Earthly skin tones"; his skin is "a few shades deeper" than that of his crush, golden-skinned Izzy. Compelling and page-turning. (Science fiction. 9-13)	
The first state of being	Kelly, Erin Entrada	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (April 1, 2024) Gr 3-5-Since voicing Kelly's 2018 Newbery Medal-awarded Hello, Universe, prolific de Ocampo (who shares Kelly's Filipino American heritage) continues as the author's male voice of choice, notably channeling ages, genders, and backgrounds with confident ease. In August 1999, 12-year-old Michael shoplifts canned peaches to augment his Y2K stockpile. His overworked single mother (who loves peaches) thinks he still needs a babysitter-16-year-old Gibby who smells like strawberries. His only other friend is Mr. Mosley, their apartment complex's maintenance manager. And then Ridge appears, asking for the date, wearing strange clothes, and speaking unfamiliar phrases. Michael and Gibby must figure out who he is, and then how to get him home. Kelly regularly interrupts her 1999 narrative with excerpts dating well into the future that de Ocampo imbues with a slight, lyrical accent, as if the English decades ahead might not be what we hear today. VERDICT De Ocampo's expert narration is also an encouraging choice for reluctant readers. © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2024) It's the summer of 1999. Twelve-year-old Delawarean Michael has worries, chief among them the approach of Y2K. What if everything falls apart? Family finances are precarious, so he's amassing a stash of groceries acquired through shoplifting. Then he meets an odd new kid. Ridge appears disoriented, as well he might, as he has time-traveled there from two hundred years in the future. In transcripts of conversations and documents from that future, we discover that Ridge went rogue and time-traveled without permission, putting himself and possibly the whole history of civilization at risk. There's a technical blip that might trap the traveler at the end of the twentieth century. A time-travel plot always involves logical conundrums, and Kelly (Those Kids from Fawn Creek, rev. 3/22) neatly grounds the mind-bending what-ifs of cause, effect, and the nature of time with real, present relationships and situations, kids with a secret, and a major problem to solve. It's a well-crafted adventure surrounding a big philosophical idea with a side of middle-grade romance. The non-dystopian (although still fragile) vision of the future is tantalizing: cures for allergies and the common cold, progress on plastic pollution, women taking the lead in science and technology. (But apparently teens and tweens will still drive their parents up the wall.) Sarah Ellis May/June 2024 p.142	Booklist (January 1, 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 9)) Grades 5-7. Newbery winner Kelly gives us a time-travel book that stays grounded, despite the subject matter, and draws on the power of human connection through time and space. Ridge is a teenage genius and the world's first time traveler—only, he wasn't supposed to use the device, and now he's stuck in 1999. Michael Rosario is a 12-year-old boy who is also stuck, in a way: his family struggles financially, something he blames himself for; as Y2K approaches, his anxiety leads him to doomsday prepping in a less-than-legal way; and his only friend is his babysitter, whom he has a huge crush on. Ridge may be trapped in time, but Michael is trapped in his own head, and when the two meet, Michael must either betray his new friend's trust or finally push aside his own fears and learn what it means to "do better tomorrow." This quiet book with a solid emotional core will be a treat for readers who love stories about found family and bravery, as well as those who would empathize with Michael's anxieties about the unknown future.	
The forbidden stone	Abbott, Tony	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (July 1, 2014) Gr 4-7-Wade Kaplan receives a coded message from his Uncle Henry, who dies suddenly soon after sending it. Wade, his dad, and three friends attend Uncle Henry's funeral in Germany and find more mysterious clues left by him. The kids and their dad are launched on an overseas adventure with mysteries and danger at every turn. It turns out that the clues are keys to finding seven relics; once they are all found, they will reveal the secret Copernicus Legacy. Unfortunately, members of an ancient and sinister society are after the seven relics as well, and Wade and his group soon find themselves in a race for their lives. -MacLeod Andrews's narration captures the thrill of the adventure, creating unique voices for each character. Many of the places and names are in German and Italian. Andrews's European accents are wonderful, but young listeners unused to listening to them may find it difficult at times to keep up with the fast-paced story. This is the first in a series that is bound to please fans of the "39 Clues" series and the "Century Quartet."-Terri Norstrom, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL (c) Copyright 2014. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (October 15, 2013 (Vol. 110, No. 4)) Grades 4-7. Right before Wade's uncle Henry, an astronomy professor in Berlin, meets a suspicious and untimely demise, he sends Wade's dad a coded e-mail. Using an antique star map Uncle Henry gave Wade for his birthday years earlier, Wade and his dad, along with Darrel, Lily, and Becca, unlock the first in long sequence of puzzles, leading them to Berlin, Bologna, Rome, and all around the world. As they dig deeper into the clues, they discover a hidden history of Nicolaus Copernicus, including 12 relics that are protected by guardians who make sure they stay out of the wrong hands. Unfortunately for Wade and his friends, those wrong hands are hot on their tail. Wade and his friends have to use all their smarts to solve the clues in this high-stakes adventure and beat their powerful pursuers to each magical relic. With word games and rebus puzzles to spare, this whirling first entry in a projected six-part series from Abbott (City of the Dead, 2011) has international intrigue, fast-paced action, entertaining characters, and a healthy helping of science history. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Best-selling Abbott is getting the usual—signings, tours, website tie-ins—but the kicker is a sweepstakes for a trip to New York City for a real-life scavenger hunt led by the author.	Kirkus Reviews starred (November 1, 2013) Four precocious preteens and a distracted astrophysicist travel to Europe to unravel a mystery that has already claimed several lives. The arrival of a coded email reveals that 12-year-old Wade Kaplan's antique star map is not just a beautiful artifact, but a key. Unfortunately, as Wade, his astrophysicist father and his stepbrother, Darrell, discover, the map is only the first of many clues. The three would-be adventurers are joined by Wade's technophile cousin, Lily, and her bookish friend, Becca. The five follow the clues to Berlin, where Dr. Kaplan discovers that he is the only remaining member of the Asterias, a group run by his murdered mentor. The academic quest quickly becomes deadly as a ruthless group competes for the 12 hidden relics that can save the world and unlock the Copernicus Legacy. Filled with riddles and ciphers, this first of 12 installments will keep readers intellectually stimulated as well as entertained. The stepbrothers' bond, a budding crush and a mystery that plays off of real historical figures and facts make this more than a pedestrian whodunit. With engaging characters, a globe-trotting plot and dangerous villains, it is hard to find something not to like. Equal parts edge-of-your-seat suspense and heartfelt coming-of-age. (Mystery. 8-12)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The forest of a thousand eyes	Hardinge, Frances	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (July 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-Feather lives in a world where a haunting and hungry Forest has taken over. Living in a part of a crumbling Wall that extends to an unknown ocean, Feather and her community work to stay safe from the encroaching Forest. When Feather finds she must venture out into the unknown to retrieve her community's precious spyglass, she does not know what will be in store for her along the crumbling Wall. Feather travels with her pet scaled ferret, Sleek, avoiding the dangers of the Forest. Along the way, she meets other communities living along the Wall and finds she is more tenacious than she thought when she began her journey. In her second highly illustrated novel, Hardinge delivers a dystopian tale that nevertheless uplifts beauty, resilience, and the notion that people are stronger together than they are as individuals. With gorgeous illustrations throughout, this story weaves imagery and narrative to create a haunting middle grade adventure. VERDICT Readers who love fantasy and adventure will be drawn to Feather and the dangers of a menacing and destructive Forest and crave more details about the communities Feather encounters.-Rebekah J. Buchanan © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2025) Hardinge and Gravett pair up again (Island of Whispers, rev. 7/24) in a short, atmospheric tale told through Hardinge's skillful fairy-tale prose and Gravett's art, which intertwines, illuminates, and sometimes takes over pages altogether. The tale evokes mystery and danger, this time amongst humans whose stature is now comparatively tiny next to the surrounding wilds. Feather and her community live inside the Wall, a decaying stone structure that snakes away from their home in two directions. Their enemy is the Forest, "pushing forward like an army" with its rampant, savage growth and the hazardous creatures it hosts. It's Feather's task as a gatherer to forage outside the Wall; when a stranger steals the community's valuable spyglass from her, she embarks on a quest to retrieve it. Her discoveries of other settlements along the Wall alert her to the possibilities of cooperation, trade, and shared technology. In this quasi-post-apocalyptic story, a travelogue of sorts, nature is the enemy more than the provider, threatening to invade, dismantle, and subsume humans and their hard-won homes. Softly shaded illustrations emphasize the natural world's overwhelming magnitude to Feather, sometimes in close-up views of insects and birds; sometimes opening out to expansive vistas; sometimes dissolving into impressionistic flecks of light and greenery. Deirdre F. Baker September/October 2025 p.65	Booklist starred (July 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 21)) Grades 3-7. The Forest creeps steadily forward, and with it comes deadly creatures, poisonous pollen, strangling vines, and clawing roots. At Greyman's Gate, residents wage a daily battle against the foliage's encroachments up the towering stone wall on which they live. Nervous energy propels Feather down the Wall on this day, not to forage as she should but to deliver a spyglass to a stranger (the first she's ever met) named Merildun, who has promised to teach Feather how to draw a map of the land beyond her home. Her naivety is rewarded with a treacherous shove from the Wall's ledge and the theft of her community's precious spyglass. Miraculously, Feather's fall is broken by a tree, and she and her scaled ferret, Sleek, manage to scramble back onto the Wall before setting off after the perfidious Merildun. As they did in Island of Whispers (2024), this creative duo fashions a slender, atmospheric tale that accomplishes much in its small page count. Hardinge's evocative prose shares space with Gravett's detailed black-and-white drawings that are fittingly accented with green, and together they build a world that effortlessly takes root in the reader's imagination. As Feather's breathless adventure unfolds, she encounters the Forest's sinister nature alongside eye-opening discoveries that make the journey worthwhile. Small but sophisticated, this dark fantasy will entice reluctant readers and genre fans alike.	
The girl who fell to Earth	Forde, Patricia	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (October 15, 2023 (Vol. 120, No. 4)) Grades 5-8. Fourteen-year-old Aria lives on an advanced planet ruled by science, where technology can prevent any disease, slow aging, and even stop death. But after accidentally seeing her DNA under a microscope, Aria finds out she's partially human—an inferior species. Reeling from this discovery, Aria is sent to accompany her dad on a secret mission to eradicate Earth—a "shadow planet" populated by the humans whom Aria's people run experiments on. Aria has been told that humans don't have feelings or form attachments because they live such short lives, but what she sees on Earth is different. When the mission goes terribly wrong, Aria is left alone on Earth to survive, find out who she really is, and get home to tell her planet that they are making a terrible mistake. Aria's experience on Earth is vivid and believable, though more details of her home world would have made this even stronger. For any reader who is fascinated by the idea of alien civilizations, this book has a magical feel that will spark wonder.	Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2023) A half-human teen from the planet Terros faces a dilemma when she's sent on a mission to destroy Earth's humans. Though Terrosians have engineered their DNA to near perfection, 14-year-old Aria Evangular is unusually susceptible to such "glitches" as allergies, fever, and headache. Aria's DNA looks completely different from that of her classmates, and she's horrified to discover that her maternal DNA is human. Created by Terrosian scientists 1,000 years ago and carefully observed ever since, humans are considered filthy and primitive. They're even destroying their own home, which Terrosians dub the Shadow Planet; soon, human-driven climate change will render it uninhabitable. When Aria's assigned to join her father on a mission to the Shadow Planet, she learns Dad's been tasked with releasing a virus in Dublin. It will eventually kill all humans… including, perhaps, Aria herself. But the virus isn't the only danger; a hidden enemy is watching Aria. Can she save herself and her new human friends? While certain plot elements are too convenient, and the characters sometimes feel like mere vehicles for concepts, Forde gives readers much to ponder; realistically, there are no easy answers. Terrosians' prejudice toward humans reflects all-too-human racism and xenophobia—which Aria, who's brown-skinned (like all Terrosians) and assumes a Rajasthani Indian persona in Ireland, also encounters. Aria's growth is believable and poignant, and readers will especially sympathize with her yearning to belong. Most human characters are white. Suspenseful and thought-provoking. (Science fiction. 9-13)		
The Gray	Baron, Chris	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (April 15, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 16)) Grades 5-8. Thirteen-year-old Sasha deals with generalized anxiety and panic attacks, which he has dubbed “The Gray.” They get worse when he spends too much time on his electronic devices, so his concerned parents decide a device-free month upstate with his great-aunt Ruthie will be a tonic. Sasha disagrees: “This will be the worst summer ever.” Nevertheless, country, here he comes. Happily, once there he quickly makes a friend in Ivy; unhappily, he runs afoul of a band of bullies, from whom he is rescued by a mysteriously taciturn, solitary boy named Eli. Grateful, Sasha tries to befriend the boy, who is a year older, but is rejected. So he hires Eli as his bodyguard and agrees to help him at the horse ranch where the older boy works, trying to tame a wild horse called—wait for it—The Gray. Baron's often-quiet story is well-plotted, and the characters are empathetic, especially Eli. The theme, change, is well-handled and perhaps will change readers as much as it does Sasha in the end.	Kirkus Reviews (April 1, 2023) A 13-year-old boy learns to cope with anxiety serious enough that it sends him to a place he calls the Gray. Sasha's parents and doctor think his obsession with video games is exacerbating his mental health issues, so they send him to spend a month with his Aunt Ruthie in upstate New York, where Sasha's aunt and uncle used to run a Jewish summer camp. Now Uncle Lou is dead, and the grounds of Camp Akiva sit empty and abandoned. Sasha tries hard to lean in to new experiences like riding a horse and learning martial arts. After being persistently bullied by one of the neighborhood kids, he asks Eli, another troubled boy, to be his bodyguard, leading to a tentative friendship and the recognition that Eli is suffering too. There's a side plot with a horse called the Gray that is a bit unclear in its purpose. Many plot elements are clunky in execution, and some of the characters feel flat or contrived. However, the central idea—that, since water can slowly change a rock, any person on Earth can also change, a concept connected to Uncle Lou's beloved story from the Talmud about Akiva and the Stone—is one of enormous importance. Baron also gets props for his sympathetic and evenhanded depiction of anxiety and the many different ways to treat it, from in-the-minute breathing exercises to appropriate medication. Important and worthy despite some flaws in the storytelling. (author's note) (Fiction. 9-14)	Publishers Weekly (April 17, 2023) Prescribed a device-free summer to mitigate his generalized anxiety condition and occasional panic, which take him to a misty, distorted world he calls "the Gray," 13-year-old New Yorker Sasha steels himself for a month upstate. He'll be visiting his widowed aunt, Ruthie, near the closed-down Jewish summer camp she and late Uncle Lou used to run. Beset by town bullies and memories of his late uncle, and feeling unmoored without his video games, Sasha experiences anxiety spikes and sensory overwhelm. Connecting with nature at the old camp and revisiting Uncle Lou's Talmudic stories coaxes him to decompress, however, and he opens up to new activities and budding friendships that challenge his assumptions about others and reveal the benefits of change. Baron (The Magical Imperfect) intricately captures teen friendship dynamics, interweaving quiet suspense by gradually divulging a pivotal, dark moment in the town's recent past. Sensory-rich settings and viscerally imagined depictions of anxiety manifest an immersive world without pulling punches, carving a hopeful path for Sasha's mental health management. An author's note shares Baron's lived experience with anxiety. Characters cue as white; Sasha and his family are Jewish. Ages 10-14. Agent: Rena Rossner, Deborah Harris Agency. (June)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The greatest kid in the world	Anderson, John David	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (October 20, 2023) Gr 3-7-Life offers very few second chances or opportunities to make amends. Twelve-year old troublemaker Ezekiel "Zeke" Stahls does not even realize he needs to atone until he is offered an exclusive spot in the Greatest Kid in the World competition. This competition is sort of like "America's Got Talent," where videos capture a week's worth of greatness and viewers log in to vote. Zeke, an endearing yet unrepentant prankster, plans to scheme his way into winning the contest (and its impressive prize) through trickery. But as the competition gets more serious, Zeke finds himself growing up and getting honest about who he is, and how his behavior affects the people who love him. Anderson crafts a prankster with a heart of gold desperately seeking attention and some joie de vivre. This text could be used in social-emotional lessons about family dynamics, guilt, grief, and how certain friend groups negatively impact decision-making. Rambunctious middle schoolers will be drawn to Zeke's humor and high jinks. VERDICT Although resembling Gordon Korman's Restart and Ungifted, Anderson's latest aims to infuse more kindness in the world by recognizing how one's actions impact others.-Laura Dooley-Taylor © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2023) Twelve-year-old Zeke Stahler learns that he is a finalist in the "Greatest Kid in the World" contest. Zeke is pretty sure it's a mistake -- as are his sister, mother, and friends. Although he's whip smart and equipped with a great imagination, Zeke's penchant for outlandish pranks (think creating a zipline from his roof with a ladder, an extension cord, and a tennis racket) keeps him in constant trouble at home and school. But when he finds out that the contest's grand prize is ten thousand dollars, he thinks of his overworked mother trying to support their cash-strapped family, and of the air conditioner that isn't working and the LEGO set his younger brother so desperately wants. Oh, and there's also an all-expense-paid trip to Hawaii thrown in for the contest winner. Zeke decides to go for it. Less about the outcome of the contest and more about Zeke's self-discovery, this novel raises a powerful question: what is the measure of an individual? Anderson (Riley's Ghost, rev. 1/22) subtly drops hints about the family's earlier life and the situation of Zeke's now-absent father, asking readers to infer the circumstances. As advice comes from many characters, Zeke tries to decide what makes a great kid; readers may want to determine that for themselves. Betty Carter September/October 2023 p.67	Booklist (November 1, 2023 (Online)) Grades 4-7. Twelve-year-old Zeke lives with his mother, his older sister, and his younger brother. More than three years after Dad's death in an accident, the family is barely getting by, financially and emotionally as well. Generally considered a smart, creative, mischievous boy with a liking for stunts and pranks, even Zeke thinks it's ludicrous when he is named a finalist in "the Greatest Kid in the World competition." The process of being filmed by a cameraman for several days makes Zeke question his enjoyment of risky challenges and reflect more on his actions. Maybe he's endangering his adoring brother. Maybe he's being unfair to Jackie. Almost certainly, he's letting his mother down. What kind of person does he really want to be? The author of Ms. Bixby's Last Day (2016), Posted (2017), and Riley's Ghost (2022), Anderson portrays a middle-school kid with problems as well as untapped resources that can help him pull through. The novel's premise and the understated wit of Zeke's engaging first person narrative make this title easy to booktalk and rewarding to read.	
The incredibly human Henson Blayze	Barnes, Derrick	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (September 12, 2025) Gr 6 Up-Barnes makes his middle grade debut with a masterly and searing account of a Black teen football prodigy. Henson Blayze is such a phenomenal athlete that he is starting and starring on the high school varsity team, despite only being 13. He is worshipped wherever he goes and treated like royalty in his small Mississippi town; treatment that, thankfully, does not corrupt Henson's devotion to his family's vineyard, father, and young neighbor, whom he treats like a little brother. However, when a vicious racist attack occurs, Henson learns of his community's true thoughts about his value as a Black boy, and he must choose between entertaining the masses and standing up for justice. Barnes includes riveting historical storytelling elements, light magical realism, and an ample amount of truth about the treatment of Black people in the United States, especially in the sports and entertainment industry. VERDICT This powerful tale of race and American culture and history seamlessly weaves a popular middle grade topic, football, with crucial lessons about justice and humanity for tween and younger teens. This is Barnes at his best and is a required purchase for middle school libraries.-Kate Olson © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2025) Thirteen-year-old Henson Blayze is about to start eighth grade and, as his friend Menkah tells him, "The whole town, the whole state of Mississippi has been waiting on you." He'll be playing football with the high school team; his mostly white town of Great Mountain has never before had a Black athlete to pin their hopes on, but now they have "a 'Negro' of their own." And it is a charmed first day -- adoring students, special food, an exclusive area in the lunchroom, even an ode written to him by last year's class president. But the head of the cafeteria, Mrs. Pendegrass, a Black woman, warns him: "Watch yourself, Henson. Ya hear? When they start acting like this -- and I done seen it before -- it never ends well. Just protect yourself, baby." Barnes creates something bigger than a traditional sports novel with an effective combination of well-realized characters, a contemporary setting rooted in history, and mythic elements that lend a transcendent feel. Especially well drawn is Henson's internal conflict: he loves football but doesn't want to feel "owned" by white fans; he loves his father and the heritage of the Blayze land, but being the one to carry on the family legacy feels claustrophobic when you want to find own your place in the world. By book's end, readers will feel that Henson will figure it out. A memorable story (with a powerful opening author's note) that takes a strong stand for true history. Dean Schneider November/December 2025 p.61	Booklist (August 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 22)) Grades 6-9. Henson Blayze, football phenom, is preparing for his first game on the high-school varsity football team, despite only being in eighth grade himself. But when Henson finds out his friend has been beaten by police during the game, he decides to leave at halftime—to the great displeasure of the predominantly white crowd. Denied the entertainment they expected, the town quickly goes from treating Henson as a local hero to subjecting him to acts of racism. The idea of the Black male as entertainment and being seen as belonging to white people is at the forefront of the book, which Barnes speaks to in his preface. Barnes also harnesses conventions of tall tales, sprinkling exaggerated accounts of town history through the main story and casting Henson as a new African American folk hero, whose prowess on the football field is almost supernatural. Intense mentions of racist language, actions, and police brutality will make this a difficult read for many, and younger readers might benefit from a guided discussion to grasp Barnes' elevated social commentary. A unique, powerful tale.	
The last bookwanderer	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The last tree town	Turley, Beth	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (April 15, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 16)) Grades 4-7. On Cassi's first day of seventh grade, her sister, Daniella, begins high school. Cassi joins the Math Olympics team, befriends a new classmate, and struggles with the fact that her looks don't reflect her Puerto Rican heritage. Meanwhile, although the sisters are members of a warm extended family, Daniella has begun to withdraw from everyone after the girls' grandfather was moved into a nursing home. Cassi tries to understand her sister's troubles and even stoops to reading her diary. In the spring, a climax brings help for Daniella, who is dealing with depression, and hope for both sisters. The author of If This Were a Story (2018), Turley creates a cast of well-defined, often colorful characters and an intertwined set of relationships. Well organized and well paced, Cassi's first-person narrative will engage readers from the start, and the inclusion of excerpts from Daniella's diary creates a dual perspective that makes the story more complex, yet more understandable. A rewarding chapter book.	Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2020) Seventh grade has brought many changes in the life of 12-year-old Cassi, and she must figure out how to be herself through them all. Daniella, Cassi's older sister, has started high school and gone from being her best friend to a sullen and withdrawn stranger around the house. Her beloved Buelo has dementia and must now reside in a nursing home. Cassi has also become aware—and bothered by the realization—that though she feels very much connected to her Puerto Rican background on her mother's side, others do not readily recognize the white, red-headed girl's identity as Latinx (she gets her coloring from her Irish American father). On the other hand, this year she has qualified for Math Olympics, her best and favorite activity. And she's made a friend in Aaron, a new, white student in school and a fellow member of the Math Olympics team. It is from Aaron's story that the book gets its title (his father is writing a memoir about living in towns named for trees). Cassi's character is well developed, making this first-person narration the ring true, but the other characters in the story are not as fully formed. Ironically, at times it is difficult to decide if Turley's handling of Cassi's looks reinforces or dispels the myth that Latinx people have a specific, definable appearance. The book ends on a hopeful note that does not trivialize the hurdles this smart young character faces. A sensitive story of family, friendship, and personal growth. (Fiction. 10-13)		
The longest night of Charlie Noon	Edge, Christopher	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (August 1, 2020) Gr 3-7-Once upon a time, three children got lost in the woods. Except this story isn't a fairy tale, and time is the problem. Charlie and Dizzy are on an adventure to find the spy who leaves messages in the woods. Johnny is there to bully Charlie and Dizzy. They quickly discover that the ciphers are not the only mysteries. Straight paths lead in circles, the sun sets hours before it should, and the stars appear in the wrong places. The adventure turns into a nightmare where time follows its own rules. The author explains on the first page that "once upon a time" does not exist. The reader may think he's just being clever, but it is in that framework that the rest of the story twists and turns. The mystery gets more intense as the children venture deeper into the forest. Violent storms, disappearing bridges, and visions of the future add to their confusion. There is no anticipating what will come next. Once the action starts, it accelerates until the very end. VERDICT Readers will find it difficult to put down this imaginative book. Highly recommended.-Julie Overpeck, Gardner Park Elem. Sch., Gastonia, NC © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (August 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 22)) Grades 4-7. Edge has a penchant for integrating advanced scientific concepts into his books, and here he works Einstein's theory of special relativity into the fabric of a creepy, surreal tale of three kids lost in the woods. Moving to the country has been challenging for Charlie Noon, whose only friend now is spacey Dizzy Heron. One afternoon, Dizzy persuades Charlie to help investigate a coded message he found in the woods, but their trek is unexpectedly interrupted by Johnny Baines, the class bully. Among the trees, things grow strange, as familiar paths suddenly lead in new directions and night falls preternaturally fast. Fears of a child-eating monster dog their steps, as more cryptic messages warn the threesome of an approaching storm. Readers may be confused as Edge plays with time as a construct, further explained in an author's note, but this doesn't alienate; rather, it puts them on equal footing with the story's bewildered characters. As they muddle through, themes of friendship and individual choice prevail, and code cracking provides an extra hook for inquisitive minds.	Kirkus Reviews starred (May 15, 2020) Lost in the woods beyond their English village, three schoolmates spend a terrifying night during which the boundaries of time dissolve. Eleven-year-old Charlie and her friend Dizzy set off for an afternoon, searching for "Old Crony," who left the secret messages Dizzy found in the woods—or so their classmate Johnny Baines has claimed. Instead, frightened by Johnny's masquerade as a bloodied monster, they run blindly into the trees. Shortly, all three are lost in what is suddenly a trackless, endless forest amid a fearsome storm. Using science theories about time, a quotation from T.S. Eliot, secret messages, and elements of quest-patterned fantasy, Edge creates a historical thriller set in 1933 in a realistically detailed natural setting. The author of The Infinite Lives of Maisie Day (2019) and other time-bending titles populates this tale with a tomboy (11-year-old Charlie loathes her real name, Charlotte), nature-loving Dizzy, and mean boy Johnny Baines, "the toughest kid in school." Dizzy has light brown skin and a "lolloping walk" thanks to an early bout with polio; the other two are likely white. Charlie's first-person present-tense narrative is suspenseful, ending with welcome relief. "We can change the world," Charlie says, as they emerge the next morning. A final chapter summarizes their later lives: how they were, indeed, changed by the events of that night and their contributions in World War II. A gripping, thought-provoking adventure to read and discuss. (Historical thriller. 10-14)	
The lost fairy tales	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (May 1, 2020) Gr 5-7-In this series sequel, Tilly and her friend Oskar try to rescue lost fairy tales, a particular challenge because they are changeable stories based on oral traditions. Luckily, Tilly and Oskar both come from families of bookwanderers, meaning they can travel back and forth between the real world and the world of fiction. Tilly's grandmother has even bookwandered into fairy tales and knows about mapping stories given her past work in a map room of the Underlibrary, a hidden magical library. Bookwandering becomes fraught with difficulties as Enoch Chalk, a renegade Source (fictional) character, is still missing and Amelia, the Head Librarian of the Underlibrary, is losing her job. Her replacement, Melville Underwood, immediately begins to limit bookwandering. Underwood's shadowy past and hints of danger intrigue Tilly and Oskar, who bookwander in secret. As they morph inside stories, book magic happens and the text transmogrifies too. As gateways between books appear, plot holes open and book magic leaks. VERDICT This series is made for book-lovers and attests to the power and importance of stories.-Lisa Gieskes, Richland County Public Library, Columbia, SC © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (March 15, 2020) Why is the new head of the Underlibrary cracking down on bookwandering? After Enoch Chalk escaped into fiction in series opener The Bookwanderers (2018), the old Head Librarian was disgraced. Her replacement, the smarmy demagogue Melville, begins his tenure with a bang: He forbids Oskar and Tilly from bookwandering, bans Tilly's whole family from the British Underlibrary, and implements tracking measures to locate every bookwanderer. Oskar and Tilly are ready to battle the new regime, and they don't understand the wariness of Tilly's grandparents, who warn them to obey the new rules. When they disobey the adults' dire warnings and enter a book of fairy tales, they discover horrible dangers. Fairy-tale characters are dissolving into black ooze or vanishing altogether. Oskar's kidnapped into Rapunzel's story, and even Tilly, who's half-fictional on her father's side, is hard-pressed to rescue him. The fairy-tale boundaries are so corrupted that Rapunzel is besieged by countless worthless Prince Charmings—Tilly and Oskar had best find out what's wrong posthaste. Droll illustrations spice up the text, though frequent changes of typeface add distraction rather than flair. An author's note on fairy tales is insufficiently clear on the distinction between the oral tradition and original tales. The story itself is clearer on this point, which is lucky, as fairy tales' having no original source edition is key to the adventure. Oskar has brown skin; Tilly (and most other human characters) seems to be white. Winsomely harking back to the oldest children's classics, this has special appeal for romantic bibliophiles. (Fantasy. 9-11)		
The map of stories	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The other side of tomorrow	Cho, Tina	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (November 1, 2024) Gr 5 Up-Yunho and Myunghee live very different lives in North Korea in 2013. While 10-year-old Yunho spends his days on the brink of starvation, scavenging for scrap iron in the heat, 11-year-old Myunghee goes to sleep with a full belly and K-pop DVDs hidden beneath her bed. Soldiers lurking everywhere around them provide a common link between the two children, as the oppression of North Korean citizens is evident via both characters. Myunghee saves Yunho's life at a public execution, and when they find each other again in China, Yunho and his omma take Myunghee with them as they travel the Asian Underground Railroad with a group of North Korean refugees. Safe houses, prison stays, enduring interrogations, and escaping the work camp pay off for the team that sticks together to fight for freedom. This must-read graphic novel will open readers' eyes to the reality of oppression in North Korea in the 21st century. Cho's vibrant, elegant writing style beautifully captures the pain, fear, courage, and resilience of the characters featured in this text. Lee's illustrations greatly enhance the text's mood and capture both the courageous adventure of a lifetime and the spirit of a community willing to risk their lives to give those seeking freedom a fighting chance. VERDICT This gut-wrenching story of hope and resilience needs to find its way to all readers' hands.-Angie Jameson © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2025) In this intense and moving comic, we follow two North Korean refugees -- Yunho, a shy, thoughtful boy; and Myunghee, a music-loving girl -- on a harrowing year-long trek through mountains, cities, and jungles. The story opens in 2013 and unfolds in diary-like alternating chapters in lyrical language, starting with daily hardships under the brutal communist regime -- famine, hard labor, the threat of constant spying, and deadly consequences for rule-breakers. Instead of attending school, Yunho scavenges for scrap metal, while orphaned Myunghee sells foraged vegetables. After witnessing a public execution, the strangers-turned-friends flee on foot into China, eventually reuniting with Yunho's mother and following an underground network of guides to help them evade the police and military. Life on the run is dangerous -- the trio is captured and put into prison; their escape through the jungle to Laos is full of peril, and their crossing into Thailand is almost derailed by a corrupt border guard. Despite the bleak circumstances, Cho's characters grow emotionally though exposure to the outside world, kindness from strangers, and awakening religious faith. Lee's detailed, cinematic digital illustrations vividly convey the refugees' journey. Ghostly pale orange and gray scenes with occasional color flashes for positive experiences (like a full meal or a K-pop song) gradually brighten until the trio reaches their new home in California. An endnote includes information on North Korea's history and repressive government. Michelle Lee March/April 2025 p.65	Booklist starred (October 15, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 4)) Grades 5-8. On his tenth birthday, Junho remembers his beloved mother: two years ago, she escaped North Korea, promising, “We’ll fly to freedom together one day.” Meanwhile, 11-year-old Myunghee has already learned the “secrets of survival: trading and bribery” in order to keep herself and her fragile great-aunt alive. The children will meet eight days later, bearing witness to the utter horror of a public execution—which includes Junho’s uncle. That night, they both flee separately. Junho reunites with his mother; Myunghee is sold into slavery. One month later, their paths cross again on a snowy Chinese street, entwining their futures through a dangerous odyssey across countries and continents. Yes, Cho’s graphic novel in verse is an extraordinary dual-voiced narrative, but what makes this title unforgettable is phenomenal, Ignatz-winning artist Lee’s (In Limbo, 2023) breathtaking artwork. Their panels, with and without defined borders (as if boundaries should always be mutable) combine sharp black outlines with warm, softened color palettes that empathically and brilliantly adapt to situations: the muted grays and browns of North Korea interrupted by brightened oranges and golds signaling poignant reminders of home and family, the lightening blues suggesting hope-filled movement toward freedom, the tropical greens of welcoming havens. Even a small quibble about a somewhat convenient plot point can’t, won’t mar this masterpiece.	
The place of no stars	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author’s reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
The poisoned king	Rundell, Katherine	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (August 29, 2025) Gr 6 Up-In this follow-up to Impossible Creatures, Dragons across the Archipelago are mysteriously falling ill, and the small but mighty dragon Jacques finds his way into the human world to enlist the help of Christopher in uncovering the cause. Along the way, they discover Princess Anya who desperately needs their help. Even readers who miss Mal are sure to find brave Anya and her Gaganas inspiring. The return of Nighthand, a fierce berserker, and Irian, a brilliant part-nereid with braided hair and dark skin, adds familiarity and warmth to the plot. Here is a book where the characters are authentically flawed. They each have strengths and weaknesses that are acknowledged with respect. While the challenging vocabulary and abrupt transitions between scenes can feel forced, the expressive prose delivers powerful themes about the dangers of greed and the importance of autonomy. Whimsical black-and-white visual elements, a detailed map, and descriptive bestiary work together to enhance the text, creating an immersive experience. Rundell weaves a fast-paced narrative of revenge, friendship, and love set against a backdrop of beautifully constructed worlds. VERDICT Highly recommended for readers who loved Impossible Creatures and are looking for that gateway back to the mythical Archipelago.-Claire Covington © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2025) When Christopher Forrester returns to the Glimouria Archipelago, conditions could not be more dire: the ancient, wise dragons are dying, and the dragon Sarkany, on whose back Christopher flew in Impossible Creatures (rev. 9/24), has sent for his help. For Anya, Princess of the Island of Dousha, the tragedy is more immediate: her grandfather the king has been poisoned, her dear father has been accused of the murder, and her uncle Claude's soldiers have been ordered to kill her and make her death look natural. Christopher rescues her, and although their quests turn out to be connected, their troubles seem nearly insurmountable. Into a story rife with mythical beings -- including sphinxes, unicorns, manticores, and crow-like gaganas that are Anya's devoted companions; all rendered in the illustrations with Art Nouveau-esque flair -- Rundell drops passages of almost crystalline beauty. Her strengths in relating her characters' inner lives engage reader sympathies in an iron clasp. Star-crossed lovers the Berserker Nighthand and nereid scientist Irian return, making an unexpected but apt contribution at the wrenchingly emotional climax. Rundell's ability to render the nobility and pathos of the human experience will take readers on a profoundly affecting journey that they will remember long after the book is closed. Anita L. Burkam November/December 2025 p.77	Kirkus Reviews starred (July 1, 2025) Following the events of Impossible Creatures (2024), a devoted Guardian teams up with a brave princess to fight her power-hungry uncle and save the Archipelago’s dragons from a strange new threat. Jacques the dragon summons Christopher Forrester back to the Archipelago from the human world: Dragons are dying, and no one knows why. Meanwhile, on the island of Dousha, Princess Anya’s grandfather, King Halam, has been murdered, and her father accused—though she knows he’s innocent. When Christopher and Anya take refuge on the islet of Glimt, the Berserker Nighthand helps them see how their twin missions to save the dragons and free Anya’s father are connected. They work together to create an antidote for the poison that’s killing the dragons and to keep Anya and her father safe from her murderous uncle. Meanwhile, Nighthand and Irian, the part-nereid ocean scholar, pursue their own important secret mission. Divided into three parts—“Castle,” “Dragons,” and “Revenge”—and containing elements of fairy tales, fantasy, and Shakespeare, this story continues the storyline established in the series opener, yet because it introduces new characters and obstacles, it could also stand alone. Dark-blond Anya (“five feet tall and all of it claws”) is a match for white-presenting Christopher, who, though he still misses Mal, finds that “it made a difference to have someone to move through the world with again. A friend changed the feel of the universe.” Mackenzie’s delicate, otherworldly art adorns the text. A spectacular return to a magical world. (map, bestiary) (Fantasy. 10-15)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The right call	Greenwald, Tommy	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (May 9, 2025) Gr 6 Up-Cal Klondike is only 15, but his pitching talent in the local youth baseball league has everyone talking. Fans, his coach, and even college and professional scouts are amazed at how fast he can throw the ball over the plate. Cal once played multiple sports, but with the encouragement of his family and coach he begins attending a high school baseball academy and makes baseball his exclusive sport. As his strikeout numbers continue to mount, so does the pressure. Cal's father becomes obsessed with his son's future career and starts to challenge the calls at home plate. Things worsen when an umpire suffers a serious head injury during an altercation with his father after a game, devastating Cal and making him rethink his relationship with the sport. The story is cleverly told with audio transcripts of conversations, text messages, and news stories written by a student reporter. Important themes, such as forgiveness and second chances, bring the story to a satisfying conclusion. Most importantly, young readers will learn that even a "right call" doesn't guarantee a positive outcome down the road. Sports enthusiasts, especially baseball players, will enjoy the characters and perhaps identify with the pressure to succeed outside the classroom. Parents, teachers, and coaches will appreciate the subtle reminders that young athletes should develop their skills slowly to avoid serious injuries. VERDICT A great purchase for libraries who own other Greenwald titles or who are looking to expand their sports fiction collections.-Anne Jung-Mathews © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (March 1, 2025) A gifted young pitcher proves better able to handle the pressure to succeed than his father does in this companion to Game Changer (2018). Greenwald again addresses themes of violence in youth sports—but this time, he focuses as much on how inflated expectations can lead to ugly conflicts between parents and officials as on the danger of injuries to athletes. Fifteen-year-old Cal Klondike, who presents white, is thrilled to be a dominating pitcher for the Walthorne Baseball Academy team. But he winds up quitting baseball after a scary shoulder injury requires rehab, and then, a few months later, his intense, pushy dad assaults and seriously injures umpire Henry Goshen. The tale unfolds through a mix of news stories, text exchanges, emails, free verse reveries, and trial and interview transcripts, and readers will easily follow the events and Cal's changing emotional landscape. Following the assault, the storyline settles into exploring the developing relationship between Cal and, surprisingly, Mr. Goshen, a retired Vietnam vet who bears no animus toward Cal's father. The umpire believes that people shouldn't be judged by their best or worst days, and he wisely urges the angry teen to forgive his sincerely repentant parent. Along with a shared setting, some characters from the earlier novel's supporting cast return, notably sensitive guidance counselor Mr. Rashad, who gently nudges Cal toward both articulating his feelings and perhaps even rediscovering his love for the game. A thoughtful exploration of a concerning issue. (author's note, further reading) (Fiction. 10-13)		
The secret diary of Mona Hasan	Hussain, Salma	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (July 1, 2022) Gr 5 Up-"All this time, I had thought wars happened in far-off places to far-off people," speaks to the nuanced voice and clarity of Hussain's fictional narrator. Set during Operation Desert Storm in the United Arab Emirates and told in a perspective like Anne Frank's The Diary of a Young Girl, this novel for middle grade readers shares the daily thoughts and interactions of Mona, a young Muslim girl. Told over one year, Mona's voice is poignant and optimistic. She makes friends, immigrates with her family to Canada, and falls in love. This book includes excellent vocabulary development, as Mona looks up and explores words such as feminism and retaliation. Upper elementary and middle grade readers will identify with this spunky, thoughtful, 12-year-old heroine. She ends her diary with a class assignment in which she writes, "Even though I've met many great heroes, the primary guiding hero of my life that I'd like to present is myself, Mona Hasan." VERDICT Inspired by Hussain's childhood, the short vignettes of this book are perfect for reluctant readers and may spark conversations about war, Operation Desert Storm, immigration, international affairs, the Muslim religion, and school equality for girls.-Tracey S. Hodges © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Kirkus Reviews (May 1, 2022) A Dubai sixth grader finds her life and plans upended when the Gulf War breaks out and her family decides to change course. Pakistani 11-year-old Mona Hasan has big plans for the new year. It's January 1991, and among her resolutions are no longer rolling her eyes behind her parents' backs and being nicer to her little sister. She is also super curious about boys, her changing body, and the popular new girl at school. Mona pours her feelings about all these things into her diary, often writing poems about the events of the day. When Iraq invades Kuwait, her parents begin whispering about immigration, a new word she looks up—and is not pleased to learn about. The text takes readers from Dubai, on a visit to Pakistan, and then eventually to Canada, where the family settles in a small Nova Scotia town. Mona is reading Sue Townsend's The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4, which this work is clearly a tribute to. Hussain effectively captures the tone and format of the original classic: Mona's diary entries and poems are often quite moving and unintentionally hilarious. However, the book's many topics, including a creepy family friend and the boy who is Mona's first crush, at times feel underdeveloped. Mona's story is at its strongest when she's describing the intricacies of life in Dubai and the cultures and religions of its diverse populations. An ambitious novel that is both heartfelt and tongue-in-cheek. (Fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly (June 20, 2022) Twelve-year-old Pakistani Muslim Mona Hasan, who lives in Dubai, has big resolutions for 1991-such as not rolling her eyes behind her parents' back, and saving someone from danger-all of which she chronicles in her diary. "Nothing exciting ever happens in the UAE, but there is bad news happening all around us," Mona writes in a January entry and, by February, Americans have invaded and dropped bombs in Iraq, before subsequently departing. Believing that the first Gulf War is over ("except for a few chips and cracks, everything's back to normal"), Mona busies herself with pining for her crush, Waleed (a February entry features only his name, written 74 times), and trying to navigate puberty, until she overhears her parents discussing leaving the U.A.E. to avoid a shifting regime. Drawing on her own lived history, Hussain, who grew up in Dubai and emigrated to Canada as a teenager, touches on weighty topics such as racism, misogyny, and war. Mona' s voice is good-humored, and her diary entries-comprising lists, poems, and letters from supporting characters-amalgamate into a wise and introspective debut. Ages 10-14. Agent: Amy Tompkins, Transatlantic Literary. (May)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The secret of the ravens	Cacao, Joanna	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (November 1, 2023) Gr 4-8-Twins Elliot and Liza want what everyone else does: the security of home and health. But that is a farfetched dream for those without parents, living in a kingdom that doesn't care. With raven quests promising them wealth and magic at their disposal, they are prompted to take greater and greater risks until Liza gets hurt. With newfound help from a well-intentioned guard apprentice named Seb, Elliot races to gather the ingredients required by the raven's mage master. Like many fantasy graphic novels, this Filipino-inspired volume provides a safe window through which to critically analyze humanity. Specifically, Cacao paints an empathetic view of poverty through the twins' experiences. Readers can easily see how their status is not due to "laziness" but from misfortune and the failures of state and society to adequately assist its citizens. The thematic drivers of prejudice and inequality regularly push the adventure along by making the characters susceptible to manipulation and by pressuring them to try extreme solutions. While the topic is heavy, the popular middle grade-style illustrations and supportive characters infuse the tone with resilience and hope. VERDICT For those who enjoy adventures such as The Nameless City or NewsPrints, this is another illuminating graphic novel that wraps its social issues around the lives of heart-capturing characters.-Rachel Forbes © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (November 1, 2023 (Vol. 120, No. 5)) Grades 3-7. Cacao's debut graphic novel tells the tale of orphaned siblings Elliot and Liza, who live in Kawumiti Kingdom. The brother and sister live on the streets in the outskirts of the kingdom, collecting people's trash just to get by. Liza has always dreamed of a better life and persuades her brother to try their luck in Capital City. However, when they arrive, they find its residents to be pretty terrible. While in the city, they make ends meet by taking on quests from ravens and being paid in return for their spoils. During a particularly dangerous quest, Liza is poisoned, and Elliot seeks out help, but in doing so, he becomes a pawn in a mage's quest for revenge from a war that took place hundreds of years ago. Cacao's sharp artwork blends fantasy with a vaguely historical aesthetic, which cultivates plenty of atmosphere, and the pacing nicely unspools the underlying mystery about magic users. Rich backstory and exquisite illustrations give this fantasy adventure lots of appeal.	Kirkus Reviews (October 15, 2023) Impoverished twins use magic to try to escape poverty. Orphaned twins Elliot and Liza sell trash to survive. When they discover Ravens' Unkindness, a magical way to complete quests and earn money, they jump at the chance. The siblings follow the ravens to the capital of Kawumiti Kingdom, where everything is expensive, and the king is trying to get rid of the poor. They meet a boy called Seb—a member of the king's Royal Apprenticeship program—who suggests they join him. Liza is in favor, but Elliot refuses to work for a king who doesn't care about his people. The twins continue to do quests until a Titan snake poisons Liza. Elliot brings Liza to a mage in the woods, who sends him on near-impossible tasks to retrieve items for an antidote. Elliot and Seb work together, but each task brings more danger, forcing Elliot to make big sacrifices to save his sister. This action-packed, full-color graphic novel is an exciting and moving Filipino-inspired fantasy. Cacao creates an immersive world and magic system; a spell glossary lists herbs and Tagalog words. Beyond central themes of siblinghood, trust, and friendship, the story addresses war, genocide, corrupt leadership, and prejudice against the impoverished. The characters in this world have brown skin and black hair. A page-turning adventure, full of heart and charm. (map, process notes, concept art, alternate covers) (Graphic fantasy. 8-12)	
The silent thaw	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
The storyteller	Hobson, Brandon	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (May 1, 2023) Gr 3-7-Ziggy is a member of the Cherokee nation living with anxiety and still processing the grief of his mother's disappearance when he was a baby. Determined to find clues about her, Ziggy teams up with school misfit Alice to explore caves his mother once explored. Alice claims these caves are home to the Nunnehi, spirit people who may be able to offer guidance. What unfolds is a series of encounters with various magical creatures. Once Alice and Ziggy, accompanied by Ziggy's sister Moon and friend Corso, start their adventure, the novel moves at a quick pace. In each chapter readers are introduced to a new magical creature or character, but the story does not feel fragmented. On the contrary, this narrative style is reminiscent of a folklore anthology, woven together with the overarching hero's quest. In one of the final chapters, Ziggy reflects on the lessons he learned from the characters he met along the way. This reflection comes off expositional; readers will have already drawn conclusions and noted the lessons learned through his travels. VERDICT Hand to tweens who enjoy magical realism and quest stories. Ziggy's experiences with anxiety and loss will likely resonate with many.-Katharine Gatcomb © Copyright 2023. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2023) Hobson (Cherokee Nation Tribe of Oklahoma) combines elements of classic Western literature, Cherokee culture, pop culture, and the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit People to forge the thematic backbone for this fantastical adventure across the New Mexico desert. Ziggy Echota, a socially awkward Cherokee middle schooler with anxiety, is convinced that the key to finding his mother (missing since he was a baby) is somewhere in a secret desert cave. He enlists the help of classmate Alice, who claims that she's familiar with the caves and the Nunnehi (immortal spirit people) that inhabit them. The surreal journey kicks into high gear one night when Alice arrives at Ziggy's house with a talking coyote who calls himself Chupacabra. Along the way, Ziggy encounters, questions, and escapes from an assortment of offbeat characters -- including an armadillo possessed by Andrew Jackson, a fortune-telling snake, and murderous shapeshifters. Each interaction leaves Ziggy with a morsel of wisdom, leading to a difficult conclusion about his mother. The fast-paced narrative is episodic and character-driven, channeling Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as a central reference point. It is Ziggy's eccentric Grandma Moses who provides clarity at the tale's end: "Storytellers have power...We find the meaning in what's happened, and then we convey that meaning to others." A significant story full of delight and dimension. Patrick Gall July/August 2023 p.110	Booklist (February 15, 2023 (Vol. 119, No. 12)) Grades 4-6. Sixth-grader Ziggy Echota suffers from anxiety, the result of his Cherokee mother's mysterious disappearance some 10 years before. He has heard tales of the Nunnehi (spirits that tell stories and protect other Cherokees) from his grandmother and his older sister, Moon. To learn more about his mother and her demise, he asks his classmate Alice to help him find the secret caves located in the New Mexico desert near their homes that his mom loved to explore. Hobson's fantasy features a folkloric setting (Poisonberry, named for the ubiquitous red fruits lethal to non-Cherokees), a mix of real and fantastic characters (including Gus, a fiddle-playing buzzard, and an armadillo channeling Andrew Jackson), and one long night of adventures. While most chapters could stand alone as self-contained stories, and Ziggy's need to cite all the things he has learned from his adventures feels didactic, readers will be happy that he moves beyond his grief (and hopefully the anxiety it has caused him), opting instead to learn and share stories of his mother's life.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The treehouse library	James, Anna	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
The trouble with heroes	Messner, Kate	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (July 25, 2025) Gr 3-8-White seventh-grader Finn Connelly has started his summer off on the wrong foot. In danger of failing his ELA and physical education classes, being caught vandalizing an old woman's gravestone- Finn knows that grief has gotten the best of him. Now he must make restitution to the woman's family by climbing the Adirondack 46 mountain ranges, bringing along her dog Seymour. The assignments and the mountain trekking must be completed by Labor Day. But how does a middle schooler do all this with a broken heart? Messner's middle grade novel is artfully crafted in first person, giving readers a front row seat into Finn's poetry and letters detailing his thoughts on his father's life and death, while grappling with big emotions amid adolescent angst. Beautiful, factual descriptions of each mountain are moving and inspiring. These mountain hikes prove to be the right recipe for Finn to begin the difficult process of healing: "I'm starting to understand why people climb mountains on purpose. The view goes on forever, all white-cloud perfect sky, pine-tree greens and purple-mountain blue." Messner includes a note at the end describing her own journey with the Adirondack 46. VERDICT This is a must-purchase for all libraries. Finn's journey from loss to gain is both breathtaking and deeply satisfying.-Tracy Cronce © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (March/April, 2025) When seventh grader Finn Connelly is caught on a surveillance camera kicking over a headstone in a local Lake Placid cemetery, little does he know it was the grave of Edna Grace Thomas, "Queen of the High Peaks," one of the first women 46ers: those who have climbed all forty-six Adirondack High Peaks. Edna's daughter, Kelly, sets Finn on a mission of atonement: to climb all forty-six mountains in memory of her mother. She suspects that Finn can use what the peaks offer: "The power to heal. / To help a troubled soul find peace. / Make a broken person whole." Finn begins a hero's journey, accompanied by Seymour, "the most slobbery, / drooly-faced, / smelly-furred, / farty-butted dog / in the world," along with a series of 46er "trail nannies," and soon realizes that "the trouble with long hikes / is that your brain has to come with you." He has plenty of time to think about the mess he has made of his life recently and about his anger and grief over the (unprocessed) loss of his father two years earlier. Messner relates Finn's story through an animated first-person narrative and through the poems Finn must write for a school project, mixing in text messages with his mother, letters to his English teacher, cookie recipes, and more. This verse novel covers a lot of ground, literally and metaphorically, and thoughtfully grapples with the big ideas of life. Dean Schneider March/April 2025 p.77	Booklist starred (April 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 15)) Grades 3-6. Finn Connelly's dad was a 9/11 hero who left big boots to fill when he died during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two years later, still consumed by anger and frustration at his loss, Finn topples a tombstone belonging to a beloved trail steward, Edna. Edna's daughter offers Finn a deal: reparations in lieu of juvie. She charges him with hiking all 46 of Edna's beloved Adirondack High Peaks this summer, and to do it with Edna's slobbery dog, Seymour, in tow. Finn sets off, carrying his unresolved grief and snacks. Long hikes with volunteer trail "nannies" offer Finn wilderness education, along with solitude to process his loss, while a summer-school poetry assignment creates an outlet for the complicated emotions Finn unravels while remembering his father. Many mountains in, Finn begrudgingly admits he "didn't mean to love it but [he does]," and he ultimately finds peace and a connection with both Edna and his dad along the trails. The dynamic story is told in accessible verse interspersed with texts, photographs, and more, while Finn's journey delicately balances humor and sadness, blending introspection and plot. Prolific author Messner, herself "a proud 46er," tenderly proffers the healing power of nature couched with obvious admiration for the mountains. A gently reflective, bittersweet, and redemptive story.	
The underground abductor : an abolitionist tale	Hale, Nathan	Upper Elementary	3-6	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The United States in World War II, 1941-1945	Collier, Christopher	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (April 1, 2002) Gr 6-10- These titles discuss political and institutional history. Changing Face focuses on two phenomena: post-World War II prosperity and the change in attitudes toward behavior. Civil rights and segregation are covered, as are the counterculture, advances in science and technology, immigration, and an aging nation. In Middle Road, the terms democrat, republican, liberal, and conservative are defined. Readers learn how these philosophies dominated and shifted during the years covered in this volume. World War II provides background on American sentiments prior to U.S. involvement in the war. The authors contend that it may have played out differently if some countries, including the U.S., had been prepared and/or willing to become involved sooner. Fascist ideology is defined. Although there is no new information in these titles, the 55-year perspective on American politics and society will interest some readers. However, occasionally the information is too brief; for example, in Changing Face, it is noted that, "today drug use is commonplace," destroying "millions of American lives." Doc Gooden and Darryl Strawberry are named as examples, but the circumstances of the damage are not mentioned, which may confuse some readers. More important, there are no footnotes for quoted matter. Clear, full-color and black-and-white photographs and drawings are well captioned. Each volume can stand alone, but readers are sometimes referred to other titles in the series for additional information. Because of this and other issues mentioned, consider these additional purchases where the need exists.-Kathleen Simonetta, Indian Trails Public Library District, Wheeling, IL Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information.	Horn Book Guide (Fall, 2002) Illustrated with period photographs, paintings, and useful maps that effectively break up the heavy blocks of text, each book in this series focuses on the major political and social themes of a specific period. The prose is clear and concise, albeit with a somewhat advanced vocabulary. The books include separate bibliographies for students and teachers. Ind. [Review covers these Drama of America History titles: The Changing Face of American Society, 1945-2000; The Middle Road; The United States in the Cold War, 1945-1989; The United States in World War II, 1941-1945.]	Book Report (March/April 2002) In their customarily engaging narrative style, the authors of these volumes offer readers a summary of important events in, and a clear picture of the scope of, American history. It's not the authors' intent to provide a comprehensive guide to the American experience, but rather to highlight significant elements of that experience. Readers who are looking for in-depth information about a given event or person will be disappointed. For example, World War II provides a brief survey of America's role in that war and the impact the conflict had on life in the United States. Illustrations are plentiful, uniformly well chosen, and include photographs, paintings, posters, and in some titles, maps. The accompanying captions are especially useful because they provide information not already discussed in the text. Young readers will find this survey of their cultural past to be easy to read and informative. Because of the lack of depth and detail, however, this series would have little value to most researchers, except for those who want to determine the connections among historical events. A time line would have been very helpful in placing events into their correct context. Bibliographies don't include Web site addresses. Recommended. Mary Elizabeth Lomax, Librarian, South High School, Omaha, Nebraska	
The vanished ones	Lucas, Chad	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (November 1, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 5)) Grades 5-8. Boys living at the Mission on the Hill on Rhodenroode Island, where they are indoctrinated in the faith, have been vanishing since the colony was founded. Any talk about these disappearances is met with scrutiny and, at times, punishment, so when Darian's fellow apprentice goes missing, the questions bubbling inside him threaten to burst. He confides in close friend—and crush—Micah, who also questions the dogma forced upon them by the Order, but when they're caught together in the attic of the library, their secret investigation into the vanishings is ended. As questions mount, Micah plans to escape the lies holding them at the Mission. Unable to let the one person he loves disappear, Darian follows Micah on a search for answers. In a world that resembles our own, Lucas builds an engaging mystery with a dash of Afrofuturism, giving a thoughtful reflection on colonialism and its effects on society. Fans of Marvel's Black Panther and stories like The Dark Crystal will enjoy this journey into the island wilds.	Kirkus Reviews (November 1, 2024) An orphan boy raised in a religious mission begins to question his existence. The strict training of the Mission on the Hill on Rhodenroode Island is all 13-year-old Darian remembers. Being the only brown-skinned boy has resulted in some bullying, but he tries to stay out of trouble. One of the few bright spots in his life is working in the village bakery. But when Gregor, the other apprentice, disappears, and the Apostle makes it clear that they shouldn't ask questions, Darian becomes alarmed. When he's unable to stop his best friend, Micah, from running away, he decides to join him on a harrowing journey. Fortunately, they're rescued by Zaide Odambo, a fearless Black girl, and her sibling, Ikebi, who take them to their community, Kyange. The boys quickly learn that everything they've been told about the lands and people outside the Mission is untrue; for one thing, the island's original name is Lagoja. Hearing of an imminent invasion of Lagoja, Darian convinces his new friends to help save the boys who are still trapped there, which leads to the discovery of the depth of the corruption of the Brothers in charge of the Mission. Drawing on the history of the role of religion in colonization, Lucas has crafted a compelling, action-filled narrative in which Darian embodies both hope and the story's central tension. A sweet romance also grows between Darian and Micah. A thoughtful depiction of youthful triumph over adult exploitation. (content advisory) (Speculative fiction. 10-14)	Publishers Weekly (December 2, 2024) One orphaned tween's restrictive religious upbringing triggers an existential epiphany in this contemplative adventure by Lucas (You Owe Me, Universe). Raised in Mission on the Hill, a faction of the Order of the Right Hand located on western Rhodenroode Island, 13-year-old Darian possesses a keen intellect and inquisitive nature, traits that initially garner praise from their wizened leader, the Apostle. But as the only resident with "deep brown skin," Darian wants to know where his own people came from; why he and his only friend Micah, a boy who speaks in sign language, were accused of "intimate fraternization"; and why members have been vanishing from the Mission without explanation. The rigid monotony of life at Mission on the Hill gives way to rollicking adventure when Micah, accompanied by Darian, flees during a storm. The novel's initially enigmatic opening turns brisk and thrilling as the boys encounter Zaide, a girl from the east with skin like Darian's. It's amid her community that Darian begins to piece together the puzzle of his lineage and uncover the truth behind his peers' disappearances. Darian and Micah's budding romance is a tender addition to this absorbing and hopeful tale. Ages 10-14. Agent: Christa Heschke, McIntosh & Otis. (Jan.)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The war of the maps	Auxier, Jonathan	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (February 28, 2025) Gr 5 Up-Auxier's latest is jam-packed with figurative language and creative wordplay, poetry, philosophy, Latin quotes, vintage sayings, and important reminders to have a critical eye. Fourteen-year-old Peter, armed with magical eyes and a sword for a hand, attempts to save the town of Haselport from being cursed to disappear on maps. Peter and his band of friends, family, and mythological creatures become pawns in the epic war between magic and reason. Characters from Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes (2011) and Sophie Quire and the Last Story Guard (2016) play roles. Although the backstory is gradually relayed, it is better to read the series sequentially. Characters like Justice Trousers are not fully explained unless readers learn about him in the second book. Comparable to other fantasies, Auxier embeds subtle repeated messages about the dangers of colonialism, whom to trust, and that characters (and readers) always have a choice, whether in riddle-solving or in life. There are many influences reflected in this book, from classic literature to Sid Meier's 1991 Civilization game. Literature teachers and librarians could use this novel in a scavenger hunt to trace all the references. VERDICT A fantastical swashbuckling adventure that provides hope for everyone to pursue the extraordinary in an ordinary world, and rewards readers with nods to many famous works. -Laura Dooley-Taylor © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (July/August, 2025) Peter Nimble and Sophie Quire (Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard and Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes) are on a rescue mission: Hazelport, Peter's home, is in trouble. But when they mistakenly crash a royal wedding, Sophie and Peter discover that the threat to Hazelport is more insidious than they'd thought: Sir Cuitous of the heinous League of Maps, with his calipers and notebooks, has been "taking the measure of things" and draining the magic from Hazelport's protective flora and fauna. Auxier's thoughtful departure from the good/bad, hero/villain paradigm shows Peter and Sophie aligning themselves separately with those they once considered opponents. Sophie responds to the wonders of scientific inquiry pursued by the League of Maps; Peter begins to understand the stories behind the Rooks, deadly child warriors. The tale is chock-a-block with characters and places old and new, but most of all with ideas political, psychological, literary, and fantastic. Engaging with ideas is "like picking a lock...When you crack an idea open, it's like a door. It reveals new paths within. New questions." There's much to feed the mind and heart here (such as that choice is the "oldest and most powerful magic"), and, in a suitable paradox, Auxier closes his story in a move both unexpected and time-honored. Deirdre F. Baker July/August 2025 p.90	Booklist (March 1, 2025 (Vol. 121, No. 13)) Grades 5-8. Two years ago, Professor Cake instructed Peter Nimble, Sophie Quire, and their motley group of companions to seek out and infiltrate the destructive League of Maps. After receiving a distressing note about his sister, Queen Pegasus Hazelgood, Peter returns to the kingdom of Hazelport and discovers that not only has magic disappeared but his sister is engaged to marry the prince of a rival kingdom—all orchestrated by League member Sir Cuitous. Meanwhile, as Peter and Sophie have been hunting for the League, the League and the Rooks (a force of young mercenaries) have been hunting them. The plot divides among Peter, Sophie, and Peg and weaves itself back together in a climactic fight with characters familiar and new. Featuring a memorable ensemble cast, the storyline explores colonization, violence, and what it means to be a leader. In this final installment of the Vanished Kingdom trilogy, Auxier delivers a nuanced narrative exploring the dichotomy between fantastical and scientific belief systems. A long-awaited finale that still manages to entice new readers.HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Peter Nimble made his debut over 10 years ago, but fans new and old will be excited to return to his world.	
Three thieves. 1,Tower of treasure	Chantler, Scott	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (February 1, 2025) Gr 5 Up-As a circus troop rolls into the kingdom of Knightsbridge, three performers-Dessa the acrobat, Topper the juggler, and Fisk the strongman-see the castle and know there will be a chance to steal from the treasury. Topper, as always, has a plan, and the entertainment of the circus itself will provide some of the distraction needed. There are three mysteries in play as well: Dessa's brother was taken when she was younger by a soldier wearing the same livery as Knightsbridge troops; the queen's Chamberlain has many secrets, some kept from even the queen herself; and Captain Drake of the Royal Dragons still longs for the peace kept by the previous king. All these threads combine to create the beginnings of a wonderful fantasy action story. Reminiscent of other books in the genre, Chantler uses archetypes but threads them through a medieval lens. Two standout sequences include a scene of the characters dealing with the traps before the treasure, and a long but exciting chase sequence showing off Dessa's acrobatic skills. This first installment lays a wonderful foundation for future volumes. VERDICT A classic action story filled with character-driven lore that will entertain middle graders and older readers, too.-Adam Fisher © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (September 15, 2010 (Vol. 107, No. 2)) Grades 3-5. With Northwest Passage (2007), Chantler proved he could balance great cartooning with a layered historical adventure. Here, he sets his sights a little lower with an appealing but incomplete-feeling first book in the Three Thieves graphic-novel series. A young tightrope walker named Dessa joins up (somewhat reluctantly) with two circus mates to stage a raid on a store of royal treasure. What follows is a nice trap-evading infiltration sequence and daring escape, but this book mostly serves to introduce the main players, including Dessa's companions—a blue-skinned, gnomish pickpocket and a huge "one-headed Ettin" (multiheaded Ettins unseen)—and a few adversaries. Chantler displays a nice grasp of visual pacing for both humor and action sequences, and his artwork is clear, confident, and richly colored. Although Dessa and her mates are only outfitted with the somewhat standard rapport of squabbling fantasy-adventure heroes, deeper character issues are hinted at. A promising start; with the groundwork now laid, we'll see where the real story goes.	Kirkus Reviews (January 15, 2025) Three young friends work together to break into the queen's treasure tower in Chantler' s fantasy graphic novel. Dessa, Topper, and Fisk work together in a traveling circus, and while they may not be related by blood, they are a family all the same. When entering Kingsbridge, the Royal City, Topper tells Dessa and Fisk his plan to break into Queen Magda's tower and steal some of the gold and treasure that she's hoarded for years. When Dessa fails to perform her tightrope act because she thinks she sees someone from her past, her boss decrees that Dessa is not allowed to return to the circus without bringing food or money to make up for the lost profits. While wandering the streets trying to come up with a plan, she runs into Topper and Fisk, who are initiating their break-in plans at the tower. Somehow, the three manage to survive the booby traps set to keep thieves away from the treasure, but Topper' s inability to wait for Dessa to finish searching for any final traps springs the biggest one of all, and they're caught by the palace guards. While Captain Drake warns them that they will each lose a hand for thievery, the queen's chamberlain, Master Greyfalcon, sentences them to death instead ("We'll display their heads in the courtyard as a warning to others"). Now, the three must escape and figure out why the chamberlain is so eager to be rid of them. In this thrilling and colorful graphic novel, suitable for a middle-grade audience, readers will enjoy the mystery and excitement of Dessa, Topper, and Fisk's adventures. The three young heroes are easy to root for, and the dilemma Captain Drake faces, caught between his empathy and his duty to the queen, makes him an intriguing possible anti-hero. Overall, this is an enjoyable read that is sure to please its audience. A colorfully illustrated, thrilling fantasy yarn perfect for middle-grade readers and up.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Three thieves. 2,The sign of the black rock	Chantler, Scott	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (November 1, 2011) Gr 5 Up-Having escaped from hanging in Tower of Treasure (Kids Can, 2010), Dessa, Topper, and Fisk hide from the queen's guard at the Black Rock Inn, where their safety is threatened by a money-grubbing innkeeper and some smugglers. While the first volume was mostly about establishing stakes and camaraderie, this one does little to continue the main plot of Dessa trying to locate her missing twin brother and his abductor. In fact, it primarily centers around the innkeep and his nefarious activities. His story, and his relationship with his wife, provides the heart of the book, which makes it an effective stand-alone volume. The artwork is clean, with mostly muted colors, making the colorful skin, hair, and tabards of the main characters and their nemeses pop out with dramatic importance. The faces are simple, but emotive, and the detailed line work in the backgrounds and costumes helps considerably in giving the fantastic world a believable dimension. The book has gentle slapstick moments, which add to its appeal. While slightly disappointing to have the overarching plot advanced so little, the story is heartfelt and moving, and helps readers become invested in the characters.-Benjamin Russell, Belmont High School, NH (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (October 15, 2011 (Vol. 108, No. 4)) Grades 4-7. This second book in the Three Thieves series, following the derring-do of Tower of Treasure (2010), presents a bottle episode of sorts. Dessa and her outlaw companions, on the run from the Queen's soldiers, spend a rainy night at a roadside inn operated by a shady proprietor and filled with smugglers and other ne'er-do-wells. Ratcheting up the tension is the fact that the soldiers hunting her are also waiting out the storm there. Touches of zany slapstick balance nicely with Dessa's continued resolve to find her lost brother, and Chantler's inviting cartooning captures it all with special aplomb.	Kirkus Reviews (July 1, 2011) A heavy thunderstorm brings a motley trio of fugitive ex-circus performers, their armored pursuers and a band of smugglers together under the roof of a greedy innkeeper in this never-a-dull-moment sequel to Tower of Treasure (2010). Complications pile on as young Dessa and her two companions-a small, irascible, bright-blue Norker and a huge, trollish Ettin-find refuge in a stable. They do so just as the owner of the adjacent inn is finishing a deal with a crew of smugglers and moments before Captain Drake and his elite troop of royal guards ride into the innyard. As in the opening episode, Chantler not only shows an ability to pack plenty of clearly defined action into his graphic panels, but also develops unusually nuanced characters through glances, gestures, subtleties of facial expression and the occasional quick flashback. In the course of a nonstop flurry of chases, captures, wild mishaps, pratfalls, acrobatic feats and narrow escapes, Dessa also picks up a cryptic clue to the whereabouts of her kidnapped twin brother and his evil captor to set up the next chapter. Readers should start with the first volume to get the characters' back stories, but here's an animated, breathlessly paced adventure that's just hitting its stride. (Graphic fantasy. 10-12)	
Thunder	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Trout fishing	Peterson, Judy Monroe	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Twin cities	Pimienta, Jose	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (August 19, 2022) Gr 6 Up-Luis Fernando and Luisa Teresa have been known as the Lu-Lu twins for their whole lives, but as the two prepare to enter middle school, Teresa wants her own identity apart from her brother. Names are only the beginning of the changes they will experience in seventh grade: new rooms, new friends, and new schools follow. Growing up in a border town in Mexicali, Mexico, in the 1990s, the twins now attend schools on opposite sides of the border. Teresa struggles to keep up with the homework, commute, and new friendships. Meanwhile, Fernando finds himself figuring out what it means to be Mexican while becoming friends with an older student who isn't the best influence. Pimienta portrays realistic sibling relationships and family dynamics. Drug use and peer pressure feature prominently as catalysts for conflict in the story. The hand-drawn, full-color illustrations complement the text, drive the story's emotion, and provide richness to the setting. An author's note offers connections to Pimienta's lived experiences and the decision to mix English and Spanish. VERDICT For fans of Alexis Castellanos's Isla to Island and Maggie Edkins Willis's Smaller Sister, this look at changing relationships and connection to identity and culture is highly recommended for middle and high school collections.-Monisha Blair © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2022) Grounded in Pimienta's experience growing up in Mexico across the border from the United States, this graphic novel explores the relationship between young teenage twins as they traverse physical, personal, and cultural borders. Teresa and Fernando are recent sixth-grade graduates in Mexicali, Mexico. With his sister's decision to attend school north of the border, change is coming, and Fernando isn't pleased. In the fall, both siblings experience their share of ups and downs (skillfully depicted through a range of cartooning techniques, such as alternating panels and mirrored layouts). Teresa struggles with the commute and the English curriculum but cultivates a strong friend group. Fernando is less interested in school but develops a friendship with the slightly older and opinionated Alex. Confrontations over shared space, autonomy, and heritage come to a head after Teresa discovers a stash of marijuana that Fernando was given by Alex. The dramatic conclusion sees the siblings reach a newfound level of closeness through open and honest communication. Penciled and inked by hand, the illustrations feature a thin, organic line and a muted, full-color palette. A consistent three-tier panel structure creates a visual rhythm that is periodically punctuated by splash pages and spreads during moments of heightened emotion. Back matter includes an author's note, a hand-drawn map, and rationale regarding the use of language throughout the book. Patrick Gall September/October 2022 p.97	Booklist (May 1, 2023 (Online)) Grades 4-7. Pimienta's Twin Cities focuses on the familiar topics of siblings struggling to get along, adjusting to middle school, and the positive and negative power of peer pressure. When twins Luis Fernando and Luisa Teresa make the decision to attend separate middle schools, much begins to drastically change in their relationships and lives. Luis Fernando, who stays in a local school in Mexicali, Mexico, struggles without his sister at his side and is somewhat resentful towards her for making the decision to attend a school across the border in Calexico, California. Dealing with this and desperate to find new friends, Luis Fernando develops a relationship with an older boy that at first seems amazing but quickly becomes destructive. Meanwhile, despite the long commute and the stress that comes with the daily U.S.–Mexico border check, Luisa Teresa really appreciates all that her new school has to offer: a different curriculum, new friends, an opportunity to learn more English, and a chance to develop an identity apart from her brother. The drastically different school experiences contribute to the growing tension that emerges in the twins' relationship, and it seems like they are destined to grow apart. Supported by brightly colored and intricately detailed artwork, Twin Cities will be appealing to many middle-grade readers.	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Veil of shadows	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Watership down, the graphic novel	Sturm, James	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress (January 12, 2024) Gr 6 Up-Watership Down first entered the popular imagination as Richard Adams's dense adventure novel about a group of rabbits establishing a new warren, deftly combining societal critique, rousing battle stories, religious myth-making, and rudimentary leporine linguistics. Illustrated adaptations to date have included an impressionistic, eerie 1970s film and a dry, naturalistic miniseries in 2018. In this, its first iteration as a luscious graphic novel, Sturm and Sutphin seem intent on almost documentary adherence to the original. Mystic rabbit Fiver has a terrible vision of his warren's destruction, and along with brave Hazel and a few others, leaves in search of safer climes. They briefly join a group of rabbits who are drugged in their den and easily harvested by humans, cleverly procure does from a farm, and find themselves in brutal battle with General Woundwort, the authoritarian leader of a militaristic warren. Sturm's and Sutphin's work revels in the natural world: woods, fields, rivers and underground habitats flowing into one intoxicating, verdant dream. However, in its heavy emphasis on the original's complex plot, the characters' identities and relationships begin to blur and the story's conclusion feels somewhat predetermined rather than hard-won. In an effort to be completely faithful to the original, this beautiful adaptation never quite finds its own voice. VERDICT Beautiful and deliberate, this graphic adaptation retells the original story with impressive, exhaustive faithfulness.-Emilia Packard © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist starred (November 1, 2023 (Vol. 120, No. 5)) Grades 7-12. In this enchantingly epic but heartbreaking adaptation of Adams' classic novel, Hazel leads a colony of rabbits on a journey to find a home away from the destructive tendencies of men. One day, Fiver, Hazel's brother, receives a foreboding vision that their current warren will be destroyed to make way for new homes, so Hazel gathers all the rabbits that dare to make the treacherous journey over the countryside to establish a new warren. The group struggles through open wilderness, escaping foxes and other predators and dangerous man-made obstructions to find the place Fiver has only seen in his visions. Once there, they face new obstacles and make new friends with local wildlife that prove beneficial to their survival. This classic story is faithfully adapted into a new medium with beautifully earthy illustrations that give each rabbit personality and new life. Audiences will appreciate the story and come to fall in love with these characters while their hearts break for the struggles they must go through to survive. While fans of Redwall or Secrets of Nymn might be tempted to pick up this anthropomorphic animal story looking for adventure, the underlying commentary on environmental impact provides a deeper, more complex tale that will appeal to older audiences, even on repeat readings.	Publishers Weekly (October 16, 2023) This action-packed graphic adaptation by Sturm (Off Season) and Sutphin (the Wingfeather Saga series) of Adams's epic novel maintains the existential gravitas of the original while artistically rendering its wild English countryside and memorable cohort of lean, scrappy rabbits. When Fiver has a vision of a field covered in blood, his brother Hazel leads a group of young bucks away from their warren. On their heroic journey, they encounter rivers, dogs, injuries, cars, and many different types of lapine society-from a group that relies on humans for food and looks the other way when rabbits end up in snares, to Efrafa, a powerful warren that rules with an iron paw. Joined along the way by various defectors, Hazel and crew come into their own, eventually establishing and defending their own colony. Their mythology, which includes a sun god and a black rabbit representing "fear and darkness... and death," guides them and fuels their bravery. The art manages to be both melancholic and dynamic, just like the tone of Adams's novel. Sturm and Sutphin effectively convey a world as fraught and complicated as the human realm, yet entirely its own. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
Weapons of World War II	MacCarald, Clara	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal (November 1, 2022) Gr 5-9-These books focus on aspects of the war such as specific geographic areas or the weapons used. Each title also has two "Closer Look" features about specific topics such as the use of propaganda or how the black market sprang up in response to wartime rationing. The text is supported by photos, maps, and infographics along with helpful captions. Reflection questions appear several times within each book as well as a comprehension quiz in the back matter, along with an answer key. There is also online support for teachers including lesson plans and activities. VERDICT A series that will circulate often and be especially useful for class units on the war and its effects. © Copyright 2022. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.			
Weirdo	Weaver, Tony	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (August 16, 2024) Gr 5-8-This semi-fictionalized premise based on Weaver's life is one that sadly may ring familiar, with Tony Jr. being the victim of bullying in his new middle school, and the hurt and trauma eventually bringing him to a suicide attempt. A cry for help allows Tony to forge ahead and rewrite his own story. Fortunately, with love, nurturing, a sense of self, and a school transfer, Tony finds peers who share his interests and who he can call friends. Later, the rush is on as Tony and his classmates work to save their school from closing. The mix of sadness, hope, and finding a sense of self are strong themes throughout the narrative. The book does not linger on the suicide attempt, with Weaver purposefully leaving out details or anything graphic. While a few scenes stray into pedantic detailing, the story's overall message is an important one, especially since the topic of suicide is not often tackled for this audience. The artwork is fun; the Wibowo siblings truly capture the titular weirdness of the characters, and each page holds visually interesting illustrations to pore over. Vibrant colors and exciting costumes are integral to the artwork. There is a trigger warning at the beginning of the book, but the digital galley did not include further resources. VERDICT This graphic novel tackles mental health topics and includes strong overtones of resilience that make it a worthy addition to any middle grade collection.-Esther Keller © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Booklist (September 15, 2024 (Vol. 121, No. 2)) Grades 5-8. Tony has always felt like an outsider, but when bullying from his classmates leads to a suicide attempt (which, very importantly, is not depicted), he's successfully able to use therapy and friends at a new school as a meaningful support system, later giving support back to his new school as it faces closure. Drawing from his real-life experience, Weaver creates an easily relatable story of overcoming obstacles and finding peace within yourself. Structured as a series of vignettes, the book can come off as incohesive, as it deals with everything from bullying and making friends to the more tangential topics of unrequited first love and crowdsourcing support for a failing school. Some of these points tie well to the main plot, but others seem to appear only briefly. The appealing, anime-inspired artwork perfectly captures the uplifiting tone, making great use of cartoonish expressions for big emotions and thoughtful color palettes during the depths of Tony's depressive episode. Some big endorsements will give this added interest, including one from Jerry Craft, whose New Kid is an ideal read-alike.	Kirkus Reviews starred (August 1, 2024) After enduring relentless bullying, a boy learns how to embrace his true self with the support of family and fellow blerds. Debut author Weaver got used to being the new kid; in this graphic memoir, he shows how he relied on his love of comics, anime, and video games to navigate challenges. But entering seventh grade at an elite pressure cooker of a school was different—those passions made Tony a target of vicious bullying; feeling trapped, he attempted to die by suicide. Soon after, he reluctantly started therapy and entered a new school, this time determined not to stand out. But Tony found the Literature Club, bonded with other delightfully nerdy Black students, and rekindled his love of writing, gradually realizing that being unapologetically himself was exactly what he should do. Tony's journey to joy and self-love is funny, relatable, and empowering. His story is rendered in a simple yet dynamic art style that skillfully uses different colors plus video game and comic motifs to reflect his emotional state and growth. The artwork grounds the otherwise abstract journey of self-discovery, delivering a nuanced depiction of healing from fear and a reminder that we can all become the hero. Fans of Jerry Craft and Jarrett Krosoczka will appreciate this honest, hopeful portrayal of recovery from even the darkest places. Readers will also enjoy spotting the many anime and gaming references. A powerful, poignant reminder that you are always worth fighting for. (author's note) (Graphic memoir. 10-16)	

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Westfallen	Brashares, Ann	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal Xpress starred (October 18, 2024) Gr 3-7-Renowned "Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants" author Brashares teams up with her brother to craft an exciting historical novel with time travel, wormholes, and a dystopian alternate reality. Westfallen: a modern-day place that used to be known as the United States before the Nazis won the war. It's 2023, and three middle schoolers have just discovered they have the power to meddle with time. They stop something sad that happened 79 years ago to three new friends whom they've just met through an old scratchy radio signal and a magical shed. Things are better, right? What about stopping something really monumental, like World War II? What's the downside of making the world a better place? The kids from 1944-Alice, Lawrence, and Artie-and the kids from 2023-Henry, Frances, and Lukas-come face to face with unexpected consequences when they disrupt the fabric of time. Young readers will be caught up in the chilling events as seen through the eyes of the six friends, but so will adult readers. Teachers should get ready for book two and start thinking about book discussions that promise lots of conversations (and arguments!) when students get their hands on this page-turner with a cliff-hanger ending. VERDICT A historical fiction adventure, highly recommended.-Cheryl Blevens © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2024) When contemporary twelve-year-olds Henry, Frances, and Lukas dig up an old radio in one of their backyards, they find themselves speaking with children of the same age, and at the same location, in 1944. Alice, Lawrence, and Artie do not know the outcome of World War II, and they certainly do not understand the consequences of interfering with a timeline. Soon enough, small, seemingly heroic actions, such as stopping a fire at a beloved candy shop, start to mess with history in very serious ways. The U.S., in 2023, changes overnight to a nightmarish new reality in which the Nazis won WWII and now control the country, renamed Westfallen. The kids from the present and the past must team up to undo the colossal damage that has been done, stopping a spy and thus righting their mistakes, before Westfallen becomes a permanent reality. But that escapade is only the beginning of an adventure that will challenge readers to consider the past, the future, and the nature of history itself. Fascinating time-travel theories collide with historical fiction to set the scene for a story that is suspenseful, complex, and at times humorous. Rapid shifts between past and present might be confusing at first, but as the plot picks up, the details coalesce to form one seamless narrative. The cliffhanger ending will leave readers eager for the next installment in a projected series. Sarah Berman November/December 2024 p.83	Booklist (August 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 22)) Grades 5-7. When New Jersey middle-schoolers Henry, Lukas, and Frances unearth an old homemade crystal radio, it connects them with a similar trio in 1944. Lukas makes a chance comment about why the Normandy Invasion succeeded in surprising the Germans—and suddenly he and his friends are living in Westfallen, a cowed police state that was the U.S. until it was conquered by Nazis. Jewish Lukas is hustled off to a work gang, but Henry and Frances hit the library and discover that the Nazis learned of the Allies' strategy back in 1944 thanks to a spy's telegram sent from their own town. Can the twenty-first-century contingent rescue their friend while the twentieth-century one finds a way to intercept the message in, as it were, time? Switching between eras amid light washes of banter and period detail, talk of the "butterfly effect," and examples of how changes in the past lead to consequences in the future set up a close that, disappointingly, only hints at a twist rather than actually revealing one. Readers will likely be left more bewildered than tantalized.	
Wind	Hunter, Erin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Winging it	Lloyd, Megan Wagner	Upper Elementary	3-6	School Library Journal (October 1, 2025) Gr 3-7-Seventh grader Luna Juniper Wright-Evans is less than thrilled when her father announces they're leaving California for Washington, D.C., and even less thrilled to learn they'll be living with her strict grandmother. Luna's mother died when she was a baby, and while she longs for a connection to Grandma Wright, she has always found her to be distant and cold. At first, life in DC feels just as bleak as Luna expected, but things begin to shift when her grandmother gives her an old journal filled with her late mother's observations of the natural world. Though Luna has never felt at ease in nature, she begins to venture outdoors, making it her goal to spot the elusive luna moth she was named after. What follows is a tender exploration of grief and a quiet celebration of discovery, as Luna makes new friends, including a daring young neighbor and a boy her age she mistakes as rude-until she learns he wasn't wearing his hearing aids. Told month by month over the course of a year, this gentle graphic novel celebrates nature, healing, and human connection. The art is vibrant, with green-suffused art guiding readers through Luna's journey. Luna is mixed-race, her father is Black, and her mother and grandmother are Asian. VERDICT Featuring authentic friendships and a diverse cast of characters, this is a must-have for upper elementary and middle school readers who enjoy heartfelt, slice-of-life stories.-Amy Ribakove © Copyright 2025. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Publishers Weekly (July 21, 2025) Luna barely remembers her mother, who died when the middle schooler was a baby. All she has left of her mom is pictures, as well as the memories shared by her loved ones, especially Luna's single, hardworking father. Luna's world is turned upside down when she and her father move from California to live with her distant maternal grandmother in a suburb outside of Washington, D.C. She begins seventh grade feeling lonelier than ever, as it seems difficult to find "a single human or animal... who actually wants to hang out with me." As Luna settles into her new home, however, she and her grandmother bond over their shared grief and love for Luna's mom. After Grandma gives Luna her mother's old nature journals, Luna aspires to follow in her mom's footsteps by creating her own diary and joining her school's environmental club, despite Luna's feeling like a "natural disaster" out of doors. Through her grief, she finds community, which Squished creators Lloyd and Nutter highlight via the protagonist's budding friendships, her shifting dynamic with her father, and her deepening relationship with her grandmother. Eye-catching earth-toned color palettes emphasize the role that nature plays in healing old wounds in this gentle graphic novel. Luna has brown skin. Ages 8-12. Author's agent: Ammi-Joan Paquette, Aevitas Creative Management. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.		

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
Wires crossed	Fantaskey, Beth	Middle School	5-8	School Library Journal starred (May 1, 2024) Gr 5 Up-While 13-year-old Mia was busy getting braces, glasses, and the world's worst haircut, her science camp bestie Tariq was busy glowing up. When Tariq's mom's job is transferred to Mia's town, she rejoices at the idea of attending school with Tariq, especially since her school best friend Addy has been exploring new friendships this year. Even though Tariq juggles commitments with the popular soccer clique, he still joins a team with Mia and some other friends to build a robot to compete in the Science Olympics. Fantaskey expertly crafts a coming-of-age story that tackles friendship, jealousy, and self-love. Readers will be charmed by Mia's quirky family, especially her wild little brother and genius live-in grandmother. The relatable scenarios and relationships will draw readers in and keep them engaged in this page-turner. Visually, Jones brings the characters to life with vibrant cartoon illustrations and dynamic panels. VERDICT A must-read graphic novel that will draw fans of Jerry Craft's New Kid and Raina Telgemeier's Smile. This book belongs on library shelves everywhere.-Angie Jameson © Copyright 2024. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.	Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2024) An enjoyable graphic novel about friendship, growing up, and all-things-engineering. Thirteen-year-old Mia is excited when her science-camp buddy, Tariq, transfers to her middle school. This turns quickly to anxiety when she discovers that her once-shy friend has blossomed into a cute, confident soccer star. Nevertheless, the two team up to compete in their school's Science Olympics (the plan: design and build an articulated snake-bot). Tension builds as the competition approaches and Mia's best friend, Addy, now hanging out with one of the mean girls, exerts pressure on Mia to act differently ("maybe you should try a little harder to fit in") and to ask Tariq to the school dance. As Mia's confidence wavers, her engineer grandmother reminds her that "some of the luckiest -- and smartest -- people never grow up" and that imagination and creativity can lead to innovation and problem-solving, especially when things don't go as planned. The cartooning is easy to scan, with establishing shots providing context for subsequent panels that use simplified, color-filled backgrounds. The quirky cast, including a sci-fi-loving dad, coupon-cutting scientist mom, and an ant-obsessed sibling, add humor and liveliness to Fantaskey's narrative, which is jam-packed with science references. Elisa Gall May/June 2024 p.136	Kirkus Reviews starred (February 15, 2024) A 13-year-old navigates middle school's constantly shifting social dynamics. Everything is changing for STEM-loving Mia. Her best friend, Addy, has been pulling away, seemingly more concerned with elevating her social standing. When Mia hears that Tariq, her bestie from science camp, is moving to her town, she's initially excited—until she sees that Tariq has shed his bespectacled boyish look and is now confoundingly cute and sporty. Mia is suddenly keenly aware that her family (fanboy father, coupon-clipping mother, and insect-loving little brother), who once seemed lovably quirky, now embarrass her. When a teacher announces the school's Science Olympics, Mia and Tariq decide to team up with artsy Kinsey and disorganized Evan. But the group's dynamics begin to erode: Could Tariq and Kinsey like each other? As the school's first dance and the Science Olympics near, Mia must reconcile first crushes, friendship squabbles, and the daily ups and downs of the constantly changing landscape of middle school. Fantaskey's endearing stand-alone graphic novel captures the gentle angst of this age with pitch-perfection, combining empathetic characters with gentle humor that's reminiscent of the work of Kayla Miller and Raina Telgemeier. Vivid full-color illustrations in tidily arranged panels highlight facial expressions, emphasizing the characters' emotions throughout. Mia's dad has brown skin and straight black hair; her light-skinned mom is blond and blue-eyed, and there's racial diversity in the supporting cast. An achingly authentic and relatable examination of adolescent friendship. (Graphic fiction. 8-12)	
Wish Monster	White, J. A	Middle School	5-8	Booklist (August 2024 (Vol. 120, No. 22)) Grades 3-7. Hudson is the only one who remembers that Violet's dog died—not because he's uncommonly thoughtful but because the fact of the dog's passing seems to have been fully erased from everyone's memory. Except for Violet's, however, and now she's weighing whether to let Hudson in on her secret: she's found a creature who grants wishes. At first, it seems like a dream come true, but Hudson can see what everyone else is missing: every wish, even purely well-intentioned ones, has consequences, some of which are quite dire. White (Nightbooks, 2018) offers a smart, entertaining, and not-too-scary monster story that blends an unsettling creature with thoughtful questions about the consequences of unbridled wish granting. His vivid, painterly descriptions are a real strength, evoking slimy textures, noxious smells, and the unearthly wish monster itself, composed of tentacles and eye stalks snaking throughout the cave system and conveying mystical wishing wells. While it's a touch slow to start, the fascinating mechanics of wish granting and the underlying mysteries about Hudson's family rivetingly drive the plot toward its satisfying conclusion.	Kirkus Reviews (September 15, 2024) Sixth grader Violet Park is heartbroken when her beloved dog dies—so, when she encounters a monster in a cave in the woods who gives her the opportunity to wish Midnight back to life, she jumps at the chance. Violet is satisfied that no one else remembers that Midnight is supposed to be dead—until classmate Hudson Causeway expresses his suspicions. Hudson is an odd kid: smart and kind but constantly overlooked by teachers and most other students, except for his one friend, Quinn Taylor. As Violet tries to figure out why Hudson is immune to the effects of her wish, she realizes that the monster wants her to bring it more wishers. She invites beleaguered shop owner Mr. Kazem to meet it, but when his wish has a terrifying side effect, Hudson and Violet realize that the wish monster may not be the benevolent entity they thought it was, and they set out to destroy it. When they learn that Hudson's mother knows more about the monster than she let on, a horrifying truth dawns on them. Packed with plenty of twists and action, this thoughtful novel explores the unintended consequences of getting one's deepest desire. Violet is cued Korean American, Hudson presents white, and Quinn has dark skin and "a mass of frizzy brown hair that [gives] off a distinct mad-scientist vibe," a description that unfortunately evokes negative racial stereotypes. Monstrous good fun. (Supernatural. 8-13)	Publishers Weekly (August 12, 2024) When middle schooler Violet Park's beloved dog Midnight is brought back from the dead by the mysterious creature that inhabits the wilds of Haywood, N.J., she discovers that reality has also been rewritten. No one else remembers Midnight's death except for forgettable sixth grader Hudson Causeway. After Violet gets the monster in the woods to grant a wish for down-on-his-luck corner store owner Mr. Kazem, Hudson is once again the only one who remembers life before Mr. Kazem's city-block spanning superstore-and before his best friend Quinn Taylor disappears, along with everyone else who used to live where the store now stands. Unfortunately for Hudson, it means he may also be the singular individual who understands the true threat of the wishes. This slow-building, suspenseful tale by White (Gravebooks) boasts a clever and surprising twist on the "Monkey's Paw" concept. Without shying away from the off-putting emotional element of facing down the consequences of even seemingly innocuous hopes and dreams, White presents a thoughtful exploration of friendship, complex family dynamics, and grief, resulting in a treat for budding horror fans. Characters are intersectionally diverse. Ages 8-12. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.	
Women's soccer legends 2025 : stats, profiles, top players	Pettman, Kevin	Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
World War Ii Battles, Part 2		Middle School	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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Baseball Encyclopedia		3-6	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Big book of who. Women in sports :the 101 athletes every fan needs to know.		3-6	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Escape from Alcatraz	Williams, Dinah	5-8	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
Escape from the USS Indianapolis	Marino, Andy	3-6	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
The Kingfisher Football Encyclopedia --A Detailed Guide to America's F	Williamson, Alicia	3-6	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			
The last resort	Kelly, Erin Entrada	5-8	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

Title	Author/Artist	Audience	Interestlevel	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	
The Last Resort 2	Warga, Jasmine	3-6	5-8	If a review for a nonfiction book or a book in a formulaic series does not exist in a professional review journal, it may be purchased with an informed decision made by weighing the factors listed below: ● Reputation and standing of the publisher ● Reputation and standing of the series ● Popular interest ● Author's reputation and significance as a writer ● Importance of the subject matter to the community ● Need for a balanced, diverse collection ● Curricular needs			

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