

Texas 2026 Bluebonnet Award Nominees

***Pocket Bear* by Katherine Applegate**

A once-beloved toy from WWI, Pocket Bear, now helps run a home where lost stuffed animals get a second chance. When his mischievous cat friend brings home a mysterious, spaghetti-covered bear, chaos—and adventure—follow! A heartwarming, funny story about friendship, history, and finding where you belong.

***The Library of Unruly Treasures* by Jeanne Birdsall**

Gwen isn't sad to escape her awful parents—especially when she meets her quirky uncle and his opinionated dog, Pumpkin. But her visit takes a magical turn when she discovers tiny winged creatures in the library that only children can see. Can Gwen find the courage to help them save their home? A whimsical, heartwarming adventure about bravery and belonging.

***Introducing Sandwina: The Strongest Woman in the World* by Vicki Conrad**

Meet Katie Brumbach—better known as Sandwina—who amazed audiences as a circus strongwoman and even defeated the strongest man! With strength, confidence, and family by her side, she became a true legend. A vibrant, inspiring story about perseverance and believing in your power. (Picture book)

***The Black Mambas: The World's First All-Woman Anti-Poaching Unit* by Kelly Crull**

In South Africa's Greater Kruger National Park, endangered animals like rhinos and pangolins are under threat from poachers. The Black Mambas—the world's first all-women anti-poaching unit—protect wildlife through patrols and tracking, without using weapons. This inspiring true story, with photos and firsthand accounts, shows how these women are making a difference for animals and their communities. (Picture book)

***Wanda Hears the Stars* by Amy S. Hansen and Wanda Díaz Merced**

As a child, Wanda dreamed of studying the stars, even while facing challenges like diabetes and vision loss. With determination and a new way of “hearing” the universe, she pursued her dream of becoming a scientist. This inspiring true story celebrates resilience, imagination, and the search for new ways to see the world.

***I'm a Dumbo Octopus!* by Anne Lambelet**

Meet Grimpy, your guide to the amazing world of cephalopods! As he shares cool facts about octopuses, squid, and more, Grimpy wonders what makes him special. This fun graphic nonfiction story shows that everyone has unique strengths worth celebrating. (Graphic picture book)

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***Saved by the Smell* by Jarrett Lerner**

Ari's mom is a mad scientist—and her latest invention, a time portal, might just save them from doing piles of stinky laundry... or make things way crazier! Funny illustrations, short chapters, and a T. rex make it a laugh-out-loud story that is full of adventure, science, and surprises.

***Gracie Under the Waves* by Linda Sue Park**

Gracie plans a family trip to Honduras to explore the ocean she loves. After an injury cuts her snorkeling short, she must face disappointment and challenges with her younger brother. This heartfelt story highlights friendship, resilience, and the importance of protecting ocean life.

***Safe Crossing* by Kari Percival**

During spring migration, amphibians must cross a dangerous road. One family steps in to help—and inspires their community to create a safer solution. This beautifully illustrated true story shows the power of teamwork and making a difference together. (Picture book)

***Speak Up, Santiago!* by Julio Anta**

Santiago is excited for a summer of soccer and new friends—but he feels unsure about his Spanish. As he struggles with confidence and identity, Santi learns to speak up and be proud of who he is. A heartfelt story about belonging and finding your voice.

***Will's Race for Home* by Jewell Parker Rhodes**

Will joins his father in the 1889 Oklahoma Land Rush, hoping to claim land and build a better future. Along the way, they face danger and injustice but also find courage and friendship. This powerful historical adventure highlights perseverance, hope, and an often-overlooked part of history.

To see the complete 2026-2027 Bluebonnet Book Award Nominee List, scan the QR Code below.

