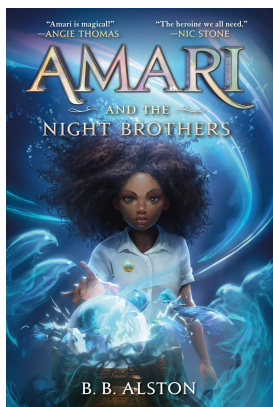


## Summer Reading Recommendations Hastings & Jones Learning Centers 2022

### Fiction



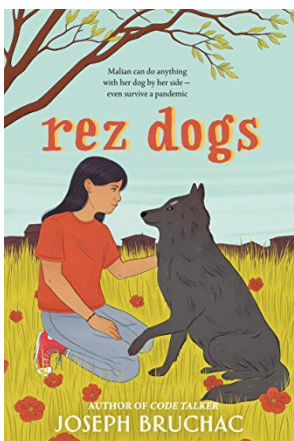
#### ***Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston**

Grades 3-7—Amari Peters is a young Black girl who believes her brother Quinton is alive, even if no one else does. Everything is going wrong and she just got expelled from school, but something exciting is about to happen. Amari, as recommended by her brother, joins a summer camp at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. She starts to learn a special skill all her own, and discovers magical creatures exist (fairies, aliens, and magicians, to name a few) that the Bureau must protect from average people. Readers follow Amari as she navigates a new magical world, hones her skills, and searches for her brother who was attempting to track down the Night Brothers—a mysterious band of magical criminals. This series debut is sure to be a hit with late elementary students and middle graders who are fans of “Harry Potter,” “Percy Jackson,” and the *Men in Black* movies. There are a lot of diverse characters who will be relatable to all kids. Amari is tough, smart, kind, and very likeable. The plot doesn’t shy away from depictions of racism and discrimination, which may provide necessary, thoughtful discussion topics for classrooms and families. (*School Library Journal*)



#### ***The Brave* by James Bird**

Grades 5 Up—Collin may be in middle school, but readers of all ages will relate to his journey of self-discovery. Collin is neurodiverse; he counts every letter that is spoken to him and compulsively says the resulting number out loud. This makes him a target for bullies. His father is cold and, after yet another blow-up at school, he sends Collin to live with the mother he has never met. She is Ojibwe, and lives on a reservation in Minnesota. This move appears to be a terrifying life change, but it ends up being wonderful. Collin meets family, learns about Native customs, and becomes friends with Orenda, the girl next door. Through his friendship with Orenda, Collin accepts things about himself, learns to trust, and grows stronger both physically and emotionally. However, Orenda is terminally ill. Ultimately, he learns to give her strength in return. Collin finds inspiration in the books that Orenda introduces him to, specifically the novels of Adriana Mather. Ghosts, spiritualism, Ojibwe culture, and the ability to find wonder in everyday events all blend seamlessly into a powerful coming-of-age story. (*School Library Journal*)



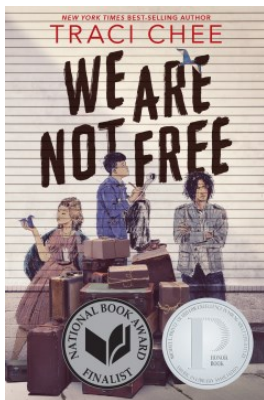
#### ***Rez Dogs* by Joseph Bruchac**

Grades 3-8 —While her parents are sheltering in place in Boston, Malian, an eighth grade Penacook girl, tries to keep herself and her grandparents safe from COVID-19 on their reservation. In this novel in verse, Bruchac takes a look at life in lockdown through the eyes of a girl coping with boredom, isolation, and the need to find her place. The text addresses residential schools, relocation, and forced sterilization, as well as racial justice and the disproportionate way that COVID-19 spread in marginalized communities. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***King and the Dragonflies* by Kacen Callender**

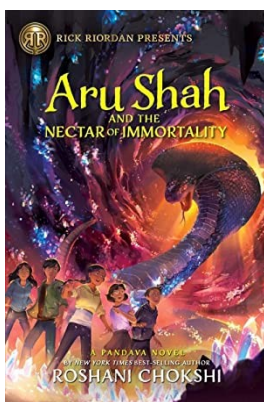
Grades 4-9—Although the bayou of Louisiana suggests something slow and gentle, 13-year-old King's contemporary story feels intense and pointed. His 16-year-old brother, Khalid, died unexpectedly of unexplained medical causes, leaving his small family reeling. Three months later, King's mom still isn't cooking and his typically stoic dad has stunned him to silence by offering a rare "I love you" while dropping him off at school. Friends and middle school romance are difficult enough but then his ex-friend Sandy goes missing. Despite a relatively simple set of events, the story delivers emotional depth via the conversations between both friends and family members. The memories of Khalid's dreamy sleep talk grippingly pluck at heartstrings, adding a romantic poetry to an already potent mix. Callender tackles some serious issues--racism, being gay, child abuse, grieving--with finesse and a heady sense of the passions and pangs of youth. *(School Library Journal)*



### ***We Are Not Free* by Tracy Chee**

Grades 7 Up—Fourteen teens form a bond growing up together in California. They go to school, work hard to be good kids in their community, and try their best to find happiness in various hobbies. American-born, they are of Japanese descent, and surrounded by people who do not trust their right to be in the U.S. World War II turns their already strained lives upside down. Taken and forced into desolate internment camps, these young kids must rally together as racism threatens to tear them apart. This novel evokes powerful emotions by using a variety of well-researched elements to tell the teens' stories, creating a thorough picture of their thoughts and feelings through poetry, diary-style entries, and drawings. As Chee mentions in the author's note, her family experienced the impact of being marked as "other" and therefore "dangerous," and were forcibly uprooted from their homes and incarcerated in internment camps.

The novel may be fiction, but it will be hard for readers not to fall deep into the harsh realities these teens face. The writing is engaging and emotionally charged, allowing the readers to connect with each character. *(School Library Journal)*



### ***Aru Shah and the Nectar of Immortality* by Roshani Chokshi**

Grades 3-7—Aru Shah and the Pandavas (aka the Potatoes) are faced with saving the world from ultimate destruction but they feel completely helpless without their celestial weapons that give them any chance of winning a battle against the Sleeper and his army. Is all hope lost? They certainly are doubting themselves and their relationships as they attempt to get into the labyrinth and get the Nectar of Immortality before Aru's traitorous sister uses her power to release it. They must travel to the parts of the Other World without being noticed, partly with the help of the very conspicuous Ruby, and find themselves stars on the concert stage, reuniting Aiden with family, risking eternal naps, and challenging immense bears. Through their trials, each of them begins to acquire the strength and self-awareness that will gain them back what was lost. This last installment of the series concludes the battle without winners, but all is resolved in ways

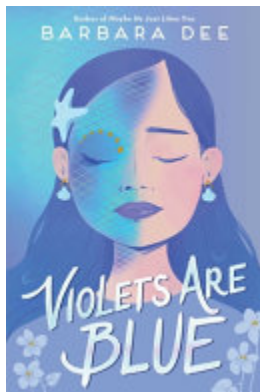
to satisfy the gods and readers alike. While readers might want to see these characters again, the ending feels like just that. Those who are new to Aru's world will need to begin with the first installment to meet each of the five Pandavas in order of appearance. The extensive glossary is helpful for those wanting to delve more deeply into the Hindu mythology and religion. *(School Library Journal)*



### ***Efrén Divided* by Ernesto Cisneros**

Grades 5-7—A timely story of one boy's fight to reunite his family, save a friendship, and stand up for justice. Efrén's favorite spot to read is the bathtub—when he wants to hide from his twin siblings, that's where he retreats, though the smell of Amá's delicious sopos always has a way of drawing him out. To Efrén, Amá is a Soperwoman! Living undocumented in the United States, Amá and Apá both work hard to provide a better life for their children. Although their apartment is small and money is tight, Efrén knows he has a lot to be thankful for. But one day everything changes. When he arrives home from school, Amá is gone. She has been deported. Stepping in to care for his siblings while Apá works overtime, Efrén tries to channel Amá's superpowers. But when teachers and friends notice something is wrong, will Efrén find the courage to share the truth? Efrén's story is not uncommon. In the last few years, the news has become saturated with

headlines about deportations and separated families. Cisneros provides a heart-wrenching and evocative glimpse of what one family's life might look like on both sides of the border. Using down-to-earth characters and authentic scenarios, he tells a story of resilience, strength, and love. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Violets Are Blue* by Barbara Dee**

Grades 4-8—Twelve-year-old Renata (Wren) is going through some difficult changes. In a few short months, her parents have divorced, her father has remarried, and Wren has gone through a major move with her mother. On the positive side, she likes her new stepmother, who is pregnant with twins, and quickly makes a friend at her new school. She also follows a YouTuber who specializes in special effects make-up, and working with make-up helps her cope with life. Wren's friend Poppy convinces her to do makeup for the school musical, and Wren is surprised to find herself enjoying the challenge. On the negative side, Wren's mother is behaving erratically, taking long naps on the sofa, missing work, and keeping things locked away in her room. Wren tackles these challenges, along with her own insecurities, with a believable maturity. Dee addresses

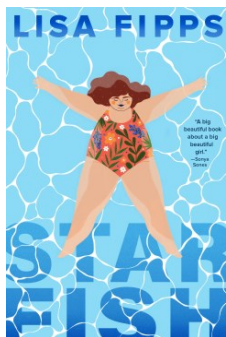
with aplomb important topics such as opioid addiction, divorce, bullying, and moving. This inspired novel deftly depicts the self-doubt and loneliness that many children (and adults) feel. Character ethnicity is not described. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Home Is Not a Country* by Safia Elhillo**

Grades 6 Up—Sudanese American poet Elhillo invites readers into her dreamlike story of 15-year-old Nima, who struggles with loneliness and the possibilities of the road not taken. Growing up in the United States, Nima wonders what life would be like if she spoke Arabic fluently, if her father hadn't died, if her mother had not left a country where everyone had dark eyes, sepia-toned skin, and textured hair like her, or if she had been given a name she felt she could live up to. In this novel in verse, Elhillo shows readers the beauty of what could have been, and the pain of being labeled a terrorist. When Nima's best friend, Haitham, is attacked, a series of dangerous events unfold, yet readers are given no real resolution. Told in three parts, the flow is a bit disjointed, but overall this is a quick and engaging story. Fans of Elizabeth Acevedo's *Clap When You Land* or Samira Ahmed's *Love, Hate & Other Filters* will enjoy this look at identity and acceptance. (*School Library Journal*)

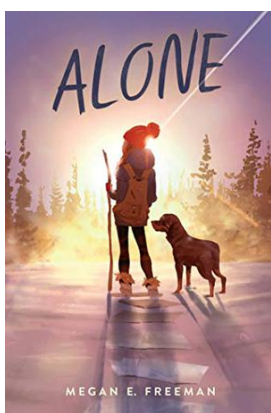




### **Starfish by Lisa Fipps**

Grades 5 Up—A charming novel in verse about a girl struggling with self-worth. Ellie is a middle school girl who is bullied every day for her weight. Whether it comes from classmates, siblings, or even her mother, Ellie is constantly bombarded with comments about her size. Luckily, her friends help keep her head up most of the time. When her best friend Viv moves away, a new friend, Catalina, fits right into her place. Ellie's dad is also an ally; he stands up to Ellie's mom and decides to take Ellie to a therapist. With the help of Dr. Wood, Ellie learns how to feel comfortable in her own skin. Once readers start, it will be difficult for them to put this book down. Ellie's story is heartbreaking and raw at times, and Fipps paints a realistic picture of bullying in a world that equates thinness with beauty.

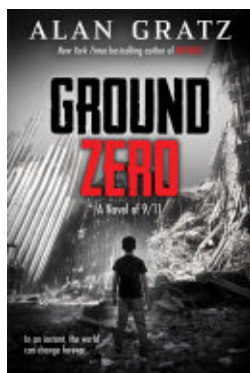
Ellie's own family, except for her dad, also buy into that ideal, calling her "Splash," making fun of her, and cataloging everything she eats. True joy comes in watching Ellie gain confidence in herself and standing up to the bullies, even when they're family. The race of most characters is not mentioned. Catalina and her family are Mexican American. (*School Library Journal*)



### **Alone by Megan E. Freeman**

Ages 11-14—Freeman's middle-grade debut starts with a wallop and carries on from there. Twelve-year-old Madeleine Albright Harrison is inadvertently left behind when her whole region is abruptly evacuated in the night. Although there had been hints of unrest, she has no real idea why everyone left or when—perhaps if—they'll ever come back. At first, there's still electricity and running water, but as days turn into weeks and then months, utilities fail, and Madeleine comes to realize that she's truly on her own. A Colorado winter will be coming soon enough. After rescuing a neighbor's dog, her only companion, she becomes increasingly sophisticated in her survival efforts, collecting food and water, learning how to light a fire in her father's woodstove and, bicycle helmet secured in place, teaching herself to drive a car. Not everything works. At one point she encounters but evades a vicious group of looters. Later she survives both a tornado and

a wildfire that sweeps through her neighborhood. But it's loneliness that becomes her greatest enemy and books from the local library that ultimately sustain her. Madeleine relates her own riveting, immersive story in believable detail, her increasingly sophisticated thoughts, as years pass, sweeping down spare pages in thin lines of verse in this Hachette for a new age. Characters default to White. Suspenseful, fast-paced, and brief enough to engage even reluctant readers. (*Kirkus Reviews*)



### **Ground Zero by Alan Gratz**

Grades 4-7—Gratz writes a searing indictment of America's involvement in Afghanistan, told through two gripping parallel narratives. On September 11, 2001, nine-year-old Brandon accompanies his father to his job at New York City's World Trade Center. The two are separated during the ensuing terrorist attack, and, with help from others, Brandon survives. Eighteen years later, 11-year-old Reshmina, living in a remote Afghan village, sees her country and family devastated by the Taliban and the U.S. military, despite both armies' claims of protection. Brandon's and Reshmina's lives intertwine in a fateful encounter that challenges America's policies as well as its presence in Afghanistan, and puts a human face on the resulting suffering. Vivid details immerse readers in the two disparate settings. The plot starts at a heart-pounding pace and never relents: Brandon

and Reshmina's lives are in danger at every turn. In a superbly structured plot, the two protagonists experience similar perils, and both respond with determination and hope. Gratz provides readers with a brief history of Afghanistan and its occupation by foreign powers. Speaking through Reshmina, he concludes "the United States had surely destroyed Afghanistan." The book includes extensive back matter, making it an excellent choice for classroom discussion. (*School Library Journal*)

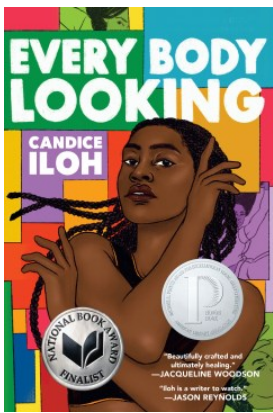




### ***The Last Cuentista* by Donna Barba Higuera**

Gr 5 Up—The magic and power of stories and storytelling help a preteen in a terrifying future. In 2061, with Earth about to be destroyed, 12-year-old Petra Peña and her scientist parents and younger brother Javier are just barely aboard the ship that will take them to the planet Sagan when a group of zealots called the Collective, wanting absolute equality at the expense of any diversity, take over. Almost 400 years later, Petra is one of the last four “sleepers” revived, and the only one who somehow retains her memories of Earth. She uses the stories her family shared and a precious copy of Yuyi Morales’s *Dreamers* to try to save the others in her cohort, her newly rediscovered brother, and what seems to be the last Collective child. Life on the ship, made even more claustrophobic by Petra’s declining vision from retinitis pigmentosa, and filled with the translucent, drugged Collective, is particularly chilling. Mexican American Petra is a

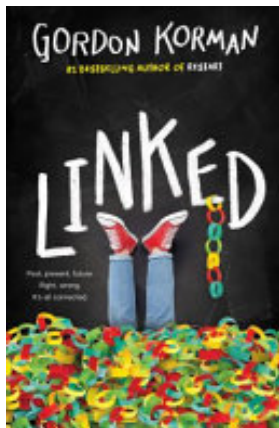
strong, heroic character, fighting incredible odds to survive and protect others. The ending leaves the door wide open for a sequel. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Every Body Looking* by Candace Iloh**

Grades 7 Up—Ada, pronounced Aah-dah!, means “first daughter” in Igbo and, as Ada shares, such a name carries the heavy weight of expectations. Written in verse, Ada’s narrative unfurls from her high school graduation, then jumps around in time while she navigates her early college days at an HBCU, dipping in and out of scenes from first, second, and sixth grades. Pivotal and sometimes wrenching episodes are seared into each of these time periods, from sexual abuse in first grade to a betrayal of her privacy by an aunty who arrives from Nigeria in sixth grade. Iloh poignantly captures the tension and jagged emotion required for Ada to juggle her needy and absent mother with the heavy expectations of her father, all while trying to figure out who she really wants to be. Amidst all this uncertainty and seeking lies dance. While Dad is the one to introduce Ada to dance lessons to connect her to his home country, it is the deep desire for

movement that consumes Ada and begins to pull her in the opposite direction of his more practical aspirations for her. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Linked* by Gordon Korman**

Grades 4-8—In a small Colorado town, lives are changed and secrets are unearthed when swastikas start appearing at the local middle school. Dana, the only Jewish girl, is on edge. Michael, the head of the art club, and Caroline, the class president, are organizing a paper chain six million links long in honor of Jewish Holocaust victims. Link, the most popular seventh grader, learns that as an infant his grandmother was saved in a Catholic nunnery from the Nazis. As the story unfolds, a popular YouTuber brings attention to the town, and Link, after learning about his Jewish ancestry, decides to have a bar mitzvah. All the while, everyone is trying to figure out who keeps drawing swastikas. In typical Korman style, this novel pulls readers in with its character development and engrossing, heartfelt story line. While the story tackles big issues such as the Holocaust and generational discrimination, the writing style remains

upbeat and easy, making this a good choice for reluctant and avid readers. Five students and the YouTuber voice the chapters, bringing depth to each character’s perspective. Struggles with challenging decisions, friendships, and self-discovery are common middle grade issues that readers will relate to. Some readers may be shocked to learn about the origin of the swastikas, and all will be elated by the celebratory ending. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Fly on the Wall* by Remy Lai**

Grades 4-7—Henry Khoo is tired of being babied by his family and invisible at school. Trying to declare independence from both, he started the infamous "Fly on the Wall" blog, which spreads gossip about his schoolmates, and is currently on his way to the airport for an unauthorized trip from Perth, Australia, (where he lives with his helicoptering mom, sister, and grandmother), to Singapore for a surprise visit to his dad. On the way, he must deal with a former best friend, a lurking nemesis, a seatmate who could double as an encyclopedia, and an online comment from the unknown "Frog in the Well," threatening that Frog is going to out Henry to Principal Trang as the creator of the notorious blog.

Near-misses and laugh-out-loud moments abound in this novel, which will endear it to readers who like "Big Nate" and "Wimpy Kid," but Henry's character development in this illustrated novel leaves Greg Heffley in the dust. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani LaRocca**

Grades 5 Up—Indian American middle schooler Reha navigates growth and loss in this 1980s coming-of-age novel in verse. Thirteen-year-old Reha deals with ordinary concerns; she tries to stay true to her Indian culture while growing up in the United States, and she grapples with a crush on a classmate. When her mother suddenly gets sick with leukemia, Reha's ordinary everyday concerns fade away and are replaced with the belief that if she is as virtuous as possible, she will save her mother's life. As the story goes on, Reha deals with her grief and builds a strong support network of friends and family to help her face her mother's illness. References to musicians such as Pat Benatar, the Beach Boys, and Cyndi Lauper firmly set this story in the 1980s, but the story otherwise feels modern. Reha's story is slow to start but quickly ramps up. Readers will

be invested in her relationships with her parents and friends and will enjoy the evocative verse and emotional stakes. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Set Me Free* by Ann Clare LeZotte**

Grades 5 Up—In this sequel to *Show Me a Sign* (2020), the action finds Deaf protagonist Mary Lambert three years after the events of the previous volume. She is now 14 and much closer to adulthood in her early 19th-century world. Raised in a real community on Martha's Vineyard where historically a significant portion of the population was Deaf and using a precursor of ASL, Mary, who is white, has therefore lived a life somewhat protected from assumptions of the era about Deaf people. Yet she is aware that when she leaves her hometown, the world has a very different perception of her based on their inability to speak her language. Mary returns to the Boston area to act as a tutor to a young girl who is also unable to communicate and is believed to be Deaf. She finds her student to be, in reality, a prisoner. Ultimately, Mary determines that she must rescue

the girl. Getting them both to safety requires help from others, but also her own courage and self-advocacy. Full of unique detail about the experience of interacting with the world as a Deaf person (the author is also Deaf), this historical novel will serve as a helpful window book for non-Deaf readers, but also a much-needed mirror book for those who are Deaf. Historical endnotes make clear how much research went into doing justice to the setting and the characters outside of the author's lived experience, including those characters who are members of the Wampanoag Nation. (*School Library Journal*)



### **When You Get the Chance by Emma Lord**

Grades 8 Up—Millie Price has long dreamed of Broadway, and nothing is going to stop her from realizing those dreams—not an embarrassing viral video from her past, not a dad who thwarts her plans to attend the precollege theater program of her dreams in California, not even the rumors that her high school is finally going to be doing a production of *Mamma Mia!* in the fall. In an effort to pay for her potential new school, Millie stumbles upon a relic from her dad’s past that sets her on her own *Mamma Mia!*-esque quest to discover the identity of her mother and leads her in some completely unexpected directions—to an internship alongside longtime rival Oliver, dance classes in a Brooklyn studio, an informal Broadway sing-along group, and maybe even her own romance. As Millie tries to solve this mystery, she comes to some important realizations about herself, her family, and where her future really lies. The book is full of Lord’s characteristic quick wit and delightful banter, and packed with

enough Broadway references to satisfy even the most avid theater fan. The rivals-to-romance development between Millie and Oliver is the stuff great rom-coms are made of, but Millie isn’t lacking in regard to other supportive friends and family members either. (*School Library Journal*)



### **Too Bright to See by Kyle Lukoff**

Grades 4-7—Lukoff’s middle grade debut is a deeply empathetic exploration of grief and gender identity through the eyes of Bug. The summer before Bug starts middle school, things are rough. Bug’s beloved Uncle Roderick passed away from a difficult illness and the family business is in trouble. Bug’s longtime best friend is excited about makeup and boys, but these things don’t resonate with Bug, and a rift begins to form between the friends. With all this change and grief comes a much different problem: Bug is being haunted, and not by the innocuous spirits that typically inhabit their home. Lukoff’s three primary themes—gender identity, grief, and ghostly hauntings—work in elegant harmony despite the load. Lukoff navigates Bug’s journey of identity and discovery with grace, welcoming readers in so they can learn along with Bug in real time. Those readers

focusing more on the haunting aspects of the story won’t be disappointed and can expect multiple goosebump-worthy moments. In a brief author’s note, Lukoff provides guidance in regards to both Bug (pronouns, etc.) and the book when recommending it to others. While some potential readers may hesitate at mixing ghosts and gender, Lukoff’s portrayal is sensitive, hopeful, and effective. The cast generally adheres to the white default; Bug’s family and classmates share diverse LGBTQIA+ identities. (*School Library Journal*)



### **A Soft Place to Land by Janae Marks**

Grades 4-6—When 12-year-old Joy Taylor’s dad loses his job and the family has to give up their house, Joy’s dreams of learning to play the piano and someday becoming a film score composer are put on hold. Their new apartment is too small, her mom and dad are fighting, and there is no money for piano lessons. A secret room in the apartment complex, known as the Hideout, provides a place where Joy and the other kids in the building can temporarily escape. Soon Joy makes new friends, starts a dog-walking business, and even begins writing to someone who is leaving heartrending messages on the wall of the Hideout. One weekend things go terribly wrong, and Joy must face uncomfortable realities about loyalty and responsibility. This relatable story touches on topics such as divorce (Joy’s parents briefly separate, then reconcile), the ups and downs of having a job at a young age, and the difficulties that arise from keeping secrets from

family and friends. Joy is Black, and there is a diverse cast of characters with different experiences including her new best friend Nora, who is Latinx, and a boy named Miles, who is one of only a few Black students at a private school. (*School Library Journal*)





### ***Me (Moth)* by Amber McBride**

Grades 8 Up—This searing debut novel-in-verse is told from the perspective of Moth, a Black teen whose life changed forever the day a car crash killed her family. Once a dancer who lived so hard she drank the sun, now she lives quietly with her aunt Jack in suburban Virginia. She no longer dances and is struggling with the guilt of her family's deaths. But then she meets Sani, a Navajo boy who lives with his white mother and abusive white stepfather and really sees Moth. Sani gave up making music after leaving New Mexico and takes pills to clear his mind. Summer arrives, and the two take off on a road trip out west, back to the reservation where Sani's Navajo father lives. Along the way, their stories entwine. Sani recounts the origin story of the Navajo, and Moth shares about her grandfather who taught her hoodoo. Like a moth in a cocoon, they each find themselves on the edge of transformation on their journey. Each free verse

poem is tightly composed, leading into the next for a poignant and richly layered narrative. The story builds softly and subtly to a perfect, bittersweet ending. Fans of Jacqueline Woodson won't be able to put this one down. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Sanctuary* by Paola Mendoza & Abby Sher**

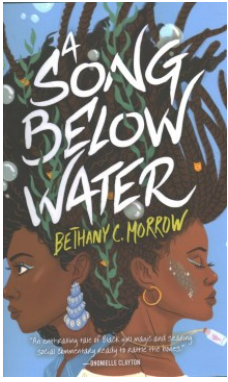
Grades 7 Up—A stunning work of YA dystopian fiction driven by the ardent voice of a teenage protagonist. The novel captures the United States' currently ominous immigration policies and extends them to violent extremes, making the stress and fear of living as an undocumented person come alive through the foil of a technocratic surveillance state. Vali, a girl of Colombian descent, lives in small-town Vermont with her mother and brother. The family lost their father to a traumatic immigration incident, and Mom supports them by working on a dairy farm. Vali is undocumented but carries a "fake chip" in her wrist that she uses to scan into her public school and various government buildings. When a newly bolstered federal Deportation Force seizes all the laborers at her mother's workplace, the family flees towards California, getting separated along the way. The plot points get the blood pumping, and the familial portrait rendered throughout the fast-paced drama is rich in symbolism. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Chirp* by Kate Messner**

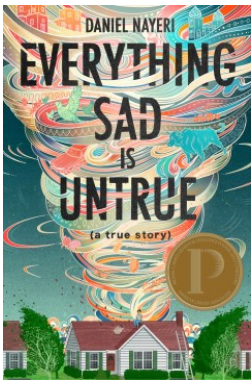
Grades 4-6—Messner crafts a timely "#MeToo" novel wrapped in intriguing parallel mysteries. What turned talented gymnast Mia away from the sport she loved after a fall and surgery? There's a story she hasn't told anyone. And who is sabotaging her Gram's fledgling cricket farm? In the summer after seventh grade, Mia finds the courage—and voice—to confront both. Helping Mia reclaim her strength are the skills she develops while attending two summer camps and a number of memorable female supporting characters. New friend Clover's innate bravery and self-confidence help Mia remember she is strong, too. Gram almost steals the spotlight as the novel's most inspiring character through her rich backstory and, like Mia, is determined to recover from a physical setback. Most male figures—both human and insect—are depicted as characters who are less mature and

sensitive than their female counterparts. A male camper eventually apologizes to Mia's friend Anna for making her feel uncomfortable with his advances. At Mia's request, her mother tells her father about Mia's past abuse to spare the teen re-telling her painful story to him; "Dad wasn't great about talking about things like that." The novel's important themes successfully inspire and empower its audience. Mia's shyness, aversion to gymnastics, and discomfort with unfamiliar boys and men clearly establishes the thematic subtext of the novel for young readers, even when the action is focused on the sabotage afoot. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***A Song Below Water* by Bethany C. Morrow**

Grades 8 Up—Tavia Philips and Effie Calhoun Freeman, Black high school teens, have been raised like sisters. Tavia is sickened by the knowledge of what could happen to her if she ever affirms her siren identity in a society where sirens are persecuted and silenced-but wants to proclaim who she is, much to the dismay of her father. Tavia draws her strength from Camilla Fox, a natural hair YouTube personality who turns out to be a siren, too. Effie, not a siren but a powerful swimmer, cosplays as a mermaid at a Renaissance fair, and is attracted to Elric, her cosplay partner who cannot see her beyond their fictional roles. Effie is burdened by an inferiority complex, the result of her grandmother hiding major family secrets. When another siren is murdered, Tavia and Effie's sisterhood has to weather many storms. Morrow has deftly woven a contemporary tale with mythical elements to take on the invisibility and marginalization of Black women, touching on issues such as misogynoir, body image, social justice, and generational trauma. (*School Library Journal*)



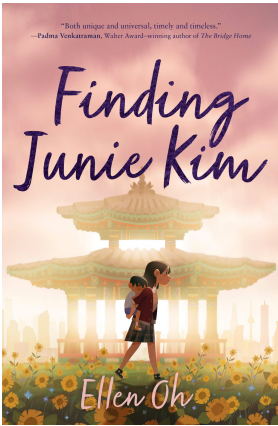
### ***Everything Sad Is Untrue* by Daniel Nayeri**

Grades 4-8—Nayeri weaves stories within stories in this fictionalized account of his formative years. He shares layers of rich information about life in Iran, refugee camps, and his experiences as an immigrant in the United States during the late 20th century. The themes of family, love, and truth are as strong as those of faith, endurance, memory, and storytelling as Khosrou (also known as Daniel) tries to tell the tales of his beautiful, complicated life and family. Nayeri provides clues about other characters without overexplaining them. Tough issues are discussed, particularly domestic violence, bullying, and life as a refugee and an immigrant, but there is levity, too. Khosrou's thoughts on Manwich sloppy joe sauce, using toilets in the U.S., and his father's overindulgence in Twinkies all lighten this tale. Without being didactic, the text communicates the universality of the human experience and the lack of empathy shown by some, not all, of those he encounters in the U.S. and in the refugee environments. The strongest developed characters are Daniel and his mother; however, readers experience varying levels of complexities of other characters like Daniel's father, stepfather, sister, teacher, and his friends (and enemies). (*School Library Journal*)



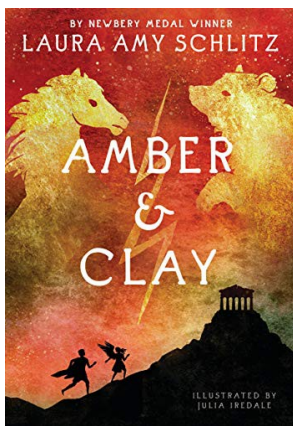
### ***XOXO* by Axie Oh**

Grades 8 Up—High school junior Jenny Go is a technically perfect cello player whose life is dedicated to her craft. When a competition judge criticizes her performance, stating that she has no “spark,” she doubts herself and her ability. Soon after, she meets a mysterious guy her age while working at her uncle’s karaoke bar in Los Angeles. Jenny and Jaewoo spend several hours together, but at the end of the night, he disappears. Months later, Jenny and her mother move to Seoul temporarily to help her sick grandmother. Jenny starts at a boarding school, makes new friends, and discovers that the mystery guy is enrolled in her school and is a star in a famous K-pop band. She and Jaewoo, at first cautious, fall into a relationship, and she begins to find that “spark” that she was missing. However, as Jenny’s time in South Korea ends, she worries that being tied to her could jeopardize Jaewoo’s future. This novel includes common YA themes: finding yourself, making adult decisions, understanding your family, finding a soulmate. It is well written, and the characters are likable, relatable, and distinct. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Finding Junie Kim* by Ellen Oh**

Grades 5–8—Twelve-year-old Korean American Junie Kim’s first morning of seventh grade turns into a police scene when racist graffiti is discovered in the school gym. Junie has been bullied by a racist white boy who calls her hateful names. Back in 1950, Korean children Doha and Jinjoo endure a brutal civil war. The book moves back and forth between then and now, illustrating the evils and effects of war and racism. In this personal narrative inspired by the author’s mother’s life, Oh writes about the ravages of war and the depths of Junie’s depression with unflinching honesty. She seamlessly provides insight into Korean history and culture for the uninitiated and captures the human condition during wartime through frank portrayals of Junie’s modern-day struggles. The portions of the book dealing with the Korean War move more swiftly, but Junie’s journey out of depression—through friends, family, therapy, and the discovery of her special talent—still develops poignantly. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Amber & Clay* by Laura Amy Schlitz**

Grades 5 Up—Two children from vastly different backgrounds—one common as clay, artistic and bright; the other precious as amber, wild, and forceful—share stories of hardship and hope, life and death in this historical fantasy told as a Greek tragedy. Born a slave and considered a barbarian by the dominant culture, redheaded Rhaskos is taught to follow orders and never think for himself. Brown-skinned Melisto is born into an affluent Athenian household, but is abused and berated by a mother who wanted a son (or at least an obedient daughter). As the children grow so do their stories, until eventually the two become entangled through the work of the gods and Rhaskos’s long-lost mother. Told from multiple perspectives, mostly in verse with some prose sections, Schlitz’s latest novel is a beautifully crafted, complex masterpiece that unfortunately may be a tough sell for the intended audience. While

the god Hermes acts as chorus, providing irreverent interludes as well as much-needed context, he cannot compensate for an often wide gap in the lived experiences of characters—at one point, Melisto’s mother describes her pregnancy and labor—and that of the reader. (*School Library Journal*)

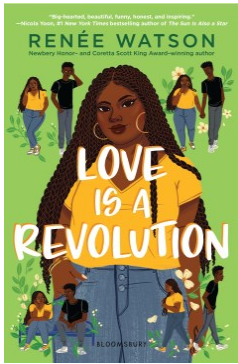


### ***Tune It Out* by Jamie Sumner**

Grades 5 Up—Loud sounds, crowds and people touching or brushing up against her are painful for 12-year-old Louise Montgomery. Her mom thinks she has the voice of an angel and is destined to make it as a singer; she has spent years forcing Louise to perform in noisy coffee shops and karaoke events while the two live together in their truck. After an incident wherein Lou crashes their truck, the young girl is moved across the country and placed in the custody of her aunt and uncle who she doesn't know. In this new setting, Lou deals with fitting in at a fancy private school, making friends, and learning to trust the adults in her life. She juggles all of this while managing what she learns, with the help of the school counselor, is a sensory processing disorder (SPD). Lou's relationships with the adults in her life, including her mom, aunt, and uncle, evolve over the course of the narrative as she adjusts to her new normal. Sumner

doesn't shy away from tough topics including homelessness, poverty, foster care, and the ups and downs of having a sensory processing disorder. (*School Library Journal*)

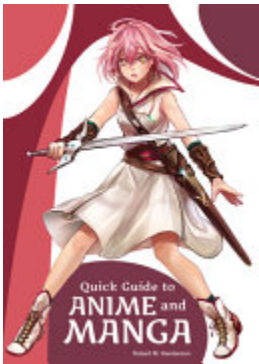




### ***Love Is a Revolution* by Renee Watson**

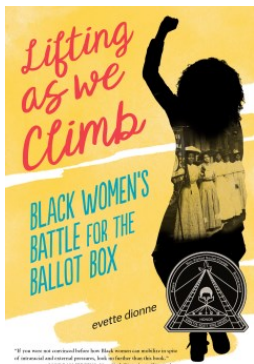
Grades 7 Up—Nala Robertson has a three-pronged plan for the summer before her senior year. One-Find a new hairstyle. Two-Spend time with her cousin and best friend, Imani. Three-Find love. When she attends a talent show hosted by the community group that her cousin is involved in and meets the beautiful Tye Brown, it seems like Nala's summer is shaping up the way she intended. Who cares if she tells a few white lies to get the civically minded Tye to think more highly of her? But as the summer progresses and Nala's relationship with Tye deepens, she feels her cousin pulling away from her and starts to wonder how long she can keep up the ruse. This book explores many different forms of love: family, romantic, and self-love. Will Nala find the courage to love herself? The protagonist's subtle humor pulls readers in, and while she occasionally muses on what it might be like to be wanted by others, she never wallows in self-pity. Notably, Nala's self-image issues are not physical. She's big and beautiful and comfortable in her body. Instead, her concern lies with her accomplishments, or what she perceives as a lack thereof. The cast of Black characters shines; each character is well-developed and relatable, even when they're not particularly likable. (*School Library Journal*)

## **Nonfiction**



### ***Quick Guide to Anime and Manga* by Robert M. Henderson**

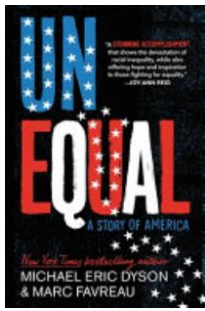
Gr 6 Up—This book discusses how manga, which originated in 11th-century Japan, evolved into an enormous industry that is loved all over the world. Readers will learn how manga (“whimsical pictures”) uses cinematic techniques to increase dramatic effects, how these comics appeal to different ages and genders, and how artists use visual cues to express personality in their characters. The deep dive into the history of these formats includes a discussion of how Japanese and American cultures influenced each other (such as how the cute Japanese characters with big eyes were influenced by Disney animated films). This book introduces readers to a wide scope of stories they can discover, from groundbreaking films like *Akira* and *My Neighbor Totoro* to more modern stories like *That Time I Got Reincarnated as a Slime*. It also includes information about the more controversial aspects of manga and anime, like fan service, whitewashing, overwork and low pay for Japanese animators, and “Netflix jail.” What readers may find especially valuable is the exploration of why manga and anime are so appealing—they provide escapism, stories about gender identity, and stories that provoke strong emotions. This volume includes enough colorful pictures to keep tweens engaged and a thorough index that will help them find their favorite topics quickly. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Lifting As We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box* by Evette Dionne**

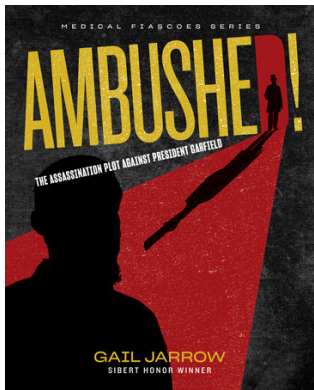
Grades 5-7—Dionne clearly presents the difficult battle for women's suffrage that African American women endured before Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment on June 4, 1919. The trek to the ballot box for African American women was a difficult one, with many grim realities to overcome before and after the amendment's ratification. Beginning with the start of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s and continuing to the present day, Dionne demonstrates why women anti-slavery advocates (African American and white) felt the need to band together to fight the sexism of the national abolitionist establishment. For instance, at the organizational meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, African American women were not invited to attend. The select white women in attendance were expected to observe the proceedings in silence. African American women fought their marginalization in the anti-slavery and later female suffrage movements and made their voices heard. The identification of African American women activists and the parts they played in American

history is the strength of Dionne's book. So many of these women played pivotal roles in the passage of fundamental civil rights legislation, yet remain unidentified in mainstream accounts. (*School Library Journal*)



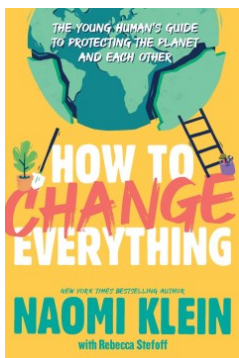
***Unequal: A Story of America* by Michael Eric Dyson & Marc Favreau**

Grades 7 Up—An incisive look at how race has been woven into the fabric of our country since its inception. Spanning from 1865 to 2021, this work profiles 20 Black Americans, including Ida B. Wells and Nikole Hannah-Jones. Other subjects who are not as widely known include 16-year-old Mary Church, who desegregated a train car in Bowling Green, KY, and went on to be one of the first Black women to graduate college, and Michelle Alexander, a lawyer who fought against “the New Jim Crow,” the over-policing of Black people during the “War on Drugs” in the 1990s. The authors’ goal is to feature the freedom fighters from all walks of life who have been at the center of the U.S.’s 150-year struggle for equality and to emphasize that “ordinary” people have pushed back against white supremacy. They make the case that this history cannot be disentangled from the broader American story. Teens can digest the substantial narrative profile by profile, but the work is best read as a whole. This is an excellent, accessible selection for history and political science classes. Thoroughly sourced and richly researched, it can be shelved alongside *Stamped* and Tracey Baptiste’s *African Icons*. (*School Library Journal*)



***Ambushed!: The Assassination Plot against President Garfield* by Gail Jarrow**

Grades 4-9—Jarrow continues her “Medical Fiascoes” series with a compelling account of the life and death of James Garfield, the 20th President of the United States. Clearly presenting the figures of Garfield and Charles Guiteau, Jarrow’s analysis of the lead up to the assassination and its aftermath is a mesmerizing read. Readers, who most likely already know the outcome of the July 2, 1881 shooting, will be rooting for Garfield’s survival along with the nation as it receives daily updates from the president’s medical team. The author has provided a multitude of primary sources to enhance the immediacy of her writing. The ramifications of each medical decision are reviewed and placed in their political and the historical contexts. The slow, lingering death of James Garfield in the summer heat of Washington, D.C., the anger of the American people, and the mental instability of the assassin all combine to make this an unforgettable book. Back matter includes glossary, timeline, more to explore online websites, author’s note, source notes, extensive bibliography, index, and picture credits. (*School Library Journal*)



***How to Change Everything: The Young Human's Guide to Protecting the Planet and Each Other* by Naomi Klein**

Grades 8 Up—Do you remember learning the three Rs of environmentalism—reduce, reuse, and recycle? Klein says a fourth, more important, R exists—the root. This root has many fibers (primarily capitalism and consumerism), but they all grow from humanity's subjugation of the Earth. Humans have arrived at a climate change cliff formed in the last 300 years due to mankind's insatiable hunger for fossil-fueled energy. Some damage to the ground, air, and water by extracting and burning those fuels is irreversible, but by acting now, the planet can be saved from disaster. Industrialized countries caused the biggest share of this damage, according to Klein. Because these countries created most of the problem, they should be responsible for reversing the effects, which disproportionately impact poorer and marginalized people. Klein discusses the need for a Green New Deal: a systemic, comprehensive, and permanent overhauling of the capitalistic and consumer-driven cultures of industrial society. She reminds readers that the United States has done it before. FDR's New Deal and the Marshall Plan were successful restructuring efforts that overhauled domestic and international systems. Klein encourages young people to

get involved in groups that will work to reverse climate change. At more than 300 pages, this is still a daunting abridgment of Klein's adult title. However, her well-presented ideas are engaging and comprehensible. She reminds readers there is no Planet B. (*School Library Journal*)



***Revolution in Our Time: The Black Panther Party's Promise to the People* by Kekla Magoon**

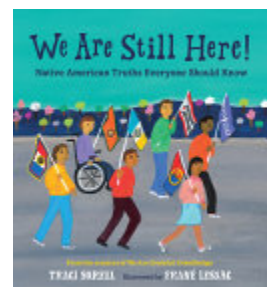
Grades 7 Up—In this thorough, well-researched work, Magoon offers an in-depth look at the Black Panthers that we've not really seen for young people—one that is honest and offers a much-needed corrective. This more sympathetic portrait is broken down into clear, easy-to-follow sections that take place in chronological order. Members of the party, particularly the founders, are highlighted; these historical figures are fleshed out as complex individuals. The compelling narrative also covers the history of the entire organization. Magoon doesn't shy away from presenting the troubles and challenges the party faced, including numerous arrests, and how despite their mission for racial equality, gender equality didn't seem to be an issue they wanted to tackle.

She brilliantly shares the positive, such as how they allowed their offices to be used for childcare and free meals, and how they set up survival programs to help people in need. The free breakfast program schools have today is thanks to the Black Panthers. (*School Library Journal*)

***Fallout: Spies, Superbombs, and the Ultimate Cold War Showdown* by Steve Sheinkin**

Grades 6 Up—Sheinkin delivers another heart-pounding tale, picking up where his 2012 award-winning book *Bomb* left off: the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War. The story opens in 1953, with Jimmy Bozart, the 13-year old paperboy who discovered a hollow nickel dropped by Soviet spy Rudolf Abel, a key early player in the series of conflicts that would lead up to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In tightly organized chapters adorned with historical photos, Sheinkin seamlessly weaves the stories of different players and includes meticulously well-researched details to personalize and humanize his subjects. Key events from the Cold War are dramatized in detailed scenes, including the inception of the arms race between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the capture of U2 pilot Francis Powers, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the building of the Berlin Wall. While Sheinkin examines up close the spies, ordinary citizens, scientists, and world leaders—including Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Khrushchev—who put events into motion, he simultaneously considers the bigger picture, not making outright villains or heroes of either side, except perhaps Soviet commander Vasily Arkhipov, who prevented a nuclear submarine strike during the

Cuban Missile Crisis. Sheinkin concludes with just how close the world came to catastrophe, and urges readers not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Teens who love history such as Marc Favreau's *Spies* and historical fiction like Jennifer Nielsen's *A Night Divided* won't be able to put this one down. (*School Library Journal*)



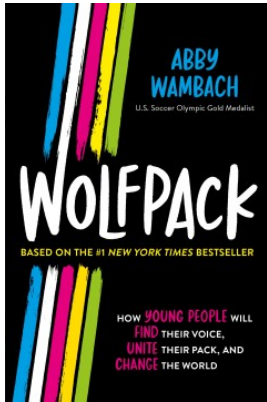
***We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know* by Traci Sorell**

Grades 4-6—Students at the Native Nations Community School share presentations about the history, present, and future of Indigenous communities. The vivid artwork features a simple, bold style. The narrative starts with a general introduction of Native Nations in the United States. Each presentation contains illustrations with the student's name, an overview of the subject, a brief list of the impact that the concept or historical moment had on Native American people, and the refrain "We Are Still Here!" The last pages show students and their families with a variety of skin tones and physical abilities studying the

presentations on topics that include sovereign rights and relocation. Additional information, a timeline, a glossary, sources, and an author's note offer further context. The lyrical text and jewel-tone illustrations



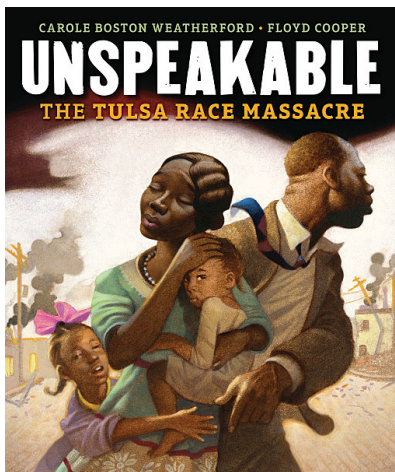
elegantly work together to stirringly portray the ongoing fight for Native American recognition and rights. *(School Library Journal)*



***Wolfpack: How Young People Will Find Their Voice, Unite the Pack, and Change the World by Abby Wambach (young reader's edition)***

Grades 5 Up—Inspired by a commencement address she gave at Barnard College, this adaptation of Wambach's adult title is a series of inspirational vignettes built around the idea of empowering young people to "find their voice, unite their pack, and change the world." Each of the book's eight chapters begins with an old rule versus a new rule breakdown. For example, the first chapter's old rule is "stay on the path," but the new rule is "create your own path." The text addresses the distinctions between each old rule and the corresponding new rule. The brief, conversational essays draw from Wambach's own experiences, not only as an elite athlete and co-captain of the U.S.

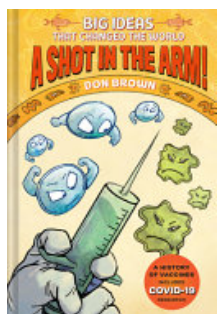
National Soccer team that won the Women's World Cup in 2015, but also as a daughter, sibling, spouse, stepparent, and friend. Many of the lessons center on leadership, sportsmanship, teamwork, and perseverance. However, values such as tolerance, vulnerability, creativity, and gratitude are also promoted. Each chapter concludes with a recap of the preceding essay's key points in a few lines of prose. Wambach provides a message that young people can and will relate to and embrace. She delivers that message with great effect in this powerful, little book. *(School Library Journal)*



***Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre by Carole Boston Weatherford***

Grades 3-6—One hundred years ago, the Greenwood district of Tulsa, OK, was a prosperous Black community. Restaurants, beauty salons, movie theaters, and dozens of other businesses thrived along "Black Wall Street." Cooper's sepia-tone illustrations depict the bustle of everyday life as people hurried to shops or churches and gathered with friends. A stark spread signals the tragic turning point that resulted in the decimation of Greenwood's Black community. A 17-year-old white woman elevator operator accused a 19-year-old Black man of assault. Incited by calls to action printed in white-owned newspapers, thousands of armed white men headed to the jail, where they met 30 armed Black men determined to stop a lynching. The confrontation resulted in the deaths of two Black men and 10 white men.

Angry that they didn't get to the jailed Black man, a white mob invaded the town, looted, and committed arson. The police did nothing to protect the Black citizens. Up to 300 Greenwood residents were killed, and more than 8,000 were left homeless. Seventy-five years passed before an official investigation occurred. Cooper's illustrations are infused with a personal connection. Not only did he grow up in Tulsa, but Cooper also heard his grandpa's stories of surviving the events. The powerful photo spread on the endpapers documents the destruction and smoking ruins. Cooper's final illustrations of Tulsa's Reconciliation Park offer a bit of hope. Weatherford's author's note provides additional background. *(School Library Journal)*

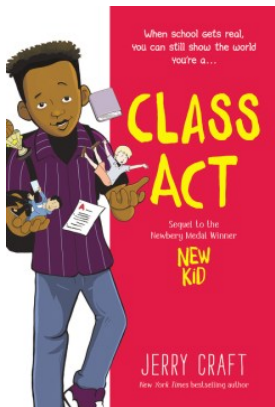


**Graphic Fiction & Nonfiction**

***A Shot in the Arm by Don Brown***

Grades 5 Up—Brown lays out the history of vaccinations in this relevant addition to the "Big Ideas That Changed the World" series. Narrator Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, an early Western champion of inoculation, marches readers through the history of smallpox, a highly contagious disease that claimed millions of lives all over the world, leaving survivors disfigured and blind. Born in 1689, Lady Mary had her own children inoculated, having

learned of the practice from her time in the Ottoman Empire. When Princess Caroline of Wales discovered it, she commissioned an experiment on prisoners before having her own children safeguarded. This kicked off not only the normalization of inoculation in the Western world but also the critical research that led to safer methods of disease prevention, such as vaccinating people with the less deadly cowpox. Brown travels through time, covering the effective eradication of polio before arriving finally at the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout, he emphasizes there were always those who did not trust scientists and doctors. The U.S. Supreme Court even ruled in the 1880s that Cambridge, MA, had “the right to protect itself against an epidemic of disease which threatens the safety of its members” by making smallpox vaccination mandatory. The blue and sepia tones add a nostalgic wash to the clean, clear layouts. Brown’s decisive tone is at times firm, often playful, and never condescending. (*School Library Journal*)

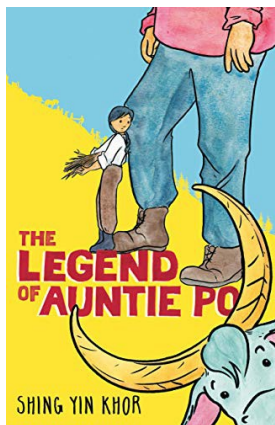


### **Class Act by Jerry Craft**

Gr 4-8—Picking up where *New Kid* left off, this sequel finds Jordan starting another riotous, discomfiting year at Riverdale Academy Day School and pondering his future. For now, he has time to burn alongside best friends Drew and Liam. An initial sequence following the three boys' daily commutes encapsulates conflicts to come.

Lighter-skinned Black, middle-class Jordan eats breakfast with his loving parents before his father drives him to school from Manhattan. Drew, who is also Black yet darker-skinned and working-class and whose doting grandmother is already at work when he leaves for school, catches two buses from Co-op City. Live-in staff attend to white, wealthy Liam while his parents, entrenched in cold war at opposite ends of the table, ignore their three children. Craft hereafter toggles among these points of view

but focuses on Drew, who must work "twice as hard to go half as far." Once again, the author/illustrator's full-color panels captivate, drawing on comics' capacity for visual metaphor and hyperbole to deliver heavy payloads. He relies on Jordan's cartoons-rendered in simple, black-and-white linework—to pause the narrative and deliver incisive, bite-size observations on race, socioeconomic status, burgeoning individuality, and pubescent perils. In time, the growing boys—unlike their school, which has no clue how to address institutional inequities and simmering tensions—initiate the painful but necessary work required to truly see and support one another. (*School Library Journal*)



### **The Legend of Auntie Po by Shing Yin Khor**

Grades 5-8—In Sierra Nevada in 1885, three years after the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 13-year-old pie maker Mei helps her father run the logging camp's kitchen. Mei, who is Chinese, also spends time with her best friend Beatrice (Bee) Andersen, who is white, and masterfully spins tall tales about a female Chinese folk hero named Po Pan Yin, aka Auntie Po, and her blue buffalo Pei Pei. As Mei grapples with her growing feelings for Bee, she suddenly starts to see Auntie Po and Pei Pei in real life. Rising racial tension in the area reaches a boiling point when Chinese cook Ah Sam and another Chinese worker are attacked on their way back to the logging camp. Changes are coming to Mei's life, and even the mother of all loggers, Auntie Po, can only do so much to help. The author interweaves fabulism and historical fiction into a well-designed, evenly paced, stirring narrative. There is a strong sense of place, thanks

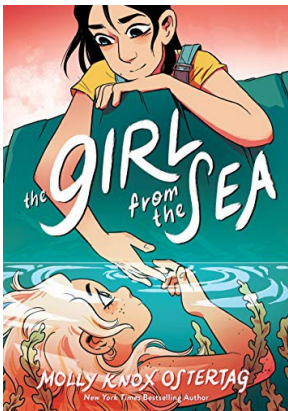
to stunning watercolors and Mei's informative narration of how a logging camp is run. The Auntie Po stories add a layer of humor or poignancy and act as an emotional channel for Mei's internal struggles. Mei's gradual queer awakening is treated sensitively as an important part of her story line. Mei; her father, Hao; Ah Sam; and some background logging camp characters are of Chinese heritage; the majority of the rest of the lumberjacks are white; and there is a Black family living at the camp as well. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***Run: Book One* by John Lewis & Andrew Aydin**

Grades 8 Up—In this follow-up to the acclaimed “March” trilogy, which picks up right after the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Lewis and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) face one challenge after another. White supremacists, including law enforcement, resist social change and calls for integration. White violence and domestic terrorism target churches, traffic stops, voting booths, and public demonstrations. Apartheid in South Africa and the Vietnam War, along with the draft, add new frontiers to a progressive movement that watches one cold-blooded killing after another take place in the United States without justice. Increased pressure and lackluster results lead to infighting among SNCC’s membership, who work to make change from a place of love but become increasingly frustrated and jaded. Lewis is but one committed

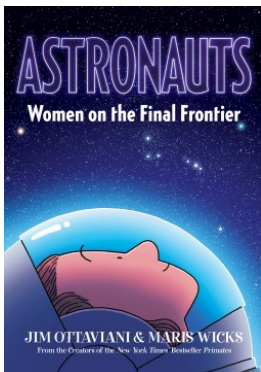
figure here, as many dedicated Black and white members of SNCC are depicted, including those who opposed Lewis’s leadership and continuous calls for integration and nonviolence. Fury and Powell’s artwork captures various states of helplessness, from losing an election to staring down the barrel of a gun, while also conveying the determination and anger that Lewis and his peers summoned to keep from quitting. Extensive biographical, reference, and artistic notes in the back matter will illuminate casual and student readers alike. (*School Library Journal*)



### ***The Girl from the Sea* by Molly Knox Ostertag**

Grades 7 Up—This sweet sapphic romance with light fantasy elements makes for an absorbing, poignant summer read. Fifteen-year-old Morgan Kwon wants to escape. After her parents’ divorce, her household is tense: Her little brother is angry; her mother is sad. The teen also wants to get away from tiny Wilneff Island, where she’s lived since she was little. Morgan, who’s a lesbian but not yet out, longs to go to college, where she can truly be herself. But she takes pleasure in walking along the beautiful and soothing yet treacherous cliffs. When she slips and falls into the water, she meets Keltie, a selkie who rescues her. Convinced she’s having a near-death hallucination, Morgan kisses Keltie. True love’s kiss gives Keltie her land legs and makes her eager to discover her fate alongside Morgan—which directly jeopardizes Morgan’s carefully regimented plans. With a timely environmentalism subplot about

how tourism and pollution affect seal habitats, the romance and coming-of-age narrative wind together in a story about identity, family, and friendship. While the plot is simple on the surface, Ostertag’s deeply saturated, expressive art makes deft use of gutters and panels, and incorporates text conversations between Morgan and her friends. Morgan’s last name indicates Korean heritage, Keltie is blonde with tan skin, and Morgan’s friend group is racially diverse. (*School Library Journal*)



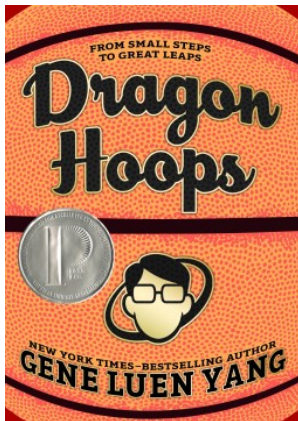
### ***Astronauts: Women on the Final Frontier* by Jim Ottaviani**

Grades 4-7—Focusing on the space race through the eyes of the women who made it possible, Ottaviani and Wicks, the creative team behind *Primates*, return with another accurate, informative, people-focused historical account. Narrator Mary Cleave, a former American astronaut, introduces readers to influential women such as Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space; engineer Dottie Lee, who worked on the Apollo space shield; and aviator Jerrie Cobb, who, as part of the Mercury 13, endured the same physiological and psychological evaluation as astronauts aboard the Mercury Seven. The nonlinear storytelling can be challenging at times, as the plot leaps across years and countries with minimal flagging for the reader. The clever use of a faux Cyrillic font, however, makes it easy to tell when characters are Russian. The artwork is cartoonish

and appealing. Though the book includes details that make the subject accessible (one scene discusses the number of tampons needed by female astronauts), technical complexity is never oversimplified. Readers will



be intrigued and inspired to dive into further research to understand some of the jargon and learn more about the women profiled here. (*School Library Journal*)



***Dragon Hoops* by Gene Luen Yang**

Grades 8 Up—A year after publishing his well-received *Boxers and Saints*, graphic novelist and math teacher Yang was beset by writer's block. But his curiosity was piqued by the Dragons, his school's men's varsity basketball team. Over the years, they had come close to winning a state championship, and 2015, the rumor mill whispered, was their year. Though a self-proclaimed nerd, Yang overcame his aversion to sports and decided to follow alumnus Coach Lou and a diverse squad of young men on their quest for the ultimate accolade. As the author juggled raising a family, teaching, and writing, the Dragons struggled to take home the championship—an effort generations in the making. The frenetic action of basketball provides ideal fodder for graphic storytelling, and Yang's visual trademarks—blade-sharp linework and squeaky-clean paneling—are in full force. His discourse on transforming human beings into cartoons that aren't caricatures is especially delightful. The narrative

combines the blood-sweat-and-tears drama of a sports story with elements of gonzo journalism, narrative nonfiction, and action comics, juxtaposing play-by-play accounts of games with explorations of players' lives and the broader history of the sport. As Yang taps into subjects as varied as assimilation and discrimination in America, internecine violence in India, and China's century-long quest for athletic recognition, readers learn how this low-cost, indoor game leveled racial, gender, and international boundaries to attain global prominence. (*School Library Journal*)