Best of the Best 2019 Middle Grades and YA Lists

Realistic/Contemporary YA Fiction
by Dr. Stacey Reese, West High School

Top 10 Book List:
1. *Internment* - Samira Ahmed
2. *Hot Dog Girl* - Jennifer Dugan
4. *Two Can Keep a Secret* - Karen McManus
5. *White Rose* - Kip Wilson
6. *We Regret to Inform You* - Ariel Kaplan
7. *People Kill People* - Ellen Hopkins
8. *XL* - Scott Brown
9. *Jacked Up* - Erica Sage
10. *The Downstairs Girl* - Stacey Lee

**Patron Saints of Nothing** - Randy Ribay (Bonus title!)

Notable Titles:
*Dream Country* by Shannon Gibney
*Let’s Go Swimming on Doomsday* by Natalie C. Anderson
*How to Make Friends with the Dark* by Kathleen Glasgow
*Field Notes on Love* by Jennifer E. Smith
*Hope and Other Punchlines* by Julie Buxbaum
*We Walked the Sky* by Lisa Fiedler
*The Princess and the Fangirl* by Ashley Poston
*If I’m Being Honest* by Emily Wibberley and Austin Siegemund-Broka
*Dealing in Dreams* by Lilliam Rivera
*If You’re Out There* by Katy Loutzenhiser
*The Universal Laws of Marco* by Carmen Rodrigues
*Death Prefers Blondes* by Caleb Roehrig
*On the Come Up* by Angie Thomas
*How It Feels to Float* by Helena Fox
*Let Me Hear a Rhyme* by Tiffany D. Jackson
*Somewhere Only We Know* by Maureen Goo
*Ray needs and Delilah’s Midnite Matinee* by Jeff Zentner
*Heroine* by Mindy McGinnis
*With the Fire on High* by Elizabeth Acevedo
*The Rest of the Story* by Sarah Dessen
*What if It’s Us* by Becky Albertalli and Adam Silvera
*The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg
Young Adult Speculative Fiction

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Dystopian/post-apocalyptic
• Dry, Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman (4★)

Fantasy:
• The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge, M. T. Anderson and Eugene Yelchin (4★)
• A Blade So Black (A Blade So Black, #1), L. L. McKinney (1★)
• The Boneless Mercies, April Genevieve Tucholke (3★)
• Courting Darkness (Courting Darkness Duology, #1), Robin LaFevers (4★)
• For a Muse of Fire (For a Muse of Fire, #1), Heidi Heilig (2★)
• The Gilded Wolves (The Gilded Wolves, #1), Roshani Chokshi (4★)
• Lovely War, Julie C. Berry (5★)
• Seafire (Seafire, #1), Natalie C. Parker
• Strange Grace, Tessa Gratton (1★)
• Tales from the Inner City, Shaun Tan (4★)
• We Hunt the Flame (Sands of Arawiya, #1), Hafsah Faizal (3★)
• We Rule the Night, Claire Eliza Bartlett (4★)
• We Set the Dark on Fire (We Set the Dark on Fire, #1), Tehlor Kay Mejia (4★)

Fantasy (literary):
• Damsel, Elana K. Arnold (2★ + Printz Honor)
• And the Ocean Was Our Sky, Patrick Ness and Rovina Cai (4★)

Horror:
• The Good Demon, Jimmy Cajoleas (3★)
• Sawkill Girls, Claire Legrand (4★)

Magical realism:
• Blanca & Roja, Anna-Marie McLemore (3★)

Science fiction:
• Aurora Rising (The Aurora Cycle, #1), Jay Kristoff and Amie Kaufman (2★)
• Once & Future (Once & Future, #1), Amy Rose Capetta and Cori McCarthy (3★)
• Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful, Arwen Elys Dayton (5★)
• The Waning Age, S. E. Grove (3★)

Anthologies:
• Toil & Trouble: 15 Tales of Women & Witchcraft, eds. Jessica Spotswood and Tess Sharpe (3★)
• Unbroken: 13 Stories Starring Disabled Teens, ed. Marieke Nijkamp (3★)

High-Demand Sequels/ Series
• King of Scars (Nikolai Duology, #1), Leigh Bardugo (2★)
• Kingdom of Ash (Throne of Glass, #7), Sarah J. Maas
• Muse of Nightmares (Strange the Dreamer, #2), Laini Taylor (2★)
• Queen of Air and Darkness (The Dark Artifices, #3), Cassandra Clare
• The Red Scrolls of Magic (The Eldest Curses, #1), Cassandra Clare and Wesley Chu
• The Storyteller (The Reader Trilogy, #3), Traci Chee (3★)
• The Toll (Arc of a Scythe, #3), Neal Shusterman (coming 11/2019)
Sequels or Companion Novels to Titles Highlighted in Previous Year

- *Archenemies* (Renegades, #2), Marissa Meyer
- *Capturing the Devil* (Stalking Jack the Ripper, #4), Kerri Maniscalco (coming 09/2019)
- *Escaping from Houdini* (Stalking Jack the Ripper, #3), Kerri Maniscalco
- *The Everlasting Rose* (The Belles, #2), Dhonielle Clayton (2★)
- *The Wicked King* (The Folk of the Air, #2), Holly Black (3★)
- *Wildcard* (Warcross, #2), Marie Lu (2★)

TV and Movie Tie-In Titles

- *Catwoman: Soulstealer* (DC Icons, #3), Sarah J. Maas
- Mortal Instruments series (*City of Bones*, etc.), Cassandra Clare
- *Pan’s Labyrinth: The Labyrinth of the Faun*, Guillermo del Toro and Cornelia Funke (2★)
- *Superman: Dawnbreaker* (DC Icons, #4), Matt de la Peña (1★)

*Note:* A number next to a star within parentheses (ex: 2★) following a title denotes the number of starred reviews that title received from among the following six publications or organizations that regularly review youth literature: Booklist, The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, The Horn Book, Kirkus Reviews, Publishers Weekly, and School Library Journal. Many thanks to the hard work of Jennifer Jazwinski, an early literacy librarian at the Palatine Public Library District, IL, for her fantastic spreadsheet compilation of starred children’s and young adult book reviews, from which I sourced this information. Visit her at https://booksheets.wordpress.com/ for more spreadsheet and book wonder.
Middle Grade and Young Adult Nonfiction
Emily Davenport

Middle Grade
(*Titles with asterisks also recommended for high school)

Social Studies & Current Issues
*Born to Fly: The First Women’s Air Race Across America by Steve Sheinkin, Bijou Karman (Illustrator)
*It’s Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood (Adapted for Young Readers) by Trevor Noah
They Lost Their Heads!: What Happened to Washington’s Teeth, Einstein’s Brain, and Other Famous Body Parts by Carlyn Beccia
*This Promise of Change: One Girl’s Story in the Fight for School Equality by Jo Ann Allen Boyce, Debbie Levy
*You Are Enough by Jen Petro-Roy

Science
Apollo 8: The Mission That Changed Everything by Martin W. Sandler
Astrophysics for Young People in a Hurry by Neil deGrasse Tyson, Gregory Mone
Beavers (Superpower Field Guide) by Rachel Poliquin, Nicholas John Frith (Illustrator)
Camp Panda: Helping Cubs Return to the Wild by Catherine Thimmesh
*Path to the Stars: My Journey from Girl Scout to Rocket Scientist by Sylvia Acevedo
Science Comics: Polar Bears: Survival on the Ice by Jason Viola, Zack Giallongo (Illustrations)

Biography/Memoir
*Always Smile: Carley Allison's Secrets for Laughing, Loving and Living by Alice Kuipers
Born Just Right by Jordan Reeves, Jen Lee Reeves
*March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine by Melba Pattillo Beals

Sports
Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery by Sandra Neil Wallace, Bryan Collier (Illustrator)
My Corner of the Ring by Jesselyn Silva
Strong Inside (Young Readers Edition): The True Story of How Perry Wallace Broke College Basketball’s Color Line by Andrew Maraniss

Literature
Our Story Begins: Your Favorite Authors and Illustrators Share Fun, Inspiring, and Occasionally Ridiculous Things They Wrote and Drew as Kids by Elissa Brent Weissman

Young Adult

Social Studies & Current Issues
The Book of Pride: LGBTQ Heroes Who Changed the World by Mason Funk
D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History (Scholastic Focus) by Deborah Hopkinson
Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic (Young Adult Adaptation) by Sam Quinones
(Don’t) Call Me Crazy: 33 Voices Start the Conversation about Mental Health by Kelly Jensen (Editor)
Enough Is Enough: How Students Can Join the Fight for Gun Safety by Michelle Roehm McCann, Shannon Watts (Foreword)
No More Excuses: Dismantling Rape Culture by Amber J. Keyser
One Person, No Vote: How All Voters Are Not Treated Equally by Carol Anderson, Tonya Bolden
Parkland Speaks: Survivors from Marjory Stoneman Douglas Share Their Stories by Sarah Lerner (Editor)
Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist by Eli Saslow
A Quick & Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities by J.R. Zuckerberg, Mady G
Spies: The Secret Showdown Between America and Russia by Marc Favreau
Troublemaker for Justice: The Story of Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the March on Washington by Jacqueline Houtman, Walter Neagle, Michael G. Long
Viral: The Fight Against AIDS in America by Ann Bausum
Your Brain Needs a Hug: Life, Love, Mental Health, and Sandwiches by Rae Earl
We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World by Malala Yousafzai
We Are Here to Stay: Voices of Undocumented Young Adults by Susan Kuklin
We Are Not Yet Equal: Understanding Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson, Tonya Bolden, Nic Stone

Science
The Weather Machine: A Journey Inside the Forecast by Andrew Blum

Biography/Memoir
Brave Face by Shaun David Hutchinson
A Cave in the Clouds: A Young Woman's Escape from Isis by Badeehah Hassan Ahmed, with Susan Elizabeth McClelland
Elon Musk: A Mission to Save the World by Anna Crowley Redding
Hey, Kiddo by Jarrett J. Krosoczka
Shout by Laurie Halse Anderson
Sissy: A Coming-of-Gender Story by Jacob Tobia
Strangers Assume My Girlfriend Is My Nurse by Shane Burcaw
Warhead: The True Story of One Teen Who Almost Saved the World by Jeff Henigson

Sports
K: A History of Baseball in Ten Pitches by Tyler Kepner
SprawlBall: A Visual Tour of the New Era of the NBA by Kirk Goldsberry

Literature
Dear Ally, How do You Write a Book? by Ally Carter

Anthologies
Color Outside the Lines by Sangu Mandanna
The (Other) F Word: A Celebration of the Fat and Fierce by Angie Manfredi (Editor)

Professional Interest
Better with Books: 500 Diverse Books to Ignite Empathy and Encourage Self-Acceptance in Tweens and Teens by Melissa Hart
Best of the Best Graphic Novels 2019
Dr. Brooke Bianchi-Pennington, Hardin Valley Academy

Middle Grades and Up

- **The Breakaways** by Cathy G. Johnson
  Bad at soccer. Okay at friends. A group of middle school girls are on their school’s C level soccer team, tricked into joining by an upperclassman. None of them enjoy the game or each other. But Faith finally has enough of all of the girls fighting and losing. Her sweet attitude helps everyone be a little more themselves and a little kinder to each other no matter how different they are.

- **Estranged** by Ethan M. Aldridge
  A human boy is the darling pet of the fey creatures who switched their own son for him as a baby. When the fey are attacked, the boy only knows one person he can turn to, the fey boy who took his place in the life he was supposed to lead. In a high fantasy world of fey, dragons, and changelings, two boys from different cultures must come together to save their families while finding new family along the way.

- **Fake Blood** by Whitney Gardner
  It’s the beginning of the new school year and AJ feels like everyone is changing but him. He hasn’t grown or had any exciting summer adventures like his best friends have. He even has the same crush he’s harbored for years. So AJ decides to take matters into his own hands. But how could a girl like Nia Winters ever like plain vanilla AJ when she only has eyes for vampires?

- **Illegal** by Eion Colfer (Author) Giobanni Rigano (Illustrator)
  Illegal tells the story of Ebo, a young boy whose only future lies with making it to Europe with his siblings. Along the way, he uses his optimism, determination, and beautiful voice to survive. Ebo’s epic journey takes him across the Sahara Desert to the dangerous streets of Tripoli, and finally out to the merciless sea. But with every step he holds on to his hope for a new life, and a reunion with his sister.

- **Island Book** by Evan Dahm
  Sola is different from everyone on her island. When the monster came, it came for her. Now, she wants to know why. Sola sets out on a journey to find the monster. Along the way she learns hers is not the only island, and she’s not the only one who feels like an outcast.

- **Making Friends** by Kristen Gudsnuk
  Sixth grade was SO much easier for Danny. All her friends were in the same room and she knew exactly what to expect out of life. Now that she's in seventh grade, she's in a new middle school, her friends are in different classes and forming new cliques, and she is totally, completely lost. Danny needs some new friends, but making friends is hard - unless you have a magic sketchbook in which everything you draw comes to life. The thing is, even when you create a best friend, there’s no guarantee they'll always be your best friend. Especially when they discover they’ve been created with magic!

- **New Kid** by Jerry Craft
  Jordan Banks is the new kid. Not only is he new, he’s also on scholarship and one of the school’s few students of color. Jordan must navigate sticking true to himself while also making new
friends who are very different from him and coping with students and faculty that, though seemingly well-intentioned, don’t quite get what the world looks like from his perspective.

- *Sanity & Tallulah* by Molly Brooks  
  Even though she’s only in 8th grade, Sanity is a master scientist living in a community on a remote space station. When Sanity uses some of her lab equipment to create herself a pet, Princess Sparkle Destroyer of Worlds, only her trouble-making best friend Tallulah can help her save her pet and the space station from destruction.

- *Sheets* by Brenna Thummler  
  Both Marjoire and Wendell feel trapped in their lives. One washes and folds sheets to keep her grieving family afloat. One floats underneath a sheet to avoid scaring the living. When these two meet, both learn to cope with both life and death.

- *This Was Our Pact* by Ryan Andrews  
  Each year on the autumn equinox, Ben’s town sends floating lanterns down the river to join the stars. This year, Ben makes a pact with his friends that they will follow the lanterns until they see what really becomes of them. But only Nathaniel, the boy ostracized from the rest of the group, follows through. Once the other boys leave, Ben and Nathaniel encounter a fantastic adventure with a talking bear, mad scientist, and bottled stars. But will they ever reach the end?

### High School and Up

- *Bloom* by Kevin Panetta (Author) Savanna Ganucheau (Illustrator)  
  Ari is perpetually dissatisfied with his life. He doesn’t want to be stuck running his family’s small-town bakery. Instead, he wants to move to the city to pursue his music career, even if all of his bandmates aren’t the nicest people. When he tries to soften the blow of his leaving by finding someone to take his place, he is reminded of what true love, friendship, and satisfaction look like - complete with adorable baking scenes.

- *Check, Please!* By Ngozi Ukazu  
  Vlogger, baker, and hockey player Eric Bittle begins his freshman year of college battling his fear of being hit on the ice. His lovable teammates help him overcome his fears while learning about love and friendship.

- *Dead Endia: The Watcher’s Test* by Hamish Steele  
  A diverse cast of characters who work at the celebrity-themed amusement park Pollywood have to cope with the events that transpire on a regular basis due to the fact that Pollywood has a portal to the seven realms of angels and demons. Sure, they have to deal with possessions, time travel, ghosts, demons, children’s birthday parties, and an impending apocalypse, but what they end up achieving is a greater understanding of themselves and their anxieties.

- *Dodge City* by Josh Trujillo (Author) Cara McGee (Artist) Brittany Peer (Colorist)  
  Tomás has joined the city’s worst dodgeball team, the Jazz Pandas. But once he overcomes his fear of being hit, her learns his ability to communicate with and care for others can lead this disparate group to come together. From conversations entirely in Spanish with no translation to
sign language, *Dodge City* includes all readers in story about working together.

- **Fence: Vol. 1 and 2** by C.S. Pacat (Author) Rebecca Nalty, Johanna the Mad (Illustrators)
  Fencing is an elite sport, but Nicholas doesn't have an elite budget. Regardless, he fights to be the best fencer he can be, wanting to follow in the steps of the father who abandoned him. When he faces the arrogant top junior fencer in the world at his first tournament and loses spectacularly, he is driven to one day beat him, no matter the cost. That is, if he can survive being roommates with him first.

- **Hey, Kiddo** by Jarrett Krosoczka
  In this autobiographical work, Krosoczka outlines his childhood coping with his absent father and drug-addicted mother. As he grows, he learns both about his art and the value of found family.

- **Home After Dark** by David Small
  Set in the 1950s, *Home After Dark* pairs well with other coming-of-age tales of the time such as *Catcher in the Rye*. Russell moves across the country after his parents’ divorce and has difficulty fitting in with the toxic masculinity of his father and friends. This book explores generational and societal violence with hints at how empathy can lead to escaping those cycles.

- **Kiss Number 8** by Colleen AF Venable (Author) Ellen T. Crenshaw (Illustrator)
  Mads doesn't get what the big deal is with kissing, that is until kiss number 8. Kiss number 8 is the first time she kisses a girl. For this church-going teen, coming to an understanding of her sexuality and her family's history of anti-LGBTQ+ actions is a difficult journey, but one which teaches her that people can change for those they love.

- **Lost Soul, Be at Peace** by Maggie Thrash
  A follow-up to *Honor Girl*, (though able to stand alone) Thrash uses the metaphor of a ghost to explore confronting generational disconnection and coming-of-age. Maggie learns about how her distant and silent father left his past behind when visiting the house he grew up in, learning to be more accepting of him and herself.

- **Luisa: Now and Then** by Carole Maurel adapted by Mariko Tamaki
  Luisa is 32, but is still finding it difficult to understand and be her authentic self. Through a magic bus ride and a helpful neighbor, she is confronted with the teenager she was and still is. This is a story about caring for your inner child and righting past wrongs against yourself through self-acceptance.

- **On a Sunbeam** by Tillie Waldon
  On a Sunbeam is a beautiful coming-of-age story about finding oneself and one’s chosen family set in a sprawling, imaginative universe. Each character in the almost entirely female book is unique and brings emotional depth to this sci-fi world.

- **Shuri Vol. 1: The Search for Black Panther** by Nnedi Okorafor (Author) Sam Spratt, Leonardo Romero (Artists)
  Shuri, Wakanda’s brilliant engineer, sends her brother to space on a mission. The only problem is, she hasn’t heard back from him. While he’s gone, Shuri must wrestle with her place in a new,
open Wakanda, search for her brother, and defend her country and the whole of Africa.

- **Skyward Vol. 1: My Low-G Life** by Joe Henderson (Author) Lee Garbett, Antonio Fabela (Artists) When Willa was a newborn, gravity broke. All of the sudden, the Earth’s gravity is a fraction of what it was, and, if you’re not careful, you could fall into the sky. Twenty years later, society has adapted, but it is still dangerous to travel out of the city. In a quest to convince her overprotective father to let her see the world, Willa uncovers her father’s role in this new world and brings new danger to her family. She won’t stop until the evil man profiting from the low-gravity world ends his threats.

- **Space Boy** by Stephen McCraine After her father loses his job in deep space, Amy and her family must leave everyone they know, become cryogenically frozen for thirty years, and move to earth. Out of space and time, Amy must acclimate to her new life. However, she meets someone who seems even more out of place than she is.

- **They Called Us Enemy** by George Takei, Justin Eisinger, Steven Scott (Authors) Harmony Becker (Illustrator) George Takei recounts his childhood in Japanese-American internment camps in World War II as well as how activism in all forms in the face of injustice can be life-changing.
K-5 Picture Books
List by Julie Danielson

My Top Ten:

2. *Going Down Home with Daddy*, written by Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrated by Daniel Minter; Peachtree, April 2019.

Notable Mentions:

- *Bear Came Along*, written by Richard T. Morris and illustrated by LeUyen Pham; Little, Brown, June 2019.
- *Lion of the Sky: Haiku for All Seasons*, written by Laura Purdie Salas and illustrated by Mercè López; Millbrook, April 2019.
- *My Heart*, written and illustrated by Corinna Luyken; Dial, January 2019.
- *A Normal Pig*, written and illustrated by K-Fai Steele; Balzer + Bray, June 2019.
- *¡Vamos! Let’s Go to the Market*, written and illustrated by Raúl the Third III; Versify, April 2019.
• *What Is Given from the Heart*, written by Patricia C. McKissack and illustrated by April Harrison; Schwartz & Wade Books, January 2019.

• *When Aidan Became a Brother*, written by Kyle Lukoff and illustrated by Kaylani Juanita; Lee & Low, May 2019.

• *A Big Mooncake for Little Star*, written and illustrated by Grace Lin; Little, Brown, August 2018.

• *Dreamers*, written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales; Neal Porter Books/Holiday House, September 2018.

• *The Rough Patch*, written and illustrated by Brian Lies; Greenwillow, August 2018.

• *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*, written by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Frané Lessac; Charlesbridge, September 2018.
Best of the Best (So Far), 2019 Edition

High Interest Books for Grades 3-6 by Lisa Meidl

Sid, Axl, and Ivan volunteer to make a late-night fast-food run for the high school theater crew, and when they return, they find themselves. Not in a deep, metaphoric sense: They find copies of themselves onstage. As they look closer, they begin to realize that the world around them isn’t quite right. Turns out, when they went to the taco place across town, they actually crossed into an alien dimension that’s eerily similar to their world. The aliens have made sinister copies of cars, buildings, and people—and they all want to get Sid, Axl, and Ivan. Now the group will have to use their wits, their truck, and even their windshield scraper to escape! But they may be too late. They may now be copies themselves . . .

Alberto lives alone in the town of Allora where fish fly out of the sea and everyone knows everybody’s business. There he makes coffins for the great and small, but being the only coffin maker in town can be lonely. That is until a little boy and a magical bird enter his life and change it forever.

In this series opener, Koko Dodo the cookie chef has a big problem. Today is the day of the royal cookie contest, and someone has stolen his top-secret fudge sauce! Luckily, a spy enters the scene just in time (or rather, crashes in on her roller skates): Didi Dodo! This might be Didi’s first case ever, but she has a daring plan to help Koko.

This series is part of Scholastic’s early chapter book line, Branches, aimed at newly independent readers. With easy-to-read text, high-interest content, fast-paced plots, and illustrations on every page, these books will boost reading confidence and stamina.

When Louisa is sent to stay with her grandparents for the summer, she’s not looking forward to it. While her brother is determined to find a way to stay on Deer Island forever, Louisa would rather be off having adventures with their globetrotting ornithographer parents. She’s a writer, and there’s nothing on all of Deer Island to write about—right? Louisa quickly discovers that small doesn’t necessarily mean quiet, and the island has plenty of scope for the imagination. It also has George, the boy who helps her see the world in a whole new light. The end of summer is coming fast, and Louisa must decide what she really wants: travel the world with her parents, or stay on Deer Island with the people she’s only just learning to love?

From comics rising star Sarah Graley, a fresh and funny middle-grade graphic novel featuring a girl who must save a virtual world... and her own!

An all-new adventure at an all-new Jedi Academy campus. The first ever Jedi Academy story to be narrated by Christina Starspeeder. As told through a mix of comics, doodles and journal entries, Christina takes us on a new adventure at an all-new Jedi Academy campus!

King, Kayla, and Grandma find a dog who has lost his human family. What does Kayla know? —This dog doesn’t have a collar or any tags. He can sit, lie down, and shake hands. No one around here knows who he is. What does King know? —The dog’s family is staying at a campground. Can they figure out who he is and where his family is?


In book 2 of the Mighty Meg series, Meg must save her school from a frozen phenomenon! Strange things are happening in Plainview. When Meg sees a wall of ice holding back a mountain of stones, she knows once the warm, spring weather comes and melts the ice, the stones are going to come crashing down. It’s up to Mighty Meg to save the day!


Diary of a Wimpy Kid meets Percy Jackson in *Odd Gods*, the first book in a hilarious illustrated series about the most unlikely, unusual Gods ever to grace the halls of Mount Olympus Middle School.


“Somewhere in the universe, there is the perfect tune for you.” This evocatively illustrated graphic novel brilliantly captures the high drama of middle school by focusing on the desire of its finely drawn characters to sing and be heard.


This evocatively illustrated graphic novel brilliantly captures the high drama of middle school by focusing on the desire of its finely drawn characters to sing and be heard. Sparkling with humor, this insightful and compassionate story will resonate with readers who have confronted secrets of their own.


Lauren and her family drive to a farm in North Dakota to visit relatives and celebrate her Auntie Joss’ wedding. But Lauren finds to her dismay that she is expected to do more than meet adults who hug her and invade her personal space. Lauren is going to be—horror of all horrors—a flower girl. Lauren has Autism Spectrum Disorder, and she sees the world a little differently from other kids. What makes her comfortable are her routines and her coping mechanisms for her anxiety, which can get out of control in no time. So it is a challenge to deal with her rambunctious cousins, try on scratchy dresses, and follow impossible directions about going down aisles slowly—but-not-like-a-sloth and tossing pretend flowers around. Is it any surprise that Lauren flips her lid more than once? But while having an extended family seems like a lot of trouble at first, she’s about to learn just how much they can care for one another.


In *Ada Twist and the Perilous Pants*, Ada must rely on her curious mind, her brave spirit, and her best pals Rosie Revere and Iggy Peck to solve a mystery in her own backyard.


Brilliantly funny new young series about the bravest scaredy-cat in the world Sam Wu is NOT a scaredy-cat (except when he is). And when a shark TOTALLY tries to eat him at the local aquarium, he decides he’s not going to take any more chances. So at his friend’s birthday party at the beach, Sam refuses to dip even a toe in the water. Nothing could go wrong now, could it?
Super Sons, Book 1: The Polarshield Project, written by Ridley Pearson. DC Comics, 2019. Jon Kent and Damian "Ian" Wayne are opposite in every way except one—they are the sons of the World's Greatest Heroes! To uncover a global conspiracy, this unlikely dynamic duo will need to learn to trust each other and work together to save the Earth. But who is the mysterious Candace, and what secrets does she hold that could be the key to everything?

Supers, A Little Star Past Cassiopeia, written by Frederic Maupome. Top Shelf Books, 2018. Matt, Lily, and Benji aren’t from around here. Abandoned on planet Earth, hiding far from their home; they can’t even use their powers in public, for fear of being discovered. Starting at a new school is hard enough already....

The Totally Secret Diary of Dani D: New School, New Me! Written by J.M. Klein. West 44 Books, 2019. Dani’s parents have just separated and she moved with her mom to a new town. Not only does she live with her grumpy grandparents now, she also has to start at a new school. Dani pretends that she was a popular drama club star at her old school and starts to attract new, cool friends. Can she keep up her lies forever, or will she totally blow her cover?

A Story Like the Wind, written by Gill Lewis. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2017. In a small boat spinning out on the sea sits a group of refugees, fleeing their war-stricken homes. They have nothing - except their memories, their stories, and their music. An unforgettable tale of displacement, hope, and the search for freedom.

Dear Justice League, written by Michael Northrop. DC Zoom, August 2019. Ben Slisby texts Superman and asks him if he’s always been “super” or if he’s ever messed up “big time” because he has. Superman is reading this text and flying, runs smack into a wall that leads to a chain of wacky events which answers that question. Wonderful coloration, lots of onomatopoeia.
Best STEM Books for Young Readers
Kristin Rearden, University of Tennessee, krearden@utk.edu


STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) is an integrated and creative approach to discovering and applying knowledge about our world to solve problems that utilizes one or more of the content areas. Trade books that deliver background and model the practices of STEM provide context and inspiration to readers. Recognizing the best publications in this field can help guide their use and provide direction to publishers.

The best STEM trade books must invite STEM-like thinking by:
- Modeling real-world innovation
- Embracing real-world design, invention, and innovation
- Connecting with authentic experiences
- Showing assimilation of new ideas
- Illustrating teamwork, diverse skills, creativity, and cooperation
- Inviting divergent thinking and doing
- Integrating interdisciplinary and creative approaches
- Exploring multiple solutions to problems
- Addressing connections between STEM disciplines
- Exploring Engineering Habits of Mind
- Systems thinking
- Creativity
- Optimization
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Ethical considerations
- Critical thinking

The best STEM trade books might represent the practices of science and engineering by:
- Asking questions, solving problems, designing, and redesigning
- Integrating STEM disciplines
- Showing the progressive changes that characterize invention and/or engineering by:
  - Demonstrating designing or redesigning, improving, building, or repairing a product or idea
  - Showing the process of working through trial and error
  - Progressively developing better engineering solutions
  - Analyzing efforts and making necessary modifications along the way
  - Illustrating at points that failure might happen and that is acceptable, providing reflection and learning occurs.

List of STEM Books

Intermediate level narrative informational book that chronicles the life of Sophie Germain, a French mathematician born in the 18th century. Author’s note about Sophie, notes from the author and illustrator, bibliography, additional resources.
Intermediate or middle grades level non-narrative informational book that depicts the inner workings and designs of common objects such as paper airplanes, soap, crayons, and zippers. Labeled photos and diagrams, glossary.

Primary or intermediate level narrative informational book that chronicles the life of Robert Goddard, whose rocket design is still used today. Cartoon-style illustrations, author’s note, works cited.

Pre-school or early primary level story book about an elephant who tries to create a tower as tall as he is. Counting up to 8, cartoon illustrations with photograph images of wooden blocks.

Intermediate to middle level non-narrative informational chapter book that focuses on six innovations: glass, cold, sound, clean, time and light. Captioned photos, bibliography, additional resources, index.

*PBS Learning Media Series: How we got to now*
https://tnlearn.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/f8a890f6-515f-4a8c-999b-3cd31343d433/how-we-got-to-now/

Primary story book about an inventive girl who strives to help an injured crow fly again.

Intermediate chapter story book that describes the contributions of a herpetologist and local Canadian children who seek to find ways for migrating salamanders to reach their destination safely. Black and white illustrations, epilogue.


Primary or intermediate narrative informational book that uses rhyming text to chronicle the life of Raye Montague, an African-American mathematician who provided innovative submarine designs to the US Navy. Cartoon-style illustrations, additional information about Raye, interview excerpts, timeline, bibliography of articles books, videos and websites.

Middle grades chapter story book that weaves together cultural aspects of Filipino family and community life in the San Francisco area with the engineering escapades of Lucinda, the main character who strives to build a “tiny house” on her family’s property.
Best of Best Workshop 2019 Book Lists

Intermediate narrative informational book that chronicles the lives of Otis Barton and William Beebe, who worked together to create the bathysphere for deep-sea exploration. Cartoon-style illustrations, author’s note with photographs, illustrator’s note, note from former assistant Constance Carter, sources.

Primary narrative informational book that chronicles the life of environmentalist Rachel Carson. Cartoon-style illustrations, author’s note, additional notes, bibliography.

Intermediate or middle grades narrative informational chapter book that chronicles the astronauts and missions of Apollo 1 through 11. Author’s and illustrator’s notes, bibliography, source notes. Written in prose with full-page spread of each mission’s astronauts. Mix of watercolor illustrations, captioned photos.

Intermediate or middle level chapter narrative informational book that chronicles the history of flight innovations, with a focus on the lives of Orville and Wilbur Wright. Cartoon-style black-and-white illustrations, photographs, diagrams, timeline, index.

Primary or intermediate level book that describes the adult life of Frank Chapman, curator at the AMNH in NYC and editor of Bird Lore which eventually became the Audubon Magazine. Additional information about Chapman, information about Audubon chapters for citizen science bird counting opportunities, author’s note. Visit the Great Backyard Bird Count at [http://gbbc.birdcount.org/](http://gbbc.birdcount.org/)

Intermediate to middle grades non-narrative informational text that compares and contrasts explorations of space and the Earth’s oceans. Timelines, captioned pictures and illustrations, glossary, index.

Primary or intermediate level narrative informational book that chronicles the life of Joan Procter, an English herpetologist who worked at the London Natural History Museum and was the curator of reptiles at the London Zoo in the 1920s. Cartoon-style illustrations, additional information, bibliography.

Middle grades level narrative informational chapter book that describes the plight and subsequent attempts to restore the blight-stricken American chestnut tree. Black-and-white photographs, some color photographs, author’s note, sources. Watch an oral history about the American chestnut tree blight’s effect on the southern Appalachian region at

Primary or intermediate narrative informational picture book about how Earle Dickson invented the Band-Aid. Cartoon-style illustrations, author’s note, time line, other medical inventions of the early 20th century, additional resources.
Cultural Customs and Celebrations

*Alma and How She Got Her Name*, by Juana Martinez-Neal. Candlewick, 2018. Grades PK-3. What’s in a name? For one little girl, her very long names tells the vibrant story of where she came from—and who she may one day be. In her author-illustrator debut, Juana Martinez-Neal opens a treasure box of discovery for children who may be curious about their own origin stories or names. *2019 Caldecott Honor Book; Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

*First Laugh Welcome, Baby!* By Rose Ann Tahe and Nancy Bo Flood. Illustrated by Jonathan Nelson. Charlesbridge, 2018. Grades PK-K. In Navajo families, the first person to make a new baby laugh hosts the child’s First Laugh Ceremony. The First Laugh Ceremony is a celebration held to welcome a new member of the community. As everyone—from Baby’s *nima* (mom) to *nadi* (big sister) to *cheii* (grandfather)—tries to elicit the joyous sound from Baby, readers are introduced to details about Navajo life and the Navajo names for family members. Back matter includes information about other cultural ceremonies that welcome new babies and children, including Man Yue celebration (China), Sanskaras (Hindu) and Aquiqa (Muslim). *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

*We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga*, by Traci Sorell and Frane Lessac. Charlesbridge, 2018. Grades PK-2. The Cherokee community is grateful for blessings and challenges that each season brings. The word *otsaliheliga* (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) is used by members of the Cherokee Nation to express gratitude. Beginning in the fall with the new year and ending in the summer, follow a full Cherokee year of celebrations and experiences. This is modern Native American life as told by an enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation. Includes a glossary and the complete Cherokee syllabary. *2019 Sibert Honor Book; 2019 Orbis Pictus Honor Book; Kirkus Reviews Best Books of 2018; Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*


*Under My Hijab*, by Hena Khan. Illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel. Lee & Low Books, 2019. Grades 1-2. Grandma wears it clasped under her chin. Aunty pins hers up with a beautiful brooch. Jenna puts it under a sun hat when she hikes. Zara styles hers to match her outfit. As a young girl observes six very different women in her life who each wear the hijab in a unique way, she also dreams of the rich possibilities of her own future, and how she will express her own personality through her hijab. Written in sprightly rhyme and illustrated by a talented newcomer, *Under My Hijab* honors the diverse lives of contemporary Muslim women and girls, their love for each other, and their pride in their culture and faith.

*When Mama Braids My Hair*, by Monique Duncan. Sweet Pea Books, 2018. Grades K-3. This is a beautiful tribute to the tradition of African hair braiding and the bond it can create between mother and daughter. Come join Nikki on an adventure as she is transformed into an Egyptian queen, a Nigerian goddess, a Zulu warrior, and a Maasai girl. While young girls throughout the African Diaspora can relate...
to getting their hair braided in intricate styles, it is also an ancient ritual that is a large part of their history. Readers will enjoy learning about the origins of popular braided hairstyles worn today.

*My Hair is a Garden, by Cozbi A. Cabrera.* Albert Whitman & Company, 2018. Grades K-3. After a day of being taunted by classmates about her unruly hair, Mackenzie can’t take it anymore and she seeks guidance from a wise and comforting neighbor, Miss Tillie, who helps Mackenzie learn that natural black hair is beautiful.

*Don’t Touch My Hair!* by Sharee Miller. Little, Brown, & Company, 2018. PreK-3. Aria loves her hair. It’s soft and bouncy, and grows up toward the sun like a flower. But what will Aria do when curious hands can’t resist touching her curls? Author-illustrator Sharee Miller tells a colorful and hilarious story about the importance of personal boundaries and asking for permission first.

**First Day-of-School Community Building/Acceptance/Kindness**


*Friends and Foes: Poems About Us All, Douglas Florian.* Beach Lane Books, 2018. Grades PreK-5. In the tradition of Shel Silverstein, celebrated picture book poet Douglas Florian offers an honest, touching, and often humorous collection of twenty-three poems about relationships—both good *and* bad!

*Best Friends in the Universe, by Stephanie Watson and Leuyen Pham.* Orchard Books, 2018. Grades PK-3. Louie and Hector are the best friends in the universe. Get ready to laugh out loud as the two boys fall in and out and eventually back into their best friendship ever through a series of funny secrets that neither one was supposed to reveal. Louie and Hector’s comical dialogue will have kids howling!

*Phone Call with a Fish,* by Silvia Vecchini. Illustrated by Sualzo. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades K-4. A story for anyone who has felt like a fish out of water. There’s a boy in class who doesn’t say anything. He doesn’t yell when a student steps on his foot, and he writes his answers to the teacher’s questions on the board. One of his classmates is trying to understand why he’s so quiet, but she can’t figure it out. But then one day the class goes to the science museum, and she discovers a phone with an aquarium full of fish on the other end of the line. And the fish, as it turns out, aren’t silent after all—they just have their own way of communicating. This empathy-building story will encourage readers to approach others with compassion and understanding. *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

*When the Cousins Came,* by Katie Yamasaki. Holiday House, 2018. Grades PK-3. Inspired by the author’s own large, diverse family, this is a sensitive story about insecurity, hosting family, and friendship. Katie Yamasaki’s tale, paired with bright mixed-media art, reminds children that negative thoughts and anxiety over exclusion don’t always translate to reality, and that even when plans go wrong you can still have a good time together.

*All Are Welcome,* by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades PK-3. A warm, welcoming picture book that celebrates diversity and gives encouragement and support to all kids. Follow a group of children through their school day, where all kids—kids in patkas, hijabs, baseball caps, and yarmulkes—are welcomed with open arms. Students learn from each others’
traditions and the whole community gathers to celebrate the Lunar New Year. *New York Times bestseller and Amazon Best Children’s Book of the Year.*

*Marvelous Maravilloso: Me and My Beautiful Family,* by Carrie Lara. Illustrated by Christine Battuz. Magination Press, 2018. Grades PK-3. This story is told from the viewpoint of a bi-racial girl, as she navigates the colorful world around her. As she is coming into her own identity and exploring what this means for her, she comes to appreciate how all families are uniquely beautiful. Includes a note to parents and caregivers with more information about how children notice and respond to skin color at different ages, and advice for talking about it with them. *International Latino Book Awards Finalist; NCSS 2019 Notable Social Science Trade Book for Young People; 2018 National Parenting Product Award Winner (NAAPA)*

*The Day You Begin,* by Jacqueline Woodson. Illustrated by Rafael López. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. Grades K-3. (Also available in Spanish, as *El Dia En Que Descubres Quién Eres*). Jaqueline Woodson’s lyrical text and Rafael López’s dazzling art reminds us that we all feel like outsiders sometimes—and how brave it is that we go forth anyway. And that sometimes, when we reach out and begin to share our stories, others will be happy to meet us halfway.


*Dreamers,* by Yuji Morales. Neal Porter Books, 2018. Grades PK-3. (Also available in Spanish as *Soñadores*). In 1994, Yuyi Morales left her home in Mexico and came to the US with her infant son. Her gorgeous picture book is about making a home in a new place. Together, mother and son found an unexpected, unbelievable place: the public library. There, book by book, they untangled the language of this strange new land, and learned to make their home within it. Included are a brief autobiographical essay about Yuyi’s own experience, a list of books that inspired her, and a description of the images, textures, and mementos she used to create this book. *2019 Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book; Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2018; 2019 Pura Belpré Illustrator Award: Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

*Aunt Luce’s Talking Paintings,* by Francie Latour. Illustrated by Ken Daley. Groundwood Books, 2018. Grades PK-2. Every winter, a young girl flies to Haiti to visit her Auntie Luce, a painter. The moment she steps off the plane, she feels a wall of heat, and familiar sights soon follow — the boys selling water ice by the pink cathedral, the tap tap buses in the busy streets, the fog and steep winding road to her aunt’s home in the mountains. The girl has always loved Auntie Luce’s paintings — the houses tucked into the hillside, colorful fishing boats by the water, heroes who fought for and won the country’s independence. Through Haiti’s colors, the girl comes to understand this place her family calls home. And when the moment finally comes to have her own portrait painted for the first time, she begins to see herself in a new way, tracing her own history and identity through her aunt’s brush. Includes an author’s note and a glossary. *2019 Outstanding International Books for Young People.*

*Mustafa,* by Marie-Louise Gay. Groundwood Books, 2018. Grades K-3. Mustafa and his family traveled a long way to reach their new home. Some nights Mustafa dreams about the country he used to live in, and he wakes up not knowing where he is. Then his mother takes him out to the balcony to see the moon — the same moon as in their old country. In the park, Mustafa sees ants and caterpillars and
bees — they are the same, too. He encounters a “girl-with-a-cat,” who says something in a language that he can’t understand. He watches an old lady feeding birds and other children playing, but he is always looking in from the outside and he feels that he is invisible. But one day, the girl-with-the-cat beckons to him, and Mustafa begins to become part of his new world.


*I Walk With Vanessa: A Story about a Simple Act of Kindness, by Kerascoët. Schwartz & Wade, 2018. Grades PreK-3. This simple yet powerful picture book—from a New York Times bestselling husband-and-wife team—tells the story of one girl who inspires a community to stand up to bullying. Inspired by real events, I Walk with Vanessa explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly, and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help. By choosing only pictures to tell their story, the creators underscore the idea that someone can be an ally without having to say a word. With themes of acceptance, kindness, and strength in numbers, this timeless and profound feel-good story will resonate with readers young and old.


The Wall in the Middle of the Book, by Jon Agee. Dial Books, 2018. Grades PK-3. There’s a wall in the middle of the book, and our hero—a young knight—is sure that the wall protects his side of the book from the dangers of the other side—like an angry tiger and giant rhino, and worst of all, an ogre who would gobble him up in a second! But our knight doesn’t seem to notice the crocodile and growing sea of water that are emerging on his side. When he’s almost over his head and calling for help, who will come to his rescue? An individual who isn’t as dangerous as the knight thought—from a side of the book that might just have some positive things to offer after all! Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.

*What Is Given from the Heart, by Patricia C. McKissack. Illustrated by April Harrison. Schwartz & Wade, 2019. Grades PK-3. This final, magnificent picture book from three-time Coretta Scott King Award winner and Newbery Honor author Patricia McKissack is a poignant and uplifting celebration of the joy of giving.

Thank You, Omu! By Oge Mora. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades PK-3. Everyone in the neighborhood dreams of a taste of Omu's delicious stew! One by one, they follow their noses toward the scrumptious scent. And one by one, Omu offers a portion of her meal. Soon the pot is empty. Has she been so generous that she has nothing left for herself? Debut author-illustrator Oge Mora brings to life a heartwarming story of sharing and community in colorful cut-paper designs as luscious as Omu's stew, with an extra serving of love. An author's note explains that "Omu" (pronounced
AH-moo) means "queen" in the Igbo language of her parents, but growing up, she used it to mean "Grandma." This book was inspired by the strong female role models in Oge Mora's life.  

**Outside My Window,** by Linda Ashman. Illustrated by Jamey Christoph. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades PK-3. Children living in different parts of the world see very different things when they gaze out of their windows. One child looks out over a boulevard lined with palm trees, another sees a train whistling past snow-capped mountains, and another waves to her father as he tends to their garden. But while their lives may seem different, there’s something important that they all share. This beautiful book will spark readers’ curiosity and imagination with its celebration of global diversity.

**Someone New,** by Anne Sibley O’Brien. Charlesbridge, 2018. Grades K-3. The new kids seem different...who will be their friends? Maria is new. She’s from Guatemala. Jesse can’t understand her very well. Jin is new. He’s from Korea. Jason can’t read his writing. Fatimah is new. She’s from Somalia. Emma can’t see anything they have in common. Eventually—with a little courage and curiosity—Jesse, Jason, and Emma reach out to their classmates. Maybe making a new friend isn’t so tricky after all. (Pair with *I’m New Here*, by Sibley O’Brien). *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*


**Biography**


**Turning Pages: My Life Story,** by Sonia Sotomayor. Illustrated by Lulu Delacre. (Also available in Spanish, as *Pasando Páginas: La historia de mi vida*). Philomel Books, 2018. Grades PK-3. As the first Latina Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor has inspired young people around the world to reach for their dreams. But what inspired her? For young Sonia, the answer was books! They were her mirrors, her maps, her friends, and her teachers. They helped her to connect with her family in New York and in Puerto Rico, to deal with her diabetes diagnosis, to cope with her father’s death, to uncover the secrets of the world, and to dream of a future for herself in which anything was possible. *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*


Girl Running, by Annette Bay Pimentel. Illustrated by Micha Archer. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. Grades K-3. Because Bobbi Gibb is a girl, she’s not allowed to run on her school’s track team. But after school, no one can stop her—and she’s free to run endless miles to her heart’s content. She is told no yet again when she tries to enter the Boston Marathon in 1966, because the officials claim that it’s a man's race and that women are just not capable of running such a long distance. So what does Bobbi do? She bravely sets out to prove the naysayers wrong and show the world just what a girl can do. *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*


Library on Wheels: Mary Lemist Titcomb and America’s First Bookmobile, by Sharlee Glenn. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades 3-7. Realizing its limitations and inability to reach the country’s 25,000 rural residents, including farmers and their families, Titcomb set about to change the library system forever with the introduction of book-deposit stations throughout the country, a children’s room in the library, and her most revolutionary idea of all—a horse-drawn Book Wagon. Soon book wagons were appearing in other parts of the country, and by 1922, the book wagon idea had received widespread support. The bookmobile was born! *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

Martin and Anne: The Kindred Spirits of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Anne Frank, by Nancy Churnin and Yevgenia Nayberg. Creston Books, 2019. Grades 3-7. Anne Frank and Martin Luther King Jr. were born the same year a world apart. Both faced ugly prejudices and violence, which both answered with words of love and faith in humanity. This is the story of their parallel journeys to find hope in darkness and to follow their dreams.
Civil Rights History


Martin Rising: Requiem for a King, by Andrea Davis Pinkney and Brian Pinkney. Scholastic Press, 2018. Grades 4-7. In a rich embroidery of visions, musical cadence, and deep emotion, Andrea and Brian Pinkney convey the final months of Martin Luther King’s life -- and of his assassination -- through metaphor, spirituality, and multilayers of meaning. Classroom plays of Martin Rising can be performed by using the “Now Is the Time” history and the 1968 timeline at the back of the book as narration -- and adding selected poems to tell the story! Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.

Be a King: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Dream and You, by Carole Boston Weatherford. Illustrated by James E. Ransome. Bloomsbury USA, 2018. Grades PK-3. Featuring a dual narrative of the key moments of Dr. King’s life alongside a modern class as the students learn about him, Carole Weatherford’s poetic text encapsulates the moments that readers today can reenact in their own lives. See a class of young students as they begin a school project inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and learn to follow his example, as he dealt with adversity and never lost hope that a future of equality and justice would soon be a reality.

Pies from Nowhere: How Georgia Gilmore Sustained the Montgomery Bus Boycott, by Dee Romito. Illustrated by Laura Freeman. Little Bee Books, NY, 2018. Grades K-3. When the bus boycott began in 1955 in Montgomery, AL, after Rosa Park’s arrest, Georgia Gilmore organized a group of women, the Club from Nowhere, who cooked and baked to fund-raise for the boycott. Their name came from Georgia’s reply to anyone who asked where the money came from: “Nowhere.” This picture book highlights a hidden figure of the civil rights movement.

Someday Is Now: Clara Luper and the 1958 Oklahoma City Sit-Ins, by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich. Illustrated by Jade Johnson. Seaglass Press, 2018. Grades 3-5. How will you stand against something you know is wrong? One way is to follow the lessons of bravery taught by civil rights pioneers like Clara Luper. As a child, Clara saw how segregation affected her life. Her journey famously led her to Oklahoma, where she and her students desegregated stores and restaurants that were closed to African-Americans. With courage and conviction, Clara Luper led young people to “do what had to be done.” This moving title includes additional information on Clara Luper’s extraordinary life, her lessons of nonviolent resistance, and a glossary of key civil rights people and terms.

Civics

Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights, by Rob Sanders. Illustrated by Jared Andrew Schorr. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018. Grades PK-3. Protesting. Standing up for what’s right. Uniting around the common good—kids have questions about all of these things they see and hear about each day. Through sparse and lyrical writing, Rob Sanders introduces abstract concepts like “fighting for what you believe in” and turns them into something actionable. Jared Schorr’s bold, bright illustrations brings the
resistance to life making it clear that one person can make a difference. *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*

*What’s the Big Deal About Elections,* by Ruby Shamir and Matt Faulkner. Philomel Books, 2018. Grades PK-3. From ballots to bonfires, from suffrage to stumping, this kid-friendly picture book filled with fun facts and historical trivia shows why voting is so important and why America gets to call its government a body of, by, and for the people.

*Americans,* by Douglas Wood. Illustrated by Elizabeth Sayles. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readrs, 2018. Grades PK-3. Americans are different from one another in many ways. And despite these differences, Americans share certain ways of doing and being that hold us all together. From the Fourth of July to the Bill of Rights, Douglas Wood and Elizabeth Sayles share the story of what it is to be American.

*Ellie May on President’s Day,* by Hillary Homzie. Illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler. Charlesbridge, 2018. Grades 1-4. Quirky and funny, second-grader Ellie May enjoys learning about US presidents. But she absolutely loves the idea of being class flag leader during the week before Presidents' Day. Tired of not being chosen to hold the flag, she makes it her mission to finally get picked. Just how far will Ellie May go to be chosen as class flag leader during the exciting week leading up to Presidents' Day?


**Little-Known American History**

*Spooked!: How a Radio Broadcast and the War of the Worlds Sparked the 1938 Invasion of America,* by Gail Jarrow. Calkins Creek, 2018. Grades 5-9. On the night of October 30, 1938, thousands of Americans panicked when they believed that Martians had invaded Earth. What appeared to be breaking news about an alien invasion was in fact a radio drama based on H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds,* performed by Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre players. Some listeners became angry once they realized they had been tricked, and the reaction to the broadcast sparked a national discussion about fake news, propaganda, and the role of radio. In this compelling nonfiction chapter book, Gail
Jarrow explores the production of the broadcast, the aftermath, and the concept of fake news in the media.

*Pass Go and Collect $200: The Real Story of How Monopoly Was Invented*, by Tanya Lee Stone. Illustrated by Steven Salerno. Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group, 2018. Grades K-4. In the late 1800s lived Lizzie Magie, a clever and charismatic woman with a strong sense of justice. Waves of urban migration drew Lizzie’s attention to rising financial inequality. One day she had an idea: create a game that shows the unfairness of the landlord-tenant relationship. But game players seemed to have the most fun pretending to be wealthy landowners. Enter Charles Darrow, a marketer and salesman with a vision for transforming Lizzie’s game into an exciting staple of American family entertainment. Features back matter that includes "Monopoly Math" word problems and equations. Excellent STEM connections and resources. *A Kirkus Best Book of the Year; An NCTE Orbus Pictus Honor Book; An NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People*


*Irving Berlin: The Immigrant Boy Who Made America Sing*, by Nancy Churnin. Illustrated by James Rey Sanchez. Creston Books, 2018. Grades 2-5. Irving Berlin came to the United States as a refugee from Tsarist Russia, escaping a pogrom that destroyed his village. Growing up on the streets of the lower East Side, the rhythms of jazz and blues inspired his own song-writing career. Starting with his first big hit, Alexander’s Ragtime Band, Berlin created the soundtrack for American life with his catchy tunes and irresistible lyrics. With “God Bless America,” he sang his thanks to the country which had given him a home and a chance to express his creative vision. *Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019.*
The Colors of History: How Colors Shaped the World, by Clive Gifford. Illustrated by Marc-Etienne Peintre. Quarto Publishing, 2018. From black to white, and all the colors in between, every shade has a story to tell. Each color group is introduced with a stunning and interpretive double-page spread illustration, followed by illustrated entries exploring the ‘colorful’ history of particular shades. With vivid, thought-provoking illustrations and engaging bite-sized text, this book is a feast for the eyes and the mind, ready to enthrall budding artists and historians alike. Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People 2019; 2019 Outstanding International Books for Young People.

Peace and Me, by Ali Winter. Illustrated by Mickaël El Fathi. Lantana Publishing, 2018. Grades K-5. How did the Nobel Prize originate, and who have been its winners? What did peace mean to them? What does it mean to you?

YA Novels for Older/Tween Readers (Grades 5-7)

- The Parker Inheritance, Varian Johnson—modern-day teens uncover secrets about African-American life in the South in the 1950s
- Blended, Sharon Draper—a story about divorce and racial identity
- Finding Langston, Lesa Cline-Ransome—Langston’s new home has one fantastic thing: the Chicago Public Library. There, hiding out after school, Langston discovers another Langston—a poet whom he learns inspired his mother enough to name her only son after him.
- Front Desk, Kelly Yang—immigration, poverty, strong female protagonist
- Lifeboat 12, Susan Hood—for middle grade Titanic fans
- Merci Suárez Changes Gears, Meg Medina—the confusion of middle school tempered by a strong, loving family
- The Season of Styx Malone, Kekla Magoon—“Heartening and hopeful, a love letter to black male youth grasping the desires within them, absorbing the worlds around them, striving to be more otherwise than ordinary.” —Kirkus Reviews
Depth and Breadth of the Power of Text Sets:
Supporting Background Knowledge and Content Area Learning
Grades K-5

Note: This Best of the Best session was adapted by a session originally put together by Dr. Deborah Wooten of the University of Tennessee by the Center for Children’s and Young Adult Literature’s graduate research assistants, Arianna Banack (abanack@vols.utk.edu) and Caitlin Metheny (cmetheny@vols.utk.edu). Contact Arianna or Caitlin with any questions.

I. Synoptic Text Sets
How books work together to gain a deeper understanding about one theme, or events. Synoptic texts are great resources to discuss author craft, literary elements, and differences in illustration. Ask students: why did each author include certain facts? How is the story presented? How do the illustrations reflect the story?

Ada Lovelace: The first Computer Programmer

Selected content areas and themes these texts address:
- Social Studies/History
  - Historical Context
  - Role of Women during the 1800s
    - Diversity (Gender)
  - Industrial Revolution
- Math
- Science

Irving Berlin (Considered to be one of America’s greatest song writers)

Selected content areas and themes these texts address:
- Social Studies/History
  - Historical Context
    - WWI and WWII
    - Immigration
    - Discrimination based on religion
    - Poverty
American Dream
  - Music (Self-taught)

II. Complementary Text Set:
How books work together to gain an understanding about themes and characteristics about people and events.

The below books provide the true stories of three different men who made sacrifices to become artists.


Selected content areas and themes these texts address:
- Social Studies/History (Context)
  - WWI
  - WWII
- Discrimination
  - Segregated South
- Art
- Sports

The below biographies work together to tell the stories of women who overcame adversity and gender stereotypes to become successful in the fields of math and science.


Selected content areas and themes these texts address:
- History (Context)
- Math
- Science
- Gender stereotypes/ Discrimination
- Overcoming adversity
Use this list of the best middle grade books of all time to keep your child enthused and interested in reading. Here you will find everything from educational fiction novels to middle school novels to teach in the classroom. Keep reading to see some of the best books to share with the middle schooler in your life. By the way, this isn’t our first rodeo when it comes to rounding up middle school favorites. Summary of the Best Middle Grade Books of All Time. Putting everything together, in this guide we reviewed the following:

- The Best Holocaust Books for Kids and Young Adult Readers of 2019. Professor Conquer
- October 17, 2019. Reading Book Lists. The Best 9th Grade Reading List. Professor Conquer