

Light up

your winter

29 titles for kids in preschool to grade 12,

with stories

reviewed by volunteers just for you!



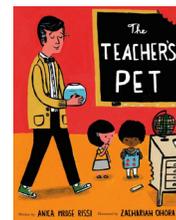
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PICTURE BOOKS

The Teacher's Pet, by Anica Mrose Rissi; illustrated by Zachariah Ohora (Preschool-Kindergarten)

There is something different about Bruno, the science experiment that hatched in Mr. Stricter's classroom. Bruno starts out the size of a tadpole, but continues growing and growing! Next, he's eating homework and classroom desks, but Mr. Stricter just doesn't want to believe that there is anything wrong with keeping Bruno as a class pet. Zachariah Ohora's bright illustrations help enhance this silly story by Maine native Anica Mrose Rissi, which will keep young kids laughing from start to finish.



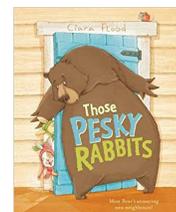
Hello Hello, by Brendan Wenzel (Preschool-Kindergarten)

Hello Hello is a playful exploration of fascinating animals. With illustrations that genuinely complement the words, kids and adults alike will enjoy spending time pondering each page. Brendan Wenzel, winner of the Caldecott Honor award, introduces us to some unusual, and, sadly, threatened species of animals with vibrant, eye-catching colors. Be sure to take note of the wonderful end pages and the listing of animals in the back to aid in further research.



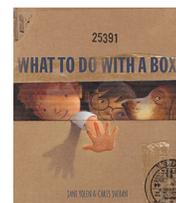
Those Pesky Rabbits, by Ciara Flood (Preschool-Grade 1)

Mr. Bear is grumpy. He has a routine and likes to be left alone. But when a family of friendly rabbits move in next door, Mr. Bear has to decide whether he will stay grumpy or accept his new neighbors' attempts to build a friendship. Kids will be tickled by Mr. Bear and the sweet bunny family, and may even help teach them what it means to be a friend.



What to Do with a Box, by Jane Yolen; illustrated by Chris Sheban (Preschool-Grade 1)

As many parents know, the best thing to a child about a new package is not the toy inside, but the box it came in. After all of the gifts are unwrapped this holiday season, keep the boxes and share this story about using your imagination that will quite literally inspire kids to think outside the box.



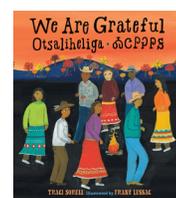
Leave Me Alone, by Vera Brosgol (Preschool-Grade 2)

The grumpy grandma at the heart of this story has had it with her umpteen grandchildren making too much noise. So she decides to pack up her knitting supplies and head somewhere – anywhere – for some peace and quiet. But she just can't quite seem to ever be alone! From bothering bears, to grazing goats and little green moon men, granny wants to get as far away from everyone as possible. Kiddos will delight in shouting grandma's oft-repeated request – "Leave me alone!" – (and grownups will relate to her plight) in this ultimately sweet story.



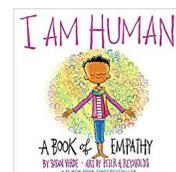
We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga, by Traci Sorell; illustrated by Frané Lessac (Preschool-Grade 2)

Otsaliheliga (oh-jah-LEE-hay-lee-gah) or "we are grateful" in Cherokee, is the expression used to give thanks to *unelanvhi* (oo-NE-la-nuh-hee), "the one who provides for all." Beginning in the fall, this colorfully illustrated picture book follows the celebrations of the seasons through general daily life duties and sacred rituals of the tribe. Modern life and historical traditions are blended together showing how the Cherokee people are citizens of both their tribal nation and the United States. With pronunciation guides and a Cherokee syllabary, we get to feel how the words form on our tongues and hear how they might sound when spoken.



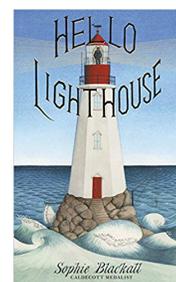
I Am Human: A Book of Empathy, by Susan Verde; illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds (Preschool-Grade 3)

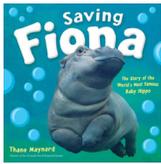
This is a sweet, uplifting story for young readers. The illustrations are wonderful and gently colorful, showing the positive attributes one can have but also the negative attitudes and feelings we all go through at one time or another. The author simply shows the way to make amends for hurtful things that are said and how to take responsibility for the mistakes we make and hopefully keep connections to each other strong, which can make a world of difference in our community, big or small.



Hello Lighthouse, by Sophie Blackall (Preschool-Grade 3)

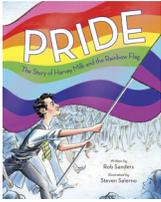
This gorgeous picture book from Caldecott medalist Sophie Blackall takes you inside a lighthouse to reveal what it was like for lighthouse keepers to live in isolation and who took such care and pride in their profession. Each page is a stunning piece of artwork on its own, but coupled with the sweet tale of a lighthouse keeper, his wife and child, it takes on a life of its own. Island Readers & Writers is thrilled that Sophie will visit several schools with us next spring for a wonderful, multifaceted program!





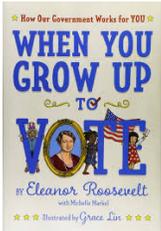
Saving Fiona, by Thane Maynard (Grades 1-3)

This is the true tale of Fiona, a baby hippopotamus that became an Internet sensation after she was born prematurely at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2017. Her story of perseverance in the face of many obstacles is both inspiring and adorable. Real photographs from her life are used to enlighten young readers about the round-the-clock effort it took for zoo workers to keep Fiona alive and thriving. Animal and biology lovers will be fascinated by the facts and details presented, and no one will be able to resist Fiona's sweet face!



Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and The Rainbow Flag, by Rob Sanders; illustrated by Steven Salerno (Grades 1-3)

This colorful, eye-catching picture book is a great fit for beginning readers that will expose them to the story of the rainbow flag and the activism behind it. Simply told, this age-appropriate narrative tells of Harvey Milk and Gilbert Baker, and their roles in the history of their community, their struggles and hopes for the future. It's an important and ultimately uplifting story of our nation's history.



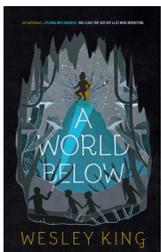
When You Grow Up to Vote, by Eleanor Roosevelt with Michelle Markel; illustrated by Grace Lin (Grades 1-7)

Eleanor Roosevelt's original 1932 text is updated with new material and fun illustrations. Written in 1932, the same year her husband was elected President of the United States, the beloved first lady explains to children in the simplest terms how government works at all levels. It is a very clear overview with the timeless emphasis on the importance of every person's civic duty to vote and would make a great gift for a child's collection or a classroom.



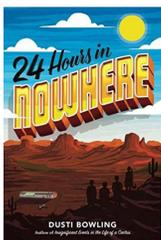
Aru Shah and the End of Time, by Roshani Chokshi (Grades 3-7)

Fast-paced and funny, this middle grade fantasy aims to do for Hindu mythology what Rick Riordan did for Greek legends with his Percy Jackson series. After 12-year-old Aru Shah accidentally frees a world-destroying demon while trying to impress some classmates, she learns she's the reincarnation of a demi-god and it's up to her to set things right. The tale would have benefitted from more character- and plot-building in the first few chapters, but it introduces a refreshingly real heroine who readers will be eager to join on more literary adventures.



A World Below, by Wesley King (Grades 3-7)

What starts out as a normal field trip to a large cave system in New Mexico quickly turns to an adventure story involving survival, teamwork, facing fears, and keeping an open heart. When Eric and Silvia's class visits limestone caves with their teacher Mr. Baker, an earthquake separates the students from the adults and they must band together to find their way back to the surface. Their obstacles, however, are not quite what they anticipated – bats, and falling stalactites, sure, but also giant lakes and their mega creatures, forests lit by glowing mushrooms, and an unknown world with inhabitants prepared to fight off any Surface People. For a quick-paced, intriguing read, journey to *A World Below*.



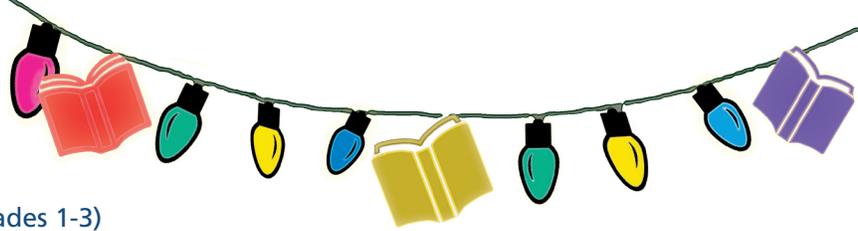
24 Hours in Nowhere, by Dusti Bowling (Grades 3-7)

Nowhere, Arizona, is the least livable town in the country. When the town's best racer comes to the aid of a friend being mercilessly bullied, she is forced to give up her prize dirt bike just before the biggest race of the season. To buy it back, she and three other initially unlikely companions have to go into a haunted and dangerous mine to find a gold nugget to buy the bike back. Their adventures, bonding and unlikely triumph are great fun. It was hard to put this book down.



Front Desk, by Kelly Yang (Grades 3-7)

Mia is a 10-year-old girl who works at the front desk in a motel after school following her family's immigration to California from China. The story tells how the motel residents teach one another to get along with different types of people, and also teaches the value of community. The owner of the motel is cruel and exploitative and Mia, a funny and strong-willed character, works to fight against injustices. This book has good lessons for readers about getting along and understanding diverse backgrounds.





Very Rich, by Polly Horvath (Grades 3-7)

Rupert Brown is about as poor as he can be. Through a chance meeting, he becomes the guest of the Rivers, the richest family in town, on Christmas. Crazy family games with confounding rules form the basis of a rich and twisted plot with lots of surprises and wonderful characters that combine to make this a great read by Newbery Honor and National Book Award winner Polly Horvath.

Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World, by Ashley Herring Blake (Grades 4-7)

Storms are a theme in this tone-perfect tale about 12-year-old Ivy who loses her home to a tornado, the attention of her parents to new twin brothers, and finally the notebook where she keeps her most closely held secret. Added to the tempest already roiling inside her are feelings she doesn't understand for a girl in her class. Could it be a crush? Deftly written and perfectly paced, this novel of first love and family love is tender, feisty and relatable – just like its heroine.

Small Spaces, by Katherine Arden (Grades 5-6)

A sixth-grade field trip to a farm seems pretty routine until the bus breaks down in the woods returning back to school. What follows is a fascinating tale involving ghosts, zombie scarecrows and much, much more. Acquaintances become friends and discover each other's hidden talents. Better read this one during the day!

Moon Over Manifest, by Clare Vanderpool (Grades 5-6)

When Abilene Tucker first jumps off the train before her stop in Manifest, Kansas, she is expecting to see the town of legend and colorful characters of which her father told stories. Instead, she sees a faded, dilapidated ghost town. With help from two new friends, Abilene begins the search for the mysterious Rattler mentioned in old letters she finds in a box under the floorboards. She hears stories from Miss Sadie the fortune teller and reads Hattie Mae's old newspaper articles to piece together the past and help the town heal. If only she could find her father someplace in those stories. *Moon Over Manifest* is a beautiful tale that won the 2011 Newbery Medal.

Hurricane Child, by Kheryn Callender (Grades 5-7)

To be a Hurricane Child is to be born cursed – or so the locals say. For 12-year-old Caroline, it feels that way. Caroline struggles with the absence of her mother, a father struggling to raise a headstrong child, a school filled with people who hate her, and phantoms that no one else can see. How is a young girl supposed to navigate it all, while balancing grief, anger, and the new feelings that have arisen for the new girl, Kalinda? With a text and imagery that evokes magical realism, *Hurricane Child* is a journey no reader should miss.

Stanley Will Probably Be Fine, by Sally J. Pla (Grades 5-7)

For Stanley Fortinbras, the world can feel like too much to handle. Thank goodness for comic books and superheroes! When you're missing your father, your friend keeps telling you to "be normal," and the daily barrage of middle school is becoming overwhelming, they'll come to your rescue. Sometimes they'll even send you on an epic quest that will help you prove to yourself, and others, that you've got what it takes. With a cast of interesting, loveable, and struggling characters, it's a great read for all – even if you don't like comic books.

YOUNG ADULTS

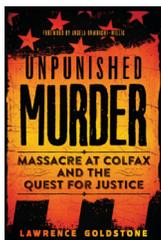
An Assassin's Guide to Love and Treason, by Virginia Boecker (Grades 7 and up)

One wouldn't think that you could cram romance, identity, Elizabethan politics, William Shakespeare, treason, Catholics and Protestants, spies, forbidden love, and sword fighting all into one book. It's not only possible, the book is a thrilling page-turner (that does contain mature language and humor). Katherine Turner, daughter to a Cornish nobleman and "treasonous Catholic," has to make a series of life-changing choices: between escape and revenge, honesty and selfishness, love and duty. How far will she go to make things right? Would she even become...an assassin?

Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings, by Margarita Engle (Grades 7-9)

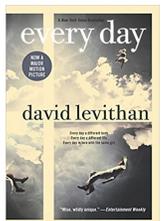
This 2015 memoir, written in poetic verse, tells the story of a teen growing up in the United States in a family of two cultural backgrounds, Eastern European and Cuban. Most of the story is told during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The verse relays the confusion and delight the girl feels in her home, school, and while traveling with her family to Cuba. Writing this memoir in poetry gives the book a different way of conveying the story and the feelings. If you like stories about different cultures, you will learn a lot about growing up in a diverse community.





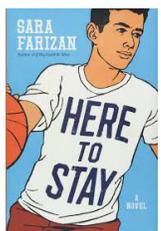
Unpunished Murder: Massacre at Colfax and the Quest for Justice,
by Lawrence Goldstone (Grades 7-12)

This gripping nonfiction tale is the account of a post-Civil War massacre by a group of white supremacists on a group of young black men in Louisiana in 1873. Any young adult reader who loves history will eat this up and be looking for more. More importantly, it may help those readers make the connections about what has come before us in our American history to what is happening today and understand how precarious some things have become in our nation's democracy and society.



Every Day, by David Levithan (Grades 7-12)

"Every day I am someone else. I am myself — I know I am myself — but I am also someone else." This is how it is for "A" waking up in a different body every day. Imagine controlling someone else from inside them. You can determine their actions and behavior for the day. But what happens tomorrow? What will they remember? How much damage will you cause if you alter their personality? What happens when the body fights back? And what happens when you fall in love? A unique and compelling novel with two sequels and a movie deal, this one is sure to capture a young reader's attention.



Here to Stay, by Sara Farizan (Grades 7-12)

"I had it in my head that if I became popular, every day would feel like my birthday." Bijan is a dorky, comic book reading, basketball-loving nerd who just wants what most high school kids want: to fit in and learn how to talk to a girl. When he unexpectedly gets put into a varsity game, his talent on the court earns some welcome attention, and then some not-so-welcome attention. Sara Farizan takes us into the many layers of prep school life, taking on Islamophobia and more with humor and grace. Fast-paced, witty and thought provoking.



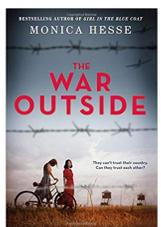
Trell, by Dick Lehr (Grades 6-10)

Ever since she was a baby, Trell's father has been in prison for a murder she knows he did not commit. Now 13-year-old Trell, her mother and a hard-working public defender must reexamine every detail of the case to prove her father's innocence. Based on an actual case in the late 1980's in Boston that author Dick Lehr covered as a reporter for the *Boston Globe*, *Trell* is a fictionalized yet gripping examination of the criminal justice system and the corruption that can lurk among it.



Dear Evan Hansen, by Val Emmich with Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (Grades 9 and up)

This novel debuted this fall after the success of the Broadway musical of the same name. This is an excellent study of the complex connections between two teen boys, Evan and Conner, who are both on the periphery of their high school's society: Evan suffers from anxiety and cannot connect with his classmates, and Conner is a lonely bully. Each narrates their own perspective on life and interactions with their friends and families. The resulting story of deceit and redemption is compelling. In the process, the reader learns about the demons that often plague a bully, and the importance of interpersonal relationships. In places, the narrative features strong language, but the story is well-told.



The War Outside, by Monica Hesse (Grades 9 and up)

In this wrenching tale two teens, one German-American, the other Japanese-American, pursue a forbidden friendship during World War II in the internment camp where both their families have been sent as "enemy aliens." Can they trust each other? And should they? Well-researched and well-written, this complex piece of historical fiction eschews easy answers as it follows the girls from their first meeting as they shelter together from a dust storm, to the aftermath of decisions that affect both families in profound ways.