

Island Readers & Writers

Sniff out a good book! Inside are 35 titles for kids in pre-K through grade 12, reviewed by readers just for you!



**Winter
Booklist
2021**

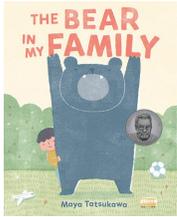
Picture Books



Animal Architects

by Amy Cherrix, illustrated by Chris Sasaki

From the moment you open this book, the architectural blueprints on the front and back plates let you know that you are in for something special. Amy Cherrix's crisp and visual words are complemented perfectly with the wonderful Chris Sasaki's vibrant illustrations. Whether you like architecture or animals (or neither!), the narrative instills curiosity and connection to the world that surrounds us. It brings the unnoticed into view and colorfully depicts the concept of architecture in a whole new way. Reading from the Selected Sources provided on the end page are a great way to keep the curiosity going.



The Bear in My Family

written and illustrated by Maya Tatsukawa

The bear in this boy's family is "really loud, really bossy, and always hungry." And he wonders why his parents don't notice what he goes through living with this bear. But bears can come in handy when trouble comes around. "And who doesn't love Bear hugs!" An adorably illustrated tale of sibling struggles that will have many nodding along in agreement. A perfect book for using the Whole Book Approach with its jacket, cover, lovely endpapers, and fantastic use of the "gutter."



Eyes That Kiss in the Corners

by Joanna Ho, Illustrated by Dung Ho

In this cheerfully illustrated book, you meet a young Asian girl who begins noticing the difference between her eyes and the eyes of others. This love story about the bonds of family show that things that make us different can bind us together in other ways. Joanna Ho's lyrical words stretch through "tales of the past and hope for the future" in pools of gold flecked oolong tea. Heart lifting!



Have You Ever Seen a Flower?

written and illustrated by Shawn Harris

This book begins in a grayscale city and quickly takes the reader into a fluorescent wonderland of color. The book leads the reader through the process of carefully observing nature and then asks us to consider embodying a flower, switching from asking "Have you ever seen a flower?" to "Have you ever been a flower?" Although Harris has illustrated other books, including Dave Eggers' *Her Right Foot* and *What Can a Citizen Do?* but this is the first book that Harris has both written and illustrated. This book's neon, abstract illustrations and philosophical questions make it a unique reading experience that will spark anyone's imagination.



It Fell from the Sky

written and illustrated by Terry Fan & Eric Fan

After a mysterious orb (what readers will recognize as a marble) falls from the sky, an empowered spider crafts up an idea on how to earn a profit off this unknown object. This ambitious spider created an amusement park for all visitors to pay a price to see this marvelous unknown object. However, after greed quickly took over, the visitors soon lost interest and Spider was left alone. In the end, Spider learns an important lesson, one that serves as a good reminder to us all.



King of Ragtime, The Story of Scott Joplin

written and illustrated by Stephen Costanza

Readers will know instantly that Costanza himself is a musician as they read the lyrical text of this wonderful tribute. "... like colors on a quilt sewn from cotton picked by black hands, brown hands, tired and worn—but oh! How they clapped at night, as voices lifted to the stars." Each page is brimming with emotion and movement as it takes us along on this historical journey through Joplin's life. King of Ragtime is an astounding tale of creative ingenuity bursting onto the musical scene despite numerous obstacles. Joplin's ability to hear music all around him allowed him to piece bits of styles together as gorgeous as the steam from the "clickety-clackety!" train in Costanza's illustration.

Little Witch Hazel: A Year in the Forest

written and illustrated by Phoebe Wahl

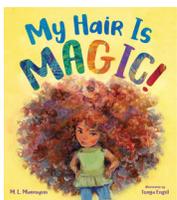
The residents of Mosswood Forest are Little Witch Hazel's friends and neighbors. This hardworking and kind witch is mid-wife to a rabbit, friend to a lonely troll, and the savior of an orphaned egg! Readers will discover that the kindness we sow is the kindness we reap, and that the woods are ever full of surprises. Phoebe Wahls' illustrations are packed with charming details (particularly the Mosswood map!) that will have you exploring the pages for hours.



My Hair is Magic

written by M.L. Marroquin, illustrated by Tonya Engel

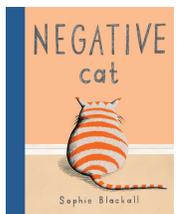
"When people ask me, 'Why is your hair so BIG?', I ask them, 'Why isn't yours?'" This book has attitude! This story has spunk! Her hair is magic, and the illustrations bring her hair to life for all readers to respect and understand. This little heroine is delightfully dauntless and sheds light on the notion of personal space and body positivity.



Negative Cat

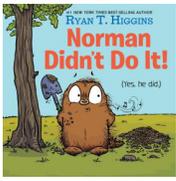
written and illustrated by Sophie Blackall

Negative Cat tells the story of a young boy who dreams of getting a pet. The boy repeatedly asks for a cat until the parents finally relent. You might expect the usual complaints from his parents, such as that the boy failed to take care of his pet, but it turns out that the cat is the one with an attitude problem! The boy tries to figure out how to make the cat happy, and the solution is unexpected and heartwarming. Many parents and kids will relate to the "expectation vs. reality" of owning a pet presented in this wonderful book. Blackall's brightly colored, expressive illustrations bring the story to life.



What is the Whole Book Approach?

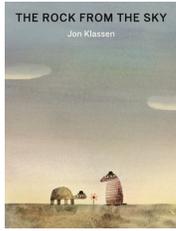
The Whole Book Approach asks children to look at books in their whole art form, including examining the endpapers, the jacket, and the cover. By asking open-ended questions about the book and its visuals, we can create an interactive, rich learning experience.



Norman Didn't Do It

written and illustrated by Ryan Higgins

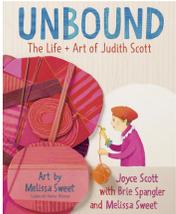
"Norman is a porcupine. Norman's best friend is Mildred. Mildred is a tree." Higgins' fans will delight in this hilarious friendship that seems to be a figment of Norman's imagination more than anything. The trials of jealousy come into play as they undoubtedly do when a third party comes onto the scene. Because three's a crowd, right? How far will Norman go to protect HIS friendship? Don't ask Norman, because he didn't do it! With brilliantly illustrated, part comic-style pages, you'll surely hear the cries of, "Read it again!"



The Rock from the Sky

written and illustrated by John Klassen

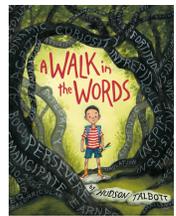
This book follows a series of characters as they avoid the titular "rock from the sky." Klassen once again expertly combines a simple vocabulary and a repetitive structure with humor. The book is told in five chapters, making this a great choice for new readers who are making the leap from easy readers to chapter books.



UNBOUND: The Life and Art of Judith Scott

by Joyce Scott, Brie Spangler, and Melissa Sweet, illustrated by Melissa Sweet

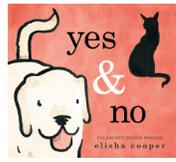
The collage of meaningful words, heartfelt illustration and photographs woven throughout this book tell an amazing story. In one beautiful picture book so many topics are covered in several "chapters" of a life and a relationship. A close sibling relationship, the pain of separation, joy of reunion, and wonder of artistic expression is beautifully described. And of course, the notion of being and feeling "different" is a "thread" that connects Judith the fiber artist, to us all. The end notes, actual photo of Judith, and the real and whimsical representation of her art give her life relevancy for us all.



A Walk in the Words

written and illustrated by Hudson Talbott

Everyone attacks reading differently! Some dive into a book, speed read and are able to comprehend the entire story. Others go slowly...maybe they have to sound out the words or they are having trouble comprehending the story. Hudson Talbott shares his own childhood challenge, one that perhaps many children (and adults) can relate to: learning how to read. This inspiring book serves as a lifeline for many readers, showing that it is okay to go at your own pace! If you have ever struggled with reading, persevered, and then eventually conquered your goal, you are not alone—this book is for you!



Yes & No

written and illustrated by Elisha Cooper

The eagerness and exuberance of a puppy (Yes) is countered by the reluctant, recalcitrant cat (No) as the mysterious narrator, sounding very much like an annoyed parent, boots them out of the house for the day. Readers who are pet owners will immediately recognize the various traits displayed by both protagonists in this entertaining romp across the pages. Cooper pulls the gaze of the reader across the page and into several full bleed, word-less spreads allowing for the story to unfold in our imaginations. Lovely and sure to be a favorite read aloud book for youngsters.



Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna

written by Alda P. Dobbs

Zonia's Rainforest,

written and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

In this beautifully illustrated picture book, we find Zonia leaving home in the morning to play with her friends in the Amazon Rainforest. We are introduced to Blue Morpho Butterfly, Sloth, Jaguar, Coati and others while she is entertained by them. Upon her return home, she finds her beloved forest has changed—someone is cutting down the trees. With her mother's advice she decides to answer the call to help.

In the back matter you will learn about the Amazon, the animals that live there, information about the Ashaninka people, the story written in the Ashaninka language, and of threats to the rainforest.

Chapter Books & Middle Level

Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna

written by Alda P. Dobbs

In 1913, Petra Luna, twelve years old, must flee her village when the federales arrive to "recruit" new soldiers, killing any man or boy that refuses to join them, and slaughtering women and children when they try to run away. Petra's Papa joins the federales to escape death, and promises to return for his family. Petra makes a promise, too—to keep her family safe until Papa gets back. But now that they're all in the desert—Petra, her abuelita, her little sister, and baby brother—how will she keep them all alive? How can Petra pursue her dreams to go to school and learn to read when she's walking barefoot in the desert, focused on survival?

The Beatryce Prophecy

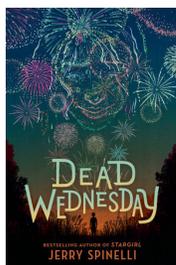
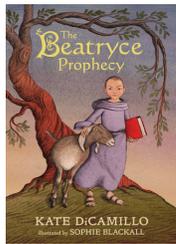
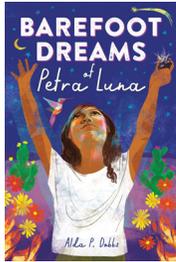
written by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Sophie Blackall

In a world where only men are educated, it is believed that Beatryce is the fulfillment of a prophecy—a girl who can read and write, destined to unseat the king. Determined to face this king and find her mother, Beatryce is supported on her journey by a rag-tag group including an angry goat, a monk with one wild eye, an orphan boy, and a man who was once a king. The story, which reads like a medieval ballad, is illuminated by Sophie Blackall's glorious illustrations. A must-read for long time DiCamillo fans and new readers alike!

Dead Wednesday

by Jerry Spinelli

For eighth graders in Amber Springs, Pennsylvania, Dead Wednesday is the day they are each assigned the name of a teenager who has died a "preventable death" in the past year, and adults pretend you're invisible. Dead Wednesday is chance to think about making good choices and the fragility of life. Or, if your Worm Tarnauer and his friends, a chance to cause some chaos...until the name and face you've been assigned become more than just a card. With a story that is both beautiful and challenging, just like navigating eighth grade itself, Jerry Spinelli has done it again.

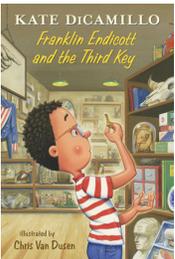




Donut Feed the Squirrels

written and illustrated by Mika Song

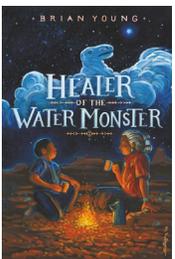
After Norma and Belly, two hungry squirrels, burn their pancakes, they are attracted to a food truck—that specializes in donuts. At first, their offering of chestnuts is rejected by the food truck chef, but their chestnut donuts soon have folks lining up to try them. A humorous young graphic novel, perfect for anyone who loves donuts or new flavors.



Franklin Endicott and the Third Key

by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen

In this sixth volume of the *Deckawoo Drive Tales*, we find Franklin Endicott furiously making lists of all the things he worries about. It is a long list that includes lions, leprosy, black holes, and armadillos. His neighbor, Eugenia Lincoln takes him on an errand to Buddy Lamp's Used Goods where he ends up in the possession of a mysterious key. With the key and a good book of short stories Franklin learns to embrace his fears and turn them into marvels. This is another beautifully written book by Kate DiCamillo with wonderfully amusing illustrations by Chris Van Dusen, a must read for ages 6–8.



Gone to the Woods;

Surviving a Lost Childhood

written by Gary Paulsen

It was a huge loss in children's literature when Gary Paulsen passed away this September. Thankfully, he left readers a gift with this childhood memoir. Equally as gripping as his fictional wilderness tales, Paulsen shares the ugly truths of growing up with alcoholic parents and his determination to find his own way. He minces no words when expressing his deep appreciation for the librarian who put books, and most important, a pencil, in his hands for him to begin to write. We are all the richer for her wise decision.



Healer of the Water Monster

written by Brian Young

Nathan, intent on getting away from his dad's new girlfriend, asks to spend the summer with his grandmother, Nali, on the Navajo reservation. As part of the deal, Nathan designs a science experiment comparing the growth of traditional versus commercial corn seed, which takes an unexpected turn when he discovers a horned toad wearing a turquoise necklace is stealing all his seeds. First the toad, then a sick water monster, then an ash thing, wind thing, rainbow being—Nathan's world opens wide to holy beings he has never heard of, who not only show him some of the wounds of this world, but also how to heal them. *Healer of the Water Monster* includes a Navajo language and glossary.

Just Like That

written by Gary Schmidt

In this touching novel, one is quickly mesmerized by the story line, characters, and a compulsion to read "just one more chapter." The character's lives unfold as their relationships to one another evolve with a bit of suspense as a backdrop, not to mention the unrest of the 1960's. Mr. Schmidt has the uncanny ability to get right inside of the young protagonist's heads and uses language that feels recognizably perfect for any of the situations including grief, fear, social stress, and the politics of the times.



One Jar of Magic

written by Corey Ann Haydu

Rose Alice or "Little Luck," as she is called by her father, is proud to be from the Anders family. Her father is the best in town at capturing magic and when the whole town goes to Too Blue Lake for the yearly collecting, Rose is expected to be just like him. When things don't turn out as planned, Rose must navigate a world where she finds her talents are not what was foretold, her friendships go sour, her father is not what he wants everyone to believe, and there are people "not meant for magic." In this beautifully crafted book, Haydu shines a light on abuse and what is truly important, while creating lovely characters with intelligence and depth.



Pity Party

by written by Kathleen Lane

A unique but funny collection of worst-case scenarios for anyone with anxiety, social awkwardness, or who has ever wondered about their place in the world. This book will keep you on your toes, teaching you by elements of exaggeration how to deal with popular forms of anxiety. The Voice is the main story in which Katya tries to handle being a kid but struggled with more worry and concern than anyone should be dealing with. The author inspires courage and sensitivity through imaginative pieces (like the hilarious "Personality Test" and the equally hilarious "Choose Your Own Catastrophe") and will comfort readers of all ages.



Soul Lanterns

written by Shaw Kuzki

This story, translated from Japanese, is an important look at the events at the end of World War II from the perspective of a young girl and her friends 25 years after the bombing at Hiroshima. It is August 6, the day of setting the Soul Lanterns afloat on the river when 12 year-old Nazomi realizes her mother always releases one lantern without a name. While questioning this, she learns of her beloved teacher's experience from this time and she and her friends begin a school art project to try and help heal their neighbors' and families' grief. This book is an important look into Japanese culture and our own countries' history.

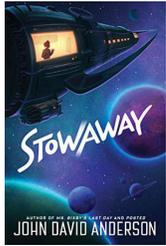




Star Fish

written by Lisa Fipps

As a starfish, Ellie can spread out and take up as much room as she likes. She does not have to think about her list of Fat Girl Rules and how she wants to disappear in her world full of bullies. The pool is the only place that gives her comfort, as even her own family is embarrassed by her and treat her badly. When she allows her therapist a glimpse of her life, she starts to gain confidence and realizes she and her weight is not the problem. Beauty, intelligence, and confidence come in all shapes and sizes. This beautiful, truthful, heartbreaking, and hopeful story gives us all a chance to reflect and hopefully do better.



Stowaway

by John David Anderson

A kid stowed away on a spaceship with pirates and aliens? What could be better? In Stowaway, Earth is a mess due to climate change but has a valuable resource that everyone wants. The Aykari are there to protect and share technology, there's a squad of Djarik marauders, and the stowaway, Leo, is trying to reunite with his dad and brother. Dad is a valuable asset as a scientist and Leo has to navigate alien/pirate relations in order to get info on where his family is. With nods to David Bowie, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and many more, this is a page turner. Anderson is skilled at weaving morals into action-packed and humorous stories. A highly entertaining read that has relevance to real world issues. The best part? There will be more to come in this series!



Wild River

by Rodman Philbrick

In this fast-paced adventure story, five students who do not know each other are chosen for a raft trip in Montana. On the first night, the dam above their campsite breaks and the ravine floods, sweeping away their raft and counselors. They have one backpack of food, no real shelter, miles to go before reaching their takeout point and problems among themselves. In addition, they encounter some wild animals and injuries. Will they be able to survive?

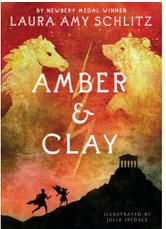


Young Adult

Almost American Girl

written by Robin Ho

A heartbreaking yet hopeful coming of age "illustrated memoir" (or nonfiction graphic novel). The author recounts the story of how, as a young Korean girl, she moved with her single mother to Alabama at age fourteen. Chuna, who takes the American name Robin, is the only Asian, non-English speaking student in her entire middle school, and she struggles for months. Just as she begins to build a life there, her mother moves her again. Along the way Robin builds confidence and resilience, and finally comes to understand and forgive her mother for the choices she has made.



Amber & Clay

written by Laura Amy Schlitz

This book is for advanced readers intrigued by mythology, archaeology, or the ancient world. It is beautifully written and challenging to navigate, as the author weaves together the



stories of two children in ancient Greece, an enslaved boy and a wealthy girl, using multiple points of view, poetry, and prose. The children are drawn together in an unexpected way that transcends death. This is not a romance it is a stimulating read that raises serious issues about slavery, and shows ancient Greece and its mystery, cruelty, and glory. The occasional narration of Hermes, the messenger god, adds humor. Readers will also be introduced to Socrates and his ideas about what makes a meaningful life, friendship, and education.

The Magic Fish

by Trung Le Nguyen

How does a boy tell his parents that he is gay when there is no corresponding word in their native language? Three storylines interlace throughout this magical graphic novel, distinguished by their color palettes: red on black tells the story of Vietnamese-American Tin and his Vietnamese family in the present day; yellow on black reveals his mother's memories; and blue on black spins the fairy tales that mirror the story line and communicate important ideas across language barriers. It can take a while for the reader to decipher this color code, increasing curiosity and engagement with the text, and resulting in many flips back and forth through the book. A heart-warming experience.

The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne

written by Jonathan Stroud

"The secret of being a successful outlaw was to move fast and stay light on your feet. No ties, no allegiances." Meet Scarlett Browne, renegade on the run. She's quick, she's clever, and she's on the run alone. That is, until she discovers an upturned bus at the bottom of a ravine with a hole in its side where she first sees Albert Browne. He is the sole passenger who is unscathed and he is a bit odd. Weak and hungry he follows Scarlett, who is none too happy about it, yet guardedly curious all the same. But trouble follows them until she realizes that she's not the only one on the run. A fast paced and witty adventure that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Six of Crows

written by Leigh Bardugo

Six of Crows is a wild ride of a fantasy adventure novel. Detailed, inventive, and often gruesome, Bardugo's writing is absorbing and twisty! Set in the city of Ketterdam (loosely inspired by Dutch Republic—era Amsterdam) Bardugo's world order builds on historical bones and dresses them in modern concerns (drug addiction, new weaponry, racism). Fans of Patrick Rothfuss and teenaged/older fans of Tolkien: here's your next great read!

Spinning Silver

written by Naomi Novik

What a fantastic, smart, inventive story! Spinning Silver is fantasy/folklore adventure with a huge heart and a valuable message about hunger, greed, family, compassion, pride, honor, and bargains. Novik turns the story of Rumpelstiltskin on its head—her inventive mind keeps things fresh. Yes, she changes narrative voices and keeps throwing in more and more, but that untidy collection of narratives is at the core of the story: what we do is connected to myriad other people. It was a grand, life-affirming, breath-taking adventure, and I loved it.



Thank you to our Volunteer Readers! Abby Morrow, Alison Johnson, Jenna Jandreau, Barbara McCleod, David Evans, Matthew Cornish, Melissa Haas, Mary Beth Dorsey, Ruth Feldman, Rebecca Leamon, Michelle Wyler, Dawn Severns, Lisa Herrington

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