

SUMMER 2023

36 recommended titles
for summer reading



IRW Booklist

Est. 2014

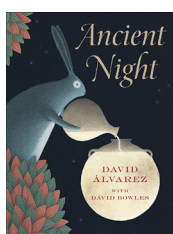
IRW takes great pride in working with our dedicated volunteer readers to identify the best new books for children, especially stories and authors with connections to Maine. You'll find that in this Summer 2023 edition, we have chosen to omit books for Young Adult readers, in order to focus on recommending more books for readers pre-K–8. We recognize that keeping children excited about reading is critical to creating lifelong learners. The Booklist reflects our efforts to recommend stories that will resonate with and inspire readers.

One way you can support the Booklist is by using IRW's affiliate link on [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org) to purchase any of the books on the Booklist—10% of your purchase will support our programming! [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org) is an online bookseller that supports independent bookstores and nonprofits. [BOOKSHOP.ORG](https://www.bookshop.org)

HAPPY READING!

KELSEY E. MOORE BUCKLEY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

PICTURE BOOKS & BOOKS WITH PICTURES



Ancient Night by David Alvarez, illustrated by David Bowles

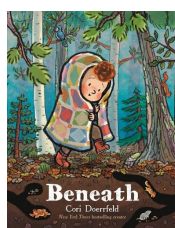
Every night, Rabbit gathers glowing nectar from the holy maguey (a sacred agave plant) and pours it into a large vessel in the sky, creating moonlight. When Possum decides he wants some of the nectar for himself, he breaks the vessel, drains it out, and drinks it. The earth is dark.

Filled with regret, Possum travels underground to bring back fire. He fills a vessel in the sky, creating sunlight. Together, Rabbit and Possum serve as Guardians of Light, lifting their cups of nectar in friendship. This beautifully illustrated book, “a twist on several traditional stories of Mesoamerica,” will forever change the way you see the moon and sun.



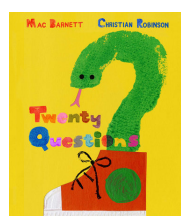
This is Not My Home by Vivienne Chang, illustrated by Eugenia Oh

When Lily's mother moves the family back to Taiwan in order to care for her elderly Ah Ma, Lily has difficulty adjusting. Nothing feels like home—not the farmer's market, the car, the fireflies. Even as Lily aches for home, family and friends help her to feel a sense of belonging and learn to love a new place. A touching and humorous story about reverse immigration and the meaning of home.



Beneath by Cori Doerrfeld

You can't always see the most important things by looking at the surface—in a person, on earth, on the water, in nature. You have to slow down and look more deeply and carefully. That's the message of this charming picture book about a small child (Finn's gender is not identified in the book) and a grandad. There's lots to look at and talk about in the colorful illustrations that show what is under the earth, inside trees, under the water, inside people and animals. A fun book for inquisitive children!



Twenty Questions by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Christian Robinson

There may be twenty questions in this book, but there are infinite answers! Clever, funny, colorful—readers of all ages will use their observation skills, speculate, laugh, and debate endlessly over the “right” answers in this

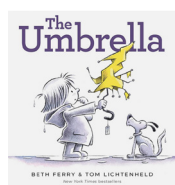
foundingly fun and profound book. Mac Barnett and Christian Robinson have proved themselves to be a picture book dream team, and *Twenty Questions* is a delight and a must for everyone, everywhere.



The Night Frolic by Julie Berry, illustrated by Jaime Zollars

Where do children go in their dreams? *The Night Frolic* uses lyrical text and beautifully detailed artwork to answer this question. From the high den of the Night Tiger, to the shining pavilion of the Night Elephant, this book takes children on an imaginative, dreamy journey. Before the night ends, readers will join the dazzling Night Frolic filled with music, dancing and magic. Children and adults alike will be mesmerized by this fantastic new picture book!

The Umbrella by Beth Ferry, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld



On a gray and dreary day, a little girl and her dog find an old, broken umbrella in a junk shop. When the stormy weather completely destroys the umbrella and the pieces fly away in the wind, the little girl is disappointed. The next day, however, she discovers that the broken umbrella pieces have become something beautiful. This beauty helps the town overcome the dreariness of the rainy weather and sunny days prevail. The small amount of text in this book, combined with the black and white pictures that become colorful as the weather changes, make for a quick read aloud perfect for a rainy (or sunny) day!

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, the cover. By asking open-ended questions about the book and its visuals, we can create an interactive, rich learning experience.

* New books from IRW Alumni Authors & Illustrators

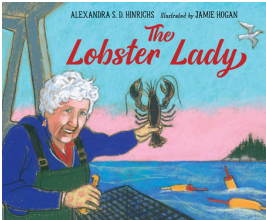
** Our picks for Whole Book Approach



We Are Human Animals

by Rosie Hayne

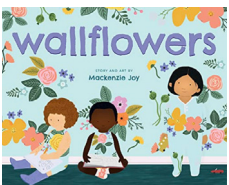
What was life like for humans tens of thousands of years ago? Using simple language, this book muses on how early humans led very different lives from us, living intimately with nature and relying on the land to supply all of their needs. At the same time, the author shows a kinship between early and modern humans—we dress ourselves, make music and art, and gather together to tell stories. This book is a good way to introduce early human culture to young readers and includes factual information in the backmatter about the cave paintings and archaeological finds that give us insight into our human ancestors.



*** **The Lobster Lady**

by Alexandra S.D. Hinrichs, illustrated by Jamie Hogan

Cozy, warm and realistic pastel images bring the story of 102 year-old Maine lobster lady Virginia Oliver to life. Alexandra Hindrichs' story-telling shares not only the subtle nuances of the ocean and lobstering, but also the details that have made up Virginia's life. The illustrations and simple but poetic language evoke Virginia's full life. The background drawings bring Maine's landscape to life, while vignette illustrations represent "Ginny's" remembrances of her own experience growing up in Maine on the island and the mainland. Whether Saturday night bean suppers or penny candy in town, she cherishes each memory. When she needs stitches in her finger due to a frisky crab, the doctor questions why she was out on the water, implying that she was too old! Her friends acknowledge that Virginia has always been a pioneer while she exclaims, "I'm me." P.S. Don't miss Virginia's recipes for Lobster Rolls and Brown Bread in the backmatter!



Wallflowers

by Mackenzie Joy

Mackenzie Joy's imaginative illustrations and crisp words that evoke the experience of being a "quiet" child. Each illustrated character is dressed in clothing that blends right into the walls and background,—a real wallflower! Joy is spot on when she shows side-by-side illustrations that give insight into the true feelings of quiet or introverted kids. While many like recognition, they need to often "find a quiet spot where you can be you." Mackenzie Joy brings to life the feelings and emotions of those young people who don't mind going unnoticed sometimes, but still like to be "heard". In the concise wording and explosive artwork, she reminds us all that it's okay to be: "bold, beautiful, and the best of ourselves that we can be."



The Fire of Stars; The Life and Brilliance of the Woman Who Discovered What Stars Are Made Of

by Kirsten W. Larson, illustrated by Katherine Roy

Two stories written in tandem; the birth of a celestial star alongside the birth and growth of astronomer and astrophysicist Cecilia Payne. The design is like a story within a story and we are guided along with lyrical language that ebbs and flows with the pulsing of atoms snapping together and the building excitement of a young and curious explorer. Be sure to check out the rich back matter

that provides a review with more detail of the star's story, more on Cecilia, and a timeline for further research. P.S. Pair this with *Skywatcher* by Jamie Hogan!.



How Old is a Whale?

by Lilly Murray, illustrated by Jesse Hodgson

Beautifully illustrated and filled with the lifespan stories of many animals—tortoises, axolotls, butterflies and more— this is just the book to get young readers interested in the variety of animal life extant on our planet. The author has taken great care to highlight familiar and not-so-familiar animals and put them in the context of their ecology and life cycles. The illustrations bring each animal to life. This is a text-heavy illustrated book, and would be a great choice for an upper elementary classroom, or as a read-aloud for younger readers who are curious about animals!

A Tulip in Winter: A Story About Folk Artist Maud Lewis

by Kathy Stinson, illustrated by Lauren Soloy

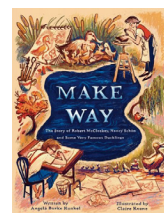
This book is a tribute to the life of a fascinating woman that endured illness, poverty, and hardships but didn't stop seeing beauty in the world. Maud Lewis was born with a devastating physical condition that led her to be an outcast and stopped her from enjoying many activities, until her mother taught her to paint, a hobby Maud enjoyed the rest of her life. With illustrations that capture the brightness of Maud's smile as well as her paintings, this book is an ode to the optimistic nature of a special woman destined to be revered in the art world long after she is gone.



** **Very Good Hats**

by Emma Straub, illustrated by Blanc Gomez

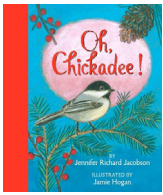
If the bright, eye-catching, clean, paper-cut style of illustration doesn't engage the reader, the creative yet simple story will captivate all ages! Little touches like the book's cover beneath its jacket, and the reverse portraits on front and back are subtle touches that pique readers' curiosity. This book begins with the question: "Do you know what a hat is?" but immediately gets our attention by challenging us: "I bet you think you know what a hat is." Not only are we taken for a tour of various traditional hats and their uses, the fun begins when our minds are stretched about how we think of a hat. Hats for humans, hats for animals, hats for inanimate objects, non-traditional hats, even temporary hats! Hats can be found everywhere you look because, "Anything can be a hat if you believe it is."



Make Way

by Angela Burke Kunkel, illustrated by Claire Keene

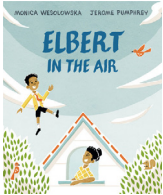
This inspiring, beautifully illustrated dual biography follows the lives of Robert McCloskey, the beloved author and illustrator of *Make Way for Ducklings*, and Nancy Schön, the creator of the famous duckling statues in the Boston Public Garden. The book uses the metaphor of an egg hatching into a duckling, which grows into a duck, to explore the idea of art (and becoming an artist)—a process that is full of ups and downs. Fans of McCloskey and Schön will find their backstories fascinating and be amused by interesting tidbits, such as the fact that McCloskey temporarily kept live ducks in his apartment so he could observe them! On a deeper level, this book is about discovering oneself as an artist, coping with rejection, and persisting to create something beautiful and enduring.



*** *Oh, Chickadee!*

by Jennifer Jacobsen,
illustrated by Jamie Hogan

Oh, Chickadee, indeed! Spend a year peering into the life of a beloved little Maine bird. What does a black-capped chickadee eat? Where do they sleep? Can you really teach one to eat from your mittened hand?! Readers will love the sweet and lively illustrations and the bravery of this highly recognizable bird. A great nonfiction picture book for nature and bird lovers with gorgeous endpapers and great back matter!

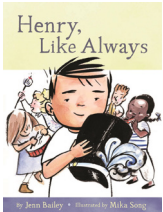


Elbert in the Air

by Monica Wesolowska,
illustrated by Jerome Pumphrey

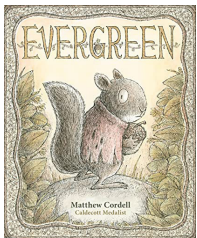
From the moment he was born, Elbert was different from the other children. He constantly floats in the air, which makes school and friendships especially hard. It seems that everyone in town has advice on how to make Elbert stop floating, but Elbert's mother encourages him to be himself. When Elbert's community decides there is no place amongst them for a person who floats, he decides to take his mother's advice and stay true to himself in the face of adversity. In doing so, Elbert finds a community that accepts him for who he is. *Elbert in the Air* is a touching book that explores the importance of supportive parents and self-acceptance.

EARLY READERS & CHAPTER BOOKS



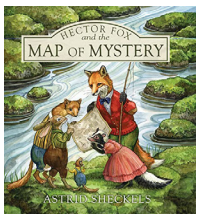
Henry, Like Always by Jenn Bailey,
illustrated by Mika Song

Henry loves the routines and rhythms of Classroom Ten, and the Big Calendar that keeps everything running smoothly. When his teacher announces a change to Friday's schedule for a class parade, all the students are delighted—except Henry. Will he be able to enjoy the parade too? This is a sensitive and warm portrayal of a child with sensory issues and relatable for anyone who has sometimes felt left out. This early reader is a sequel to the picture book *A Friend for Henry*, which pair together beautifully for children beginning to read independently.



Evergreen by Matthew Cordell

Evergreen is a timid squirrel with many fears—loud noises, strangers, heights, and, especially, thunderstorms. When her mother asks her to deliver soup to sick Granny Oak, Evergreen must confront her fears on an adventure-filled journey through scary Buckthorn Forest. This long picture book features a different mini-adventure in each of its six parts. It's a true page-turner that is full of excitement and suspense, as well as a delightful cast of woodland creatures. Throughout the story, we see Evergreen develop confidence and begin to enjoy her exploration of the outside world. The detailed ink and watercolor illustrations from Caldecott medalist Matthew Cordell tell the story as much as the words.

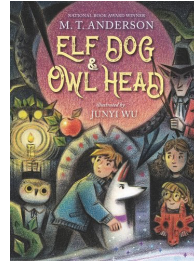


Hector Fox Series
by Astrid Sheckels

Hector Fox and his friends read together, get curious, and set out to solve mysteries and have adventures in this charming picture book series for early readers. The rich, detailed illustrations bring to life woods that look

and feel much like Maine, but are filled with surprises! This series includes *Hector Fox and the Giant Quest*, *Hector Fox and the Raven's Revenge*, *Hector Fox and the Daring Flight*, and *Hector Fox and the Map of Mystery*.

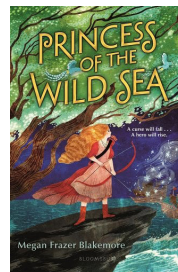
MIDDLE GRADE BOOKS



Elf Dog and Owl Head

by M.T. Anderson

His new book takes us on a journey from a bored boy's walk in the woods behind his home to the inner world of "Under the Mountain" where elf folk and owl-headed people live. Clay finds a magical dog that escaped from Under the Mountain and begins his summer of fantasy, exploring this new world and learning what it takes to be a good friend. Expect strange creatures and many adventures, both dangerous and fun.



* *Princess of the Wild Sea*

by Megan Fraser Blakemore

A cursed princess, a remote island, a fantastical and quirky world—*Princess of the Wild Sea* blends familiar fairy tale elements with a fresh story. Harbor Rose lives with her aunts who try to keep her safe from a curse on their eccentric, if sometimes lonely, island. When danger arrives, Harbor Rose is ready to embrace her fate on her own terms. This is one for fans of *Beyond the Bright Sea* and *The Ogress and the Orphans!*



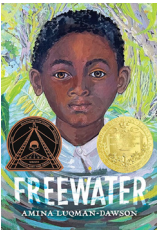
The Tornado by Jake Burt

Bell Kirby has life at Village Green Middle School figured out. As long as he has his precious notebook at his side, he can always stay a step ahead of the class bully, Parker Hellickson. That is, until a quirky new girl shows up and threatens to disrupt all his intricate systems. Daelynn challenges all the norms and he must put aside his fears and work with friends to help when she becomes the target. Author Jake Burt has created a bully to rival any before seen and a stellar team of outcasts that humorously and courageously change the status quo.



Hear Me by Kerry O'Malley Cerra

Twelve year old Rayne's hearing is getting worse in spite of her hearing aids. The reader truly understands the decrease in Rayne's ability to hear through conversations that are filled with asterisks to indicate the words she is not understanding. Rayne becomes frustrated when she can no longer surf, hear the music of her favorite artist, R-Jarrow, or understand conversations when in large groups. Rayne's loving parents are convinced that cochlear implants are the best solution for her situation. While many options have been explored, Rayne is extremely frightened of the operation and possible outcomes. When implant surgery is imminent, Rayne resorts to a bus journey on her own that will help her face life with diminished hearing. On this journey, Rayne makes new friends that help her realize that while her ears are "broken," she is not! This book is drawn from the author's own experiences.



Freewater

by Amina Luqman Dawson

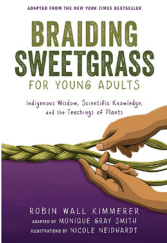
This year's Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award recipient, *Freewater* is a work of historical fiction not to be missed. When two young children escape a plantation, they're forced to leave their mother behind. When they find the secret community of Freewater, made up of formerly enslaved people and some freeborn children, it seems that they've found a new home—for now. Drawn from history, this is an inspiring, accessible read.

The In-Between



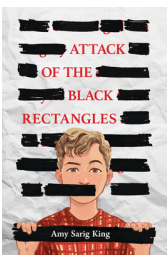
by Katie Van Heidrich

Katie lives in the in-between. In between siblings, in between friendships, in between ages (she's 13), and in between homes. She has moved so many times, she can describe them as fast (you have only minutes to decide what comes with you in this life) or long (you plan and plan and still have to pare down and decide what's important to come with and what you have to part with). When her family is evicted from their home, they begin another journey of the in-between, and Katie uses her journal, her love of words, and her keen observations of the world, and her family, to bump up against the edges of the in-between, and to figure out how to make a space for her in her life where things can get better. The memoir itself is in-between, not poem, not nove—written in verse that makes you laugh and ache, and pulls you right into Katie's journey, as a friend.



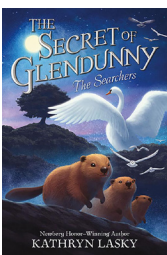
Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults by Robin Wall Kimmerer, adapted by Monique Gray Smith, illustrated by Nicole Neidhardt

This book about Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants explores such concepts as: how all flourishing is mutual, how to participate in Honorable Harvest, how to live in reciprocity. Adapted from the popular book for adults, this young adult version inspires readers to not only think of how they can love the world, but to recognize how the world loves them back, and to be in thoughtful relationship with more-than-human kin.



Attack of the Black Rectangles by Amy Sariq King

It takes courage to take a stand for what you believe in but that's just what Mac Delaney does when someone decides to censor the books at school. He likes his books and he expects adults to be honest with him, even if he's just a kid. With the help of his best friends, author Jane Yolen, and his family, Mac takes on the challenge to discover who is doing the censoring and why. A relevant story reflecting the events of our time.



***The Secret of Glendunny: The Searchers** by Kathryn Lasky

Fans of this series will be delighted to return to Glendunny, a secret kingdom in England, where beavers have hidden from human sight since the reign of Henry VIII. *The Searchers* follows a harrowing quest to find and rescue animals kidnapped from the Glendunny community by the "two-legs." This rich fantasy adventure follows a wide

cast of animal characters through moments of bravery, compassion, as well as heartbreaking events. Twists and turns and multiple perspectives will keep readers enthralled!



***Home Away from Home** by Cynthia Lord

Cynthia Lord has created another memorable Maine landscape and community with *Home Away from Home*. Mia is upset by all the changes in her life since her parents' divorce and is sent to stay with Grandma for the summer. Although Grandma's house in Maine is her favorite place, she is a bit anxious about being there without her mother for the first time. She and the new neighbor, Cayman discover a strange new bird harassing the nesting eagles. Mia's reaction causes a chain of events that test the small town, Cayman's family, and the fragile friendship between the two children.



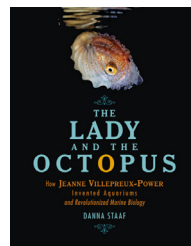
***Wishing Season** by Anica Mrose Rissi

As 11 year-old Lily enters her first summer following the loss of her twin brother, Anders, her mother is struggling with her grief. But while Mom cries in Anders' room, or dials a psychic, Lily spends her time in the overlap, a magical spot where she and Anders can still meet up—for now. As summer unfolds and the overlap begins to shrink, Lily will have to learn to let Anders go, while still holding her memories of him close. Middle grade readers will be heartened and comforted by Rissi's tender treatment of grief, conflicts with friends, loneliness, and opening up about feelings. The magical realism (Is Anders real? Is he a ghost? A metaphor?) beautifully mirrors the confounding (or "squiggly") process of grief, while the setting's details transport us to a Maine summer.



***Just Like That** by Gary D. Schmidt

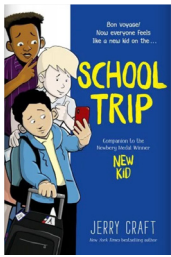
Just like that. . . Gary has done it again—masterfully woven a tale of complicated characters making their way through unthinkable sorrow, unexpected joy, and mindful growth. The threads that stitch things together sew under and over the storyline and each character has you rooting for them as they stumble and soar. Clever and endearing while also a thrill of a ride!



The Lady and the Octopus by Danna Staaf

Utilizing a Ph.D. in Marine Biology, Danna Staaf has written an excellent book about the amateur biologist, Jeanne Villepreux-Power, who revolutionized marine biology nearly 200 years ago. Writing with an engaging, personal style, Staaf tells Jeanne's story: after a childhood of wonder at the natural world, she later moves to Italy with her English husband. Using her newly invented aquarium, she is able to perform experiments to discover much about the Argonaut, the only octopus that secretes the shell in which it lives, breaking new ground in the new science of marine biology. The author presents a very interesting story of the mid-19th century, the scientific method, the life of an elusive marine mollusk, and what the perseverance of a young woman can produce. P.S. This would pair well with the picture book *Secrets of the Sea: the Story of Jeanne Power*, by Evan Griffith, illustrated by Joanie Stone!

GRAPHIC NOVELS



School Trip by Jerry Craft

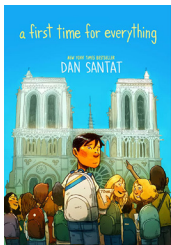
Fans of Jerry Craft's *New Kid* (awarded the 2020 Newbery Medal & Coretta Scott King Award) will be excited to join Jordan and his friends once again for more adventures in this graphic novel sequel. This time, Jordan, Drew and Liam are headed off on an international school trip—to Paris! Even while navigating a new and foreign city, friendship, and difference, this is a book packed with laughs.



The Moth Keeper by K. O'Neill

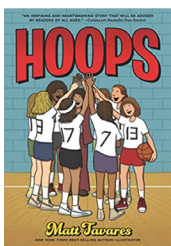
This imaginative, graphic novel tells the story of a young girl's responsibility and dedication to her community and herself, set against her desire for adventure and exploration. Anya is honored to become a moth keeper, an important role of protecting the lunar moths. The moths allow the Night Lily, which her village depends on, to flower and thrive. Anya is proud to be selected to help, but

the job is more than she bargained for. Anya's decision to take a break from her duties and the consequences of that choice forms a cautionary but hopeful tale, full of magic and with very cool illustrations. Emphasizes the values of truth, honor, friendship, and found families.



A First Time for Everything by Dan Santat

"Ha ha ha ha ha . . . I'd like to report a murder. There were about 700 witnesses." That is what it felt like when Dan was put in front of his entire school and asked to read a poem. His peers were not kind. The principal could not rein them in. It was every kid's worst nightmare. Being a target is no fun but sometimes there are windows of escape. Experiences that show us that the world is not entirely against us. Though this takes place in the late 80's today's middle schoolers will relate well. And they'll get a taste of how different life was before technology and fear ruled our lives. There really is a first time for everything. And those things might just change your life.



Hoops by Matt Tavares

Indiana, basketball, Friday nights . . . you get the picture! In *Hoops*, we're talking about girls' basketball and how Title 1X may have opened doors—but young women still had to push through them! (Readers may wonder: how much has changed when you think about preferred court time, even right here in Maine?) *Hoops* is Tavares' first graphic novel and a winner. This story was inspired

by a real-life team, and kids and families will find much to relate to but also be inspired by the creativity and grit that drove these young women to the hoops!

Thank you to our Volunteer Readers!

Katherine Emery, David Evans, Jean Evans,
Lisa Herrington, Jenna Jandreau,
Alison Johnson, Becky Lloyd,
Barbara McLeod, Lauren White

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