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Booklist Reader

July 2026

Book and audiobook recommendations for all ages

Fifteen Ways to Imagine Life During the Climate Crisis

The *Booklist* Odyssey Interviews

Recent Ecofiction for Teens

High-Demand Read-Alikes: The Princess in Black

Art from *At Sea*, by Y. M. Abdel-Magied, design by Lindy Kasler

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Booklist Reader

July 2026
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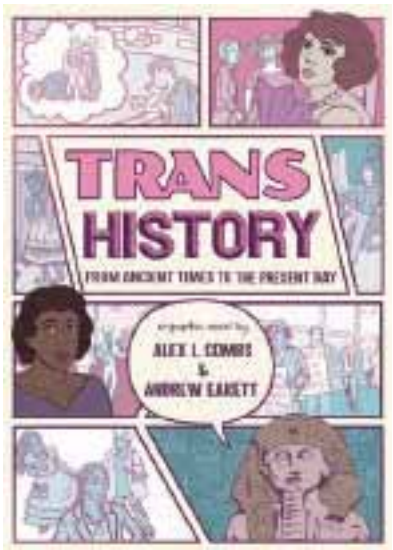

On the Cover

From *At Sea*, By Y. M. Abdel-Magied, design by Lindy Kasler. *At Sea* is featured in "Fifteen Ways to Imagine Life During the Climate Crisis," (p.4). Used with permission of Pegasus Books.

From the Editor

Reading outside on a beautiful July day is bliss, and reading about the living world is exhilarating. It can also be alarming, of course, given the impacts of climate change. Because it's so important to understand nature's intricacies and wonders, we recommend a rich variety of green books for all ages. You will find plenty of nonfiction lists, including "Birding Books for Everyone" (p.26), but we take particular pleasure in sharing our favorite environmentally attuned fiction. Check out "Fifteen Ways to Imagine Life During the Climate Crisis" (p.4) and "Recent Ecofiction for Teens" (p.24).

I know I'm not alone in finding it difficult to stay focused on work when a beautiful summer day calls; for satirical takes on job frustrations, turn to "Workplace Woes" (p.12). Hoping to keep kiddos entertained while you read? We offer lively read-alikes for Princess in Black fans (p.29). And these are just a few of this issue's many delectable summer reads and listens. We wish you deeply rewarding reading experiences.

—Donna Seaman
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Top 10

Books on the Environment & Sustainability

The most reverberating environmental books weave personal inquiries into fresh perceptions of the wonders and vulnerabilities of the grand web of life.

A Billion Butterflies: A Life in Climate and Chaos Theory. By Jagadish Shukla. 2025. St. Martin's.

Climate scientist Shukla zestfully traces the remarkable trajectory of his life from a village in India to working with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change the year it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Carbon: The Book of Life. By Paul Hawken. 2025. Viking.

Hawken looks closely at the miraculous life force of carbon, a perplexing element that has created all that we know and all that we are, while catalyzing the climate crisis.

The Glorians: Visitations from the Holy Ordinary. By Terry Tempest Williams. 2026. Grove.

The term "Glorians" came to Williams in a dream, and she ponders its possible meanings in this exquisite, deeply affecting chronicle of her experiences in the red rock desert of Utah and at Harvard Divinity School, where she's a writer-in-residence.

Is a River Alive? By Robert Macfarlane. 2025. Norton.

Macfarlane considers the proposition that rivers are alive and have the right to live freely without pollution and dams, a vision he pursues over the course of three dramatic river journeys.

Art from the cover of *Shelter from the Storm.*

My Head for a Tree: The Extraordinary Story of the Bishnoi, Guardians of Nature. By Martin Goodman. 2025. Greystone.

Goodman tells the extraordinary story of the fiercely courageous Bishnoi of India, whose unique religion "has environmental protection at its very core."

Poisoning the Well: How Forever Chemicals Contaminated America. By Sharon Udasin and Rachel Frazin. 2025. Island.

In this eye-opening exposé of the disastrous medical and environmental effects of forever chemicals, Udasin and Frazin explain the science and properties of PFAS, which are found in many household products.

Shelter from the Storm: How Climate Change Is Creating a New Era of Migration. By Julian Hattem. 2026. New Press.

Hattem presents a compelling and nuanced overview of the role that climate change plays in global human migration patterns and the struggles of "climate migrants."

We Are Eating the Earth: The Race to Fix Our Food System and Save Our Climate. By Michael Grunwald. 2025. Simon & Schuster.

Grunwald presents an engaging call for environmental action within the complex story of sustainability expert Tim Searchinger, a passionate campaigner for land-use and agricultural reform.

Art from the cover of *We Are Eating the Earth.*

When It All Burns: Fighting Fire in a Transformed World. By Jordan Thomas. 2025. Riverhead.

A member of the Hotshots, an elite federal firefighting force, Thomas describes megafires he's fought and considers our misperception of forests as commodities and how climate denialism is making for a more flammable planet.

When the Forest Breathes: Renewal and Resilience in the Natural World. By Suzanne Simard. 2026. Knopf.

Forest ecologist Simard (*Finding the Mother Tree*, 2022) delivers another potent mix of superb science writing and memoir while illuminating the suffering of forests due to global warming, wildfires, flooding, insect infestations, and human exploitation.

Art from the covers of *Ghost-Eye, Earth 7, A Guardian and a Thief, At Sea, Terrestrial,* and *Only a Little While Here.*

Fifteen Ways to Imagine Life During the Climate Crisis

by Donna Seaman

In the 14 novels and one story collection below, the authors explore the emotional, social, and moral impacts of climate change in speculative tales that vary from nuanced to satirical to outright apocalyptic. All, however, are psychologically astute, dramatic, and environmentally illuminating, as well as richly imaginative and provocative. Most celebrate the beauties and wonders of nature and affirm human tenacity and hope.

2084: A Novel of Future War. By Elliot Ackerman and James Stavridis. 2026. Penguin Press.

The third outing in Ackerman and Stavridis' excellent near-future series, following *2034* and *2054*, depicts a horrifying climate war in which the biggest polluters, the U.S. and China, form an uneasy alliance to oppose the Reparationist forces led by Nigeria, Brazil, and Indonesia.

At Sea. By Y. M. Abdel-Magied. 2026. Pegasus.

Zainab, the only woman on board and a Muslim woman of color, is overseeing the crew on an offshore oil rig as they struggle to cap an underwater well in this highly suspenseful, psychologically intricate tale inspired by the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil-spill disaster.

Bumblebee Season. By Eileen Garvin. 2026. Dutton.

In this sequel to *The Music of Bees*, former troubled teen with paraplegia Jake Stevenson has turned the Hood River honey farm into an unqualified success, but he must overcome wildfires, habitat destruction, and a lack of workers due to ICE raids.

The Compound. By Aisling Rawle. 2025. Random.

Twentysomething Lily wakes up in the Compound, the setting of a long-running reality show, where she and the other nine women wait for the ten male contestants to cross the desert to join them in Rawle's masterful and captivating story of materialism and the search for meaning amidst climate crisis and economic instability.

Earth 7. By Deb Olin Unferth. 2026. Graywolf.

Raised by her scientist mother in an undersea pod, Dylan ends up continuing her mother's efforts to preserve the DNA of various species back on Earth's surface, which is now a vast desert, in Unferth's crystalline, witty, and haunting tale of planetary loss, adaptation, unexpected beauty, and surpassing love.

Ghost-Eye. By Amitav Ghosh. 2026. Farrar.

Ghosh continues the entrancingly mystical environmental adventures spun in *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*. In 1969 Calcutta, three-year-old Varsha shocks her family with memories of a previous life in a fishing village; in the present, Dinu, an antiquarian now in Brooklyn, gets drawn into a scheme to find Varsha to convince her to help stop the construction of a coal plant in the environmentally fragile Sundarbans.

A Guardian and a Thief. By Megha Majumdar. 2025. Knopf.

In a near-future Kolkata besieged by worsening climate crises, food is scarce and flooding is extensive, pitting two families against each other, one well-off enough to plan an exodus to America, the other desperate. Majumdar's award-winning tale of a life-or-death moral dilemma is exquisitely written, gripping, and resounding.

Hexes of the Deadwood Forest. By Agnieszka Szpila. Tr. by Scotia Gilroy. 2026. Pantheon.

In this ribald, diabolically clever, fiercely feminist, ecosexual satire, daring Polish writer Szpila portrays Anna Frenza, the irascible CEO of a Polish oil company, and three generations of resourceful and independent women with profound knowledge of plants and trees who believe their communal orgasms in the woods sustain and nourish Earth.

Only a Little While Here. By María Ospina. Tr. by Heather Cleary. 2026. Scribner.

In her first novel, with its trace of *Aesop's Fables*, award-winning Colombian writer Ospina offers imaginative depictions of the inner lives and relationships of two dogs, a bird, an insect, a porcupine, and some empathetic human beings as they persist in their struggles for survival.

The Origin of Ava. By Annie Lampman. 2026. Torrey House.

Lampman follows three travelers looking for a fresh start: Ava, a grieving ornithology professor; Ezra, who is fleeing parole and heading toward Ecuador; and young Greer, who runs away from her abusive stepfather, escaping to the wilderness of Idaho with a dog and two llamas. As each encounters beauty and danger in nature, powerful moments embody the environmental crisis.

The Pillagers' Guide to Arctic Pianos. By Kendra Langford Shaw. 2026. Pantheon.

Langford's debut is a multigenerational story of families who live in the Arctic wilderness, with all the challenges, hopes, and heartbreaks that come with such a demanding and dangerous environment, including new risks associated with climate change.

Should the Waters Take Us. By Stephanie Soileau. 2026. Doubleday.

Louisiana native Soileau's first novel tracks an Acadian family's fight to maintain their way of life amid environmental disasters in the Louisiana bayous, including a massive oil spill, in a tale that deftly balances the fragility and desperation of Gulf Coast life with the resilience and pride of its people.

Sometimes an Island. By Ellen Meeropol. 2026. Sea Crow.

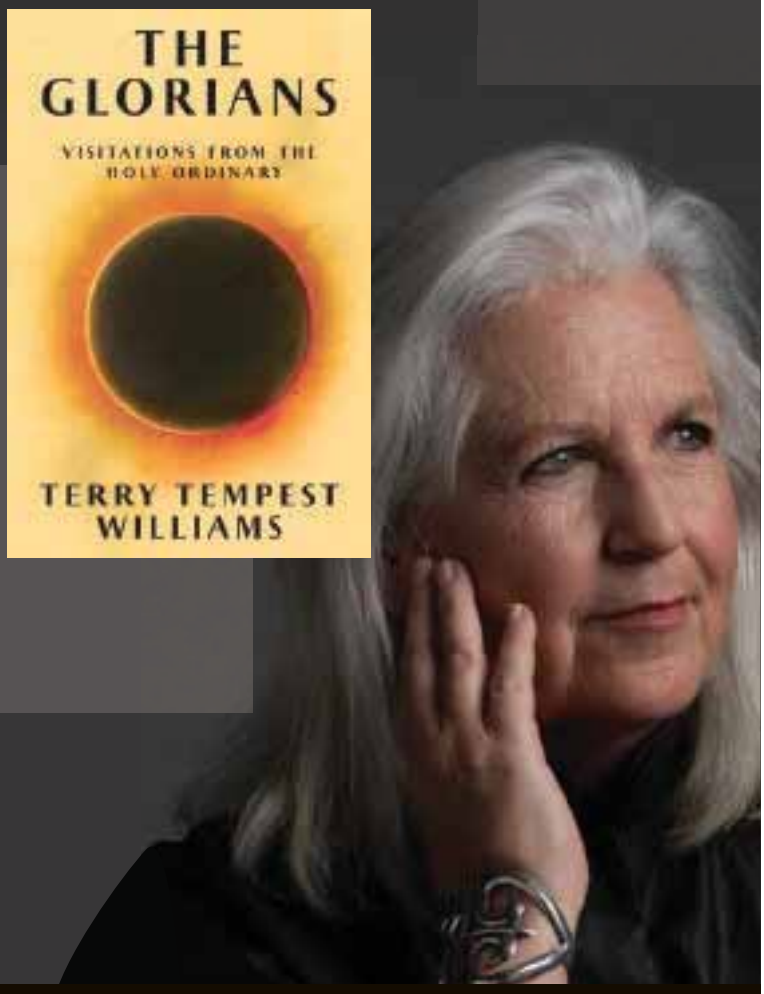
Centered around the personal aspects of the climate crisis, this intense epic of life and resilience on a Maine island tells the stories of a Jewish family who fled antisemitic violence, a Brooklyn family escaping dangerously polluted air, an interracial couple, and members of a commune.

Terrestrial History. By Joe Mungo Reed. 2025. Norton.

Reed chronicles the last days of Earth's death from climate change through four generations of a single family, each attempting to be vital to humanity's progress, from early-twenty-first-century Scottish scientist Hannah, who tries to slow global warming, to her granddaughter who works for a billionaire who plans to colonize Mars and her great-grandson who is born on the Red Planet.

The Words of Dr. L and Other Stories. By Karen E. Bender. 2025. Counterpoint.

The concreteness of Bender's language is in sharp contrast to the deep strangeness and troubling ambiguity afoot in the dystopian worlds her characters navigate in these speculative stories that align the decimation of climate change and tyrannical regimes with the precarity of friendship and the bewilderment and longing of parents and children.



The *Booklist* Interview

Terry Tempest Williams

by Donna Seaman

Terry Tempest Williams is a writer, teacher, and activist of passionate and courageous attunement, compassion, candor, artistry, and ethics. Her deep knowledge of and concern for the living world have shaped her more than 20 books, which include *Refuge*, *Finding Beauty in a Broken World*, *When Women were Birds*, and *Erosion*. We were so thrilled to speak with Williams about her newest, *The Glorians: Visitations from the Holy Ordinary*, a Top 10 Books on the Environment & Sustainability title, and a gorgeous work of profound generosity and revelation.

Donna Seaman: **The Glorians** ***came to you in a dream, which you immediately wrote down in a notebook, following a practice your grandmother taught you.***
Terry Tempest Williams: My grandmother begins this book and really in many ways infiltrates every sentence, because when we were children she demanded that we pay attention to our dreams. She was a self-taught Jungian analyst; her library was vast. She worked with women in these clandestine dream speakeasies, really radical women who would share their dreams. And I think she experimented with us. It was terrifying. We would stay with her, and we all slept in late because we knew we would be held to account of our nightlife. And she would say, "Darling, what have you dreamed today? Or "What dream do you bring to the table?"

Seaman: You've written a lot about being raised in a Mormon family, but this aspect of your grandmother's life surprised me, though it does explain a lot about your own independent thinking.
Williams: You know, growing up, I thought Joseph Campbell, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Carl Jung, and Marie-Louise von Franz were Mormons. We had this warped, tweaked sense of Mormonism. My family were Latter-day Saints and we were raised by a community of Mormons, but I think for my family, certainly for my parents, it was more social and cultural. It was a way to bring up a family with values. And even though I have left the church, culturally, it still matters to me. Prayer matters to me. Community matters to me, and that is throughout my work. So it's complicated, which I think any religious upbringing is.

Seaman: Let's return to the dream that sparked the book.
Williams: The dream that shaped this book happened a week after the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020. In it, I was walking through the gates of Harvard to Harvard Yard in fall, surrounded by resplendent, beautiful trees, red, gold, yellow, orange. I knew I had to get to the tower. (There is no tower.) I turn, I see it. There are two ways to get to the top. One is the direct path up the front. The other is a spiral staircase on the side. Of course, I take the spiral staircase. When I go up, I realize I'm in Cassandra's temple, the ruins at my feet. I have this strong feeling that I've forgotten something. I hear my name called. I turn. A woman is walking up the main steps with students. The gate is locked. And she says, "Terry, do you remember your vow that you made to us?" And I said, "Remind me." And she said, "Your vow is to create *The Epic Documentation of the Glorians*. And then, I wake up and I think, what is a Glorian?

Seaman: That question propels the book as you create a rolling, encompassing definition of a Glorian—which can be a creature, a person, a moment—while chronicling intense experiences on your home ground in Utah's red rock desert and

on the Harvard campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where you've been writer-in-residence for the Divinity School for a decade. These two very different places underwent dramatic and painful changes and upheavals during the last six years, the time frame of the book. Can you talk about bringing them both to life on these pages and what they represented?
Williams: In a strange way, it was a balance because the desert is largely a place of stillness and quiet, solitude. It's where I flourish mentally, emotionally, and physically. At the Divinity School, every hour, every minute is scheduled. It's not healthy, every day with high pressure, high performance, deep preparation. I had to really work to catch up with everyone. My education is not a formal education. My intelligence is of a different order. One night I was made to feel that I had no business being at the Divinity School. I walked home and I sat down at my desk and I wrote without thinking, "What do I know?" I wrote down hundreds of names of birds, and I thought, I'll start here. And that was very clarifying. What I did know was creation. What I did know was the sacred. What I did understand was reverence.

As writer-in-residence, my task was to create a space where students could flourish with language. I tried to create a sacred space for them where we could feel the power of community. That's really what matters. I also realized that what I was most interested in was the spiritual implications of climate change, so every class, every piece of work I did, circled around that.

What Harvard gave me was an intellectual feast that I will cherish my entire life. Harvard supported what I know in the desert. What I know in the desert enabled me to survive apart. That's the balance. That's reciprocity.

Seaman: How do you see the dynamic among your writing, teaching, and activism?
Williams: When I was in my twenties and thirties, I would think, am I an activist or am I a writer? Am I a teacher or am I a writer? What is my role? Where do I belong? Now I think that my role is to live a life that's engaged. I think in many ways, *The Glorians* is a book about trust and a book about grace and that we can't know what's ahead. The Glorians are inviting us to engage. I think they are telling us each in their own forms, whatever we deem a Glorian to be, that we are in the process of creating a new world, a new way of being, even in this darkness. Yes, even as we feel the world is on fire.

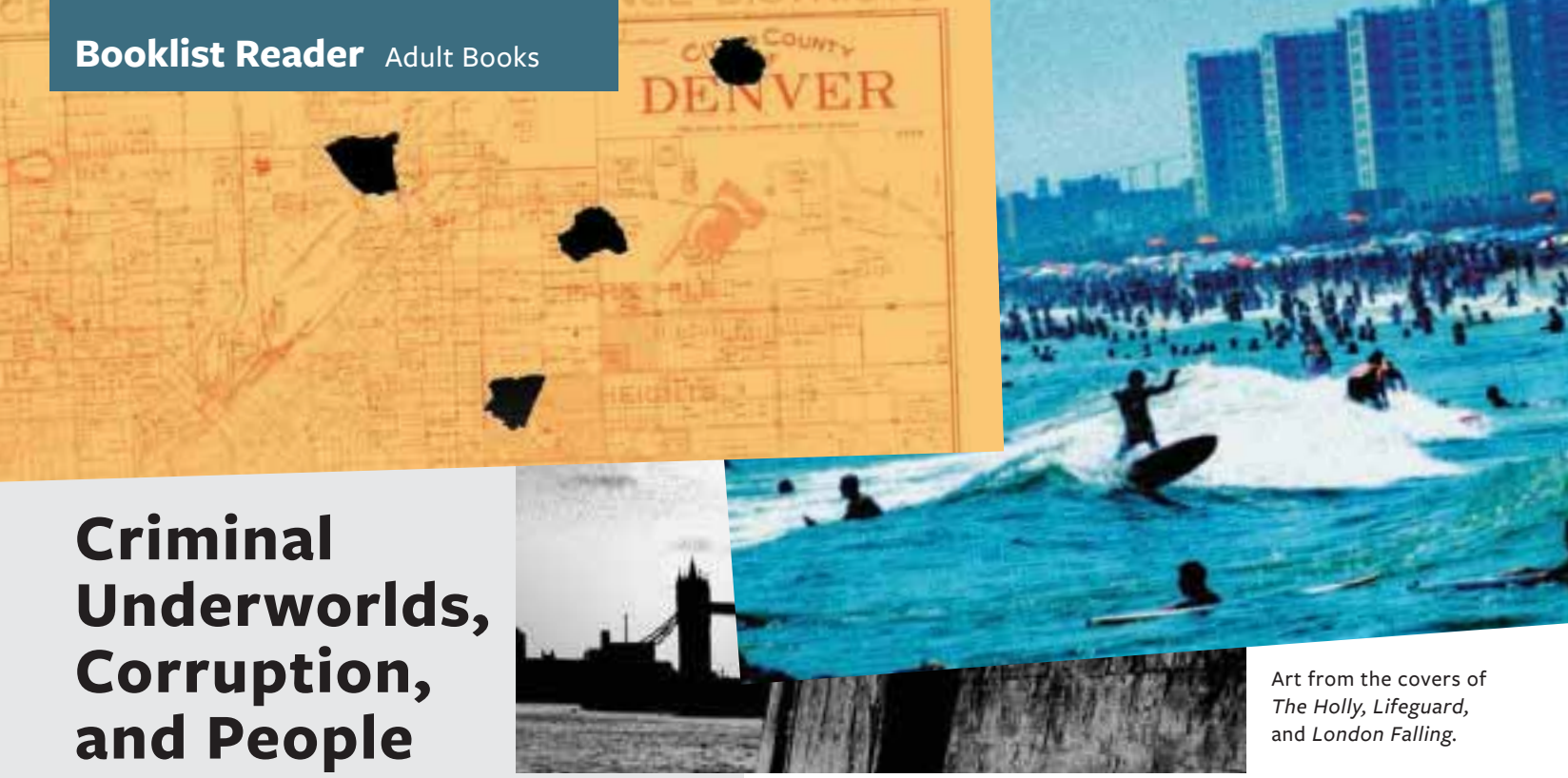
But I will also say that writing is what has saved my life. I am alive in a family of women who have all died early, with the exception of my grandmothers. The others all died of breast cancer or ovarian cancer, cancers of the female reproductive system. And from an early age, I believed that was because they had forfeited their creativity in the service of family. I've never said this publicly before, but that was a vow I did make, that I would not do that. That for the lives of the women who came before me, I would do what they could not do—and that was to speak out freely in public, and write what was in their hearts for others to know.

Seaman: In* The Glorians*, you write: "We can adapt and reimagine the climate crisis to be a time of transformation where we can be participants in change, not victims of it."
Williams: I am so tired of hearing about hope. Maybe because I've lost so many members of our family, and I had such hopes. But I just really do believe there's something deeper than hope and that is engagement, that we do have the power to change what feels like the inevitable. I think we're seeing this in Minneapolis and other places across the country. We're seeing this in every single library in this country with librarians as advocates of free speech, librarians as the beacons of courage and strength and ferocity. Librarians raised me in every school I attended. In elementary school, the librarian would just keep piling books on us. And she was formidable. She had so much power over shaping our imaginations.

Utah has banned more books than any other state in the country. And they've just added two more. What does that say? What are they afraid of? They're banning books as the Great Salt Lake is retreating to record lows. If it goes beyond the critical point—and right now it's below thirty-seven percent and that's in the red zone—if it gets lower, two million people are going to have to move and we are in total denial.

Seaman: It's so important for people to know about disasters like this, which are happening everywhere. What role do libraries play in inspiring people to read about nature and all that threatens the web of life?
Williams: Wherever I go, I go into the library. I just love to see what people are reading in different places. We went into this small library in Middleburg, Virginia. And I could not believe it. Right in front were four shelves of books about the desert. All my favorite books were there. I met the librarian and she said she felt that it was really important for their readers to know there is a world beyond Virginia.

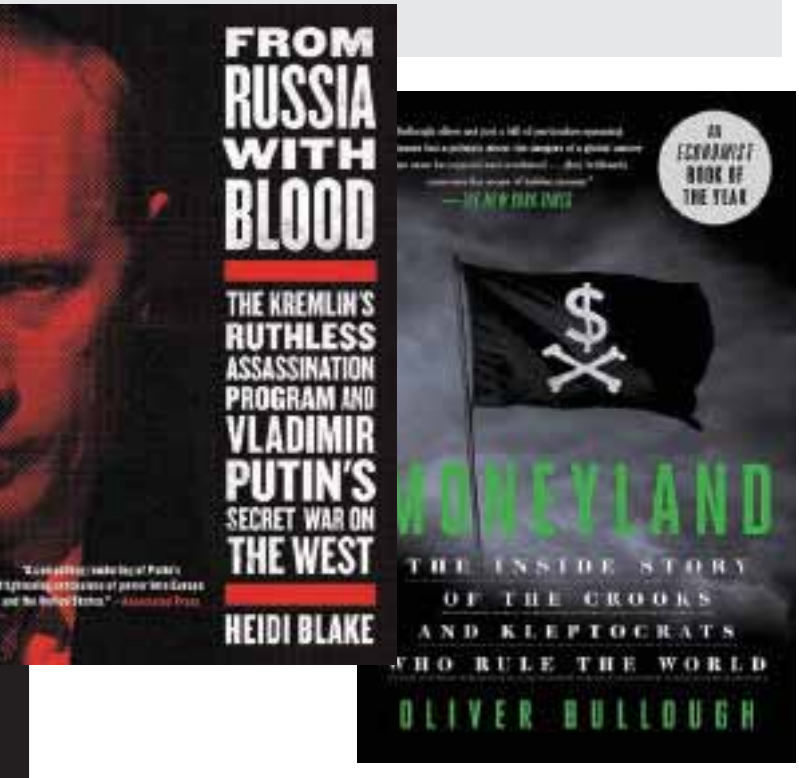
I think displays of books about our public lands and national parks would be meaningful because they are under such siege. And not only the land; they're even banning books in National Park Service visitor centers. I found out that my book, *The Hour of Land: A Personal Topography of America's National Parks*, has been challenged for "corrosive ideology." So, I think libraries have a great opportunity to educate readers about not only what books are being banned, but what ideologies are being banned, and about what's happening to our national parks, what's happening to our national wildlife refuges, forests, and public lands that belong to all of us.



Criminal Underworlds, Corruption, and People Fighting for the Truth

by Annie Bostrom and Donna Seaman

These riveting works of nonfiction explore various forms of crime, greed, corruption, lies, destruction, and mysterious deaths, and bring forward individuals fighting hard for truth, accountability, and justice.



Art from the covers of *The Holly, Lifeguard,* and *London Falling.*

Amity and Prosperity: One Family and the Fracturing of America. By Eliza Griswold. 2018. 336p. Farrar.

After a Pennsylvania single mother signed a lease to allow hydraulic fracking on her land, her son manifested a series of inexplicable ailments and farm animals unexpectedly died. This empathetic yet analytical account shows how she painstakingly traced the illnesses' source back to the pollution generated by the fracking sites and finally found the hope and help to take on this powerful adversary.

The Beginning Comes After the End: Notes on a World of Change. By Rebecca Solnit. 2026. 160p. Haymarket.

Observing that we're in the midst of a massive backlash that threatens to undo such hard-fought advances as increased use of renewable energy sources and efforts at achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion, Solnit argues that this reaction is due to already profound and ultimately unstoppable societal transformations. In a remarkably fluent chronicle of social change over the last six decades, she profiles trailblazers and traces pursuits of justice on many fronts.

Blizzard of Lies: Karen Read, John O'Keefe, and the Shocking Unsolved Murder in Cop Town, USA. By Dave Wedge. 2026. 272p. BenBella.

Wedge tells the story of Karen Read, who was accused of killing her boyfriend, a Boston police officer, in 2022. Read was tried twice; first there was a mistrial and then an acquittal. It's a complicated story involving police incompetence (and, perhaps, outright malfeasance), conflicting accounts of the events surrounding John O'Keefe's death, crusading social media stars, and confusing evidence.

Death in Mud Lick: A Coal Country Fight Against the Drug Companies That Delivered the Opioid Epidemic. By Eric Eyre. 2020. 304p. Scribner.

When her brother died of an overdose in 2005, Debbie Preece recruited a lawyer friend to find out why. A mom-and-pop pharmacy in Kermit, West Virginia (population 382) had received shipments of a staggering nine million opioid pain pills in just two years. Journalist Eyre chased down the facts.

From Russia with Blood: The Kremlin's Ruthless Assassination Program and Vladimir Putin's Secret War on the West. By Heidi Blake. 2019. 336p. Little, Brown/Mulholland.

A dozen-plus Russian exiles have died under suspicious circumstances in Great Britain in recent years. Buzzfeed News reporter Blake looks back to Russia's upheaval in the 1990s, when ex-KGB officer Vladimir Putin was promoted to succeed then-president Boris Yeltsin, to investigate the web of deaths.

The Holly: Five Bullets, One Gun, and the Struggle to Save an American Neighborhood. By Julian Rubinstein. 2021. 284p. Farrar.

Rubinstein spent seven years uncovering what happened when an anti-gang violence activist shot a gang member at a Denver peace march in 2013 in this gripping deep dive into media underreporting and how the criminal-justice industrial complex may be invested in systemic corruption designed to keep drug wars going.

Lifeguard: A Love Story. By Janet Fash and Clio Chang. 2026. 240p. Simon & Schuster.

Janet Fash became the first female lifeguard chief at Rockaway Beach in Queens, where millions of swimmers and surfers convene each year. This book covers her decades on the job, from 1974 through 2025, and chronicles not only the rowdy beach culture but also the rampant corruption, inept management, nepotism, and misogyny within the governmental bureaucracy overseeing the lifeguards and their union and her efforts to affect positive change.

London Falling: A Mysterious Death in a Gilded City and a Family's Search for Truth. By Patrick Radden Keefe. 2026. 384p. Doubleday.

Keefe's tour de force is a work of staggering yet sensitive investigation and reportage that digs into the circumstances that led to the 2019 death of privileged 19-year-old Londoner Matthew Brettler, who had been posing as the heir of a Russian oligarch, a chronicle that involves England's colonial past, the banking industry, and Holocaust survivors.

Moneyland: The Inside Story of the Crooks and Kleptocrats Who Rule the World. By Oliver Bullough. 2019. 320p. St. Martin's.

They say "follow the money," but in the world of plutocrats, kleptocrats, and oligarchs, that's nearly impossible. Bullough traveled the world, from Siberia to the Seychelles, to untangle a web of deceit, avarice, and amorality in this eye-opening exposé of financial transgressions on a global scale that threaten democracy.

The Riders Come Out at Night: Brutality, Corruption, and Cover-up in Oakland. By Ali Winston and Darwin BondGraham. 2023. 480p. Atria.

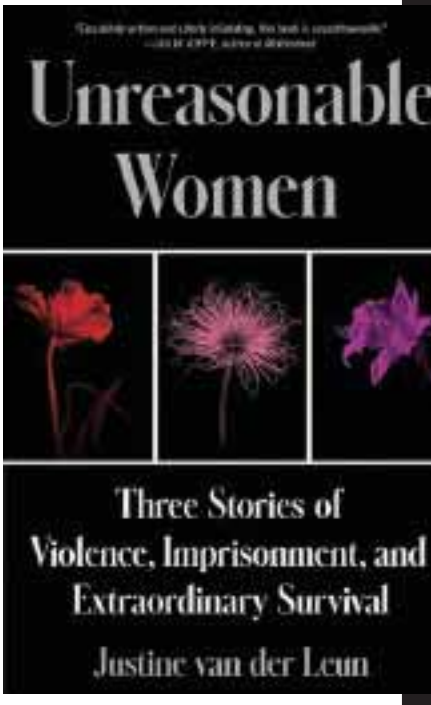
Winston and BondGraham cover the terror inflicted by the local police force on the Oakland community in the 1990s and early 2000s: off-the-clock beatdowns, drug planting, Internal Affairs cover-ups. The authors' care for the victims and their dogged pursuit of the deeper story make this a book, like *London Falling*, that easily connects nonfiction journalism and true crime.

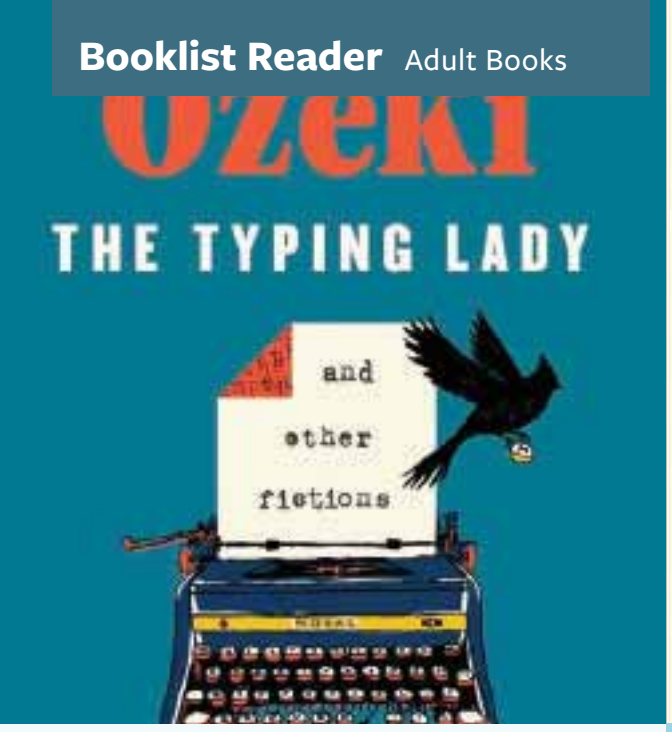
Thundering Waters: The Toxic Legacy of Niagara Falls. By Christen E. Civiletto. 2026. 392p. Island.

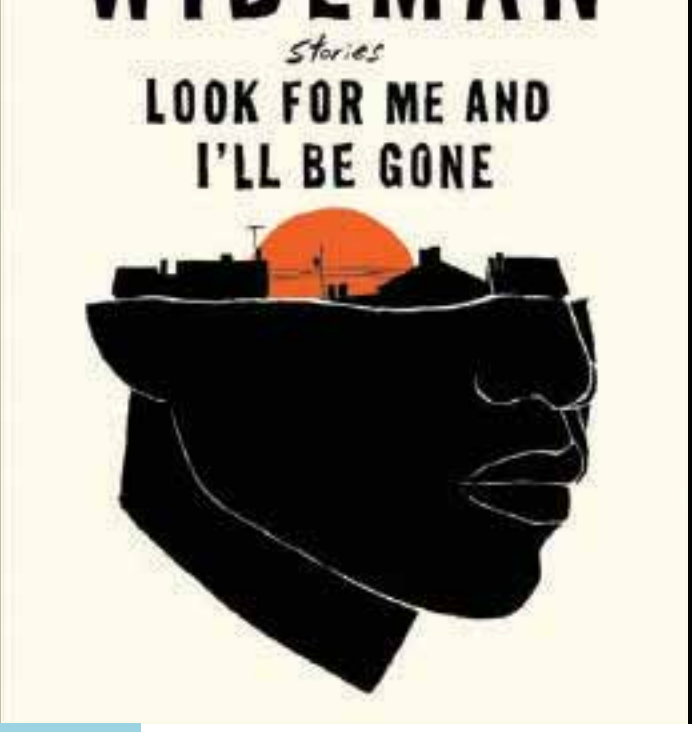
Chemical manufacturing giants such as Hooker/Occidental and DuPont used the magnificent Niagara Falls as a source of inexpensive power while dumping toxic waste in the Niagara River and its tributaries. Environmental attorney Civiletto grew up there and when she, most of her family, friends, and the wider community were diagnosed with various cancers and other devastating illnesses, she dug into how this once-pristine region became a poisonous cesspool, chronicling her research and findings in this mix of crime thriller, environmental exposé, geographic history, and personal memoir.

Unreasonable Women: Three Stories of Violence, Imprisonment, and Extraordinary Survival. By Justine van der Leun. 2026. 336p. Ecco.

Investigative journalist van der Leun dismantles the racist, sexist systems that funnel thousands of survivors of domestic and sexual violence through the courts and into jails and prisons, portraying three women who have been incarcerated for defending themselves and their families against their abusers.



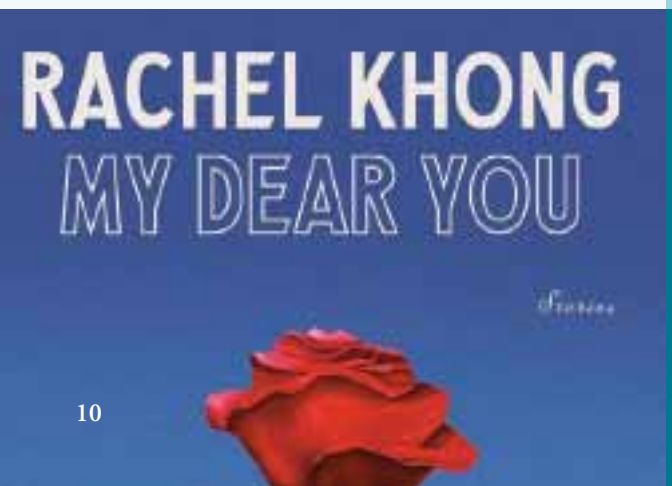




Captivating and Provocative Short-Story Collections

by Donna Seaman

The short stories in these enthralling and surprising collections share themes and traits both overt and subtle, from incisive takes on rural and suburban lives, shadows from the past, and concerns about the future to emotional intricacy, sharp humor, soaring imagination, profound empathy, complex trauma, and transcendent wonder.



The Animal Room. By Lauren Acampora. 2026. 334p. Grove.

Through 13 linked stories set in the fictional Connecticut suburb of Old Cranbury, Acampora reminds her readers that humans are never far removed from their wild roots.

Blasphemy: New and Selected Stories. By Sherman Alexie. 2012. 480p. Grove.

The characters in Alexie's mischievously and mordantly funny and scathingly forthright tales grapple with racism, poverty, alcoholism, the tragic loss of languages and customs, endangered truths, and imperiled nature.

A Calm & Normal Heart. By Chelsea T. Hicks. 2022. 216p. Unnamed.

Hicks, an enrolled citizen of the Osage Nation, presents stories that fearlessly embrace and upend Native American traditions as young women navigate sex, love, and life transitions in lands, from Oklahoma to California, that are theirs and not, where they belong and don't.

For a Little While: New and Selected Stories. By Rick Bass. 2016. 480p. Little, Brown.

Bass' characters in moral or mortal peril seek connection to the fecundity, beauty, and marvels of the Earth in stories that combine psychological nuance, factual precision, and deep imagination.

Holler, Child. By LaToya Watkins. 2023. 224p. Penguin/Tiny Reparations.

Watkins' stories explore generational trauma in rural Black communities in East Texas, as experienced by, for example, a woman who doesn't want her son to see her as a failure, so she tells him he's the son of God, and a former horse breeder who gets in trouble when an escaped horse appears in his suburb.

I Am the Ghost Here. By Kim Samek. 2026. 224p. Dial.

Samek explores the fragility of identity in an ever-changing, modern world in surreal, humorous, and heartbreaking stories that include a tale in which a narrator's increasingly strange brother surrenders control to a human puppeteer.

Liberation Day. By George Saunders. 2022. 256p. Random.

Saunders' boldly imagined stories are catalyzed by outright and insidious assaults on our most basic rights, including freedom of mind. Language and memories are essential for understanding oneself, others, and the world; when they are stolen, we lose our autonomy and liberty, scenarios Saunders choreographs with unnerving specificity in these caustically funny, mischievously romantic, and profoundly compassionate fables.

Look for Me and I'll Be Gone. By John Edgar Wideman. 2021. 192p. Scribner.

Short-story virtuoso Wideman touches on identity, family relationships, culture, history, and social issues in tales that include an experimental, time-transcending journey into family histories, a heartbreaking story about a loved one's incarceration, and an epic reimagining of an early African American missionary.

Mothers, Tell Your Daughters. By Bonnie Jo Campbell. 2015. 256p. Norton.

In each visceral, unpredictable story, Campbell reveals the hidden truths of women who farm; drive a truck; or work as a cashier, phlebotomist, biology teacher, or upholsterer while dealing with confounding or dangerous situations. For a fearsome rattlesnake, turn to Campell's novel, *The Waters* (2024).

My Dear You. By Rachel Khong. 2026. 240p. Knopf.

In her steady-handed first story collection, Khong lets characters choose their heavenly faces after violent deaths; introduces a government-backed procedure called "the Freshening" that, once undergone, makes all others reflect the subject's own race; and gives unhappy spirits and a sex doll the chance to speak.

Night of the Living Rez. By Morgan Talty. 2022. 296p. Tin House.

Talty's collection moves back and forth in time, capturing moments in the life of David, or Dee, a member of the Penobscot Nation in Maine; his well-meaning, troubled mother; alcoholic medicine man Frick; and David's volatile older sister in whose lives Native traditions mix with binge-watches of *The Sopranos*.

Out There. By Kate Folk. 2022. 256p. Random.

Folk's mind-bending stories ingeniously pair everyday challenges with outlandish predicaments. Sexy "biomorphic humanoids" seduce their victims, steal their data, and vanish; houses possess malevolent powers; and women risk their lives to escape men they're weary of.

Patient, Female. By Julie Schumacher. 2026. 272p. Milkweed.

In 13 taut, lively, psychologically deep, and superbly crafted short stories, Schumacher uses everyday events to explore universal experiences of sorrow and family dynamics, while also portraying female protagonists who are often unrewarded for performing essential emotional labor.

Python's Kiss. By Louise Erdrich. 2026. 240p. Harper.

Erdrich's enrapturing stories, set primarily in her centering place, Minnesota, are saturated with feelings while wild, hilarious, and cruel acts and accidents occur in rapid succession, generating an incandescent intensity that illuminates just how intricately humans are meshed with one another, animals, Earth, sky, and spirit.

Some Stupid Glow. By TJ Fuller. 2026. 172p. Featherproof.

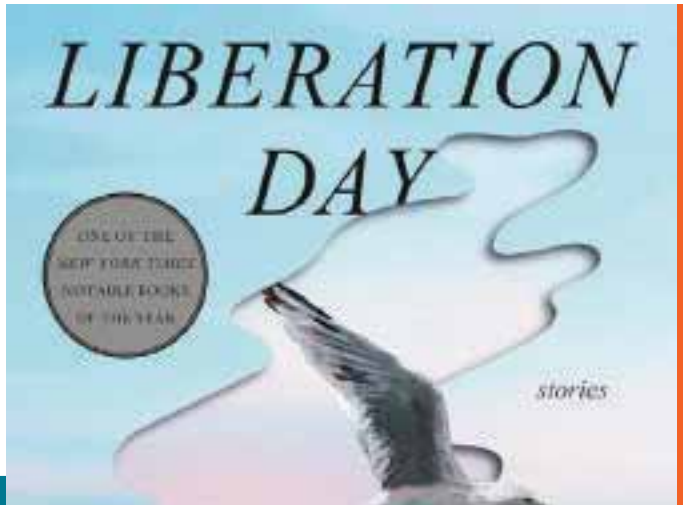
Set in the Pacific Northwest, Fuller's stories portray characters clinging to a dream in prose that is punchy, original, and lively. Each intriguing, varied, and fascinating tale shifts the ground beneath the reader's feet.

The Typing Lady: And Other Fictions. By Ruth Ozeki. 2026. 336p. Viking.

Ozeki's retrospective short-story collection begins with "The Typing Lady: An Author's Note," which is about a woman who is always "typing furiously away on her laptop," and ends with "The Problem of the Body," in which a writer dreading her next book tour attempts to use a dating app to prescreen potential suitors for her beloved 17-year-old granddaughter.

Waiting for the Long Night Moon. By Amanda Peters. 2025. 256p. Catapult.

Carnegie Medal–winner Peters' stunning story collection centers Indigenous people and meshes past and present in long, complex tales about struggles with deprivation, loss, and damaged nature as well as shorter stories focusing on an image, element of culture, or moment of joy.



Workplace Woes

by Elizabeth Reiser

Whether in a cubicle or home office, workplace culture is full of absurdities that anyone who has held a job can appreciate. From apathetic coworkers scrolling TikTok to illicit romances, the full extent of the foibles of humanity are on display, so it's no wonder fiction writers have mined its depths. These novels capture the humor, heartbreak, madness, and even terror that encapsulate the modern workplace.

Art from the cover of *Discontent.*

Black Buck. By Mateo Askaripour. 2021. Mariner.

When a chance encounter gives Darren the chance at a dream job, he reinvents himself as a ruthless salesman. Then tragedy strikes. Tackling race in corporate America, Askaripour's novel is darkly funny and insightful.

Convenience Store Woman. By Sayaka Murata. Tr. by Ginny Tapley Takemori. 2018. Grove.

Keiko is content working in a convenience store, until others question her path, making her begin to do the same. This short novel explores career expectations and what it means when your identity becomes lost in work.

Discontent. By Beatriz Serrano. Tr. by Mara Faye Lethem. 2025. Vintage.

Marisa appears to be a successful young woman excelling in life, but she is bored and angry. She hates her job and everyone around her and spends most of her workday stealing ideas from others between bouts of watching YouTube and self-medicating.

JPod. By Douglas Coupland. 2006. Bloomsbury.

Coupland was an early satirist of the digital workplace in *Microserfs* (1995). Here he portrays a bunch of precocious, angsty designer-geeks whose last names start with *J* slotted into a pod of cubicles in a giant Vancouver video-game corporation.

Personal Days. By Ed Park. 2008. Random House.

Park's version of the office tale offers a satirical look at the hours we lose to workplace absurdity. Compared to the TV show *The Office*, but with a bit of mystery thrown in, this vignette-like tale is a humorous take on corporate culture.

Several People Are Typing. By Calvin Kasulke. 2021. Doubleday.

In Kasulke's inventive, funny, tender, and compelling first novel, told in Slack messages, Gerald, a middling employee at a New York public-relations firm, has his consciousness uploaded to the workplace app. While kind coworker Pradeep tends to his bodily needs, Gerald's productivity increases.

Severance. By Ling Ma. 2018. Farrar.

Set in a postapocalyptic America, Ma's tale follows Candace Chen as she navigates a zombie pandemic. Rather than eating brains, these zombies are forced to perform mindless routines repeatedly. A commentary on identity, consumerism, and how we prioritize work.

Then We Came to the End. By Joshua Ferris. 2007. Little, Brown.

Ferris captures the ennui of the workers at an advertising agency where layoffs are running rampant. By using the first-person plural point of view, the novel makes the reader feel like a temp worker observing both the ridiculous and the mundane of a failing corporate office.

There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job. By Kikuko Tsumura. 2021. Bloomsbury.

Feeling burnt out, a woman decides to take on temp jobs that involve very little thinking on her part. As the narrator moves from job to job, convenience and ease aren't making her happy. The question is how one finds meaning in a culture that prizes work so highly.

Reserve These Reads

Adult

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Fiction

Beginning Middle End. By Valeria Luiselli. Knopf.

Luiselli, who won the Carnegie Medal for *Lost Children Archive* (2019), continues the story of a mother and daughter (though this tale stands alone) as they embark on a journey to Sicily, a journey of family heritage and mythology amid ancient ruins.

Cool Machine. By Colson Whitehead. Doubleday.

Whitehead rounds out his Harlem Trilogy (*Harlem Shuffle*, 2021; *Crook Manifesto*, 2023) in the 1980s, depicting a gritty city full of absurd and tender details. Ray Carney, a business man and a fence, and star of the series, is basking in the success of his Harlem furniture store but can't resist the lure of yet another heist.

Country People. By Daniel Mason. Random.

The Pulitzer Prize–nominated author of *North Woods* (2023) plays with narrative structure and various types of humor—dry, humane, occasionally absurd—in this tale of a devoted husband and father, a failed academic, who jumps at the chance to re-embrace life when his wife accepts a job at a rural Vermont college.

Crash into Me. By Robinne Lee. St. Martin's.

Lee, author of the best-selling romance-turned-movie (starring Anne Hathaway) *The Idea of You*, introduces Cecelia Chen, a photographer at a crossroads in her life who literally runs into someone from her past who just may help realign her present.

Fishbone Cinderella. By Elizabeth Lim. Del Rey.

Best-selling YA author Lim makes her adult debut in this family saga, tinged with magic, that transverses 1940s Hong Kong and and 1960s San Francisco, following a woman with the uncanny ability to disappear and her daughter, who believes she is the only one who can save her mother.

Helpless. By Jessica Knoll. Scribner.

Knoll is known for female-centered, pulse-pounding thrillers, and her latest is sure to draw a crowd as she returns to contemporary times after a brief foray into the historical (in *Bright Young Women*, 2023). Years after breaking up, a couple reunites on campus after the death of a beloved professor; apologies ensue, followed by a kidnapping, and that's just the beginning.

The Intrigue. By Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Del Rey.

The best-selling author of *Mexican Gothic* takes on more realistic terrors in this historical noir, set in 1940s Mexico, that follows a charming con artist whose latest mark proves less of a silly spinster than he originally thought.

Men in Love. By Irvine Welsh. Pegasus.

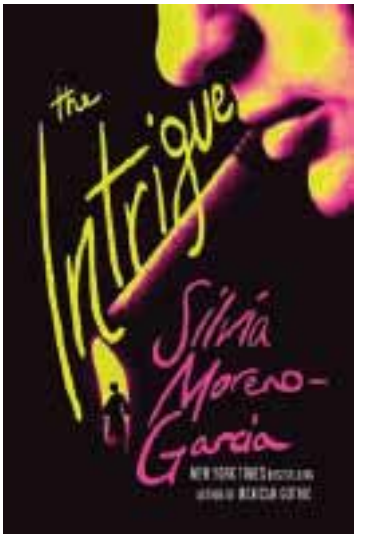
For many Gen-X readers, *Trainspotting*—both Welsh's 1993 novel and Danny Boyle's 1996 film adaptation—defined a generation, and they will rejoice that Welsh is returning with a prequel, as Renton, Sick Boy, Spud, and Begbie search for love as the 1980s come to an end.

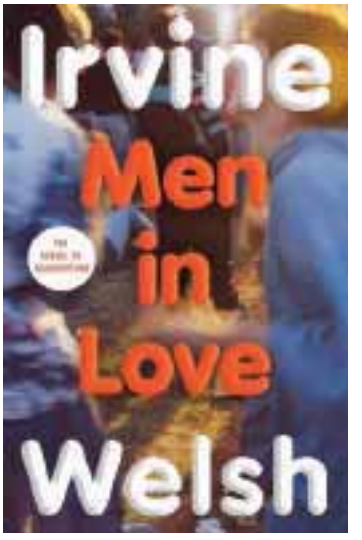
Ransom. By Daniel Silva. Harper.

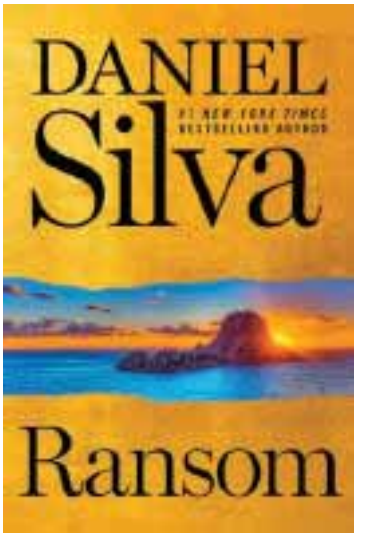
He's an art restorer, he's a spy, and he's back. This time, Gabriel Allon is tasked with finding the missing influencer wife of a billionaire, but both husband and wife have secrets that threaten to derail his investigation.

This Changes Everything. By Lisa Scottoline. Grand Central.

Best-seller Scottoline's twisty latest explores the power of female friendship, following a woman who leaves an idyllic life in Tuscany behind to help her best friend, who just witnessed her grandmother's murder in Pennsylvania.



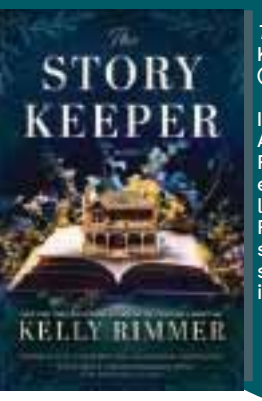




July 2026

The Top Ten Adult Fiction and Nonfiction Chosen Monthly by America's Library Staff

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org



The Story Keeper
Kelly Rimmer
(Mira)

TOP PICK

In this compelling gothic novel set in Australia, recently divorced 50-something Fiona buys her uncle's decaying country estate with plans to refurbish it. But the locals fear the place is haunted. When Fiona discovers a novel that appears to be set in the house, it becomes a dual-timeline story, with chapters from the book woven into the narrative.

—Robin Beerbower, LibraryReads Ambassador, AZ
NoveList read-alike: *The Secret Book of Flora Lea* by Patti Callahan Henry

In Stormy Weather
Chelsea Curto
(Atria)

Two rival meteorologists who have been competing since high school end up spending a summer together storm-chasing while they both try to figure out the next steps in their careers. Readers will love this contemporary romance with characters who genuinely respect each other's intelligence and expertise.

—Gabrielle Lucas, Community Library of the Shenango Valley, PA
NoveList read-alike: *Chase Me If You Can* by Heather Frances

If Books Could Kill: A Novel
Kate Eberle
(Penguin Books)

Roxie wishes to live out her favorite romance author's next book, but ends up in a crime thriller instead, complete with a knife-wielding date. What follows is pure comedic gold as she kidnaps an anxious English professor to help her survive. This novel is a unique and engaging take on the romance genre.

—Lupe Herrera, Mount Pleasant Public Library, TX
NoveList read-alike: *How to Kill a Guy in Ten Dates* by Shailee Thompson

The Exquisite Torment of Loving Your Enemy
Brigitte Knightley
(Ace)

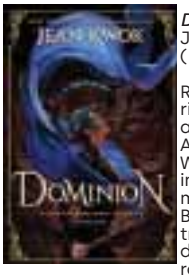
The second book in the Dearly Beloathed Duology finds Assassin Osric and Healer Aurienne struggling with their feelings while fighting a deadlyPox outbreak. This cozy romantasy features humorous banter, interesting characters and fantastic world-building.

—Sara Doyle, Hays Public Library, KS
NoveList read-alike: Queens of Villainy series by Stephanie Burgis

Helpless
Jessica Knoll
(Scribner)

Screenwriter Faye senses trouble when she runs into her ex, Henry, who she left behind for Hollywood and a hit show based on their relationship. When Faye wakes up drugged in a remote cabin with an angry Henry, motives blur, and the reader is left uncertain, fueling a tense, twisty thriller of kidnapping and revenge.

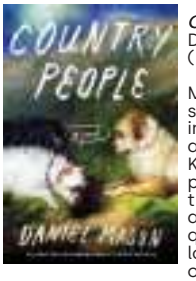
—Kimberly McGee, Lake Travis Community Library, Austin, TX
NoveList read-alike: *The Plunge* by Lila Raicek



Dominion
Jean Kwok
(Putnam)

Rubi Morningtail is a skilled ribbon dancer with no memory and minimal magic. Blake Axefire, the handsome Tyger Warrior leader, sees something in her. Thanks to his machinations, she becomes Bonded to a tygress and must train to fight as demons plot devastation. A steamy romantasy with all the popular tropes yet a distinctive world.

—Sarah Walker, Indianapolis Public Library, IN
NoveList read-alike: *We Who Will Die* by Stacia Stark



Country People: A Novel
Daniel Mason
(Random House)

Miles Krzelewski has stalled on finishing his PhD in Russian folklore for over a decade. When his wife Kate takes a visiting professorship in Vermont, they move their family across the country. Miles quickly fits into a warm local community rich in its own lore and legends. A joyful novel full of colorful characters.

—Jennifer Winberry, Hunterdon County Library, NJ
NoveList read-alike: *Alan Opts Out* by Courtney Maum

Die for Me: A Novel
Shirlene Obuobi
(Penguin Books)

What starts as a fun, age-gap romance quickly transforms into a suspenseful paranormal ride. Sean, the only Black female cardiologist at her hospital, is consumed by work and has sworn off love when she meets Julian, a breathtakingly magnetic much younger man. Obuobi expertly builds a slow-burning sense of dread that is both profoundly sensual and genuinely unnerving.

—Chasity Moreno, New York Public Library, NY
NoveList read-alike: *Son of Morning* by Akwaeke Emezi

Everything Was Beautiful and Nothing Hurt
Ben Reeves
(Avid Reader Press)

Death—aka Travis—moves through the world like a normal man. When not providing guidance and comfort to those who are passing, he keeps to himself and lives a quiet life. That changes when he forges a bond with his neighbor and her daughter. This novel explores the nature of grief, the beauty of lives both long and short, and the many ways humans deal with loss. A lovely, weighty, read.

—Jayna McDaniel-Browning, Delaware County District Library, OH
NoveList read-alike: *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi

Yes, Chef
Grace Reilly
(Avon)

Poppy and Jack are both in need of a second chance, having gone viral for a public breakup (her) and a public meltdown (him). They can't stand each other but somehow find themselves stuck together trying to revive a Florida restaurant. Entertaining and well-written, hitting all the right tropes (grumpy/sunshine, forced proximity, enemies-to-lovers).

—Erin Gordenier, Librarian, OR
NoveList read-alike: *Just One Taste* by Lizzy Dent

Bonus pick:

When Mikan Road Was Ours
D. K. Furutani
(Atria)

Notable Nonfiction:

Human Raised: Nurturing Connection, Curiosity & Lifelong Learning in the Age of AI
Dana Suskind, M.D.
(Dutton)

Be sure to check out our social media for the Bonus Pick annotations!

Made in LibraryAware - www.libraryaware.com

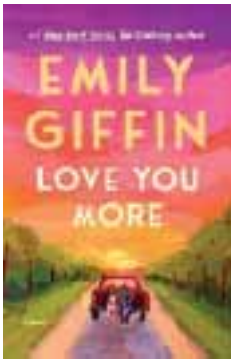
July 2026
HALL OF FAME TITLES

The LibraryReads Hall of Fame designation honors authors who have had multiple titles appear on the monthly list since 2013.

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org/HOF

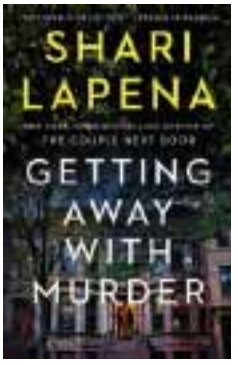
Sea of Charms: A Spellshop Novel
Sarah Beth Durst
(Bramble)

The Final Score
Lana Ferguson
(Berkley)



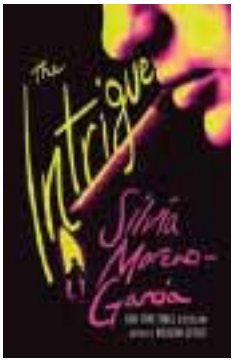
Love You More
Emily Giffin
(Ballantine Books)

Meet Me in Paris
Kristin Harmel
(Gallery Books)



Getting Away with Murder
Shari Lapena
(Pamela Dorman Books)

The Romance Revival
Christina Lauren
(Gallery Books)



The Intrigue
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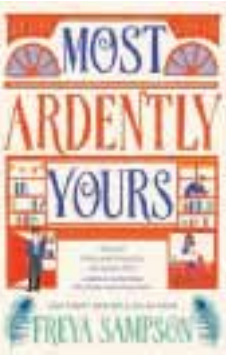


Most Ardently Yours
Freya Sampson
(Sourcebooks Landmark)

Extracurricular
Rachel Lynn Solomon
(Berkley)

Fabulous Bodies
Chuck Tingle
(Tor Nightfire)

Cool Machine: A Novel
Colson Whitehead
(Doubleday)

Hot Girl Murder Club
Ashley Winstead
(Minotaur Books)

PBS BOOKS

Celebrating the Stories That Shape Us

As the nation approaches the U.S. Semiquincentennial, PBS Books presents the America250 Collection—a curated suite of programs that illuminate the stories, voices, and histories that define the American experience. Through conversations with authors, filmmakers, historians, and cultural leaders, this collection invites audiences to rediscover the narratives that have shaped our shared past and continue to influence our future.

These programs highlight perspectives often overlooked, deepen our understanding of familiar events, and bring forward the people whose courage, creativity, and resilience have woven the American story.

American Stories: A Reading Road Trip

Take a literary journey across the country with American Stories: A Reading Road Trip. This series explores the nation one state at a time, uncovering the books, authors, and ideas that have contributed to America's rich literary heritage. Each stop offers a window into regional history, culture, and imagination—revealing how stories help define who we are.

Created in celebration of America250, Visions of America is a digital-first series produced by PBS Books in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Through videos and virtual conversations, the series highlights the places, people, and histories that have shaped the nation. It invites viewers to reflect on the diverse experiences that contribute to the America we know today—and the America we aspire to build.

AMERICA 250

PBS Books: 12 Years of Storytelling

For more than a decade, PBS Books has championed the stories behind the books and films that capture the spirit of American resilience, ingenuity, and hope. As we celebrate 12 years of programming, we look back on the authors, historians, and filmmakers who have helped illuminate the collective narrative of our nation. Their work continues to inspire curiosity, spark dialogue, and remind us of the power of storytelling to connect us all.

Want More Stories That Shape America? Find the full collection of America250 programs—rich with history, insight, and inspiration—at **pbsbooks.org/america250**.

PBS AMERICA@250

A Celebration of History

PBS commemorates the nation's 250th anniversary with a rich collection of programming that explores how the United States came together—highlighting its complex history, treasured artifacts, and the performances and artistic expressions that continue to define the American spirit.

History & Biographies

Explore America's past through powerful documentaries and profiles that illuminate the people, ideas, and events that shaped the nation.

Suffs – Great Performances

Great Performances continues its tradition of bringing world-class arts programming to audiences nationwide. Suffs showcases the story of the women who fought tirelessly for the right to vote, blending history, music, and performance in a compelling theatrical experience.

NOVA: Athens – Birth of Democracy

Travel back 2,500 years to uncover the origins of democracy in ancient Greece. Archaeological discoveries—including mass graves and sites of political upheaval—shed new light on the revolutionary ideas that influenced America's founders.

A More Perfect Union

This program examines the founding ideals articulated 250 years ago and how they continue to shape the nation. Featuring Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein, co-directors of The American Revolution, alongside Yuval Levin, Jeffrey Rosen, and Melody Barnes, the conversation explores the enduring values and tensions at the heart of American democracy.

PBS KIDS: History for Young Explorers

Young viewers can dive into America's past through engaging, adventure-filled episodes, including:

- **Wowsabout** in Sequoia National Park
- **Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum**: How to Be a Leader, featuring a visit with George Washington
- **Peg + Cat**, where Peg and Cat meet Betsy Ross and help George Washington cross the Delaware

...and many more fun, educational journeys that bring history to life for kids.

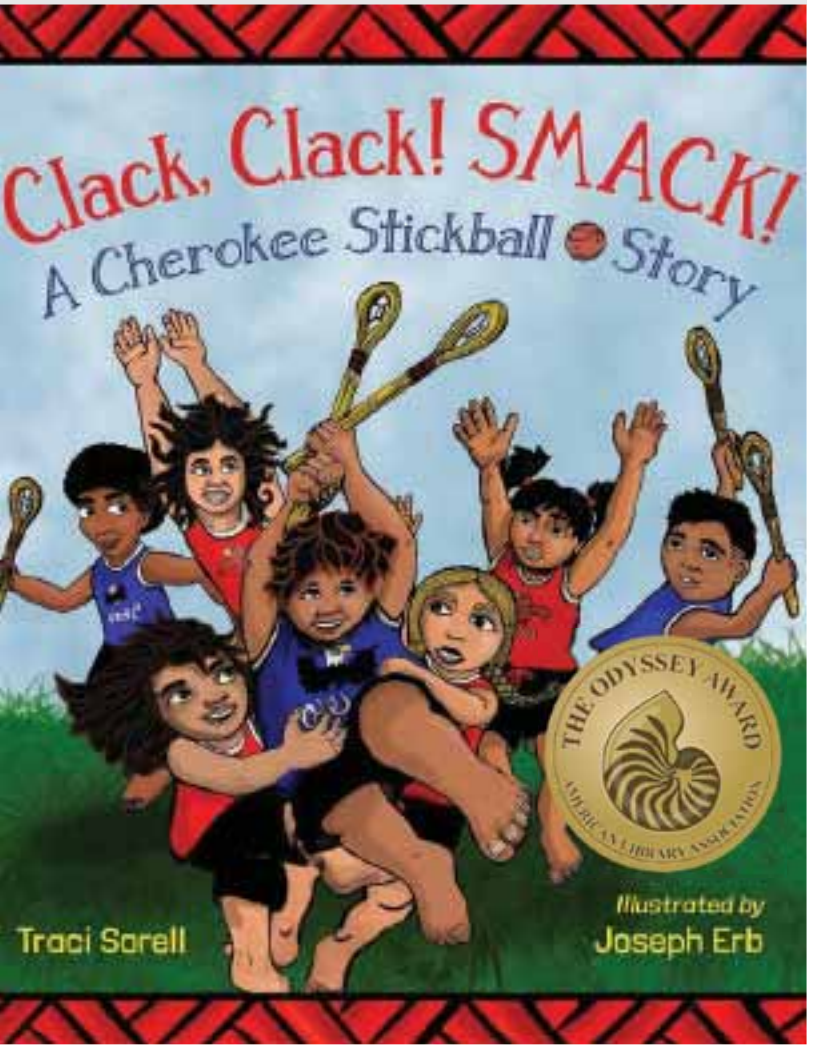
Every Story Matters. Explore Them All. Continue your journey through America's past and present with the complete America250 program collection at **pbsbooks.org/america250.**

The *Booklist* Odyssey Interview

Live Oak

by Heather Booth

This isn't the first time Live Oak Media's Arnie Cardillo and author Traci Sorell have worked together to produce an audio based on one of her books. Their first collaboration, *We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga* (2019), was a 2020 Odyssey Honor title. *Booklist* was glad to revisit the duo in honor of their work on this year's winner of the Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production for Children: *Clack, Clack, Smack! A Cherokee Stickball Story* [CCS], by Traci Sorell and read by a full cast.



Heather Booth: ***What was your collaboration like and how has it changed since your first Odyssey-honored project?***

Traci Sorell: The process has always been very collaborative. For *We Are Grateful Otsaliheliga* ᎣᏣᏳᎵᏍ, Arnie invited me to find a local studio for recording. Hendersongs Studio is located within the Cherokee Nation reservation, so it's convenient for cast members. The owner as well as the sound engineer have both created the musical scores and recorded the many narrators that we worked with on the production. Arnie has put me in charge of casting for each project. I first reach out to fellow Cherokees and then other Native people to audition. I love the range of ages and accents listeners hear featured in each audiobook. The projects have all been fulfilling to me as a creative and a Cherokee author, with all-Native casts bringing the stories to life for readers everywhere.

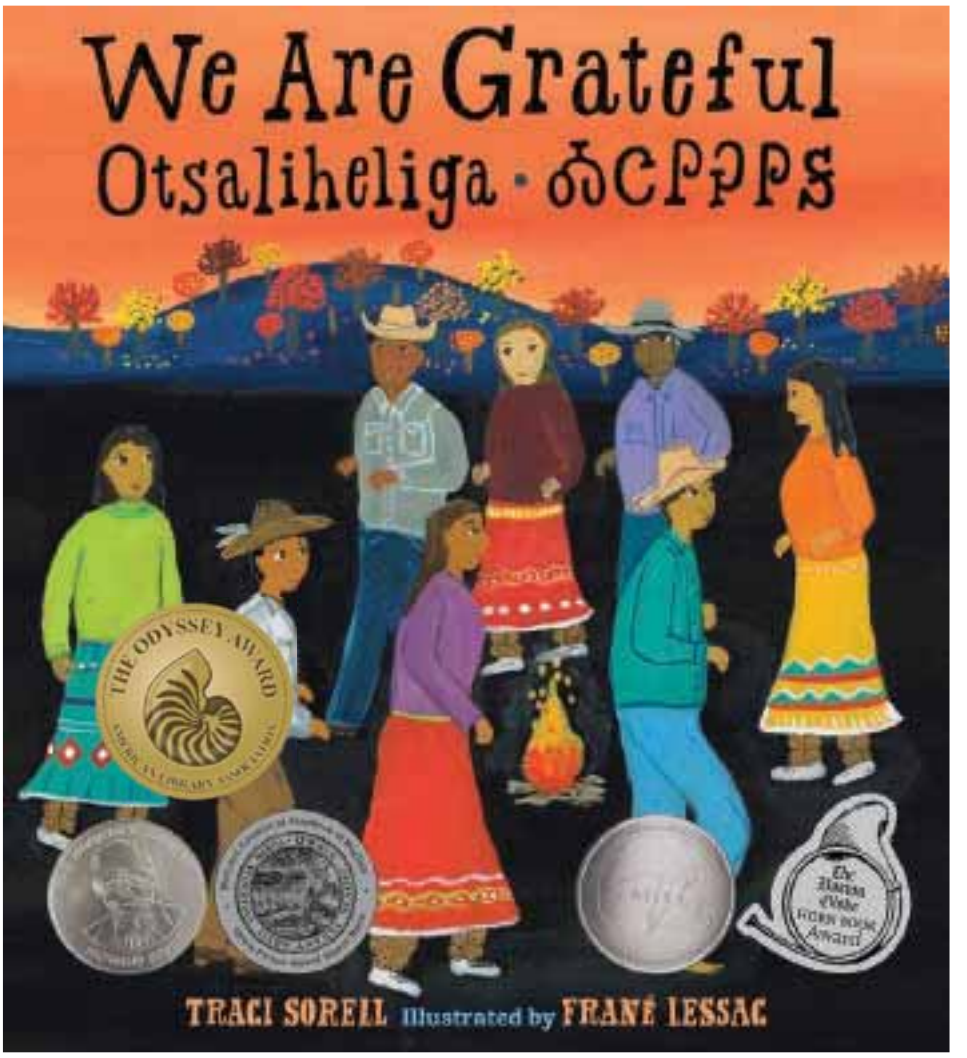
Arnie Cardillo, Live Oak Media: I felt it was essential to make the first production as authentic as possible. The more we spoke, the more I realized that the Cherokee Nation community had the resources necessary to make the project a reality. There were storytellers, public speakers, musicians, experts in the Cherokee language, and students who were being brought up to be true members of the Cherokee Nation. The community is very vibrant and dedicated to passing on its history, traditions, and language, especially to young people and future generations.

By the time that we started producing this book, Traci was anticipating my requests, casting narrators, organizing transportation to and from the studio, and scheduling recording sessions without needing any direction from me. I couldn't and wouldn't have been able to do any of it without that help and support, or without the dedication and commitment of a community that was totally engaged from day one!

Booth: ***The soundscape is so robust, full of the joyful sounds of sport and celebration!***

Cardillo: Our philosophy of picture-book audio production is based on the premise that learning and remembering is most effective when it is a multisensory and multidimensional experience. The text says, "The ambulance roared down the street, its siren blaring." The illustration depicts the ambulance moving down the road (with movement lines in the drawing), a flashing red siren on its top. We add the sound of a vehicle engine accelerating, mix in the sound of a siren, and because the recording is in stereo, pan (move) the sound left or right depending on which direction the ambulance is facing in the art. We're also careful to place the sound effect before,

during, or after the narration (or in all three places at the same time) so that it has the greatest impact. To create these mixes, which might include 50 or more sound effects on a single page, I like to envision a stage where the sound components are set at various volume levels, and placed at various positions (that is, center, left, or right) in the stereo mix, always with the intention of hearing the narrator center stage, and the music and sound effects in the background, much like a supporting cast. Adding original music to every production helps convey the emotional content of the story, be it happy, sad, majestic, or serene. By approaching our productions in this way, we honor the total book and allow the listener to become fully immersed in the story, whether reading along with the book or only listening. For words drawn by the artist as part of the illustration, we have the narrator say these words and incorporate them into the mix so that the child will hear how they are pronounced.



Booth: ***Are there any especially memorable moments in the audio or throughout the production work that stand out to you that you'd like to share?***

Sorell: I loved the collaborative nature of this production. We needed permission from the Cherokee Nation Principal Chief and the administration of the tribe's Immersion School, which they all enthusiastically granted. Josh Mouse, who voiced the coach, secured the equipment for us to record the kids playing stickball outside at school. Parents of those students with speaking parts brought their children to the studio to record after school. It all came together beautifully.

Cardillo: There was something we did with *CCS* that was new to the process for us. Since the story takes place outdoors during a Cherokee stickball game, I asked Traci if she could arrange a stickball game on a field with students and coaches, sticks and balls, and record it. She spoke with the phys-ed teacher at the school and he was able to get equipment for Traci to record the game! It was also an opportunity to record the students and coaches outdoors, acting as fans at the game, cheering on their team in the Cherokee language!

Booth: ***Any general thoughts on your Odyssey win?***

Cardillo: I have to reiterate what Traci said: it was amazing how many people came together to produce this audiobook. From the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, all ages, teachers, musicians, as well as sound engineers who allowed us to bring stickball sticks into the studio, all the way back to New York where my longtime editor and post-production collaborator, Rory Young, and I tried to foley the sound of a ball soaring through the air as the crowd cheered in Cherokee and the music rose to a celebratory climax. It is always an honor to be recognized for your work by librarians, our main, most long-standing and loyal audience over the 29 years that we've been in business. And it's especially rewarding for a very small audio publisher whose reason for being has always been to produce the best children's audiobooks we possibly could. We are so grateful to the members of the Odyssey Committee for their dedication to the award process, to *Booklist* for sponsoring the annual Odyssey Award Ceremony, to the Audio Publisher's Association for sponsoring the celebration, and to ALSC and YALSA for seeing the value of providing young people with multiple ways of learning and enjoying a good book!

The *Booklist* Odyssey Interview

Listening Library

by Heather Booth

This year's YA winner of the Odyssey Award is a historical nonfiction graphic title, not the first genre that comes to mind when we imagine a remarkable audiobook. But *Trans History* is truly a memorable listening experience. The audio is written by Alex L. Combs and Andrew Eakett, performed by a full cast, and produced for Listening Library by Juan García Ticoulat and Iris McElroy. *Booklist*'s Audio Editor, Heather Booth, discussed this notable win with producers García Ticoulat and McElroy.

Heather Booth: What was it about this book that called to you?

Juan García Ticoulat and Iris McElroy: It's such a rich, layered text—it's educational, deeply human, and creatively structured. We immediately saw the potential to mirror the collage-like storytelling of the print in a way that could feel immersive, dynamic, and emotionally resonant. We approached the production with the idea of creating an audio documentary. There's a narrative throughline (read by author Andrew Eakett) that carries the listener chronologically through historical moments. This throughline is supported by scripted scenes, sound design, and personal testimonials, creating something truly unique that can be experienced separately or in tandem with the print book.

Booth: Can you talk about the collage of voices that you brought together to tell this story?

García Ticoulat and McElroy: Whenever possible, we cast the actual individuals in the personal testimonies and the community chapters. For the scripted scenes, we aimed to cast authentically with a focus on the cultural backgrounds, accents, and identities of the featured individuals.

Booth: Are there any especially memorable moments from creating this audio that you'd like to share?

García Ticoulat and McElroy: There were many! One of the most meaningful for both of us was the participation of trans-community icons and activists like Ms. Billie Cooper, Dee Dee Watters, Susan Stryker, Eilís Ní Fhlannagáin, and more. Another truly special moment is having Lilac Maldonado's voice in the program. Lilac sadly passed away shortly after recording and we're honored to have her included in memoriam.

We were also deeply moved by the final story, which honors the late Rose Wong, a pianist and composer, through a conversation with her loved ones. We were able to incorporate a piece of her original music into the section, adding a beautiful, personal layer.

Booth: Did any of the book's details and hidden histories surprise you or become particularly important for you to illuminate through sound?

García Ticoulat and McElroy: We were struck by seeing how trans history unfolds across time—sometimes in ways that are surprising, unexpected, or even shocking. Some anecdotes are deeply moving, others are joyful, and most reflect the often-wrought moments that have driven this community forward.

We wanted the audio to reflect the authors' incredible tonal range. Because the writing is so strong, it gave us a clear emotional road map. Our goal was to honor that by using performance, pacing, and, where appropriate, music and sound design to support and enhance those emotional shifts—whether that meant leaning into moments of humor or allowing space for more heartbreaking stories to land.

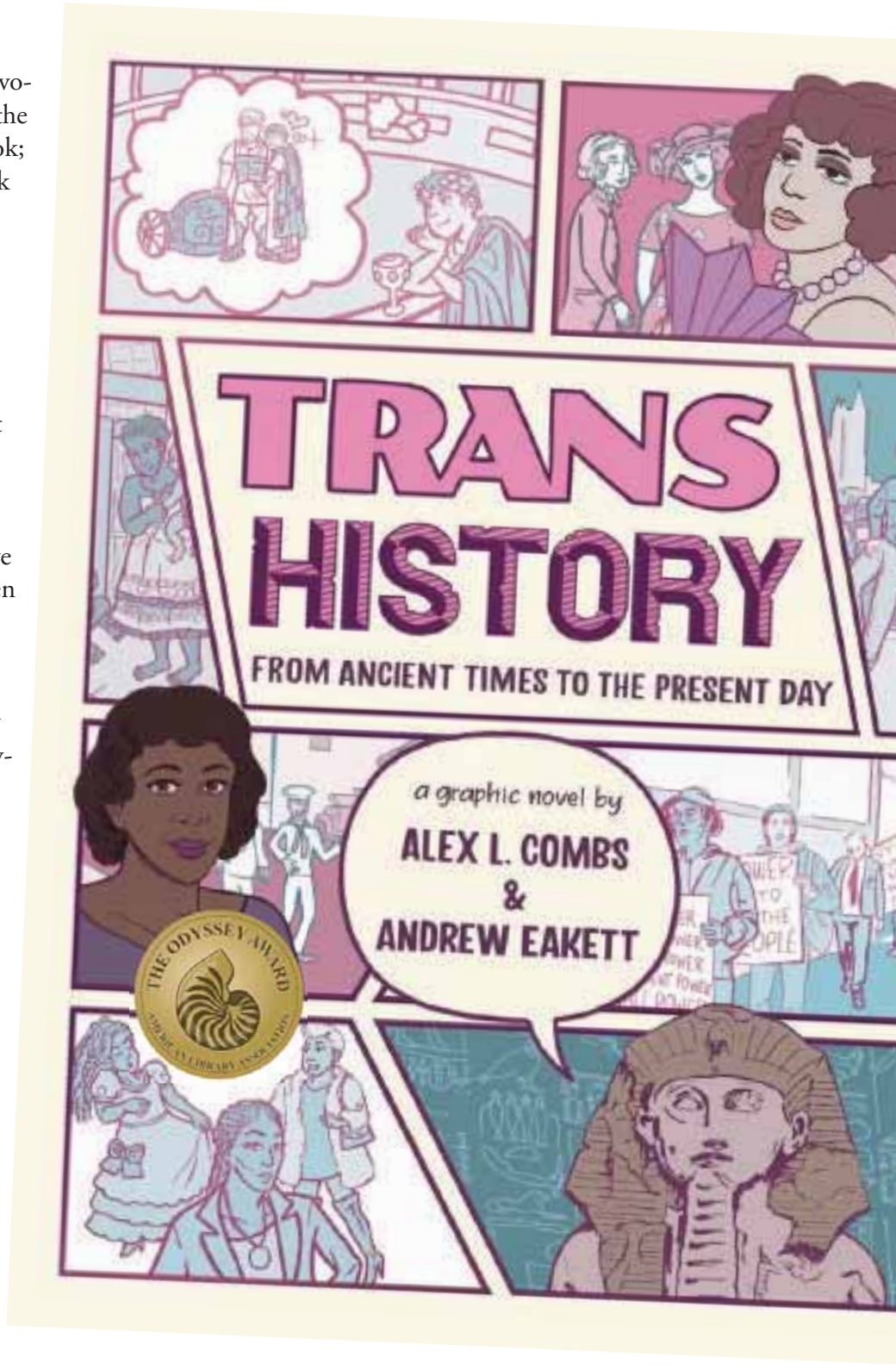
For us, so much of the emotional

core lives in the community chapter. These stories are inspiring in their passion and advocacy, and at times deeply heartbreaking in the realities they reveal. It's the heart of the book; getting to hear the personal stories will stick with us for a long time.

Booth: Who is the ideal listenership for this book?

García Ticoulat and McElroy: We truly believe this is a book for everyone. This experience enabled us to learn more about a community that we always had compassion for but now feel deeply connected to in a new way, and we hope listeners have the same experience. More importantly, we want young people who may not have been represented in historical contexts and stories in the past to see themselves reflected in the audiobook.

As the authors articulate so well, identity is not fixed or singular, it's expansive, evolving, and deeply personal. We hoped to create an immersive experience in which listeners can connect to that full spectrum—whether that means feeling seen and represented, developing empathy, or simply gaining a deeper understanding of the lives and histories being shared. Ideally, it's an experience that invites both reflection and connection.



Booth: You both come from the music production and engineering world. What draws you to work with audiobooks now?

García Ticoulat: The most rewarding part of the work for me is seeing it connect with someone or have an impact—however small.

McElroy: I've always loved reading and I feel so lucky every day that I have this opportunity. It has opened my world in a beautiful way and is a reminder of why books and stories are so important.

Booth: Any thoughts on your first Odyssey win?

García Ticoulat and McElroy: As producers, you pour so much love into a project with the hope that it will connect to someone. We're incredibly grateful and humbled that not only has this book been listened to, it has also been honored in this way. We hope that the visibility that comes with this award will help bring this fantastic book to even more listeners. Ultimately, we hope the audiobook allows people to learn something new, feel understood, and experience this powerful work in a different way. Thank you to the librarians who took the time to listen to this labor of love [for that effort] and for everything that you're doing to promote diverse voices in literature.

Listen Up

Audio on Ice

by Heather Booth

Ice is much discussed in conversations about the environment. Both icy climes and those that *should* be covered with ice but are no longer make fascinating settings for these passionately narrated audiobooks for adults and teens.

Nonfiction

Empire of Ice and Stone: The Disastrous and Heroic Voyage of the Karluk. By Buddy Levy. Read by Will Damron. 2022. Macmillan Audio.

In 1913, less than two months into an Arctic journey seeking the North Pole, the wood-hulled *Karluk* became icebound, was crushed by the powerful Arctic ice, and sank. The story of the sailing party, including an Inuit mother and her two young daughters, is one filled with heroism, tragedy, high hopes, and great disappointment. Damron's narration never lets listeners forget that the toll here was real, human, and significant. An easy pick for fans of other tales of survival or historical intrigue like Jennifer Niven's *The Ice Master* (2000) or Erik Larson's *Dead Wake* (2015).

Everest, Inc: The Renegades and Rogues Who Built an Industry at the Top of the World. By Will Cockrell. Read by Pete Simonelli. 2024. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Mount Everest has long captured the imaginations of explorers, adventurers, dreamers, and, as described here, entrepreneurs and the financially savvy. Mountaineering is full of blustery bravado and oversized personalities, and narrator Simonelli does an admirable job carrying the bold tone of these (mostly) men while retaining the glimmer of amazement and wonder they also share. His pacing nods to the thrills, visceral depictions, and cultural conflicts of mountain climbing also seen in Jon Krakauer's landmark *Into Thin Air* and climbing documentaries such as Nims Purja's story in *14 Peaks* and the heartbreaking *Finding Michael.*

Vanished Beyond the Map: The Mystery of Lost Explorer Hubert Darrell. By Adam Shoalts. Read by the author. 2025. Penguin Canada.

British Canadian Darrell was an early twentieth-century prospector who was drawn in by the allure of the Northwest Territory's frigid landscapes. Shoalts' exploration of his life and exploits includes the journalist's own journey to retrace Darrell's steps, hoping to uncover the truth of his disappearance. With a narration that is part National Geographic documentary and part wry campfire tale, he immediately brings listeners along for this look at a shockingly bold life in the Arctic.

Fiction

Maude Horton's Glorious Revenge. By Lizzie Pook. Read by Genevieve Gaunt. 2024. Simon & Schuster Audio.

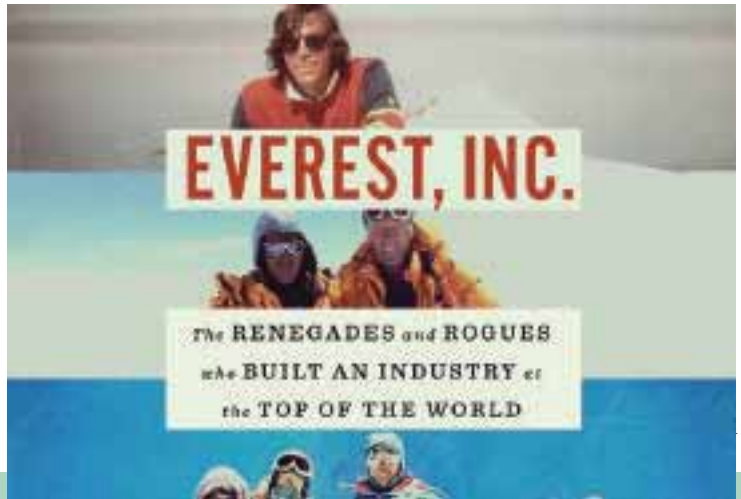
Maude was always the meeker sister, the one content to stay home and learn from her pharmacist grandfather while Constance, the adventurer, went off to join an Arctic sea exploration disguised as a cabin boy. But when Constance goes missing, Maude musters all her strength to hold to account the man responsible for extinguishing the flame that was her beloved sister. Gaunt portrays heartbroken Maude with a tremor in her voice that is slowly but surely replaced by a steely fortitude. Accents easily shift to evoke classes and roles in the various echelons of London society, and Gaunt's pacing is unfailingly insightful.

Secret Nights and Northern Lights. By Megan Oliver. Read by Brittany Pressley. 2025. Books on Tape.

Love, joy, and beauty make any contemplation about climate change all the more emotionally resonant. This contemporary romance set in Iceland among its rugged natural wonders—from steamy hot springs to spectacular glaciers—reminds readers of the personal potential in an extreme setting. Pressley's upbeat narration is a great companion as travel writer Mona's surprise reunion with her childhood first love, now a freelance photographer, leads to a slow-burn romance rich with vivid descriptions of this gorgeous, icy land.

Wild Dark Shore. By Charlotte McConaghy. Read by a full cast. 2025. Macmillan Audio.

On a remote island in the Southern Ocean, a lighthouse keeper and his three children are the only remaining residents guarding a global seed bank imperiled by the warming climate until a woman washes ashore with secrets as deep as theirs. The otherworldly setting, tense plot, and complex characters are riveting on their own, but the full-cast narration adds another layer of intrigue and connection to the characters while making it clear how isolated each is from the others.



Top 10

Environment & Sustainability Books for Youth

These 10 exceptional titles offer both straightforward climate science and awe-inspiring accounts of the wonders of our natural world.

An Immense World (Young Readers Edition): How Animals Sense Earth's Amazing Secrets. By Ed Yong and Annmarie Anderson. Illus. by Rebecca Mills. 2025. Random/Bright Matter. Gr. 5–8.

Acclaimed science writer Yong blends science with personal experiences and conversational writing in this illustrated exploration of the world of animal senses.

The Black Mambas: The World's First All-Woman Anti-Poaching Unit. By Kelly Crull. Illus. by the author. 2025. Lerner/Millbrook. Gr. 1–4.

Crull introduces readers to the first women-led anti-poaching unit in the world as they work in South Africa's Olifants West Nature Reserve to protect animals from poachers.

Change Is in the Air: The Hidden Discoveries of Eunice Newton Foote, the First Climate Scientist. By Rebecca Donnelly. Illus. by Mercè López. 2026. Holt. Gr. 1–3.

The revolutionary discoveries of nineteenth-century climate scientist Eunice Newton Foote are given their due in this wonderfully illustrated picture-book biography.

Climate Is Just the Start. By Mikaela Loach. Illus. by Lauri Johnston. 2025. Random/Bright Matter. Gr. 4–7.

In an empowering tone, Loach offers advice to young people on tackling the climate crisis while encouraging them to radically upend how they think of fighting climate change.

Dinosaurs: Exploring Prehistoric Life and Geological Time. By Rachel Ignotofsky. Illus. by the author. 2025. Ten Speed. Gr. 2–5.

Here's a dinosaur book that doubles as an amazing account of planet Earth and the vast array of life that has called it home, up to and including contemporary humans.

The Dirt! Wild Life Under the Soil's Surface. By Lindsey Leigh. Illus. by the author. 2025. Penguin Workshop. Gr. 3–8.

Though students likely take soil for granted, this standout overview full of wide-ranging information showcases how fascinating it can be.

Firefly Song: Lynn Frierson Faust and the Great Smoky Mountain Discovery. By Colleen Paeff. Illus. by Ji-Hyuk Kim. 2025. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry. K–Gr. 3.

Self-taught naturalist Lynn Frierson Faust's study of fireflies in the Great Smoky Mountains shines bright in this illuminating picture-book biography.

Twelve Daring Grays: A Whale Migration Adventure. By Nora Nickum. Illus. by Elly MacKay. 2026. Candlewick. Gr. 1–3.

In stunning collage artwork, this slim volume describes the unusual migration patterns of a group of gray whales, which brave shallow waters to snack on tasty shrimp buried in the mud flats.

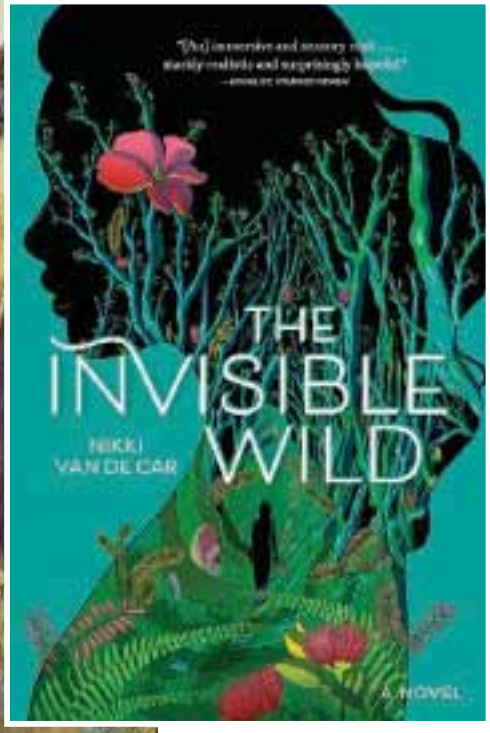
The Whale's Song: Discover the Giants of Our Oceans. By Rossana Bossù. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Margaret Greenan. 2025. Post Wave. Gr. 4–8.

This handsomely designed, graphics-rich picture book is a cetacean-centric compilation that offers solid information for researchers and fascinating illustrations that will enthrall browsers.

Whales in the City. By Nancy F. Castaldo. Illus. by Chuck Groenink. 2025. Farrar. K–Gr. 2.

This heartening environmental success story describes how activists and the Clean Water Act made rivers around New York City suitable for whales again after decades of pollution.

Art from the cover of *The Whale's Song*.



Left: Art from the cover of *Ash's Cabin.*

Recent Ecofiction for Teens

by Sarah Hunter

As climate anxiety spikes among youth, it's appearing more and more often in YA fiction—and in a dizzingly wide variety of ways. From the cathartic scares in *The Dead of Summer* to the breezily encouraging *Lying, Stealing, and Other Ways to Save the Planet* to the stirringly emotional *Ash's Cabin*, these recent novels, graphic novels, and manga touch on the myriad ways of feeling about and dealing with the realities of global climate change.

Ash's Cabin. By Jen Wang. Art by the author. 2024. 320p. First Second. Gr. 9–12.

Ash is so disgusted by the way humans are trashing the planet that they're determined to live off the grid in their late grandfather's secret cabin in the California wilderness. But while solitude has its benefits, it quickly becomes harder then they thought it would be.

The Dead of Summer. By Ryan La Sala. 2025. 400p. Scholastic/Push. Gr. 8–12.

Ollie's hoping for the best summer ever on a small island off the coast of Maine, but soon he's just hoping to survive, once apocalyptic coral starts turning the islanders into lumbering zombies. Quippy dialogue and complicated depth combine in this fresh novel that meaningfully integrates themes of belonging, grief, and even queer joy.

Down Came the Rain. By Jennifer Mathieu. 2023. 288p. Roaring Brook. Gr. 9–12.

After Hurricane Harvey, white Eliza is displaced from her Houston home and attending an unfamiliar school when she meets Mexican American Javier, whose house was spared, though he still deals with panic attacks

anytime it rains. While the two teens establish an environmental club at their school, their relationship deepens in a sweet, positive way.

Eden of Witches, v.1. By Yumeji. Art by the author. Tr. by Jessie Aufiery. 2024. 184p. Abrams/Kana. Gr. 9–12.

Humanity has been abandoned by nature in Yumeji's lushly drawn, postapocalyptic world, but witches maintain the power to communicate with plants and animals. An apprentice witch, Pili, embarks on a quest through the human world, where her connection to nature puts her in peril.

Fable for the End of the World. By Ava Reid. 2025. 384p. Harper. Gr. 8–12.

Inesa must survive the Lamb's Gauntlet, a livestreamed deadly pursuit by skilled assassins, and Melinoë must prove her worth as a killer in this politically charged and surprisingly romantic sf dystopia set in a world ravaged by realistically described climate change.

Few Blue Skies. By Carolina Ixta. 2026. 384p. HarperCollins/Quill Tree. Gr. 7–12.

Paloma idolizes her heroic dad, who leads a union strike against his employer, a company that has been exploiting the environment so negligently that people have been killed. As she seeks out a future in environmental activism, she is confronted with difficult, complex questions about the scales of social justice and her deep-rooted principles.

The Invisible Wild. By Nikki Van De Car. 2025. 256p. Running Press Teens. Gr. 9–12.

Emma finds a very real legendary society of menehune and agrees to help protect them from the resort development threatening their home in this starkly realistic and surprisingly hopeful tale of environmental justice in Hawai'i.

Lying, Stealing, and Other Ways to Save the Planet. By Curtis Campbell. 2026. 208p. Annick. Gr. 9–12.

When gay high-school journalist John O'Neil is humiliated by a country club heir into abandoning the biggest story of his career, he embarks on a fast-paced, high-stakes exploit to stop the club's planned expansion into the neighboring bird sanctuary, and high jinks ensue.

Onward: 16 Climate Fiction Short Stories to Inspire Hope. Ed. by Nora Shalaway Carpenter. 2026. 352p. Charlesbridge Teen. Gr. 9–12.

With a mostly positive throughline, back matter listing further resources, and an overarching theme of hope, this compilation of 16 short stories, essays, and poems is designed to help young people work through feelings and fears associated with climate change.

Salvage. By Renée Nault. Art by the author. 2026. 256p. Ten Speed. Gr. 10–12.

In this stunning graphic novel of a future in which the world we recognize is largely underwater, the privileged live in dry high-rises while everyone else survives off salvaged pieces of the old world. As a romance blooms against this backdrop, class discrepancies loom large, especially in how differently people experience the effects of climate change.

That Which Feeds Us. By Keala Kendall. 2026. 352p. Random. Gr. 8–12.

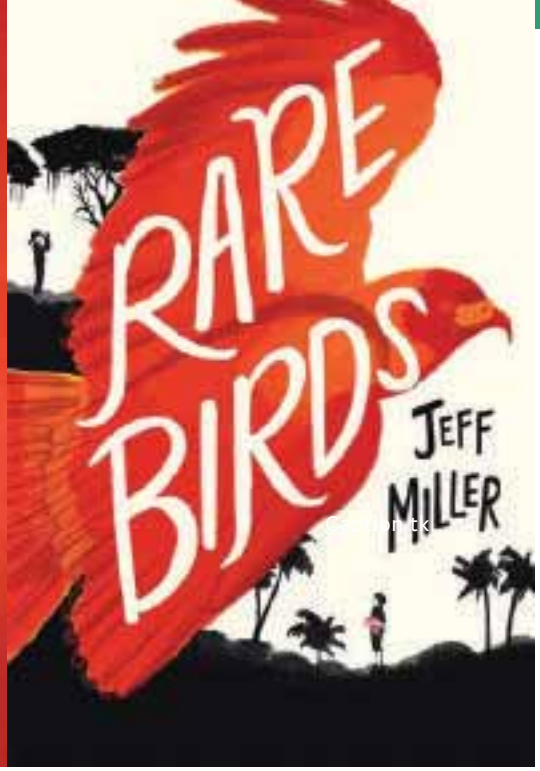
Indigenous Hawaiian Lehua travels to the Kōpa'a Island Resort, Farm, and Orchard following a series of strange calls from her twin sister in a creative horror mystery exploring how exploitative colonialism destroys not only people but entire environments.

This Is the Year. By Gloria Muñoz. 2025. 304p. Holiday. Gr. 9–12.

As Juli contemplates leaving Earth for good to live on a sanctuary on the Moon, she movingly grapples with the dichotomy of grief and hope in this robust debut exploring what it means to be a human and survive in the face of climate crisis.

We Don't Have Time for This. By Brianna Craft. 2024. 272p. Disney/Hyperion. Gr. 9–12.

Isa hopes her school's environmental club will take strong action against local polluters, but she butts heads with her co-president, who advocates for a much more passive path. They'll have to work together, though, when a proposed natural-gas pipeline threatens to further worsen the town's climate and the health of their neighbors.



Birding Books for Everyone

by Julia Smith

Birding went mainstream during the COVID-19 lockdown and has continued to gain popularity among people of all feathers. Likewise, this pastime has made its way into a delightful array of books, both fiction and nonfiction, for readers of all ages.

Art from the cover of *Birds*.

Older

Bianca Torre Is Afraid of Everything. By Justine Pucella Winans. 2023. Clarion. Gr. 9–12.

Rear Window gets a modern makeover when a teenage shut-in witnesses a murder while peering through their birding binoculars.

Birding Is My Favorite Video Game: Cartoons About the Natural World from Bird and Moon. By Rosemary Mosco. Art by the author. 2018. Andrews McMeel.

Birds feature prominently in this selection of amusing, science-based cartoons drawn from Mosco's webcomic. Though published for adults, it holds ample appeal for younger readers.

The Confusion of Laurel Graham. By Adrienne Kisner. 2019. 288p. Feiwel and Friends. Gr. 9–12.

Laurel, a dedicated birder, teams up with rival Risa (who's starting to look really cute) to stop a construction project slated for land that's a sanctuary for wildlife.

The Feminist Bird Club's Birding for a Better World: A Guide to Finding Joy and Community in Nature. By Sydney Anderson and Molly Adams. 2023. Princeton Architectural.

With inclusivity and social justice at its core, this guide from the Feminist Bird Club walks readers through birding basics, offering important context and ethical insights along the way. An adult title, but perfect for teens.

Flight Season. By Marie Marquardt. 2018. 352p. St. Martin's/Wednesday. Gr. 9–12.

In this poignant story of two college students, Vivi's birding journal organically illustrates how no one is free to fly until they are at peace with themselves.

Middle

Across the Pond. By Joy McCullough. 2021. Atheneum. Gr. 4–7.

After her family's recent move to Scotland, Callie finds friends at a local bird-watching club and discovers a fascinating old journal.

Bird Nerd. By Jennifer Ann Richter. 2024. Holiday. Gr. 3–6.

As Nyla's Philadelphia school holds a birding tournament, she works to lead the majority-Black City Birders to victory against the majority-white Burb Birders.

Birds. By Mike Unwin. Illus. by Pau Morgan. 2019. QEB. Gr. 1–4.

Packed with bird facts, lore, activities, and crafts, this all-encompassing avian guide will stoke elementary-aged kids' enthusiasm and birding know-how.

Fly: A Family Guide to Birds and How to Spot Them. By David Lindo. Illus. by Sara Boccaccini Meadows. 2024. Abrams/Magic Cat. Gr. 2–5.

An astonishing 100-plus species are packed into this elegant offering, which discusses birds' physical characteristics and behavior, bird-watching tips, and notes on conservation.

Home Away from Home. By Cynthia Lord. 2023. Scholastic. Gr. 4–7.

A summer trip to her grandmother's takes a turn when Mia accidentally puts a raptor at risk after posting about the bird online, drawing a crowd of photographers.

Look Up! Bird-Watching in Your Own Backyard. By Annette LeBlanc Cate. Illus. by the author. 2013. Candlewick. Gr. 3–5.

Engagingly written and brightly illustrated, Cate's introduction to backyard birding is a great starting place for youngsters looking to build their avian awareness and identification skills.

Omnibird: An Avian Investigator's Handbook. By Giselle Clarkson. Illus. by the author. 2025. Lerner/Gecko. Gr. 3–6.

Taking a quirky, humorous approach to her topic, Clarkson celebrates the ubiquitous bird, providing detailed hints for viewing birds and insights into their anatomy, songs, and behaviors.

Rare Birds. By Jeff Miller. 2023. 288p. Union Square Kids. Gr. 4–7.

Graham and his friend enter a local birding contest on behalf of Graham's sickly mother, who always wanted to see the competition's target: the endangered snail kite.

The Secret Language of Birds. By Lynne Kelly. 2024. Delacorte. Gr. 4–7.

At a summer camp run by her aunt, 13-year-old Nina draws her new friends into her passion for birding after catching sight of an endangered whooping crane at a nearby marsh.

Young

Honeybird Blue. By Taunya English. Illus. by Raissa Figueroa. 2026. Harper. PreS–Gr. 2.

A father and daughter set out for a bird sanctuary before dawn, eager to see all the birds they can, but the girl has her hopes pinned on finding a great blue heron.

How to Bird. By Rasha Hamid. 2023. Free Spirit. PreS–Gr. 3.

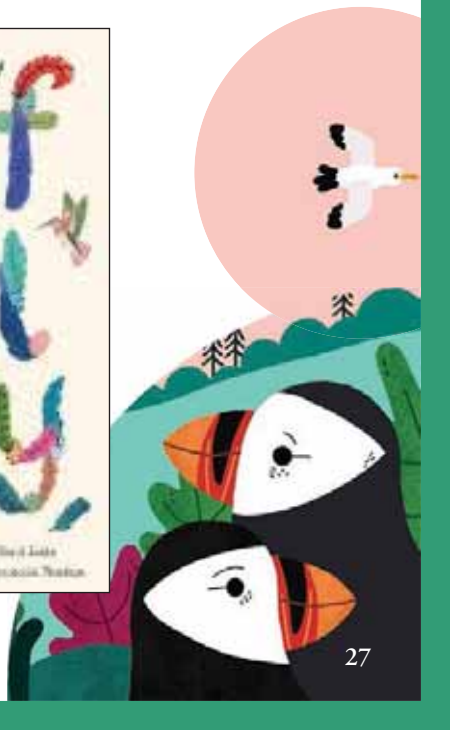
Photographs of ethnically and physically diverse children alongside simple sentences and helpful labels make this picture-book introduction to birding a wonderful choice for beginning readers.

How to Find a Bird. By Jennifer Ward. Illus. by Diana Sudyka. 2020. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane. K–Gr. 2.

This poetic and marvelously illustrated guide to finding feathered friends in the wild encourages budding ornithologists to look high *and* low as well as to listen when engaged in this pursuit.

Otto Blotter, Bird Spotter. By Graham Carter. Illus. by the author. 2019. Andersen. PreS–Gr. 1.

Despite coming from a family of birders, Otto finds life behind binoculars boring. When he comes across an unusual baby bird, however, he needs help to reunite the bird with its family.



Bookworms

by Kit Ballenger

No need to be an early bird to dig up a satisfying story about one of nature's squirmiest and humblest keystone species. With options deftly blending ecosystem information with giggle-worthy tidbits, these picture books and early-reader worm books will wriggle their way right into readers' hearts.

Art from the cover of *The Worm.*

Carl and the Meaning of Life. By Deborah Freedman. 2019. Viking. PreS–Gr. 2.

The simple question, "Why?" posed by a field mouse, stops earthworm Carl in his tunneling tracks and prompts a philosophical adventure through his evolving world that reiterates the power of every small player contributing their part.

Darwin's Super-Pooping Worm Spectacular. By Polly Owen. Illus. by Gwen Millward. 2023. Wide Eyed. Gr. 1–3.

Charles Darwin experimented extensively with worms before discovering their critical impact on soil nutrition; both his research and his results are explained well here with humor, scientific accuracy, and copious poop references.

How to Say Hello to a Worm: A First Guide to Outside. By Kari Percival. 2022. Penguin Workshop/RISE. PreS–K.

Child-centered woodcut illustrations and spare text in a Q&A format introduce younger readers to gardening while inviting them to appreciate nature and approach it with openness. Also available in Spanish.

I Can Only Draw Worms. By Will Mabbitt. 2019. Penguin Workshop. PreS–Gr. 2.

When a self-deprecating author-illustrator reveals his lack of artistic ability, the result is an eye-catching neon counting book that earns serious laughs with its sly humor and subtle illustrative details.

The Worm. By Elise Gravel. 2016. Tundra. Gr. 1–3.

With amusing illustrations and a highly engaging narrative voice, this gem leans into its subtitle (Disgusting Critters) and goes beyond earthworms to also offer information on grosser worm varieties like tapeworms and parasites.

The Worm Family Has Its Picture Taken. By Jennifer Frank. Illus. by David Ezra Stein. 2021. Random. PreS–Gr. 2.

Emma, a worm, is struck with insecurity when she worries her family portrait won't be fancy. After Emma's dalliance with dress-up, the Worm family finds a way to capture their true selves in a sweet you-do-you story with a nostalgic feel.

This is a Book to Read with a Worm. By Jodi Wheeler-Toppen. Illus. by Margaret McCartney. 2020. Charlesbridge. Gr. 1–3.

A worm guides readers through a series of simple experiments that encourage gentle observations of a live specimen, while engaging, detailed illustrations stoke curiosity and allow for learning in the absence of an actual worm.

We Dig Worms. By Kevin McCloskey. 2015. TOON. K–Gr. 3.

Fact-filled and presented in an inviting graphic format, this informational introduction to worms includes the topic of vermicomposting and features artwork created on recycled brown paper bags.

Worm and Caterpillar Are Friends. By Kaz Windness. 2023. Simon Spotlight. PreS–Gr. 2.

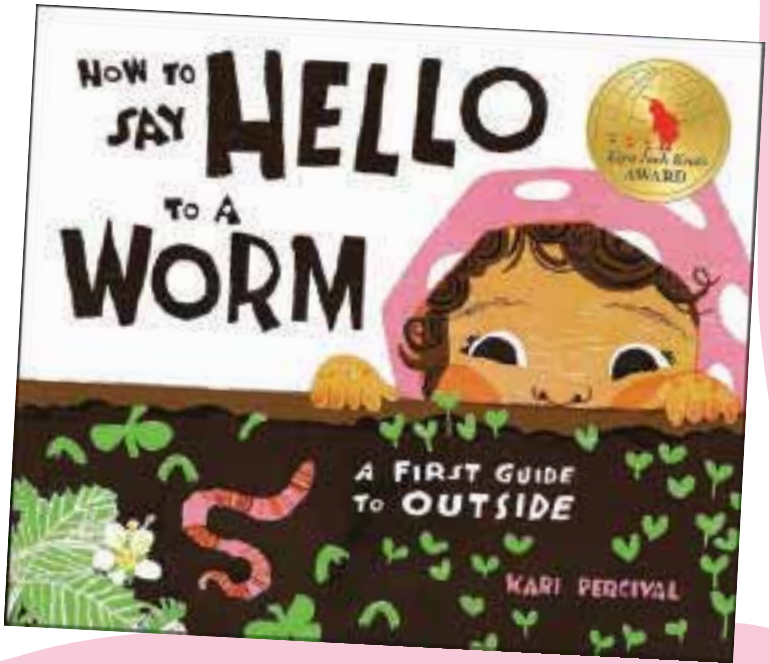
Besties Worm and Caterpillar have a lot in common, but when Caterpillar goes through some big life changes, their friendship stays true. This charming, Geisel Honor–winning series starter has decodable text that extends its appeal to emerging readers.

Worm Loves Worm. By J.J. Austrian. Illus. by Mike Curato. 2016. HarperCollins. PreS–Gr. 1.

After being bombarded by their friends' wedding-planning suggestions, two worms buck the system and marry in their own way, despite how things have always been done.

Worm Makes a Sandwich. By Brianne Farley. 2025. Putnam. K–Gr. 3.

It might take a little while, but Worm shows readers how, through composting, a few pieces of garbage can nurture a garden full of vegetables perfect for sandwiches in this sweetly humorous, sequential STEM story.



High-Demand Read-alikes

Princess in Black

by Sarah Hunter

The fan-favorite Princess in Black (PIB) returns this month in her twelfth book, *The Princess in Black and the Trick-or-Treating Trouble*. This time, Princess Magnolia joins a troupe of other Princesses in Black for some casual trick-or-treating on Halloween, but when she encounters a monster, she can't quite tell if it's a costume. Kids who love the series' plucky protagonists in fantasy settings and are looking for more will find similar flavors in the following titles.

Catalina Incognito. By Jennifer Torres. Illus. by Gladys Jose. 2022. 128p. Aladdin. Gr. 1–4.

As a gift from her great-aunt, a telenovela star, eight-year-old Catalina Castañeda gets a magical sewing kit, which lets her make magical disguises that help her investigate a mystery and catch a rhinestone thief.

Hilda & Twig Hide from the Rain. By Luke Pearson. Art by the author. 2024. 56p. Flying Eye. Gr. 1–4.

Pearson launched the Hildafolk series over a decade ago, and this new early-reader comics series stars the fearless adventurer when she's much younger. Larger panels and fonts make this series a strong choice for PIB fans, especially those who love LeUyen Pham's expressive artwork.

The Fairy Tale Fixers: Cinderella. By Deborah Underwood. Art by Jorge Lacera. 2025. 128p. Clarion. Gr. 1–5.

While Underwood and Lacera's series opener has a wryer tone and slightly higher reading level than PIB, the playful take on fairy-tale characters and settings in this slim graphic novel should strike a similar chord, especially for kids who appreciate the Hales' moments of over-the-top humor.

Kitty and the Moonlight Rescue. By Paula Harrison. Illus. by Jenny Løvlie. 2019. 128p. Greenwillow. Gr. 2–4.

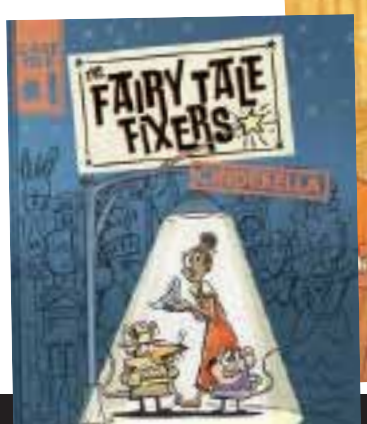
A girl named Kitty dons a cat costume at night and, using secret superpowers, faces her fears and helps solve crimes in this cheery opening volume in a chapter-book series that will appeal to PIB fans who particularly like secret-identity plotlines.

Princess Pulverizer: Grilled Cheese and Dragons. By Nancy Krulik. Illus. by Ben Balistreri. 2018. 144p. Penguin Workshop. Gr. 2–4.

Written at a slightly higher reading level, the Princess Pulverizer series, starting with this title, has a similar combination of adventure-seeking girl warrior, monster battles, and fantasy quests, but instead of Magnolia's predominantly sweet disposition, Princess Pulverizer is a protagonist with attitude.

Zoey & Sassafras: Dragons and Marshmallows. By Asia Citro. Illus. by Marion Lindsay. 2017. 96p. Innovation. Gr. 1–3.

Zoey and her scientist mom can see magical creatures that are invisible to everyone else in this STEM-oriented 10-book series. Like PIB, Zoey routinely saves the day, but in each installment, she uses scientific thinking and research to solve such problems as sick dragons, an unexpected snowstorm, and gnomes with bad allergies.



Art from the cover of *Princess Pulverizer*.

Top 10

Early Reading

There's an art to creating books designed to help kids read independently. The following beginning readers and early chapter books succeed as both fantastic literacy supports and entertaining reads.

Bunny Hop. By Sarah Hwang. Illus. by the author. 2024. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight. PreS–Gr. 1.

A mischievous pink rabbit hops into a kitchen on a quest for a delicious meal in this adorable beginning reader. The sweet artwork helps young children understand the story's rich adjectives and expressive verbs, making it an effective tool for language learning.

Duckie & Snaps: We Cannot Be Friends. By Ame Dyckman. Illus. by Tim Miller. 2025. Scholastic/Orchard. PreS–Gr. 1.

Though technically a picture book, this hilarious tale of a duckling and alligator hatchling wields comics conventions, simple line drawings, and limited text, making it perfect for beginning readers.

Fairy Door Diaries: Eliza and the Flower Fairies. By Megan McDonald. Illus. by Lenny Wen. 2025. Candlewick. Gr. 1–4.

Eliza must help save the flower fairies from a curse in this magical early chapter book featuring abundant imagination and enchanting color illustrations.

Harriet Hound. By Kate Foster. Illus. by Sophie Beer. 2024. Candlewick. Gr. 1–4.

This early chapter-book series starter stars eight-year-old Harriet, an autistic super sleuth who solves mysteries around town with the help of local shelter dogs.

Higgledy Piggledy and the Pot of Gold. By David J. Tomlinson. Illus. by Janna Mattia. 2025. Loyola/4U2B. Gr. 1–4.

Higgledy Piggledy the pig and his two friends take on the greedy mayor in this irresistible chapter book that boasts vibrant illustrations, lovable main characters, and worthwhile lessons.

Millie Magnus Won't Be Bullied. By Brittany Mazique. Illus. by Ebony Glenn. 2024. Putnam. Gr. 1–3.

This new early chapter-book series introduces spirited third-grader Millie Magnus (and her pet chick, Extra Spicy) as she encounters a school bully and displays strong emotional literacy.

Mouse and Spoon: The Elephant's Birthday. By Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by Janna Mattia. 2025. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight. PreS–Gr. 2.

Rylant's gift for writing beginning-reader books is evident in this pleasingly illustrated tale about three mice who run a bakery.

Murray the Viking. By Adam Stower. Illus. by the author. 2025. Random. Gr. 1–4.

A magical cat flap and an enchanted sticky bun (now an actual bunny) disrupt Murray the cat's peaceful world as he and Bun are transported to the time of Vikings. Despite the book's higher page count, the illustration-packed pages fly.

Rafi and Rosi Menu! By Lulu Delacre. Illus. by the author. 2025. Lee & Low/Children's Book. Gr. 1–3.

This installment in the Rafi and Rosi early-reader series celebrates culinary traditions of Puerto Rico as the tree-frog siblings help their abuela in the kitchen. Soft artwork and Spanish phrases further enrich the narrative.

Train Day! By Elspeth Rae and Rowena Rae. Illus. by Elisa Gutiérrez. 2025. Orca. Gr. 1–4.

Part of a thoughtfully designed phonics-based storybook series, this chapter book contains five illustrated stories, each focused on a specific long-vowel sound.

Art from the cover of *Bunny Hop.*

Top 10

Early Reader Comics

Newly independent comics readers are sure to be delighted by the wide range of these playful and creative offerings.

Cabin Head and Tree Head. By Scott Campbell. Art by the author. 2025. Tundra. K–Gr. 3.

Jam-packed with the freewheeling creativity of kids' imaginative play, these uproarious stories follow two buddies, one with a cabin for a head and the other with a tree for a head.

The Faraway Forest: Wally's Route. By Debbie Fong. Art by Debbie Fong and Kayla Catanzaro. 2025. Chronicle. K–Gr. 2.

In this whimsical woodland charmer, Wally the raccoon cheerfully delivers more than just mail in four short comics chapters perfect for emerging readers.

Hide & Seek with Clyde and Monique: Clyde in Plain Sight. By Graham Annable. Art by the author. 2025. HarperAlley. Gr. 1–3.

In this gratifying pick, readers will enjoy their own epic game of hide-and-seek as they try to spot Clyde in his many ingenious and physics-defying hiding places.

Kat and Mouse: I Like Cheese! By Salina Yoon. Art by the author. 2025. Bloomsbury. PreS–Gr. 2.

With bold, large-format panels, this amiable story of two friends disagreeing about what makes the best lunch is a good choice for kids transitioning from picture books to comics.

Little Mouse Saves the Day! By Jeff Smith. Art by Jeff Smith and Tom Gaadt. 2025. TOON. PreS–Gr. 1.

Little Mouse got dressed in Smith's first early-reader comic (*Little Mouse Gets Ready,* 2009), and this time the adorable rodent is getting ready for bed when he spots something eerie in his closet.

Pickle on Wheels. By Sylvie Kantorovitz. Art by the author. 2025. Holiday. K–Gr. 2.

When Pickle underestimates how tricky roller skating can be, his friend generously helps him practice—a kindness Pickle pays forward when he meets another shaky skater.

Snap! Crunch! Munch? By Diana Castillo. Art by the author. 2025. Holiday. PreS–Gr. 1.

A kid imagines his family members as different animals depending on their food preferences in this boldly illustrated, entertaining comic, perfect for newly independent readers. Simultaneously published in Spanish.

Tate Tuber, Space Spud. By Michael Slack. Art by the author. 2025. Holiday. K–Gr. 3.

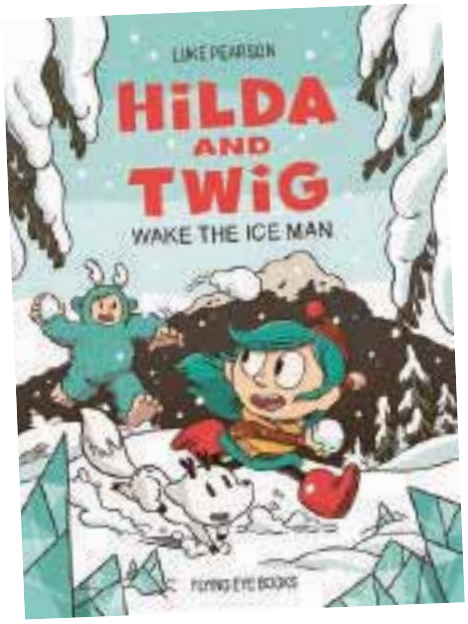
In this rollicking, joke-filled comic with playful, energetic artwork and an entertaining premise, a potato on a space mission saves the day—just not quite how he expected to.

Wake the Ice Man. By Luke Pearson. Art by the author. 2025. Flying Eye. K–Gr. 3.

This second volume in Pearson's charming prequel series finds Hilda wishing for a snowy day, while her beloved deerfox, Twig, embarks on a thrilling adventure with a fantastical being to grant Hilda her wish.

Worm and Butterfly Are Friends Always. By Kaz Windness. Art by the author. 2026. Simon & Schuster/Simon Spotlight. Gr. 1–3.

Worm is sad that Butterfly is about to head south to Mexico, but an unexpected new friend helps the winter pass by cozily until it's warm enough for Butterfly to return.



Art from the cover of *Cabin Head and Tree Head.*

Reserve These Reads

Children & Teens

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Older

Evamar. By Margarita Engle. 272p. Atheneum. Gr. 7–12.

Engle proves once again her mastery of the verse novel, with stunning cultural details and sensory verse imagery in this ancestral story of grief and growth as Evamar travels to Cuba per her late grandmother's wishes.

Heartstopper, v. 6. By Alice Oseman. Art by the author. 448p. Scholastic/Graphix. Gr. 9–12.

Oseman returns to the world of Nick, Charlie, and friends to conclude their stories as Charlie bids to become head boy and Nick prepares for college.

Middle

Fatal Glitch: Camp Zero. By Erin Entrada Kelly and Eliot Schrefer. Illus. by Jeannette Arroyo. 144p. Sourcebooks/Stonefruit Studio. Gr. 4–7.

Award-winning authors Entrada Kelly and Schrefer team up for an unnerving middle-grade tale following deplorable Sofia and her antics at camp Forestjaw.

Wolf's Belly. By John August. Art by Simón Estrada. 320p. Roaring Brook. Gr. 4–8.

In this accomplished graphic novel by screenwriter August and seasoned animator Estrada, a girl in a red cape ends up in a wolf's belly, and while she's trapped inside, finds a village populated by other characters who have stories to tell.

Yarn Is Everything! By Aaron Reynolds. Illus. by Peter Brown. 104p. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 1–4.

Jasper Rabbit has arrived and is ready to share the terrors of Winona Mole's experiences with yarn in this third creepy, goofy spin-off of Reynolds and Brown's Creepy picture-book series.

Young

A Day Off School. By Oliver Jeffers. Illus. By Kevin Waldron. 40p. Philomel. PreS–Gr. 3.

A boy gets to stay home from school thanks to some sniffles, but he starts to wonder what he might be missing in another quirky tale from picture-book hotshot Jeffers and Irish illustrator Waldron.

The Haunted Playground. By R. J. Palacio. Illus. by Brett Helquist. 50p. Random. PreS–Gr. 3.

Palacio's whimsical rhymes amplify the gleefully ghastly tone of this tale about Halloween night, when, while children lie fast asleep, Ghost King Rex Magnificus and his gathering of specters swoop about a secret world.

The House with Nobody in It. By Jon Klassen. Illus. by the author. 18p. Candlewick. PreS.

Klassen's signature wit and simplistic yet evocative design are once again on display as readers venture through a house with furniture here and there, though no one lives inside (or do they?).

The Princess in Black and the Trick-or-Treating Trouble. By Shannon Hale and Dean Hale. Illus. by LeUyen Pham. 96p. Candlewick. K–Gr. 3.

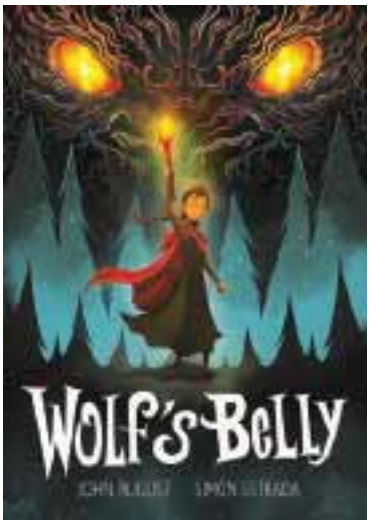
The highly popular Princess in Black series from the Hale and Pham team returns with a new installment focused on Halloween antics and a little monster taking advantage of the costumed evening.

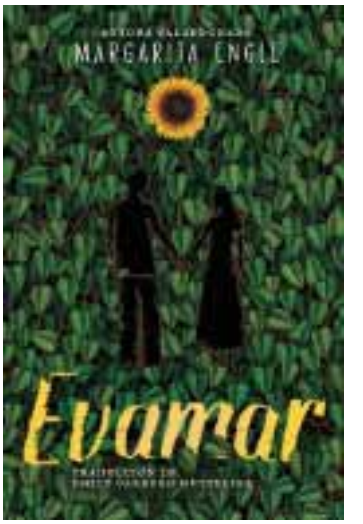
Story Rug. By Sophie Blackall. Illus. by Phoebe Wahl. 40p. Little, Brown. K–Gr. 3.

This cozy classroom tale traces how a small spark of interest can gather momentum and meaning through shared making with a charming interweaving of craft, cooperation, and the celebration of stories.

Today Is the Day. By Chelsea Lin Wallace. Illus. by Adam Rex. 44p. Chronicle. K–Gr. 2.

This exploration of all the wonderful things a day can hold could help someone remember that better days may come, inspire a new graduate to consider upcoming possibilities, or remind children to pause and ponder the excitement that each new day can promise.





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Kenny Porter (W), Mike Becker (A), Kevin Betou (C), Buddy Beaudoin (L)

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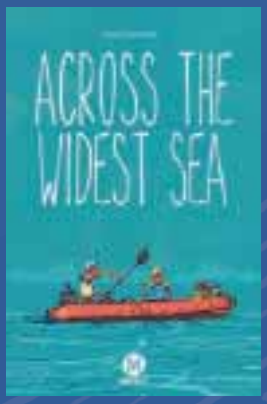

ACROSS THE WIDEST SEA

Jean Cremers (W/A), Taylor Esposito (L), Joe Johnson (Tr.)

A story about how entering adulthood can feel like being lost at sea, and the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Abandoned in the middle of the ocean by her parents to learn to fend for herself, Léonie must find dry land. She meets Balthazar, a teenager whose canoe is taking on water, and Agathe, who lets herself be carried by the current and no longer has any hope of landing. They join forces to find a shore.

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Pen So (W/A), Book Buddy Media (L)

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