

Excel Academy Charter School
Rising 6th Grade Recommended Reading List¹

Reading Level Guide: * Q-R and S-T ** U-W *** X, Y, Z
- denotes “hot,” popular titles

Nonfiction, including Autobiography & Biography:

My Life in Dog Years by Gary Paulsen * Gary Paulsen has owned dozens of unforgettable and amazing dogs, and here are his favorites—one to a chapter. Among them are Snowball, the puppy he owned as a boy in the Philippines; Ike, his mysterious hunting companion; Electric Fred and his best friend, Pig; Dirk, the grim protector; and Josh, one of the remarkable border collies working on Paulsen's ranch today. *My Life in Dog Years* is a book for every dog lover and every Paulsen fan.

George Washington, Spymaster: How the Americans Outspied the British and Won the Revolutionary War by Thomas Allen ** Presents the untold story of the invisible war behind the American Revolution. A riveting tale of intrigue, spies, counterspies and secret agents, *George Washington, Spymaster* is a unique and entertaining account of one of the most important chapters in our nation's history. The compelling narrative reveals the surprising role played by the first commander-in-chief, General George Washington, in the War of Independence.

Harriet Tubman, Secret Agent: How Daring Slaves and Free Blacks Spied for the Union during the Civil War by Thomas Allen ** It's 1863. Harriet Tubman is facing one of the biggest—and most dangerous—challenges of her life. She has survived her master's lash, escaped from slavery, and risked her life countless times to lead runaway slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad. Now she has a new role—that of Union spy! The outcome of a secret night raid deep into Confederate territory depends on the accuracy of the intelligence she and other black spies have gathered. Success will mean freedom for hundreds of slaves. Failure will mean death by hanging. You are about to enter the undercover world of African-American spies—enslaved and free—risking everything in the name of freedom.

My Life with Chimpanzees by Jane Goodall ** So enthusiastically does Goodall relate the first 28 years of her life in the jungles of Tanzania that her odyssey appears to have just begun. . . . Stories of the chimps dominate the book; they threaten to steal the show in many instances; readers will love meeting these personable animals.

Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes by Juan Felipe Herrera ** This visually stunning book showcases twenty Hispanic and Latino American men and women who have made outstanding contributions to the arts, politics, science, humanitarianism, and athletics. Gorgeous portraits complement sparkling biographies of Cesar Chavez, Sonia Sotomayor, Ellen Ochoa, Roberto Clemente, and many more. A magnificent homage to those who have shaped our nation.

¹ All book descriptions were adapted from www.amazon.com.

Blizzard!: The Storm that Changed America by Jim Murphy ** *Snow began falling over New York City on March 12, 1888. All around town, people struggled along slippery streets and sidewalks -- some seeking the warmth of their homes, some to get to work or to care for the less fortunate, and some to experience what they assumed would be the last little snowfall of one of the warmest winters on record. What no one realized was that in a very few hours, the wind and snow would bury the city in nearly 21 inches of snow and bring it to a ferocious standstill.*

Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of the Shackleton Expedition by Jennifer Armstrong *** *In August 1914, Ernest Shackleton and 27 men sailed from England in an attempt to become the first team of explorers to cross Antarctica from one side to the other. Five months later and still 100 miles from land, their ship, Endurance, became trapped in ice. Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World vividly re-creates one of the most extraordinary adventure stories in history.*

Escape! The Story of the Great Houdini by Sid Fleischman *** *Fleischman looks at Houdini's life through his own eyes as a fellow magician. Guarding the secrets, yet entertaining readers, he tells the rags-to-rags story of a poor Jewish boy named Ehrich Weiss, who longed to be like his idol, French magician Robert-Houdin. Not satisfied to perform the usual magicians' fare, he began perfecting tricks involving illusion, particularly escaping from restraints such as trunks, handcuffs, and straightjackets.*

Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott by Russell Freedman *** *On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus and give up her seat to a white man. This refusal to give up her dignity sparked the Montgomery bus boycott, a yearlong struggle, and a major victory in the civil rights movement.*

→ **The Great Molasses Flood, Boston 1919 by Deborah Kops ***** *A strange and sticky piece of history. January 15, 1919, started off as a normal day in Boston's North End. Workers took a break for lunch, children played in the park, trains made trips between North and South Stations. Then all of a sudden a large tank of molasses exploded, sending shards of metal hundreds of feet away, collapsing buildings, and coating the harborfront community with a thick layer of sticky-sweet sludge. What happened? Why did the tank explode? Many people died or were injured in the accident—who was to blame?*

Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World by Sy Montgomery *** *- Montgomery's book not only tells the powerful story of one amazing woman's life journey, but also helps readers understand autistic people.*

An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Plague Epidemic of 1793 by Jim Murphy *** *1793, Philadelphia. The nation's capital and the largest city in North America is devastated by an apparently incurable disease, cause unknown. In a powerful, dramatic narrative, critically acclaimed author Jim Murphy describes the illness known as yellow fever and the toll it took on the city's residents, relating the epidemic to the major social and political events of the day and to 18th-century medical beliefs and practices. Drawing on first-hand accounts, Murphy spotlights the heroic role of Philadelphia's free blacks in combating the disease, and the Constitutional crisis that President Washington faced when he was forced to leave the city--and all his papers--while escaping the deadly contagion. The search for the fever's causes and cure, not found for more than a century afterward, provides a suspenseful counterpoint to this riveting true story of a city under siege. (For a fictional account of these same events read: Fever 1793 by Laurie Halse Anderson.)*

Amistad: A Long Road to Freedom by Walter Dean Myers *** *In 1839, there was a rebellion on the slave ship Amistad. In a bloody struggle, the African captives aboard rebelled against their kidnappers and declared mutiny. While trying to sail the ship home, the Africans accidentally ended up in New York. They were later imprisoned and put on trial for murder. Award-winning author Walter Dean Myers's probing look at this triumph over indignity and injustice shows the events' effect on the country America has become.*

Bad Boy by Walter Dean Myers *** *As a boy, Walter Dean Myers was quick-tempered and physically strong, always ready for a fight. He also read voraciously-he would check out books from the library and carry them home, hidden in brown paper bags in order to avoid other boys' teasing. He aspired to be a writer. But growing up in a poor family in Harlem, his hope for a successful future diminished as he came to realize fully the class and racial struggles that surrounded him. He began to doubt himself and the values that he had always relied on, attending high school less and less, turning to the streets and his books for comfort. In a memoir that is gripping, funny, and ultimately unforgettable, Walter Dean Myers travels back to his roots in the magical world of Harlem during the 1940s and 1950s. Here is the story of one of the strongest voices in young people's literature today.*

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary by Walter Dean Myers *** *Profiles the late African American leader, providing a startling picture of the life of the controversial and important historical figure. Malcolm X's pivotal impact on the civil rights movement of the '60s was the result of his distinctive, dramatic approach.*

Witnesses to Freedom: Young People Who Fought for Civil Rights by Belinda Rochelle *** *While adult leaders' contributions to the civil rights movement have been well chronicled, those made by young people have not received as much attention. Rochelle relates the pivotal roles played by young African Americans in nine major events, including the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the lunch-counter sit-ins at Woolworth in North Carolina. A chapter is devoted to each event. The author describes the circumstances surrounding each occurrence and highlights the experiences and feelings of those involved. Ranging in age from eight to their upper teens, the subjects poignantly describe how their commitment to their cause propelled them to take a stand for freedom, often at great personal risk. Some of the individuals portrayed may not be well known, but their stories are inspiring and touching.*

Brown v. Board of Education, A Fight for Simple Justice by Susan Goldman Rubin *** *This behind-the-scenes story of the people and events leading to the landmark Brown v. Board of Education's Supreme Court decision shows that even if the justice sought may be simple, getting it is long and complicated. A rich, compelling story of the many people who stood up to racial inequality, risking significant danger and hardship for the cause of justice.*

Freedom Summer, The 1964 Silent Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi by Susan Goldman Rubin *** *Rubin presents heroes, villains and everyday people in 1964 Mississippi. Freedom schools, voter-registration drives and murders drew national attention to Mississippi during the Freedom Summer, and actions there affected the civil rights movement elsewhere, all culminating in the Voting Rights Act. A fascinating treatment of a key civil rights moment.*

→ **Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson (written in VERSE) ***** *Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become.*

Kid Pirates: Their Battles, Shipwrecks, and Narrow Escapes by Allan Zullo *** *Some volunteered. Others were forced into service. But all ten of these young people sailed with the world's most feared pirates-from the notorious Blackbeard and Captain Kidd to Henry Morgan. Some fought side by side with pirates; others tried to escape. You'll never forget their incredible true stories.*

Humor:

→ ***The Strange Case of Origami Yoda (series) by Tom Angleberger**** *Not so long ago, in a middle school not so far away, a sixth grader named Dwight folded an origami finger puppet of Yoda. For class oddball Dwight, this wasn't weird. It was typical Dwight behavior. But what is weird is that Origami Yoda is uncannily wise and prescient. He can predict the date of a pop quiz, guess who stole the classroom Shakespeare bust, and save a classmate from popularity-crushing embarrassment with some well-timed advice.*

Star Wars Jedi Academy (series) by Jeffrey Brown * *Roan's one dream is to leave home and attend Pilot Academy like his older brother, father, and grandfather. But just as Roan is mysteriously denied entrance to Pilot School, he is invited to attend Jedi Academy--a school that he didn't apply to and only recruits children when they are just a few years old. That is, until now...*

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key (series) by Jack Gantos * *Joey Pigza's got heart, he's got a mom who loves him, and he's got "dud meds," which is what he calls the Ritalin pills that are supposed to even out his wild mood swings. Sometimes Joey makes bad choices. But he is determined not to let that happen. In this antic yet poignant new novel, Jack Gantos has perfect pitch in capturing the humor, the off-the-wall intensity, and the serious challenges that life presents to a kid dealing with hyper-activity and related disorders.*

→ ***I Funny (series) by James Patterson**** *Jamie Grimm is a middle schooler on a mission: he wants to become the world's greatest standup comedian--even if he doesn't have a lot to laugh about these days. He's new in town and stuck living with his aunt, uncle, and their evil son Stevie, a bully who doesn't let Jamie's wheelchair stop him from messing with Jamie as much as possible. But Jamie doesn't let his situation get him down. When his Uncle Frankie mentions a contest called The Planet's Funniest Kid Comic, Jamie knows he has to enter.*

My Life as a . . . (series) by Janet Tashjian* *Summer's finally here, and Derek Fallon is looking forward to pelting the UPS truck with water balloons, climbing onto the garage roof, and conducting silly investigations. But when his parents decide to send him to Learning Camp, Derek's dreams of fun come to an end. As Derek forges unexpected friendships and uncovers a family secret involving himself (in diapers! no less), he realizes that adventures and surprises are around the corner.*

Pals in Peril (series) by M. T. Anderson ** *In Whales on Stilts, a madman has unleashed an army of stilt-walking, laser-beaming, thoroughly angry whales upon the world! Luckily, Jasper Dash and his friends Katie Mulligan and Lily Gefelty are around to save the day.*

Greetings from Witness Protection by Jake Burt ** *Nicki Demere is an orphan and a pickpocket. She also happens to be the U.S. Marshals' best bet to keep a family alive. . . . The marshals are looking for the perfect girl to join a mother, father, and son on the run from the nation's most notorious criminals. After all, the bad guys are searching for a family with one kid, not two, and adding a streetwise girl who knows a little something about hiding things may be just what the marshals need.*

Lights, Camera, Disaster by Erin Dionne ** *Hester Greene loves making movies. With her camera in hand, she can focus, make decisions, and have the control she lacks in life, where her executive function disorder sabotages her every move. But middle school is not a movie, and if her last-ditch attempt to save her language-arts grade--and her chance to pass eighth grade, period--doesn't work, Hess could lose her friends, her year, even her camera. It will take more than a cool training montage to get her life together, but by thinking outside the frame, she just might craft a whole new ending.*

→ ***Liar, Liar (series) by Gary Paulsen ***** *Kevin doesn't mean to make trouble when he lies. He's just really good at it, and it makes life so much easier. But as his lies pile up, he finds himself in big—and funny—trouble with his friends, family, and teachers. He's got to find a way to end his lying streak—forever.*

→ ***Dork Diaries (series) by Renee Russell ***** *Meet Nikki Maxwell! She's starting eighth grade at a new school. Nikki confesses all in her first diary ever: her epic battle with her mom for an iPhone, meeting her new soon-to-be BFFs Chloe and Zoey, falling for adorably sweet crush Brandon, dealing with her zany little sister Brianna's antics—and the immediate clashes with mean girl Mackenzie, who becomes Nikki's rival.*

Rhyme Schemer by K. A. Holt (written in VERSE) *** *Kevin has a bad attitude. He has a real knack for rubbing people the wrong way. And he's even figured out a secret way to do it with poems. But what happens when the tables are turned and he is the one getting picked on?*

→ ***Geeks, Girls, and Secret Identities by Mike Jung ****** *Vincent Wu knows everything there is to know about Copperplate City's most beloved superhero, Captain Stupendous. He talks about him at dinner. He does reports on him at school. He is even a founding member of the Captain Stupendous Fan Club. When the hero takes a bad hit rescuing Vincent's not-so-secret crush, Polly Winnicott-Lee, he returns slightly different. He no longer has the skills he once had, and he is nearly pulverized in a rematch with the giant automaton he's bested before. In a last-ditch effort to save Vincent from being crushed, and to escape the battle, Stupendous takes off with the boy in his grasp. There is a revelatory moment when Stupendous unveils his secret identity.*

Sports:

→ **Matt Christopher Sports Bio Bookshelf (series) and Legends of Sports (series) by Matt Christopher** * *Biographies of some of the most celebrated sports heroes of the past and of our time.*

***I Got This: To Gold and Beyond* by Laurie Hernandez** * *Gold medal-winning Olympic gymnast Laurie Hernandez shares her story in her own words in this debut book for fans of all ages.*

***Sidelined* by Trevor Kew** * *For Vicky Parker, life has never been better. Despite mom's new boyfriend (ew!), Vicky and best friends Parm and Marjan seem to be shoo-ins for the soccer team and the chance to play in the tournament in England! But friendships turn into rivalries as the pressures of tryouts get to be too much. How far are the girls willing to go when the competition heats up?*

***The Contest (the Everest series)* by Gordon Korman** * *Four kids. One mountain. They come from all across America to be the youngest kid ever to climb Everest. But only one will reach the top first. The competition is fierce. The preparation is intense. The challenge is breathtaking. When the final four reach the higher peaks, disaster strikes—and all that separates the living from the dead is chance, bravery, and action.*

***The Last Shot (series)* by John Feinstein** ** *The setting is college basketball's Final Four, and the stars are the two teenage winners of a writing contest, Stevie Thomas and Susan Carol Anderson, whose prize is a free trip to the tournament and an opportunity to cover the games. Friction between the pair quickly turns to camaraderie when they overhear one of the players from fictional Minnesota State being coerced into throwing the title game. Now they have just 48 hours to figure out who is blackmailing one of MSU's star players and why.*

→ ***Football Genius (series)* by Tim Green** ** *Troy White is every football team's dream...even if they don't know it yet. Although he's in middle school, he is a great quarterback on his rec team, and he's got a secret talent—he can watch any football game and, after a few plays, he can call the subsequent plays before they happen. When Troy's mom, Tessa, gets a job as PR assistant for the Atlanta Falcons, Troy thinks he'll get the chance to use his gift and help his favorite team to a winning season.*

***Women in Sports: 50 Fearless Athletes Who Played to Win* by Rachle Ignatofsky** ** *Highlights the achievements and stories of fifty notable women athletes from the 1800s to today, including trailblazers, Olympians, and record-breakers in more than forty sports. Also contains infographics on topics that sporty women want to know about such as muscle anatomy, a timeline of women's participation in sports, pay and media statistics for female athletes, and influential women's teams.*

***Point Guard* by Mike Lupica** ** *Everyone assumes that Gus, whose family is from the Dominican Republic, is a baseball guy. But this year Gus is even more excited about basketball than any other sport he's ever played. He's been practicing some new moves and lately he's more surprised when he misses his shot than when he scores. Plus now that he's convinced his friend Teddy to try out for the team and Jack's shoulder is healed, it looks like Walton's home team will be unstoppable.*

***Rising Above: How 11 Athletes Overcame Challenges in their Youth to Become Stars* by Gregory Zuckerman** ** *Athlete after athlete in this book found discipline, hope, and inspiration on the playing field, rising above their circumstances. Filled with first-hand accounts from stars who exemplify the idea of enduring at all costs, *Rising Above* will serve as a must-read source of inspiration for kids and sports fans of all ages.*

A Little Piece of Ground by Elizabeth Laird *** *Twelve-year-old Karim Aboudi and his family are trapped in their Ramallah home by a strict curfew. In response to a Palestinian suicide bombing, the Israeli military subjects the West Bank town to a virtual siege. Meanwhile, Karim, trapped at home with his teenage brother and fearful parents, longs to play football [soccer] with his friends. When the curfew ends, he and his friend discover an unused patch of ground that's the perfect site for a football [soccer] pitch. Nearby, an old car hidden intact under bulldozed building makes a brilliant den. But in this city there's constant danger, even for schoolboys. And when Israeli soldiers find Karim outside during the next curfew, it seems impossible that he will survive.*

- ***Fast Break by Mike Lupica ****** *Twelve-year-old Jayson, a tough kid from the poor part of Moreland, North Carolina, is sent across town to live with foster parents, where he'll play basketball for a rival team. Lupica delivers solid sports action.*
- ***Heat by Mike Lupica ****** *When Michael Arroyo is on the baseball diamond, everything feels right. He's a terrific pitcher who dreams of leading his South Bronx All-Stars to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, PA. It's a dream he shared with his father, one they brought with them as they fled Cuba and wound up living in the shadow of Yankee Stadium. Readers will find themselves rooting for Michael as he struggles with the loss of his father, stumbles into his first boy-girl relationship, and yearns to play baseball.*
- ***Travel Team by Mike Lupica ****** *Twelve-year-old Danny Walker may be the smallest kid on the basketball court -- but don't tell him that. Because no one plays with more heart or court sense. But none of that matters when he is cut from his local travel team, the very same team his father led to national prominence as a boy. Danny's father, still smarting from his own troubles, knows Danny isn't the only kid who was cut for the wrong reason, and together, this washed-up former player and a bunch of never-say-die kids prove that the heart simply cannot be measured.*
- ***Ghost and other titles in the Track series by Jason Reynolds **** *Ghost. Lu. Patina. Sunny. Four kids from wildly different backgrounds with personalities that are explosive when they clash. But they are also four kids chosen for an elite middle school track team—a team that could qualify them for the Junior Olympics if they can get their acts together. They all have a lot to lose, but they also have a lot to prove, not only to each other, but to themselves.*

Knock Out by K. A. Holt (written in VERSE) *** *Levi just wants to be treated like a typical kid. As a baby, he had a serious disease that caused him respiratory issues. He's fine now, but his mom and overprotective brother still think of him as damaged, and his schoolmates see him as the same class clown he's always been. He feels stuck. So when his dad—divorced from his mom—suggests he take up boxing, he falls in love with the sport. And when he finds out about a school with a killer boxing team and a free-study curriculum, it feels like he's found a ticket to a new Levi. But how can he tell his mom about boxing? And how can he convince his family to set him free?*

Realistic Fiction, Action, & Adventure:

→ ***The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate** * *This unforgettable novel celebrates the transformative power of unexpected friendship. Inspired by the true story of a captive gorilla known as Ivan, this illustrated novel is told from the point of view of Ivan himself. Having spent twenty-seven years behind the glass walls of his enclosure in a shopping mall, Ivan has grown accustomed to humans watching him. He hardly ever thinks about his life in the jungle. Instead, Ivan occupies himself with television, his friends Stella and Bob, and painting. But when he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from the wild, he is forced to see their home, and his art, through new eyes.*

***Close to Famous* by Joan Bauer** * *When twelve-year-old Foster and her mother land in the tiny town of Culpepper, they don't know what to expect. But folks quickly warm to the woman with the great voice and the girl who can bake like nobody's business. Soon Foster - who dreams of having her own cooking show one day - lands herself a gig baking for the local coffee shop, and gets herself some much-needed help in overcoming her biggest challenge - learning to read . . . just as Foster and Mama start to feel at ease, their past catches up to them. Thanks to the folks in Culpepper though, Foster and her mama find the strength to put their troubles behind them for good.*

***Gaby, Lost and Found* by Angela Cervantes** * *When Gaby Ramirez Howard's mother is deported back to Honduras, the sixth-grader's life is anything but stable. Her father often forgets to purchase food, but worse, neglects his daughter emotionally. She is an outcast at St. Ann's where classmates tease her about her family life. With everything falling apart, the protagonist finds strength and self-confidence in the class service project at their local animal shelter.*

***Rules* by Cynthia Lord** * *Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public" - in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?*

***Hatchet (series)* by Gary Paulsen** * *This Newbery Honor book is a dramatic, heart-stopping story of a boy who, following a plane crash in the Canadian wilderness, must learn to survive with only a hatchet and his own wits.*

***Last Summer with Maizon (series)* by Jacqueline Woodson** * *Margaret loves her parents and hanging out with her best friend, Maizon. Then it happens, like a one-two punch, during the summer she turns eleven: first, Margaret's father dies of a heart attack, and then Maizon is accepted at an expensive boarding school, far away from the city they call home. For the first time in her life, Margaret has to turn to someone who isn't Maizon, who doesn't know her heart and her dreams.*

***The Tequila Worm* by Viola Canales** ** *Sofia comes from a family of storytellers. Here are her tales of growing up in the barrio, full of the magic and mystery of family traditions: making Easter cascarnes, celebrating el Dia de los Muertos, preparing for quincea-era, rejoicing in the Christmas nacimiento, and curing homesickness by eating the tequila worm. When Sofia is singled out to receive a scholarship to an elite boarding school, she longs to explore life beyond the barrio, even though it means leaving her family to navigate a strange world of rich, privileged kids.*

***Chasing Redbird* by Sharon Creech** ** *Always the quiet (and often forgotten) middle child in a bustling family, Zinnia's life begins to change when she stumbles upon a hidden, overgrown pathway that stretches from the edge of her family's farm into the great unknown. Determined to find where the path leads, Zinnia begins the daunting task of uncovering brambles and weeds along every inch of its length.*

- ***Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper **** *Eleven-year-old Melody has a photographic memory that makes her the brightest kid in her school. Unfortunately, most people—including her doctors and teachers—believe she can't even learn. That's why her school days drone on with the same preschool lessons again and again and again. Unable to talk, write, or walk, Melody longs to tell what she thinks and knows—but she can't. Trapped inside her own body, she often feels driven to the brink of insanity. And then one day, she discovers how to "speak." For the first time, hope sweeps over her. She has a voice at last! But is everyone prepared to listen?*
- ***Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt **** *Ally has been smart enough to fool a lot of smart people. Every time she lands in a new school, she is able to hide her inability to read by creating clever yet disruptive distractions. She is afraid to ask for help; after all, how can you cure dumb? However, her newest teacher Mr. Daniels sees the bright, creative kid underneath the trouble maker. With his help, Ally learns not to be so hard on herself and that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of. As her confidence grows, Ally feels free to be herself and the world starts opening up with possibilities. She discovers that there's a lot more to her—and to everyone—than a label, and that great minds don't always think alike.*

Eight Keys* by Suzanne LaFleur * *Elise and Franklin have always been best friends. Elise has always lived in the big house with her loving Uncle and Aunt because Elise's parents died when she was too young to remember them. There's always been a barn behind the house with eight locked doors on the second floor. But When Elise and Franklin start middle school, things feel all wrong. Bullying. Not fitting in. Franklin suddenly seems babyish. Then, soon after her 12th birthday, Elise receives a mysterious key left for her by her father. A key that unlocks one of the eight doors upstairs in the barn.*

Confetti Girl* by Diana Lopez * *Apolonia "Lina" Flores is a sock enthusiast, a volleyball player, a science lover, and a girl who's just looking for answers. Even though her house is crammed full of books (her dad's a bibliophile), she's having trouble figuring out some very big questions, like why her dad seems to care about books more than her, why her best friend's divorced mom is obsessed with making cascarones (hollowed eggshells filled with colorful confetti), and, most of all, why her mom died last year. Like colors in cascarones, Lina's life is a rainbow of people, interests, and unexpected changes.*

Becoming Naomi Leon* by Pam Munoz Ryan * *Half-Mexican Naomi Soledad, 11, and her younger disabled brother, Owen, have been brought up by their tough, loving great-grandmother in a California trailer park, and they feel at home in the multiracial community. Then their alcoholic mom reappears after seven years with her slimy boyfriend, hoping to take Naomi (not Owen) back and collect the welfare check. Determined not to let that happen, Gram drives the trailer across the border to a barrio in Oaxaca to search for the children's dad at the city's annual Christmas arts festival. Ryan, the author of the award-winning *Esperanza Rising* (2000), makes Naomi's search for her dad a search for identity, and both are exciting.*

- ***The Winter of the Robots* by Kurtis Scaletta **** *Jim is tired of being the sidekick to his scientific genius, robot-obsessed, best friend Oliver. So this winter, when it comes time to choose partners for the science fair, Jim dumps Oliver and teams up with a girl instead. Rocky has spotted wild otters down by the river, and her idea is to study them. But what they discover is bigger—and much more menacing—than fuzzy otters: a hidden junkyard on abandoned Half Street. And as desolate as it may seem, there's something living in the junkyard. Something that won't be contained for long by the rusty fences and mounds of snow. Can Jim and Rocky—along with Oliver and his new science-fair partner—put aside their rivalry and unite their robot-building skills? Whatever is lurking on Half Street is about to meet its match.*

Takedown* by Laura Shovan * *Discover what happens when one girl wants to break barriers in a sport dominated by boys. Mikayla is a wrestler; when you grow up in a house full of brothers who wrestle, it's inevitable. It's also a way to stay connected to her oldest brother, Evan, who moved in with their dad. Some people object to having a girl on the team. But that's not stopping Mikayla. She's determined to work harder than ever, and win.*

Crash by Jerry Spinelli ** *Ever since first grade “Crash” Coogan has been tormenting Penn Ward, a skinny vegetarian Quaker boy who lives in a tiny former garage with his aged parents. Now that they’re in seventh grade, “chippy chirpy perky” Penn becomes an even better target: not only does Penn still wear outdated used clothes, he joins the cheerleading squad. But even though Crash becomes the school’s star football player and wears the most expensive togs from the mall, he still can’t get what Penn has – his parents’ attention and the admiration of the most gorgeous girl in school.*

Stef Soto, Taco Queen by Jennifer Torres ** *Estefania “Stef” Soto is itching to shake off the onion-and-cilantro embrace of Tia Perla, her family’s taco truck. She wants nothing more than for Papi to get a normal job and for Tia Perla to be a distant memory. Then maybe everyone at school will stop seeing her as the Taco Queen. But when her family’s livelihood is threatened, and it looks like her wish will finally come true, Stef surprises everyone (including herself) by becoming the truck’s unlikely champion.*

The Secret Life of Lincoln Jones by Wendelin Van Draanen ** *A fresh and funny story about a boy learning to become the brave hero of his own life. My secret life is filled with psychic vampires, wheelchair zombies, chain-rattlin’ ghosts, and a one-eyed cat. But they’re nothing compared to my real-life stalker: a sixth-grade girl named Kandi Kain. . . .*

Bad Girls (series) by Cynthia Voigt ** *Best friends Margalo and Mikey, two girls from the other side of the tracks, begin fifth grade with chips on their shoulders and seek to prove to everyone that they fear nothing, trust nobody, and can be tough even if they are not boys.*

Karma Khullar’s Moustache by Kristin Wientge ** *Everything has been so different this year for Karmajeet Khullar. She is worried about starting middle school, about her dissolving relationship with her best friend, Sara, and about Sara’s new friendship with mean girl Lacy. At home, she misses her beloved Dadima, who recently passed away. How will Karma navigate the complexities of adolescence, middle school, and the 17 hairs on her upper lip in this humorous story of new friendships and family support.*

The Thing about Jellyfish by Ali Benjamin *** *Suzy’s best friend, Franny Jackson, was a strong swimmer. There is no way she could have drowned, at least in Suzy’s mind. Suzy’s determined search for a different explanation for her friend’s death leads her to believe that Franny was stung by an Irukandji jellyfish. Having nothing but time, since she has no other friends and has decided to stop talking, Suzy sets out to prove her theory.*

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech *** *To trace the path of her missing mother, Sal embarks on a journey from Ohio to Idaho with her grandparents. On the road, Sal tells the strange and exciting story of her friend Phoebe. As the miles pass, Phoebe’s tale becomes more and more outrageous, while Sal’s own story begins to emerge. In unraveling Phoebe’s mystery, Sal comes ever closer to finding out the truth behind her own bittersweet journey.*

Dead End in Norvelt by Jack Gantos *** *- This is a novel about an incredible two months for a kid named Jack Gantos, whose plans for vacation excitement are shot down when he is “grounded for life” by his feuding parents, and whose nose spews bad blood at every little shock he gets. But plenty of excitement (and shocks) are coming Jack’s way once his mom loans him out to help a feisty old neighbor with a most unusual chore—typewriting obituaries filled with stories about the people who founded his utopian town. As one obituary leads to another, Jack is launched on a strange adventure involving molten wax, Eleanor Roosevelt, twisted promises, a homemade airplane, Girl Scout cookies, a man on a trike, a dancing plague, voices from the past, Hells Angels . . . and possibly murder.*

→ **Waiting for Unicorns by Beth Hautala ***** *It’s been a terrible year for almost-13-year-old Talia. It’s only been a few months since her beloved mother died from cancer, and now Dad, a whale researcher, has dragged them from their home in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, to Manitoba, Canada, so that he can study beluga whales out on the ice. Talia used to remain at home with her mother during Dad’s annual trips, but now she will live with Sura, a local Inuit woman, whom she’s never met before. Clinging desperately to her special “jar of secret wishes,” Talia feels like she herself is frozen and she is terrified of losing her father—a very real possibility given his dangerous profession. During the long months when Dad is away, Talia begins to explore the area (carefully, given the roaming polar bears), meets a new friend, and discovers a way to relate to Sura through her traditional storytelling.*

Hoot (other titles such as *Flush*, *Scat*, etc.) by Carl Hiaasen *** *It involves new kids, bullies, alligators, eco-warriors, pancakes, and pint-sized owls. Roy Eberhardt is the new kid – again. This time around it’s Trace Middle School in humid Coconut Grove, Florida. But it’s still the same old routine: table by himself at lunch, no real friends, and thick-headed bullies like Dana Matherson pushing him around. But if it wasn’t for Dana Matherson mashing his face against the school bus window that one day, he might never have seen the tow-headed running boy.*

→ **Blackbird Fly by Erin Entrada Kelly ***** *Apple has always felt a little different from her classmates. She and her mother moved to Louisiana from the Philippines when she was little, and her mother still cooks Filipino foods and chastises Apple for becoming “too American.” When Apple’s friends turn on her and everything about her life starts to seem weird and embarrassing, Apple turns to music. If she can just save enough to buy a guitar and learn to play, maybe she can change herself. It might be the music that saves her . . . or it might be her two new friends, who show her how special she really is.*

→ **Wonder by R. J. Palacio ***** *- August Pullman is a 10-year-old boy who likes Star Wars and Xbox, ordinary except for his jarring facial anomalies. Homeschooled all his life, August heads to public school for fifth grade and he is not the only one changed by the experience--something we learn about first-hand through the narratives of those who orbit his world. August’s internal dialogue and interactions with students and family ring true, and though remarkably courageous he comes across as a sweet, funny boy who wants the same things others want: friendship, understanding, and the freedom to be himself.*

→ **Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes ***** *A heartbreaking and powerful story about a black boy killed by a police officer, drawing connections through history. Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of this unjust and brutal killing.*

Baseball in April and Other Stories by Gary Soto *** *Soto tells 11 short stories about the everyday problems of growing up. Latinos in central California are the focus of the stories, but the events are typical of young teens anywhere in the United States. The main characters try out for Little League teams, take karate lessons, try to get the attention of the opposite sex, and are embarrassed by their grandparents’ behavior.*

Liar and Spy by Rebecca Stead *** *A story about spies, games, and friendship. Seventh grader Georges moves into a Brooklyn apartment building and meets Safer, a twelve-year-old self-appointed spy. Georges becomes Safer's first spy recruit. His assignment? Tracking the mysterious Mr. X, who lives in the apartment upstairs. But as Safer becomes more demanding, Georges starts to wonder: what is a lie, and what is a game? How far is too far to go for your only friend?*

Feathers by Jacqueline Woodson (written in VERSE) *** *“Hope is the thing with feathers” starts the poem Frannie is reading in school. Frannie hasn’t thought much about hope. There are so many other things to think about. During a winter full of surprises, good and bad, Frannie starts seeing a lot of things in a new light—her brother Sean’s deafness, her mother’s fear, the class bully’s anger, her best friend’s faith and her own desire for “the thing with feathers.”*

Mystery & Horror:

Chasing Vermeer (series) by Blue Balliett * *This bewitching first novel is a puzzle, wrapped in a mystery, disguised as an adventure, and delivered as a work of art. When a book of unexplainable occurrences brings Petra and Calder together, strange things start to happen. Seemingly unrelated events connect; an eccentric old woman seeks their company; an invaluable Vermeer painting disappears. Before they know it, the two find themselves at the center of an international art scandal, where no one is spared from suspicion.*

The House with the Clock in Its Walls (series) by John Bellairs * *Lewis always dreamed of living in an old house full of secret passageways, hidden rooms, and big marble fireplaces. And suddenly, after the death of his parents, he finds himself in just such a mansion – his Uncle Jonathan’s. When he discovers that his big friendly uncle is also a wizard, Lewis has a hard time keeping himself from jumping up and down in his seat. Unfortunately, what Lewis doesn’t bank on is the fact that the previous owner of the mansion was also a wizard – but an evil one who has placed a tick-tocking clock somewhere in the bowels of the house, marking off the minutes until the end of the world.*

Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring by Angela Cervantes * *A room locked for fifty years. A valuable peacock ring. A mysterious brother-sister duo. Paloma Marquez is traveling to Mexico City, birthplace of her deceased father, for the very first time. She’s hoping that spending time in Mexico will help her unlock memories of the too-brief time they spent together. While in Mexico, Paloma meets Lizzie and Gael, who present her with an irresistible challenge: The siblings want her to help them find a valuable ring that once belonged to beloved Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Finding the ring means a big reward -- and the thanks of all Mexico. What better way to honor her father than returning a priceless piece of jewelry that once belonged to his favorite artist!*

The Falcon’s Malteser (the Diamond Brothers mysteries series) by Anthony Horowitz * *Nick Simple’s life is anything but simple. His parents have moved to Australia, leaving him in the care of his incompetent older brother who is trying to make a living as a private detective and changes the family name. They are visited by a dwarf who leaves a package with them for safekeeping and later turns up dead. Set in England and filled with a variety of colorful characters, the plot reads like a 1940s detective movie.*

→ **Abduction (and others by her) by Peg Kehret *** *Matt is missing. Bonnie’s brother left his classroom to use the bathroom—and disappeared. A police dog traces his scent to the curb, where he apparently got into a vehicle. But why would Matt go anywhere with a stranger? Overwhelmed with fear, Bonnie discovers that her dog is gone, too. Was Pookie used as a lure for Matt? Bonnie makes one big mistake in her attempt to find her brother. In a chilling climax on a Washington State ferry, Bonnie and Matt must outsmart their abductor or pay with their lives.*

Took and other titles by Mary Downing Hahn *-** *Thirteen-year-old Daniel Anderson doesn’t believe Brody Mason’s crazy stories about the ghost witch who lives up on Brewster’s Hill with Bloody Bones, her man-eating razorback hog. He figures Brody’s probably just trying to scare him since he’s the new kid . . . a “stuck-up snot” from Connecticut. But Daniel’s seven-year-old sister Erica has become more and more withdrawn, talking to her lookalike doll. When she disappears into the woods one day, he knows something is terribly wrong. Did the witch strike? Has Erica been “took”?*

Shakespeare’s Secret by Elise Broach ** *Starting sixth grade at a new school is never easy, especially when your name is Hero. Named after a character in a Shakespeare play, Hero isn’t at all interested in this literary connection. But when she’s told by an eccentric neighbor that there might be a million dollar diamond hidden in her new house and that it could reveal something about Shakespeare’s true identity, Hero is determined to live up to her name and uncover the mystery.*

→ **The London Eye Mystery by Siobhan Dowd **** *Ted and Kat watched their cousin Salim board the London Eye, but after half an hour it landed and everyone trooped off—except Salim. Where could he have gone? How on earth could he have disappeared into thin air? Ted and his older sister, Kat, become sleuthing partners, since the police are having no luck. Despite their prickly relationship, they overcome their differences to follow a trail of clues across London in a desperate bid to find their cousin. And ultimately it comes down to Ted, whose brain works in its own very unique way, to find the key to the mystery.*

→ ***Belly Up (and others by him) by Stuart Gibbs*** ** Twelve-year-old Teddy Roosevelt Fitzroy has murder on his hands and trouble on his tail. He believes that Henry, the hippopotamus at the brand-new FunJungle, has been murdered. The zoo's top brass claim the hippo went belly up the natural way, but Teddy and his feisty friend Summer McCracken have other ideas. Could the culprit be FunJungle's animal-hating head of operations? Or is it FunJungle's owner—Summer's dad—a man who is much more concerned about money than animal welfare? The deeper Teddy and Summer dig, the more danger they're in—because when it comes to hippo homicide, the truth can't be caged!

Spirit Hunters by Ellen Oh ** Harper doesn't trust her new home from the moment she steps inside, and the rumors are that the Raine family's new house is haunted. Harper isn't sure she believes those rumors, until her younger brother, Michael, starts acting strangely. The whole atmosphere gives Harper a sense of déjà vu, but she can't remember why. She knows that the memories she's blocking will help make sense of her brother's behavior and the strange and threatening sensations she feels in this house, but will she be able to put the pieces together in time?

The Mysterious Benedict Society (series) by Trenton Lee Stewart and Carson Ellis ** Just four very special children will succeed. Their challenge: to go on a secret mission that only the most intelligent and resourceful children could complete. To accomplish it they will have to go undercover at the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, where the only rule is that there are no rules.

The Ghost of Greylock and other titles by Dan Pablocki **-*** Does an abandoned asylum hold the key to a frightful haunting? Everyone's heard the stories about Graylock Hall. It was meant to be a place of healing - a hospital where children and teenagers with mental disorders would be cared for and perhaps even cured. But something went wrong. Several young patients died under mysterious circumstances. Eventually, the hospital was shut down, the building abandoned and left to rot deep in the woods. As the new kid in town, Neil Cady wants to see Graylock for himself. Especially since rumor has it that the building is haunted. He's got fresh batteries in his flashlight, a camera to document the adventure, and a new best friend watching his back. Neil might think he's prepared for what he'll find in the dark and decrepit asylum. But he's certainly not prepared for what follows him home.

Finding Mighty by Sheela Chari *** Along the train lines north of New York City, twelve-year-old neighbors Myla and Peter search for the link between Myla's necklace and the disappearance of Peter's brother, Randall. Thrown into a world of parkour, graffiti, and diamond-smuggling, Myla and Peter encounter a band of thugs who are after the same thing as Randall. Can Myla and Peter find Randall before it's too late?

→ ***I Know What You Did Last Summer by Lois Duncan (and others by her)*** *** They didn't mean it. They didn't mean to hit the boy. There was a party, and it was an accident...that wasn't who they were. They were pre-law, a football player, bound for New York. No one could know, so Barry, Julie, Helen, and Ray swore one another to secrecy. But now, a year later, someone knows. . . . The dark lie is unearthed, and before the four friends know it they need to outsmart a killer...or they will be the next to die. Leave the lights on when reading this classic thriller!

Historical Fiction & Fiction about Other Cultures and Countries:

***Iron Thunder* by Avi (and others in the *I Witness* series)** * Early in 1862, 13-year-old Tom Carroll must go to work when his father is killed in a Maryland battle. He finds a job at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where he is put to work on "Ericsson's Folly," the ironclad that will become the Monitor. Tom is an eyewitness to history as the ship travels to join the Union blockade fleet and enters into its fateful battle with the Merrimac. Factual information and historical terms are woven smoothly into the narrative. Period photographs, engravings, and newspaper headlines are strategically placed throughout the text to further bring history to life.

***Birchbark House* (series) by Louise Erdrich** * Seen through the eyes of the spirited, 7-year-old Ojibwa girl Omakayas, or Little Frog, so named because her first step was a hop. Readers will be riveted by the daily life of this Native American family, in which tanning moose hides, picking berries, and scaring crows from the cornfield are as commonplace as encounters with bear cubs and fireside ghost stories.

→ ***Buddy* by M. H. Herlong** * Tyrone "Li'l T" Roberts meets Buddy when his family's car accidentally hits the stray dog on their way to church. Buddy turns out to be the dog Li'l T's always wished for--until Hurricane Katrina comes to New Orleans and he must leave Buddy behind. After the storm, Li'l T and his father return home to find a community struggling to rebuild their lives--and Buddy gone. But Li'l T refuses to give up his quest to find his best friend.

***Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam* by Cynthia Kadohota** * A German shepherd trained to sniff out bombs, traps, and the enemy. The fate of entire army platoons rests on her keen sense of smell. She's a Big Deal, and she likes it that way. Sometimes Cracker remembers when she was younger, and her previous owner would feed her hot dogs and let her sleep in his bed. That was nice, too. When Cracker is paired with Rick, she isn't so sure about this new owner. He's going to have to prove himself to her before she's going to prove herself to him. They need to be friends before they can be a team, and they have to be a team if they want to get home alive.

→ ***Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes** * Twelve-year-old Laneshia lives in a tight-knit community in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. She doesn't have a fancy house like her uptown family or lots of friends like the other kids on her street. But what she does have is Mama Ya-Ya, her fiercely loving caretaker, wise in the ways of the world and able to predict the future. So when Mama Ya-Ya's visions show a powerful hurricane--Katrina--fast approaching, it's up to Laneshia to call upon the hope and strength Mama Ya-Ya has given her to help them both survive the storm. A deeply emotional story about transformation and a celebration of resilience, friendship, and family--as only love can define it.

***Riding Freedom* by Pam Munoz Ryan** * Charley, spent most of her life masquerading as a man. Her own predilection is to be with the horses and the elderly man who cares for them. Vern's tales of escaping slavery are the seeds of Charlotte's own desperate bid for freedom after her only other friend is adopted. Her knack with horses soon enables the disguised Charley to pursue her dream of driving a stagecoach. She does it so well that she is admired and sought after, and is offered the opportunity to earn a livelihood in the California gold fields. Many trials arise, including the loss of sight in her left eye, but throughout, Charlotte remembers her friends, works hard and persistently, and fulfills her ambitions, culminating in her voting in a presidential election. A concluding note tells more about the historical facts surrounding Parkhurst's life, but kids will read it just for the adventure.

***Home of the Brave* by Katherine Applegate (written in VERSE)** ** Kek comes from Africa where he lived with his mother, father, and brother. But only he and his mother have survived. Now she's missing, and Kek has been sent to a new home. In America, he sees snow for the first time, and feels its sting. He wonders if the people in this new place will be like the winter—cold and unkind. But slowly he makes friends: a girl in foster care, an old woman with a rundown farm, and a sweet, sad cow that reminds Kek of home. As he waits for word of his mother's fate, Kek weathers the tough Minnesota winter by finding warmth in his new friendships, strength in his memories, and belief in his new country.

Raleigh's Page by Alan Armstrong ** *Armstrong weaves a richly detailed historical narrative featuring 11-year-old Andrew Saintleger, who leaves his home in Devon to become a page to Walter Raleigh. Within two years, he has served Raleigh by sailing to France as a spy, helping to steal an important map, and traveling to Virginia, where he befriends an Indian boy. Andrew goes back to England more experienced, more mature, and eager to return to America.*

Crispin: Cross of Lead (series) by Avi ** *An action-packed historical narrative that follows the frantic flight of a 13-year-old peasant boy across 14th-century England. After being declared a "wolf's head" by his manor's corrupt steward for a crime he didn't commit (meaning that anyone can kill him like a common animal--and collect a reward), this timid boy has to flee a tiny village that's the only world he's ever known. Just as the boy is leaving, "Asta's son," as he's always been known, learns from the village priest that his Christian name is Crispin, and that his parents' origins – and fates – might be more perplexing than he ever imagined.*

True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi ** *A breathtaking seafaring adventure, set in 1832. Charlotte Doyle, 13, returning from school in England to join her family in Rhode Island, is deposited on a seedy ship with a ruthless, mad captain and a mutinous crew. Refusing to heed warnings about Captain Jaggery's brutality, Charlotte seeks his guidance and approval only to become his victim, a pariah to the entire crew, and a convicted felon for the murder of the first mate.*

→ **A Thousand Never Evers by Shana Burg **** *In Kuckachoo, Mississippi 1963, Addie Ann Pickett worships her brother Elias and follows in his footsteps by attending the black junior high school. But when her careless act leads to her brother's disappearance and possible murder, Addie Ann, Mama, and Uncle Bump struggle with not knowing if he's dead or alive. Then a good deed meant to unite Kuckachoo sets off a chain of explosive events. Addie Ann knows Old Man Adams left his land to the white and black people to plant a garden and reap its bounty together, but the mayor denies it. On garden picking day, Addie Ann's family is sorely tested. Through tragedy, she finds the voice to lead a civil rights march all her own, and maybe change the future for her people.*

The Watson's Go to Birmingham by Christopher Paul Curtis ** *The year is 1963, and self-important Byron Watson is the bane of his younger brother Kenny's existence. Constantly in trouble for one thing or another, from straightening his hair into a "conk" to lighting fires to freezing his lips to the mirror of the new family car, Byron finally pushes his family too far. Before this "official juvenile delinquent" can cut school or steal change one more time, Momma and Dad finally make good on their threat to send him to the deep south to spend the summer with his tiny, strict grandmother. Christopher Paul Curtis's alternately hilarious and deeply moving novel, winner of the Newbery Honor and the Coretta Scott King Honor, blends the fictional account of an African American family with the factual events of the violent summer of 1963.*

→ **Upside Down in the Middle of Nowhere by Julie Lamana**** *Armani Curtis can think about only one thing: her birthday. She's having a party, her mama is making a big cake, and she has a good feeling about a certain wrapped box. It is a big deal to Armani. It means she's older, wiser, more responsible. But when Hurricane Katrina hits the Lower Nines of New Orleans and tears her world apart, Armani realizes that being older means being brave, watching loved ones die, and mustering all her strength to help her family weather the storm. A gripping story of courage and survival, Upside Down in the Middle of Nowhere celebrates the power of hope and love in the face of the unthinkable.*

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park ** *A Long Walk to Water begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a girl in Sudan in 2008 and a boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way.*

Fever 1793 by Laurie Halse Anderson *** *During the summer of 1793, Mattie Cook lives above the family coffee shop with her widowed mother and grandfather. Mattie spends her days avoiding chores and making plans to turn the family business into the finest Philadelphia has ever seen. But then the fever breaks out. Disease sweeps the streets, destroying everything in its path and turning Mattie's world upside down. At her feverish mother's insistence, Mattie flees the city with her grandfather. But she soon discovers that the sickness is everywhere, and Mattie must learn quickly how to survive in a city turned frantic with disease.*

Jefferson's Sons by Kimberley Brubaker Bradley *** *This story of Thomas Jefferson's children by one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. As each child grows up and tells his story, the contradiction between slavery and freedom becomes starker, calling into question the real meaning of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This poignant story sheds light on what life was like as one of Jefferson's invisible offspring.*

Behind the Mountain by Edwidge Danticat *** *As the best student in the class, Celiane is given a "sweet little book" in which she decides to keep a journal. Her entries date from October 2000 to March 2001, and chronicle the family's departure from their homeland of Haiti to join her father, who had immigrated to New York City five years earlier. Danticat seamlessly weaves together all that such a decision involves: the difficulties of rural life on the island and a longing for an absent parent combined with a fondness for her tiny mountain. When Celiane, her mother, and her 19-year-old brother are finally approved to enter the U.S., the teen knows everything will be all right as soon as she sees her father.*

The Breadwinner (series) by Deborah Ellis *** *Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, 11-year-old Parvana has rarely been outdoors. Barred from attending school, shopping at the market, or even playing in the streets of Kabul, the heroine of Deborah Ellis's engrossing children's novel The Breadwinner is trapped inside her family's one-room home. That is, until the Taliban hauls away her father and Parvana realizes that it's up to her to become the "breadwinner" and disguise herself as a boy to support her mother, two sisters, and baby brother.*

Silver People: Voices from the Panama Canal by Margarita Engle (written in VERSE) *** *It is 1906, and the race to build the Panama Canal is wide reaching. There is nothing 14-year-old Mateo desires more than to escape his Cuban home. Armed only with his courage, he heads to Panama in hopes of finding a future building the canal. What he discovers, however, is perilous work and harsh inequality. This masterfully written novel to life every bit of Panama, from the horrible working conditions of the islanders forced to dig the canal for next-to-nothing wages to the lush forest and wildlife.*

→ **Projekt 1065 by Alan Gratz ***** *Infiltrate. Befriend. Sabotage. World War II is raging. Michael O'Shaunessey, originally from Ireland, now lives in Nazi Germany with his parents. Like the other boys in his school, Michael is a member of the Hitler Youth. But Michael has a secret. He and his parents are spies. When Michael learns about Projekt 1065, a secret Nazi war mission, things get even more complicated. He must prove his loyalty to the Hitler Youth at all costs -- even if it means risking everything he cares about. Including... his own life.*

Turtle in Paradise by Jennifer Holm *** *In Jennifer L. Holm's historical fiction novel, life isn't like the movies. But then again, 11-year-old Turtle is no Shirley Temple. She's smart and tough and has seen enough of the world not to expect a Hollywood ending. After all, it's 1935 and jobs and money and sometimes even dreams are scarce. So when Turtle's mama gets a job housekeeping for a lady who doesn't like kids, Turtle says goodbye without a tear and heads off to Key West, Florida to live with relatives she's never met. Florida's like nothing Turtle's ever seen before though. It's hot and strange, full of rag tag boy cousins, family secrets, scams, and even buried pirate treasure!*

A Million Shades of Gray by Cynthia Kadohata *** *Growing up in a remote Dega village in South Vietnam, Y'Tin is as close with his beloved elephant, Lady, as he is with his father, who works with the American Special Forces. After the Americans leave, Y'Tin, 13, flees the Vietcong massacre of his village and tries to find his family and friends while surviving in the jungle and caring for Lady.*

Evolution of Calpurnia Tate by Jacqueline Kelly *** Growing up with six brothers in rural Texas in 1899, 12-year-old Callie realizes that her aversion to needlework and cooking disappoints her mother. Still, she prefers to spend her time exploring the river, observing animals, and keeping notes on what she sees. Callie's growing interest in nature creates a bond with her grandfather. After they discover an unknown species, Callie is aware of her growing desire to become a scientist and of societal expectations that make her dream seem nearly impossible.

Lions of Little Rock by Kristin Levine *** As twelve-year-old Marlee starts middle school in 1958 Little Rock, Arkansas, it feels like her whole world is falling apart. Until she meets Liz, the new girl at school. Liz is everything Marlee wishes she could be: she's brave, brash and always knows the right thing to say. But then Liz leaves school without even a good-bye. To stay friends, Marlee is willing to take on segregation and the dangers her friendship could bring to both of their families.

A Night Divided by Jennifer Nielsen *** With the rise of the Berlin Wall, twelve-year-old Gerta finds her family suddenly divided. She, her mother, and her brother Fritz live on the eastern side, controlled by the Soviets. Her father and middle brother, who had gone west in search of work, cannot return home. Gerta knows it is dangerous to watch the wall, to think forbidden thoughts of freedom, yet she can't help herself. But one day, while on her way to school, Gerta spots her father on a viewing platform on the western side, pantomiming a peculiar dance. Then, when she receives a mysterious drawing, Gerta puts two and two together and concludes that her father wants Gerta and Fritz to tunnel beneath the wall, out of East Berlin. However, if they are caught, the consequences will be deadly. No one can be trusted. Will Gerta and her family find their way to freedom?

Making Bombs for Hitler by Marsha Skrypuch *** Lida thought she was safe. Her neighbors wearing the yellow star were all taken away, but Lida is not Jewish. She will be fine, won't she? But she cannot escape the horrors of World War II. The Nazis take Lida to a brutal work camp, where she and other Ukrainian children are forced into backbreaking labor. Starving and terrified, Lida bonds with her fellow prisoners, but none of them know if they'll live to see tomorrow. This pulse-pounding novel of survival, courage, and hope shows us a lesser-known piece of history.

Moon over Manifest by Clare Vanderpool *** It's 1936 and Abilene Tucker feels abandoned. Her father has put her on a train, sending her off to live with an old friend for the summer while he works a railroad job. Armed only with a few possessions and her list of universals, Abilene jumps off the train in Manifest, Kansas, aiming to learn about the boy her father once was. Having heard stories about Manifest, Abilene is disappointed to find that it's just a dried-up, worn-out old town. But her disappointment quickly turns to excitement when she discovers a hidden cigar box full of mementos, including some old letters that mention a spy known as the Rattler. These mysterious letters send Abilene and her new friends, Lettie and Ruthanne, on an honest-to-goodness spy hunt, even though they are warned to "Leave Well Enough Alone."

Science Fiction & Fantasy (see also Read-Alikes for Harry Potter or The Lightning Thief):

The Field Guide (Spiderwick Chronicles series) by Holly Black * After their parents' divorce, the Grace kids - twins Jared and Simon and their older sister Mallory - move with their mom to the decaying old mansion belonging to their ancient great-aunt Lucinda, who has been sent off to an asylum. But before they can even unpack, Jared begins to notice that they're not alone in the house. There's something living there with them. His investigations eventually lead to an old book filled with pictures of fantastic creatures - Arthur Spiderwick's Field Guide to the Fantastical World Around You - and an even bigger mystery - the disappearance of his great-great-uncle and Lucinda's father, Arthur Spiderwick.

→ ***Alcatraz vs. the Evil Librarians (series) by Brandon Sanderson **** On his thirteenth birthday, foster child Alcatraz Smedry gets a bag of sand in the mail--his only inheritance from his father and mother. He soon learns that this is no ordinary bag of sand. It is quickly stolen by the cult of evil Librarians who are taking over the world by spreading misinformation and suppressing truth. Alcatraz must stop them, using the only weapon he has: an incredible talent for breaking things.

Search for Delicious by Natalie Babbitt ** Gaylen, the King's messenger, a skinny boy of twelve, is off to poll the kingdom, traveling from town to farmstead to town on his horse, Marrow. At first it is merely a question of disagreement at the royal castle over which food should stand for Delicious in the new dictionary. But soon it seems that the search for Delicious had better succeed if civil war is to be avoided. Gaylen's quest leads him to the woldweller, a wise, 900-year-old creature who lives alone at the precise center of the forest; to Canto, the minstrel who sings him an old song about a mermaid child and who gives him a peculiar good-luck charm; to the underground domain of the dwarfs; and finally to Ardis who might save the kingdom from havoc.

→ ***Serafina and the Black Cloak (series) by Robert Beatty ***** A brave and unusual girl named Serafina lives secretly in the basement of the grand Biltmore Estate amidst the splendor of the Gilded Age. Serafina's pa, the estate's maintenance man, has warned her to keep herself hidden from the fancy folk who live on the floors above, but when children at the estate start disappearing, Serafina and her friend Braeden Vanderbilt must work together to solve a dark and dangerous mystery.

→ ***NERDS (series) by Michael Buckley ***** A group of unpopular middle schoolers run a spy network from inside their school. With the help of cutting-edge science, they transform their nerdy qualities into incredible abilities! Their enemies? An array of James Bond-style villains, each with an evil plan more diabolical and more ridiculous than the last.

Artemis Fowl (series) by Eoin Colfer ** Twelve-year-old Artemis Fowl is a millionaire, a genius—and, above all, a criminal mastermind. But even Artemis doesn't know what he's taken on when he kidnaps a fairy, Captain Holly Short of the LEPrecon Unit. These aren't the fairies of bedtime stories; these fairies are armed and dangerous. Artemis thinks he has them right where he wants them...but then they stop playing by the rules.

→ ***City of Ember (series) by Jeanne Duprau ***** It is always night in the city of Ember. But there is no moon, no stars. The only light during the regular twelve hours of "day" comes from floodlamps that cast a yellowish glow over the streets of the city. Beyond are the pitch-black Unknown Regions, which no one has ever explored because an understanding of fire and electricity has been lost, and with it the idea of a Moveable Light. For 250 years they have lived pleasantly, because there has been plenty of everything in the vast storerooms. But now there are more and more empty shelves--and more and more times when the lights flicker and go out, leaving them in terrifying blackness for long minutes. Twelve-year-old Doon Harrow and Lina Mayfleet seem to be the only people who are worried. When Lina finds a very old paper with enigmatic "Instructions for Egress," they begin to puzzle out the frightening and dangerous way to the city of light of which Lina has dreamed.

The Girl Who Could Fly (series) by Victoria Forester ** You just can't keep a good girl down . . . unless you use the proper methods. Piper McCloud can fly. Just like that. Problem is the good folk of Lowland County are

*afraid of Piper. And her ma's at her wit's end. So it seems only fitting that she leave her parents' farm to attend a top-secret, maximum-security school for kids with exceptional abilities. School is great at first with a bunch of new friends whose skills range from super-strength to super-genius. (Plus all the homemade apple pie she can eat!) But Piper is special, even among the special. And there are consequences. Consequences too dire to talk about. Too crazy to consider. And too dangerous to ignore. *The Girl Who Could Fly* is an unforgettable story of defiance and courage about an irrepressible heroine who can, who will, who must . . . fly.*

Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* by Carlos Hernandez * *Salvador Vidón is the new kid at Miami's magnet school Culeco Academy of the Arts, but being at a special school doesn't protect Sal from trouble. Bullies are everywhere, but seventh-grader Sal knows just how to handle a difficult kid like Yasmany Robles. Obviously, you deal with a bully by opening a portal into another universe, taking a raw chicken from it, and planting it in the bully's locker. But you cannot just go opening portals into other universes without some consequences.*

***Alanna: The First Adventure (series)* by Tamora Pierce ** (books 1 and 2) *** (books 3 and 4)** *Call it fate, call it intuition, or just call it common sense, but somehow young Alanna knows she isn't meant to become some proper lady cloistered in a convent. Instead, she wants to be a great warrior maiden – a female knight. But in the land of Tortall, women aren't allowed to train as warriors. So Alanna finds a way to switch places with her twin, Thom, and take his place as a knight in training at the palace of King Roald. Disguising herself as a boy, Alanna begins her training as a page in the royal court. Soon, she is garnering the admiration of all around her, including the crown prince, with her strong work ethic and her thirst for knowledge. But all the while, she is haunted by the recurring vision of a black stone city that emanates evil... somehow she knows it is her fate to purge that place of its wickedness. But how will she find it? And can she fulfill her destiny while keeping her gender a secret?*

→ ***The Lightning Thief (series)* by Rick Riordan **** *Percy Jackson is a good kid, but he can't seem to focus on his schoolwork or control his temper. When his mom tells him the truth about where he came from, she takes him to the one place he'll be safe—Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for demigods (on Long Island). There, Percy learns that the father he never knew is actually Poseidon, God of the Sea. Soon Percy finds himself caught up in a mystery that could lead to disastrous consequences. Together with his friends—a satyr and other the demigod daughter of Athena—Percy sets out on a quest to reach the gates of the Underworld and prevent a catastrophic war between the gods.*

→ ***Harry Potter (series)* by J. K. Rowling ** (books 1, 2 and 3) *** (books 4, 5, 6, and 7)** *Harry Potter has no idea how famous he is. That's because he's being raised by his miserable aunt and uncle who are terrified Harry will learn that he's really a wizard, just as his parents were. But everything changes when Harry is summoned to attend an infamous school for wizards, and he begins to discover some clues about his illustrious birthright. From the surprising way he is greeted by a lovable giant, to the unique curriculum and colorful faculty at his unusual school, Harry finds himself drawn deep inside a mystical world he never knew existed and closer to his own noble destiny.*

→ ***A Series of Unfortunate Events (series)* by Lemony Snicket **** *It tells an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children. Even though they are charming and clever, the Baudelaire siblings lead lives filled with misery and woe. From the very first page of this book when the children are at the beach and receive terrible news, continuing on through the entire story, disaster lurks at their heels. One might say they are magnets for misfortune.*

City of the Beasts (series)* by Isabelle Allende ** *When Alexander Cold is sent to stay with his eccentric grandmother, she takes Alex along with her on an expedition to the Amazon to verify the existence of the fierce, gigantic, legendary creature known as the Beast. Joining them on their adventure are a celebrated anthropologist; a local guide and his daughter, Nadia; a doctor; and a local entrepreneur. But not everyone's intentions are pure—and dangerous discoveries await Alex and Nadia as they embark, with the aid of a jungle shaman, on an epic journey into the realm of the mythical Beasts of the Amazon.*

The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Kelly Barnhill ** Every year, the people of the Protectorate leave a baby as an offering to the witch who lives in the forest. They hope this sacrifice will keep her from terrorizing their town. But the witch in the Forest, Xan, is kind. She shares her home with a wise Swamp Monster and a Perfectly Tiny Dragon. Xan rescues the children and delivers them to welcoming families on the other side of the forest, nourishing the babies with starlight on the journey. But one year, Xan accidentally feeds a baby moonlight instead of starlight, filling the ordinary child with extraordinary magic.

The Last Book in the Universe* by Rodman Philbrick ** This fast-paced action novel is set in a future where the world has been almost destroyed. It's the story of an epileptic teenager nicknamed Spaz, who begins the heroic fight to bring human intelligence back to the planet. In a world where most people are plugged into brain-drain entertainment systems, Spaz is the rare human being who can see life as it really is. When he meets an old man called Ryter, he begins to learn about Earth and its past. With Ryter as his companion, Spaz sets off an unlikely quest to save his dying sister -- and in the process, perhaps the world.

The Red Pyramid (series)* by Rick Riordan ** Since their mother's death, Carter and Sadie have become near strangers. While Sadie has lived with her grandparents in London, her brother has traveled the world with their father, the brilliant Egyptologist, Dr. Julius Kane. One night, Dr. Kane brings the siblings together for a "research experiment" at the British Museum, where he hopes to set things right for his family. Instead, he unleashes the Egyptian god Set, who banishes him to oblivion and forces the children to flee for their lives. Soon, Sadie and Carter discover that the gods of Egypt are waking, and the worst of them – Set – has his sights on the Kanes.

Read-Alikes for the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling:

Fablehaven (series) by Brendan Mull * *Teenagers Seth and Kendra are dropped off by traveling parents at their grandfather's isolated Connecticut estate, and soon discover why he's so reluctant to have them—the place is a secret haven for magical creatures, both benign and decidedly otherwise.*

Miss Ellicott's School for the Magically Minded by Sage Blackwood ** *Chantel would much rather focus on her magic than on curtsying, which is why she often finds herself in trouble at Miss Ellicott's School for Magical Maidens. But when Miss Ellicott mysteriously disappears along with all the other sorceresses in the city, Chantel's behavior becomes the least of her problems.*

→ ***Gregor the Overlander (Underland Chronicles series) by Suzanne Collins ***** *In the first novel of the New York Times bestselling series by Suzanne Collins, author of The Hunger Games, young Gregor falls through a grate in the laundry room of his apartment building and hurtles into the dark Underland. This strange world is on the brink of war, and Gregor's arrival is no accident. A prophecy foretells that Gregor has a role to play in the Underland's uncertain future. Gregor wants no part of it -- until he realizes it's the only way to solve the mystery of his father's disappearance. Gregor embarks on a dangerous adventure that will change both him and the Underland forever.*

The Accidental Keyhand (The Ninja Librarians series) by Jen Downey ** *When Dorrie and her brother Marcus chase an unusually foul-tempered mongoose into the janitor's closet of their local library, they make an astonishing discovery: the headquarters of a secret society of ninja librarians. Their mission: protect those whose words get them into trouble, anywhere in the world and at any time in history. A melding of fantasy, adventure, and history. Readers who miss the collegial, magical setting of Hogwarts will enjoy exploring Petrarch's Library.*

Theodosia and the Serpents of Chaos (The Theodosia series) by R. L. LaFevers ** *"You'd be surprised by how many things come into the museum loaded with curses--bad ones," says 11-year-old Theodosia, whose parents run London's Museum of Legends and Antiquities. Then a sacred amulet disappears, and during her search, Theodosia stumbles into a terrifying battle between international secret societies. A sure bet for Harry Potter fans.*

Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble (series) by Anna Meriano ** *Leonora Logroño's family owns the most beloved bakery in Rose Hill, Texas, spending their days conjuring delicious cookies and cakes for any occasion. And no occasion is more important than the annual Día de los Muertos festival. Leo hopes that this might be the year that she gets to help prepare for the big celebration—but, once again, she is told she's too young. Sneaking out of school and down to the bakery, she discovers that her mother, aunt, and four older sisters have in fact been keeping a big secret: they're brujas—witches of Mexican ancestry—who pour a little bit of sweet magic into everything that they bake. Leo knows that she has magical ability as well and is more determined than ever to join the family business—even if she can't let her mama and hermanas know about it yet.*

The Apprentice Witch by James Nichol ** *Arianwyn has flunked her witch's assessment: She's doomed. Declared an apprentice and sent to the town of Lull in disgrace, she may never become a real witch-- much to the glee of her arch-rival, Gimma. But remote Lull is not as boring as it seems. Strange things are sighted in the woods, a dangerous infestation of hex creeps throughout the town, and a mysterious magical visitor arrives with his eye on her. With every spirit banished, creature helped, and spell cast, Arianwyn starts to get the hang of being a witch--even if she's only an apprentice. But the worst still lies ahead. For a sinister darkness has begun to haunt her spells, and there may be much more at stake than just her pride . . . for Arianwyn and the entire land.*

The Emerald Atlas (Books of Beginning series) by John Stephens ** *Three siblings have been in one orphanage after another for the last ten years. Yet these unwanted children are more remarkable than they could possibly imagine. Ripped from their parents as babies, they are being protected from a horrible evil of devastating power, an evil they know nothing about. Until now. Before long, Kate, Michael, and Emma are on a journey through time to dangerous and secret corners of the world...a journey of allies and enemies, of magic and mayhem. And—if an ancient prophesy is correct—what they do can change history, and it is up to them to set things right.*

The Menagerie (series) by Tui Sutherland ** *In the small town of Xanadu, Wyoming lies the Menagerie, a top secret facility filled with unicorns, dragons, phoenixes, and other fairy tale creatures. At least, it was a secret—until six griffin cubs escaped.If Logan and Zoe don't get the cubs back fast, the entire Menagerie will be shut down. The race*

is on and the resulting adventure is only the beginning of a thrilling series that will leave readers wanting a magical menagerie of their very own.

Nevermoor, The Trials of Morrigan Crow by Jessica Townsend ** *Morrigan Crow is cursed. Having been born on Eventide, the unluckiest day for any child to be born, she's blamed for all local misfortunes, from hailstorms to heart attacks--and, worst of all, the curse means that Morrigan is doomed to die at midnight on her eleventh birthday. But as Morrigan awaits her fate, a strange and remarkable man named Jupiter North appears. It's then that Morrigan discovers Jupiter has chosen her to contend for a place in the city's most prestigious organization: the Wondrous Society.*

The Dark Hills Divide (The Land of Elyon series) by Patrick Carman *** *An extraordinary tale weaving magic and heroism into a classic tale of good and evil, featuring a heroine you'll never forget. Inquisitive twelve-year-old Alexa Daley is spending another summer in the walled town of Bridewell. This year, she is set on solving the mystery of what lies beyond the walls. Legend says the walls were built to keep out an unnamed evil that lurks in the forests and The Dark Hills. But what exactly is it that the townspeople are so afraid of?*

→ **The School for Good and Evil (series) by Soman Chainani ***** *Every four years, two children, one regarded as particularly nice and the other particularly nasty, are snatched from the village of Gavaldon by the shadowy School Master to attend the school. Those who survive to graduate become major or minor characters in fairy tales. Hogwarts-style pranks, classroom mishaps and competitions both academic and romantic.*

→ **The Warrior Heir (The Heir Chronicle series) by Cinda Williams Chima ***** *Before he knew about the Roses, 16-year-old Jack lived an unremarkable life. Only the medicine he has to take daily and the thick scar above his heart set him apart from the other high-schoolers. Then one day Jack skips his medicine. Suddenly, he is stronger, fiercer, and more confident than ever before. And it feels great--until he loses control of his own strength and nearly kills another player during soccer team tryouts. Soon, Jack learns the startling truth about himself: He is Weirind; part of an underground society of magical people who live among us. At the head of this magical society sit the feuding houses of the Red Rose and the White Rose, whose power is determined by playing The Game--a magical tournament in which each house sponsors a warrior to fight to the death.*

So You Want to be a Wizard (Young Wizards series) by Diane Duane *** *"Something stopped Nita's hand as it ran along the bookshelf. She looked and found that one of the books had a loose thread at the top of its spine. It was one of those So You Want to Be a . . . books, a series on careers. So You Want to Be a Pilot, and a Scientist . . . a Writer. But this one said, So You Want to Be a Wizard. I don't believe this, Nina thought. She shut the book and stood there holding it in her hand, confused, amazed, suspicious--and delighted. If it was a joke, it was a great one. If it wasn't . . . ?."*

Shade and Sorceress (The Last Days of Tian Di series) by Catherine Egan *** *Eliza and her father have spent her whole life hiding from something, or someone. When she is twelve years old, she finds out why. Snatched away from the island she has come to call home, Eliza becomes half prisoner, half pupil in the mystical Citadel of the Mancers. They believe she is the lost daughter of the last Shang Sorceress, who guards the Crossing between the magical and the non-magical worlds.*

→ **The Unwanteds (series) by Lisa McMann***** *The Hunger Games meets Harry Potter. When Alex finds out he is Unwanted, he expects to die. That is the way of the people of Quill. Each year, all the thirteen-year-olds are labeled as Wanted, Necessary, or Unwanted. Wanteds get more schooling and train to join the Quillitary. Necessaries keep the farms running. Unwanteds are set for elimination. It's hard for Alex, but he makes peace with his fate--until he discovers that instead of a "death farm," what awaits him is a magical place called Artimé.*

Ribblestrop (series) by Andy Mulligan *** *When your school's motto is "Life is dangerous," you know that anything can happen--and everything does! There's no school that's quite like Ribblestrop, complete with roofless dormitories, distracted teachers, and a perilous underground labyrinth. And then there are the students!*

Akata Witch by Nnedi Okorafor *** *Twelve-year-old Sunny lives in Nigeria, but she was born American. Her features are African, but she's albino. She's a terrific athlete, but can't go out into the sun to play soccer. There seems to*

be no place where she fits. And then she discovers something amazing—a magical power. Soon she's part of a quartet of magic students, studying the visible and invisible, learning to change reality.

Magyk (Septimus Heap series) by Angie Sage *** *Heads up, Harry, there's a new young wizard on his way up. The Magyk Begins Here. Septimus Heap, the seventh son of the seventh son, disappears the night he is born. That same night, the baby's father, Silas Heap, comes across an abandoned child in the snow—a newborn girl with violet eyes. Who is this mysterious baby girl, and what really happened to the Heaps' beloved son Septimus?*

The Amulet of Samarkand (Bartimaeus Trilogy series) by Jonathan Stroud *** *Nathaniel is a magician's apprentice, taking his first lessons in the arts of magic. But when a devious hot-shot wizard named Simon Lovelace ruthlessly humiliates Nathaniel in front of his elders, Nathaniel decides to kick up his education a few notches and show Lovelace who's boss. With revenge on his mind, he summons the powerful djinni, Bartimaeus. But summoning Bartimaeus and controlling him are two different things entirely.*

The Forbidden Library (series) by Django Wexler *** *When Alice's father disappears in a shipwreck, she is sent to live with her uncle Geryon—an uncle she's never heard of and knows nothing about. He lives in an enormous manor with a massive library that is off-limits to Alice. But then she meets a talking cat. And, even for a rule-follower, when a talking cat sneaks you into a forbidden library and introduces you to an arrogant boy who dares you to open a book, it's hard to resist. Especially if you're a reader to begin with. Soon Alice finds herself INSIDE the book, and the only way out is to defeat the creature imprisoned within.*

Read-Alikes for the Lightning Thief series by Rick Riordan:

The Forbidden Stone (The Copernicus Legacy series) by Tony Abbott ** *The Copernicus Legacy, begins with The Forbidden Stone, a thrilling adventure packed with puzzles, intrigue, and action. Fans of Rick Riordan will love this first book in an exciting series that takes the reader all over the globe in a race to find pieces of a mysterious hidden past—before it's too late.*

→ ***Loki's Wolves (The Blackwell Pages series) by K. L. Armstrong*** ** *The apocalypse is coming, and only the gods can stop it. One problem—the gods are dead. The gods of Norse myth might be dead, but their descendants live, and in Blackwell, S.D., most residents are descendants of either Thor or the trickster god Loki. When Ragnarök, the apocalypse, arrives, 13-year-old Matt Thorsen will be the champion of the gods. He is charged with finding descendants of other gods, forming an alliance and facing off against the monsters of the apocalypse. Norse mythology brought to life with engaging contemporary characters; ideal for Percy Jackson fans who want to branch out.*

Charlie Hernandez & The League of Shadows by Ryan Calejo ** *The Lightning Thief meets The Story Thieves series in this fantasy inspired by Hispanic folklore, legends, and myths from the Iberian Peninsula and Central and South America.*

The Storm Runner by J. C. Cervantes ** *Feisty heroes, tricky gods, murderous demons, and spirited giants are just some of the pleasures that await in this fresh and funny take on Maya mythology.*

Aru Shah and the End of Time by Roshani Chokshi ** *Hindu mythology comes to life in modern times as a lonely 12-year-old girl accidentally unleashes a fearsome demon. Bravery, friendship, and adventure, await.*

The Serpent's Secret (Kiranmala and the Kingdom Beyond series) by Sayantani Dasgupta ** *MEET KIRANMALA: INTERDIMENSIONAL DEMON SLAYER. (Only she doesn't know it yet.) On the morning of her twelfth birthday, Kiranmala is just a regular sixth grader living in Parsippany, New Jersey . . . until her parents mysteriously vanish and a drooling rakkhosh demon slams through her kitchen, determined to eat her alive. Turns out there might be some truth to her parents' fantastical stories-like how Kiranmala is a real Indian princess and how she comes from a secret place not of this world. To complicate matters, two crush-worthy princes ring her doorbell, insisting they've come to rescue her. Suddenly, Kiran is swept into another dimension full of magic, winged horses, moving maps, and annoying, talking birds. There she must solve riddles and battle demons all while avoiding the Serpent King of the underworld and the Rakkhoshi Queen in order to find her parents and basically save New Jersey, her entire world, and everything beyond it . . .*

Iris, Messenger by Sarah Deming ** *Dreamer Iris Greenwold doesn't care much for the real world. It's generally pretty disappointing: divorced parents, unsympathetic peers, and a middle school that is hell. But then, on her twelfth birthday, Iris mysteriously receives a copy of Bulfinch's Mythology and discovers that the entire pantheon of gods is living in the greater Philadelphia area. Poseidon is running a clam shack, Aphrodite is doing makeovers, Apollo is playing tenor sax. . . . Suddenly the day-to-day life Iris found so humdrum is rich with new meaning and excitement, and all her dreams are not quite what they seemed.*

Journey Across the Hidden Islands by Sarah Beth Durst ** *The traditional Emperor's Journey is meant to be uneventful. But as the princesses Seika and Ji-Lin—twin sisters—travel to pay respects to their kingdom's dragon guardian, unexpected monsters appear and tremors shake the earth. The Hidden Islands face unprecedented threats, and the old rituals are failing. With only their strength, ingenuity, and flying lion to rely on, can the sisters find a new way to keep their people safe?*

Dragon Pearl by Yoon Ha Lee ** *This Korean-mythology-in-space setup is great fun, with supernatural beings and ghosts aplenty, spaceships that run on technological and spiritual energy combined, an entire planet populated by ghosts, and bountiful space hijinks and derring-do.*

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky by Kwame Mbalia ** *Seventh grader Tristan Strong feels anything but strong ever since he failed to save his best friend when they were in a bus accident together. All he has left*

of Eddie is the journal his friend wrote stories in. Tristan is dreading the month he's going to spend on his grandparents' farm in Alabama, where he's being sent to heal from the tragedy. But on his first night there, a sticky creature shows up in his bedroom and steals Eddie's notebook. Tristan chases after it and finds himself in the middle of a battle that has left black American folk heroes John Henry and Brer Rabbit exhausted. In order to get back home, Tristan and these new allies will need to entice the god Anansi, the Weaver, to come out of hiding and seal the hole in the sky. But bartering with the trickster Anansi always comes at a price. Can Tristan save this world before he loses more of the things he loves?

Going Wild (series) by Lisa McMann ** Charlie Wilde knew her life would change forever when her family moved from the city of Chicago to the suburbs of Arizona...and that was before she found the bracelet. After putting it on, she notices odd things start to happen. Suddenly Charlie seems to have the speed of a cheetah and the strength of an elephant—and that's just the beginning.

Hunters of Chaos (series) by Crystal Velasquez ** Ana's average, suburban life is turned upside down when she's offered a place at the exclusive boarding school in New Mexico that both of her late parents attended. As she struggles to navigate the wealthy cliques of her new school, mysterious things begin to occur: sudden power failures, terrible storms, and even an earthquake! It turns out that the school sits on top of a mysterious temple, the ancient meeting place of the dangerous Brotherhood of Chaos.

Frostborn (Thrones and Bones series) by Lou Anders *** Fantasy fans of Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson will embrace this first novel in an adventure-filled, Viking-inspired series. Meet Karn. He is destined to take over the family farm in Norrøngard. His only problem? He'd rather be playing the board game Thrones and Bones. Enter Thianna. Half human, half frost giantess. She's too tall to blend in with other humans but too short to be taken seriously as a giant. When family intrigues force Karn and Thianna to flee into the wilderness, they have to keep their sense of humor and their wits about them. But survival can be challenging when you're being chased by a 1,500-year-old dragon; Helltoppr, the undead warrior, and his undead minions; an evil uncle; wyverns; and an assortment of trolls and giants.

The Savage Fortress (series) by Sarwat Chadda *** On vacation in India with his aunt, uncle, and younger sister, Ash Mistry can't wait to get back home to his video games and London friends. But when his uncle is offered a million pounds to assist mysterious Lord Savage with translations from an archaeological find, Ash becomes embroiled in an overwhelming and deadly real-life battle. He realizes that Lord Savage is not an ordinary mortal and that his minions are rakshasas (demons). Determined to save his uncle, Ash unwittingly betrays himself and becomes the rakshasas's target. Plot-driven, fast paced, exciting, and sometimes terrifying, *The Savage Fortress* is the ideal next step for readers who loved Rick Riordan's.

The Children's Homer: The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy by Padraic Colum *** Travel back to a mythical time when Achilles, aided by the gods, waged war against the Trojans. And join Odysseus on his journey through murky waters, facing obstacles like the terrifying Scylla and whirring Charybdis, the beautiful enchantress Circe, and the land of the raging Cyclopes.

Xander and the Lost Island of Monsters (Momotaro series) by Margaret Dilloway *** A breathless retelling of the Japanese legend of Momotaro, this is an Asian version of Percy Jackson; adventure fans will be waiting for more."

- ***Skulduggery Pleasant (series) by Derek Landy*** *** *A high-intensity tale shot through with spectacular magic battles, savage mayhem, cool outfits, monsters, hidden doors, over-the-top names, narrow escapes, evil schemes and behavior heroic, ambiguous and really, really bad. When the murder of a favorite uncle touches off a frantic search for a fabled superweapon known as the Scepter of the Ancients, 12-year-old Stephanie is abruptly pitched out of her mundane life. She hooks up with Skulduggery Pleasant—a walking, wisecracking, nattily dressed, fire-throwing skeleton detective—and similar unlikely allies to fight a genially sadistic sorcerer out to conquer the world and to bring back the bad old gods.*
- ***The Shadow Thieves (Cronus Chronicles series) by Anne Ursu*** *** *Something extraordinary is about to happen to Charlotte Mielszewski. It's not the very cute kitten that appears out of nowhere. It's not the arrival of her cousin Zee, who believes he's the cause of a mysterious sickness that has struck his friends back in England. And it's not the white-faced, yellow-eyed men in tuxedos who follow Charlotte everywhere. What's so extraordinary is not any one of these things. It's all of them. When Charlotte's friends start to get sick, Charlotte and Zee set out to find a cure. Their quest leads them to a not-so-mythical Underworld, where they face Harpies that love to rhyme, gods with personnel problems, and ghosts with a thirst for blood.*

Read-Alikes for Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli:

The Midnight War of Mateo Martinez by Robin Yardi * *Life is confusing for Mateo Martinez. He and Johnny Ramirez don't hang out anymore, even though they used to be best friends. He and his new friend Ashwin try to act like brave, old-time knights, but it only gets them in trouble. And last night, two skunks stole Mateo's old trike. Wait—two skunks stole his trike? Mateo is too big for that rusty kid toy. He has a cool, shiny new bike anyway. But Mateo also has a neighborhood to protect. And he's about to begin a big, stinky quest to catch the thieves in the middle of the night! As Mateo protects his neighborhood, he also learns a few things about growing up and letting go.*

Tumble and Blue by Cassie Beasley ** *When the red moon rises over the heart of the Okefenokee swamp, legend says that the mysterious golden gator Munch will grant good luck to the poor soul foolish enough to face him. But in 1817, when TWO fools reach him at the same time, the night's fate is split. With disastrous consequences for both . . . and their descendants. Half of the descendants have great fates, and the other half have terrible ones. Now, Tumble Wilson and Blue Montgomery are determined to fix their ancestors' mistakes and banish the bad luck that's followed them around for all of their lives. They're going to face Munch the gator themselves, and they're going to reclaim their destinies. But what if the legend of Munch is nothing but a legend, after all?*

24 Hours in Nowhere by Dusti Bowling ** *When you come from Nowhere, can you ever really make it anywhere? A gripping story about friendship, hope, and finding the power we all have within ourselves.*

Powerless by Matthew Cody ** *Superhero kids meet comic book mystery in this action-filled debut about the true meaning of a hero.*

Me and Marvin Garden by Amy King ** *Obe Devlin has problems. His family's farmland has been taken over by developers. His best friend Tommy has abandoned him. And he keeps getting nosebleeds, because of that thing he doesn't like to talk about. So Obe hangs out at the nearby creek, in the last wild patch left, picking up trash and looking for animal tracks. One day, he sees a creature that looks kind of like a large dog. And as he watches it, he realizes it eats plastic. Only plastic. Water bottles, shopping bags... No one has seen a creature like this before. The animal--Marvin Gardens--becomes Obe's best friend and biggest secret. But to keep him safe from the developers and Tommy and his friends, Obe must make a decision that might change everything.*

The Season of Styx Malone by Kekla Magoon ** *Meet Caleb and Bobby Gene, two brothers embarking on a madcap, heartwarming, one-thing-leads-to-another. Friendships will be forged, loyalties will be tested . . . and miracles just might happen.*

The Exact Location of Home by Kate Messner ** *Kirby "Zig" Zigonski lives for the world of simple circuits, light bulbs, buzzers, and motors. Electronics are, after all, much more predictable than most people--especially his father, who he hasn't seen in over a year. When his dad's latest visit is canceled with no explanation and his mom seems to be hiding something, Zig turns to his best friend Gianna and a new gizmo--a garage sale GPS unit--for help.*

The Boy Who Saved Baseball by John Ritter ** *Tom Gallagher is in a tight spot. The fate of the Dillontown team rests on the outcome of one baseball game, winner take all. If Tom's team loses, they lose their field too. But how can they possibly win? Just when everything seems hopeless, a mysterious boy named Cruz de la Cruz rides into town and claims to know the secret of hitting. Not to mention the secrets of Dante Del Gato, Dillontown's greatest hitter ever. Since he walked away from the game years ago, Del Gato hasn't spoken a word to anyone. But now he might be Tom's only hope for saving his hometown.*

→ ***Holes by Louis Sachar*** ** *Sentenced to a brutal juvenile detention camp for a crime he didn't commit, a wimpy teenager turns four generations of bad family luck around in this sunburnt tale of courage, obsession, and buried treasure.*

→ ***Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli*** ** *From the day she arrives at quiet Mica High in a burst of color and sound, the hallways hum with the murmur of "Stargirl, Stargirl." The students of Mica High are enchanted. At first. Then they turn on her. Stargirl is suddenly shunned for everything that makes her different.*

Sidekicked* by John David Anderson ** *With his less-than-spectacular superpowers and a partner who never shows up, Andrew finds that his life as a crime-fighting sidekick called “the Sensationalist” is fairly tame. When a mysterious villain captures most of the city’s top “Supers,” though, the 13-year-old has to find a way to thwart the evil plot and save the day.*

→ ***Tangerine* by Edward Bloor ***** *Tangerine, Florida—once known for its citrus groves—is now an uninhabitable quagmire of muck fires and school-swallowing sinkholes. Still, twelve-year-old Paul sees the move as a way to start anew, maybe even make a name for himself in middle school soccer—despite his father’s obsession with his high-school-age brother Erik’s future in football.*

If A Tree Falls at Lunch Period* by Jennifer Choldenko ** *Kirsten and Walk start the first day of seventh grade with one thing in common: They’re both late. This earns them a detention together, and they strike up an easy friendship, which seems to make their mothers uneasy for some reason. A story of familiar middle-school tribulations with a surprise twist.*

A Snicker of Magic* by Natalie Lloyd ** *Midnight Gulch used to be a magical place, a town where people could sing up thunderstorms and dance up sunflowers. But that was long ago, before a curse drove the magic away. Twelve-year-old Felicity knows all about things like that; her nomadic mother is cursed with a wandering heart. Felicity wants to stay in Midnight Gulch more than anything, but first, she’ll need to figure out how to bring back the magic, breaking the spell that’s been cast over the town, and her mother’s broken heart.*

No matter how busy you may think you are,
you must find time for reading, or surrender
yourself to self-chosen ignorance.”

- ***Confucius (551–479 BC) China’s most famous
ancient philosopher and teacher***