**ALMOST FLYING**

Author: Jake Maia Arlow

A delightful middle grade debut exploring first crushes and family relationships. Dalia is upset to discover that her father has had a girlfriend for the past six months and is now getting married. Dalia always thought she and her father were close, so this comes as a shock. But the worst part isn’t Vanessa, her dad’s fiancée; it’s Vanessa’s college-aged daughter, Alexa. Alexa seems angry and distracted in getting to know Dalia, but their parents want Alexa to cancel her weak-long summer vacation to five amusement parks so she can bond with Dalia. Dalia, who is secretly obsessed with roller coasters (even though she has never been on one), has a better idea: She can come along. Everyone agrees that this could work, and Dalia is even lucky enough to bring her new friend, Rani. The trip gets off to a rocky start, but Dalia isn’t too bothered, because she really enjoys spending time with Rani. When Dalia starts to think her feelings for Rani might be more than friendly, she finds some unexpected guidance from Alexa and her friend Dhruv. Dalia’s inner thoughts feel authentic, and most other characters are well developed. The relationships between characters deepen at a natural pace, and tweens will enjoy trying to figure out if Rani likes Dalia, too.

**BLACK BIRDS IN THE SKY: THE STORY AND LEGACY OF THE 1921 TULSA RACE MASSACRE**

Author: Brandy Colbert

After generations of erasure and a concerted effort to cover up history, the story of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is finally being told in a modern historical context. Following the alleged assault of a white woman by a Black man in an elevator, the thriving Black community of Greenwood, Oklahoma (also known as Black Wall Street), was heaved into violence and destruction when a white mob descended on the town to seek revenge. Colbert recounts the event in detail, piecing together accounts from survivors and news stories, though many newspaper articles were not recovered in full. Colbert dives into the events directly preceding the massacre and gives ample context through the founding of Tulsa, mounting racial tensions in the region and elsewhere, the aftermath of Reconstruction, and the forcible removal of the Muscogee (Creek) people from the land. Her foreword frames her own upbringing in a majority white community and flows into the many historical and cultural factors that led up to the 1921 massacre, emphasizing the point that no one act of violence against a Black community can be viewed as an isolated event. Clear straightforward text, photos, and well-organized storytelling makes this an essential read for teens and adults alike.

**THE YEAR I FLEW AWAY**

Author: Marie Arnold

It’s 1965 and ten-year-old Gabrielle is excited to be moving from Haiti to America. Unfortunately, her parents won’t be able to join her yet and she’ll be living in a place called Brooklyn, New York, with relatives she has never met. She promises her parents that she will behave, but life proves to be difficult in the United States, from learning the language to always feeling like she doesn’t fit in to being bullied. So when a witch offers her a chance to speak English perfectly and be “American,” she makes the deal. But soon she realizes how much she has given up by trying to fit in and, along with her two new friends (one of them a talking rat), takes on the witch in an epic battle to try to reverse the spell. Gabrielle is a funny and engaging heroine you won’t soon forget in this sweet and lyrical novel that’s perfect for fans of Hurricane Child and Front Desk.

**LOYALTY**

Author: Avi

In 1774, Massachusetts was central to rising tensions between the Colonies and Britain. Thirteen-year-old Noah’s family supports the King, but a friend’s betrayal causes the family to be driven from their home after members of the Sons of Liberty beat Noah and tar and feather his father. Its no wonder then that once Noah, his mother, and sisters flee to Boston, the teen becomes a spy for the British. Noah’s commitment to the Loyalist cause wavers as he sees hypocrisy and tyranny on both sides. His Black friend Jolla raises white Noah’s awareness of British and American commitment to slavery. As Noah struggles to determine where his loyalty lies, his mother’s words “Think For Yourself” guide him and will resonate with readers.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE FALLEN TOWERS**

Author: Don Brown

Brown’s latest work of graphic nonfiction revisits September 11, 2001, and its aftermath in time for the tragedy’s 20th anniversary. While filming a documentary about New York firefighters, French filmmaker Jules Naudet shifts his lens skyward as the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center are struck by airliners and, ultimately, collapse. Using vivid phrases like debris-strewn whirlwind, ocean of rubble, and snowfall of papers, Brown captions emotional illustrations that depict the wreckage of the towers and, later, the Pentagon. Scenes of family members and first responders alike searching for survivors in the following days, weeks, and months are juxtaposed with depictions of the United States response to the attacks, including war in the Middle East and a rise in Islamophobic incidents domestically.

**WHAT LIVES IN THE WOODS**

Author: Lindsay Currie

Twelve-year-old Ginny Anderson and her older brother, Leo, are less than thrilled to be spending a month of summer vacation away from their Chicago home. They are relocating to Saugatuck, Michigan, for their historical restoration expert father’s research. Ginny will be missing the mystery writing workshop she’s been looking forward to, and Leo doubts there’ll be many basketball courts in the sleepy town. Oh, and there’s one more thing: The fancy historic house they’ll be staying in might be haunted. Saugatuck residents whisper of mutant creatures concocted by a long-ago mad scientist roaming the surrounding woods, and everyone avoids the place. It doesn’t take long for Ginny to encounter some spooky situations, but with the help of a new local friend, Will, she is on the case.
The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise
Author: Dan Gemeinhart

Five Years. That’s how long Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have lived on the road in an old school bus, crisscrossing the nation. It’s also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a car crash. Coyote hasn’t been home in all that time, but when she learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished—the very same old neighborhood is being demolished—the very same one where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box—she devises an elaborate plan to start over. Val needs a safe place to be herself. And then going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all...but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her “once upon a time” into a “happily ever after.”

The Last Cuentista
Author: Donna Barba Higuera

The magic and power of stories and storytelling help a preteen in a terrifying future. In 2061, with Earth about to be destroyed, 12-year-old Petra Peña and her scientist parents and younger brother Javier are just barely aboard the ship that will take them to the planet Sagan when a group of zealots called the Collective, wanting absolute equality at the expense of any diversity, take over. Almost 400 years later, Petra is one of the last four “sleepers” revived, and the only one who somehow retains her memories of Earth. She uses the stories her family shared and a precious copy of Yuyi Morales’s Dreamers to try to save the others in her cohort, her newly rediscovered brother, and what seems to be the last Collective child. Life on the ship, made even more claustrophobic by Petra’s declining vision from retinitis pigmentosa, and filled with the translucent, drugged Collective, is particularly chilling. Mexican American Petra is a strong, heroic character, fighting incredible odds to survive and protect others. The ending leaves the door wide open for a sequel.

STARFISH
Author: Lisa Fipps

A charming novel in verse about a girl struggling with self-worth. Ellie is a middle school girl who is bullied every day for her weight. Whether it comes from classmates, siblings, or even her mother, Ellie is constantly bombarded with comments about her size. Luckily, her friends help keep her head up most of the time. When her best friend Viv moves away, a new friend, Catalina, fits right into her place. Ellie’s dad is also an ally; he stands up to Ellie’s mom and decides to take Ellie to a therapist. With the help of Dr. Wood, Ellie learns how to feel comfortable in her own skin. Once readers start, it will be difficult for them to put this book down. Ellie’s story is heartbreaking and raw at times, and Fipps paints a realistic picture of bullying in a world that equates thinness with beauty. Ellie’s own family, except for her dad, also buy into that ideal, calling her “Splash,” making fun of her, and cataloguing everything she eats. True joy comes in watching Ellie gain confidence in herself and standing up to the bullies, even when they’re family.

BAD SISTER
Author: Charise Mericle Harper

From the day baby Daniel arrives, crying so loudly that it hurts Charise’s ears and absorbing her mother’s attention, Charise starts growing into her role of bad sister. The popular children’s author highlights rough-and-tumble episodes from her childhood that scar her and her brother, literally and figuratively. Charise plays wildly, tricks her little brother, and enjoys her power. Often Daniel gets hurt, and her parents insist she should know better. The selected stories and details shared here reveal volumes about the family’s dynamics. The siblings’ escalating antics are captured in clean, colorful panels that often end with moving illustrations in moody blues conveying Charise’s isolation, frustration, and guilt. Readers will relate to the rivalry, ambivalent feelings, and raw honesty and they, unlike Charise’s parents, will see the full picture - it takes two to tango sometimes four, counting their parents’ roles in exacerbating everything.

OUT OF MY HEART
Author: Sharon M. Draper

A tween with cerebral palsy expands her horizons when she attends her first summer camp. Twelve-year-old Melody Brooks, from Draper’s bestselling award winner Out of My Mind 2010, returns. As the school year ends, her classmates are full of their plans for summer camp, and Melody wonders if there could be a camp that is accessible for her she uses a wheelchair and an assistive communication device. After getting brochures from the library, Melody convinces her parents to overcome their concerns and enroll her in Camp Green Glades, a camp for kids with disabilities. Melody feels some nerves, but the staff are welcoming, and she bonds with Trinity, her Jamaican American camp counselor who has a leg brace, and meets the three other girls who will share her cabin.

SHOUTING AT THE RAIN
Author: Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Delsie loves tracking the weather—lately, though, it seems the squalls are in her own life. She’s always lived with her kindhearted Grammy, but now she’s looking at their life with comments about her size. Luckily, her friends help keep her head up most of the time. When her best friend Viv moves away, a new friend, Catalina, fits right into her place. Ellie’s dad is also an ally; he stands up to Ellie’s mom and decides to take Ellie to a therapist. With the help of Dr. Wood, Ellie learns how to feel comfortable in her own skin. Once readers start, it will be difficult for them to put this book down. Ellie’s story is heartbreaking and raw at times, and Fipps paints a realistic picture of bullying in a world that equates thinness with beauty. Ellie’s own family, except for her dad, also buy into that ideal, calling her “Splash,” making fun of her, and cataloguing everything she eats. True joy comes in watching Ellie gain confidence in herself and standing up to the bullies, even when they’re family.

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Over the course of thousands of miles, Coyote will learn that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all...but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her “once upon a time” into a “happily ever after.”

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**WHEN YOU TRAP A TIGER**  
**Author: Tae Keller**

Would you make a deal with a magical tiger? This uplifting story brings Korean folklore to life as a girl goes on a quest to unlock the power of stories and save her grandmother.

When Lily and her family move in with her sick grandmother, a magical tiger straight out of her halloween Korean folktales arrives, prompting Lily to unravel a secret family history. Long, long ago, Halmoin stole something from the tigers. Now they want it back. And when one of the tigers approaches Lily with a deal—return what her grandmother stole in exchange for Halmoin’s health—Lily is tempted to agree. But deals with tigers are never what they seem! With the help of her sister and her new friend Ricky, Lily must find her voice...and the courage to face a tiger.

**A SNAKE FALLS TO EARTH**  
**Author: Darcie Little Badger**

Nina is a Lipan girl living in Texas, a budding documentarian working to find her voice. As she hone her videos over the years, she also works to decipher tales of her family’s history—stories full of animal people and the Reflecting World. Oli is a young cottontooth, sent away by his mother to find his own way. Lost and beset upon by monsters, he eventually makes a home on the banks of a bottomless lake, where he befriends a frog and two coyote twins. When Oli’s frog friend and Nina’s grandmother are endangered because of climate troubles on Earth, their lives intertwine. Magic and monsters combine with internet stardom and hurricane warnings to create a wonderful fable set in modern-day Texas. Following traditional Lipan Apache storytelling structure, this is an entertaining and illuminating look at how traditions and magic can exist in the modern world. Oli and his friends are delightful to read about, while Nina’s human concerns and love for her grandmother shine.

**TEN THOUSAND TRIES**  
**Author: Amy Makechnie**

Eighth grader Golden Maroni diligently practices soccer greatness while worrying about his father’s degenerative illness. Golden is the smallest boy on his coed soccer team, but he’s fast and determined. He believes that after spending 10,000 hours practicing and playing soccer, he’ll eventually achieve mastery of the game, like his legendary idol, Lionel Messi. Soccer is his entire family’s favorite sport—his father is a former soccer pro, and his parents are popular and successful local school coaches. But this year is different: Not only is it Golden’s final shot at captain and leading his team to the championship, but it’s 18 months since his beloved father was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. An optimist, Golden believes that with hard work and positive thinking his dad can beat ALS. When Golden and his best friend, Benny Ho, discover their mutual bestie, Lucy Littlehouse, might be moving to Maine, Golden refuses to accept that fact either. The author poignantly explores Golden’s conflicting emotions as he learns to care for his dad, help his mom and three sisters, and come to terms with the prospect of loss.

**THE BURNING**  
**Author: Tim Madigan**  
**Adapted By: Hilary Beard**

Eye-opening and immersive, this book is essential antiracist reading. Written by Madigan and adapted by Beard for young readers, this in-depth work of narrative nonfiction peels back the layers of the burning and massacre of Greenwood, a 35-block part of Tulsa, OK, in 1921. Also known as “Black Wall Street,” Greenwood was a bustling, thriving community of Black Americans that became the target of white racist rage, violence, and destruction after a Black 19-year-old named Dick Rowland was accused of accosting a white 17-year-old named Sarah Page. Madigan and Beard weave together a complex history of the setting, beginning with enslavement times, and by peppering the chapters with personal stories sometimes get bogged down in the depth of history that is required to set the stage for the unfolding of the deadliest domestic outbreak of violence since the Civil War. Upwards of 300 deaths, $50–$100 million in damages in today’s dollars, over 1,000 homes burned, and dozens of businesses looted and torched: the reader is asked to grapple with the virulent racism of the times, which still plays out in Tulsa’s systemic injustices today. As Beard notes in the introduction, readers, especially Black youth, should take caution when reading about lynching, mobs, and massacre.

**RED, WHITE, AND WHOLE**  
**Author: Rajani LaRocca**

Reha feels torn between two worlds: school, where she’s the only Indian American student, and home, with her family’s traditions and holidays. But Reha’s parents don’t understand why she’s conflicted—they only notice when Reha doesn’t meet their strict expectations. Reha feels disconnected from her mother, or Amma. Although their names are linked—Reha means “star” and Punam means “moon”—they are a universe apart. Then Reha finds out that her Amma is sick. Really sick. Reha, who dreams of becoming a doctor even though she can’t stomach the sight of blood, is determined to make her Amma well again. She’ll be the perfect daughter if it means saving her Amma’s life.
A KIND OF SPARK
Author: Elle McNicoll

Middle schooler Addie is autistic, and this year will be one of great change. When the teacher she had hoped for gets sick, she is stuck with Ms. Murphy, a bully who doesn’t want Addie in her class just because she is different. When Addie learns that her small Scottish village used to try “suspicious” women and execute them as witches, she feels a deep and concerning connection with these outcasts. She realizes that it is up to her to ensure that this piece of history, and these women, are not forgotten. But will Addie be able to pull strength from her family and herself while facing opposition from school and the city council because of her autism? This deeply honest, at times painful story brings a much needed look at middle school from the perspective of neurodiverse students. Addie’s twin older sisters, one of whom is also autistic, provide strong examples of healthy family relationships, and her new friend Audrey loves Addie for who she is. This debut novel from neurodivergent author McNicoll will bring readers to tears and have them cheering for Addie as she learns how much she has to offer the world.

AIN’T BURNT ALL THE BRIGHT
Author: Jason Reynolds  
Illustrator: Jason Griffin

Reynolds’s introspective narrative poem, with a young man at home during quarantine as its speaker, shares the stage with Griffin’s emotive collagelike illustrations done in Moleskine notebooks and reproduced on the pages to make it look like a real teen’s journal. The poem and images create an authentic-sounding adolescent narrator trying to grapple with the confusion and fear of the double pandemic (COVID-19 and systemic racism) he is facing. The book ends with a conversation between the two Jasons about their collaborative process for creating this work during the pandemic.

STUNTB GUY IN THE MEANIME
Author: Jason Reynolds  
Illustrator: Raúl the Third

This ingeniously crafted illustrated novel offers a multifaceted and heartfelt take on the classic superhero story. Portico Reeves is a kid with a secret secret -- he likes to think of himself as Stuntboy, a homegrown and self-styled superhero whose power is making sure all the other heroes stay super. And safe. Supersafe. The selfless Stuntboy protects the quirky and racially diverse cast of characters in his apartment building, particularly his own family members and his best friend Zola. Instead of super strength or flight, Stuntboy performs a variety of odd stunts to help others, which also lets him burn off some energy. When he is Stuntboy, the young hero isn’t affected by his anxiety, or the frets, which are made worse for family members and his best friend Zola. Instead of super strength or flight, Stuntboy performs a variety of odd stunts to help others, which also lets him burn off some energy. When he is Stuntboy, the young hero isn’t affected by his anxiety, or the frets, which are made worse for Portico by his parents constant bickering and his by his anxiety, or the frets, which are made worse for

STUCK
Author: Jennifer Swender

If Austin picked a color to describe his life, it would be tumbleweed brown. Austin doesn’t like standing out. He’s always the new kid, and there’s no hiding his size. Plus, Austin has a secret: he struggles to read.

Then Austin meets Bertie, who is razzmatazz. Everything about Bertie is bursting! But the best part of his newest school is the Safety Squad, with their laser lemon vests. Their easy confidence and leadership stand out in the coolest way. Even when things are not so vibrant and life at home makes Austin feel pacific blue, for the first time, he wants to leave a mark. And the more Austin speaks up, the more he finds he may not be that different after all.

THE ONE THING YOU’D SAVE
Author: Linda Sue Park

Newbery Medalist Park presents a provocative collection of narrative poems inspired by sijo, a 14th-century Korean syllabic verse form. Teacher Ms. Chang poses to her class a variation of the timeless desert-island question: “Imagine that your home is on fire.” and, while family and pets are spared, “you’re allowed to save one thing.” Chang’s students react well to this “good homework,” sharing with their classmates a multitude of objects they’d protect from the hypothetical flames. Some choose eminently practical items like a cellphone (“somebody’s gotta call 9-1-1, right?”) and “MY DAD’S WALLET. DUH!” (because “if a fire burns everything up, you’re gonna need money. A lot”). Other treasures reflect differing levels of maturity and self-involvement: a mother’s insulin kit, a rug to smother flames, sneakers like “Jeremy Lin wore when he scored thirty-eight points / against the Lakers” and for which the student had saved pennies for months, a “muddy blue” sweater May’s father’s mother had knitted for her father that her other grandmother then unraveled and reknit for her. Coupled with debut illustrator Sae-Hing’s accessible grayscale sketches of the objects, often in situ, Park’s sijo’s mementos offer middle-grade readers much food for thought regarding what one values and how others can touch one’s life. A note on sijo concludes the volume.

ROOT MAGIC
Author: Eden Royce

An African American tween learns about her family’s connection to conjure magic—and human evil—in 1960s South Carolina. Jezebel and her twin brother, Jay, know their family will never be the same following their Gran’s death. Their father’s unexplained disappearance a few years back is another loss that has yet to heal. Gran was a talented Gullah rootworker whose abilities were sought by some and reviled by others. The local White deputy harasses families who use rootwork even as they are needed for the healing denied by segregated hospitals.

Now, Jezebel and Jay are about to learn these skills from their uncle to keep the legacy alive. For the first time, the twins will not be in the same class since Jezebel will skip fifth grade. She becomes the target of bullies but manages to make one friend, a girl new to the school. As the rootwork lessons proceed, the twins become more aware of change all around them, from whispered voices in the marsh to the strange actions of Jezebel’s doll. It becomes clear that they have inherited connections to the spiritual world and that they face a very human threat.

AMAL UNBOUND
Author: Aisha Saeed

Twelve-year-old Amal’s dream of becoming a teacher one day is dashed in an instant when she accidentally insults a member of her Pakistani village’s ruling family. As punishment for her behavior, she is forced to leave her heartbroken family behind and go work at their estate. Amal is distraught but has faced setbacks before. So she summons her courage and begins navigating the complex rules of life as a servant, with all its attendant jealousies and pecking-order woes. Most troubling, though, is Amal’s increasing awareness of the deadly measures the Khan family will go to in order to stay in control. It’s clear that their hold over her village will never loosen as long as everyone is too afraid to challenge them—so if Amal is to have any chance of ensuring her loved ones’ safety and winning back her freedom, she must find a way to work with the other servants to make it happen.
**Fallout**

Author: Steve Sheinkin

Sheinkin delivers another heart-pounding tale, picking up where his 2012 award-winning book Bomb left off the end of World War II and the start of the Cold War. The story opens in 1953, with Jimmy Bozart, the 13-year-old paperboy who discovered a hollow nickel dropped by Soviet spy Rudolf Abel, a key early player in the series of conflicts that would lead up to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In tightly organized chapters adorned with historical photos, Sheinkin seamlessly weaves the stories of different players and includes meticulously well-researched details to personalize and humanize his subjects. Key events from the Cold War are dramatized in detailed scenes, including the inception of the arms race between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., the capture of U2 pilot Francis Powers, the Bay of Pigs invasion, and the building of the Berlin Wall.

**Other Words for Home**

Author: Jasmine Warga

Jude never thought she’d be leaving her beloved older brother and father behind, all the way across the ocean in Syria. But when things in her hometown start becoming volatile, Jude and her mother are sent to live in Cincinnati with relatives.

At first, everything in America seems too fast and too loud. The American movies that Jude has always loved haven’t quite prepared her for starting school in the US—and her new label of “Middle Eastern,” an identity she’s never known before. But this life also brings unexpected surprises—there are new friends, a whole new family, and a school musical that Jude might just try out for. Maybe America, too, is a place where Jude can be seen as she really is.

**Healer of the Water Monster**

Author: Brian Young

Eleven-year-old Nathan convinces his (divorced) parents to let him stay with his grandmother, Nali (a Navajo word used for paternal relationships, e.g., paternal grandparents), in New Mexico during the summer so he can work on a science experiment. Nathan notices that the traditional seeds are missing. One night he finds a horned toad taking his seeds and follows it into the desert. There he finds a sick water monster. At the same time, Uncle Jet has returned home from the Marines and needs healing as well. Nathan is committed to helping them both. To do that, Nathan must travel to the Third World to meet with the Mother Water Monster.