



# Young Readers' Choice Award

## YRCA Nominees 2018 – Book Profiles

### Junior Division

#### ***Crenshaw - Katherine Applegate***

**What's it about?** Ten-year-old Jackson's family is going through hard times and financial insecurity; Crenshaw (a giant cat) is an imaginary friend from Jack's early childhood who returns in his time of need.

**What kind of book is it?** emotional, real-life, homelessness, imaginary friends, imagination

**Reviews:** *Crenshaw is a masterful story about a family down on its luck, and though it tackles homelessness, it's never hopeless. Honest and very readable, this portrayal of economic insecurity flows effortlessly toward its hopeful but not unrealistic conclusion.* — Common Sense Media.

**Similar to/noteworthy:** By the same author of the *One and Only Ivan*, a past YRCA nominated title and 2013 Newbery Award winner.

#### ***The Terrible Two - Mac Barnett* SERIES**

**What's it about?** Junior High School student Miles Murphy is the best prankster his school has ever seen. When he is forced to move to a small town, he assumes that he will be the best prankster at his new school as well, but he discovers pretty quickly that he has some stiff competition.

**What kind of book is it?** funny, black and white cartoon illustrations, practical jokes, friendship, rivalry, fast-paced

**Reviews:** *Barnett (the Brixton Brothers series) and John (All My Friends Are Dead) are in perfect comic harmony, filling their story with exaggerated archetypes (the overbearing principal, the do-gooder), pranks gone awry, and wisecracking banter.* — Publishers Weekly

**Similar to...***Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Captain Underpants, Middle School – the Worst Years of my Life.*

**Noteworthy:** This book is the first in a trilogy, with a fourth book underway. Film version also in the works.

## **Circus Mirandus - Cassie Beasley**

**What's it about?** Micah Tuttle is a fifth grader who is preparing to deal with the loss of his beloved grandfather, Ephraim. His horrible aunt has come to stay and Micah is desperate to find a way to save his grandfather. But the Lightbender of the Circus Mirandus has promised Ephraim a miracle and Micah embarks on an adventure to save him.

**What kind of book is it?** magical realism, adventure, dealing with loss and grief

**Reviews...***the book is a fantastical circus romp, with fortunetelling vultures and “a wallaby that could burp the Greek alphabet.” ... it's both serious and thick with longing.* — Kirkus

**Similar to...***Big Fish, Peter Pan, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, a kid's version of *Night Circus*. This is the author's first novel.

## **The War that Saved My Life - Kimberly Brubaker Bradley**

**What's it about?** Set in WW2 (1939) in England where families are evacuating children from London to rural areas. Ava is 11. Born with a twisted foot, her mother considers her an abomination and is very abusive to her. When she and her younger brother Jamie are sent to a rural farm, the world opens up to Ava - who up until now has never been allowed even to go outside or learn to walk.

**What kind of book is it?** historical fiction, disabilities, physical and emotional abuse, siblings

**Reviews:** *The War That Saved My Life, (a 2016 Newbery Honor book), is a standout coming-of-age story set in the English countryside during World War II. Kids and adults will cheer for Ada...There's lots of historical detail about World War II in England.* — Common Sense Media

**Similar to:** *Anne of Green Gables*

**Noteworthy:** Wall Street Journal's Best Children's Book of 2015, Newbery Honor Book in 2016

## **Roller Girl – Victoria Jamieson**

**What's it about?** 12-year-old Astrid has always done everything with her best friend Nicole. So when Astrid signs up for roller derby camp, she assumes Nicole will too. But Nicole signs up for dance camp with a new friend instead, and so begins the toughest summer of Astrid's life.

**What kind of book is it?** friendship, graphic novel, self-acceptance/self-esteem, real life

**Reviews:** *The Newbery Honor Award Winner and New York Times bestseller Roller Girl is a heartwarming graphic novel about friendship and surviving junior high through the power of roller derby – perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier's Smile!*

**Similar to...** *Smile, Wonder, El Deafo*

## **Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer – Kelly Jones**

**What's it about?** 12-year-old Sophie feels out of place after moving to a farm from Los Angeles. But when she discovers that one of the chickens can move things with her mind, things get more and more interesting! Told in letters, lists, quizzes, a chicken-care correspondence course, and more.

**What kind of book is it?** animal stories, adventure, mystery, fantasy

**Reviews:** *Readers will cheer for Sophie and clamor for more of those amazing chickens. Exceptional, indeed.* — School Library Journal

**Similar to...** books by Roald Dahl and Polly Horvath

## **Masterminds – Gordon Korman      CANADIAN AUTHOR      SERIES**

**What's it about?** Eli has never left his hometown because everything about it is perfect, but one day he rides his bike to the outskirts and something so crazy and unexpected happens that it changes everything. He and his friends find a connection to some of the greatest criminal masterminds ever known, and they realize that they can't trust anyone, not even their own parents.

**What kind of book is it?** adventure, thriller, friendship, mystery

**Reviews:** *Masterminds is a masterpiece - a mind-bending adventure in a shocking but all-too-possible present, a tale of friendship and ultimate sacrifice with characters who will reach inside you and not let go. It's that rare book that scares you to the core while you're laughing your head off.* — Peter Lerangis

**Similar to...** *Maximum Ride, Theodore Boone*

**Noteworthy:** Canadian author, Gordon Korman, published his first book when he was in junior high school. Several of his books have been nominated for YRCA and some, like *No More Dead Dogs* and *Son of the Mob*, have won. *Ungifted* was nominated in 2015.

## **Fuzzy Mud – Louis Sachar**

**What's it about?** Tamaya and Marshall take a shortcut to avoid fighting with a bully. They get lost and find something that might affect the future of the world.

**What kind of book is it?** suspense, friendship, bullying, mystery, science, environment

**Reviews:** *Sachar blends elements of mystery, suspense, and school-day life into a taut environmental cautionary tale.* — Publishers Weekly

**Similar to...** *Flush*

**Noteworthy:** Author also wrote *Holes*.

**More info for teachers:** [http://www.stemread.com/fuzzy\\_mud/](http://www.stemread.com/fuzzy_mud/)

## Intermediate Division

### *The Darkest Part of the Forest – Holly Black*

**What's it about?** Hazel lives with her brother, Ben, in the strange town of Fairfold where humans and fae exist side by side. The faeries' seemingly harmless magic attracts tourists, but Hazel knows how dangerous they can be, and she knows how to stop them. Or she did, once (Goodreads).

**What kind of book is it?** fantasy, faerie mythology, urban fantasy, paranormal, atmospheric, romance, relationships, plot twist

**Reviews:** *The fairies in the woods around Fairfold are not the playful, glitter-winged sprites of popular culture...They will enchant and destroy on a whim. Highly recommended for young adults or the young at heart who are looking for a fantasy-filled escape from the real world. — Goodreads*

**Similar to...** Re-telling of the Sleeping Beauty story. Co-author of the *Spiderwick Chronicles*, author of *Doll Bones*, Holly Black wrote the 2016 YRCA nominated *Coldest Girl in Coldtown*.

### *Saint Anything – Sarah Dessen*

**What's it about?** Peyton, Sydney's charismatic older brother, has always been the star of the family, receiving the lion's share of their parents' attention and—lately—concern. When Peyton's increasingly reckless behavior culminates in an accident, a drunk driving conviction, and a jail sentence, Sydney is cast adrift, searching for her place in the family and the world (Goodreads).

**What kind of book is it?** relationships, rich versus poor, emotional, change, self-discovery

**Reviews:** *The uber-popular Sarah Dessen explores her signature themes of family, self-discovery, and change in her twelfth novel, sure to delight her legions of fans. — Goodreads*

**Similar to...** other Sarah Dessen novels

## ***Illuminae* - Amie Kaufman & Jay Kristoff** SERIES

**What's it about?** The year is 2575, and two rival corporations are at war over the planet. With enemy fire raining down on them, Kady and Ezra are forced to fight their way onto an evacuating fleet, with an enemy warship in hot pursuit. If that's not enough, a deadly plague is mutating the fleet's AI, and nobody will say what's really going on (Publisher).

**What kind of book is it?** space opera, futuristic, science fiction, romance, adventure, hackers, artificial intelligence

**Reviews:** *Mix some Battlestar Galactica with a sprinkling of The Walking Dead and 2001: A Space Odyssey, and you'd get this very flavorful if incredibly intense space thriller.* — Common sense media

**Similar to...** *Legend, Maze Runner.*

**Noteworthy:** First book in a trilogy, this is an epistolary novel (told in photos, letters, military files, medical reports, screenshots, etc). The co-authors are longtime friends. The book is being developed for film.

## ***The Nest* - Kenneth Oppel** CANADIAN AUTHOR

**What's it about?** Harper Collins Book trailer here  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZdbWYGHJ80>

Steve is an older brother struggling with anxiety and his family's distress after his newborn brother, Theodore, is diagnosed with a rare congenital disorder. After a curious wasp from the hive above their house stings Steve, he develops the ability to speak to the hive's queen, who promises to replace the ailing baby with a new one (Publishers Weekly).

**What kind of book is it?** creepy, odd, horror, supernatural, anxiety, OCD, nightmares, illness, wasps

**Reviews:** *This quiet yet emotionally haunting book thoughtfully explores themes of safety, anxiety, and the beauty of the imperfect...[An] affecting middle grade psychological thriller.* — School Library Journal

**Similar to...** *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman. This author also wrote *Boundless*, a 2017 YRCA nominated book.

## ***Magnus Chase and the Sword of Summer* – Rick Riordan** SERIES

**What's it about?** Magnus Chase, a homeless boy living in Boston, finds out he is the son of a Norse god, and that he is the only one who can prevent Ragnarok (the apocalypse).

**What kind of book is it?** action, adventure, mythology, fantasy

**Reviews:** *Rick Riordan's new series is simply brilliant-maybe his best yet! I thought I knew Norse mythology, but now that I've read the gripping and hilarious Sword of Summer, I'll never see Thor the same way again. Get ready to stay up all night reading!*— New York Times #1 best-selling author Harlan Coben

**Similar to...** *Loki's Wolves, Percy Jackson, Seven Wonders*

## ***The Blackthorn Key* – Kevin Sands** CANADIAN AUTHOR

**What's it about?** In 1665 London, fourteen-year-old Christopher Rowe, apprentice to an apothecary, and his best friend, Tom, try to uncover the truth behind a mysterious cult, following a trail of puzzles, codes, pranks, and danger toward an unearthly secret with the power to tear the world apart.

**What kind of book is it?** action, adventure, history, science, humour

**Reviews:** *First-time novelist Sands has written an exciting and self-assured tale of alchemy and dark secrets...It's a story that should have broad appeal, while especially intriguing readers with an existing interest in chemistry, history, and decoding puzzles.* — Publishers Weekly

**Similar to...** *Theodosia Throckmorton series, Alistair Grim's Odditorium, The Book Without Words.*

## ***Goodbye Stranger* – Rebecca Stead**

**What's it about?** As Bridge makes her way through seventh grade on Manhattan's Upper West Side with her best friends, curvacious Em, crusader Tab, and a curious new friend--or more than friend--Sherm, she finds the answer she has been seeking since she barely survived an accident at age eight: "What is my purpose?"

**What kind of book is it?** friendship, school, real life

**Reviews:** *Stead adroitly conveys the way things get complicated so quickly and so completely for even fairly ordinary children at the edge of growing up with her cleareyed look at bullies and their appeal (one girl is "truly genius at being awful"), as well as her look at impulsiveness and the lure of easy sharing via text. Superb.* — Kirkus

**Similar to...** *Middle School is Worse than Meatloaf, The Secret Language of Girls, Agnes Parker – Girl in Progress.*

## ***Nimona* – Noelle Stevenson**

**What's it about?** Lord Blackheart, a villain with a vendetta, and his sidekick, Nimona, an impulsive young shapeshifter, must prove to the kingdom that Sir Goldenloin and the Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics aren't the heroes everyone thinks they are.

**What kind of book is it?** graphic novel, fantasy, science fiction, world-building

**Reviews:** *Packed with spot-on comedic timing and heartening relationships, this is perfect for readers who prefer their adventures rollickingly clever. Fans of the original webcomic will be delighted by the print-only epilogue.* — Booklist

**Similar to...** *Lumberjanes, The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl, Princeless*

## Senior Division

### ***Red Queen - Aveyard, Victoria* SERIES**

**What's it about?** This is a world divided by blood – red or silver. The Reds are commoners, ruled by a Silver elite in possession of god-like superpowers. And to Mare Barrow, a seventeen-year-old Red girl from the poverty-stricken Stilts, it seems like nothing will ever change. That is, until she finds herself working in the Silver Palace. Here, Mare discovers that she possesses a deadly power of her own. One that threatens to destroy the balance of power (Goodreads).

**What kind of book is it?** historical fantasy, dystopia, magic

**Reviews:** *Aveyard weaves a compelling new world, and Mare and the two men in her life evolve intriguingly as class tension rises. Revolution supersedes romance, setting the stage for action-packed surprises. An inventive, character-driven twist breathes new life into tired fantasy trends.* — Kirkus

**Similar to:** *Graceling, The Selection*, “Games of Thrones meets Hunger Games meets X Men” (according to one blogger).

**Noteworthy:** First in a series, Book 4 has a 2018 publication date. Film version in the works.

### ***Six of Crows - Bardugo, Leigh* SERIES**

**What's it about?** Ketterdam: a bustling hub of international trade where anything can be had for the right price—and no one knows that better than criminal prodigy Kaz Brekker. Kaz is offered a chance at a deadly heist. But he can't pull it off alone. Kaz's crew of six dangerous outcasts is the only thing that might stand between the world and destruction—if they don't kill each other first (LeighBardugo.com).

**What kind of book is it?** fantasy adventure, heist story, Tsarist Russia, magic

**Reviews:** *This has all the right elements to keep readers enthralled: a cunning leader with a plan for every occasion, nigh-impossible odds, an entertainingly combative team of skilled misfits, a twisty plot, and a nerve-wracking cliffhanger.* — Publishers Weekly

**Similar to:** *Ocean's 11* (heist story with great characters). This spinoff of Bardugo's very popular Grisha Trilogy is set in the same location but in the future. *Shadow and Bone*, book 1 of the Grisha trilogy was a previous YRCA nominated book. Book 1 of a 2 book series.

## ***Between the World and Me - Ta-Nehisi Coates***

**What's it about?** In a series of essays, written as a letter to his son, Coates confronts the notion of race in America and how it has shaped American history, many times at the cost of black bodies and lives. A timely work, this title will resonate with all teens--those who have experienced racism as well as those who have followed the recent news coverage on violence against people of color. (Goodreads)

**What kind of book is it?** letter, lyrical prose, memoir, racism, race relations

**Reviews:** *Hailed by Toni Morrison as "required reading," a bold and personal literary exploration of America's racial history by "the single best writer on the subject of race in the United States".* — The New York Observer

**Similar to...** *Underground Railroad*. Audiobook format narrated by author.

Was a finalist for 2016 Pulitzer prize for nonfiction

## ***I Was Here – Gayle Forman***

**What's it about?** When Cody's best friend Meg commits suicide, Cody is naturally reeling with heartbreak and guilt. However, when she travels to collect Meg's things at her college, she discovers two things: an encrypted file on Meg's computer and Ben McCallister, the boy who broke Meg's heart. Suddenly, all that Cody believes about Meg's death is shaken up (Teen Reads).

**What kind of book is it?** suicide, depression, grief, friendship, mystery, romance, contemporary

**Reviews:** *Part tautly paced mystery, part psychological study of suicide and its aftereffects. . . An engrossing and provocative look at the devastating finality of suicide, survivor's guilt, the complicated nature of responsibility and even the role of the Internet in life-and-death decisions.* — Kirkus

**Similar to...** *If I Stay* (by the same author), *13 Reasons Why*

## ***Finding Audrey – Sophie Kinsella***

**What's it about?** Audrey has developed an anxiety disorder and is making slow but steady progress with the help of a therapist. She meets Linus, her brother's teammate and finds she can talk through her fears with him in a way she's never been able to do with anyone before.

**What kind of book is it?** anxiety, bullying, school, love, friendship

**Reviews:** *An outstanding tragicomedy that gently explores mental illness, the lasting effects of bullying, and the power of friends and loving family to help in the healing.* — Kirkus, starred review

**Similar to...** *The Boyfriend List*, *Along for the Ride*, *10 Things I Can See From Here*



## ***A Court of Thorns and Roses – Sarah J. Maas***

**What's it about?** The human world is in peril. After Feyre kills an enormous wolf, a fierce fey shows up at her doorstep seeking retribution. Feyre is led to beautiful eternal springs, but the journey is not without danger. A retelling of Beauty and the Beast.

**What kind of book is it?** Fantasy, action, fairies, romance

**Reviews:** *Sarah J. Maas delivers what may be her best work to date...Enchanting, spellbinding and imaginative...The world-building is stellar, as only Maas can imagine it.* — USA Today

**Similar to...** *The Wrath & the Dawn, The Darkest Part of the Forest, Throne of Glass series*

## ***We Are All Made of Molecules – Susin Nielsen* CANADIAN AUTHOR**

**What's it about?** Thirteen-year-old brilliant but socially-challenged Stewart and mean-girl Ashley must find common ground when, two years after Stewart's mother died, his father moves in with his new girlfriend--Ashley's mother, whose gay ex-husband lives in their guest house.

**What kind of book is it?** real life, stepsiblings, loss, funny, quirky, family, school, bullying

**Reviews:** *By turns humorous and heartbreaking, the story is told in alternating chapters narrated by both protagonists ... Their overlapping journeys will leave readers with much to think about, as Nielsen unflinchingly tackles issues such as bullying, bigotry, and tolerance; the true nature of friendship; and what it means to be a family.* — School Library Journal

**Similar to...** *See You at Harry's, Dough Boy, Wonder*

## ***Carry On – Rainbow Rowell***

**What's it about?** During his last year at Watford School of Magicks, Simon Snow, the Chosen One, faces a magic-eating monster wearing his face, a break-up, and a missing nemesis.

**What kind of book is it?** Fantasy, world-building, romance, monsters

**Reviews:** *With rock-solid worldbuilding, a sweet and believable romance subplot, and satisfying ending, Carry On is a monumentally enjoyable reading experience.* — School Library Journal, starred review

**Similar to...** *Fangirl, Harry Potter, A Hero at the End of the World*