



Young Reader's Choice Awards

YRCA 2023 Book Profiles

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YRCA 2023 Junior Book Profiles

***Maya and the Rising Darkness* by Rena Barron**

What's it about? Maya learns a shocking secret about her family and community, and with the help of her friends unlocks powers she never knew she had to save the day.

Read-alikes:

- *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan
- *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs
- *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston
- *Paola Santiago and the River of Tears* by Tehlor Kay Mejia

If you like diverse characters, magical creatures, secret worlds, and fantasy stories with complicated bad guys, you'll love this book.

Something interesting: Rena Barron loves learning about ghosts, science fiction and superheroes! The magical world in this book is based on West African Mythology and the Orisha Pantheon.

Reading level: 720L

Suggested age: Grade 5 to 7 (School Library Journal)

***Wink* by Rob Harrell**

What's it about? A wrenching, yet hilarious story about embracing life's weirdness and surviving an unthinkable diagnosis with a rare eye cancer.

Read-alikes:

- *Wimpy Kid Series* by Jeff Kinney
- *Restart* by Gordon Korman
- *Tornado Brain* by Cat Patrick

If you like funny stories starring kids with real-life struggles, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Rob Harrell risked losing his artistic career when he was diagnosed with eye cancer in 2005.

Reading level: 580L

Suggested age: Grades 3 to 6 (School Library Journal)



***When Stars Are Scattered* by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed**

What's it about? Two Somali brothers must endure life alone in a refugee camp.

Read-alikes:

- *The Red Pencil* by Andrea Davis Pinkney
- *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park
- *Child Soldier* by Jessica Dee Humphries
- *Escape from Aleppo* by N.H. Senzai

If you like the drawings found in *Roller Girl*, and enjoy reading about real life stories then you will like this book!

Something interesting: This story is based on the lived experiences of a real person, the second author, Omar Mohamed. There were only 3 to 4 books for all the students to share at the school in the refugee camp. Omar Mohamed has started an organization called Refugee Strong to provide educational supplies to other students growing up in refugee camps.

Reading level: 530L

Suggested age: Grade 4 to 8 (School Library Journal)

***When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller**

What's it about? Lily feels helpless against her grandmother's illness, but when she meets a magical tiger who offers her a deal that can help her grandmother, she must decide whether or not to trust the tiger before it's too late.

Read-alikes:

- *Inkling* by Kenneth Oppel
- *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin
- *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech

If you like culturally diverse stories inspired by fairy tales, folklore, and magical realism you will love this book!

Something interesting: *When You Trap a Tiger* is the winner of the Newberry Medal and The Asian Pacific Award. It was inspired by Tae Keller's childhood in Hawaii, where she grew up listening to her own halmoni's tiger stories. Her mother, Nora Okha Keller, is also an award-winning author.

Reading level: 590L

Suggested age: Grades 4 to 7 (School Library Journal)



***From the Desk of Zoe Washington* by Janae Marks**

What's it about? Zoe Washington, who loves to bake, writes to her father in prison, and then tries to prove his innocence.

Read-alikes:

- *Blended* by Sharon M. Draper
- *Partly Cloudy* by Tanita S. Davis
- *The Swag is in the Socks* by Kelly J. Baptist
- *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang

If you like family stories, detective stories, or stories about standing up for what's right, then you will like this book!

Something interesting: You can find a recipe and the playlist from the book on the [author's website](#).

Reading level: 660L

Suggested age: Grades 4+ (School Library Journal)

***Everything Sad is Untrue (A True Story)* by Daniel Nayeri**

What's it about? 12-year-old Khosrou is an Iranian refugee in Oklahoma who tells stories from his childhood to try and fit in at school.

Read-alikes:

- *Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga
- *Pie in the Sky* by Remy Lai
- *Ahmed Aziz's Epic Year* by Nina Hamza

If you like books about family, immigrant experiences, and trying to fit in at school, give this book a try!

Something interesting: While this book is fiction, it is inspired by the author's own experience immigrating to the United States from Iran when he was young.

Reading level: 800L

Suggested age: Grades 4 to 8 (School Library Journal)



***City Spies* by James Ponti**

What's it about? Sara leaves her life behind to become a spy in a team with four other kids from around the world.

Read-alikes:

- *Spy School* by Stuart Gibbs
- *Pilfer Academy* by Lauren Magaziner
- *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* by Chris Grabenstein

If you like spy novels, found families, visiting cities around the world, and mysteries then you will like this book!

Something interesting: James Ponti was born in Italy, has a fear of frogs, strongly dislikes mayonnaise, and used to work at a Disney Park.

Reading level: 750L

Suggested age: Grade 4 to 8 (School Library Journal)

***The Barren Grounds* by David A. Robertson**

What's it about? Two Indigenous children caught up in the foster care system stumble upon a secret portal to the Barren Grounds of Misewa, a community who desperately need their help before the icy winter weather freezes everything.

Read-alikes:

- *Healer of the Water Monster* by Brian Young
- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Land of Stories* by Chris Colfer
- *Sisters of the Neversea* by Cynthia Leitich Smith

If you like adventure stories with diverse characters and an attention-grabbing writing style, then you will like this book!

Something interesting: *Barren Grounds* is inspired by the land of Narnia but incorporates the legends and storytelling traditions of the author's Cree heritage. Environmental sustainability is pitted against empire building, heroes are honoured with constellations in the sky, and it all ends with a high-speed canoe chase. Robertson is a member of the Norway House Cree Nation.

Reading level: 680L

Suggested age: Grades 4 to 6 (School Library Journal)



YRCA 2023 Intermediate Book Profiles

***Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo**

What's it about? A novel in verse about two teenage girls, Camino and Yahaira, whose lives are separated by oceans, and the secrets their papi has been keeping. It is only after he is gone that they find each other and realize that they have the same father, and that he was hiding the fact that he had two families.

Read-alikes:

- *Home is Not A Country* by Safia Elhillo
- *Every Body Looking* by Candice Iloh
- *Me (Moth)* by Amber McBride

If you like novels in verse, and realistic fiction that deals with grief and forgiveness then you will like this book!

Something interesting: Before she was a writer, Elizabeth used to be a teacher and a slam poet! During the pandemic Elizabeth took up candle making.

Reading level: 800L

Suggested age: Grade 9+ (School Library Journal)

***We are Not Free* by Traci Chee**

What's it about? Traci Chee brings to life first person stories of 14 teens as they experience racism, segregation, and incarceration in America during World War II.

Read-alikes:

- *Internment* by Samira Ahmed
- *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei
- *Displacement* by Kiku Hughes

If you like culturally diverse stories that bring to light social injustices and historical fiction, then you'll like this book.

Something interesting: Traci Chee loves bonsai gardening, the ancient Japanese tradition of pruning trees into miniature forms.

Reading level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated Reader is IL: UG, BL: 5.5, AR Pts: 14

Suggested age: Grade 7+ (School Library Journal)



Legendborn by Tracy Deonn

What's it about? Bree enters the high school program at UNC-Chapel Hill, where she witnesses a magical attack her very first night on campus, and tumbles into a world of magic and legends.

Read-alikes:

- *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie Stiefvater
- *The Guinevere Deception* by Kiersten White
- *Ace of Spades* by Faridah Àbíké-íyímídé

If you like well-constructed worlds, secret societies and explorations of grief then you will like this book!

Something interesting: Much like Bree, Tracy went to UNC-Chapel Hill, but she was not part of a secret society. She loves anything ginger flavored, and reads fanfiction.

Reading level: 730L

Suggested age: Grade 8+ (School Library Journal)

The Henna Wars by Adiba Jaigirdar

What's it about? Bangladeshi-Irish Nishat falls for her rival in a school business competition while navigating how her culture, faith and sexuality weave together.

Read-alikes:

- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender
- *I Kissed Alice* by Anna Birch
- *I'll Be the One* by Lyla Lee

If you like books about queer romance, family ties and artistic expression, then this is the book for you!

Something interesting: Adiba Jaigirdar wrote this book while listening to Janelle Monáe and Hayley Kiyoko, and drinking an excessive amount of tea.

Reading level: No reading level reported

Suggested age: Grades 7 to 10 (School Library Journal)



***Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger**

What's it about? In a parallel America, a teen with the power to raise the dead sets out to solve the mystery of her cousin's murder.

Read-alikes:

- *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi
- *The Okay Witch* by Emma Steinkellner
- *A Song Below Water* by Bethany C. Morrow

If you like LGBTQIA+ characters, culturally diverse stories, mysteries, and fantasy give this book a read!

Something interesting: *Elatsoe* is a Locus Award Winner and a National Indie Bestseller. Darcie Little Badger is a Lipan Apache, an Earth scientist, and an oceanographer. She is part of the Indigenous Futurisms movement, where Indigenous artists and authors create science fiction and fantasy with characters and themes drawn from Indigenous cultures.

Reading level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated Reader is IL: UG, BL: 4.7, AR Pts: 11

Suggested age: Grade 5+ (School Library Journal)

***The Paper Girl of Paris* by Jordyn Taylor**

What's it about? 16-year-old Alice tries to solve the mystery of her grandmother's apartment in Paris, abandoned in the 1940s, using her great-aunt's diary.

Read-alikes:

- *White Rose* by Kip Wilson
- *Tamar* by Mal Peet
- *Code Name Verity* by Elizabeth Wein

If you like WWII stories, coming of age stories, and mysteries, you will like this book!

Something interesting: The author consulted real diaries written by women in Nazi-occupied France while researching this book. She was inspired by stories that she read as a child of ordinary people doing extraordinary things to fight evil.

Reading level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated Reader is IL: UG, BL: 5.5, AR Pts: 13

Suggested age: Grade 8+ (School Library Journal)



Cemetery Boys by Aiden Thomas

What's it about? Yadriel, wanting to prove who he is to his family, summons the wrong spirit while trying to find out what happened to his cousin. Now he must find out what happened to both his cousin, and the spirit he summoned.

Read-alikes:

- *The Taking of Jake Livingston* by Ryan Douglass
- *Blood Like Magic* by Liselle Sambury
- *These Witches Don't Burn* by Isabel Stirling

If you like paranormal activity, stories dealing with real issues, and romance then you will like this book!

Something interesting: This is Aiden's debut book. Aiden enjoys organizing their bookshelf by color, and would be a great partner for The Office Trivia Night.

Reading Level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated Reader is: IL: UG, BL: 5.2, AR Pts: 15

Suggested age: Grade 9+ (School Library Journal)

Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

What's it about? Amal, a Black Muslim teenager, is convicted of a crime he did not commit.

Read-alikes:

- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *Say Her Name* by Zetta Elliott

If you like books about social justice, real life, and poetry, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: Yusef Salaam is a member of the exonerated five, a group of five Black and Latino youths who were wrongfully convicted of a brutal crime they did not commit. Amal's story is based on the author's experiences of racial injustice.

Reading level: Lexile level NP. Accelerated reading IL: UG, BL: 5.7, AR Pts: 5

Suggested age: Grade 8+ (School Library Journal)



YRCA 2023 Senior Book Profiles

***The Inheritance Games* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes**

What's it about? A teen must solve a multilayered puzzle to find out why she's the recipient of a billionaire's inheritance.

Read-alikes:

- *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin
- *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson
- *One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus

If you like solving puzzles, a bit of romance, and the movie *Knives Out*, you will like this book!

Something interesting: Jen wrote her first published novel when she was nineteen and sold her first five books while still in college. She is one of the world's leading experts on the psychology of fandom.

Reading level: 640L

Suggested age: Grade 7+ (School Library Journal)

***Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender**

What's it about? Black trans teen Felix Love is attending a summer program at a NYC arts school. He struggles to feel accepted by his family and his classmates as he explores his art and his identity.

Read-alikes:

- *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli
- *I Wish You All the Best* by Mason Deaver
- *Between Perfect and Real* by Ray Stoeve

If you like LGBTQIA+ characters, high school romance, coming of age, and self-discovery, this book has it all!

Something interesting: The author was born and raised in St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands. They are Black, queer, and trans. *Felix Ever After* won the Stonewall Award for Children's and YA Literature in 2021.

Reading level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated Reader is IL: UG, BL: 5.1, AR Pts: 13

Suggested Age: Grade 9+ (School Library Journal)



***The Silence of Bones* by June Hur**

What's it about? An eerie murder mystery and a coming-of-age tale about a girl searching for home, set in 19th century Joseon Korea.

Read-alikes:

- *Splinters of Scarlet* by Emily Murphy
- *Out of the Easy* by Ruth Sepetys
- *Terrier* by Tamora Pierce
- *Mirage* by Somaiya Daud

If you like resilient heroines, murder mysteries and family dramas, you will like this book.

Something interesting: June Hur was born in South Korea and raised in Canada, except for the time when she moved back to Korea and attended high school there. She studied History and Literature at the University of Toronto, and currently works for the public library. She lives in Toronto with her husband and daughter.

Reading level: 800L

Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***You Should See Me in a Crown* by Leah Johnson**

What's it about? Liz is a musician in her high school band, and when she doesn't get a scholarship that she was counting on she decides to run for prom queen to win a scholarship. Will falling for another would-be prom queen keep Liz from her dreams, or make them come true?

Read-alikes:

- *Who Put This Song On* by Morgan Parker
- *The Weight of the Stars* by K. Ancrum
- *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus

If you like prom stories, sweet romances, important friendships and accomplishing dreams then you will like this book!

Something interesting: On the day of her prom, Leah Johnson had her tennis sectional championship, concert choir state finals and her brother's graduation. She played her last tennis match with rollers in her hair and fresh acrylic nails.

Reading level: 880L

Suggested age: Grade 9+ (School Library Journal)



***The Wild* by Owen Laukkanen**

What's it about? Dawn's life is spiraling out of control. Her mother and stepfather send her away against her will to a wilderness therapy program only to find out things don't go as planned.

Read-alikes:

- *The Trail* by Meika Hashimoto
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding
- *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

If you like plot twists, outdoor survival, and edge of your seat suspense, give this book a read!

Something interesting: Owen Laukkanen is a Canadian author who lives in Vancouver and PEI with his rescue pit bull Lucy. One of his first jobs as a writer was being hired to write a report on the World Series of Poker.

Reading level: 840L

Suggested age: 16+ (Random House)

***Faith Taking Flight* by Julie Murphy**

What's it about? Faith Herbert was just a regular teen until an encounter with a mysterious organization leaves her with the ability to fly. When a new designer drug infiltrates her school, and animals and people start disappearing, Faith must save her town, all while juggling grades, volunteering, and relationships.

Read-alikes:

- *Ms. Marvel* by G. Willow Wilson
- *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl Beats Up the Marvel Universe* by Ryan North
- *Mooncakes* by Suzanne Walker

If you like superhero stories and LGBTQIA+ characters, this is the book for you!

Something interesting: Julie Murphy's novel *Dumplin'* is now a Netflix original film. You can follow more of Faith Herbert's adventures in the sequel novel *Faith: Greater Heights*, and the limited comic series *Faith* published by Valiant.

Reading level: No Lexile Level reported. Accelerated reader is IL: UG, BL: 5.2, AR Pts: 12

Suggested age: Grade 8+ (School Library Journal)



***Dear Justyce* by Nic Stone**

What's it about? Incarcerated teen, Quan Banks, pleads not guilty for shooting a police officer, and writes letters to his childhood neighbour Justyce McCallister about his experiences in the American juvenile justice system.

Read-alikes:

- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From* by Jennifer De Leon
- *Tyler Johnson Was Here* by Jay Coles

If you like realistic fiction that is thought provoking and character driven, then you will like this book!

Something interesting: Nic Stone was born in Atlanta, but spent many years working with youth in Israel. She is openly bisexual. She was inspired to write at a young age because of the lack of representation of people who looked like her in the books that she read.

Reading level: 780L

Suggested age: 14+ (School Library Journal)

***Parachutes* by Kelly Yang**

What's it about? A Chinese teen and her host sister in California navigate issues of wealth, power, and trauma.

Read-alikes:

- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo
- *Yolk* by Mary H.K. Choi
- *The Love and Lies of Rukhsana Ali* by Sabina Kahn

If you like strong female characters that deal with hard topics then you will like this book.

Something interesting: Kelly Yang went to college at 13 and got into law school at 17. She has a law degree but quit being a lawyer in order to be a writer!

Reading level: No reading level reported.

Suggested age: Grade 9+ (School Library Journal)