



YRCA 2026 Book Profiles

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YRCA 2026 Junior Book Profiles

***A Horse Named Sky* by Rosanne Parry**

What's it about? Sky, a young, wild mustang that is born free roaming on the range in Nevada during the 1860s. After being captured for the Pony Express, he must find his way across treacherous terrain to reunite with his family.

Read-alikes:

- [*A Wolf Called Wander*](#) by Rosanne Parry
- [*The Black Stallion*](#) by Walter Farley
- [*Pax: Journey Home*](#) by Sara Pennypacker

If you like horses, stories about wild animals, or big adventures, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: While researching this book during the pandemic, Rosanne Perry lived in a 'research mobile' in Oregon near a herd of wild horses to study them up close.

Reading level: 480L

Suggested age: Ages 8-12 (Publisher)

***Chalice of the Gods* by Rick Riordan**

What's it about? Percy Jackson needs three college recommendation letters from Mount Olympus. To get it, he must team up with Annabeth and Grover to fulfill three quests.

Read-alikes:

- [*Artemis Fowl*](#) by Eoin Colfer
- [*The Serpent's Secret*](#) by Sayantani DasGupta
- [*Fablehaven*](#) by Brandon Mull

If you like humorous fantasy adventures that blend modern life with ancient mythology, featuring relatable teen heroes facing both everyday challenges and epic quests, you'll love *The Chalice of the Gods*.

Something interesting: Rick Riordan originally had no plans to return to Percy Jackson's point of view, but he wrote this book to re-introduce readers to Percy before Disney+ "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" series aired!

Reading level: Lexile measure 710L; DRA 40

Suggested age: Grades 3-8 (Scholastic)



***Four Eyes* by Rex Ogle & Dave Valeza**

What's it about? A graphic novel about a boy named Rex whose middle school experience is nothing like he expected. He must learn how to grapple with his new appearance, his emotionally distant father, and his family's financial status. Rex learns to regain confidence in who he is.

Read-alikes:

- [*Nat for Nothing*](#) by Maria Scrivan
- [*Curlfriends. New in Town*](#) by Sharee Miller
- [*Picture Day*](#) by Sarah Sax

If you like heartwarming graphic novels about finding healthy relationships, family, and embracing yourself you'll love *Four Eyes*.

Something interesting: This book is based on the author's own experience growing up!

Reading level: Lexile measure GN280L; DRA 40

Suggested age: Grades 3-7 (Scholastic)

***The Grace of Wild Things* by Heather Fawcett**

What's it about? An *Anne of Green Gables* retelling with magic! Grace goes to the witch in the woods to become her apprentice, but she must learn how to do 100 ½ spells in a year or the witch will eat her!

Read-alikes:

- [*The Mirrorwood*](#) by Deva Fagan
- [*The Gingerbread Witch*](#) by Alexandra Overy
- [*The Last Windwitch*](#) by Jennifer Adam

If you like magic, talking crows, making friends and lyrical descriptions of the world, this book is for you!

Something interesting: Heather Fawcett has said that if she were to ride a fantasy creature into battle it would be a dragon. She currently lives on Vancouver Island, Canada! Before she was an author, she was an archaeologist.

Reading level: Not Available

Suggested age: Ages 8-12 (Scholastic)



The Moth Keeper: a graphic novel by Kay O'Neill

What's it about? A young girl understands how very important the role 'Moth Keeper' is to her village and undertakes this new responsibility with heartfelt diligence. However, her curiosity of other villages and nagging memories from her past tempt her to sway from her chosen path.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Witch Boy*](#) by Molly Ostertag
- [*Pilu of the Woods*](#) by Mai K. Nguyen
- [*The Wondrous Wonders*](#) by Camille Jourdy

If you like fantasy, graphic novels, and protagonists who are finding their way while questioning who they are, then you'll like *The Moth Keeper*.

Something interesting: O'Neil's work often includes LGBTQ+ characters and positive messages about inclusiveness. The author prefers to be known as Kay and goes by they/them pronouns.

Reading level: Lexile: 710

Suggested age: Ages 9-12 (NoveList)

The Otherwoods by Justine Pucella Winans

What's it about? Twelve-year-old River Rydell – who can see monsters and cross into a creepy spirit realm – must face their deepest fears to save their best friend from a world that's anything but friendly.

Read-alikes:

- [*Nightmare King*](#) by Daka Hermon
- [*Ghost Book*](#) by Remy Lai
- [*Finch House*](#) by Ciera Burch

If you like monsters, creepy forests, a brave, queer protagonist, and overcoming fear and self-doubt, you'll love *The Otherwoods*. Also cats. You have to like cats.

Something interesting: When Justine Pucella Winans (they/she) is not busy writing queer horror fiction, they can be found snuggling their cat and working on their true goal of becoming a Pokémon Trainer.

Reading level: ATOS 5.1

Suggested age: Ages 8-12 (Kirkus)



***The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels* by Beth Lincoln**

What's it about? A mystery that takes place on a family estate with quirky characters and new discoveries around every turn – and a treasure hunt!

Read-alikes:

- [*A Series of Unfortunate Events*](#) by Lemony Snicket
- [*The 39 Clues*](#) (Main Series)
- [*Greenglass House*](#) by Kate Milford

If you like witty, quirky, who-done-it mysteries then you'll like this first-in-a-series book!

Something interesting: The author, Beth Lincoln, was raised in a former Victorian railway station in the North of England. Some of her favourite things include ghosts and weird words like “bumbershoot” (AKA umbrella) and “Zounderkite” (a Victorian word meaning fool)

Reading level: Lexile Measure 810L

Suggested age: Ages 8-12 (Amazon)

***The Firefly Summer* by Morgan Matson**

What's it about? Ryanna goes to her grandparents' home at an old summer camp, hoping to find out more about her mother - but finds a whole lot more!

Read-alikes:

- [*Sink or Swim*](#) by Lee Durfey-Lavoie
- [*Unhappy Camper*](#) by Lily LaMotte
- [*Mirror to Mirror*](#) by Rajani LaRocca
- [*Samira's Worst Best Summer*](#) Nina Hamza

If you like mysteries and summer camp stories, try this one!

Something interesting: Morgan Matson has written eight other books for teens, but *The Firefly Summer* is her first book for kids. She prefers marshmallows “toasted so it's lightly brown on the outside but fully gooey on the inside”

Reading Level: 800L

Suggested Age: Ages 8-12 (Publisher)



YRCA 2026 Intermediate Book Profiles

***Divine Rivals* by Rebecca Ross**

What's it about? With her brother fighting in the war between the gods, her mother drinking her sorrows away, and her handsome rival at her job competing for the same promotion, Iris Winnow is doing her best, including communicating with a stranger through her typewriter. When things get worse, she takes the plunge and heads deep into the war.

Read-alikes:

- [*Seasons of the Storm*](#) by Elle Cosimano
- [*The Cruel Prince*](#) by Holly Black
- [*A Study in Drowning*](#) by Ava Reid

If you like enemies to lovers, stories of gods and wars, slow burn romances, and historical steampunk fiction, you'll like this book.

Something interesting: Before becoming a full-time writer, Rebecca Ross worked at a dude ranch, as a school librarian, and as a live-time captionist for college.

Reading level: ATOS 5.6

Suggested age: Ages 13-18 (Publisher)

***Dreamer: A Graphic Novel* by Akim Aliu**

What's it about? This graphic novel memoir is the story of Akim Aliu, a previous Calgary Flames hockey player and his story of growing up in Ukraine, Nigeria and Canada as well as his experience as a hockey player.

Read-alikes:

- [*Play Like a Girl*](#) by Misty Wilson
- [*The Tryout*](#) by Christina Soontornvat
- [*The Crossover*](#) by Kwame Alexander

If you like real life stories, graphic novels and hockey, you'll like this book.

Something interesting: In 2022 Akim Aliu and six other active NHL players launched the Hockey Diversity Alliance, aimed at creating equitable programs to end systemic racism in hockey.

Reading level: Lexile Level GN580L

Suggested age: Ages 12 and up (Scholastic)



***Confessions of a Candy Snatcher* by Phoebe Sinclair**

What's it about? On Halloween night, twelve-year-old Jonas and his friends hit the streets to go Candy Snatching – same as they have done for years. Except this time, their sweet heist goes sour when someone fights back, setting off a Candy Snatching nightmare with no rewind button.

Read-alikes:

- [*Riding Chance*](#) by Christine Kendall
- [*The Probability of Everything*](#) by Sarah Everett
- [*I know What You Did Last Summer*](#) by Lois Duncan

If you like stories of friendship and loyalty, moral conflict, and zines, you'll like *Confessions of a Candy Snatcher*.

Something interesting: Zines are self-published magazines typically used to bring unheard voices into the spotlight, providing a space for all. They originated as an amateur press movement, where publications were distributed to people through mail. Today Zines are made to discuss a range of topics from comics to politics to art, etc. Anyone can make them – even you!

Reading level: Lexile 700

Suggested age: Ages 9-12

***Harvest House* by Cynthia Leitich Smith**

What's it about? Hughie is a Muscogee teen helping with a haunted house fundraiser. A creepy supernatural entity seems to be targeting young Brown women. Themes of racism and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls are explored with a creepy backdrop.

Read-alikes:

- [*She is a Haunting*](#) by Trang Thanh Tran
- [*Funeral Songs for Dying Girls*](#) by Cherie Dimaline
- [*Here Lies Olive*](#) by Kate Anderson

If you like learning about contemporary Indigenous issues, creepy supernatural tales, and young romance, this book is for you.

Something interesting: Cynthia has seen “Star Wars” (1977) in the movie theatre over 180 times. Her favorite character is R2D2.

Reading Level: Lexile 850 L

Suggested Age: Ages 12-18 (Kirkus)



***Junior High: The Graphic Novel* by Tegan Quinn and Sara Quinn**

What's it about? Before the indie-pop duo Tegan and Sara became Tegan and Sara, they were... well... Tegan and Sara: going through the perils of puberty, discovering their love of music... and finding themselves drifting apart. For the first time ever, they ask who one sister is without the other.

Read-alikes:

- [*Kristy's Great Idea*](#) by Raina Telgemeier
- [*Just Lizzie*](#) by Karen Wilfrid
- [*All Summer Long*](#) by Hope Larson

If you like coming of age, self-discovery, a passion for music, and lightly fictionalized autobiographical graphic novels, you'll love Tegan and Sara's *Junior High*.

Something interesting: Tegan and Sara's first band, "Plunk" was short for "Light Punk", and they initially struggled to get permission to use their school's recording studio, with Sara saying that their teacher was "uncomfortable letting us girls handle the machines unchaperoned."

Reading level: Lexile Measure HL 180L

Suggested age: Ages 10-14 (Publisher)

***The Isles of the Gods* by Amie Kaufman**

What's it about? A sea-faring adventure where three teens must find their way out of a string of dangerous situations to prevent a gangster's younger sister from starting a war to wake a sleeping god.

Read-alikes:

- [*Silver in the Bone*](#) by Alexandra Bracken
- [*Caraval*](#) by Stephanie Garber
- [*Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*](#) by Rick Riordan

If you like sailing, adventure, a hint of romance, nail-biting suspenseful moments, and magic, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: This is the first book of a duology – *Heart of the World* was released in 2024 and is available from EPL now!

Reading level: Lexile 8940L

Suggested age: Ages 12-18 (Kirkus)



***Tress of the Emerald Sea* by Brandon Sanderson**

What's it about? When her friend is taken to find a bride, and disaster strikes, Tress must leave the only place she's ever known. She sets sail to find the Sorceress of the deadly Midnight Sea, where a single drop can mean death.

Read-alikes:

- [*All The Stars and Teeth*](#) by Adalyn Grace
- [*Howl's Moving Castle*](#) by Diana Wynne Jones
- [*The Princess Bride*](#) by William Goldman

If you like *The Princess Bride*, the ocean, pirates and adventure, you'll like this book!

Something interesting: If you're interested in becoming a writer, Brandon Sanderson has a youtube channel dedicated to helping people learn the craft!

Reading level: Not Available

Suggested age: Not Available

***The Infinity Particle: A Graphic Novel* by Wendy Xu**

What's it about? A young scientist falls for her mentor's AI creation, sparking questions about the rights of AI and what it means to be human.

Read-alikes:

- [*Lunar Boy*](#) by Jessica Wibowo
- [*True Life in Uncanny Valley*](#) Deb Caletti
- [*Pixels of You*](#) by Ananth Hirsh
- [*Strange Bedfellows*](#) by Ariel Slamet Ries

If you like sci-fi graphic novels with a hint of romance, you'll love *The Infinity Particle*.

Something interesting: Wendy Xu illustrated the popular graphic novel *Mooncakes* and posts many more short comics and art online.

Reading level: Not Available

Suggested age: Ages 13+ (Publisher)



YRCA 2026 Senior Book Profiles

***Check & Mate* by Ali Hazelwood**

What's it about? 18-year-old Mallory Greenleaf is launched into the world of high-paying chess competitions after beating the world champion.

Read-alikes:

- [*If You Could See the Sun*](#) by Ann Liang
- [*Don't Hate the Player*](#) by Alexis Need
- [*Betting on You*](#) by Lynn Painter

If you like chess and stories about rivalry, personal growth, and romance, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: The inspiration for this book came from the concept of 'stereotype threat' and a study that showed that due to the stereotype that female chess players are less skilled, they often experience more anxiety and lower success when playing against male chess players.

Reading level: HL670L

Suggested age: Ages 14+ (Publisher)

***Danger and Other Unknown Risks: A Graphic Novel* by Ryan North and Erica Henderson**

What's it about? A Chosen One sci-fi adventure with a twist.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Deep Dark*](#) by Molly Knox Ostertag
- [*The Ojja-wojja*](#) by Magdalene Visaggio
- [*Luminous Beings*](#) by David Arnold

If you like funny graphic novels with a heartfelt twist and surprises added to familiar fantasy tropes, check out this graphic novel!

Something interesting: Ryan North has worked on numerous comics and graphic novels including *Adventure Time* and *Fantastic Four*. His dog's name is Noam Chompsky.

Reading level: HL490L

Suggested age: Ages 12-17 (Canadian Review of Materials)



Hockey Girl Loves Drama Boy: A Graphic Novel by Faith Erin Hicks

What's it about? Opposites attract in this graphic novel about a friendship between a Hockey Girl and a Drama Boy that grows from mentor-apprentice to friends to more than friends.

Read-alikes:

- [*If You'll Have Me*](#) by Eunie
- [*Belle of the Ball*](#) by Mari Costa
- [*Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me*](#) by Mariko Tamaki & Rosemary Valero-O'Connell

If you like quick reads and rom-com graphic novels with cute illustration style, you will love this book.

Something interesting: Faith Erin Hicks is a Canadian author and self-proclaimed terrible ice skater. She also has never played hockey, so she consulted her friend and fellow cartoonist Shelli Paroline for the ins and outs of being a Hockey Girl.

Reading Level: AR Level 2.9

Suggested age: Ages 14-18 (Publisher)

Lying in the Deep by Diana Urban

What's it about? Jade is taking a college semester on a cruise ship. When her ex-best friend goes missing, leaving a bloody room behind, everyone thinks Jade murdered her. Jade has to solve the crime before she gets arrested.

Read-alikes:

- [*Nothing More to Tell*](#) by Karen M. McManus
- [*You'll Be the Death of Me*](#) by Karen McManus
- [*A Good Girls Guide to Murder*](#) by Holly Jackson

If you like murder mysteries, travel and a romance sub-plot, you'll like this book!

Something interesting: When not writing novels, Diana Urban freelances in video game narrative writing.

Reading level: HL720L

Suggested age: Ages 14+ (Publisher)



Powerless by Lauren Roberts

What's it about? An Ordinary blending in with the Elites to stay alive and out of trouble, Paedyn is thrown into the Purging Trials, a brutal competition to showcase the Elites' powers--the very thing she lacks.

Read-alikes:

- [Fourth Wing](#) by Rebecca Yarros
- [Heartless Hunter](#) by Kristen Ciccarelli
- [Red Queen](#) by Victoria Aveyard

If you like fantasy, romantasy, suspenseful, action packed novels, you'll enjoy *Powerless*.

Something interesting: *Powerless* is Lauren Roberts' first novel. She started writing it when she was 18 and self-published it at 19. Then it was picked up by a major publishing house and became a New York Times Bestseller.

Reading Level: Lexile 730L

Suggested Age: Ages 14-99 (Publisher)

Stars and Smoke by Marie Lu

What's it about? In order to infiltrate the inner circle of a crime organization, a world-famous charming popstar and a no-nonsense spy must team up. However, things between them are more than they appear, and they both might be in over their heads

Read-alikes:

- [Once Upon A K-Prom](#) by Kat Cho
- [I'd Tell You I'd Love You But Then I'd Have To Kill You](#) by Ally Carter
- [The Inheritance Games](#) by Jennifer Lynne Barnes

If you like K-Pop, spy thrillers and opposites attract romances, you'll like this book!

Something interesting: When she was three, Marie Lu was bit on the eyelid by a rat, and ended up in the hospital for a month because of it.

Reading level: 800L

Suggested age: Ages 14-18 (Publisher)



***To Shape a Dragon's Breath* by Moniquill Blackgoose**

What's it about? After finding the egg of a dragon sacred to the Indigenous people of Masquapaug, Anequs bonds with the hatchling. The traditional knowledge of how to care for the dragon has been lost by the Masquapaug's Indigenous people, so Anequs's only option is to enroll in the dragoneer school, Kuiper's Academy of Natural Philosophy run by their colonizers.

Read-alikes:

- [*Firekeeper's Daughter*](#) by Angeline Boulley
- [*Moon of the Crusted Snow*](#) by Rice Waubgeshig
- [*Bad Cree*](#) by Jessica Johns
- [*Son of a Trickster*](#) by Eden Robinson

If you like Indigenous-centered fantasy, dragons and magical schools, try this book!

Something interesting: An enrolled member of the Seaconke Wampanoag Tribe and a lineal descendant of Ousamequin Massasoit, Moniquill has been writing science fiction and fantasy since the age of twelve.

Reading level: Not Available

Suggested age: Not Available

***What the River Knows* by Isabel Ibanez**

What's it about? In this YA historical fantasy, the wealthy but lonely Inez travels alone to Egypt to find out what happened to her parents. She finds herself in colonial-controlled Cairo while Egypt's historical treasures are being looted. There is magic and romance as she tries to make sense of what happened to her family.

Read-alikes:

- [*The City Beautiful*](#) by Aden Polydoros
- [*Before We Disappear*](#) by Shaun David Hutchinson
- [*The Wicked Bargain*](#) by Gabe Cole Novoa

If you like *The Mummy*, *Indiana Jones*, rivals to lovers, adventure, magic, and historical fantasy, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: Book Two of the *Secrets of the Nile* duology by Bolivian American author Isabel Ibanez is out! It's called *Where the Library Hides*.

Reading Level: 1160 Lexile

Suggested Age: Ages 13-18 (Kirkus)