

Kinder and 1st Grade

Today by Julie Morstad.

I love this extra large book with its myriad illustrations. It begins with a girl waking up and the text asking "What should I do today?" Every decision, from choosing a hairdo to choosing a snack to reading a book to picking transportation offers an array of diverse options, each one illustrated and labeled. The book is filled with children of all backgrounds and kids will love discussing how they would choose to spend their day!

Confetti: Poems for Children by Pat Mora, illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez.

This is a joyful collection of short poems sprinkled with Spanish words. Pat Mora has done a wonderful job composing poems that will appeal to very young children on a range of subjects like colors, nature, counting and everyday moments.

Hello Goodbye Dog by Maria Gianferrari, illustrated by Patrice Barton.

Zara has a dog named Moose. Moose loves Zara so much he wants to go with her everywhere. Moose is not a service dog, but others see his potential as a good companion and Moose goes through the training to become a therapy dog. Although Zara is in a wheelchair, the story isn't about her physical challenges, it is about the joy of friendship with a furry friend.

Thunder Boy Jr. by Sherman Alexie

This book is both fun and thought-provoking. Thunder Boy, Jr. wishes he had a normal name, like his sister. And he does not like being called "Little Thunder," which sounds "like a burp or a fart." He sets out to pick a new name, perhaps one that reflects one of his great achievements. In the end, he settles on the perfect name—one that is both his very own and still connects him to his dad.

Yo Soy Muslim by Mark Gonzales, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini.

The narrative is written as a letter from a father to his daughter, but it reads like a poem. The father recognizes that his child will have questions about who she is and what she can accomplish. Celebrating their shared faith and culture and language, the father's letter aims to give his daughter confidence and pride in her identity as a Latina and as a Muslim.

This Is How We Do It by Matt Lamothe.

The book follows seven children from different countries: Italy, Japan, Uganda, Russia, India, Peru and Iran. Each contemporary child describes their home, school, family, food and daily life. This is a great starting point for conversations about the differences and similarities between life in different countries, but also how children in the same country don't all live the same way. At the end, photographs reveal the actual families depicted in the book. I love the large size of the book, and how the illustrations invite a lengthy perusal.

Cora Cooks Pancit by Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore, illustrated by Kristi Valiant.

Confession: I have a soft spot for picture books that show families cooking. I don't know why, since cooking is not really my thing. Cora's favorite Filipino dish is pancit, a noodle and chicken meal. One day, when her older siblings head out to the mall, Cora jumps at the chance to help Mama make the delicious dish. During the food preparation, Cora learns about the family's history and Filipino culture.

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald No Combina by Monica Brown, illustrated by Sara Palacios.

Red-headed half-Scottish half-Peruvian Marisol bounces off the page with great enthusiasm and loves her mismatched life. When her friend, Ollie, challenges her to “match,” Marisol finds she is unhappy with life as a conformist. This is a great story that emphasizes the importance of embracing and accepting one's uniqueness. A bilingual book.

Stella Brings the Family by Miriam B. Schiffer.

Stella doesn't feel different than the other kids, but she realizes her parents are different from a lot of the other families she knows. Her school class is planning a Mother's Day celebration, so Stella comes up with a way to include her two dads. The lovely way the book communicates that Stella's dads can do all the things a mom can do sends a positive message that families may look different, but the love is the same.

More-igami by Dori Kleber, illustrated by G. Brian Karas.

This is a sweet story of perseverance. After his classmate's mother teaches him origami, Joey is determined to be a master folder. But it takes lots of practice! He finds the perfect place to hone his skills at the local restaurant. I loved how Joey spent time folding everything he could get his hands on, including the money!

All the Way to Havana by Margarita Engle, illustrated by Mike Curato.

I loved the rhythm of this book! A boy and his family drive to Havana in their car, Cara-Cara. Along the way, the boy takes in all the sights and sounds of the drive, especially the sounds made by his beloved car. The illustrations are wonderfully vibrant. This is a great read aloud choice.

A Hat for Mrs. Goldman: A Story About Knitting and Love by Michelle Edwards, illustrated by G. Brian Karas.

This is such an incredibly sweet and inspiring story! Mrs. Goldman, a Jewish woman, makes hats for others, performing a mitzvah. Her Latina neighbor Sophie likes to help her by making the pom poms that top each one. When winter arrives Sophie notices that Mrs. Goldman doesn't have a hat of her own and although knitting is challenging for Sophie, she sets about making a hat for her friend. When she is done with the hat, her lack of knitting skills means the hat has a few holes. However, since Sophie knows Mrs. Goldman loves her pom poms, Sophie covers up the holes in a creative way. Mrs. Goldman, of course, loves the hat and the kindness shown to her.

The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi.

Unhei has just moved to America from Korea. She loves her name but when the other kids can't pronounce it, she worries about fitting in. She decides she should choose a new American name. Her classmates fill up a jar with potential new names but with the support of others Unhei decides she wants to keep her Korean name. This book is so important, especially in classrooms in which children may have names that are difficult for English speakers to say. Names are a big part of a person's identity and we serve children well by valuing them.

Back to Front and Upside Down by Claire Alexander.

The class is making cards for their principal but Stan has trouble forming letters and his handwriting is all mushy and unreadable. He feels discouraged but doesn't know how to ask for help. Many parents have children who struggle greatly with handwriting and this sweet book emphasizes the importance of getting help for one's struggles and giving yourself permission to take the time necessary to learn and accomplish one's tasks.

Maybe Something Beautiful by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell, illustrated by Rafael López.

This book is based on a true story. Mira and her neighbors transform their environment with colorful murals. I love the vibrant illustrations and the message that art makes life better!

The Water Princess by Susan Verde, and Georgie Badiel, illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds.

I loved this book when I read it and I was surprised I didn't already have it on a list! In an African community, water is precious and every day Gie Gie and the other girls must travel far in order to fetch clear drinking water for the community. Gie Gie can command other forces of nature: she tames the dogs, she plays hide and seek with the wind, but she can't seem to make the water safe to drink. But she perseveres and never gives up hope that one day she will have enough clean, clear water.

Lucia the Luchadora by Cynthia Leonor Garza, illustrated by Alyssa Bermudez.

This is a fun, exuberant book, which you can pair with *Niño Wrestles the World* (on the 30 days of diverse preschool books list). Lucia runs through the playground with her red cape, and the boys tell her "girls can't be superheroes." This makes Lucia mad, "Spicy mad. KA-POW kind of mad." Then, her grandmother tells her about the luchadoras and together they hatch a marvelous plan.

I'm New Here by Anne Sibley O'Brien.

Every child knows what it is like to walk into a room and not know anyone. Compound that with not being able to speak the language, or not being familiar with the culture and it can lead to some anxiety indeed. Three children—from Guatemala, Korea, and Somalia—tell their stories of what it is like to be the new kid from a distant land.

Monsoon by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Jamel Akib.

I love this book about a girl describing how her family waits for the monsoon rains. The land is dry and they wonder if the rain will ever come. The illustrations are full of life and the poetic text is fun to read aloud.

That Is My Dream! by Langston Hughes, illustrated by Daniel Miyares.

This is a picture book of Hughes's poem, "Dream Variation," about the dream of living without racial prejudice. Each page spread contains a short line of the poem, accompanied by brilliant illustrations. In the illustrations we see the dream of transformation from a segregated community to one in which a white child and an African-American child can splash their faces with water from the same pond. A gorgeous book and excellent introduction for children to Hughes's splendid poetry.

The Rain Stomper by Boswell Addie, illustrated by Eric Velasquez.

I love the joyful spirit of this book, the illustrations are alive with movement. Jazmin is excited to twirl her baton in a parade, but the rain threatens to spoil everything. At first she takes out her anger by stomping in the puddles, but that energy quickly turns into something else as she spins and jumps, twirls and splashes. The rest of the neighborhood can't help but be drawn in. This is an engaging book showing how the physical release of emotion can lead to positive action and release.

A Morning with Grandpa by Sylvia Liu, illustrated by Christina Forshay.

Mindfulness doesn't have to take place in solitude! I adore this book about how a girl connects with her grandfather over the practice of Tai Chi. Mei Mei joins her grandpa in the morning for his daily ritual but while he is smooth and graceful, Mei Mei puts her own spin on things, reminding us that mindfulness need not always be practiced in the stillness. A wonderful story.

Where's Rodney? by Carmen Bogan, illustrated by Floyd Cooper.

This is a really fun story about a boy who can't sit still (we all know kids like that, right?) and just wants to be outside! Cooper's illustrations marvelously capture Rodney's energy as he discovers the joys of being in a park and all the ways he can finally express himself and release his energy!

A Full Moon Is Rising by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by Julia Cairns.

A collection of poems that celebrate the magic of a full moon as it is experienced around the globe. There are poems set in the city, the country and across the world from Africa to China to Colombia. Different religious and ethnic traditions are represented, including Sukkot, moon watching in Canada and the Chinese Moon Festival. This is truly a multicultural collection. The end papers include notes and a map of all the locations that appear throughout the book.

Jalapeño Bagels.

Pablo needs to bring in something to school for International Day. He debates whether or not to bring in his mother's delicious Mexican baked goods or his father's challah. From the title you can guess his decision! This book is sure to make you hungry so have a snack handy. Includes a Yiddish and Spanish glossary.

Last Stop On Market Street by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson. I wasn't going to put this book on the list because I prefer to make room for new-to-you books and this one is so popular. But then I caved. So even if you've read it, add it in to your reading list again. A boy and his grandma catch the bus. We don't yet know where they are headed, but along the way the boy asks questions about why they don't have certain luxuries. The grandma has a ready answer about the advantages of what they do have and encourages him to think of positive aspects of lacking material goods. When they reach their destination we find out that they were traveling to help out at a soup kitchen.

Alfie (The Turtle that Disappeared) by Thyra Heder.

This may be the only book in which the narration is told first from a human point of view, and then from a turtle's. Nia got a turtle for her birthday, but turtles don't really do much, when it comes right down to it. So Nia doesn't pay much attention to Alfie, until he disappears. Alfie narrates what happened to him while he was missing (one whole year!). It turns out he was searching for the perfect present for Nia. Absolutely adorable.

Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book by Yuyi Morales.

I adore trickster tales and this one about a grandmother who outsmarts a skeleton is quite a treat. A skeleton comes to fetch Grandma Beetle on her birthday, but the clever woman thwarts him as she claims to have too many chores to do first. The tale seamlessly weaves Spanish language numbers into the humorous narrative as grandma counts up the tasks she must do in order to keep the skeleton at bay.

The Children's Garden: Growing Food in the City by Carole Lexa Schaefer, illustrated by Pierr Morgan.

I love books which celebrate how urban communities come together, with all their diversity, and transform their neighborhoods for the better. In this one, the neighborhood children learn about agriculture and sustainability while they grow food in a community garden.

Rulers of the Playground by Joseph Kuefler.

On the playground, Jonah declares himself the ruler. At first, the others play along, although with some eye-rolling. But soon, Jonah has a challenger who wants to be the ruler herself and the two engage in some spirited political battles! The wonderful illustrations depict the life of the playground with all its actions, both large and small. It is teeming with a diverse group of children who eventually give up on both the would-be tyrants and forge a peace, instead. I particularly liked the droll ending.

2nd Grade

Dragons and Marshmallows by Asia Citro

Zooey and her cat Sassafras have an amazing ability: they can help magical animals in their backyard barn. In the first book of the Zooey and Sassafras series, Zooey must help a sick dragon who comes to her to figure out what's wrong. I love this book because it features a strong and smart young girl who uses science to solve problems. It's a great combination of reading and STEM!

Jasmine Toguchi, Mochi Queen by Debbie Michiko Florence

Jasmine Toguchi is a spunky eight-year-old who loves flamingos. Jasmine is excited to celebrate the new year, but upset that her sister Sophie gets to help make the mochi, while Jasmine is forced to hang out with her younger cousins. Jasmine hatches a plan to involve herself in the celebration in a special way that no girl has tried before!

Meet Yasmin! by Saadia Faruqi

This upbeat book follows the adventures of Yasmin, a second-grade girl from a multi-generational Pakistani-American family. Yasmin loves exploring her creative side through fashion, art, building, and exploring. She uses her imagination to find creative solutions to the challenges she faces.

Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins

Naima wants so badly to be able to help her parents out financially, but in her Bangladeshi culture, girls are not allowed to work. When Naima accidentally breaks her father's rickshaw, she knows she has to find a way to make money for her family. She decides to disguise herself as a boy and paint alpanas to help her family get by. Will she be able to pull off her deception and help her parents?

Book Uncle and Me by Umi Krishnaswami

Yasmin is a nine-year-old girl living in India. Every day, she stops to borrow a book from Book Uncle and his free lending library he's set up next to her apartment building. But one day, Book Uncle has to pack up the library. The mayor says Book Uncle must have a permit to run his library, and Book Uncle cannot afford it. Yasmin teams up with people in her community to help save Book Uncle's Lending Library, and she learns what it means to be an activist, and how regular people can change a community for good. This is one of my favorite early chapter books!

The Great Cake Mystery: Precious Ramotswe's Very First Case by Alexander McCall Smith

When a piece of cake goes missing from Precious Ramotswe's classroom, everyone thinks that a boy in her class is responsible. But Precious isn't so sure. She sets out to find the truth and learns much about investigating and asking the right questions.

First Day in Grapes by L. King Perez

Chico and his family are migrant workers, moving all over California to harvest different types of crops. They've moved to a new town to harvest grapes, and Chico has enrolled in the third grade. He's not particularly excited to go to school; he'd rather be working alongside his family. His first day of school is tough, but he is able to use the math skills he's learned to best the bullies he encounters and build his confidence.

The Buried Bones Mystery by Sharon M. Draper

Ziggy, Rashawn, Rico, and Jerome love playing in their clubhouse and solving mysteries. The four boys call themselves the Black Dinosaurs. When the boys find a box of bones buried behind their clubhouse, the investigation begins. Who buried the bones, and why?

Freddy Ramos Takes Off by Jacqueline Jules

Freddy Ramos comes home to find a strange package on his doorstep. What's inside? Magical shoes that give him super speed! The shoes allow Freddy to do heroic things and help his friends and his neighborhood. Is Freddy really ready to become a superhero?

Ada Twist and the Perilous Pants by Andrea Beaty

Ada Twist has lots of questions, and her favorite is, “Why?” When Rosie Revere’s Uncle Ned floats away in his helium pants, Ada is determined to figure out just how far he can float and the best way to get him down. Asking “Why?” helps lead Ada to the answers.

The Year of the Book by Andrea Cheng

Making friends can be hard. Anna Wang would much rather turn to books for company; they are always there for her when she needs them. But while books are a fine companion, they can’t provide the same support that a real friend can. But how can Anna learn to make friends? She finds the answer in kindness.

Moldylocks and the Three Beards by Noah Z. Jones

First name: Princess. Last name: Pink. Princess Pink doesn’t like pink or princesses, but she does like mud puddles, bugs, and monster trucks. Kids will love her crazy adventures in the Land of Fake-Believe! In this story, Princess Pink meets up with Moldylocks, who is very hungry. They go to the house of the Three Beards for a snack, and hilarity ensues. What will the Three Bears think when they find the girls in their home?

Caravan by Lawrence McKay

Jura is excited to accompany his father for the first time on a caravan through the mountains of Afghanistan. The ten-day journey is difficult, but the reward is great — his father will be able to trade for the grain their family needs to survive. Along the way, Jura learns much about his father, trade, and the beauty of his surroundings.

Louis Sockalexis fell in love with baseball at the age of 12, but he was told over and over again that there was no place for him on the field. Louis’s father wanted Louis to devote himself to life in the Penobscot tribe. Teams and players thought baseball was for white men only. Louis faced obstacles at every turn, but facing off against a famous pitcher, he was finally able to show the world that baseball was for him, too.

3rd Grade

Akissi: Tales of Mischief by Marguerite Abouet

This book follows a young girl named Akissi through her days living in a small town in the Ivory Coast, Africa. As Akissi moves through simple tasks, she finds great adventure! Akissi strives to find the balance between having fun and getting into trouble as she explores the town with her varied cast of friends. This book is also on our list of Graphic Novels with Strong Female Characters.

Indian Shoes by Cynthia Leitich Smith

This collection of stories captures the relationship between a young boy and his grandfather. Ray Halfmoon goes to live with his Grampa Halfmoon in Chicago after his parents are killed in a tornado. Ray seems to find his way into crazy situations, but his Grampa is always there to help him out. The two share a special bond, and Ray gets to learn more about his family and his heritage through his Grampa's stories.

Ahimsa by Supriya Kelkar

Set in 1942 India, this novel follows Anjali's changing home life as her mother is jailed for being a freedom fighter against the British occupation of India. Supriya Kelkar doesn't sugarcoat the complexities of the struggle for freedom and raises many moral and ethical questions, in addition to telling children about an important time in Indian history.

Ghosts by Raina Telgemeier

Cat isn't excited about moving to Northern California, but she knows it's what's best for her sister Maya, who has cystic fibrosis. When they arrive in their new home of Bahía de la Luna, they learn from a neighbor that the area is haunted. Cat is definitely not interested in seeing a ghost, but she has to put aside her fear to help her sister. This graphic novel is a moving story about the power of love.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin

Minli has grown up hearing her father's stories of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man in the Moon. Minli's family is struggling, and she wonders if these magical figures can show her how to change their luck. She sets out on a journey to find the Old Man in the Moon, and along the way she meets a dragon who joins her on her travels. What she learns along the way will change her forever.

Dara Palmer's Major Drama by Emma Shevah

Dara Palmer and her best friend Lacey know they are destined to be stars. So when Dara isn't cast in the school's production of *The Sound of Music*, she knows something must be wrong. Is it because she's Cambodian-American and doesn't look like an Austrian nanny? What follows is a story of growth and humility, as Dara sets out on a path that teaches her more about herself and more about her background. Dara learns she may not know everything about acting just because she wants to be famous, but she also learns that her story is important, unique, and beautiful.

Aru Shah and the End of Time by Roshani Chokshi

This novel tells the story of Aru Shah, a curious Indian girl who accidentally unleashes an ancient demon in the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture. Like many others in the Rick Riordan Presents imprint, the novel's plot is steeped in its title character's culture, religion, and mythology. Get ready for a fantastical ride through Indian mythos! This is the first book in a fun and magical series.

Lety Out Loud by Angela Cervantes

Lety loves volunteering at the animal shelter. The dogs and cats are so cute (especially Spike!), and the animals don't care that English isn't her first language. When the shelter needs someone to write profiles for the adoptable animals, Lety gladly volunteers. She's excited for the opportunity to perfect her English. When another volunteer at the shelter wants Lety's profile-writing job, he proposes a competition to see whose profiles are best. Lety is afraid to lose, and afraid that if they get caught, she'll lose her volunteering spot and won't get to adopt Spike. Can Lety win a contest where writing in English seals your fate?

Dragons in a Bag by Zetta Elliott

When Jax is taken to spend the day with a grumpy old woman his mother calls Ma, he assumes that she must be his grandmother. Imagine his shock when he learns that not only is Ma NOT his grandmother, she's a witch. Ma gives Jax an important mission: to deliver some baby dragons safely to their new home in a magical world. Jax recruits his friends Vikram and Kavita to help, and things quickly start to spiral out of control. Jax has to think fast and act quickly if he's going to get the dragons to where they belong.

Jada Sly, Artist and Spy by Sherri Winston

Jada Sly is moving back to New York City after living in Europe for several years. She has two goals while she's there; the first is to study the art of her hero Jackie Olmes, an African-American cartoonist. Her second goal is to find her missing mother. Most people think that Jada's mother died in a plane crash, but Jada is convinced that her mom is alive. She's also convinced that her mom is a spy — just like Jada, who considers herself to be a spy-in-training. But will Jada be able to find the evidence she seeks?

Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

Ten-year-old Bud has lost his mother, and never met his father. But his mother left behind a clue to his father's identity, on a flyer for a well-known musical act. Bud is determined to find his father, no matter the cost. Set in Flint, Michigan during the Great Depression, this story follows a spirited young boy who is not only searching for his father, but also finding out just how strong he is.

Sal and Gabi Break the Universe by Carlos Hernandez

An early installment of the Rick Riordan Presents Imprint, aimed at centering mythology and folklore from all over the world, *Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* is a fantasy with lots of humor and quirks. Sal and Gabi are polar opposites, and they start the book as enemies. But when Gabi isn't scared off by Sal's magical powers, they form a powerful partnership.

The Distance Between Me and the Cherry Tree by Paola Peretti

Mafalda keeps a list of all the things she loves to do; things like playing soccer and climbing her favorite cherry tree. She started this list because she knows one day she won't be able to enjoy any of these things. Mafalda has a rare genetic illness called Stargardt disease, and she is losing her vision. Mafalda can already sense that people are treating her differently because of her illness, so she works hard to hide the fact that her vision is deteriorating rapidly. But as the story progresses, Mafalda finds that losing her sight gives her clarity on many things in her life.

Pickle: The (Formerly) Anonymous Prank Club of Fountain Point Middle School by Kim Baker

Ben, Frank, Oliver, and Bean love to pull pranks. Disguised as the school pickle-making club, they come together to create some of the most hilarious hi-jinx Fountain Point Middle School has ever seen. But can the League of Pickle Makers keep pulling pranks without getting caught?

The Mystery of the Moon Tower by Francesco Sedita and Prescott Seraydarian

An unlikely group of five kids gets thrown together at summer camp, with a challenging mystery to solve. They follow a series of clues to the castle of old Henry Merriweather, which is not only beautiful, but also magical. Can Kyle, Vic, Beth, Harry, and Nate work together to solve the mystery Merriweather has left for them, and find the long-lost treasure of Windrose? It will take intelligence, bravery, and most of all, collaboration.

Grade 4

The Last Last-Day-of-Summer by Lamar Giles

It's the last day of summer vacation, and Sheed and Otto can't agree on how to spend it. They're yearning for one more adventure before they head back to school. The perfect mission comes along when a strange man shows up in their town. The man has a camera that freezes time, and the boys realize they must work together to save their town and save the last day of summer.

Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh! by Umi Krishnaswami

Maria Singh is an "adi-adi," half Indian, half Mexican. More than anything, she longs to play softball, but her parents don't think a girl should be playing sports. Softball isn't Maria's only worry; she also has to navigate prejudice, economic hardship, and the impact of World War II on her Yuba City, California community. Set in 1945, this book is an eye-opening look at a little-known time and place in history.

Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Beneath Ally's mischief-making and distractions, she hides a secret: she can't read. She's been able to fool teachers for years, but her new teacher Mr. Daniels isn't willing to give up on her like other teachers have. With Mr. Daniels' help, Ally is able to see that maybe she isn't a lost cause, and that having dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of.

George by Alex Gino

George's teacher says George can't try out for the part of Charlotte in the class production of Charlotte's Web, because George is a boy. But George isn't a boy. She looks like a boy to the outside world, but she knows that she's really a girl. With the help of a good friend, George comes up with a plan to play the role of her dreams and show her friends and family who she really is on the inside.

Flying Lessons and Other Stories edited by Ellen Ho

In this anthology, a diverse collection of authors comes together to share powerful short stories. Authors like Jacqueline Woodson, Kwame Alexander, and Tim Tingle share works that will resonate with all children, no matter their background. This is a book that belongs in every child's library!

Sanity and Tallulah by Molly Brooks

Sanity and Tallulah are two totally normal, smart, creative best friends...except they live on a space station and have just accidentally spawned a three-headed kitten that grows at an exponential rate! A fast-paced, action-packed story filled with smart, leading women of color, Sanity and Tallulah is the perfect read for a feminist tween.

Show Me a Sign by Ann Clare LeZotte

Mary Lambert has always felt safe in her insular deaf community on Martha's Vineyard. But everything changes when her brother dies. Mary is heartbroken over the loss, and she's starting to become nervous about the disputes between the English settlers and native Wampanoag people. When a curious scientist arrives on the island to learn more about the deaf community there, Mary soon finds herself in the middle of a dangerous situation. She must call upon all of her strength and intelligence to save herself.

Front Desk by Kelly Yang

Mia Tang dreams of being a writer, but her mom wants her to stick with math, since English isn't her native language. While working the front desk at the Calivista Motel, Mia dreams about her future, and worries about the present. The boss Mr. Yao doesn't know that her parents are hiding immigrants in empty motel rooms. She knows they're doing the right thing, but if her parents get caught, the Tangs will lose everything. Set in the 1990s, this book is fun and uplifting, despite the serious subject matter. This book is one of my favorites!

Dragon Pearl by Yoon Ha Lee

Min longs for adventure and excitement, instead of her boring life of chores and annoying family members. Her home planet is boring, and her mother insists that they must act human at all times, even though they are fox spirits. When Min hears that her older brother Jun has left his assignment in the Space Forces to search for the Dragon Pearl, she can't believe it. She knows Jun would never do something like that, so she runs away from home to find the truth and clear her brother's name. The quest takes her on an adventure she never could've imagined.

Merci Suarez Changes Gears by Meg Medina

Merci Suarez is a Cuban-American girl who attends a ritzy private school "on scholarship" as her not-so-nice peers like to point out. The story follows Merci as she navigates her new middle school life and identity, as well as issues within her own family. My favorite aspect of this book is the portrayal of Merci's extended family, who live in a duplex-like apartment complex, where they help each other in a myriad of ways.

Betty Before X by Ilyasah Shabazz and Renee Watson

Betty Shabazz is probably best known for being married to activist Malcolm X, but she was living a life of activism long before she got married. This fictional account of her childhood follows her childhood in Detroit, her rocky relationship with her mother, and her work supporting black-owned businesses as a junior member of the Housewives League. This work of historical fiction, written by Betty's daughter, is full of fascinating facts about her life, and paints a realistic picture of life in Detroit in the 1940s.

Once Upon an Eid edited by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed

The short stories in this book all revolve around the Muslim celebration of Eid, but they all show different aspects of the Muslim experience. Each story is wrapped in the joy and happiness that Eid represents, and readers will learn much about both the Muslim faith and values.

Grade 5

Paper Wishes

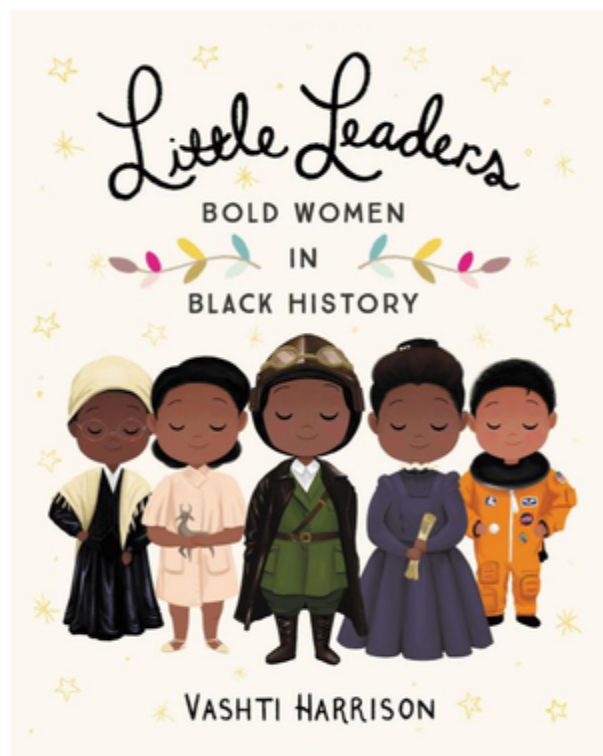
In this work of historical fiction by Lois Sepahban, 10-year-old Manami is forced to leave her home after the attack on Pearl Harbor—her Japanese American family is relocated from Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, to an internment camp in the California desert. When her dog is taken from her in the process, Manami stops talking. A good introduction to the tough subject of Japanese internment—and the personal and social cost of intolerance.

Drita, My Homegirl

An unlikely friendship blossoms between Maxie, a popular fourth grader, and the new kid in class, Drita, whose family has fled the war in Kosovo. In bringing together a refugee with limited English and an African American New York City kid, former public school teacher Jenny Lombard explores immigration and multicultural friendship.

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History

Vashti Harrison's beautifully illustrated mini-biographies of 40 black female trailblazers are meant to be inspiring for all readers; Harrison says she wrote it for her younger self, wondering "what kind of dreams I might have had if I had known about all these women when I was growing up." Harrison's subjects range from Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman to Mahalia Jackson, Shirley Chisholm, Octavia Butler, and Dominique Dawes—role models in politics, sports, the arts and sciences, and more.



Wonder

August Pullman—Auggie—has had numerous surgeries to correct facial anomalies, but when he enters school in fifth grade after years of homeschooling, he still has a face that draws nicknames like Freak and Freddy Krueger. R.J. Palacio's novel presents Auggie's perspective as well as those of friends and family members. Palacio has called the novel "a meditation on kindness."

Brown Girl Dreaming

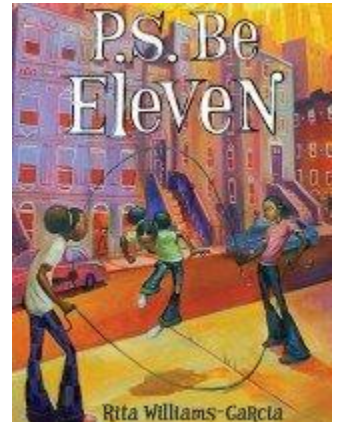
by: *Jacqueline Woodson*

Jacqueline Woodson tells the story of her life, family, and first attempts at writing for younger audiences in this memoir in verse. She provides a rich historical perspective of what it was like growing up in Columbus, Ohio during the civil rights era as she sat at the back of the bus, learned about the death of Martin Luther King Jr., and watched the Black Panthers on TV. In other, more personal poems, Woodson recounts her struggles learning to read and eventually, wanting to write. This may look like a book of poetry, but once your child ventures into the first pages, the story will carry her along.

P.S. Be Eleven

by: *Rita Williams-Garcia*

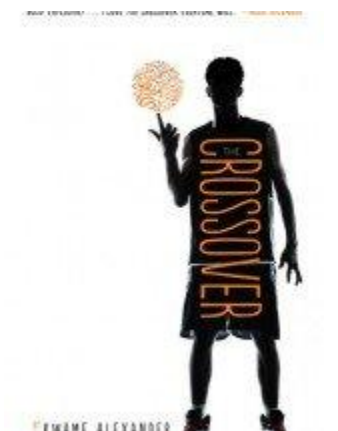
Delphine and her sisters are back in this sequel to *One Crazy Summer*. After self-discovery and empowerment gained during their summer in Oakland, the girls return home to Brooklyn. But now, they must readjust to the changes at home. Pa has a new girlfriend, Uncle Darnell returns from Vietnam, and Delphine is about to start sixth grade. Amidst all the changes, Delphine continues to keep in touch with her mother, Cecile. In her letters, Cecile advises Delphine to be 11 while she can.



The Crossover

by: *Kwame Alexander*

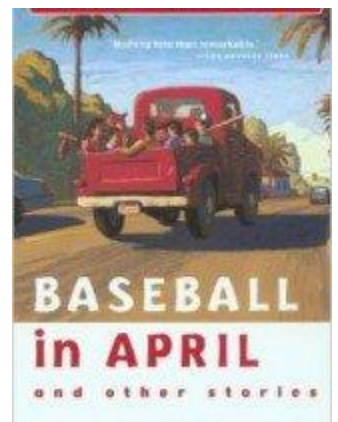
Twins Josh and Jordan Bell are 12-year-old basketball stars. Josh, a.k.a. Filthy McNasty, executes way more than a slammerific shot. He's creative, narrating his story using verse-style poetry that never skips a beat. When Jordan gets a girlfriend, Josh feels abandoned. With the brothers' close relationship threatened by tension, Josh uses rhymes to share his take on sports, school, race, and, most importantly, a loving family.



Baseball in April and Other Stories

by: *Gary Soto*

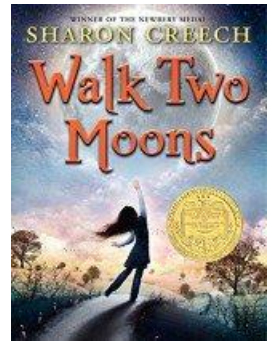
Alfonso is a seventh grader who wishes his teeth were straighter, his hair were cooler, and his abs were more muscular. His parents are preoccupied with earning a living and his older brother, Ernie, has girl troubles. Alfonso meets a girl with ponytails and invites her for a bike ride, but then his bike chain breaks. Will Ernie lend Alfonso his bike? The eleven short stories in this book explore family bonds, falling in love, fears, and insecurities — themes common to all kids as they grow up. They feature Mexican-American families and are full of colorful details from the author's own experiences growing up in California's Central Valley.



Walk Two Moons

by: *Sharon Creech*

In this story from 1995, a young girl traveling with her grandparents entertains them by weaving tales about her imaginary friend. At the same time, she must confront her feelings about her estranged mother.



Number the Stars

by: *Lois Lowry*

A brave Danish girl helps smuggle her Jewish friends to safety. Lowry's sense of timing and choice of details put readers in the middle of the story. A riveting read, but your kids may have questions afterward.

Africa Is My Home

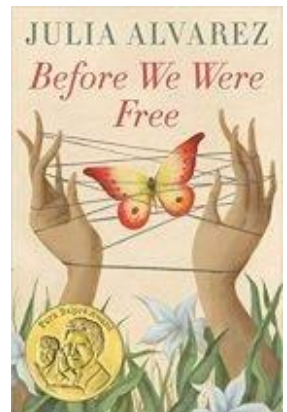
by: *Monica Edinger*

Magulu, a 9-year-old from the Mende region in Sierra Leone captured by slave traders and taken to Cuba, offers the focal point for this little-known chapter in the history of slavery. Upon being sold in Cuba, she ends up on the Amistad, a 19th century Spanish slave ship. There, the Mende captives revolt against their captors, free themselves, and demand to be taken back to Sierra Leone. This book recounts the abduction, mutiny, and legal trials that ensue — all from young Magulu's point of view.

Before We Were Free

by: *Julia Alvarez*

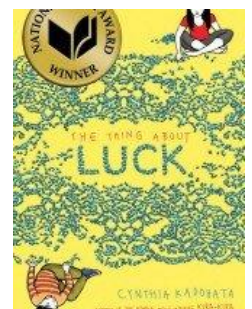
Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre has normal adolescent worries about school and friends, crushes, and sibling rivalry. But some worries she erases from her diary, lest she implicate her family in a dangerous coup against the Dominican Republic's dictator. When the resistance's assassination attempt fails, Anita's father and uncle are arrested and she and her mother must flee the secret police and go into hiding, eventually immigrating to the United States. Set in the Dominican Republic in the 1960's during Trujillo's regime, this historical novel is about family, perseverance, and the human spirit.



The Thing About Luck

by: *Cynthia Kadohata*

Summer's family is plagued with bad luck. When a family emergency sends her parents to Japan, Summer and her little brother, Jaz, are left with their grandparents, who come out of retirement to harvest wheat and help pay the bills. As her family's luck goes from bad to worse, Summer must figure out how to make it better. Like Kadohata's *Kira-Kira*, this story explores the inner lives of tweens in a stark and sometimes heartbreakingly real world; but this story's slow pace requires a patient appreciation for her nuanced characters and evocative settings.



Dancing Home

by: *Alma Flor Ada and Gabriel M. Zubizarreta*

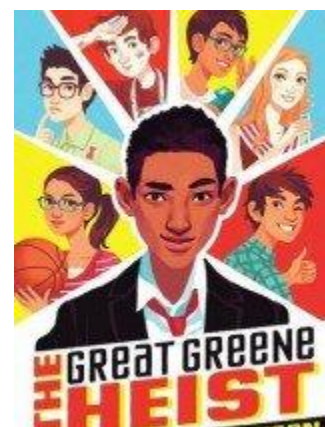
Ten-year-old Margarita calls herself Margie at school. Her parents were born in Mexico, but Margie is proud to be American and wants the other kids in her class to think of her as just like them. When her cousin Lupe comes from Mexico to live with them in California and goes to school with Margie, it threatens the identity Margie has created for herself. This story alternates between the viewpoints of Margie and Lupe as they become as close as sisters and learn what it means to live in two cultures.



The Great Greene Heist

by: *Varian Johnson*

Jackson Greene assembles a crack team to ensure the school bully, Keith Sinclair, doesn't win the election for student council president. Jack and his team, consisting of a reporter, science goddess, and tech genius, work to pull off the school's greatest con — all to ensure their friend Gaby has a fair shot at winning the election. A cast of multicultural characters propels this fast-paced plot with plenty of twists and turns.



I Lived on Butterfly Hill

by: *Marjorie Agosín*

Celeste lives in Valparaíso, Chile with her inspiring multigenerational family on Butterfly Hill. Things take a turn when a ruthless dictator overthrows the Chilean president, and Celeste's friends and classmates begin to mysteriously disappear. Her parents, who are doctors, must go into hiding because they are considered subversives for helping the poor. Sent to live with her aunt in the U.S., Celeste struggles to adjust to a new life in exile as her country descends into turmoil. Based on the author's experience growing up in Chile around the time of the Augusto Pinochet coup, the story offers a very personal entrée into a devastating chapter in Chile's history.

The House on Mango Street

by: *Sandra Cisneros*

A series of short, poetic vignettes offer glimpses into the life of 12-year-old Esperanza Cordero, a Latina girl growing up in a poor neighborhood in Chicago. The author, who has helped a generation of Latina poets and writers find their voices, draws on her own experience to describe Esperanza's search for her identity as a strong woman.

