Preschool - First Grade

Adela’s Meriachi Band by Denise Vega and Erika Rodriguiez Medina, PreK-1
Adela dreams of finding her place in her family's mariachi band, but she is too young to play the instruments well. She tries each one until she finds a way to fit in the band.

Bhangra Boogie by Hena Khan and Sandhya Prabhat, PreK-1
Talia wants to be as graceful as the bhangra dancers at the mehndi but her feet drag and her arms freeze when she tries to dance in front of others. Instead, she shrinks in her chair. But maybe with some help from her Dadi, Talia will find the courage to take to the floor. Then, can she convince Dadi to join her?

Brown Girl, Brown Girl by Lesle Honore and Cozbi A. Cabrera, PreK-1
Based on a poem written to celebrate the election of Vice President Kamala Harris, this text celebrates black and brown women from the past, present, and future.

City Summer Country Summer by Kiese Laymon and Alexis Franklin, PreK-1
Black boys from the city and the country meet at the houses of their grandmas, who are friends.

Dante Plays His Blues by Allen R. Wells and Shamar Knight-Justice, PreK-1
Danté is a young black child who is introduced to his family's culture through the blues. The music helps him channel his bad experiences as an unhoused youth into art and use them as a way to identify with his community and his family.

Dear New Friend by Taraneh Matloob and Alida Massari, PreK-1
A young boy invites a new friend to visit his house by writing a letter describing what to expect during the visit. As readers, we learn of the customs, foods, and traditions of this Persian family.

Fierce Aunties by Laurel Goodluck and Steph Littlebird, PreK-1
This book promotes Aunties and highlights the special role they play in the lives of children.

The Gift of Eid by Shifa Saltagi Safadi and Aaliya Jaleel, PreK-1
With Baba gone, Yasmine doesn’t have enough money to buy Mama’s Eid gift and can’t think of anything she wants for herself when Mama asks. After exchanging gifts with her mom in the Masjid, Yasmine realizes that true Eid joy comes from being together.

Hilwa’s Gifts by Safa Suleiman and Anait Semirdzhyan, PreK-1
Ali has arrived in Palestine for a visit just in time for the olive harvest. His grandfather, Seedo, and Hilwa—his favorite tree—greet him in the grove, where Seedo explains that Hilwa has many gifts to share. Tradition is the greatest gift of all: the family gathering—generation after generation—to celebrate a bountiful harvest.

The History of We by Nikkolas Smith, PreK-1
This book celebrates Africa as the cradle of civilization and Africans as the original people.

Home in a Lunchbox by Cherry Mo, PreK-1
Jun moves to America and has a difficult time assimilating to a new culture. When she eats lunch however, the foods remind her of home and she finds comfort in that. Sharing her food one day at lunch leads to making new friends!

I am La Chiva by Karol Hernandez and Lorena Alvarez Gomez, PreK-1
A colorful bus takes people, their agricultural products and musical instruments from Andean villages into the city market and home again.

Jollof Day by Bernard Mensah and Analise Barber-Opp, PreK-1
A boy and his father celebrate their cultural heritage by making jollof rice for the family on the weekend. It includes the recipe.

Legendary Cakes by Kerisa Greene, PreK-1
This book describes a family's celebration of the Tet New Year in Vietnam. It shares many authentic foods and customs.

Made for More by Chole Ito Ward and Gael Abrary, PreK-1
A young Japanese-Hawaiian girl pushes aside traditional Japanese beauty standards to embrace her own beauty in the skin she is in!

Mai's Ao Dai by Thai and Troung Nguyen and Dung Monique Ho, PreK-1
Mai resists wearing the traditional Áo Dái for Lunar New Year until her father explains how the garment influenced their family's history and her grandmother's past.

Matzah Day by Charlotte Offsay and Jason Kirschner, PreK-1
This book is an ode to the joys of Matzah, as well as its place in the Jewish celebration of Passover.

Meena's Saturday by Kusum Mepani and Yasmeen Ismail, PreK-1
A slice-of-life story with a feminist message about a young Indian girl and her sisters managing a bustling house full of boisterous guests on a busy Saturday.the charming story of a family's weekend ritual, a love letter to the gatherings of community and family, and an example of how changing long-standing traditions can start with you.

Noodles on a Bicycle bu Kro Maclear and Gracey Zhang, PreK-1
A vibrant historical picture book about Tokyo's bicycle food deliverers, or demae, who balanced towering trays of steaming hot noodles on their shoulders while navigating crowded city streets.

One Small Spark: A Tikkum Olam Story by Ruth Spiro and Victoria Tentler-Krylov, PreK-1
A young girl works to make the world a better place by small acts. Her actions create a chain reaction of small changes by others that make a big difference in the world.

Oshyn and Me: A Story of Love and Braids by Adiba Nelson and Allenanna and Harris, PreK-1
A young Black girl in a wheelchair feels a connection to her African culture through her braids and a Yoruba deity named Oshun. This heritage and the personal connection she has with Oshun gives her the will to take on mobility challenges and overcome shyness to make connections with her peers.

Papa's Coming Home by Chasten Buttigieg and Dan Taylor, PreK-1
Jojo and Rosie's papa has been away on a trip, and they can't wait to welcome him home! They make signs, they pick flowers, and with Daddy's help, they bake a cake and pack the car with absolutely everything Papa might have missed while he was away.

Roar-choo by Charlotte Cheng and Dan Santat, PreK-1
In Chinese mythology the dragon and the phoenix represent a married couple. In this story, Dragon is sick, but won't admit it. They want to roar their mighty roar, while Phoenix wants Dragon to relax and heal. It takes Phoenix getting sick too for Dragon to empathize and show their gentler side.

Samba! The Heartbeat of a Community by Philip Hoelzel and Andre Ceolin, PreK-1
This book traces the life story of samba director Mestre Ailton Nunes from his youth in Rio de Janeiro to the United States and back again as he follows his dreams and brings the world together with the beautiful music of samba.

Soy Sauce! By Laura G. Lee, PreK-1
Follow Luan, Haru, and Yu-Mi as they explore how Soy Sauce is made in each of their different cultures. This exploration of Soy Sauce is an informative look at what makes this dinnertime staple taste like home.

Squawk of Spanish by Gabriella Aldemann and Romina Galotta, PreK-1
Max isn't confident with his Spanish, especially rolling his Rs, and his cousins always tease him about it. But he loves spending weekends baking with his Spanish-speaking abuela, while Lorito the parrot helps translate. But when Lorito disappears for a day, Max and Abuela must figure out how to communicate.

Tios and Primos by Jaacquelin Alcantara, PreK-1
A young Honduran-American girl is anxious about visiting her extended family in Honduras because she doesn't speak Spanish well. The love of her extended family helps her to appreciate them and feel a part of the family.

Lower Elementary

Abuelo, the Sea and Me by Ismee Williams and Tatiana Gardel, 2-3

A young girl and her abuelo explore the beach near his home during each season of the year, where Abuelo tells her his memories of leaving his island home (of Cuba) and they make new memories together.

Addy's Chair to Everywhere bu Debi Novotny and Jomike Tejido, 2-3

Addy, a girl who uses a wheelchair to get around, uses her imagination to find ways to play with the kids around her, dreaming up adventures in a chariot, a rocket, and a submarine. Includes tips for caregivers and teachers.

Ady and Me bu Rich and Rox Pink and Sara Rhys, 2-3

A little girl struggles to fit into a neurotypical world with her friend Ady (a cute character representing her ADHD). She struggles with a teacher that doesn't understand and finds help from a principal that understands because he has ADHD too.

Amina Banana and the Formula for Friendship by Shifa Saltagi Safady and Aaliya Jaleel, 2-3

Amina loves bananas, science, and all things yellow! Her family recently arrived from Syria to Indiana, and she's starting at a brand-new school in a brand-new country. She's excited but also nervous, especially about making friends! But she develops the perfect formula to get everything just right.

Amina Banana and the Formula for Winning by Shifa Saltagi Safady and Aaliya Jaleel, 2-3

Amina Banana's third grade class is abuzz with excitement for the upcoming spelling bee. But spelling in English is tough for Amina. Still, she's going to prove to her classmates that even if English is an additional language for her, she can take home the gold medal.

Angelica and la Guira by Angie Cruz and Luz Batista, 2-3

Angélica is sad to leave her family in the Dominican Republic, but Abuelito gives her a güira (metal instrument) to help remind her of her heritage and family. Back in the US, no one seems to appreciate the sound of la güira. Until one day Angélica shows her neighborhood how the güira's music brings people together.

At Night They Danced by Victoria Scott-Miller and Toni D. Chambers, 2-3

Two brothers are trying to figure out why their parents are not going on their usual date night. They discover that their parents are having date night at home.

A Banquet for Cecilia by Julie Leung and Melissa Iwai, 2-3

From an early age, Cecilia Chiang could be found delighting in the sounds and smells from her favorite room in her home—the kitchen. Little did Cecilia know that she would one day have to escape war and travel to a faraway country, destined to change Chinese cuisine in the United States forever.

Binna's Dalgona by Sojung Kim-McCarthy, 2-3

Binna is proud of how much English she has learned since moving to Britain from Korea. She's also proud to be old enough to make her own dalgona. One day at school she struggles to find the English words she needs and wonders if she is really as smart as she once thought. With encouragement from her family and friends, Binna finds her words.

Bo and the Baking Disaster by Elliott Smith and Subi Bosa, 2-3

Bo lives with his grandfather above their barber shop. They are deciding what dish to make for the Juneteenth celebration.

Bo and the Clubhouse Crew by Elliott Smith and Subi Bosa, 2-3

Bo and his grandfather are deciding what dish to make for the Juneteenth celebration. Bo burns the cake and needs help deciding what else to make.

Bo and the Talent Show Trouble by Elliott Smith and Subi Bosa, 2-3

Bo and his friends are deciding if they should perform in the school talent show. A community member at the barber shop helps them decide what to do.

Bo and the Street Artist by Elliott Smith and Subi Bosa, 2-3
Bo notices that his grandfather's barber shop has been tagged. A street artist comes to help them turn it into a mural.

The Boldest White: A Story of Hijab and Community by Ibtihaj Muhammad, S.K. Ali, and Hatem Aly, 2-3
Faizah loves being part of the community at her mosque, and she loves being part of the group at her fencing lessons. When all eyes are on her, though, Faizah freezes up. Mama says bravery will come with time, but there's a fencing tournament coming up—does Faizah have what it takes to be bold?

The Boy Who Found His Voice by Tyler Gordon, 2-3
There once was a young boy who had trouble with words. He paused and stuttered and stammered, which made school really tough. But with encouragement from his mom and a paintbrush in hand, he learns that finding your voice isn't about being perfect—it's about being true to yourself.

Chooch Helped by Andrea L. Rogers and Rebecca Lee Kunz, 2-3
Chooch Helped is a universal story of an older sibling learning to make space for a new child...showing one Cherokee family practicing their cultural traditions.

Claudette Colvin: I Want Freedom Now by Claudette Colvin, Phillip Hoose, and Bea Jackson, 2-3
This is the almost untold story of Claudette Colvin, the teenage girl who came before Rosa Parks and fought against Jim Crow segregation during the Montgomery bus boycotts.

Daughter of the Light-Footed People by Belen Medina and Natalia Rojas Castro, 2-3
This is the true story of Lorena Ramírez, an indigenous woman from Chihuahua, Mexico who wins ultramarathons world-wide while running in home-made huaraches and traditional indigenous dress to make money for her family and to show the world her pride in her way of life.

Elijah's Easter Suit by Brentom Jackson and Emmanuel Boateng, 2-3
Elijah is determined to have the perfect outfit on Easter Sunday, but struggles to find the one that feels just right. After he talks to family members and church leaders, he understands the history and traditions of the holiday and creates the perfect suit!

Esma Farouk, Lost in the Souk bu Lisa Boersen, Hasna Elbaamrani, and Annelies Vandenbosch, 2-3
Esma Farouk and her family travel to Morocco to visit their extended family. When Esma travels to the souk, or market, she gets separated from her mama and aunt. The musicians, snake charmers, fortune tellers, and others at the souk help her to reunite with her family members.

Fish Fry Friday by Winsome Bringham and C.G. Esperanza, 2-3
On a particular Friday, a young boy and his grandmother work together to catch and prepare a fish dinner for the family. This book is the companion to the previously published Soul Food Sunday.

The Gift of the Great Buffalo by Carole Lindstrom and Aly McKnight, 2-3
A young Native American girl wants to help her father find the buffalo that her tribe needs. She goes out alone, but is successful in locating buffalo tracks for her father.

Ice Cream Everywhere: Sweet Stories from Around the World by Judy Campbell-Smith and Lucy Semple, 2-3
This is a "sweet" non-fiction picture book about ice cream all over the world. From breakfast ice cream in Italy to pistachio-covered bouza in Jordan, readers will want to sit down with a cool bowl of ice cream as they eat-up ice cream information.

Imani and Isaiah by Cicely Lewis and Anastasia Magloire Williams, 2-3
Imani is jealous when Isaiah has surgery, and all of the family's attention is on him. In the end she uses her hair magic to become a caring member of her family.

Imani and the Ghost by Cicely Lewis and Anastasia Magloire Williams, 2-3
Imani has fun at her slumber party until she hears a strange noise—maybe a ghost! But then she keeps hearing the noise night after night. Will Imani be able to solve the case?

Imani at the Beach by Cicely Lewis and Anastasia Magloire Williams, 2-3
After Imani sees the trash that litters her local beach, she decides to organize a clean up. But everyone she tells about it doubts that she can make a difference. Can Imani prove them wrong?

Imani's New Dog by Cicely Lewis and Anastasia Magloire Williams, 2-3
Imani's family is getting a dog! But Imani struggles with the balance of caring for her new pet and having fun with friends. Can Imani step up and be a better dog owner?

The Interpreter by Olivia Abtahi and Monica Arnaldo, 2-3
A sharp and heartfelt picture book about a young soccer-loving girl who's an interpreter for her Spanish-speaking parents.

Joyful Song: A Naming Story by Leslea Newman and Susan Gal, 2-3
As a new big-brother, Zachary is excited for his baby sister's naming day. While walking to the synagogue with Mama and Mommy, the family encounters three friendly neighbors who join them for the big event. Zachary can't wait to share his baby sister's name with the world.

Just What to Do by Kyle Lukoff and Hala Tanboub, 2-3
A young child struggles to understand what others around him need when they are dealing with grief. Nobody needs the same thing, but they all appreciate a friend who will listen to them in their time of need.

Kaho'olawe: The True Story of an Island and Her People by Kamalani Hurley and Harinani Orme, 2-3
Accompanied by vibrant illustrations, the story of the Hawaiian island of Kaho'olawe is told over centuries. After the island is used for target practice by the United States armed forces, the people of Hawaii band together to protect its ecosystem and its legacy.

A Little Like Magic by Sarah Kurpiel, 2-3
Although reluctant to attend an ice sculpture show because she worries about discomfort and the unknown, a young girl who uses a power wheelchair finds lasting beauty in stepping outside her comfort zone.

Looking for the Eid Moon by Sahtinay Abaza and Sandra Eide, 2-3
Muslim sisters Sara and Lulu are waiting for the crescent moon to be spotted for Eid. They stay up late into the night watching the sky and keeping each other company. When they have to go to bed without seeing the moon, Sara creates a surprise plan to cheer up her little sister and make special Eid memories for them both.

Lulu in the Spotlight: A South Asian Wedding Story by Natasha Khan Kazi, 2-3
Lulu is determined to be included in the family wedding games that bring the two families together. However, as the youngest cousin she keeps getting left out. That is until she saves the games.

Mama Moon: A Story About Love and Mental Health by Noah Grigni, 2-3
The main character is a little girl who uses the phases of the moon to illustrate and understand her mama's battle with bipolar disorder. The moon has highs and lows and even when you can't see it it is still there.

Mamiahi and Me by Jolene Gutierrez and Dakota Gutierrez, 2-3
A young Mexican-American girl faces her fears and joins her mother and aunts in the family mariachi band. The book describes the instruments and costumes of a mariachi band in an information section in the back. It is also available in Spanish.

Mamie Tape Fights to go to School by Traci Huahn, 2-3
The story of one young changemaker's brave steps on the long journey to end school segregation in California. It began with a single step.

Many Things at Once by Veera Hirandandani, 2-3
A young girl from two different backgrounds learns through stories from her parents that it is special to be many things at once. Based on the author's own experience, this story will resonate with many readers.

A Map for Falasteen by Maysa Odeh, 2-3
When Falasteen's teacher cannot find her family's homeland, Palestine, on a map, she "turns to her family for answers. Her grandfather, grandmother, and Mama encourage her to see their homeland from a different perspective, and each of their stories helps her understand her people's history and her own place in the world.

Mara Hears in Style by Terri Clemmons, 2-3
On her first day of school, Mara is anxious about how the students will react to her hearing aides. As she makes friends, she teaches them about her hearing aides, lip reading, and sign language.

Midnight Motorbike by Maureen Shay Tajsar, 2-3
Amma takes her daughter on a magical, moonlit motorbike ride through South India.

Mistaco: A Tale of Tragedy y Tortillas by Eliza Kinktz, 2-3
Izzy made some pretty big mistakes at school today, and she doesn't want to talk about it. But when Lito helps her tackle her big feelings by cooking her mistakes into tacos (or "mistacos") and eating them, her whole family joins in the fun. Izzy learns that everyone makes mistakes, ranging from silly to gross to regrettable.

My Daddy is a Cowboy by Stephanie Seales, 2-3
A Panamanian American girl and her daddy get up before dawn to ride horses through their town in this atmospheric picture book that celebrates a close bond between a father and daughter as well as contemporary Black cowboys.

My Olive Tree by Hazar Elbayya, 2-3
Salam's grandpa says that olive trees are strong and that their roots run deep in their Palestinian land. When Salam 's olive tree is destroyed by soldiers, her grandpa gathers their neighbors and, together, they plant olive trees as far as the eye can see, delivering a powerful story about the beauty of the olive tree and the importance of community in the face of hardship.

Navya Sings for Navarathri by Lakshmi Thamizhmani, 2-3
Celebrate Navarathri, the nine-night Hindu festival honoring the divine feminine, with this empowering picture book of girlhood, Shakti, and the nine days of Navarathri.

Nearly Exactly Almost Like Me by Jennifer Bradbury, 2-3
This book features two brothers, one a biological child of their parents and the other adopted. Despite not looking alike, the brothers share many things in common.

The Night Market by Seina Wedlick, 2-3
Journey with a young girl as she explores the mesmerizing wonders of a Nigerian night market, where each stall is an adventure waiting to be discovered! Filled with vibrant illustrations, this captivating picture book invites young readers into a world of magic, mystery, and the joy of finding treasures in unexpected places.

No More Chairs by Dan Gil, 2-3
Mr. Gill tells his students the story of the extra chair in his classroom. When he was a child growing up in New York in the 1950's, his best friend Archie was not allowed to attend a birthday party because he was Black. Mr. Gill wants his students to know that there will always be room for them in his classroom, no matter what.

The Ofrenda that we Built by Jolene and Shalan Gutierrez, 2-3
In a simple repeated verse, much like The House that Jack Built, this book explains the items and beliefs that make an ofrenda for Dia de los Muertos. The notes at the back give further clarification about the history and origins of this custom.

Outside Mom, Inside Mom by Jane Park, 2-3
A Korean American child sees his mother act more outgoing at home than she does outside the home.

Pedro’s Yo-Yos: How a Filipino Immigrant Came to America and Changed the World of Toys by Rob Penas, 2-3

Pedro Flores was born in the Philippines in 1896, when Spain still ruled his country. After the US took over, Pedro traveled to California, received an education, and looked for ways to go into business for himself. Then he remembered a toy from his childhood called the yo-yo, which means “come back” in Tagalog. With a couple of blocks of wood and a little string, Pedro created his first model yo-yo and practiced tricks to show it off.

Ping-Pong Shabbat: The True Story of Champion Estee Ackerman by Ann Dament Koffsky, 2-3

A Jewish girl takes the ping-pong world by storm, but when she has to choose between competing in a championship match and Shabbat, her day of religious rest, reflection, and family, she shows what she values most.

Robin’s Worlds by Rainie Oet, 2-3

On Robin's eight birthday a magical creature called the Cat-Headed Wanderer arrives to whisk them off to a fantasy birthday party with all of their imaginary friends. Robin sees images of their childhood and remembers their parents before coming back to reality to celebrate with their Uncle Miles.

Sari Sisters by Anitha Rao-Robinson, 2-3

Ruhi is jealous when her older sister Kayra gets her first sari. Then Ruhi has a clever idea - she uses scarves to make her own sari for all of the youngest cousins. A family dance party brings the older and younger sisters together as they bond over and celebrate their Indian culture.

Saturday Morning at the Shop by Keenan Jones, 2-3

While his mother is away at work, a young Black child is stoked to spend his *Saturday at the 'Shop*, which serves as not just a place to get a trim, but as a bustling community center filled with music, conversation, learning, and artistry.

Shell Song: Based on a True Family Story by Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson, 2-3

A Japanese American man in Hawai'i is sent to a prison camp due to his ethnicity and status as a community leader. While there, he collects shells which are passed along to his grandchildren.

Shivi’s Big Leap by Kritika H. Rao, 2-3

Shivi is determined to conquer the rock climbing wall, but his nerves take over. Shivi reflects on what he knows about Hanuman, the Hindu monkey god, and is able to overcome his fears.

Sister Friend by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, 2-3

Ameena feels invisible. It’s been that way since she started at her new school. But now there is another new girl in class. Ameena sees her brownness and her hijab, even though the other kids do not. Ameena wants to be her friend, but she can’t seem to find the right words or do the right things. Until one day, they find them together: “Assalamu Alaikum, Sister. Welcome.

The Sole Man: Jan Matzeliger’s Lasting Invention by Keller Shana, 2-3

Jan Matzeliger moves to America to make shoes. Using his ingenuity and knowledge, he invents a complicated machine to help mass produce shoes.

Stay for Dinner by Sandhya Parappukkaran, 2-3

Reshma loves dinnertime with her family. Her family eat with their hands – not just finger food type–eating, but hands-on squishy eating. When she’s invited to stay for dinner at her friends’ places, she finds out that they all eat in different ways. So what will her friends say when they see her family eat with their hands?

Strong Like Me by Kelechi Okafor, 2-3

Kamara is strong, and that makes her special. Sometimes her strength makes others feel not as strong, and that makes Kamara sad. How can she use her strength in different ways?

Tamales for Christman by Stephen Briseno, 2-3
Inspired by the author's grandmother, this illustrated children's book chronicles the ingenuity and love of a grandmother who, all through the fall and early winter months, prepares, sells, and gives away over 1,000 dozen tamales to earn money to buy Christmas presents for her family. Tamale recipe included. Also available in Spanish.

Unicycle Dad by Sarah Hovorka, 2-3
Sarah is in awe of her unicycle-riding dad, who takes care of his two children by working two jobs and earning his high school diploma. Life is not always easy, and Sarah learns to pitch in by helping care for her brother.

Wash Day Love by Tanisia Moore, 2-3
Tasha hates wash day. She runs and hides at the thought of the water dripping into her eyes and ears, and snaking down her back. But with the help of her sister Tianna, her Granny, and her Mama, she lets go of her fear and embraces the multi-generational family bonding experience.

We Are American Too by Kristen Me Chase, 2-3
Mei's ancestor was the second American born Chinese person in Washington, DC. She explores the city with her parents and baby brother, and speaks to a crowd of people about her family's history.

We are the Scrappy Ones by Rebekah Taussig, 2-3
An ode to dignity and the Right to Joy for all human beings, no matter the body they inhabit. It includes a few short biographies of disability rights advocates at the back of the book.

Wish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt, 2-3
Oliver struggles in school because his brain is always thinking and exploding with ideas, unlike everyone else in his class. While he deals with one bullying classmate, others help Oliver to see the uniqueness and creativity he has inside of him and to embrace it. This picture book for younger readers is a companion to the novel, Fish in a Tree.

Yaadila! Good Grief by Laurel Goodluck, 2-3
Bahe and Dezba are helping their grandmother, Nali, move from her sheep camp home to their house. The family is settling into a new life together, which isn’t always easy. At every frustration, they throw up their hands and exclaim, “Yaadila!” Good grief! In this heartwarming and quintessentially Navajo (Diné) story, readers see a big change for an Elder made easier with a creative gesture of love and care.

Upper Elementary

The Anxious Exile of Sara Salt by Gabrielle Prendergast, 4-5
When Sara's stepbrother is born prematurely, she is sent to live temporarily with her half sister Abby in Toronto. Abby is working to create a village of transitional housing for the unhoused in the city. Sara works to overcome her selective mutism and anxiety to help Abby fight for change.

Any Way You Look by Maleeha Siddiqui, 4-8
Ainy is ready for summer! She wants to work in her mom's store, hang out with her best friend, and spend time with her awesome older sister - and maybe start wearing the hijab, if the time is right. But when some boys from her community start harassing her, Ainy isn't sure what to do; will wearing the hijab make those boys leave her alone? With some help from her family and friends, Ainy gets creative and learns how to stand her ground while staying true to herself.

Are You a Friend of Dorthy? By Kyle Lukoff, 4-5
A positive, humorous explanation of homophobia and queer community in America over the past century. In a time when the LGBTQ+ community was forced to hide in the shadows, a woman named Dorothy helped her people find each other in the dark and celebrate themselves in the light.

At Home in a Faraway Place by Lynne Rae Perkins, 4-5
Lissie travels to Guatemala with her father and grandmother to visit her father's friend from high school. She is overwhelmed at the language she does not know and the new environment. She gradually learns many Spanish words and phrases, while making friendships that last after the trip is over.

The Beautiful Game by Yamile Saied Mendez, 4-8
Valeria "Magic" Solomon is a twelve-year-old soccer legend on her way to winning a championship as the only girl on a boys' soccer team, when tragedies strike. Her first period, the death of her aunt, a cousin coming to live with her, and her Grandfather/Coach removing her from the team lead her to feel like she has no team at all. Now she will have to play for (and prove herself to) a new team - an all-girls team.

Black Joy by Chanaie Gordon and Lhaiza Morena, 4-5
Jaden is a black boy celebrating love and joy in his predominantly black neighborhood. Learn about and celebrate Black Love Day (February 13th) with Jaden.

Black Star: Door of No Return by Kwame Alexander, 4-5
A young black girl in the south struggles with racism and sexism as she pursues her dream of becoming a pitcher. This book takes place in the South during Segregation and the Great Migration. This is the second book in a series following a family from Africa through generations of descendants as they make their way in the US.

Buffalo Dreamer by Violet Duncan, 4-8
Summer visits her grandparents on the Cree Reservation in Alberta, where she joins in traditional activities and begins dreaming of a girl escaping a residential school. When she learns the dreams connect to her Mosom and nearby graves, Summer confronts her people's painful history and the resilience of their culture.

Chef’s Secret by Kelly Yang, 4-5
In the 6th Front Desk novel we hear a new voice as Jason narrates the story. Jason and Mia are officially a couple, but Jason worries that he is not being emotionally supportive as he struggles with worries about his restaurant, the motel, and his family's scheme to become members at a fancy country club. Jason and the Yao family learn valuable lessons about themselves and what they value.

Deer Run Home by Ann Clare LeZotte, 4-8
Twelve year old Effie is deaf, and her family refuses to learn ASL, which is her primary form of communication. After an incident at her mom's house results in Effie moving in with her father, she is neglected and abused. Miss Kathy, Effie's ASL interpreter, advocates to Effie to have her voice heard and to find where she belongs.

Dreams to Ashes: The 1871 Los Angles Chinatown Massacre by Livia Blackburne and Nicole Xu, 4-5
In the mid-1800s, Chinese men fled to Los Angeles hoping for a better life. Tensions and racism met them at every turn, until a breaking point was reached in 1871, with many Chinese losing their lives. This book depicts a tragedy with the hopes of a better future.

Ellis Island Passover by Marissa Moss, 4-5
Miriam feels disconnected from the Passover celebration until Uncle Ezra shares the story of his first seder in America with her. Uncle Ezra gives her a broader, more personal sense of the meaning of Passover and the importance of sharing family stories.

Family Week by Sarah Moon, 4-8
Four best friends spend Family Week together at an annual gathering of LGBTQ+ families in Provincetown, MA—the largest of its kind across the world—in this middle grade coming-of-age story that celebrates identity, acceptance, and found family.

Fighting with Love: The Legacy of John Lewis by Lesa Cline-Ransome and James E. Ransome, 4-5
John Lewis began his fight for civil rights when he was a young boy. He continued fighting throughout his life, always remembering the ideas of peace and love when he encountered violence and anger. His legacy and work lives on today.

First Day Around the World by Ibi Zoboi and Juanita Londono, 4-5
Explore the first day of school around the globe in this beautiful picture book that illustrates how children prepare for school and learn about their culture and history in many countries and on every continent.

Gamerville by Johnnie Christmas, 4-8
Just after qualifying for the big video game championship tournament, Max's mom signs him up for a no-tech nature summer at Camp Reset. Will Max find a way to escape and compete or will his dreams of videogame dominance be dashed?

The Gate and the Girl and the Dragon by Grace Lin, 4-5
Jin, the Gongshi doesn't pay attention to his father's instructions about the Sacred Sphere and the responsibilities entrusted to the stone spirits. To his horror, the Sacred Sphere is lost and Jin is shut outside the Old City Gate, unable to return home. If he cannot figure out how to return the Sacred Sphere to the Old City, the city and its inhabitants will die. Can he save them in time?

The Home We Mae by Maham Khwaja and Daby Zainab Faidhi, 4-5
A Middle Eastern family becomes refugees from war, spending time in a refugee camp, then seeking asylum in the U.S. They are both welcomed and threatened by the people in the U.S.

How Sweet the Sound by Kwame Alexander and Charly Palmer, 4-8
This poetic book presents a history of Black music in an inspiring long form poem. There are extensive notes in the back explaining the songs, forms and artists name checked in the poem.

How to Talk to your Succulent by Zoe Persico, 4-8
Both Adara and her father are grief-stricken after the death of her mother. Moving to Michigan to live with Grandma only adds to Adara's misery. She finds hope and healing by discovering that she can talk to plants like her mother could.

Invisible Isabel by Sally J. Pla and Tania de Regil, 4-5
Isabel is a young girl who experiences anxiety in the form of stomachaches, which she refers to as moth wings flapping in her stomach. She is bullied by classmates and becomes distant from her former friends. Her attempts to communicate these feelings to others do not work until it becomes impossible to ignore them anymore.

Kaho'olawe: The True Story of an Island and her People, 4-5
A stunningly beautiful book that tells the story of destruction, devastation, and resilience, of both the human and natural world. . . The artwork tells the story in dramatic, compelling, and beautiful ways. Together, text and art will engage readers from the first page.

Kareem Between by Shifa Saltagi Safadi, 4–8
All Kareem wants is to be the first famous Syrian American quarterback, but no one seems to see his potential. In this novel in verse, Kareem struggles with his faltering Arabic, a racist bully classmate, befriending a Syrian refugee, and the 2017 "Muslim Ban" preventing his mother from returning to the US from Syria.

The Lonely Below by Haron G. Davis, 4-8
Eva, an Autistic Black girl, is sent to Blythe Academy boarding school after the death of her beloved grandmother. Eva struggles to fit in, not just because of her differences, but also because of chilling visions. Blythe Academy is haunted, and Eva is sure that a catastrophic event is coming - but how can she keep everyone safe?

Max and the House of Spies: A Tale of World War II by Adam Gidwitz, 4-8
At the brink of WWII, Max is sent away from Berlin by his Jewish parents. He finds himself accompanied by two immortal and incorporeal creatures: a dybbuk and a kobold. Max must survive anti-Semitic bullies and then work his way into training to become the youngest spy for Britain, all in hopes of getting sent back to Berlin to be reunited with his parents.

Mixed-Up by Kami Garcia, Brittney Williams, and Tyler Smith, 4-5
Stella struggles with the challenges of the reading expectations in 5th grade. It takes loving teachers and her family to recognize that Stella has a learning difference, and after a dyslexia diagnosis she gets the support and tools she needs to succeed.

Picture a Girl by Jenny Manzer, 4-8
Addie's mother is really good at a couple of things: surfing, and disappearing. When Addie wakes up one Monday morning to find that her mom has left again, it's up to her to take care of her brother, scrape together enough food for meals, and hopefully win some cash in a surfing competition.
Popcorn by Rob Harrell, 4-8
It's picture day, and middle schooler Andrew is having an epically bad day. He tries to keep his fears at bay, but a day this bad would be hard on any kid. For Andrew, who is dealing with the stress of anxiety and OCD, it's especially difficult.

Right Back At You, by Carolyn Mackler, 4-5
Mason (2023) is having trouble dealing with his dad moving away, his mom's drinking, and his classmate's bullying, so his therapist has him write a letter to help him work out his feelings. When his letter disappears from his closet, it is replaced by a response... from 36 years in the past! Talia, bullied for her Jewish identity in 1987, and Mason exchange letters, bond over shared interests, and help each other work through challenges.

Samira’s Worst Best Summer by Nina Hamza, 4-8

Samira just wants to spend her summer quietly and in peace, but when her house is toilet-papered, everything changes. Samira’s family assumes it’s because they’re the only brown family on the block. When she tries to solve the problem, she ends up making an even bigger mess.

Seeker of Truth: Kailash Satyarthi’s Fight to End Child Labor by Srividhya Venkat and Danica da Silva Pereira, 4-5

Kailash Satyarthi has fought injustice his whole life. As a young boy, he raised money so poor children could attend school. When he was a teen, he combatted caste discrimination by sharing a meal with "untouchables." As an adult, he fought against child labor and for increased education, ultimately rescuing hundreds of thousands of children worldwide.

Speechless by Aron Nels Steinke, 4-8

Mira hopes starting middle school will bring a fresh start and the chance to start speaking again while at school. Instead, when her classmates speak for her and her anxiety gets the best of her, she continues to only speak at home and express herself through her stop-motion animation projects. Then, her former friend and now enemy Chloe moves in with her family. How will Mira find her voice and overcome her fears when it feels like no one is listening?

A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall by Jasmine Warga, 4-8

Rami Ahmed can see a ghost that looks just like the subject of a painting recently stolen from an art museum. Rami’s mother, a Lebanese immigrant, works at the museum and has been accused of stealing the painting. With the help of his new friend Veda and a special turtle named Agatha, will Rami be able to find the painting and set everything right?

To Walk the Sky: How Iroquois Steelworkers Helped Build Towering Cities by Patricia Morris Buckley and E.B. Lewis, 4-5

Native American steelworkers, called skywalkers, have helped to build skyscrapers all over North America for generations. This informational text explores the contributions and sacrifices made by many of them that have made our cities what they are today.

Up, Up, Ever Up! Junko Tabei: A Life in the Mountains, 4-8

Junko Tabei dreamed of a life spent climbing mountains. But sponsors told her to stay home, men refused to climb with her, and the gloves didn’t fit her hands. But Junko wouldn’t let those obstacles get in her way. Not only did she succeed in summiting the world’s tallest peak with a team of women, she took on a new challenge: protecting the wild spaces she loved for future generations.

Uprooted by Ruth Chan, 4-8

Ruth loves her life in Toronto, and when her parents tell her that they’re moving to Hong Kong, she feels a lot of feelings: anger at her family for making her move, frustration that she doesn’t speak Cantonese very well, and loneliness since she misses her friends. But as her dad tells her stories about their family, and about how they relied on each other, Ruth realizes that she is also strong, and can put down roots too.

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While on a wild adventure, Chloe finds strength and heals some of the grief from losing her horse. She must rely on the help of her father who struggles immensely with mental health issues, including anxiety and OCD. Together they save a unicorn, dwarf, giant, and mermaid escape a witch and return home. The fantastical elements help ease the difficult topics covered in this story.

What Color is the Baby? A Celebration of Skin Tones by Harshini Vankineni and Neha Rawat, 4-5

When Kundana’s baby sister Kuku is born, everyone asks what color she is. Confused by their focus on skin tone, Kundana insists her sister is simply beautiful. Inspired by the author’s experiences with colorism, this story follows a big sister’s journey to lovingly describe and defend her sister.

What Fell From the Sky by Adrianna Cuevas, 4-5

The rural Texas town where Pineda Matlage and his friends live is taken over by American soldiers carrying out a training exercise. Pineda realizes that the army's presence is really a coverup for capturing his newly found alien friend. With the help of a Black soldier adjusting to a newly integrated army, Pineda and his friends rescue the peaceful alien family, while showing the town how to see beyond assumptions based on fear and ignorance.

Will's Race for Home by Jewell Parker Rhodes, 4-8

12-year-old Will's family are black sharecroppers in Texas in 1889, his father and grandfather having headed west from plantation life after the Civil War. Along with a Black former Union soldier who suffers scars from the war, Will and his father head for the Oklahoma Land Rush, confronting the hardships black folks faced in the American West.

Zarina Divided by Reem Faruqi, 4-8

Zarina Divided is a novel-in-verse set in India in 1947. Zarina's family is uprooted from their home during the Partition of India, and they undergo many hardships on their way to their new home in Karachi, Pakistan.

Middle School

Any Way You Look by Maleeha Siddiqui, 4-8

Ainy is ready for summer! She wants to work in her mom's store, hang out with her best friend, and spend time with her awesome older sister - and maybe start wearing the hijab, if the time is right. But when some boys from her community start harassing her, Ainy isn't sure what to do; will wearing the hijab make those boys leave her alone? With some help from her family and friends, Ainy gets creative and learns how to stand her ground while staying true to herself.

All the Blues in the Sky by Renee Watson, 6-8

After her best friend is killed in a hit-and-run, Sage is struggling to cope. In a counseling group with other girls who have lost someone close to them, she learns that not all losses are the same, and healing isn't predictable. And even as Sage grieves, new, good things enter her life - and she just may find a way to know that she can feel it all.

Amazing Immortals: A Guide to Gods and Goddesses Around the World by Dinah Williams, 6-8

A fact-filled, culturally diverse, and gorgeously illustrated book; a perfect introduction to mythology, containing information about gods from 30 different pantheons. Focusing on big themes (creation, water, death, love, war, etc.), this anthology provides cultural context and connections to modern-day pop culture.

Are you Nobody Too? By Tina Cane, 6-8

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and a transfer to a new school in Chinatown, Emily Sofer, an adoptee raised by white parents, struggles with cultural identity, loneliness, and a surprising revelation about her adoptive family. Emily finds comfort in the poetry of Emily Dickinson, which becomes a bridge to her classmates and helps her feel seen and understood.

Ash’s Cabin by Jen Wang, 6-8

Feeling alone while grieving their grandfather, ignored by classmates who do not care about climate change, and misunderstood after requesting their family use their new pronouns and name, Ash decides to leave society in search of their grandfather's secret cabin and start a new life on their own.

The Beautiful Game by Yamile Saied, 4-8

Valeria "Magic" Solomon is a twelve-year-old soccer legend on her way to winning a championship as the only girl on a boys' soccer team when two tragedies strike. First, she gets her period for the first time and learns to cope with severe cramping. Second, her aunt passes away, starting a chain of events that would lead to her cousin coming to live with them, and her grandfather (and coach) removing her from the soccer team. Now she will have to play for (and prove herself to) a new team - an all-girls team.

Black Girl Power by Leah Johnson, 6-8

A collection of 15 stories celebrating black girlhood--friendships, families, and communities. Stories were written by award-winning authors Ibi Zoboi, Sharon Draper, Renée Watson, and more.

Black Lives: Great Minds of Science by Tonya Bolden and David Wilkerson, 6-8

An inspirational exploration of Black women and men that have excelled in a field of science. The fields include medicine, engineering, math, biology, geology, and aviation.

Blood in the Water by Tiffany D. Jackson, 6-8

While spending the summer with family friends in Martha’s Vineyard, Brooklyn girl Kaylani McKinnon feels like a fish out of water. Suddenly, the death of a popular teenage boy shocks the community. Was it drowning? A shark attack? Or was it the unthinkable - murder? Kaylani is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Boy 2.0 by Tracey Baptiste, 6-8
When thirteen-year-old African American Coal discovers he can turn invisible, he searches for answers about his past with the help of his friends and his new foster family.

Breaking into Sunlight by John Cochran, 6-8
Seventh-grader Reese Buck's life is upended by his father's opioid overdose. Forced to move, he finds healing and friendship in an unexpected place: a rundown trailer on a rural property owned by an acquaintance of his mom.Through nature and connection, Reese learns that hope can grow even in the darkest times.

Buffalo Dreamer by Violet Duncan, 4-8
Summer visits her grandparents on the Cree Reservation in Alberta, where she joins in traditional activities and begins dreaming of a girl escaping a residential school. When she learns the dreams connect to her Mosom and nearby graves, Summer confronts her people's painful history and the resilience of their culture.

Deer Run Home by Ann Clare LeZotte, 4-8
Twelve year old Effie is deaf, and her family refuses to learn ASL, which is her primary form of communication. After an incident at her mom's house results in Effie moving in with her father, she is neglected and abused. Miss Kathy, Effie's ASL interpreter, advocates to Effie to have her voice heard and to find where she belongs.

Family Week by Sarah Moon, 4-8
Four best friends spend Family Week together at an annual gathering of LGBTQ+ families in Provincetown, MA—the largest of its kind across the country—in this middle grade coming-of-age story that celebrates identity, acceptance, and found family.

Gamerville by Johnnie Christmas, 4-8
Just after qualifying for a video game championship tournament, Max's mom signs him up for a no-tech nature summer at Camp Reset. Will Max find a way to escape and compete or will his dreams of videogame dominance be dashed?

Glitch Girl! By Rainie Oet, 6-8
J is a transgender girl with ADHD but no one seems to see her as anything other than a "bad boy" until she meets Junie and quickly develops a powerful crush. It takes meeting a non-binary peer and forming a true friendship to see that her obsession with Junie was unhealthy and that J is much more than a "glitch".

Going Overboard by Caroline Huntoon, 6-8
A reverse-Parent Trap story where tweens Piper and Colton must force their parents to break up, or their lives will change forever.

Gooseberry by Robin Gow, 6-8
This heartfelt middle-grade novel is about 12-year-old B, a nonbinary, neurodivergent foster child searching for belonging. When B and their new queer foster family adopt an anxious rescue dog named Gooseberry, the parallel journey of healing and trust they embark on—both for dog and child—reveals a tender, hopeful path toward chosen family and self-acceptance.

How Sweet the Sound by Kwame Alexander and Charly Palmer, 4-8
This poetic book presents a history of Black music in an inspiring long form poem. There are extensive notes in the back explaining the songs, forms, and artists described in the book.

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Both Adara and her father are grief-stricken after the death of her mother. Moving to Michigan to live with Grandma only adds to Adara's misery. She finds hope and healing by discovering that she can talk to plants like her mother could.

The Incredible Human Henson Blayze by Derrick Barnes, 6-8
Henson is celebrated by his small town for his amazing football prowess. But when his dear friend experiences a devastating beating, Henson has to decide if he will continue to play for the entertainment of his mostly white community or if he'll stand up for justice.

It’s All of Nothing, Vale by Andrea Beatriz Arango, 6-8
A poignant novel-in-verse in which, after a life-changing accident, one girl finds her way back to her life’s passion. But the harder Vale fights to catch up, the more she realizes her injury isn’t the only thing holding her back. If she can’t leave her accident in the past, then what does she have to look forward to?

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At the brink of WWII, Max is sent away from Berlin by his Jewish parents. He finds himself accompanied by two immortal and incorporeal creatures: a dybbuk and a kobold. Max must survive anti-Semitic bullies and then work his way into training to become the youngest spy for Britain, all in hopes of getting sent back to Berlin to be reunited with his parents.

Not Nothing by Gayle Forman, 6-8
When Alex gets assigned community service after a horrible incident, he ends up volunteering at a senior living facility where he meets Joseph (a 107 year old Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor) and Maya Jade (a peer who is a Chinese-American adoptee). After years of not talking at all, Joseph starts opening up to Alex about his past and Alex's tough facade begins to crack. In spite of his past, Alex has to decide if he can rise to the occasion of his life.

Octopus Moon by Bobbie Pyron, 6-8
A deeply moving middle grade novel-in-verse about a girl struggling with depression when she starts fifth grade amidst a sea of changes.

On the Block: Stories of Immigrant Families by Ellen Oh, 6-8
The reader takes a tour around the world without leaving a New York city block. With all the cultural intricacies that come with getting to know a character's home, each apartment is filled with the language, sounds, smells and customs of immigrant families.

On Thin Ice by Jessica Kim, 6-8
Twelve-year-old fraternal twins Phoebe and Dexter Bae are polar opposites in every way except for their love of the ice. Phoebe is hyperfocused on pairs figure skating, and Dex loves his hockey team. But when Phoebe’s partner injures his knee just two months before competitions and Dex gets cut from his team in favor of a new hotshot goalie from Canada, they’re both left spinning.

One Big Open Sky by Lesa Cline-Ransome, 6-8
Three African American women (a daughter, a wife and mother, and a single independent teacher) narrate their stories about their journey to Nebraska to own their land.

Picture a Girl by Jenny Manzer, 4-8
Addie’s mother is really good at a couple of things: surfing, and disappearing. When Addie wakes up one Monday morning to find that her mom has left again, it’s up to her to take care of her brother, scrape together enough food for meals, and hopefully win some cash in a surfing competition.

The Poetry of Car Mechanics by Heidi E.Y. Stemple, 6-8
15-year-old Dylan has always felt like an outsider in his small town. Isolated when he was younger as the result of his unpredictable, now-absent mother and feeling like a disappointment to his grandfather who has stepped in to raise him, Dylan finds relief in the woods behind his grandfather's auto shop.

Popcorn by Rob Harrell, 4-8
It's picture day, and middle schooler Andrew is having an epically bad day. He tries to keep his fears at bay, but a day this bad would be hard on any kid. For Andrew, who is dealing with the stress of anxiety and OCD, it's especially difficult.

The Queen Bees of Tybee County by Kyle Casey Chu, 6-8
A summer of "yes" leads to a lot of self-discovery for Derrick Chan. Spending an unexpected summer with his Chinese American grandmother, Derrick rediscovers his love of fabrics and dresses. Will this be the summer that Derrick says yes to his own identity and shows the world who he really is? Will everyone accept him?

Red Bird Danced by Dawn Quigley, 6-8
While Ariel is navigating the grief of her aunt's disappearance by finding solace in dance, her friend Tomah is discovering his strength lies in storytelling. Together, they learn to share their stories and feelings, offering hope and raising awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women crisis that is deeply affecting their lives.

Safe Harbor by Padma Venkatraman, 6-8
An uplifting novel-in-verse about an immigrant girl adjusting to life in the US through her love of nature, music, and poetry.

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Samira just wants to spend her summer quietly and in peace, but when her house is toilet-papered, everything changes. Samira's family assumes it's because they're the only brown family on the block. When she tries to solve the problem, she ends up making an even bigger mess.

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Rami Ahmed can see a ghost. The ghost is a girl who looks just like the subject of a painting that has been stolen from the art museum that his Lebanese immigrant mother works at (and has been accused of stealing). With the help of his new friend Veda (and a special turtle named Agatha), will Rami be able to find the painting and set everything right?

The Strongest Heart by Saadia Faruqi, 6-8
Mo and his father, who has schizophrenia, are forced to move to Texas to stay with family. Mo's relationship with his father transforms as he adapts to his new environment.

The Tenth Mistake of Hank Hooperman by Gennifer Choldenko, 6-8
When eleven-year-old Hank's mom abandons him and his sister Boo for over a week, he seeks out the stranger she listed as an emergency contact. Asking for help, though, means social workers, a new school, and the chance he might be separated from Boo. This is a heart-wrenching, healing, and ultimately hopeful story about how complicated family can be.

The Trouble with Secrets by Naomi Milliner, 6-8
A Jewish girl preparing for her upcoming bat mitzvah tries to keep a secret—along with one of her sister's—in this beautiful coming-of-age contemporary novel that explores change, grief, and the complexities of sibling relationships.

The Truth About Triangles, Michael Leali, 6-8
A heartfelt contemporary middle grade novel following Luca Salvatore, a young gay Italian American trying to save his family's pizza restaurant and a life that feels like it's falling apart after he learns that his parents may be separating and his first crush and best friend might be into each other.

Unhappy Camper: A Graphic Novel by Lily LaMotte and Ann and Sunmi Xu, 6-8
Off to camp sisters Claire and Michelle go! Both Taiwanese-American, they have a very different understanding and pride in their cultural heritage. Claire is a camp counselor this year and excited to be learning more and teaching others about Taiwanese heritage. Michelle is forced to camp and would much rather be at home trying to get an invite to the end of summer bash. Will Michelle come to embrace her heritage over the summer or will she be too busy pining for home?

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Ruth loves her life in Toronto, and when her parents tell her that they're moving to Hong Kong, she feels a lot of feelings: anger at her family for making her move, frustration that she doesn't speak Cantonese very well, and loneliness since she misses her friends. But as her dad tells her stories about their family, and about how they relied on each other, Ruth realizes that she is also strong, and can put down roots too.

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Weirdo by Tony Jr. Weaver and Jes an Cin Wicowo, 6-8
Tony is a Black nerd (blerd) who is bullied by his peers for being an "Oreo" who brings toys to school. Overcome by grief for his recently departed grandmother and the bullying, he attempts suicide. Through caring family, therapy, and finding his people at a new school, Tony becomes a hero to his new community.

Will's Race for Home by Jewell Parker Rhodes, 4-8
12-year-old Will's family are black sharecroppers in Texas in 1889, his father and grandfather having headed west from plantation life after the Civil War. Along with a Black former Union soldier who suffers scars from the war, Will and his father head for the Oklahoma Land Rush, confronting the hardships black folks faced in the American West.

A World Worth Saving by Kyle Lukoff, 6-8
A is a Jewish, trans-male teen tasked with saving the world from creatures in Jewish lore with the assistance of a golem made of trash. Taking place in Washington during the COVID19 pandemic, this story is full of the ups and downs of friendships and challenges that many trans youth face.

Zarina Divided by Reem Faruqi, 4-8
Zarina Divided is a novel-in-verse set in India in 1947. Zarina's family is uprooted from their home during the Partition of India, and they undergo many hardships on their way to their new home in Karachi, Pakistan.

High School

A Bird in the Air Means We Can Still Breathe by Mahogany L. Browne, 9-12

Set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 shutdown in NYC, this narrative interweaves the stories of seven teenagers. Through masks, grief, and fear, their resilience, love, and survival emerge, connecting disparate experiences from a bustling bodega to the stark isolation of a cell, revealing the palpable essence of the human experience.

The Breakup Lists by Adib Khorram, 9-12

Jackson Ghasnavi is good at a lot of things: stage managing, hanging with his best friend Bowie, and making lists - usually about all the horrible qualities of his twin sister's awful ex-boyfriends. But when his sister starts dating Liam - the captain of the swim team turned lead actor for the theatre department - Jackson is already worried about writing that inevitable list, especially since he's started crushing so hard on Liam.

Bright Red Fruit by Safia Elhillo, 9-12

Samira lives under the overly watchful eye of her mother and aunties, who are trying to make sure she abides by Sudanese cultural and religious expectations. When Samira is able to go to Washington, DC for the summer, she explores the city, her poetry and her relationship with an older poet that has some dangerous consequences.

Brownstone by Samuel Teer and Mar Julia, 9-12

Almudena discovers her heritage when she begrudgingly has to spend an entire summer with her Spanish-speaking father she hasn't seen since she was a toddler. Not a Spanish speaker, she struggles to communicate and acculturate to her new identity. Throughout the summer, she finds a place within a new found family.

The Color of a Lie by Kim Johnson, 9-12

Passing for white, Calvin and his family leave Chicago and move to an all-white suburb. While living there, Calvin learns some dark secrets about this suburb that puts him and his family at risk.

Compound Fracture by Andrew Joseph White, 9-12

Transgender and autistic teen Miles has evidence against the town's corrupt sheriff, and he's beaten nearly to death because of it. He discovers that others in Twist Creek are also desperate to escape the sheriff's oppressive rule. They're ready to risk everything to protect their families from this cycle of abuse—but is Miles willing to do the same?

Crashing into You by Rocky Callen, 9-12

Leti and Jacob are both 17 and in high school. Leti's mother is long dead and her father is emotionally absent. Leti worships her older brother, Santos, and is part of a "crew" of road racers that become her family. Jacob is autistic, has recently lost his father and is passionate about space and becoming an astronaut. There is romance, but the focus is on grief, found family, resilience, friendship, anger and forgiveness.

Dear Manny by Nic Stone, 9-12

In part 3 of the Dear Martin series, Jared is running for student government while studying at Yale. During his race, he examines his own privilege, confronts his father and his expectations, and falls in love.

Desert Echoes by Abdi Nazemian, 9-12
Fifteen-year-old Kam is head over heels for Ash, the boy who swept him off his feet. But his family and best friend, Bodie, are worried. Something seems off about Ash. He also has a habit of disappearing, at times for days. When Ash asks Kam to join him on a trip to Joshua Tree, the two of them walk off into the sunset… but only Kam returns.

Dividing Sky by Jill Tew, 9-12
In a world where the government is run like a corporation and everything is about making the bottom line and productivity is everything, Liv has a neurochip in her brain that collects memories that she sells to wealthy clients so they do not have to spend time away from their offices for new experiences. Liv is offered an impossible sum to collect a memory for a client outside of the Metro in no-man's land where she is pursued by an enforcer. Circumstances lead to Liv temporarily losing her memories when the enforcer catches up to her and he is faced with the ethical dilemma of whether or not to arrest her for a crime of which she has no memory.

Ellie Haycock is Totally Normal by Gretchen Schreiber, 9-12
Ellie Haycock Is Totally Normal follows a witty teen with a chronic illness as she navigates life between hospital stays and high school drama. When a new hospitalization shakes her routine, she confronts her identity, relationships, and what it truly means to be "normal."

Everything We Never Had by Randy Ribay, 9-12
Four generations of young men beginning in the 1930's with Francisco who emigrated to the US from the Philippines to work as an agricultural laborer, to 1965 Emil who wants nothing more than to succeed in school despite racial prejudice he faces and his absentee father who is fighting for workers rights, to 1983 Chris who wishes his father would listen to him and understand that he does not want to be an engineer, to 2020 Enzo who struggles with anxiety as the COVID pandemic hits and his estranged grandfather moves in with them.

Exes & Foes by Amanda Woody, 9-12
High school seniors and exes Caleb and Emma find their complicated dynamic further disrupted by the arrival of the intriguing new transfer student, Juliet. As unexpected connections form and old tensions resurface, they must navigate the complexities of friendship, romance, and self-discovery.

First Love Language by Stefany Valentine, 9-12
A heartfelt young adult romance about Catie Carlson, a Taiwanese American teen navigating identity, grief, and love. When her summer coworker Toby offers to teach her Mandarin in exchange for dating advice, Catie uses her late father's annotated copy of The Five Love Languages to coach him—despite having no dating experience herself. As their bond deepens and Catie searches for her biological mother, she discovers that understanding love—both romantic and familial—is more complex than she imagined.

Four Eids and a Funeral by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé and Jaigirdar Adiba, 9-12
Said Hossain and Tiwa Olatunji were best friends growing up, but all of that ended when Said left for boarding school. When Said returns home for a funeral, he and Tiwa are forced back together. As they begin to work together to save the Islamic center, they discover they may not be enemies after all.

The Girl You Know by Elle Gonzalez Rose, 9-12
After her twin sister, Solina, is found dead, Luna Flores decides to assume her twin's identity and return to the elite boarding school Solina attended in hopes of finding out what really led to her death. As Luna navigates a world of wealth, secrets, and privilege, she’s forced to confront painful truths about her sister, herself, and the cost of justice.

The Great Cool Ranch Dorito in the Sky by Josh Galarza, 9-12
Teen comic book creator Brett Harrison struggles with disordered eating and his adoptive mother's cancer diagnosis while trying to navigate friendship, self-worth, and identity. When his private food journal is leaked online, he must face his deepest insecurities and lean on unlikely friends before his destructive habits spiral out of control.

Hangry Hearts by Jennifer Chen, 9-12
Romeo and Juliet retold against the backdrop of the Pasadena Farmers Market with the Wu and Chen families. The families were once fast friends and Randall and Julie grew up together until an unforgettable fight between both grandmothers. Randall and Julie are paired with London for a school project and fall for each other despite the family feud. Will their love for one another be stronger than the feud that has kept the families at odds for years?

Here I Am by Shaunta Grimes, 9-12
After relentlessly being bullied about her weight, Celly is ready to end it all, but changes her mind at the last minute. During her road to recovery she makes a new friend, realizes she is strong in many ways, and finds that people struggle with their weight in many ways.

How to Lose a Best Friend by Jordan K. Casomar, 9-12
When Zeke publicly confesses his feelings for his best friend Imogen at her sixteenth birthday party, she’s forced to confront the pressure to reciprocate despite her true feelings for someone else. As Zeke's desperation escalates, Imogen must stand up for herself and her right to choose who she loves, even if it means risking their lifelong friendship.

Huda F. Wants to Know? By Huda Fahmy, 9-12
Huda has big plans for her junior year of high school. Unfortunately, things go sideways when her parents announce they are getting a divorce. Huda must figure out what this new reality means for her family.

Lam Made of Death by Kelly Andrew, 9-12
Vivienne is a selective mute and her father hires Thomas to act as her interpreter to go with her everywhere she goes. Vivienne is less than pleased with the arrangement but Thomas is making too much money to risk losing this job. Things take a dark turn when Vivienne seeks out a surgical exorcism.

I am Not Jessica Chen by Ann Liang, 9-12
A thought-provoking YA novel about Jenna Chen, a Chinese American teen who wakes up in the body of her seemingly perfect cousin, Jessica, after wishing to escape her own disappointing life. As Jenna navigates Jessica’s privileged world, she uncovers the hidden pressures and emotional toll behind her cousin’s success, ultimately learning that perfection is an illusion and self-worth must come from within.

Ida, In Love and In Trouble by Veronica Chambers, 9-12
Ida B. Wells tries to live within the societal boundaries as an African American female teacher. However, her passion, spirit, and writing for truth and justice expands her boundaries and thus propels her to become a crusader and warrior for her people.

The Judgement of Yoyo Gold by Isaac Blum, 9-12
Yoyo Gold is the dutiful daughter of an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, but when her best friend is sent to boarding school, she feels isolated and frustrated. Through her friendship with a non-Orthodox Jewish girl and a budding romance, Yoyo learns about herself and her place in her community.

Knucklehead by Tony Jr. Keith, 9-12
While society often assigns the label “knucklehead” to kids with attitude problems, this brilliant and electric poetry collection by spoken word poet and hip-hop educator Tony Keith Jr. subverts that narrow way of thinking and empathizes with young people who are misunderstood and unheard.

Liar’s Test by Ambelin Kwaymullina, 9-12
Bell Silverleaf was torn from her family, her community, her land and forced into servitude of the Risen. Now, she'll compete in the Queen's Test and have the opportunity to rule for the next 25 years. Will she survive the competition and rescue her family?

Looking For Smoke by K.A. Cobell, 9-12
A native girl is murdered and four young people feel they must solve the mystery of her death or be suspects, since they were the last to see the victim alive. This story brings the issue of the high rate of kidnapping and murder of indigenous women to light.

My Life as a Chameleon by Diana Anyakwo, 9-12
In 1990 Manchester, 16-year-old Lily— biracial, with a Nigerian father and Irish mother—prepares to return to Nigeria for her father’s death anniversary, prompting memories of a childhood marked by her father’s schizophrenia, escalating violence, and a sudden relocation from Lagos to England. As political unrest in Lagos and family secrets unravel, Lily grapples with racism, identity, and belonging across two cultures, ultimately forging resilience amid emotional turmoil.

Needy Little Things by Channelle Desamours, 9-12
Sariyah has a gift to hear what people need and then provides it. When her friend, Deja, disappears, Sariyah and her friends use her intuitive powers and other skills to find her.

Night Owls: A Mystical Tale of Love and Lore by A.R. Vishny, 9-12
Drawn from Jewish folklore our main characters are owl-shifting vampire sisters who have owned a historic movie theater for over a hundred years. The new ticket office attendant can see the undead, is a movie history geek, and has a crush on one of the sisters. The monstrous underworld of New York pulls the sisters in and the three of them must work together to face demons and their own insecurities.

On the Wings of La Noche by Vanessa L. Torres, 9-12
Noche is a Lechuza by night, an ethereal jet-black owl who guides the dead to the after. Except now, Noche cannot bring herself to escort her dead girlfriend, whose soul is fading the harder Noche holds on—an aching romance about first and second loves and finding the strength to let go.

One Big Open Sky by Lesa Cline Ransome, 9-12
In 1879 Mississippi, three women, Lettie, a daughter, Sylvia, Lettie's mother, and Philomenia, a teacher, narrate their stories while traveling west to Nebraska. A historical novel told in verse.

Our Shouts Echo by Jade Adia, 9-12
While Niarah has plans to build a doomsday bunker in her backyard, the school she attends has a different plan. Because of her poor and failing grades, Niarah must spend a summer with Color Group or attend summer school. She spends the summer with Color Group which takes her on a self-discovery path to herself.

Playin’ Hard by Whitney D. Grandison, 9-12
A debate about love between Cree Jacobs and Deandre Parker sets off both of them to (1) convince Cree that Deandre isn't like his friends in The Ballers Club and (2) to convince Deandre that Cree isn't like other girls who swoon over athletes.

Rosa by Any Other Name by Hailey Alcaraz, 9-12
Rosa is a light skinned Mexican-American passing for white in a 1950s all white high school. Things go sideways when her blonde girlfriend falls for her dark skinned Mexican-American best friend. The story is a rewrite of Romeo and Juliet so it takes a tragic turn.

Ruin Road by Lama Giles, 9-12
High school football player Cade Webster buys a ring in a pawn shop, but when his wish that people stop acting scared of him seems to be coming true, he remembers the ring came with a warning--"When the strangeness begins, come back"--and suddenly people seem to have lost their fear of everything.

Run Like a Girl by Amaka Egbe, 9-12
Dera Edwards knows her life is over when she's shipped off to live with her estranged father in the middle of White Suburbia. To make matters worse, Dera learns that her new school doesn't have a girls' track team, shattering her dreams of getting a track scholarship and, one day, competing in the Olympics.

Say a Little Prayer by Jenna Voris, 9-12
Sentenced to a week at church camp after slapping her sister's former best friend, Riley decides to prove to her community how awful her former pastor is by committing each of the seven deadly sins while there.

Shampoo Unicorn by Sawyer Lovett, 9-12
In the small town of Canon, West Virginia, people care about three things: God, country, and football. Brian is more into Drag Race, Dolly Parton, and his gig as mystery host of podcast, Shampoo Unicorn. Greg's life should be perfect as the town's super-masc football star, but his secret is he's just as gay as Brian. Leslie is a trans girl living in nearby Pennsylvania, searching for reasons to get out of bed every day. When a terrible accident occurs, it's Shampoo Unicorn that brings the three teens' lives together. And what begins as a search for answers becomes a story of finding connection.

Shut Up, This is Serious by Caroline Ixta, 9-12
Belen wants to help her friend, Leti, through her pregnancy and family issues and while dealing with her own depression and family problems. So Belen hangs out with an older guy and skips class. However, Belen learns that these activities may be fun but only delays the inevitable reality that Belen must face.

The Singular Life of Aria Patel bu Samira Ahmed, 9-12
This captivating and mind-bending second-chance romance explores what it means to love—even across the multiverse.

Sisters in the Wind by Angeline Boulley, 9-12
After discovering that she was lied to about her culture and ancestry following the death of her father, Lucy escapes an abusive stepmother only to be immersed in the throes of the foster care system. While in foster care, Lucy discovers the dark reality of too many of such homes and flees from her last host family only to be hunted down in hopes of being kept quiet. Along the way, she discovers more and more about her own cultural identity and ancestry as an Ojibway woman.

(S)kin by Ibi Zoboi, 9-12
Marisol, fifteen, is the daughter of a soucouyant--who sheds its skin every new moon. Genevieve, seventeen, is the daughter of a professor. When the professor gets a new nanny, the new nanny reveals a family secret connecting both Marisol and Genevieve. They learn that their skin color and condition connects them in ways they could not imagine.

Something Like Right by H.D. Hunter, 9-12
Biracial teen Zay is expelled from his high school after a fight and must navigate a new life at Broadlawn Alternative School while living with his aunt. As he faces complicated family dynamics, social injustice, and a budding romance, Zay begins to confront the pain of his past and the challenges of shaping his future. The story offers a heartfelt look at love, identity, resilience, and healing.

Tangleroot by Kalela Williams, 9-12
Noni's parents have recently divorced and she is forced to move to Virginia into a plantation home with her mother who is a professor of Black literature. Noni becomes fascinated by the history of the white, slaveholding family that once lived in her home and the more she finds out about them the more she reveals about the ugly ways that racism have shaped the way that the people of her new home view their own history.

They Bloom at Night by Trang Thanh Tran, 9-12
A climate disaster has struck and the red algae has taken over the town of Mercy. With her dad and brother missing - presumed dead - Noon is left to care for her mother broken by grief, capture the monster that they believe to be the cause of the disappearances in the town all while figuring out their self identity.

Thirsty by Jad Hammonds, 9-12
Blake is an African American queer trying to fit in a predominantly white school. She and her girlfriend, Ella, are hoping to join the secret society. So Blake does almost anything and everything to join. However, Blake learns that trying to fit in has some serious and dangerous consequences.

This Thing of Ours by Joseph Frederick, 9-12
In an instant, Ossie Brown’s entire future is in jeopardy when a torn ACL ends his promising basketball career. Now that basketball is no longer a major part of his identity, Ossie—a Black teen who doesn’t come from wealth and privilege—must navigate his new place in the social and academic ecosystems of his affluent, predominantly white school.

Time and Time Again by Chatham Greenfield, 9-12
In this debut YA speculative romance perfect for fans of Rachael Lippincott, two queer, disabled, Jewish teens find themselves stuck in a time loop--and falling love.

Twenty-Four Seconds From Now by Jason Reynolds, 9-12
A tender and humorous young adult love story told from the perspective of 17-year-old Neon Benton. As Neon prepares for a major milestone in his relationship with Aria Wright, the novel unfolds in reverse chronological order, tracing their two-year journey of falling in love, navigating family dynamics, and confronting the emotional complexities of intimacy. Through flashbacks and heartfelt moments, Neon learns to embrace vulnerability, guided by the wisdom of his sister, parents, and grandmother.

Up in Smoke by Nick Brooks, 9-12
After Cooper King is pressured into participating in looting by his brother-figure Jason, a peaceful protest turns violent and a woman is murdered - and the cops think Jason did it. Cooper and Jason's sister (and Cooper's crush) Mo team up to clear Jason's name and find out who really committed the murder.

When the World Tips Over by Jandy Nelson, 9-12

Years ago, the Fall kids' father mysteriously disappeared, cracking the family into pieces. Now Dizzy Fall, age twelve, bakes cakes, sees spirits, and wishes she were a heroine of a romance novel. Miles Fall, seventeen, brainiac, athlete, and dog-whisperer, is a raving beauty, but also lost, and desperate to meet the kind of guy he dreams of. And Wynton Fall, nineteen, is a virtuoso violinist set on a crash course for fame or self-destruction. Then an enigmatic rainbow-haired girl shows up… Somehow, she is vital to each of them. But before anyone can figure out who she is, catastrophe strikes, leaving the Falls more broken than ever.

When We Ride by Rex Ogle, 9-12

When We Ride by Rex Ogle is a gripping novel-in-verse that follows Diego Benevides, a hardworking teen trying to escape his struggling neighborhood and make it to college. His loyalty to his best friend Lawson—who deals drugs—pulls him into dangerous territory, forcing Diego to confront the consequences of blurred boundaries and difficult choices. The story explores themes of friendship, survival, and the cost of loyalty in a world shaped by poverty and violence.

Where Wolves Won’t Die by Anton Treuer, 9-12

Where Wolves Don’t Die by Anton Treuer is a powerful coming-of-age story about Ezra Cloud, a 15-year-old Ojibwe boy sent to live with his grandfather in the Canadian wilderness after being falsely accused of arson. As Ezra learns survival skills and reconnects with his Indigenous roots, he confronts grief, racism, and identity, ultimately finding strength in tradition and family. The novel blends adventure with cultural healing, offering a vibrant portrayal of Ojibwe life and resilience.

With Love, Miss Americanah by Jane Igharo, 9-12

Enore Adesuwa, a seventeen year old Nigerian and her family moved to the U.S. shortly after the death of her dad. New to the country, the city and her school, Enore slowly learns to adjust with the help of a new friend named Davi Santiago.

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