

2020 OLA Intermediate Sequoyah Masterlist Annotations

Anderson, M.T., and Eugene Yelchin. *The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2018. 544 p. (Grades 5-8). Elf historian, Brangwain Spurge is on a mission. Fly into the foul goblin kingdom, find his host Werfel the Archivist, deliver a gift of peace to Gogh the “Evil One” and send images back to the spymaster in Elfland. What could possibly go wrong? Told through a combination of prose, illustrations, and spymaster reports, this story delivers a humorous tale of misinformation, identity and acceptance.

Auxier, Jonathan. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster*. New York: Amulet Books, 2018. 344 p. (Grades 3-8). Nan is an orphan in Victorian England. To survive, she works as a chimney sweep, which is a difficult and dangerous job. One day, Nan gets stuck in a chimney fire and passes out. She wakes in the attic later, surprised that she is not dead, and also not alone — the monster that rescued her is there, too, and thus begins a beautiful friendship.

Beals, Melba Pattillo. *March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018. 214 p. (Grades 7 and up). Melba Pattillo Beals chronicles her childhood in Little Rock, Arkansas. She gives compelling accounts of the frustrations of growing up under the Jim Crow laws. Through it all, her faith and courage are evident as she challenges the limitations placed on her due to the color of her skin.

Blake, Ashley Herring. *Ivy Aberdeen’s Letter to the World*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018. 310 p. (Grades 4-7). Ivy’s precious notebook is lost in the confusion when her family’s home is destroyed by a tornado. The notebook is full of her innermost thoughts — like that Ivy thinks she may like girls — and someone knows her secret. Ivy’s story is a sensitive depiction of first crushes and the challenges that face a family displaced by disaster.

Braden, Ann. *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*. New York City: Sky Pony Press, 2018. 256 p. (Grades 4-7). Seventh grader Zoey Albro tries to care for her young siblings while dealing with issues relating to her family’s poverty. When a teacher finally believes enough in her to invite her to join the school’s debate team, Zoey begins to find her voice and tries to get her mom out of an abusive relationship.

Cartaya, Pablo. *Marcus Vega Doesn’t Speak Spanish*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018. 249 p. (Grades 5-9). Marcus tries to help his mother when money is tight, and with the care of Charlie, his brother who has Down Syndrome. On a family trip to Puerto Rico, Marcus tries to track down his father who deserted the family years before.

Charles, Tami. *Like Vanessa*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2018. 284 p. (Grades 5-8). For most of her young life, thirteen-year old Vanessa Martin has been fascinated by the Miss America pageant. When given the opportunity to participate in her school's first beauty pageant, Vanessa must overcome her self-confidence issues, the growing chasm between her and her best friend, and the long-held secret regarding her absentee mother.

Hesse, Monica. *The War Outside*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018. 336 p. (Grade 7 and up). Haruko and Margot are unlikely friends. One Japanese-American and one German-American, both considered enemies of the State. Along with their families, they are held in an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas, during World War II. In this uncertain environment, they must learn to trust each other because in the camp, change is the only constant, and they must survive it — together or apart.

Marsh, Katherine. *Nowhere Boy*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 368 p. (Grades 4-7). Ahmed has just arrived in Brussels, Belgium, as a Syrian refugee and quickly figures out he is not welcome there. Max is an American boy living in Brussels and also feels like he does not belong in Belgium. Ahmed and Max meet through some strange circumstances and form an unlikely friendship. Both boys are sad for very different reasons and find ways to help each other be brave.

McGuire, Sarah. *The Flight of Swans*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2018. 442 p. (Grades 4-6). In a beautiful retelling of the German story "The Six Swans" by the Brothers Grimm, Princess Ryn's stepmother cursed her brothers to become swans. They will only live as long as Ryn can stay silent for six years. During this time her brothers will revert back to their true human forms during every full moon. Ryn must create six shirts out of nettles by the time the six years are up; otherwise, her brothers will be swans forever.

O'Connor, Sheila. *Until Tomorrow, Mr. Marsworth*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018. 348 p. (Grades 5-7). Eleven-year-old Reenie starts a paper route and becomes pen pals with her shut-in neighbor, Mr. Marsworth. In her letters, Reenie pours out her heart about the death of her mother and her worries about keeping her brother Billy out of the Vietnam War.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *Boots on the Ground: America's War in Vietnam*. New York: Viking Books for Young Readers, 2018. 224 p. (Grades 6 and up). In 1965, President Johnson sent troops to Vietnam. By the end of the war, 57,939 American lives were lost. This book tells the stories of six soldiers, a nurse, and a Vietnamese refugee from their viewpoints. By adding in what is happening at home, a well-rounded view of the war is developed.

Ribay, Randy. *After the Shot Drops*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2018. 352 p. (Grades 8 and up). Written in alternate voices, author Ribay shows the impact personal decisions have on the lives of others through the lives of two boys: one with a chance for a better life for his family and the other who feels left out and left behind by a best friend.

Saeed, Aisha. *Amal Unbound*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 226 p. (Grades 5-8). Amal is a Pakistani girl with a passion for her education, but she fears her dreams are lost when an accidental encounter causes her to become an indentured servant to a nefarious landlord. Working within a system that would keep her and other girls like her oppressed forever, Amal must use her intellect and resourcefulness to fight her way back home.

Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018. 304 p. (Grades 3-7). Based on the author's childhood, spunky and resourceful Mia Tang runs the front desk of the hotel her parents manage. As Chinese immigrants, Mia's family feel like they are within reach of the "American Dream" but still face setbacks, racism and poverty. Mia herself manages all of this plus working on her own dream of being a writer while doing what she can to help her parents and the hotel residents she considers family.