

2020 OLA Intermediate Sequoyah Smorgasbord

The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge

By M.T. Anderson and Eugene Yelchin

Citation:

Anderson, M.T., and Eugene Yelchin. *The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge*. Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2018. 544p. (Grades 5-8)

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Elf Historian, Brangwain Spurge, has been catapulted (quite literally) into the arms of his nation’s greatest enemy, the goblin kingdom, on a mission to observe his surroundings and deliver a gift to the mysterious ruler Ghohg. Survival is optional. Eagerly awaiting the arrival of his invited guest is Goblin historian, Werfel the Archivist. Ever the patient and kind host, Werfel immerses Spurge in goblin culture. Meanwhile, ill-tempered Spurge is spying and sending Top Secret Transmission images back to the Order of the Clean Hand, but there is more to the story than meets the eye.

This side-splitting illustrated novel is a fantastical comedy of manners that will tickle the readers’ funny bone while simultaneously asking them to think critically about the consequences of cultural perception, bias, and misinformation.

Reviews:

- Booklist (Starred), 06/01/2018
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 09/01/2018
- Horn Book (Starred), 09/01/2018
- Kirkus (Starred), 07/01/2018
- Publisher’s Weekly (Starred), 08/06/2018
- School Library Journal, 08/30/2018
- Voices of Youth Advocates, 6/1/2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2018 Junior Library Guild Selection
- 2018 Kirkus Best Books Of The Year
- 2018 National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature
- 2018 NPR Best Books Of The Year
- 2018 Publishers Weekly Best Books of the Year
- 2019 YALSA Top Ten Amazing Audiobooks
- 2019 ALSC Notables List: Middle Grade category

Websites/Social Media:

- Website: mt-anderson.com; eugeneyelchinbooks.com
- Twitter: @_MTAnderson

Related Titles:

- *The Book of Boy* by Catherine Gilbert Murdock (2018)
- *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick (2007)
- *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket (1999-2006)

Other Books by Authors:

M.T. Anderson:

- *Feed* (2004)
- *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Vol. I: The Pox Party* (2006)
- *Whales on Stilts, Pals in Peril #1* (2006)

Eugene Yelchin:

- *Breaking Stalin's Nose* (2011)
- *Arcady's Goal* (2014)
- *The Haunting of Falcon House* (2016)

Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster

By Jonathan Auxier

Citation:

Auxier, Jonathan. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster*. New York: Amulet Books, 2018. 344 p. (Grades 3-8).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Orphans don't have many options in Victorian England, especially girls, and Nan is both an orphan and a girl. To earn her living, Nan is a chimney sweep and must often climb up in chimneys to clean them. Being a chimney sweep is hard, dangerous work, but Nan is one of the best. Then one day, she is caught up in a sweep's worst nightmare: the chimney that she is in catches on fire. Nan is sure she is a goner, but she later wakes up in an attic...and she is not alone! Find out more about who saved Nan and what the monster is in *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster*.

Reviews:

- Booklist (Starred), 08/01/2018
- Horn Book Magazine, 11/01/2018
- Kirkus (Starred), 08/01/2018
- Publisher's Weekly (Starred), 07/09/2018
- School Library Journal, 08/01/2018

Awards/Honors:

- 2019 Sydney Taylor Book Award: Older Readers
- 2019 NCTE Charlotte Huck Award

Website/Social Media:

- Website: www.thescop.com
- Twitter : [@JonathanAuxier](https://twitter.com/JonathanAuxier)
- Facebook: Jonathan Auxier
- Instagram: [@auxierjonathan](https://www.instagram.com/auxierjonathan)

Related Titles:

- *Little Bigfoot in the City* by Jennifer Weiner (2017)
- *Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate (2015)
- *The Floating Circus* by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer (2008)

Other Books by Author:

- *The Night Gardener* (2014)
- *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes* (2011)
- *Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard* (2016)

March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine

By Melba Pattillo Beals

Citation:

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).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Melba Pattillo Beals knows what it is like to feel fear, but she never let it keep her down. This book is an amazing story about the horrors and injustice that Melba faced growing up. Despite it all, or maybe because of it, young Melba was a warrior for civil rights. Can you imagine being one of only nine people to go to a school where many people didn't want you? That is what Melba did, but she faced many obstacles and terrors leading up to that moment she became part of the Little Rock Nine. Read about her story in *March Forward Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine*.

Reviews:

- Horn Book Guide, 11/01/2017
- Publishers Weekly (Starred), 11/13/2017
- School Library Journal, 12/01/2017
- Kirkus Reviews, 12/15/2017
- Booklist, 01/01/2018
- School Library Connection, 03/01/18

Website/Social Media:

- Website: www.melbapattillobeals.com
- Facebook: Melba Pattillo-Beals
- Twitter @melbabeals1

Related Titles:

- *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom* by Lynda Blackmon Lowery (2015)
- *Lions of Little Rock* by Kristin Levine (2012)

- *I am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* by Malala Yousafzai (2014)

Other Books by Author:

- *Warriors Don't Cry* (1994)
- *White is a State of Mind* (1999)
- *I Will Not Fear* (2018)

Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World

By Ashley Herring Blake

Citation:

Blake, Ashley Herring. *Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018. 310 p. (Grades 4-7).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

When their home is destroyed by a tornado, Ivy's family spends the night in a community shelter. It is there that Ivy's precious notebook, full of her darkest secrets, is lost in the chaos. Still reeling from the trauma of losing her home, Ivy develops a crush on her classmate, June. As the two girls grow closer, Ivy suspects that her notebook has been found by a mystery person who urges her to come out to someone she trusts. Meanwhile, Ivy struggles with being the overlooked middle child of parents preoccupied by her twin baby brothers and the loss of their home. Blake paints a sensitive picture of first love against the background of a family in crisis. Ivy is a beautifully flawed and complete character readers of all ages will relate to.

Reviews:

- Booklist, 01/01/18
- Horn Book Guide, 11/01/18
- Horn Book Magazine, 05/01/18
- Kirkus Reviews (Starred), 12/15/17
- New York Times, 03/18/18
- Publishers Weekly (Starred), 01/01/18
- School Library Connection, 05/01/18
- School Library Journal (Starred), 01/01/18

Awards and Honors:

- 2019 Stonewall Honor Book
- 2019 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults
- 2019 ALA GLBT Roundtable Rainbow List

Website/Social Media:

- Website: www.ashleyherringblake.com
- Twitter: [@ashleyhblake](https://twitter.com/ashleyhblake)

Related Titles:

- *Star-Crossed* by Barbara Dee (2017)
- *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl* by Stacy McAnulty (2018)
- *Between Two Skies* by Joanne O'Sullivan (2017)

Other Books by Author:

- *Suffer Love* (2016)
- *How to Make a Wish* (2017)
- *Girl Made of Stars* (2018)
- *The Mighty Heart of Sunny St. James* (2019)

The Benefits of Being an Octopus

By Ann Braden

Citation:

Braden, Ann. *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*. New York City: Sky Pony Press, 2018. 256 p. (Grades 4-7)

Annotation:

Seventh grader Zoey Albrow 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.

Booktalk:

How could you worry about homework if you don't have electricity at home? Who has time to join an after-school club when you have to take care of your younger siblings? What (if anything) will be for dinner tonight? These thoughts plague seventh grade Zoey's everyday existence. Zoey's mom works several jobs to keep them afloat, and puts up with emotional abuse from her boyfriend and father of Zoey's youngest brother, Hector. Zoey knows her life would be so much easier if she had eight arms and other abilities that her favorite animal, the octopus, has. When Zoey's teacher convinces her to join the debate club, she begins to discover a confidence to be more than a product of her environment, but is it enough to help get her and her family out of a potentially dangerous situation?

A story filled with heart and hope, *The Benefits of Being an Octopus* will tug at your heartstrings, and leave you wanting more.

Reviews:

- Booklist, 09/1/2018
- School Library Journal (Starred), 08/1/2018

Awards and Honors:

- NPR Best Book of the Year 2018 (Kids' Books Category)

Website/Social Media:

- Website: annbradenbooks.com
- Twitter: [@annbradenbooks](https://twitter.com/annbradenbooks)
- Facebook: facebook.com/ann.b.braden

- Instagram: @annbradenbooks

Related Titles:

- *Hello Universe* by Erin Entrada Kelly (2017)
- *Me and Marvin Gardens* by Amy Saring King (2017)
- *Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate (2015)

Other Books by Author:

The Benefits of Being an Octopus is Ann Braden's debut novel.

Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish

By Pablo Cartaya

Citation:

Cartaya, Pablo. *Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018. 249p. (Grades 5-9).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Marcus Vega does not fit in. He is the biggest student in the eighth grade, and the other students are a little afraid of him. This does help him earn some extra money, though, as he earns money by offering a bully protection service to the school's most picked on kids, walking them to and from school. The money he earns goes into his struggling mom's cash jar. When one of the bullies calls Marcus's brother, Charlie, who has Down Syndrome, a retard, Marcus hits him and is suspended from school. Marcus's mother decides to use this time to pull together as a family and takes the boys to Puerto Rico, where they meet their large and loving extended family. Despite Marcus only focusing on hunting for his father who abandoned the family ten years before, Marcus begins to learn what family means and where he fits in. This is a charming look at Puerto Rico and its culture, and you will love the relationship that Marcus has with his funny and adorable brother, Charlie.

Reviews:

- Booklist, 06/01/2018
- Horn Book, Sept/Oct 2018
- Kirkus Reviews, 07/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly, 07/09/2018
- School Library Journal (Starred), 06/01/2018
- Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), Aug 2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2018 Junior Library Guild Selection

Website/Social Media:

- Website: www.pablocartaya.com

- Twitter: @phcartaya

Related Titles:

- *Darius the Great is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram (2018)
- *First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez (2017)

Other Books by Author:

- *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora* (2017)
- *Each Tiny Spark* (2019)

Like Vanessa
By Tami Charles

Citation:

Charles, Tami. *Like Vanessa*. Watertown, MA.: Charlesbridge, 2018. 284 p. (Grades 5-8).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

“And your new Miss America is...Vanessa Williams!” For thirteen-year old Vanessa Martin, the crowning of the first African-American Miss America is the start of a journey of which she has long dreamed. When the new music teacher announces that there will be a beauty pageant at her Newark, New Jersey, school, Vanessa is both excited and apprehensive: excited that she will now have something in common with the mother who “disappeared” years ago, and apprehensive because Vanessa sees herself as “too dark” and “too fat.” Despite the fact that her father, who is rarely at home and is withdrawn when he is, would never give her permission, Vanessa decides to participate in the pageant. With the encouragement of her alcoholic grandfather, her cousin, who is a whiz at designing and creating dresses, and the music teacher, who sees tremendous potential in her, Vanessa begins her journey to become “like Vanessa.” Come along this journey with Vanessa, as she unravels the secrets her family has been keeping, where she learns that maintaining old friendships and creating new ones is often challenging, and most importantly, that true beauty comes in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

Reviews:

- Booklist, (Starred), 03/10/2018
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 04/01/2018
- Horn Book Guide, 11/01/2018
- Horn Book Magazine, 03/01/2018
- Kirkus Reviews, (Starred), 01/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly Annex, 03/12/2018

Awards or Honors:

- Booklist Top 10 Books of 2018, Historical Fiction
- 2018 Indies Introduce Top 10 List

- 2018 Kids' Indies Next Top 10 List
- 2018- 2019 Project Lit Top 10 Middle Grade List
- We Need Diverse Books/Goodreads "Must Read" of 2018

Website/Social Media:

- Website: tamiwrites.com
- Twitter: [@TamiWritesStuff](https://twitter.com/TamiWritesStuff)
- Instagram: [@tamiwrites](https://www.instagram.com/tamiwrites)

Related Titles:

- *Raymie Nightingale* by Kate DiCamillo (2016)
- *Dumplin'* by Julie Murphy (2015)
- *Revenge of the Girl With the Great Personality* by Elizabeth Eulberg (2014)

Other Books by Author:

- *Definitely Daphne* (2018)
- *GOAT, Serena Williams* (2019)
- *Becoming Beatriz* (2019)

The War Outside

By Monica Hesse

Citation:

Hesse, Monica. *The War Outside*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018. 336p. (Grade 7 and up)

Annotation:

Haruko and Margot are unlikely friends. One Japanese-American and one German-American, both are 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.

Booktalk:

Seventeen year olds, Haruko and Margot do not have much in common, except that they are both Americans and both being held in an internment camp during WWII. Daily life in the camp includes school, swimming, shopping at the commissary, and even a camp newspaper, but still both girls are prisoners — not allowed to leave. In these circumstances, they form an unlikely friendship that could be something more.

This well-researched historical fiction novel explores the themes of friendship, betrayal, and freedom.

Reviews: (Professional Reviews Only)

- Booklist (starred), 6/1/2018
- Kirkus, 07/15/2018
- Publisher's Weekly (starred), 07/09/2018
- School Library Journal (starred), 07/01/2018
- The New York Times, 11/05/2018
- The Washington Post, 09/20/2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2019 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

Websites/Social Media:

- Website: monicahesse.com
- Twitter: [@MonicaHesse](https://twitter.com/MonicaHesse)
- Facebook: facebook.com/monica.hesse.7

Related Titles:

- *The Librarian of Auschwitz* by Antonio Itrube (2017)
- *Uprooted: The Japanese American Experience during World War II* by Albert Marrin (2016)
- *Nowhere Boy* by Katherine Marsh (2018)

Other Books by Author:

- *The Girl in a Blue Coat* (2016)

Nowhere Boy
By Katherine Marsh

Citation:

Marsh, Katherine. *Nowhere Boy*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 368 p. (Grades 4-7).

Annotation:

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 strange circumstances and form an unlikely friendship. Both boys are sad for very different reasons and find ways to help each other be brave.

Booktalk:

Ahmed and his father were trying to escape the war in Syria. They left Aleppo with little more than the clothes on their backs. After almost making it to Belgium, Ahmed gets separated from his father and fears he is dead. Now he must figure out what to do. He doesn't even speak the language of this new country he is now stranded in. Ahmed knows he needs to find a place to stay and food to eat. As he wanders around the strange city, he sees a house that looks like it might be a good place to hide. He finds an unused basement where it is warm and quickly settles in and falls asleep.

Max, an American living in Brussels, is miserable that he is having to repeat the sixth grade. He is not happy about leaving his home in Washington, D.C. One night he hears noises in the basement and goes to investigate. He discovers Ahmed. The boys don't speak the same language, but they are drawn together and help each other through the rough parts of their lives.

Reviews:

- Kirkus (Starred), 07/01/2018
- Publisher's Weekly (Starred), 11/19/2018
- School Library Journal 07/03/2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2018 Washington Post Best Books of the Year

Website/Social Media:

- Website: katherinemarsh.com
- Twitter: @MarshKatherine

Related Titles:

- *Just a Drop of Water* by Kerry O'Malley Cerra (2014)
- *Amal Unbound* by Aisha Saeed (2018)
- *The Night Diaries* by Veera Hiranandani (2018)

Other books by Author:

- *The Night Tourist* (2008)
- *The Twilight Prisoner* (2009)
- *The Door by the Staircase* (2016)

The Flight of Swans

By Sarah McGuire

Citation:

McGuire, Sarah. **The Flight of Swans**. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2018, 442. (4-6)

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Princess Andaryn’s (Ryn) father brought home a wife and stepmother who is an enchantress. The enchantress uses her powers to turn Ryn’s father against her, and after an act of defiance Ryn is banished from the kingdom altogether. Ryn’s six brothers try to get Ryn to stay, but their evil stepmother turns them all into swans, adding to Ryn’s heartbreak. In an effort to try to save her brothers, Ryn strikes a deal: if she is able to stay silent for six years, her brothers may turn back into their true forms; if not, they will all die. As the years pass and Ryn lives out her banishment in silence, she faces magical dangers that threaten not only her and her brothers, but the kingdom she knows as home. Will she save her family and defeat the evil Queen? A fantastical, fairy-tale retelling that will have you on the edge of your seat and rooting for the spunky, but silent Ryn and her swan brothers.

Reviews:

- Booklist, August 2018
- Horn Book, Sept/Oct 2018
- Kirkus (Starred), 06/25/2018)
- School Library Journal (09/01/2018)

Awards and Honors:

None

Website/Social Media:

- Website: sarahmcguirebooks.com
- Twitter: [@fireplusalgebra](https://twitter.com/fireplusalgebra)

Related Titles:

- *Moonlight* by Ann Hunter (2014)
- *Princess Sophie and the Six Swans* by Kim Jacobs (2016)
- *After Zero* by Christina Collins (2018)

Other Books by Author:

Valiant (2015)

Until Tomorrow, Mr. Marsworth

By Sheila O'Connor

Citation:

O'Connor, Sheila. *Until Tomorrow, Mr. Marsworth*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018. 348p. (Grades 5-7).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Have you ever had a pen pal? Reenie has a new paper route, and the letter she leaves her shut-in neighbor, Mr. Marsworth, to introduce herself leads to an ongoing letter exchange. In these letters, Reenie pours her heart out about the recent death of her mother, moving in with her grandmother, and the situation with the neighborhood bullies. Mostly she worries about her brother, Billy, being sent as a soldier to the Vietnam War. Read this book to understand the differing viewpoints about the USA's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Reviews:

- Booklist, 03/01/2018
- Kirkus Reviews. 02/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly. 2/26/2018
- School Library Connection, May/June 2018
- School Library Journal. 03/01/2018
- Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), April 2018

Awards and Honors:

None

Website:

- Website: sheilaoconnor.com

Related Titles:

- *Everything Else in the Universe* by Tracy Holczer (2018)
- *Dodger Boy* by Sarah Ellis (2018)

Other Books by Author:

- *Keeping Safe the Stars* (2012)
- *Sparrow Road* (2011)

Boots on the Ground: America's War in Vietnam

By Elizabeth Partridge

Citation:

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).

Annotation:

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. The addition of what is happening at home, a well-rounded view of the war is developed.

Booktalk:

The Vietnam War conflicts started in 1955 and lasted until 1975. It covered the presidencies of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. In 1965, President Johnson ordered boots on the ground in Vietnam. This began the period of American highest involvement, where almost 58,000 American soldiers lost their lives during the last decade of fighting. The history of this war was very complex — many feeling America had no place in it, while others felt we had no choice but to go. The War forever changed, polarized, and further divided American citizens. To this day it causes heartache in the people who lived through it.

In this book, you will hear about the stories of those that lived it including a Vietnamese refugee, an American nurse, and six soldiers who served in the war. Each experience reveals a different viewpoint of the war as it was nearing the end. In addition to these stories, there are profiles of the decision-making leaders and reports on the events at home. Showing a well-rounded view of the war, this non-fiction book will make you want to read it again.

Reviews:

- Booklist (Starred), 01/01/2018
- Horn Book Magazine, April/March 2018
- Kirkus (Starred), 02/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly, 03/05/2018
- School Library Journal (Starred), 04/01/2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2018 National Book Award Long List for Young People's Literature
- 2019 Golden Kite Award Winner, Non-Fiction for Older Readers
- 2019 YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award Finalist

Websites:

- Website: www.elizabethpartridge.com
- Facebook: facebook.com/elizabethpartridge

- Twitter: @epartridge

Related Titles:

- *Vietnam: A History of the War* by Russell Freedman (2016)
- *TigerFish: A Memoir of a South Vietnamese Colonel's Daughter and her coming of age in America* by Hoang Chi Truong (2016)
- *Spooked!: How a Radio Broadcast and the War of the Worlds Sparked the 1938 Invasion of America* by Gail Jarrow (2018)

Other Books by Author:

- *Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange* (1998)
- *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, children, and don't you grow weary* (2009)
- *DogTag Summer* (2015)

After the Shot Drops

By Randy Ribay

Citation:

Ribay, Randy. *After the Shot Drops*. New York City: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018. 325p. (Grades 8 and up)

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Bunny Thompson is a rising high school sophomore basketball star. His innate ability and dedication to the sport permitted Bunny to take advantage of an opportunity to move from his Philadelphia working class neighborhood high school to an exclusive private school. Taking a lead playing position on the all-white suburban St. Sebastian's basketball team increases Bunny's exposure. A winning season and entry to the statewide championship playoffs has college scouts actively recruiting him. Left behind is Nasir, Bunny's former best friend. Feeling forgotten by Bunny, Nasir ends their longtime friendship. Hurt and angry, Nasir's considers suggestions by his cousin Wallace to retaliate and punish Bunny by ruining his winning basketball season. Clouding Nasir's decision to go through with their plans of retribution is an offer by Bunny that would change his life forever. Written in alternate voices, author Randy Ribay's novel highlights the impact the personal decisions that one makes and their resulting actions have on the family and friendships.

Reviews:

- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 03/01/2018
- Horn Book Magazine, 03/01/2018
- Kirkus Reviews (Starred) 01/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly (Starred), 01/15/2019
- School Library Journal (Starred), 01/01/2018
- Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), 02/02/2018

Awards and Honors:

2019 Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults

Websites/Social Media:

- Website: www.randyribay.com

- Facebook: facebook.com/randyribaywrites
- Twitter: [@randyribay](https://twitter.com/randyribay)
- Instagram: [@randyribay](https://www.instagram.com/randyribay)

Related Titles:

- *Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team* by Steve Sheinkin (2017)
- *Hooper* by Geoff Herbach (2018)
- *Boy21* by Matthew Quick (2013)

Other Books by Author:

- *An Infinite Number of Parallel Universes* (2015)
- *Patron Saints of Nothing* (2019)

Amal Unbound

By Aisha Saeed

Citation:

Saeed, Aisha. *Amal Unbound*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 226 p. (Grades 5-8).

Annotation:

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. Indentured 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.

Booktalk:

Growing up in Pakistan, Amal loves going to school and has dreams of one day becoming a teacher. When her mother gives birth to yet another daughter, Amal's father pulls her out of school to help care for the family. Amal is angry, and she wonders if she were a boy if her father would be so careless with her education. One day at the local market, Amal is nearly run over by a car. Quick-witted and opinionated, Amal stands up for herself to the driver, and before she knows it, her sharp tongue lands her in indentured servitude with her community's most feared landlord. Now living in a home where her only value is to serve this evil man and his family, Amal must figure out how to free herself and return home to her family.

Reviews:

- Booklist, 04/01/18
- Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 05/01/18
- Catholic Library World, 09/01/18
- Horn Book Magazine, 11/01/18
- Kirkus Reviews (Starred), 04/01/18
- Publishers Weekly (Starred), 03/12/18
- School Library Connection (Starred), 08/01/18
- School Library Journal (Starred), 06/01/18
- Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), 04/01/18

Awards and Honors:

- 2018 Global Read Aloud (upper elementary/middle grade selection)

Websites/Social Media:

- Website: Aishasaeed.com
- Twitter: [@aishacs](https://twitter.com/aishacs)

Related Titles:

- *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* by Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick (2013)
- *The Red Pencil* by Andrea Davis Pinkney (2014)
- *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis (2015)

Other Books by Author:

- *Written in the Stars* (2016)
- *Aladdin Live Action Original Novel* (2019)
- *Bilal Cooks Daal* (2019)

Front Desk
By Kelly Yang

Citation:

Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018. 304 p. (Grades 3-7).

Annotation:

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.

Booktalk:

Mia and her family manage the Calivista Motel. Each day while her parents work very hard to clean the rooms, fix broken items, do laundry and much more, Mia runs the front desk and takes care of the customers while her parents are busy. Some days there are customers and situations that are difficult, but Mia does her best to take care of them. Mia does all of this despite the fact that she is only ten years old. Mia knows that sometimes her parents will hide new immigrants at the motel. She knows that if the owner, Mr. Yao, finds out, her parents will be fired and they will be homeless. While she is proud that her parents want to help the immigrants on their journey into the US, she is always worried that something bad will happen and they won't get to stay. Will Mia's hardwork and plucky perseverance be enough to help her parents and discover her own "American dream?" A sweet and moving book about standing up for what is right and the hardships of being an immigrant in the US, *Front Desk* is also based loosely off of the author's own childhood experiences.

Reviews:

- Horn Book, 07/24/2018
- Kirkus (Starred), 03/15/2018
- Publishers Weekly 06/18/2018

Awards and Honors:

- 2019 Asian/Pacific American Award for Children's Literature
- 2018 NPR Best Books of the Year (Kids' Books Category)
- 2018 Kirkus Reviews Best Books of the Year
- 2018 Publishers Weekly Best Books of the Year
- 2018 Washington Post Best Books of the Year
- 2018 School Library Journal Best Books of the Year
- 2018 Bookpage Best Books of the Year
- 2018 New York Public Library Best Books of the Year
- 2018 Chicago Public Library Best Books of the Year
- 2018 Top Ten Debut Novels - ALA Booklist

Website/Social Media:

- Website: kellyyang.edu.hk
- Twitter: [@kellyyanghk](https://twitter.com/kellyyanghk)
- Instagram: [@kellyyanghk](https://www.instagram.com/kellyyanghk)

Related Titles:

- *The Land of Forgotten Girls* by Erin Entrada Kelly (2016)
- *Everlasting Nora* by Marie Miranda Cruz (2018)
- *I'm OK* by Patti Kim (2018)

Other Books by Author:

- *Front Desk* is Kelly Yang's debut novel.