

KEYSTONE TO READING SECONDARY
ANNOTATED MIDDLE SCHOOL BOOK AWARD LIST
2017-2018

Booked by Kwame Alexander

Booked, by Newbery Medal winner Kwame Alexander (*The Crossover*), is a novel in verse that centers on a middle school soccer player who struggles with his family going through a divorce, school bullies, and middle school romance. The sneaky and hilarious way author Kwame Alexander introduces "weird" yet cool vocabulary words is a delightful part of this realistic look into middle school life. (Realistic Fiction in Verse, 10-12)

Fuzzy by Tom Aglesberger & Paul Dellinger

Fuzzy focuses on some of the absurdities of middle school, and the "Big Brother" surveillance setup ensures that the stakes are high for Max and her robotic friend, Fuzzy. Reluctant readers may especially enjoy the fast pace and snappy dialogue, but anyone is likely to be captivated by this tale of kids learning to feel empathy for a new student. (Fantasy/Sci Fi. 8-12)

Last Man Out by Mike Lupica

This story stands out because the main character, Brian, recognizes he probably won't ever make the big leagues, but he still wants to be the best he can; because his divorced dad was a lousy father and he doesn't have a miraculous change of heart or change his ways in the end; instead Brian gains the maturity to realize his dad might not change, but he can still love him. The book includes a frank discussion of steroid use and why some athletes give in to the pressure and try to cheat by using drugs (the book cites some real-life athletes such as Barry Bonds). This is a rather rare look at the shortcomings many celebrity role models have and provides a unique opportunity to discuss the issue. (Realistic Fiction, 10+)

Lost in the Pacific 1942: Not a Drop to Drink by Tod Olson

World War II, October 21, 1942. A B-17 bomber drones high over the Pacific Ocean, sending a desperate SOS into the air. The crew is carrying America's greatest living war hero on a secret mission deep into the battle zone. But the plane is lost, burning through its final gallons of fuel. At 1:30 p.m., there is only one choice left: an emergency landing at sea. If the crew survives the impact, they will be left stranded without food or water hundreds of miles from civilization. Eight men. Three inflatable rafts. Sixty-eight million square miles of ocean. What will it take to make it back alive? (Non-fiction, 10+)

Mr. Lemoncello's Library Olympics by Chris Grabenstein

Mr. Lemoncello's Library Olympics is the sequel to *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* and delivers more of what made Chris Grabenstein's first library adventure such a hit: likable heroes; mind-teasing puzzles and challenges; and a steady barrage of book references, educational tech, pop-culture shout-outs, and wisecracks, many of them from madcap genius and game developer Luigi Lemoncello himself. So many books get mentioned in the story (including those by Grabenstein's frequent coauthor James Patterson) that there's a multipage list of all the titles at the end of the book. The story presents strong messages about teamwork, cooperation, and putting aside your differences to work together when there's a problem. Learning is supposed to be fun here; the villains are adults who want to ban books they don't like and eliminate all the

cool stuff. (Mystery, 8-12)

Rescued by Eliot Schrefer

Raja has been raised in captivity. Not behind the bars of a zoo, but within the confines of an American home. He was stolen when he was young to be someone's pet. Now he's grown up . . . and is about to be sent away again, to a place from which there will be no return. John grew up with Raja. The orangutan was his friend, his brother -- never his pet. But when John's parents split up and he moved across the country, he left Raja behind. Now Raja is suffering. There's one last chance to save Raja -- a chance that will force John to confront his fractured family and the captivity he's imposed on himself all of these years. (Realistic Fiction, 12+)

Save Me a Seat by Sarah Weeks & Gita Varadarajan

Joe and Ravi might be from very different places, but they're both stuck in the same place: SCHOOL. Joe's lived in the same town all his life, and was doing just fine until his best friends moved away and left him on his own. Ravi's family just moved to America from India, and he's finding it pretty hard to figure out where he fits in. Joe and Ravi don't think they have anything in common -- but soon enough they have a common enemy, Dillon, (the biggest bully in their class) and a common mission: to take control of their lives over the course of a single crazy week. (Realistic Fiction, 8-12)

The Seventh Wish by Kate Messner

When Charlie Brennan goes ice fishing on her town's winter lake, she's hoping the perch that she reels in will help pay for a fancy Irish dancing solo dress. But when Charlie's first catch of the day offers her a wish in exchange for its freedom, her world turns upside down. Again and again, Charlie catches the same fish, but each time her wishes go terribly and hilariously wrong. When things are finally starting to turn around, a family crisis with her older sister forces Charlie to accept the fact that some of the toughest challenges in life can't be fixed by wishing. (Fantasy, 8-12)

Unbound by Ann E. Burg

The day Grace is called from the slave cabins to work in the Big House, Mama makes her promise to keep her eyes down. Uncle Jim warns her to keep her thoughts tucked private in her mind or they could bring a whole lot of trouble and pain. But the more Grace sees of the heartless Master and hateful Missus, the more a rightness voice clamors in her head-asking how come white folks can own slaves, sell them on the auction block, and separate families forever. When that voice escapes without warning, it sets off a terrible chain of events that prove Uncle Jim's words true. Suddenly, Grace and her family must flee deep into the woods, where they brave deadly animals, slave patrollers, and the uncertainty of ever finding freedom. (Historical Fiction in Verse, 9-12)

When Friendship Followed Me Home by Paul Griffin

Readers will love spending time with these smart, funny, relatable characters who display grace under fire even when they're put through the emotional wringer of serious loss. Ben, the extremely likable narrator, tells his story in a wry, self-deprecating, highly entertaining voice, and his story grips us. Ben's already had a challenging life when he's called upon to absorb multiple losses, and his best friend Halley has to deal with a life-threatening rare cancer. Though these characters have lives laced with sadness, readers might find themselves envying them,

because through it all, they have each other. This page-turning, emotionally resonant story provides reassurance that we're all loved and cared for -- by our loved ones here, by those who've passed on, and by sweet, slobbery strays who follow us home, giving life pleasure and meaning. (Realistic Fiction, 10-14)

Wildings by Eleanor Glewwe

Rivka Kadmiel accompanies her ambassador father to Ashara for one reason: to find her lost twin brother, Arik. At age 10, Rivka passed her magic test, remaining in her kasiri (upper-class) family while Arik, a non-magical wilding, was immediately placed with a halani (lower-class) family in the country of Ashara. Rivka works fiercely to locate her brother with the help of her new school friend, Caleb. Rivka shares class notes with Caleb, since he has hearing loss, and Caleb connects Rivka to Arik and other halani families. The strict "family laws" prohibit kasiri and halani from mixing, and Rivka's future with Arik seems uncertain unless the laws are overturned. She works with her brother and social activists Marah Levi and Azariah to legally reunite wilding families in an exciting courtroom battle. While Arik doesn't match Rivka for loyalty and bravery, Rivka's growing understanding of the function of law and her passion for creating a just society are inspiring. (Fantasy, 10+)

Wolf Hollow by Lauren Wolk

Eleven-year-old Annabelle lives in a rural Pennsylvania community in 1943. The continued fighting of World War II haunts everyone, but life is mostly peaceful—until Betty Glengarry's arrival. Betty is cruel and threatening and thrives on inflicting pain. At first, Annabelle is slightly comforted to know that Toby is watching out for her. Toby is a local vagabond, a World War I veteran of few words who has become something like a friend of Annabelle's family. Meanwhile, Betty's violent malice only grows, until one day she goes missing. Toby immediately becomes the prime suspect in Betty's disappearance. Annabelle is sure of Toby's innocence and is determined to prove it. Readers are alerted from the outset that this is the story of how the narrator loses her childish naïveté in a life-altering way. The narrative is powerful, complex, and lifelike. There are pointlessly cruel people, courageously kind people, and those who simply pass the gossip. Despite the jaded feelings that come with witnessing unjust persecution, the heart of this story is ultimately one of hope and empathy. (Historical Fiction, 10+)

The Keystone to Reading Secondary Book Awards lists are created to give students a voice in the selection of the children's choice book awards presented each year at the annual KSRA Conference. The information presented in these books represents the thoughts and opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the Keystone State Reading Association.