

KEYSTONE TO READING SECONDARY
ANNOTATED MIDDLE SCHOOL BOOK AWARD LIST
2018-2019

Beyond the Bright Sea by Lauren Wolk

Twelve-year-old Crow has lived her entire life on a tiny, isolated piece of the starkly beautiful Elizabeth Islands in Massachusetts. Abandoned and set adrift in a small boat when she was just hours old, Crow's only companions are Osh, the man who rescued and raised her, and Miss Maggie, their fierce and affectionate neighbor across the sandbar. Crow has always been curious about the world around her, but it isn't until the night a mysterious fire appears across the water that the unspoken question of her own history forms in her heart. Soon, an unstoppable chain of events is triggered, leading Crow down a path of discovery and danger. (Historical Fiction, 7-9)

Greetings from Witness Protection by Jake Burt

The marshals are looking for the perfect girl to join a mother, father, and son on the run from the nation's most notorious criminals. After all, the bad guys are searching for a family with one kid, not two, and adding a streetwise girl who knows a little something about hiding things may be just what the marshals need. Nicki swears she can keep the Trevor family safe, but to do so she'll have to dodge hitmen, cyberbullies, and the specter of standardized testing, all while maintaining her marshal-mandated B-minus average. As she barely balances the responsibilities of her new identity, Nicki learns that the biggest threats to her family's security might not lurk on the road from New York to North Carolina, but rather in her own past. (Realistic Fiction, 7-9)

Halfway Normal by Barbara Dee

Norah Levy has just completed two years of treatment for leukemia and is ready to go back to the "real world" of middle school. She knows it'll be tricky—but like the Greek mythological characters she read about while she was sick, Norah's up for any challenge. But seventh grade turns out to be trickier than she thought. Norah's classmates don't know what to make of her. Her best friend, Harper, tries to be there for her, but she doesn't *get it*, really—and is hanging out with a new group of girls. Norah's other good friend, Silas, is avoiding her. What's that about, anyway? When Norah is placed with the eighth graders for math and science she meets Griffin, a cute boy who encourages her love of Greek mythology and art. And Norah decides not to tell him her secret—that she was "that girl" who had cancer. But when something happens to make secret-keeping impossible, Norah must figure out a way to share her cancer story. But how do you explain something to others that you can't explain to yourself? Can Nora take her cue from her favorite Greek myth? And then, once she finds the words, can she move forward with a whole new 'normal'? (Realistic Fiction, 4-8)

Hideout by Watt Key

The son of a Mississippi policeman finds a boy living on his own in the wilderness. Twelve-year-old Sam has been given a fishing boat by his father, but he hates fishing. Instead he uses the boat to disappear for hours at a time, exploring the forbidden swampy surroundings of his bayou home. Then he discovers a strange kid named Davey, mysteriously alone, repairing an abandoned cabin deep in the woods. Not fooled by the boy's evasive explanation as to why he's on his own, Sam becomes entangled in his own efforts to help Davey. But this leads him to telling small lies that only get bigger as the danger increases for both boys and hidden truths become harder to conceal. (Realistic Fiction/Action-Adventure, 4-8)

Horizon by Scott Westerfeld

When a plane crash-lands in the arctic, eight young survivors step from the wreckage expecting to see nothing but ice and snow. Instead they find themselves lost in a strange jungle with no way to get home and little hope of rescue. Food is running out. Water is scarce. And the jungle is full of threats unlike anything the survivors have ever seen before -- from razor-beaked shredder birds to carnivorous vines and much, much worse. With danger at every turn, these eight kids must learn to work together to survive. But cliques and rivalries threaten to tear them apart. And not everyone will make it out of the jungle alive. (Science Fiction/Fantasy, 4-7)

Lost In Outer Space: The Incredible Journey of Apollo 13 by Tod Olson

April 13, 1970: Two hundred thousand miles from Earth and counting, an explosion rips through Jim Lovell's spacecraft. The crippled ship hurtles toward the moon at three times the speed of sound, losing power and leaking oxygen into space. Lovell and his crew were two days from the dream of a lifetime - walking on the surface of moon. Now, they will count themselves lucky to set foot on Earth again. From "Houston, we've had a problem" to the final tense moments at Mission Control, *Lost in Outer Space* takes readers on the unbelievable journey of Apollo 13 and inside the minds of its famous and heroic astronauts. Complete with photographs of the crew and diagrams of the spacecraft, this is an up-close-and-personal look at one of the most thrilling survival stories of all time. (Non-fiction, 3-8)

Refugee by Alan Gratz

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . .

ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . .

MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . .

All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of *tomorrow*. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end. (Historical Fiction, 4-8)

Restart by Gordon Korman

Chase doesn't remember falling off the roof. He doesn't remember hitting his head. He doesn't, in fact, remember *anything*. He wakes up in a hospital room and suddenly has to learn his whole life all over again . . . starting with his own name. He knows he's Chase. But who *is* Chase? When he gets back to school, he sees that different kids have very different reactions to his return. Some kids treat him like a hero. Some kids are clearly afraid of him. One girl in particular is so angry with him that she pours her frozen yogurt on his head the first chance she gets. Pretty soon, it's not only a question of who Chase is--it's a question of who he *was* . . . and who he's going to be. (Realistic Fiction, 3-8)

***The Elephant Whisperer* by Lawrence Anthony & Graham Spence**

Lawrence Anthony devoted his life to animal conservation, protecting the world's endangered species. Then he was asked to accept a herd of "rogue" wild elephants on his Thula Thula game reserve in Zululand. His common sense told him to refuse, but he was the herd's last chance of survival: they would be killed if he wouldn't take them. In order to save their lives, Anthony took them in. In the years that followed he became a part of their family. And as he battled to create a bond with the elephants, he came to realize that they had a great deal to teach him about life, loyalty, and freedom. (Non-Fiction, 4-8)

***The Exact Location of Home* by Kate Messner**

Kirby "Zig" Zigonski lives for the world of simple circuits, light bulbs, buzzers, and motors. Electronics are, after all, much more predictable than most people--especially his father, who he hasn't seen in over a year. When his dad's latest visit is canceled with no explanation and his mom seems to be hiding something, Zig turns to his best friend Gianna and a new gizmo--a garage sale GPS unit--for help. Convinced that his dad is leaving clues around town to explain his absence, Zig sets out to find him. Following one clue after another, logging mile after mile, Zig soon discovers that people aren't always what they seem . . . and sometimes, there's more than one set of coordinates for home. (Realistic Fiction, 4-8)

***The Insignificant Life of a Cactus* by Dusti Bowling**

Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she'll have to answer the question over and over again. Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It's hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven's about to discover she can do it all . . . even without arms. (Realistic Fiction, 3-7)

***William Wenton and the Impossible Puzzle* by Bobbie Peers**

Twelve-year-old William Wenton is a puzzle-solving genius. He lives with his family in a quiet Norwegian town. They used to live in England, but eight years ago his family suddenly packed up, moved away, and even changed their last name! Neither of his parents will offer an explanation or tell William why he has to keep his talent for solving codes and puzzles a secret. But then a special exhibit comes to the local museum: the Impossible Puzzle. The experts say it is unsolvable, but William's sure that he can crack it if he gets a chance. However, when he does, everything begins to go wrong. Suddenly William is whisked off to a strange school filled with robots and kids whose skills are almost as good as his own. But what's really going on? And what's the secret involving William's grandfather? And is there anyone he can trust? (Mystery/Adventure, 3-7)

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 does not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the Keystone State Reading Association.