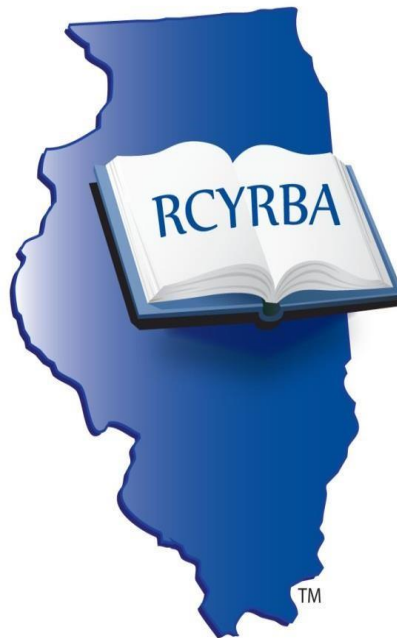


# LET'S TALK ABOUT BOOKS

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List 2024

Suggestions for Use



Edited by Ellen Popit

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## Introduction

The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) is now celebrating its thirty fifth year! Twenty titles are nominated each year, and any students in grades four through eight in participating Illinois schools and public libraries, who have read or heard of three books, may vote for the most outstanding book in February. The winner is announced in March. Children are encouraged to read the books on this list and share their thoughts and reactions with others, thus making the reading experience more enjoyable.

This packet of materials is meant to be a guide for librarians and teachers to help children enjoy and interpret what they read. It is designed as a beginning step when looking in depth at the books on the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Master List for 2024. It is hoped that the packet will start creative thoughts flowing in librarians, teachers, and children who are trying to read books enthusiastically and with joy. All the materials developed are meant to be used "with" children and not given to them in isolation.

The following suggestions for the twenty titles on the 2024 RCYRBA Master List were developed by a group of librarians and teachers. Information is provided in ten areas: a summary, questions for students, journal starters, and activities designed to extend the book into other curricular areas, reading recommendations, promotional booktalks, related materials, web sites, and book review citations.

**Summary:** The summary provides an overview of the book for anyone who has not read a title.

**Questions:** The questions included are primarily open-ended with neither a right nor a wrong answer. Since readers' reactions to stories are different, they should be encouraged to express different points of view. The questions encourage students to relate reading to their everyday lives and are designed to promote more questions and discussion as a result. Questions can be given to students when they begin to read the book so they can think about their responses as they read and focus on the ideas that the author is trying to convey.

**Journal Starters:** These questions are designed to engage students in the writing process and to encourage them to put themselves in situations presented in the books.

**Activities:** There are a wide variety of activities included to suit different age and interest levels. Some are designed for groups, others for individuals.

**Interest Levels:** Interest levels are included to help librarians and teachers decide if a title will be of interest to a group of students or to an individual. The recommendation is only made with consideration for grades four through eight, which are the grades included in the award. Occasionally, a caution is listed when a sensitive topic is included that may cause concern in some communities.

**Book Trailers:** Online "commercials" for books on this list have been added when available.

**Booktalks:** Booktalks have been added for the convenience of librarians and teachers who would like a prepared piece to use for book promotion. They are short, sometimes including a passage

from the book, since hearing the voice of the author is often important when students are deciding whether to read a specific title.

**Read-Alikes:** A listing of related books that will aid in extending literature activities. Titles were suggested by teachers and librarians who have had experience with them. This list is not exhaustive, and materials have not been screened for literary merit. These related books are divided into three general categories: additional books by the same author, topics which are mentioned in the story, and books which are similar. Because of their broad appeal throughout the curriculum, picture books are also included in this listing.

**Websites:** Sites were selected to expand the activities and learning of the students. Some sites are for author information and others for organizations, locations or topics related to the book. The sites were checked on September 5, 2023, and were active at that time. If links to .pdf files or other sites do not load, try copying and pasting them into your browser.

**Book Review Citations:** Book review citations have been included to aid teachers and librarians in case a challenge to any of the books on the list should occur.

This activities packet has been edited with care from materials developed by the contributors. The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Board would appreciate comments and suggestions concerning the packet. Please direct communications to anyone on the committee or to the editor of the packet.

Developing this packet was a challenging and invigorating experience for the participants. Enjoy!

**Cherry-Paul, Sonja et al. *Stamped (For Kids): Racism, Antiracism, and You.* Little Brown and Company, 2021**

**SUMMARY:**

*Stamped (For Kids)* is an adaptation of *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You* by Jason Reynolds and *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi. This award-winning book deals with racism in plain language for all readers to understand. Although it covers the history of racism in America, starting in 1415, it also tackles the racism issues that we see today. This is a must read for all students. “Until we learn to talk about race, the poison of racism, won’t go away.”

**QUESTIONS:**

How would you describe a segregationist?  
How would you describe an assimilationist?  
How would you describe an antiracist?  
How is a rope like race?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

In the author’s “Let’s Pause” she says “Words matter. Stories matter. Lies matter” what do you think she means by this?  
I have seen racism on the screen in these movies...  
We should keep talking about race because...  
The most important “Let’s Pause” moment for me was ...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Create a timeline with pictures of influential figures in the fight against racism.  
Research one of the historical figures mentioned in the book.  
Watch Martin Luther King Jr.’s “[I Have a Dream](#)” speech.  
View images from the [National Civil Right Museum](#) in Memphis, TN.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOKTRAILER:**

Kwasibookclub TV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf6DGcnyC1U>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Oh NO! A book about the R word, RACE. This is not a boring history book. Jason Reynolds refers to this as a “Present” book. *Stamped (For Kids)* is a book about racism. To understand how racism affects us today, we must first understand how it has affected us throughout America’s history. Take a journey with these amazing writers from 1415 through today to see how racism has been woven into our history without many of us even knowing it.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Acho, Emmanuel. *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Boy*. Henry Holt & Co., 2021  
Jewell, Tiffany. *The Anti-Racist Kid: a book about identity, justice and activism*. Versify, 2022.  
Jewell, Tiffany. *This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work*. Frances Lincoln Children’s Books, 2020  
Tisby, Jemar *How to Fight Racism: a guide on how to stand up for racial justice*. Zonderkidz, 2022

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Ibram X. Kendi:** <https://www.ibramxkendi.com/>  
**Jason Reynolds:** <https://www.jasonwritesbooks.com/>  
**Sonja Cherry-Paul:** [sonjacherrypaul.com](http://sonjacherrypaul.com)  
**CBS Interview with the Authors:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6fBJWvQN3w>  
**A Conversation on Racism:** <https://ncte.org/stamped-resources/>  
**Stamped Educator’s Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/yc4edete>  
**Anti-Racism Resources for Parents and Kids:** <https://tinyurl.com/53vc5amf>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (May 1, 2021)  
*School Library Journal* (June 4, 2021)

**Dee, Barbara. *My Life in the Fish Tank*. Simon and Schuster, 2020.**

**SUMMARY:**

12-year-old Zinny's brother, Gabriel, just left home to go to college. One night, Zinny's family gets a call that Gabriel has been in an accident. After a stay in the emergency room, Gabriel is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. To protect Gabriel's privacy Zinny's parents ask her to keep his news private, but, to Zinny, that means not telling her friends about the most important thing in her life. Her friendships start to fall apart as Zinny tries to balance honoring her family's wishes with her own need to rely on her friends during tough times.

**QUESTIONS:**

Do you think Zinny's parents acted correctly after Gabriel's diagnosis? Why or why not?

If you were in Zinny's shoes, could you have kept the secret?

Why do you think the author titled the book *My Life in the Fish Tank*?

How is Clawed a symbol in the book?

How do the flashbacks contribute to the story?

Have you ever been asked to keep a secret that caused damage to your relationships? What is the difference between "private" and "secret"?

Where do you find relief when things in "real life" get too complicated?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I were a friend of Zinny's I would try to help her by.....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research symptoms and treatments for bipolar disorder. What does the author include in the book, and what does she leave out?

Research programs offered by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). What programs could have benefitted Zinny and her family?

Create a collage similar to the book cover that symbolizes your "fish tank."

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-8

**BOOKTRAILER/BOOKTALK:**

Scattered Books Banter: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zvvhXmXHng>



## **BOOKTALK:**

Imagine being woken up in the middle of the night by a phone call. For so many of us, that's our worst nightmare. When it happens to 12-year-old Zinny, her life changes forever. Her brother Gabriel has had an "incident" away at college, with doctors describing his behavior as "concerning." Zinny and her family soon learn that Gabriel has bipolar disorder, a mental illness that can be helped with both therapy and medication—but it takes time. Zinny's parents ask her and her siblings to keep Gabriel's situation private, but Zinny hears that as them asking her to keep it secret. As things at home start to get more difficult with her parents caring for Gabriel, Zinny's friendships start to fray. What makes it worse is she feels like she can't tell her friends what's happening and also respect her family's privacy. She finds some refuge in her science class and an experiment raising crayfish—but will that be enough to help her feel at peace and mend her relationships?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Gephart, Donna. *Abby, Tried and True*. Simon & Schuster, 2021  
Gephart, Donna. *Lily and Dunkin*. Delacorte Press, 2016  
Keller, Tae. *The Science of Breakable Things*. Random House, 2018  
King, Wesley. *OCDaniel*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2016  
Strout, Allison Weiser. *Next Door to Happy*. Holiday House, 2022

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Barbara Dee** <https://barbaradeebooks.com/>  
**BPHOPE:** <https://www.bphope.com/fast-talk-script-solutions-for-support/>  
**Crayfish Animal Facts:** <https://a-z-animals.com/animals/crayfish>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (June 15, 2020)  
*Publishers Weekly* (October 19, 2020)  
*School Library Journal* (July 1, 2020)

## **Forman, Gayle. *Frankie & Bug*. Aladdin, 2021.**

### **SUMMARY:**

It's the summer of 1987 in Venice, California and 10-year-old Beatrice (Bug) is bored. Normally, she would spend her days at the beach with her big brother Danny. Danny is now 14 and wants to hang out with his friends, not his little sister. Bug is stuck at home with the neighbors in her apartment building sharing babysitting responsibilities while Mom is working. The days drag on until Frankie arrives to spend the summer with his Uncle Phillip, a favorite neighbor and friend of the family.

Frankie and Bug share an interest in investigating the case of a local serial killer, the Midnight Marauder. As they become closer friends, they discover that there is more evil and hatred in the world than they realized. The Midnight Marauder is not the only danger in their community.

### **QUESTIONS:**

Why is Bug disappointed in Frankie when he first arrives?

What project brings Frankie and Bug together?

What country did Danny and Bug's father come from originally?

Why did the bullies (skinheads) bother Danny when he was skateboarding?

How did Phillip end up in the hospital?

Why did Frankie's parents send him to Venice for the summer?

Why did Bug's mother leave her hometown (Visalia) after her husband died?

Why do you think Danny and Bug's mother felt so at home in the apartment building in Venice?

Why did Aunt Teri have a hard time accepting things and people that were different?

What do you think will happen when Frankie goes back home?

Will Frankie and Bug be able to maintain their friendship? Why or why not?

How does fear of the unknown make people do unkind things?

### **JOURNAL STARTER:**

If I had to start life in a new place, things that would concern me include.....

### **ACTIVITIES:**

Compare and contrast the treatment of the disease now and in the time period of this story.

Class discussion - Compare and contrast the treatment of people in the LGBTQIA community today and in 1987.

Do a little research on the history of Disneyland.

Choose a favorite Disney attraction (now or then) and create a brochure to advertise it.

Research El Salvador. Create a presentation on the history, geography, climate, the people, the language, the food and culture of the country. Share with the class. (See websites listed under Related Websites.)

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-6.

**BOOK TRAILER/BOOKTALK:**

**Colby Sharp:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoWNO-9k3BE>

**BOOKTALK:**

Bug (nickname for Beatrice) is looking forward to a summer at the beach. Her big brother decides he needs his space, and she is stuck at home. Her neighbor's nephew shows up to save the summer. But he doesn't like swimming or the beach! So what good is he? Well, it turns out he makes a great partner trying to crack the case of the Midnight Marauder.

**READ-ALIKES:**

Federle, Tim. *Better Nate than Ever*. Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2013.

Gephart, Donna. *Lily and Dunkin*. Delacorte Press, 2016.

Gino, Alex. *Melissa*. Scholastic Press, 2015.

Kelly, Erin Estrada. *Kids from Fawn Creek*. HarperCollins Childrens Books, 2022

Lukoff, Kyle. *Too Bright to See*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2021.

Polonsky, Ami. *Gracefully Grayson*. Disney/Hyperion, 2014.

Wang, Jen. *The Prince and the Dressmaker*. First Second, 2018.

**RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Gayle Foreman:** <https://www.gayleforman.com/>

**Reading Group Guide:** <http://tinyurl.com/hm2ckd8r>

**Transgender Children and Youth:** [HRC Foundation](https://www.hrc.org/)

**Gender-Diverse and Transgender Children:** [Healthy Children.org](https://www.healthychildren.org/)

**Facts about El Salvador:** [U.S. State Department Facts about El Salvador](https://photos.state.gov/libraries/salvador/)

**El Salvador Profile:** [National Geographic Kids](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/learn/central-and-south-america/el-salvador/)

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (August, 2021)

*Kirkus* (September 1, 2021)

*Publishers Weekly* (August 16, 2021)

## **Freeman, Megan E. *Alone*. Simon & Schuster, 2021**

### **SUMMARY:**

Told in verse, this novel follows Maddie, a girl who wants to plan a secret sleepover at her grandparent's empty apartment. When her friends cancel on her, Maddie ends up staying there alone. She wakes up to find out that the government has announced a mandatory evacuation, leaving her abandoned and without contact with her family or friends. She's going to have to go it alone.

### **QUESTIONS:**

How would you feel if you woke up and realized everyone was gone?  
Would you stay in town like Maddie, or try and travel to find your family and friends?  
Do you think you would have the survival skills to go it "alone"? What do you think you'd need to know to survive in an abandoned suburb?  
What would be the scariest to you? (People, animals, being alone, etc.)  
What do you notice Maddie misses the most about life before? What would YOU miss the most?  
What do you think is the impact of this novel being written in verse?  
What happens to Maddie's mental and physical state throughout the story? Do you think you would respond in a similar or different way?  
What were your thoughts when Maddie came across the men looting houses nearby? Do you feel the intensity of the scene was realistic, or not?  
Maddie's house burns down, and she is unsure what to save or what to do. How would you react in a situation like this? What would you save, if anything? Why?

### **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Materials I would need for survival include:  
If I woke up in an evacuated town, I would....

### **ACTIVITIES:**

Pretend you are Maddie and write a journal entry for one of your days alone.  
As Maddie, write a letter to a friend or family member telling them what is happening and how you feel.  
Play a battle of the books with trivia from the book.  
Play the game Worst Case Scenario (board game or trivia cards) to brush up on your survival skills.  
Have a book club and ask discussion questions throughout.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Mooresillve, IN Public Library:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBUZ7uWcjmM>

**BOOK TALK:**

Maddie is a normal 12-year-old girl who wants to spend some time with her friends. She knows because of the curfew in her town set by the government against some kind of unknown threat, that she won't be able to have a sleepover like she wants. So, she plots with them to sneak out, tell their parents different stories, and to stay overnight at her grandparents' empty apartment. Maddie makes it there only to receive texts from both friends saying they wouldn't be able to make it, and she is all alone. She's disappointed but watches some movies and goes to bed planning to head back home in the morning. But when Maddie wakes up...the town has been evacuated. That unknown threat? Yeah, it made itself known and everyone was forced to leave. Left behind, Maddie begins to panic. How will she survive? Should she go searching for her family and friends, or should she stay where she is and not risk being harmed by whatever is out there? Read and find out!

**READ-ALIKES:**

Bowling, Dusti. *Across the Desert*. Little, Brown and Company, 2021  
Bowling, Dusti. *The Canyon's Edge*. Little, Bown and Company, 2020  
Greenslade, Frances. *Red Fox Road*. Tundra Books of Northern New York, 2020  
Gretz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic, 2017  
Parry, Rosanne. *A Wolf Called Wander*. Greenwillow Books, 2019  
Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Bradbury Press, 1987  
Tarshis, Lauren. *I Survived Series*

**RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Megan Freeman:** <https://www.meganfreeman.com/>  
**Survival Skills for Kids:** <https://runwildmychild.com/wilderness-survival-skills/>  
**Teaching Resources:** <http://tinyurl.com/7pvm2b9w>  
**“Alone” Vocabulary Quizlet:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMmpFgl7Kks>  
**First Chapter Friday:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIHwGRkuRGY>

**REVIEWS:**

Booklist (December 1, 2020)

Publishers Weekly (November 23, 2020)

## **Hamza, Nina. *Ahmed Aziz's Epic Year*. Quill Tree Books, 2021**

### **SUMMARY:**

Moving to a new town and starting a new school can be challenging under any circumstances. However, when you're part of an Indian American Muslim family moving from Hawaii to Minnesota, it can be even worse. Ahmed is anxious, homesick, and afraid as he leaves a world he knows to move to his father's hometown, one of three places where his father can get the treatment he needs to recover from an inherited form of hepatitis C. Things do not begin well, and on his first day at his mostly white school, his neighbor Jack bullies him. Even though he hates to read, Ahmed is assigned to an accelerated language arts, a class taught by his father's old friend Janet Gaarder. A key part of the class will be rereading, or in Ahmed's case, reading for the first time, three classic novels. They include *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Surprisingly, Ahmed finds himself reading and liking the books. As his father's illness worsens, Ahmed struggles to find a place among his peers, keep up with the work in his language arts class, and avoid Jack who continues to seek him out and torment him on an almost daily basis. In an unexpected turn of events, Ahmed begins to find comfort in places he never expected, including hearing memories of his uncle, who died at the age of 12 in the same hospital where Ahmed's dad is now fighting for his life. Eventually, Ahmed realizes that he is happiest when he has the courage to be himself.

### **QUESTIONS:**

Ahmed must move from a place he moves to an unknown part of the country. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of having to move this way?

Evaluate Ahmed's ways of dealing with Jack's constant bullying. What is he doing right and what can he improve?

Identify the main conflicts in the novel (man v. man, man v. self, man v. society, and man v. technology). Choose a quote or part of the text that supports each conflict.

What did you think of Mrs. Gaarder's choice of rereading favorite novels as the basis for a year of instruction? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

Which book(s), *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, or *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, have you read, or do you want to read?

### **JOURNAL STARTERS:**

My favorite part of the novel was ...

Upon arrival in Minnesota, I'm sure that Ahmed and his family were...

The most interesting novel that was read in Ahmed's language arts class was...

Dealing with a bully can be ...

Finding out that you are like an older relative can be ...

I identified most with the character ...



## ACTIVITIES

Compare and contrast the similarities and differences involved in living in Hawaii versus Minnesota.

Explore this [website](#) about Islam to learn about the culture and religion of Ahmed's family. Illustrate with pictures and quotations how Ahmed's journey to Minnesota leads to his self-discovery.

Draw the elements of plot in *Ahmed Aziz's Epic Year*. (*exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution*)

Debate the following topics:

- ✓ Does Jack deserve mercy?
- ✓ Are Jack and Ahmed believable characters?
- ✓ Is Mrs. Gaarder an outstanding teacher?
- ✓ Which is the best book? (*Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, or *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*)

Choose one of the symbols of *Ahmed Aziz's Epic Year* and describe its importance.

Be the character in bold and write a full page from their perspective:

- ✓ **Ahmed** - What do you like and dislike about being compared to your uncle?
- ✓ **Ahmed's uncle** - What is the great life lesson that you want to share with Ahmed? ○
- ✓ **Jack** - What things at home and with your parents should change so that you feel better and more secure?
- ✓ **Mrs. Gaarder** - What is the best part of teaching the accelerated language arts class with students like Ahmed?

What was the most important lesson from Grumpy Old Man that you identified with?

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## BOOKTRAILER:

**BP Library Kids:** <http://tinyurl.com/57rfjhw6>

## BOOKTALK:

Ahmed Aziz is having an epic year—epically bad. After his dad gets sick, the family moves from Hawaii to Minnesota for his dad's treatment. Even though his dad grew up there, Ahmed can't imagine a worse place to live. He's one of the only brown kids in his school. And as a proud slacker, Ahmed doesn't want to deal with expectations from his new teachers. Ahmed surprises himself by reading the assigned books for his English class: *Holes*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Shockingly, he doesn't hate them. Ahmed also starts learning about his uncle, who died before Ahmed was born. Getting bits and pieces of his family's history might be the one upside of the move, as his dad's health hangs in the balance and the school bully refuses to leave him alone.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Baptist, Kelly J. *The Swag Is in the Socks*. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2021  
Cuevas, Adrianna. *Cuba in My Pocket*. Square Fish, 2021.  
Khan, Henna. *More to the Story*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019.  
Siddiqui, Maleeha *Barakah Beats*. Scholastic, 2021  
Stoddard, Lindsey. *The Real Deal*. HarperCollins, 2022  
Wan-Long Shang, Wendy. *The Secret Battle of Evan Pao*. Scholastic Press, 2022  
Yee, Lisa. *Maizy Chen's Last Chance*. Random House, 2022.  
Ziegler, Jennifer. *Worser*. Margaret Ferguson Books, 2022

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Nina Hamza:** <https://ninahamza.com>  
**Holes the Book:** <http://www.louissachar.com/holes.html>  
**Quizlet:** <https://quizlet.com/759683466/ahmed-azizs-epic-year-flash-cards/>  
**E. L. Konigsburg:** <https://www.simonandschuster.com/authors/E-L-Konigsburg/20030386>  
**Bridge to Terabithia:** <https://katherinapaterson.com/books/bridge-to-terabithia/>  
**What Is Hepatitis C?:** <https://www.chop.edu/conditions-diseases/hepatitis-c>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (May 1, 2021)  
*Kirkus* (May 15, 2021)  
*Publishers Weekly* (July 26,2021)  
*School Library Journal* (May 1, 2021)

**Higuera, Donna Barba. *The Last Cuentista*. Levine Querido, 2021.**

**SUMMARY:**

Earth is doomed; about to be destroyed by a wayward Halley's comet. Petra Peña and her family have been chosen to be among the few humans to travel in suspended animation to a new planet and rebuild civilization. While she sleeps, a group of people called the Collective have taken over the ship and attempted to fix all of Earth's problems by erasing the differences between individuals. When Petra wakes, she must fight to retain her identity, including her own memories of Earth, her family...and the only remaining stories of life on Earth. Will Petra succeed, or will the future of humanity belong to the Collective?

**QUESTIONS:**

Have you ever known a storyteller like Lita? What stories did they tell you? Are stories important? Why or why not?  
If you could learn the way that Petra and the other children learn while they sleep, what would you want to study? Why?  
Would you want to be part of the first group of settlers on a new planet? Why or why not?  
Would *The Last Cuentista* make a good movie? Why do you think that?  
Why do you think Voxy was different from the other Collective members?  
Why did the Collective think they were doing the right thing by erasing memories and differences? What were the consequences of their actions?  
What do you think will happen next after the end of the book?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Petra was brave when...  
Petra was smart when...  
I want to know more about the story of...  
If I could take three objects from my life on Earth, I would take...  
I think the new civilization will be...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research what criteria scientists use to determine if a planet can support human life or not. What is the closest planet they have found that might work? Why won't the planets inside our own solar system work? Design a perfect new planet, name it and illustrate what it might look like. Create a poster advertising your new colony on the new planet.  
If you were in charge of selecting people to travel to a new planet and start a new colony, what kinds of people would you pick? What jobs would they need to be able to do? What experts would you need? Would you send their families too? How would you decide who could go in the

first spaceship? Would you have rules about their health and age? Make a list of your selection criteria and create a poster explaining who you are looking for and how to apply. Interview an older family member or community member you feel comfortable with about the stories they heard growing up. Ask them about how the stories made them feel, and how old they think the stories are. Ask them if they shared those stories with anyone else when they became grown-ups. Write one of their stories down and draw illustrations to go with it.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 6-8

**BOOKTRAILER:**

**Bay Shore - Brightwaters Public Library:** <http://tinyurl.com/yhacume6>

**BOOKTALK:**

It is the year 2061 and a solar flare has caused Halley's comet to veer off course. Earth is about to be destroyed. Three spaceships have been built to carry a few hundred specially chosen people to a new planet, where they hope humanity can survive and rebuild. 12-year-old Petra Peña and her family are among those chosen to travel in suspended animation, which means they will sleep for the entire trip and not age at all. While they sleep, they will have knowledge downloaded into their brains to help them start the new colony.

Petra sleeps for 384 years. During that time, a group of people called the Collective take over the ship and attempt to fix all of Earth's conflicts and problems by erasing the differences between individuals and reprogramming them to be loyal to the Collective. When Petra wakes, she discovers that she is the only one left who remembers life on Earth. She must fight to retain her own identity, including her memories of Earth and her family, and all her grandmother's stories. She struggles to remind others of the lives they once lived and the things that made Earth precious. Will Petra succeed, or will the future of humanity belong to the Collective?

**READ-ALIKES:**

Barry, Michelle A. *Moongarden*. Pixel+Ink Books, 2022  
Cervantes, J.C. *The Lords of Night*. Rick Riordan Presents, 2022  
Traoré, Efuá. *Children of the Quicksands*. Chicken House, 2021  
Mbalia, Kwame. *Last Gate of the Emperor*. Scholastic Press, 2021  
Burt, Jake. *Cleo Porter and the Body Electric*. Feiwel & Friends, 2020

## RELATED WEBSITES:

**Donna Barba Higuera:** <https://www.dbhiguera.com>

**Educator Guide from Levine Querido:** <http://tinyurl.com/377whx2n>

**Levine Querido Publishing :** <https://www.levinequerido.com/the-last-cuentista>

**Nick Thomas Interview with Donna Barba Higuera:** <http://tinyurl.com/3bn2rbbt>

**School Library Journal:** <http://tinyurl.com/ymsybyzs>

**Gifted Development Center:** <https://www.gifteddevelopment.org/musings/cuentista>

## REVIEWS:

*Booklist:* (March 15, 2022)

*Kirkus:* (July 2, 2021)

*Publishers Weekly* (June 14, 2021)

*School Library Journal* (September 1, 2021)

**Ireland, Justina. *Ophie's Ghosts*. Baltzer + Bray, 2021.**

**SUMMARY:**

Ophie Harrison can see ghosts. She first discovered this on a fateful night in 1922, when she lost both her father and her home in the Georgia countryside. After that incident, Ophie and her mother moved to Pittsburgh, where they both work at Daffodil Manor, owned by the wealthy Caruthers Family. Ophie soon learns that the manor is haunted, and she befriends one of the spirits. This ghost shares their unfinished business with Ophie, who decides to try to help uncover the secrets about the past.

**QUESTIONS:**

What does Ophie's father tell her to get from under the floorboards?  
Why was Ophie's father killed?  
Why do Ophie and Clara become friends?  
How does Ophie help Clara find peace?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Which ghost would you most want to befriend, and why?  
Who do you think murdered Clara, and why?

**ACTIVITIES:**

Justina Ireland uses personification to bring her settings to life, almost treating them like characters. Find examples of this in the text, and draw a picture to show how you imagine these settings.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Mooresville, Indiana Public Library:** <https://safeshare.tv/x/ss641b1d251f08d>

**BOOKTALK:**

In the 1920s, Black Americans were fleeing the South to escape poverty and persecution caused by Jim Crow laws. Ophie is startled awake in the middle of the night by her father, who tells her

to grab their emergency money, wake her mother, and go to the secret hideout in the back. Ophie and her mother make it just in time, as a group of angry white men show up and burn her house to the ground. The next day, Ophie discovers the shocking truth: her father had actually been murdered by this mob the afternoon before, and the man who woke her in the middle of the night was actually her father's *ghost*. That's right, Ophie can communicate with ghosts. Ophie and her mother move to Pittsburgh, where both women work at Daffodil Manor to save up money for their own place, but here Ophie discovers even more ghosts, and a dark mystery about the past that she needs to solve.

### **READ-ALIKES:**

Brown, India Hill. *The Forgotten Girl*. Scholastic Press, 2019  
Lugman-Dawson. *Freewater*. Little, Brown & Company, 2022  
Mafi, Tahereh. *Furthermore*. Dutton Children's Books, 2016  
Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ghost Boys*. Little, Brown & Company, 2018  
Royce, Eden. *Root Magic*. Walden Pond Press, 2021  
Taylor, Mildred. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Dial Press, 1976

### **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Justinia Ireland** <https://www.authorjustinaireland.com/>

### **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (April 15, 2021)  
*Kirkus* (March 15, 2021)  
*Publishers Weekly* (March 22, 2021)

**LaRocca, Rajani. *Red, White and Whole*. Quill Tree Books, 2021**

**SUMMARY:**

*Red White and Whole* is a novel in verse that centers on Reha, a 13-year-old, first generation Indian American. Reha is struggling to find her place in the world as she balances following her Indian customs and trying to fit in with her American friends. When Reha's mother gets sick, it changes everything in her life, and she is determined to do anything in her power to make her mother healthy again. This book is full of emotion, feelings, and thought-provoking events.

**QUESTIONS:**

How do you feel about the setting of this book being in the 1980s? Could it have been set in the 2020s? How would that have changed things?

The author wrote this book as a novel in verse. How does that change how this book is read? Do you think this is the most effective way to tell Reha's story?

In what ways are the struggles Reha and her family facing similar to issues immigrant families are facing today? How are they different?

Does Reha's plan for her future negatively or positively affect her reaction to her mother's illness? Explain.

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

The best choice Reha made was...

I would like to go back to the 1980s to see...

I have felt like Reah when...

The hardest part of the book for me to read was...

**ACTIVITIES:**

In a similar Young Adult book, *All My Rage* by Sabaa Tahir, the author continuously lists songs from different artists that represent how the characters are feeling throughout the book. As you read *Red, White, and Whole*, create a playlist that follows the events Reha is experiencing throughout the book.

Create a collage of yourself. One side is who you are at home, the other side is who you are at school or with your friends. How similar or different are each side of the collage? Compare and discuss with others.

Interview someone that grew up in the 1980s. Ask them about some of the events, settings, and music in the book.

Find some primary sources from 1983. Discuss in groups where they come from, what makes them primary sources, and how they relate to your lives today.



**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

**BOOKTRAILER:**

**Red, White and Whole Trailer:** <http://tinyurl.com/4n2sp7yt>

**BOOKTALK:**

Have you ever felt like you are a different person at home than you are with your friends? That is exactly how Reha feels. At school, she has fun with her friends, listening to music, studying, and doing what every other teenager in the 1980s was doing. At home, she is following all her Indian family traditions. But when tragedy strikes, everything starts to change. Read *Red, White and Whole* to find out how far Reha's is willing to go to fix her world before it falls apart.

**READ-ALIKES:**

Rajani LaRocca. *Mirror to Mirror*. Quill Tree Books, 2023.  
Padma Venkatraman. *A Time to Dance*. Speak, 2015.  
Jasmine Warga. *Other Words for Home*. Balzer + Bray, 2021.  
Thanhha Lai. *Inside Out and Back Again*. Harper, 2017.

**RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Rajaini La Rocca:** <https://www.rajanilarocca.com/>  
**Educator's Guide:** <http://tinyurl.com/ahvb6ty2>  
**We Need Diverse Books:** <http://www.diversebooks.org>  
**Anti-Defamation League Book of the Month:** <http://tinyurl.com/8d2n6mhj>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (January 1, 2021)  
*Horn Book Magazine* (May/June 2021)  
*School Library Journal* (February 1, 2021)

**Peters, Shaun. *The Unforgettable Logan Foster*. HarperCollins, 2022**

**SUMMARY:**

Logan Foster has spent most of his life in an orphanage. Gil and Margie are interested in bringing Logan into their family. He finds out that they are superheroes who are being hunted by a supervillain. Now, Logan must save not only Gil and Margie, but also the world.

**QUESTIONS:**

Gil and Margie don't always tell the truth in order to hide their true identities. Were their lies okay?

How did Logan use his eidetic memory to save Gil and Margie?

If you were Logan, would you want Gil and Margie to adopt you?

Throughout the book, Logan is writing a letter to his sibling. Who did you picture Logan's sibling to be?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

A situation where it would be helpful to have eidetic memory would be...

If I were a superhero, the superpower I would want the most and the least is...

Having superhero parents would be great because...

Having superhero parents would NOT be great because...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Do some research on superheroes (Marvel and DC are the two largest comic book companies, but there are others out there!). Find a superhero with a superpower you'd like, and a superhero with a superpower that completely surprised you.

There have always been superheroes among us. Read a biography about someone who inspires you.

What's your superpower? Is it your kindness? Your love of animals? Or your great knowledge of Pokemon? Create a comic featuring you as the superhero and using your everyday superpower to solve a problem.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-6

## **BOOKTALK:**

Logan Foster has given up on ever being adopted. Between being autistic, having an eidetic memory, and almost being in high school, it seems like there are no prospective parents who want to take a chance on him—until Gil and Margie. They have their own quirks: Gil makes terrible jokes, Margie can't cook anything well, they're out at all hours of the night, and their house has an intense security system. Soon, Logan figures out the truth, Gil and Margie are really the superheroes Ultra-Quantum and Quicksilver Siren! Everything he's ever read about in his comics is true, and if there are superheroes there are definitely supervillains! But how can ordinary Logan Foster save the day?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Bury, Katryn. *Drew Leclair Gets a Clue*. HarperCollins, 2022.

Emerson, Marcus. *The Super Life of Ben Braver*. Roaring Brook Press, 2018

Finnegan, Margaret. *We Could be Heroes*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020

Jensen, Marion. *Almost Super*. HarperCollins, 2014

Puller, J.S. *Captain Superlative*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2018

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Shawn Peters:** <https://www.shawnpeterswrites.com/>

**Virtual Author Visit with Shawn Peters:** <https://tinyurl.com/5n97vjw8>

**Teen Librarian Toolbox Guest Post:** <https://tinyurl.com/vk7rknh8>

**List of Superheroes:** <https://www.britannica.com/art/comic-book>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (November 1, 2021)

*Kirkus* (January 25, 2022)

*School Library Journal* (January 28, 2022)

**Ponti, James. *City Spies*. Alladin, 2020**

**SUMMARY:**

Sara Martinez is a New York City foster child who has the ability to hack into any computer system. She has managed to hack into the New York state foster care network, and it lands her in court. While awaiting her sentencing, she gets a new lawyer who is actually an MI6 spy. He has come to New York to recruit Sara to his team of teenage spies. They travel to Scotland to start training Sara for a top-secret mission that takes place in a few short weeks in Paris. Sara's hacking skills will be put to the test as well as her survival skills. Can she and the team of talented teens do what adult MI6 spies can't?

**QUESTIONS:**

Do you think Sara should have been punished for hacking into the foster care system?  
Do you think Mother is a good role model for the team?  
Why do you think Rio wants to be the Alpha so badly?  
Do you think the team should have spied on Sara when she arrived?  
Why does Charlotte help the team at the summit?  
Do you think Mother will find his children?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

My spy specialty would be...  
My favorite City Spy is ....  
If I could travel to any city in the world, I would choose...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Take a virtual tour of Edinburgh <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvEbXDGKjbQ>  
Learn more about the Eifel Tower  
<https://www.tou Eiffel.paris/en/the-monument/history>  
Visit The Met and view some of Auguste Renoir's paintings  
[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/augu/hd\\_augu.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/augu/hd_augu.htm)

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-8

**BOOKTRAILER:**

James Ponti: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPPTB3JskQU>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Hacker, spies, secrets, villains; *City Spies* has all these and more. Sara Martinez, a foster kid, is about to go into a New York City court room to receive her sentencing for hacking into the state foster care network. Her new lawyer isn't a lawyer at all but a MI6 operative that has traveled to New York City to recruit Sara to his team of exceptional teenage spies. Travel to Scotland, Australia and then to Paris in the action-packed spy novel.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Carter, Ally. *Winterbourne Home for Vengeance and Valor*. Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2020  
Horowitz, Anthony. Alex Rider Series. Philomel, 2001-2020  
Gibbs, Stuart. *Spy School*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012  
Korman, Gordon. *Masterminds*. Balzar + Bray, 2015  
McMullen, Beth. *Mrs. Smith's Spy School for Girls* Alladin, 2017  
Newsome, Richard. *The Billionaire's Curse*. Walden Pond Press, 2010

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**James Ponti:** <https://www.jamesponti.com/>

**Reading Group Guide:** [https://thereadingwarehouse.com/thebookpantry/City\\_Spies\\_RGG.pdf](https://thereadingwarehouse.com/thebookpantry/City_Spies_RGG.pdf)

**First Chapter:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTu1sbXl12o>

**Meet the City Spies:** <https://www.jamesponti.com/city-spies>

**Virtual Tour of Edinburgh** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvEbXDgKjbQ>

**The Eiffel Tower:** <https://www.tou Eiffel.paris/en/the-monument/history>

**Auguste Renoir:** [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/augu/hd\\_augu.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/augu/hd_augu.htm)

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (June 1, 2017)

*Publishers Weekly* (May 15, 2017)

*School Library Journal* (May 1, 2017)

**Reese, Jenn. *A Game of Fox and Squirrels*. Henry Holt and Company, 2020.**

**SUMMARY:**

Samantha and her older sister Caitlin experience domestic violence and are taken from their home to live with their aunt in Oregon. More than anything, Sam wants to go back to her life in California. Aunt Vicky tries to make the girls feel at home, and gives Sam a magical card game, *A Game of Fox and Squirrels*, for her birthday. One day, Sam sees a flash of color in her bedroom and meets a talking fox named Ashander. The charming fox makes her a promise: if she goes on a quest for him and finds the golden acorn, her wish will come true. Sam feels this is the best chance to go home, so she does tasks for Ashander that become increasingly dangerous. How far will she go to go home? This book is both magical and metaphorical and is a beautiful story of healing and hope.

**QUESTIONS:**

If you found a golden acorn that could make any wish come true, what would you wish for?  
Why do you think Aunt Vicky decided to take the sisters into her home?  
Who do you think Ashander represents in the story? Who do the squirrels represent?  
Who is your favorite character in this book?  
Which character is most like you?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

When I have problems, I can talk to...  
It is important to speak up about ...  
If I were an animal, I would be a ...  
If I could have any wish, it would be...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Play a Game of Fox and Squirrels! Use two standard decks of cards and some tokens. See attached rules: [Rules for a Game of Fox and Squirrels](#)  
Make your own card game. Who are the characters? What is their goal?  
Write your autobiography with animal characters. What kind of animal would you be? What about your family or friends?  
Invite a counselor to read this book and discuss it with your group.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4 – 7

## **BOOKTRAILER/BOOKTALK:**

**One Minute Books:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NczWLodeXc0>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Samantha and her older sister Caitlin are taken from their home and to live with their Aunt Vicky in Oregon. Sam does not want to go, but Caitlin, always agreeable, acts as if this will be a great adventure. All Sam wants to do is get back home before the start of the school year in two weeks. One day a charming fox named Ashander befriends her and tells her he can help her. All she has to do is go on a quest for him and he will give her a golden acorn which will grant her one wish. The tasks, though, get more and more dangerous. How far will Sam go to get home?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *Fighting Words*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2020.  
Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. *One For the Murphys*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2012.  
Ness, Patrick. *A Monster Calls*. Candlewick Press, 2016.  
Ogle, Rex. *Free Lunch*. Norton Young Readers, an imprint of W. W. Norton & Company, 2019  
Rauf, Onjali Q. *The Star Outside My Window*. Delacorte Press, 2021.

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Jenn Reese:** <https://www.jennreese.com>

**Discussion Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/3f8tufht>

**Chapter 1:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1u8KiWOf3I&t=7s>

**Author Interview:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkUaxQi0ZbY&t=37s>

**Our Kids...Talking to Kids About Child Abuse:** <https://tinyurl.com/mvpvwwsb>

**Childhelp:** <https://www.childhelp.org>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (April 1, 2020)

*Horn Book Magazine* (May/June, 2020)

*Kirkus Reviews* (February 15, 2020)

*Publishers Weekly* (March 16, 2020)

*School Library Journal Xpress* (March 27, 2020)

**Riordan, Rick. *Daughter of the Deep*. Disney-Hyperion, 2021**

**SUMMARY:**

Ana Dakkar and her brother, Dev, lost their parents two years ago in a scientific expedition gone wrong. Now the only place they have to call home is Harding-Pencroft Academy (HP), a high school known for graduating the best marine scientists, explorers, and naval officers. Ana is on her way to a weekend out at sea to complete her freshman trials, when she sees something odd in the water. In horror, she watches as her life and her school are destroyed.

In fear for their lives, Professor Hewett takes the students out to sea to escape their unseen enemies. As Hewett's health fades, Ana learns the truth about her school and her destiny. Land Institute, their rival school, and HP have been fighting a war for the last one hundred and fifty years to uncover technology that HP has been protecting. This technology is ahead of its time and contains some of the most advanced and dangerous weapons in the world. If it falls into the wrong hands, it could mean the end of the world as we know it. All that stands between Land Institute and acquisition of this technology is Ana, who discovers that her ancestor is the famous Captain Nemo, and that the science fiction of long ago, may not be fiction at all.

**QUESTIONS:**

What characteristics does it take to be a good leader? Does Ana have any of these characteristics?

Discuss Dev's character. Why did Dev betray HP? Do you agree or disagree with his actions? Should Ana forgive him? Could you?

Should HP share Nemo's technology with the world? What good and bad things can come of it? Is the Nautilus alive? Why or why not?

The Nautilus killed Ana's parents. Would you have been able to trust this ship? Would you have been brave enough to get on? Why or why not?

If you could have any fiction book turn out to be true, which book would it be and why?

Would you like to see *Daughter of the Deep* made into a movie? Why or why not?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If you had access to the Nautilus's technology. What would you do with it? What would you create? Who would you help?

If you were going to design the freshman trials for HP, what would they entail? What would the freshman have to do to pass?

Would you stay to help rebuild HP, or would you take your part of the money and go home to your family. Why?



## ACTIVITIES:

In *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Nemo uses his skills to seek revenge. Compare and contrast Dev's character with Nemo.

Research the music used in *Daughter of the Deep*. Listen to the pieces and draw the images they create in your mind.

Compare Harding-Pencroft to Hogwarts. What do they have in common? How are they different?

Create a plan/timeline on how to rebuild Harding-Pencroft. What would you include? Where would you rebuild? Create a blueprint for the new school.

Debate the pros and cons of keeping the technology secret from the world.

You are going to update the Nautilus. What technology would you add/improve? Sketch the Nautilus and your improvements.

Create a playlist of music to use with the Nautilus. What would each song make the submarine do?

Research bioelectricity and squids. Create a slideshow teaching your classmates about the subject.

Develop a presentation on how dolphins communicate. How have humans trained dolphins?

How do dolphins communicate with other dolphins, humans, etc.

Read *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and compare it to the facts *Daughter of the Deep*.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-8

## BOOK TRAILER:

**Penguin Books:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y05FvxOlec8>

## BOOKTALK:

How many of you have wished that the world of your favorite fantasy or science fiction book could be true: maybe a world of advanced technology, musical computer programs, warp-speed time travel, a giant orangutan that cooks food for you or a living long-lost killer submarine?

Ana Dakkar was supposed to be facing her freshman year trials, a weekend of challenges on the open sea. Instead, she is running for her life, fighting unknown enemies, discovering family secrets, playing musical instruments for a giant prehistoric squid, risking her life to captain a killer submarine, and struggling to save her friends and her school in the process. Can Ana take control of her destiny, and protect her family's technology from falling into the wrong hands?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Alston, B. B. *Amari and the Night Brothers*. Balzer + Bray, 2022  
Chokshi, Roshani. *Aru Shah and the End of Time*. Rick Riordan Presents, 2018  
Henderson, Jason. *Young Captain Nemo*. Feiwel & Friends, 2019  
Mbalia, Kwame. *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*. Rick Riordan Presents, 2020  
Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief*. Disney-Hyperion, 2006.  
Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Scholastic, 1999.

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Rick Riordan:** <https://rickriordan.com>

**Rick Riordan Preview:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENXIbecxR6Q>

**Discussion Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/26rscbmh>

**Kiddle:** [https://kids.kiddle.co/Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea](https://kids.kiddle.co/Twenty_Thousand_Leagues_Under_the_Sea)

**Laughing Place: Interview with Rick Riordan:** <https://tinyurl.com/22xxrx4w>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (October 1, 2021)

*Publishers Weekly* (September 6, 2021)

**Sepetys, Ruta. *I Must Betray You*. Philomel Books. 2022.**

**SUMMARY:**

Christian Florescu is a 17-year-old living in Romania in the late 1980s. He lives in a small apartment where he, his parents, his sister, and his grandfather are under constant surveillance by the communist government. To obtain medicine for his grandfather, he is forced to become an informer for the government by spying on the American ambassador his mother cleans for. While keeping a notebook containing his thoughts, observations and dreams, Christian struggles to do the right thing, in a world where no one is to be trusted.

**QUESTIONS:**

How were Romanian schools in the book different from schools in the United States today?  
Why is learning English important to Christian?  
Christian and Liliana form their opinions of life in America based on American movies. Do American movies accurately reflect life in America?  
Why is Christian angry when he suspects that Luca has informed on him when Christian himself is an informer?  
Explain the black market and the system of bribes that is described in the book.  
Did Christian do the right thing when he gave the notebook to Mr. Van Dorn?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I knew I was being watched and my private conversations were overheard I would feel . . .  
If I had to make a choice between betrayal and saving a person I loved, I would . . .  
If I knew my government was evil, but standing up to it would be dangerous, I would . . .

**ACTIVITIES:**

Create a journal like Christian's. Record thoughts, feelings, poems, etc.  
Research the government of Romania in the 1980s and what real people did to stand up to it.  
Research other famous underground spies.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 7-8

**BOOK TRAILER:**

**Penguin Teen Trailer:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vei9vBjrKUQ&t=3s>

## **BOOKTALK:**

What would you do if you had to decide between portraying your friend and saving your grandfather? That is the difficult decision faced by Christian Florescue, a teenager living in Romania in 1989 during communist rule. While keeping a notebook containing his thoughts, observations and dreams, Christian struggles to do the right thing, in a world where no one is to be trusted.

## **READALIKES:**

Fukuda, Andrew. *This Light Between Us: A Novel of World War II*. Tor Teen, 2020  
Marsh, Katherine. *The Lost Year: A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine*. Roaring Brook Press, 2023  
Standish, Ali. *Yonder*. HarperCollins, 2022  
Nielsen, Jennifer A. *Lines of Courage*. Scholastic Press, 2022  
Hood, Susan. *Alias Anna: A True Story of Outwitting the Nazis*. HarperCollins, 2022  
Najem, Muhammad. *Muhammad Najem, War Reporter*. Little, Brown Ink, 2022  
Hendrix, John. *The Faithful Spy*. Harry N. Abrams, 2018  
Kessler, Liz. *When the World Was Ours*. Aladdin, 2021  
Kelkar, Supriya. *Strong as Fire, Fierce as Flame*. Tu Books, 2021  
Kramer, J. Kasper. *The Story That Cannot Be Told*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Ruta Sepetys:** <https://rutasepetys.com/>  
**Penguin Random House:** <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/602715/i-must-betray-you-by-ruta-sepetys/>  
**Penguin Classroom Portal:** <https://www.penguinclassroom.com/books/i-must-betray-you/>  
**The Romanian Revolution Explained:** <https://tinyurl.com/y73hvw7r>.

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (February 1, 2022)  
*School Library Journal* (February 1, 2022)  
*Publishers Weekly* (February 2022)

**Sheinkin, Steve. *Fallout: Spies, Superbombs, and the Ultimate Cold War Showdown*. Roaring Brook Press, 2021**

**SUMMARY:**

Fallout is a non-fiction book that tells the events of the Cold War. The United States and Soviet Union are superpowers on the verge of mutually assured destruction. The book details the nuclear arms race, how communism is sweeping the globe, the Space Race, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**QUESTIONS:**

Why was the period after World War II called the Cold War?  
What was the Red Scare?  
What two countries were superpowers and who were their leaders?  
Describe the Cuban Missile Crisis and its significance?  
What are radioactive atoms and why are they so dangerous?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I lived during the Cold War, I would feel...  
I would like to know more about...  
Pretend you are Kennedy, describe what you would do to make the Cuban Missile Crisis a success.

**ACTIVITIES:**

Create a comic strip that details a scene from the book.  
Research one topic or person that you found interesting and want to know more about.  
Design a fallout shelter. What would you need to make sure was in there to survive?  
Write a letter to someone who lived during the Cold War describing the way the world is now and the United States relationship with Russia.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 7-8

**BOOKTRAILER:**

MacKids Books: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PI4SpQBLk3M>

## **BOOKTALK:**

World War II is over. Communism is spreading around the world and the Soviet Union is a superpower that now has nuclear weapons that they will use at any minute. The United States is trying to prevent the spread of Communism, but at what cost? This period is called the Cold War and tensions are high between the leaders and countries. *Fallout* is a book that talks about events and people from this time period!

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Sheinkin, Steve. *Bomb: The Race to Build – and Steal – the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon*. Flash Point, 2012  
Goodman, Michael E. *Cold War Spies*. Creative Education, 2016.  
Hudak, Heather. *Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Race*. Crabtree Publishing, 2018  
Riggs, Kate. *The End of the Cold War*. Creative Education, 2016  
Samuels, Charlie. *Machines and Weaponry of the Cold War*. Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2013.  
Strasser, Todd. *Fallout*. Candlewick Press, 2013  
Wiles, Deborah. *Countdown*. Scholastic, 2010.

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Steve Sheinkin:** <https://stevesheinkin.com>  
**Cuban Missile Crisis:** <https://tinyurl.com/5n82vuaz>  
**Timeline of the Cold War:** <https://tinyurl.com/4f5bvn3r>  
**Cold War History:** <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history>  
**South Carolina Junior Book Award:** <https://tinyurl.com/3sj4psbe>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (July 15, 2021)  
*Publishers Weekly* (September 13, 2021)  
*School Library Journal* (September 1, 2021)

**Siddiqui, Maleeha. *Barakah Beats*. Scholastic Press, 2021.**

**SUMMARY:**

Pakistani-American tween Nimra Sharif’s world is flipped upside-down when she attends public school for the first time. Her best friend Jenna starts ignoring her, her teachers are all too strict, and many of her classmates treat her differently because she wears a hijab. When the school’s pop Muslim band, Barakah Beats, overhears Nimra praying and loves her voice, she agrees to be their vocalist to win back her friendship with Jenna. However, her parents have taught her that music is against their beliefs. Nimra struggles to balance her friendships, hide the band from her family, and continue practicing her faith.

**QUESTIONS:**

In what ways did you relate to Nimra’s character throughout the story?

What do you think Jenna could have done differently to be a better friend to Nimra?

How does Nimra’s relationship with her parents compare to their relationship with her grandparents?

What do you think the future will look like for the band Barakah Beats?

If you played a part in a band, what role would it be? Would you rather be in the limelight or work behind the scenes?

What’s something new you’ve tried that’s different from what you usually like? How did it go?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

The biggest challenge for Nimra was...

The character who was most supportive to Nimra was...

If I were Nimra’s parents, I would...

**ACTIVITIES:**

In the story, classmates make assumptions about Nimra because she wears a hijab. Discuss these assumptions and what these classmates could have done instead.

Design a logo and/or promotional poster for the “Barakah Beats” band.

Write a letter to one of the characters in the story. You can write it from the viewpoint of another character in the book, or you can share thoughts from your own perspective.

Invite a local musician or music instructor to speak to your class about working in their industry and what inspired them.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## **BOOKTRAILER:**

Maleeha Siddiqui Book Talk from Scholastic: <https://tinyurl.com/z5mdy5s4>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Middle school is never easy, but it's especially difficult for Nimra, who has only ever attended Islamic school. It seems like no one in public school gets her – even her lifelong friend, Jenna, who expects her to leave her hijab at home. But then she meets *Barakah Beats*, a Muslim band made up of three of the most popular boys in school. Will joining them as the lead singer win her friends and a “normal” middle school experience? Or will it just leave her with more questions about her own identity?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Cisneros, Ernesto. *Falling Short*. HarperCollins US, 2022

Fipps, Lisa. *Starfish*. Penguin Young Readers: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2021

Khan, Hena. *Amina's Voice*. Salaam Reads / Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2017

Perez, Celia. *The First Rule of Punk*. Viking, 2017

Ramée, Lisa Moore. *A Good Kind of Trouble*. Balzer + Bray, 2019

Reem, Faruqi. *Unsettled*. HarperCollins, 2021

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Maleeha Siddiqui Official Website:** <https://www.maleehasiddiqui.com/>

**Barakah Beats: The Book:** <https://www.maleehasiddiqui.com/barakah-beats>

**Q&A With Maleeha Siddiqui:** <https://tinyurl.com/42u7zh7c>

**Interview with Maleeha Siddiqui:** <https://tinyurl.com/yc5r479k>

**Own Voices Article by Maleeha Siddiqui:** <https://tinyurl.com/2s373vca>

**Hijabi (Wrap My Hijab) song by Mona Haydar:** <https://tinyurl.com/4p4a2b43>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (October 1, 2021)

*Kirkus* (September 15, 2021)

*School Library Journal* (October 1, 2021)



**Soontornvat, Christina. *A Wish in the Dark*. Candlewick Press, 2020.**

**SUMMARY:**

After the city of Chattana was destroyed by a great fire, no one is allowed to light a fire again. To obtain light or electricity, the Governor uses his light-giving abilities to create different colored light orbs to power everything in the land. Depending on your status, job, or wealth depends on what color light you can afford and how much you can do throughout the day. Nine-year-old Pong was born in the Namwon Prison and grew up there because of his mother who committed a crime. Eventually, Pong escapes from Namwon in a garbage basket and runs away to a nearby village on the mountain called Tanaburi. While there, he enters a Buddhist temple and meets the head monk, Father Cham. Father Cham finds favor with Pong and gifts him with white cords to wrap around his wrist to hide the prison tattoo that can't be removed. When Nok, the daughter of former Namwon Prison, arrives in Tanaburi and discovers Pong's true identity, he escapes and goes back to Chattana to find his childhood friend Somkit and plan a protest against the Governor to fight for the rights of the people.

**QUESTIONS:**

Have you ever wanted a superpower? What would it be?  
How would you feel growing up in a prison? What are some experiences that you think you would have if you did?  
Would you have joined Pong and Somkit in the protest? Why or why not?  
Would *A Wish in the Dark* make a good movie? Why do you think that?  
What are the differences and similarities between Pong and Nok?  
What do you think will happen next after the end of the book?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Pong was brave when... I think Somkit was brave when....  
If I only had one item that could be electrically powered, it would be....

**ACTIVITIES:**

Research Thai Culture. What are some elements that were in the book that were based on their culture and what are some elements that were left.  
Create a character poster of one of the characters from the book.  
If this book became a movie, what would the movie poster look like?  
Create a comic strip of one of the chapters/scenes from the story.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## **BOOKTRAILER:**

**Christina Soontornvat:** <https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=WVmbba8-nxM>

## **BOOKTALK:**

13-year-old Pong along with his friend Somkit live in the Namwon Prison in Chattana and become orphans. The city is ruled by an oppressive Governor who wants to control everything including the light sources which are magical orbs. Pong escapes the prison and is desperate to leave behind his past to start anew but has many obstacles to face to do that. One of those obstacles is his prison tattoo that can't be removed except by the governor himself. Everywhere he goes people are going to know that he was in that prison. Another person trying to prove herself to her family is Nok. She wants to prove to her father and the governor that she is more than just a girl surrounded by the gossip of the town due to who her true parents are. This book is full of adventure, learning to escape your past mistakes or those of your families, and fighting for justice!

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Keller, Tae. *When You Trap a Tiger*. Random House Books for Young Readers, 2020

Lim, Celeste. *The Crystal Ribbon*. Scholastic Press, 2017.

Rimington, Celesta. *The Elephant's Girl*. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Urssu, Anne. *The Troubled Girls of Dragomir Academy*. Walden Pond Press, 2021

Venkatraman, Padma. *Born Behind Bars*. Nancy Paulsen, 2021

Zhang, Kat. *The Memory of Forgotten Things*. Aladdin, 2018.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Christina Soontornvat:** <https://soontornvat.com>

**Soontornvat Middle Reader Lesson Plan:** <https://tinyurl.com/57zfnvbs>

**Teaching Books:** <https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=69222>

**WordPress:** <https://kidsread.wordpress.com/2021/03/28/a-wish-in-the-dark-by-soontornvat-novel-guide/>

**Candlewick Press Discussion Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/2chndahw>

**About the Setting:** <https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=c2UIGgsN07o>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (February 2, 2020)

*Kirkus* (February 1, 2020)

*Publishers Weekly* (January 1, 2020)

*School Library Journal* (February 1, 2020)

**Warga, Jasmine. *The Shape of Thunder*. Balzer + Bray, 2021.**

**SUMMARY:**

It has been ten months since the tragedy that ended Cora and Quinn's friendship. Cora is grieving the death of her sister from a school shooting. Quinn is mourning not only her brother, but what her brother did. Both girls are dealing with grief in their own way. Cora and her family are working with therapists and openly talk about what happened. Quinn's family doesn't talk about what happened. One day Quinn comes up with an idea to create a time machine to change what happened. She leaves a box on Cora's doorstep asking for her help. Told in alternative perspectives it explores grief and what we would do to prevent tragedy.

**QUESTIONS:**

How does the title of the book reflect the content of the novel?

How does this story show the power of friendship?

Do we always know everything about our own family?

Why do you think the author chose to write about the aftermath of a school shooting without going into detail about the shooting?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

I would create a time machine to change....

Things that I would find unforgivable would include...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Have a debate about whether time travel is science or magic.

Research the five stages of grief and discuss where you think each girl is at.

Quinn writes letters to her brother Parker. Give students the option to write to a pet, a family member, a famous person, or someone else that they know that has died.

Create a Venn diagram about the two families and their grief.

Have students research grief counseling or programs available to teens and young adults in their area. Compile a list of these resources to share with the community.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 6-8

**BOOK TRAILER/BOOKTALK:**

**Jasmine Warga Booktalk:** [https://youtu.be/b0WP10pi\\_3Y](https://youtu.be/b0WP10pi_3Y)

## **BOOKTALK:**

Imagine finding a box from your former best friend on your porch the day of your birthday. Would you open it if you knew that the former friend's brother killed your sister? This is the story of Cora and Quinn who are dealing with grief, blame, and guilt over the school shooting that happened ten months ago. When Quinn proposes to scientifically minded Cora that they create a time machine to travel back to prevent what happened Cora agrees. Will they succeed in fixing things? Or will they only make things worse?

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Condie, Allyson Braithwaite. *Summerlost*. Penguin Random House LLC, 2016.  
Connor, Leslie. *The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle*. HarperCollins, 2018.  
Dooley, Sarah. *Free Verse*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2016.  
Erskine, Kathryn. *Mockingbird*. Penguin Young Readers Group, 2011.  
Gemeinhart, Dan. *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*. Henry Holt and Company (BYR), 2019.  
Holt, K. A. *This Is Not a Drill*. Scholastic, Incorporated, 2022.  
Hood, Ann. *Jude Banks, Superhero*. Penguin Young Readers Group, 2021.  
LaFleur, Suzanne. *Love, Aubrey*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2009.  
Levy, Joanne. *Sorry for Your Loss*. Orca Book Publishers, 2021.  
Lupica, Mike. *The Only Game*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2015.  
Reynolds, Justin A., and Caron Butler. *Shot Clock*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2022.

## **RELATED WEBSITES:**

**Teaching Guide from the Publisher:** <https://tinyurl.com/b239uybn>  
**Jasmine Warga:** <http://jasminewarga.com/>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (April 1, 2021)  
*Kirkus* (March 15, 2021)  
*Publisher's Weekly* (March 29, 2021)  
*School Library Journal* (June 1, 2021)

**Wolkenstein, Evan M. *Turtle Boy*. Yearling Books, 2020**

**SUMMARY:**

It is a tough seventh grade year for introverted Will Levine. Kids at school bully him and call him Turtle Boy because of his chin that appears to be receding due to a condition called micrognathia. His science teacher discovers he has been collecting turtles illegally from a marsh behind the school and orders him to release them back. In addition, he is preparing for his upcoming Bar Mitzvah. Unfortunately for Will, his rabbi insists that everyone do community service. He does not like any of the choices, so the rabbi has Will visit a 16-year-old boy in the hospital who is suffering from an incurable illness. Will hates hospitals! At first the boys do not get along, but once RJ shares his bucket list with Will, Will wants to help him complete the items before RJ dies.

**QUESTIONS:**

Max believes his love of reading came from his mother, and his chin came from his father. What traits have your parents passed down to you? Explain.

Compare and contrast Max and Will. Who would you want to be friends with? Why?

What connection between Will and RJ happens on the third visit? Why do you think RJ gave Will his practice pad?

Did you ever have to give up something that was important to you like Max had to do with his turtles? Why do you think he did not release the Blanding's turtle?

What does the rabbi mean when he says on page 137, "We forget what we remember, and we remember what we forget"? Why is the rabbi telling Will this when he tells him that RJ is dying?

Visualize the roller coaster ride? Describe it in detail or draw a picture of it. Because of this ride, does anything in the story shift? Explain.

How does Will change from the beginning of the book until the end? How did RJ help Will change?

The author had the same condition as Will. How did this help or hinder the book?

How was Will most like a turtle throughout the book?

Who in this book would you most want to sit next to on an airplane and why? What questions might you ask this person?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

Some of Will's fears include...

When Will first visits RJ...

It was important to find Blanding's Turtles because...

One theme of *Turtle Boy* is...

RJ's bucket list is important to Will because...

## ACTIVITIES:

Make your own bucket list of what you want to see or do before finishing high school. Illustrate it and explain why each item is important to you.

Find out what turtles are common to your area, and which are rare. If possible, find out where you can find these turtles, and take photos of them.

Investigate mitochondrial disease like RJ had. Find out its symptoms, treatments and prognosis. Learn about body dysmorphia and what it does to individuals. Interview psychologists and psychiatrists to find out treatments.

Write a newspaper article about the saving of the Back 40. Include a headline, byline, and quote(s) from people who were prominent in making it happen. Include a photo as well.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 5-8

## BOOK TRAILERS:

**Mooresville IN Public Library:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYP6Cfy-Ro>

**Liz Friend:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y1JuVf3wEg>

## BOOKTALK:

Will Levine is having an awful seventh grade year. He is being bullied for having a facial deformity in which his chin recedes. Other boys call him Turtle Boy. In addition, Will, an introvert, finds solace in the Back 40, a nature preserve behind his school. He collects wild frogs and keeps them as pets. Finding out the Back 40 may be developed and is off-limits to the public angers him. His old science teacher finds out about his turtles and makes him release them. As this year is Will's bar mitzvah year, he is required to do community service. His rabbi assigns Will to visit sixteen-year-old RJ in the hospital. RJ has an incurable disease and wants to finish his bucket list before he dies. Will agrees to help him, but will Will be in time?

## READ-ALIKES:

Fipps, Lisa. *Starfish*. Nancy Paulson Books, 2021.

Harrell, Rob. *Wink*. Dial Books, 2020.

Lucas, Chad. *Thanks a Lot, Universe*. Amulet Books, 2021.

Palacio, R.J. *Wonder*. Alfred J. Knopf, 2012.

Sumner, Jamie. *Tune It Out*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020.

**RELATED WEB SITES:**

**PJ Library:** <https://tinyurl.com/5n7chp46>

**Cleveland Clinic:** <https://tinyurl.com/2s3xfhrh>

**Supado.com:** <https://tinyurl.com/5drsxvvt>

**Association of Jewish Libraries:** [https://jewishlibraries.org/sydney\\_taylor\\_book\\_award/](https://jewishlibraries.org/sydney_taylor_book_award/)

**Teaching Books:** <https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=68760>

**REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (May 15, 2020)

*Kirkus Reviews* (March 1, 2020)

*Publisher's Weekly* (April 8, 2020)

**Yee, Lisa. *Maizy Chen's Last Chance*. Random House, 2022**

**SUMMARY:**

This is Maizy Chen's first time visiting Last Chance, Minnesota. Her grandfather is sick, and she needs to help her mom run the family restaurant, The Golden Palace. At first, they plan to only stay a short while, but plans change. Maizy begins to learn more about her family's history in Last Chance and her family's current dynamics.

**QUESTIONS:**

What was your favorite part of the book?

Maizy and her grandfather, or Opa, develop a very close relationship. Who are some of the important elders in your life?

Opa starts looking and feeling better when he begins telling Maizy stories about Lucky. Why do you think that is? And why do these stories brighten him up?

How does Maizy's perceptions of Last Chance change throughout the course of the book?

Racist bullying and discrimination happen multiple times throughout the story. When Maizy talks with Riley about her friends being mean to her (p.81), she says, "Maybe you can tell them to stop" Riley says, "You can ask them to stop, too." Whose responsibility is it to stop bullying? Did you like the ending, if so why, if not, what would you change?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I had to move to Last Chance, I would...

If I were Maizy Chen, I would...

A time when I experienced or witnessed racism was...

The most important person in my life is...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Write a letter to an older family member. Ask them to tell you about your family's history.

Create a list of fortune cookie messages that would make someone's day!

Talk to your family members about important recipes in your family. Create recipe cards for those recipes.

Make some Chinese dishes to share as a group.

Research Paper Sons to learn more about the topic.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7



## **BOOKTRAILER:**

**First Chapter Friday:** [https://youtu.be/b\\_GIES\\_IKzo](https://youtu.be/b_GIES_IKzo)

## **BOOKTALK:**

Imagine having grandparents that you don't really see or know much about? Then one day your mom tells you that you are going to stay with those grandparents and help run a restaurant for a couple of weeks! This happens to Maizy Chen. As soon as Maizy arrives in Last Chance, Minnesota, she realizes that her family is unique. They are the only Asian American family in Last Chance. Maizy's grandfather is sick and slowly begins telling Maizy the story of her ancestors and the way Chinese Americans were treated in the United States.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Getten, Kereen. *If You Read This*. Delacorte Press, 2022  
Keller, Tae. *When You Trap a Tiger*. Random House, 2020  
Kelly, Lynne. *Song for a Whale*. Random House Children's Books, 2019  
Kuzki, Shaw. *Soul Lanterns*. Delacorte Press, 2021  
Respicio, Mae. *Any Day with You*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2020  
Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2018

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Lisa Yee:** <http://www.lisayee.com>  
**Maizy Chen Educator's Guide:** <https://tinyurl.com/4epw8bv9>  
**Museum of Chinese in America -** <https://www.mocanyc.org/>  
**Chinese American Museum -** <https://camla.org/>  
**Gingered Whisk:** <https://thegingeredwhisk.com/category/cuisine/asian/>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Booklist* (February 15, 2022)  
*Kirkus* (December 1, 2021)  
*Publishers Weekly* (December 20, 2021)

**Yogis, Jaimal. *City of Dragons: The Awakening Storm*. Graphix, 2021**

**SUMMARY:**

A few years after Grace's father dies, she moves to Hong Kong with her mother and stepfather. Grace finds fitting in at a new school, in a new country, challenging. When a dragon hatches out of an egg Grace was given, reality and mythology come crashing together. Grace and her new friends are off on an exciting adventure to save the dragon and themselves from unknown, evil forces.

**QUESTIONS:**

If you were bullied, as Grace was in the beginning of the novel, what would you do?  
What would you do with a dragon of your own?  
What do you think about the friendships Grace made with Ramesh, James and Jing?  
What was your favorite part of the book?  
What did you think about the part Grace's stepfather and Biogena played in the book?  
Do you think the illustrations added to the storytelling? Why or why not?

**JOURNAL STARTERS:**

If I had a superpower like Grace...  
If I moved to another country like Grace...  
If I started at a new school like Grace...  
Friendship is...

**ACTIVITIES:**

Is there an anti-bullying or kindness club at your school or public library? Get involved, raise awareness and help make your school and neighborhoods safer, friendlier places.  
Mythology plays a significant role in the *City of Dragons*. Research other Chinese myths to discover other interesting stories.  
Ramesh is really into technology. Find out about GPS, coding, graphic design, green screen imaging or other tech applications.  
Start a graphic novel of your own to tell a fantasy or other type of story with words and illustrations.  
Grace's friends find many pictures, symbols and images of dragons. Draw or paint your own dragon picture.  
Create and decorate a dragon egg with a rock, clay or papier mâché.

**INTEREST LEVELS:** Grades 4-7

## **BOOKTRAILER/BOOKTALK:**

Super Short Recommendations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ik44wF1rpms>

## **BOOKTALK:**

Grace has a lot on her plate, her father died, her mother remarried and then she moves to Hong Kong! Off to a top-rated international school in China goes jet-lagged Grace. During the first week of school, Grace's class takes a trip to Kowloon. Ramesh, a super techie, convinces Grace to ditch the tour and explore on their own. Grace then encounters an old woman who gives her a big egg. The next morning, Grace finds a freshly hatched blue dragon in her toilet! Grace and Ramesh are joined by James and Jing to figure out what's up with the dragon. As they chase down leads, mythology about dragons and a yellow emperor, bring them into a collision course with some mysterious fiends with evil plans for the dragon! You'll want to read *City of Dragons: The Awakening* and check out the graphic novel's illustrations to see if Grace and her friends can stay ahead of danger and foil a sinister scheme.

## **READ-ALIKES:**

Bream, Trevor. *Another Kind*. Harper Valley, 2021  
Kibuishi, Amy Kim. *Realm of the Blue Mist*. Graphix, 2022  
Liu, Marjorie M. *Wingbearer*. Quill Tree Books, 2022  
Santat, Dan. *The Aquanaut*. Graphix, 2022  
Stewart, Martin. *The Wild Huntsboys*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2021  
Young, Ethan. *The Dragon Path*. Graphix, 2021

## **RELATED WEB SITES:**

**Jaimal Yogis:** <https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/authors/jaimal-yogis-880000012902>  
**Vivian Truong:** <https://www.viviantruong.com/comics.html>  
**The Beat Comics Culture Interview:** <https://tinyurl.com/53abmt7p>  
**Bullying:** [pacerkidsagainstbullying.org](https://pacerkidsagainstbullying.org)  
**City of Dragons Author & Illustrator Livestream Event:** <https://tinyurl.com/hd5afy4t>  
**How to Create a Graphic Novel as a Kid:** <https://tinyurl.com/yctrknnz>

## **REVIEWS:**

*Kirkus* (August 15, 2021)  
*Booklist* (September 15, 2021)  
*School Library Journal* (September 3, 2021)

