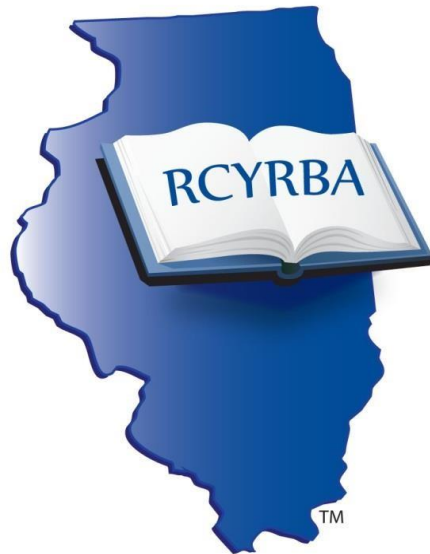


Let's Talk About Books

Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List 2022



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 third 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 2022. 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 2022 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 August 26, 2021, 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 Committee 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!

Allen, Kate. *The Line Tender*. Dutton Children's Books, 2019

SUMMARY:

Lucy Everhart's mom is a marine biologist who works off the coast of Massachusetts, where she collects shark data. When Lucy was seven her mom died while on an expedition. For the next seven years Lucy and her father keep their heads above water, with the help of friends and neighbors. One sunny day in June of her twelfth year, the tide brings in a great white shark. On the heels of this event, another tragedy occurs. To deal with her loss and her father's sadness, Lucy visits an elderly man who is connected with her mom's research on the Great White shark's return to Cape Code.

QUESTIONS:

- Read from pages 6-23. There are several references to Lucy's mom, including a statement that her mom would have been called to the dock to see this shark. This is a bit of foreshadowing, and it indicates something has changed. What is Lucy's mood during these pages and how are the other characters treating her. Find support from these pages.
- On page 31 the chapter ends with Lucy saying the circle begins again. What might she be referring to? What circle?
- This book is loaded with similes. HUNT FOR THEM! When you find a simile in the book, use a post it to mark the page. Write the paragraph or line number to help you find the simile later.
- On page 35, Lucy decides she wants to draw the great white shark. Why?
- On page 126, the author uses the word, 'forage' to describe some of the few things Lucy and her father are doing. Look up the word. Provide the definition and then explain how this particular word gives the reader insight into the characters' emotional state.
- Does Lucy want her postcards to be delivered to someone? Provide proof from the text.
- When does Lucy send postcards? Is there a particular reason she sends postcards at certain times?
- How do you think Lucy benefits from writing these postcards to Fred?
- Read pages 165-168. Lucy cannot gut fish as fast as Sookie. If she isn't really helping him, why is Sookie having Lucy help him? Provide support from the text.
- Page 112 describes the job of a line tender. Now that you have finished the book, why did the author choose that as the title? What characters are connected by a line tender in this book?
- On page 179, Mr. Patterson says that "no man can be an island." Read the paragraphs preceding this comment and tell me what the phrase means.
- The author uses the dream on page 210 to give us some insight into Lucy's emotions and feelings. What does the dream represent for Lucy?
- When you finish the book, determine who are Lucy's family members.

JOURNAL STARTER:

- A mentor that would be helpful to me would be.....

ACTIVITIES:

- Research projects on sharks, marine, biology, Rachel Carson, or other saltwater creatures
- Do some map work on Massachusetts and the train system in Boston: find Cape Cod and make a tourist brochure of things to do there
- Plan a road trip from your home to Cape Cod. What major roads would you take?
- The book opens with some similes using candy. His eyes were as wide as peanut butter cups. Write your own similes using a candy.
- Find the distance from your home to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, using the formula $D = RT$, and assuming you are traveling 60 mph, how many hours would it take to reach Cape Cod.
- Then assume your car gets 30 mpg, how many gallons of gas would it take?
- Then find the current price of gas in your area, how much would it cost to drive?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOKTALK:

Lucy and Fred are inseparable. They are working on a summer project together, a field guide that details wildlife they see throughout the summer. Sookie, a local fisherman, catches a great white shark in his fishing net and Lucy and Fred plan to add it to their field guide before it suddenly vanishes. All this reminds Lucy of her marine biologist mother who died when Lucy was seven. Lucy and her father manage with the help of friends and neighbors until another tragedy rocks the town the summer that Lucy turns 12. This book explores loss, healing, and the connections we create.

BOOK TRAILER:

[The Line Tender by Kate Allen book trailer - Bing video](#)

READ-ALIKES:

Cox, Lynne. *Grayson*. Harvest Books, 2008
Gemeinhart, Dan: *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*. Henry Holt and Company, 2019
Gemeinhart, Dan: *Some Kind of Courage*, Scholastic, 2016
Kelly, Lynne: *Songs for a Whale*. Delacorte Press, 2019
O'Connor, Barbara: *Wish*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2016

RELATED WEB SITES:

- [Kate Allen \(kateallenbooks.com\)](http://kateallenbooks.com)
- [Whale | Species | WWF \(worldwildlife.org\)](http://worldwildlife.org)
- [Whale facts and information \(nationalgeographic.com\)](http://nationalgeographic.com)
- [The Best Whale Moments Captured on Film | Top 5 | BBC Earth - YouTube](#)

- [36 Finalists Blog: Kate Allen | The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (March 1, 2019)

Kirkus Reviews (January 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly (February 18, 2019)

School Library Journal (March 1, 2019)

Athaide, Tina. *Orange for the Sunsets*. Katherine Tegan Books, 2019

SUMMARY:

Orange for the Sunsets is an historical fiction novel about two friends, Asha and Yesofu. Asha is Indian and Yesofu is African, but they have both lived in Uganda, Africa their entire lives. One day, the President of Uganda ordered all Indians to leave the country within 90 days! President Idi Amin promises a better life for Yesofu and all Africans with the expulsion of Indians, but this also means that Asha and her family are forced to leave the only home she's ever known. The narrative is told in the alternating voices of Asha and Yesofu. *Orange for the Sunsets* questions friendships and loyalties and renders courage and determination in an unjust world.

QUESTIONS:

- After President Idi Amin declared that Indians must leave, a great divide between Indian and African classmates was created. What other time(s) in history have leaders or laws caused segregation between groups of people?
- When Yesofu was named captain of the cricket team, it didn't feel like a victory to him. Why not?
- Boy-Girl, Black-Brown, Rich-Poor. Yesofu and Asha are very different. Do differences make it harder to be best friends? How are you different from your friends?
- Why did Asha's father want to get their family out of Uganda, even before they were officially kicked out?
- What did Asha hide from her parents, and why?
- Yesofu felt he was in between the battle of Asha and Akello. He wanted to make it stop without taking sides. "Indian or African. Friends or family. It didn't matter which one he picked. He lost either way." Is it possible for Yesofu to be friends with Asha and Akello?
- Why did Akello get a new TV as a gift?
- Why does Yesofu's mother tell him to stay away from Asha? Do you agree?
- Can people be happy and sad at the same time?
- Yesofu starts to feel bad for the way he treated Asha. Is it ever too late to apologize to a friend?
- President Admin was supposed to help Yesofu and the Africans, not ruin his life. How is the order for Indians to leave the country affecting Yesofu?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- Yesofu struggled with wanting what was best for his family vs what is best for his friend and thousands of other families. A time I sacrificed what was best for me to help others was when...
- If your president or leader did not want you in your home country, would you stay or leave? Why or why not?
- A time I felt I didn't belong was...
- A time my loyalty was tested was...

ACTIVITIES:

- At the beginning of the story, Asha saw Yesofu cheering while people surrounding him shouted “Indians go home.” She must have had many feelings towards her best friend at this moment. Pretend you are Asha and write a letter to your best friend Yesofu.
- Asha and her father played a game called carrom. Follow the YouTube steps to [Draw your own carrom board](#) and learn [the rules](#) to play with a friend.
- Create a map that identifies locations described in this book.
- Draw or create a bracelet for a friend. What does each color symbolize?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOK TRAILER:

["Orange for the Sunsets" written by Tina Athaide Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

90 Days. Less than 3 months. That’s how much time President Idi Amin is giving Indians to leave Uganda, the country many of them call home. 90 days until Yesofu may never see his best friend, Asha again. The president claims kicking the Indians out of the country will lead to a greater future for Africans. They are taking back the country that was theirs to begin with--right? But why doesn’t it feel quite right? Follow the story of two best friends--Yesofu, an African boy, and Asha, an Indian girl--as their worlds are rattled when a new law is put in place. An historical fiction novel that will question who to trust and what it means to be loyal.

READ-ALIKES:

Hiranandani, Veera. *The Night Diary*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2018
Kelkar, Supriya. *Ahimsa*. Tu Books, 2017
Nanji, Shenaaz. *Child of Dandelions*. Front Street, 2008
Venkatraman, Padma. *The Bridge Home*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Welcome - Tina Athaide](#)
- [Finishing Strong & A Conversation with Tina Athaide: Books Between, Episode 73 – MG Book Village](#)
- [Copy-of-Orange-for-the-Sunsets-Digital-Reading-Response.pdf \(bookcentre.ca\)](#)
- [Idi Amin - Death, Uganda & Facts - HISTORY](#)
- [TNR: The 90 Day Ultimatum - YouTube](#)
- [Uganda’s Asian exodus: Rose-tinted memories and current realities | Migration | Al Jazeera](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (March 1, 2019)

Kirkus: (January 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (February 18, 2019)

School Library Journal: (March 1, 2019)

Brosgol, Vera, and Longstreth, Alec. *Be Prepared*. FirstSecondBook, 2018

SUMMARY:

Vera tries to fit in with the other girls from school but does not quite succeed. Mainly because her single, Russian immigrant mother is not able to afford all the things that the other girls get, such as going to summer camp. But this year, Vera is determined to experience camp even if it means going to a Russian Orthodox Camp. Vera is shocked to discover that life at ORRA (Organization of Russian Razvedchiki) camp is vastly different from what she had envisioned. *Be Prepared* follows Vera as she experiences summer camp for the first time and grapples with its daily physical and social challenges. Done in graphic novel format, her struggles are portrayed in a comedic but realistic light. The art is simple but expressive and the story is easy to follow.

QUESTIONS:

- Why is it so difficult for Vera to fit in with her friends from school?
- Why does she want to go to summer camp so badly?
- How does her first day at ORRA camp go?
- What are some of the things she must get used to that are part of daily camp life?
- What did her camp counselor mean when she said, “Friends you buy aren’t as good as friends you get for free?”
- What happens when her mom comes after her first two weeks?
- Why did Vera make fun of the boy who got stung by a bug during the twelve-mile hike?
- Why did Vera feel like a different person after the hike?
- How did Vera and Kira become friends?
- How do you think Vera felt about the news that her family would be moving to London?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- If I attended Camp ORRA, I would enjoy...
- If I attended Camp ORRA, I would not enjoy...
- If my family was moving to London I would ...

ACTIVITIES:

- Get a drawing book and practice drawing animals. Look up facts about animals in your area. Create your own local animal guidebook.
- Make up a scary ghost story and take turns telling your classmates.
- Create ‘badges’ that you can earn by learning about your own cultural heritage.
- Come up with a packing list for things that you would bring if you went to camp for two weeks.
- Find someone in your class that you do not know that well. Spend 20 minutes getting to know them and share what you have in common with the class.
- If you have the ability, visit a Russian Orthodox Church.

- Set up a game of Napadenya.
- Research the [Organization of Russian Youth Scouts](#).

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[Vera Brosgol's Be Prepared -- Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Do you like graphic novels that are both funny and cringey? Have you ever had expectations that did not live up to the reality? Have you ever felt extremely out of your element? This is the case for Vera, a wide-eyed misfit, who attends a Russian Orthodox camp the summer of fifth grade. See what happens when everything that could go wrong, does and how she overcomes those true-life situations.

READ-ALIKES:

Chanani, Nidhi. *Pashmina*. First Second Books, 2017.
Chmakova, Svetlana. *Awkward*. Yen Press, 2015
Hale, Shannon. *Real Friends*. First Second Books, 2017
Jamieson, Victoria. *Roller Girl*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015
LaMotte, Lily and Ann Xu. *Measuring Up*. Harper Alley, 2020
Miller, Kayla. *Camp (A Click Graphic Novel)*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019.
Scrivan, Maria. *Nat Enough*. Graphix, 2020

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Vera Brosgol](#)
- [Sleepaway Camp Tips and Packing List \(thecentsiblelife.com\)](#)
- [Medovik - Honey Layer Cake: Торт "Медовик" - Olga's Flavor Factory \(olgasflavorfactory.com\)](#)
- [The Glory of Camp Stories \(everythingsummercamp.com\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (April 15, 2018)
Horn Book Guide Reviews (Fall, 2018)
Kirkus (March 15, 2018)
Publishers Weekly (April 16, 2018)
School Library Journal (May 1, 2018)

Callendar, Kacen. *King and the Dragonflies*. Scholastic Press, 2020

SUMMARY:

King's beloved older brother is dead. Only he's not dead; he's a dragonfly. One of the last things his older brother, Khalid, said to him was, in essence, to stop hanging out with his best friend lest people think he be gay as well. Meanwhile, King's best friend, Sandy, runs away from an abusive father only to be discovered by King in a tent in his backyard. Instead of turning him in, King agrees to hide Sandy, thus beginning an adventure, an exploration, a quest, and a reckoning. The winner of the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, Callendar's *King and the Dragonflies* is a hope-filled, beautiful expression of friendship and family, of faith and identity, and of love and loss.

QUESTIONS:

- What do you think of Mikey and his friends and the way they confronted King in the beginning of the book? How would you handle such a confrontation?
- Khalid says to King in a dream that he doesn't need other people to know the truth if he has the truth in him. What do you think about this?
- Why did King choose to hide his friend, Sandy? Would you have done the same in his situation? Would you have told the authorities or your/his family? How would the book have changed if King had immediately told someone about Sandy's whereabouts?
- King is offered an opportunity to run away with Sandy. How do you feel about his response? How would you have responded to such an opportunity?

JOURNAL STARTER:

- If my sibling were an animal, I would want them to be...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research Louisiana bayous. Draw or paint the setting. Find similar settings for the book and determine how they might change the novel.
- Make dragonfly art with a spoon and tissue paper, or pipe cleaners.
- Write a different ending for the book.
 - Consider if King had run away.
 - Consider if King had chosen not to hide Sandy.
 - Consider if Khalid didn't come back as a dragonfly or came back as something different.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[King and the Dragonflies by Kacen Callender | Spring 2020 Online Preview - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

How would it feel if a sibling, or, for that matter, any close family member suddenly passed away? What would it be like if you thought that that family member was brought back into your life in another form? In the bayou of their Louisiana town, King truly believes his brother was brought back to life as a dragonfly. It brings him joy. It fills his life with wonder. Of course, as with any high adventure (with plenty of heart), it also quite complicates things along the way.

READ-ALIKES:

Callender, Kacen. *Hurricane Child*. Scholastic, 2019.

Gino, Alex. *Rick*. Scholastic, 2020.

Howard, Greg. *The Whispers*. Puffin Books, 2020.

Little, Kimberly Griffiths. *The Healing Spell*. Scholastic, 2011.

Rhodes, Jewell Parker. *Ninth Ward*. Little, Brown Books, 2012.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Kacen Callender](#)
- [The Horn Book | Five questions for Kacen Callender \(hbook.com\)](#)
- [10 Fascinating Facts About Dragonflies \(thoughtco.com\)](#)
- [bayou | National Geographic Society](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (January 1, 2020)

Kirkus (December 1, 2019)

Publishers Weekly (December 2, 2019)

School Library Journal (January 1, 2020)

Day, Christina. *I Can Make This Promise*. Harper Collins, October 1, 2019.

SUMMARY:

I Can Make This Promise tells the story of 12-year-old Edie, and her exploration into her Native American heritage. Edie's mother is Native American and was adopted by a white couple. Edie has always been aware of her mother's adoption but has never known the details surrounding the adoption. Edie, along with her friend, find a box in Edie's attic that is full of pictures of someone named Edith who looks just like Edie. This finding leads Edie on an exciting and emotional discovery.

QUESTIONS:

- On Edie's first day of kindergarten, what type of questions was she asked by her teacher? How could her teacher have handled her curiosity in a better way?
- What happens with Edie and her good friends? How did it make Edie feel?
- Why is Edie so drawn to the stray dog? Is there a correlation between her compassion for the stray dog and how Edie's biological grandmother was treated?
- What was the motivation behind Edie's parents' silence about Edie's mother's adoption?
- Edie's parents adore her, yet they have kept a big secret from Edie. How did the secret impact Edie?
- After learning how Edie's mother was removed from her biological family, how does Edie feel?
- Edie's parents take Edie on a journey to explore the place where Edie's biological grandmother lived. What happened on the journey and how did it impact Edie's relationship with her parents?
- What is the story behind Edie's name?
- Edith Graham, Edie's biological grandmother, wrote in a letter that she felt lonely because she was the only Native American where she was living. Does Edie ever experience this type of loneliness? What would it be like to never see another person who shares your heritage?
- After learning about the Child Welfare Act of 1978, what are your thoughts? Are you surprised by what was taking place?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- Edie has a fascinating story behind her name. Have you ever wondered about your name? Do you know who chose your name or if there is a special story or meaning behind your name?

ACTIVITIES:

- Research the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. What makes this legislation so important to Native American families and communities?
- I Can Make This Promise* is the title of the book. Edie makes a promise in the book. Think about what makes a promise important. Write an acrostic using the letters of the word promise.
- Investigate different Native American groups that lived in your area. Choose one and create a PowerPoint or slideshow presentation for that group.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOKTRAILER:

[Children's Book Trailer I Can Make This Promise - Bing video](#)

BOOKTALK:

Edie's parents have always been very open about the fact that Edie is half Native American. Her mother was adopted by a Caucasian family. However, nothing is ever shared about her mother's biological family. While working together on a film, Edie and her friends find a box that contains letters and photographs of a woman named Edith Graham----a woman who looks very much like Edie! What's the connection and what will it mean to Edie and her parents?

READ-ALIKES:

Day, Christine. *The Sea in Winter*. Heartdrum, 2021

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People*, Beacon Press, 2019

Edwardson, Debby Dahl. *My Name is Not Easy*. Marshall Cavendish, 20110

McManis, Charlene Willing. *Indian No More*. Tu Books, 2019

Quigley, Dawn. *Apple in the Middle*. North Dakota State University Press, 2018

Sheinkin, Steve. *Undeclared*. Roaring Brook Press, 2017.

Tingle, Tim. *How I Became a Ghost*. RoadRunner Press, 2013

McLaughlin, Timothy P. *Walking on Earth and Touching the Sky: Poetry and Prose by Lakota Youth at Red Cloud Indian School*. Beacon Press, 2019.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [I Can Make This Promise — Christine Day \(bychristineday.com\)](#)
- [I Can Make This Promise---Discussion Guide](#)
- [2021 All Iowa Reads----Discussion Guide](#)
- [Indian Child Welfare Association](#)
- [Indian Child Welfare Act – Cal Indian Legal Services](#)
- [Adoption History: Indian Adoption Project \(uoregon.edu\)](#)
- [Home | Upper Skagit Indian Tribe \(upperskagittribe-nsn.gov\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (September 15, 2019)

Kirkus Reviews (August 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly (July 29, 2019)

Dee, Barbara. *Maybe He Just Likes You*. Aladdin, 2019.

SUMMARY:

Mila is subtly sexually harassed by some boys in her grade. She feels uncomfortable and knows something is wrong about it, but not quite what. This is because the boys are denying it's anything but friendship or they blatantly deny doing it. Her best friend gets angry because the boy she likes is "hitting" on Mila and says to her that she just doesn't get what flirting is. The grown-ups tell her not to make a big deal out of it. But something must change.

QUESTIONS:

- Several kids tried to intervene and help Mila. Who were they? What did they do? And do you think they were successful at helping her?
- What do you think the rules for sexual harassment should be at school? How should a school define sexual harassment? What do you think the consequence should be for harassing someone?
- What is consent? How do you know you have consent? How do you ask for consent? In which situations does consent need to be given?
- How do you think karate helped Mila?
- Do you think the boys understand what they did by the end of the book? How? List each boy's reaction and whether you think they "get it" or not.
- Define personal boundaries. What are your boundaries? If you don't have great boundaries, how do you make them better or get better at enforcing them?
- Do you think Mila's home financial situation has anything to do with how Mila acts or doesn't act in the book?
- Why do you think the boys play this game in the first place?
- What are the signs that you know that Mila is afraid of the boys?
- What does the phrase "boys will be boys" mean? What do you think it means according to this book? Why do people say it? Is it an appropriate thing to say? Why?
- Why do you think some adults don't believe kids when they say they've been sexually harassed?
- What does her friend mean when she says she wouldn't "allow" something like that to happen to her? Does Mila allow the harassment to happen to her?
- Is it tattling to tell on another person's behavior that affects you and makes you upset?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- Is it the responsibility of the girls or the boys in this book to do something to stop the situation? Make a t-chart and list all of Mila's friends on the left side. On the right side, write how Mila and that person's relationship has changed by the end of the book. Write how they reacted to Mila's complaints of sexual harassment. Who do you think should be Mila's best friend?
- Has anyone ever told you about a time they were sexually harassed? How did it make you feel? What were your ideas for supporting them? What did they want to do about it?

ACTIVITIES:

- Look up the actual rules on sexual harassment in your student handbook. What are they? Do they make sense? Would you change or add anything? Write a letter to your principal on your thoughts.
- Here is how RAINN suggests intervening if you see someone you know being harassed: [Show you C.A.R.E.: Four Ways To Keep Your Friends Safe | RAINN](#). Read the CARE steps and make your own plan for helping a friend. Create a pamphlet that students can take to keep in mind how to help.
- Make a list of actions and have students sort the actions into sexual harassment or not. Talk about the hard choices, the things they think they could put in either category or why. Discuss what they should do if each action happened to them. What would they say to a friend if that action happened to the friend? Talk about how sometimes it's hard to say whether something is sexual harassment or not, but if you feel uncomfortable about it, you should tell an adult. Invite a counselor to lead the discussion

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee - Bing video](#)

BOOKTALK:

Any touch that makes you feel uncomfortable is a touch to which you can say no. But Mila doesn't see it so simply. Maybe these subtle touches from boys are slips of the hand? Maybe "he just likes" her? Worst of all---maybe it's a game the boys in her group are playing. At any rate, the adults don't listen, and Mila must find a way to stand up and speak out for herself.

READ-ALIKES:

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999.
Bowling, Dusti. *The Canyon's Edge*. Little, Brown and Company, 2020
Braden, Ann. *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*. Sky Pony Press, 2018
Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *Fighting Words*. Dial Books, 2020
Carter, Caela. *How To Be a Girl in the World*. Quill Tree Books, 2020
Firestone, Carrie. *Dress Coded*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2020
Solter, Sonja. *When You Know What I Know*. Little, Brown, and Company, 2020
Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Swear to Howdy*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2003

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Official Site of Barbara Dee, Author of Middle Grade Novels \(barbaradeebooks.com\)](#)
- [Author Read Aloud: Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee - YouTube](#)

- [Maybe He Just Likes You | Book by Barbara Dee | Official Publisher Page | Simon & Schuster \(simonandschuster.com\)](#)
- [Discussion Questions: Maybe He Just Likes You – twobookwormsblog \(wordpress.com\)](#)
- [Book Review: Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee - Teen Librarian Toolbox](#)
- [Sexual Harassment | Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#)
- [Show you C.A.R.E.: Four Ways to Keep Your Friends Safe | Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#)
- [How to Teach Yourself the Basics of Karate: 12 Steps \(wikihow.com\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (September 15, 2019)

Kirkus Reviews: (July 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly (August 12, 2019)

School Library Journal (September 1, 2019)

Gemeinhart, Dan. *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*. Henry Holt & Co., 2019.

SUMMARY:

Coyote Sunrise is a 12-year-old girl living with her father in a renovated school bus that they have been using to travel the country for five years following the devastating car accident that killed her mother and two sisters. They changed their names and headed out, trying to get as far away from Washington state as possible. Before the accident, Coyote, her mother, and her sisters, created a memory box and buried it in a park near their house, with plans to come back and dig it up together sometime in the future. One day, while talking to her grandmother, Coyote learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being torn down. She is desperate to get home and save their memory box before the park is destroyed. Rodeo, Coyote's dad, has sworn he will never return home, but Coyote is determined to get them home in time, without him realizing what they are doing. Along the way they meet a quirky cast of characters and learn a lot about forgiveness, acceptance, and love.

QUESTIONS:

- If you had the opportunity to change your name, what would you change it to? Why?
- If you were planning an epic road trip, where would you go? Why?
- Coyote LOVES to read. What are your favorite kinds of books to read? Do you have a favorite author? Genre?
- Along their journey, Coyote and her dad meet lots of other travelers, and even give some of them a ride. But before anyone can get on the bus they must answer 3 questions - what is your favorite book, what is your favorite place in the world, and what is your favorite sandwich? How would you answer these questions? Do you think your answers would tell people anything about you?
- In chapter 3 Rodeo says, "It ain't good to need things you can lose." What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree?
- In chapter 8 Coyote introduces us to the term D.E.A.D Dream - a "Drop Everything and Drive" Dream - when you have had "an undeniable hankering for something and it just couldn't wait". Have you ever had something you just HAD to have and were willing to do anything to get it?
- How do you think Coyote and her dad have grown and changed during their 5 years on the road?
- Were you surprised that Coyote and Rodeo did not stay in Washington? Where do you think they will finally settle down?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

Throughout the story Coyote and Rodeo challenge each other to "give me a once-upon-a-time". Tell me your story that starts, "Once upon a time..."

-At the end of the book Coyote and her dad start a new tradition - each night, before they go to sleep, they each tell a memory about their family. Write about a memory of your family.

ACTIVITIES:

- Create a memory box. Include examples of some of your favorite things and decorate the box to reflect you!
- Research converting a bus to an RV. Design and decorate your own bus.
- Map out the RV's route during this novel. Make sure to note the stops.
- Read one (or two) of the books Coyote talks about in the book (i.e. - The One and Only Ivan). Write a recommendation of your favorite.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOK TRAILER:

[The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise book trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Can you imagine spending 5 years traveling the country in a converted school bus - just you, your dad, and a kitten named Ivan? That's life for Ella, ever since the terrible car accident that killed her mom and two sisters. She and her dad change their names (to Coyote and Rodeo) and head out, determined to get as far away as possible from Washington state, and never speak again about the tragedy. Can they outrun their sadness? Will they ever return home? Fans of sad stories, filled with love, friendship, and hope with love this heartfelt story.

READ-ALIKES:

Allen, Kate. *The Line Tender*. Dutton Children's Books, 2019
Bowling, Dusti. *Canyon's Edge*. Little, Brown and Company, 2020
Kelly, Lynne. *Song For a Whale*. Random House Children's Books, 2019
O'Connor, Leslie. *The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle*. HarperCollins Children's Books, 2018
Sloan, Holly Goldberg. *Counting by 7s*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2012.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Dan Gemeinhart - Home](#)
- [The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise - Macmillan](#)
- [Author Fan Face-off #28: Dan Gemeinhart/THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF COYOTE SUNRISE - YouTube](#)
- [Helping Your Child Deal with Death \(for Parents\) - Nemours Kidshealth](#)
- [How to Convert a School Bus into an RV | What Is a Skoolie? \(popularmechanics.com\)](#)

- [Transforming School Buses into Stylish Mobile Homes Is Becoming More Popular \(awesomeinventions.com\)](http://awesomeinventions.com)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (December 15, 2018)

Kirkus: (December 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly: (November 12, 2018)

Heiligman, Deborah. *Torpedoed: The True Story of the World War II Sinking of “The Children’s Ship”*. Godwin Books, 2019.

SUMMARY:

The Germans were bombing London in air raids for eight months straight in 1940 and 1941. Many parents decided London was not a safe place for their children. Some parents sent their children to safety in Canada. In September 1940, 100 children boarded the SS City of Benares. When they were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, a German Submarine torpedoed their ship. Many children died. Others struggled for their lives on rafts awaiting rescue. This is their true story.

QUESTIONS:

- Explain the purpose of the CORB program.
- What luxuries were the children offered on the ship?
- Why was Lifeboat 12 left behind?
- Imagine you are a parent. Would you send your child overseas to safety? Explain why or why not?
- Of the children mentioned in *Torpedoed*, with whom do you most closely identify? Why?
- Find examples of primary source photographs and documents in the book. What is the importance of primary sources in nonfiction?
- The commander of the German U-boat that torpedoed the SS City of Benares was Heinrich Bleichrodt, nicknamed Ajax. He was trying to sink as many enemy ships as he could. He did not know until much later that the ship was filled with children. He was devastated. Based on this one incident, how could you persuade our world leaders not to go to war?
- The children were very limited on what they could take on the ship. If you could sneak one more thing in your luggage, what would it be and why?
- What does CORB stand for?
- What was the name of the ship the children boarded for Canada?
- What piece of clothing made Deborah Heiligman curious enough to start the research for this story?
- What was the name of the girl’s chaperone who ended up on Lifeboat 12 taking care of the boys?
- What was the name of the ship that rescued the survivors of Lifeboat 12?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- My thoughts about leaving home and family for a new country include...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research CORB (Children’s Overseas Reception Board) - create a Google Slide presentation, Video, e-book, or another multimedia project to demonstrate your knowledge.
- Research the Blitzkrieg
- Compare the sinking of The Titanic in 1912 to the Sinking of The Children’s Ship. Create a graphic organizer to show the similarities and differences.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[The Sinking of the 'Children's Ship' - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

What would it be like to leave your family and friends behind and go off to a new country? This is the true adventure of a group of English children whose families thought they were protecting them from the bombing raids during WWII. Many of the children had never been treated so well as they were on the ship the SS City of Benares. They were having the time of their lives, until the fateful night they were awoken by an explosion.

READ-ALIKES:

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *The War that Saved My Life*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015.

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *The War I Finally Won*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017.

Hood, Susan. *Lifeboat 12*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

Hopkinson, Deborah. *Titanic: Voices from the Disaster*. Scholastic Press, 2012

Spradlin, Michael P. *Into the Killing Seas*. Scholastic Press, 2015

Tarshis, Lauren. *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912*. Scholastic, 2010

Tarshis, Lauren. *I Survived the Nazi Invasion, 1944*. Graphix, 2021

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Deborah Heiligman - Author of Torpedoed, Vincent & Theo, and more.](#) (Includes Discussion Guide)
- [More children rescued from torpedoed SS City of Benares \(1940\) - YouTube](#)
- [WW2 British Child Evacuees to Canada | John D Reid website](#)
- [The Children's Invasion - Legion Magazine](#)
- [Blitzkrieg \(Lightning War\) | Holocaust Encyclopedia \(ushmm.org\)](#)
- [Blitzkrieg - Definition & World War II - HISTORY](#)
-

REVIEWS:

Kirkus: (September 1, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (July 29, 2019)

School Library Journal: (December 1, 2019)

Marks, Janae. *From the Desk of Zoe Washington*. HarperCollins, 2020

SUMMARY:

Zoe Washington is a budding pastry chef whose biggest problem is a misunderstanding with her best friend, Trevor. Her goal is to win a spot on the *Kids Bake Challenge*. Her priorities change on her twelfth birthday when she receives a letter from her father, who is in prison, serving a sentence for murder. Slowly the two start up a correspondence and Zoe learns that things may not be as they appear for her father. He has an alibi that was never checked out at the time of his trial. Zoe is determined to find the person who can verify that her father was not at the scene of the murder and enlists the help of her friend Trevor to get the job done.

QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think Grandma was willing to help Zoe and Marcus? What does she do to protect Zoe?
- Why was Zoe mad at Trevor? Why is it important to stand up for your friends?
- Why were Marcus's earlier letters kept from Zoe?
- What is the surprising similarity that Zoe discovers between her and her father?
- What is the Innocence Project?
- What is systemic racism? How did bias play in the storyline of this book?
- What were the consequences of all the lies that Zoe and Trevor told the adults in their lives?
- How had Zoe's mother changed by the end of the book?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- An instance in which I had to work hard to forgive a friend was when...
- The piece of music that means the most to me is _____ because...

ACTIVITIES:

- Ask someone in the legal community to talk to your group about legal representation for those who can't afford it.
- Arrange an interactive baking session for the group.
- Pick a piece of music and listen to it in three ways: Streaming, on CD, on Vinyl. What differences (if any) can you hear?
- Watch an episode of *The Kids Baking Championship*.
- Create a playlist that you'd like to share with one specific adult in your life.
- Do some research about crimes in which someone has been falsely accused. Share the story with your group.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-7

BOOKTRAILERS:

[Children's Book Trailer *From the Desk of Zoe Washington* - YouTube](#)
[From the Desk of Zoe Washington Book Trailer on Vimeo](#)

BOOKTALK:

Zoe is a very focused aspiring baker, whose current goal is to get her parents to sign-off on her application to be a contestant on the Kids Baking Championship. It's her focus and her goal until she received a letter from her father, Marcus, who is serving a prison term for murder. It's a murder he said that he didn't commit, and he lets Zoe know that he has an alibi. Zoe's goal pivots and she is determined to do all that she can to prove her father innocent and get him out of jail. Can she? Pick up *From the Desk of Zoe Washington* and find out!

READ-ALIKES:

Baskin, Nora Raleigh. *Ruby on the Outside*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2015
Bauer, Joan. *Close to Famous*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2011
Connor, Leslie. *All Rise for the Honorable Perry T. Cook*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2016
Dilloway, Margaret. *Summer of a Thousand Pies*. Balzar + Bray, 2019.
Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2018
Patterson, Katherine. *The Same Stuff as Stars*. Clarion Books, 2002
Yang, Kelly. *Front Desk*. Arthur A. Levine Books 2018

RELATED WEB SITES:

- [Janae Marks - Janae Marks - Home](#)
- [Extras and Book Discussion Guide](#)
- [Using FROM THE DESK OF ZOE WASHINGTON to Teach About Criminal Justice](#)
- [Kids Baking Championship | Food Network](#)
- [Innocence Project - Help us put an end to wrongful convictions!](#)
- [Innocence Project Children of Incarcerated Parents | youth.gov](#)
- [Stevie Wonder - Songs, Family & Facts - Biography](#)
- [Pink Martini - Hang on Little Tomato \(Live at SFJAZZ\) - YouTube](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (November 15, 2019)

Kirkus: (October 1, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (November 4, 2019)

Noah, Trevor. *It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime*. Delacorte Press, 2019.

SUMMARY:

Trevor Noah takes readers to apartheid South Africa in this coming-of-age story. The host of the Daily Show tells readers how his birth was a crime when he was born in 1984. His mother is black, and his father is white, which was not only unacceptable, but illegal at the time. Noah talks about growing up in a country that did not accept him with a mother who was strong, supportive, and fearless. When reading *It's Trevor Noah*, not only will the reader learn about apartheid, but they will also laugh at stories from Noah's childhood and teenage years.

QUESTIONS:

- If you lived in South Africa during apartheid, how do you think you would have reacted to those laws?
- How much do you think South Africa has changed since apartheid ending?
- Do you think you would have a good sense of humor like Trevor Noah does if you grew up in his situation? Why or why not?
- If you could ask Trevor Noah one question, what would it be? How do you think he would answer?
- Compare apartheid South Africa to the south in United States during the Civil Rights era. What do you think is similar? What do you think is different?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- A time I felt different from others was...
- As a stand-up comedian, the first joke I would tell would be...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research apartheid. Write a few paragraphs explaining what it meant and who it affected. Are there other famous people that were living in South Africa during apartheid. Why is Trevor Noah's story unique?
- After reading the book, investigate the different cover versions for the adult and young reader's editions. Look at covers from other countries. Why do you think they chose the cover they did? Can you redesign the cover to represent your opinion of the book?
- Create a "Bento Box" that includes items represented in or related to the book.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grade 7-8

BOOK TRAILER:

[Trevor Noah introduces BORN A CRIME - YouTube](#) (References Adult Version)

BOOKTALK:

Comedian and host of The Daily Show, Trevor Noah, talks about his childhood and growing up in South Africa. Did you know that when Trevor was born it was illegal for his parents to be together? And illegal for him to even be born? If you like humor, celebrities, personal stories, and even learning a little about history you should check out this book!

READ-ALIKES:

Acho, Emmanuel. *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Boy*. Henry Holt & Co., 2021

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a boy soldier*. Sarah Crichton Books, 2008.

Jamieson, Victoria. *When Stars are Scattered*. Dial Books, 2020.

Naidoo, Beverly. *The Other Side of Truth*. Harper Collins, 2001.

Ogle, Rex. *Free Lunch*. Norton Young Readers, 2019.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Trevor Noah](#)
- [Trevor Noah's Lesson to Young Readers: It's Freeing to Define Yourself on Your Own Terms | Here & Now \(wbur.org\)](#)
- [Random House Discussion Guide](#)
- [Pan MacMillan Discussion Guide](#)
- [Apartheid In South Africa: Laws, End & Facts - HISTORY](#)
- [Children under apartheid - World's Children's Prize \(worldschildrensprize.org\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (March 1, 2019)

Kirkus (October 1, 2019)

School Library Journal (April 1, 2019)

Ogle, Rex. *Free Lunch*. Norton Young Readers, 2019

SUMMARY:

Rex Ogle shares his heartbreaking experiences during his first semester of sixth grade in his poignant memoir, *Free Lunch*. Rex lives with his mom, stepdad, and little brother. His parents don't have jobs, and the family lives in poverty. Rex's bed is a sleeping bag, and he keeps all his clothes in a cardboard box. Worst of all, his mom and stepdad are emotionally and physically abusive. As Rex says, his mom can't love him when she's always worrying about money. Despite his hardships, Rex manages to stay hopeful and shares some funny moments as well. This is an important book for all middle grade students. If they are going through difficult times themselves, this story gives them hope and lets them know they are not alone. Everyone who reads this book will hopefully learn to see kids for who they are and not what they don't have.

QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever been judged or seen someone judged for their clothes or the color of their skin? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever felt embarrassed about something? How did you deal with that?
- Have you ever had a secret you didn't want anyone to know? What did that feel like?
- Rex says, "And don't say something stupid like, 'love is free.' Cause it's not. It takes money to take care of the people you love." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- When I'm sad or need help, I turn to _____ because _____.
- I- agree/disagree with the statement, "Love is free" because _____.

ACTIVITIES:

- Draw a picture of Rex's room. If you could help Rex decorate his room, what would you put on the walls? What would he like?
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, most kids were learning from home at some point. How do you think that impacts kids who depend on free lunch or free breakfast at school? Research/brainstorm some ways you can help people with food insecurity. Can you donate food to a local food pantry? Volunteer at a shelter? Put together a presentation for your class.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 7-8

BOOKTRAILERS:

[Book Trailer for Free Lunch by Rex Ogle - YouTube](#)

[Free Lunch by Rex Ogle Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Sometimes life doesn't feel fair. Rex is so embarrassed during his first semester of sixth grade when his mom signs him up for the free lunch program at school. Every day he must go through the lunch line and tell the cafeteria lady he gets free lunch. What's worse, the cafeteria lady is old, practically deaf, and forgetful. Rex must shout his shameful situation to her every day. Things get worse when he can't join the football team because his family can't afford it. To top things off, he has the painful secret that he is being abused at home. Despite all these obstacles, Rex learns to be patient and hopeful. He is proof that you are not alone, and things can get better.

READ-ALIKES:

Applegate, Katherine. *Crenshaw*. Feiwel & Friends, 2015

Arce, Julissa. *Someone Like Me: How One Undocumented Girl Fought for her American Dream*. Little, Brown and Company, 2018

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. *Fighting Words*. Dial Books, 2020

Jacobson, Jennifer Richard. *Paper Things*. Candlewick Press, 2015

Nielson, Susin. *No Fixed Address*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2018

Williams, Alicia. *Genesis Begins Again*. Atheneum, 2019

RELATED WEB SITES:

[Rex Ogle](#)

[2020 Nonfiction Award Winner: An Interview with Rex Ogle on Free Lunch – The Hub \(ala.org\)](#)

[End Child Hunger in America | No Kid Hungry](#)

[Domestic Violence Support | The National Domestic Violence Hotline \(thehotline.org\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Kirkus: (February 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (July 22, 2019)

Oppel, Kenneth. *Inkling*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.

SUMMARY:

Ethan Rylance is in sixth grade and has lost his mother. Ethan and his father and sister, Sarah are trying to cope with her death. Ethan's Dad is a graphic novel artist who has hit wall and when an ink blot from his sketchbook comes to life everything changes. The ink blot (named Inkling!) takes on the tone of every word or pictures it consumes. Ethan's biggest challenge is a school group project to create a graphic novel for which it is assumed (based on his father's past success) that he will be the star illustrator. Ethan is not so confident.

QUESTIONS:

- How are graphic novels different from comic books?
- "*Inkling*" is not a graphic novel, what is the difference between an illustrated chapter book and a graphic novel?
- Do you think Ethan and his dad were having a communication problem? If so, how would you fix this problem?
- What happened with Inkling got into a book?
- What part did Vika and her father play in the story?
- What helped Ethan's drawing improve?
- What did Ethan and his father find in the blue plastic bin?
- How did Ethan's father change during the book? How did the changes happen?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- If I couldn't draw and had to draw for a school project, I would...
- If I were Ethan and I wanted my father to teach me something, I would have...

ACTIVITIES:

- Start your own graphic novel and create three or four panels.
- Learn more about Down Syndrome.
- Pick a few graphic novels and compare the different illustrations.
- Start a book club at your school or in class just with graphic novels. Keep a list of your favorites.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOKTRAILER:

[Inkling by Kenneth Oppel - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Ethan is having a lot of trouble in his life right now. He's promised to do all the drawings for his group project at school and he feels like he doesn't know how to draw. His Dad said he was going to help, but his dad seems to be very down lately, what with writer's block, the death of Ethan's mother and trying to care for Ethan's special needs sister. Then, along comes Inkling to help with all the problems in Ethan's life, but does he make more problems? You will have to read this funny adventure story to find out.

READ-ALIKES:

Graff, Lisa. *Far Away*. Philomel Books, 2019

Hays, Tommy. *What I Came to Tell You*. Egmont USA, 2013

Keller, Tae. *When you Trap a Tiger*. Random House, 2020.

MacLachlan, Patricia. *Waiting for the Magic*. Atheneum Books, 2011.

RELATED WEB SITES:

- [Kenneth Oppel](#)
- [About — Sydney Smith \(sydneydraws.ca\)](#)
- [Inkling-Classroom-Ideas.pdf \(walkerbooks.com.au\)](#)
- [INKLING read aloud by Kenneth Oppel - YouTube](#)
- [What is Down Syndrome? | National Down Syndrome Society \(ndss.org\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Publishers Weekly (October 1, 2018)

School Library Journal (September 1, 2018)

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Jewell Parker Rhodes. Ghost Boys. Little, Brown and Company, 2018

SUMMARY:

“Only the living can make the world better. Live and make it better.”

In Chicago, a white police officer shoots and kills black 12-year-old Jerome, mistaking a toy gun the child is playing with for a real one. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that’s been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing. Jerome goes on to meet another ghost, Emmett Till, a black boy murdered in 1955. Till shows Jerome that hundreds of other “ghost boys” just like them are left to roam the streets of America. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey toward recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father’s actions. As Jerome comes to terms with the reality of his death and the unjust circumstances that led up to it, he experiences some powerful revelations. Jerome calls on the living, like the police officer’s young daughter, to see the impacts of racism and change the world, so stories like his do not keep happening.

QUESTIONS:

- What do you think about how the book began? Did it surprise you to learn that this book is narrated by a character who dies on the first page?
- What morning ritual does Jerome have with his mother? How do you think this ritual makes them feel? Do you have special rituals with any of your loved ones?
- What do you think about Jerome’s decision not to share with his family that he is being bullied at school?
- Jerome wonders, “...I can’t move on. I don’t know how. Or where to move on to. How am I supposed to know how to be dead?” Why do you think Jerome is stuck right now?
- Sarah is the only living person who can see Jerome. What do you think this means?
- How has Jerome’s death affected Officer Moore’s family?
- What did you think of the army of ghost boys?
- Why does Emmett tell Jerome that it matters that Sarah can see him?
- How do you think Jerome is supposed to help Sarah?
- Why does Jerome consider Sarah “forever changed” after she watches the video?
- What is the verdict in the preliminary hearing? How do you feel about this?
- What does Carlos have to tell Jerome’s grandma? How do you imagine he is feeling?
- Why do you think Emmett waited for Jerome to be “ready” to bear witness to the events that ended his life?
- According to Emmett, why do Black boys get killed? What do you think about his explanation?
- What do you think is the “one more thing” that Jerome has to do before he is gone?
- Why does the narrator sign the last words “Ghost boy” and not Jerome? What does this say about his character?
- At the end of the book, Jerome realizes that he and the other ghost boys can communicate with certain people so they can “bear witness” to the ghost boys’ stories. What does this mean? How does bearing witness tie into the statement, “Only the living can make the world better”?
- After reading this novel, how can you make the world better?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- I can make this world better by...
- If Jerome showed up in MY room, I would want to tell him...

ACTIVITIES:

- Once Jerome is a ghost, he sees and learns things about his city that he never knew when he was alive. Create a T-chart that contrasts what Jerome sees and experiences called Alive vs. Dead.
- Jerome's' grandma asks him to tell her three good things about his life. This helps Jerome stay focused on the positive. Use the "Three Good Things" worksheet to brainstorm the positive things in your own life.
- Scan through the text, and select three meaningful quotes from the story, writing a paragraph describing what each quote means, and how it relates to the themes of the novel.
- Create a timeline of some of the major events of the Civil Rights Movement. Where does Emmett Till fit into this timeline? Did his death influence any of the events that took place in the Civil Rights Movement? If so, which ones? *Brown vs. Board of Education, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Little Rock, Sit-Ins, Freedom Riders, Birmingham Civil Rights March, Letter from Birmingham Jail, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, "I Have a Dream" Speech, Selma*
- Divide students by some random piece of clothing. For example, all students wearing tennis shoes move to the left side of the room. All students wearing any other type of shoes move to the right side of the room. Reward one group only with a token prize such as a piece of candy. Discuss how the students from each group felt. Did types of shoes really matter? How did it feel to be included or excluded?
- Create a simple T-Chart on a piece of paper. Label one side "Insider" and the other side "Outsider." Brainstorm and list on the T-Chart times you felt like you were included in a group, an insider. Next, list times when you felt like you were excluded, an outsider.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5 - 7

BOOKTRAILER:

[Ghost Boys book trailer 360p - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Read the beginning passage of the book starting with "How small I look." through "I hit snowy ground". Jerome was a twelve-year-old boy with a toy gun who was shot by a police officer that didn't know it was a toy. He's a ghost now who can see and comprehend the consequences of that police shooting. He sees what his family goes through and how his impacts his friend Carlos, who owned the toy gun. He also interacts with two very different beings. The first is the ghost of Emmett Till, the Chicago youth who was killed in Mississippi for interacting with a white woman in 1955. He also has the ability to talk with Sarah, the daughter of the police officer who shot him. Between reliving Emmett's experience and

walking with Sarah as she struggles with her father's actions, Jerome shows us the impact of gun violence in modern American history.

READ-ALIKES:

Brown, India Hill. *The Forgotten Girl*. Scholastic Press, 2019
Draper, Sharon. *Blended*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2018.
Magoon, Kekla. *The Rock and the River*. Alladin, 2009
Tingle, Tim. *How I Became a Ghost*. Road Runner Press, 2013
Williams, Alicia D. *Genesis Begins Again*. Atheneum, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Jewell Parker Rhodes](#)
- [Teaching Guides - Children's Fiction by Jewell Parker Rhodes](#)
- [Reading with Relevance---Ghost Boys](#)
- [Emmett Till - Death, Movie & Funeral - Biography](#)
- [Race & Ethnicity | Learning for Justice](#)
- [Race and Racism Teaching Resources for Middle and High School Students \(kuder.com\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (February 1, 2018)
Kirkus: (February 15, 2018)
Publishers Weekly: (February 19, 2018)
School Library Journal: January 1, 2018)

Schwab, Victoria. *City of Ghosts*. Scholastic, 2018

SUMMARY:

The first title in a series of three, is about Cassidy Blake, who has had a near death drowning experience that now allows her to be able to leave the living and visit the dead. She enters the world of spirits when she crosses the veil. She doesn't understand how and why she's able to do this but navigates the veil that separates the living and the dead with her best friend, Jacob, who is a ghost. Her parents decide to host a TV show about the most haunted places in the world and head to Edinburgh, Scotland to explore graveyards and castles. Cassidy isn't thrilled with the move, but soon meets another girl, Lara Chowdhury, who has the same "gift" that she has. When the evil "Raven in Red" targets Cassidy, the three friends are in for the adventure of a lifetime.

QUESTIONS:

- Using details from the text, describe the relationship between Jacob and Cassidy or Cassidy and Lara. What importance do Cassidy's parents have in this story?
- Why do you think Jacob keeps secrets from Cass? Do you think he has more that she's unaware of yet?
- Lara seems to know much more about navigating through the veil. Why do you think she's aware of things that Cass hasn't figured out yet?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- If you could go beyond the veil, what would you explore and who would you hope to find?
- Choose a character and write a letter to a friend in their voice explaining the veil and what can be found there.

ACTIVITIES:

- Research the job that Cass's parents have and what it would be like to visit and learn about haunted places.
- Draw a picture of what you see when you read about the castles and areas in Scotland that the children explore.
- Write a ghost story and illustrate it.
- Write an alternate ending to the book with a different outcome.
- Look at a map of Scotland and try to identify where activities in the novel take place.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[City of Ghosts by Victoria Schwab | Official Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Imagine a world where your parents write about ghosts, and you find that you can communicate with them. You nearly drown and wake up with a ghost best friend and can reach beyond this life and visit with other ghosts.

Will Cassidy’s parents find out about her “gift?” Will she encounter evil ghosts when she goes beyond the veil? Read *City of Ghosts* to find out what happens to Cassidy.

READ-ALIKES:

Schwab, Victoria. *Tunnel of Bones*. Scholastic, 2019

Schwab, Victoria. *Bridge of Souls*. Scholastic, 2021

Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener*. Amulet Books, 2014

Stroud, Jonathan. *The Screaming Staircase*, Disney, Hyperion, 2013

Series:

Holt, Catherine. *Midnight Reynolds*. Albert Whitman

Noel, Alyson. *Riley Bloom*. Square Fish

Oh, Ellen. *Spirit Hunters*. Harper

Poblocki, Dan. *Shadow House*. Scholastic

Smibert, Angie. *Ghosts of Ordinary Objects*. Boyds Mill Press

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Victoria | V.E. Schwab \(veschwab.com\)](#)
- [How To Hunt Ghosts | Learn How to Investigate Paranormal Occurrences \(ghostsandgravestones.com\)](#)
- [What It's Like to Be a Ghost Hunter \(afar.com\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (June 1, 2018)

Kirkus (July 1, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (October 29, 2018)

School Library Journal (February 1, 2019)

Sloan, Holly Goldberg, and Wolitzer, Meg. *To Night Owl from Dogfish*. Puffin Books, 2020

SUMMARY:

Bett Devlin and Avery Bloom are as different as night and day, but what they have in common is that both are being raised by single, gay dads. When their dads fall in love, they want the girls to meet and spend some time together in hopes that eventually, they will be like sisters. The girls get off to a rough start and the dads' relationship hits the rocks. As the girls develop a best friend relationship, they start to email and write letters back and forth with their nicknames, Night Owl and Dogfish. Will their friendship be enough to keep their dads together? Will their adventures and plotting and scheming give them both the family they have always wanted?

QUESTIONS:

- How are Bett and Avery alike and different? What qualities end up making them best friends?
- Why were Bett and Avery scheming and planning throughout their time at camp?
- How does Avery Bloom's mom enter the story and how does it affect the plot?
- Describe the friendship that is built and how it is different from many of the relationships between girls at that age?
- Other than Brett and Avery, pick a character that appeals to you. Why do you look forward to his/her story and how does it change the outcome of what is happening throughout?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- Pair the students up (teacher choice, blind draw, student choice, etc.) and have them start a journaling assignment each day with this "friend". They will come up with nicknames and create a storyline of their own between the two of them. This can be sustained for as long as seems feasible or effective.
- Students can write their own journal about friendships, family, etc. Have them do 10 minutes free writing each day for a week or two, talking about their life and what is happening in their family and friendships.

ACTIVITIES:

- Research summer camps throughout the United States. Create a brochure for your favorite.
- Learn more about Broadway Shows. Try staging some auditions.
- Create a "Summer Camp Survival Guide" that will help keep prospective campers from getting into trouble.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOK TRAILER:

[TO NIGHT OWL FROM DOGFISH | OFFICIAL BOOK TRAILER - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Imagine you are sent to camp far away from home and you are meeting someone with whom your parent wants you to become friends. You don't want to leave the normal chaos of your life in the city to go out into nature and make a new friend. But when you get there, your life is turned upside down with one adventure after another. Trouble is around every corner, and you and your new "best" friend can't help but be right in the middle of it all. Then the saddest news arrives, your dads have split up and you probably won't see each other again. So, the secret emailing, phone calls, and letters begin. The scheming and plotting to get together and become a real family seem like it may work. Can they possibly pull off the biggest scam of their lives???

READ-ALIKES:

Martin, Ann M. and Danziger, Paula. *PS Longer Letter Later*. Scholastic, 1999.
Murphy, Julie. *Dear Sweet Pea*. Balzer + Bray, 2019
Payne, C. C. *The Thing About Leftovers*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2016
Stead, Rebecca. *The List of Things That Will Not Change*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2020.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Holly Goldberg Sloan | Author of Young Adult Fiction](#)
- [Meg Wolitzer](#)
- [Random House Study Guide](#)
- [Blog Tour//Camp Activities Inspired by To Night Owl from Dogfish – Book Loaner \(wordpress.com\)](#)
- [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students - Welcoming Schools](#)
- [Sleepaway Camp Survival Guide | 🌸For Girls🌸 - Bing video](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (February 15, 2019)
Horn Book (June 25, 2019)
Publishers Weekly (October 29, 2018)
School Library Journal (February 1, 2019)

Steinkeller, Emma. The Okay Witch. Aladdin, 2019.

SUMMARY:

Moth is a normal thirteen-year-old girl. She loves all things witchy, and she finds out they are not just the stuff of legends. One day, when bullies tease her, she unintentionally finds out she has powers, too. Moth learns about the secret past of her hometown Founder's Bluff; Massachusetts and that the history isn't all that it seems. Moth is thrown into a world with talking cats, magic and a town history that is not one to be proud of. Find out how Moth unravels the history of her family's past and honors her family's legacy.

QUESTIONS:

- What happened at the Founder's Bluff Witch Hunt?
- What did Moth accidentally do when she used her powers for the first time?
- What happens when Moth reads her mom's diary?
- Why does Charlie want to join the school play?
- How does Moth learn more spells?
- How are witches perceived in the school play?
- What does Moth learn about her mom at the museum?
- What happens at the school play to make Moth think she is dangerous?
- What does Moth do to help her believe in herself?
- What choice does Moth have to make in Hecate?
- What do Moth Charlie and Mr. Laslo have to do to save Moth's Mom?
- How does Moth make her own way as a witch?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- If I fell into an enchanted diary, my make-believe world would look like...
- To honor my family history, I would...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research the history of witches, including the Salem Witch Trials.
- Write and draw your own version of a scene from this book.
- Make a list of powers that have been passed down through members of your family.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[The Okay Witch - Graphic Novel Review and Fan Art - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Thirteen-year-old Moth doesn't have a lot of friends and all the family she has ever known is her mom. Moth loves all things witchy. She grew up in Founder's Bluff Massachusetts a small town that has a checkered past involving witches. One day at school, a bully teases Moth and strange things happen. Moth finds out she is a witch and meets a talking cat. Moth learns that the witches that were forced out of Founder's Bluff are her ancestors. Moth goes on a journey of self-discovery, family history and explores her powers. This book is a fantasy graphic novel that is fast paced plot full of humor and adventure.

READ-ALIKES:

Escabasse, Sophie. *The Witches of Brooklyn*. Rh Graphic, 2020
Gudsnuk, Kristen. *Making Friends*. Graphix, 2018.
Hoffman, Alice. *Nightbird*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2015.
Leyh, Kat. *Snapdragon*. First Second, 2020.
Muro, Jennifer. *Primer* DC Comics, 2020
Ostertag, Molly. *The Witch Boy*. Graphix, 2017.
Steinkellner, Emma. *The Okay Witch and the Hungry Shadow*. Alladin, 2021

RELATED WEB SITES:

- [Emma Steinkellner](#)
- [Discussion Questions for the Okay Witch — Book Club for Kids](#)
- [Salem Witch Trials | History, Summary, Location, Causes, Victims, & Facts | Britannica](#)
- [Create Comics Online | Comix Maker | Comic Strips | Comic Generator \(makebeliefscomix.com\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (July 1, 2019)
Kirkus (June 1, 2019)
Publishers Weekly (September 2, 2019)
School Library Journal (September 1, 2019)

Stone, Nic. *Clean Getaway*. Penguin Random House, 2020

SUMMARY:

William “Scoob” Lamar is suspended from school and so his spring break trip to St. Simon’s has been cancelled. When his beloved G’ma invites him to accompany her on a road trip in her brand-new Winnebago, he doesn’t need to think twice about the offer. He’s so ready to go that he grabs suitcase that had been readied for spring break, leaves his father a note and leaves his phone behind. Neither Scoob nor G’ma is very interested in discussing this trip! What starts out as an adventure becomes a journey of life lessons for Scoob.

QUESTIONS:

- The book opens with an introductory quote by Bryan Stevenson: “Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done.” How does this apply to the characters in this book?
- Why was G’ma so insistent on taking the road trip?
- Why do you think G’ma was changing the license plate on the Winnebago?
- Chapter 4 is titled, ‘Life Pollution,’ what do you think that means?
- Why did Scoob think being like ‘James Robert Lamar Senior (G’pops) was a good thing?
- What do you think about the ‘*Green Book*?’ What are your thoughts about why it was needed?
- What were the treasures in G’ma’s treasure box?
- Several important historical figures and locations are introduced in *Clean Getaway*. Which did you find surprising or the most interesting?
- What is your opinion of G’ma? Is she a good person? How would you describe her character | characteristics?
- How do your grandparents compare to G’ma?
- Why do you think Nic Stone did not use Technology to navigate the road trip?

JOURNAL STARTER:

-If I were going on a road trip, the essential things I would need to pack would be...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research the Green Book.
- Create a map of the trip taken by G’ma and Scoob.
- Select an important person, place or event from the book and explain their significance to your group.
- Norman Rockwell’s painting: [The Problem We All Live With](#); depicts an image of Ruby Bridges going to school. What do you see? How does it make you feel?
- Find and read an article about Doris Payne. Discuss your reaction to Doris Payne’s actions. How does Nic Stone create Doris’ story through G’ma?

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-6

BOOKTRAILER:

[Official Book Trailer from Random House](#)

BOOKTALK:

You are about to meet William ‘Scoob’ Lamar and his G’ma. Scoob has landed himself in trouble at school and is unable to go on the school spring break trip. G’ma rolls up in her brand-new Winnebago and offers to take ‘Scoob’ on a Road Trip. Things start off great; but then G’ma starts acting strange. She is repeatedly calling Scoob the wrong name, she gets annoyed with a waitress, and they leave a restaurant... after they eat... without paying. She is also being super strange about the use of her cell phone and won’t let Scoob call his dad. Why did they need to take this road trip and follow the rules of the Green Book? What is happening with G’ma? Read to find out.

READ-ALIKES:

Acampora, Paul. *How To Avoid Extinction*. Scholastic Press, 2016
Brown, India Hill. *The Forgotten Girl*. Scholastic Press, 2019
Frazier, Sundee. *The Other Half of My Heart*. Delacorte Press, 2010
Hautman, Pete. *Otherwood*. Candlewick Press, 2018
Magoon, Kekla. *The Season of Styx Malone*, Wendy Lamb Books, 2018

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Nic Stone](#)
- [Random House Discussion Guide](#)
- [Doris Payne Biography - Facts, Childhood, Family Life & Crimes of Jewel Thief \(thefamouspeople.com\)](#)
- [History of the Green Book](#)
- [National African American Historical Landmarks by State](#)
- [Sundown Towns](#)
- [Emmet Till](#)
- [Ruby Bridges | National Women's History Museum \(womenshistory.org\)](#)
- [The Problem We All Live With](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (October 15, 2019)
Publishers Weekly: (October 21, 2019)
School Library Journal: (December 1, 2019)

Takei, George. *They Called Us Enemy*. Top Shelf Productions, 2019.

SUMMARY:

Actor and activist George Takei shares childhood memories in this graphic novel memoir telling of the years he and his family spent in the Japanese internment camps during WWII. George Takei joins co-writers Justin Eisinger & Steven Scott in providing broader historical context and implications of the historical events as seen through George's young eyes. Artist Harmony Becker's style focuses on the family unit and their shared experiences.

QUESTIONS:

- What was the reasoning behind placing people in internment camps?
- Takei's mother smuggled in a sewing machine to make clothes for her children, even though it was forbidden. What items would you bring?
- How do you think being incarcerated at a young age shapes identity or affects someone as an adult?
- What was the most powerful moment or scene from the book?
- How does Takei's story connect with issues going on in the United States Today?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- I would define an American as...
- I believe what makes a home is...
- Loyalty is...

ACTIVITIES:

- Research and report on the contributions of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans to the culture of the United States.
- Create a collage of images of the Japanese internment camps and the people who lived there.
- Virtually tour one of the locations of the internment camps: [Digital Resources & Archives - Heart Mountain Relocation Center](#)
- Pick a local issue that you believe needs attention and determine if there is an action your group can take to change it.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 5 - 8

BOOK TRAILER:

[George Takei "They Called Us Enemy" - One morning in Los Angeles - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

My father had roused my brother and I early one morning. We were to wait in the living room while my father finished packing. I couldn't understand why. Minutes later, my younger brother and I saw two soldiers walking up our driveway with shiny bayonets attached. "Bam, Bam, Bam, Bam, Bam" The pounding on the door trembled through the house and terrified me. We were ordered out of the house. They granted only 10 more minutes for us to pack our lives. Father said we were going on vacation. We were being forced to move far away from the life we knew.

That scene was burned into George Takei's memory as well as the experience of his family as they were relocated to an internment camp during World War II. A firsthand recounting of a very sad chapter of American history.

READ-ALIKES:

Atkins, Laura and Yogi, Stan. *Fred Korematsu Speaks Up*. Heyday, 2016.

Denenberg, Barry. *The Journal of Ben Uchida: Citizen 13559, Mirror Lake Internment Camp*. Scholastic, 1999

Goldsmith, Connie. *Kiyo Sato: from a WWII Japanese internment camp to a life of service*. Twenty-First Century Books, 2020

Hughes, Kiku. *Displacement*. First Second, 2020.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Weedflower*. Atheneum, 2006

Mazer, Harry. *A Boy No More*. Aladdin Historical Fiction, 2006

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*. Lee & Low, 1993

Oppenheim, Joann, Becker, Snowden, et. al. *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration During World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference*. Scholastic Non-fiction. 2006

Wolff, Virginia. *Bat 6*. Scholastic, 1998

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [George Takei](#)
- [Japanese American National Museum-Teachers Guide](#)
- [Discussion guide to 'They Called Us Enemy' by George Takei](#)
- [Children of the Camps | INTERNMENT HISTORY \(pbs.org\)](#)
- [Home - Korematsu Institute](#)
- [National Historic Landmark - Heart Mountain WWII Japanese American](#)
- [Japanese American Internment | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

REVIEWS:

Kirkus: (August 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (July 8, 2019)

Warga, Jasmine. *Other Words for Home*. Balzer + Bray, 2019

SUMMARY:

As conflict and violence surge in their hometown in Syria, Jude and her mother are sent to live in Cincinnati with relatives, leaving her beloved older brother, Issa, and her father behind. Jude thought she had America all figured out based on the American movies she and her brother used to watch together. But everything in her new home is not what she expected. Jude grapples with the feelings of being different and being brave. For someone whose heart lies in two places, Jude wonders if she will ever feel whole again. Through her new friendships, she tries out for her school's musical, and finds a way to belong to both places at once.

QUESTIONS:

- Would you have been ready to leave Syria when Jude and her mother do?
- Mama says, "Americans don't have much history / so they like things they think are old." Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
- Jude notices that Americans love labels, so they know what to expect. Do you think this is true?
- How does Sarah change throughout the story?
- Do you think Jude is brave?
- Layla says, "There is always something to be afraid of." Is that true?
- Miles asks Jude, "So what do you think it would feel like to step on the moon?" How would you answer his question?

JOURNAL STARTERS:

- The movie I've seen that best depicts America is...
- If I were Issa, I would have...
- Jude embraces her Middle Eastern identity by...
- The book's theme of belonging is demonstrated through...
- Home means...

ACTIVITIES:

- Learn more about the conflict in Syria. There are websites listed in the back of the book to get you started.
- There are several Arabic proverbs throughout the book including "The offspring of ducks float." Make a list of other proverbs that you know and are meaningful to you.
- Sarah and Aunt Michelle are both envious of Jude being able to speak Arabic and English. What words do you know from another language? Make a glossary of the words and their meanings.
- Aunt Michelle loves to cook and find recipes online. Research a recipe online that you would like to make and prepare it for your group.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 4-7

BOOKTRAILER:

[Other Words for Home Book Trailer - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

“I’m learning how to be sad and happy at the same time.” Jude and her mother must escape violence in their home country, Syria. They are sent to Cincinnati to live with relatives. Jude thought she knew what America was all about from the movies she and her brother used to watch together. But everything is very different from what she thought she knew. How will Jude adjust to her new life?

READ-ALIKES:

Gratz, Alan. *Refugee*. Scholastic Press, 2017

Lai, Remy. *Pie in the Sky*. Henry Holt and Company, 2019

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *The Red Pencil*. Little, Brown and Company, 2014

Rauf, Onjali. *The Boy at the Back of the Class*. Delacorte, 2019

Senzai, N.H. *Escape from Aleppo*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Jasmine Warga](#)
- [Discussion Guide for Other Words from Home](#)
- [Infographic-Syrian Refugees in the United States](#)
- [Top 20 Most Popular Syrian Foods - Top Foods in Syria \(chefspencil.com\)](#)
- [A Brief History of the Veil in Islam | Facing History and Ourselves](#)
- [Beauty and The Beast \(1991\) | Animation Movies in English - The Best Moments - YouTube](#)

REVIEWS:

Booklist: (April 15, 2019)

Kirkus Reviews: (March 15, 2019)

Publishers Weekly: (February 25, 2019)

School Library Journal (April 1, 2019)

Williams, Alicia D. *Genesis Begins Again*. Atheneum, 2019

SUMMARY:

Thirteen-year-old Genesis has some serious struggles. Her family got kicked out of their apartment, again. Her dad has a gambling problem, and maybe even a drinking problem. And worst of all, she hates herself, and how dark her skin is compared to other members of her family. When Genesis begins to engage in some self-destructive behaviors, she must learn to focus on what she does like about herself.

QUESTIONS:

- What embarrassing event happens in the very first chapter when Genesis brings a group of friends' home after school?
- What does Genesis do with household items like baking soda, milk, lemon juice, and yogurt?
- What hurtful thing does Genesis's father always tell her about the way she looks?
- What important lesson does Genesis learn from strong role models like Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday?
- Who wins the grand prize at the talent show?

JOURNAL STARTER:

- Genesis learns to love herself through her musical talents. The ability that I have that I love the most is...

ACTIVITIES:

- Listen to some of the musicians mentioned in the book and reflect on what their strengths are. Did you enjoy listening to their music? Why or why not?
- Instead of making a list of reasons why you dislike yourself like Genesis did originally, make a list of reasons why you love yourself!
- Genesis is pleasantly surprised to see all the books in her new school's library that she can check out. Make a list of the books you believe every middle school library should include? Explain why.

INTEREST LEVELS: Grades 6-8

BOOKTRAILER:

[Genesis Begins Again by Alicia D. Williams - YouTube](#)

BOOKTALK:

Genesis is mortified when she comes home from school to discover that her family has been kicked out of their apartment... again. It's sure hard to make friends when she's constantly switching schools. Even though Genesis keeps a list of reasons why she doesn't like herself, she's about to discover that there is a whole lot more important reason why she should.

READ-ALIKES:

Charles, Tami. *Like Vanessa*. Charlesbridge, 2018.

Colbert, Brandy. *The Only Black Girls in Town*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Flake, Sharon. *The Skin I'm In*. Hyperion Books for Children, 1998

Lockington, Mariama J. *For Black Girls Like Me*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.

Ramee, Lisa Moore. *A Good Kind of Trouble*. Balzer + Bray, 2015.

RELATED WEBSITES:

- [Writer | Author Alicia D. Williams \(aliciadwilliams.com\)](http://aliciadwilliams.com)
- [Genesis Begins Again | Book by Alicia D. Williams | Official Publisher Page | Simon & Schuster \(simonandschuster.net\)](http://simonandschuster.net)
- [Colorism - National Coalition of Christians and Jews](http://colorism.org)
- [Music | Ella Fitzgerald](http://ella Fitzgerald.com)
- [Billie Holiday Music | The Official Website of Billie Holiday](http://billieholiday.com)
- [Etta James | Biography & History | AllMusic](http://AllMusic.com)

REVIEWS:

Booklist (December 15, 2018)

Kirkus (November 15, 2018)

Publishers Weekly (December 10, 2018)

School Library Journal (February 1, 2019)