

# Middle-Grade Books About Families (Big and Small)

The best middle-grade books about families warm our hearts. But then again, isn't nearly every book a little bit about families? I thought so too, so for this list of middle-grade books about families, I chose books with family as one of the central themes. This means that whether the families in this story are small (parent and child) or large (parents and multiple children), a major plot point is how the family unit deals with a given challenge. You'll find happy families, worried families, dysfunctional families, and supportive families in various shapes and sizes.

## Counting Thyme



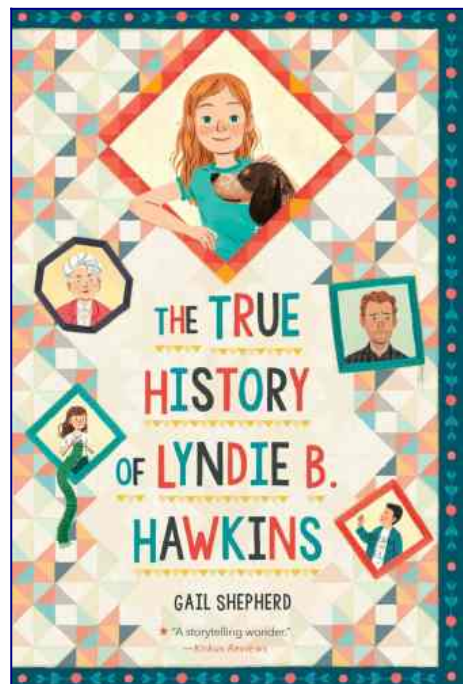
When eleven-year-old Thyme Owens' little brother, Val, is accepted into a new cancer drug trial, it's just the second chance that he needs. But it also means the Owens family has to move to New York, thousands of miles away from

Thyme's best friend and everything she knows and loves. The island of Manhattan doesn't exactly inspire new beginnings, but Thyme tries to embrace the change for what it is: temporary.

After Val's treatment shows real promise and Mr. Owens accepts a full-time position in the city, Thyme has to face the frightening possibility that the move to New York is permanent. Thyme loves her brother, and knows the trial could save his life—she'd give anything for him to be well—but she still wants to go home, although the guilt of not wanting to stay is agonizing. She finds herself even more mixed up when her heart feels the tug of new friends, a first crush, and even a crotchety neighbor and his sweet whistling bird. All Thyme can do is count the minutes, the hours, and days, and hope time can bring both a miracle for Val and a way back home.

With equal parts heart and humor, Melanie Conklin's debut is a courageous and charming story of love and family—and what it means to be counted.

## The True History of Lyndie B. Hawkins

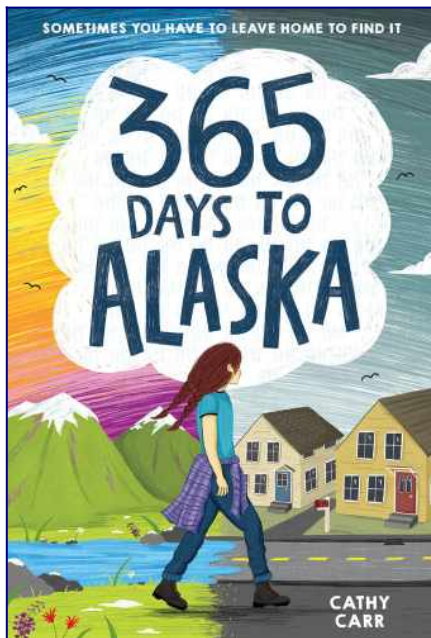


## Family + Loyalty = Keeping Secrets

When it comes to American history or defending the underdog or getting to the bottom of things, no one outsmarts or outfights Lyndie B. Hawkins. But as far as her family goes, her knowledge is full of holes: What exactly happened to Daddy in Vietnam? Why did he lose his job? And why did they have to move in with her grandparents? Grandma Lady's number one rule is Keep Quiet About Family Business. But when her beloved daddy goes missing, Lyndie faces a difficult choice: follow Lady's rule and do nothing—which doesn't help her father—or say something and split her family right down the middle.

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## 365 Days to Alaska



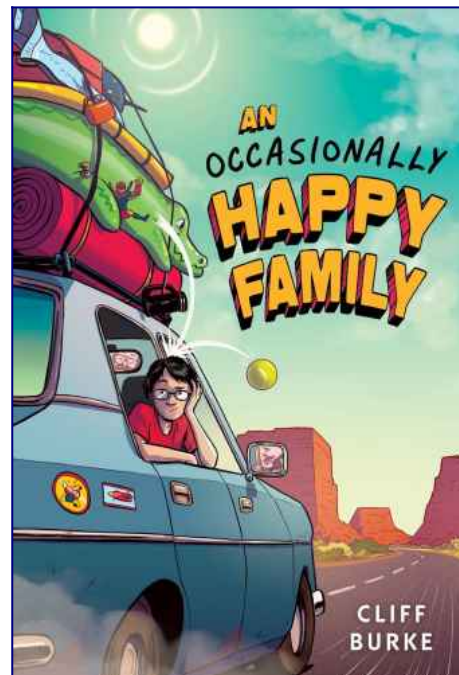
Eleven-year-old Rigel Harman loves her life in off-the-grid Alaska. She hunts rabbits, takes correspondence classes through the mail, and plays dominoes with her family in their two-room cabin. She doesn't mind not having electricity or running water—instead, she's got tall trees, fresh streams, and endless sky.

But then her parents divorce, and Rigel and her sisters have to move with their mom to the Connecticut suburbs to live with a grandmother they've never met. Rigel *hates* it in Connecticut. It's noisy, and crowded, and there's no *real* nature. Her only hope is a secret pact that she made with her father: If she can stick it out in Connecticut for one year, he'll bring her back home.

At first, surviving the year feels impossible. Middle school is nothing like the wilderness, and she doesn't connect with anyone . . . until she befriends a crow living behind her school. And if this wild creature has made a life for itself in the suburbs, then, just maybe, Rigel can too.

*365 Days to Alaska* is a wise and funny debut novel about finding beauty, hope, and connection in the world no matter where you are—even Connecticut.

## An Occasionally Happy Family



There are *zero* reasons for Theo Ripley to look forward to his family vacation. Not only are he,

sister Laura, and nature-obsessed Dad going to Big Bend, the least popular National Park, but once there, the family will be camping. And Theo is an indoor animal. It doesn't help that this will be the first vacation they're taking since Mom passed away.

Once there, the family contends with 110 degree days, wild bears, and an annoying amateur ornithologist and his awful teenage vlogger son. Then, Theo's dad hits him with a whopper of a surprise: the whole trip is just a trick to introduce his secret new girlfriend.

Theo tries to squash down the pain in his chest. But when it becomes clear that this is an auditioning-to-be-his-stepmom girlfriend, Theo must find a way to face his grief and talk to his dad before his family is forever changed.

### The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street

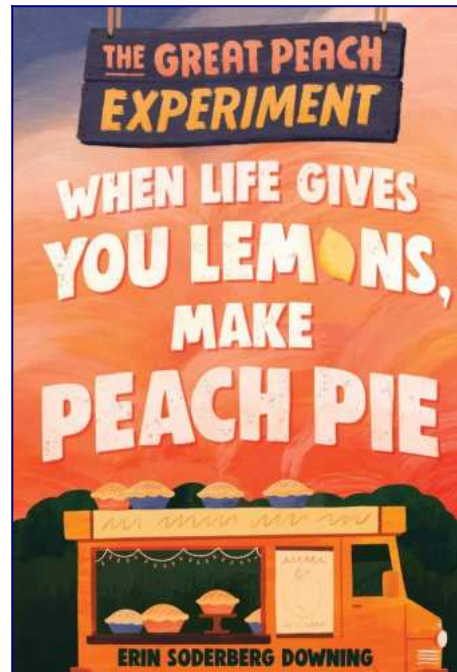


The Vanderbeekers have always lived in the brownstone on 141st Street. It's practically another member of the family. So when their reclusive, curmudgeonly landlord decides not to

renew their lease, the five siblings have eleven days to do whatever it takes to stay in their beloved home and convince the dreaded Beiderman just how wonderful they are. And all is fair in love and war when it comes to keeping their home.

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### The Great Peach Experiment



*Sweet summer has taken a rotten turn . . .*

After a tough year, Lucy, Freddy, and Herb Peach are ready for vacation. Lucy wants to read all of the books on the summer reading list. Freddy wants to work on his art projects (when he isn't stuck in summer school). Herb wants to swim every day.

Then their dad makes a big announcement: one of the inventions their mom came up with before she passed away has sold, and now they're millionaires!

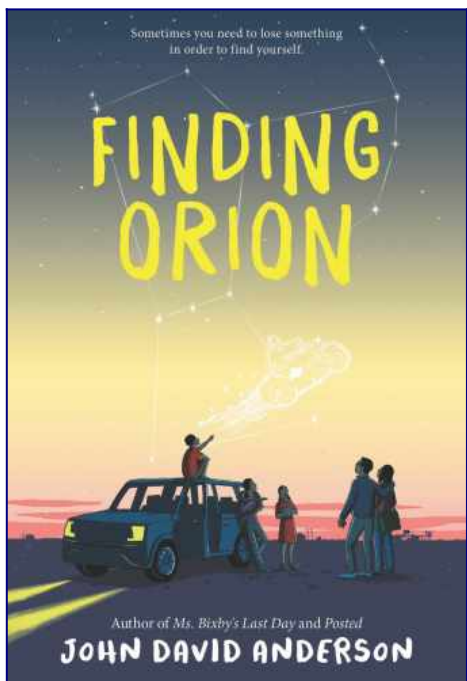
But Dad has bigger plans than blowing the cash on fun stuff or investing it. He's bought a used food truck. The Peaches are going to spend the summer traveling the country selling pies. It will



be the Great Peach Experiment—a summer of bonding while living out one of Mom’s dreams. Summer plans, sunk. And there’s one more issue Dad’s neglected: none of them knows how to bake. . . .

A perfect blend of humor, heart, and family antics, *When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Peach Pie* is a delectable treat to be gobbled down or savored slowly. (Slice of pie on the side, optional, but highly recommended.)

## Finding Orion



Rion Kwirk comes from a rather odd family. His mother named him and his sisters after her favorite constellations, and his father makes funky-flavored jellybeans for a living. One sister acts as if she’s always on stage, and the other is a walking dictionary. But no one in the family is more odd than Rion’s grandfather, Papa Kwirk.

He’s the kind of guy who shows up on his motorcycle only on holidays handing out crossbows and stuffed squirrels as presents. Rion has always been fascinated by Papa Kwirk, especially as his son—Rion’s father—is the complete opposite. Where Dad is predictable,

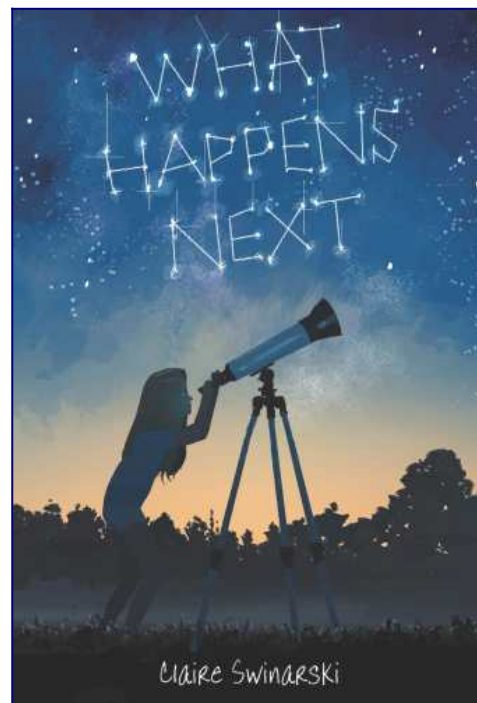
nerdy, and reassuringly boring, Papa Kwirk is mysterious, dangerous, and cool.

Which is why, when Rion and his family learn of Papa Kwirk’s death and pile into the car to attend his funeral and pay their respects, Rion can’t help but feel that that’s not the end of his story. That there’s so much more to Papa Kwirk to discover.

He doesn’t know how right he is.

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## What Happens Next



Astronomy-obsessed Abby McCourt should be thrilled about the solar eclipse her small town of Moose Junction is about to witness, but she’s not. After her older sister Blair was sent away for an eating disorder, Abby has been in a funk.

Desperate to dull the pain her sister’s absence has left, she teams up with a visiting astronomer to help track down his long-lost telescope. Though this is supposed to take Abby’s mind off the distance between her and Blair, what she finds may bring her closer to her sister than she ever thought possible.

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## What Momma Left Me

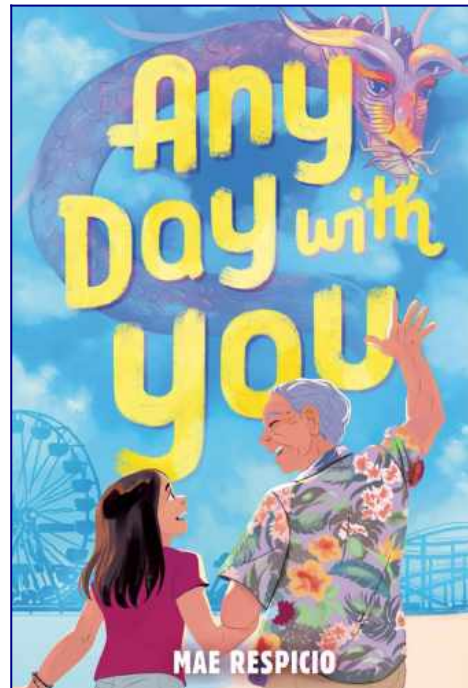


Serenity is good at keeping secrets, and she's got a whole lifetime's worth of them. Her mother is dead, her father is gone, and starting life over at her grandparents' house is strange. Luckily, certain things seem to hold promise: a new friend who makes her feel connected, and a boy who makes her feel seen. But when her brother starts making poor choices, her friend is keeping her own dangerous secret, and her grandparents put all of their trust in a faith that Serenity isn't sure she understands, it is the power of love that will repair her heart and keep her sure of just who she is.

Renée Watson's stunning writing shines in this powerful and ultimately uplifting novel.

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## Any Day With You

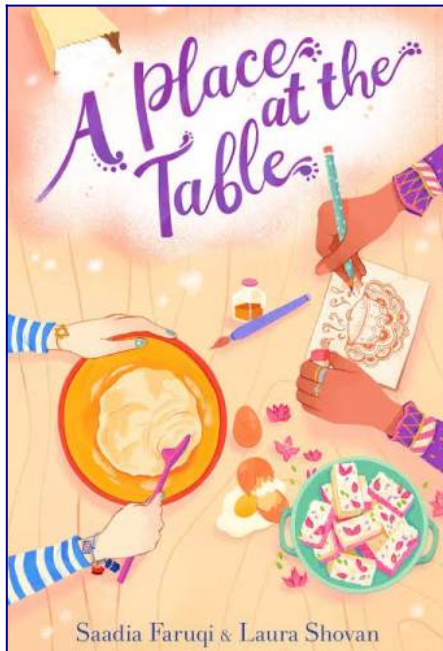


Kaia and her family live near the beach in California, where the fun of moviemaking is all around them. Kaia loves playing with makeup and creating special effects, turning her friends into merfolk and other magical creatures.

This summer, Kaia and her friends are part of a creative arts camp, where they're working on a short movie to enter in a contest. The movie is inspired by the Filipino folktales that her beloved Tatang, her great-grandfather, tells. Tatang lives with her family and is like the sparkle of her special-effects makeup. When Tatang decides that it is time to return to his homeland in the Philippines, Kaia will do anything to convince him not to go.

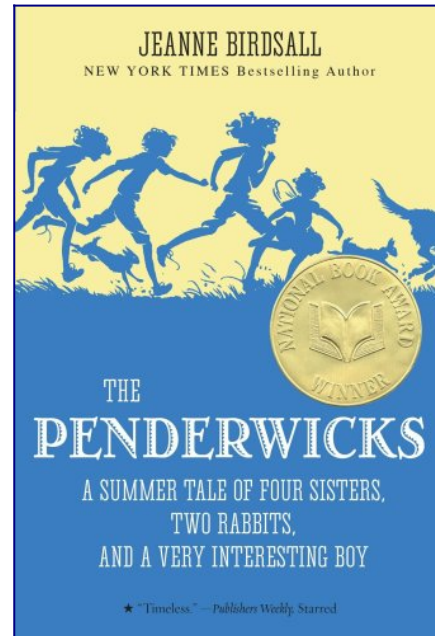
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## A Place at the Table



Sixth graders Sara and Elizabeth could not be more different. Sara is at a new school that is completely unlike the small Islamic school she used to attend. Elizabeth has her own problems: her British mum has been struggling with depression. The girls meet in an after-school South Asian cooking class, which Elizabeth takes because her mom has stopped cooking, and which Sara, who hates to cook, is forced to attend because her mother is the teacher. The girls form a shaky alliance that gradually deepens, and they make plans to create the most amazing, mouth-watering cross-cultural dish together and win a spot on a local food show. They make good cooking partners . . . but can they learn to trust each other enough to become true friends?

## The Penderwicks

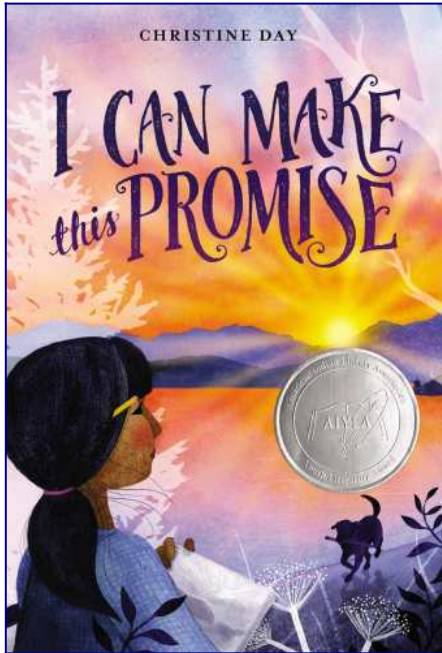


This summer the Penderwick sisters have a wonderful surprise: a holiday on the grounds of a beautiful estate called Arundel. Soon they are busy discovering the summertime magic of Arundel's sprawling gardens, treasure-filled attic, tame rabbits, and the cook who makes the best gingerbread in Massachusetts. But the best discovery of all is Jeffrey Tifton, son of Arundel's owner, who quickly proves to be the perfect companion for their adventures.

The icy-hearted Mrs. Tifton is not as pleased with the Penderwicks as Jeffrey is, though, and warns the new friends to stay out of trouble. Which, of course, they will—won't they? One thing's for sure: it will be a summer the Penderwicks will never forget.

Deliciously nostalgic and quaintly witty, this is a story as breezy and carefree as a summer day.

## I Can Make This Promise



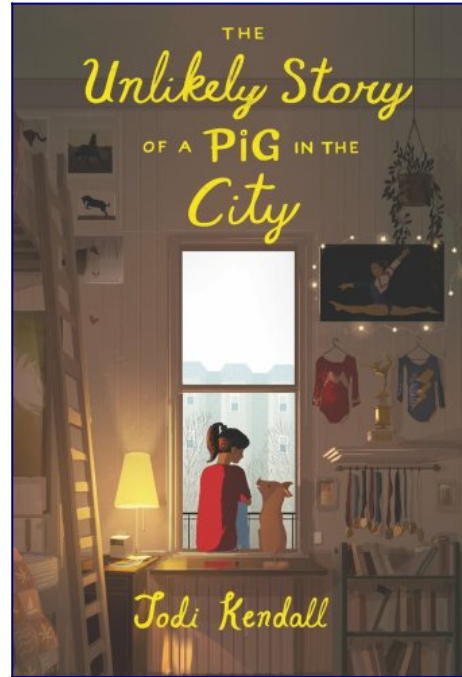
All her life, Edie has known that her mom was adopted by a white couple. So, no matter how curious she might be about her Native American heritage, Edie is sure her family doesn't have any answers.

Until the day when she and her friends discover a box hidden in the attic—a box full of letters signed “Love, Edith,” and photos of a woman who looks just like her.

Suddenly, Edie has a flurry of new questions about this woman who shares her name. Could she belong to the Native family that Edie never knew about? But if her mom and dad have kept this secret from her all her life, how can she trust them to tell her the truth now?

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## The Unlikely Story of a Pig in the City



A little pig in a big city leads to lots of trouble!

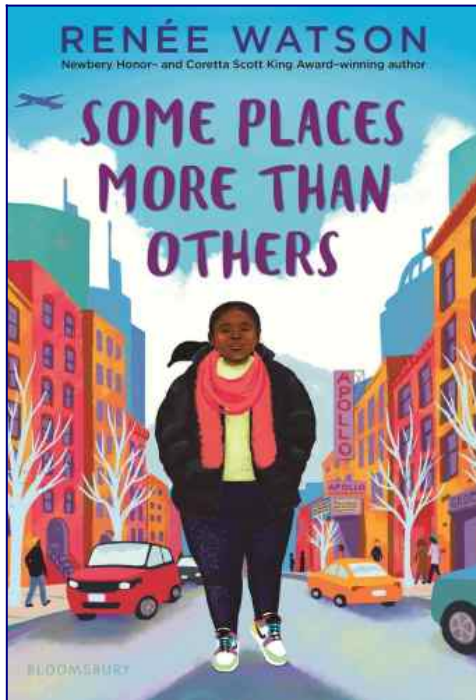
Josie Shilling's family is too big, their cramped city house is too small, and she feels like no one's ever on her side. Then, on Thanksgiving Day, her older brother, Tom, brings home a pink, squirmy bundle wrapped in an old football jersey—a piglet he rescued from a nearby farm. Her name is Hamlet.

The minute Josie holds Hamlet, she feels an instant connection. But there's no room for Hamlet in the crowded Shilling household. And whoever heard of keeping a pig in the city? So it's up to Josie to find her a forever home.

*The Unlikely Story of a Pig in the City* is a heartwarming tale of family, belonging, and growing bigger when you've always felt small.



## Some Places More Than Others



All Amara wants for her birthday is to visit her father’s family in New York City—Harlem, to be exact. She can’t wait to finally meet her Grandpa Earl and cousins in person, and to stay in the brownstone where her father grew up. Maybe this will help her understand her family—and herself—in new way.

But New York City is not exactly what Amara thought it would be. It’s crowded, with confusing subways, suffocating sidewalks, and her father is too busy with work to spend time with her and too angry to spend time with Grandpa Earl. As she explores, asks questions, and learns more and more about Harlem and about her father and his family history, she realizes how, in some ways more than others, she connects with him, her home, and her family.

## Stef Soto, Taco Queen



Estefania “Stef” Soto is itching to shake off the onion-and-cilantro embrace of Tia Perla, her family’s taco truck. She wants nothing more than for Papi to get a normal job and for Tia Perla to be a distant memory. Then maybe everyone at school will stop seeing her as the Taco Queen.

But when her family’s livelihood is threatened, and it looks like her wish will finally come true, Stef surprises everyone (including herself) by becoming the truck’s unlikely champion. In this fun and heartfelt novel, Stef will discover what matters most and ultimately embrace an identity that even includes old Tia Perla.

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## Stand Up, Yumi Chung

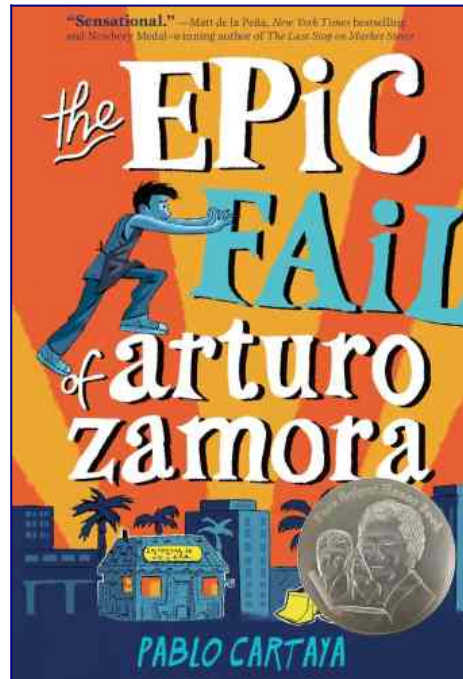


On the outside, Yumi Chung suffers from #shygirlproblems, a perm-gone-wrong, and kids calling her “Yu-MEAT” because she smells like her family’s Korean barbecue restaurant. On the inside, Yumi is ready for her Netflix stand-up special. Her notebook is filled with mortifying memories that she’s reworked into comedy gold. All she needs is a stage and courage.

Instead of spending the summer studying her favorite YouTube comedians, Yumi is enrolled in test-prep tutoring to qualify for a private school scholarship, which will help in a time of hardship at the restaurant. One day after class, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favorite YouTube stars. The only problem is that the instructor and all the students think she’s a girl named Kay Nakamura—and Yumi doesn’t correct them.

As this case of mistaken identity unravels, Yumi must decide to stand up and reveal the truth or risk losing her dreams and disappointing everyone she cares about.

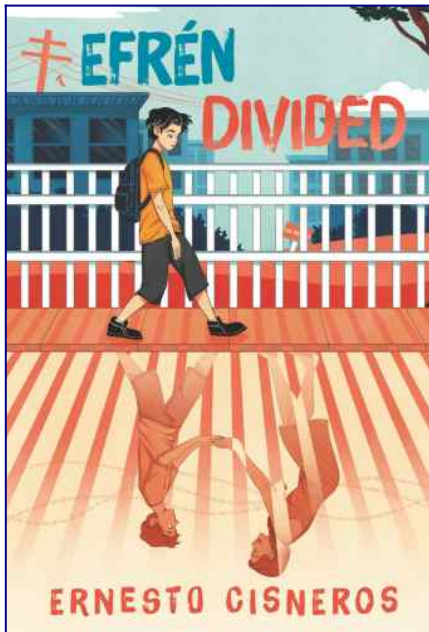
## The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora



Save the restaurant. Save the town. Get the girl. Make Abuela proud. Can thirteen-year-old Arturo Zamora do it all or is he in for a BIG, EPIC FAIL?

For Arturo, summertime in Miami means playing basketball until dark, sipping mango smoothies, and keeping cool under banyan trees. And maybe a few shifts as junior lunchtime dishwasher at Abuela’s restaurant. Maybe. But this summer also includes Carmen, a poetry enthusiast who moves into Arturo’s apartment complex and turns his stomach into a deep fryer. He almost doesn’t notice the smarmy land developer who rolls into town and threatens to change it. Arturo refuses to let his family and community go down without a fight, and as he schemes with Carmen, Arturo discovers the power of poetry and protest through untold family stories and the work of José Martí.

## Efrén Divided



Efrén Nava’s Amá is his Superwoman—or Soperwoman, named after the delicious Mexican sopes his mother often prepares. Both Amá and Apá work hard all day to provide for the family, making sure Efrén and his younger siblings Max and Mía feel safe and loved.

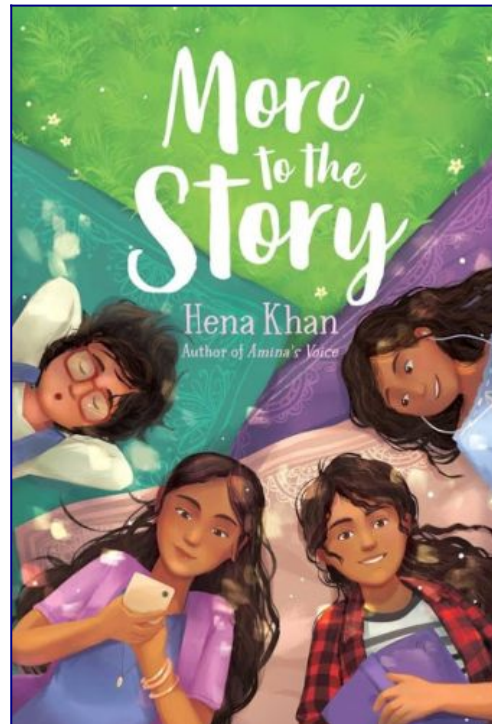
But Efrén worries about his parents; although he’s American-born, his parents are undocumented. His worst nightmare comes true one day when Amá doesn’t return from work and is deported across the border to Tijuana, México.

Now more than ever, Efrén must channel his inner Soperboy to help take care of and try to reunite his family.

A glossary of Spanish words is included in the back of the book.

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## More to the Story

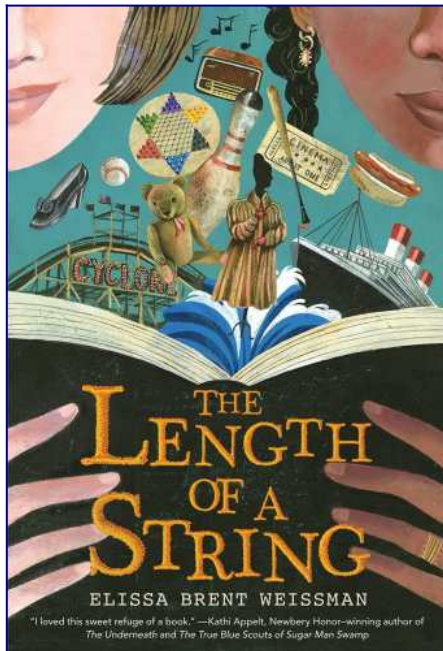


When Jameela Mirza is picked to be feature editor of her middle school newspaper, she’s one step closer to being an award-winning journalist like her late grandfather. The problem is her editor-in-chief keeps shooting down her article ideas. Jameela’s assigned to write about the new boy in school, who has a cool British accent but doesn’t share much, and wonders how she’ll make his story gripping enough to enter into a national media contest.

Jameela, along with her three sisters, is devastated when their father needs to take a job overseas, away from their cozy Georgia home for six months. Missing him makes Jameela determined to write an epic article—one to make her dad extra proud. But when her younger sister gets seriously ill, Jameela’s world turns upside down. And as her hunger for fame looks like it might cost her a blossoming friendship, Jameela questions what matters most, and whether she’s cut out to be a journalist at all...



## The Length of a String



Imani knows exactly what she wants as her big bat mitzvah gift: to find her birth parents. She loves her family and her Jewish community in Baltimore, but she has always wondered where she came from, especially since she's black and almost everyone she knows is white. Then her mom's grandmother—Imani's great-grandma Anna—passes away, and Imani discovers an old journal among her books. It's Anna's diary from 1941, the year she was twelve and fled Nazi-occupied Luxembourg alone, sent by her parents to seek refuge in Brooklyn, New York. Anna's diary records her journey to America and her new life with an adoptive family of her own. And as Imani reads the diary, she begins to see her family, and her place in it, in a whole new way.

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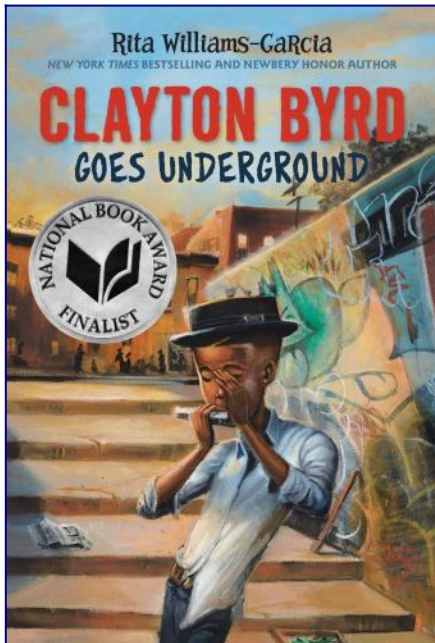
## Broken Strings



It's 2002. In the aftermath of the twin towers — and the death of her beloved grandmother — Shirli Berman is intent on moving forward. The best singer in her junior high, she auditions for the lead role in *Fiddler on the Roof*, but is crushed to learn that she's been given the part of the old Jewish mother in the musical rather than the coveted part of the sister. But there is an upside: her “husband” is none other than Ben Morgan, the cutest and most popular boy in the school.

Deciding to throw herself into the role, she rummages in her grandfather's attic for some props. There, she discovers an old violin in the corner — strange, since her Zayde has never seemed to like music, never even going to any of her recitals. Showing it to her grandfather unleashes an anger in him she has never seen before, and while she is frightened of what it might mean, Shirli keeps trying to connect with her Zayde and discover the awful reason behind his anger. A long-kept family secret spills out, and Shirli learns the true power of music, both terrible and wonderful.

## Clayton Byrd Goes Underground



Clayton feels most alive when he's with his grandfather, Cool Papa Byrd, and the band of Bluesmen—he can't wait to join them, just as soon as he has a blues song of his own. But then the unthinkable happens. Cool Papa Byrd dies, and Clayton's mother forbids Clayton from playing the blues. And Clayton knows that's no way to live.

Armed with his grandfather's brown porkpie hat and his harmonica, he runs away from home in search of the Bluesmen, hoping he can join them on the road. But on the journey that takes him through the New York City subways and to Washington Square Park, Clayton learns some things that surprise him.

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## Crenshaw



Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again.

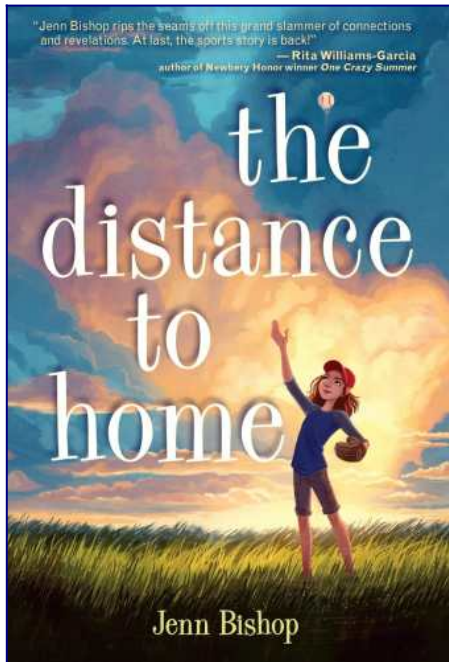
Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything?

Beloved author Katherine Applegate proves in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary.

This title has Common Core connections.

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## The Distance to Home



Last summer, Quinnen was the star pitcher of her baseball team, the Panthers. They were headed for the championship, and her loudest supporter at every game was her best friend and older sister, Haley.

This summer, everything is different. Haley's death, at the end of last summer, has left Quinnen and her parents reeling. Without Haley in the stands, Quinnen doesn't want to play baseball. It seems like nothing can fill the Haley-sized hole in her world. The one glimmer of happiness comes from the Bandits, the local minor-league baseball team. For the first time, Quinnen and her family are hosting one of the players for the season. Without Haley, Quinnen's not sure it will be any fun, but soon she befriends a few players. With their help, can she make peace with the past and return to the pitcher's mound?

## Right As Rain



It's been almost a year since Rain's brother Guthrie died, and her parents still don't know it was all Rain's fault. In fact, no one does—Rain buried her secret deep, no matter how heavy it weighs on her heart.

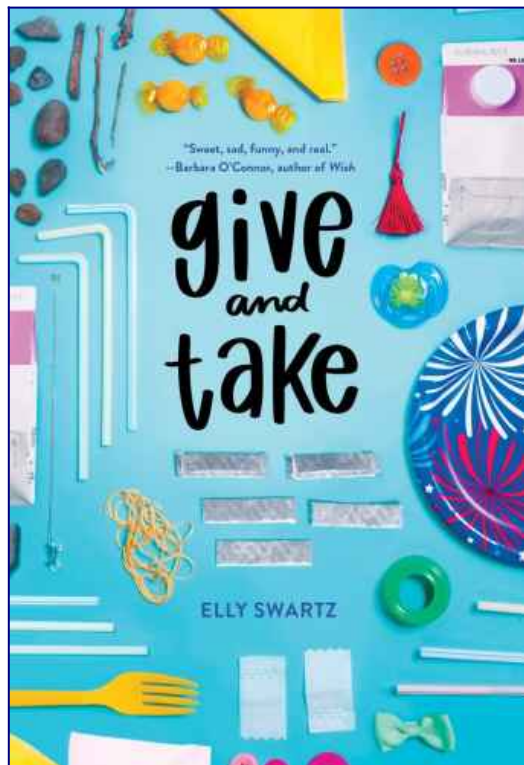
So when her mom suggests moving the family from Vermont to New York City, Rain agrees. But life in the big city is different. She's never seen so many people in one place—or felt more like an outsider.

With her parents fighting more than ever and the anniversary of Guthrie's death approaching, Rain is determined to keep her big secret close to her heart. But even she knows that when you bury things deep, they grow up twice as tall.

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## Give and Take



Family has always been important to twelve-year-old Maggie: a trapshooter, she is coached by her dad and cheered on by her mom. But her grandmother's recent death leaves a giant hole in Maggie's life, one which she begins to fill with an assortment of things: candy wrappers, pieces of tassel from Nana's favorite scarf, milk cartons, sticks . . . all stuffed in cardboard boxes under her bed.

Then her parents decide to take in a foster infant. But anxiety over the new baby's departure only worsens Maggie's hoarding, and soon she finds herself taking and taking until she spirals out of control. Ultimately, with some help from family, friends, and experts, Maggie learns that sometimes love means letting go.

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## Red, White and Whole



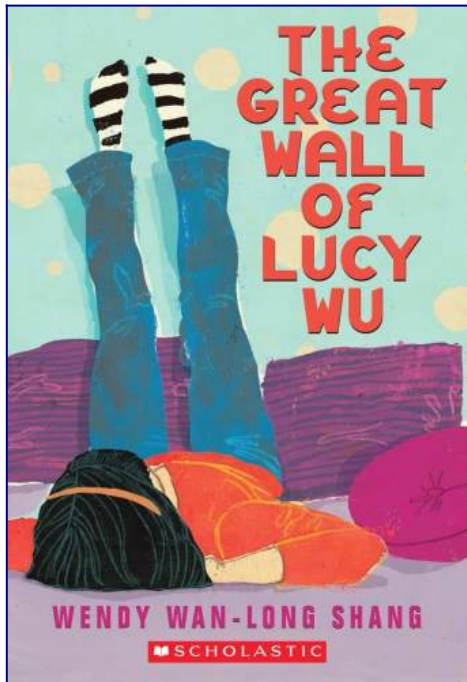
Reha feels torn between two worlds: school, where she's the only Indian American student, and home, with her family's traditions and holidays. But Reha's parents don't understand why she's conflicted—they only notice when Reha doesn't meet their strict expectations. Reha feels disconnected from her mother, or Amma, although their names are linked—Reha means “star” and Punam means “moon”—but they are a universe apart.

Then Reha finds out that her Amma is sick. Really sick.

Reha, who dreams of becoming a doctor even though she can't stomach the sight of blood, is determined to make her Amma well again. She'll be the perfect daughter, if it means saving her Amma's life.

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## The Great Wall of Lucy Wu



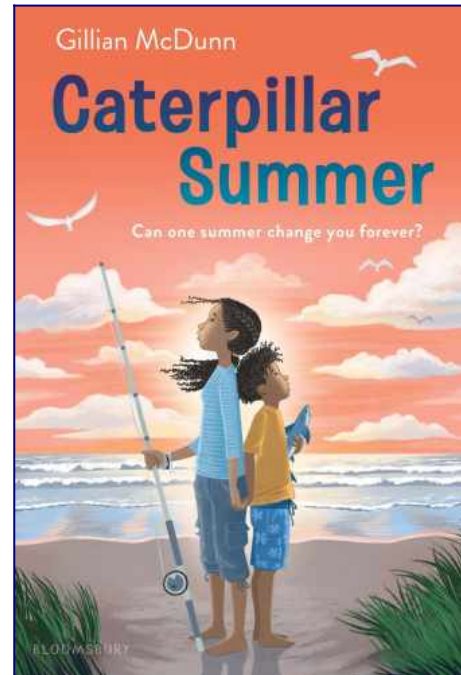
Lucy Wu, aspiring basketball star and interior designer, is on the verge of having the best year of her life. She's ready to rule the school as a sixth grader, go out for captain of the school basketball team, and take over the bedroom she has always shared with her sister. In an instant, though, her plans are shattered when she finds out that Yi Po, her beloved grandmother's sister, is coming to visit for several months — and is staying in Lucy's room.

Lucy's vision of a perfect year begins to crumble, and in its place come an unwelcome roommate, foiled birthday plans, a bully who tries to scare Lucy off the basketball team, and Chinese school with the annoying know-it-all Talent Chang. Lucy's year is ruined — or is it?

A wonderfully funny, warm, and heartfelt tale about the ways life often reveals silver linings in the most unexpected of clouds.

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## Caterpillar Summer



Cat and her brother Chicken have always had a very special bond—Cat is one of the few people who can keep Chicken happy. When he has a “meltdown” she's the one who scratches his back and reads his favorite story. She's the one who knows what Chicken needs. Since their mom has had to work double-hard to keep their family afloat after their father passed away, Cat has been the glue holding her family together.

But even the strongest glue sometimes struggles to hold. When a summer trip doesn't go according to plan, Cat and Chicken end up spending three weeks with grandparents they never knew. For the first time in years, Cat has the opportunity to be a kid again, and the journey she takes shows that even the most broken or strained relationships can be healed if people take the time to walk in one another's shoes.

## Stella by Starlight



Stella lives in the segregated South—in Bumblebee, North Carolina, to be exact about it. Some stores she can go into. Some stores she can't. Some folks are right pleasant. Others are a lot less so. To Stella, it sort of evens out, and heck, the Klan hasn't bothered them for years. But one late night, later than she should ever be up, much less wandering around outside, Stella and her little brother see something they're never supposed to see, something that is the first flicker of change to come, unwelcome change by any stretch of the imagination. As Stella's community—her world—is upended, she decides to fight fire with fire. And she learns that ashes don't necessarily signify an end.

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## We Dream of Space



Cash, Fitch, and Bird Thomas are three siblings in seventh grade together in Park, Delaware. In 1986, as the country waits expectantly for the launch of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, they each struggle with their own personal anxieties.

Cash, who loves basketball but has a newly broken wrist, is in danger of failing seventh grade for the second time. Fitch spends every afternoon playing *Major Havoc* at the arcade on Main and wrestles with an explosive temper that he doesn't understand. And Bird, his twelve-year-old twin, dreams of being NASA's first female shuttle commander, but feels like she's disappearing.

The Thomas children exist in their own orbits, circling a tense and unpredictable household, with little in common except an enthusiastic science teacher named Ms. Salonga. As the launch of the *Challenger* approaches, Ms. Salonga gives her students a project—they are separated into spacecraft crews and must create and complete a mission. When the fated day finally arrives, it changes all of their lives and brings them together in unexpected ways.



Told in three alternating points of view, *We Dream of Space* is an unforgettable and thematically rich novel for middle grade readers.

## Merci Suarez Changes Gears



Merci Suarez knew that sixth grade would be different, but she had no idea just *how* different. For starters, Merci has never been like the other kids at her private school in Florida, because she and her older brother, Roli, are scholarship students. They don't have a big house or a fancy boat, and they have to do extra community service to make up for their free tuition. So when bossy Edna Santos sets her sights on the new boy who happens to be Merci's school-assigned Sunshine Buddy, Merci becomes the target of Edna's jealousy. Things aren't going well at home, either: Merci's grandfather and most trusted ally, Lolo, has been acting strangely lately — forgetting important things, falling from his bike, and getting angry over nothing. No one in her family will tell Merci what's going on, so she's left to her own worries, while also feeling all on her own at school. In a coming-of-age tale full of humor and wisdom, award-winning author Meg Medina gets to the heart of the confusion

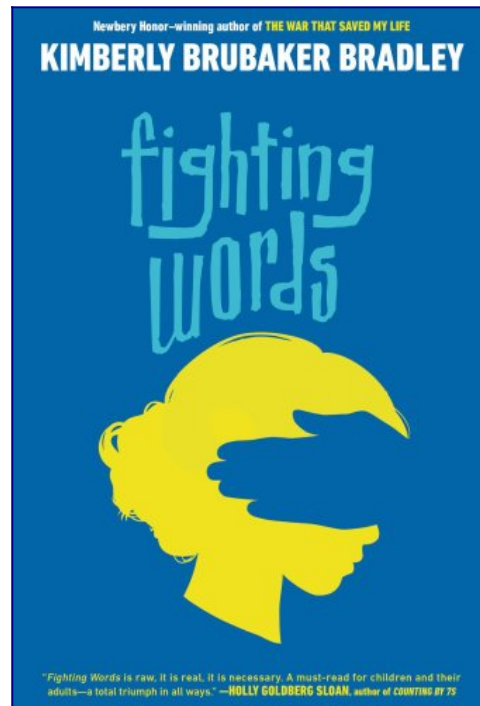
and constant change that defines middle school — and the steadfast connection that defines family.

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There they are: 33 of the best middle-grade books about families, whether big or small! Many of these books have warmed my heart and remain memory till this day. They remind me of what family feels like even though life isn't always rosy.

**Have you read any of these middle-grade books about families? Which of them did you enjoy and which other family-centered middle-grade books would you recommend?**

## Fighting Words

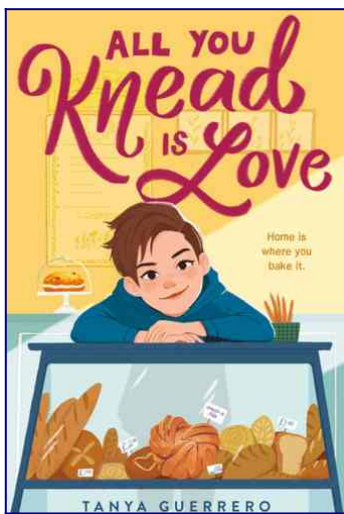


**Published: August 11, 2020**

Ten-year-old Della has always had her older sister, Suki: When their mom went to prison, Della had Suki. When their mom's boyfriend took them in, Della had Suki. When that same

boyfriend did something so awful they had to run *fast*, Della had Suki. Suki is Della's own wolf—her protector. But who has been protecting Suki? Della might get told off for swearing at school, but she has always known how to keep quiet where it counts. Then Suki tries to kill herself, and Della's world turns so far upside down, it feels like it's shaking her by the ankles. Maybe she's been quiet about the wrong things. Maybe it's time to be loud.

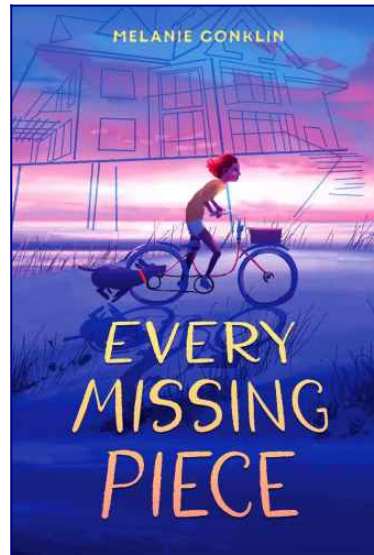
### All You Knead Is Love



**Published: March 30, 2021**

Twelve-year-old Alba doesn't want to live with her estranged grandmother in Barcelona. But her mother needs her to be far, far away from their home in New York City. Because this is the year that her mother is going to leave Alba's abusive father. Hopefully, if she's strong enough to finally, finally do it. Alba is surprised to find that she loves Barcelona, forming a close relationship with her grandmother, meeting a supportive father figure, and making new friends. Most of all, she discovers a passion and talent for bread baking. When her beloved bakery is threatened with closure, Alba is determined to find a way to save it—and at the same time, she may just come up with a plan to make their family whole again.

### Every Missing Piece

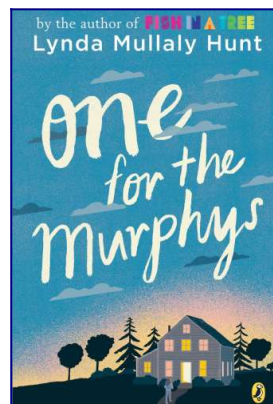


**Published: May 26, 2020**

Maddy Gaines sees danger everywhere she looks: at the bus stop, around the roller rink, in the woods, and (especially) by the ocean. When Maddy meets a mysterious boy setting booby traps in the North Carolina woods, she suspects is Billy Holcomb—the boy who went missing in the fall.

As Maddy tries to uncover the truth about Billy Holcomb, ghosts from her own past surface, her best friend starts to slip away, and Maddy's world tilts once again. Can she put the pieces of her life back together, even if some of them are lost forever?

### One for the Murphys



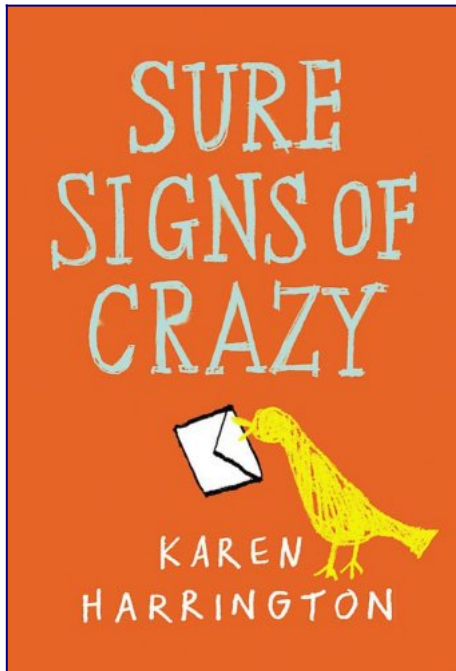
**Published: May 10, 2012**

A moving debut novel about a foster child learning to open her heart to a family's love

Carley uses humor and street smarts to keep her emotional walls high and thick. But the day she becomes a foster child, and moves in with the Murphys, she's blindsided. This loving, bustling family shows Carley the stable family life she never thought existed, and she feels like an alien in their cookie-cutter-perfect household. Despite her resistance, the Murphys eventually show her what it feels like to belong—until her mother wants her back and Carley has to decide where and how to live. She's not really a Murphy, but the gifts they've given her have opened up a new future.

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### Sure Signs of Crazy



**Published: August 20, 2013**

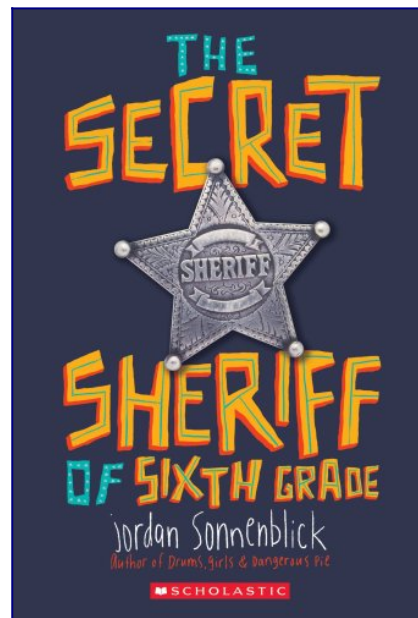
You've never met anyone exactly like twelve-year-old Sarah Nelson. While most of her friends obsess over Harry Potter, she spends her time writing letters to Atticus Finch. She collects trouble words in her diary. Her best friend is a plant. And she's never known her mother, who left when Sarah was two.

Since then, Sarah and her dad have moved from one small Texas town to another, and not one has felt like home.

Everything changes when Sarah launches an investigation into her family's Big Secret. She makes unexpected new friends and has her first real crush, and instead of a "typical boring Sarah Nelson summer," this one might just turn out to be extraordinary.

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### The Secret Sheriff of Sixth Grade



**Published: August 29, 2017**

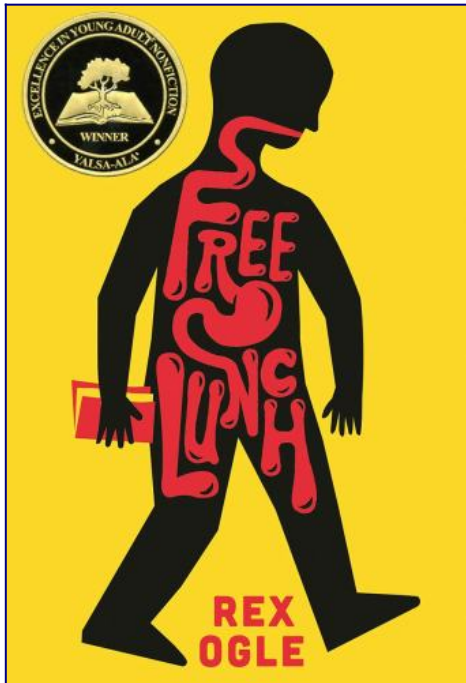
In sixth grade, bad things can happen to good kids. Bullies will find your weakness and jump on it. Teachers will say you did something wrong when really you didn't mean to do anything wrong. The kids who joke the loudest can drown out the quieter, nicer kids. Maverick wants to change all that. One of the last things his father left him was a toy sheriff's badge, back when Maverick was little. Now he likes to carry it around to remind him of his dad — and also to remind him to make school a better place for everyone . . . even if that's a hard thing to do,



especially when his own home life is falling apart. *The Secret Sheriff of Sixth Grade* is a story about standing up for yourself — and being a hero at home and in the halls of your school.

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## Free Lunch



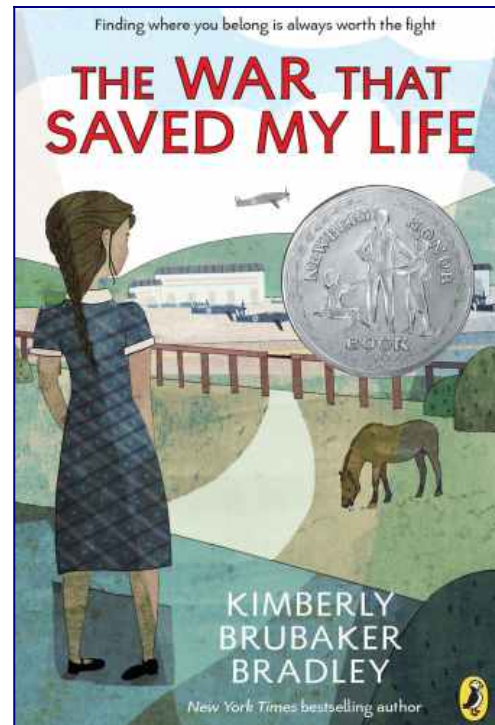
**Published: September 10, 2019**

Instead of giving him lunch money, Rex's mom has signed him up for free meals. As a poor kid in a wealthy school district, better-off kids crowd impatiently behind him as he tries to explain to the cashier that he's on the free meal program. The lunch lady is hard of hearing, so Rex has to shout.

*Free Lunch* is the story of Rex's efforts to navigate his first semester of sixth grade—who to sit with, not being able to join the football team, Halloween in a handmade costume, classmates and a teacher who take one look at him and decide he's trouble—all while wearing secondhand clothes and being hungry. His mom and her boyfriend are out of work, and life at home is punctuated by outbursts of violence.

Halfway through the semester, his family is evicted and ends up in government-subsidized housing in view of the school. Rex lingers at the end of last period every day until the buses have left, so no one will see where he lives.

## The War That Saved My Life



**Published: January 8, 2015**

Ten-year-old Ada has never left her one-room apartment. Her mother is too humiliated by Ada's twisted foot to let her outside. So when her little brother Jamie is shipped out of London to escape the war, Ada doesn't waste a minute—she sneaks out to join him.

So begins a new adventure for Ada, and for Susan Smith, the woman who is forced to take the two kids in. As Ada teaches herself to ride a pony, learns to read, and watches for German spies, she begins to trust Susan—and Susan begins to love Ada and Jamie. But in the end, will their bond be enough to hold them together through wartime?

Or will Ada and her brother fall back into the cruel hands of their mother?

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## The Best Worst Summer



[read my review](#)

**Published: May 4, 2021**

This is going to be the *worst* summer ever for Peyton. Her family just moved, and she had to leave her best friend behind. She's lonely. She's bored. Until . . . she comes across a box buried in her backyard, with a message: *I'm so sorry. Please forgive me.* Things are about to get interesting.

Back in 1989, it's going to be the *best* summer ever for Melissa and Jessica. They have two whole months to goof around and explore, and they're even going to bury a time capsule! But when one girl's family secret starts to unravel, it's clear things may not go exactly as planned.

In alternating chapters, from Peyton in present day to Melissa three decades earlier (a time with no cell phones, no social media, and camera film that took days to develop, but also a whole lot of freedom), beloved author Elizabeth Eulberg tells the story of a mystery that two sets of memorable characters will never forget.

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## What Momma Left Me



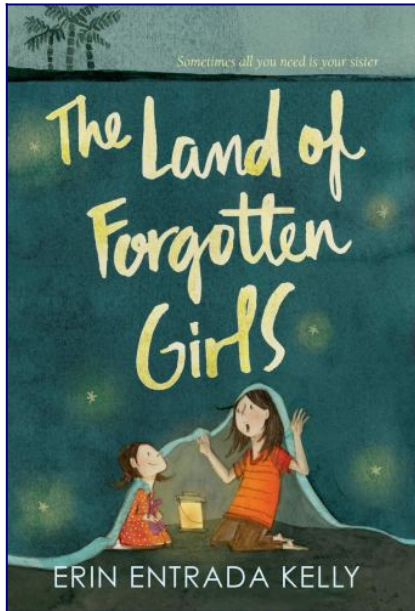
[read my review](#)

**Published: January 8, 2019**

Serenity is good at keeping secrets, and she's got a whole lifetime's worth of them. Her mother is dead, her father is gone, and starting life over at her grandparents' house is strange. Luckily, certain things seem to hold promise: a new friend who makes her feel connected, and a boy who makes her feel seen. But when her brother starts making poor choices, her friend is keeping her own dangerous secret, and her grandparents put all of their trust in a faith that Serenity isn't sure

she understands, it is the power of love that will repair her heart and keep her sure of just who she is.

### The Land of Forgotten Girls

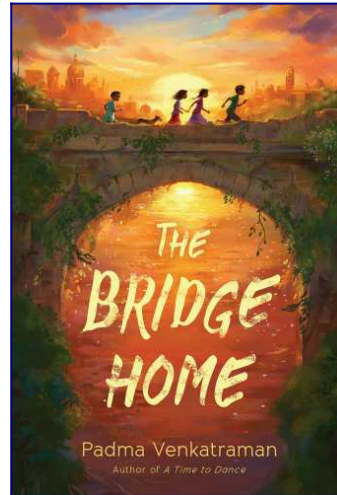


**Published: March 1, 2016**

Soledad has always been able to escape into the stories she creates. Just like her mother always could. And Soledad has needed that escape more than ever in the five years since her mother and sister died, and her father moved Sol and her youngest sister from the Philippines to Louisiana. After her father leaves, all Sol and Ming have is their evil stepmother, Veal. Sol has protected Ming all this time, but then Ming begins to believe that Auntie Jove—their mythical, world-traveling aunt—is really going to come rescue them. Can Sol protect Ming from this impossible hope?

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### The Bridge Home



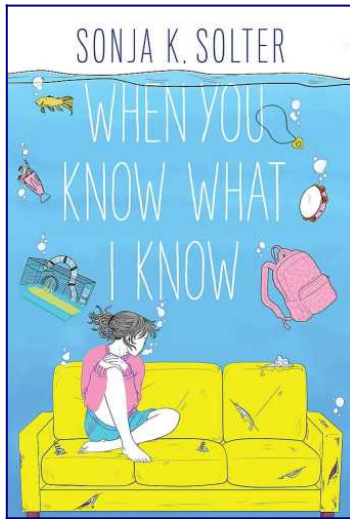
**Published: February 5, 2019**

Four determined homeless children make a life for themselves in Padma Venkatraman’s stirring middle-grade debut.

Life is harsh in Chennai’s teeming streets, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects look grim. Very quickly, eleven-year-old Viji discovers how vulnerable they are in this uncaring, dangerous world. Fortunately, the girls find shelter—and friendship—on an abandoned bridge. With two homeless boys, Muthi and Arul, the group forms a family of sorts. And while making a living scavenging the city’s trash heaps is the pits, the kids find plenty to laugh about and take pride in too. After all, they are now the bosses of themselves and no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.



## When You Know What I Know

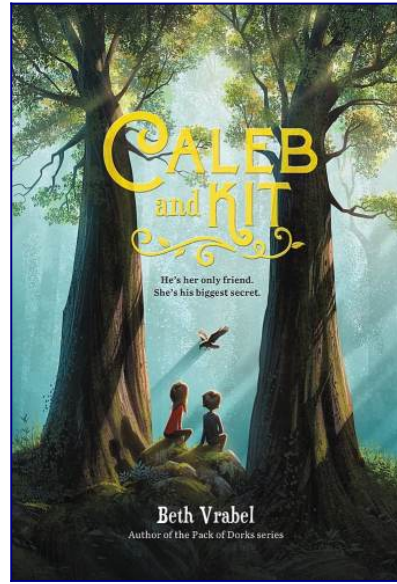


**Published: March 24, 2020**

One day after school, on the couch in the basement, Tori’s uncle did something bad. Afterward, Tori tells her mom. Even though telling was a brave thing to do, her mom still doesn’t believe her at first. Her grandma still takes *his* side. And Tori doesn’t want anyone else—even her best friend—to know what happened.

Now Tori finds herself battling mixed emotions—anger, shame, and sadness—as she deals with the trauma. But with the help of her mom, her little sister, her best friend, and others, can Tori find a way to have the last word?

## Caleb and Kit

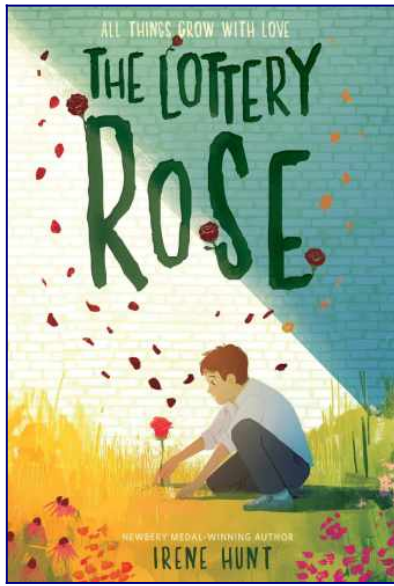


**Published: September 12, 2017**

Twelve-year-old Caleb is shorter, frailer, and more protected than most kids his age. That’s because he has cystic fibrosis, a diagnosis meaning lungs that fill with mucus and a shortened lifespan. Caleb tries not to let his disorder define him, but it can be hard with an overprotective mom and a perfect big brother.

Then Caleb meets Kit — a vibrant, independent, and free girl — and his world changes instantly. Kit reads Caleb’s palm and tells him they are destined to become friends. She calls birds down from the sky and turns every day into an adventure. Her magic is contagious, making Caleb question the rules and order in his life. But being Kit’s friend means embracing deception and danger, and soon Caleb will have to decide if his friendship with Kit is really what’s best for him — or her.

## The Lottery Rose



**Published: March 23, 2021**

Georgie Burgess doesn't talk about the abuse that he receives from his mother and her boyfriend. Even though he's constantly getting into trouble at school, he continues to hide his hurt, refusing to tell anyone what life is like at home. Instead, he finds escape between the pages of books depicting beautiful gardens and flowers.

When Georgie wins a small rosebush in a supermarket lottery, he gives it all the love and caring he's never had. Soon after, his life begins to change when child services remove him from his mother's care and look for a new, safe home for him. But all the while, Georgie still needs to find a home for his rosebush, and through the people he meets, he slowly learns what it means to be loved and accepted.

## My Jasper June



**Published: September 3, 2019**

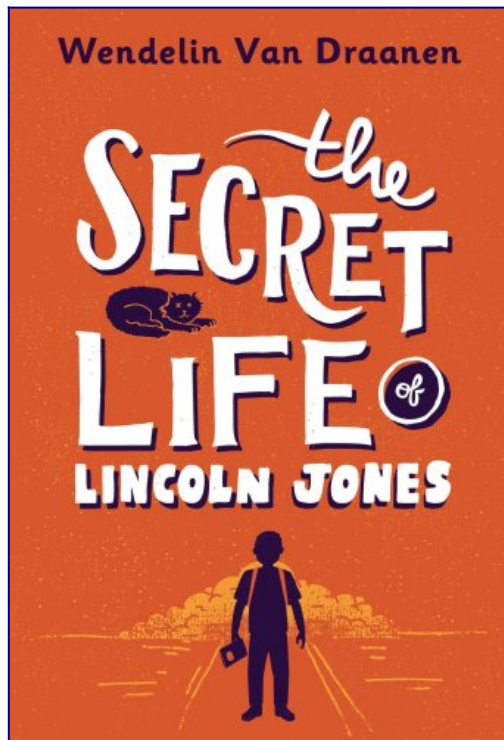
The school year is over, and it is summer in Atlanta. The sky is blue, the sun is blazing, and the days brim with possibility. But Leah feels. . . lost. She has been this way since one terrible afternoon a year ago, when everything changed. Since that day, her parents have become distant, her friends have fallen away, and Leah's been adrift and alone.

Then she meets Jasper, a girl unlike anyone she has ever known. There's something mysterious about Jasper, almost magical. And Jasper, Leah discovers, is also lost.

Together, the two girls carve out a place for themselves, a hideaway in the overgrown spaces of Atlanta, away from their parents and their hardships, somewhere only they can find.

But as the days of this magical June start to draw to a close, and the darker realities of their lives intrude once more, Leah and Jasper have to decide how real their friendship is, and whether it can be enough to save them both.

## The Secret Life of Lincoln Jones

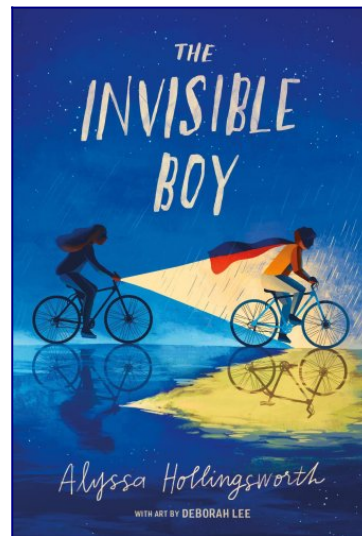


**Published: October 25, 2016**

Lincoln Jones is always working on the latest story he's got going in his notebook. Those stories are his refuge. A place where the hero always prevails and the bad guy goes to jail. Real life is messy and complicated, so Lincoln sticks to fiction and keeps to himself. Which works fine until a nosy girl at his new school starts prying into his private business. She wants to know what he's writing, where he disappears to after school, and why he never talks to anybody. . . .

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## The invisible Boy (Human Trafficking)



**Published: September 8, 2020**

Nadia looks for adventure in the pages of her Superman comic books, until a mysterious boy saves her dog from drowning during a storm and then disappears. Now she finds herself in the role of Lois Lane, hunting down the scoop of the Invisible Boy. Suddenly she's in a real-life adventure that's far more dangerous than anything in her comic books.