



TOP 10 PICKS TOP 10 PICKS **TOP 10 PICKS** TOP 10 PICKS TOP 10

## With the Fire on High

By Elizabeth Acevedo

"The only word I can use to properly describe this book is 'delicious.' I first fell in love with Acevedo's poetry in *The Poet X*, and now I'm even more in love with her prose in *With the Fire on High*. This gorgeously relatable story of a teen mom who dreams of life as a chef will rip your heart out, season it, fry it up, and serve it back to you in the tastiest of ways. My only warning is this: Do not read it while hungry."

—Emelie Burl, Hickory Stick Bookshop, Washington Depot, CT



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## Sorcery of Thorns

By Margaret Rogerson

"A beautiful, dark, atmospheric YA fantasy that kept me guessing and my heart pounding, *Sorcery of Thorns* is set in a world where libraries are full of magical books that contain all the mysteries of the world. Elisabeth Scrivener is an awesome, strong, brave character who doesn't need rescuing and is determined to fight evil, even though her definitions of evil keep shifting as she discovers the truth. The love story is quirky, steamy, and not cheesy, which I loved, and I grew so attached to the characters and their struggles."

—Danica Ramgoolam, Townie Books, Crested Butte, CO



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## The Important Thing About Margaret Wise Brown

By Mac Barnett, Sarah Jacoby (Illus.)

"Children's writer Mac Barnett makes his first foray into nonfiction with this unconventional, insightful, and poignant book about *Goodnight Moon* author Margaret Wise Brown. Barnett's prose is full of the same intentionality, playfulness, and deep respect for young readers that were hallmarks of Brown's work, and Jacoby's illustrations are perfectly composed, with visuals that are simply breathtaking."

—Stephanie Appell, Parnassus Books, Nashville, T



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## Other Words for Home

By Jasmine Warga

"*Other Words for Home* is such an important book and should be required reading for every student at a middle-grade reading level. The character of Jude teaches us empathy as we read what it's like to be a young teenager from Syria trying to fit in in America. She tries to learn the English language while tackling discrimination and classmates unwilling to understand and accept her, including her cousin of the same age. Jasmine Warga has created a story that is both powerful and gentle, big but full of small moments, a happy but sad story that will live in your heart."

—Marilyn Robbins, BookBar, Denver, CO



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## If I Was the Sunshine

By Julie Fogliano, Loren Long (Illus.)

"I am in love with this new picture book! Fogliano's sweet text about love paired with Loren Long's gorgeous, color-bursting illustrations is perfection. (Spoiler: the very best one is of enormous waves with text that reads, 'If I was the ocean and you were a boat, you'd call me wild.'). If a customer is in need of a perfect story, I'll hand them this one in a heartbeat."

—Jen Wills Geraedts, Beagle and Wolf Books & Bindery, Park Rapids, MN

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## Kings, Queens, and In-Betweens

By Tanya Boteju

"Nima may be awkward and a little lost in life, but she's funnier than she thinks and so endearing. You can't help but fall for her voice and feel for her situation. While she may think life is boring and want some changes, she doesn't quite bargain for all she gets. Filled with kings, queens, and in-betweens, this is the story of a girl searching for herself through family situations, friendships, and a possible new romance. Such a lovely story that really will captivate you and pull you in."

—Candace Robinson, Vintage Books, Vancouver, WA

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## Wilder Girls

By Rory Power

"Set at a girls boarding school off the coast of Maine, *Wilder Girls* explores the lengths to which a group of teen girls will go to survive their own mutating bodies and the vicious wilderness on the island where they are quarantined due to a mysterious contagion called the Tox. Unapologetically brutal, this feminist horror story is both a mystery unraveling and an action-packed thriller, showing humanity's desperation as the girls try to survive and save those they love most. A stunning debut by a powerful new voice."

—Hanna Yost, Northshire Bookstore, Saratoga Springs, NY

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## A Wolf Called Wander

By Rosanne Parry, Mónica Armíño (Illus.)

"Kids who loved *The Call of the Wild* will enjoy this novel. This middle reader is entirely from the point of view of a young wolf who is trying to find his way to a new home after his family is defeated by a rival wolf pack. A great book that will give kids insight into what it may be like to be a wild animal surviving on the edges of human civilization. Animal lovers, adventurers, and kids involved with nature will want to read this one."

—Amy McClelland, Bright Side Bookshop, Flagstaff, AZ

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## Nocturna

By Maya Motayne

"Maya Motayne's *Nocturna* is the fantasy that you have been waiting for. With the sneaky cleverness of Stephanie Gabor's *Caraval* and the moral grayness of Marissa Meyer's *Renegades*, *Nocturna* offers up a tale of a brother in search of a way to save his kingdom, and a girl doing all she can to survive. This tale set in a Latin-inspired world provides just the right amount of magic and adventure, as heir-to-the-throne Alfie and shape-shifter Finn race to stop the terrible darkness they have released."

—Jen Pino, Vroman's Bookstore, Pasadena, CA



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## Queen of the Sea

By Dylan Meconis

"In this historical graphic novel, Margaret seeks to learn who she is and how she arrived at the island convent she calls home. When the banished Queen Eleanor of Albion arrives on the island, Margaret realizes the past is more complicated than she thought. Meconis' beautiful watercolor illustrations will captivate readers, while her details on history and folklore enrich this immersive feat of storytelling."

—Marika McCoola, Porter Square Books, Cambridge, MA



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## Big Boys Cry

By Jonty Howley

"Levi is about to spend his first day at a new school, and he's scared! 'Big boys don't cry,' his father tells him as he sends him on his walk to school. But as he walks, Levi encounters a fisherman, a harpist, Army men, a biker man, all sorts of men, and to his surprise, for some reason or another, they are all crying! This charming and funny book has a warm illustration style and will help teach kids that expressing emotion is healthy, while at the same time making them chuckle at how everyone Levi encounters is tearing up."

—Jen Manglass, Odyssey Bookshop, South Hadley, MA



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## Bunny in the Middle

By Anika A. Denise, Christopher Denise (Illus.)

"I want to give this book a hug! While the focus is on being a middle child, this utterly charming picture book is a celebration of sibling bonds and simply the sweetest story of the season. Oh, and the illustrations of the bunny siblings, all cozy reading in bed—does it get any better than that?"

—Kathleen Carey, Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany, NY



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## Camp Tiger

By Susan Choi, John Rocco

"*Camp Tiger* is an amazing picture book. Perfect text and gorgeous art combine harmoniously to offer readers an incredible, unforgettable adventure. This story of a friendship between a young boy and a very real tiger is improbable, but through the immense talents of Choi and Rocco it becomes believable, compelling, and beautiful. *Camp Tiger* is a story of growth and passage that is original, unique, and important."

—Christopher Rose, The Spirit of '76 Bookstore, Marblehead, MA



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## A Curious Menagerie: Of Herds, Flocks, Leaps, Gaggles, Scurries, and More!

By Carin Berger

"As a child, one of my favorite topics to ask about was the collective nouns for groups of animals. This book gathers some of the more interesting ones into a list, with amusingly literal illustrations of various animal groups, such as a 'business of ferrets.'"

—Gwendolyn Baltera, Buttonwood Books and Toys, Cohasset, MA



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## Fox and the Box

By Yvonne Ivins

"This is a delightful story told in very few words. What a perfect book for early readers to enjoy independently! With amazing artistry, the author introduces an adorable fox who decides to set sail in a box. The illustrations allow readers to use their imagination to follow the fox's adventures and fill in the details. For example, by the light of the moon, we see the fox has survived a terrible gale with hail but the page only says, 'Pail. Bail.' Of course, there is a happy ending. I found myself falling in love with the fox and his little mouse friend, and I'm ready to share this gem with a young one just as soon as I can."

—Pat Donmoyer, White Rabbit Children's Books and Gifts, Leonardtown, MD



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## Goodbye, Friend! Hello, Friend!

By Cori Doerrfeld

"*Goodbye, Friend! Hello, Friend!* transforms some of the saddest, most difficult moments of childhood (and adulthood) into happier ones. With beautiful illustrations accompanying the simple story, this book shows that saying goodbye to everything from a beloved friend to the summer sun can lead to new possibilities. This is a beautiful book to share with all children, but especially those trying to cope with change in their lives."

—Beth Seuffer Buss, Bookmarks, Winston-Salem, NC



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## Hair Love

By Matthew A. Cherry, Vashti Harrison (Illus.)

"I LOVE this charming and empowering story about Zuri, a girl who gets a little help from her dad to achieve the perfect hairstyle for a very special occasion. *Hair Love* is a sweet and heartwarming celebration of natural hair and loving daddy-daughter relationships with absolutely perfect pictures from one of my favorite illustrators. This picture book will have you cheering enthusiastically alongside Zuri!"

—Tomoko Bason, BookPeople, Austin, TX

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## How to Read a Book

By Kwame Alexander, Melissa Sweet (Illus.)

"Once you've flipped through these pages, there is no going back. You're never going to forget it. The whimsy and wonder of each page of this book are astounding; Melissa Sweet has perfectly illustrated Kwame Alexander's lovely poem."

—Cristina Russell, Books & Books, Coral Gables, FL

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## Hum and Swish

By Matt Myers

"*Hum and Swish* has captivated my spirit and spoken to my soul! Matt Myers' fabulous illustrations and perfectly chosen words allow us to feel the wind and smell the ocean as we share Jamie's inspiring day at the beach. Moved by her surroundings, Jamie embarks on a solitary and very personal quest to explore and express what it means to create. Validating and mesmerizing, this book speaks to the artist inside all of us."

—Kathy Neff, Square Books, Oxford, MS

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## The King of Kindergarten

By Derrick Barnes, Vanessa Brantley-Newton (Illus.)

"This king of kindergarten takes on his day with gusto, gleefully deploying his powers of bravery, empathy, and kindness. Joy and confidence leap off every page. Read this to a child and watch those first-day-of-school nerves fade away."

—Elese Stutts, Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, NC

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## Lambslide

By Ann Patchett, Robin Preiss Glasser (Illus.)

"Oh, what a joyful, playful story! Life on the farm can seem a little dull, but when the lambs hear 'lambslide' instead of 'landslide' by mistake, it becomes the talk of the farm. Getting the votes of the animals and the farmers leads to a cooperative effort to build the best lambslide ever! Great illustrations make this story special. Patchett and Glasser are a dynamic duo for sure."

—Melissa DeMotte, The Well-Read Moose, Coeur d'Alene, ID



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## Llama Destroys the World

By Jonathan Stutzman, Heather Fox (Illus.)

"I love this book! It is a wonderful addition to the world of children's picture books and I can't wait to share it with the world. I laughed, I cried, and then I laughed again! Now I'm off to buy a pair of dancing pants, after I eat some cake (maybe all the cake)!"

—Jessica Osborne, E. Shaver, Bookseller, Savannah, GA



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## My Papi Has a Motorcycle

By Isabel Quintero, Zeke Peña (Illus.)

"This book is perfect for Father's Day! This beautifully illustrated celebration of all that makes father-daughter relationships so powerful also incorporates a vision of neighborhoods filled with many who do not often see their world reflected in the pages of books. This is for all those fathers who show their love in ways not typically seen in picture books, and for all those daughters who recognize and cherish those acts of love."

—Linda Sherman-Nurick, Cellar Door Books, Riverside, CA



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## You Made Me a Dad

By Laurenne Sala, Mike Malbrough (Illus.)

"The absolute perfect Father's Day gift for brand new dads, this fun little book showcases all the fabulous opportunities that come with this amazing new job."

—Angie Talley, The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines, NC



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## All the Greys on Greene Street

By Laura Tucker

"Debut novelist Tucker elegantly weaves together a story of a young artist desperately trying to keep her family together while learning that a true support network is not confined to blood ties. This is a deft and delicate probe into the unfortunate yet real situations so many kids have to navigate in childhood. Bravo!"

—Jane Knight, Bear Pond Books, Montpelier, VT



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## Finding Orion

By John David Anderson

"*Finding Orion* is for anyone who thinks their family is crazy, and for anyone who has experienced the upheaval the loss of a loved one can create. This wonderfully funny and insightful story follows Rion and his family after the death of his dad's estranged father, Papa Kwirk. A singing clown comes to deliver the news to Rion's family, and that isn't the only odd thing to happen: Papa Kwirk's body turns up missing. As he searches for his missing grandfather, Rion learns about him and his own father at the same time. John David Anderson is a master storyteller. I've loved EVERYTHING he has written; I'm sure you will, too."

—Cherilyn Perelli, Gibson's Bookstore, Concord, N



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## The Girl Who Sailed the Stars

By Matilda Woods, Anuska Allepuz (Illus.)

"You can't lose with text by Matilda Woods and illustrations by Anuska Allepuz. It's impossible not to love whatever magical thing they create, and *The Girl Who Sailed the Stars* is no exception. This book was whimsical and imaginative from page one, and I loved discovering new things alongside the curious and bold Oona—the sea cats are also a delightful part of this universe. Pick this one up as soon as you can!"

—Melissa Music, The Story Shop, Monroe, GA



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## Just Jaime (Emmie & Friends)

By Terri Libenson

"An instantly relatable tale for anyone who has struggled or is currently struggling with navigating the tricky trials and tribulations of middle-school friendships. Told from both sides of a lifelong friendship that seems headed for an imminent end, *Just Jaime* tells a story of female friendship with a focus on the respect, depth, and empathy young girls deserve but so often don't get from adults."

—Miranda McGowan, An Unlikely Story, Plainville, MA



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## Maximillian Fly

By Angie Sage

"*Maximillian Fly* is the middle-grade mash-up you didn't know you needed! *Metamorphosis* combines with Lemony-Snicket-esque prose to perfectly tell the strange and fascinating tale of Maximillian, a human with the features of a cockroach who becomes entangled with two fugitives of an oppressive government. Wacky, fun, and so satisfying, *Maximillian Fly* will steal your heart!"

—Laura Graveline, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX



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## Midsummer's Mayhem

By Rajani LaRocca

"An enchanting treat of a middle-grade novel, LaRocca's debut is baked to perfection. You don't need to be a Shakespeare fan to enjoy this modern fantasy twist on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the third act (so to speak) takes a wonderful, unexpected turn. It's the perfect book for young bakers and those who love stories about family and friendship!"

—Paul Swydan, The Silver Unicorn Bookstore, Acton, MA



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## Odd Gods

By David Slavín, Daniel Weitzman, Adam J.B. Lane (Illus.)

"While the characters are rooted in Greek mythology, this story is very relatable for any young reader, and this is a great book for anyone who likes the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. The characters are classified as Gods and odds, and the illustrations are very well done and quite funny. The story is all about overcoming stereotypes and being confident in yourself, no matter how odd you may be."

—Ashlee Mitchell, Viewpoint Books, Columbus, IN



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## The Oddmire, Book 1: Changeling

By William Ritter

"*The Oddmire* is just a great story, one of wonderment, magic, and family. It is reminiscent of the work of Kelly Barnhill, with its ode to otherness and a bit of darkness, but with humor and heart liberally sprinkled throughout. It will be an easy and fun book to sell to younger middle-grade kids who liked *BOB* and stories with just enough scary to send a bit of a shiver, but enough light to make it through to the end."

—Liesel Freudenstein, Boulder Book Store, Boulder, CO



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## Pie in the Sky

By Remy Lai

"If books came in cake form (and WHY NOT, I ask?), *Pie in the Sky* would be the apple mille-feuille of the bunch. Lai masterfully creates a story of grief, familial love and discord, and alienation that will have readers both biting their nails and loudly guffawing. The character of Jingwen helps us remember that growing up means forgiving yourself and others—even if letting go is the one thing you don't want to do. A delicious confection that will be devoured by fans of Raina Telgemeier, Vera Brosgol, and Shaun Tan."

—Hannah DeCamp, Avid Bookshop, Athens, GA



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## Planet Earth Is Blue

By Nicole Panteleakos

"It's 1986, and Nova is eagerly awaiting the launch of the space shuttle *Challenger*. She loves astronomy, plus her sister, Bridget, promised she'd be back for the launch, no matter what. Nova is autistic and nonverbal, and navigating a new foster family and a new school alone is extra tough; no one but Bridget has ever fully understood that she's a whole, intelligent person. As Nova counts down to the launch, we share in her excitement, her worries, her grief, and her joys. Panteleakos, who is on the spectrum herself, has crafted a compelling, compassionate debut."

—Madeline Shier, Powell's Books, Portland, OR



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## Scouts

By Shannon Greenland

"This adventure and friendship story will pull you along happily on the journey of Annie and her posse of friends called the Scouts. Are friendships forever or can they be finite due to outgrowing shared experiences? Debut author Greenland carefully navigates this question as seventh grade looms large on the horizon. Annie and her buddies get lost in caves, almost drown, and get down and dirty in the mud and worms while a strange meteor shower-sprinkling of silver dust leads to a wham-bang climax."

—Maureen Palacios, Once Upon a Time, Montrose, CA



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## Shouting at the Rain

By Lynda Mullaly Hunt

"A well-spun tale of a middle-grade girl whose life swells its own storms one summer on Cape Cod. The barefoot local finds herself suddenly adrift as friends' lives shift away from her and she's forced to deal with her motherless past. Amid all this turmoil, she finds hope in new and familiar faces. A great summer read for young and old storm chasers."

—Ernio Hernandez, River Bend Bookshop, Glastonbury, CT



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## Spark

By Sarah Beth Durst

"This story is a triumph for every quiet person and those who feel a little out of step with their peers. Mina and her lightning beast, Pixit, are learning how to make the weather idyllic in her country. Mina doesn't like to be the center of attention but decides to make herself heard when it's important to her and to society. As she discovers that making things better in one place can have unforeseen consequences, one quiet girl learns that she can be strong and change the world."

—Julie Karaganis, Cabot Street Books & Cards, Beverly, MA



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## This Was Our Pact

By Ryan Andrews

"The pact is simple: keep going down the river to see where the lanterns go. No one turns for home and no one looks back. This is a refreshing adventure story featuring two boys who follow lanterns along the river, lit by their town on the autumn equinox, to see where they end up. The myth says they turn into stars, but Ben and Nathaniel are the only two who make the journey to actually find out. The illustrations and color palate helped tell the story, which was in parts sweet, funny, magical, and touching. Also, there's a dashing talking bear."

—Katrina Bright-Yerges, Books & Company, Oconomowoc, WI



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## The Beholder

By Anna Bright

"Selah, seneschal-elect of Potomac, knows that she must find a husband for the good of her country. But when she is publicly rejected in front of her father's court and her stepmother takes the opportunity to send her across the Atlantic under the guise of securing an engagement, Selah realizes there are more things at play in her life than her own heart. Sweeping in scale and lushly romantic, *The Beholder* is a shimmering debut that whispers its magic to you, wraps you up in an old cloak of fairy tales, and carries you off across a brand-new ocean of its own making. A positively lovely book."

—Rebecca Speas, One More Page Books, Arlington, VA



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## Don't Date Rosa Santos

By Nina Moreno

"If you're a guy with a boat, don't date Rosa Santos. Both her grandfather and her father died at sea, so she is supposed to stay close to home and away from the water. But that's tough when you live in Port Coral, Florida! Of course, while organizing a fundraiser to save the community, Rosa meets a boy who feels pulled to the ocean. What's she to do? This debut novel is pitch-perfect in tone and voice, and its characters are as real as your own friends and family."

—Cathy Berner, Blue Willow Bookshop, Houston, TX



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## The Grief Keeper

By Alexandra Villasante

"I have not stopped thinking about Marisol since I turned the last page of her story. Her strength shines through as she takes on pain for her sister amid the promise of their new life together. The reasons she has to leave El Salvador are revealed bit by bit, which adds a level of tension and intrigue. As the plot unfolds, we learn the many threats Marisol faces as an immigrant, a sister, a daughter, and a lesbian. This incredibly well-crafted book carries important messages about the complexities of love."

—Jennifer Kraar, City of Asylum Bookstore, Pittsburgh, PA

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## Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me

By Mariko Tamaki, Rosemary Valero-O'Connell (Illus.)

"Freddy has a problem: her girlfriend, Laura Dean, keeps breaking up with her. One day, they're a happy couple. The next? Freddy's heartbroken while Laura Dean is off partying with some other girl. As Freddy struggles with the roller-coaster ride of her relationship, her friendships—including with her best friend, Doodle—suffer. As Tamaki and Valero-O'Connell explore the ins and outs of high school relationships in this compelling graphic novel, readers—LGBT or not—will see themselves in Freddy's story, and hopefully ask themselves the same question: Do my relationships make me happy? Eloquent, engrossing, and utterly unputdownable."

—Melissa Fox, Watermark Books & Café, Wichita, KS

Find out more about this book and others at [WWW.INDIEBOUND.ORG](http://WWW.INDIEBOUND.ORG)



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## Let Me Hear a Rhyme

By Tiffany D. Jackson

"Jackson's third novel transports you straight into the Brooklyn of the late '90s, full of great hip-hop and rap references, dial-up internet, and the cultural reverberations of the murders of Tupac and Biggie on the black community. When their best friend is shot and killed, two teens attempt to keep his spirit alive by convincing his younger sister to let them make years of his secretly recorded rap music go viral. Jackson's characters are tangible and her atmosphere is so timely, even though it is set 20 years in the past."

—Lauren Nopenz Fairley, Curious Iguana, Frederick, MD

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## Like a Love Story

By Abdi Nazemian

"*Like a Love Story* broke me and fixed me at the same time. Set in New York City in 1989, it chronicles the lives of three teens as they navigate the AIDS crisis. Abdi Nazemian captures perfectly what it felt like to be both excited and repelled by the thought of finding other gay kids to share experiences with, as well as the constant fear of wondering if AIDS was inevitable for all young gay men. I finished *Like a Love Story* with tears streaming down my face; they were tears of recognition to see myself so accurately reflected on the pages of a book."

—John McDougall, Murder by the Book, Houston, TX

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## The Merciful Crow

By Margaret Owen

"In a world dominated by a strict caste system, the Crows struggle to get by, take care of their own, and survive the rampant prejudices of society. Within the first few pages, I was completely caught up in this fully realized world and compelling story where we follow Fie, a daring Crow full of fire and fury, as she tries to carve out a place for herself and her people against all odds. I loved the strong characters, endowed with real fears, desires, and relationships, and the heart-wrenching realities of their world, which often echoed the injustices and inequalities of ours."

—Shoshana Smith, Flashlight Books, Walnut Creek, CA



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## Shatter the Sky

By Rebecca Kim Wells

"If you need to be reminded of how incredibly cool books with dragons are, you should really already be reading this book. Showcasing solid fantasy world-building, Rebecca Kim Wells' story starts when prophetic agents of the empire force Maren's girlfriend, Kaia, to leave her home. Maren follows in a rage and hatches a plan to steal a dragon from the stronghold and save the one she loves. Wells' writing is immersive; this is one of those novels you sink into. And, come on, there's dragons."

—Nichole Cousins, White Birch Books, North Conway, NH



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## Teen Titans: Raven

By Kami Garcia, Gabriel Picolo (Illus.)

"Kami Garcia has taken an iconic Teen Titans character and turned her into a beautiful warrior in her latest graphic novel. After Raven's foster mother is killed in a car accident, she relocates to New Orleans with no memory of her previous life, moving in with her foster mother's sister and her daughter, Max. Through Max and her new high school friends, Raven discovers a whole new life that includes hearing others' thoughts and influencing their actions. At turns frightened and joyful at these powers, Raven struggles to find a balance to her powers. Garcia has brought wonderful depth to this Teen Titans powerhouse."

—Annie Carl, The Neverending Bookshop, Edmonds, WA



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## Tell Me How You Really Feel

By Aminah Mae Safi

"If you wanted *Gilmore Girls* to be a little less white and a whole lot gayer, this is the book for you. It's a rom-com about two ambitious women fighting against the world, themselves, and their feelings for each other, and learning how all those things can peacefully coexist. This book is a lot like your favorite rom-coms but with a cast of characters you don't usually see."

—Mackenzie Van Engelenhoven, The King's English Bookshop, Salt Lake City, UT



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