



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

## From the Desk of Zoe Washington

By Janae Marks

"Zoe Washington is my new favorite middle-grade heroine! When she receives a letter from Marcus, her birth father, on her 12th birthday, Zoe begins corresponding with him in secret. Marcus is in prison for a crime he says he didn't commit, and Zoe is determined to find out the truth while also trying to excel in her baking internship and manage middle-school friendship drama with her neighbor Trevor. In her excellent debut novel, Marks skillfully balances a difficult social justice theme with lighthearted elements and lovingly rendered familial relationships."

—Anna Millsaps, bbg books, Richmond, VA



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## The Guinevere Deception (Camelot Rising Trilogy #1)

By Kiersten White

"Absolutely stunning. This fantastic, original retelling will have you hooked as you journey alongside Arthur and Guinevere to root out the dark magic creeping into Camelot's borders. But reader, beware! Appearances can be deceiving, titles are not always telling, and sometimes you have to be your own knight in shining armor. Kiersten White throws twist upon epic twist into this classic Arthurian legend to create a Camelot all her own. White is a force to be reckoned with."

—Kayla Roy, An Unlikely Story, Plainville, MA



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## The Queen of Nothing (The Folk of the Air #3)

By Holly Black

"In *The Queen of Nothing*, Black continues the story of Jude and Carden that started with *The Cruel Prince*. Exile does not suit Jude and when the opportunity to return to Elfhame presents itself, she cannot say no, as the Faerie Court, her father, and Carden pull at her curiosity and heart. Black's Faerie world is wonderfully constructed, and her storytelling skills shine. A rare series in which each new book enlarges, entwines, and enchants! Just flat-out fun to read."

—Margaret Brennan Neville, The King's English Bookshop, Salt Lake City, UT



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## Layoverland

By Gabby Noone

"I absolutely loved this book! Imagine limbo as an airport, with flights bringing in the newly dead and leaving with those moving on to Heaven. Then imagine dying in a car accident at the age of 17. Since you were such a mean person in life, you are sent to this limbo airport as punishment to help other souls move on. But who knew helping other souls could help yours, too? A multilayered, funny, and emotional story that is different from anything I've read in a while."

—Lauren Nopenz Fairley, Curious Iguana, Frederick, MD



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## **A Heart So Fierce and Broken (The Cursebreaker Series)**

By Brigid Kemmerer

"Cursebreakers rejoice! The sequel to *A Curse So Dark and Lonely* is here! This story follows Grey and introduces a new heroine: Lia Mara from the enemy kingdom of Syhl Shallow. Filled with the same propulsive action and slow-burning romance as the first book, the sequel turns the first story on its head, leaving you to wonder who the real hero of the series will be. A cliffhanger ending will have you counting down the days until the next book in the series is released!"

—Carrie Deming, The Dog Eared Book, Palmyra, NY



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## **Little Mole's Wish**

By Sang-Keun Kim

"Such a sweet story about a lonely mole who takes the idea of making friends quite literally! The illustrations depict Little Mole's imaginative nature as he turns a big ball of snow into a friend, someone with whom he can wait for the bus and keep warm with a new hat. The winter landscape, while soft and comforting, is also stark, allowing us to feel the chill Little Mole feels when he thinks he's lost his new friend. This will be the perfect book to read with loved ones while sipping hot cocoa. Yay to the power of imagination and friendship (and cheers to kind bus drivers and listening grandmas)!"

—Sara Wigglesworth, Green Apple Books & Music, San Francisco, CA



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## **Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir**

By Robin Ha

"Chuna lives with her mother in Korea; it's just the two of them and always has been. Suddenly, her life is turned upside down when what she thinks is a vacation to Alabama turns out to be a permanent stay. Her mother is getting married, and her family of two has just quadrupled in size. Now, at 14, Chuna must learn how to navigate this new American life. Robin Ha shares her story with readers in this touching memoir told in graphic novel form, and I enjoyed every moment of it. You will laugh and cry!"

—Jen Steele, Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, WI



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## **Bad Dog**

By Mike Boldt

"Rocky is a very bad dog; she doesn't do tricks or listen to her human's orders. She's very good at catlike things, though, like clawing things up and sleeping. *Bad Dog* has adorable seeping out of every page as Rocky's human tells readers all about her! Every cat owner will find their own fluffy friends in these accurate illustrations of feline mischief and love."

—Andrew King, University Book Store, Seattle, WA



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## The Runaway Princess

By Johan Troianowski

"How can one individual have this much talent and imagination? Each of the three stories written and illustrated by Johan Troianowski were delightful, from the lively, colorful illustrations to the humorous dialogue, unbelievably creative fantasy sequences, and quick plot twists. Princess Robin is a wonderful character with endless energy, an adventurous spirit, and an irrepressibly optimistic attitude. Highly recommended."

—Brittany Baker, Trident Booksellers & Café, Boston, MA



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## Three Things I Know Are True

By Betty Culley

"Topical, deeply honest, and important, this book has an edge that is painful and sharp but softened with the cadence of verse. The ripple effect of Jonah's foolish actions pulses violently outward and crashes into friends, family, and the larger community. Three things I know are true: this book captures the subject matter seriously and accurately, it starts a necessary dialogue, and it might change some lives."

—Nichole Cousins, Still North Books & Bar, Hanover, NH



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## A Is for Audra: Broadway's Leading Ladies From A to Z

By John Robert Allman, Peter Emmerich (Illus.)

"I love everything about this book and so will all my MTK friends! That's showbiz-speak for 'Musical Theater Kids.' A great representation of the varied women who made (and are still making) their mark on Broadway. I love the vibrant illustrations!"

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



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## Bear Is Awake!: An Alphabet Story

By Hannah E. Harrison

"Creative, original, and with a whole new take on the alphabet book, *Bear Is Awake!* is remarkable. Hannah E. Harrison's fun-filled tale of a little girl and a bear, along with her fabulously expressive illustrations, will entice the reader to devour this captivating book over and over again. An engaging and entertaining treat for the whole family."

—Kathy Neff, Square Books, Oxford, MS



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## Bedtime for Sweet Creatures

By Nikki Grimes, Elizabeth Zunon (Illus.)

“Grimes’ words and Zunon’s beautiful illustrations combine to create a book that has the potential to be a new bedtime classic, especially for parents looking for diverse books for their young children. Grimes uses animals and instruments to reimagine bedtime rituals in a story sure to delight readers in the same way as Eric Carle books.”

—Alison Perine, Hooray for Books!, Alexandria, VA



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## Cherry Blossom and Paper Planes

By Jef Aerts, Sanne te Loo (Illus.)

“A lovely story of friendship near and far. The illustrations are breathtaking and enhance the story immensely. Subtle nods to differences in race and class—and how they can mean little to children but have greater implications—will make good discussion points for older readers, but anyone who has ever moved or had a friend move away will appreciate this story. Incredibly captivating.”

—Tildy Banker-Johnson, Belmont Books, Belmont, MA



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## Freedom Soup

By Tami Charles, Jacqueline Alcántara (Illus.)

“Jacqueline Alcántara’s energy-filled illustrations match perfectly with Tami Charles’ story of a grandmother and granddaughter cooking together and learning some Haitian history in the process. A story that is sure to make your mouth water and your heart sing.”

—Cecilia Cackley, East City Bookshop, Washington, DC



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## The Heart of a Whale

By Anna Pignataro

“In *The Heart of a Whale*, mesmerizing illustrations combine with a story that is at first sweet, then melancholic, and at last endearingly hopeful. This book transported me into a world of soothing colors, beautiful reflections, and a touching message.”

—Alexa Ochocki, Content Bookstore, Northfield, MN



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## In a Jar

By Deborah Marcero

"There's nothing like a picture book to drop you into a moment, a memory, and have you feeling the feelings and experiencing the magic anew. This book filled my heart. My daughter, now grown, was quite a collector. *In a Jar* transported me right back to the moment she started her first collection: worms she gently deposited in jars after naming each one, and which we eventually released. I still have the heart-shaped stones she gave me in a basket, bowls of shells, and random trinkets. Each one is capable of transporting me back to her childhood, to that moment of experiencing the wonder alongside her."

—Alana Haley, Schuler Books, Grand Rapids, MI



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## Just Like Me

By Vanessa Newton

"In her ever-stunning style, Vanessa Newton playfully and vividly illustrates poems about subjects from parties to grandmothers to errant sundresses. Some silly and some serious, Newton's poems are perfect for reading together and reading aloud."

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



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## Love From the Crayons

By Drew Daywalt, Oliver Jeffers (Illus.)

"A fun reminder that love comes in all colors and many different types. Traditional red and purple are balanced by brown (love stinks!) and white (hard to find!), making for a lot to talk about while still set in Daywalt and Jeffers' crayon universe we all know and love."

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



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## Odd Dog Out

By Rob Biddulph

"Happy, vibrant colors usher in a story of accepting yourself for who you are, especially when who you are is someone special, different, and uniquely you!"

—Miranda Atkins, A Little Bookish, Ooltewah, TN



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## The Old Truck

By Jerome Pumphrey, Jarrett Pumphrey

"Full of nostalgia and wonder, this is a sweet and simple tale of determination and growth. I am absolutely in love with the stamp illustrations in *The Old Truck* and the young girl who lives, works, and dreams at the farm. A great addition to a home library, this is for fans of things that go and the work of illustrator Christian Robinson!"

—Eugenia Vela, BookPeople, Austin, TX



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## Pluto Gets the Call

By Adam Rex, Laurie Keller (Illus.)

"Pluto is happy to meet readers and show them around the neighborhood. When a call comes in from scientists on Earth, Pluto hears that it's no longer considered a planet. This prompts a journey through the solar system, where Pluto shares the sad news. Adam Rex's clever language paired with Laurie Keller's spirited illustrations make for a wonderful collaboration!"

—Cathy Berner, Blue Willow Bookshop, Houston, TX



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## Ready to Fly: How Sylvia Townsend Became the Bookmobile Ballerina

By Lea Lyon, Alexandria LaFaye, Jessica Gibson (Illus.)

"Warm and inviting illustrations follow young Sylvia Townsend on her journey to becoming a ballerina. Weaving in the history of the bookmobile, this picture book biography is perfect for fans of dance."

—Jill Burket Ragase, Blue Manatee Literacy Project Bookstore, Cincinnati, OH



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## Ruby Red Shoes

By Kate Knapp

"This is a positively charming story of the beauty all around and the knowledge of right action. If the world worked half as well as what I see in these pages, we would probably all be fine. The illustrations alone are like a quiet moment of mindful beauty. I have to give it a 10 and will most certainly gift this one myself."

—Kathryn Nassberg, Otto Bookstore, Williamsport, PA



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## Wild Honey From the Moon

By Kenneth Kraegel

“What would a mother do for her child? In this poignant and adventurous tale, Mother Shrew goes beyond the ends of the earth—to the moon—to fetch some wild honey for her son, who is sick at home. With cozy illustrations and just enough suspense for little listeners, this story will enchant children and their parents alike.”

—Heather Hebert, Children’s Book World, Haverford, PA



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## The Best of Iggy

By Annie Barrows, Sam Ricks (Illus.)

“Another fun series by Annie Barrows! Kids who have trouble doing the right thing ALL the time will relate to Iggy. Fun illustrations accompany a narrative full of winking nods to the reader.”

—Robin Stern, Books Inc., San Francisco, CA



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## Catherine's War

By Julia Billet, Claire Fauvel (Illus.), Ivanka Hahnenberger (Transl.)

“This story of everyday courage highlights the life of a Jewish teen in occupied France. Rachel Cohen must change her name to Catherine Colin and go into hiding. As she moves from safe house to safe house, she captures her journey in photographs as a way to hang on to her identity and her hopes for the future. I was so moved by Rachel’s story, which is largely based on the life of the author’s mother. This is an excellent graphic novel for middle grade (and beyond!) readers who want to learn more about resistance and preserving history on the home front.”

—Julia Steiner, The Book Cellar, Chicago, IL



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## Clean Getaway

By Nic Stone

“Stone takes on the ugly realities of the Jim Crow laws, family stories untold, and love so deep and powerful it’ll make you cry through your smile. Mind you, this is also a hilarious book. William ‘Scoob’ Lamar is on lockdown at home by a dad who refuses to hear his side of why he hit that kid at school, so when his G’ma invites him to her brand new mobile home, he’s all in, even leaving his phone behind so he doesn’t have to hear his dad yell. But when G’ma pulls out her ‘treasure box’ and the *Traveler’s Green Book*, Scoob realizes this trip may be more than he bargained for. Brilliant weaving of historical realities into a funny, heartbreaking coming-of-age. Welcome to middle grade, Nic!”

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



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## Diana: Princess of the Amazons

By Shannon Hale, Dean Hale, Victoria Ying (Illus.)

“Diana lives on the island of Themyscira, home to the Amazons. She is the only child among these grown-up, powerful, incredible women, so to ward off loneliness, she makes a duplicate of herself out of sand and clay. When her ‘twin’ comes to life, Diana is extremely happy to finally have someone her own age to do things with. But all is not as it seems. Her double is actually the evil nemesis of the Amazons and their friendship puts her and all the Amazons in great peril. This book enforces how easy it is to let ourselves be deceived by what looks good.”

—Pat Trotter, Bookends on Main, Menomonie, WI



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## Fearless Felines: 30 True Tales of Courageous Cats

By Kimberlie Hamilton

“What a fun and informative book! Not only do we have some great stories about cats, we also learn some superstitions and fun facts. Beautifully illustrated and a must for cat lovers.”

—Debbie Buck, Vintage Books, Vancouver, WA



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## The Fowl Twins

By Eoin Colfer

“Eoin Colfer’s spinoff to his wildly popular Artemis Fowl series will grab readers and make them sit up straight and pay attention. The writing is both witty and informative, the plot never slows down, and the characters—both good and bad—are at the top of their games. Fans of the exploits of the Fowl family will most assuredly gobble this up and beg for more.”

—Tanya Parker Mills, The Book Bungalow, St. George, UT



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## The Ghost in Apartment 2R

By Denis Markell

“*The Ghost in Apartment 2R* confidently straddles the line between spooky and funny, spine-chilling and heart-warming. I got goosebumps! Multiple times! But they were always offset by the arrival of dawn and the charming shenanigans of Danny’s parents and friends. Just as Danny’s life is inextricably tied to the history of his diverse Brooklyn neighborhood—which is slowly being transformed by encroaching gentrification—the ghost’s terror and trauma are tied to this earthly place. Markell writes about Brooklyn, its history, and its people with the warmth and affection only a native could achieve, while also crafting a stellar ghost story that kept me hooked from beginning to end. I can’t wait to start shoving this book in readers’ hands.”

—Abby Rauscher, Books Are Magic, Brooklyn, NY



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## Go With the Flow

By Karen Schneemann, Lily Williams

“This period-positive story is fantastic. Letting teenagers experience and understand that menstruation is a natural occurrence and not something to be ashamed of is an important step in the journey toward gender equality. This graphic novel is about menstruation and activism, but it is wrapped up in a wonderful story about friendship. A great read for pre-teens and teens who love realistic graphic novels like those by Raina Telgemeier and Teri Libenson.”

—Sandy Scott, The Galaxy Bookshop, Hardwick, VT



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## Martin McLean, Middle School Queen

By Alyssa Zaczek

“Middle school seems daunting to shy and insecure Martin. To complicate his life, he’s starting to wonder if he *like* likes girls or boys, and the class bully keeps making digs about him being gay. Is he? He doesn’t know and can’t talk to anyone about his feelings. The one place he shines is Mathletes... until he discovers drag. Cue the Celia Cruz tunes and Martin’s feeling confident and happy. But becoming a middle-school drag queen will not be without some crazy drama. A wonderful, laugh-out-loud debut.”

—Ellen Richmond, Children’s Book Cellar, Waterville, ME



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## Race to the Sun

By Rebecca Roanhorse

“Nizhoni Begay is a heroine you won’t soon forget! Roanhorse delves into Native American mythology with glee as Nizhoni learns about her heritage and what it takes to become a hero. With a colorful cast of characters—Mr. Yazzie the horned toad being a personal favorite—it’s a race to the sun god for mythical weapons so Nizhoni and company can free her father from a tyrannical monster (who also happens to be an oil baron).”

—Sami Thomason, Square Books, Oxford, MS



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## Shine!

By J.J. and Chris Grabenstein

“Growing up can be tough, especially when your superstar mom died when you were young and you have to figure out how to shine at the private school where your dad now teaches. You miss your old friends, especially when Ainsley seems to be turning everyone against you. *Shine!* by husband and wife J.J. and Chris Grabenstein is a charming novel about the highs and lows of growing up and what it takes to truly shine!”

—Marilyn Robbins, BookBar, Denver, CO



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## Sisterland

By Salla Simukka, Owen Frederick Witesman (Trans.)

"*Sisterland* is gorgeous, lush, and dreamy, with the atmosphere of the fairy tales we all know and love. It's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, but for this generation. A beautiful exploration of friendship and the way children forget, of bravery and the beauty of remembering."

—Megan Szmyd, Old Firehouse Books, Fort Collins, CO



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## Sunnyside Plaza

By Scott Simon

"When the residents of Sunnyside Plaza—a group home for adults with developmental disabilities—start unexpectedly dying, a young woman must work with the other Sunnysiders to figure out what's happening. Scott Simon's characters are instantly emotionally engaging and their resiliency and determination to help and protect each other will have readers of all ages deeply invested in their story."

—Colin Sneed, Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, NC



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## That's What Friends Do

By Cathleen Barnhart

"It's been a while since I read a middle-grade book, but this bittersweet tale of adolescent friendship was certainly worth making an exception for. The relationships are messy and complicated, and while parents and peers 'just don't understand,' the novel doesn't try to paint miscommunication as an insurmountable part of growing up, but rather a problem to be rectified. This is a tale of self-discovery and shame, of realizing your parents aren't perfect and you aren't either, and an important book for anyone who has ever lost a friend or wondered why things can't stay the same forever. If you're looking for catharsis, *That's What Friends Do* will deliver."

—Reid Wilson, Prairie Pages Bookseller, Pierre, SD



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



## Voyage of the Frostheart

By Jamie Littler

"I love a good, cold read on a hot day. What better way to spend it than with the crew of the *Frostheart*? When Ash and his new friends set out on a mission to find his family, we get to go along for a wild, chilly adventure in the imaginative landscape Littler has created. Keep sailing, *Frostheart*."

—Rosemary Pugliese, Malaprop's Bookstore/Café, Asheville, NC



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## The Map From Here to There

By Emery Lord

"I absolutely adored this book. Emery Lord really understands what it is to be a teenager, especially one with anxiety. All of the overthinking, the nervous energy, the panic that goes on inside Paige's head over the drama surrounding college and boys and friendship is so relatable. I desperately wanted her to succeed despite her flaws, because Paige Hancock is an authentic teenager. This book is cute and funny, and it sometimes made me want to rip my hair out from sheer relatability. The romance between Max and Paige was my favorite part of the book, because Lord didn't shy away from the stumbles that come with first loves. I wish I'd had this one a few years ago!"

—Ava Tusek, Second Star to the Right Children's Books, Denver, CO

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## Not So Pure and Simple

By Lamar Giles

"What *The Hate U Give* did for opening up a conversation with teens about police brutality and racial profiling, *Not So Pure and Simple* does for toxic masculinity. This story is hilarious, honest, and more necessary than I know how to put into words. Giles is able to paint the normalcy of toxic masculinity in all its minute idiosyncrasies without it feeling like a beat-you-over-the-head-I'm-trying-to-teach-you-something story. He shows the layers to a problem that's been built by generations of men just passing on the habits, expectations, and advice of the men before them. And he does so through the beautifully flawed—although he doesn't know he's flawed—Del. Everyone needs to read this book."

—Claire Phelan, Third Place Books, Lake Forest Park, WA

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## Reverie

By Ryan La Sala

"A joyfully queer fantasy thriller! Kane has no memory of what led up to the accident at the old mill or why he would have done the things the police are accusing him of. As he tries to figure out what's going on (with the help and hindrance of three classmates claiming to be his friends), the world starts dissolving into dreams called reveries. And someone is benefitting from them. Can Kane and his maybe-friends figure out how to keep that someone from destroying the world? Exciting, romantic, and truly original."

—Lillian Tschudi-Campbell, Red Balloon Bookshop, St. Paul, MN

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## Scavenge the Stars

By Tara Sim

"*Scavenge the Stars* is a bold, gender-bent retelling of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Told from dual points of view, the story follows one woman's quest for vengeance against an entire world that has wronged her. Moray is a gilded city, with deep-rooted depravity lurking just underneath the glittering surface. Revenge and a romance built on lies make this tempest of a novel one you will never want to put down!"

—Laura Graveline, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX

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## Tweet Cute

By Emma Lord

"This is an adorable debut from new young adult romance author Emma Lord that follows Pepper and Jack as they navigate high school, parents, New York City, and a life-or-death Twitter war. When her mom asks her to respond to a tweet claiming the family restaurant empire stole a recipe from a small local diner, Pepper counts it as just another frustrating thing on her to-do list; Jack is just defending his family's small business and grandmother's recipe when he takes on the Twitter war. The two learn more about themselves and each other as they tweet in defense of their families. An unputdownable first novel for anyone craving a delicious morsel!"

—Annie Carl, The Neverending Bookshop, Edmonds, WA



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## What I Carry

By Jennifer Longo

"Muir is in the final year of foster care before she ages out. She has to focus and prepare for the time when she's on her own, but in her last placement she runs into problems—problems with names like Kira, Sean, and Francine. Muir needs let go of her rules and open her heart. Longo has crafted a great story that engages as well as educates. I loved it!"

—Laura Cummings, White Birch Books, North Conway, NH



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## Where the World Ends

By Geraldine McCaughrean

"This is a book about stories as much as it is about survival. Eight boys find themselves trapped on a sea stack four miles from home when their return boat fails to come for them. As the boys struggle to survive, narrator Quill begins to tell the boys stories in order to get them through the long months. An amazing story itself, *Where the World Ends* is chilling and beautiful. I was captivated to the last page."

—Katherine Nazzaro, Trident Booksellers & Café, Boston, MA



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## Winterwood

By Shea Ernschaw

"In this spine-tingling young adult novel, Nora Walker is the last in a long line of witches but has never found her magic. She lives a quiet life across the lake from a camp for wayward boys. With the arrival of each full moon (and only at the full moon), she ventures into the darkest, most dangerous part of the woods, where she finds lost things. This time, the lost thing she finds is a boy. Very atmospheric and full of surprises."

—Lisa Wright, Oblong Books and Music, Millerton, NY



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