



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

Stepping Stones

By Lucy Knisley

“Following her parents’ separation, Jen moves with her mom from the city to a small country farm. But Jen would rather be reading or drawing than caring for chickens, let alone answering to her mom’s annoying boyfriend, Walter, and she really doesn’t want to work the farm stand with Walter’s two daughters. Andy and Reese are so perfect, Jen can’t seem to do anything right. But one step at a time, the farm—and their blended family—finally starts to feel like home. I adore Lucy Knisley, and I’m so excited that she’s sharing her pitch-perfect voice with middle readers in this story inspired by her childhood! Fans of Raina Telgemeier, rejoice!”

—Mary Wahlmeier, Raven Book Store, Lawrence, KS



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Stay Gold

By Tobly McSmith

“Pony and Georgia will steal your heart in this gentle gem of an #OwnVoices contemporary young adult novel about a transgender teen who wants his body to match his identity and the girl who slowly but steadily falls for him. *Stay Gold* is one of those rare novels that reads easily and has comic romantic appeal, but punches hard realism into your gut. Reminiscent of the nuanced storytelling in K.A. Holt’s *Redwood and Ponytail*, the novel is both accessible and humorous, yet deeply moving and emotional as *Pony and Georgia* balance being true to themselves with the often-destructive expectations of family and friends. Hopeful, heartfelt, and very needed.”

—Joy Preble, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX



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The Extraordinaire

By TJ Klune

“*The Extraordinaries* is a superhero story that abounds with character. From the dynamic narration that captures Nick’s perspective with ease to the very believable teen characters, this is a fun read for fans of Becky Albertalli and Marie Lu. I laughed, I cried, and I am ready for more.”

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



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Clap When You Land

By Elizabeth Acevedo

“What happens when you find out you have a sister you never knew about over a thousand miles away? Camino and Yahaira Rios are both about to find out. When their father perishes in a plane crash carrying him from New York City to the Dominican Republic, both girls discover each other’s existence, kept a secret from them by their shared father. What follows is a story of love, loss, grief, and everything in between. Elizabeth Acevedo continues to wow with her words, never once letting up on the emotional gas pedal. *Clap When You Land* is sure to stick with you well beyond the last page.”

—Heather Hill, Changing Hands, Tempe, AZ



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Burn Our Bodies Down

By Rory Power

“Power’s second novel has prose sharp enough to carve your heart out and a plot that aims to do just that. While there are supernatural elements at play in the novel, the keenest pain in the story comes from the very human relationships between the members of Margot’s small, splintered family. The complex web of love, resentment, isolation, possession, and fear that binds the Nielsen family is brought to life in all its terrible brilliance by Power’s unique voice. The horror elements serve to further amplify the dark and desperate emotions at the core of the story, creating something truly unlike any other YA novel I’ve read.”

—Kay Witherow, Parnassus Books, Nashville, TN



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The Unadoptables

By Hana Tooke

“This endearing debut introduces five supposedly unadoptable orphans—Milou, Sem, Lotta, Egg, and Fenna—who were abandoned as infants at the Little Tulip Orphanage in late-19th-century Holland. When the cruel matron sees an opportunity to sell the unadoptables to an unsavory character, the children hatch a plan to escape the orphanage—and along the way discover the truth about their past. With echoes of Dickens and Hans Christian Andersen stories, this book has something for everyone!”

—Anna Millsaps, bbg books, Richmond, VA



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Date Me, Bryson Keller

By Kevin van Whye

“*Date Me, Bryson Keller* is a gloriously satisfying gay teen coming-of-age love story with characters you’ll think about long after you put the book down (and you won’t want to put it down until you’ve read every word—I didn’t). The narrator, the closeted, gay, mixed-race Kai Sheridan, impulsively takes advantage of a dare to ask out ultra-popular Bryson Keller, who has been dared to spend each week dating the first person who asks him out on Monday morning. Could this possibly lead to the real thing? Highly recommended.”

—Carol Schneck Varner, Schuler Books, Okemos, MI



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Private Lessons

By Cynthia Salaysay

“Beautifully written, musical, and lyrical, *Private Lessons* is a coming-of-age novel that pulled at my heartstrings. Claire’s relationship with her mother and father had me weeping early on in the book, and I admired and understood her drive to escape her suburban life. Her Filipino heritage is a part of the story but doesn’t define her, and the microaggressions that she faces are just like real life—cutting but ultimately unnoticed by anyone but the target. The lens of Claire’s journey is beautiful and brilliant and I enjoyed reading about her growing up.”

—Jackie Jou, Mysterious Galaxy Books, San Diego, CA



Find out more about this book and others at WWW.INDIEBOUND.ORG



Soaked!

By Abi Cushman

"Sometimes we just need pure fun, and this book is it. The illustrations are wonderful, the characters have a depth that only a fine author and illustrator can produce, and I am looking for some hula hoops for a totally fun event! Awesome!"

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



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Llama Unleashes the Alpacalypse

By Jonathan Stutzman, Heather Fox (Illus.)

"Funny and relatable. Who doesn't like a well-balanced breakfast but could do without the well-balanced mess it creates? In this hilarious sequel to *Llama Destroys the World*, Jonathan Stutzman once again regales readers with Llama's misadventures...this time involving his good friend Alpaca. Heather Fox's illustrations perfectly bring to life that lovable polymath, Llama."

—Amanda Kothe, Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Cincinnati, OH



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After Squidnight

By Jonathan Fenske

"This might be my new favorite picture book! A wonderfully weird and completely hilarious story about the power of art and squids. Beautifully illustrated, full of great rhymes, and topped off with the perfect amount of creepy—I loved every ink-soaked page."

—Zach Claypole White, Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, NC



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Chicken Little: The Real and Totally True Tale

By Sam Wedelich

"My son is OBSESSED with Chicken! He asks to read *Chicken Little* over and over again, and he also loves the sky. A fun story, great illustrations, and a great way to spark conversations about fact-checking and the dangers of spreading misinformation."

—Sarah Krammen, Dragonfly Books, Decorah, IA



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AGES 4 TO 8 FOR AGES 4 TO 8 **FOR AGES 4 TO 8** FOR AGES 4 TO 8

Doctor Who: The Runaway TARDIS

By Kim Smith

"This is a cute introduction into the world of *Doctor Who* for the children in your life. With bright, fun cartoon illustrations, it is something that everyone can enjoy flipping through. There is a great storyline about how it is okay to say goodbye to old friends, and to make new ones as well. Plus, you have the fun of seeing the power of peanut butter sandwiches. I loved reading this book and look forward to sharing it with my niece, who also happens to love peanut butter sandwiches."

—Markie Rustad, Ballast Book Company, Bremerton, WA



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A Family for Louie

By Alexandra Thompson

"Louie is a dog with taste, and his daily restaurant outings are all a dog could ever want... right? But there's one thing missing: a family to share his feast with. It's not so easy to find a family that shares his sophisticated diet, or one that operates at the same pace as Louie. He considers giving up, but then he finds a very special young person who might be just right. Adorable, humorous, and classy. I would love to go to brunch with this little buddy!"

—Andrew King, University Book Store, Seattle, WA



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First Day Critter Jitters

By Jory John, Liz Climo (Illus.)

"These critters have the jitters. They each have their own worries, as we do, but they also find out that worries don't need to be shouldered alone. A great, fun, first-day-of-school picture book. Plus, the illustrations by Liz Climo are so light, fresh, and happy, they help ease the anxiety, too!"

—Jenny Lyons, The Vermont Book Shop, Middlebury, VT



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Gustavo, the Shy Ghost

By Flavia Z. Drago

"I want to be Gustavo's friend! This shy ghost would like for someone to be his friend, if only he could bring himself to appear and talk to someone! Flavia Z. Drago's beautiful illustrations help tell such a wonderful story."

—Clarissa Hadge, Trident Booksellers & Café, Boston, MA



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Lift

By Minh Lê, Dan Santat (Illus.)

“Iris has a cure for when she’s feeling a bit down: pushing elevator buttons! One day, Iris discovers a magic button that will take her to wondrous places. She can’t wait to go exploring, but something holds her back, and Iris soon realizes that sharing this magical discovery makes it all the better. *Lift* is an uplifting picture book full of heart and imagination. When you hear that elevator ding, where do you want to go?”

—Jen Steele, Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, WI

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Lone Wolf

By Sarah Kurpiel

“A super fun book about a husky who decides to try to be a wolf after everyone keeps saying she looks like a one. With some real facts about wolves and dogs and fun illustrations, this is the perfect book for your young dog lover. Heartwarming and funny—I highly recommend this cute picture book!”

—Danica Ramgoolam, Townie Books, Crested Butte, CO

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The Night Is for Darkness

By Jonathan Stutzman, Joseph Kuefler (Illus.)

“Readers join a father driving home with his son and daughter at night as they notice wildlife, the night sky, and sights and sounds that are part of the world of darkness. They arrive home to meet their mother and begin bedtime rituals, complete with brushing teeth, saying prayers, and listening to stories. *The Night Is for Darkness* is a story told in lyrical rhythm and rhyme accompanied by appealing illustrations. This bedtime story has a peaceful and reassuring feel that makes it a great addition to any young child’s library.”

—Ann Niedzielski, Beagle and Wolf Books & Bindery, Park Rapids, MN

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The Ocean in Your Bathtub

By Seth Fishman, Isabel Greenberg (Illus.)

“This brightly illustrated story reminds everyone of their place in the water cycle. Tons of information fills the pages without feeling overwhelming. I loved the tone and design on this one—there’s something for everyone to learn, whether they live near the ocean or far away.”

—Dwan Dawson-Tape, Sundog Books, Santa Rosa Beach, FL

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Our Friend Hedgehog: The Story of Us

By Lauren Castillo

"In the gentle tradition of *Winnie the Pooh*, this book weaves together the adventures of several woodland creatures (and one human). Hedgehog leaves her cozy, comfy island to look for her beloved friend, who was blown away in a storm. Tense moments quickly pass due to Hedgehog's perseverance and strength. A sweet beginning to a new series!"

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

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Sheep Dog and Sheep Sheep: Baaad Hair Day

By Eric Barclay

"Sheep Sheep finds sidesplittingly funny ways to avoid shearing day even though Sheep Dog assures her it's for the best. A hilarious follow-up to the laugh-out-loud funny *Sheep Dog and Sheep Sheep*. 'Water chickens' may be the best thing ever."

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

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Tad

By Benji Davies

"Growing up, my brother and I would always go looking for frog eggs in ponds during the spring and summer, then watch them evolve into tadpoles and frogs. Benji Davies illustrates this life cycle while telling a thrilling tale about Tad, a tadpole who is just a little smaller than all the others and might need to escape a giant fish—or else. The bold illustrations will draw kids in!"

—Nikki Silvestrini, Zenith Bookstore, Duluth, MN

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The Starkeeper

By Faith Pray

"What a gorgeously illustrated book about the power of kindness! This book shows kids that no matter how small or inexperienced, they are able to effect real and important change in our world just by being kind."

—Melissa Taylor, E. Shaver, Bookseller, Savannah, GA

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What About Worms!? (Elephant & Piggie Like Reading!)

By Ryan T. Higgins, Mo Willems

"Hilarious! I love how this book tackles worry in a way that is funny and hopeful. Although there are big things in life to worry about, especially when kids are small, maybe they don't need to seem SO scary. The pacing, humor, and rhythm of the story all come together into one great picture book. Well done!"

—Izzy Stringham, Bookbinders Basalt, Basalt, CO

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Doodleville

By Chad Sell

"A fascinating premise combines with Chad Sell's signature empathy in a sweet story about self-expression and friendship. Sell clearly admires both kids and the communal nature of art. A diverse cast of characters and a nuanced, compassionate view of childhood anxiety make this graphic novel stand out from its peers."

—Olivia Morris, Harvard Book Store, Cambridge, MA

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Dress Coded

By Carrie Firestone

"After her friend gets unfairly targeted for a dress code violation, Molly Frost decides to start a podcast... and ends up starting a revolution. In her crusade to eliminate the school dress code, she and her friends discover what true friendship is all about. What an incredibly timely and important book! Firestone perfectly captures the problems of enforcing a strict dress code on young people, from stressing over the expense of school-appropriate clothing to being targeted for wearing normal clothes while having a developed body. This should be required reading in schools."

—Rachel Copeland, Boswell Book Company, Milwaukee, WI

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Five Things About Ava Andrews

By Laura Knetzger

By Margaret Dilloway

"Ava Andrews is starting her sixth-grade year alone. Struggling with both a crippling anxiety and heart condition, she is lost without her best friend beside her. Somehow, she finds herself in an improvisation group and, perhaps more surprisingly, part of a grassroots activist movement to save a historic community. This book shows just how strong you can be when you believe in yourself, your passion, and your potential!"

—Lindsey Howard, Lark and Owl Booksellers, Georgetown, TX

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The Girl and the Witch's Garden

By Erin Bowman

"Erin Bowman has perfectly captured both the magic and loneliness of being a kid. A creepy house, a daring rescue, a magic portal, a secret garden—this book has everything that the best books of my childhood had. The characters are vibrant and real, and their problems take more than magic to solve—though the magic definitely helps!"

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



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I Hate Reading: How to Read When You'd Rather Not

By Beth Bacon

"*I Hate Reading* is pure genius! Its bold, intriguing title and cover grab readers immediately. It is full of kid-endorsed advice for those who prefer not to read but are forced to. This wildly appealing gem is great fun—and a reminder that kids become eager readers one terrific book at a time. *I Hate Reading* is the perfect start."

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



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Kerry and the Knight of the Forest

By Andi Watson

"When Kerry gets lost in the forest while trying to find medicine for his sick parents, he has to figure out how to get home and who to trust to help show him the way. Friendship, trust, betrayal, and finding yourself are all common themes in this lovely graphic novel. An adventurous story with a heartfelt ending."

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



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Kiki's Delivery Service

By Eiko Kadono

"*Kiki's Delivery Service* is one of my favorite animated films, and reading this book allowed me to revisit the story with brand new eyes. I loved the clear writing, charming pictures, and varied adventures Kiki got up to. While different to the film in many ways, this book is just as wonderful and beautifully told."

—Donna Liu, The Reading Bug, San Carlos, CA



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The One and Only Bob

By Katherine Applegate, Patricia Castelao (Illus.)
(HarperCollins, 9780062991317, \$18.99)

“Revisit the world of Ivan, Ruby, and Bob, but this time with Bob as the central character of a story that is just as heartwarming as *The One and Only Ivan*. Bob’s wry sense of humor, compassion for all animals, and love for his friends makes this another hit by Applegate.”

—Pam Page, pages: a bookstore, Manhattan Beach, CA



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Pages & Co.: The Lost Fairy Tales

By Anna James, Paola Escobar (Illus.)

“During a trip to Paris to visit Oskar’s father, Tilly and Oskar ignore the warnings from Tilly’s grandparents and wander into a collection of fairy tales... but nothing is normal inside these stories. Back at the London Underlibrary, new head librarian Melville Underwood is trying to bind books and restrict access to Bookwandering. Both Tilly and Oskar, along with Tilly’s grandparents and former librarian Amelia, are determined to find a way to stop him. Can they do it before it’s too late?”

—Rebecca Minnock, Murder by the Book, Houston, TX



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Rise of ZomBert

By Kara LaReau, Ryan Andrews

“What would you do if you found a stray cat in a dumpster? Would you take it home knowing your parents don’t approve of pets of any kind? Well, that’s exactly what Mellie does, keeping it hidden from her parents. Little does she know that the cat has escaped from an experimental lab. And before long, the mystery—and the chase—is on!”

—Judith Lafitte, Octavia Books, New Orleans, LA



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Something to Say

By Lisa Moore Ramée

“Speaking up about changing a school’s name may sound like a dry topic, but under Lisa Moore’s Ramée’s deft hand, the reader is thrown into the middle of an important topic as seen through the eyes of one of the shyest activists they’ll ever confront. I loved this warm book of social justice and heart!”

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



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The Time of Green Magic

By Hilary McKay

"Hilary McKay is a funny, heart-grabbing, rollicking master of middle-grade family stories. If you love books like *The Penderwicks* or *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street*, *The Time of Green Magic* is your next favorite. In this story, McKay blends the complications of a big, new blended family, a wondrous house, and magic that may be a little more dangerous than anyone expects at first."

—Alex Schaffner, Brookline Booksmith, Brookline, MA



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Tornado Brain

By Cat Patrick

"A mutual friend goes missing and twin sisters Frankie, a young teen on the spectrum, and popular Tess try to solve the mystery. The loyalty of sisters, friendship, and acceptance all come into play in this well-written and engaging book."

—Marlene Craig, The Well-Read Moose, Coeur d'Alene, ID



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We Dream of Space

By Erin Entrada Kelly

"*We Dream of Space* transports us back to the weeks leading up to the space shuttle *Challenger's* disastrous launch on January 28, 1986, and follows three siblings struggling to navigate the turbulence of middle school and family life. This heartbreaking yet hopeful novel about enduring tragedy will resonate with middle schoolers and with adults who remember this traumatic event. It's the perfect read for these challenging times."

—Alyssa Raymond, Copper Dog Books, Beverly, MA



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Yorick and Bones

By Jeremy Tankard, Hermione Tankard

"This is the first book in a rib-tickling and heartfelt graphic novel series about the unlikely friendship between an Elizabethan-era skeleton and the modern-day dog who digs him up. Yorick is a hilarious and thoughtful protagonist, and Tankard's newspaper-cartoon-style drawings are a delightful addition to such a fun and funny story!"

—Laura Graveline, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX



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Forged in Fire and Stars

By Andrea Robertson

"In one word: exciting. From the beginning, this adventure/chosen-one story brings three teens together who must fight to save their country from a people who worship a dark and demanding god. *Very Lord of the Rings* meets *Game of Thrones* meet *Vikings*. I loved it!"

—Lauren Nopenz Fairley, Curious Iguana, Frederick, MD



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Hard Wired

By Len Vlahos

"You think you've got problems? Try imagining you're a sentient supercomputer, the first of its kind, suddenly realizing what or who you are. That's what Len Vlahos does with cleverness, suspense, and wit in *Hard Wired*. The result is a provocative, entertaining, fast-paced novel that explores not just the complex relationship between man and machine but what it means to be human."

—Bradley Graham, Politics and Prose Bookstore, Washington, DC



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Heartstopper: Volume 1

By Alice Oseman

"After being forced out of the closet last year, Charlie is 'the gay kid' at his boys' school. The bullying has pretty much stopped, but now he has other problems—like his crush on his cute (straight) classmate Nick. Nick is a rugby star, and though he's nice, he couldn't possibly be interested in someone like Charlie, especially since Nick already has a crush on a girl... right? A sweet story about teen friendship and love that will melt your heart the same way *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* did."

—Melissa Oates, Fiction Addiction, Greenville, SC



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House of Dragons

By Jessica Cluess

"First: dragons. Need I say more? Fine; then let's throw five competitors from rival houses into a top-secret competition for the emperor's throne where only one will emerge victorious... and the others will die. But this time the calling seems to have gone terribly wrong, and the candidates range from a stablehand to a bastard to a girl with illegal magic. Yet none can escape their fate, and so the games begin. There will be betrayal, there will be blood, and there will be fire. Cluess has created a sweeping start to a series that is sure to enthrall fans everywhere."

—Cailey Neuschaefer, Bookmarks, Winston-Salem, NC



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The Montague Twins: The Witch's Hand

By Nathan Page, Drew Shannon (Illus.)

"What a perfect book for summer! *The Montague Twins* is a modern take on the *Hardy Boys* and the '60s. This graphic novel expertly mixes magic, detective skills, madcap adventure, brotherhood, and friendship. One of the most fun reading experiences I have had in a while—highly recommended!"

—Chelsea Bauer, Union Avenue Books, Knoxville, TN



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Parachutes

By Kelly Yang

"This is a must-read! The overarching themes of this book are: 1) What it means to make decisions based on prejudice (you didn't know you had); 2) Figuring out the right way to handle a difficult situation within a relationship; and 3) Standing your ground and doing the right thing, even if it doesn't bring about the desired result. The characters are beautifully developed. One can feel the joy, anger, agony, and hope leaping off the pages."

—Jody Everett, Beanbag Books, Delaware, OH



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Today Tonight Tomorrow

By Rachel Lynn Solomon

"With pitch-perfect teenage twitterpation and whip-smart repartee, Solomon puts a 21st-century spin on the classic 'frenemies become lovers' romance. But this is more than a romance—it's also about what it means to be a true friend and how to stand up for yourself. It features a city-wide scavenger hunt through Seattle that will make you want to plan a trip yourself."

—Sam Miller, Carmichael's Bookstore, Louisville, KY



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We Are Not From Here

By Jenny Torres Sanchez

"This tale will grab you, get under your fingernails, and not let go, so vivid is the story of these three friends on a harrowing journey to save themselves. This story is ripped from the headlines and extraordinary in its depiction of kids running from their country's violence, depredation, and hopelessness. The sometimes-unthinkable events are also tempered with the hope and humanity of kind people along the way. Traveling from Honduras to the promised land of the U.S., your eyes will be opened and your heart will plead for our nation to see these children and treat them with compassion."

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



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