



WINTER 2020-2021 Kids' Next



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

Amari and the Night Brothers

By B.B. Alston

“What a breath of fresh air! This absorbing new middle reader takes you on the kind of exhilarating adventure as only you would find when stepping through the wardrobe to Narnia. With a whole lot of heart—and some guts to boot—in this book, you might well find yourself cheering (with wild abandon) alongside the ever-so-plucky antagonist, Amari, whose spirit shines brighter than any magic wand would. This might easily become the next big #BlackGirlMagic series of the year!”

—Colleen Ross, Books Inc., San Francisco, CA



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The Cousins

By Karen M. McManus

“Another stellar mystery by Karen McManus, who doesn’t miss a beat as she takes on summer vacation rather than the schoolroom. When three cousins are summoned to meet their long-estranged (and incredibly wealthy) grandmother, they unearth more than just a family conspiracy. The Story family more than lives up to its name in this twisty and completely unpredictable thriller.”

—Sami Thomason, Square Books, Oxford, MS



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A Vow So Bold and Deadly

By Brigid Kemmerer

“It’s finally here! I was almost afraid to read the third book in The Cursebreaker series because my expectations could not have been higher. I am pleased to report that *A Vow So Bold and Deadly* delivers! Alternating among the point of view of each of the four main characters, this book continues the breathless pace of the series. My only critique is that the book had to come to an end (and what a satisfying end!), forcing me to leave the world Brigid Kemmerer has created. If you haven’t encountered this series yet, do yourself a favor and get your hands on the first book! I promise you’ll become just as addicted as I am.”

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



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The Sea in Winter

By Christine Day

“Christine Day has written a powerful #OwnVoices middle-grade novel about a Makah/Piscataway girl slowly recovering from a ballet injury. Maisie’s struggles with depression, anxiety, and loneliness, as well as her humor, perseverance, and ability to find love and support, will resonate strongly with middle schoolers and with adults. *The Sea in Winter* is a love letter to all of us right now as we suffer the loss of our pre-COVID lives and figure out how to stay resilient and hopeful in these scary and uncertain times.”

—Alyssa Raymond, Copper Dog Books, Beverly, MA



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The ABCs of Black History

By Rio Cortez, Lauren Semmer (Illus.)

"This beautiful and bold book should be on every child's shelf. It illustrates Black history through words and images that highlight both the challenges and achievements of Black Americans. The bold colors and simple rhymes will keep kids engaged while covering deep topics. A wonderful introduction for kids."

—Kristin Saner, Fables Books, Goshen, IN



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The Enigma Game

By Elizabeth Wein

"Elizabeth Wein yet again humanizes history by taking the true story of the Allies capturing the first enigma machine in World War II and using that background to tell the deeply personal stories of three disparate young people who find each other in the midst of war. With characters familiar and new, Wein's story captures both the danger and turbulence of a world at war, and the moments of happiness that still emerge in spite of that."

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



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Instant Karma

By Marissa Meyer

"This is a delightful YA contemporary romance with a touch of magic and a deep dive into environmental issues that impact the ocean and its animals. Prudence is an overachiever who has not yet found a cause that she can throw herself into. Her nemesis, Quint, is an underachiever whose mom owns a rescue center for hurt sea life. Sparks fly and wills clash as these two go from fighting each other to fighting for each other and the ocean they both love. Throw in a little bit of karma and you have a fun read."

—Cara Dyne-Gores, Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Cincinnati, OH



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Soulswift

By Megan Bannen

"This book made me cry. It broke my heart right in two. I know that may not sound like a glowing review, but trust me, it is. The best stories are the ones that make us feel so deeply we drown in them. That is what *Soulswift* is. A deep, beautiful, and heartbreaking story that will stay with you forever. You'll love it as you read it and you'll be shaking when it's over, but you wouldn't want it any other way."

—Marielle Orff, Towne Book Center and Wine Bar, Collegeville, PA



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The Valley and the Flood

By Rebecca Mahoney

"Luminous and haunting, Rebecca Mahoney's shimmering debut examines PTSD and grief through a speculative lens that resonates powerfully. It is a sweet sort of ache to watch Rose battle and overcome her trauma. It is addictive to watch the residents of Lotus Valley learn to live amongst their own unnatural ghosts. You will be swept away by this tale."

—Laura Graveline, Brazos Bookstore, Houston, TX



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Eyes That Kiss in the Corners

By Joanna Ho, Dung Ho (Illus.)

"*Eyes That Kiss in the Corners* is a stunning #OwnVoices picture book that highlights a young Asian girl's self-love and appreciation of her eye shape. It is a characteristic that binds her to women across generations in her family. The beautiful prose of Joanna Ho is richly complemented by Dung Ho's vibrant illustrations. This book is a moving tribute to the beauty of diversity both in physical appearance and heritage."

—Audrey Beatty, River Bend Bookshop, Glastonbury, CT



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

Amy Wu and the Patchwork Dragon

By Kat Zhang, Charlene Chua (Illus.)

"After sharing a story about dragons, a teacher encourages their students to draw and create their own, but Amy's dragon doesn't look like any dragon the other kids have ever seen. When she mentions it to her grandmother, Grandma tells her stories about all the dragons that she knows from China, including the slinky, horned ones just like the one in the attic. But how can Amy make it her own? Well, glitter—lots of glitter—helps, and so do her friends. A sweet story about discovering your family tales and making your own mark on them."

—Rene Kirkpatrick, University Book Store, Seattle, WA



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Beak & Ally: Unlikely Friends

By Norm Feuti

"What do you do when a noisy bird named Beak lands on your nose? You'll probably grumble but you just might make a friend. Although (as mentioned) a noisy one. Not to mention one who is loyal and fun to be around (even if they only know one song). A great book about friendship, sticking together, and how sometimes quiet is good, but so is a noisy friend."

—Jeanette Sessions, Northshire Bookstore, Manchester Center, VT



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Benny's True Colors

By Norene Paulson, Anne Passchier (Illus.)

"I definitely believe we need to work on having more inclusive stories featuring real people, but this is genuinely one of my favorite animal allegories for transitioning. Benny is always loved and supported by his community, both the bats who raised him and the butterflies he identifies with. It also approaches the topic of gender affirming surgery in a way that is understandable and not at all scary for young readers. I cannot wait to have this book on our shelves and get it into all of our local schools."

—Stephanie Heinz, Print: A Bookstore, Portland, ME



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The Couch Potato

By Jory John, Pete Oswald (Illus.)

"Jory John is back with another hilarious story filled with a great life lesson and such a unique humor that parents will love it as well! The illustrations by Pete Oswald will make you smile throughout the book. The story delivers an excellent message about balancing activity and screen time and, as always, is hilarious to read out loud."

—Stephanie Cszasz, Books Around the Corner, Gresham, OR



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Counting Creatures

By Julia Donaldson, Sharon King-Chai (Illus.)

"What a gorgeous book! I loved *Animalphabet*, and this goes perfectly on the shelf with it. Did you know that a baby arctic hare is called a leveret? This book taught me that!"

—Tegan Tigani, Queen Anne Book Company, Seattle, WA



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Dear Earth...From Your Friends in Room 5

By Erin Deale, Luisa Uribe (Illus.)

"The students in Room 5 write to their pen pal—the Earth—detailing their yearlong efforts to help improve the environment and decrease their carbon footprint. This is a fun addition for Earth Day and sure to be a hit with teachers!"

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



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Find Fergus

By Mike Boldt

"Oh, Fergus. He just doesn't get hide and seek. After hiding among moose, polar bears, and skinny trees, Fergus finally discovers the perfect hiding place. But when it's time for the game to be over, Fergus is nowhere to be found. Oh, Fergus."

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



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I Love My Teacher

By Giles Andreae, Emma Dodd (Illus.)

"Who didn't grow up thinking their teacher was a superhero? Just seeing them in a store was magical. This story makes that all so real and fun. School should be fun, not scary. A kind, fun teacher makes all the difference, and this book proves it."

—Suzanne Lucey, Page 158 Books, Wake Forest, NC



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The Little Mermaid

By Jerry Pinkney

"A mermaid reclaims her voice in this powerful reimagining of the classic story. Friendship and repairing her seaside kingdom are the mermaid's goals in this gorgeous book starring diverse characters."

—Rae Ann Parker, Parnassus Books, Nashville, TN



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No Reading Allowed: The Worst Read-Aloud Book Ever

By Raj Halder, Chris Carpenter, Bryce Gladfelter (Illus.)

"A fabulous follow-up to *P Is for Pterodactyl!* This book of homonyms is a silly delight for kids of all ages. The best picture books are the ones you want to read slowly to savor all the little details in the word choice and illustrations, and *No Reading Allowed* definitely accomplishes that."

—Lizzy Nanney, Quail Ridge Books, Raleigh, NC



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Oona

By Kelly DiPucchio, Raissa Figueroa (Illus.)

"I am in love with this book: the characters, the storytelling, the art, the message—everything. Oona the mermaid and her best friend, Otto the otter, live in a dreamy ocean world filled with adventure and laughter. Oona has a passion for finding, collecting, and creating, which leads to some serious trouble but also some great problem-solving. It's impossible to finish this book without feeling like you have two new friends—and perhaps a sudden desire to make something fantastic of your own?"

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



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Over the Shop

By Jonaro Lawson, Qin Leng (Illus.)

"This beautiful picture book without words tells a story of welcoming and acceptance. I love that the absence of text allows the reader to make up any story or dialogue they want, and the pictures provide so much to talk about. It would be easy to become so absorbed in this book that the time just passes by."

—Kate Storhoff, Bookmarks, Winston-Salem, NC



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Sylvia and Marsha Start a Revolution!: The Story of the Trans Women of Color Who Made LGBTQ+ History

By Joy Ellison, Teshika Silver (Illus.)

"It makes me feel so good that we are starting to see LGBTQ history written for kids in so many different formats. While it's simplified, this is a great starting point for younger kids to learn about two important icons in American LGBTQ history. I love the supplements in the back for kids to learn more and for parents to talk with their kids about what they read."

—Cass Moskowitz, Books of Wonder, New York, NY



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The Trouble With Penguins

By Rebecca Jordan-Glum

"A roasted marshmallow opens this delightful new friendship story. Atmospheric illustrations beautifully complement this warm-hearted story of community and sharing. Perfect for fans of marshmallows, penguins, and, of course, best friends!"

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



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Wreck This Picture Book

By Keri Smith

"When we look at a worn and frayed book, our first thought isn't that the book wasn't taken care of, it's that it was loved. It's been around. Seen things. *Wreck This Picture Book* joyfully and playfully suggests that books are meant to go with you everywhere, to be companions or accomplices on all your adventures. Books are meant to be loved. Hard."

—Alana Haley, Schuler Books, Grand Rapids, MI



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The Ballad of Tubs Marshfield

By Cara Hoffman

"This is a cute children's book about the environment, the power of music, and the changes we can make if we all come together for a common good. It is a great way to introduce children to activism."

—Gabrielle Belisle, An Unlikely Story, Plainville, MA



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Exploring the White House: Inside America's Most Famous Home

By Kate Andersen Brower

"This fun and informative book is perfect for young history buffs. Middle readers will learn the history of the White House through the lens of the people who lived and worked there over the years, and learn as much about the spouses and children as about the presidents. The best stories come from the hundreds of interviews Brower held with current and former White House staff, many of whom worked there for decades. These staff are amazingly non-partisan in their approach to the job and are dedicated to the families and the institution they serve. Kids and adults will enjoy this exploration, and it will likely spur some kids to start reading biographies of American presidents."

—Shirley Freeman, Bookbug, Kalamazoo, MI



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Fantastic Tales of Nothing

By Alejandra Green, Fanny Rodriguez

"Despite its name, Nothing is a land filled with magic, ancient legends, shapeshifters, and one not-so-ordinary human named Nathan who is about to embark on a quest to save everything (err...Nothing). Alejandra Green and Fanny Rodriguez bring their respective animation and video game design experience to this middle-grade fantasy filled with humor, mystery, adventure, and plenty of action! This dynamic start to a new graphic novel series will appeal to fans of the Amulet and Estranged book series."

—Kinsey Forman, High Five Books, Florence, MA



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Hard-Boiled Bugs for Breakfast: And Other Tasty Poems

By Jack Prelutsky, Ruth Chan (illus.)

"I'm so happy that Jack Prelutsky has gifted us with a new poetry collection! I loved *The New Kid on the Block* and his other books as a kid, and it's such a joy to be able to share Prelutsky's wit and imagination with young ones. Featuring 100 new poems, *Hard-Boiled Bugs for Breakfast* is just what we all need to remind us how important it is to read aloud, laugh, and let our imaginations run wild—especially in such dark times."

—Alyssa Raymond, Copper Dog Books, Beverly, MA



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Katie the Catsitter

By Colleen AF Venable, Stephanie Yue (illus.)

"This graphic novel is perfect for anyone who loves cats! I love a good superhero comic, but this one is extra special in that the line between superhero and supervillain is blurred. Katie is just trying to make enough money to attend camp, but she soon starts to speculate about what her new boss might be doing on her night shift. More than 200 cat sidekicks make this comic a purrfect read!"

—Kate Storhoff, Bookmarks, Winston-Salem, NC



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Legacy: Women Poets of the Harlem Renaissance

By Nikki Grimes

"This incredibly well-constructed book of historical poetry by many women, Golden Shovel poetry by the book's author, and art by Black illustrators is ideal for all ages even though it's listed as a middle-grade book. My kindergartener loved looking at the pictures and talking about what they mean, and I found so much meaning in the Harlem Renaissance poetry as well as in Nikki Grimes' works based on those poems. This is a must-have book for families, school libraries, and educational settings."

—Emily Autenrieth, A Seat at the Table Books, Elk Grove, CA



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Max and the Midnights: Battle of the Bodkins

By Lincoln Peirce

"Max and the crew are back for another fantastic adventure. This time, knight training hasn't gone exactly as Max had expected, and even worse, Byjovia is in trouble again—the Bodkins are returning (you'll learn what a Bodkin is). Will brave Max, Kevyn, Millie, and Simon be able to save the kingdom again? *Battle of the Bodkins* has all of the action, villains, humor, and heart that readers loved in the first Max and the Midnights book. More Max? Yes, please!"

—Christopher Rose, Andover Bookstore, Andover, MA



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The Mouse Watch

By J.J. Gilbert

"Bernie Skampersky, a small-in-stature mouse, wants nothing more in life but to be part of the Mouse Watch, headquartered in New York City but operating all over the world. This conglomeration of mice perform top-secret adventures to keep the world safe. Will Bernie's lifelong dream come true? Reminiscent of Disney's *The Rescuers Down Under*, this is a tale filled with adventure that middle readers and Disney fans of all ages will enjoy."

—Pat Trotter, Bookends on Main, Menomonie, WI



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The Retake

By Jen Calonita

"If you had an app on your phone that could change the future, would you use it? That's exactly what Zoe does. But can anyone really change the future, and would you really want to? When the first day of junior high arrives and Zoe realizes she's losing her best friend, the app is clicked!"

—Judith Lafitte, Octavia Books, New Orleans, LA



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Root Magic

By Eden Royce

"*Root Magic* combines all of the great things about children's books: a vivid setting, adventure, friendship, family love and stability, overcoming hardship, and more than a sprinkling of magic. In Eden Royce's debut novel, we meet Jezebel Turner, an 11-year-old girl of Gullah-Geechee heritage living in the turbulent Jim Crow days of the 1960s in South Carolina. For generations, her family members have been root workers or witch doctors, who harvest cures and powerful medicine from the natural areas around them. When her Uncle Doc decides she and her twin brother, Jay, are old enough to begin learning root work themselves, a series of unforeseen and spooky events challenge them and their family to the core. Royce is a powerful new voice in children's literature!"

—Kelly Barth, Raven Book Store, Lawrence, KS



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Serena Says

By Tanita S. Davis

"I loved watching Serena as she worked toward becoming a YouTuber. She is so brave and put so much effort into making friends even though she's shy. A great read for everyone who is a little nervous to put themselves out there and try something new."

—Haley Butler, Liberty Bay Books, Poulsbo, WA



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Sky Song

By Abi Elphinstone

"The Ice Queen is collecting voices in order to perform some big, sure-to-be-devastating magic, and as her prisoner, Eska knows she has to keep her own voice out of the Ice Queen's hands. When inventor Flint happens to show up while Eska is escaping, she convinces him to help her. Thus starts many journeys—a journey to get help from other people in the kingdom to defeat the Ice Queen, a journey to friendship, and a personal journey for both Eska and Flint as they decide who they want to be. A good, magical story about hope, bravery, and friendship in the face of loss and despair."

—Melissa Oates, Fiction Addiction, Greenville, SC



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Take Back the Block

By Chrystal D. Giles

"What an incredible time to be a middle-grade reader. *Take Back the Block* is a beautiful reminder that more often than not, the most effective, passionate, and honorable activists are barely old enough to drive themselves to rallies for a movement their voices helped create. I love that readers won't just learn about gentrification in this book—they'll learn what empathy and community can accomplish."

—Hannah Oxley, Mystery to Me, Madison, WI



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This Is Your Time

By Ruby Bridges

"This stunning book shares the first-hand account of Ruby Bridges' remarkable story. Though intended for children, adults, too, have much to learn from this civil rights icon."

—Suzanna Hermans, Oblong Books & Music, Millerton, NY



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Unplugged

By Gordon Korman

"As a Silicon Valley billionaire's son, Jett Baranov is completely aware that he can get away with anything short of murder. After one incident too many, his dad ships him off to Oasis, a wellness camp in rural Arkansas. The worst part about it? No electronics of any kind are permitted. While he intends to decimate Oasis by whatever means necessary, he finds himself among a group of other kids his age who are secretly raising a baby alligator they dub Needles for his prickly teeth. As the team works together caring for their forbidden reptile, Jett and his friends find there is more going on at Oasis than meets the eye. Fans of Carl Hiaasen are sure to love *Unplugged*, an uproarious novel full of clever and crafty kids with brave and daring personalities."

—Andrew King, University Book Store, Seattle, WA



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Be Dazzled

By Ryan La Sala

"I absolutely loved this book. Ryan La Sala is one of my favorite authors to follow on social media because he is hilarious, and I'm so happy to know that his humor translates amazingly into his books. I loved Raffy and Luca and their story so much. I don't know much about the world of cosplay, but I loved learning about it through this book! I'll definitely be recommending this to people!"

—Emily Knosher, Read It Again Books, Suwanee, GA



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The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person

By Frederick Joseph

"A great addition to your personal anti-racism shelves and your store's. This book is personal and illuminating, with input from an impressive number of activists and artists covering a range of perspectives in important conversations. Like *Stamped*, this should be required reading beginning with age 12 and going all the way up; although marked for teens, adults will get so much out of it, too. I also recommend it for book clubs and community read programs."

—Tegan Tigani, Queen Anne Book Company, Seattle, WA



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The Camelot Betrayal

By Kiersten White

(Delacorte Press, 9780525581710, \$18.99)

"I loved this sequel to *The Guinevere Deception*. Be prepared for answers, new relationships, and a light shining on Guinevere's past that makes her question everything she thought was the truth. What are these dreams that don't seem to be her own? Why can't she stop thinking about Mordred? Does she belong as Queen of Camelot? All this and more awaits you in *The Camelot Betrayal*."

—Kalli King, Rediscovered Books, Boise, ID



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Chasing Lucky

By Jenn Bennett

"Another incredibly captivating read from Jenn Bennett! The chemistry between Josie and Lucky is palpable as former best friends become quarreling rivals. A picturesque setting in a seaside bookstore makes this a fun and charming read that you won't be able to put down."

—Katie Kenney, Bank Square Books, Mystic, CT



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TEENS FOR TEENS FOR TEENS FOR TEENS FOR TEENS FOR TEE

The Good Girls

By Claire Eliza Bartlett

"Who killed Emma? Was it the perfect, popular, and beautiful cheerleader? The suspects at Emma's high school are like those at every other high school—except one of them is the killer. Nothing is as it seems in this page-turner, which you will want to share with your nemesis and friends!"

—Suzanne Lucey, Page 158 Books, Wake Forest, NC



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Happily Ever Afters

By Elise Bryant

"I loved *Happily Ever Afters*. It's one of those wonderful reads that leaves its readers nose-wrinklingly happy. It's a wonderful exploration of new and old best friends, family dynamics, and the pressure we put on ourselves and on living up to the expectations of others that can sometimes lead to paralysis. This book is absolutely lovely, and I'd easily pick it up to read it again."

—Brittany Bunzey, Read With Me, A Children's Book & Art Shop, Raleigh, NC



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Last Night at the Telegraph Club

By Malinda Lo

"It's 1950s San Francisco and Lily Hu dreams of going to the moon, or at least working on the math that will someday send a human into space. Calculations and equations are simpler than the puzzle of her own identity—especially as she becomes increasingly sure that she's queer. With a new friend who might be like her, Lily finds herself venturing into the San Francisco LGBTQ+ community, falling in love, and hiding it all from her family and friends. But keeping secrets is dangerous, especially as McCarthyism's rise puts Chinese Americans on the defensive. Thoughtful, romantic, and full of descriptions of delicious food, Lily's story is one of intersecting identities and first love."

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



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The Love Curse of Melody McIntyre

By Robin Talley

"Any theater nerd, especially those who enjoyed the epic highs and lows of high school theater, will gobble up this book and enjoy every second. Everything rang so true and felt incredibly real! I adored every character—and found myself listening to the *Les Mis* soundtrack while reading!"

—Abby Bensusky, Old Town Books, Alexandria, VA



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One of the Good Ones

By Maika Moulite, Maritza Moulite

"Maika Moulite and Maritza Moulite have done it again, and more, with their sophomore novel, *One of the Good Ones*. This book kept me up into the early morning hours, furiously flipping pages, needing to know where things would end up for the Smith sisters. The story takes you on a real journey, jumping through history and back again, dissecting race relations in America with an unflinching eye; it is beautifully written, heartbreaking, and disturbing, yet ultimately hopeful. I can't recommend it enough."

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



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Rent a Boyfriend

By Gloria Chao

"Gloria Chao's sophomore novel holds nothing back as it explores the deeply complicated relationship between child, parent, and community. Readers everywhere will see themselves in Chloe as she faces the ultimate decision of living her life with the safety of her parents' approval or risking it all to discover her own path—a path that might even lead to the kind of love she never knew she deserved."

—Stephanie Heinz, Print: A Bookstore, Portland, ME



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These Violent Delights

By Chloe Gong

"A completely unique and 1920s take on the Romeo and Juliet story. I am in love with these characters and the amazing, supernatural Shanghai world Gong created. *These Violent Delights* combines historical relevance, racism, and colonial rule with a rival love story that doesn't start out that way. So gripping and exciting."

—Lauren Nopenz Fairley, Curious Iguana, Frederick, MD



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You Have a Match

By Emma Lord

"I love Emma Lord! Her debut, *Tweet Cute*, was an adorable and wonderfully fun book. *You Have a Match* is the perfect follow-up! Abby has a reasonably normal life. Friends, family, brothers, school, a crush. When she decides to do a DNA test, Abby's entire world is upended as she discovers an older sister that she had no idea existed. Why did her parents give Savannah up for adoption? Is it too late to reconcile with Abby's best friend and crush? Will Abby be able to weather these shifts in her life? Only time, and summer camp, will reveal the answers. I absolutely adored this book and can't wait to read more from Emma!"

—Annie Carl, The Neverending Bookshop, Edmonds, WA



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