Nebraska Golden Sower Award Nominee Titles 2025-2026

A program of Nebraska Library Association

This nominee list is developed by a group of adult volunteers representing teachers and librarians across Nebraska. Local library or school officials are responsible for selecting books from these lists they feel are appropriate for the needs and interests of their patrons or students. **Voting eligibility requires student readers to have read or heard a minimum of four** of the current nominees from a category in which they will be voting: Little Bluestem, Honeybee, Meadowlark, or Bald Eagle.

2025-2026 Little Bluestem Nominees – Primarily intended for grades K-2.

Big by Vashti Harrison, author and illustrator. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2023. ISBN 978-0316353229 [hardcover].
The story follows a young girl with a big laugh, a big heart, and big dreams. Initially, the word "big" is a compliment used to describe her growth, appetite, and accomplishments. However, as she continues to grow, the world around her begins to praise "smallness," making her feel self-conscious, judged, and out of place. After a few hurtful incidents and microaggressions, she learns to push back against the negativity. She reclaims the word "big," ultimately realizing her size, compassion, and presence are beautiful and valid just the way she is.

The Book That Almost Rhymed by Omar Abed, illustrated by Hatem Aly. Dial Books, 2024. ISBN 978-0593406380 [hardcover].
An older brother sits down to read a heroic adventure poem he has written, but his younger sister constantly butts in. Instead of following his carefully constructed verses, she throws in wild, nonsensical changes like a knight riding a rocket or a fire-breathing armadillo, utterly destroying his rhymes

Dog vs. Strawberry by Nelly Buchet, illustrated by Andrea Zuill. Random House Studio, 2024. ISBN 978-0593643129 [hardcover].
When Dog is handed a strawberry from the fruit bowl, she sizes it up, dances around it, and decides she is going to race the Strawberry–and win. She dashes left, then right, then–oh!– over the couch in an attempt to outrun her opponent. Strawberry doesn't move, but that doesn't stop Dog from continuing the race. Eventually, it's neck-and-neck… until mom walks in to see what the fuss is about, and SPLAT!

I Am Stuck by Julia Mills, author and illustrator. Clarion Books, 2023. ISBN 978-0358695332 [hardcover].
"Stuck?" asks Duck. Yep, Turtle is flipped over on his shell and can't seem to get un-stuck. Duck suggests wiggling his feet, Kangaroo wants him to wag his tail, and Armadillo says rolling into a ball always does the trick. But Turtle is STILL. STUCK.
Is there anyone who can help?
This wise and humorous story reminds us that when we're feeling down, sometimes what we need most is a friend by our side—and a deep belly laugh—to help us get back on our feet again.

I Want 100 Dogs by Stacy McAnulty, illustrated by Claire Keane. Chronicle Books, 2023. ISBN 978-1797214405 [hardcover].
A young girl proclaims, "I want 100 dogs." In a twist, her parents agree, but they have just one question: Where will 100 dogs sleep? Our protagonist revises her request to 90 dogs. But how does one walk 90 dogs? A silly, subtractive counting tale and an over-the-top ode to the joys (and woes) of canine company, this sweet and surprising story proves that no matter how boundless your enthusiasm, when it comes to finding the perfect pet, sometimes less really is more.

Mr. S. by Monica Arnaldo, author and illustrator. HarperCollins, 2023. ISBN
It was the first day of school. But even the kindergarteners of room 2B could tell something was seriously wrong...Where was the teacher? Who left this sandwich on the desk? The only clue, written neatly on the chalkboard, were three simple letters: Mr. S. 978-0063003958 [hardcover].

The Red Jacket by Bob Holt, author and illustrator. HarperCollins, 2023. ISBN 978-0063237605 [hardcover].
Bob loves his red jacket. The red jacket makes him feel swanky cool. The red jacket makes other seagulls notice him and even speak to him. But when a wave washes it away, will Bob lose his cool *and* his newfound friends, too? Bob Holt's spare text and humorous artwork come together perfectly in this charmingly humorous tale about a seagull who learns a lesson or two about style, "fitting in," and confidence.

Seals Are Jerks by Jared Chapman, author and illustrator. Orchard Books, 2023. ISBN 978-1338835687 [hardcover].
Seals are Lorelei's favorite animal: they're so cute and cuddly and best buddies with penguins. Well... that's what *she* thought before learning the ugly truth -- some seals EAT penguins! She doesn't want to believe it at first, but she drags Penguin, the classroom guest, and seal whistleblower, to Antarctica to prove Penguin wrong and confront Seal face-to-face. And Seal finally reveals the truth.

The World's Best Class Plant by Audrey Bernick & Liz Garton Scanlon, illustrated by Lynnor Bontigao. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2023. ISBN 978-0525516354 [hardcover].
Room 107 has a cockatiel. Room 108 has a chinchilla. Even the Art Room has a bearded dragon. But in Room 109, Arlo's classroom, there is a plant. A mostly green, hardly growing, never moving plant. Even though it doesn't squeak, whistle, or whimper, Arlo's teacher says the plant is "more than enough excitement for us." But what could possibly be exciting about a plant?

One day, Arlo decides to name the plant Jerry. Something about naming the plant makes it more exciting. As the class learns to take care of Jerry, he starts to grow . . . greener and longer and twistier. And before long it's clear that something amazing has taken root in Arlo's classroom.

Worm and Caterpillar Are Friends by Kaz Windness, author and illustrator. Simon Spotlight, 2023. ISBN 978-1665920001 [paperback].
Worm and Caterpillar are friends—best friends. Worm loves how they are just alike, but Caterpillar has a feeling there is a big change coming. Then Caterpillar disappears for a while and comes back as Butterfly. Will Butterfly and Worm still be friends?

2025-2026 Honeybee Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 3-5.

Dogtown by Katherine Applegate & Gennifer Choldenko, illustrated by Wallace West. Feiwel & Friends, 2023. ISBN 978-1250811608 [hardcover].
Dogtown is a shelter for stray dogs, misbehaving dogs, and discarded robot dogs, whose owners have outgrown them. Chance, a real dog, has been in Dogtown since her owners unwittingly left her with irresponsible dog-sitters who skipped town. Metal Head is a robot dog who dreams of being back in a real home. And Mouse is a mouse who has the run of Dogtown, pilfering kibble, and performing clever feats to protect the dogs he loves. When Chance and Metal Head embark on an adventure to find their forever homes, there is danger, cheese sandwiches, a charging station, and some unexpected kindnesses along the way.

Ferris by Kate DiCamillo. Candlewick, 2025. ISBN 978-1536241860 [paperback].
It's the summer before fifth grade, and for Ferris Wilkey, it is a summer of sheer pandemonium: Her little sister, Pinky, has vowed to become an outlaw. Uncle Ted has left Aunt Shirley and, to Ferris's mother's chagrin, is holed up in the Wilkey basement to paint a history of the world. And Charisse, Ferris's grandmother, has started seeing a ghost at the threshold of her room, which seems like an alarming omen given that she is also feeling unwell. But the ghost is not there to usher Charisse to the Great Beyond. Rather, she has other plans—wild, impractical, illuminating plans. How can Ferris satisfy a specter with Pinky terrorizing the town, Uncle Ted sending Ferris to spy on her aunt, and her father battling an invasion of raccoons? As Charisse likes to say, "Every good story is a love story," and Kate DiCamillo has written one for the ages: emotionally resonant and healing, showing the two-time Newbery Medalist at her most playful, universal, and profound.

The Firefly Summer by Morgan Matson. Simor & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2024. ISBN 978-1534493360 [paperback].
For as long as Ryanna Stuart can remember, her summers have been spent with her father and his new wife. Just the three of them, structured, planned, and quiet. But this summer is different. This summer, she's received a letter from her grandparents—grandparents neither she nor her dad have spoken to since her mom's death—inviting her to stay with them at an old summer camp in the Poconos.

Ryanna accepts. She wants to learn about her mom. She wants to uncover the mystery of why her father hasn't spoken to her grandparents all these years. She's even looking forward to a quiet summer by the lake. But what she finds are relatives…so many relatives! Aunts and uncles and cousins upon cousins—a motley, rambunctious crew of kids and eccentric, unconventional adults. People who have memories of her mom from when she was Ryanna's age, clues to her past like a treasure map. Ryanna even finds an actual, real-life treasure map!

Over the course of one unforgettable summer—filled with s'mores and swimming, adventure and fun, and even a decades-old mystery to solve—Ryanna discovers a whole new side of herself and that, sometimes, the last place you expected to be is the place where you really belong.

Greenwild: The World Behind the Door by Pari Thomson. Square Fish, 2024. ISBN 978-1250894540 [paperback].
Eleven-year-old Daisy Thistledown is on the run. Her mother has been keeping big, glittering secrets, and now she has vanished. Daisy knows it's up to her to find Ma—but someone is hunting her across London. Someone determined to stop her from discovering the truth.

So when Daisy flees to safety through a mysterious hidden doorway, she can barely believe her eyes—she has stepped out of the city and into another world. This is the Greenwild. Bursting with magic and full of amazing natural wonders, it seems too astonishing to be true. But not only is this land of green magic real, it holds the key to finding Daisy's mother. And someone wants to destroy it. Daisy must band together with a botanical genius, a boy who can talk with animals, and a spunky cat to uncover the truth about who she really is. Only then can she channel the power that will change her whole world . . . and save the Greenwild itself.

Home Away from Home by Cynthia Lord. Scholastic Press, 2024. ISBN 978-1338726138 [paperback].
Mia and her mom visit Grandma in Maine every summer, but this year Mia is going alone. Her mom will stay behind to get their house ready to sell. It'll be a new start, she says, after the divorce.

Mia doesn't want a new start. She'd rather everything just stayed the same! At least things will be the same at Grandma's, though. Mia will walk to town for ice cream, and wait by the water, watching for birds, just like always.

Then Mia meets Grandma's know-it-all new neighbor, who's just her age. Cayman acts like he belongs at Grandma's house. He acts like he's the expert on everything. And when he and Mia spot an unusual white bird of prey, he acts like it's his job to find out what it is.

Unless, that is, Mia finds out first. And, in her effort to prove herself to him, she makes a decision that will change things for the town, for the bird, for Cayman, and even for herself. Can Mia stop what she's put into motion?

The Lost Library: A Kid-Friendly Mystery by Rebecca Stead & Wendy Mass. Square Fish, 2025. ISBN 978-1250838834 [paperback].
When a mysterious little free library (guarded by a large orange cat) appears overnight in the small town of Martinville, eleven-year-old Evan plucks two weathered books from its shelves, never suspecting that his life is about to change.

Evan and his best friend Rafe quickly discover a link between one of the old books and a long-ago event that none of the grown-ups want to talk about. The two boys start asking questions whose answers will transform not only their own futures, but the town itself.

Told in turn by a ghost librarian named Al, an aging (but beautiful) cat named Mortimer, and Evan himself, The Lost Library is a timeless story from award-winning authors Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass. It’s about owning your truth, choosing the life you want, and the power of a good book (and, of course, the librarian who gave it to you).

Medusa by Katherine Marsh. Storytide, 2025. ISBN 978-0063303751 [paperback].
Ava Baldwin has always tried to keep her anger in check, just like her mom taught her. But when know-it-all classmate Owen King tries to speak over her yet again, Ava explodes . . . and Owen freezes, becoming totally unresponsive.

Although Owen recovers, Ava's parents whisk her off to her mother’s alma mater, the Accademia del Forte, a mysterious magical boarding school in Venice, Italy. There, Ava and her brother, Jax, discover that the Olympian gods founded the Accademia to teach the descendants of mythological monsters how to control their emotions and their secret powers and become functioning, well-adjusted members of society.

The Mystery of the Radcliffe Riddle by Taryn Souders. Sourcebooks Young Readers, 2023. ISBN 978-1728271415 [paperback].
When Grady and his dad learn that the town oddball, Eudora "Kooky" Klinch left something for them in her will, they can only imagine what it might be. When it turns out it's an old scrap of 300-year-old tapestry, they are bitterly disappointed. But the cloth comes with a note saying, "This is no ordinary piece of needlework. It's a treasure map. Riddles and Clues. To the victor go the riches." Grady's dad dismisses it, but Grady thinks this could be the chance of a lifetime. With the help of his friends Thad, Clemmie, and the town dog Ophelia, Grady is determined to crack the clues and find the treasure.

But when someone tries to break into Grady's house one night, and then the local antiques expert who examined the tapestry is found unconscious, Grady realizes that he's not the only one who knows about the treasure map. There's more at risk than he bargained for, and solving this mystery just got a lot more dangerous.

Nothing Else but Miracles by Kate Albus. Margaret Ferguson Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0823460663 [paperback].
When 12-year-old Dory Byrne's pop left New York City's Lower East Side to fight Hitler, he promised her and her brothers that they'd be safe. Like he always said, "the neighborhood will give you what you need."

There's the lady from the bakery, who saves them leftover crullers. The kind landlord who checks in on them. And every Thursday night, the Byrnes enjoy a free bowl of seafood stew at Mr. Caputo's restaurant. . . which is where Dory learns about the abandoned hand-pulled elevator that is the only way to get to Caputo's upper floors.

But when a new landlord threatens their home in the community that's raised them and kept them safe, the secret elevator—and the abandoned hotel it leads to—provides just the solution they need.

Tree. Table. Book. by Lois Lowry. Clarion Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063299511 [paperback].
When precocious eleven-year-old Sophie sets out to save her elderly neighbor (who is also her dearest friend), her journey will take her through their familiar suburban landscape and then, steadily yet unexpectedly, deeper into a landscape of history and shared stories.

Everyone knows the two Sophies are best friends. One is in elementary school, and one is . . . well . . . in a little trouble of late. She's elderly, sure, but she's always been on her game, the best friend any girl struggling to fit in could ever have. The Sophies drink tea, have strong opinions about pretty much everything, and love each other dearly. Now it seems the elder Sophie is having memory problems, burning teakettles, and forgetting just about everything. It looks like her son is going to come and get her and steal her away forever. Young Sophie isn't having that. Not one bit. So she sets out to help elder Sophie's memory, with the aid of her neighborhood friends Ralphie and Oliver. But when she opens the floodgates of elder Sophie's memories, she winds up listening to stories that will illustrate just how much there is to know about her dear friend, stories of war, hunger, cruelty, and ultimately love.

2025-2026 Meadowlark Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 6-8.

Dust by Dusti Bowling. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2025. ISBN 978-0316414333 [paperback].
After Avalyn nearly died from an asthma attack, her parents moved her to the clear, dry air of Clear Canyon City, Arizona. And for the last ten years, she's been able to breathe. That is, until Adam showed up.

Quiet and disheveled, Adam is an instant target for the bullies who have plagued Avalyn and her friends. As Avalyn gets to know him, she begins to suspect that the sudden, strange increase in dust storms around town is somehow connected to his emotions. She thinks his problems may be even worse at home, especially when massive black walls of dust start rolling in after the school day. Will she find a way to stand up for her new friend? Her life may just depend on it.

The Labors of Hercules Beal: A Witty Novel of Greek Mythology and Coming of Age on Cape Cod for Children by Gary D. Schmidt. Clarion Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0358699255 [paperback].
Herc Beal knows who he's named after—a mythical hero—but he's no superhero. He's the smallest kid in his class. So when his homeroom teacher at his new middle school gives him the assignment of duplicating the mythical Hercules's amazing feats in real life, he's skeptical. After all, there are no Nemean Lions on Cape Cod—and not a single Hydra in sight.

Missing his parents terribly and wishing his older brother wasn't working all the time, Herc figures out how to take his first steps along the road that the great Hercules himself once walked. Soon, new friends, human and animal, are helping him. And though his mythical role model performed his twelve labors by himself, Herc begins to see that he may not have to go it alone.

The Lost Year: A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine by Katherine Marsh. Square Fish, 2024. ISBN 978-1250909305 [paperback].
Thirteen-year-old Matthew is miserable. His journalist dad is stuck overseas indefinitely, and his mom has moved in his one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother to ride out the pandemic, adding to his stress and isolation.

But when Matthew finds a tattered black-and-white photo in his great-grandmother's belongings, he discovers a clue to a hidden chapter of her past, one that will lead to a life-shattering family secret. Set in alternating timelines that connect the present-day to the 1930s and the US to the USSR, Katherine Marsh's latest novel sheds fresh light on the Holodomor – the horrific famine that killed millions of Ukrainians, and which the Soviet government covered up for decades.

Mascot by Traci Sorell & Charles Waters. Charlesbridge, 2025. ISBN 978-1623546359 [paperback].
In Rye, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC, people work hard, kids go to school, and football is big on Friday nights. An eighth-grade English teacher creates an assignment for her class to debate whether Rye's mascot should stay or change.

Now six middle schoolers—all with different backgrounds and beliefs—get involved in the contentious issue that already has the suburb turned upside down with everyone choosing sides and arguments getting ugly.

Told from several perspectives, readers see how each student comes to new understandings about identity, tradition, and what it means to stand up for real change.

The Mona Lisa Vanishes: A Legendary Painter, a Shocking Heist, and the Birth of a Global Celebrity by Nicholas Day, illustrated by Brett Helquist. Random House Studio, 2025. ISBN 978-0593904213 [paperback].
On a hot August day in Paris, just over a century ago, a desperate guard burst into the office of the director of the Louvre and shouted, La Joconde, c'est partie! The Mona Lisa, she's gone!

No one knew who was behind the heist. Was it an international gang of thieves? Was it an art-hungry American millionaire? Was it the young Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, who was about to remake the very art of painting?

Parachute Kids: A Graphic Novel by Betty C. Tang. Graphix, 2023. ISBN 978-1338832686 [paperback].
Feng-Li can't wait to discover America with her family! But after an action-packed vacation, her parents deliver shocking news: They are returning to Taiwan and leaving Feng-Li and her older siblings in California on their own.

Suddenly, the three kids must fend for themselves in a strange new world--and get along. Starting a new school, learning a new language, and trying to make new friends while managing a household is hard enough, but Bro and Sis's constant bickering makes everything worse. Thankfully, there are some hilarious moments to balance the stress and loneliness. But as tensions escalate--and all three kids get tangled in a web of bad choices--can Feng-Li keep her family together?

The Probability of Everything by Sarah Everett. Clarion Books, 2024. ISBN 978-0063256569 [paperback].
Eleven-year-old Kemi Carter loves scientific facts, specifically probability. It's how she understands the world and her place in it. Kemi knows her odds of being born were 1 in 5.5 trillion and that the odds of her having the best family ever were even lower. Yet somehow, Kemi lucked out.

But everything Kemi thought she knew changes when she sees an asteroid hover in the sky, casting a purple haze over her world. Amplus-68 has an 84.7% chance of colliding with earth in four days, and with that collision, Kemi's life as she knows it will end.

But over the course of the four days, even facts don't feel true to Kemi anymore. The new town she moved to that was supposed to be "better for her family" isn't very welcoming. And Amplus-68 is taking over her life, but others are still going to school and eating at their favorite diner like nothing has changed. Is Kemi the only one who feels like the world is ending?

With the days numbered, Kemi decides to put together a time capsule that will capture her family's truth: how creative her mother is, how inquisitive her little sister can be, and how much Kemi's whole world revolves around her father. But no time capsule can change the truth behind all of it, that Kemi must face the most inevitable and hardest part of life: saying goodbye.

Simon Sort of Says by Erin Bow. Disney Hyperion, 2024. ISBN 978-1368099585 [paperback].
Simon O'Keeffe's biggest claim to fame should be the time his dad accidentally gave a squirrel a holy sacrament. Or maybe the alpaca disaster that went viral on YouTube. But the story the whole world wants to tell about Simon is the one he'd do anything to forget: the one starring Simon as a famous survivor of gun violence at school.

Two years after the infamous event, twelve-year-old Simon and his family move to the National Quiet Zone—the only place in America where the internet is banned. Instead of talking about Simon, the astronomers who flock to the area are busy listening for signs of life in space. And when Simon makes a friend who's determined to give the scientists what they're looking for, he'll finally have the chance to spin a new story for the world to tell.

Something Like Home by Andrea Beatriz Arango. Yearling, 2024. ISBN 978-0593566213 [paperback].
Laura Rodríguez Colón has a plan: no matter what the grown-ups say, she will live with her parents again. Can you blame her? It's tough to make friends as the new kid at school. And while staying at her aunt's house is okay, it just isn't the same as being in her own space.

So when Laura finds a puppy, it seems like fate. If she can train the puppy to become a therapy dog, then maybe she'll be allowed to visit her parents. Maybe the dog will help them get better and things will finally go back to the way they should be.

After all, how do you explain to others that you're technically a foster kid, even though you live with your aunt? And most importantly . . . how do you explain that you're not where you belong, and you just want to go home?

Wild Poppies by Haya Saleh. Lantern Paperbacks, 2025. ISBN 978-1646146529 [paperback].
Since the passing of their father, Omar has tried—and in his little brother Sufyan's eyes, failed—to be the man of his family of Syrian refugees. As Omar waits in line for rations, longing for the books he left behind when his family fled their home, Sufyan explores more nontraditional methods to provide for his family. Ignoring his brother's warnings, Sufyan gets more and more involved with a group that provides him with big rewards for doing seemingly inconsequential tasks.

When the group abruptly gets more intense—taking Sufyan and other boys away from their families, teaching them how to shoot guns—Sufyan realizes his brother is right. But is it too late for Sufyan to get out of this?

It's left to the bookish Omar to rescue his brother and reunite his family. He will have to take charge and be brave in ways he has never dared to before.

2025-2026 Bald Eagle Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 9-12.

Give Me a Sign by Anna Sortino. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2024. ISBN 978-0593533802 [paperback].
Lilah is stuck in the middle. At least, that's what having a hearing loss seems like sometimes—when you don't feel "deaf enough" to identify as Deaf or hearing enough to meet the world's expectations. But this summer, Lilah is ready for a change.

When Lilah becomes a counselor at a summer camp for the deaf and blind, her plan is to brush up on her ASL. Once there, she also finds a community. There are cute British lifeguards who break hearts but not rules, a YouTuber who's just a bit desperate for clout, the campers Lilah's responsible for (and overwhelmed by)—and then there's Isaac, the dreamy Deaf counselor who volunteers to help Lilah with her signing.

Romance was never on the agenda, and Lilah's not positive Isaac likes her that way. But all signs seem to point to love. Unless she's reading them wrong? One thing's for sure: Lilah wanted change, and things here . . . they're certainly different than what she's used to.

Invisible Son by Kim Johnson. Ember, 2024. ISBN 978-0593482131 [paperback].
Life can change in an instant.
When you're wrongfully accused of a crime.
When a virus shuts everything down.
When the girl you love moves on.

Andre Jackson is determined to reclaim his identity. But returning from juvie doesn't feel like coming home. His Portland, Oregon, neighborhood is rapidly gentrifying, and COVID-19 shuts down school before he can return. And Andre's suspicions about his arrest for a crime he didn't commit even taint his friendships. It's as if his whole life has been erased.

The one thing Andre is counting on is his relationship with the Whitaker kids—especially his longtime crush, Sierra. But Sierra's brother Eric is missing, and the facts don't add up as their adoptive parents fight to keep up the act that their racially diverse family is picture-perfect. If Andre can find Eric, he just might uncover the truth about his own arrest. But in a world where power is held by a few and Andre is nearly invisible, searching for the truth is a dangerous game.

The Next New Syrian Girl by Ream Shukairy. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2024. ISBN 978-0316432757 [paperback].
Khadija Shami is a Syrian American high school senior raised on boxing and football. Saddled with a monstrous ego and a fierce mother to test it, she dreams of escaping her sheltered life to travel the world with her best friend.

Leene Tahir is a Syrian refugee, doing her best to adjust to the wildly unfamiliar society of a suburban Detroit high school while battling panic attacks and family pressures.

When their worlds collide the result is catastrophic. To Khadija, Leene embodies the tame, dutiful Syrian ideal she's long rebelled against. And to Leene, Khadija is the strong-willed, closed-off American who makes her doubt her place in the world.

Promise Boys by Nick Brooks. Macmillan Publishers, 2025. ISBN 978-1250362674 [paperback].
The prestigious Urban Promise Prep school might look pristine on the outside, but deadly secrets lurk within. When the principal ends up murdered on school premises and the cops come sniffing around, a trio of students—J.B., Ramón, and Trey—emerge as the prime suspects. They had the means, they had the motive . . . and they may have had the murder weapon. But with all three maintaining their innocence, they must band together to track down the real killer before they are arrested. Or is the true culprit hiding among them?

Find out who killed Principal Moore in Nick Brooks's murder mystery, Promise Boys—The Hate U Give meets One of Us Is Lying.

Saints of the Household by Ari Tison. Square Fish, 2025. ISBN 978-1250907004 [paperback].
Max and Jay have always depended on one another for their survival. Growing up with a physically abusive father, the two Bribri American brothers have learned that the only way to protect themselves and their mother is to stick to a schedule and keep their heads down.

But when they hear a classmate in trouble in the woods, instinct takes over and they intervene, breaking up a fight and beating their high school's star soccer player to a pulp. This act of violence threatens the brothers' dreams for the future and their beliefs about who they are. As the true details of that fateful afternoon unfold over the course of the novel, Max and Jay grapple with the weight of their actions, their shifting relationship as brothers, and the realization that they may be more like their father than they thought. They'll have to reach back to their Bribri roots to find their way forward.

The Scarlet Alchemist by Kylie Lee Baker. Inkyard Press, 2023. ISBN 978-1335458018 [hardcover].
Zilan dreams of becoming a royal alchemist, of providing for her family by making alchemical gold and gems for the wealthy to eat in order to stay young forever. But for now, she's trapped in her impoverished village in southern China, practicing an illegal form of alchemy to keep food on the table—resurrecting the dead, for a price.

When Zilan finally has the chance to complete her imperial exams, she ventures to the capital to compete against the best alchemists in the country in tasks she'll be lucky to survive, let alone pass. On top of that, her reputation for raising the dead has followed her to the capital, and the Crown Prince himself seeks out her help, suspecting a coming assassination attempt.

The more Zilan succeeds in her alchemy, the more she gets caught in the dangerous political games of the royal family. There are monsters lurking within the palace walls, and it's only a matter of time before they—and secrets of Zilan's past—catch up with her.

The Space Between Here & Now by Sarah Suk. Quill Tree Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063255142 [paperback].
Seventeen-year-old Aimee Roh has Sensory Time Warp Syndrome, a rare condition that causes her to time travel to a moment in her life when she smells something linked to that memory. Her dad is convinced she'll simply grow out of it if she tries hard enough, but Aimee's fear of vanishing at random has kept her from living a normal life.

When Aimee disappears for nine hours into a memory of her estranged mom—a moment Aimee has never remembered before—she becomes distraught. Not only was this her longest disappearance yet, but the memory doesn't match up with the story of how her mom left—at least, not the version she's always heard from her dad.

Desperate for answers, Aimee travels to Korea, where she unravels the mystery of her memories, the truth about her mother, and the reason she keeps returning to certain moments in her life. Along the way, she realizes she'll need to reconcile her past in order to save her present.

Swarm by Jennifer D. Lyle. Sourcebooks Fire, 2023. ISBN 978-1728270913 [paperback].
On a sunny September morning, the creatures first appear. Shur sees one of them hovering outside the window in history class: it looks like a giant butterfly, at first too beautiful and strange to seem like a threat. But when emergency alerts light up everyone's phones around her, she realizes something very, very wrong is happening outside. These… things are everywhere.

By the time Shur makes it back to her house with her brother, Keene, and their two best friends, it's clear they must face whatever comes next on their own. A terrifying species the world's never seen before has suddenly emerged, and few living things are safe. As the creatures swarm and attack outside, life for Shur and her friends becomes a survival game. They board the windows, stockpile supplies, and try to make sense of the news reports for as long as the power stays on.

Yet nothing can prepare them for what follows. The butterflies are only the beginning. The next onslaught will be deadlier, and even closer to home.

That's Not My Name by Megan Lally. Sourcebooks Fire, 2023. ISBN 978-1728270111 [paperback].
It was a mistake to trust him.

Shivering and bruised, a teen wakes up on the side of a dirt road with no memory of how she got there—or who she is. A passing officer takes her to the police station, and not long after, a frantic man arrives. He's been searching for her for hours. He has her school ID, her birth certificate, and even family photos.
He is her father. Her name is Mary. Or so he says.

When Lola slammed the car door and stormed off into the night, Drew thought they just needed some time to cool off. Except Lola disappeared, and the sheriff, his friends, and the whole town are convinced Drew murdered his girlfriend. Forget proving his innocence, he needs to find her before it's too late. The longer Lola is missing, the fewer leads there are to follow…and the more danger they both are in.

Warrior Girl Unearthed by Angeline Boulley. Firekeeper's Daughter, 2025. ISBN 978-1250394668 [paperbook].
Perry Firekeeper-Birch has always known who she is - the laidback twin, the troublemaker, the best fisher on Sugar Island. Her aspirations won't ever take her far from home, and she wouldn't have it any other way. But as the rising number of missing Indigenous women starts circling closer to home, as her family becomes embroiled in a high-profile murder investigation, and as greedy grave robbers seek to profit off of what belongs to her Anishinaabe tribe, Perry begins to question everything.

In order to reclaim this inheritance for her people, Perry has no choice but to take matters into her own hands. She can only count on her friends and allies, including her overachieving twin and a charming new boy in town with unwavering morals. Old rivalries, sister secrets, and botched heists cannot - will not - stop her from uncovering the mystery before the ancestors and missing women are lost forever.

Sometimes, the truth shouldn't stay buried.