# Nebraska Golden Sower Award Nominee Titles 2027-2028

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.

## 2027-2028 Little Bluestem Nominees – Primarily intended for grades K-2.

***No More Chairs*** by Dan Gill, author and Susan Gal, illustrator. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2025. ISBN 978-0316552691 [hardcover].
From art to science, history to math, there are so many things to learn at school! But Mr. Gill's students are most interested in learning about the empty chair that sits in the front of their classroom. He tells them a story from his childhood about his Black best friend, Archie, the racism they experienced at a classmate's birthday party, when Archie was told there wasn't a chair for him, and how it inspired Mr. Gill to prioritize inclusivity and love.

**Cranky, Crabby Crow (Saves the World)** by Corey R. Tabor, author and illustrator. Greenwillow Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063373587 [hardcover].
Cranky, crabby Crow does not want to play with Squirrel or do loop-de-loops with Hummingbird. He doesn't have time for Rat or Bat. From high atop a telephone pole, Cat warns Crow that he will soon be all alone if he turns his friends away with his very cranky "kaw!" one more time. But, unbeknownst to all, Crow has bigger, world-saving fish to fry—he must protect planet Earth from an asteroid headed our way!

**The Day the Books Disappeared**, by Joanna Ho & Caroline Kusin Pritchard, illustrated by Dan Santat. Disney Hyperion, 2025. ISBN 978-1368110655 [hardcover].
Arnold didn't mean for the books to disappear—not exactly. It all started because he liked his book about airplanes best. Why would anyone want to read about tomatoes or ostriches or submarines (ew, the worst!) when they could read about planes, instead?

When Arnold realizes—POOF!—he can make the other books vanish, he goes a little too far. Before he knows it, all the books are gone…including his. Can Arnold figure out how to bring them back before it's too late?

***It's Taco Knight,*** by Megan Maynor, illustrated by Estrela Lourenco. Clarion Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0358682974 [hardcover].
In a kingdom full of busy, clever people, no one has time to cook. Luckily the Knights of Dinner make sure the villagers are well fed. It could be Pizza Knight or Noodle Knight, Dumpling Knight, even New Recipe Knight! No knight is everybody's favorite, but every knight is somebody's favorite. That is . . . until Taco Knight comes to town—and tries to turn every night into taco night.

***The Peddler of Puddles*** by Beth Ferry, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld. Clarion Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063318342 [hardcover].
The Peddler travels the countryside making perfect puddles for all his forest friends. Puddles that delight ducks, refresh frogs, and satisfy even the thirstiest hummingbird. But being constantly on the go can be lonely, and it's not until his friends step in that the Peddler discovers the joys of a home sweet home of his own.

***The Dangerous Alphabet Book*** by DK Ryland. Astra Young Readers, 2025. ISBN 978-1662620898 [hardcover].
Adorable Avocado, our sweet narrator, is rudely interrupted by Angry Alligator who intends to throw the orderly world of the alphabet into sheer chaos. From A to Z, the two competing characters argue over what's better: Elegant Eggplants or Eerie Electric Eels? Kissing Kiwis or Killer King Cobras? With each letter providing a new zany battle between the delightful and the dangerous, and an unexpected twist ending, readers ages 3 to 7 will be on the edges of their seats as they relish this alphabet adventure.

***Poo Pile on the Prairie*** by Amy Hevron, author and illustrator. Beach Lane Books, 2025. ISBN 978-1665935029 [hardcover].
Behold! The majestic bison of the Great Plains! Hear them thunder across the prairie! Watch them mow down miles of meadows! See them…poo.

Did you know that entire tiny habitats can form on a pile of poo? In the prairies of North America, bison roam the land, and their poo becomes an important building block for diverse prairie ecosystems. It fertilizes the soil, spreads seeds, and houses and feeds hundreds of tiny grassland species, which in turn feed birds and small mammals, which then attract bigger animals, and the cycle goes on! With snappy, funny text and lush illustrations, this book invites curious readers to explore a tiny ecosystem that's truly abuzz with life.

***How Not to Make a Jelly Sandwich*** by Ross Burach, author and illustrator. Scholastic Press, 2026. ISBN 978-1338877090 [hardcover].
Why be simple when you can be silly?
Frankie has her own way of doing things—the FUN way!
In her world, the ordinary becomes more enjoyable with a little original thinking. If you want to make a delicious jelly sandwich, for example, just follow Frankie's five simple steps:
1. Disguise yourself as a duck
2. Spin with an elephant
3. Bathe a dog
4. Organize a joust
5. Train a hamster

***Seven Ways Through the Woods*** by Jenn Reese, illustrated by Devin Elle Kurtz. Greenwillow Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063356269 [hardcover].
There are many ways through the woods. Some are long and winding. Some are as quick as a blink. You might encounter griffins, giants, serpents, sprites, and more along the way. Which path will you choose? What will you discover?

**Little Bird Laila** by Kelly Yang, author, illustrated by Xindi Yan. Dial Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0593407110 [hardcover].
Laila knows how clever, kind, and funny her Mama and Baba are—but sometimes they need her help translating things from English. With English classes being too expensive, Laila decides to become her parents' teacher, even though she's just learning the language too. There's lots that Laila knows (like you don't pronounce the t in ballet) but there's so much she doesn't know too. Together, they embrace the joy and struggles of learning a new language.

# 2027-2028 Honeybee Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 3-5.

***Ms. Pennypickle's Puzzle Quest*** by Chris Grabenstein. Yearling, 2026. ISBN 978-0593708019 [paperback].
Benjamin and Ethan Broderick don't fit together. Twelve-year-old Ben loves retro arcade games and puzzles, while his older brother would rather play sports and hang out with his friends. The only thing they have in common is how much they resent being forced to go on a summer road trip.

But at the quirky diner where the brothers make their very first stop, they discover a clue leading to a giant puzzle race with a million-dollar prize! Along with five other families, the Brodericks are thrust into a high-stakes competition along the famous Route 66.

Can Ben and Ethan put their heads together—and put aside their differences—to beat out the other families and solve Ms. Pennypickle's ultimate puzzle?

***The Unlikely Tale of Chase and Finnegan*** by Jasmine Warga. Balzer + Bray, 2026. ISBN 9781536244465 [hardcover].
Finnegan is a rescue dog with a broken heart.
Chase is a newly orphaned cheetah cub.

The two animals couldn't be more different. But one day, they are brought together for the unlikeliest of reasons: Finnegan must help Chase gain the confidence she needs to perform as part of an educational program for children at a zoo.

Finnegan and Chase have each suffered losses and have trouble trusting. Yet somehow, they are just what the other needs. But if Finnegan isn't able to help Chase overcome her fears, he won't just be letting Chase down—he could be risking his new home as well.

***Busted*** by Dan Gemeinhart. Henry Holt and Co. (BYR), 2025. ISBN 978-1250378361 [hardcover].
Oscar Aberdeen is a bit of an oddball. He's an ace at playing bridge, loves Frank Sinatra, and attends a whole lot of funerals. He's also the youngest resident of Sunny Days retirement home by more than a half-century—and he wouldn't have it any other way. So when his grandpa's suddenly served an eviction notice that threatens their place at Sunny Days, he needs to find some cash. Fast.

Enter Jimmy Deluca, a shady elderly man with a reputation for being bad news, who makes Oscar an offer he can't refuse. He's got the drop on riches hidden away on the "outside" and he'll share the loot with Oscar on one condition: he busts him out of Sunny Days.

In this humdinger of an adventure, the ultimate odd couple, along with an uninvited stowaway, go from high-stakes escape to rollicking escapade as they search for the secret stash—and forge an unlikely friendship along the way. Will Oscar succeed in saving the only home he's ever known? Or will he have to fuggedaboutit and return a failure?

***Finding Lost*** by Holly Goldberg Sloan. Rocky Pond Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0593530252 [paperback].
Cordy Jenkins is searching for something that will change her life, and for the safety that vanished when her father died. She is convinced that if she just tries hard enough, she will find part of what her family lost, which will stop her mom from wanting to leave the small town she and her little brother have always called home. What Cordy finds instead is a muddy, hungry little dog with bad breath. And he's the start of her family's new beginning.

***The Teacher of Nomad Land: A World War II Story*** by Daniel Nayeri. Levine Querido, 2025. ISBN 978-1646145669 [hardcover].
1941. The German armies are storming across Europe. Iran is a neutral country occupied by British forces on one side, Soviet forces on another. Soldiers fill the teahouses of Isfahan. Nazi spies roam the alleyways.

Babak and his little sister have just lost their father. Now orphans, fearing they will be separated, the two devise a plan. Babak will take up his father's old job as a teacher to the nomads. With a chalkboard strapped to Babak's back, and a satchel full of textbooks, the siblings set off to find the nomad tribes as they make their yearly trek across the mountains.

On the treacherous journey they meet a Jewish boy, hiding from a Nazi spy. And suddenly, they are all in a race for survival.

Against the backdrop of World War II comes an epic adventure in the faraway places. Through the cacophony of soldiers, tanks, and planes, can young hearts of different creeds and nations learn to find a common language?

***Benny on the Case*** by Wesley King. Beach Lane Books, 2026. ISBN 978-1665937702 [paperback].
Benny isn't your average boy from Newfoundland. He lives in a retirement home that his mother runs, he has an eighty-six-year-old best friend named Mr. Tom, he knows more about fixing boats than video games, and he has Mosaic Down syndrome. When Benny transitions to a mainstream classroom for the first time, the other students tease him for his differences…except for Salma. She's new, too, and not your typical Newfoundland girl: she's tech savvy, speaks Arabic, plays basketball, and isn't afraid to eat lunch with Benny.

So when Salma's grandmother and several other residents in the retirement home are robbed, Benny asks Salma to help him catch the thief. Time is not on their side as an inspector threatens to close the home. And to make matters worse, Benny and Salma must crack the case while working on a class assignment with their bullies. Can Benny save his home and take a stand against the bullies once and for all? He's about to find out, b'ys.

***Three Blue Hearts*** by Lynne Kelly. Delacorte Press, 2025. ISBN 978-0593898390 [hardcover].
Max can't seem to escape the big, looming shadow of his politician dad. But for the next few months, Max and his mom are going away to a quiet Texas beach town where Max can be someone else. Someone who doesn't make dumb mistakes that embarrass his father—someone who knows how to be strong.

He stumbles on his fresh start right away, when he finds an injured octopus washed up onshore after a storm. With the help of a local wildlife center and a couple of new friends, Max rescues the octopus—who they name Ursula—and vows to take care of her until she's ready to return to the sea.

But as their bond deepens and Max makes unexpected discoveries that turn his summer upside down, Max's true strength will be put to the test. Can he keep his promise after all?

***The Last Resort*** by Erin Entrada Kelly. Scholastic, 2026. ISBN 979-8225079062 [paperback].
Twelve-year-old Lila has two goals for the summer:
1. Win back the friends who ditched her for being "too dramatic"
2. Stop being so dramatic
But then Lila's estranged Grandpa Clem dies, throwing a wrench in her plans. Now she'll have to spend the summer in Ohio while her parents decide what to do with Grandpa Clem's creepy Victorian Inn. It's supremely unfair. How can she show off the "new and improved" Lila from so far away?
Even worse, strange things keep happening. En route to Ohio, the family gets into a scary car accident. No one's hurt, but the remainder of the trip is... odd. At every rest stop, Lila sees people in weird old-fashioned clothes. People no one else can see or hear...

Lila convinces herself it's just her overactive imagination until the day of the funeral when she spots an old man sitting in her grandfather's favorite chair. She does a double take -- it's him, Grandpa Clem. He tells Lila that he didn't die of a heart attack: he was murdered. Possibly by someone who wants to control the inn. Because it's not a normal bed & breakfast: it's a portal between the land of the living and the realm of the dead. A hotel for ghosts passing onto the afterlife.

With the help of her skeptical brother, Caleb, and their new ghost-obsessed neighbor, Teddy, Lila -- the girl who's vowed to be less dramatic -- must uncover her grandfather's killer AND stop the evil spirits desperate to make their way back into the human world.

***Story Spinners: A Sisterly Tale of Danger, a Princess, and Her Crew of Lady Pirates*** by Cassandra Federman. Aladdin, 2025. ISBN 978-1665918244 [paperback].
Big sister Kennedy and little sister Devon couldn't be more different. Their shared room has a clear divide down the middle. On one, musical theater–loving Kennedy keeps things tidy. On the other, heavy metal fan Devon looks like she lives in an exploded toy store. When baby sister Eve moves in, her contribution is crying. Constant. Ear-piercing. Crying.

The added stress pushes the older girls to their breaking point, and they get into their biggest fight yet. In response, Mom and Dad crack down, seizing all beloved electronics until Kennedy and Devon can find a way to get along. Now stuck together with no distractions except Eve's screaming, the two land on a desperate solution: tell Eve a bedtime story so epic that it puts her to sleep and gets her big sisters out of trouble.

Pizza aside, the only thing the girls have in common is their love of stories. But Kennedy's fairy tales make Devon want to barf, and Devon's nonsensical adventure stories make Kennedy want to tear her hair out. So they try to mash-up a story of true love, adventure, princesses, pirates, pirate-princesses, dragons, spiders, and…garbage trucks?

***Chickenpox*** by Remy Lai. Henry Holt and Co. BYR Paperbacks, 2025. ISBN 978-1250863294 [paperback].
All big sister Abby wants is to spend more time with her friends, far away from the sticky fingers and snooping eyes of her annoying brothers and sisters. But when a case of the chickenpox leaves the Lai kids covered in scratchy red spots and stuck at home together for two weeks of nonstop mayhem, Abby thinks this might be the end . . . of her sanity. Yet she feels responsible for the situation since her best friend was Patient Zero and brought chickenpox into their home.

Will the itch to escape her siblings overwhelm Abby or will she realize being a big sister isn't all bad? Full of heart and hijinks, Chickenpox showcases what gets us through good times and bad: family.

## 2027-2028 Meadowlark Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 6-8.

***Blood in the Water*** by Tiffany D. Jackson. Scholastic Press, 2025. ISBN 978-1338849912 [hardcover].
This summer, beware of sharks...

Brooklyn girl Kaylani McKinnon feels like a fish out of water. She's spending the summer with family friends in their huge house on Martha's Vineyard, and the vibe is definitely snooty. Still, there are beautiful beaches, lots of ice cream, and a town full of fascinating Black history. Plus a few kids her age who seem friendly.
Until the shocking death of a popular teenage boy rocks the community to its core. Was it a drowning? A shark attack? Or the unthinkable--murder?

Kaylani is determined to solve the mystery. But her investigation leads her to uncover shocking secrets that could change her own life as she knows it... if she survives.

***The Trouble with Heroes*** by Kate Messner. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2026. ISBN 978-1547619429 [paperback].
Finn Connelly is nothing like his dad, a star athlete and firefighter hero who always ran toward danger until he died two years ago. Finn is about to fail seventh grade and has never made headlines . . . until now.

Caught on camera vandalizing a cemetery, he's in big trouble for knocking down some dead old lady's headstone. Turns out that grave belongs to a legendary local mountain climber, and her daughter makes Finn an unusual offer: she'll drop all the charges if he agrees to climb all forty-six Adirondack High Peaks in a single summer. And there's just one more thing--he has to bring along the dead woman's dog.

In a wild three months of misadventures, mountain mud, and unexpected mentors, Finn begins to find his way on the trails. At the top of each peak, he can see for miles and slowly begins to understand more about himself and his dad. But the mountains don't care about any of that, and as the clock ticks down to September, they have more surprises in store. Finn's final summit challenge may be more than even a hero can face.

***Holding on for Dear Life*** by Dusti Bowling. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2025. ISBN 978-1547616060 [hardcover].
Thirteen-year-old Canyon loves bull riding, but the sport doesn't exactly love him back. His body is in constant pain and doctors have warned him about the dangers of his repeated concussions, but bull riding is the only thing he and his dad connect on ever since Canyon's mom died. Canyon is convinced winning the Junior World Bull Riding championship will be the thing to bring them together again, that once he has that shiny belt buckle all the pain will be worth it. Besides, Canyon has a secret way to help his hurt: playing the fiddle.

When Canyon is unexpectedly chosen for a music competition show, a new dream begins to form. But Dad is getting worse, and Canyon feels more pressure than ever to hold his family together--even if it means choosing to hurt himself bull riding over healing through music. Soon Canyon begins to wonder if he's holding on to all the right things, or if there are some he needs to let go of.

***A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation*** by Pablo Cartaya. Kokila, 2026. ISBN 978-0451479761 [paperback].
Gonzalo Alberto Sánchez García has never considered himself the hero of his own story. He's an observer, quietly snapshotting landscapes and drawing the creatures he imagines emerging from them. Forced to spend the summer with his estranged grandfather, Alberto William García—the very famous reclusive author—Gonzalo doesn't expect to learn that heroes and monsters are not only the stuff of fantasy.

But that's precisely what happens when Gonzalo's CEO mother, Veronica, sends Alberto on tour to promote the final book in his fantasy series for children and Gonzalo must tag along, even though he feels no connection to his grandfather or the books. Together, they embark on a cross-country road trip from Mendocino to Miami in a classic 1968 Oldsmobile Cutlass S convertible named Mathilde. Over the course of ten epic days on the highway, they will slay demons, real and imagined; confront old stories to write new ones; and learn what it truly means to show up for your family.

***The Lost Women of Science*** by Melina Gerosa Bellows and Katie Hafner, illustrated by Karyn Lee. Bright Matter Books, 2026. ISBN 978-0593896747 [paperback].
For far too long, women in science have been overlooked. But despite the missing pages from the history books, these remarkable ladies conducted groundbreaking experiments, discovered diseases that changed lives, deciphered codes that altered the course of world wars, and so much more. And now, we know their stories.

***Isle of Ever*** by Jen Calonita. Sourcebooks Young Readers, 2025. ISBN 978-1464234422 [paperback].
Everly "Benny" Benedict and her mom have always managed to get by, though they're broke most of the time. But all that could change. Benny's just learned she's the sole heir to the vast fortune of Evelyn Terry, a mysterious ancestor from the 1800s!

There's a catch, though. First Benny needs to play—and win—a game: following clues that are more than a century old, she must find her way to the tiny island Evelyn wrote about in her diary. It was somewhere off the shoreline of Evelyn's home town, but according to legend, it vanished long ago and hasn't appeared on maps for hundreds of years. Yet Benny has only a couple weeks to locate it.

If she's successful, she'll collect the inheritance. But what if there's more than a fortune at stake in this game? What if Benny has to break an ancient curse to win?

***Zed Moonstein Makes a Friend*** by Lance Rubin. Clarion Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0063396654 [hardcover].
Zed Moonstein is terrible at making friends.

For the most part, though, that's not such a big deal, because Zed has Rishti, his best friend and the only one he needs. They're into the same stuff, they laugh at the same weird jokes, and they love living in MonoTown, the home of MonoLyth, the raddest tech company in the world. Even better, Zed's mom works at MonoLyth, which means they get early access to all the newest devices and apps.

But since middle school started, things have been . . . trickier. Rishti and Zed are in all different classes, and worse, she's made a new, cooler friend that Zed can't seem to compete with. Zed feels left behind, forgotten in a drawer like last year's MonoPhone.

That's when Zed comes across something on his mom's work computer: a top secret new app called MonoFriend. Soon, Zed is chatting with "Matt." Matt is funny, he's smart, and he knows Zed better than anyone else, even Rishti.

Maybe, Zed thinks, an A.I. best friend can be just as "real" as any other.
Unfortunately, he's about to discover that he's more right than he knows.

***Sole Survivor*** by Norman Ollestad and Brendan Kiely. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), 2025. ISBN 978-0374392611 [hardcover].
Eleven-year-old Norman Ollestad is no stranger to extreme situations. Whether it's surfing big swells off Topanga Beach or skiing in a blizzard, he has braved one adrenaline-rush adventure after another, pushed by his thrill-seeking father to realize that "anything's possible." And with Dad by his side, sometimes Norman believes him.

That motto is put to the ultimate test when the small plane Norman and his dad are aboard is engulfed by a snowstorm and crashes in the San Gabriel Mountains—with deadly consequences. Struggling in and out of lucidity, haunted by the voices and memories from difficult moments in his past, Norman must decide what to do while trapped eight thousand feet above sea level, facing dangers unlike any he has encountered before.

***The Undead Fox of Deadwood Forest*** by Aubrey Hartman. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2026. ISBN 978-0316575737 [paperback].
Clare is the undead fox of Deadwood Forest. Here, leaves grow in a perpetual state of fall: not quite dead, but not quite alive—just like Clare. Long ago, he was struck by a car, and, hovering between life and death, he was given the choice to either cross into the Afterlife or become an Usher of wandering souls. Clare chose the latter: a solitary life of guiding souls to their final resting place.

Clare's quiet and predictable days are met with upheaval when a badger soul named Gingersnipes knocks on his door. Despite Clare's efforts to usher her into the Afterlife, the badger is unable to leave Deadwood. This is unprecedented. Baffling. A disturbing mystery which threatens the delicate balance between the living and the dead.

Desperate for help, Clare and Gingersnipes set out on a treacherous journey to find Hesterfowl—the visionary grouse who recently foretold of turmoil in Deadwood. But upon their arrival, Hesterfowl divulges a shocking revelation that leaves Clare devastated, outraged, and determined to do anything to change his fate.

***Dear Jackie*** by Jessixa Bagley, illustrated by Aaron Bagley. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2025. ISBN 978-1534496576 [paperback].
Jackie and Milo have been best friends since they were born. Whether they're reading comic books in their tree house hideout, playing video games, or spying on their neighbors using walkie talkies and code names, it's always been the two of them versus the world. But in middle school, things are changing. Milo joins the soccer team and starts hanging out with a new crew. Jackie gets taken under the wing of Adelle, who wants to give her a total makeover and find her a crush. Suddenly, it seems like there are certain acceptable ways to be a girl or a boy, and Jackie starts to feel like everything about her is wrong.

In an effort to get Adelle and her new friends off her back, Jackie sends herself an anonymous love letter. But her plan backfires, and soon Jackie's secret admirer is all anybody at school can talk about. Now she's wondering: Dear Jackie, how are you going to get out of this?

## 2027-2028 Bald Eagle Nominees – Primarily intended for grades 9-12.

***Grave Flowers*** by Autumn Krause. Peachtree Teen, 2025. ISBN 978-1682636497 [hardcover].
Marry the prince, then kill him.

Princess Madalina and her twin sister, Inessa, were born attached at the hand and separated right after. That's the only time the sisters ever held hands. The girls' personalities have been shaped in the Sinet family's drive to make their kingdom more than what it is: unrespectable and loathsome, a damp place where deceit fills the palace walls like mold.

Madalina is different from her family. She's considered the weak one and only finds peace in the garden, tending her magical flowers, which are pejoratively called grave flowers because they are ideal for torture and torment. Secretly, she dreams of escape and a new life.

Then Inessa, who was betrothed to the heir of a wealthy kingdom—Prince Aeric—gets trapped in Bide, a terrifying purgatory, and begs Madalina to set her free. Now, not only must Madalina take her sister's place as Aeric's bride-to-be, but she also must finish Inessa's secret mission: Inessa wasn't just sent to marry Prince Aeric, but to kill him, too, and solidify a profitable pact with his traitorous uncle.

On behalf of her family, Madalina will need to resist the infuriatingly clever prince—as well as her own heart—if she's to free her sister and finish the job.

***All the Noise at Once*** by DeAndra Davis. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2026. ISBN 978-1665952668 [paperback].
All Aiden has ever wanted to do was play football just like his star quarterback brother, Brandon. An overstimulation meltdown gets in the way of Aiden making the team during summer tryouts, but when the school year starts and a spot unexpectedly needs to be filled, he finally gets a chance to play the game he loves.

However, not every player is happy about the new addition to the team, wary of how Aiden's autism will present itself on game day. Tensions rise. A fight breaks out. Cops are called.

Brandon interferes on behalf of his brother, but is arrested by the very same cops who, just hours earlier, were chanting his name from the bleachers. When he's wrongly charged for felony assault on an officer, everything Brandon has worked for starts to slip away, and the brothers' relationship is tested. As Brandon's trial inches closer, Aiden is desperate to figure out what really happened that night. Can he clear his brother's name in time?

***The Escape Game*** by Marissa Meyer and Tamara Moss. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2026. ISBN 979-8217006120 [hardcover].
It's all fun and games until someone ends up dead.

Six months ago, season four of The Escape Game ended in horror when contestant Alicia Angelos was found murdered on set.

Now season five is underway, and new contestants are ready to put their skills to the test solving the show's trickiest escape rooms. There's Adi, the cryptographer; Carter, the math whiz; Beck, the wannabe game master; and . . . Sierra Angelos, the girl who got away with her sister's murder. Or so everyone believes.

But Sierra's not just here to win. She's here for justice.

When the contestants begin uncovering clues that hint at the identity of Alicia's true killer, it becomes clear that the stakes aren't high just in this competition—they're deadly. If these teens want to win—and survive—the game, they must solve the biggest mystery of all: who killed Alicia Angelos?

***Sisters in the Wind*** by Angeline Boulley. Henry Holt and Co. (BYR), 2025. ISBN 978-1250328533 [hardcover].
Ever since Lucy Smith's father died five years ago, "home" has been more of an idea than a place. She knows being on the run is better than anything waiting for her as a "ward of the state". But when the sharp-eyed and kind Mr. Jameson with an interest in her case comes looking for her, Lucy wonders if hiding from her past will ever truly keep her safe.

Five years in the foster system has taught her to be cautious and smart. But she wants to believe Mr. Jameson and his "friend-not-friend", a tall and fierce-looking woman who say they want to look after her. They also tell Lucy the truth her father hid from her: She is Ojibwe; she has – had – a sister, and more siblings, a grandmother who'd look after her and a home where she would be loved.

But Lucy is being followed. The past has destroyed any chance at safety she had. Will the secrets she's hiding swallow her whole and take away any hope for the future she always dreamed of?

When the past comes for revenge, it's fight or flight.

***The Story of My Anger*** by Jasminne Mendez. Dial Books, 2025. ISBN 978-0593531877 [hardcover].
Yulieta Lopez is accustomed to playing various roles: the diligent daughter, the honorable hija, the good girl who swallows the flames in her throat before they burn anyone. But the fire inside Yuli is spreading, and she can no longer be silent.

Because Yuli is angry. Angry at the school board threatening to ban books that made Yuli feel seen. Angry that she has to keep quiet until she can head to college and leave Texas forever. And angry at her racist drama teacher who refuses to cast Black students in lead roles. Determined to fight back, Yuli and her friends start a guerrilla theater club, which stirs things up and gets people talking, and finally, Yuli steps into the role she was always meant to play.

***Everything I Promised You*** by Katy Upperman. Sourcebooks Fire, 2025. ISBN 978-1464217784 [paperback].
What comes after heartbreak?

Lia and Beck. Beck and Lia. Despite army-brat life orbiting them in and out of each other's worlds, Lia knows they are destined to be together. It's more than their friendship and chemistry. When Lia's mom was a teen, a fortune teller said her daughter would fall in love with her best friend's son. Lia and Beck were always meant to be. Or so they thought.

When tragedy steals Beck away, Lia is devastated. She lived her life by her mom's old fortune. If she was fated to be with Beck and he is gone, who is she supposed to be? And is there room in her broken heart for life, let alone new love?

***Beth is Dead*** by Katie Bernet. Sarah Barley Books/Simor & Schuster Books, 2026. ISBN 978-1665988698 [hardcover].
When Beth March is found dead in the woods on New Year's Day, her sisters vow to uncover her murderer.

Suspects abound. There's the neighbor who has feelings for not one but two of the girls. Meg's manipulative best friend. Amy's flirtatious mentor. And Beth's lionhearted first love. But it doesn't take the surviving sisters much digging to uncover motives each one of the March girls had for doing the unthinkable.

Jo, an aspiring author with a huge following on social media, would do anything to hook readers. Would she kill her sister for the story? Amy dreams of studying art in Europe, but she'll need money from her aunt—money that's always been earmarked for Beth. And Meg wouldn't dream of hurting her sister…but her boyfriend might have, and she'll protect him at all costs.

Despite the growing suspicion within the family, it's hard to know for sure if the crime was committed by someone close to home. After all, the March sisters were dragged into the spotlight months ago when their father published a controversial bestseller about his own daughters. Beth could have been killed by anyone.

Beth's perspective told in flashback unfolds next to Meg, Jo, and Amy's increasingly fraught investigation as the tragedy threatens to rip the Marches apart.

***Fake Skating*** by Lynn Painter. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2026. ISBN 978-1665921275 [paperback].
Growing up, Dani couldn't help but follow around the adorable son of her mom's best friend. Funny, kind of nerdy, and a little soft, Alec was always down to hang with Dani when they were little. From play dates to sneaking into movie theaters, Dani and Alec were inseparable. Until Dani moved away. Alec promised they'd stay in touch—except, they didn't.

Flash forward and Dani is back in Minnesota for her senior year, she and her mom living with her grandfather. Dealing with the fallout of her parents' devastating divorce, Dani wouldn't mind a nerd-out with the cozy and comforting Alec (and maybe a chance to confront him on his MIA status for all these years). But teenage Alec is nothing like the kid Dani remembers. He's a hockey star in a town where hockey players are worshiped as gods. Dani's place as his shadow has been taken up by drooling female fans…and he loves it.

Dani is resolved to ice out her former best friend until an unlikely series of events brings them together—and forces them to fake being a couple. Once stuck together, the former childhood sweethearts begin to reconnect, unearth complicated family secrets, and face their true feelings towards each other…including the real reason Alec has been pushing Dani away all these years.

***The Assassin's Guide to Babysitting*** by Natalie C. Parker. Candlewick, 2025. ISBN 978-1536247916 [paperback].
Tru has been hiding all her life. Her parents taught her to conceal her bastion Talent: indestructible skin, muscles, and bones. In a world where Talents are common and varied, no one trusts a bastion—they're too powerful. Hiding failed to keep Tru's parents alive, but moments before their murder, Tru's mom pointed her to Logan Dire, a famed recluse assassin who adopted and trained orphaned Tru. At seventeen, she's still hiding. Not even her closest friends know her true name or Talent, or that she's balancing high school with knife and stealth training (while crushing on her BFF's older sister). When assassins interrupt a mundane babysitting job booked through BountyApp—where lethal hunters find work and babysitters for their kids—Tru flees with a one-year-old strapped to her chest and spiraling questions: Who killed her parents? Whom can she trust? What does it mean to be a bastion? And is it ever OK to kiss a girl who's trying to hunt you down? From an award-winning author comes a masterfully plotted thriller that holds character and relationship on a par with action and nail-biting suspense.

***The Thrashers*** by Julie Soto. Wednesday Books, 2026. ISBN 978-1250377197 [paperback].
Welcome to the Thrashers, the elite friend group at New Helvetia High.

They're everything everyone wants to be.

Jodi Dillon was never meant to be one of them. Julian, Lucy, Paige, and the infamous Zack Thrasher are rich, sophisticated, and love attention. Jodi feels out of place, but Zack's her childhood best friend, so she's in.

Then Emily Mills, who desperately wanted to be a Thrasher, dies—and the whispers about the Thrashers begin. As Emily's journal surfaces, detectives close in, and Jodi faces an impossible choice: betray her friends or protect herself.

But as eerie messages and strange occurrences escalate, it becomes clear—Emily isn't done with them yet.