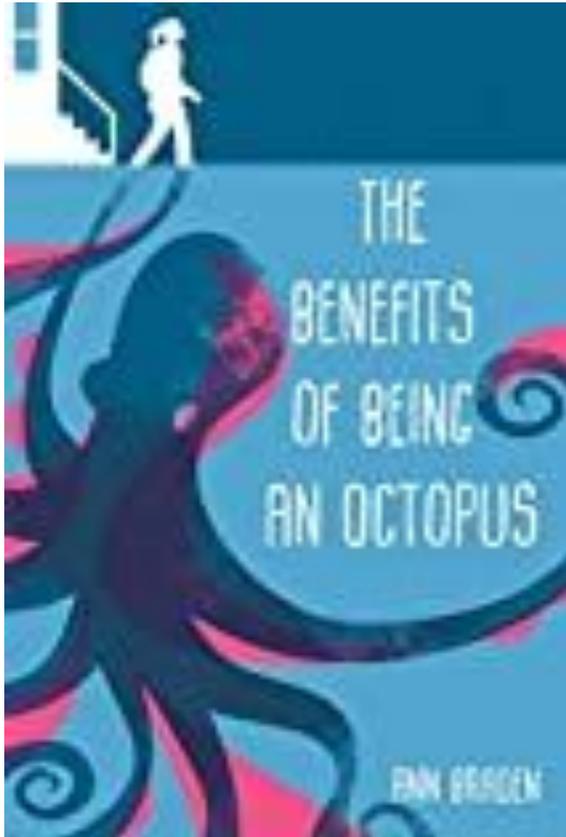


**SC JUNIOR
BOOK AWARD NOMINEES
2020-2021**



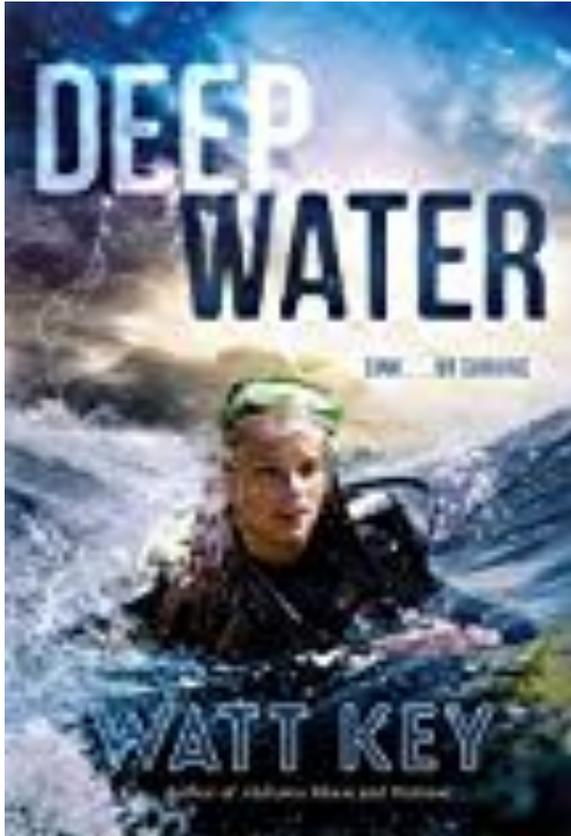
The Benefits of Being an Octopus by Ann Braden



Seventh-grader Zoey doesn't think she's as good as other kids at school who have nice things. She also doesn't have the inclination to do homework because she's too busy taking care of her siblings—Bryce (four), Aurora (three), and baby Hector—all offspring of different fathers. They and their mother live in a trailer with Mom's fussy bully of a boyfriend, Lenny, and his cantankerous father. When Zoey's social-studies teacher makes her join the school debate club, she begins to see situations with fresh eyes and from both sides—an ability she courageously applies to the gun debate after a school lockdown occurs. [Book trailer](#)

Deep Water

by Watt Key



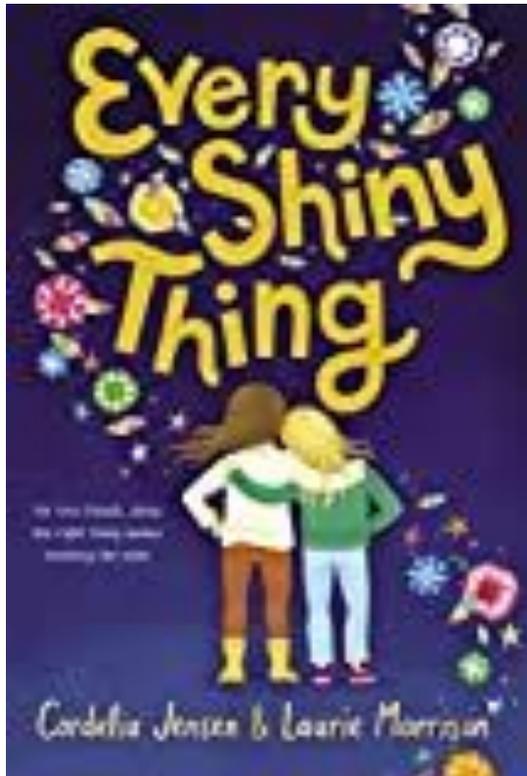
When 12-year-old Julie is descending more than 100 feet below the ocean's surface, all she can think about is how to complete the dive safely—not how miserable her father, owner of a small diving business, has been since her mother left him to move to Atlanta. But when Julie must lead a dive with two reckless clients whose expensive equipment is as untested as they are, she encounters a nightmare more harrowing than any of her problems on land. [Book trailer](#)

Endling: the Last by Katherine Applegate



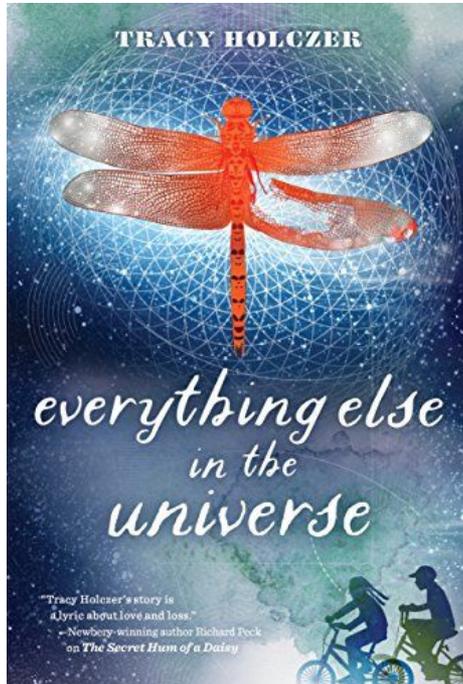
In the land of Nedarra, six governing species reign supreme, but the dairnes—a cross between dog and sugar glider—are critically endangered. Hunted by humans to obscurity, the remaining dairnes have left their treetop nests for more concealed abodes on the ground. Byx is the runt of her pack and highly curious about the world around her. When she sneaks out to explore one day, she rescues a wobbyk (imagine a silvery-blue chinchilla) named Tobble from a group of poachers, only to return home to the horror of finding her entire pack slaughtered by human soldiers. Byx flees with Khara—the poachers’ young guide—and Tobble, but the unusual group is brought up short by unsettling news: Byx may be an endling, the last of her species. [Book trailer](#)

Every Shiny Thing by Cordelia Jensen and Laurie Morrison



Lauren and Sierra are both 12 years old, but they're from completely different worlds. Sierra cares for her alcoholic mother while they're constantly on the move. Lauren lives in a wealthy suburb and wants for nothing, except maybe to have her autistic brother back home rather than in a boarding school for students on the spectrum. After Sierra is placed in a foster home next door to Lauren, they attend the same private school and become fast friends. Then Lauren becomes so obsessed with raising money to help autistic children who can't afford services that she sells some of her possessions, then shoplifts and steals from her friends and their families. Sierra is not happy about being drawn in as an unwilling accomplice, but she doesn't know what to do or whom to trust.

Everything Else in the Universe by Tracy Holczer



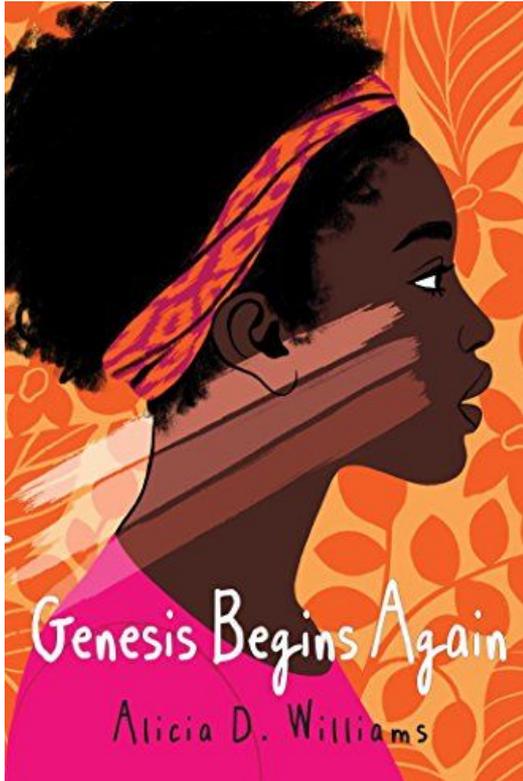
Twelve-year-old Lucy's surgeon father is coming home from Vietnam—minus his arm. Steady, solemn Lucy has held things together in the year he's been gone by studying the rocks he's sent her, trying to fit in with his boisterous Italian family, and being a team with her patrician mother. But the move to California has left her friendless until she meets Milo, whose father is still in Vietnam. When they find military artifacts, including photos and a Purple Heart, buried nearby, the duo decide to locate the rightful owner.

Front Desk by Kelly Yang



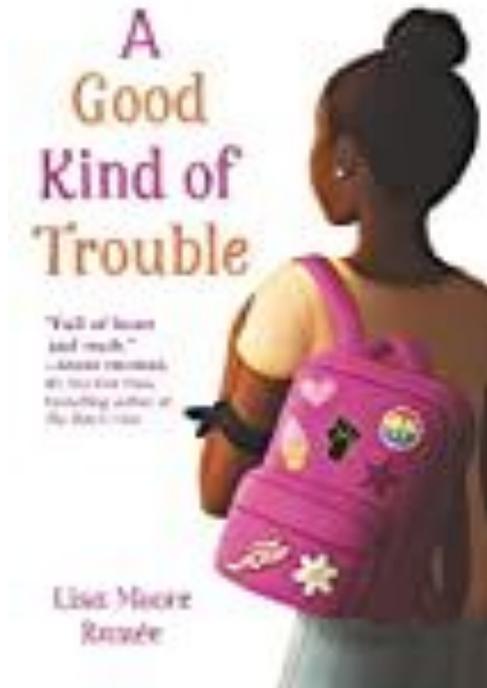
When Mia Tang’s parents find a new job managing the Calivista motel, it seems like the answer to their prayers: free housing and a stable, secure job, neither of which have come easy to the recent Chinese immigrants. Fifth-grader Mia takes pride in working the front desk and becomes fast friends with the weeklies, for whom the motel is a semipermanent residence. But the motel’s owner, Mr. Yao, is beyond mean—he’s flat out racist—so Mia enters a writing contest to win their very own motel. [Book trailer](#)

Genesis Begins Again by Alicia D. Williams



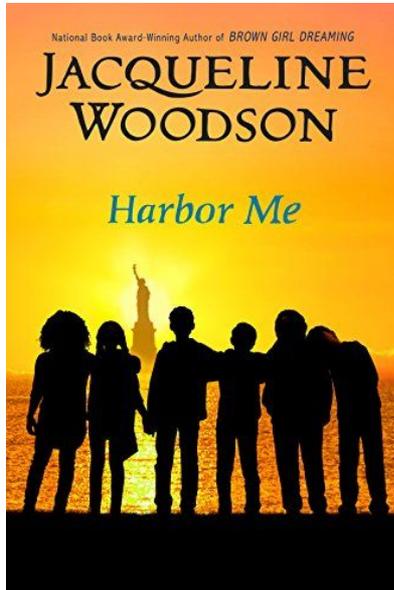
Her dad is an alcoholic with a gambling problem who never pays the rent, so her family keeps getting evicted from their homes. But that's not the only reason Genesis hates herself. Mostly it's because she is dark-skinned, and she wishes she were lighter. Genesis tries multiple ways to lighten her skin and help her family, both with disappointing results. Only after she learns to appreciate herself for who she is does everything else start to fall into place.

A Good Kind of Trouble by Lisa Moore Ramée



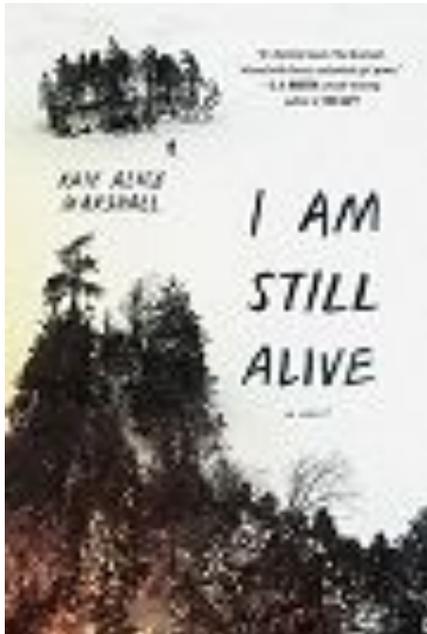
In her first novel, Ramée explores the concept that fear can stop you from doing the right thing. Shayla is a shy, bright middle-school student who deals with unwanted advances from boys, racial tensions, academic competition, and finding her own voice. Middle school is quite an adjustment for Shayla and her friends, a diverse trio dubbed “the United Nations,” but she decides to stand up for the rights of African Americans after a ruling is made in a controversial court case involving the shooting of a black man by a white police officer. Encouraged by her sister and peers, she joins the Black Lives Matter movement and passes out black armbands at school, an act that puts her at odds with her friends, principal, and students of different races. As civil unrest spreads, Shayla must determine whether creating awareness by causing trouble is worth risking her academic standing.

Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson



Six fifth- and sixth-graders, all in a special class for those who learn differently, are suddenly given, by their beloved teacher, an extra hour of safe space—an empty classroom where they are told they can talk about anything or nothing. At first, it's nothing. Then, Haley, the book's narrator, describes how each child begins to unfold. Esteban's story demands to be told first; Immigration Services have taken his father away. The others lend sympathy and support, and then, over the course of a school year, more confidences are shared. Ashton, one of the school's few white kids, is bullied. Amari sketches guns and worries about being shot. Puerto Rican Tiago struggles with being American, yet *not* American. Haley's own story is intertwined with that of her best friend, Holly. Haley's red hair comes from her father, but he's in jail and Haley's mother is dead; an uncle cares for the hyperactive Holly. [Book Trailer](#)

I Am Still Alive by Kate Alice Marshall



Jess hasn't seen her father in years, so she doesn't know what to expect when she lands at the remote Alaska airport where he's supposed to pick her up. Still, she's surprised by an even further journey into the back country of Canada, where her father lives off the grid in a cabin he built by himself. Her new situation is tough, and the debilitating injuries and chronic pain she sustained during the car crash that killed her mother make it even worse. But when her father is murdered by men from his past, who burn his cabin to the ground, Jess has to rely on the meager skills she learned in their brief time together to survive a winter in the wilderness.

The Jigsaw Jungle by Kristin Levine



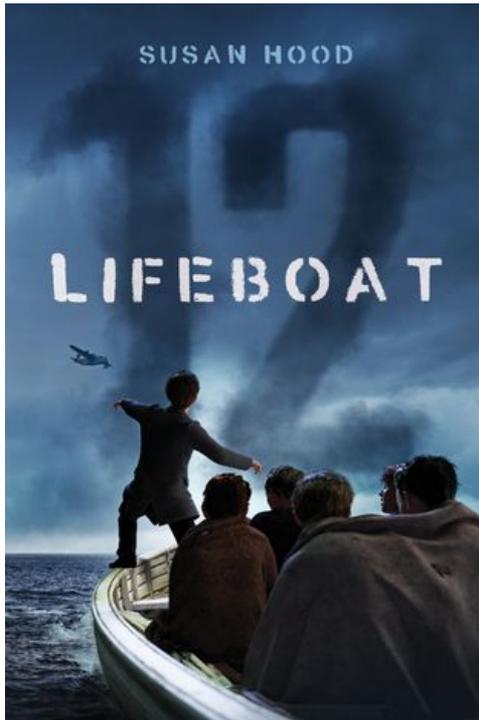
In 2015, Claudia Dalton’s life is suddenly turned upside down. On the last day of school, Claudia’s father, Jeff, sends a short email to his family saying that he will be home late—and then does not return. A few days later, Claudia’s mother, Jennifer, attends a conference in Switzerland, and Claudia stays with her recently widowed and still grieving paternal grandfather, Walter. While with Walter, Claudia frequently emails her father and finally receives an unlikely answer: a puzzle piece with a cryptic message telling her to find a time capsule buried in Jeff’s youth. With the help of her new friend, budding filmmaker Luis, Claudia begins a quest to find the time capsule and the secret that has suddenly separated her family.

Kirkus Reviews starred (May 1, 2018)

Lifeboat 12

by Susan Hood

This novel in verse based on true events.

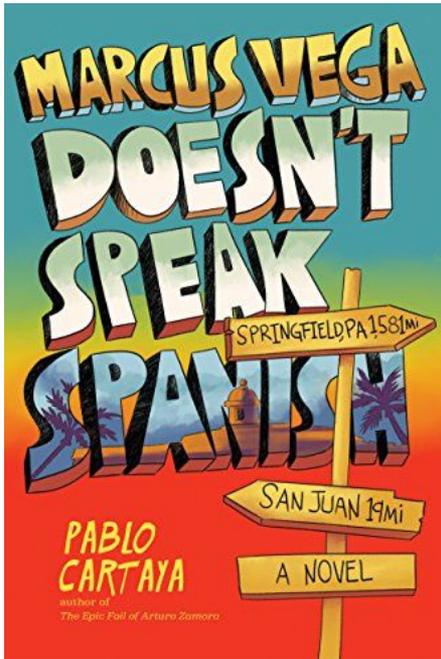


With Nazis bombing London every night, it's time for thirteen-year-old Ken to escape. He suspects his stepmother is glad to see him go, but his dad says he's one of the lucky ones—one of ninety boys and girls to ship out aboard the *SS City of Benares* to safety in Canada.

Life aboard the luxury ship is grand—nine-course meals, new friends, and a life far from the bombs, rations, and his stepmum's glare. And after five days at sea, the ship's officers announce that they're out of danger.

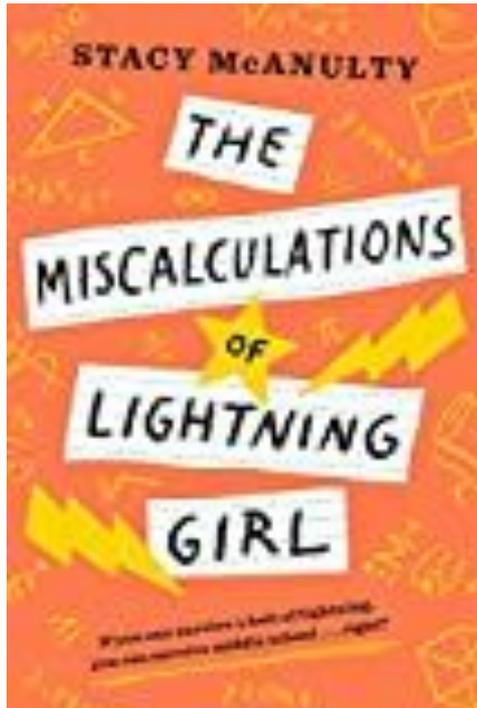
They're wrong. Late that night, an explosion hurls Ken from his bunk. They've been hit. Torpedoed! The *Benares* is sinking fast. Terrified, Ken scrambles aboard Lifeboat 12 with five other boys. Will they survive? [Book Trailer](#)

Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish by Pablo Cartaya



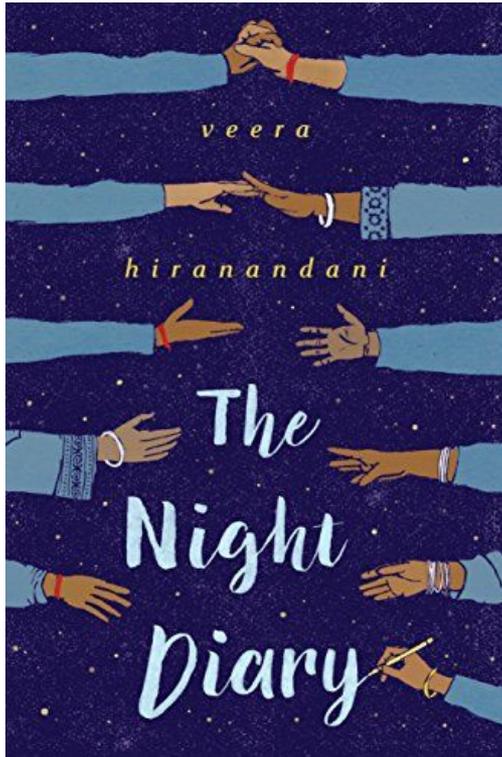
Marcus Vega uses his size to his advantage, collecting fees from fellow students who hire him to walk them to and from school, keeping them off of bully Stephen Hobert's radar. The money goes in his mom's emergency stash, which comes in handy when bills pile up. Then Stephen insults Marcus' younger brother, Charlie, with a derogatory term and Marcus gets in serious trouble. For a reprieve, his mom takes Marcus and Charlie on a trip to Puerto Rico to spend time with family; but instead of seeing it as a break, Marcus thinks it's the perfect chance to find the father who abandoned them.

The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl by Stacy McAnulty



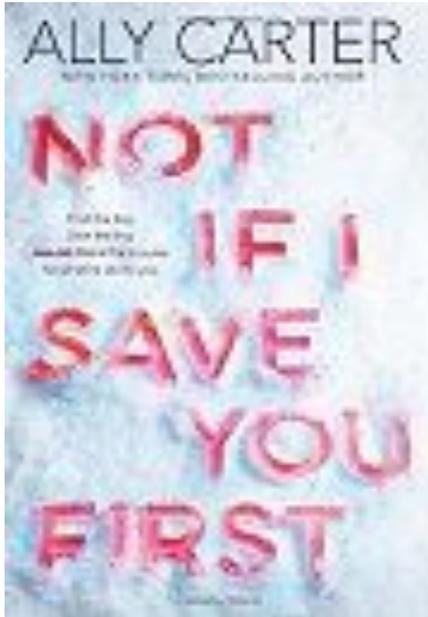
When Lucy, 12, was struck by lightning, she gained extraordinary math skills, and her grandmother, Nana, who raised Lucy after her parents' death, has homeschooled her ever since. Lucy is content to fill her hours with online college classes and chats on math forums where no one knows her real age, but Nana decides that Lucy needs to experience a world outside of a computer screen. If Lucy goes to middle school for one year, Nana promises, she'll be allowed to apply to college, and reluctantly, Lucy agrees. At first, her germophobia and mild obsessive behavior make a difficult situation more difficult, but eventually, she acquires two friends, finds useful work to do at an animal shelter, and has her life changed by a little dog she calls Pi.

The Night Diary by Veera Hiranandani



A quiet, sensitive half Hindu, half Muslim girl tries to make sense of her place in a country literally divided during the India Partition in 1947. Twelve-year-old Nisha has always struggled to express herself to her family and schoolmates, so each night she turns to her diary, where she writes entries to her mother, who passed away when she was a baby. Nisha feels the diary helps make the mother she never knew more real, but it also becomes a tool to bring Nisha's own thoughts and feelings into focus as she sorts through confusion, loss, and terror as her family embarks on a dangerous, forced migration from Pakistan to their new home.

Not If I Save You First by Ally Carter



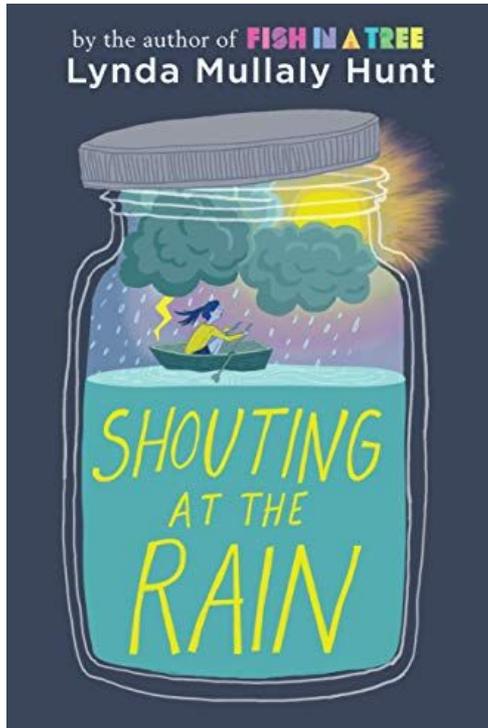
Maddie Manchester has spent the last six years isolated in the Alaskan wilderness. Apart from her father, who brought her to Alaska after a near-fatal incident as a secret service agent, Maddie interacts with no one, forcing her to become physically tough and mentally acute. Her old life—including her best friend and presidential son, Logan—has become a distant memory. That is, until Logan shows up at her door after one too many acts of rebellion for his parents’ tastes. He’s taller and hotter—and then, suddenly, missing. Maddie is immediately thrust into a desperate hunt to save Logan from his kidnappers, armed with only her wits and know-how (and more than one strategically hidden knife). [Book trailer](#)

The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise by Dan Gemeinhart



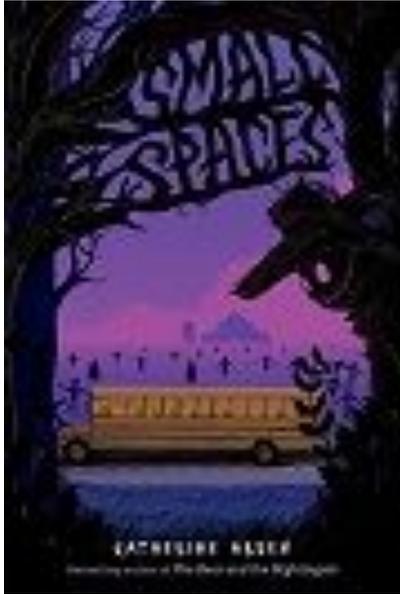
For the past five years, 12-year-old Coyote Sunrise and her father, Rodeo, have traveled all over the U.S. on a retired school bus converted into a home on wheels. Once upon a time, they lived in Washington State, but when her mother and two sisters died in an automobile accident, her father bought the bus, changed their names, and took off, determined to put painful memories behind them. But when Coyote learns that her former neighborhood park, where she and her mother and sisters buried a memory box, is about to be demolished, she knows she has to get back there and retrieve it. Knowing that a return to their old home is what Rodeo would call a “no-go,” Coyote plots a way to get where she needs to go. Along the way, they pick up an assortment of passengers who become involved with Coyote’s quest.

Shouting at the Rain by Lynda Mullaly Hunt



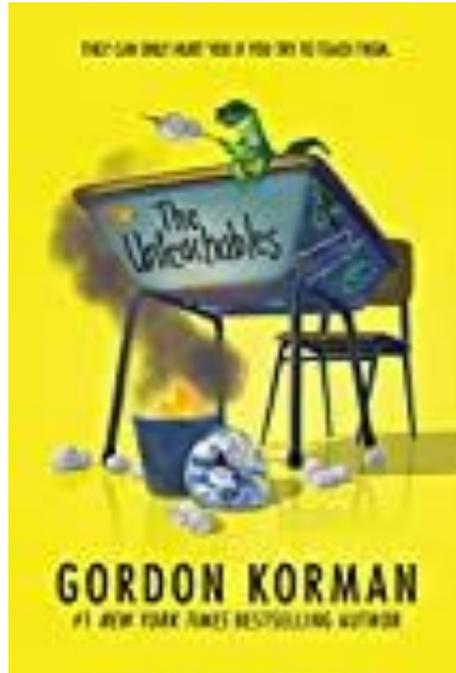
It's a summer of change for Delsie when a longtime friend is drawn away into the orbit of a mean girl. Raised by her grandmother alone since her grandfather's death, Delsie lives in a small, tight-knit neighborhood on Cape Cod, where Grammy cleans guest cottages to support them. When someone asks Delsie what it's like to be an orphan, her apparent abandonment by her parents seems to matter as never before. On the other hand, a new kid with a chip on his shoulder gradually opens up to become a new friend she can count on. [Book trailer](#)

Small Spaces by Katherine Arden



Things were already pretty spooky for Ollie after she rescued an antique book from a weeping, maniacal woman, but when the bus taking her and her classmates home from a school trip to a farm stalls in a dense bank of fog next to a field peppered with creepy scarecrows, it's clear something otherworldly is going on. Heeding the advice appearing in her late mother's digital watch—"RUN"—Ollie and a couple of classmates, Jamaican-born Brian and sensitive Coco, escape to the woods, trying to avoid the terrifying, animated scarecrows and find their way back to the farm, which has an eerie connection to the book. [Trailer](#)

The Unteachables by Gordon Korman



Kiana, a bright kid whose mother ships her off to spend a couple of months with “Dad and Stepmonster,” never exactly registers as a student at her new middle school. But she allows the hand of fate to nudge her into the special, self-contained eighth-grade class (aka the Unteachables), along with six misfits that the school has given up on. Make that seven—why exclude Mr. Kermit? Framed during a cheating scandal two decades ago and publicly humiliated, this once-gifted, now-jaded teacher is slouching toward retirement. After he unknowingly wins his students’ loyalty, their efforts and far-reaching results on his behalf surprise everyone.

Book Review Sources

Booklist Online: Book Reviews from the American Library Association

<https://www.booklistonline.com/>

Kirkus Reviews starred (May 1, 2018)

<http://www.titlewave.com/>

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