

Golden Dome Award: The B List

The Golden Dome A List consists each year of a list of 25 middle-grade books judged by the Golden Dome reading committee to be the best in children's literature. Not all on the committee always agree on just which books are the best – so each year we also include a list of the books which for one reason or another that got away.

365 Days to Alaska

Cathy Carr

Harry N. Abrams, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-4197-4380-1

Eleven-year-old Rigel has been raised off the grid in the Alaskan wilderness in a two-room cabin with no indoor plumbing or electricity, where she and her sisters, Willow and Izzy, got their education through correspondence classes. Now her parents, Bear and Lila, are divorcing and Lila is taking the girls to Connecticut to live with their grandmother. Rigel is miserable in her new, noisy, urban world and the only saving grace is Bear's promise that she can return to Alaska after a year. Then Bear's calls and letters drop off and lonely Rigel finds solace in a new friend – an injured crow that she names Blueberry. The bottom line: beauty, hope, and connection can be found anywhere – even in Connecticut.

Across the Desert

Dusti Bowling

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-316-49474-8

Twelve-year-old Jolene, a budding cartographer, loves the livestream adventures of Addie Earhart, a girl her age who flies an ultralight airplane over the Arizona desert – while at home she struggles with poverty and her mother's drug addiction, which in the past has landed Jolene in foster care. When Addie crashes one day, Jolene is unable to convince anyone that they need to go search for her – and eventually decides to go herself, despite the risk of calling down unwanted attention from Child Protective Services. She sets off on the long journey with a backpack, her mother's decrepit cell phone, and a homemade map. Eventually she meets 17-year-old Matty, who has troubles of her own, and the two develop a bond as they race against time to find Addie. A riveting story of survival and friendship.

Bea Is for Blended

Lindsay Stoddard

HarperCollins, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-06-287816-8

Bea's mother, now pregnant, has married Wendell, and Bea, long accustomed to a family of just two, has acquired three new brothers, two dogs, and a cat. Worse, one of the brothers, Bryce, has long been her nemesis at school, bullying her neurodiverse best friend, Max, and making fun of Bea's soccer playing. (Even worse, Bea and Bryce share a birthday.) As an added

twist, the sexist soccer coach/principal doesn't support the idea of a girls' soccer team, which Bea and friends are determined to have. A heartwarming coming-of-age story for both Bea and Bryce - and a great pitch for girls' soccer.

The Beatryce Prophecy

Kate DiCamillo

Candlewick, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-5362-1361-4

In this fairytale-like story set in a medieval world in time of war, Brother Edik finds a mysterious child at the monastery of the Order of the Chronicles of Sorrowing – bloody, sick, and curled in the straw with the monastery's demon goat, Answelica. When the monks discover that the child, Beatryce, can read and write, they are convinced that she's the child of the prophecy written in the *Chronicles* – the girl who will unseat the king – and so, believing that it's too dangerous for her to remain with them, they send her away. Beatryce, armed with a head full of stories about kings and queens, mermaids and wolves, then sets off through the woods in search of the castle where her destiny lies and where her own story began.

Black Boy Joy

Kwame Mbalia

Delacorte Press, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-593-37993-6

This is an anthology of 17 stories by authors such as Jerry Craft, Jason Reynolds, and Varian Johnson, variously in prose, poetry, or graphic/comic format, all celebrating the joys and wonders of black boyhood, from a debate about superheroes to determining the true meaning of the word *cool*. Stories run the gamut from funny to poignant, but all are compelling.

Breathing Underwater

Sarah Allen

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-374-31325-8

Olivia, a passionate photographer, is on a cross-country road trip from Tennessee to California with her older sister, Ruth, travelling by RV with her mother's cousin, Eddie, and his wife, Ellie. Once there, Olivia hopes to find the time capsule that she and Ruth once buried in a cave near their old home. Ruth suffers from depression and Olivia, in hopes of helping Ruth, tries to turn the trip into a treasure hunt for memories of happier times, which she once commemorated with photos and Ruth with playlists. A hopeful story of sisterhood and the challenge of mental illness.

DaVinci's Cat

Catherine Gilbert Murdock

Greenwillow Books, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-0630-1525-8

Bee, in modern-day New Jersey, and Federico, in sixteenth-century Rome, are linked together by a cat and a time-traveling wardrobe that once belonged to Leonardo DaVinci. Federico, a political hostage in the Pope's palace, models for Raphael and watches Michelangelo at work on the Sistine Chapel – and deals with Herbert, an art collector from the 1920s, who arrives via wardrobe in hopes of getting a sketch signed by Raphael. (He bribes Federico with chocolate and peanuts.) Then Bee discovers the wardrobe and finds herself in Renaissance Italy, where she and Federico, after all this time slippage, set about putting history to rights. Adventure and art history.

Fifty-Four Things Wrong with Gwendolyn Rogers

Caela Carter

Quill Tree Books, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-0629-9663-3

No one can figure out just what Gwendolyn's problem is – not her mother, her teachers, or her battery of therapists – but Gwendolyn, having seen a confidential school report, knows that she doesn't have just one problem, but fifty-four. And how to cope with them all in time for her to go to horse camp? It's possible, with the help of the understanding Dr. Nessa.

Gone to the Woods

Gary Paulsen

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-3743-1415-6

Paulsen's gripping memoir begins when, as a five-year-old, he's put on a train in Chicago and sent to live with an aunt and uncle in Minnesota's North Woods. It's a brief halcyon period there before his alcoholic, irresponsible mother arrives to take him away. Paulsen's story is filled with pain and trauma – though also with hope, as when, at age 13, he found his way to a public library, where a librarian put a notebook and pencil in his hands and encouraged him to write. The book is subtitled "Surviving a Lost Childhood," and as Paulsen's wonderful body of work shows us, he did indeed survive.

Kaleidoscope

Brian Selznick

Scholastic, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-3387-7724-6

Magical, mysterious, fantastical, complex, and – well, confusing. The book is divided in thirds (Morning, Afternoon, Evening), following an unnamed narrator and companion James through a changing landscape as they deal with themes of love, death, friendship, dreams, and grief. The book begins on the narrator's thirteenth birthday, when he and James are carried by a storm to the Moon where James defends night and sleep by battling the Sun. Beautiful, brilliant, ever-changing, and fascinating.

Long Lost

Jacqueline West

Greenwillow Books, 2021
ISBN: 978-0-0626-9175-0

Fiona is unhappy: her family has just moved across Massachusetts to the little town of Lost Lake so that her sister Arden, a champion figure skater, can be close to her practice rink. Then, in the town library, Fiona finds a mysterious book about two sisters, Hazel and Pearl, who lived in Lost Lake a century ago – one of whom disappeared. The stories of the sisters, past and present, parallel each other, and Fiona is determined to find out what really happened to Hazel and Pearl. A spooky supernatural mystery.

Ophie's Ghosts

Justina Ireland

Balzer + Bray, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-0629-1589-4

Twelve-year-old Ophelia Harrison has a special talent. She can see ghosts – which she learned when her father suddenly appeared to her in their home in Georgia, telling her to wake her mother and flee the house. They did, just in time to escape a marauding band of white men who, they discovered later, had murdered her father. Now they've moved to Pittsburgh to live with Aunt Rosie and family, and Ophie is working with her mother as a maid at Daffodil Manor, trying to save enough money to have their own home and allow Ophie to go to school. But Daffodil Manor, along with a curmudgeonly white mistress, has its own population of ghosts and a mystery that Ophie is determined to solve.

Race Against Time

Sandra Neil Wallace and Rich Wallace

Calkins Creek, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-6297-9816-5

Written by a pair of investigative journalists, this is the little-known story of Scipio Jones, a former slave and self-educated attorney, who fought for justice for twelve black sharecroppers unjustly sentenced to death after the townsmen of Hoop Spur, Arkansas, raided the meeting where they had gathered to discuss unionizing. A wonderful story and a great tribute to an unsung hero of African American rights.

The Raconteur's Commonplace Book

Kate Milford

Clarion Books, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-3284-6690-7

In this stand-alone book from Milford's Greenglass House universe, twelve guests – including a ship's captain, Maisie, a young girl traveling alone, a pair of tattooed brothers, Madame Grisaille, a dancer, and Al Tesserian, a builder of card castles - are trapped by floods at the Blue Vein Tavern. They decide to pass the time by telling stories, which are variously eerie, fascinating, and filled with secrets – while an uncanny rain pours down outside.

Real

Carol Cujec

Shadow Mountain Publishing, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-6297-2789-9

Thirteen-year-old Charily, though bright and blessed with a photographic memory, is severely autistic and has been sent to Borden Academy, where kids with disabilities are mistreated and denied a substantive education. With help from her parents, Charity is transferred to a mainstream school, where she learns to communicate via facilitated communication – but her life still isn't trouble-free.

Root Magic

Eden Royce

Walden Pond Press

ISBN: 978-0-0628-9957-6

Eleven-year-old twins Jez and Jay Turner have been raised in the Gullah Geechee culture of South Carolina, where generations of their family have practiced root magic. Now, in the 1960s, their family and others are being threatened by the local white deputy sheriff, and Jez and Jay must learn to use rootwork and their connection to the spiritual world to help cope with danger in the here and now.

The Shape of Thunder

Jasmine Warga

Balzer + Bray, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-0629-5667-5

Best friends Cora and Quinn are separated by terrible tragedy: Cora's sister Mabel was killed in a school shooting and Quinn's brother, Parker, is the one who did the shooting. On Cora's twelfth birthday, she finds a box on her porch with a note from Quinn, who believes that if, working together, they can open a wormhole, perhaps they can travel back in time to save both their siblings. A moving story about friendship, loss, and the healing power of what may be an impossible hope.

Sisters of the Neversea

Cynthia Leitich Smith

Heartdrum

ISBN: 978-0-0628-6998-1

A whole new take on Peter Pan. The Roberts-Darlings are a blended family: Lily and big brother John (Roberts) are Muscogee Creek; Wendy (Darling) is from England; and little brother Michael is a mix of the two. When the kids' parents consider separation, Wendy and Michael are seduced by Peter Pan and the fairy Belle into flying to Neverland, followed by skeptical Lily, who plans to save her siblings. Neverland under Peter's despotic rule turns out to be a troubled country. Lily joins a group of Native kids; Wendy and Michael join the Lost, all of whom have been kidnapped by Peter. An exciting adventure and definitely not your grandma's Neverland.

The Way of the Hive

Jay Hosler

HarperAlley, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-0630-0735-2

In this colorful graphic novel, Nyuki (from the Swahili for bee) is a brand-new honeybee with a lot of questions about life as a bee. As she learns about the way of the hive – and then passes on what she’s learned to younger bees – readers too learn about the lives and importance of bees. An important read.

Why Longfellow Lied

Jeff Lantos

Charlesbridge, 2021

ISBN: 978-1-5808-9933-8

Does Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s famous 1860 poem “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Not hardly, according to Jeff Lantos, who works his way through Longfellow’s version, setting the historical record straight along the way. A thoroughly interesting feat of historical myth-busting.