

The B List
Or Some of the Books That Got Away

Goblins, Ghosts, and a Curse

The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge
M.T. Anderson; Candlewick, 2018

Elf historian Brangwain Spurge is catapulted across the Bonecruel Mountains bearing a priceless goblin artifact in hopes of forging a bond between the elf and goblin kingdoms. His host, goblin archivist Werfel, does his best to make the snobbish Spurge feel at home, but misunderstandings and cultural bumbblings lead to a crisis between the two historically opposed kingdoms. Clever and witty; medieval illustrations by Eugene Yelchin further the plot.

City of Ghosts
Victoria Schwab; Scholastic, 2018.

Ever since Cass drowned and was revived, she's been able to pull back the Veil between the living and the dead – even her best friend, Jacob, is a ghost. Her life becomes more complicated when her parents, a pair of paranormal authors, begin hosting a television show on the world's most haunted places, and begin with a tour of the castles and graveyards of Edinburgh, Scotland. In Edinburgh, Cass meets Lara, who shares her ability, and runs up against an ancient and sinister specter, the Raven in Red.

Winterhouse
Ben Guterson; Henry Holt and Co., 2018

Eleven-year-old orphan Elizabeth arrives home just before Christmas to find herself locked out; her wretched Aunt Purdy and Uncle Burlap have left on vacation, leaving a train ticket and three dollar bills taped to the door. Off Elizabeth goes to spend the holidays at the strange and magical Winterhouse Hotel, where she and new friend Freddy attempt to solve its many secrets – especially that concerning the sinister couple who have arrived toting a distinctly coffin-shaped “box of books.” A great pick for lovers of puzzles and wordplay; Elizabeth is a puzzle whiz and each chapter begins with a word ladder.

Witches and Fairies

Nightbooks
J.A. White; Katherine Tegen Books, 2018

Alex, who writes spooky stories, is sick of being called a weirdo and so has decided to toss his cache of “nightbooks” into the basement furnace – but en route he's lured into the enchanted apartment of Natacha, a witch, and is trapped. (No gingerbread here; Alex is pulled in by a television show.) There he's forced to read Natacha a new tale each night,

while he and fellow prisoner Yasmin – with help from the witch’s cat, Lenore - struggle to escape. An exciting and satisfyingly creepy mix of “Hansel and Gretel” and “1001 Nights.”

Granted

John David Anderson; Walden Pond Press, 2018

Ophelia Delphinium Fidgets of the Granter Guild in the Haven has long been in training for wish-granting missions, and at last she gets her chance. Unfortunately magic isn’t what it used to be – and in fact is fading so fast that those few wishes that can be granted are chosen by lottery. Ophelia, on her way to grant a wish for a new bicycle, runs into disaster after disaster, eventually ending up grounded and with a broken wing. There she forms a friendship with a stray dog named Sam and a boy, Gabe Morales, wishing for his father to return safely from Iraq – and Ophelia begins to question the fairy rules for the granting of wishes.

Who Doesn’t Like Chemistry?

The Disappearing Spoon

Sam Kean; Little, Brown, 2018

This is the Young Readers Edition of the adult book of the same name, a chatty, reader-friendly history of the periodic table, crammed with catchy stories and anecdotes. Readers learn about the Boy Scout who built a nuclear reactor, the Babylonian king who went mad from antimony paint, and the CIA plot to kill Castro by sprinkling thallium powder in his socks. And the disappearing spoons? They’re made from gallium, an element that is solid at room temperature but melts at 84°F. A classic science prank was to serve them with tea and watch the guests gasp as their utensils dissolve.

Historical Fiction

The Night Diary

Veera Hiranandani; Dial, 2018

It’s 1947 and India, newly freed from British rule, has been partitioned into two countries, primarily based on religious majorities: India, primarily Hindu, and Pakistan, primarily Muslim. Twelve-year-old Nisha’s family – half Hindu, half Muslim – has found the new Pakistan too dangerous, and so is making a dangerous trek on foot across the border to India. The story is told through Nisha’s diary, written in the form of letters to her dead (Muslim) mother. An often under-represented historical period, with themes of friendship and overcoming prejudice. A Newbery Honor Book.

The Length of a String

Elissa Brent Weissman; Dial, 2018

Imani, who is black, has been adopted and raised by Jewish parents – and now, as she approaches her bat mitzvah, she wants to search for her birth parents. At the same time she finds a journal in 1941 written by her adoptive mother’s grandmother, Anna – the story

of the year she was twelve, sent away from her parents and twin sister in Nazi-occupied Luxembourg to find a new life with an adoptive family in New York. A story of the making and breaking of family ties, told in two voices.

Cool Nonfiction

The Girl Who Drew Butterflies

Joyce Sidman; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018

This is an exquisitely illustrated biography of Maria Sibylla Merian, the 17th-century German-born naturalist and artist, and one of the first to document the metamorphosis of moths and butterflies. Included are archival images, historical sidebars, maps, photos, and color reproductions of Merian's original artworks. A Robert F. Sibert Medal winner.

Library on Wheels

Sharlee Glenn; Harry N. Abrams, 2018

The story of librarian Mary Lemist Titcomb and her innovations to the library system – including library children's rooms and the introduction of the first bookmobile. Her first, a horse-drawn wagon, was so often mistaken for a hearse that she painted it bright red. The book is illustrated scrapbook-style, with letters, postcards, and archival photos.

Animals Whose Names Begin With W

Saving Winslow

Sharon Creech; HarperCollins, 2018

Louie and Nora have problems: Louie worries about his older brother, overseas in the military, who has begun signing his letters "Remember me;" Nora, who has just lost her dog and her premature baby brother, is determined not to form any further emotional attachments. When the two collaborate to save a fragile infant donkey named Winslow, however, both find hope and confidence and – along with Winslow – grow stronger.

Winnie's Great War

Lindsay Mattick; Little, Brown, 2018

This is the chapter-book version of Mattick's *Finding Winnie*, which won the Caldecott Medal in 2015. It's the true story of a small Canadian bear, rescued by veterinarian Harry Colebourne in 1914 as he heads for Europe during World War I, and named Winnie for his hometown of Winnipeg. Winnie becomes the beloved mascot of Harry's military unit and crosses the ocean with them to England – but is left behind at the London Zoo when the unit is sent to France. There she meets a young boy named Christopher Robin Milne and becomes the inspiration for *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

If You Liked *The Inquisitor's Tale*...

The Book of Boy

Catherine Gilbert Murdock; Greenwillow, 2018

Set in the 14th century, the title character, known only as Boy, is the village outcast, ridiculed for his humpback. Then the pilgrim Secundus passes through town and takes on Boy to help him in his quest to collect – or steal - the relics of Saint Peter from sites across Europe, thereby guaranteeing his entry into heaven. Boy begins to hope that perhaps Saint Peter might be able to make him a normal boy – though it's clear from Boy's mysterious abilities (he never eats and is able to communicate with animals) that he isn't. Miracles, mysteries, and an unforgettable protagonist. A Newbery Honor Book.

If You Liked *One Crazy Summer*...

The Season of Styx Malone

Kekla Magoon; Wendy Lamb Books, 2018

This story of three African-American boys in small-town Indiana opens with a bang, when Caleb and Bobby Gene inadvertently trade their baby sister for a bag of fireworks. They get the sister back, but manage to keep the fireworks – at which point they meet the irresistible Styx Malone and embark upon the Great Escalator Trade, exchanging their fireworks up in sequential steps in hopes of obtaining a moped. It's funny and delightful, with an underpinning of emotional struggle: Caleb's ultra-cautious father warns his boys against standing out; and Styx, a child of foster homes, has troubles of his own. A Coretta Scott King Honor Book.

Theft. And Aliens.

Every Shiny Thing

Cordelia Jensen and Laurie Morrison; Harry N. Abrams, 2018

This story is told in the alternating voices of Sierra – in verse – and Lauren – in prose. Sierra, while her mother serves time in jail, is in foster care with Carl and Anne, a lovely interracial couple whose own daughter died years previously. Next-door neighbor Lauren's brother has just been sent to a special boarding school for kids with autism, and Lauren – who has always felt responsible for him – is at loose ends. Lauren decides to raise money for less-well-off autistic kids, a project that turns into an obsessive Robin-Hood scheme, in which she begins to steal from her parents, friends, and neighbors; then proceeds to shoplifting. Sierra is implicated when Lauren convinces her to store stolen goods in Carl and Anne's daughter's bedroom. Issues of friendship and of right gone wrong.

A Problematic Paradox

Eliot Sappingfield; G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2018

Think Hogwarts for nerds. Brilliant Nikola Kross's father has been kidnapped by aliens, but he – anticipating this – has made arrangements for Nikola to be sent to a very

peculiar boarding school, where gifted humans and parahumans study quantum mechanics and move between classes via wormholes. Meanwhile the school and the planet are in danger from the Old Ones, interdimensional alien horrors, one of whom goes by the unlikely name of Tabbabitha. Exciting, outlandish, and wildly imaginative.

Snakes and a Taxidermied Moose

Squirm

Carl Hiaasen; Knopf, 2018

Central character of Hiaasen's latest eco-adventures is Billy Dickens, a snake-lover, who has spent his life moving frequently because his mom always has to live near a bald eagle nest. Billy's father left when he was four and he knows nothing about him – until he finally manages to track down his address on an old envelope. Off Billy goes from Florida to Montana to meet his elusive dad – and discovers that he has a new stepmother and stepsister, both members of the Crow Nation, but still no father, who has left on some mysterious job – which turns out to be a guerilla attempt to protect wildlife from trophy hunters.

A Stitch in Time

Daphne Kalmar; Feiwel & Friends, 2018

Set in Vermont in 1927, Donut, a geography buff and hobby taxidermist, has been raised by her father, recently killed in a car accident. Now Aunt Agnes has arrived to take charge, with plans to relocate Donut to Boston, and Donut, broken-hearted at the thought of leaving her friends and hometown, is determined not to go. Instead she runs away, sinking her father's homemade folding boat in the process, and setting fire to a neighbor's hunting cabin.

Adversity Times Three

Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World

Ashley Herring Blake; Little, Brown, 2018

When 12-year-old Ivy's Georgia home is destroyed by a tornado, Ivy and her family (mother, father, older sister, and twin baby brothers) end up in a shelter. There Ivy links up with June, a young poet in Ivy's class – and there Ivy loses her special secret notebook filled with drawings, many showing Ivy holding hands with another girl. When the drawings mysteriously begin to show up in Ivy's school locker, Ivy is horrified that someone knows her secret – and worries as the mystery person urges her to come out. An understanding novel about a girl struggling with questions of gender, identity, and belonging.

Hope in the Holler

Lisa Lewis Tyre; Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018

Wavie's mother has died of cancer, leaving Wavie to her horrible aunt Samantha Rose, who relocates her to Conley Holler in the rundown backwoods of Kentucky. It soon becomes clear that Samantha Rose is only interested in nabbing Wavie's Social Security check, and life looks bleak. However, with the help of a pair of new friends and a long-ago family mystery, there's eventually a happy ending.

The Science of Breakable Things
Tae Keller; Random House, 2018

Natalie's botanist mother is suffering from depression – and not only doesn't seem to care about Natalie anymore, but can't even get out of bed. Encouraged by an enthusiastic science teacher, Natalie is determined to win the class egg-drop contest – and use the prize money to take her mother to New Mexico to see the rare cobalt blue orchids that she had once been studying, in hopes of effecting a cure.