

# 2021 BEST OF THE BEST BOOKLIST

## 9TH THROUGH 12TH GRADE

### **Love is a Revolution by Renee Watson**

-At an open mic event, Nala Robertson falls in love with Tye Brown, an activist. To keep Tye's interest in her, Nala tells a few lies. As they spend more time together, the truth is slowly revealed. Can and will Nala accept the consequences of her actions? A powerful story on finding and loving oneself first. Also appropriate for 7th and 8th grade students.

### **Muted by Tami Charles**

-Denver, along with her best friends, Dali and Shak, are determined to make it into the music world. When they meet Sean "Mercury" Jones, a powerhouse in the music business, they think they have made it. But, the parties and the lifestyle comes with a painful price. Based on the author's own life, and stories from abused women in the music industry, Charles tells the story of what it takes to fight back.

### **Nubia: Real One by L. L. McKinney**

-McKinney takes a somewhat uncommon approach to the teenage superhero formula, crafting an origin story that's less about gaining powers and more about becoming empowered. As is hinted at by the title, Real One's plot leans heavily towards realism, reading more like *The Hate U Give* than *Miles Morales*. Equal credit for the graphic novel's authenticity is due to Smith, whose wonderfully expressive artwork brings the characters and the entire world to life.

### **One of the Good Ones by Maika and Maritza Moulite**

-Kezi's seemingly perfect sister dies at the hand of police. She grapples with being left behind and her sister's new place in society as a martyr.

### **Our Time is Now: Power, Purpose, and the Fight for a Fair America by Stacey Abrams**

-Extensive research from organizations, experts, and anecdotes, Abrams chronicles a shocking account of how the right to vote and the principle of democracy have been and continue to be under attack. At stake, is not only losing the right to vote, but a loss of power and a voice. Abrams offers some concrete solutions and inspirations to counter to defend our right to vote.

### **Out of my Heart by Sharon M. Draper**

-The long-awaited sequel to Draper's *Out of My Mind* follows loving, spunky protagonist Melody, a girl with cerebral palsy, as she attends her first ever sleep-away camp. Armed with her new speech device and camp gear, Melody is excited to attend camp and make new friends, as well as meet other children with special needs like herself.



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### **Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam**

-Amal Shalid, an artist and a poet in a "diverse" school is wrongfully incarcerated for a crime he did not commit. In prison, he succumbs to despair and anger, and life in prison that threatens to strip him of his humanity and truth. Zoboi and Salaam tell a painful, emotional, yet profound story about how Amal maintains his humanity and fights for truth.

### **Recognize: An Anthology Honoring and Amplifying Black Life by Wade Hudson**

-This collection of essays, poems, photographs, cartoons from prominent African American authors and illustrators celebrate and capture the love, beauty, resilience, and pride of Black life. This book is also suitable for grades 5-8.

### **Revolution in Our Time: Black Panther Promise to the People by Kekla Magoon**

-In this thoroughly researched book, Magoon accurately tells the story of The Black Panther Party and its role in the civil rights movement and US history. Rich with anecdotes, primary documents, and historical accounts, teens will learn that the Black Panther Party, with their ten point platform, free breakfast and education programs, were truly for the people.

### **Robert Smalls: Tales of the Talented Tenth #3 by Joel Christian Gill**

-An excellent graphic novel biography which tells the story of Robert Smalls, a 23-year-old enslaved deckhand on the Confederate ship the CSS Planter who was strong-willed, defiant and who devised a plan that would get him and 15 others across into Union territory with little to no suspicion.

### **Simone Breaks All the Rules by Debbie**

-Simone has tried really hard to follow her parents rules and she has finally had it. Follow along in this realistic fiction novel as Simone creates a list of all the rules she plans to break before she graduates highschool.

### **The Black Panther Party: A Graphic Novel History by David F. Walker**

-Told in bold, dramatic, yet gripping with details, this graphic novel history of the revolutionary Black Panther Party will leave no stone unturned as it reveals the impact and significance of the Panther Party.

### **The Bones of Ruin by Sarah Raughley**

-Iris is an African tightrope walker in a London circus with a secret, and she can't die. People think she's 17, but in reality, she's ageless. Follow along as she tries to find balance in a Tournament of Freaks hosted by a secret society while the world might be coming to an end.



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### **The Gilded Ones by Namina Forna**

—A dark feminist tale spun with blood and gold. Dekka decides to leave the only life she's ever known. But as she journeys to the capital to train for the biggest battle of her life, she will discover that the great walled city holds many surprises. Nothing and no one are quite what they seem to be—not even Dekka herself.

### **The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman**

—Gorman, who on January 20, 2021 became the youngest poet to deliver a reading for a presidential inauguration, played her role undauntingly while under the expectant gaze of the nation and the world. Her captivating poem is reproduced here, with the addition of a forward by Oprah Winfrey.

### **The Life I'm In by Sharon G. Flake**

—A companion book to Flake's award-winning *The Skin I'm In*, this book follows the life of Charlese Jones, Maleeka's troubled yet complex bully. Still reeling from the deaths of her parents years ago, Charlese is hurt when her older sister sends her away to live with their grandparents. But as she travels and gets caught up in human trafficking, Charlese has to pull on strength and support that she didn't know she had in order to find her way back home.

### **The Meet-Cute Project by Rhiannon Richardson**

—Mia needs an escort to her sister's wedding. Her well-meaning friends try to find a suitable escort for Mia, but their plans go awry. Even Mia tries to connect with someone who she thinks is suitable. When it comes to romance, unlikely partners become suitable, and well meaning friends' "set-ups" should be natural and not forced. In this story, Mia learns more about herself and who is best for her.

### **The Other Black Girl by Zakiya Dalila Harris**

Novel steeped in office microaggressions and Black women trying to succeed and break the glass ceiling but ultimately feeling as if there are forces working against them. What if there an easier way to find success?

### **The Taking of Jake Livingston by Ryan Douglass**

—As one of the handful of Black kids at St. Clair Prep (in addition to being in the closet), Jake Livingston is having a pretty tough time trying to fit in. Oh, and there's one other problem: he can see dead people, one of whom was a mass murderer and is now trying to possess his body. Douglass portrays microaggressions, homophobia, and the supernatural with engaging magical-realism in this unique YA thriller.



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### **The Cost of Knowing by Brittney Morris**

-What would you do if you could see into the future just by touching someone? Would you want to know what was going to happen or would you rather leave it to fate? Alex no longer has that choice. Ever since his parents died he can see into the future and it's giving him major anxiety. Especially now that he's seen the death of his younger brother. With time running out can Alex save his little brother?

### **This Poison Heart by Kalynn Bayron**

-Briseis's gift of a single touch of growing plants from tiny seeds to rich blooms is tested when her aunt dies and leaves Briseis a crumbling estate in rural New York in her care. The estate is surrounded by plants and flowers. However, as beautiful as this home appears, there is something ominous about this home. There is more to Bri's sudden inheritance than she could have imagined, and she is determined to uncover it.

### **Where the Rhythm Takes You by Sarah Dass**

-Despite being raised at her family's luxurious seaside resort in Tobago, Reyna finds herself yearning for more—"more" specifically being Aiden, her childhood best friend and first crush. After two years away, Aiden finally returns...but as a Grammy-nominated musician with two beautiful LA socialites in tow, one of whom he may or may not be dating. Dass's creative recontextualization of a lesser-known Jane Austen novel makes for a delightfully drama-laden teen romance.

### **Wings of Ebony by J. Elle**

-When Rue's mother is shot dead on her doorstep, Rue is forced to leave her little sister behind and her father takes her away to a hidden island of magic wielders named Ghizon. Rue, half-god and half-human, tries to adjust to life on this island. Desperate to see her sister, Rue breaks a law and returns home and discovers that Tasha is in danger.

### **Y'all Hiring? The Black Teen's Guide to Navigating Employment by Albert Phillips, Jr.**

It's no secret that getting a job involves much more than being qualified to do the work, and a number of factors have long made the hidden curriculum behind help wanted ads especially difficult to crack for teens of color. Phillips seeks to level the playing field with this handbook to navigating employment, including advice on résumé building, interviews, and discrimination within the workplace, all in straightforward and accessible language.

### **Your Dark Corner by Desmond Hall**

-Jamaican born Frankie Green was awarded a scholarship that would get him out of Jamaica. Then his father is shot. Now he has to join his uncle's gang in order to pay for his father's medical expenses. Will Frankie be able to get out of the gang and pursue his dreams?



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## CONTRIBUTORS

### School Library

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