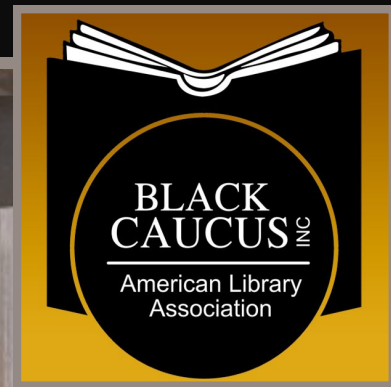


Best of the Best 2023

Grades PreK–4



An American Story

by Kwame Alexander, ill. by Dare Coulter

A picture book in verse that threads together past and present to explore the legacy of slavery during a classroom lesson.

All Aboard the Schooltrain: A Little Story from the Great Migration, by Glenda Armand, ill. Keisha Morris

During the Great Migration in 1930's Louisiana, eight-year-old Jenny tries to understand why a man named Jim Crow is making trouble for her family.

Ice Cream Man: How Augustus Jackson Made a Sweet Treat Better by Glenda Armand and Kim Freeman, ill. by Keith Mallett

This picture book biography recounts the extraordinary life of Augustus Jackson, an African American entrepreneur who is known as the "Father of Ice Cream".

Words of Wonder From Z to A

by Zaila Avant-Garde, illustrated by Keisha Moore

2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee Winner Zaila Avant-Garde shares her love of words and the feelings that they bring in this whimsical picture book. Running through all twenty-six letters of the alphabet, Avant-Garde discusses some of her favorite words that begin with each letter, encouraging readers while also including inspiring quotes from various figures.

Crowned

by Kahran and Regis Bethencourt

Magical folk and classic fairy tales told from the diaspora perspective. These tales embrace Black love, joy, culture, beauty, and humanity. Beautiful photographs of African American children complement these tales.

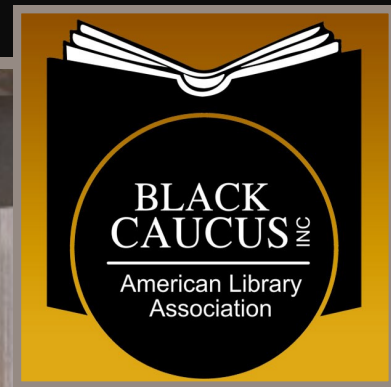
Rock, Rosetta, Rock! Roll, Rosetta, Roll! Presenting Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Godmother of Rock & Roll

by Tonya Bolden, ill. R. Gregory Christie

Award-winning author Tonya Bolden and acclaimed illustrator R. Gregory Christie deliver an inspiring true story about the life, career, and impact of 20th-century blues and gospel singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe. The godmother of rock & roll started as a little girl from Arkansas with music in her air, in her hair, in her bones, wiggling her toes. With a big guitar in hand and a big voice in her soul, she grew into a rock & roll trailblazer in a time when women were rarely seen rocking out. Her guitar picking was like nobody else's.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades PreK–4



You Come From Greatness

by Sara Chinakwe, ill. by Ken Daley

A father gives his son a poetic explanation of their the long and rich family history, covering a diverse cast of ancestors ranging from resilient homemakers to ingenious innovators. The boy not only learns of how those who came before him worked to shaped the world around him, but also comes to recognize his power to do the same.

The Story of the Saxophone

by Lesa Cline-Ransome, ill. James Ransome

Coretta Scott King Honoree Lesa Cline-Ransome unravels the fascinating history of how Adolphe's once reviled instrument was transported across Europe and Mexico to New Orleans. Follow the saxophone's journey from Adolphe's imagination to the pawn shop window where it caught the eye of musician Sidney Bechet and became the iconic symbol of jazz music it is today.

My Oh My, I Can't Wait to Eat This Pie!

by Chef Shavown Cox and Brittany Young, ill. D. G.

Antonio and Vonnie are visiting Gana for the weekend. She needs to get some sweet potatoes for the marvelous sweet potato pie that she's going to make for Sunday dinner. However, Gana only uses farm-fresh sweet potatoes in her pie, so Vonnie and Antonio have to go on a hunt with her to various farmers markets around the city. Go on the journey with Gana, Vonnie, and Antonio to find out if they find the best sweet potatoes for Gana's pie.

Okra Stew

by Natalie Daise

This tribute to Gullah Geechie culture celebrates the time and care that goes into making one of the most beloved and iconic dishes: Okra stew. When the rest of the family leaves for the day, little Bobo and his fisherman father gather all the ingredients to make okra stew, catching shrimp and pulling vegetables from their garden. Gullah words and cadence fill the text in this celebration of family and passing down recipes as heritage.

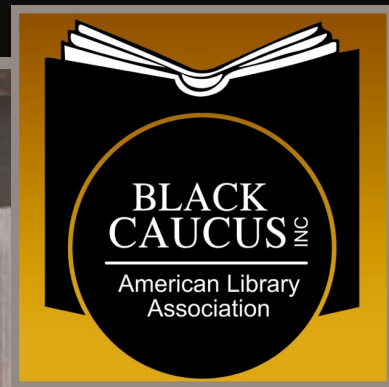
To Boldly Go: How Nichelle Nichols and 'Star Trek' Helped Advance Civil Rights

by Angela Dalton, ill. Lauren Semmer

This empowering tribute to the trailblazing pop culture icon Nichelle Nicholas reminds us of the importance of perseverance and the power of representation in storytelling. A smart, strong, independent Black woman aboard the starship Enterprise was revolutionary in the 1960s when only white men had traveled to outer space in real life and most Black characters on TV were servants. Nichelle not only inspired a generation to pursue their dreams, but also opened the door for the real-life pioneering astronaut Sally Ride, Dr. Mae Jemison, and more.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades PreK–4



Harlem at Four

by Michael Datcher, ill. Frank Morrison

An enamored father juxtaposes the growth of his daughter with the history of the legendary neighborhood, whose name she shares. The two walk around their neighborhood and visit familiar places, and little Harlem learns more about the place she calls home, prompting a flashback to over a century before and the figures, both known and unsung, who helped shape Harlem into a haven for Black culture. The love between the pair and the reverence for the neighborhood's history make this an engaging read.

Little Black Lives Matter

by Khodi Dill

Little Black Lives Matter empowers Black children by affirming that their lives, however little they may yet be, matter. Featuring fifteen great Black heroes of the past and the powerful words they spoke and actions they took, Little Black Lives Matter is a rhyming board book that incorporates memorable quotations and a reminder to little ones that each of these great people once lived a little Black life themselves.

The Green Piano: How Little Me Found Music

by Roberta Flack and Tonya Bolden, ill. Hayden Goodman

Legendary singer Roberta Flack reflects on her early childhood and her love of music.

Juneteenth: A Picture Book for Kids Celebrating Black Joy

by Van G. Garrett, illustrated by Reginald C Adams and Samson Bimbo Adenugba

A young Black child experiences the magic of the Juneteenth parade for the first time with their family as they come to understand the purpose of the party that happens every year—and why they celebrate their African American history.

Big

by Vashti Harrison

A picture book expertly illustrates a young girl's being pain when the pros of being a big girl soon thereafter become cons when she's told too big. She learns to set boundaries to protect her peace and make the world a kinder place.

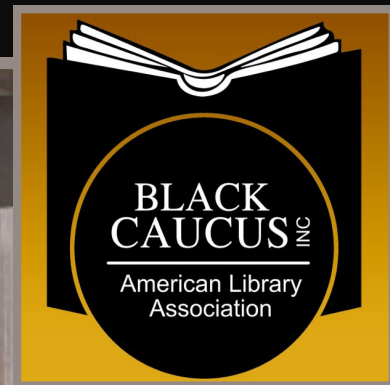
Dear Yesteryear

by Kimberly Annece Henderson

In 2020, Kimberly Annece Henderson started emaline and 'nem, an Instagram-based archival image repository that features portraiture of everyday African Americans from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Dear Yesteryear is a beautiful and lyrical continuation of that project that addresses the past, honoring the ancestors who made the present possible and celebrating the ordinary goings on of Black Americans.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades PreK–4



Invincible: Fathers and Mothers of Black America by Wade Hudson, ill. E.B. Lewis

This picture book biography lauds the achievements of Ketanji Brown Jackson, the nation's first Black female Supreme Court Justice. Weatherford highlights Jackson's family legacy and

Jackie Ormes Draws The Future by Liz Montague

This picture book biography tells the necessary story of the trailblazing Jackie Ormes, the first Black woman cartoonist to have her work nationally syndicated. Though bright, engaging illustrations, Montague (herself the second Black female cartoonist for *The New Yorker* magazine) tracks Ormes' journey as a child of the Great Migration who drew everything around her, and whose comic characters captured the everyday lives of driven, dreamy young Black girls like herself.

You Gotta Meet Mr. Pierce! The Storied Life of Folk Artist Elijah Pierce by Chiquita Mullins Lee, ill. Jennifer Mack-Watkins

Based on the true story of artist Elijah Pierce and his community barbershop, this picture book biography is a new and engaging offering on a hidden figure in Black art history.

Little Rosetta and the Talking Guitar: The Musical Story of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Woman Who Invented Rock and Roll by Charmelle Pinkney Barlow

A picture-book biography of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the woman who invented rock and roll—a warm, inspiring tale of a childhood filled with music, community, and a drive to succeed.

There was a Party for Langston by Jason Reynolds, ill. by Jerome Pumphrey & Jarrett Pumphrey

A beautifully written and illustrated picture book celebrating Langston Hughes, whose powerful poems, short stories, and novels, impacted and influenced many.

Justice Rising: 12 Amazing Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement by Katheryn Russell-Brown, ill. by Kim Holt

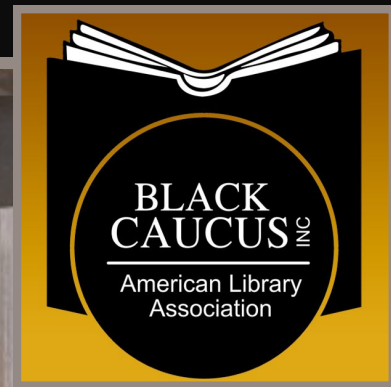
Told through twelve short biographies, this book celebrates just some of the many Black women --each of whom has been largely underrepresented until now--who were instrumental to the nation's fight for civil rights and the contributions they made in driving the Movement forward.

My Red, White, and Blue by Alana Tyson, ill. by London Ladd

A powerful story about the mixture of pride and pain that one Black family finds in the American flag, and an invitation for each of us to choose how we relate to America, its history, and the flag that means so many things to so many people.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades PreK–4



Jerry Changed the Game!

by Don Tate, ill. by Cherise Harris

This picture book biography tells the story of Jerry Lawson, who built a video game console that allowed players to switch out video game cartridges. Jerry Lawson also founded Video-Soft, Inc., the first African American owned video game company in the country.

A Flag for Juneteenth

by Kim Taylor

Expert quilter Kim Taylor shares a unique and powerful story of the celebration of the first Juneteenth, from the perspective of a young girl.

Joy Takes Root

by Gwendolyn Wallace, ill. Ashleigh Corrin

Joy joins her grandmother for a life lesson in gardening.

All Rise: The Story of Ketanji Brown Jackson

by Carole Boston Weatherford, ill. Ashley Evans

This picture book biography lauds the achievements of Ketanji Brown Jackson, the nation's first Black female Supreme Court Justice. Weatherford highlights Jackson's family legacy and development of her personality, showing how her astuteness and innate leadership skills were evident throughout her life and experiences, laying the foundation for her current position. Young readers will be inspired by the unconditional love from her family, as well as Jackson's refusal to accept the opinions of those who would try to stop her progress.

How Do You Spell Unfair?: MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee

by Carole Boston Weatherford, ill. by Frank Morrison

A true story of determination and groundbreaking achievement follows eighth grade African American spelling champion MacNolia Cox, who left Akron, Ohio, in 1936 to compete in the prestigious National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., only to be met with prejudice and discrimination.

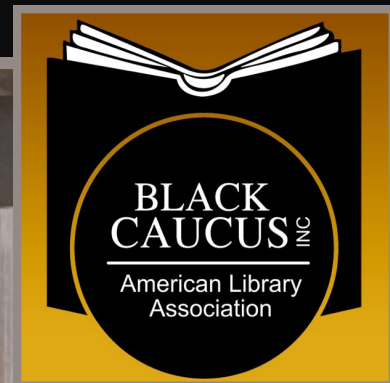
You Are My Pride: A Love Letter from Your Motherland

by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by E.B. Lewis

Told in the ringing, singing language of a creation story, this book is a love letter from mother to child that honors our shared history.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 5—8



Eb and Flow by Kelly J. Baptist

Two sensitive tweens clash during a startling event and are forced to reevaluate their emotions, and how they see themselves, in this eloquent verse novel. When De'Kari, nicknamed "Flow," hits Ebony, or "Eb" for accidentally scuffing his new shoes, a fight breaks out in their school lunchroom, which is caught on camera. Both students are suspended for ten days, returning home frustrated and angry. Over the course of the suspension, the truth about what led to the fight is revealed, as well as the details and nuances of Eb and Flow's relationships with the people they care about. As their respective families begin escalating the situation, both Eb and Flow must make a decision about who they want to be, and how they can make that possible.

Crowned: Magical Folk and Fairy Tales from the Diaspora by. Kahran and Regis Bethencourt

Collection of folk tales and fairy tales with photographs that celebrate Black beauty, culture, love, and imagination.

My Selma by Willie Mae Brown

Artist Willie Mae Brown paints a full portrait of her childhood growing up in Selma, Alabama. A mixture of song lyrics, poetry and family memories, Brown relates the comforts and joys of her community, as well as the effects of the sweeping changes of the Civil Rights Movement, in which her family participated. Brown's recollections are a unique and welcome addition to the growing number of memoirs from her contemporaries, and offers an opportunity for young readers today to make new connections.

Indigo and Ida by Heather Murphy Capps

Middle school journalist Indigo happens upon the letters of Ida B. Wells and is inspired to challenge her school's unfair detention policy.

I Am, I Can, I Will: A Guided Journal of Self-Discovery for Black Girls by Cynthia Jacobs Carter, Ed. D.

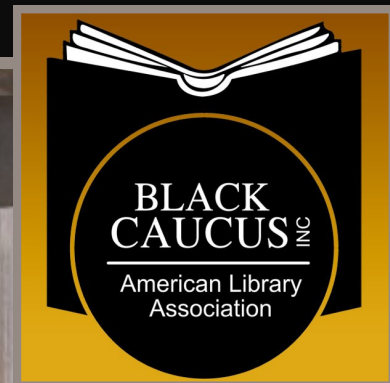
This collection of empowering quotes and brief biographies centered around Black women and girls is an inspiring text for any young reader, but will be especially impactful for our young ladies. Guiding questions and prompts invite readers to actively engage with the courage, integrity, passion, generosity, and countless other strengths of their foremothers.

Rain Remembers by Courtne Comrie

Middle grade companion novel in verse about Rain, as she enters her first year of high school and begins the roller coaster of life, experiencing teen age angst but growing up.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 5—8



The Rhythm of Time by Questlove and S. A. Cosby

Rahim, a seventh grader wants to be a rapper. His best friend, Kasia, is a tech genius. She gives Rahim her latest invention, a cell phone. When Rahim accidentally discovers that this cell phone transports him back in time, he and Kasia work against time to bring Rahim safely home.

Montgomery and the Case of the Golden Key by Patricia Occomy Crowder

When ten-year old Montgomery “Monty” Carver finds a mysterious key in his neighbor’s yard it leads him on a journey to learn more about his vibrant community and its history. Travel back to South Side Chicago in 2008 in this mystery adventure.

Slavery and the African-American Story (Race to the Truth) by Patricia Williams Dockery

This timely and detailed entry in the Race to the Truth series details the long, multifaceted role that Black Americans play in the country's history, and how vital that they are to the American story. Written in an engaging style with anecdotes and a glossary, the book debunks common, persistent myths about slavery while highlighting resistance efforts among enslaved people, helping young readers to think critically and combat misinformation.

Once in a Blue Moon by Sharon G. Flake

After a traumatic accident separates them from their mother and lands her in the hospital, twins James and Hattie are sent to live with relatives in North Carolina. Sensitive James, who feels guilty about the circumstances of the accident, becomes a recluse and refuses to speak to anyone except for his sister and grandmother. As James expresses himself through writing and becomes increasingly interested in astronomy, he works to face his guilt and tell his family the truth of what happened.

Not an Easy Win by Chrystal D. Giles

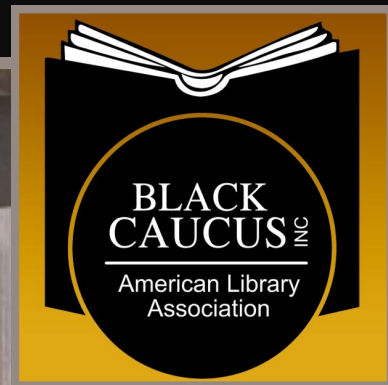
Who knew getting expelled could be so life changing. Giles has had one to many fights and his only alternative is to hang out at the rec center. Giles falls in love with the game of chess and all he wants is a seat at the table. Right in front of the chess board.

The Order of Things by Kaija Langley

April's life follows a certain order shaped by her military veteran mom. Yet she learns how unpredictable life can be starting with her best friend and neighbor going to a new school

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 5—8



Hands

by Torrey Maldonado

Trev is no stranger to violence. He takes up boxing to be ready to protect himself and his family from his stepdad.

On Air With Zoe Washington

by Janae Marks

Two years ago, Zoe Washington helped clear her birth father, Marcus, for a crime he didn't commit. Now that he has been released, he reveals his dream of opening his own restaurant and Zoe becomes determined to help him achieve it. However, starting a new place is much more difficult than it looks, and Marcus is having a harder time re-entering society than anyone expected. Set on finding a solution, Zoe starts a podcast to bring light to the exonerees' experiences and fundraise for their restaurant. Is anyone interested and is anyone really listening to their stories?

Curlfriends: New in Town

by Sharee Miller

Charlie is the new kid living in her father's old hometown. How will she ever survive walking in the footsteps of someone so hometown worthy. Charlie hatches a plan that includes magazine dress-alikes and lots of pretending until it all goes south and Charlie must come clean. Will she ever have friends?

Hope's Path to Glory

by Jerdine Nolen

When their enslaver's family experiences financial trouble, young Hope, along with her mother and father, are forced to join their enslaver's son as he joins the California Gold Rush. As they travel on the Overland Trail, meeting others, Hope begins to think about a new future for her family, one in which they can truly be free. Nolen's meticulously-researched novel presents a fascinating and overlooked part of American history by focusing on the Black presence in westward expansion.

Cameron Battle and the Escape Trials

by Jamar J. Perry

Second book in the Cameron Battle series. Cameron and his friends must return back to Chidani to rescue his mom, find his dad, and save the world.

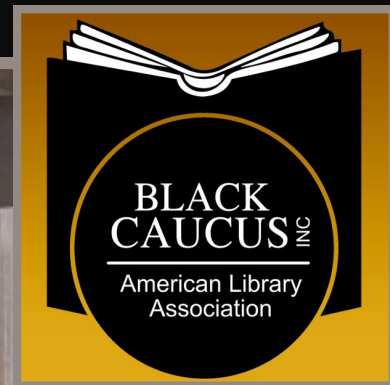
Conjure Island

by Eden Royce

Delphinia Baker, whose mom passed away when she was young and whose dad is often away on deployment, and whose Gramma takes care of her is convinced that is all the family she needs. Until Gramma becomes ill, and Del is sent to stay with her great grandmother, Nana Rose, on an island off the South Carolina coast. Nana Rose runs a school dedicated to "conjure magic" and Del believes she is in for an eerie summer. However, the magic is real. Del finds herself surrounded by people and creatures that may answer questions about her Gramma's family she has never known.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 5–8



Treasure Island: Runaway Gold by Jewel Parker Rhodes

Rhodes retells the classic novel *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson against the backdrop of 21st century Manhattan.

Just Jerry; How Drawing Shaped My Life by Jerry Pinkney

The legendary Jerry Pinkney reflects on his career journey in this posthumous memoir. Beginning with his childhood in Philadelphia, Pinkney describes the process behind some of his most beloved books, while encouraging young burgeoning artists like himself to work on their craft.

Control Freaks by J. E. Thomas

Frederick Douglass Zezzmer is determined to be the greatest inventor ever. Yet he must learn to set boundaries and be open to working in a blended family at home and in a team at school.

Kin: Rooted in Hope by Carole Boston Weatherford, ill. Jeffery Boston Weatherford

The resilience of Black families and the sense of discovery in connecting with one's lineage inform this powerful and informative book. Weatherford traces her own journey from a disinterested tween to an invested chronicler of her family history, taking pride in their accomplishments and generational resistance. In detailing her research process, Weatherford talks about the difficulties faced by Black Americans in conducting genealogical research, and simultaneously demonstrates alternative research methods, encouraging youth to establish relationships and ask new questions of their own family members.

Sparkle by Lakita Wilson

Middle grade novel on being an influencer, with alopecia, and family struggles.

The Braid Girls by Sherri Winston

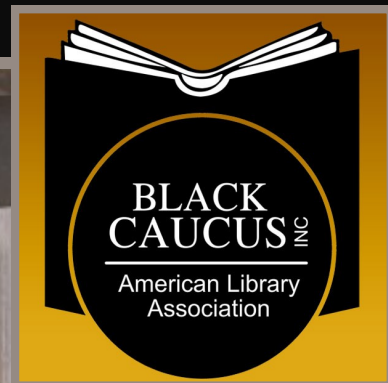
Three young girls experience unexpected changes over the summer as they try to balance new relationships with old ones, learning more about themselves in the process. Best friends Daija and Maggie are excited about their first jobs, as well as starting their own hair-braiding business. Then Maggie discovers the existence of her paternal half-sister Callie, who comes to live with the family after Callie's mother dies. As each girl begins questioning her own place and emotions amid the new circumstances, they find a way to connect with each other and pursue their dreams in a way that makes room for everyone.

Remember Us by Jacqueline Woodson

Tragedy and loss can lead to healing and change as revealed in the story of Sage, a 7th grader coming to terms with growing up and leaving behind the innocence of childhood. This rich narrative written in lyrical prose as only Jacqueline Woodson can do, weaves the story of community

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 9–12



There Goes The Neighborhood by Jade Alia

Things are changing in South LA. A Pilates studio and boutique coffee shop have replaced the global spice mart and the liquor store where you could once buy chile mango pops. Resident teens Rhea, Zeke, and Malachi decide to take things into their own hands to stop the gentrification after Zeke's rent goes up by sixty percent, but their plan has unforeseen consequences. What would you do to save your neighborhood?

All You Have to Do by Autumn Allen

Separated by nearly 30 years, two teen boys come of age in challenging times.

Those Who Saw The Sun by Jaha Nailah Avery

A collection of nine different accounts from African Americans growing up and thriving in Jim Crow, from a tax assessor to a cartoonist.

Forgive Me Not by Jennifer Baker

After driving drunk and causing the accident that kills her little sister, Violetta Chen-Samuels is incarcerated. Under the juvenile justice system, her fate lies in the hands of those she's wronged—her family. With their forgiveness, she could go home. However, she is denied their forgiveness, and Violetta is now left with two options, neither good—remain in juvenile detention for an uncertain sentence, or participate in the Trials. Now Violetta has to prove her remorse and try to regain her family's love and forgiveness.

Promise Boys by Nick Brooks

In screenplay format Brooks weaves a compelling tale of underserved Black and Brown boys, crime, stereotypes, and power in our broken education system.

The Secret Summer Promise by Keah Brown

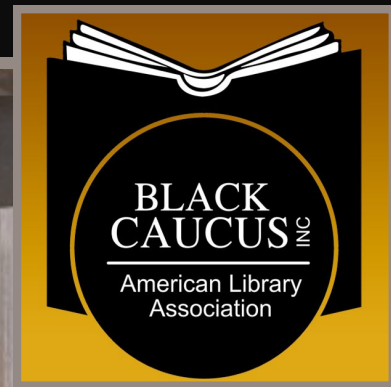
Andrea Williams has promised herself this will be the best summer. Two summers ago, she spent all her time in bed, recovering from the latest surgery for her cerebral palsy. She's waited too long for adventure and thrills to enter her life. Together with her crew of ride-or-die friends and the best parents anyone could ask for (just don't tell them that), she's going to live it up. There are few things that could possibly ruin it.

Black People Breathe by Zee Clark

Breathwork and more techniques are provided as a way to cope when faced with discrimination, microaggression, and painful racism.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 9–12



For Lamb **by Leesa Cline-Ransome**

A young girl comes of age in this taut, piercing novel about the complexities and horrors of the Jim Crow South. The aptly-named Lamb lives with her astute older brother Simeon and their strong-willed mother, Marion, who is hiding a secret of her own. Lamb, who doesn't always see what's in front of her, is surrounded by family and community who encourage and indirectly shield her from the harsher elements of their segregated life in Mississippi. But when she befriends the white daughter of the town doctor, it starts a series of events that spiral into tragic consequences.

The Blackwoods **by Brandy Colbert**

Complex family relationships and Hollywood history intertwine in this detailed, introspective young adult novel. When legendary Blossom Blackwood, beloved matriarch of a rare Black Hollywood dynasty, passes away, her great-granddaughters, Hollis and Ardith, are crushed by her absence. But her death leads to the revelation of a long-held secret, and each girl must figure out their place in this new reality, as well as their futures.

Susie King Taylor: Nurse, Teacher & Freedom Fighter **by Erica Armstrong Dunbar & Candace Buford**

This biography covers the life of Susie King Taylor, one of the first Black women to serve as a nurse during the Civil War. She was tasked with treating wounded confederate soldiers of South Carolina's Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and went on to become a founder of the postbellum educational system pioneered by African Americans. She opened several schools in Georgia, and she was also among the first Black women to publish a memoir.

Black AF History: The Un-Whitewashed Story of America **by Michael Harriot**

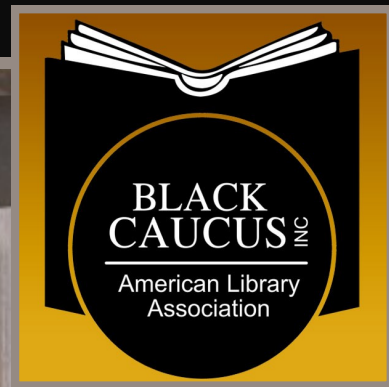
This timely and detailed entry in the *Race to the Truth* series details the long, multifaceted role that Black Americans play in the country's history, and how vital that they are to the American story. Written in an engaging style with anecdotes and a glossary, the book debunks common, persistent myths about slavery while highlighting resistance efforts among enslaved people, helping young readers to think critically and combat misinformation.

True, True **by Don Hooper**

Introspective Gil, a young Jamaican-American teen from Brooklyn, is reluctant to transfer to his new prep school on the Upper West Side, but knows that its advanced robotics program is key to his college dreams. When Gil is the only one punished when fighting back against racist teasing, he joins with some of the few other Black students to protest the school's history of latent racism, causing tensions both at school and with his community. But even with these difficulties, Gil stands firm in his convictions.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 9–12



Invisible Son by Kim Johnson

Themes of vindication and asserting one's place in the world come to the forefront in this taut, stirring young adult novel. Seventeen-year-old Andre, who was incarcerated for a crime that he didn't commit, is released to his old neighborhood at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Andre tries to rebuild his life while investigating his friend's disappearance, he uncovers a complex web of mysteries and lies that expose the deep issues in his neighborhood, and which hold the key to him clearing his name.

Thieves' Gambit by Kayvion Lewis

Thieves Gambit is a thrilling read with a perfect balance of mystery, action, romance, and betrayal. Rosalyn "Ross" Quest is a member of a notorious family of thieves. When her mom's life is in danger, Ross must compete in the Thieves' Gambit, a deadly heist competition. With twists and turns in every chapter, Kayvion Lewis proves to be a master storyteller who knows how to leave you wanting more.

The Davenports by Krystle Marquis

Edwardian Age intrigue meet themes of Black interclass relationships in this debut YA novel. Scions of a formerly enslaved man who built his own business, the three Davenport sisters live a life of luxury among Chicago's small but proud Black elite. As the sisters enter their debut season, a series of complex romantic entanglements, as well as exposure to others outside of their social circle, cause them to rethink the roles that their parents have planned for them and carve out their own spaces.

Gone Wolf by Amber McBride

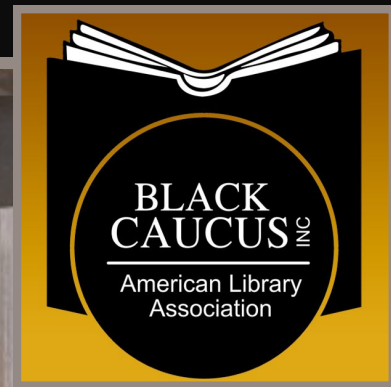
Inmate Eleven, the Black female protagonist, lives a life of confinement. As a "biological match" for the president's son, she is kept prisoner in case he should fall ill. While her real name is a mystery, she is also called Blue—the color of sadness. Her living space is a tiny room, and her only companion is her dog, who has been going "wolf" more and more often.

We All are so Good at Smiling by Amber McBride

We're All So Good at Smiling is a powerful and moving novel in verse about two teenagers trying to cope with grief, depression, and their identities. The main characters, Faerry and Whimsy, are haunted by their past traumas, which have a massive impact on their lives. McBride beautifully portrays their bond through a scene where they lean on each other while stumbling through the woods—neither carrying the other, but both keeping each other upright. Their shared struggle to survive is incredibly poignant. McBride's lyrical writing and powerful allegories give hope and beauty to this emotionally charged story.

Best of the Best 2023

Grades 9–12



Wade in the Water by Nyani Nkrumah

Ella is Black, eleven years old, very intelligent, and mature. Katherine is white, living with an evil father and a Black maid named Bessie. When Katherine comes to Ella's town to conduct some research, Ricksville's townspeople are naturally curious and suspicious. Ella and Katherine become "friends". However, that "friendship" is tested as secrets are revealed, and the townspeople learn more about Katherine and her intent.

Speculation by Nisi Shawl

An accident sets off a chain reaction that helps a young girl connect with her family and learn about the importance of sharing stories. When Winna's sister accidentally breaks her glasses, her grandfather gives her an old pair that belonged to her great-aunt Estelle. Communicating with Winna through the glasses, Estelle ghost asks a reluctant Winna for her help in solving a heartbreaking family mystery, one that still affects everyone in the present. As Winna learns about her family's role in the Underground Railroad, she also learns more about the reasons behind some family tensions, and determines to help them find peace.

Chaos Theory by Nic Stone

This YA romance novel follows the parallel stories of two protagonists: the first a girl dealing with mental illness, and the second a politician's son battling with addiction.

16 and Pregnant by LaLa Thomas

This realistic and thoughtful novel examines the complexities of teenage pregnancy through the eyes of two ambitious girls. When 16-year-old Erykah discovers that she's pregnant and makes a choice about her pregnancy that puts her at odds with her mother, her best sister-friend Kelaya stands by her. As the gravity of Erykah's pregnancy settles in, the two girls must navigate the rapidly shifting nature of their close relationship, and what this means for their previously planned futures.

Their Vicious Games by Joelle Wellington

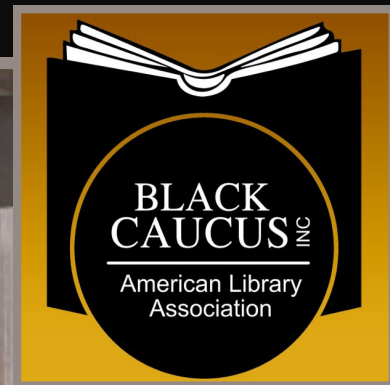
When Adina Walker's seat at Yale is stripped away from her, she accepts an invitation to an exclusive competition with America's aristocracy to get it back. Yet regrets that acceptance once she learns the games are twisted and deadly. It is a satirical look at society's norms for wealth, power, and privilege.

Nigeria Jones by Ibi Zoboi

Nigeria Jones is the acclaimed warrior princess of the most famous Black Nationalist in Philadelphia. She becomes conflicted when she is presented with an alternative, more inclusive path her mother believes could broaden her horizon. She must confront all things familiar to her including herself to make a decision.

Best of the Best 2023

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