



Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books 2024-2025 List for Grades 3-5



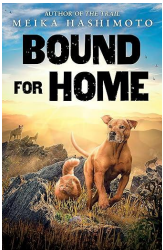
The Aquanaut: A Graphic Novel by Dan Santat

Cousins Coral and Isa are so close that they're practically siblings; their mothers are sisters, and the two girls grew up on the same small island. When Coral and her parents leave on a months-long sea voyage amid the islands of Indonesia, Isa is devastated that they'll be kept apart, and the two vow to write to each other no matter what. Then the unthinkable happens, and Coral's boat capsizes at sea, where her parents vanish. Washed up on a deserted island, alone and wracked by grief, she must find the strength within to survive, and find her way back home. Meanwhile, Isa is still on Pebble Island, the only one holding out hope that her beloved cousin is still alive. Told in alternating points of view, this is a powerful story of loss and hope, love and family—and the unexpected resilience of the human spirit.



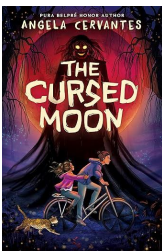
The Big Sting by Rachelle Delaney

Eleven-year-old Leo is an "armchair adventurer." This, according to Dad, means he'd choose adventures in books or video games over real-life experiences. And while Leo hates the label, he can't argue with it. Unlike his little sister Lizzie, Leo is not a risk-taker. So when he, Lizzie, Mom and Dad leave the city to visit Grandpa on Heron Island, Leo finds all kinds of dangers to avoid — from the deep, dark ocean to an old barn on the verge of collapse. But nothing on the island is more fearsome than Grandpa himself — Leo has never met anyone so grumpy! According to Mom, Grandpa is still grieving the recent death of his wife, a beekeeper beloved by everyone on the island. Despite Leo's best efforts to avoid it, adventure finds him anyway when Grandpa's beehives go missing in the dead of night. Infuriated, Grandpa vows to track down the sticky-fingered thieves himself . . . with risk-averse Leo and danger-loving Lizzie (plus a kitten named Mayhem) in tow.



Bound for Home by Meika Hashimoto

From the moment Emi walks into the animal shelter, she knows the dopey-looking dog with the sandy-colored hair is the dog for her. Despite Max's many escape attempts and inability to be trained, she chooses him. When Emi's home life starts to crumble, she takes off into the Maine woods with Max at her side, determined to prove that she can make it on her own. But they immediately lose each other, and one catastrophe after another shows that they're totally unprepared to handle the wilderness. Wild animals, hunger, and an impossible trail to track mean that each must do whatever it takes to stay alive—but what happens when they have to choose between getting back to safety... and looking out for a friend? Can loyalty be as strong as the will to survive?



The Cursed Moon by Angela Cervantes

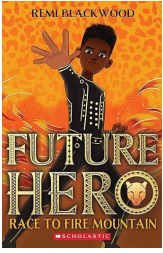
Rafael Fuentes isn't easily scared. He loves writing ghost stories, reading scary books, and entertaining his friends with terrifying tales he creates on the spot. Rafa has come up against enough real-life scary situations that fictional hauntings seem like no big deal. Rafa's incarcerated mom is being released from jail soon, and will be coming to live with him, his sister, and their grandparents. For the first time in a while, Rafa feels a pit of fear growing in his stomach.



Finally Seen by Kelly Yang

When ten-year-old Lina Gao steps off the plane in Los Angeles, it's her first time in America and the first time seeing her parents and her little sister in five years! She's been waiting for this moment every day while she lived with her grandmother in Beijing, getting teased by kids at school who called her "left behind girl." Finally, her parents are ready for her to join their fabulous life in America! Except, it's not exactly like in the postcards:

1. School's a lot harder than she thought. When she mispronounces some words in English on the first day, she decides she simply won't talk. Ever again.
2. Her chatty little sister has no problem with English. And seems to do everything better than Lina, including knowing exactly the way to her parents' hearts.
3. They live in an apartment, not a house like in Mom's letters, and they owe a lot of back rent from the pandemic. And Mom's plan to pay it back sounds more like a hobby than a moneymaker.



Future Hero (Future Hero, 1) by Remi Blackwood

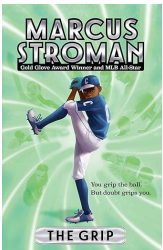
Jarell has never quite known where he belongs. He's ignored at home and teased at school for wanting to draw instead of playing sports with the other boys. The only place he's ever felt truly at ease is his local barbershop where the owner hangs Jarell's art up on the walls.

When Jarell discovers a hidden portal in the barbershop, he's transported to a magical world that's unlike anything he's seen before. But it's not just the powerful gods and dangerous creatures that makes this world different—it's that everyone believes Jarell is the hero they've been waiting for.



The Girl Who Built a Spider by George Brewington

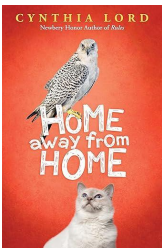
When Theresa Brown wins the Charleston County Middle School Science Fair, she receives the opportunity of a lifetime—an invitation to celebrated scientist Dr. Flax's laboratory and a summer spent building the invention of her dreams. Along with the second- and third-place finishers of the science fair, Theresa is whisked off to a world of robots, excitement, and danger. Dr. Flax claims his inventions are going to help stop climate change and make the world a better, safer place, but is that true? And can Theresa and her friends get to the bottom of the mysteries of his laboratory?



The Grip by Marcus Stroman

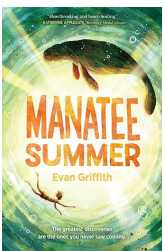
Young Marcus Stroman is determined to make it to the highest playing level he can, despite every coach telling him he's not tall enough to become a "real" pitcher. He'll show them...with some struggling and a whole lot of learning.

It's easy to forget that for every professional sports player there was a kid just learning that sport, dealing with nerves during try-outs, dropping the ball when all their teammates are counting on them, and learning how to stay friends with someone who doesn't make the team. These hard lessons are universal whether in the majors or on a school playing field, and so are teamwork, competition, and believing in yourself.



Home Away from Home by Cynthia Lord

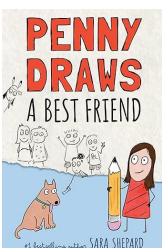
Mia and her mom visit Grandma in Maine every summer, but this year Mia is going alone. Her mom will stay behind to get their house ready to sell. It'll be a new start, she says, after the divorce. Mia doesn't want a new start. She'd rather everything just stayed the same! At least things will be the same at Grandma's, though. Mia will walk to town for ice cream, and wait by the water, watching for birds, just like always. Then Mia meets Grandma's know-it-all new neighbor, who's just her age. Cayman acts like he belongs at Grandma's house. He acts like he's the expert on everything. And when he and Mia spot an unusual white bird of prey, he acts like it's his job to find out what it is. Unless, that is, Mia finds out first. And, in her effort to prove herself to him, she makes a decision that will change things for the town, for the bird, for Cayman, and even for herself. Can Mia stop what she's put into motion?



Manatee Summer by Evan Griffith

Peter and his best friend, Tommy, have a goal for their last summer before middle school: finish their Discovery Journal, a catalog of the wildlife around their Florida town. When they spot a manatee in a canal, Peter knows they've found something special—and when the manatee is injured by a boat, something to protect!

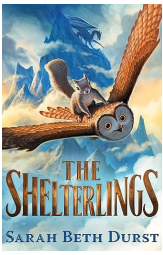
As Peter joins the fight to save Florida manatees, he also finds himself taking care of his ailing grandfather and facing an unwelcome surprise that jeopardizes his friendship with Tommy. Soon Peter is adrift, navigating shifting tides and realizing that he has as much to discover about himself as he does about the world around him.



Penny Draws a Best Friend by Sara Shepard

Nobody said starting fifth grade would be easy, and Penny Lowry's anxiety means a million questions are always spinning through her thoughts. Luckily she's got a lot to look forward to, like her favorite after-school activity, Art Club, and seeing her best friend Violet again after spending the whole summer apart.

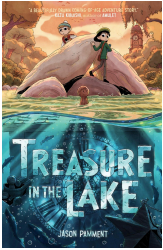
The thing is, Violet has been acting weird ever since she got back. She never wants to hang out anymore, says Art Club is for babies, and spends all her time with Riley, the meanest girl in school. Did Penny do something wrong? And if she did, can she undo it?



The Shelterlings by Sarah Beth Durst

Holly, a grey squirrel, and her animal friends have accepted that they will never be wizards' familiars. Though they are each magical, their powers are so offbeat—Holly herself can conjure pastries (and only pastries)—that no professional magic-worker would choose any of them as a companion for noble quests. So instead of going on adventures, they languish at the Shelter for Rejected Familiars, where they are known as "shelterlings."

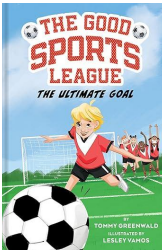
When an old friend appears with a plan for curing the shelterlings' defective magic, everyone is on board to help him locate and retrieve the ingredients for a powerful spell. But when they learn that his offer is not what it seems, Holly and the shelterlings must fight to defend their magic, discovering in the process that their unorthodox skills may just be what is needed to save the day.



Treasure in the Lake by Jason Pamment

Iris knows this because she's read them all. However, as a thirteen-year-old stuck in the tiny town of Bugden, real adventure seems like a distant dream. But when Iris and her best friend, Sam, stumble upon an unusually dry river on the outskirts of town, they're led to a discovery beyond anything Iris has ever read about: a hidden city and a forgotten tale of friendship.

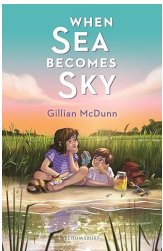
In Jason Pamment's middle grade graphic novel debut, perfect for fans of Hilda and This Was Our Pact, can Iris and Sam uncover the truth in time to keep their own friendship afloat, or will history repeat itself and pull them apart forever?



The Ultimate Goal (Good Sports League #1) by Tommy Greenwald

Ben Cutler loves everything about soccer! He's got a great team, and they have the best pre-game chants and half-time jokes. He and his best friend, Jay-Jay, even invent dances for when they score a goal! And Ben is good at soccer. Like REALLY good. Too good for a casual rec team.

Soon, he's recruited for a travel team. His new team plays amazingly well, but they take soccer super seriously. No pre-game chants, no juice-box breaks, and the most important rule of all: NO DANCING. Even though his new team is winning all the time, Ben is left to wonder: Is winning all that matters in the end?



When Sea Becomes Sky by Gillian McDunn

Bex and Davey's summer in the saltmarsh is different this year, thanks to the record-breaking drought. Even the fish seem listless--and each day the water level lowers farther. When they discover a mysterious underwater statue, they're thrilled at the chance to solve the puzzle of its origin. This is the summer adventure they've been waiting for.

When they learn of a development plan that will destroy their special spot, they'll need to act quickly. Unfortunately, sometimes progress happens whether you're ready or not. What will it mean if Bex and Davey lose their corner of the marsh where otters frolic and dragonflies buzz--their favorite place to be siblings together?

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