



Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books 2024-2025 List for Grades 6-8



Adrift by Tanya Guerrero

Ever since her father was lost at sea, Sophia has been moping around Aqualand, the marine theme park her dad and uncle created. But Sophia's world is turned upside down when an "aquanaut" breaks into the park's research lab.

To her amazement, Sophia discovers that the aquanaut is not what it seems -- inside lives a band of four goofy sea creatures! And when they all realize that Aqualand has evolved into something much darker than Sophia's dad had envisioned, Sophia is determined to help the aquanaut crew free the park's captive marine life before it's too late.



Fake: A thrillingly paced, timely novel about identity and our digital lives by Ele Fountain

Imagine a world where your only friends are virtual, and big tech companies control access to food, healthcare and leisure. This is Jess's world. But when she turns fourteen, Jess can go to school with other children for the first time. Most of them hate the 'real' world, but Jess begins to question whether the digital world is 'perfect' after all. Back home, her sister Chloe's life-saving medication is getting ever more expensive. Determined to help, Jess risks everything by using skills forbidden in the cyber-world, only to stumble on something explosive. Something that will turn her whole world upside down.

It's up to Jess to figure out exactly what is real, and what is fake - Chloe's survival depends on it.



Falling Short by Ernesto Cisneros

Isaac and Marco already know sixth grade is going to change their lives. But it won't change things at home—not without each other's help. This year, star basketball player Isaac plans on finally keeping up with his schoolwork. Better grades will surely stop Isaac's parents from arguing all the time. Meanwhile, straight-A Marco vows on finally winning his father's approval by earning a spot on the school's basketball team.

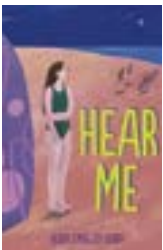
But will their friendship and support for each other be enough to keep the two boys from falling short?



Girl in White by Lindsay Currie

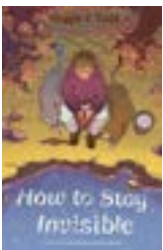
Mallory hasn't quite adapted to life in her new town of Eastport yet. Maybe it's because everyone is obsessed with keeping the town's reputation as the most cursed town in the US. And thanks to the nightmares she's had since arriving, Mallory hardly sleeps. Combined with the unsettling sensation of being watched, she's quickly becoming convinced there's more to her town. Something darker.

When Mallory has a terrifying encounter with the same old woman from her dreams, she knows she has to do something—but what? With Eastport gearing up to celebrate the anniversary of their first recorded legend Mallory is forced to investigate the one legend she's always secretly been afraid of .



Hear Me by Kerry O'Malley Cerra

It's been a year since her diagnosis, and Rayne's hearing continues to decline, even with aids. It's a struggle to maintain friendships and keep up in school, surfing is now a wipeout, and she can't understand her favorite singer's lyrics. But worst of all, Rayne's parents are pushing for her to get cochlear implants, a surgery Rayne's not convinced is worth the risks and challenges. Rayne begs her parents to consider other options, but they're not budging. With the surgery looming, Rayne sets off on a bus journey that forces her to face her own assumptions about what her hearing loss means and what kind of life she could have. With the help of some new friends, Rayne realizes that even though her ears may be broken, she is not.



How to Stay Invisible by Maggie C. Rudd

Twelve-year-old Raymond Hurley has never had a place to call home. His free-wheeling parents move their family from town to town, and he's living in a trailer in a brand-new state when one day, they just up and abandon him. All alone with nothing but a duffle bag full of clothes and his reliable pup, Rosie, he is forced to live in the woods behind his middle school. With a fishing pole in hand and survival guide checked out from the library, Raymond scrapes by and doesn't tell anyone his secret. This isn't the first time he's had to rely on himself. However, when winter days get colder and finding food becomes nearly impossible, Raymond makes new friends, including a curious coyote, in unexpected places. Soon, he learns that his fate will depend not just on his wilderness skills, but on the people and animals he chooses to trust.



Kelcie Murphy and the Academy for the Unbreakable Arts (The Academy for the Unbreakable Arts, 1) by Erika Lewis
The Otherworld is at war. The Academy for the Unbreakable Arts trains warriors. And Kelcie Murphy—a foster child raised in the human world—is dying to attend. A place at AUA means meeting Scáthach, the legendary trainer of Celtic heroes. It means learning to fight with a sword. It means harnessing her hidden powers and—most importantly—finding out who her parents are, and why they abandoned her in Boston Harbor eight years ago. When Kelcie tests into the school, she learns that she's a Saiga, one of the most ancient beings in the Otherworld. Secretive, shunned, and possessed of imposing elemental powers, the Saiga are also kin to the Otherworld's most infamous traitor. But Kelcie is a survivor, and she'll do whatever it takes to find her parents and her place in their world. Even if that means making a few enemies.



The Mystery of the Radcliffe Riddle by Taryn Souders

When Grady and his dad learn that the town oddball, Eudora "Kooky" Klinch left something for them in her will, they can only imagine what it might be. When it turns out it's an old scrap of 300-year-old tapestry, they are bitterly disappointed. But the cloth comes with a note saying, "This is no ordinary piece of needlework. It's a treasure map. Riddles and Clues. To the victor go the riches." Grady's dad dismisses it, but Grady thinks this could be the chance of a lifetime. With the help of his friends Thad, Clemmie, and the town dog Ophelia, Grady is determined to crack the clues and find the treasure.

But when someone tries to break into Grady's house one night, and then the local antiques expert who examined the tapestry is found unconscious, Grady realizes that he's not the only one who knows about the treasure map. There's more at risk than he bargained for, and solving this mystery just got a lot more dangerous.



New Dragon City by Mari Mancusi

No one predicted the dragon apocalypse. The dragons came suddenly and decimated the world as we knew it, including New York City. Now, three years later, Noah, his hardcore survivalist father, and a ragtag group of survivors are barely scraping by in this new reality. Kids scavenge not only for materials in abandoned homes but also for leftover books at the library. Adults spend their time establishing a make-shift society and defending their shelter... with any means available. At least for the few months the dragons are hibernating, until it's no longer safe aboveground. The division runs deeper than scales versus skin because trying to follow his heart might just cost Noah his family too. If Noah and his father can't see eye to eye, can he really get humans and dragons to?



Over and Out by Jenni L. Walsh

Sophie has spent her entire life behind the Berlin Wall, guarded by land mines, towers, and attack dogs. A science lover, Sophie dreams of becoming an inventor... but that's unlikely in East Berlin, where the Stasi, the secret police, are always watching.

Though she tries to avoid their notice, when her beloved neighbor is arrested, Sophie is called to her principal's office. There, a young Stasi officer asks Sophie if she'll spy on her neighbor after she is released. Sophie doesn't want to agree, but in reality has no choice: The Stasi threaten to bring her mother, who has a disability from post-polio syndrome, to an institution if Sophie does not comply. Sophie is backed into a corner, until she finds out, for the first time, that she has family on the other side of the Wall, in the West. This could be what she needs to attempt an escape with her mother to freedom -- if she can invent her way out.



Ride On by Faith Erin Hicks

Victoria has always loved horses. But riding in competitions is high stakes, high stress, and shockingly expensive. And even though Victoria's best friend Taylor loves competing, Victoria has lost her taste for it. After a heartbreaking fight with Taylor, Victoria needs a new start—at a new stables. A place where she doesn't have to worry about anything other than riding. No competition, no drama, no friends. Just horses.



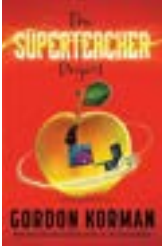
Roll for Initiative by Jaime Formato

Riley Henderson has never taken a bus to school in her entire life. Or made an afterschool snack, or finished her homework on her own, or—ewww—done her own laundry. That's what her older brother Devin was for. With the help of her new D&D friends, Riley discovers that not only can she function without Devin, she kind of likes it. She figures out that bus thing, totes the clothes down to the laundry room and sets up her D&D campaigns right there on the slightly suspect folding table, makes her own snacks and dinner—the whole deal. But when Devin runs into trouble with his program and returns home, it's pretty clear, even to Riley, that since he can't navigate his own life, he's going to live Riley's for her. Now she has to help Devin go back to college and prove to her mom that she can take care of herself . . . all before the upcoming Winter-Con.



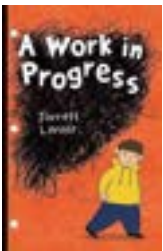
The Ruby Code by Jessica Khoury

Bullied at school and home, Ash finds respite from his unhappy life in virtual reality games. One night, he spends his meager savings to help a stranger, who thanks him with a copy of an old fantasy game called *The Glass Realm*. While exploring the game, Ash meets a seemingly humble shopkeeper named Ruby. But from the start, Ruby seems different than the other townsfolk—especially when she and Ash stumble across an in-game quest designed not for the player, but for Ruby to solve. When Ruby begins developing powerful abilities that can rewrite the very code of the game, they realize she is far more than a pre-programmed side character.



The Superteacher Project by Gordon Korman

Oliver Zahn, spitball champion and self-declared rule-wrecker of Brightling Middle School, is not a fan of his new homeroom teacher, Mr. Aidact. The guy is sort of stiff, never cracks a smile, and refers to them as “pupils.” The worst part is he catches Oliver before he can pull any of his signature pranks! It’s time for Oliver and his best friend, Nathan, to show the new teacher who’s boss. But as the weeks go by, they start to realize that Mr. Aidact is not what they expected. He has an uncanny ability to remember song lyrics or trivia. When the girls’ field hockey team needs a new coach, he suddenly turns out to be an expert. He never complains when other teachers unload work on him—even when it’s lunchroom duty and overseeing detention. Against all odds, Mr. Aidact starts to become the most popular teacher at Brightling.



A Work in Progress by Jarrett Lerner

Will is the only round kid in a school full of thin ones. So he hides...in baggy jeans and oversized hoodies, in the back row during class, and anywhere but the cafeteria during lunch. But shame isn’t the only feeling that dominates Will’s life. He’s also got a crush on a girl named Jules who he knows he doesn’t have a chance with, because of his size—but he can’t help wondering what if?

Will’s best shot at attracting Jules’s attention is by slaying the Will Monster inside him by changing his eating habits and getting more exercise. But the results are either frustratingly slow or infuriatingly unsuccessful, and Will’s shame begins to morph into self-loathing.

Available at www.itzbooks.com