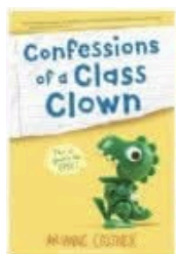


Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books 2025-2026 List for Grades 6-8



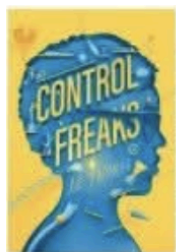
Marius Grey: Brick Dust and Bones by M.R. Fournet

Marius Grey hunts Monsters. He's not supposed to. He's only twelve and his job as a Cemetery Boy is to look after the ghosts in his family's graveyard. He should be tending these ghosts and—of course—going to school to learn how to live between worlds without getting into trouble. But, Marius has an expensive goal. He wants to bring his mother back from the dead, and that takes a LOT of mystic coins, which means a LOT of Monster Hunting, and his mother's window to return is closing. If he wants her back, Marius is going to have to go after bigger and meaner monsters, decide if a certain flesh-eating mermaid is a friend or foe, and avoid meddling Demons and teachers along the way.



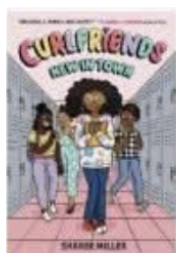
Confessions of a Class Clown by Arianne Costner

Meet Jack Reynolds. Making people laugh is his life's work. Jack's wacky MyTube channel is really starting to take off. The only problem is, for the truly epic posts, he needs a collaborator. And, well, he doesn't exactly have any friends. So Jack has to swallow his pride and join the new after-school Speed Friendship club. But who would make the best partner in comedy?



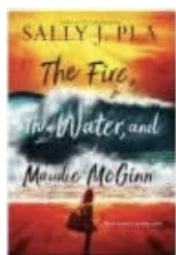
Control Freaks by J.E. Thomas

The kids at Benjamin Banneker College Prep are a little... competitive. Okay. They're a LOT competitive. The minute Principal Yee announces an epic competition for the golden B-B trophy, seventh-grader Frederick Douglass Zezzmer knows he has to win. But it won't be easy. The competition doesn't just include science, technology, engineering and math. It also has arts and sports. Not Doug's best subjects. Even worse, it's a TEAM competition. Instead of being in a superstar group, Doug gets paired with four middle school misfits no one else wants. Worst of all, Doug's dad has a horrible backup plan. If Doug doesn't win, he has to forget about becoming The World's Greatest Inventor and spend the summer in sports camp, with his scary stepbrother. With only a week to go, Doug launches a quest to turn his team of outcasts into winners... and maybe even friends.



Curlfriends: New in Town: A Graphic Novel by Sharee Miller

Charlie has a foolproof plan for the first day at her new middle school. Even though she's used to starting over as the new kid—thanks to her military family's constant moving—making friends has never been easy for her. But this time, her first impression needs to last, since this is where her family plans to settle for good. So she's hiding any interests that may seem “babyish,” updating her look, and doing her best to leave her shyness behind her...but is erasing the real Charlie the best way to make friends? When not everything goes exactly to plan, like, AT ALL, Charlie is ready to give up on making new friendships. Then she meets the Curlfriends, a group of Black girls who couldn't be more different from each other, and learns that maybe there is a place for Charlie to be her true self after all.



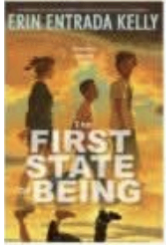
The Fire, the Water, and Maudie McGinn by Sally J. Pla

Maudie always looks forward to the summers she spends in California with her dad. But this year, she must keep a troubling secret about her home life—one that her mom warned her never to tell. Maudie wants to confide in her dad about her stepdad's anger, but she's scared. When a wildfire strikes, Maudie and her dad are forced to evacuate to the beach town where he grew up. It's another turbulent wave of change. But now, every morning, from their camper, Maudie can see surfers bobbing in the water. She desperately wants to learn, but could she ever be brave enough?



The Firefly Summer by Morgan Matson

For as long as Ryanna Stuart can remember, her summers have been spent with her father and his new wife. Just the three of them, structured, planned, and quiet. But this summer is different. This summer, she's received a letter from her grandparents—grandparents neither she nor her dad have spoken to since her mom's death—inviting her to stay with them at an old summer camp in the Poconos. Ryanna accepts. She wants to learn about her mom. She wants to uncover the mystery of why her father hasn't spoken to her grandparents all these years. She's even looking forward to a quiet summer by the lake. But what she finds are relatives...so many relatives!



The First State of Being by Erin Entrada Kelly

It's August 1999. For twelve-year-old Michael Rosario, life at Fox Run Apartments in Red Knot, Delaware, is as ordinary as ever—except for the looming Y2K crisis and his overwhelming crush on his sixteen-year-old babysitter, Gibby. But when a disoriented teenage boy named Ridge appears out of nowhere, Michael discovers there is more to life than stockpiling supplies and pining over Gibby. It turns out that Ridge is carefree, confident, and bold, things Michael wishes he could be. Unlike Michael, however, Ridge isn't where he belongs. When Ridge reveals that he's the world's first time traveler, Michael and Gibby are stunned but curious. As Ridge immerses himself in 1999—fascinated by microwaves, basketballs, and malls—Michael discovers that his new friend has a book that outlines the events of the next twenty years, and his curiosity morphs into something else: focused determination.



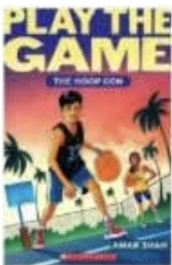
Fowl Play by Kristin O'Donnell Tubb

Uncle Will was Chloe's best friend. Without him, she's left with only her memories of them together—which come to her in snapshots—and her new friend, Charlie. The parrot has a vast vocabulary, and soon Chloe hears her say something odd: It was murder, followed by homicide and cyanide. Chloe becomes convinced her uncle Will's death was foul play. Why else wouldn't he have told anyone in the family—especially Chloe—that he was sick? With the help of her family, Chloe begins the investigation to uncover Uncle Will's murderer. The suspects: His nosy neighbor. An ex-girlfriend. A rude landlord. A loan shark. But it all leads to more questions than answers. Did someone really kill Uncle Will? Or could this journey help reunite Chloe's grieving family?



Heroes: A Novel of Pearl Harbor by Alan Gratz

Frank and Stanley are touring a battleship when Japanese planes zoom overhead, dropping bomb after bomb. As explosions roar and sailors scream, Frank and Stanley realize the unthinkable is happening: Japan is attacking America! The war has come to them. Frantically, the boys struggle to find safety. But disaster and danger are everywhere—from torpedoes underwater to bullets on the beach... to the shocking cruelty that their friends and neighbors show Stanley. Because his mom is Japanese-American, Stanley is suddenly seen as the "enemy." And Frank, who is white, cannot begin to understand what his friend is now facing. If the boys make it through this infamous day, can their friendship—and their dreams—survive? Or has everything they know been destroyed?



Play the Game: The Hoop Con by Amar Shah

Raam Patel is eager to prove himself ever since he didn't make the middle school's basketball team. So, when Hoop Con comes to town he is determined to be there and take his shot. His big moment proves to be unforgettable... but not in the way he'd hoped. Raam gets schooled by the camp's golden boy right in front of his NBA idol. To make matters even worse, this fail goes viral. Raam is used to being the underdog, but becoming the newest meme might be something even he can't overcome alone. He skips town in an effort to lay low and take a break from basketball. However, he's met with new courts, fresh kicks, and tough new competition, changing his whole outlook on the game. Raam has the skills, but now it's time to unlock the mental game.



The Lost Year: A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine by Katherine Marsh

Thirteen-year-old Matthew is miserable. His journalist dad is stuck overseas indefinitely, and his mom has moved in his one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother to ride out the pandemic, adding to his stress and isolation. But when Matthew finds a tattered black-and-white photo in his great-grandmother's belongings, he discovers a clue to a hidden chapter of her past, one that will lead to a life-shattering family secret. Set in alternating timelines that connect the present-day to the 1930s and the US to the USSR, Katherine Marsh's latest novel sheds fresh light on the Holodomor – the horrific famine that killed millions of Ukrainians, and which the Soviet government covered up for decades.



Mid-Air by Alicia D. Williams

It's the last few months of eighth grade, and Isaiah feels lost. He thought his summer was going to be him and his boys Drew and Darius, hanging out, doing wheelies, watching martial arts movies, and breaking tons of Guinness World Records before high school. But now, more and more, Drew seems to be fading from their friendship, and though he won't admit it, Isaiah knows exactly why. Because Darius is...gone. A hit and run killed Darius in the midst of a record-breaking long wheelie when Isaiah should have been keeping watch, ready to warn: "CAR!" Now, Drew can barely look at Isaiah. But Isaiah, already quaking with ache and guilt, can't lose two friends. So, he comes up with a plan to keep Drew and him together—they can spend the summer breaking records, for Darius.



The Society of Explorers and Adventurers: Shinji Takahashi and the Mark of the Coatl by Julie Kagawa

Halle dreams of becoming a scream queen. She practices her loudest scream every day and has learned a lot from studying the horror movies of her favorite director, Maximus Price. Maximus lives just outside town, and when the chance to go to his home arises, Halle grabs it with both hands. She doesn't realize that real life horrors await her at Price Manor. Paisley and Argyle, Maximus's twin children, think that the creepy, squid-like creatures that have attached themselves to the faces of the manor's staff, putting them in a zombie-like stupor, are just another one of their prankster dad's tricks. When Halle arrives and is attacked by one of the creatures, she meets the twins and assures them that this is no joke.



Simon Sort of Says by Erin Bow

Simon O'Keeffe's biggest claim to fame should be the time his dad accidentally gave a squirrel a holy sacrament. Or maybe the alpaca disaster that went viral on YouTube. But the story the whole world wants to tell about Simon is the one he'd do anything to forget: the one starring Simon as a famous survivor of gun violence at school. Two years after the infamous event, twelve-year-old Simon and his family move to the National Quiet Zone—the only place in America where the internet is banned. Instead of talking about Simon, the astronomers who flock to the area are busy listening for signs of life in space.



Skyriders by Polly Holyoke

Twelve-year-old Kiesandra's best friend isn't human, but that doesn't stop her from sharing jokes and secrets with her winged horse, N'Rah. She, like every other person with a skysteed, can communicate with N'Rah through her mind. Their bond is critical when one day, monsters from long ago reemerge to ravage a nearby village. No one knows how to fight the fearsome chimerae except Kie's uncle . . . and now Kie. Injured in the battle, Uncle Dug makes her promise to bring his attack plan and weapons to the capital. Kie reluctantly agrees. At the palace, she and N'Rah attempt to gain the trust of the royals and train the army in Dug's lessons. But how can a young girl and her skysteed convince anyone that only they know how to defeat the deadly monsters?