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With the Fire on High by Elizabeth Acevedo

High school senior Emoni Santiago has a lot to handle. She has to care for her daughter and help out her abuela, all while surviving high school. Emoni finds solace in the kitchen—her passion lies in cooking, and when her school opens a culinary arts class, she jumps at the chance to take it.

When the class plans on taking a trip to Spain to learn from the best, though, Emoni knows there’s no way she’s going to be able to afford it, let alone leave her little girl and grandmother to travel to the opposite side of the globe. But how could she let a once in a lifetime opportunity like this pass her by?

Emoni makes the hard decisions, but does her best to never lose sight of her true passions. Grounded in Acevedo’s own Afro-Latina background and history with poetry, With the Fire on High rounds out its lyrical prose with recipes and plenty of description of delicious food.

The audiobook, read by the author, is particularly good, infusing a wonderful musicality into the rhythm of her already impeccable writing. With the Fire on High is a print and audiobook that any YA fan should absolutely pick up.
**Wreck** by Kirstin Cronn-Mills

In Duluth, Minnesota, Tobin is an average high-school junior whose life is consumed by school, working at her family’s antique shop, hanging out with friends, and completing her scholarship portfolio. She dreams of going to art school to pursue photography, like her father, Steve. It’s just been Tobin and Steve since her mother left when she was five.

This average life is wrecked one horrible day when Steve breaks it to her that he has ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease) and will soon die from the debilitating disease. As she tries to deal with this new reality and the impending death of her father, friends, school, and her art school dreams fall to the wayside. Steve’s disease rapidly changes his body and his mind, affecting his daily functions, emotions, and memory in unexpected ways.

During his career as a paramedic, Steve saw his share of death and decides he intends to end his life with dignity, on his own terms. Tobin and her family struggle with Steve’s decision, but also struggle with watching him progressively decline. Tobin metaphorically and symbolically buries her heart deep in frozen Lake Superior in attempt to cope with the situation, but learns that the circumstances surrounding her father’s degeneration will continue, regardless of how heartlessly she copes.

*Wreck* is a heart-wrenching novel about illness, suffering, grief, death, and life carrying on after the loss of a loved one. It addresses the difficulties of a loved one suffering from ALS, of which there is currently no cure, as well as the controversial matter of death with dignity. In the midst of these heavy subjects, *Wreck* also tells a beautiful story of a community supporting a family in grief and a family and close friends coming together to support an individual living and dying through a terrible disease.
How to Make Friends with the Dark by Kathleen Glasgow

It has always been Tiger and her mom against the world, and then on a day like any other, her mom suddenly passes away. Now it’s just Tiger, and she’s alone. Her world is turned upside down as she is plunged into a world of grief, confusion, isolation, and instability. Everything turns dark. How will she cope with the loss of the one person who was everything to her? How will she manage jumping from foster home to foster home as a ward of the state? Will anyone save her?

There is no manual or set of instructions for grief and Tiger learns that grieving is a never-ending process that looks different for everyone. An unflinching, raw display of grief that comes with losing a parent, this novel is an excellent reminder that many people are fighting battles that may not be noticeable. Regardless of the reader’s personal experience with grief, How to Make Friends With the Dark is a melancholy, brilliant, and necessary read.

Dig by A.S. King

The opening scene to this epic and absurd family history has Marla hiding plastic Easter eggs in the yard and her husband Gottfried crying as he peels potatoes, thinking about a pair of robins he accidentally killed 50 years ago. The significance of the eggs and the robins will come to light much later, but because A. S. King is a master of foreshadowing, the savvy reader knows that she will circle back and that the importance of eggs and robins will be something no-one expects.

Her main teen characters in this saga are known as The Shoveler, The Freak, and CanIHelpYou?, and their disparate stories weave in and out of each other’s, along
with those of First-Class Malcolm and Loretta the Flea Circus Ring Mistress. The Shoveler, a teenage boy who just moved to the frigid north with his mother in time for a massive blizzard and discovers his love of shoveling snow; The Freak, a whispy, flickering girl, barely there; and CanIHelpYou?, practical, self-sufficient, and usually high – navigate the trials of family and the mysteries of discovering purpose in a world that makes no sense and yet all fits together perfectly.

This is King at her best – genre-bending, darkly humorous yet illuminating, reminding us that with other human beings, what you see never quite reflects reality.

**On the Come Up by Angie Thomas**

Bri is a young girl living in one of the roughest neighborhoods in the city, Garden Heights. Her father was murdered when she was a baby, when life was good and his rap career was about to take off. Bri wants to become a rapper just like him, but she doesn’t want her story to end in the Garden.

The city has been in turmoil ever since a Black kid was shot by a white cop and Bri is facing the after effects at school. She’s stewing in her anger and it’s dying to be released. So, when she gets the opportunity to record one of her songs, she takes it. Soon the track is blaring at school, from people’s cars, and being quoted back at her. People take the song literally instead of poetically, however, and Bri finds herself in a great deal of trouble. The song, her mom’s unemployment, the bills left unpaid, and the rising drama at school are all threatening to break her. She hopes this song, even though it paints her as a hoodlum and a thug, will bring her enough money that she and her family can get out of the Garden.

Angie Thomas’s second novel continues to provide an enthralling and real world. *On the Come Up*, with its very real life themes of racism, drug addiction, racial profiling, parental unemployment, and trying to change a broken system forces readers to face difficult contemporary problems that they can both relate to and learn from.
Romance

**Serious Moonlight** by Jenn Bennett

Birdie is in love with mystery novels and films and loves a good case to solve. Shortly after her grandmother dies, Birdie meets Daniel at her favorite place, the Moonlight Diner. When her relationship with Daniel heats up very quickly, she freezes and runs away, hoping to forget about the encounter entirely.

She manages to until she starts her first job at a historic hotel in downtown Seattle as a night receptionist and is introduced to one of the hotel’s van drivers, Daniel. Daniel is an easy going extrovert and is determined to forget that night ever happened and hopefully start over with Birdie. Birdie, however, is determined to ignore Daniel completely.

That is until he brings her a case she can’t turn down. It’s a chance to discover the true identity of Seattle’s very own mysterious author who has been secretly meeting with someone in one of the hotel rooms. When she agrees to help him crack the case, they start meeting up regularly for stake outs.

These meetups sometimes happen at the diner or at work and Birdie notices that they’re not always talking about the case and that’s not so bad. There was a reason she was so drawn to Daniel in the first place,
but will he be able to forgive her embarrassing moment from before? This romance novel invites readers on an adventure that takes them all over Seattle and has them uncovering more than one mystery with Birdie and Daniel.

**Hot Dog Girl** by Jennifer Dugan

Lou Parker is certain that her pre-senior year summer is going to be her summer. She’s finally going to play the role of princess at Magic Castle Playland, her perennial summer employer. She’s finally going to date her crush, Nick. And she and her best friend Seeley are going to have the most fun ever. It’s going to be magic, epic, the absolute best.

But right away, it’s obvious things will not go according to plan. She’s cast as the hot dog. The princess will be played by Nick’s beautiful girlfriend. And, worst of all, the park is set to close at the end of the summer.

Lou sets out to save her pre-senior year summer. She snoops and schemes to try to save Magic Castle Playland. She conspires to win Nick’s affections and get him to break up with the princess. And she plays matchmaker to Seeley. Lou’s secret plans only turn her summer into a bigger mess, hurting the feelings and invading the privacy of almost everyone close to her.

When Lou, her friends, and family are finally honest with each other and with themselves, unexpected truths are revealed and the summer turns out pretty magical after all. With plenty of fun, humor, and truthfully rendered characters, Hot Dog Girl is a wholesome queer romance about listening to what others need instead of what you want and finding that all sorts of love were right in front of you all along if you’d only opened your eyes.
You’d Be Mine by Erin Hahn

Country superstar Clay Coolidge is about to lose everything if he doesn’t quit the partying bad boy image he’s fallen into. His only hope is to persuade a rising YouTube star with famous parents, Annie Matthers, to join his tour and clean up his image. Everyone knows the beautiful love story and tragic ending of Annie’s parents. And Annie can’t get the nightmare of finding them dead all those years ago out of her mind. Ever.

Lately, Annie’s been focused on making her own music with her band and is doing her best to just live her life when country music’s bad boy Clay Coolidge swoops in. At first, she’s determined to say no to Clay’s proposal to join his tour, but she wasn’t prepared to fall for his charm.

When the two set out on tour with Annie’s band, the label makes quick work to portray Annie and Clay as country music’s new “it” couple. As the two open up to one another, they realize they greatly misjudged one another. This newfound friendship has the two writing songs together and Clay realizes what’s been missing from his life recently.

As the tour continues, Annie tries to outshine her demons, while Clay continues to drown in his. Annie distances herself from him, but she tries to help him, too, not wanting to meet a tragic end like her parents. But Clay doesn’t want help and knows he’s only going to destroy Annie if he continues letting her into his world.

Lovers of country music will appreciate call backs to country music legends like Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash along with the tour bus and sold out arenas of Hahn’s world. You’d Be Mine is full of excitement, drama, heartbreak, and grief, and will have readers captivated from beginning to end.
The Downstairs Girl by Stacey Lee

Jo Kuan works as a lady’s maid and companion to the spoiled and acerbic Caroline Payne in late 19th century Atlanta, but her real vocation is writing an advice column under the name of “Miss Sweetie.” Society ladies write letters asking for her practical and often humorous advice, not realizing that Miss Sweetie isn’t the genteel lady living in a fine house that they presume she is, but actually is the American-born granddaughter of a Chinese immigrant who lives secretly in the basement of the newspaper office that prints her advice.

Through a series of events, Jo’s identity and circumstance is brought to light and her followers must come to terms with the reality of their own bigotry and hypocrisy, as Jo herself comes to terms with uncovered family secrets.

Author Lee is one of the founders of the We Need Diverse Books movement in youth literature, and she has heeded her own call very well here. Jo is a charming and feisty protagonist and her trials are realistically drawn in the context of the times. Emily Woo Zeller, the reader of the audio version, does a good job distinguishing the voices of various characters without over-exaggerating the quirks and southernisms. Jo herself, though of Chinese decent, has grown up in Georgia and so has a lovely and unexpected southern lilt. The pace is just right for this engaging and suspenseful story, highly recommended for historical fiction fans in grades 7 and up.
Thirteen Doorways, Wolves Behind Them All by Laura Ruby

It’s 1941 in Chicago. Three teenage siblings, Vito, Francesca, and their sister Toni, are living in an orphanage even though they are not technically orphans. Their mother is dead, and their father has started a new life with a new wife and isn’t able to take care of them. When he decides to move to Colorado, he takes his wife’s daughters and Vito, but leaves Frankie and Toni with promises of sending for them.

The story checks all the boxes of a standard YA Historical Fiction novel – the mother’s scandalous death, the fickle and emotionally abusive father, the beloved brother who goes off to fight the war, the sister who seems determined to ruin herself. What sets this one apart is the fact that the narrator is a ghost – a young woman named Pearl, who had died in the flu pandemic of 1918.

Pearl’s story is intertwined with Frankie’s in ways that are not obvious until the end. Both are young ladies who resist the notion of women being appendages of their fathers and husbands, and in the end, each in her own way triumphs over the conventions of their times.

The real star of this novel, though, is Laura Ruby’s ability to weave it all together meaningfully in language that is both beautiful and brutally real. The loves and losses of Pearl and Frankie are things both ethereal and earthy, and the reader can only be pulled along from one world to the next through doorways that always conceal something unexpected.
**White Rose by Kip Wilson**

White Rose is the coming of age story of Sophie Scholl, who was a young woman in Germany at the height of World War II. She grew up in Fortchenberg, Germany as Adolf Hitler rose to power and the Nazi Party demanded that children of all ages participate in Nazi Youth Organizations.

Sophie was among six children of Nazi critics who wished to not be involved with the party at all. Her older brother, Hans, though, served in the Nazi Army and Sophie herself was expected to serve at a workhouse until she left home to attend University.

Once she finally made it to University, Sophie became involved in the White Rose organization with her brother, Hans, and their friends. The White Rose spread pamphlets detailing the truth of what the Nazis were doing in Germany and the rest of Europe, an extremely dangerous task under Hitler’s dictatorship.

Sophie’s story shows what it means to be passionate for a cause and to speak truth to deadly power. Sophie gave her life to expose the atrocities of the Nazis and show the world her Germany, not Hitler’s. Wilson provides an excellent fictional retelling of Sophie Scholl’s biography, bringing to life a strong, passionate young woman determined to do the right thing.
His Hideous Heart: 13 of Edgar Allan Poe’s Most Unsettling Tales Reimagined, edited by Dahlia Adler

Thirteen YA authors retell 13 stories by the master of suspense and horror Edgar Allan Poe in this anthology of macabre contemporary tales. “It’s Carnival!,” Tiffany D. Jackson’s take on “The Cask of Amontillado,” is the ultimate bully revenge story. Just as Poe’s narrator took advantage of Fortunato’s wine connoisseurship to lure him into a cellar, Jackson’s “Cindy” seduces her tormentor Darrell into going into her basement so he can try her father’s sorrel, a key ingredient in the rum punch favored during the Brooklyn West Indian Day Carnival. Just as Poe’s Fortunato would never leave the cellar, Darrell will never again hear Caribbean street music or see the light of day.

Each entry takes place in a unique and modern setting. The robed judges of the Inquisition in Toledo, Spain in “The Pit and the Pendulum” become a masked serial killer in Toledo, Ohio in Caleb Roehrig’s “The Glittering Death.” Stephanie Kuehn’s “Happy Days, Sweetheart” takes place at an East Coast boarding school that resembles the setting of Poe’s short but chilling chronicle of madness, “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

These stories and 10 others represent Poe’s most compelling dark and twisted themes – grief, madness, revenge, etc. – in the topical contexts of issues haunting teens today. Bullying, random violence, the psychological stress of competition – these authors bring our nightmares to life with disconcertingly recognizable
characters. The volume includes the original Poe stories – recommended for ages 13 to 18.

**I Know You Remember** by Jennifer Donaldson

Following the tragic loss of her mother, Ruthie Haydon returns to Anchorage, Alaska to live with her newly sober father, his wife, and a goodie-goodie step-sister. There’s only one thing making this move worth it: getting to reunite with her childhood best friend, Zahra.

When news spreads of Zahra’s disappearance, Ruthie must try to understand the life of a friend she thought she knew so well in order to find her. Along the way, readers piece together secrets and lies that could never fit. With themes of loss, addiction, and violence, *I Know You Remember* is recommended for older teens. Winding through stunning twists and turns before arriving at its shocking conclusion, this enthralling novel will be an instant favorite for fans of Karen M. McManus and Amber Lynn Natusch.

**Two Can Keep a Secret** by Karen M. McManus

One might think that Ellery and Ezra’s sudden relocation to small-town Vermont would bring a slower, quieter lifestyle than the one they experienced in LA with their dysfunctional mother. And that would be true if it weren’t for the fact that Echo Ridge is where their aunt went missing at age 17, if they didn’t discover the dead body of a beloved teacher within minutes of arriving, and if someone hadn’t declared open season on this year’s homecoming court, which happens to include 17-year old-Ellery.

Two Can Keep a Secret is packed with many secrets, mysteries, missing persons cases, red herrings, unlikely alliances, and completely unexpected truths. Using alternating narrators, McManus builds a realistically unsettled small town, characters who are honest in their portrayal if not in their actions, and true-to-life drama. This riveting suspense story is well-paced, sure to keep readers turning pages well into the night. Each twist, turn, and uncovered secret is well worth it.
The Gilded Wolves by Roshani Chokshi

The World’s Fair has come to Paris! The year is 1889 and Paris is in the midst of the Belle Époque and the Exposition Universelle. The world is on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution and the fair brings all kinds of exhibits and wonder to the ancient streets. With all of the excitement, no one spares a second thought for the dark, wealthy hotelier and treasure hunter Séverin Montagnet-Alarie. But when the elite, powerful Order of Babel approaches him with a quest that will give him his true inheritance, he is hard pressed to refuse.

In order to find the ancient artifact the Order seeks, Séverin calls upon some unlikely experts: An engineer with a debt to pay. A historian banished from his home. A dancer with a sinister past. And a brother in arms if not blood. This dubious team band together to join Séverin as he explores the dark, glittering heart of Paris. What they find might change the course of history—but only if they can stay alive.

Gilded Wolves is an epic heist tale with magic, thieving, friendship, and a giant spider. It’s a fun, humorous action adventure with puzzles and mystery as well as love and light. The audiobook, read by P.J. Ochlan and Laurie Catherine Winkle, makes for great listening as well with Winkle’s dynamic voice to balance Ochlan’s more stoic performance. Gilded Wolves is highly recommended for fans of historical fantasy.
**Wicked Saints by Emily A. Duncan**

*Wicked Saints* begins when war finally reaches the monastery home of 17-year-old cleric, Nadezhda “Nadya” Lapteva. As a Cleric who can channel the powers of not just her patron goddess, but the “entire pantheon,” the monks hope Nadya can become the weapon to turn the tide of the war. It’s too early to tell, though, as she is still in training.

The Tranavian High Prince Serefin Meleski has other plans. Rumors of this sacred weapon brought him and his army to the monastery. Nadya barely escapes and, while on the run, she meets up with Malachiasz, a mysterious boy with a dangerous past.

A Cleric with transcendent powers, a tarnished prince, and a nefarious blood mage all merge and scheme to end a century-long holy war. There are no clear-cut heroes here and each struggle with their path.

This captivating book comes to vibrant life in audio book form. The two narrators, Natasha Soudek & Tristan Morris transport listeners to snow-swept lands of Kalyazin and Tranavia. Natasha’s voices radiate power, vulnerability and eloquence and add to the success of the book. *Wicked Saints* is a bloody and violent Gothic novel sprinkled with tender moments and enough cliffhangers to have teens absolutely craving the sequel.

**The Devouring Gray by Christine Lynn Herman**

In upstate New York, there’s a town called Four Paths. Still reeling from the tragic death of her sister, Violet Saunders and her mother move to this small town where her mother grew up. Unfortunately for Violet, she’s a descendant of one of the Founders of Four Paths, which means everyone in the town keeps their distance with a kind of reverence bordering on fear.

She doesn’t understand why until she meets four other teenagers, Justin and May Hawthorne, Harper Carlisle, and Isaac Sullivan. All of them are also descendants of the Founders and all of them have chaotic powers. Surrounded by forests, Four Paths is haunted by a monster simply known as The Beast that has been worryingly active lately. With each passing day, and each death, Violet and the other teens work to harness their
powers and figure out a way to stop The Beast before it’s too late and the city is consumed by the dangerous realm the Beast inhabits: the Gray.

The problem is, old families bring with them a lot of baggage and that keeps the teenagers from wanting to work together, even though they have to. Stunningly atmospheric with a cast you can’t help but love, The Devouring Gray is perfect for any reader who loves paranormal fantasy.

**We Set the Dark on Fire by Tehlor Kay Mejia**

Set on a fantasy island brimming with tension, *We Set the Dark on Fire* follows Daniela Varga, a girl who is at the top of her class at the Medio School for Girls. At the school, young women are trained for one of two societal roles: that of the wife who will raise her husband’s children or the wife who will run his household. These roles are a privilege and the girls are promised comfortable lives where there is no danger of ever being touched by the political upheaval and uprising of the lower class.

Daniela is well on her way toward a distinguished marriage—so long as no one discovers that her identification papers are forged and that she actually came from a poor village from across the border wall. If discovered, she would be sent back across the wall and her family punished for the fake papers.

Dani is forced to make difficult choices: be grateful for the comfortable life her parents sacrificed so much to give to her, or follow her heart and join with an underground resistance group to try to change everything and bring about a free Medio. Grippingly paced, poignant, and gently romantic, this book is perfect for fans who love fantasy, but want a little dystopia, too.
The Merciful Crow by Margaret Owen

Fie is a Crow. In the rigid caste system of her world, the Crows are at the bottom. They’re the ones who travel on foot, following plague beacons to dispense mercy on those who have caught the plague before it spreads any further. Reviled by the other castes, and frequently attacked because of false beliefs that it’s the Crows who spread the plague, life is dangerous.

When Fie’s band is called to the royal palace to collect the dead prince, a glimmer of hope for enough coin to feed the group is found, but when it turns out that the prince and his bodyguard faked their deaths to escape the queen, trouble is clearly on the way. Crows protect their own, not two boys from other castes who will bring the fires of the queen down on their heads.

The prince, Jasimir, promises that if Fie and her band help him get across the country to an uncle where he can safely begin planning to take the throne from the queen, he’ll do his best to protect the Crows from those who would do them harm. But is it worth the trouble? The Merciful Crow is excellent reading for fans of intricate, dramatic world building and books with grouchy cats.
**Sorcery of Thorns** by Margaret Rogerson

A library with living books, an incredibly tall librarian who wields a sword, and a possibly evil sorcerer with a demon familiar who frequently appears in the form of a fluffy white cat.

In Sorcery of Thorns, Elisabeth, an orphan who grew up in a library that houses hundreds of magical, living books, dreams of one day becoming a warden—someone who watches over the books and keeps their magic from spreading outside their libraries. But when one of the grimoires escapes, she’s forced to team up with Nathanial Thorn, a sorcerer.

Sorcerers are bad news and along with Nathanial is his demon familiar, Silas. In leaving the library she’s known her whole life, Elisabeth discovers that everything she was told about sorcerers—and their demon familiars—might not be entirely true, and they might be able to work together to stop a plot that could destroy all the great libraries… and potentially the whole kingdom. Full of magic, cheerful banter, and incredible world building, Sorcery of Thorns is perfect for readers who like their fantasy a little on the lighter side and harkening back to Dianna Wynne Jones.
**Girl Gone Viral** by Arvin Ahmadi

*Girl Gone Viral* transports readers to a plausible near future wherein Instagram and Snapchat have become the subjects of history classes, eclipsed by holographic and virtual reality social media platforms, and self-driving cars and completely automated industries have become the standard. In the midst of this world is Opal Hopper, senior at an elite STEM high school, daughter of disappeared tech genius Aaron Tal, and, very suddenly, rising star.

At first, the show she and her friends run on WAVE is just for a contest. The prize is all Opal’s ever wanted—a meeting with her father’s reclusive former business partner. Soon, though, it becomes a platform for Opal to reveal truths and lies we hide behind online. As she struggles to get closer to the truth of what happened to her father, and the truth of who we are behind our avatars, Opal falls deeper into her own betrayals of those she loves and into the web of deceit that the tech giant behind WAVE has created.

In this engaging speculative fiction novel, Ahmadi has created a simultaneously believable and fantastical world filled with relatable characters navigating not just average high school problems, but
the moral quandaries of technology and celebrity as well. Dealing with timely political issues, gender issues, grief, and mental illness, Girl Gone Viral is a thought-provoking look at how technology impacts individual lives and society as a whole, at how social media brings out both our cruelty and our compassion, and how best to balance the marvels and perils of humanity and technology alike.

**The Grace Year** by Kim Liggett

The red ribbon 16 year old Tierney James wears in her hair signifies the potential of her devilish magic. Born into The County, a society built upon the fear of women’s magic, Tierney must head into the wilderness with the other Grace Year Girls to release their magic and then return to The County as proper young women. First, though, they must survive near starvation, poachers waiting to devour them, and, most of all, each other.

Seeing the punishments that fall upon the wives caught harboring their magic, Tierney wants nothing more than to avoid following in their footsteps, to become a good, pure woman and wife. But when a marriage proposal surprises everyone, her return to The County becomes more complicated.

This speculative fiction novel is equal parts Lord of the Flies and The Handmaid's Tale, dissecting teenage cruelty and institutionalized misogyny with a fresh lens, allowing readers to witness violence as well as love, trust, and friendship. Teen readers will fall in love with Tierney as a brave, strong, but complex heroine in this absolutely thrilling page-turner.
**Wilder Girls** by Rory Power

The Raxter School for Girls has been under quarantine because of a mysterious disease for over a year. Many have been lost, and those who remain become more deformed by the disease they call the Tox with every flare-up – Hetty has lost an eye, Byatt grew a second spine and Reese’s hand has grown silver scales.

These three friends and the dozens of other students and teachers remaining have a tenuous existence at what used to be a verdant island paradise of a boarding school. They are cut off from civilization for fear of their malady spreading, except for monthly supply drops. The very woods surrounding them have become wild and dangerous with the murderous animals affected by the Tox.

Ever scared, hungry, feral and resigned, they live day to day doing the chores they’ve been assigned and waiting for the mainland to come up with a cure. But through all of this, the one thing they can count on is each other – until they can’t. In this chilling and prescient story, first-time author Power has managed to convey the fierce love and loyalty of friends and the hopeful will to survive in a heart-breaking, unimaginable reality that is brutally violent and unforgiving.
Graphic Novels

*Urban Legendz Vol. 1* by Paul Downs, Nick Bruno, & Michael Yates

Dwayne is experiencing a lot of upheaval. With his mother recently passed, D, his brother, and his father move from their home in small town Indiana to his mom’s old neighborhood in Brooklyn. The move is jarring—Brooklyn is loud, dirty, crowded, and experiencing upheavals of its own. As crews compete against one another for turf, developers compete against longtime residence for control over the city’s future. Oh, and D and his new friends, Cashew, Worm, and Mya, fight against urban legends come to life that have been attacking and killing people all over Brooklyn.

As the newly formed crew investigates the alligators in the sewers, the gargoyles come to life, and the massive bed bugs, they find not only the reason behind them, but also the humanity in the people who once unsettled them. And as more and more people accept that these occurrences are not just paranormal, but yet another faction competing for the future of Brooklyn, everyone comes to understand that community must be prioritized over money or power in order to defeat them.

*Urban Legendz Volume 1* is a fun start to a paranormal fiction series that’s grounded in reality with lots of heart, hard truth, and respect for communities marginalized by the ever-growing push for “the future.”
Bloom by Kevin Panetta & Savanna Ganucheau

Ari’s family owns a bakery in their beach town. Ari wants to move with his friends to the big city so they can all pursue music together, but Ari’s dad tells him he can’t leave just yet because they need help around the bakery.

Everything changes when Ari meets Hector, a new boy with a real talent for baking. Hector has just moved to town to clean out his grandmother’s house after her passing. When Hector meets Ari’s friends, Ari starts to realize that maybe his friends aren’t the people he wants to be spending time with after all.

As Hector starts learning all of Ari’s family’s recipes, Ari starts to stay behind to help Hector instead of practicing with his band. Soon the two are taking off for the fair to sell baked goods and managing the store with Ari’s parents. It slowly start to become more as the two start sitting up on the roof talking late into the night and spending more time together outside of the bakery.

When something tragic happens to the bakery, Ari thinks he’s loss Hector for good. Can the their relationship survive without baking in the mix? Ganucheau’s use of subtle blue colors along with the expressive illustrations help set the romantic and somber tone throughout the novel. This sweet tale makes any reader hope for the best for these two young people in love.

Pumpkinheads by Rainbow Rowell & Faith Erin Hicks

It’s Josiah and Deja’s last night of their last season working at the pumpkin patch together before they part ways, finish their senior year, and head off to college. Tonight is the night that Josiah finally asks out the fudge girl he has been crushing on forever. Well, at least that’s what Deja thinks as she makes the trade for them to work directly across from the fudge store. Josiah, however, is not too thrilled with this idea.

When he heads over on a break to find fudge girl to ask her out, he finds that she’s not there. Josiah is willing to just leave it and move on with the night, but Deja has other plans. The two abandon their post and take off all around the
pumpkin patch, just missing the fudge girl at every turn. They run into runaway goats, caramel apples, ex-boyfriends, ex-girlfriends, arch nemeses and so much more.

As they continue, it all turns into a memorable last night for the two friends who realize that maybe their friendship is worth more than just a season at the pumpkin patch. Rowell brings to life a fun story of two best friends realizing that maybe their friendship is a little more and it’s all made more vibrant with Hicks’ illustrations style. This is a fun and exciting story for any reader looking for a little adventure, friendship and love.

**Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me** by Mariko Tamaki & Rosemary Valero-O’Connell

Freddy is hopelessly entangled with her off-again-on-again-off-again girlfriend. Reeling from their latest in a long line of breakups, she looks for insight into what to do just about anywhere she can find it, except for where she should. An advice columnist. A fortune teller. A cute server in the local diner. Sister Wives. Her stuffed animals.

With all of her focus on the ways Laura Dean hurts her and flatters her over and over again, Freddy neglects to be supportive of her best friend, Doodle, when they need her most, and can’t manage to be truly immersed in potential new romances. The palpable and true-to-life emotion of these relationships thrown into disarray is rendered in at once simple and chaotic, but always gorgeous and engaging monochromatic illustrations.

Told through dialogue, emails, and text messages, **Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me** is a beautiful exploration of the relationships that shape us and a challenge to leave behind the ones that hurt us. With honest portrayals of queer characters and the cycles of toxic relationships, this graphic novel is a quick, darkly funny, and ultimately moving read for older teens and young adults.
**The Avant-Guards Vol. 1** by Carly Usdin, Noah Hayes, & Rebecca Nalty

Charlie Bravo has just transferred to an art school and is not much of a joiner, but she’s played basketball until very recently. Olivia Bates, a theatre major, is an intense overachiever determined to start a school basketball team. And here’s the thing: she needs just one more player in order for her team to compete.

As Olivia enlists her friends Jay, Tiffany, Ashley, and Nicole to convince Charlie to join, clever and not-so-clever schemes ensue and each character’s light shines. After Charlie finally gives in, a successful team starts to take shape… as well as a budding romance!

This first volume of The Avant-Guards promises a great new comic book series offering up fun, dynamic characters, sweet romance, sweeter friendships, and plenty of queer jock representation. Excellent, entertaining reading for fans of realistic fiction, graphic novels and comics, sports stories, and romance looking to diversify their bookshelves.
Mooncakes by Wendu Xu & Suzanne Walker

Nova is one of the brightest young witches of her age. There’s never been much of a problem in her small town, as she and her grandmothers keep a low profile in their bookshop. That all changes when Nova’s best friend, Tat, reports some mysterious happenings in the woods on the outskirts of town. Nova, ever the curious witch, goes to investigate.

In the forest, she not only discovers a demon running rampant, but also a long lost friend, Tam. Tam is a werewolf and has been in town for a while trying to hunt down this demon and get their magic under control at the same time. Tam and Nova were close when they were younger, but when Tam left, the two thought they’d never see each other again. Now that they’re reunited and spending long days together trying to figure out how Tam can defeat the demon, they grow closer than ever before. Soon, their friendship develops into something more.

As the full moon approaches, the two celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot with Nova’s family and enjoy freshly made mooncakes. In order to defeat the dark forces that extend farther than the demon in the woods, the pair will team up with Nova’s witchy grandparents and one very mortal best friend. This magical tale is a fun and heartfelt read for fans of romance and fantasy.
Non-Fiction
An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese

In this adaptation of an adult nonfiction book, readers find an incredibly difficult history made accessible. An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States condenses millennia of history from thousands of cultures into a simplified, fast-paced narrative that challenges everything we think we know about American history and the land we inhabit.

From reframing early English settlements to highlighting 20th Century termination and relocation programs, this dense but uncomplicated text unravels the complex histories that indigenous people have long known. Significantly, while An Indigenous Peoples’ History certainly favors its indigenous protagonists, it does not shy away from ways that some indigenous individuals or groups have done harm to themselves throughout the long history of what is now North America.

The book also offers guidance in grappling with the information it contains, with helpful “Did You Know?,” “Consider This,” and “To Do” sections that illuminate ways to move forward with this knowledge and work towards a more just community that respects indigenous peoples as well as the cultures and environments many of them try to protect. An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States for Young People is unequivocally essential reading for teens and adults looking for a fuller understanding of their world.

Troublemaker for Justice: The Story of Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the March on Washington by Jacqueline Houtman, Walter Naegle, & Michael G. Long

Bayard Rustin is one of the most significant, but most often forgotten figures of the 20th Century. Troublemaker for Justice pulls him out of the shadows. Written with the help of one of his partners and one of his mentees, this biography covers his
pacifist Quaker upbringing that came to influence his life and a movement, his work behind the scenes on anti-war protests and the Civil Rights Movement, and his eventual role in the gay rights movement.

Rustin is the reason the Civil Rights Movement utilized the Gandhian nonviolence it is known for and he was the main organizer of the momentous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. And yet, he was pushed to the background of the movement he shaped because of his openness about his homosexuality which was still illegal at the time.

The text deals with the complexities, nuances, and internal arguments among exalted figures of the 20th Century, revealing how they differed on issues like war, poverty, respectability, and sexuality, and how they held their own prejudices and fears even as they fought for justice.

Troublemaker for Justice is a worthy and accessible entry in the effort to right the record of history to include the queer, the nuanced, the complicated. This biography is a guiding light for potential activists, a testament to what determination and passion can accomplish and to all the work that goes on beyond the spotlight to bring about major social and political change.

*(Don’t) Call Me Crazy: 33 Voices Start the Conversation about Mental Health*, edited by Kelly Jensen

Famous actors, YA authors, activists, and creators lend their voices to this anthology of essays, creative writing, comics, and photography dealing with a wide range of experiences with mental health conditions, from depression to OCD to eating disorders to bipolar disorder to addiction to trichotillomania. Each contributor has their own approach to their condition and to mental health as a whole, and each contributor is in their own place in terms of treatment, recovery, and how their condition is influenced by other aspects of their experience such as race, class, gender, and sexuality.

All of these entries work together to create a dynamic and nuanced picture of
mental health that is permeated, above all, by hope. Whether contributors are at the beginning of their treatment, in the midst of recovery, or years away from their most difficult experiences, the final message is always that it is possible to live through and live with mental health conditions and find joy, love, and, often most importantly, tolerable equilibriums.

(Don’t) Call Me Crazy is at times difficult, but always essential reading for everyone looking to approach themselves and others with more compassion and understanding and looking to approach mental health with more faith in the potential for a full life alongside challenges.

*Girls Who Run the World: 31 CEOs Who Mean Business* by Diana Kapp, illustrated by Bijou Karman

Girls can run the world. And in many ways, they already do! This upbeat book is a collection of biographies of incredible women who run some of the most successful businesses in the world. But it is more than just that: it is also an inspiring and empowering guide to future female entrepreneurs, encouraging them to follow their passion and to never give up.

This easy-to-follow book includes a chapter for each of the featured women. Each chapter has an illustration, plus several fun facts about the woman (her favorite candy, or what’s on her bucket list, for example). The biographies are both encouraging and entertaining. Also included are relatable tips and practical advice for future businesswomen: building an idea into a business, creating a business plan, handling finances, writing a mission statement, learning about creative marketing, and developing other essential business skills.
CEOs covered in this book are from many different cultures and backgrounds, as well as a variety of areas of business, including science, technology, fashion, food, and more. Each woman is different, yet they are all successful. They display courage, purpose, and determination. Many faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles, yet they never gave up. Their stories are captivating and will inspire girls to face their own challenges and chase their own dreams, no matter how big or wild they may seem. Girls can do anything, and they can – and do! -- change the world.

**Parkland Speaks: Survivors from Marjory Stoneman Douglas Share Their Stories, edited by Sarah Lerner**

At once illuminating, inspiring, and heart-wrenching, this anthology of essays, poetry, photography, and art brings together the voices of students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where a mass shooting took place on Valentine’s Day of 2018.

The students recount the terrifying experience of that day, the grief, anger, and trauma that followed, and the action and activism that helped them to move forward with their lives and to try to move our nation forward from gun violence.

These writings from teens who have been caught in the crossfires of the debates and tragedies of gun violence are a testament to how much needs to change and how much can change in an instant, to the power of teens, and to the power of using your voice in the face of trauma and tragedy.

This book is a useful document for working through one’s own feelings about guns and gun violence and an effective argument for the need for some kind of change in how we approach them. This book is also a hopeful document of the potential for healing as a community through honest conversation, activism, work with therapists and therapy dogs, and yoga and other mindfulness practices.

Parkland Speaks is highly recommended reading for teens struggling with this timely issue and looking for a path forward.
It’s Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood, Adapted for Young Readers by Trevor Noah

In this memoir, edited for teen readers, stand-up comic and The Daily Show host Trevor Noah tells the story of his early life in South Africa in the 1980s during the final years of apartheid oppression. Apartheid segregated people by race and made all interracial relationships illegal, making Noah’s birth from a white father and Black mother a crime.

His narrative illuminates how his family tried to hide his parentage and how his mother worked tirelessly to ensure he still received the best possible education and a drive to overcome the obstacles he would inherently face. Noah also illustrates how, in spite of his dangerous existence, and perhaps because he felt like such an outsider, his youth was filled with mischief that even landed him in jail.

His exploits are relatable, and his writing is engaging and thought-provoking. Apartheid itself plays a role in the book, introducing the reader to the oppression, racism, and poverty that was forced on the people of South Africa for nearly fifty years and the profound effect that it had on Noah.

Told in his own words, his observations are truthful and sometimes hard-hitting, as he uses his humor and smarts to navigate his very difficult world and try to find his place in it, despite the barriers he faced. Though the profanity was removed from this edition, the violence and injustice remain, making this not only an interesting and relatable story, but also an eye-opening, educational, and informative nonfiction read for teens.

Rad Girls Can: Stories of Bold, Brave, and Brilliant Young Women by Kate Schatz & Miriam Klein Stahl

The first American boxer to win two gold medals at the Olympics. A refugee who saved the lives of eighteen others as they crossed the Mediterranean. Sisters who secretly housed Jewish families during the Holocaust. Plaintiffs in a court case against the U.S. government for its contributions to climate change.

These are just some of the inspiring stories of the power of teen girls to be
found in Rad Girls Can by Kate Schatz and Mariam Klein Stahl. With entries on athletes, actors, writers, activists, creators, inventors, and everyday girls who’ve made a difference, this collection offers a wide ranging and diverse look at young women who have changed the world in one way or another before the age of 20.

Rad Girls Can is a heartening reminder to look for solutions when we witness problems or injustices and shows us that no matter what we love to do, following our passions allows us to shape the world we want to see and inspires others to do the same.

**Girlish by Alana Wulff**

It is not always easy to be a girl, but it is always worth it! In an inviting and engaging format, this book covers all kinds of topics and truths that are important to girls today and provides inspiration for them to be their very best selves. Written in the form of a journal, it includes not only information, but also inspirational quotes from noteworthy women, illustrations, tips, thought-provoking questions, and space for the reader to write her own ideas.

Topics include relationships, gender equality, self-esteem, self-care, emotions, friendship, education, social media, and many more. Profiles, stories, and quotes are included from fascinating women such as Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Michelle Obama, Malala Yousafzai, Amy Poehler, Simone Biles, Emma Watson, and more.

Life is sometimes beautiful, sometimes messy, and sometimes frustrating, but there is always a bright side. This uplifting book challenges its readers to define their own values, set their own goals, and celebrate what makes each person unique.

It offers motivation and advice for girls to figure out what is important to them, how they feel about themselves and their world, and what types of big dreams they have for themselves. Girlish introduces the idea of feminism and challenges girls to be bold enough to discover what their passions are and to create their own place in the world.