

# Best Books for Libraries 2018 – Elementary School

## Prepared by

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Parsippany-Troy Hills Public Library System [www.parsippanylibrary.org](http://www.parsippanylibrary.org)

Main Library	Lake Hiawatha Library	Mount Tabor Library
449 Halsey Road	68 Nokomis Avenue	31 Trinity Park
Parsippany	Lake Hiawatha	Mount Tabor
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## Picture Books

de la Pena, Matt. *Carmela Full of Wishes*. (Grades K-2)

Newbery Medal-winning author Matt de la Pena and Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator Christian Robinson have created another award-worthy story. It is Carmela's birthday and she is allowed to go into town with her big brother. She finds a dandelion growing in the sidewalk and does not realize that she should make a wish with it. When her brother tells her that "Everyone knows that", she pretends that she made a wish. The two children visit the Laundromat and the locksmith as they run errands for the family. The father is away "getting his papers fixed so he could finally be home" and the mother works at a fancy hotel. The neighborhood where Carmela and her brother live is warmly illustrated with clear details from shoes on the telephone wires to a vegetable stand. When Carmela takes a tumble, her brother lovingly shows her a place where she can make many wishes.

Diaz, Junot. *Island Born*. (Grades K-3)

When Ms. Obi asks her students to draw a picture of the country they are originally from, the children are excited. All except Lola who does not remember the island she is from because she was a baby when her family left. As Lola talks to some of her neighbors from the island to draw from their memories, she learns that the island was very beautiful. She wonders why anyone

would want to leave a place like that. Reluctantly, Mr. Mir, the building superintendent, tells her of a monster that fell upon their island and did as he pleased for 30 years. Though never mentioned by name, the country in question is the Dominican Republic and the monster refers to dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. A sensitive, beautiful story of culture, identity and belonging. Vivid and gorgeous illustrations.

Morales, Yuyi. ***Dreamers***. (Grades K-2) This autobiographical picture book tells the story of Yuyi Morales and her young son's experience in America as non-English speakers who do not understand the customs of their new home. They discover the public library which offers hope and dreams in the form of books as "We learned to read,/ to speak,/ to write,/ and/ to make/ our voices heard." The artist uses painting, drawing, photography, and embroidery to create mixed-media illustrations that are filled with folkloric characters from Mexican culture and vibrant colors. Morales includes a list of books which inspired her and the covers of these stories are depicted in the artwork.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***The Day You Begin***. (Grades K-2).

A girl with brown skin and curly hair, who spent the summer at home taking care of her little sister, feels left out when classmates start sharing the various places they traveled to over the summer. Another boy, recently arrived from Venezuela, feels alone when none of his new classmates understand his language. Another girl's friend makes fun of the food she eats for lunch, and a boy who can't physically keep up with the other kids is forgotten by them on the playground. But when these four children share their stories with one another, they develop common ground and friendships. A beautiful and powerful book about celebrating the things that make us unique.

## Easy Readers

Manushkin, Fran. ***Katie Woo: Katie Woo Blows Her Top***. (Grades K-2)

Katie Woo is excited to make a volcano model with Pedro and JoJo. However, when the volcano starts getting lumpy, Katie gets angry. In the meantime, the group does not want to share and JoJo accidentally pours baking soda on Katie's head. Katie immediately blows her top! They decide to be fair to one another and work on a new volcano project. Will it be a success? Large font and short chapters make this a perfect book for introductory readers.

Milgrim, David. ***See Pip Flap***. (Kindergarten) This pre-level one addition to The Adventures of Otto series is perfect for a child that is just starting to read. Tweet the bird can fly so Pip the mouse wants to fly too. He flaps and flaps and flaps but he ultimately flops. Finally Otto the robot helps him succeed. The repetition of words and the abundance of three letter words

encourages young readers while the simple story has a clever plot. The clear illustrations express the characters' feelings.

Pham, LeUyen. ***The Itchy Book***. (K-2)

Triceratops has an itch. So does Pterodactyl, thanks to a bug bite. And T-Rex is tortured by an itchy tag. But they don't dare scratch. Because there's a rule, literally written in stone:

DINOSAURS DO NOT SCRATCH. As they're tempted by things ever more itchy--leftover bits of hair from a haircut, a wool sweater--it becomes harder and harder to resist scratching. But maybe the dinosaurs should pay a little closer attention to that sign... A simple and satisfying book for beginning readers, who will love the hilarious illustrations. Mo Willem's beloved Elephant & Piggie introduce and close the book.

Ransom, Candice. ***Snow Day***. (Kindergarten)

The sister and brother from *Pumpkin Day* and *Apple Picking Day* are back in this winter tale. Children love snow days and this easy reader depicts the perfect day of sledding, snowball fights, and snuggling under blankets. This is a Step 1 reader which features big type and easy words.

Willems, Mo. ***Unlimited Squirrels in I Lost My Tooth***. (K-2)

This is the first title in a new easy reader series about squirrels. Zoom Squirrel has lost his baby tooth and his squirrel friends are very worried about a little baby tooth all alone in the world. They are determined to rescue the lost tooth. There are additional sections including A-corny Jokes and facts about teeth by a character named Research Rodent. Willems' cartoon-style illustrations in brown and green tones will captivate young children and they will be eager to read the next book in the series.

## **Juvenile Fiction**

Barnett, Mac. ***Mac Undercover***. (Grades 3-5)

Author Mac Barnett claims that he was a spy as a kid in the 1980s. This quirky story blends historical facts about England with a unbelievable tale about espionage. The illustrations add to the appeal of this quick read. The main character Mac is summoned from his home in California to England to solve the mystery of the theft of the Crown Jewels.

Blake, Ashley Herring. ***Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World***. (Grades 4-6)

Ivy has some big problems: her family's house was destroyed by a hurricane, and her secret notebook, full of pictures of girls holding hands, was stolen. When her pictures start showing up in her locker with notes encouraging her to share her feelings, Ivy hopes they are from a girl in her class on whom she has her first crush. This sensitive, beautifully written novel deals equally with Ivy's struggle with coming out and her struggle as the often overlooked middle child in her family.

Brallier, Max. *The Last Kids on Earth and the Cosmic Beyond* (Grades 4-6)

The latest entry in The Last Kids on Earth series continues the adventures of Jack Sullivan and his friends, Quint, June, and Dirk. Jack provides a real-deal recap of what has happened in the previous three books so readers unfamiliar with the series can jump right into this story. The tweens have battled frightening creatures including zombies before but this is their first winter adventure. There are snowball battles and sledding mishaps as the characters try to introduce Christmas to monsters. This book is an excellent blend of illustration and text which should interest readers of **The Treehouse Books** series.

Chokshi, Roshani. *Aru Shah and the End of Time*. (Grades 4-7)

Seventh grader Aru has a tendency to stretch the truth in order to fit into to her private middle school. While all of her classmates are traveling around the world to places like Paris, Aru will be spending her Autumn break in the Museum of Ancient Indian Art that her mother curates. One day her classmates visit her at the museum and Aru lights the ancient lamp that her mother has warned her against lighting and she is launched into the world of the gods and mythical characters. Aru must enter the Kingdom of the Dead in order to save the world from being frozen in time. An exciting debut in a new series which uses Hindu mythology as a foundation, Chokshi's tale will likely inspire fans of the "Percy Jackson" series. A glossary provides readers with with a basic introduction to Indian mythology.

Draper, Sharon M. *Blended*. (Grades 4-7)

Sixth-grader Isabella is biracial; her mom is white and her dad is black. Her parents are also divorced and share custody; one week, she lives with her mom, a working-class waitress, the next, she lives with her dad, a wealthy attorney. Every Sunday, they all meet at the mall to do "the exchange." Izzy loves her parents, but she hates feeling like she is always caught between two worlds. Izzy deals with universal tween concerns like getting ready for a big piano recital and teachers who assign too many vocab words. She also grows more aware of racist incidents in her world, both small and large. Izzy is funny, thoughtful, and relatable, and *Blended* succeeds both as a story about the struggles faced by children of divorce and as a story of the struggles faced by children of color.

Faruqi, Saadia. *Meet Yasmin!* (Grades K-2)

Yasmin is a spirited second grader who's always on the lookout for those "aha" moments to help her solve life's little problems. Taking inspiration from her surroundings and her big imagination, she boldly faces any situation, assuming her imagination doesn't get too big of

course. Yasmin and her Pakistani American family are ready for new adventures every day! A new and diverse series to read aloud to students or to introduce to emerging readers.

Guterson, Ben. ***Winterhouse***. (Grades 4-6)

Bibliophile Elizabeth Somers is dismayed to find that her Aunt Purdy and Uncle Burlap expect her to spend the winter break alone at a resort called Winterhouse. Fortunately Elizabeth meets the proprietor of Winterhouse, Norbridge Falls and discovers the wonders of the hotel. She also makes her first friend, Freddy. Elizabeth's puzzle-solving skills may help her solve the mystery of a magical book and learn more about her family including her deceased parents. *Winterhouse* is the first book in a planned trilogy. Readers who liked *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library* and *The Mysterious Benedict Society* will be drawn to this book.

Kelly, Erin Entrada. ***You Go First***. (Grades 4-6)

Charlotte's father just had a heart attack, and her best friend has abandoned her in favor of a more popular girl. Ben's parents are getting a divorce, and he's a target for bullies at his new school. Though they live a thousand miles apart, Charlotte and Ben have become friendly playing online Scrabble against each other for years. In one eventful week, their long-distance virtual friendship inspires each of them to make positive changes in their real-life relationships. A rewarding story about the power of kindness and friendship.

Krulik, Nancy. ***Princess Pulverizer: Grilled Cheese and Dragons***. (Grades 1-3)

Princess Serena (or Princess Pulverizer, as she prefers) doesn't want to be a princess- she wants to be a knight. However, first she must complete a Quest of Kindness to prove she has what it takes to be a hero. In the first book in a wacky, new adventure series, Princess Pulverizer knows that retrieving jewels stolen from the queen will be a good deed and help her on her path to knighthood. Will she be able to do this on her own? A strong series opener and a solid choice for those looking for early chapter books.

Kuhlmen, Torben. ***Edison: The Mystery of the Missing Mouse Treasure***. (Grades 3-6)

Inspired by a generations-old family story, young Pete the mouse enlists the help of a pipe-smoking professor at the University of Mice-first to search the old records for the location of a certain ocean liner that has sunk in the mid-Atlantic, and then to invent a submarine that will allow them to explore the wreck. So begins a laborious, sometimes dangerous process of trial and error and also of study and experimentation. In the pictures, with great attention to detail and in monochrome and sepia-toned color, mice scamper through human-sized archival files and design a fish-like submarine. The mice begin a journey into the deep, dark depths of the ocean and Pete and the professor will discover not exactly treasure at the wreckage but a diary with

diagrams that connect Pete's ancestor with one of the greatest human inventors of all. A beautifully illustrated work of fiction interwoven with themes of both science and history.

MacKnight, Wendy McLeod. ***The Frame-Up***. (Grades 4-6) The paintings at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery are alive but the characters are only allowed to interact with each other. Thirteen-year-old Mona Dunn is one of the residents in the paintings and she is caught moving by the gallery director's son, Sargent. Sargent is forced to spend the summer with his dad who left his life after his parents divorced. Both Mona and Sargent are lonely and an unlikely friendship develops as they work together to solve a mystery. Hand this book to fans of the movie *Night at the Museum* or readers who enjoyed Blue Balliett's art mysteries. Full-color inserts of each portrait are included in the book.

Ransome, Lesa Cline. ***Finding Langston***. (Grades 3-6)

When 11-year old Langston's mother dies in 1946, he and his father leave rural Alabama for Chicago's brown belt as a part of what came to be known as the Great Migration. It's lonely in the small apartment with just the two of them and at school Langston is bullied. But his new home has one fantastic thing. Unlike the whites-only library in Alabama, the local public library welcomes everyone. There, hiding out after school, Langston discovers another Langston, a poet whom he learns inspired his mother enough to name her only son after him. A powerful story of friendship, love and loss for fans of historical fiction.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Harbor Me***. (Grades 4-6)

Ms. Laverne, the teacher of a self-contained special needs classroom, has an idea: for one hour a week, the kids will sit in an empty classroom by themselves--*no teacher, no adults*--so they can talk about whatever they want. At first, her students think she's crazy, but soon they recognize the value of a safe space where they can talk about what's on their minds, free from judgment or fear. One boy confesses that his father has been picked up by ICE and has been sent to a detention center. The other five kids share their stories, too: stories about racism, bullying, and family secrets. A beautifully written story about friendship, the importance of listening to others' stories and sharing your own, and what it means to be a safe harbor for someone else.

Yang, Kelly. ***Front Desk***. (Grades 4-6)

Mia's parents, recent immigrants from China, manage a motel owned by a cruel man who takes advantage of their desperate financial situation. Still, ten-year-old Mia, who works the front desk after school, never gives up on her American Dream. This powerful novel, based on the author's own childhood experiences, explores issues of class, racism, poverty, and exploitation of immigrant workers. Readers, charmed by Mia's likable voice, her unfailing sense of justice, and her unflappable optimism, will cheer for her family and their friends to succeed.

## Graphic Novels

Hernandez, Jaime. *The Dragon Slayer: Folktales from Latin America: A Toon Graphic* (Grades 4-7) How would a kitchen maid fare against a seven-headed dragon? What happens when a woman marries a mouse? And what can a young man learn from a thousand leaf cutter ants? Famed *Love and Rockets* Jaime Hernandez asks these questions and more as he transforms beloved myths into bold, stunning and utterly contemporary comics. Three tales are included in this graphic novel which includes diverse characters with two of the tales including strong heroines. Special features includes a foreword, an appendix, a bibliography and Aztec-inspired endpapers and design motifs.

Ruzzier, Sergio. *The Party and Other Stories*. (Grades K-2) This graphic novel suitable for beginning readers features three unrelated stories about Chick, a fun-loving bird and Fox, a serious vegetarian. The two friends do not always see eye to eye but they learn to appreciate each other. The first story, *The Party* sets the tone for the rest of the interactions. Chick will make readers laugh while Fox is the voice of reason. The watercolor illustrations show a happy land where animals live in simple cottages with full bathrooms. Children that finished the Frog and Toad books will gravitate towards this new series. The next title will be published in 2019.

Sell, Chad. *The Cardboard Kingdom*. (Grades 4-7)

In a suburban neighborhood, a group of diverse kids spend a glorious summer creating an elaborate kingdom using only their imagination, some old cardboard boxes, and a roll of tape. Each kid finds that they're able to truly express themselves in the cardboard kingdom in a way that they can't in the real world. Sophie, always being scolded to be quieter, is as loud as she likes as the Hulk-like Big Banshee. Jack drops his male identity to become the beautiful and powerful Sorceress. And Seth is the Gargoyle, able to protect his recently-divorced mom from his dad, who keeps showing up to their house drunk in the middle of the night. This fun, exciting graphic novel has cheerful, bright illustrations and is an loving ode to the power of imagination and friendship.

Steinke, Aron Neils. *Mr. Wolf's Class*. (Grades 2-5)

Mr. Wolf has just started teaching at Hazelwood Elementary School. He wants the first day to go well, but he has his hands full with his fourth grade class. Readers will see Mr. Wolf setting up his classroom before the first day of school and the students trying to get some sleep the night before school starts. From antics on the bus, the library, lunch and recess, Mr. Wolf and his

students have quite a first day! Mr. Wolf's class has a diverse group of children with unique personalities that children will relate to. This delightful new series captures the everyday-and unexpected-ups and downs of a fourth grade classroom. Readers will be looking forward to the next book in this series.

Tetri, Mily. ***Tiger Vs. Nightmare.*** (Grades 1-5)

Tiger is a very lucky kid; she has a monster living under her bed. Every night, Tiger and Monster play games until it is it's time for lights out. Of course, Monster would never do anything to scare Tiger- that's not what best friends do. But Monster needs to scare someone so he scares away all of Tiger's nightmares. However, waiting in the darkness is a nightmare so big that Monster can't fight it alone and must get help from Tiger. An uplifting tale of best friends, imagination, bravery and teamwork.

Varon, Sara. ***New Shoes.*** (Grades 1-4)

Francis the donkey is a shoemaker who lives in a small village. His fancy shoes are made from the best materials including wild tiger grass which is found in the jungles of South America. Francis relies on his friend Nigel, a squirrel monkey to retrieve the wild tiger grass from the jungle. Francis receives a special shoe order from Miss Manatee, the queen of calypso, but he does not have any more tiger grass. Nigel has not returned from the jungle so Francis sets off reluctantly for a jungle adventure. He meets capybaras, a sloth, and many other animals outside his neighborhood. Facts about each animal are sprinkled throughout the book and there is a section at the end which includes photographs that Varon took of a village in Guyana which provided the inspiration for her scenery.

## **Nonfiction**

Ben-Barak, Idan. ***Do Not Lick This Book.*** (Grades K-3)

Why not? Because it's full of germs! Readers are invited to touch the book. When they turn the page, they'll find a two-page spread of a close-up photograph of paper, taken with an electron microscope, showing the microbes living there. Other stops on this gross, germy journey: their teeth, their shirt, and their skin. The close-up photographs are fascinating--who knew that fabric looks like a bunch of noodles?--and it's a good visual reminder of the importance of good personal hygiene.

Curtis, Andrea. ***Eat This!: How Fast-Food Marketing Gets You to Buy Junk (And How to Fight Back).*** (Grades 4-7)

Most kids can probably tell you that junk food is bad for them, but have they ever stopped to think about *why* they're tempted to buy junk food anyway? This book explores the way marketers promote junk food to kids in a way that will open their eyes and make them think.



Curtis discusses more obvious tactics (like toys in Happy Meals or product placement in TV shows and movies) to more subtle ones (like “over-the-top” food and drinks specifically designed by restaurants to “go viral” on social media). The end of the book contains practical tips for students, parents, and teachers to recognize and challenge fast-food culture and marketing in their everyday lives.

Halligan, Katherine. ***Herstory: 50 Women and Girls Who Shook Up the World.*** (Grades 5-8) This attractively illustrated, oversized collection features fifty women who shook up the world -- ranging from Hatshepsut in ancient Egypt to 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai. Some of the diverse women and girls profiled will be familiar; some are lesser known. Rather than list them chronologically, the women and girls separated into groups that emphasize their common bonds. Each subject is given a two-page, scrapbook-inspired spread detailing their biography and their accomplishments, making them seem both approachable and inspirational.

Lloyd, Christopher. ***Absolutely Everything!: A History of Earth, Dinosaurs, Rulers, Robots and Other Things Too Numerous to Mention.*** (Grades 4-8)

#### **Winner of a Parents' Choice Silver Award 2018**

While this is not the history of absolutely everything, it is a gateway to knowledge that will spark interest in specific topics. Chapter One starts with the origins of the Universe and the last chapter covers 1945 to the present including the Black Lives Matter movement. Each chapter starts with a timeline and there are hundreds of photographs and illustrations throughout the book. A glossary, index, and a list of further reading are included at the end of the book.

McCloskey, Kevin. ***Snails Are Just My Speed! Toon Level 1 (Giggle and Learn)*** Grades K-3 Did you know that snails build roads like engineers and go undercover in camouflage, like spies? Did you know they can be smaller than a seed or bigger than a grown-up's hand? Fun facts about snails are abound in the fourth book in the Giggle and Learn Series for Toon books. It would be a star in a gross-book-themed storytime and a perfect selection for any elementary school library shelf.

Seluk, Nick. ***The Sun is Kind of a Big Deal.*** (Grades 2-4) This is the funniest book about the sun that has ever been published. Students will learn about the importance of the sun, the cycles of the moon, the water cycle, and photosynthesis. There is a glossary and a detailed Did You Know section in the back of the book. Children will respond well to the humor while retaining facts about the sun.

Siber, Kate. ***National Parks of the USA.*** (Grades 2-6)

This book is an excellent introduction to many National Parks located in all regions of the United States. It begins with the parks located in the east and ends with the parks in the tropics.

Creatures and plants that are located in each park are described in detail while art-deco illustrations give a vintage look to the book. The popular parks are covered as well as less-known locations.

Thornhill, Jan. ***The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow***. (Grades 3-6)

Who knew that the little brown sparrow, seen on everyday sidewalks scavenging for crumbs, is the most despised bird in human history? This informative nonfiction picture book explains why sparrows and humans lives are intertwined and how civilizations throughout history have both loved them and battled against them. But ecosystems are delicately balanced, and trying to alter them can have unintended consequences. Recently the sparrows' numbers have been declining: what does that mean about our environment? This engaging look is a reminder that even the most commonplace things can have fascinating stories.

Thuras and Rosemary Mosco. ***The Atlas Obscura Explorer's Guide for The World's Most Adventurous Kid***. (Grades 4-7)

This book takes its readers on a thrilling expedition to 100 of the most surprising, mysterious, and weird-but-true places on earth. Each location has a two page layout and includes information about population, national motto, food etc. and always includes one obscure fact about the locations. Beautiful illustrations are included for each location showing exactly where this particular place is on Earth and much more. A perfect book for both teaching and reading over and over again.

Zommer, Yuval. ***The Big Book of Blue***. (Grades K-2)

The third installment in Yuval Zommer's beloved "Big Book" series. Cheerful and absolutely enticing, the oversized pages contain beautiful illustrations of different sea creatures along with accurate facts about each one. Ocean fans and underwater animal lovers will want to read this book over and over again.