2023 Capitol Choices Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens

BIRTH TO AGE FIVE

BATHE THE CAT
McGinty, Alice B.
David Roberts, illustrator
Chronicle Books
978-1452142708
A clever cat creates mischief and hilarious chaos for two Black dads and their children. Rhyming text and outrageous action lead readers on a silly, colorful ride as the family gets the house ready for Grandma.

BERRY SONG
Goade, Michaela
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers
978-0316494175
As a Tlingit girl and her grandmother forage for berries on an Alaskan island, their song of gratitude connects them to the Earth and to the ancestors.

BLANKET
Ohi, Ruth
Groundwood
978-1773066141
Sad Cat hides under her blue blanket to be alone. Dog waits with her until she is ready to talk, and the blanket becomes a mat they can share. Lovely and wordless.

CHIRP!
Murphy, Mary
Candlewick Press
978-1536217698
Stars fade from the sky and birds start to sing, and sunrise is captured in illustrations that grow from muted blues to vibrant yellows and oranges. Onomatopoeic bird sounds make this a fun read-aloud.

EVERY DOG IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
Stead, Philip C.
Matthew Cordell, illustrator
Holiday House/Neal Porter Books
978-0823444274
A kind, determined grandmother teaches about community engagement by encouraging her grandson to count the dogs where they live. Colorful line drawings depict a bustling neighborhood and the singular personalities of its human and animal residents.
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FARMHOUSE
Blackall, Sophie
Little, Brown and Company
978-0316528948
The rambling farmhouse that was home to a loving family of fourteen as children were born and grew and left home is imagined with charm and affection in this stunning book.

FIREFIGHTER FLO!
Zimmerman, Andrea
Dan Yaccarino, illustrator
Holiday House
978-0823451579
A brave Black female firefighter and her team are portrayed in short, rhyming text accompanied by simple, active illustrations in vibrant colors. To the rescue they go, lickety split! A perfect firefighter book for the very young.

GIB*BER*ISH
Vo, Young
Levine Querido
978-1646141104
Retro cartoonish, black-and-white drawings juxtaposed with colorful, realistic illustrations convey a young Asian immigrant's experience at a new school. For Dat, being surrounded by so much “gibberish” is isolating until a friendly girl finds a way to connect and communicate.

A GIFT FOR NANA
Smith, Lane
Random House Studio
978-0593430330
Rabbit loves his grandmother so much that he wants to give her something, and other creatures in the forest have suggestions. The nibbled carrot Rabbit ultimately offers leads to a deeply satisfying conclusion.

I LOVE YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU
Văn, Mươn Thị
Jessica Love, illustrator
Harper Kids/Katherine Tegan Books
978-0062894595
In this celebration of diversity and poetic tribute to love, an inclusive cast of characters demonstrates affection and togetherness in everyday moments. Warm, colorful illustrations enhance the rhythmic call and response.
I’LL GO AND COME BACK
LaRocca, Rajani
Sara Palacios, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536207170
Jyoti feels lonely and uncomfortable at first when visiting her grandmother in India. But the warm, colorful scenes soon show them enjoying cooking, shopping, and games together. The roles are reversed when the child hosts in America. The titular phrase replaces the sadness of saying “goodbye.”

KNIGHT OWL
Denise, Christopher
Little, Brown
978-0316310628
Little Owl dreams of becoming a knight, applies to Knight School, and is admitted! He is brave and has heart and wit. Glowing illustrations and a clever story show that size isn’t the only thing that matters.

LIKE
Barrows, Annie
Leo Espinosa, illustrator
Chronicle Books
978-1452163376
In this boldly illustrated book, humans are compared to tin cans, mushrooms, hyenas, and more. The lighthearted conclusion? Humans aren’t exactly alike, but they are more alike than they are different.

LOVE, VIOLET
Sullivan Wild, Charlotte
Charlene Chua, illustrator
Farrar Strauss Giroux
978-0374313722
Valentine’s Day presents an exciting opportunity, relatable worries, and a happy ending for a young queer girl experiencing the thrilling ups and downs of a first crush.

MAMA AND MOMMY AND ME IN THE MIDDLE
LaCour, Nina
Kaylani Juanita, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536211511
Expressive text and detailed illustrations tell the heartfelt story of a diverse, queer, loving family managing a week full of activity while missing one parent who is away on a work trip.
MONSTERS IN THE FOG
Bahrampour, Ali
Abrams Books for Young Readers
978-1419752452
Hakim, a donkey, travels up a mountain to give his friend a present but sees monsters in the fog. Are they monsters? A clever story with a surprise ending shows how appearances can be deceiving. The lovely illustrations are reminiscent of William Steig.

ON BABA'S BACK
Dubuc, Marianne
Princeton Architectural Press
978-1616899127
Baby koala Koko does everything from atop Baba's back until, when he wants to follow a butterfly, he decides to explore alone. Whimsical illustrations and a board book format make this perfect to share with babies.

SEE YOU SOMEDAY SOON
Miller, Pat Zietlow
Suzy Lee, illustrator
Roaring Brook Press
978-1250221100
A child imagines seeing Grandma, who lives far away, "someday soon." Clever page cut-outs, drawings, and bold background colors humorously depict imaginative possibilities for connecting.

A SEED GROWS
Portis, Antoinette
Holiday House/Neal Porter Books
978-0823448920
The life cycle of a sunflower is beautifully and simply explained with gorgeous illustrations and clever, minimal text. Important back matter is provided.

THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF
Barnett, Mac
Jon Klassen, illustrator
Scholastic
978-1338673845
An often retold fairy tale has a new twist, spooky illustrations, fabulous descriptions of goat dishes, and a surprise ending: you will laugh yourself silly.
2023 Capitol Choices Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens

THIS IS A SCHOOL
Schu, John
Veronica Miller Jamison, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536204582
A school is not an amalgam of bricks and mortar. It is a living and changing home to a vibrant community of learners, teachers, staff, caring, storytimes, playing, and much more. It’s where you want to be!

THIS STORY IS NOT ABOUT A KITTEN
de Sève, Randall
Carson Ellis, illustrator
Random House Studio
978-0593374535
A scared, homeless kitten waits for help. The cumulative narrative encourages readers to spot her. Ultimately, the story isn’t about the little cat, but about the people who work together to rescue her.

THE TIDE POOL WAITS
Fleming, Candace
Amy Hevron, illustrator
Holiday House/Neal Porter Books
978-0823449156
Poetic text, soft, colorful art, and extensive back matter introduce readers to the creatures who live in and around coastal tide pools.

THE YEAR WE LEARNED TO FLY
Woodson, Jacqueline
Rafael Lopez, illustrator
Nancy Paulsen/Penguin Random House
978-0399545535
A grandmother teaches her grandchildren the power of sharing history to rise above obstacles together. Dramatic hues and uplifting words give the story—and the reader—wings.

TWO DOGS
Falconer, Ian
MDC Books/ HarperCollins
978-0062954473
The Dachshund brothers—one a worrier, one full of irrepressible excitement—are home alone and bored. As dignified as “little Roman emperors,” things change when the pair escapes to the garden...until the car returns. Falconer’s depiction of doggy expressions and behavior is hilariously accurate.
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AGES SIX TO NINE

AT THE SEA
Giuliani, Emma
Chronicle Books / Princeton Architectural Press
978-1648961267
This oversized, gorgeously illustrated lift-the-flap book follows Plum and her little brother, Robin, as they explore life on a coastal town: sailboats, lighthouses, marine life, and more.

BLUE: A HISTORY OF THE COLOR AS DEEP AS THE SEA AND AS WIDE AS THE SKY
Brew-Hammond, Nana Ekua
Daniel Minter, illustrator
Random House Children's Books / Knopf Books for Young Readers
978-1984894366
A vibrant, lushly illustrated nonfiction meditation on the color blue in art, history, and culture. Stunning illustrations and poetic prose.

CRESS WATERCRESS
Maguire, Gregory
David Litchfield, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536211009
A young rabbit learns to live with the loss of her father and finds unexpected friends when her family moves to a run-down woodland apartment. Glowing illustrations add to the magic of this gentle animal fantasy, a read-aloud treat.

ENDLESSLY EVER AFTER: PICK YOUR PATH TO COUNTLESS FAIRYTALE ENDINGS!
Snyder, Laurel
Dan Santat, illustrator
Chronicle Books
978-1452144825
Classic fairytales are transformed into a wickedly funny, high-stakes adventure across 85 exuberantly illustrated pages in this choose-your-own-path picture book that puts readers in the driver’s seat.

GIGI AND OJIJI
Iwai, Melissa
HarperCollins
978-0063208063
Gigi and her Japanese grandfather, Ojiji, bond despite the barriers of language. This easy reader explores elements of culture and generation, while showing how love can connect people despite their differences.
GOOD EATING: THE SHORT LIFE OF KRILL
Lilley, Matt
Dab Tavis, illustrator
Tilbury House Publishers
978-0884488675
A quirky, informational look at one of the underappreciated parts of our ocean ecosystem: krill. The illustrations of various ocean animals balance accuracy with expressiveness and humor.

THE GREATEST SONG OF ALL: HOW ISAAC STERN UNITED THE WORLD TO SAVE CARNEGIE HALL
Hoyt, Megan
Katie Hickey, illustrator
HarperCollins / Quill Tree Books
978-0063045279
This engagingly illustrated account tells how violinist Isaac Stern led a worldwide campaign to save Carnegie Hall when it was threatened with destruction in favor of Lincoln Center in 1960. Excellent back matter, too.

A LIFE OF SERVICE: THE STORY OF SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH
Soontornvat, Christina
Dow Phumiruk, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536222050
Sen. Duckworth’s fighting spirit comes to life in this well-researched picture book biography by two Thai-American creators showcasing her service to her country, her bravery in the face of death, and her commitment to fighting for veterans.

MINA
Forsythe, Matthew
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
978-1481480413
Mouse Mina’s eccentric father brings home a feline creature that is certainly not the “squirrel” he claims it to be. This quirky fantasy uses soft watercolor art and humor to depict a father/daughter role reversal.

ODDER
Applegate, Katherine
Charles Santoso, illustrator
Macmillan / Feiwel & Friends
978-1250147424
The life of Odder the otter, named for her daredevil antics, takes a dramatic turn after an encounter with a hungry great white shark. Lyrical free verse incorporates factual information into this story inspired by an actual otter rehabilitation program in Monterey Bay.
**OH, SAL**
Henkes, Kevin
HarperCollins / Greenwillow Books
978-0063244924
The Miller family's first Christmas with the new, unnamed baby is careening toward catastrophe for middle child Sal, who has lost her favorite pair of sparkly underpants. A funny, heartfelt early chapter book perfect for sibling readers and read-alouds.

**PARADISE SANDS: A STORY OF ENCHANTMENT**
Pinfold, Levi
Candlewick Studio
978-1536212822
A nonsense rhyme may hold a deeper truth for four siblings who enter an eerie palace with fantastical occupants. The otherworldliness of the story and illustrations go hand-in-hand in this spooky tale.

**PINEAPPLE PRINCESS**
Hahn, Sabina
Macmillan / Roaring Brook Press
978-1250798367
Watercolor vignettes accompany this spare and silly story of a strong-minded, "deeply misunderstood" girl—ahem, princess.

**POLAR BEAR**
Fleming, Candace
Eric Rohmann, illustrator
Neal Porter / Holiday House
980823449163
With cinematic storytelling and evocative oil paintings, this nonfiction book explores the life and habitat of this endangered species, following a mother and her cubs on a year-long journey to find food and ice in a landscape transformed by rising temperatures.

**POWWOW DAY**
Sorell, Traci
Madelyn Goodnight, illustrator
Charlesbridge
978-1580899482
River is sidelined by illness on the day of the community Powwow. The magnificent Grand Entry and the traditional grass and jingle dancers are portrayed in vibrant, vivid illustrations. As she watches, River begins to feel the beat of the drums and the healing power of the dance.
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THE REAL DADA MOTHER GOOSE: A TREASURY OF COMPLETE NONSENSE
Scieszka, Jon
Julia Rothman, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-0763694340
Mother Goose in all her glory gets the Dadaist treatment of "creating art with humor and absurdity," as nursery rhymes and the classic illustrations are turned upside down in mad libs, pop quizzes, and comic strips.

REINA RAMOS WORKS IT OUT
Otheguy, Emma
Andrés Landazábal, illustrator
HarperCollins
978-0063223110
Reina is eager to dress up as Frida Kahlo for the class wax museum project, but her best friend calls first dibs. Reina grapples with big emotions, until her Abuela suggests another famous Latina. Vibrant illustrations highlight the diversity of the classroom, and Spanish words are woven throughout.

SANDOR KATZ AND THE TINY WILD
Martin, Jacqueline Briggs
Julie Wilson, illustrator
Readers to Eaters
978-0998047713
An energetic text and lively illustrations introduce the pickle-loving New Yorker who moved to Tennessee after developing HIV, re-discovered a world of fermented foods, and enthusiastically shared his products and recipes. Includes a simple “kraut-chi” recipe.

SIR LADYBUG
Tabor, Corey R.
HarperCollins / Balzer + Bray
978-0063069060
This humorous graphic novel series opener introduces Sir Ladybug, an adventure (and video game) loving knight who, along with a group of garden-creature pals, saves a worm from becoming a bird’s lunch. Smart and silly, this tale of bravery, creativity, and friendship is perfect for emerging readers.

SURVIVING THE WILD: RAINBOW AND THE KOALA
Lai, Remy
Macmillan/Henry Holt
978-1250785442
One of three excellent titles in a wildlife-focused graphic novel series for emerging readers, this story follows the heroism of a young koala fighting to survive a bushfire. Amidst the high suspense and gentle humor is accessible information about ecology, conservation, and climate change.
THE TREASURE BOX
Keane, Dave
Rahele Jomepour Bell, illustrator
G. P. Putnam's Sons
978-1984813183
Touching illustrations and text create a sensitive story about a young girl and her grandfather, who made the funniest faces.

WASHED ASHORE: MAKING ART FROM OCEAN PLASTIC
Crull, Kelly
Millbrook Press
978-1728430300
Impressive photos of fourteen giant marine animal sculptures made from beach trash as part of a project to raise awareness about plastic pollution are paired with information about the sea creature and a seek-and-find game using the plastic pieces forming the sculptures.

THE WHALE WHO SWAM THROUGH TIME: A 200 YEAR JOURNEY IN THE ARCTIC
Boersma, Alex and Nick Pyenson
Alex Boersma, illustrator
Roaring Brook Press
978-1250803023
This nonfiction title has the read-aloud quality of a picture book. Watercolor illustrations bring the arctic and ocean to life.
AIN’T BURNED ALL THE BRIGHT
Reynolds, Jason
Jason Griffin, illustrator
Atheneum / Caitlyn Dlouhy Books
978-1534439467
In three heaving “breaths,” this powerful conversation between strung text poetry and bold mixed-media collage addresses current social events from a child’s perspective. Reynolds also offers a captivating audio rendition, but the art is not to be missed.

ALIAS ANNA: A TRUE STORY OF OUTWITTING THE NAZIS
Hood, Susan and Greg Dawson
HarperCollins
978-0063083899
Poetry weaves a moving account of resilience and bravery in this biography in verse.

AMERICAN MURDERER: THE PARASITE THAT HAUNTED THE SOUTH
Jarrow, Gail
Astra Publishing House / Calkins Creek
978-1684378159
During the late 1800s and early 1900s, people in the Southern United States were dying or severely anemic. Parasitologist Charles Stiles sets out to solve this medical mystery. Primary documents, magnified microscopic images, and extensive source notes make the content thoroughly engaging.

ANSWERS IN THE PAGES
Levithan, David
Knopf Books for Young Readers
978-0593484685
A book in fifth grade language arts ignites debate and division in a small Pennsylvania town. Interwoven narratives of two middle school boys falling in love and selections from the fictional adventure at the center of the controversy highlight the painful relevance of this story to today’s attempts to remove LGBTQIA+ books from library shelves across the country.

ANYBODY HERE SEEN FRENCHIE?
Connor, Leslie
HarperCollins / Katherine Tegen Books
978-0062999368
Aurora, a boisterous quirky eleven year old, is best friends with Frenchie, a silent, introspective autistic boy. She always knows his needs and wants and is never shy to speak up for him, and when Frenchie goes missing, Aurora never gives up on finding her friend.
ATTACK OF THE BLACK RECTANGLES
King, A.S.
Scholastic Press
978-1338680522
When he realizes that certain words in their copies of *The Devil’s Arithmetic* have been blacked out, Mac rallies his friends to confront a tradition of censorship in their school, in this compassionate exploration of a timely topic.

AVIVA VS. THE DYBBUK
Lowe, Mari
Chronicle / Levine Querido
978-1646141258
A mischievous dybbuk causes havoc in Aviva’s life, but she’s the only one who can see it. Readers are immersed in contemporary Orthodox Jewish culture as they learn more about community tensions, family grief, and healing friendships.

CHOOSING BRAVE: HOW MAMIE TILL-MOBLEY AND EMMETT TILL SPARKED THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Joy, Angela
Janelle Washington, illustrator
Macmillan / Roaring Brook Press
978-1250220950
Mamie Till-Mobley became a leading voice in the struggle for Civil Rights after the horrifying tragedy that changed the course of her life. A powerful, heartbreaking account.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF FRUIT
Lukoff, Kyle
Penguin Young Readers / Dial Books for Young Readers
978-0593111185
Annabelle thinks sixth grade will be the same as every other year, but her friendship with new student Bailey, a non-binary tween, is transformative. The labels that she has always known—boy, girl, gay, straight—may not be as definitive as she’d thought.

FRIZZY
Ortega, Claribel A
Rose Bousamra, illustrator
Macmillan / First Second
978-1250259639
Marlene loves books, her Tia Ruby, and her best friend, Camilia. What she hates is going to the salon every Sunday to straighten her curly "wrong" hair, in this gorgeous graphic novel with its look at oppressive beauty standards and internalized racism.
I MUST BETRAY YOU
Sepetys, Ruta
Penguin Young Readers / Philomel Books
978-1984836038
As Communist regimes crumble in 1989, Cristian Florescu is one of many Romanians struggling in isolation and under constant surveillance by dictator Nicholas Ceaușescu. Blackmailed into becoming an informant, Cristian works with other young people to spark a movement to free themselves. Maps and photographs in this meticulously researched thriller bring history to life.

JENNIFER CHAN IS NOT ALONE
Keller, Tae
Shannon Tyo, narrator
Listening Library
978-0593559994
Mallory understands that middle school is a series of unwritten rules by which new girl Jennifer Chan refuses to abide. When Jennifer goes missing, Mallory steals Jennifer’s journals to figure out where she could have gone, then must confront her own role as a bully. Tyo and Kang’s audio narration feels authentically middle school.

THE LAST MAPMAKER
Soontornvat, Christina
Candlewick Press
978-1536204957
In a world where ancestors determine social status, Sai is desperate to escape her past with her con man father and climb the ranks of society. She joins an expeditionary voyage to gain wealth and status but learns about treachery, greed, and betrayal. A vivid and suspenseful seafaring fantasy rooted in Thai culture.

LITTLE MONARCHS
Case, Jonathan
Holiday House / Margaret Ferguson Books
978-0823442607
Ten-year-old Elvie and biologist Flora may be the only ones who can prevent the extinction of people in a futuristic world. Facts about butterfly migration and survival skills alongside an environmental crisis figure in this vibrant graphic novel adventure.

LOTUS BLOOM AND THE AFRO REVOLUTION
Winston, Sherri
Latonya Williams, narrator
Bloomsbury
978-1547611812
Violin prodigy Lotus is the concertmaster at her new school and loves her Afro. When a parent uses Lotus’ hairstyle as an excuse to get her expelled, she must decide whether to stay silent or stand up for her rights. Latonya Williams brings the unique voice of Lotus to life in the audiobook.
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LOUISA JUNE AND THE NAZIS IN THE WAVES
Elliott, L.M.
HarperCollins / Katherine Tegen Books
978-0063056565
This moving story of a family's loss and a young girl's hope on the homefront, set on the Virginia coast during World War II, is perfect for fans of The War That Saved My Life.

LOYALTY
Avi
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt / Clarion Books
978-0358248071
When his father is killed by neighbors for proclaiming loyalty to the King and England, Noah begins spying for the British in pre-Revolutionary Boston. He gradually discovers the dishonesty and brutality on both sides through the eyes of co-worker Jolla, a free Black man.

MARSHMALLOW CLOUDS: TWO POETS AT PLAY AMONG FIGURES OF SPEECH
Kooser, Ted and Connie Wanek
Richard Jones, illustrator
Candlewick Press
978-1536203035
Figurative language and meditative illustrations invite readers to stretch their imagination and look at the natural world in new ways.

MY OWN LIGHTNING
Wolk, Lauren
Penguin Young Readers / Dutton Children's Books
978-0525555599
In this splendid sequel to Wolf Hollow, Annabelle still struggles with past events when she is struck by lightning and saved by a mysterious stranger. As she recovers, she becomes aware of the feelings of animals, especially mistreated dogs, and of the changes in once bully Andy.

THE OGRESS AND THE ORPHANS
Barnhill, Kelly
Workman / Algonquin Young Readers
978-1643750743
When a kindly ogress gets blamed for all the things going wrong in Stone-in-the-Glen, it's up to a family of fifteen orphans to stand against the wicked and powerful and save the day in this brilliantly woven tale.
THE SECRET BATTLE OF EVAN PAO
Wan-Long Shang, Wendy
Scholastic Press
978-1338678857
When Evan Pao moves to the Civil War-obsessed town of Haddington, Virginia, he hopes to blend in, despite being the only Asian American kid. However, Evan’s participation in treasured traditions is met with cruelty and threats. This thoughtful novel explores racism, masculinity, friendship, and reconciliation with complexity and care.

STAR CHILD: A BIOGRAPHICAL CONSTELLATION OF OCTAVIA ESTELLE BUTLER
Zoboi, Ibi
Penguin Young Readers / Dutton Children's Books
978-0399187384
A visually stunning middle grade collection of poems and prose, dotted with ephemera, shows how Butler’s shy, solitary childhood influenced her trajectory as an author, and how her imagination fueled her award-winning writing.

SWIM TEAM
Christmas, Johnnie
HarperCollins / HarperAlley
978-0063056770
Bree is excited to start middle school until she finds that she got stuck in Swim 101 when she is terrified to swim. Luckily for Bree, her elderly neighbor agrees to be her coach and help her overcome her fear. A gorgeously illustrated contemporary story with a touch of historical fiction.

THOSE KIDS FROM FAWN CREEK
Kelly, Erin Entrada
HarperCollins / Greenwillow Books
978-0062970350
A charming but enigmatic newcomer shakes up a tiny seventh grade class in small town Louisiana, in this gentle, empathetic story about being one’s true and best self.

WILDOAK
Harrington, C. C.
Scholastic Press
978-1338803860
A young girl with a debilitating stutter finds her “voice” as she tries to rescue a young snow leopard cub discarded in an English countryside.
WINDSWEPT
Preus, Margi
Armando Veve, illustrator
Abrams / Amulet Books
978-1419758249
Children who go outside disappear into swirling snow. Can Tag and a group of “Youngers” find them before it is too late? The swiftly moving fantasy is enhanced by captivating language and an expertly woven world built upon Norwegian folklore.
2023 Capitol Choices Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens
AGES FIFTEEN AND UP

THE AGATHAS
Glasgow, Kathleen and Liz Lawson
Random House Children’s Books / Delacorte Press
978-0593431115
Everyone has secrets. Two enemy girls team up to solve a classmate’s death and cautiously become friends, in this homage to Dame Agatha Christie. Dual narration audiobook.

AN ARROW TO THE MOON
Pan, Emily X. R.
Natalie Naudus, narrator
Hachette Audio / Little, Brown Young Readers
978-1668609842
Luna Chang and Hunter Yee, first generation American teens born on the same day to Taiwanese immigrants, are the star-crossed protagonists in this mash-up of Chinese folklore and Romeo and Juliet. The narrators create a wonderful balance between the impulsive, troubled teen characters and the interchapters featuring the backstory of the warring adults.

BONE WEAVER
Polydoros, Aden
HarperCollins / Inkyard Press
978-1335915825
An immersive adventure with elements of Slavic folklore follows Toma on her quest to save her undead sister. Unlikely allies Venya, a commoner with magic ability, and the dethroned Tsar Mikhail join Toma and drag her into the middle of the Empire’s civil war.

COLD: A NOVEL
Tamaki, Mariko
Macmillan / Roaring Brook Press
978-1626722736
Georgia didn’t know Todd Mayer until after his body is found in a local park, and she can’t stop thinking about him, but why? Todd is a ghost observing the investigation into his homicide and starts to realize he wasn’t the only one with secrets.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN
Konigsberg, Bill
Scholastic Press
978-1338618051
In 1987 New York, two boys try to figure out if their budding relationship is friendship or something more. Konigsberg thoughtfully weaves young love, the AIDS epidemic, and social justice through this coming-of-age novel.
DIAMOND PARK
Diederich, Philippe
Penguin Young Readers / Dutton Children's Books
978-0593354254
Flaco goes along with his pals to Diamond Park to pick up a 1959 Chevy Impala; he’s only thinking of the joy rides ahead, and that his crush Susi has invited herself and is sitting by him. But all their plans turn upside down when a man is murdered, a dangerous man is on the run, and Susi is arrested.

THE GIRL WHO FELL BENEATH THE SEA
Oh, Axie
Macmillan / Feiwel & Friends
978-1250780867
In this story based on a Korean fairy tale, Mina offers herself as bride to the Sea God in place of her brother's lover, who was chosen to be the 100th and final bride. Mina finds the Sea God is not the all-powerful being she was expecting, and can't imagine a life as his bride when her fate is altered once more.

HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE
Adler, Dahlia
Macmillan / Wednesday Books
978-1250765840
High school cheerleader Amber finds Jack, the new QB for her school, very compelling. But Jack is a girl playing against expectations in her sport, and the pair’s romance means facing misogyny and homophobia and making decisions about what matters most to them.

HOW TO EXCAVATE A HEART
Arlow, Jake Maia
HarperCollins / HarperTeen
978-0063078727
This queer, Jewish, winter romance features undergrads in DC and unstintingly explores abusive relationships and found families who allow space for healing.

I KISSED SHARA WHEELER
McQuiston, Casey
Macmillan / Wednesday Books
978-1250244451
Chloe isn’t the only one who has kissed Shara Wheeler, but she is the only one wondering why. And where did Shara Wheeler go after that kiss?
IMPROBABLE MAGIC FOR CYNICAL WITCHES
Scelsa, Kate
HarperCollins / Balzer + Bray
978-0062465030
Eleanor doesn’t believe in magic and can’t shake the memories of her past relationship. But when Pix comes into her Salem, Massachusetts souvenir shop one day in Halloween season, Eleanor gets another chance to believe in magic, love, and herself.

KINGS OF B’MORE
Thomas, R. Eric
Penguin Young Readers / Kokila
978-0593326183
Two queer Black teens decide to take a day for adventures together before a family move separates them. In the spirit of Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, they plan their day. Little goes smoothly, but their story is told with humor and empathy and accompanied by an engaging, delightful cast of characters.

MESSY ROOTS: A GRAPHIC MEMOIR OF A WUHANESE AMERICAN
Gao, Laura
HarperCollins / Balzer + Bray
978-0063067776
Laura, from Wuhan, China, faces xenophobic and racist attitudes made worse by the COVID pandemic, while navigating family expectations and coming out as queer.

THE MOST DAZZLING GIRL IN BERLIN
Wilson, Kip
HarperCollins / Versify
978-0358448907
18-year-old Hilde, struggling on the streets of 1932 Berlin after leaving the orphanage, is determined to land on her feet and finds work, comfort, and community in Cafe Lila, a queer club. As the shadow of the Nazi movement starts to darken the city, Hilde’s talent brightens the lives of those in her chosen family.

MURDER AMONG FRIENDS: HOW LEOPOLD AND LOEB TRIED TO COMMIT THE PERFECT CRIME
Fleming, Candace
Random House Children’s Books / Anne Schwartz Books
978-0593177426
Two well-to-do young Chicago society men conceived of a depraved plan in the 1920s to kidnap and murder a child for the "adventure" of it. This account reads like a novel in its depiction of the dynamic between the two, their heinous plan and crime, and their capture, confession, and trial. Fast-paced and well-researched nonfiction.
NIGHT OF THE LIVING CAT VOLUME 1
Hawkman
Mecha-Roots, illustrator
Seven Seas
978-1638585817
A pandemic has hit the world: humans become cats just by touching them. Can humans resist the temptation to pet the fluffy, adorable cats and escape? Or will they succumb to their cuteness and forever be a feline?

QUEER DUCKS (AND OTHER ANIMALS): THE NATURAL WORLD OF ANIMAL SEXUALITY
Schrefer, Eliot
Jules Zuckerberg, illustrator
HarperCollins / Katherine Tegen Books
978-0063069497
This nonfiction work explores same-sex sexual relationships among animals, while questioning human biases regarding sex and gender.

SCOUT'S HONOR
Anderson, Lily
Macmillan / Henry Holt Books for Young Readers
978-1250246738
Wielding pastel-colored hatchets and sporting signature charm bracelets, the Ladybirds protect their communities from mulligrubs, monsters who feed on human emotions. Prudence Perry quit the Ladybirds three years ago after losing her best friend in a mulligrub attack, but when her former fellow Ladybirds ask her to train a group of new scouts, she must reconsider.

THE SILENCE THAT BINDS US
Ho, Joanna
HarperCollins / HarperTeen
978-0063059344
May and her family are trying to deal with the loss of her brother, Danny, to suicide, when a classmate's father makes racist remarks and blames her parents for the loss. May must decide whether to fight back through the use of words and peaceful assembly or listen to her parents who just want it all to go away.

THE SUMMER OF BITTER AND SWEET
Ferguson, Jen
Harper Collins / Heartdrum
978-0063086166
Lou, a Métis teen, is stuck working in her family's ice cream stand with her ex-boyfriend and her ex-best friend, but she starts to come to terms with her identity, her friendships, and her biological father's re-emergence in her life.
2023 Capitol Choices Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens

THIEVES
Byron, Lucie
Nobrow
978-1838741198
High school senior Ella has a crush on a mysterious classmate named Madeline. Their lives become intertwined when Ella wakes up one morning after a house party surrounded by possessions that are not her own.

VICTORY. STAND! RAISING MY FIST FOR JUSTICE
Smith, Tommie and Derrick Barnes
Dawud Anyabwile, illustrator
W.W. Norton & Company / Norton Young Readers
978-1324003908
Olympic athlete Smith discusses the iconic photograph where he raises a fist in a black glove from the 1968 Olympic winners’ stand. Powerful black-and-white illustrations accompany Dr. Smith’s account of the racial inequities and struggle for justice that comprise the back story of this compelling image.

WE DESERVE MONUMENTS
Hammonds, Jas
Macmillan / Roaring Brook Press
978-1250816559
Avery must leave her safe haven in Washington, D.C. for her grandmother's home in Georgia, a place with a history of generational trauma and overt racism. While her home life is hostile at best, the outside world provides her with friendship, romance, and a mystery.

WELCOME TO ST. HELL: MY TRANS TEEN MISADVENTURE
Hancox, Lewis
Scholastic Graphix
978-1338824438
Adolescence is hard enough, but if you are transgendering it can be Hell. With wit, honesty, and simple but emotional artwork, Lewis Hancox makes this graphic memoir, a message to his younger self, a journey readers can connect with.

WHITEOUT
Clayton, Dhonielle
Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, Angie Thomas, Ashley Woodfolk, Nicola Yoon, co-authors
HarperCollins / Quill Tree Books
978-0063088146
In the cohesive throughline for the stories in this companion collection to Blackout (2021), a snowstorm shuts down Atlanta. Teens navigate first love, family, and loyalty while trying to understand their own wavering identities. A full cast audiobook brings the myriad characters to life.
2023 Capitol Choices Noteworthy Books for Children and Teens

WHO WE ARE
The first edition of Capitol Choices published in 1996, built on the work of the late Peggy Coughlan at the Children’s Literature Center of the Library of Congress, who for many years edited an annual list entitled "Books for Children." The founding members of the Capitol Choices group who worked on these lists appreciated the opportunity to hone their critical skills during those years and wished to carry the work of that committee forward.

Since 1996, Capitol Choices has included librarians, teachers, booksellers, children’s literature specialists, reviewers, and magazine editors who work in cities, suburbs, and rural areas in and around Washington, D.C. Most of us work directly with young people, and all of us share a passion for books and a commitment to pairing children with books.

CRITERIA
Our mission is to identify and select a yearly list of outstanding titles for children and teens. We consider books and audiobooks published in the current calendar year for readers from birth through the high school years. We look not only for those books and audiobooks that are obviously remarkable but also for those whose charm, art, information, or depth of feeling may enhance a young person’s world. We especially look for books that may not find an audience without the benefit of special attention.

What does Capitol Choices mean by "the best"? "Best" of the year? "Best" by this author? "Best" of its type? Our discussions are often heated, always serious, filled with good humor and, in the end, the titles we choose meet all of these criteria. In addition to the qualities that mark good titles—clarity, accuracy, credibility, and that most elusive quality of all, distinguished writing, illustration or narration—we place special emphasis on titles which we believe appeal to and reflect the sensibilities of their intended audience.

JOIN US
We welcome you in person at our monthly meetings. Capitol Choices members are also available to present workshops on the best titles of the year, how to evaluate literature for young people, and other topics related to our passion for books and audiobooks for young readers. Please visit our website www.capitolchoices.org to schedule a workshop or find out more about joining our group.

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