# 2023 Best Bets Annotations

## Picture Books

**Arnaldo, Monica. Mr. S. HarperCollins.**

What do you do if you arrive on the first day of kindergarten and your teacher is missing and all that is in the classroom is a sandwich and the words Mr. S written on the board? Chaos ensues of course and while the class weighs the possibility of their new teacher, Mr. S, being a person or a sandwich. This picture book brings the absurdity and the laughs as the kids battle it out over whether a sandwich can also be a teacher.

**Freeman-Haskin, Leah. The Last Two Crayons. Illustrated by Shantala Robinson. Groundwood.**

Sienna is excited to draw a picture for her school's art show but by the time she arrives at the art table only a dark and light brown crayon is left. How can she use brown to create an award-winning picture? The Last Two Crayons is a celebration of the colour brown, whether it's in the form of chocolate ice cream, or the colour of the skin of someone you love. The illustrator Shantala Robinson manages to illustrate the story beautifully while highlighting what makes brown so special as a colour. Creative, diverse and powerful, this picture book is a must have for libraries.

**Johnson, Vicki. Molly's Tuxedo. Illustrated by Gillian Reid. little bee books.**

Published in partnership with GLAAD to accelerate LGBTQ+ inclusivity and acceptance, Molly’s Tuxedo is the story of a child who wants to look their best on picture, follow their heart, and get their mom to realize how great they will look in a tux. Molly knows from experience that dresses are nothing but trouble. They have tight places and hard to reach zippers, and worst of all: NO POCKETS. Molly knows nothing looks better than a tux, but their mom thinks that Molly looks best in a dress. Featuring a gender non-conforming character, this joyful picture features exuberant illustrations that highlight the joy that comes from doing what is right for you.

**King, Lindsay Christina. Storyteller Skye: Teachings from My Ojibway Grandfather. Illustrated by Carolyn Frank. Medicine Wheel Publishing.**

Come listen as budding storyteller Skye regals the reader with Indigenous stories told to her by her grandfather, a member of the Ojibway Nation. Short, funny vignettes, such as why does Rabbit have such long ears, and why does Raccoon wear a mask, will charm readers with their humour and life lessons. At the end of the book, Skye encourages readers to become storytellers themselves, and continue the tradition. The book is presented as a look at the Ojibway teachings of the Seven Grandfathers from a new perspective. Illustrations by Carolyn Frank perfectly match the tone of the writing and add colour and depth to the stories.

**Pliska, Zeena M. Egyptian Lullaby. Illustrated by Hatem Aly. Roaring Brook Press.**

A young girl’s Auntie is visiting from Egypt, and each night sings her niece to sleep with the sounds of Egypt: clip, clop, clip, and swish, swoosh, swish. A lyrical depiction of life in Egypt, this book takes us on a journey through the beautiful and modern streets of Cairo. The illustrations show us the diverse aspects of Egyptian life. We learn some new words and share in the joy this child has of her former home. When you think of Egypt what do you think of?

**Rogers, Kim. Just Like Grandma. Illustrated by Julie Flett. Heartdrum (HarperCollins).**

In this lyrical picture book, illustrated by award-winning Swampy Cree–Red River Métis artist Julie Flett, Becca loves spending time with Grandma. Every time Becca says, “Let me try,” Grandma shows her how to make something beautiful. Whether they are beading moccasins, dancing like the most beautiful butterflies, or practicing basketball together, Becca knows that, more than anything, she wants to be just like Grandma. A tender and touching tribute to the loving, reciprocal bonds of intergenerational relationships.

**Smith, Heather. Waking Ben Doldrums. Illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler. Orca.**

Every morning starts off for Frida Bellows with a neighborly chorus of noises that gets everyone up and raring to start the day. Frida likes this tradition. It makes her feel like she’s part of something big. Everyone has their part to play, until one day her neighbor, Ben Doldrums, stops. No one knows why, least of all Ben. What follows is a whimsical story of a diverse community coming together to support a neighbor who is having a tough time. While we can’t always fix another person’s problems, a simple act of kindness can go a long way.

**Suzuki, David with Tanya Lloyd Kyi. Bompa's Insect Expedition. Illustrated by Qin Leng. Greystone Kids.**

Inspired by David Suzuki’s adventures with his grandchildren, this book takes you on an adventure of the incredible world you can find right in your own backyard. The twins are excited for another adventure with Bompa, but to their disappointment they are just exploring their own yard. As they begin searching for insects, they are amazed by all the incredible things they find! From world-champion flyers, eaters, and weightlifters, the twins find a way to recognize the amazing feats and important role of all insects. . . even the annoying ones! Featuring colorful illustrations, this book also includes amazing facts about insects, and how kids can help insects survive and thrive!

**Thompkins-Bigelow, Jamilah. Salat in Secret. Illustrated by Hatem Aly. Penguin Random House.**

From the critically acclaimed author of *Your Name Is a Song* and the bestselling illustrator of *The Proudest Blue* comes a story about overcoming your fears. Muhammed, a young Muslim, has just turned 7 and received a prayer mat for his birthday. He’s super excited and determined to do all 5 daily prayers. Except when it comes to the prayer that takes place during the school day – Salat. Seeing his father stop and pray throughout the day empowers him, but also makes him worry. People stare and mock him. What follows is a poignant and empowering look at an important facet of Islam that many observant children cherish but might be scared to share.

**Welch, Erin. The Never-Ending Sweater. Illustrated by Dorothy Leung. Orca.**

When Peter was little, he asked his grandmother to knit him a VERY big sweater. So she made him a sweater with love knit into every stitch. Young Peter wore the sweater, with its drooping sleeves and oversized body, everywhere he went. Eventually, Peter outgrew his small seaside village and decided to see the world with his sweater providing comfort and a reminder of home on every adventure. After traveling for many years, he returns home to find a new family next door. They too have traveled from far away, and Peter finds a connection with the young son, who also needs a comforting reminder of home. An endearing story of home, connection and love through generations.

### Honourable Mentions

Dyckman, Ame. Tiny Barbarian Conquers the Kraken! Illustrated by Ashley Spires. HarperCollins.

Fernandes, Eugenie. When Rabbit Was a Lion. OwlKids Books.

Muhammad, Ibtihaj & S.K. Ali. The Kindest Red: A Story of Hijab and Friendship. Illustrated by Hatem Aly. Little Brown Books for Young Readers.

Nicholson, Lorna Schultz. What to Bring. Illustrated by Ellen Rooney. OwlKids Books.

Okemow, SJ. Âmî Osâwâpikones / Dear Dandelion. Annick Press.

Smith, Sydney. Do You Remember? Groundwood.

## Junior Fiction

**Bow, Erin. Simon Sort of Says. Scholastic.**

Simon’s family has just moved to the National Quiet Zone, where the internet is banned so radio astronomers can listen for signs of life in space. For a kid who loves to tell stories, like how his family was driven out of Omaha by alpacas, his church-deacon dad accidentally gave a squirrel a holy sacrament, or his undertaker mom occasionally must wrangle emus, this is the perfect place to be. It is also perfect for someone who is avoiding one story that has been following them everywhere, because Simon is the only survivor of a school shooting. When Simon meets a kid who wants to give the astronomers exactly what they are looking for, he sees an opportunity to create a new story about himself. Equal parts hilarious and heart-wrenching, this hopeful book is about finding your friends, healing your heart and speaking your truth.

**Chantler, Scott. Squire & Knight. First Second.**

Squire is brainy, bookish, and terribly under-appreciated by his boss, the brawny, inept knight, Sir Kelton, who somehow always gets all the glory. When they find themselves in a cursed village, plagued by a demonic dragon, Kelton rides off to slay it, but Squire starts to notice that something isn’t quite right about this town. This fabulous fantasy adventure graphic novel series opener is full of mysteries, monsters and magic.

**Everett, Sarah. The Probability of Everything. HarperCollins.**

Eleven-year-old Kemi Carter loves scientific facts, specifically probability. It's how she understands the world and her place in it. But everything Kemi thought she knew changes when she sees an asteroid hovering in the sky, casting a purple haze over her world. Amplus-68 has an 84.7% chance of colliding with earth in four days, and with that collision, Kemi’s life as she knows it will end. While Kemi’s world is ending, everyone outside her family carries on as if nothing has changed. Kemi decides to put together a time capsule that will encapsulate who her family is to memorialize them when it’s finally time to say goodbye. A powerful story about family, racism, and grief.

**Goldstyn, Jacques. The Stars. Translated by Helen Mixter. Greystone Kids.**

Every day, Yakov takes his sisters to the park. He's supposed to look after them, but their games are boring, so he reads about space and dreams of becoming an astronaut instead. His father, though, has other plans: he wants Yakov to take over his grocery store when he grows up. Yakov's world changes when at the park one day, he comes across a girl also reading a book about space. Aïcha has moved into the house right behind his, and the two become inseparable. Together, they search for constellations, check out astronomy books from the library, and marvel at the night sky. However, their fathers fear they are growing too close. They are forbidden from spending time together, and Aïcha eventually moves away. Years later, Yakov has achieved his dream: he works for NASA and builds space probes. Will he and Aïcha ever see each other again? The stars is a powerful story that shows passion and love can transcend any boundary.

**Lyall, Casey. Gnome is Where Your Heart Is. HarperCollins.**

Eleven-year-old Lemon Peabody is certain that aliens visited her grandfather thirty years ago, but she is running out of time to prove it before Grandpa Walt's memory fades due to Alzheimer’s disease. After spotting a spaceship during a storm, Lemon comes face-to-face with garden gnome-like aliens, and nothing goes the way she expected. By turns heartwarming and heartbreaking, this sensitive novel is about family, friendship, and always believing in yourself.

**Nelson, Colleen. The Umbrella House. Pajama Press.**

Middle-school New Yorker Roxy Markowski wants to tell the truth fearlessly and powerfully, just like her idols at Veracity News. She and her best friend Scout already make YouTube videos together about East Village life, so when Veracity News announces a Young Voices video competition, Roxy knows it’s the perfect opportunity to make a name for herself, if only she can find a story worth telling. When a real-estate mogul threatens to buy her historic East Village apartment building, Umbrella House, Roxy sets out to create a video about the people who live in her building, depicting their love for art, community, and family. With time running out, Roxy finds herself caught up in the mystery of the Midnight Muralist, a famous East Village artist whose murals once made buildings famous and valuable. Could finding this enigmatic artist be the key to saving her historic East Village apartment building? An inspiring read about the power of community.

**Quin, Tegan and Sara Quin. Tegan & Sara: Junior High. Illustrated by Tillie Walden. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.**

From first crushes to the perils of puberty, surviving junior high is something the sisters plan to face side by side, just like they've always faced things. But growing up also means growing apart, as Tegan and Sara make different friends and take separate paths to understanding their queerness. For the first time ever, they ask who one sister is without the other. This graphic novel about the famous Canadian duo tackles the struggles of growing up, self-discovery, and not knowing where you fit in with great illustrations from Tillie Walden.

**Ramadan, Danny. Salma Makes a Home / Salma Writes a Book. Illustrated by Anna Bron. Annick Press.**

The spunky heroine of the beloved picture book, "Salma the Syrian Chef," is now the star of a series of early fiction readers for children. Salma's father has finally joined the family from Syria, but she is worried that he may want to leave and go back to Damascus, so she throws herself into showing her Baba how wonderful Canada is. Salma and her Baba learn how to love two "homes" at the same time.

Salma finds further adventure with the second book in the series, "Salma Writes a Book." Salma is ecstatic to learn that she will be a big sister! She decides to write a book on how to be the best big sister ever. Through the course of learning about and trying to be a better sibling, Salma learns that her mother is fighting with her own younger sibling over his choice of a partner. Readers who fell in love with Salma in her picture book will absolutely love the expansion of Salma's story and her family's life journey in their new home in Canada. Illustrations are once again provided by Anna Bron, whose delightful drawings make Salma and her family jump off the page.

**Riley, Ronnie. Jude Saves the World. Scholastic.**

Twelve-year-old Jude Winters is dealing with ADHD while trying to figure out how to tell their old-fashioned grandparents about their nonbinary status--but now they have another problem: Stevie, a previously popular girl at school has been ostracized because she has a crush on another girl, and Jude wants to help her cope as well. This leads to them working towards forming the first Diversity Club in their community, if they can get the support that they need. This was a heartwarming book that reminds you of the impact acceptance can have on someone.

**VanSickle, Vikki. P.S. Tell No One. Illustrated by Holly Allerellie. Scholastic.**

“Are you there God? It’s me, Margaret”, for the 21st century, this book is a look into the lives of tweens and the questions (and answers) they have on their journey of growing up. After their cell phones are confiscated (The HORROR!), four friends decide to create a shared journal called the Pass Around Diary, or P.A.D for short, to communicate and share their thoughts. The P.A.D becomes filled with sweet, funny, sharp and important insights that speak to navigating middle grade life — friendships, crushes, consent, bodies, parents, siblings, periods, sports and student life. Designed to look like a journal, this book is a funny and frank exploration of all aspects of growing up told from the eyes of a diverse group of friends.

### Honourable Mentions

Bandali, Zain. Mehndi Boy. Illustrated by Jani Balakumar. Annick Press.

Bécotte, Jonathan. Like a Hurricane. Translated by Jonathan Kaplansky. Orca.

Krampien, Celia. The Bellwoods Game. Simon & Schuster.

Nguyen, Linh S. No Place Like Home. HarperCollins.

Saeed, Aisha, S.K. Ali, Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, and Huda Al-Marashi. Grounded. Amulet Books/Abrams.

Sindu, SJ. Shakti. Illustrated by Nabi H. Ali. HarperCollins.

Taylor, Wanda. The Grover School Pledge. HarperCollins.

Zhou, Vivian. Atana and the Firebird. HarperCollins.

## Junior Non-Fiction

**Carmichael, L.E. Polar. Illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler. Kids Can Press.**

Despite the bitter cold, ferocious winds and six months of darkness, the polar regions are home to many animals. These creatures can survive because of their unique adaptations, explored here through compelling fact-based stories and evocative illustrations. Readers learn about the arctic fox’s furry toe pads that protect her when walking on ice, emperor penguins that huddle in groups around their chicks to keep everyone warm, and narwhals that use echolocation to find a crack in the surface ice to breathe. This informative book takes you through the changes that happen throughout the year in Antarctica and the Arctic with engaging illustrations featuring the animals you’re learning about.

**Gladstone, James. A Star Explodes: The Story of Supernova 1054. Illustrated by Yaara Eshet. OwlKids Books.**

The supernova of 1054 was one of the brightest supernova events recorded in history. And its remnant, the Crab Nebula, is still studied today. Beginning at the moment of a supernova explosion thousands of years ago, this story travels forward in time to 1054, the year people around the world saw the unparalleled light of an exploding star appear in Earth’s sky. The story then travels deep into space to see the remnant of this supernova—the Crab Nebula—followed by a continuing trip forward in time. This fascinating book reads like a storybook as it takes you across the world and through time to learn about this supernova with fun illustrations.

**Hohn, Nadia L. (ed.). The Antiracist Kitchen: 21 Stories (and Recipes). Illustrated by Roza Nozari. Orca.**

What if talking about racism was as easy as baking a cake, frying plantains or cooking rice? The Antiracist Kitchen: 21 Stories (and Recipes) is a celebration of food, family, activism and resistance in the face of racism. In this anthology featuring stories and recipes from 21 diverse and award-winning North American children's authors, the authors share the role of food in their lives and how it has helped fight discrimination, reclaim culture and celebrate people with different backgrounds. They bring personal and sometimes difficult experiences growing up as racialized people. Chopped, seared, marinated and stewed,The Antiracist Kitchenhighlights the power of sitting down to share a meal and how that simple act can help bring us all together. The Anti-Racist Kitchen is the perfect book for any budding chef interested in how food and identity are connected.

**Janicki, Peggy. The Secret Pocket. Illustrated by Carrielynn Victor. Orca.**

*The Secret Pocket* shares the history of indigenous girls at Lejac Residential school. Run by catholic priests and nuns, who were quick to punish anyone speaking Dakelh and students often went hungry as school officials gave out minute rations. With the help of their sewing skills, passed down by older family members, the girls at Leejac were able to create secret pockets in their clothes. They used these pockets to steal food in order to feed those who had not been given enough to eat. *The Secret Pocket* is an important read. It is a great tool for having discussions about the topic of cultural genocide and residential schools with younger audiences.

**Kehoe, Rachel with Wanda Robson. The Trailblazing Life of Viola Desmond. Illustrated by Chelsea Charles. Orca.**

On November 8, 1946, she was arrested for refusing to move from the "whites-only" section of a movie theater. Her heroic act inspired Black community leaders and made her a symbol of courage in the fight against inequality. This story of Viola's life is based on rare interviews with her sister Wanda Robson, who spent her life championing her sister's story and was successful in getting Viola a posthumous pardon that recognized she was innocent of any crime. From their childhood in Nova Scotia to Viola's career as a teacher in a segregated school and, later, her role as a pioneer in Black beauty culture, young readers are introduced to the girl and the woman who went on to become the face of the civil-rights movement in Canada. One of only a few books on Viola Desmond, this expansive book on her life and legacy is a must have for any library.

**Klassen, Jon. The Skull a Tyrolean Folktale. Penguin Random House.**

Secrets, skulls, and skeletons make for a scary story in Jon Klassen’s The Skull. Based off a Tyrolean folktale Klassen found in a Library book in Alaska, the story follows a girl named Otilla who has run away from home and into the forest. In the forest she comes upon a very big, very old house. In the house lives a skull, and the skull has a secret. This Spine-Chilling story is illustrated in somber tones that are surprisingly warm. There is an ending that is satisfying in classic subversive Jon Klassen style.

**Mollen Dupuis, Melissa. Nutshimit: In the Woods. Translated by Gaëlle Mollen. Illustrated by Elise Gravel. Scholastic.**

The Innu word Nutshimit signifies the physical and social space to practice traditional activities and language. Melissa Mollen Dupuis offers a personalized guided tour through the woods and shares her knowledge of the Innu language, the seasons, recipes, and traditions. Elise Gravel brings her signature comic style illustrations to this immersive, interactive walk in the forest.

**Nore, Gordon. Biphobia: Deal With It and be More Than a Bystander. Illustrated by Kate Phillips. James Lorimer and Company.**

Young readers and teens will probably already be well versed in what it means to be homophobic. However, discrimination against people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ is not limited to those who identify as "gay" or "lesbian." Discrimination can also take the form of biphobia, which affects those people who identify as bisexual. Readers will get an in-depth look at what biphobia means, how it can manifest in microaggressions or attitudes, as well as real life examples of how to identify it. The book also tackles how to be an ally to those who identify as bisexual, as well as giving young readers the tools and language to use if they find themselves in these situations. This excellent addition to the Lorimer "Deal With It" series is a much-needed look at this not often talked about topic.

**Roberge, Julie. Mountain of Fire: Into the Heart of Volcanoes. Translated by Charles Simard. Illustrated by Aless MC. Orca.**

Krakatoa. Kilimanjaro. Vesuvius. The destructive power of volcanoes has claimed more than 250,000 lives since the beginning of civilization. Whether as objects of worship or of terror, they have shaped our world and fed the human imagination. And they can be found just about everywhere, from ancient Pompeii to the geysers of Yellowstone to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean and the surface of Jupiter. Take a trip around the world (and beyond) to discover the science, myths, and stories behind iconic volcanoes. With simple but eye-catching illustrations and straightforward explanations, this book provides the perfect amount of information for each volcano.

**Tom, Paul. Alone: The Journeys of Three Young Refugees. Translated by Arielle Aaronson. Illustrated by Mélanie Baillairgé. Groundwood.**

Alone relates the journey of three of them: Afshin, Alain and Patricia. Their story opens a window onto the many heartbreaks, difficult sacrifices and countless hardships that punctuate their obstacle-filled path. But *Alone* most especially tells of the courage and resilience that these young people demonstrated before being able to finally obtain a life where threats and danger are no longer a part of their everyday existence. A gripping story, with powerful images to match, Alone takes you through the heart wrenching risks families have had to make when faced with uncertainty and change.

### Honourable Mentions

Curtis, Andrea. City of Neighbors. Illustrated by Katy Dockrill. Groundwood.

Fox, J.F. The Van Buren Sisters vs. the Pants Police (Head to Head History). Illustrated by Anna Kwan. Kids Can Press.

Grindler, Sarah. Garden Wonders: A Guidebook for Little Green Thumbs. Nimbus Publishing.

Kaner, Etta. Do Fire Ants Fight Fires? How Animals Work in the Wild. Illustrated by Jenna Piechota. OwlKids Books.

Singh, Rina. The Forest Keeper: The True Story of Jadav Payeng. Illustrated by Ishita Jain. NorthSouth Books.

Smith, Nicole F. Dig Deep: Connecting Archaeology, Oceans, and Us. Orca.

## Young Adult Fiction & Non-Fiction

**Campbell, Curtis. Dragging Mason County. Annick Press.**

Peter Thompkin needs a public image overhaul. After a tense confrontation with one of the few other queer kids in his small-town high school, rumors about him are becoming more elaborate by the day. Meanwhile, his best friend Alan (aka teen drag queen Aggie Culture) is throwing Mason County’s debut Drag Extravaganza. Although Peter is a self-described “dragnostic,” he decides to help produce the show, hoping to prove that he isn’t a self-hating gay. In the process, he finds himself facing down angry guard dogs, angrier bigots, and a very high-strung church lady. As the backlash grows, Peter begins to wonder whether he's setting fire to his already damaged reputation and if his friendship with Alan will survive past curtain call. Small town rural charm meets Drag Race in this heartwarming story that explores the pains and pleasures of queer community through one teen's journey to self-acceptance.

**Dimaline, Cherie. Funeral Songs for Dying Girls. Tundra.**

Winifred has lived in the apartment above the cemetery office with her father, who works in the crematorium, all her life, close to her mother's grave. With her sixteenth birthday only days away, Winifred has settled into a lazy summer schedule, lugging her obese Chihuahua around the grounds in a squeaky red wagon to visit the neglected grave sites and nursing a serious crush on her best friend, Jack. Her habit of wandering the graveyard at all hours has started a rumor that Winterson Cemetery might be haunted. It’s welcome news since the crematorium is on the verge of closure and her father’s job is being outsourced. But when Phil, an actual ghost of a teen girl who lived and died in the ravine next to the cemetery, starts showing up, Winifred begins to question everything she believes about life, love and death.

**Ferguson, Jen. Those Pink Mountain Nights. HarperCollins.**

Pink Mountain Pizza is a legendary local business employing a diverse group of high school students. After a weekend at Pink Mountain Pizza takes several unexpected turns, three very different teens will have to acknowledge the various ways they’ve been hurt—and how much they need each other to hold it all together. An entertaining novel exploring racism, grief, community, and friendship.

**Kumagai, Clara. Catfish Rolling. Penguin Random House.**

There's a catfish under Japan, and when it rolls, the land rises and falls. At least, that's what Sora was told after she lost her mother to an earthquake so powerful that it cracked time itself. Sora and her father are some of the few who still live near the most powerful of these "zones" — the places where time has been irrevocably sped up or slowed down. When high school ends, and her best friend leaves for university, Sora finds herself stuck and increasingly alone while working through her, and her father’s, grief. She begins secretly conducting her own research, tracking down a time expert in Tokyo. She also feels increasingly conflicted in her quasi-romantic feelings for her best friend — and for the time expert's assistant, a striking and confident girl named Maya with whom Sora forms an instant bond. But when Sora's father disappears, she has no choice but to return home and venture deep into the abandoned time zones to find him. A stunning coming of age story intertwining Japanese myth and magic realism.

**Leth, Kate. Mall Goth. Colorist Diana Sousa. Letterer Robin Crank. Simon & Schuster.**

Liv Holme is not exactly thrilled to be moving to a new town with her mother. After all, high school can be brutal, even more so when you’re a fifteen-year-old, bisexual goth. But Liv is determined to be who she is, bullies or not. Still, being the new kid and the only out student brings her a lot of unwelcome attention, and Liv flounders in her search for community. The only person who makes time for her is one of the teachers, but Liv isn’t sure how to feel about the way he behaves toward her.

Thankfully, she’s found the perfect escape: the mall. Under its fluorescent lights, Liv feels far away from her parents’ strained marriage and the peers who don’t understand her. Amid the bright storefronts, food court smell, and anonymous shoppers, Liv can safely blend in and can feel in control of her own life for once. While embracing her retail refuge, Liv sets off on a journey of self-acceptance while navigating the complicated world of teenage friendships and relationships. This graphic novel wonderfully illustrates the nostalgic 2000s setting filled with pop culture references while also telling a story with a powerful message.

**Methot, Suzanne. Killing the Wittigo: Indigenous Culture-Based Approaches to Waking Up, Taking Action, and Doing the Work of Healing. ECW Press.**

A young adult version of the adult book "Legacy: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous Healing," this unflinching look at the traumatic effects of colonization, including the residential school system, examines how trauma is internalized in the body and has a debilitating effect on generations of survivors. But the author also positions hope in the stories of those who have been able to heal from their traumas, and the ways in which new generations are recovering from hundreds of years of colonial violence. Readers are asked what they can do to help create change in a society that continues to ignore Indigenous issues. This is an important resource for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to read and have access to.

**Nazemian, Abdi. Only This Beautiful Moment. HarperCollins.**

Three generations of family stories are shared in this novel that spans the lives of three men in an Iranian-American family. 2019. Moud is an out gay teen living in Los Angeles with his distant father, Saeed. 1978. Saeed is an engineering student with a promising future ahead of him in Tehran. But when his parents discover his involvement in the country’s burgeoning revolution, they send him to safety in America. 1939. Bobby, the son of a calculating Hollywood stage mother, lands a coveted MGM studio contract. But the fairy-tale world of glamour he’s thrust into has a dark side. A compelling story about acceptance, family secrets and generational trauma that spans decades and continents. It also highlights that queerness, tolerance and love exist in every time period, and culture, even ones seen as repressive.

**Pau Preto, Nicki. Bonesmith. Simon & Schuster.**

In the Dominions, the dead linger, violent and unpredictable, unless a bonesmith severs the ghost from its earthly remains. For bonesmith Wren, becoming a valkyr—a ghost-fighting warrior—is a chance to solidify her place in the noble House of Bone and impress her frequently absent father. But when sabotage causes Wren to fail her qualifying trial, she is banished to the Border Wall, the last line of defense against a wasteland called the Breach where the vicious dead roam unchecked.

When a House of Gold prince is kidnapped and taken beyond the Wall, Wren sets off to rescue the prince to reclaim her family's respect and show she has what it takes. But to do so, she’s forced into an uneasy alliance with one of the kidnappers—a fierce ironsmith called Julian from the exiled House of Iron, the very people who caused the Breach in the first place…and the House of Bone’s sworn enemy.

As they travel, Wren and Julian spend as much time fighting each other as they do the undead, but when they discover there’s more behind the kidnapping than either of them knew, they’ll need to work together to combat the real danger: a dark alliance that is brewing between the living and the undead. This quick paced story is full of adventure, ghosts, and unlikely allies on a bold heroine's journey to prove herself.

**Ruthnam, Naben. The Grimmer. ECW Press.**

Set in Kelowna in 1994, Naben Ruthnam’s *The Grimmer* is an unputdownable YA horror. Vish has not had an easy go of things recently, with his dad suffering with an addiction and Vish spending the last two years in a juvenile detention centre, he is not excited to be back in his hometown. He fills his days reading or spending time alone at home. That is until one visit to the local secondhand bookstore throws him directly into Mr. Harris’ path. Soon Vish’s life is filled with witches, alternate dimensions, and the world of the occult. Will Vish be able to stop ancient evil forces from destroying his hometown or is he doomed to lose everyone he loves? This is Naben Ruthnam’s first YA title, and he certainly does not disappoint! Perfect for readers of YA Horror/Thriller titles!

**Sambury, Liselle. Delicious Monsters. Simon & Schuster.**

Former Best Bets winner Liselle Sambury is back with another novel full of magic and intrigue. Don’t be put off by the page count, this horror/mystery novel is a page turner from start to finish!

Told in alternating narratives between Daisy, a Toronto teen who sees ghosts and has just been dumped by her older boyfriend, and Brittany, a university student and web series producer desperate to break away from her abusive mother. Daisy is excited to leave Toronto behind, and for her and her mother’s lives to change when they inherit her late brother-in-law’s abandoned, secluded mansion in Northern Ontario. However, Daisy’s mother seems to act odder than normal after they arrive, and Daisy soon learns deeply held secrets about the mansion and her mother’s past.

Ten years later Brittany is producing her popular web series *Haunted* and begins to investigate the so-called “Miracle Mansion,” made popular by her abusive mother. Brittany knows her mother is lying and that the mansion holds even darker secrets. As Brittney investigates the mansion in the present, Daisy’s story runs parallel in the past, both timelines propelling the girls to face the most dangerous monsters of all: those that hide in plain sight.

### Honourable Mentions

Blair, Kate. A Mist of Memories. DCB.

Girard, M-E. Then Everything Happens At Once. HarperCollins.

Lapite, Shade. Goddess Crown. Penguin Random House.

Onome, Louisa. The Melancholy of Summer. HarperCollins.