# 2024 Best Bets Annotations

## Picture Books

**Abed, Omar. The Book that Almost Rhymed. Illustrated by Hatem Aly. Dial Books for Young Readers.**

Everyone knows the best stories rhyme. Or do they? A young boy is so proud of the story he wrote, and how well the rhyming words sound when read aloud. Unfortunately, his sister has her own ideas for how the story should go. From knights on rockets, pirates dancing, and even fire breathing armadillos, little sister’s creative additions keep messing up the story. But as the story goes on, the boy starts to realize that maybe, just maybe, stories are better if they are written together. With vibrant illustrations and a surprising twist at the end, this is a book that is made for reading on repeat.

**Ahmad, Maidah. Muhammad’s Recipe for Remembering. Illustrated by Shruti Prabhu. Annick Press.**

Muhammad, a Muslim boy, wants to take part when his fellow classmates honor veterans, but he is unsure if his community members fought in the World Wars. Through shared memories passed down from his family and community members, Muhammad rediscovers the history of the Muslim experience in the World Wars. Muhammad wants to find a way to honor the Muslim veterans and remembers that he learned that the soldiers shared roti on the battlefield. In honor of their memories, Muhammad shares roti with his classmates. Children can share in the history too, with a roti recipe included at the back of the book, along with a note from the author and some historical context on Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu soldiers who served in the World Wars.

**Brar, Kuljinder Kaur. Mandeep's Cloudy Days. Illustrated by Samrath Kaur. Annick Press.**

Mandeep’s sunniest days are with her dad! They cook together, have tea parties, and dance up a storm. When Mandeep’s dad gets a job that takes him away during the week, Mandeep’s days get cloudy. Follow along as Mandeep learns how to bring sunshine back into her life.

**Chiang, Sylv. Still My Tessa. Illustrated by Mathias Ball. North Winds Press.**

Little Evelyn loves her big sibling named Tessa. Tessa is going through a tough time. They don’t want to play the same games they used to and are always in their room. Tessa has recently come out as non-binary, and Evelyn is learning how to use pronouns and how to show Tessa that they are loved. Come along for this sweet story of siblings learning about pronouns and how to be an effective ally.

**Lam, Thao. One Giant Leap. Owlkids.**

This wordless picture book imagines a commute to school as a magical trip to space. The power of imagination transforms a child into an astronaut and onto a new planet where they explore a wondrous world of creatures. A blizzard hits and the astronaut must fight their way through…right to their school hallway. Hints along the way reveal reality while the child’s imagination transforms the everyday into the exceptional. Vibrant colours and relatable situations engage readers and encourage them to use their creativity and imagination as they move through the story.

**Lee, Jessica J. A Garden Called Home. Illustrated by Elaine Chen. Tundra.**

This beautiful and sweet book tells the story of a little girl who is growing up in a country with cold winters. She loves to play outside all the time, even when it is freezing! Her Mama was born somewhere where the winters are warm, and she stays inside when it's cold. One day Mama takes the little girl to visit her home country, and along the way the little girl learns about different cultures, traditions, and plants. While they are away her Mama is very happy. When they come home to the cold, Mama becomes sad. How can the girl show her mother that nature at home can be wondrous too?

**Pottle, Adam. Butterfly on the Wind. Illustrated by Ziyue Chen. Roaring Brook Press.**

Aurora is nervous - she’s meant to present a fairytale at her school’s talent show, using ASL - American sign language, but her hands shake, and she stumbles over the words. After seeing a butterfly in a garden, Aurora signs “butterfly” into the wind, hoping that it will flow from her hands and across the world, to help her build confidence. The butterfly sign bounces from one hand to another across the world, building and building on its beauty, until it comes back to Aurora with the strength of others in the Deaf community. Beautifully illustrated to complement the text and message, Butterfly in the wind is a brand-new picture book by Deaf creators Canadian author Adam Pottle and artist Ziyue Chen.

**Simpson, Tonya, translated by Dorothy Thunder. This Land is a Lullaby / cistomâwasowin ôma askiy. Illustrated by Delreé Dumont. Orca.**

This bilingual lullaby explores the spiritual relationship between children, ancestors and the land. The sounds of the Prairies and Plains create a soothing and gentle setting for the message of reconciliation and reclamation. Tonya Simpson wrote this gentle song for her daughter, and Delreé Dumont beautifully illustrates with pointillism artwork.

**Smith, Kim. Baker Makers. HarperCollins.**

Naveen dreams of baking extraordinary cakes. He’s pretty sure he’s practically a master baker, so when he gets to take creative cake-making at Baker Makers Lap, he’s positive his cake will be the most astonishing and extraordinary one of all. But when he struggles with perfectionism and his plans not working out in the kitchen, it leads to disaster. Naveen must embrace the unexpected to overcome his baking obstacles amid competition.

**Wang, Michelle. Oma’s Bag. Illustrated by Sam Nunez. Arsenal Pulp Press.**

Oma and Opa are coming to visit, and the Lim siblings could not be more excited. But something seems a little different with Oma. Her cooking doesn’t taste like it used to, she keeps asking the same questions again and again and cannot seem to remember things from her past quite as well. When missing items from around the house are found in Oma’s ever-present shopping bag, the family comes to realize that these are all signs that she is in the early stages of Alzheimer’s. Oma may not be the same as before, but as the grandkids watch her dance around their house, they can tell that the grandmother they love is still there. This beautifully illustrated book is a gentle introduction to a difficult topic that can help children navigate the new realities of an Alzheimer’s diagnosis. The back of the book also includes resources, additional information, and lists of things that children can do to help someone with dementia.

### Honourable Mentions

Chan, Aaron. The Broken Heart. Illustrated by Josiane Vlitos. Penguin Random House.

Golshan, Sahar. So Loud! Illustrated by Shiva Delsooz. Annick Press.

Hrab, Naseem. How to Staycation Like a Snail. Illustrated by Kelly Collier. Owlkids.

Maclear, Kyo. Noodles on a Bicycle. Illustrated by Gracey Zhang. Random House Studio.

Stone, Tiffany. The Day Dancer Flew. Illustrated by Brittany Lane. Orca.

Young, Jessica. Two Homes, One Heart. Illustrated by Chelsea O'Byrne. HarperCollins.

## Junior Fiction

**Averling, Mary. The Cure of Eelgrass Bog. Penguin Random House.**

The Curse of Eelgrass Bog is an eerie and magical story about Kess, who ventures into a bog full of monsters to break a mysterious curse. Nothing about her life is normal. Not her home (she lives in her family’s Unnatural History Museum), not her interests (hunting for megafauna fossils and skeletons), and not her best friend (a talking demon’s head in a jar named Shrunken Jim). Her life gets stranger when the new girl at school, Lilou Starling, asks Kess to help her break a curse that leads them straight into the centre of Eelgrass Bog. This adventure is full of magic and monsters as they investigate long-buried secrets. Together they learn that this curse might hit Kess closer to home than she expected, and they must work together to break the curse before it’s too late.

**Chung, Christine D.U and Salwa Majoka. Viewfinder. Tundra.**

A young space traveler visits Earth in the future and finds an empty planet. Using a viewfinder with images of what the planet used to be like, she sees Earth as it was. The lush and captivating art in this wordless graphic novel will make readers quietly reflect on the future of our planet.

**Ellis, Deborah. The Outsmarters. Groundwood Books.**

Kate spends her days bored, having been suspended from school for multiple meltdowns. Twelve years old, and living with her strict grandmother, she longs for the day when her mother will return for her. Hoping to earn some money for her mother, she opens a Philosophy Booth next to her grandmother’s junk shop and looks to bring answers to life’s biggest (and smallest) questions to her customers. However, Kate soon learns that adults can have big secrets, and the dreams she has for herself, and her mother may need to be altered.

**Erb, Calyssa. Maya Plays the Part. Annick Press.**

Maya LOVES musicals, and an opportunity to attend a theatre camp that is performing her favourite show ever is a dream come true. She knows the Drowsy Chaperone inside out and backwards, and she knows the lead role is going to be hers. But Maya’s mother keeps telling her not to take the lead role for granted. Is this just another one of the “autism rules” her mother has made for her? As camp goes on, Maya does not understand why her new friends are getting mad at her for no reason- she is just trying to be helpful when she corrects their mistakes! Maya just wants to perform in a musical and is tired of playing “Maya in Public” every day, where she must constantly mask her facial expressions and body language and worry about saying the right thing. This first-person portrayal of the world through the eyes of a neurodiverse child takes the reader on a journey of self-acceptance and discovery as Maya learns how to play the most important role of her life- herself.

**Florence, Melanie. Lo Simpson Starts a Revolution. Orca.**

Follow Lo Simpson as she navigates the challenges of growing up, particularly the painful experience of her best friend drifting away to focus on makeup, boys, and bras, while Lo prefers her comics and Doctor Who. As Lo struggles with the changes in her friendship, she finds new friends who accept her for who she is and help her discover her voice as an advocate and activist. The book explores the importance of growing at your own pace, finding your voice, and standing up for what's right.

**Horne, Maggie. Noah Frye Gets Crushed. HarperCollins.**

Recently home from summer science camp, Noah is bursting with the news that her camp best friend, Jessa, will be joining her other best friends, Zoey and Luna, at their school in September. Before she can spill the good news, she is hit with a revelation - Zoey and Luna went to summer camp and discovered…boys! Noah is not sure how she feels about this (surely there are more interesting things to talk about?). In a moment of trying to fit in, Noah tells a small lie and now must find a boy to pretend to crush on. But this soon becomes harder than it sounds and all the while, Jessa is never far from Noah’s thoughts. Is it possible…could Noah be crushing on…Jessa?

**Lyall, Casey. Waking the Dead and Other Fun Activities. HarperCollins.**

Kimmy Jones is the next generation of her family that has inherited a special gift - they can speak to the recently deceased. They use their gifts to speak to those who recently passed to try and give a last wish to the dead, before sending them on. Kimmy’s world gets turned upside down when her grandmother suddenly dies, and she is unable to wake her to ask for her last wish. Thinking something is wrong with her powers, Kimmy tests her gift and attempts to help solve the murder of a boy by breaking into the morgue to try and wake him. She succeeds, a little too well. The boy, Devon, doesn’t pass on, but just stays awake. Attempting to figure out what is going on, Kimmy and Devon come face to face with a powerful witch, who has been around for a long time, and who needs Kimmy’s power to continue to live. Kimmy must discover long buried family secrets to protect herself, her family, and her town from being victims of the witch’s malevolent powers.

**Manzer, Jenny. Picture a Girl. Orca.**

Addie and her brother, Billy, live in a rundown cabin in the beach tourist town of Cedarveil, BC, with their mom. Their life is marked by struggles, frequent visits to the food bank, no phone or TV, and their mom’s unpredictable behavior due to her depression. Sometimes she tells them stories and makes waffles, other times she drinks, but the worst is when she leaves them. When Addie wakes up to find her mom gone again, she takes on the responsibility of caring for their home and Billy, doing her best to keep things normal and hide that they are once again on their own. When will her mom return? Will this be the last time they are left alone?

**Pau Preto, Nicki. The Last Hope School for Magical Delinquents. Viking Books for Young Readers.**

Lavinia “Vin” Lucas is a magical student finding herself at her last resort for magical school—if she gets herself in trouble here, she will be a school dropout with little chance for success. If she can keep her emotions in check and not draw attention to herself, maybe she can make it through unnoticed. The trouble is, no one, including the headmistress, wants her to keep her magic in check, and mysterious magic seems to follow her everywhere she goes. Despite this, for the first time, Vin finds herself surrounded by friends and compelled to find out more about herself, her magical powers, and her mysterious new home and the headmistress who runs it. Should Vin trust the headmistress and her new classmates, and will Last Hope be worth fighting for when the school is attacked by a former student?

**Smith, Heather. Tig. Tundra.**

After months of living alone after her mother abandons them, Tig and Peter are found by Social Services and taken to live with their uncle and his partner. The transition from neglect and abuse to idyllic family life is confusing for Tig and she struggles to settle into her new safe life. Anger drives her to steal, destroy, and fight. But with Peter’s support and her guardians’ persistence, Tig begins to feel safe in her new home and sees the potential for a future as a family. Tig must decide what to leave behind to move forward. A story that intertwines heartbreaking loss with humour, including Tig’s plans to become a competitive cheese racer. This story is full of hope and love.

### Honourable Mentions

Becker, Helaine. Puffin and Penguin. Kids Can Press.

Fawcett, Heather. A Galaxy of Whales. Penguin Random House.

Hrab, Naseem. Otis and Peanut Forever and Ever. Illustrated by Kelly Collier. Owlkids.

McNicoll, Sylvia. Blue to the Sky. DCB Young Readers.

Sharp, Sid. Bog Myrtle. Annick Press.

## Junior Non-Fiction

**Ballantyne, Sonya. Little by Little You Can Change the World. Illustrated by Rhael McGregor & Toben Racicot. HighWater Press.**

Little by Little is a graphic novel telling the inspirational story of Michael, an Indigenous boy, who has a strong desire to help those around him and make a difference. Will Michael be brave enough to stand up for what he believes is right? Through his upbringing and the lesson that “love can change things,” Michael uses his voice to stand up for what he believes in, encourage others to do the same, and little by little, change the world. This inspiring story, told through beautiful artwork, teaches children that no matter what your age is, you can stand up for what you believe in and make a difference in the world.

**George, Kallie. Mushrooms Know: Wisdom From Our Friends the Fungi. Illustrated by Sara Gillingham. Greystone Kids.**

Sara Gillingham’s adorable art and Karie George’s wonderful words show us that Mushrooms have so much to teach us! From what’s underneath the surface, to finding joy in uniqueness, learn about all the things mushrooms know! Throughout the book and at the end there are fun facts about the type of fungus known as mushrooms. They really are wise fungi.

**Gravel, Elise, translated by Montana Kane. Club Microbe. Drawn & Quarterly.**

Governor General’s Award–winning author-illustrator Elise Gravel provides a captivating close-up look at microscopic microorganisms and how they rule the world. With witty aplomb, Gravel explains how trillions of microbes live in us, on us, and everywhere around us. Gravel is adept at visualizing a topic that is essentially invisible. Far from being tiny terrors, kooky-looking cooties are presented in her signature wide-eyed, toothsome comic style. Superbly designed and full of fascinating facts, Club Microbe exudes a contagious enthusiasm that is positively infectious.

**Lewis, Amanda West. A Planet is a Poem. Illustrated by Oliver Averill. Kids Can Press.**

A Planet is a Poem combines science and poetry to explore the wonders of our solar system. There are 14 original poems about planets and other bodies in our solar system, such as a ballad of Earth, an ode to the sun, and a villanelle for Venus. Each poem is written in a different poetic form that’s been chosen to reflect the object’s unique characteristics, and each is full of other intriguing details to capture reader’s imaginations and teach something new along the way. Young astronomers will be delighted to learn facts such as why Mars is known as the Red Planet, how many moons orbit Jupiter, or what exactly is the Kuiper Belt? The book is beautifully illustrated, and each poem is paired with a fold-out flap that reveals easy-to-understand science facts as well as an explanation of the poetic form and why it was used.

**Logan, Jason. How to be a Colour Wizard. MIT Kids Press.**

A perfect combination of science, art, and a little magic, How to Be a Colour Wizard takes aspiring wizards on a creative journey through nature. Filled with spells, quests and potion recipes, ink maker Jason Logan uses whimsy and magic to explain the science behind colour and encourages children (or children at heart) to unlock their creativity. Featuring quests, hands-on activities, and a new way to look at everyday items found around neighbourhoods, this is a book that children can come back to again and again. Filled with both photographs and the author's own colour experiments, How to be a Colour Wizard is a book destined to be an adventure companion. The perfect addition to a classroom, library program, or home art box, colour wizardry is a great way to take STEAM learning outside and create some everyday magic.

**McIntyre, Rick and David A. Poulsen. The Unlikely Hero: The Story of Wolf 8 (A Young Readers’ Edition). Greystone Kids.**

This young readers’ edition of McIntyre’s The Rise of Wolf 8 tells the true story of Wolf 8, newly reintroduced along with his pack to Yellowstone National Park. Action-packed chapters bring the drama and intrigue of the wolves' world to life, tracing 8’s days as a bullied pup through his growth into adulthood, in which he finds a mate, adopts her pups, and becomes the alpha male of a new pack. The immersive writing lets readers know what the wolves may be thinking and feeling based on their body language and sounds. This narrative nonfiction book offers an insightful and moving look at these once-misunderstood animals.

**Rathgeber, Trina. Lost at Windy River: A True Story of Survival. Illustrated by Alina Pete & Jillian Dolan. Orca.**

This is the true story of Ilse Schweder, a young Indigenous girl who became lost in a snowstorm while checking her family’s trapline in northern Canada. Ilse uses Traditional Indigenous Knowledge passed down through her family to survive freezing temperatures, wild animals, snow blindness, and frostbite. With no food or water, Ilse uses her connection to the land and her personal resilience to find her way home. Told by Ilse’s granddaughter, this story demonstrates how important narrative is in ensuring that Indigenous stories are heard.

**Sadlier, Rosemary. The Kids Book of Black History in Canada. Illustrated by Arden Taylor. Kids Can Press.**

The Kids Book of Black History in Canada presents a comprehensive exploration of 400 years of Black history in Canada. This is an updated edition of Rosemary Sadlier's award-winning The Kids Book of Black Canadian History. It features vivid illustrations with interesting facts and profiles of historical figures. The book provides a chronological overview of Black history in Canada, highlighting key events, people, and issues affecting Black Canadians’ lives, such as Canada’s legacy of slavery, the Black Loyalist and Exoduster movements, the Underground Railroad and the fight for civil rights. This book is an essential resource for classrooms and libraries.

**Soon, Chad & George Chiang. The Longest Shot: How Larry Kwong Changed the Face of Hockey. Illustrated by Amy Qi. Orca.**

A new non-fiction biography of athlete and hockey player Larry Kwong, who faced discrimination and setbacks both personally and professionally as a Canadian of Chinese descent. The story starts in the late 19th century, when Kwong’s father emigrated to Canada from China, and opened a store in Vernon, British Columbia. Soon after Larry was born in 1923, the Canadian government implemented the Chinese Immigration Act, a fact which had long lasting impacts on his family. The story follows Larry as he grows up to become a gifted hockey player, playing first for fun, and then professionally. Though very talented and achieving a great deal over many decades of hockey playing, he only got one chance at the NHL. The book is beautifully illustrated and showcases the inspirational story of a largely unknown Canadian.

**Stevenson, Robin. Queer History A to Z 100 Years of LGBTQ+ Activism.** **Illustrated by Vivian Rosas. Kids Can Press.**

This book explores the history of LGBTQ+ activism in North America, presenting key figures, events, and places that shaped the fight for equality and acceptance. Organized in an A-to-Z format, each letter introduces a different topic, such as “A for activism” and "P is for Pride," It highlights important milestones in queer history as well as past and current activists who are essential in the queer rights movement. Additionally, the book addresses ongoing issues like banned children's books in America, providing young readers with an accessible, informative overview of LGBTQ+ history and activism.

### Honourable Mentions

Birmingham, Maria. When Nature Calls: The Unusual Bathroom Habits of the World's Creatures. Illustrated by Dave Whamond. Red Deer Press.

Craigie, Gregor. Walls: The Long History of Human Barriers and Why We Build Them. Illustrated by Arden Taylor. Orca.

Curtis, Andrea. Loop de Loop: Circular Solutions for a Waste-Free World. Illustrated by Roozeboos. Groundwood Books.

Desjardins, India, translated by David Warriner. Whales and Us: Our Shared Journey. Illustrated by Nathalie Dion. Orca.

MacLeod, Elizabeth. Meet Clara Hughes. Illustrated by Mike Deas. Scholastic.

MacLeod, Elizabeth. Meet Jim Egan. Illustrated by Mike Deas. Scholastic.

## Young Adult

**Ali, S.K. Fledgling (The Keeper’s Records of Revolution). Kokila.**

Raisa, the dutiful daughter of the leader of Upper Earth, agrees to be married to the Crown Prince of Lower Earth. Leaving her advanced technological colony in the sky, to descend to the chaos and violence of the ground, she brings with her a promise from the Council of Guardians - after the wedding, there will be an Enlightenment Ceremony, and all the residents of Lower Earth will be “knitted” with neural links to enter a harmonious existence with the people of Upper Earth. But there are those on the ground who do not see this as welcome. Nada will do anything to disrupt her cousin’s marriage and what she sees as the enslavement of her people. Her twin brother, Nayf, is also working to expose the truth of the Guardian’s promise. Having spent most of their life imprisoned after the murder of their grandmother, the twins know their cousin, Crown Prince Lein, has dark motives. When Raisa is kidnapped on her way to the wedding, plans go awry and Nada and Nayf are thrown into danger as they and Raisa struggle to learn the true history of the Guardians and the divisions between Upper and Lower Earth.

**Cerilli, Matteo. Lockjaw. Tundra.**

Lockjaw is an absolute stunner of a debut, evoking the band-of-misfits and downright horror of Stranger Things, but with a much more poignant storyline. Paz Espino knows how Chuck Warren died in their small outpost of a town, but no one believes them. Convinced that it is a monster, Paz, and their group of friends decide to search, find and destroy it once and for all. Although they believe it lurks under an abandoned mill, the reader learns that the “monster” is something far more insidious which has permeated all the town and its townspeople. One by one people begin to die, or do they? Not everything is quite as it seems, for the characters, and the readers, as the story unfolds.

**Cooke, Stephanie. Pillow Talk. Illustrated by Mel Valentine Vargas. HarperCollins.**

Pillow Talk follows Grace Mendes, a shy college freshman who falls in love with the gritty sport of pillow fighting, a mix of roller derby and professional wrestling. Grace adopts the persona of Cinderhella to face her insecurities, particularly her struggles with body image. Grace finds strength in her new team and through self-empowerment. This graphic novel discusses the high standards set for women and the importance of finding a supportive community.

**Dhaliwal, Aminder. A Witch’s Guide to Burning. Drawn & Quarterly.**

A Witch’s Guide to Burning is a beautifully illustrated graphic novel with a fun, descriptive font. The story follows Singe, a singed-at-the-stake witch who is on a journey of healing with the help of Yew-Veda, a witch doctor, and her toad friend, Bufo Wonder. Can Singe and her interesting new travelling companions nurse Singe back to health before she loses her memories and magic for good? The story is an amusing tale of friendship and found family, but covers difficult themes of burnout, giving yourself grace, and allowing yourself to heal.

**Fung, Rosena. Age 16. Annick Press.**

Age 16 is a moving, multi-layered coming-of-age graphic novel that explores three generations of mothers and 16-year-old daughters. Readers are immersed in alternating timelines, points of view and experiences: Roz in Toronto in 2000; Lydia in Hong Kong in 1973; and Mei Laan in Guangdong province, China, in 1954. Each character struggles with body image, gender expectations and identity. The three stories interweave and realistically convey how one generation impacts and shapes the next in so many ways. Rosena Fung’s detailed, expressive illustrations are gorgeous and use a distinct colour palette to delineate time, place, and in a poignant resolution, the ties that bind.

**Isaacs, Cheryl. The Unfinished. Heartdrum.**

In Mohawk author Cheryl Isaacs’s spine-tingling horror debut, an Indigenous teen stumbles upon an eerie pond full of black water and shape-shifting monsters. When small-town athlete Avery’s morning run leads her to a strange pond in the middle of the forest, she awakens a horror the townspeople of Crook’s Falls have long forgotten. The black water has been waiting. Watching. Hungry for the souls it needs to survive. Avery can smell the water, see it flooding everywhere; she thinks she's losing her mind. And as the black water haunts Avery—taking a new form each time—people in town begin to go missing. Though Avery had heard whispers of monsters from her Kanien’kéha:ka (Mohawk) relatives, she has never really connected to her Indigenous culture or understood the stories. But the Elders she has distanced herself from now may have the answers she needs. When Key, her best friend and longtime crush, is the next to disappear, Avery is faced with a choice: listen to the Kanien’kéha:ka and save the town but lose her friend forever…or listen to her heart and risk everything to get Key back.

**Koops, Victoria. Who We Are in Real Life. Groundwood Books.**

Tabletop gaming, romance, and epic campaigns collide both in games and in real life in Who We Are in Real Life. Darcy has just moved to the small prairie town of Unity Creek with her two moms. She misses what she left behind– the city, her gaming friends, and her boyfriend– and is horrified by the homophobia her family faces in their new home. Then she meets Art, who invites her to join his Dungeons & Dragons game. Art mostly fades into the background at school but comes alive during his friends’ weekly D&D game. When he meets Darcy, suddenly he has something to fight for in real life as well. Darcy and her friends are trying to start a queer-straight alliance at school, and this puts Art in conflict with his father, an influential and conservative figure in their town. Meanwhile, in their weekly game, Darcy and Art’s *D&D* characters join forces to fight corruption as they grow closer in the homebrew world of Durgeon’s Keep — as fantasy and reality collide.

**Lin, Judy I. The Dark Becomes Her. Disney Hyperion.**

Ruby is struggling to be the perfect eldest daughter to her strict parents. She is pressured to excel at school, excel in piano lessons, and excel at keeping her younger sister, Tina, on track to excel at school and her extracurriculars. But when a ghost attacks Ruby in Vancouver’s Chinatown, her life is upended into chaos. She now sees sinister spirits everywhere and Tina’s personality has changed overnight. Strange noises come from Tina’s bedroom at all hours, and her once kind sister is now dark and unfeeling. As Ruby fights to save her sister from what holds her, she finds herself in the middle of a battle over the gateway to the underworld. Chinese and Taiwanese mythology are woven throughout this chilling Asian diaspora experience.

**Robinson, Ishi. Sweetness in the Skin. HarperAvenue.**

Pumkin’s house, a small two bedroom shared with family members, represents the literal and metaphorical in-between of her life. Stradling the humbler houses in one direction, and the richer houses in the other, Pumpkin tries to be many things at once. When Pumkin’s Aunt, a loving and positive force in her life, leaves Jamaica for Paris, she too wants to leave her home country for the possibilities a new place may provide. To raise the money, Pumkin uses her talent as a baker, but faces many obstacles on her way to success. Sweetness in the skin doesn’t shy away from the hard topics of family, grief, jealousy and above all what it means to be tied to a place and an idea that is both beautiful and complicated.

**Varga, Emily. For She is Wrath. St. Martin's Press.**

In this sweeping romantic fantasy, a girl named Dania seeks revenge against those who betrayed her, including Mazin, the man she once loved. Framed for a crime she didn't commit; Dania counts down the days in prison until she can exact her vengeance. When she learns of a hidden djinn treasure, she teams up with a fellow inmate to escape and find the treasure, which holds the key to her revenge. With dark magic and a new identity, Dania begins a dangerous plan to bring down those who wronged her and her family. She will risk losing her humanity and her heart, torn between the desire for retribution and the love she cannot escape.

### Honourable Mentions

Ciccarelli, Kristen. Heartless Hunter. St. Martin’s Press.

Hur, June. A Crane Among Wolves. Feiwel & Friends.

Mac, Carrie. Zombie Apocalypse Running Club. Crown Books for Young Readers.

Mather, Janice Lynn. Where Was Goodbye? Simon & Schuster.

Rana, Sarah Mughal. Hope Ablaze. St. Martin’s Press.