

Summer Reading 2022
Oceans of Possibilities
Children's and YA Literature
Wellfleet Public Library

All selections and annotations by WPL Librarian Anna L. Nielsen

Fiction

Acampora, Paul. *In Honor of Broken Things*. NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, Penguin Random House, 2022. Oscar, Noah, and Riley. Riley, Noah, and Oscar. One has a dead sister, one has divorced parents, one never even knew her Dad. They are broken, they think. They think they are broken, broken things. So they become friends, and take care of each other, and do for each other what they would want each other to do for them. Because that is what friends do. There is football, the game and the ball, the latter of which is a prolate spheroid – did you know? Noah does – and a Priest, and a Saint who isn't hungry but is from Hungary, a pottery class, and lunches. Lots and lots of lunches. They learn that the last tragedy isn't anything more than something to get you ready for the next one and that the trick is to be grateful and take a step, ignore the pain, and keep going. And to hold on to Bubble Wrap, otherwise known as friends and family. Friends and family are excellent Bubble Wrap. Filled with humor and straightforward yet gentle reckoning, these broken kids aren't broken. They're friends. **Ages: 8+.**

Algorta, Alejandra; illus. Ivan Rickenmann; trans. Spanish & English Aida Salazar. *Neverforgotten*. NY: Levine Querido, Chronicle Books, 2021. The book begins and ends with Rickenmann's charcoal on paper drawings of the streets of Bogota and Fabio, the boy on a bicycle who cycles, and cycles more, until suddenly one day he forgets how. "His body would no longer do what it had done so many times before." Why did he forget? Because he learned on a Wednesday, the one day of the week in which what is learned is forgotten? Or because the salmon bike is not really his? Or because the dust in Bogota is building, always building, making more and then more and then more? Or because words are lies? O porque esta muerto? The book is about loss and wanting to hide from it, and about not feeling brave anymore once you know what loss is. Once Fabio knows what it feels like to fall, to get hurt, to lose, he can't ride anymore. The illustrations sketch an air of poignancy and searching, and the language narrates a wondering quest to understand the world that is poetic and lyrical. A beautiful book, with an exceptionally well-done translation. **Ages: 8+.**

Counsel, June; illus. Jill Bennett. *A Dragon in Class 4*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1984. One morning, on the way to school, Sam found a dragon. Sam doesn't think the dragon is real and the dragon is pretty sure Sam isn't real. They spend some time debating, until Sam realizes he's late. The dragon tells him not to worry, as he's always wanted a boy, and flies him to school, lickety-split. Sam thinks the flying part is great, but the getting to school part not so much. After all, it's Spelling Class Day. Sam does not like spelling. The dragon loves it. And so their adventures begin. A lovely, friendly story in which there are plenty of treats and everything turns out okay. First in a series, all recommended. **Ages: 7+.**

DiCamillo, Kate; illus. Sophie Blackall. *The Beatryce Prophecy*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2021. Beginning with the epigraph, we know exactly what kind of book these two award-winners are giving us, and we are immediately grateful. "It is written in the Chronicles of Sorrowing that one day there will come a child who will unseat a king. The prophecy states that this child will be a girl. Because of this, the prophecy has long been ignored." Take that, world. Few writers understand the delicacy of a well-placed dramatic phrase better than DiCamillo, or the twists and

turns of wry statements of truth that sound like hyperbole but are, actually, verity. Verity that reveals everything, not just the murderous fears of foolish kings, but the light that is love that is binding, that changes the world. Plus, she's funny. What could be better? "It is only through ignorance that we do not find our way to them." **Ages: 8+.**

Holm, Jennifer L. *The Lion of Mars*. NY: Random House, 2021. It's a brave new world called Mars. Bell lives in the US colony with a few other adults and children, and they keep to themselves (settlement rules), never interacting with the other colonies (not even France). And then a virus strikes and all the grown-ups get sick and it's up to the kids to save the day and everyone might die and some people do die and deep breath, whoa. How can Bell and the kids stay safe if they can't do it alone but they can't do it with other people, either? Being alone can be scary. Figuring out what the right thing to do is hard. And sometimes, being brave is being scared the whole time but not giving up anyway. **Ages: 9+.**

Kelly, Erin Entrada. *Those Kids from Fawn Creek*. NY: GreenWillow Books, HarperCollins, 2022. In a small town in a small place just like any other, everything is always exactly the same. Everyone knows everyone and always has and nothing and no one will ever change, least of all what people think of each other. And every kid in seventh grade is in school with the same kids they've been in school with forever and ever, and all the cliques and friendships are the same – the God Squad, the Royals, the Jocks, and Dorothy and Greyson. And then Orchid comes, a sort of manic pixie dream girl without the mania or the dreaming, who really just sees people as they are. As the best versions of themselves. As their own versions of themselves. She's good at it. Dorothy and Greyson get it. Rennie does not, not even a little bit. Janie might. Maybe. Some people are nice. Some people are not. Some people are a little bit of both. Maybe people can learn from their mistakes. It's just a small town in a small place just like any other, after all. And where there are mistakes, when we keep going, there are miracles. Small ones, every day. **Ages: 8+.**

LaRocca, Rajani. *Red, White, and Whole*. NY: Quill Tree Books, HarperCollins Publishers, 2021. A Newbery Honor novel in verse about an Indian American girl torn between her two lives, "One that is Indian, one that is not." Her Amma and her Daddy and her in America, the rest of her family in Bangalore. Her friends in her culture, her friends in her school, her family traditions, her American dreams, and across all borders something involving a high white blood cell count, and her Amma. She has two futures to navigate in her bifurcated life, one with her Amma, and another impossible to think about. She does have friends across the divisions of her life; one especially who helps her realize, "we are friends/ both/ living two lives,/ both/ rushing over rapids/ in separate boats." Maybe life is hard for everyone, no matter how you slice it. It is also full of love. And the important part is to try. Sad, hopeful, heartbreaking, and entirely recommended. **Ages: 8+.**

Leitch Smith, Cynthia, Ed. *Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids*. NY: Heartdrum, HarperCollins, 2021. The Heartdrum imprint is one we've been waiting for; it's totally by and devoted to Native American authors. The books "emphasize the present and future of Indian Country and the strength of young Indigenous heroes." Read anything and everything they publish, but this is a good place to start: sixteen stories by award-winning and revered and new Native authors. Leitch's contribution tells the story of two teens needing multiple attempts to start their friendship, involving the discomfort of taking photos without permission, knowing yourself as an artist, and a nod to Nulhegan Abenaki elder and writer Joseph Bruchac. **Ages: 8+.**

Leviathan, David. *Answers in the Pages*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. With exquisite timing, Leviathan drops his latest middle grade novel, about a boy named Donovan at the center of a book censoring challenge who figures out – with the help of his community – that banning books doesn't

accomplish a darn thing, other than tearing people apart. Donovan is in school, and his teacher Mr. Howe assigned a book about two adventurer boys which ends with the boys realizing they love each other, and Gideon and Roberto are (were) in another school with Ms. June having realizations of their own. Betwixt and between the three narratives we get the fresh air of Leviathan optimism: no one is actually evil, love is in the air, of all kinds, and everyone can learn. **Ages: 8+.**

Luckoff, Kyle. *Too Bright to See*. NY: Penguin, 2021. Bug is a girl whose favorite uncle is dead, whose best friend is making her play with makeup, and oh yeah, whose previously mentioned dead uncle was a drag queen who is probably haunting her. In a good way, a supportive way. Really. It's summer, middle school is about to start, and she has decisions to make. She thinks: "Maybe no one is really sure of who they are. I probably have to try out a bunch of selves until I find one that fits." So she does, and learns: Bug is a boy. A boy whose dead uncle shows him the way, whose best friend is totally on board, and whose entire community – from mom to principal to neighbors – supports him completely. Though the dialogue sometimes sounds like it comes from a counselor's playbook from a perfect world, the earnest desire of an accepting and open world rings idealistic and true – and why not aim for a perfect world? **Ages: 8+.**

McKay, Hilary. *The Time of Green Magic*. NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2020. Divorce and separation can be good things, things that are better for everybody, in the end. But that doesn't mean that the journey part of getting to the better ending isn't at least a little bit messy. Abi's dad Theo marries Max and Louis's mom Polly, and suddenly they are a brand new blended family in a brand new (actually, really old, but new to them) possibly haunted house. Abi is not convinced. Throw in a cat that simply can't be real and a realism that is seriously tainted with the magical, and the dangers of being nervous, however righteously so, and the family has a lot to deal with. And they do: together, as good families do, no matter how they started. **Ages: 9+.**

Mbalia, Kwame, Ed. *Black Boy Joy: Seventeen Stories Celebrating Black Boyhood*. NY: Delacorte Press, Penguin Random House LLC, 2021. One look at Kadir Nelson's exuberant oil portrait of a Black boy grinning on the cover art, and you just know this is a book in which to jump. Seventeen Black male and nonbinary authors contributed stories and comics – and Newbery Medal-winner Jerry Craft a graphic short – about "the power of joy and the wonders of Black boyhood." The editor is the author of *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky* and its sequels, and his aim is to celebrate the glory of being Black Boys. Marvelous stuff, and recommended reading for all. **Ages: 8+.**

Riordan, Rick. *Daughter of the Deep*. NY: Disney Hyperion, 2021. Ana is the last surviving heir to Prince Dakkar (Captain Nemo from Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* - read that one, too) and is, of course thusly, the chosen one who must save the world, or at least her school. Ocean environment, watery tech, good friends, bad friends, and villains from a rival school intent on controlling everything. Fun! While Riordan has been exemplary in his imprint work, it's nice to have some writing from him again. **Ages: 8+.**

Rivera, Kaela. *Cece Rios and the Desert of Souls*. NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2021. Cece lives with her sister and parents in the desert town of Tierra del Sol, surrounded by the lairs of criaturas, creatures of legend and evil (maybe not) who can only be controlled by brujas, humans who enslave the criaturas for the protection of mankind (or maybe their own use). Cece's always been a little different – she's built of the fluidity and flexibility and generosity of water, not the heat of the desert. And she's not sure all criaturas are bad or brujas good. She knows that "when people are in pain, they do terrible things to try to bandage their broken hearts." And she knows that doesn't make it okay. So maybe she can be a healer, a curandera. When her sister is kidnapped and she

learns to see and love the enslaved criaturas, she knows what she has to do. "You sacrifice yourself even when it's hard. It's called love." Oh, Cece. May we all have girls like you in our lives. **Ages: 8+.**

Sabatinelli, Elisa; illus. Iacopo Bruno; trans. Italian Christopher Turner. *The Secret of the Magic Pearl*. Brooklyn, NY: Red Comet Press, 2021. A fable about the perils of industrial corporate fishing and greed winning over, well, everything. Everything decent and good. The villain is Amedeo Limonta who has one goal in life: to make money; and thus, he loses his sailor's soul and betrays the sea. The good guys are Hector, his father and mother, his best friend, and all the nice folks in town who are decent and good, and, well, the sea. But maybe Amedeo isn't a total villain; maybe he's just lost without his soul he sold for riches and gold. Hector finds a pearl – the pearl of the sea – and brings it home. Not to keep, not to sell, but to share. Amedeo steals it – of course- and all could be lost. Except, except, except: Hector. Bruno's illustrations are luscious and fantastical, giving this happy ending story a boost of flair. **Ages: 7+.**

Schmidt, Gary D. & Elizabeth Stickney; illus. Jane Manning. *One Smart Sheep*. NY: Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021. "Wilson was Abigail Atwood's friendliest sheep. Wilson was Abigail Atwood's wooliest sheep. And Wilson was Abigail Atwood's smartest sheep. That is a lot for a sheep to be." So begins this chapter book for newly independent readers – the text is to the point and purposefully repetitive, with a matter-of-fact sense of humor. Wilson is one smart sheep, but even smart sheep can run into trouble. What will Abigail and her collie Tippy do? Get a piano delivered, for starters. The watercolor and pencil illustrations are warm and expressive and lend a perfect occasional respite from reading. Just lovely all around. **Ages: 7+.**

Selznick, Brian. *Kaleidoscope*. NY: Scholastic Press, 2021. Any book from Selznick is worth noting (*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, 2007 and *Wonderstruck*, 2011, to name a couple), and his latest is no exception. Interspersed with his usual sketch drawings, his text is a meditation on grief and loss and memory. Who are we without the ones we love? Who are we when we lose the ones we love, when we lose ourselves? What happens when we are gone? The narrator isn't straightforward or chronological or even named: the only constant are the reflections about James, the one who is mourned, lost, and remembered. A man tries to write a reference book that would contain all the information in the universe and gets stymied by apple: how to define it as red without defining the color in all its infinite variations? What about the idea of seeds, and the concept of shiny? The world is uncontainable. But on the other hand, everything is connected, and so "the entire universe can be found in an apple." All we can know for sure is that we can die of broken hearts, even giants, but that we can also live by love. Written in isolation during the pandemic, Selznick honestly looks at complicated matters and does his best to map them, or at least provide an intriguing example of mapping. **Ages: 8+.**

Stark, Ulf; illus. Anna Hoglund; trans. Swedish Julia Marshall. *Can You Whistle, Johanna?* Wellington, NZ: Gecko Press, 2021. In this big old world of ours there are lonely kids without grandparents and lonely elders without grandchildren. Hmmm. Imagine if an enterprising young kid decided to bop on down to the local retirement home and do something about it, like, say, pick a gentleman and decide to call him Gramps, and the elderly gent, so chosen, acquiesced? Perhaps they could teach each other what they know. Perhaps they could become friends. Perhaps they could become family. Moving and sweet, and excellent for promoting intergenerational relations. **Ages: 7+.**

Ursu, Anne. *The Troubled Girls of Dragomir Academy*. NY: Walden Pond Press, HarperCollins Publishers, 2021. Marya can never do anything right, except embarrass and shame her family. So off she's sent, to the mystery school for wayward girls, which is exactly as bad as it sounds. There's

nothing new about girls being silenced and torn down for their strength and capacities, but it still stinks. A lot. Her father is happiest when he forgets she exists and her mother helps hold her down for fear of what would happen if Marya tried to get up. Mother is right and also wrong, and Marya doesn't know what is happening or why. She just knows it stinks. A lot. And that it's always a good idea to "question the stories the world tells you." And maybe it's time to be done with a world in which everything is built for men. It's ridiculous to believe they're the only ones with magic. Ridiculous. After all, whom does that story serve? And if it were true, why are men so scared they need to silence and tear and steal from every strong girl they see? A determined romp with a little bit of glee for critical thinking. Recommended. **Ages: 8+.**

Williams, Ursula Moray; illus. Catherine Rayner. *Gobbolino the Witch's Cat and The Further Adventures of Gobbolino and the Little Wooden Horse*. NY: Macmillan Children's Books, 2017 (1942). Reissued with empathetic chapter drawings by the inestimable Rayner, this wartime tale (written in the midst of air raid warnings that required constant sheltering in England 1940) of a cat searching for home and family, because all he wants is to be good and to be loved, remains as endearing as ever and fundamentally poignant as ever. Little Gobbolino endures hardships and adventures exciting and a little scary and back again, and he carries on, wishing only to be true. **Ages: 7+.**

