



Read. Vote. Repeat.

YRCA 2025 Book Profiles

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YRCA 2025 Junior Book Profiles

***Odder* by Katherine Applegate**

What's it about? A playful, adventurous otter's life is saved twice by humans.

Read-alikes:

- [*A Rover's Story*](#) by Jasmine Warga
- [*Sea Otter Rescue*](#) by Suzi Esterhas
- [*Saving Winslow*](#) by Sharon Creech

If you like animal stories, free verse, or books based on true stories, you will like this book.

Something interesting: When Katherine Applegate was 10 years old, she was featured in her local newspaper as a gerbil saleswoman.

Reading level: Lexile NP (non-prose)

Suggested age: Grades 3-7 (School Library Journal)

***The Ogress and the Orphans* by Kelly Barnhill**

What's it about? A kind ogress helps a poverty-stricken town under the cover of darkness, despite their growing suspicion of strangers.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Wolf Suit*](#) by Sid Sharp
- [*The Midnight Children*](#) by Dan Gemeinhart
- [*Wishtree*](#) by Katherine Applegate

If you like lyrical folk tales and thoughtful themes of community-building, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Kelly Barnhill used to read fairy tales to herself on an abandoned trolley platform in Minneapolis when she was a child.

Reading level: ATOS 5.1

Suggested age: Grades 3-7 (School Library Journal)



Swim Team by Johnnie Christmas

What's it about? In this graphic novel Bree moves to Florida and has to make new friends, learn how to swim and conquer the voice inside of her head that tells her that she will just embarrass herself.

Read-alikes:

- [Roller Girl](#) by Victoria Jamieson
- [Be Prepared](#) by Vera Brosgol
- [Stepping Stones](#) by Lucy Knisley

If you like Graphic novels, swimming, Black history, teamwork and friendship, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Johnnie Christmas was born in Puerto Rico, raised in Miami and now lives in Vancouver. He almost drowned as a child, and he didn't learn to swim until he was an adult.

Reading level: ATOS 2.6

Suggested age: Grades 3-6 (School Library Journal)

The Marvellers by Dhonielle Clayton

What's it about? The first Conjuror to attend the Arcanum Training Institute, 11-year-old Ella must prove her innocence with the help of new friends when a dangerous criminal escapes and her mentor disappears.

Read-alikes:

- [Harry Potter](#) by J.K. Rowling
- [Wildseed Witch](#) by Marti Dumas
- [Amari and the Night Brothers](#) by B. B. Alston
- [Onyeka and the Academy of the Sun](#) by Tola Okogwu

If you like magical boarding schools, mystery, belonging and friendship, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Dhonielle Clayton spent most of her childhood under her grandmother's table with a stack of books. She was a teacher for several years and is a school librarian.

Reading level: 670L

Suggested age: Grades 3-7 (School Library Journal)



***The Clackity* by Lora Senf**

What's it about? Twelve-year-old Evie Von Rathe embarks on a journey into a strange world filled with hungry witches, ghosts, and a story thief, to rescue her aunt from a shadowy being called The Clackity.

Read-alikes:

- [*City of Ghosts*](#) by Victoria Schwab
- [*Small Spaces*](#) by Katherine Arden
- [*Ghost Girl*](#) by Ally Malinenko
- [*Coraline*](#) by Neil Gaiman

If you like plot-driven atmospheric horror stories, then you will like this book.

Something interesting: Lora Senf finds inspiration for her spooky stories from her children's dreams and nightmares.

Reading level: 750L

Suggested age: Grades 5+ (Simon & Schuster)

***The Last Mapmaker* by Christina Soontornvat**

What's it about? In a Thai-inspired fantasy world, Sai attempts to build a new life and identity as an aide to the last mapmaker on a voyage set forth by the Queen.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Last Cuentista*](#) by Donna Barba Higuera
- [*Lintang and the Pirate Queen*](#) by Tamara Moss
- [*The Serpent's Secret*](#) by Sayantani DasGupta

If you like adventure, sea voyages, dragons, lost worlds, and coming-of-age journeys, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Christina Soontornvat holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a master's degree in Science Education. She spent a decade working in the science museum field, where she designed programs and exhibits to get kids excited about science.

Reading level: 740L

Suggested age: Grades 3-6 (School Library Journal)



***A Rover's Story* by Jasmine Warga**

What's it about? *A Rover's Story* gives us the internal thoughts and feelings of a new rover getting ready to embark on his epic journey to Mars and his adventures once he reaches the planet.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Wild Robot*](#) by Peter Brown
- [*The Lion of Mars*](#) by Jennifer L. Holm
- [*In the Red*](#) by Christopher Swiedler
- [*CatStronauts: Mission Moon*](#) by Drew Brockington

If you like robots, astronomical roving vehicles, outer space or Mars, you'll love this book!

Something interesting: Did you know that Skittles are the author's favorite candy?

Reading level: ATOS 4.1

Suggested age: Grades 3-5 (School Library Journal)

***New from Here* by Kelly Yang**

What's it about? A story based on the author's own experiences with her family during the COVID pandemic. It follows ten-year-old Knox, his brother, sister, and mom as they leave Hong Kong to seek safety from the virus in the United States.

Read-alikes:

- [*Honestly Elliott*](#) by Gillian McDunn
- [*Mixed Up*](#) by Gordon Korman
- [*Maizy Chen's Last Chance*](#) by Lisa Lee

If you like first person stories about overcoming adversity, challenging racism and embracing differences, then you'll like this book!

Something interesting: Kelly Yang immigrated to America from Hong Kong when she was 6 years old. She overcame poverty to go to college at 13 and went on to law school at 17!

Reading Level: 630L

Suggested Age: Grades 4-7 (School Library Journal)



YRCA 2025 Intermediate Book Profiles

***Messy Roots: A Graphic Memoir of a Wuhanese American* by Laura Gao**

What's it about? A journey toward self-acceptance of queer and Wuhanese American identities, *Messy Roots* is about embracing your past and present, learning to accept where you came from and living authentically.

Read-alikes:

- [*When Stars Are Scattered*](#) by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed
- [*Measuring Up*](#) by Lily LaMotte
- [*Welcome to St. Hell: my Trans Teen Misadventure*](#) by Lewis Hancox

If you like graphic novels, coming of age stories, LGBTQIA+ stories

Something interesting: The Samuels Public Library almost banned *Messy Roots* because of an effort from a small number of members of the public to censor all materials related to LGBTQIA+ experiences. Luckily, the rest of the community banded together to fight this censorship!

Reading level: Lexile and ATOS not available.

Suggested age: Grades 7+ (School Library Journal)

***The Stars Did Wander Darkling* by Colin Meloy**

What's it about? Construction was being done on the old, and some say cursed, Langdon place. Now all the adults in the town are acting weird, and it is up to Archie and his friends to save their town.

Read-alikes:

- [*Ghostlight*](#) by Kenneth Oppel
- [*What Lives in the Woods*](#) by Lindsay Currie
- [*The Skull*](#) by Jon Klassen

If you like *Stranger Things*, friends having to solve a mystery, and spooky tales, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Colin Meloy is the lead singer in the band *The Decemberists* and knows how to play the bouzouki (which is a musical instrument).

Reading level: ATOS 5.2



Suggested age: Ages 8-12 (Harper Collins)

***The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* by Axie Oh**

What's it about? In order to save her brother, and her homeland, Mina sacrifices herself to solve the storms that have ravaged Mina's homeland for generations.

Read-alikes:

- [Six Crimson Cranes](#) by Eizabeth Lim
- [Song of Silver, Flame Like Night](#) by Amélie Wen Zhao
- [We Hunt the Flame](#) by Hafsah Faizal

If you like Studio Ghibli films (particularly *Spirited Away*), swoon worthy romances, and Korean mythology, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Axie Oh really loves her K-Dramas, and some of her books are based on them.

Reading level: 770L

Suggested age: Grades 7+ (School Library Journal)

***The Elephant Girl* by James Patterson and Ellen Banda-Aaku**

What's it about? A twelve-year-old girl, different from most of her peers in the village, deeply cares about a local elephant herd and must face unthinkable challenges as a result.

Read-alikes:

- [The Last Beekeeper](#) by Siya Turabi
- [Tiger Boy](#) by Mitali Perkins
- [Odder](#) by Katherine Applegate

If you like true-to-life stories about protecting wildlife where young protagonists must be brave against all odds, then you will like this book.

Something interesting: **Ellen Banda-Aaku** is from Zambia and started her writing career late, when she was already over 30! However, she also has a passion for sewing and if she hadn't made it as a writer would probably have "tried (her) hand at fashion." **James Patterson** is the most popular storyteller of our time and is the creator of the *Middle School* and *Treasure Hunters* series.

Reading Level: ATOS 5.2



Suggested Age: Grades 4-6 (School Library Journal)

***Echoes and Empires* by Morgan Rhodes**

What's it about? Josslyn Drake grapples with her identity as rare, illegal, and deadly magic enters her world. Against her better judgement, she must team up with the renegades of magic to save herself.

Read-alikes:

- [Throne of Glass](#) by Sarah J. Maas
- [The Young Elites](#) by Marie Lu
- [The Pledge](#) by Kimberly Derting

If you like handsome thieves, forbidden magic, and heart pounding fantasy, you will love the beautifully woven story of *Echoes and Empires*.

Something interesting: A former graphic designer drawn to sparkly objects and fancy handbags, Morgan Rhodes lives in Ontario, where she maintains a very healthy belief in all things magical.

Reading level: 690L

Suggested age: Grades 8+ (School Library Journal)

***The Sunbearer Trials* by Aiden Thomas**

What's it about? Teo is selected for a competition where the winner gets glory, and the loser gets sacrificed.

Read-alikes:

- [All Of Us Villains](#) by Amanda Foody
- [Spell Bound](#) by F.T. Lukens
- [The Percy Jackson series](#) by Rick Riordan

If you like gods and demigods, deadly games, and talking to birds, you will like this book!

Something interesting: Aiden Thomas is a Trans Latinx author and they organize their bookshelves by colour. *The Sunbearer Trials* is their first series, with the second book coming out September 2024.

Reading level: 850L

Suggested age: Grades 7+ (School Library Journal)



***Places We've Never Been* by Kasie West**

What's it about? Childhood best friends who haven't seen each other in years reunite on a summer road trip. After a rocky start, their childhood friendship is revived and grows into something new.

Read-alikes:

- [*Where the Road Leads Us*](#) by Robin Reul
- [*Our Way Back to Always*](#) by Nina Moreno
- [*The Getaway List*](#) by Emma Lord

If you like light-hearted stories about romance, friendship, family and road trips, you will like this story!

Something interesting: the author has written over a dozen teen romance novels, but she has stated that she will never write a sequel for any of her books.

Reading level: HL560 L

Suggested age: Grades 8+ (School Library Journal)

***A Song Called Home* by Sara Zarr**

What's it about? Eleven-year-old Lou and her older sister Casey navigate the changes that come with their mom's remarriage – new home, new friends, and new schools – as well as their inconsistent relationship with their alcoholic father.

Read-alikes:

- [*Life in the Balance*](#) by Jen Petro-Roy
- [*A Soft Place to Land*](#) by Janae Marks
- [*Operation Sisterhood*](#) by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

If you like realistic stories about friends, families, and new beginnings, you will like this book.

Something interesting: Sara Zarr grew up in a similar family situation to Lou's. She is the host and producer of the *This Creative Life* podcast.

Reading level: ATOS 4.4

Suggested age: Grades 5-8 (School Library Journal)



YRCA 2025 Senior Book Profiles

***The Summer of Bitter and Sweet* by Jen Ferguson**

What's it about? A Métis teen must deal with the fallout of long kept secrets, both her family's and her own, while navigating the trauma surrounding her family and her sexuality.

Read-alikes:

- [*Hearts Unbroken*](#) by Cynthia Leitich Smith
- [*Funeral Songs for Dying Girls*](#) by Cherie Dimaline
- [*Warrior Girl Unearthed*](#) by Angeline Boulley

If you like Indigenous-centered stories about real-life situations that have a touch of romance, you will like this story.

Something interesting: Jen Ferguson's favorite animals are bison and moose. She never worked at an ice cream shack but has run a pizza shop which is the setting of her latest book, *Those Pink Mountain Nights*.

Reading level: ATOS 4.2

Suggested age: Grades 10+ (School Library Journal)

***The Agathas* by Kathleen Glasgow**

What's it about? When Alice's boyfriend-stealing ex-bff Brooke goes missing after a party, she teams up with her tutor, Iris, and her band of misfit friends to discover what really happened, even when it seems like no one in the wealthy town of Castle Cove wants them to.

Read-alikes:

- [*The Black Queen*](#) by Jumata Emill
- [*Someone is Always Watching*](#) by Kelley Armstrong
- [*I'm the Girl*](#) by Courtney Summers

If you like sudsy drama, high school betrayal and mysteries told from multiple perspectives.

Something interesting: The creation of one of the characters was inspired by the real-life 11-day disappearance of mystery writer Agatha Christie in 1926.

Reading level: HL660L



Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***The Silence That Binds Us* by Joanna Ho**

What's it about? A Chinese-American teen combats Asian hate and subverts the dominant narrative that explores who gets to tell their story and who gets silenced.

Read-alikes:

- [*Bruised*](#) by Tanya Boteju
- [*The Hate U Give*](#) by Angie Thomas
- [*Finding My Voice*](#) by Marie Myung-Ok Lee
- [*Private Label*](#) by Kelly Yang

If you like complex characterizations, intense dialogue and books about taking social action, then you will like this book!

Something interesting: The author's ideal vacation involves hiking, tents, waterfalls, mountains, spectacular views and s'mores. This book is inspired by true events that happened in the author's hometown.

Reading Level: ATOS 4.9

Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***A Magic Steeped in Poison* by Judy I. Lin**

What's it about? Ning enters a competition in the magical art of tea-making to receive a favour from the princess, which may be her only chance to save her sister's life.

Read-alikes:

- [*Spin the Dawn*](#) by Elizabeth Lim
- [*Daughter of the Moon Goddess*](#) by Sue Lynn Tan
- [*The Scarlet Alchemist*](#) by Kylie Lee Baker
- [*The Moonlight Blade*](#) by Tessa Barbosa

If you like mythology, interesting magic-systems, political intrigue, and surprising plot twists, then this book is for you!

Something interesting: When asked what kind of dumpling the main character, Ning, would be, the author said she is best represented by the dumpling that appears in the story: the humble zongzi (glutinous rice dumpling). A dumpling with history, associated with remembrance and sacrifice.

Reading level: 860L



Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***This Woven Kingdom* by Tahereh Mafi**

What's it about? The long-lost heir to an ancient Jinn kingdom, Alizeh, is forced to hide in plain sight and bide her time in the shadows patiently waiting to uproot the kingdom of the crown prince—and the world.

Read-alikes:

- [*Three Dark Crowns*](#) by Kendare Blake
- [*The Wrath & the Dawn*](#) by Renee Ahdieh
- [*Girl, Serpent, Thorn*](#) by Melissa Bashardoust
- [*A Magic Steeped in Poison*](#) by Judy I. Lin

If you like richly detailed books about forbidden love and clashing kingdoms, then you will like this book!

Something interesting: Tahereh Mafi is married to fellow author, Ransom Riggs. She speaks 8 languages and can often be found over-caffeinated and stuck in a book.

Reading Level: ATOS 6.9

Suggested Age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***Nothing More to Tell* by Karen M. McManus**

What's it about? Brynn has recently moved back to Sturgis, Massachusetts and is trying to solve the murder of her old teacher, whose unsolved case is shrouded in mystery.

Read-alikes:

- [*A Good Girl's Guide to Murder*](#) by Holly Jackson
- [*Truly Devious*](#) by Maureen Johnson
- [*The Counselors*](#) by Jessica Goodman

If you like true-crime, high school settings and rekindling friendships, you will like this story.

Something interesting: Karen McManus' first book, *One of Us Is Lying* has been turned into a TV show on Peacock.

Reading level: HL790L

Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)



***Castles in Their Bones* by Laura Sebastian**

What's it about? Three sisters have come of age and all leave to go marry into other kingdoms, but are secretly working to destroy them all so their mother can take over the continent.

Read-alikes:

- [Three Dark Crowns](#) by Kendare Blake
- [Rule](#) by Ellen Goodlett
- [Twin Crowns](#) by Catherine Doyle

If you like magic, sister relationships and political intrigue.

Something interesting: Laura Sebastian grew up in Florida, but now lives in London with her two dogs, Neville and Circe.

Reading level: 940L

Suggested age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)

***I Must Betray You* by Ruta Sepetys**

What's it about? A 17-year-old boy in Romania searches for freedom, truth, and love in a country that is controlled by an evil dictator.

Read-alikes:

- [The Light in Hidden Places](#) by Sharon Cameron
- [Walls](#) by Laura Elliott
- [Under the Iron Bridge](#) by Kathy Kacer
- [The Librarian of Auschwitz](#) by Antonio Iturbe

If you like historical fiction and fast-paced thrillers with a smattering of romance, with young, rebellious first-person characters, willing to risk their lives for change, then you'll like this book.

Something interesting: Ruta Sepetys is the daughter of a Lithuanian refugee and was recently honored with a Lithuanian postage stamp containing her image.

Reading Level: 500L

Suggested Age: Grades 9+ (School Library Journal)