

Selected and annotated by Elora Agsten, Adam McConville, and Anna Elizabeth Mitchell. Review codes are taken from the reviews of these books by [*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*](#). *R* indicates recommended titles and *R** indicates recommended titles of special distinction. Age and grade level recommendations are also taken from *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*.

**Barnett, Mac. *The Important Thing about Margaret Wise Brown*; illus. by Sarah Jacoby. Balzer + Bray, 2019. [48p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-06-239344-9 \$17.99
*R**. 6-10 years
Recommended by Anna Elizabeth.**

Join a bunny librarian as she gives a meta-reading of this picture book biography detailing Margaret Wise Brown's eccentric life, including her pets, strange books, and conflict with literary gatekeeper Anne Carroll Moore at the NYPL. Through Sarah Jacoby's charming art and Mac Barnett's stunning prose, this biography beautifully examines not only the unusual life and career of Margaret Wise Brown, but also raises questions about literary merit, intellectual freedom, and respect for young readers.

**Choi, Susan. *Camp Tiger*; illus. by John Rocco. Putnam, 2019. [40p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-399-17329-5 \$17.99
E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-525-51668-2 \$10.99
*R**. 5-8 years
Recommended by Adam.**

In this picture book, a young boy encounters a maybe-real, maybe-imaginary tiger on a family camping trip. As boy and tiger romp together, the book explores the challenges of growing up through gentle but powerful digital art and authentically youthful narration. It's an imaginative story grounded in reality, with a *Calvin and Hobbes*-esque ability to pair the familiar with the fantastic.

**Donnelly, Rebecca. *Cats Are a Liquid*; illus. by Misa Saburi. Godwin/Holt, 2019. [32p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-250-20659-6 \$17.99
*R**. Gr. 2-4
Recommended by Elora.**

Any cat owner can relate to this common scenario: "... how did you fit in there?". This fun, story-time-ready read subtly teaches children the different stages of matter (while also implying that cats might be Oobleks) and is sure to get a hoot out of anyone who has witnessed the feline contortions of our fuzzy friends.

Emezi, Akwaeke. *Pet. Make Me a World*/Random House, 2019. [208p]

Library ed. ISBN 978-0-525-64708-9 \$20.99

Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-525-64707-2 \$17.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-525-64709-6 \$10.99

R*. Gr. 7-10

Recommended by Adam.

The city of Lucille is angel-run and thus monster-free, or at least, it's supposed to be. When Jam, a Black, trans teenager, summons a terrifying creature – the titular Pet - from one of her mother's paintings, she joins Pet on its hunt to track down a monster still lingering in Lucille. The story examines corruption, communication, and administration of justice, with magic realism blending into allegory to reminds readers monsters can take on any form.

Grimes, Nikki. *Ordinary Hazards: A Memoir*. WordSong/Boyd's Mills, 2019. [332p] illus. with photographs

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-62979-881-3 \$18.99

R*. Gr. 8-12

Recommended by Anna Elizabeth.

This striking memoir-in-verse from poet Nikki Grimes details her most painful, fractured, and celebrated childhood memories. *Ordinary Hazards* unravels her past traumas to reveal a strong self-identity empowered through words. The vulnerable, courageous, gritty, and wise young Grimes will inspire readers both young and old.

Jeffers, Oliver. *The Fate of Fausto: A Painted Fable*; written and illus. by Oliver Jeffers. Philomel, 2019. 96p

Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-593-11501-5 \$24.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-593-11503-9 \$12.99

R. Gr. 2-4

Recommended by Anna Elizabeth.

The greedy and controlling Fausto “believed he owned everything.” Fausto claims dominion over the flower, the sheep, the tree, the field, the forest, the lake, and the mountain, but the sea claims Fausto. This modern-day fable and simple yet effective lithograph paintings remind readers to respect our natural environment and to be content with what we already have.

Ofili, Sylvia. *German Calendar, No December*; illus. and lettered by Birgit Weyhe. Cassava Republic, 2019. 186p

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-911115-61-8 \$24.95

R*. Gr. 8-12

Recommended by Elora.

This coming of age tale tells the story of Olivia, a mixed-race Nigerian teen attending boarding school for the first time. Olivia's dreams of going on adventures and making friends with the other girls are quickly ruined when she arrives at the school in Lagos only to find herself a target of cliques and hazing rituals. After graduating, Olivia moves to her mother's homeland of Germany for university, where she joins a loving group of coworkers at a train station, secretly helping refugees move through the country. Issues of identity, belonging, and the concept of home are thoroughly explored in this graphic novel, completely rendered in green, black, white, and red.

Richmond, Susan Edwards. *Bird Count*; illus. by Stephanie Fizer Coleman. Peachtree, 2019. [32p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-56145-954-4 \$17.95

R. Gr. 2-4

Recommended by Elora.

Young birder Ava, her mother, and their team leader, Big Al, embark on the Christmas Day Bird Count, an annual birding tradition where local teams record as many birds as they can in one December day. Ava's first-person narration details citizen science procedures for the bird count and readers can keep track of the team's tally with a continuous illustration of Ava's notebook (24 species in all; a respectable number for December in the northern US!). A wonderful introduction to birding and citizen science, this is sure to inspire young birders (and their parents) to go outside and pick up the binoculars.

Sayre, April Pulley. *Bloom Boom!*. Beach Lane/Simon, 2019. [40p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-9472-4 \$17.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-1-4814-9473-1 \$10.99

R. 3-6 years

Recommended by Elora and Anna Elizabeth.

With bright, clear photographs, Sayre walks the reader through the beginning stages of flowering plants and rewards them with a very satisfying "Bloom, boom!" each time a new bud blossoms. A perfect springtime read and a great way to introduce young children to the plant cycle.

Smith, Sydney. *Small in the City*; written and illus. by Sydney Smith. Porter/Holiday House, 2019. [40p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-8234-4261-4 \$18.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-8234-4395-6 \$11.99

R*. 4-7 years

Recommended by Anna Elizabeth and Elora.

The young protagonist of this picture book addresses their missing cat while expertly navigating a crowded, cold, and noisy city. The heartbreaking narrative of fear and loss is met with a hopeful ending and warm comfort from a loving mother. A sensory reading experience is evoked by Sydney Smith's thoughtful prose, sequential frames, and full-page spreads, causing readers to sympathize with the child's simultaneous anxiety and appreciation for growing up in an urban environment.

Tamaki, Mariko. *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me*; illus. by Rosemary Valero-O'Connell. First Second, 2019. [304p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-25031-284-6 \$24.99

Paper ed. ISBN 978-1-62672-259-0 \$17.99

R*. Gr. 8-12

Recommended by Anna Elizabeth.

Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O'Connell's graphic novel unfolds through narrator Freddy's emails in which she describes her on-again, off-again relationship to an advice columnist. Unique art details reiterate the painful and empowering experiences of the characters related to toxic young love, high school friendship, and queer identity. The most significant moments are often captured in panels that compare to stills on a film reel: these frames demonstrate a subtle movement like a slight shift in gaze or curl of a finger. Valero-O'Connell also makes intelligent use of negative space, pink highlighting, background movement, and dynamic panel layouts.

Trelease, Gita. *Enchantée*. Flatiron, 2019. [464p]

Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-250-29552-1 \$18.99

E-book ed. ISBN 978-1-250-29553-8 \$9.99

R. Gr. 7-10

Recommended by Elora.

In an 18th century France where magic exists, seventeen-year-old orphan Camille has both a gift and a curse: she can work *la magie*, a transformational magical ability she inherited from her deceased mother, but to do so takes a great physical and emotional toll. However, in order to support her sickly younger sister and protect them both from their violent older brother, Camille continues to use *la magie*. With the help of a blood magic disguise left by her mother, she heads to Versailles as a mysterious baroness to try to win a fortune magically cheating at cards. While there, she quickly realizes she is far from alone in her magical abilities. A thoroughly satisfying read for lovers of both fantasy and historical fiction, Camille's journey discusses the roles of

class and race in pre-Revolutionary Paris, as well as the lengths one will go to for the love of family.

**Venable, Colleen AF. *Kiss Number 8*; illus. by Ellen T. Crenshaw. First Second, 2019 [320p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-1-25019-693-4 \$24.99
Paper ed. ISBN 978-1-59643-709-8 \$17.99
R. Gr. 8-12
Recommended by Adam.**

High school teenager Mads's exploration of her sexuality uncovers truths her Catholic family has kept hidden, straining her close relationships with her father and her best friends. There are a lot of threads in this plot, but they gradually weave together through Crenshaw's dynamically composed comic panels. It's rare to find a book that successfully portrays the navigation of religion and sexuality, let alone one that acknowledges the traumas of high school while providing hope for a fulfilling, queer adulthood. LGBTQ+ readers struggling with their faith can find some comfort here.