

Booklist
Leading book discovery

October 2021
Vol. 1 No. 2

Booklist Reader

Book and audiobook recommendations for all ages

INSIDE:

**Adult Read-alikes:
Technology,
Surveillance, and
Resistance**

**The Essentials:
Scaring Up
YA—Adult Horror
Novels for Teens**

**Top 10 Science
Fiction/Fantasy &
Horror on Audio**

Cover art by artist Jeff Manning
and designer Erin Fitzsimmons,
from *White Smoke*, by Tiffany D.
Jackson

ALA American Library Association



From the Editor & Publisher

Time travel, parallel universes, magic, and monsters: this second *Booklist Reader* issue presents a mind-bending mix of adult and youth science fiction, fantasy, and horror recommendations, in print and on audio. Yes, these are some of my favorite genres (OK, fine, I like everything!), but this issue showcases books from other genres, too. You'll find those in Reserve These Reads for Adult (p.10) and Youth (p.20), two columns presenting the month's hottest releases, which you'll want to check out now or place on the hold list.

In the mood for even more scintillating suggestions and exceptional content? We've got you covered! Visit us at www.booklistonline.com, where you'll find the *Booklist* Blog, the *Shelf Care* podcast, and a rich selection of webinars—oh yeah, and lots and lots of book reviews. Happy scary, fantastic, and otherworldly reading!

—George Kendall
gkendall@ala.org

How to use *Booklist Reader*

Our goal is to promote reading and, as such, *Booklist Reader* and LibraryReads content is intended to be read and shared widely.

Do I have permission to print and redistribute *Booklist Reader* and LibraryReads content?

Yes! *Booklist Reader* users may print the full publication and/or individual pages (including LibraryReads pages), and circulate.

Do I have permission to share *Booklist Reader* digitally?

Libraries may post a link to *Booklist Reader* on their websites, in patron-facing newsletters, and other library-marketing materials. Individual pages of *Booklist Reader* and LibraryReads may be shared digitally (please include a link back to the full publication).

How will library patrons access *Booklist Reader*?

The first four issues (September–December 2021) will be free and open to everyone. Beginning in January 2022, *Booklist Reader* will be available only as part of a *Booklist* subscription. At that time, staff and patrons of subscribing libraries will have access to *Booklist Reader*. To access, head to *Booklist's* home page and click the *Booklist Reader* cover, updated monthly. The books highlighted in each issue are available in libraries now, so prepare to read and share widely!

About *Booklist*

Booklist is a book-review magazine that has been published by the American Library Association for more than 100 years and is widely viewed as offering the most reliable reviews to help libraries decide what to buy and to help library patrons and students decide what to read, view, or listen to.

Booklist Reader is supported by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Art from *A Glasshouse of Stars* (see p.14).



Booklist Reader

October 2021
Volume 1, Issue 2

Spotlight on Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror

Adult Books

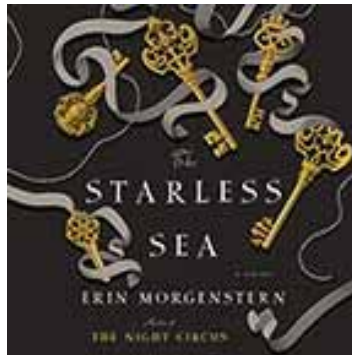
- 2 Top 10
SF/Fantasy & Horror
- 3 Top 10
SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts
- 4 The Essentials
Spectrum of Horror—From Shivers to Terror
by Susan Maguire & Becky Spratford
- 6 The Essentials
The Epic Fantasy Renaissance
by Susan Maguire
- 8 Adult Read-alikes
Technology, Surveillance, and Resistance
by Nell Keep
- 10 Reserve These Reads
Adult
- 12 LibraryReads
October Picks



- 18 A Conversation
Letting the Magic Speak—A Magic Realism Roundtable
- 20 Reserve These Reads
Youth

Audiobooks

- 21 Top 10
SF/Fantasy & Horror on Audio



Books for Youth

- 14 Top 10
SF/Fantasy & Horror for Youth
- 15 Top 10
SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts for Youth
- 16 The Essentials
Scaring Up YA—Adult Horror Novels for Teens
by Julia Smith



On the Cover

From *White Smoke*, by Tiffany Jackson, published by Katherine Tegen Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishing. *White Smoke* was reviewed in *Booklist* in July. Illustration © 2021 by Jeff Manning. Used by permission of the publisher.



Editor / Publisher

George Kendall

Adult Books

Donna Seaman, Editor, Adult Books
Susan Maguire, Senior Editor, Collection Management
and Library Outreach
Annie Bostrom, Associate Editor, Adult Books

Books for Youth

Sarah Hunter, Editor, Books for Youth
Maggie Reagan, Senior Editor, Books for Youth
Julia Smith, Senior Editor, Books for Youth
Ronny Khuri, Associate Editor, Books for Youth

Audiobooks

Heather Booth, Editor, Audio
Candy Smith, Contributing Reviewer, Audio
Terry Hong, Contributing Reviewer, Adult, Youth, Audio

Production

Ben Segedin, Production Director
Carlos Orellana, Production Editor
Chris Simon, Production Editor

Sales & Marketing

Melissa Carr, Marketing Director
Briana Shemroske, Marketing Associate
Grace Rosean, Marketing Associate
Daniel Kaplan, Subscriptions (312-280-5715)
Linda Cohen, Advertising Sales, New York
(914-944-0135)
Nancy Wood, Advertising Sales, East Coast
(610-285-2923)
Ryan King, Advertising Sales, Midwest & West
(773-414-9292)
Cynthia Harden, Ad Traffic

LibraryReads

Rebecca Vnuk, Executive Director

For a full listing of *Booklist's* Advisory Board and Staff,
please visit www.booklistonline.com

Booklist
Leading book discovery



Top 10

SF/Fantasy & Horror

The top sf, fantasy, and horror books explore deep issues like racism and ableism while still bringing all of the genre's cherished thrills and chills.

The Best of World SF, v.1. Ed. by Lavie Tidhar. 2021. IPG/Head of Zeus.

The inventiveness and creativity of these 26 tales, which range from focused and weird to vast and complex, create a rich and well-curated collection full of surprises.

The Burning God. By R. F. Kuang. 2020. Harper Voyager.

Bringing her complex Poppy War trilogy to a poignant conclusion, Kuang shines a searing light on the devastating price and valiant sacrifices of warfare.

The Jasmine Throne. By Tasha Suri. 2021. Orbit.

Priya's country suffers from a mysterious plague; Princess Malini is sent there to die by her zealot brother, and they share an inconvenient mutual attraction in a lavishly realized setting inspired by the history and epics of India.

Love after the End: An Anthology of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Speculative Fiction. Ed. by Joshua Whitehead. 2020. Arsenal Pulp.

These stories by Two-Spirit/queer Indigenous authors are a welcome alternative to the often hyperindividualist,



survivalist subgenre of postapocalyptic fiction, offering new possibilities for sf as a crucible for different futures.

A Master of Djinn. By P. Djèli Clark. 2021. Tor.com.

In 1912, 40 years after the mystic al-Jahiz put a hole through the realities that allowed djinn to enter our world, Cairo is a bustling metropolis with commerce, intrigue, and steampunk technology in Clark's delightful combination of mystery, fantasy, and romance.

My Heart Is a Chainsaw. By Stephen Graham Jones. 2021. Saga.

Jade, half-Indian, poor, and motherless, finds solace in 1980s horror movies in this brilliantly crafted, heart-breakingly beautiful slasher that presents a new type of authentic "final girl."

Project Hail Mary. By Andy Weir. 2021. Ballantine.

The sun is dying, abruptly and rapidly, and the survival of humanity depends on a lone astronaut who is unsure of where he is or how to tackle this monumental task.

The Queen of the Cicadas. By V. Castro. 2021. Flame Tree.

Belinda gets uncomfortably reacquainted with the urban legend of Milagros, a farm worker murdered in the 1950s, in this erotically charged supernatural thriller with violence that would make Quentin Tarantino blush.

Sorrowland. By Rivers Solomon. 2021. Farrar/MCD.

Fifteen-year-old Vern escapes from the Blessed Acres of Cain into the surrounding forest, where she gives birth to twins while being hunted by someone—or something—in this distinct and visceral exploration of the trauma of Black and queer bodies in an all-too-believable near future.

We Are Satellites. By Sarah Pinsker. 2021. Berkley.

David gets a Pilot, a brain implant that improves productivity, though his epileptic sister cannot in a world where innovation is primarily profit-driven, sparking an intricate cautionary tale woven with issues of discrimination, ableism, transparency, and more.



Art from the cover of *The Burning God*.

Top 10

SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts

The top 10 sf, fantasy, and horror debuts showcase fresh new voices exploring fantastic worlds, body horror, and folkloric retellings.

Composite Creatures. By Caroline Hardaker. 2021. Angry Robot.

In Hardaker's novel of a poisoned Earth and privatized health care, the land and air have become toxic, dooming most humans to an eventual "greying" unless they can secure access to exclusive experimental treatments.

The Forever Sea. By Joshua Phillip Johnson. 2021. DAW.

The world is covered in the vast grasses of the Miyazakiesque Forever Sea, where one junior hearth-fire keeper and her crew flee a corrupt but prosperous island nation into the heart of pirate-dominated Roughs.

The Mask of Mirrors. By M. A. Carrick. 2021. Orbit.

Con artist and former street rat Ren returns home to an occupied city in the otherwise free region of Vraszan, determined to infiltrate the elite but decaying House Traementis, but darker forces are at work in this richly detailed historical urban fantasy full of revenge and intrigue.

On Fragile Waves. By E. Lily Yu. 2021. Erewhon.

Stubborn, bold dreamer Firuzeh sets off with her family on a long, difficult journey to find asylum in Australia, telling folkloric stories to make sense of her tragic reality in this enchanting, fabulist novel.

She Who Became the Sun. By Shelley Parker-Chan. 2021. Tor.

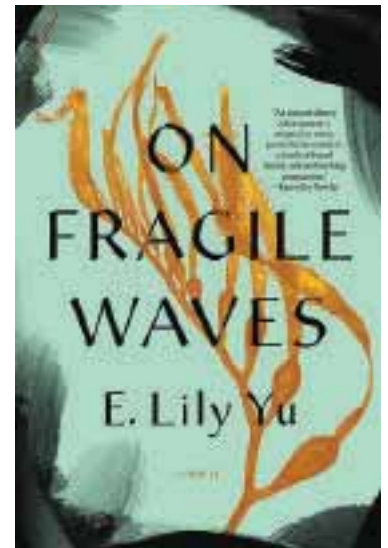
A second daughter tricks fate by stealing her brother's identity in order to achieve greatness in the first in a new high-fantasy series, an epic tale of the power of desire, the role of free will, and a powerful queer antihero.

Sun-Daughters, Sea-Daughters. By Aimee Ogden. 2021. Tor.com.

Brief but epic in world-building craft and characterization, this lyrical space opera, a retelling of "The Little Mermaid," finds a sea-turned-land creature returning to the underwater domes to find a cure for the plague devastating land-dwellers.

The Taxidermist's Lover. By Polly Hall. 2020. CamCat.

In this modern gothic, Scarlett recounts a calendar year with her taxidermist lover, Henry, during which



he turned his trade into high art, mixing animals into creepy, hybrid creations.

We Have Always Been Here. By Lena Nguyen. 2021. DAW.

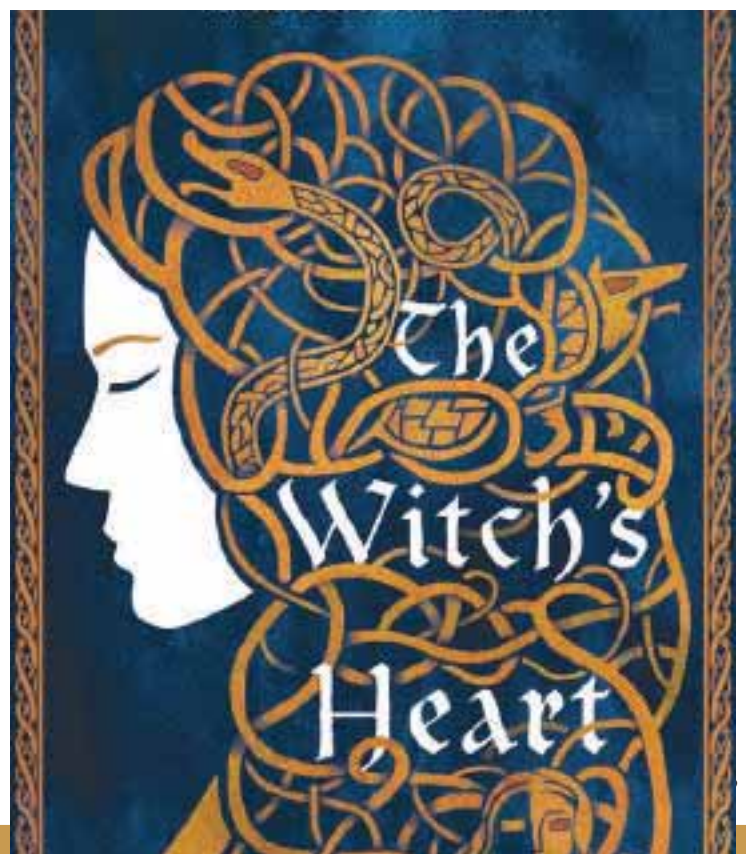
A psychologist with an affinity for androids may be the only hope for those aboard the *Deucalion*, who are slowly being manipulated by something in the hold of the ship, in a debut that seamlessly blends thriller and sf elements.

The Witch Hunter. By Max Seeck. 2020. Berkley.

A woman is murdered, and clues start to parallel her husband's books about witches and inquisitors in this dark, intricate, and cinematic supernatural thriller.

The Witch's Heart. By Genevieve Gornichec. 2021. Ace.

A feminist reimagining of Ragnarök melds Norse mythology with a story of tenderness and betrayal, friendship and loyalty, family and monsters, and beginnings and endings.





The Essentials

Spectrum of Horror—From Shivers to Terror

by Susan Maguire & Becky Spratford

Horror is a genre that elicits strong feelings, and readers look for those thrills and chills. But not everybody wants an all-out gore fest, nor does everybody want a light sense of spookiness, and fortunately horror writers provide many levels of fright in between these extremes. This Spectrum of Horror will help match the right intensity of scariness with the right reader. Of course we understand that “scary” means different things for different people, but between a horror-reading veteran, *Booklist* horror reviewer Becky; and a real scaredy-cat, *Booklist* senior editor Susan, we think we’ve placed each book in the right place.

Shivers

Readers of these books will want to keep the lights on, but they probably won’t have nightmares. These titles include an urban-fantasy retelling of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a sweet and ominous Pandora’s Box tale, a masterful haunted-house story, and two novellas that stitch together Lovecraftian cosmic horror with eerie terrestrial elements.

- **Creatures of Will and Temper.** By Molly Tanzer. 2017. HMH/Mariner.
- **Gwendy’s Button Box.** By Stephen King and Richard Chizmar. 2017. Cemetery Dance.
- **The Invited.** By Jennifer McMahon. 2019. Doubleday.
- **A Lush and Seething Hell.** By John Hornor Jacobs. 2019. Harper Voyager.

Dread

These books will unsettle readers, leaving them with an uneasy feeling, but they will be able to keep the fear at bay. Here you’ll find an Iraq War–set monster story, an accounting of the Donner Party, a claustrophobic social experiment that separates young people by gender, and a grown-up Scooby gang on the trail of the monster that got away.

- **Frankenstein in Baghdad.** By Ahmed Saadawi. Tr. by Jonathan Wright. 2018. Penguin Press.
- **The Hunger.** By Alma Katsu. 2018. Putnam.
- **Inspection.** By Josh Malerman. 2019. Del Rey.
- **Meddling Kids.** By Edgar Cantero. 2017. Doubleday/Blumhouse.



Fright

Menacing is the word for these books. They're not necessarily gory, although they can be. Readers who venture into these tales will start to lose control of their fear. Our choices in this category include a supernatural tale of the gentrification of a whaling town, a woman facing evil forces, a privileged young woman and a mold-infested manor house, and a true-crime book club that may have its own case to contend with when a mysterious stranger comes to town.

- **The Blade Between.** By Sam J. Miller. 2020. Ecco.
- **The Good House.** By Tananarive Due. 2004. Washington Square.
- **Mexican Gothic.** By Silvia Moreno-Garcia. 2020. Del Rey.
- **The Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires.** By Grady Hendrix. 2020. Quirk.

Panic

On this level of horror, readers lose control of reality and the primal instinct takes over and silences reason. Readers might want to hide the book in the freezer to get a bit of a reprieve. These panic-inducing titles include a Jazz-Age retelling of a Lovecraft classic, a gruesome and modern zombie tale, a mingling of Mexican folklore and Aztec goddesses at a Texas wedding, and a deadly force that kills with a mere touch.

- **The Ballad of Black Tom.** By Victor LaValle. 2016. Tor.
- **The Living Dead.** By George A. Romero and Daniel Kraus. 2020. Tor.
- **The Queen of the Cicadas.** By V. Castro. 2021. Flame Tree.
- **Red Hands.** By Christopher Golden. 2020. St. Martin's.

Terror

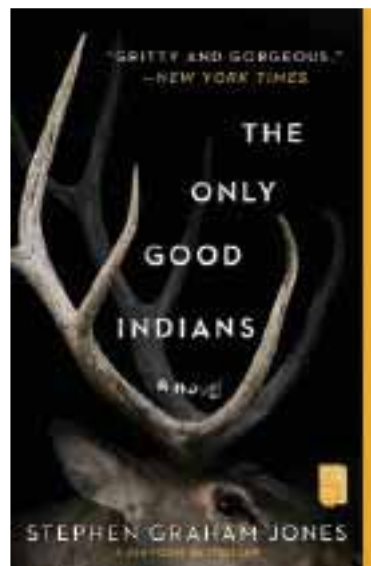
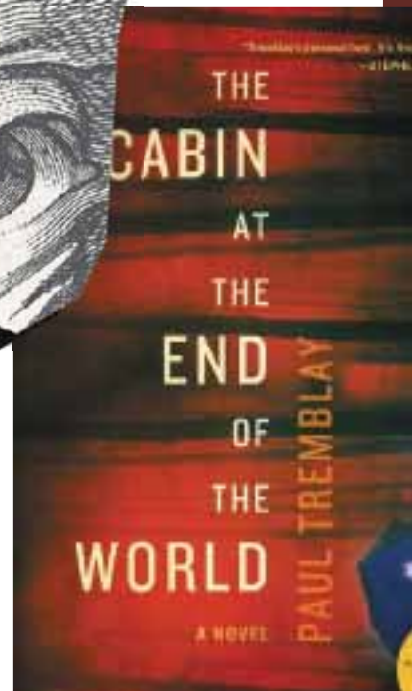
Bleak and gory offerings for readers who want the book to be in charge. They can't hide from the terror, and they don't want to. As Becky says, "These books will break you, and you'll be glad they did." These hardcore choices include a family facing the apocalypse, a mysterious black vortex that leads two slackers to bodily horrors, the story of an elk hunt that instigates lifelong supernatural consequences, and a tale of grief over a Final Girl intensified by an evil monster.

- **The Cabin at the End of the World.** By Paul Tremblay. 2018. Morrow.
- **The Cipher.** By Kathe Koja. 2020. Meerkat.
- **The Only Good Indians.** By Stephen Graham Jones. 2020. Saga.
- **Slash.** By Hunter Shea. 2019. Flame Tree.

Becky Spratford is the author of *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Horror*. The third edition was published in August by ALA Editions.



Art from the cover of *Frankenstein in Baghdad*.



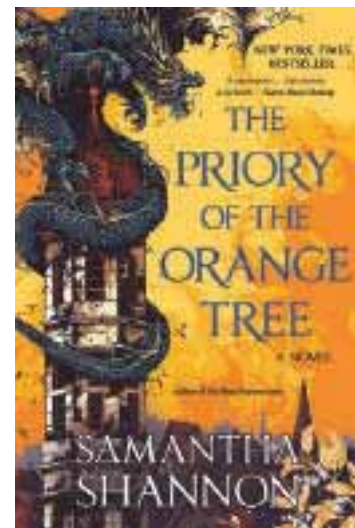
The Essentials

The Epic Fantasy Renaissance

by Susan Maguire

What makes a fantasy epic? It has to be big: a big, historical-seeming world with big magic; a big cast of characters; a big, political plot that surrounds a big quest; and a big page count. Epic fantasy's roots go back to Granddaddy Tolkien, and the genre has experienced a resurgence of popularity with TV series adaptations of George R. R. Martin's *Game of Thrones*, Terry Brooks' *Shannara*, N. K. Jemisin's *Inheritance Trilogy*, and Erika Johansen's *Queen of the Tearling*. Today's epic fantasists may take direction from the old masters, but they are forging new paths of worldbuilding, with worlds inspired by their own backgrounds, and new depths of characterization and diverse casts that include women who are more than merely pawns. Here are a few newly published epic fantasy series—some completed, some just getting started—that represent the best of the new class.

Art from the covers of *The Poppy War* (left) and *A Hero Born* (right).



Black Leopard, Red Wolf. By Marlon James. 2019. Riverhead.

James' Africa-inspired Dark Star Trilogy starter follows Tracker, on the hunt for a missing child, through wild-lands and cities, and through encounters with zombies, mermaids, and the elusive, shape-shifting Leopard.

The Bloodprint. By Ausma Zehanat Khan. 2017. Harper Voyager.

Arian and her apprentice Sinnia return home to find that the magical tides have turned, and a new ally sends them on a quest to find a book that contains the very spirit of their beliefs. The fourth and final book in the Khorasan Archives (*The Bladebone*) comes out this month.

The City of Brass. By S. A. Chakraborty. 2017. Harper Voyager.

The Daevabad Trilogy just wrapped up (with *The Empire of Gold*, 2020), so readers can fully immerse themselves in the world of Cairo con artist Nahri, who is transported to a city where the pure-blood djinns seek to oppress the half-blood djinns, with Prince Ali caught between family loyalty and what he knows to be right.

Empire of Sand. By Tasha Suri. 2018. Orbit.

The South Asian-inspired Books of Ambha series begins with half-Amrithi Mehr inadvertently using magic during a sandstorm, which brings her to the attention of a powerful mystic with a marriage proposal. The series continues with *Realm of Ash* (2019).

A Hero Born. By Jin Yong. Translated by Anna Holmwood. 2019. St. Martin's.

Yong was one of China's most popular authors of wuxia, novels of martial arts heroics, and Holmwood's translation is the chance for English readers to start the epic Legends of the Condor Heroes series, the first volume of which follows a twelfth-century boy who, aided by the Seven Heroes of the South, trains with Genghis Khan.



The Poppy War. By R. F. Kuang. 2018. Harper Voyager.

Though Rin is an orphan, she fights her way into the Empire's military academy, where she trains under the eccentric Master Jiang, who helps her explore her innate talent for the mystical art of shamanism. The third and final book in the Poppy War series (*The Burning God*) comes out in November.

The Priory of the Orange Tree. By Samantha Shannon. 2019. Bloomsbury.

Inspired by the legend of George and the dragon, evil dragons begin to reappear while the Berethnet queen rules without an heir in a standalone historical fantasy that has it all: heroism, romance, friendship, pirates, plagues, and dragons.

Queen of the Conquered. By Kacen Callender. 2019. Orbit.

In an alternate colonial Caribbean, Sigourney Rose, the daughter of a freed slave and a nobleman, slowly gains enough power and influence to free her people, but someone else is killing ruling families, disrupting her revenge plot. The second Islands of Blood and Storm book (*King of the Rising*) came out in 2020.

Race the Sands. By Sarah Beth Durst. 2020. Harper Voyager.

This standalone epic features a down-on-her-luck former champion of the Grand Becaran Race who agrees to teach a teenage runaway to train and ride a lethal monster in a world where aura-reading priests guide souls to their next life.

The Rage of Dragons. By Evan Winter. 2019. Orbit.

Winter's debut is also the start of the Burning series based on his South African heritage, in which Tau, a commoner training as a warrior in the 200-year war between the Chosen and the native Hedin, finds a new purpose: revenge. Book two (*The Fires of Vengeance*) is also available.

The Ruin of Kings. By Jenn Lyons. 2019. Tor.

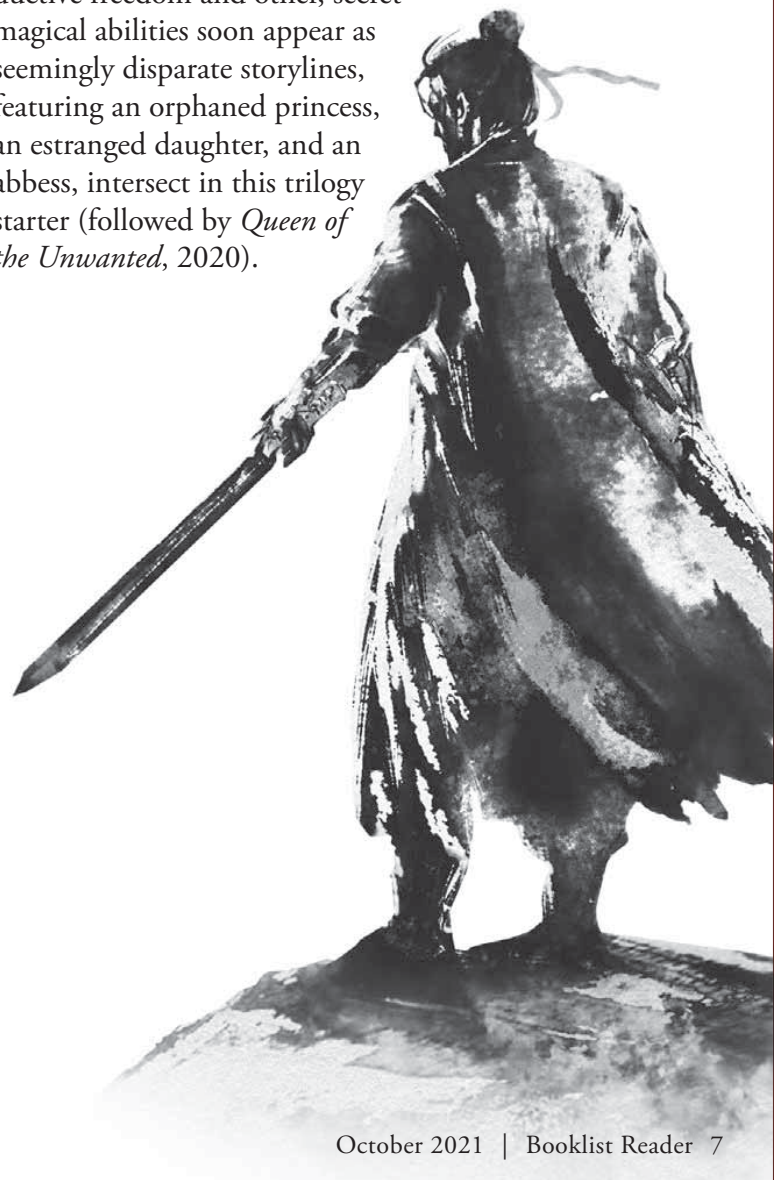
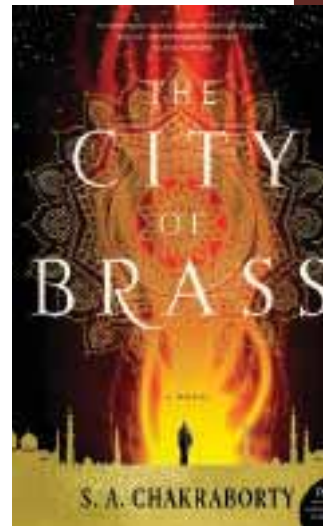
A twisting genealogy of royal families, goddesses who walk among humans, demons and dragons, and a man who awakens to a destiny that involves magic and swordplay—it's all in the first of the proposed five-book Chorus of Dragons series (which continues in *The Name of All Things*, 2019, and *The Memory of Souls*, 2020).

Song of Blood and Stone. By L. Penelope. 2018. St. Martin's.

Jasminda was born with her father's Lagrimari skin and magical Earthsong, which make her an outcast in Elsira, until she heals an Elsiran soldier and joins his quest to prevent a war. The fourth and final Earthsinger Chronicles book (*Requiem of Silence*) published in August.

The Women's War. By Jenna Glass. 2019. Del Rey.

A powerful spell grants women reproductive freedom and other, secret magical abilities soon appear as seemingly disparate storylines, featuring an orphaned princess, an estranged daughter, and an abbess, intersect in this trilogy starter (followed by *Queen of the Unwanted*, 2020).





Art from the cover of *Autonomous*.

Adult Read-alikes

Technology, Surveillance, and Resistance

By Nell Keep

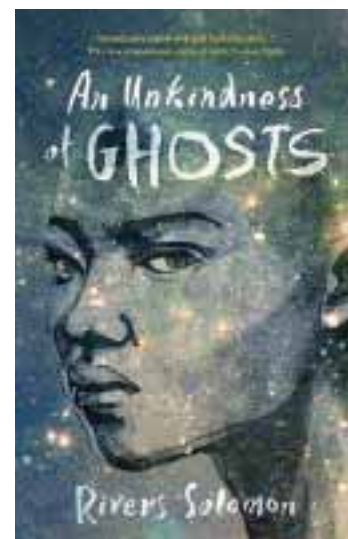
In *Attack Surface*, Cory Doctorow digs deep into the relationship between surveillance technology and political possibility, and asks if change can happen despite overwhelming resistance. Each of these books, ranging from sf to historical fiction to investigative nonfiction, explores the same fruitful concerns in unique ways.

The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther. By Jeffrey Haas. 2011. Chicago Review.

In Haas' riveting account of how he and his People's Law Office colleagues investigated and prosecuted the Chicago Police Department for the murder of Fred Hampton, he reveals the deep involvement of FBI surveillance under the COINTELPRO program, and the book is a perfect example of the effects of state surveillance, and subsequent violence, on people that the state deems "worthy of interest."

Autonomous. By Annalee Newitz. 2017. Tor.

Newitz's debut presents a world in which patents on essential biotech have resulted in astronomical medical costs, so the average person relies on grey market solu-



tions. A near-future pharmaceutical Robin Hood must figure out why the scrip she's been writing turned deadly, while the team pursuing her, one human and one robot, deal with their own rapidly evolving relationship. The combination of fast-paced action with an interrogation of how privatized medicine and technology affects human (or AI) autonomy makes this an excellent companion to Doctorow's work.

I Hotel. By Karen Tei Yamashita. 2010. Coffee House.

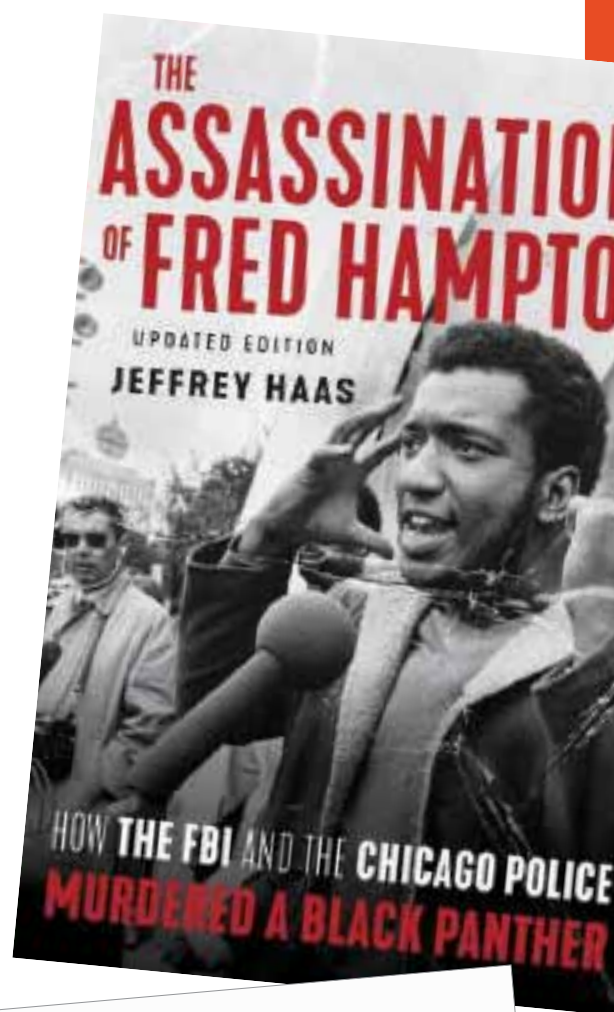
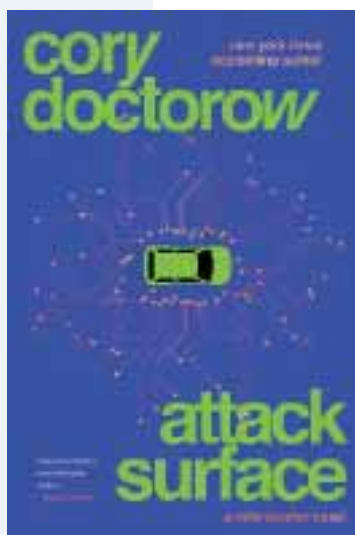
Yamashita's expansive historical novel about Asian American political activism in 1960s and '70s San Francisco plays with various styles and forms across its decades-spanning narrative. A particularly powerful section goes into the effects of COINTELPRO surveillance on Asian American activist groups, and how the use of surveillance technology and undercover operatives creates an atmosphere of suspicion, even among trusted comrades.

The Tiger Flu. By Larissa Lai. 2018. Arsenal Pulp.

Lai's alien future presents a community of women who rely on their own bizarre genetically altered biology to resist being forced to return to a patriarchal society. As one

Attack Surface. By Cory Doctorow. 2020. Tor.

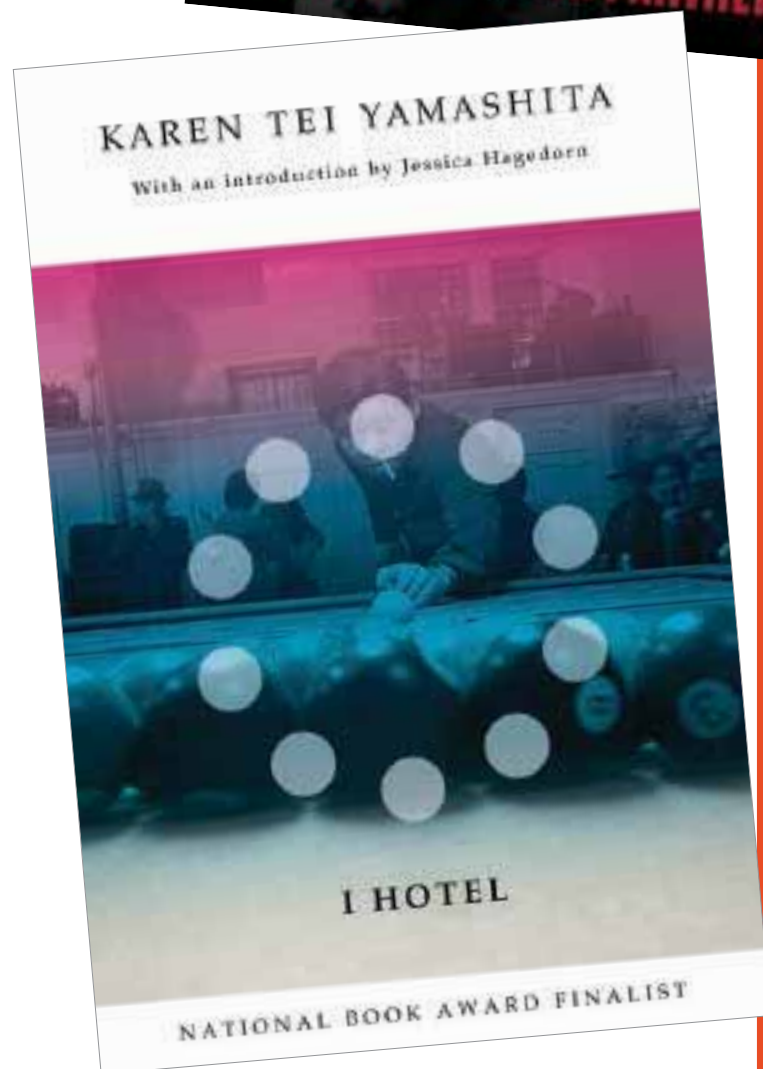
This adult follow-up to Doctorow's YA *Little Brother* novels (starting with *Little Brother*, 2008) shifts perspective from the idealist Marcus Yallow to his sometime antagonist, sometime friend Masha Maximow. Masha has spent her life compartmentalizing, keeping her work as a surveillance contractor to repressive regimes separate from her friendship with—and clandestine support for—people attempting to hide from said regimes. When a protest in the Eastern Bloc country Masha works in goes awry due to her interventions, she is let go from her job, and her carefully crafted internal compartments begin breaking down. The narrative leaps back and forth between Masha's present, as she returns to Oakland and attempts to help a friend evade police surveillance, and her past as a teen wunderkind for the DHS and contractor under the chilly and possibly psychotic Carrie Johnstone. Doctorow explores his earlier novels' idealism and anti-authoritarian politics from the deeply conflicted point of view of someone on the inside. He remains a strong and passionate storyteller, capturing all of Masha's internal and external conflicts while also debating the real-world concerns of surveillance, counter-surveillance, and the limits of both. Highly recommended for those interested in near-future sf with a politically aware bent. —*Nell Keep*



woman seeks a replacement for her dead, organ-creating lover, she must journey to the heart of the plague-ridden city her community abandoned decades before. The intimate connections between technology, survival, and political resistance in Lai's novel make it a fascinating complement to Doctorow's own near-future concerns.

An Unkindness of Ghosts. By Rivers Solomon. 2017. Akashic.

The racially stratified society of the spaceship *Matilda* is supposedly united around the ship's eventual destination on an inhabitable planet. As lower-decks healer Aster begins to investigate their mother's suicide, they come to unravel the many and sundry ways that the vast ship's technology has been twisted to serve its oppressive elite. While Solomon's far-future generation ship is very distant from the setting of *Attack Surface*, their debut novel is intimately concerned with the same issues of technology and power.



Nell Keep is a *Booklist* reviewer with special interests in genre, "experimental," and LGBTQ fiction.

Reserve These Reads

Adult

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.

Nonfiction

Act Like You Got Some Sense. By Jamie Foxx. Grand Central.

Actor, musician, and comedian Foxx reflects on parenting two daughters who have very different personalities, a chronicle that is presented in tandem with commentary (and reality checks) from the daughters themselves.

The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times. By Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams. Celadon.

Iconic naturalist Goodall and author Abrams explore the uniquely human element of hope, from what it means to how to hold on to it.

Bourdain: The Definitive Oral Biography. By Laurie Woolever. Ecco.

Woolever, a longtime collaborator of Anthony Bourdain's, gathers testimonials from those who knew the beloved chef and globe-trekker best.

Going There. By Katie Couric. Little, Brown.

Couric's memoir promises a brutally honest look at 40 years in the news business alongside heartfelt personal stories.

Hip-Hop (And Other Things). By Shea Serrano. Art by Arturo Torres. Twelve.

The first two titles in Serrano's best-selling (And Other Things) series covered basketball and movies; here he brings his wit and expertise to hip-hop, celebrating the best of its 25-year reign in the music world.

Reclamation: Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson, and a Descendant's Search for Her Family's Lasting Legacy. By Gayle Jessup White. Amistad.

Journalist Jessup White sets out to find the truth behind family lore stating that they were direct, Black descendants of Thomas Jefferson, taking readers on an epic and moving genealogical journey.

The Storyteller: Tales of Life and Music. By Dave Grohl. Dey Street.

Musicians' memoirs are always popular, and the first book from Nirvana and the Foo Fighters' Grohl promises wild stories and insights on music and life.

Fiction

2 Sisters Detective Agency. By James Patterson and Candice Fox. Grand Central.

Patterson and Fox team up again after the Harriet Blue series with this story of two sisters who don't know they are sisters until they inherit a detective agency from their estranged father.

April in Spain. By John Banville. Hanover Square.

In this follow-up to the best-selling crime novel *Snow*, Irish pathologist Quirke is vacationing in San Sebastian when he sees a woman who'd supposedly been murdered years before, now very much alive, setting off a chain of even more mysterious events.

As the Wicked Watch. By Tamron Hall. Morrow.

Journalist and talk-show host Hall enters the thriller game with the first in a proposed series about reporter Jordan Manning, here on the trail of a serial killer targeting Black girls in Chicago.

Crossroads. By Jonathan Franzen. Farrar.

The first novel in a trilogy about the Chicago-based Hildebrandt family begins in 1971, as the parents contemplate divorce and their children get wrapped up in activism and the counterculture.

The Lincoln Highway. By Amor Towles. Viking.

In 1950s Nebraska, a young man recently released from serving time for involuntary manslaughter tries to rebuild his life.

Oh William! By Elizabeth Strout. Random.

Strout's beloved character Lucy Barton is back, after *Anything Is Possible*, this time recalling her decades-long relationship with her first husband, William.

State of Terror. By Hillary Rodham Clinton and Louise Penny. Simon & Schuster.

Two powerhouse writers—one a prominent political leader who nearly became the first woman president of the United States, the other an acclaimed crime novelist—join forces in this international political thriller that centers on a Secretary of State caught in a complicated conspiracy against the U.S.

Art from the cover of *Oh William!*



Celebrate National Friends of Libraries Week

OCTOBER 17–23, 2021

Learn more about National Friends of Libraries Week and how to join United for Libraries at www.ala.org/united.

♥ ilovelibraries.org

Find out how to support and advocate for libraries at www.ilovelibraries.org and [sign up to receive the I Love Libraries newsletter](#).

United for Libraries

Association of Library Trustees,
Advocates, Friends and Foundations

A division of the American Library Association





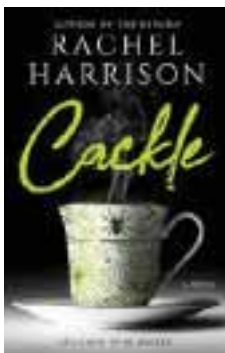
All the Feels
A Novel
by Olivia Dade
(Avon)

"Alex is an actor on a Game of Thrones-type TV show entering its final season. Lauren's job is to keep him out of trouble. Their relationship develops over forced proximity, a road trip, and tons of fanfic tropes (only one bed!). This steamy romance, with flawed, genuine characters and sensitive treatment of mental health and body issues, is a delight from start to finish. For fans of *Spoiler Alert*, *Girl Gone Viral*, and *One To Watch*."

—Lauren Mitchell, Neenah Public Library, Neenah, WI
NovelList read-alike: *Incense and Sensibility* by Sonali Dev



October 2021 - The top ten books published this month that library staff across the country love.



Cackle
by Rachel Harrison
(Berkley)

"Annie is floundering after an unexpected breakup and a subsequent move to a small, quirky town. Her new friend Sophie is a little strange, but Annie is so happy to have someone who has chosen her that she ignores her concerns. This delightfully creepy fall story will work well for those who like paranormal fiction and light horror, and fans of *The Year of the Witching* and *The Deep*."

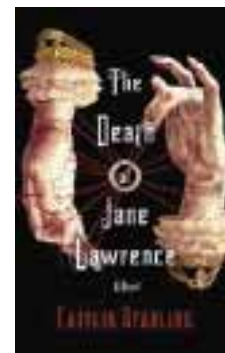
—Rebecca Swanson, Fitchburg Public Library, Fitchburg, WI
NovelList read-alike: *We Ride Upon Sticks* by Quan Barry



Death at Greenway
A Novel
by Lori Rader-Day
(William Morrow Paperbacks)

"In this departure from Rader-Day's usual thriller, two young women, hired as nurses to care for a group of children, are evacuated to Agatha Christie's country estate during WWII. Then a dead body shows up, and suddenly there's no telling what is safe and who can be trusted. For fans of Agatha Christie and Louise Penny."

—Linda Quinn, Fairfield Public Library, Fairfield, CT
NovelList read-alike: *In Farleigh Field* by Rhys Bowen



The Death of Jane Lawrence
A Novel
by Caitlin Starling
(St. Martin's Press)

"Jane, a sensible young woman, decides that she must get married. Her first choice is Dr. Lawrence, but she soon discovers his dark, terrifying secrets and becomes engulfed in a tangled mystery of magic, ghosts, demons, and bizarre rituals. A well-written story for fans of gothic fantasy and horror like *Gideon the Ninth* and *Mexican Gothic*."

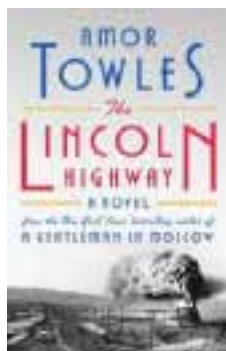
—Sandra Allen, South Community Library, St. Petersburg, FL
NovelList read-alike: *The Silent Companions* by Laura Purcell



Last Girl Ghosted
by Lisa Unger
(Park Row)

"Wren meets Adam on a dating app, and they seem to hit it off. After she tells him a secret, though, he ghosts her. She refuses to let it go and starts searching for him. What she finds is shocking, but she can match him in the secret department. Chilling, twisty, and hard to put down. Give to fans of *Ghosted* and *The Couple Next Door*."

—Shari Suarez, Genesee District Library, Goodrich, MI
NovelList read-alike: *The Date* by Louise Jensen



The Lincoln Highway
A Novel
by Amor Towles
(Viking)

"In 1952, castoffs from a Nebraska juvenile detention camp embark on a road trip that takes them in different directions than initially intended. There's so much genuine sweetness and aching loss in this exuberant book full of characters you'll care about deeply. For fans of John Irving and Ann Patchett."

—Diana Armstrong, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR
NovelList read-alike: *Last Bus to Wisdom* by Ivan Doig



Nothing But Blackened Teeth
by Cassandra Khaw
(Tor Nightfire)

"This short, creepy haunted house tale, brimming with Japanese folklore, cleverly reveals the monstrousness in ordinary human callousness—we're awful not from horrendous actions or beliefs, but because we just react and shout each other down. For fans of *My Heart is a Chainsaw* and *The Toll*."

—Matthew Galloway, Anythink Libraries, Thornton, CO
NovelList read-alike: *Slade House* by David Mitchell



Once More Upon a Time
by Roshani Chokshi
(Sourcebooks Casablanca)

"In this classic fairytale with a twist, a prince and princess who became a cursed king and queen are given a second chance at a future. The storyline and characters are engaging, but it's the beautiful, flowing writing that really stands out. Recommended for readers of *Stardust* and *Kill the Farmboy*."

—Sandra Woodbury, Burlington Public Library, Burlington, MA
NovelList read-alike: *Monkey Around* by Jadie Jang



Payback's a Witch
by Lana Harper
(Berkley Jove)

"Emmy reluctantly returns to her hometown to serve as arbiter of a magical tournament. But the town now seemingly has much more to offer, including a gorgeous witch. Will she be enough incentive for Emmy to stay? Romance and a well-developed magical system make this perfect for fans of TJ Klune and Seanan McGuire."

—Alicia Ahlvers, Henrico County Public Library, Henrico, VA
NovelList read-alike: *The Ex Hex* by Erin Sterling



A Spindle Splintered
by Alix E. Harrow
(Tordotcom)

"Harrow delights with a queer fractured fairy tale novella. Zinnia Grey, forever obsessed with the Sleeping Beauty story, gets a spindle for her 21st birthday. When she pricks her finger, she's transported to another dimension and finds a princess who'd rather not marry the dashing prince. For fans of Naomi Novik and Margaret Atwood."

—Jill Minor, Washington County Public Library, Abingdon, VA
NovelList read-alike: *Briar Rose* by Jane Yolen

Made in LibraryAware - www.libraryaware.com

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org



OCTOBER 2021

The LibraryReads Hall of Fame designation honors authors who have had multiple titles appear on the monthly LibraryReads list since 2013. When their third title places on the list via library staff votes, the author moves into the Hall of Fame.



The Book of Magic
A Novel
by Alice Hoffman
(Simon & Schuster)

"If you want a deep story about women, mothers, daughters and love in all its forms, look no further. We follow the Owens family as they try to break the curse that kept them from loving freely. This is a beautiful ending for these characters readers have grown to love. For fans of *The Orphan Witch* and *Cackle*."

—Kris Hickey, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Columbus, OH
NovelList read-alike: *The Forbidden Garden* by Ellen Herrick



A Line to Kill
A Novel
by Anthony Horowitz
(Harper)

"Ex-D.I. Daniel Hawthorne and his sidekick Anthony Horowitz face a locked-island murder at an exclusive literary festival on the island of Alderney. The author's subtle humor and phrasing shines in this latest book in the Hawthorne & Horowitz series, which is full of brilliant misdirection, beautifully set-out clues, and a diabolically clever denouement. Readers who enjoy English detective stories that overwhelm you with characters and plot devices will be thrilled."

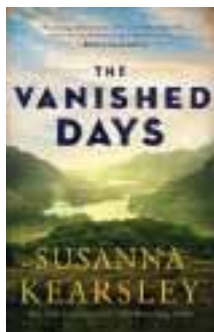
—Jane Easterly, Galesburg Public Library, Galesburg, IL
NovelList read-alike: *Fiction Can Be Murder* by Becky Clark



Oh William!
A Novel
by Elizabeth Strout
(Random House)

"Readers of *I Am Lucy Barton* will delight in the chance to revisit the character. The reflections on life, love and marriage are conveyed in Ms. Strout's conversational yet concise writing. Readers will feel like they are having a personal discussion with Strout in their minds. For fans of Marilynne Robinson and Ann Patchett."

—Carol Tuttle, Willoughby-Eastlake Public Library, Willoughby, OH
NovelList read-alike: *The Silent Treatment* by Abbie Greaves



The Vanished Days
by Susanna Kearsley
(Sourcebooks Landmark)

"In 1707 Scotland, Adam is given the task of proving or disproving Lily's claim that she should receive a widow's pension. Political unrest, strong women, a hint of romance and danger adds up to a sweeping historical saga. This is the book to read if you love Diana Gabaldon or Sara Donati."

—Kimberly McGee, Lake Travis Community Library, Austin, TX
NovelList read-alike: *The Island House* by Posie Graeme-Evans



Well Matched
by Jen DeLuca
(Berkley Jove)

"When Mitch asks April to pose as his girlfriend for an upcoming family event, you immediately know where this is going. If you're a fan of Lyssa Kay Adams or Tessa Bailey, then you'll enjoy this light, feel-good romance!"

—Rosanna Johnson, Chandler Public Library, Chandler, AZ
NovelList read-alike: *The Dating Plan* by Sara Desai

Made inLibraryAware - www.libraryaware.com

Find out more at www.LibraryReads.org

Top 10

SF/Fantasy & Horror for Youth

It may come as no surprise that viruses feature prominently in this selection of best sf/fantasy & horror novels for youth (mostly the horror). But among these titles, you can also find books that run the gamut from biting satires to cozy fantasies about found family.

The Darkness outside Us. By Eliot Schrefer. 2021. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen. Gr. 9–12.

On an interplanetary mission to rescue his missing sister from the moons of Saturn, Ambrose finds himself deeply drawn to a boy who, though he shares his mission, is also his enemy.

Eat Your Heart Out. By Kelly deVos. 2021. Razorbill. Gr. 8–11.

At a weight-loss camp in Arizona, six teenagers face down a horde of hungry zombies in a high-stakes adventure that unpicks genre conventions and tackles fatphobia head-on.

The Electric Kingdom. By David Arnold. 2021. Viking. Gr. 8–12.

In an intricately built, high-concept piece of sf, Arnold follows 18-year-old Nico and 12-year-old Kit as their journeys intersect in a postapocalyptic New England decimated by “Flu-flies” and illness.

A Glasshouse of Stars. By Shirley Marr. 2021. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 4–7.

When Meixing and her parents arrive in the disorienting New Land, they discover that their house grows bigger or smaller as they need. Dreamily told in second person, this is a gorgeous meditation on the nebulous idea of home.

The Lion of Mars. By Jennifer L. Holm. 2021. Random. Gr. 3–6.

In 2091, 11-year-old Bell lives a cozy and collaborative life in America’s underground settlement on Mars, until a virus infects all American adults and forces the kids to seek aid from neighboring settlements.

The Mirror Season. By Anna-Marie McLemore. 2021. Feiwei and Friends. Gr. 9–12.

After they’re both sexually assaulted, Ciela helps an un-

conscious boy to the hospital. Then her magical power, to know exactly which pan dulce customers need, disappears. In a story inspired by “The Snow Queen,” McLemore weaves an empowering tale of healing.

Skunk and Badger. By Amy Timberlake. Illus. by Jon Klassen. 2020. Algonquin. Gr. 2–4.

Badger lives a solitary, tidy life in his aunt Lula’s brownstone. This is exactly how he likes things, so it’s a shock when Skunk appears with the news that he is to be Badger’s new housemate.

Once upon a Camel. By Kathi Appelt. Illus. by Eric Rohmann. 2021. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 4–7.

After a desert sandstorm sweeps a pair of kestrel parents away, Zada, an elderly camel, calms their anxious babies by spinning yarns of her extraordinary life. Soft oil paintings add to the fantastical proceedings.

Sisters of the Neversea. By Cynthia Leitich Smith. 2021. HarperCollins/Heartdrum. Gr. 3–6.

In this fresh rebuttal of *Peter & Wendy*, Peter Pan sweeps best-friends/stepsisters Wendy (white) and Lily (Muscogee Creek) away to Neverland, but he soon reveals his dark side, forcing Lily to rescue her sister from his violent games.

The Snow Fell Three Graves Deep: Voices from the Donner Party. By Allan Wolf. 2020. Candlewick. Gr. 8–12.

In a mixture of poetry and prose and through multiple narrators—including, chillingly, Hunger—Wolf excavates the experiences of the Donner Party. Though historical fiction, this book is truly slow-burn horror that sees loyalties fractured and minds shattered.

Art from the cover of *A Glasshouse of Stars*.



Top 10

SF/Fantasy & Horror Debuts for Youth

These debut sf/fantasy & horror novels offer vivid worlds, dynamic characters, and imaginative narratives that touch meaningfully on real-world concerns.

Blood like Magic. By Liselle Sambury. 2021. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry. Gr. 9–12.

In order for Voya to finally receive her family's magic, she must destroy her first love. This dazzling magical world comments on real-world racism against the Black community.

Cece Rios and the Desert of Souls. By Kaela Rivera. 2021. Harper. Gr. 4–8.

After gentle Cece helps a misunderstood criatura, one of the terrifying monsters that haunts her town, she's viewed with suspicion. But when her sister goes missing, Cece must use her kindness and grit in this novel imbued with Mexican American legends.

Cinderella Is Dead. By Kalynn Bayron. 2020. Bloomsbury. Gr. 8–12.

Cunning Sophia's determined to dismantle the "Cinderella"-inspired rules of her kingdom, which keep the town's young women vulnerable. Bayron gleefully undercuts the fairy tale in this fast-paced, sly debut.

Girl Giant and the Monkey King. By Van Hoang. 2020. Roaring Brook. Gr. 4–7.

Afraid of being teased, Thom Ngoh hides her Vietnamese heritage, but she also possesses incredible, uncontrollable strength. She'll need it after she accidentally releases the Monkey King and embarks on an adventure inspired by Vietnamese legends.

Legendborn. By Tracy Deonn. 2020. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse. Gr. 9–12.

Bree infiltrates a traditionally white, racist secret society in this modern take on Arthurian myth, which is drenched in Southern magic.

The Monster Who Wasn't. By T. C. Shelley. 2020. Bloomsbury. Gr. 5–7.

Predicated on the lesser-known fact that monsters come from a dying person's last sigh of regret, this series opener centers on a lad who hatches in the subterranean kingdom of the brutal Troll King.



Spindlefish and Stars. By Christiane M. Andrews. 2020. Little, Brown. Gr. 5–8.

When young Clo's father goes missing, she sets out after him to a curious island where she struggles to unravel the mystery of her own murky origins.

These Violent Delights. By Chloe Gong. 2020. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse. Gr. 9–12.

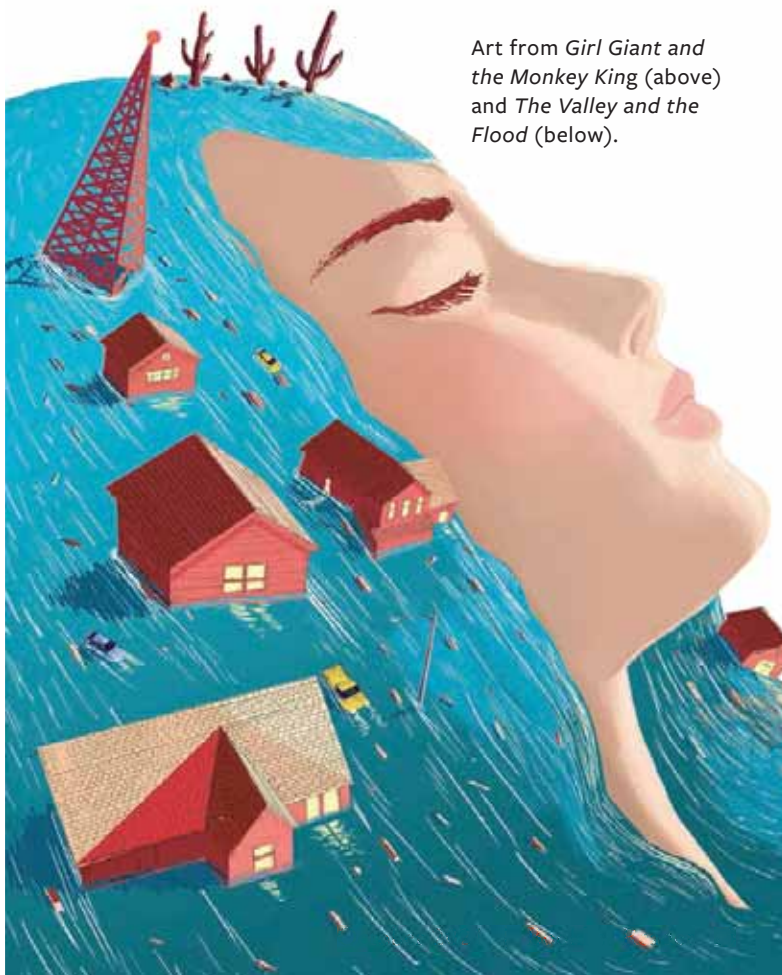
Gong reimagines *Romeo and Juliet* in a richly realized 1920s Shanghai, where rival factions battle for control of the city and rumors swirl of a river monster that can cause suicidal madness in the people of the city.

The Valley and the Flood. By Rebecca Mahoney. 2021. Razorbill. Gr. 9–12.

When Rose gets stranded in the eerie town of Lotus Valley, she finds odd occurrences and a prophecy foreboding a destructive flood. This poignant exploration of emotion and trauma teems with strange magic.

The Year I Flew Away. By Marie Arnold. 2021. HarperCollins/Versify. Gr. 3–6.

Gabrielle flees violence in Haiti to live with her aunt and uncle in America, but when she makes a wish to fit in, the consequences are unexpected in this fantastical, refreshing take on one girl's experience as an immigrant.



Art from *Girl Giant and the Monkey King* (above) and *The Valley and the Flood* (below).



Art from the covers of *My Best Friend's Exorcism* (left) and *Children of the Dark* (right).

The Essentials

Scaring Up YA— Adult Horror Novels for Teens

by Julia Smith

Our recent partnership with the Summer Scares reading program has made us more excited than ever to help readers find great horror picks. With that in mind, I decided to sneak over to the adult section and (with some guidance from Susan Maguire) find a selection of recent horror novels that teen readers would die for the chance to read.

Angel of the Underground. By David Andreas. 2018. Akashic.

When a series of grisly murders occurs at the Hartman Catholic Group Home, 15-year-old Robin is rehoused with the decidedly off-kilter Grantham family. Hand to older teens with a penchant for character-driven horror and dysfunctional families.

Bite. By K. S. Merbeth. 2016. Orbit.

In a postnuclear, apocalyptic world, Kid, a teenage girl, falls in with a gang and embarks on a *Mad Max*-style adventure through a hostile landscape in which cannibalism is a real survival option. Filled with dark humor and wit, this story puts the idea of “good guys” to the test.

Blood Sugar. By Daniel Kraus. 2019. Hard Case Crime.

Couched within this twisted Halloween revenge tale is a downright tender alternative-family story of three young misfits and the pathetic adult sicko they rally behind—think

Weetzie Bat gone seriously noir. Coming-of-age themes tip-toe through the cutting-edge horror and stylistic innovation.

Children of the Dark. By Jonathan Janz. 2016. Sinister Grin.

A teen baseball star in small-town Indiana leads his community into a battle against a recently awoken ancient evil and a terrifying serial killer. Old-school horror sensibilities satisfyingly bring to mind *Stand by Me* by way of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Hand to the Stephen King crowd.

The Children of Red Peak. By Craig DiLouie. 2020. Redhook.

Teens will be fascinated by this story of a religious cult and an incident of mass suicide, as told through the recollections of its few surviving members, all of whom were tweens and teens at the time.

The Dead Girls Club. By Damien Angelica Walters. 2019. Crooked Lane.

As children, Heather and her friend Becca would get together with other kids and talk about serial killers and other morbid things, but when Becca suddenly dies, the Dead Girls Club loses its appeal. Memories of this and the mysterious “Red Lady” begin plaguing the now-adult Heather, unraveling her sanity and bringing serious Fear Street vibes.

The Deep. By Alma Katsu. 2020. Putnam.

Katsu puts a supernatural spin on the sinking of sister ships *Titanic* (1912) and *Britannic* (1916), tying them together through a shared (and very unlucky) passenger: young Irish maid Annie Hebbley.

Echoes: The Saga Anthology of Ghost Stories. Ed. by Ellen Datlow. 2019. Saga.

These twenty-first-century ghost stories, as complicated and varied as our times, are a great choice for YA readers,

since many of the stories feature teens or adults reflecting on their adolescence.

The Ghost Tree. By Christina Henry. 2020. Berkley.

The peace and prosperity of Smiths Hollow are kept by the yearly sacrifice of a town daughter—but something has changed. A mesmerizing curse, racial bigotry, and coming-of-age angst make for a bizarre tale of horror.

A House at the Bottom of a Lake. By Josh Malerman. 2020. Del Rey.

Amelia and James, 17, spend a summer exploring a creepy house—fully submerged in a secret lake—that they discovered on their first date. Obsessive curiosity, deep anxiety, and some very real dangers add depth to this eerie love story.

Mexican Gothic. By Silvia Moreno-Garcia. 2020. Del Rey.

Moreno-Garcia takes on gothic suspense in this shiver-inducing tale of Noemí Taboada, a high-spirited young woman who visits her recently married cousin at her new family's mold-infested manor.

My Best Friend's Exorcism. By Grady Hendrix. 2016. Quirk.

Abby and Gretchen are high-school juniors living a typical 1980s adolescence in South Carolina—until the night they experiment with LSD and Gretchen gets possessed by a demon. Hendrix's humorous horror tale goes a shade darker than *Heathers* and brims with '80s pop-culture references.

My Heart Is a Chainsaw. By Stephen Graham Jones. 2021. Saga.

Issues of class and privilege collide with the threat of a Fourth of July massacre in Jones' latest, where slasher-film-obsessed Jade uses her knowledge of the genre to survive demons, a lake witch, and high school.

Providence. By Caroline Kepnes. 2018. Random/Lenny.

Chloe's friend Jon disappears in middle school only to mysteriously reappear four years later with the ability to give people in his presence heart attacks. A strange blend of Lovecraftian horror, a love story, and a detective novel.

The Return. By Rachel Harrison. 2020. Berkley.

In this creepy debut, four college friends reunite when one of their own, Julie, disappears, only to reappear unsettlingly altered with no memory of what happened. An intense read that combines psychological suspense, supernatural horror, and a thoughtful new-adult story centered around female friendship.

The Rust Maidens. By Gwendolyn Kiste. 2018. JournalStone.

Phoebe, a new high-school graduate, recounts the strange

summer of 1980, when young girls of her neighborhood—many of them her friends—begin turning into grotesquely beautiful beasts.

The Second Bell. By Gabriela Houston. 2021. Angry Robot.

Houston's debut draws on old mythology and modern attitudes as it relays Salka's coming-of-age tale of defiance to root out society's evil. Fans of fairy-tale retellings will appreciate this.

Shiver. By Junji Ito. Art by the author. 2017. VIZ Media.

Horror-manga master Ito nearly always features teens or young people in the visual nightmares that are his story collections, and this one is no different. Not for the faint of heart.

Sleeping Beauties, v.1. By Stephen King and others. Art by Alison Sampson and Triona Farrell. 2021. IDW.

A mysterious disease called Aurora causes a cocoon of webbing to encase any woman who falls asleep, and the world promptly descends into chaos. Yet, Evie Black is somehow immune to Aurora, her fate seemingly entwined with that of the disease.

Widow's Point. By Richard Chizmar and Billy Chizmar. 2018. Cemetery Dance.

Writing with his college-age son, Richard Chizmar delivers an intense, viscerally terrifying novella, complete with found footage, about a writer spending three days locked in a supposedly haunted lighthouse.



A Conversation

Letting the Magic Speak—A Magic Realism Roundtable

by Maggie Reagan

In the YA world, the term “magic realism” gets applied to a lot of different types of books—whimsical books, books that skirt the edges of fantasy, books that tap into the mythical. But what is true magic realism? Who has a right to claim the term? Here we talk to four Latinx authors—Michelle Ruiz Keil (*All of Us with Wings*, 2019), Samantha Mabry (*Tigers, Not Daughters*, 2020), Anna-Marie McLemore (*Dark and Deepest Red*, 2020), and Lilliam Rivera (*Never Look Back*, 2020)—about where the magic in their writing comes from and how it shapes the stories they tell.

Reagan: *I'm curious to hear about the elements you all think a book has to contain to be true magic realism.*

Lilliam Rivera: Writing for me is rooted in being Latinx, but I always feel uncomfortable with being labeled because magic realism is such a heavy term. A lot of people feel really passionate about who gets to tell that story. I just want to write stories that incorporate magic that is as real to me as in my every day. I don't know if what I'm writing is magic realism. I just know that it's the way I'm writing about trauma and pain—I'm writing through a lens of magic.

Samantha Mabry: I always think about magic realism being tied to land, to actual soil—land and the sort of conflicts and trauma that have happened to the land that then create the people who live there, which creates the magic. Or the magic creates the people. I think that there has to be some kind of colonization, the effect of culture clash and oppression, that manifests in the land to create these kinds of stories. I think what a lot of people who think they're writing magic realism are really doing sometimes is writing fables, which don't necessarily have that kind of generational trauma that a lot of true magic realism comes from.

Michelle Ruiz Keil: I love what both of you said about trauma and the land. The land connection is huge. *All of*

Us with Wings is set in San Francisco, and I write about the wild parrots that live there. They're part of the magic realism of the story—they're these displaced, sort of stolen, oppressed animals that have then reclaimed their wildness. And magic realism allows me to express the internal complexity of trauma and healing externally in a way that feels almost more real to me than if I were to write a straight contemporary story. And I do think that magic realism is a term that's used a little more loosely than I would like in the publishing industry.

Anna-Marie McLemore: In *Wild Beauty*, I write about these gardens that are beautiful but that also murder people—that's how I talk about colonialism, that's how I talk about displacement, the rage that's held inside the land, the idea of fighting back. So for me, a lot of magical realism is these things that become visible or tangible to talk about, things that communities either feel that they are not allowed to talk about or things that they have refused to talk about. The magic is going to tell your secrets. Sometimes it's going to tell *you* your secrets, if you're not really aware of them, and sometimes it's going to make your community face things that it's not facing. And that magic is also a language, it's an undercurrent. It's something that no one is really going to control. It's something that belongs to a community. The magic is speaking, the land is speaking, your own history is speaking.

Mabry: Early in the editorial process for *All the Wind in the World*, one of the questions that kept coming up from my editor was, “What is the locus of the magic?” Well, it's coming from the land. The book's very specific, it's set at what's now the U.S.–Mexico border. There's millennia of history there, and certainly centuries of recent history that we know. Is it just like a Latinx thing where it makes sense that a place creates the magic?

Rivera: I felt the same way when I was writing *Never Look Back*. I was thinking about the structures—buildings in the Bronx and the pain within those buildings, lasting generation upon generation, no matter who lives in them. There's pain in the streets that we're walking in that no one is talking about.

Keil: I feel like in a lot of magic realism, there is that element of what I think people are now calling eco-horror, where the earth is rising up and angry and expressing the things we can't express. There are these water creatures in *All of Us with Wings* that are really holding both the trauma of the earth and the trauma of the body, and those come together.

Reagan: *The four of you seem to write with a strong awareness of culture. Is magic realism actively tied to an exploration of culture for you?*

Mabry: I don't like to say that I write about culture. I'm one-fourth Puerto Rican, half Mexican American, real assimilated, white kind of. I have this really small sliver

that I try to speak to. The weight of talking about being a writer of culture is sort of frightening for me.

McLemore: Magic realism wasn't a term I really knew until someone told me that's what I was writing. It was just how we told stories in my family. So when I think about writing about culture and writing about community, I cannot separate being Latinx, being mixed-race, being queer, being trans, being nonbinary, from my stories, because I can't separate any of that from myself. Magic realism was how I understood stories, how I came to understand stories growing up.

Rivera: Every story I write, I'm tackling subjects that I'm struggling with. *Never Look Back* is a story about generational trauma seen through the eyes of the Caribbean and Caribbean American experience while using the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice as my structure. This particular novel speaks on the trauma that came to these islands decades ago and how the pain has passed through generations. How do we combat that pain? I'm not saying magic is the tool, I'm saying love is and love is magical.

Keil: I came to magic realism through visual art. I saw Frida Kahlo's work, I think when I was 18 or 19, and I was like, "That. That's a picture of what it's like for me." My family was a super-assimilated Mexican family and I'm also Colombian, but that side of the family actually passed as Spanish and hid, and we didn't find out the truth until I was an adult. So there's a lot of this liminality: I grew up in a lot of white space and in the era of multiculturalism where it was almost rude to talk about the fact that I was not white with my friends, because it would make them uncomfortable. They weren't seeing it, so why should I see it? So for me, writing about culture is writing about liminality. That comes through in magic realism because it's neither here nor there. There aren't rules. I'm writing about identity, but it's almost about not feeling like I have enough of it.

McLemore: I've had trans and nonbinary characters in my last four books. And when we talk about the way magic tells secrets, I wrote four books with trans characters before realizing I was trans and nonbinary. So, we have those experiences in our own lives, where our stories speak to us, even if we're not ready to listen. Other people's stories speak to us. The stories that we tell and the stories that we listen to, the stories we take in, they're seeds in us, going back to that idea of land.

Reagan: *Do you set any rules for yourselves while working through these worlds? I know it's a little different from building a high fantasy novel.*

Mabry: Yes! The answer is yes, for me. Because I'm not creating a different world. You have to honor the fact that people lived in the places that you're writing about and they have histories and you can't just play fast and loose. I do try to be respectful and honorable and honor the fact that people have histories in these places.

Rivera: To me, it's world-building even if I'm writing in a contemporary setting. For *Never Look Back*, my setting is in the Bronx, and although I was raised there, I don't live there, so I have to do as much research as if I'm creating a world that's based out of a fantasy. In *Never Look Back*, my character Pheus is a history buff—that's my chance to show how buildings hold violent histories: "This area right here is filled with blood, with Black and Brown people dying because somebody wanted a Central Park." That fight between land and modernization and gentrification and capitalism, all those things are clashing within my characters. I do take a lot of time when it comes to worldbuilding.

Keil: My newest book is set in Portland, and I didn't grow up here. I've lived here for a long time, but I didn't come of age here. So I did a lot of research into this place and into all of the cultural history that is here. I've had so many conflicting feelings about being here and being away from California, which is where my family lived for generations. The main thing I think I'm trying to do is find the voice of the place and listen to it and make sure it sounds authentic to you, just as you would with your characters' dialogue.

McLemore: In *Dark and Deepest Red*, part of the narrative is set in this very specific time, in 1518, during the dancing plague in Strasbourg. All of these people dancing uncontrollably, it sounds like something made up in a fairy tale, but it's something that really happened, and something that resonates with magic realism because when you start to get into why this probably happened, there was so much oppression in this city and so much that was going unspoken. So I wanted to be very respectful and very diligent toward honoring the people who lived there, especially the people who are often left out of historical record. Communities of color, and queer and trans and nonbinary communities, we were there. Wherever you're talking about in history, we were there. So my question was, how is magic now going to address what has gone unspoken?



Michelle Ruiz Keil



Samantha Mabry



Anna-Marie McLemore



Lilliam Rivera

Reserve These Reads

Children & Teens

Get your hands on these hotly anticipated books, all out this month.



Older

Aristotle and Dante Dive into the Waters of the World.

By Benjamin Alire Sáenz. Simon & Schuster. Gr. 9–12.

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Universe captured readers' hearts when it came out nearly a decade ago. This sequel follows the pair as they try to thrive in an era that's actively hostile to their identities.

Black Birds in the Sky. By Brandy Colbert.

HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray. Gr. 8–12.

Colbert's incisive, deeply researched history of the Tulsa Race Massacre offers nuanced accounts of individuals set against the broader context of a deeply racist society.

The Heartbreak Bakery. By A. R. Capetta. Candlewick.

Gr. 9–12.

Syd (no pronouns, please) bakes a batch of brownies in a heightened emotional state, wreaking magical havoc on the customers of The Proud Muffin in this LGBTQIA+ romance.

The Mirror: Shattered Midnight. By Dhonielle Clayton.

Disney/Hyperion. Gr. 9–12.

In an enchanted, jazz-age New Orleans, Zora finds love and a fresh start as a singer while contending with racial prejudice.

Middle

Birdie's Bargain. By Katherine Paterson. Candlewick.

Gr. 4–7.

When 10-year-old Birdie's dad is called up once again, she makes a deal with God to keep him safe, but it's tough to hold up her end of the bargain at a new school.

Dust & Grim. By Chuck Wendig. Little, Brown. Gr. 3–7.

Wendig enters the middle-grade scene with this story about recently orphaned Molly, who's joining the family business: a mortuary for monsters.

Frankie & Bug. By Gayle Forman. Aladdin. Gr. 4–7.

In 1987 Venice Beach, 10-year-old Bug is in for an eye-opening summer of change due, in part, to a new friendship.



The Genius under the Table: Growing Up behind the Iron Curtain.

By Eugene Yelchin. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. Gr. 5–8.

Yelchin describes his 1960s Lenin-grad childhood in the former Soviet Union in a humorous, informative, and engaging illustrated memoir.

The Last Chance for Logan County. By Lamar Giles.

Illus. by Derick Brooks. HarperCollins/Versify. Gr. 3–7.

The Legendary Alston boys are at it again in this third book in award-winning Giles' series. This time, the future of their town is on the line, thanks to a greedy corporation.

Playing the Cards You're Dealt. By Varian Johnson.

Scholastic. Gr. 3–7.

Ant is eager to finally compete in the spades tournament, like the rest of the men in his family, but changing family dynamics and a new crush make things tricky.

Young

Inside Cat. By Brendan Wenzel. Illus. by the author.

Chronicle. PreS–Gr. 2.

With succinct text and imaginative artwork, this picture book follows an indoor cat keeping tabs on the outside world through a variety of windows and humorous observations.

Juana & Lucas: Muchos Changes. By Juana Medina. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. Gr. 1–3.

In Juana's third outing in Medina's charming bilingual early reader series, she deals with worries over attending a summer camp and becoming a big sister.

Santa in the City. By Tiffany D. Jackson. Illus. by Reggie Brown. Dial. PreS–Gr.3.

Critically acclaimed Jackson makes her picture book debut with this story of Deja, who's worried Santa won't be able to visit her in her chimney-less city apartment.

Sonny Rollins Plays the Bridge. By Gary Golio.

Illus. by James Ransome. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. K–Gr. 3.

This gorgeously illustrated picture-book biography centers on jazz-legend Sonny Rollins' practice sessions at the top of New York City's Williamsburg Bridge.



Top 10

SF/Fantasy & Horror on Audio

Magic, mayhem, and menace are some of the building blocks of these enchanting sf, fantasy, and horror novels for adults. Masterful narrations, both from individual narrators and cohesive full casts, are another. Read more about each of these superb audiobooks below.

Devolution: A Firsthand Account of the Rainier Sasquatch Massacre. By Max Brooks. Read by a full cast. 2020. 10hr. Books on Tape.

A star-studded full cast narrates this exemplary production anchored by Judy Greer's impressive performance as a woman forced into a survivalist situation.

Exhalation. By Ted Chiang. Read by a full cast. 2019. 7hr. Books on Tape.

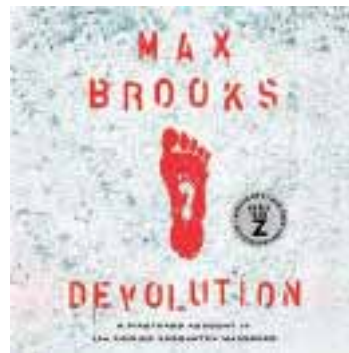
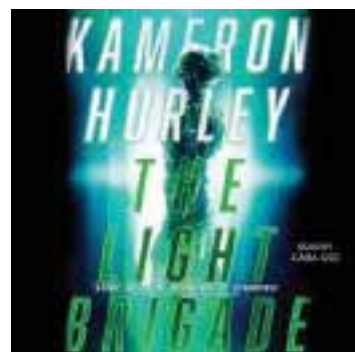
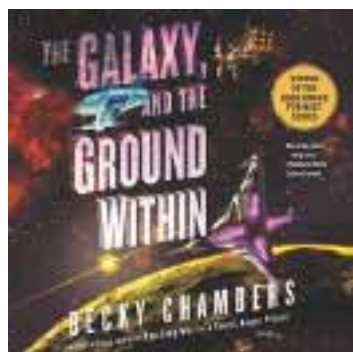
Chiang's sf short story collection is voiced, in turn, by three narrators, but most notable is Chiang himself, who appends each story with a revealing provenance.

The Galaxy and the Ground Within. By Becky Chambers. Read by Rachel Dulude. 2021. 10hr. HarperAudio.

This companion title to the Wayfarer series stands out and stands alone as Dulude's narration offers an uplifting sense of hope to the listener: a welcome experience.

Imaginary Friend. By Stephen Chbosky. Read by Christine Lakin. 2019. 24.5hr. Hachette.

Lakin displays her particular skill at matching tone and intensity to each character's motive and intent, enhancing the story's suspense, thrills, and chills.



The Light Brigade. By Kameron Hurley. Read by Cara Gee and Jackie Sanders. 2019. 10.5hr. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Gee subtly presents several different versions of a multi-faceted main character, while Sanders' narration acts as a perfect foil.

A Master of Djinn. By P. Djèlí Clark. Read by Suehyla El-Attar. 2021. 16hr. Macmillan Audio.

The Cairo setting comes to life in El-Attar's vibrant narration that plays on Arabic accents and the enchanting plot's mystery and magic.

Mexican Gothic. By Silvia Moreno-Garcia. Read by Frankie Corzo. 2020. 11hr. Books on Tape.

A gripping, atmospheric performance. Corzo fluidly intertwines a variety of Spanish accents, taking listeners to every dark and menacing corner of this twisting tale.

Scarlet Odyssey. By C. T. Rwizi. Read by a full cast. 2020. 19.5hr. Brilliance.

Korey Jackson's deep and resonant voice leads the all-Black narrative cast in this multilayered sf story drawn from sub-Saharan African mythology.

The Starless Sea. By Erin Morgenstern. Read by a full cast. 2019. 18.5hr. Books on Tape.

As multiple tales weave around the son of a fortune teller, multiple narrators entrance listeners and guide them through layers of magic and wonder.

The Vanished Birds. By Simon Jimenez. Read by Shayna Small. 2020. 13.5hr. Books on Tape.

2020's Voice of Choice narrator, Shayna Small, adroitly embodies Jimenez' diverse cast in this fresh sf debut in which the characters' ethnicities remain predominantly, refreshingly, unspecified.

