

Maine Student Book Award

2021-2022 Reading List

(Titles, published in 2020, suggested for students in grades 4-8)

A project of: Maine Library Association, Maine Association of School Libraries, & Maine Literacy Educators

1. Alexander, Kwame and Patterson, James. ***Becoming Muhammad Ali***. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Sports. Gr. 4+. 320 pages. "Readers will learn about Cassius' family and neighbors in Louisville, Kentucky, and how, after a thief stole his bike, Cassius began training as an amateur boxer at age twelve. Before long, he won his first Golden Gloves bout and began his transformation into the unrivaled Muhammad Ali." -Goodreads
2. Alkaf, Hanna. ***Girl and the Ghost, The***. HarperCollins. Gr. 5+. 288 pages. "Suraya is delighted when her witch grandmother gifts her a pelesit. She names her ghostly companion Pink, and the two quickly become inseparable. But Suraya doesn't know that pelesits have a dark side—and when Pink's shadows threaten to consume them both, they must find enough light to survive...before they are both lost to the darkness." -Goodreads
3. Ali, S.K., et al. ***Once Upon an Eid***. Amulet. Gr. 4+. 272 pages. "Once Upon an Eid is a collection of short stories that showcases the most brilliant Muslim voices writing today, all about the most joyful holiday of the year: Eid!" -Goodreads
4. Barnes, Jennifer. ***Inheritance Games, The***. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers. Gr. 7+. 384 pages. "Avery Grambs has a plan for a better future: survive high school, win a scholarship, and get out. But her fortunes change in an instant when billionaire Tobias Hawthorne dies and leaves Avery virtually his entire fortune. The catch? Avery has no idea why—or even who Tobias Hawthorne is. To receive her inheritance, Avery must move into sprawling, secret passage-filled Hawthorne House, where every room bears the old man's touch—and his love of puzzles, riddles, and codes." -Goodreads
5. Baughman, Sarah. ***Wild Path, The***. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers. Gr. 4+. 336 pages. Claire's revolves around training and caring for her horses. But when her brother is sent to rehab, her family needs to focus its financial resources on his treatment. Claire is distraught about the horses and struggles to know how to feel about her brother. When she finds mysterious horses in the woods near her home, she focuses her energy on solving that mystery. Little does she know that it may help her solve her other problems as well.
6. Behrens, Rebecca. ***Alone in the Woods***. Sourcebooks. Gr. 5+. 320 pages. Jocelyn and Alex have been best friends for years. Now, though, something has come between them and their friendship is on the rocks. Jocelyn hopes their families' annual camping trip in the woods will help repair their relationship, but they end up getting separated from their families. Can they come together and survive being alone in the woods?

7. Bildner, Phil. ***High Five for Glenn Burke, A***. Farrar Straus Giroux BYR. Gr. 4+. 288 pages. "When sixth grader Silas Wade does a school presentation on former Major Leaguer Glenn Burke, it's more than just a report about the irrepressible inventor of the high five. Burke was a gay baseball player in the 1970s--and for Silas, the presentation is his own first baby step toward revealing a truth about himself he's tired of hiding. Soon he tells his best friend, Zoey, but the longer he keeps his secret from his baseball teammates, the more he suspects they know something's up--especially when he stages one big cover-up with terrible consequences." -Goodreads

8. Blankman, Anne. ***Blackbird Girls, The***. Viking Children's Books. Gr. 5+. 352 pages. "On a spring morning in 1986, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work--Chernobyl--has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In 1941 Rifka must flee Kiev before the Germans arrive. Her journey is harrowing and fraught with danger because Germans and Russians alike will revile her for her Jewish blood. In both time periods, the girls must learn who to trust and how to have hope in the midst of horrible events." -Goodreads

9. Bowling, Dusti. ***Canyon's Edge, The***. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers. Gr 5+. 320 pages. One year after her mother's death, Nora heads out to hike a desert canyon. Though they have experience and expertise, an unexpected storm comes along and floods the canyon, sweeping Nora's father away. Lost and alone in the canyon, Nora has to muster her strength and determination to find her father and save them both from certain death.

10. Browne, Mahogany L. ***Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice***. Roaring Book Press. Gr. 4+. 56 pages. "Historically poets have been on the forefront of social movements. Woke is a collection of poems by women that reflects the joy and passion in the fight for social justice, tackling topics from discrimination to empathy, and acceptance to speaking out." -Goodreads

11. Callender, Kacen. ***King and the Dragonflies***. Scholastic. Gr. 6+. Shortly before he died, King's brother told him to end his friendship with his best friend, Sandy. Sandy is gay, and King's brother warned him that others might think the same of him. King finds Sandy hiding out in a tent, away from his abusive father. While the rest of the town thinks Sandy is missing, King decides to help Sandy escape to safety.

12. Cisernos, Ernesto. ***Efrén Divided***. HarperCollins. Gr. 5+. 272 pages. Efrén is constantly worried that his undocumented parents will one day be discovered and deported. When that nightmare comes true, Efrén is suddenly responsible for his brother and sister while his father works to earn money to bring his mother back. Eventually, Efrén and his father come up with a risky plan to bring her back themselves.

13. Cullum, Jared. ***Kodi***. Top Shelf Productions. Gr. 4-6. 176 pages. "Katya and her Meema are spending another normal summer at their cottage in Alaska, when a chance accident leaves Katya face-to-face with the biggest creature she's ever seen... an enormous kodiak bear, soon

to become her closest friend. But when Katya must suddenly return home to Seattle, the two are torn apart, leaving Kodi to do whatever it takes to reunite with his fragile human friend.”

-Goodreads

14. Ecton, Emily. **Great Pet Heist, The**. Simon and Schuster. Gr. 4-6. 256 pages. Butterbean and her pet friends have to come up with a plan to get by when their beloved owner has to go to the hospital. When they notice a strange man in their apartment building who appears to have a stash of money, they work together to plan a daring heist.

15. Esplin, J.L. **96 Miles**. Starscape. Gr. 5+. 304 pages. “The Lockwood brothers are supposed to be able to survive anything. Their dad, a hardcore survivalist, has stockpiled enough food and water on their isolated Nevada ranch to last for months. But when they are robbed at gunpoint during a massive blackout while their dad is out of town, John and Stew must walk 96 miles in the stark desert sun to get help--and they have only 3 days before their time runs out...”-Goodreads

16. Eszterhas, Suzi. **My Wild Life**. Owlkids. Gr. 4-6. 32 pages. “As a young girl, Suzi Eszterhas knew she wanted to be a wildlife photographer. But how did she go from snapping pictures of cats in her backyard to taking photos of cheetah cubs in Kenya? In this nonfiction picture-book biography, Eszterhas invites readers to find out what her life is like behind the lens.” -Goodreads

17. Firestone, Carrie. **Dress Coded**. G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books. Gr. 6+. 303 pages. Molly is tired of the way girls in her middle school are being treated because of their clothes. She decides to start a podcast where girls can tell stories of their experiences. Her little project inspires girls to stand up for what they believe is right.

18. Gino, Alex. **Rick**. Scholastic. Gr. 4+. 240 pages. “Now Rick’s gotten to middle school, and new doors are opening. One of them leads to the school’s Rainbow Spectrum club, where kids of many genders and identities congregate, including Melissa, the girl who sits in front of Rick in class and seems to have her life together. Rick wants his own life to be that ... understood. Even if it means breaking some old friendships and making some new ones.” -Goodreads

19. Harrell, Rob. **Wink**. Dial Books. Gr. 5+. 300 pages. “Twelve-year-old Ross Maloy just wants to be normal. Not to have a rare eye cancer, not to lose his hair, not to have to wear a weird hat or have a goopy eye full of ointment. Just normal. But with a sudden and horrifying diagnosis, Ross can’t help standing out. His new life is medical treatments that feel straight out of a video game, vision loss in one eye, disappearing friends who don’t know what to say to “the cancer kid,” cruel bullying, and ultimately, friendships new and old that rise above everything. Just when Ross starts to feel like he’s losing his footing, he discovers how music, art, and true friends can change everything.” -Goodreads

20. Khoury, Jessica. **Mystwick School of Musicraft, The**. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Gr. 4+. 368 pages. “Amelia Jones always dreamed of attending the Mystwick School of Musicraft, where the world’s most promising musicians learn to create magic. So when Amelia botches her audition, she thinks her dream has met an abrupt and humiliating end—until the school agrees

to give her a trial period. Amelia is determined to prove herself, vowing to do whatever it takes to become the perfect musician. Even if it means pretending to be someone she isn't. Meanwhile, a mysterious storm is brewing that no one, not even the maestros at Mystwick, is prepared to contain. Can Amelia find the courage to be true to herself in time to save her beloved school from certain destruction?" -Goodreads

21. Krajewski, Thomas. **Primer**. DC Comics. Gr. 4+ 160 pages. Ashley is staying with her newest foster parents. Her foster dad is an artist like her, and her foster mom is a scientist working on a secret government project. When Ashley finds a set of body paints in her mom's safe, Ashley assumes they're a birthday present for her. But when the paints start giving her superpowers, Ashley realizes she has stumbled onto something serious. Her new powers attract villains and attention. Can she learn how to harness the powers and use them to stop a major threat?

22. Kyi, Tanya Lloyd. **Me and Banksy**. Puffin/Penguin Random House Canada. Gr. 5+. 272 pages. Dominica attends a private school where newly installed cameras are causing quite a commotion. Someone is hacking the cameras and catching students during embarrassing moments. When Dominica herself is targeted and put on display while changing her shirt, she decides to team up with her friends to use art as a response.

23. Lang, Heidi. **Whispering Pines**. Simon and Schuster. Gr. 6+. 320 pages. Rae and her family have moved to the small town of Whispering Pines. And while it may be small, it's anything besides quiet. Whispering Pines has a reputation for strange things happening, including a recent string of missing children. Rae befriends Caden, an outcast among their peers, and they connect over shared secrets. They decide to look into the secrets of the town, but can they do so without becoming another of the town's missing children?

24. Maldonado, Torrey. **What Lane?**. Nancy Paulsen Books. Gr. 5+. 144 pages. "Anything his friends can do, Stephen should be able to do too, right? So when they dare each other to sneak into an abandoned building, he doesn't think it's his lane, but he goes. Here's the thing, though: Can he do everything his friends can? Lately, he's not so sure. As a mixed kid, he feels like he's living in two worlds with different rules--and he's been noticing that strangers treat him differently than his white friends . . ." -Goodreads

25. Marks, Janae. **From the Desk of Zoe Washington**. HarperCollins. Gr. 4+. 291 pages. Zoe has recently connected with her incarcerated father through letter writing. Her dad claims to be innocent, but without ever having met him, Zoe isn't sure what to believe. Can she find any evidence to help prove her father's innocence or is he a stranger not to be trusted?

26. Martin, Laura. **Glitch**. HarperCollins. Gr. 5+. 384 pages. "Regan Fitz and Elliot Mason have been enemies since they started training to become Glitchers—people who travel through time to preserve important historical events. But everything changes when they find a letter from Regan's future self, warning them about an impending disaster that threatens them and everyone they know. Will they be able to set aside their past in order to save the future?" -Goodreads

27. McCulloch, Amy. **Jinxed**. Sourcebooks. Gr. 4+. 336 pages. Lacey Chu is a coder and has excellent skills in tinkering with technology. She puts her skills to use when she comes across a broken but highly advanced baku—a robotic pet. Lacey takes her new pet, Jinx, with her to school, but Jinx is attracting some unwanted attention. Lacey is about to learn secrets that will shatter everything she thought she knew.

28. Meggitt-Phillips, Jack. **Beast and the Bethany, The**. Aladdin. Gr. 4-6. 240 pages. For Ebenezer Tweezer, nothing is more important than beauty. To keep his good looks, he simply needs to cater to a beast living in his attic by serving it whatever it wants to eat. This time around, the beast wants to taste a child. But when Ebenezer picks one up from the local orphanage, he finds out that taming this child may be harder than pleasing the beast.

29. Merritt, Kory. **No Place for Monsters**. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Gr. 5+. 384 pages. “Levi and Kat are about to discover a very dark side to their neighborhood. Nothing ever seems out of place in the safe, suburban town of Cowslip Grove. Lawns are neatly mowed, sidewalks are tidy, and the sounds of ice cream trucks fill the air. But now.... kids have been going missing - except no one even realizes it, because no one remembers them. Not their friends. Not their teachers. Not even their families. But Levi and Kat do remember, and suddenly only they can see why everyone is in terrible danger when the night air rolls in. Now it is up to Levi and Kat to fight it and save the missing kids before it swallows the town whole.” -Goodreads

30. Messner, Kate. **History Smashers: The Mayflower**. Random House Children’s Books. Gr. 4+. Fact check everything you thought you knew about the Mayflower and the first Thanksgiving with History Smashers! Readers may be surprised to know just what happened on the holiday many people celebrate in November!

31. Mian, Zanib. **Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet**. G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books. Gr. 4-6. Omar’s family has moved him to a new town and a new school. As if that wasn’t hard enough, the school bully has decided to focus his attention on Omar. When their class goes on a field trip, Omar and the bully get separated from the class and have to work together to find their way back. Can they put their differences aside and work together?

32. Mohamed, Omar. **When Stars are Scattered**. Dial Books. Gr. 5+. 264 pages. Omar and his brother Hassan spent much of their early life in a refugee camp. They faced many challenges there, but Omar was determined to continue his education and move to America. When he gets the opportunity to follow his dreams, he has to choose between that and taking care of his little brother. Is it worth it if he can make a better life for himself and Hassan?

33. Oppel, Kenneth. **Bloom**. Knopf Books for Young Readers. Gr. 5+. 320 pages. A strange rain carries seeds that grow into dangerous plants. Conventional methods of removal don’t work and the plants seem unstoppable. But three kids seem to be oddly resistant to the plants and their effects. Could they hold the key to stopping this takeover?

34. Park, Linda Sue. **Prairie Lotus**. Clarion Books. Gr. 6+. 260 pages. “Prairie Lotus is a book about a girl determined to fit in and realize her dreams: getting an education, becoming a

dressmaker in her father's shop, and making at least one friend. Hanna, a half-Asian girl in a small town in America's heartland, lives in 1880. Hanna's adjustment to her new surroundings, and the townspeople's prejudice against Asians, is at the heart of the story." -Goodreads

35. Pransky, Judith. ***Seventh Handmaiden, The***. Green Bean Books. Gr. 5+. 256 pages. "Darya does not remember how she came to be a slave or who she was before she was bought by an army captain for his motherless daughter in the ancient Persian city of Susa. Protected and nurtured by the housekeeper and her daughter, Darya has as good a life as a slave can have, even acquiring the rare skill of reading and writing, which she learns alongside her young mistress. When the captain dies and the household is broken up, this skill proves to be her lifeline. She becomes the seventh handmaiden to the mysterious Esther, who is being housed at the Royal Palace while in contention to be King Xerxes' new Queen." -Goodreads

36. Reese, Jenn. ***Game of Fox and Squirrels, A***. Henry Holt & Company. Gr. 6+. 224 pages. Sam and her sister Caitlin are staying with their aunt after experiencing a traumatic event at home. Their aunt gives Sam "A Game of Fox and Squirrel", the animals from the game start showing up. Unfortunately, this is a game that the fox has rigged and will be nearly impossible to win. Sam decides to play this dangerous game, but her opponent has plenty of tricks up his sleeve.

37. Reintgen, Scott. ***Ashlords***. Crown Books for Young Readers. Gr. 6+. 368 pages. Riders from all different backgrounds are competing in this deadly race for the championship. The stakes are high, and each competitor has their own reason for needing to win. Riders must use their knowledge of alchemy to help their horses through different parts of the course. With their lives on the line, some riders will do anything to win.

38. Reynolds, Jason and Kendi, Ibram X. ***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You***. Little, Brown and Company Books for Young Readers. Gr. 6+. Learn about the history of racism and how it has reached into all branches of society. Readers learn about the classifications of antiracist, assimilationist, and segregationist and what that looks like in our culture.

39. Rippon, Jo. ***Rise Up!: The Art of Protest***. Charlesbridge. Gr. 4+. 64 pages. "Human rights belong to every single one of us, but they are often under threat. Developed in collaboration with Amnesty International, Rise Up! encourages young people to engage in peaceful protest and stand up for freedom. Photographs of protest posters celebrate the ongoing fight for gender equality, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, refugee and immigrant rights, peace, and the environment." -Amazon

40. Soontornvat, Christina. ***All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Boy's Soccer Team***. Candlewick Press. Gr. 5+. "On June 23, 2018, twelve young players of the Wild Boars soccer team and their coach enter a cave in northern Thailand seeking an afternoon's adventure. But when they turn to leave, rising floodwaters block their path out. The boys are trapped! Before long, news of the missing team spreads, launching a seventeen-day rescue operation involving thousands of rescuers from around the globe." -Barnes and Noble