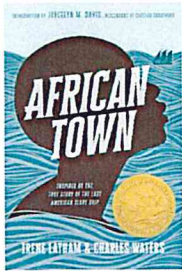




2025 Nutmeg Book Award Middle School Nominees Grades 7-8



AFRICAN TOWN

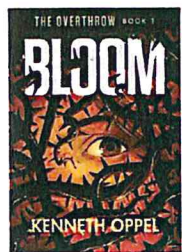
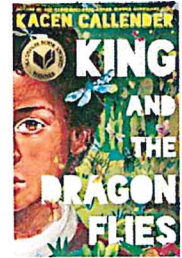
by Irene Latham and Charles Waters

In 1860, 110 Africans were taken and brought to America, as a wager to evade the prohibition on the importation of slaves. Fourteen characters relay the story through their thoughts and feelings. Once emancipated and unable to return to Africa, they established Africatown, a place where they could follow the customs and traditions of their ancestors.

KING AND THE DRAGONFLIES

by Kacen Callender

King's world is falling apart; his brother Khalid unexpectedly passed away, his close-knit family is drenched with grief, and his once best friend Sandy is missing. Before his death Khalid warned King to stay away from Sandy because he's gay. When Sandy shows up in need of help, King is forced to face thoughts about his own identity and future.



BLOOM

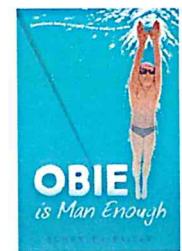
by Kenneth Oppel

When mysterious black plants suddenly appear and grow wild, engulfing and poisoning all in their path, teens Anaya, Petra, and Seth realize they have something in common- all three of them are immune. Now it's up to them to discover the secrets behind the botanical invasion.

OBIE IS MAN ENOUGH

by Schuyler Bailar

Obie is a transgender tween trying to find where he belongs. He discovers that people once important to him react negatively to his transition. Luckily, he has support from his new friends, his family, and his first crush. Obie just might find his place in competitive swimming and prove that he is as good as any other boy.



ELATSOE

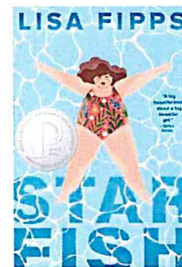
by Darcie Little Badger, art by Rovina Cai

When Ellie's favorite cousin Trevor dies in a terrible car crash, she doesn't believe it was an accident. As her search for clues leads her to the picture perfect but very private town of Willowbee, Ellie enlists her friends and family, both living and dead, to help her find his killer.

STARFISH

By Lisa Fipps

Ellie has always struggled with body image. She is bullied at school and pressured by her mom to lose weight. The only time she feels herself is when she is swimming, taking up all the space she wants. With help from her dad, her friend Catalina, and her therapist, Ellie must learn to love herself.



INVISIBLE

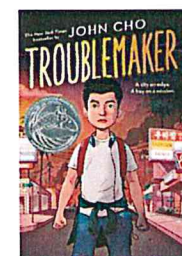
by Christina Diaz Gonzalez, art by Gabriela Epstein

Five students with nothing in common aside from their Latinx roots form an unlikely friendship after getting into trouble. The community service may have been assigned, but when they find an opportunity to really help, will they stand up for others or will they remain invisible?

TROUBLEMAKER

By John Cho

Korean American Jordan makes a desperate trip through the streets of Los Angeles to help his father fortify the family store against the LA Riots. As the night wears on, he finds help and hindrances in surprising places, and ultimately has to decide the kind of person he wants to be.



IVELIZ EXPLAINS IT ALL

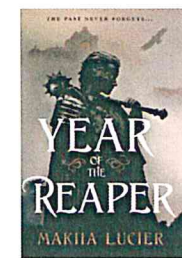
by Andrea Beatriz Arango, art by Alyssa Bermudez

Iveliz records her struggles dealing with starting seventh grade, changing friend relationships, dealing with depression and PTSD, and a grandmother with Alzheimer's in the only place she can speak her mind: her journal. But can she find a way to say what she needs to say out loud before it's too late?

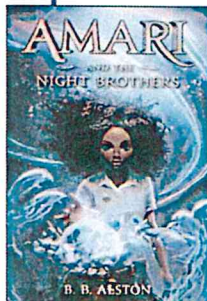
YEAR OF THE REAPER

by Makiia Lucier

Lord Cassia finally returns home three years after being captured and catching the plague. His devastated country is at peace but he finds his castle overrun with the royal court taking refuge. When a killer starts attacking those closest to the foreign queen and threatening the shaky peace, it falls to Cas to unravel the treacherous secrets of what happened while he was gone.

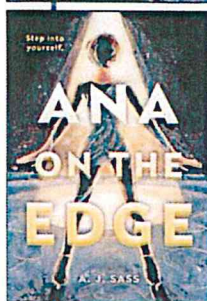


2024 Nutmeg Book Award Middle School Nominees Grades 7-8



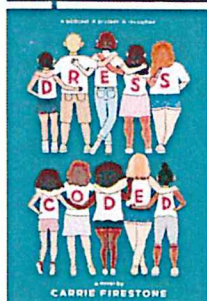
Amari and the Night Brothers by B. B. Alston

Following the disappearance of her older brother, Amari is introduced to a new world full of magic, where she must compete to take his place at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. Yet, not only is she at a disadvantage against her more magic-savvy peers, a shocking turn of events reveals she may be more powerful than she realizes. Will Amari be able to emerge triumphant and find her brother - before it's too late?



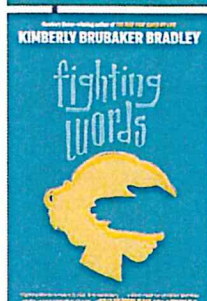
Ana on the Edge by A. J. Sass

Twelve-year-old Ana has been a competitive figure skater for years. This year is a hard year for Ana because her coach moved rinks which makes her commute long and her practice days hard. It affects her friendship and her new competition level brings hardships she wasn't expecting. This leads to new friendships and more questions than Ana ever knew existed.



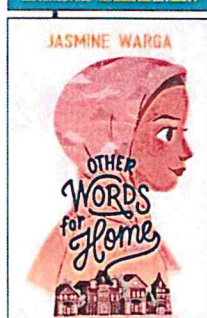
Dress Coded by Carrie Firestone

After witnessing a classmate humiliated over her outfit, 8th grader Molly Frost starts a podcast to protest her school's unfair dress code. As more and more students share their stories of being "dress coded," her protest snowballs into a full fledged revolution.



Fighting Words by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Della and her older sister Suki are inseparable. Ever since their mother went to jail and her boyfriend took them, Suki has taken care of and protected Della. When the girls are sent to live in foster care things start to improve. But an incident involving Suki makes Della realize how much her big sister has shouldered. To get the help they need, Della must learn to speak up.

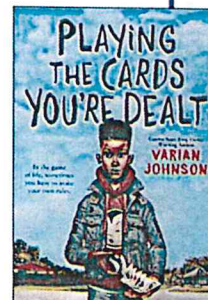


Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga

Jude leaves behind her brother and father to travel to the United States with her mother for refuge. Trying to bridge the differences between her Syrian life and her new home in Cincinnati, Jude searches for an identity that fits all of her.

Playing the Cards You're Dealt by Varian Johnson

Ten-year-old Anthony ("Ant") Joplin is navigating fifth grade, girls, best friends, and the family tradition of competing in the annual Spades Tournament. If that isn't enough, secrets threaten to tear it all apart in this hopeful look at legacies.



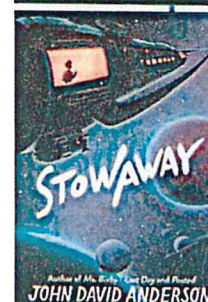
Spin by Lamar Giles

When rising star DJ Parsec is found murdered just before a big show, her ex-best friend Kya and biggest fan Fuse are determined to find out who killed her and why. But uncovering the truth may be more dangerous than they realize.



Stowaway by John David Anderson

The ship was all Leo has known for the past 3 years. His father brought the whole family on the Ayakari ship, and they are showing no signs of stopping. That is, until the pirates come. Bonded by trauma, an unlikely alliance forms between child and pirate, looking to stop the evil encroaching on their land in this action-packed sci-fi novel.



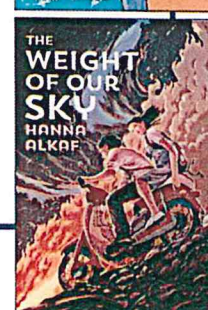
Swim Team by Johnnie Christmas

When Bree and her father move from New York to Florida, she can't wait to join her new Middle School STEM club. But when the only elective she can fit in her schedule is Swim 101, she's not only faced with learning to swim, but with helping her school swim team make it to the State Championships.



The Weight of Our Sky by Hanna Alkaf

After getting separated from her mother, Melati must navigate her war-torn home of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in an effort to reunite with her. However, Mel is contested by Chinese rioters as well as her own OCD, which manifests as a djinn within her mind. Joined by a Chinese boy named Vincent, Mel must overcome all that stands in her way to ensure her mother's safety.



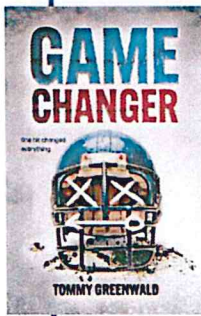
2023 Nutmeg Book Award Middle School Nominees Grades 7-8



Black Brother, Black Brother

by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Biracial brothers Donte and Trey attend Middlefield Prep, an almost entirely white school. Trey presents as white, while Donte presents as black. When Donte is unjustly suspended, he begins to realize that life is not always fair. The unlikely world of fencing provides Donte with unique opportunities to learn more about himself and those around him.



Game Changer

by Tommy Greenwald

Teddy Youngblood lies in a coma after receiving a devastating hit at football camp. His teammates know what really happened, but will they find the strength to tell the truth? Details are slowly revealed as his friends, teammates, and coach visit Teddy and his grieving family.



The Line Tender

by Kate Allen

After twelve-year-old Lucy's mother dies, she is able to find meaning and comfort by pursuing the work of her marine biologist mother. This thoughtful novel reveals the depths of grief and loss coupled with moments of laughter and redemption.



Look Both Ways

by Jason Reynolds

Ten interconnected stories detail what happens after school lets out and kids are walking home. Skateboards, handshakes, and standing up to bullies are just a few of the detours faced on the way home.



The Magic Fish

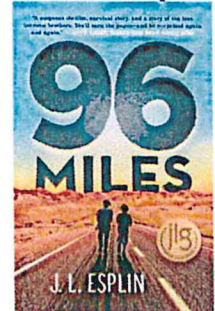
by Trung Le Nguyen

Tien and his mom can't always find the right words, so they express themselves to one another by sharing fairy tales. His mother has a hard time opening up about her trauma coming to the United States, and Tien wanders a road of self discovery as he solidifies his identity. The two navigate their separate lives while communicating their perspectives within layers of fables.

96 Miles

by J. L. Esplin

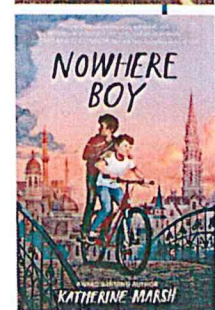
When brothers John and Stew realize that it is impossible for their father to return home, they must attempt to survive on their own. Fear, danger, violence, and illness follow after a dramatic disaster hits. Will the brothers' resourcefulness, loyalty, and determination keep them safe?



Nowhere Boy

by Katherine Marsh

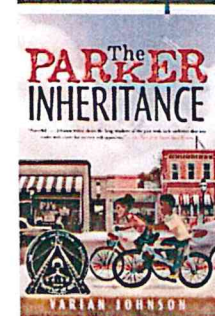
Ahmed doesn't belong in Brussels, not after he lost his family while fleeing war-torn Syria. American-born Max doesn't belong in Brussels either, but not being able to speak French is the least of his worries when Max finds a Syrian refugee living in his basement. Two worlds collide in this story of unlikely friendship, hope, and courage.



The Parker Inheritance

by Varian Johnson

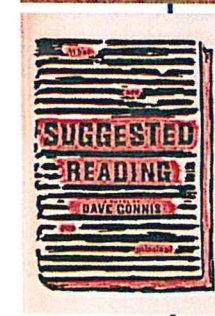
While visiting family in Lambert, South Carolina over the summer, Candace uncovers a decades-old mystery involving her grandmother. She sets out with the help of a quiet neighbor, Brandon, to uncover the past while learning about historical injustices that happened in the town.



Suggested Reading

by Dave Connis

Clara Evans has earned a spot at an elite high school through a scholarship opportunity. But when the books that influenced her begin mysteriously disappearing from the school's shelves, Clara learns how far she and others are willing to go to give books to those who need them.

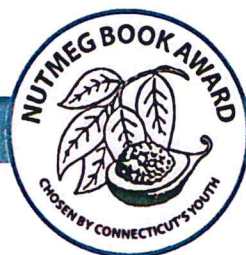
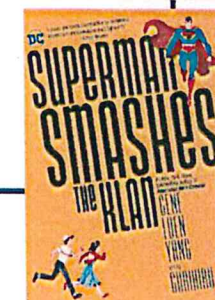


Superman Smashes the Klan

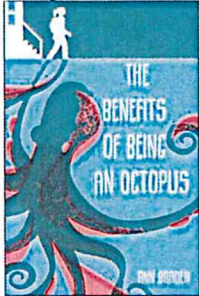
by Gene Luen Yang, art

by Gurihiru

Teens Roberta and Tommy Lee just moved to Metropolis, the city protected by Superman. After their family house is targeted by the Klan, Roberta and Tommy must help Superman foil the Klan's plot and defeat racism and hatred.



2022 Nutmeg Book Award Middle School Nominees Grades 7-8



The Benefits of Being an Octopus

by Ann Braden

Seventh-grader Zoey wishes she had eight arms to assist with all of her responsibilities. When she reluctantly joins the debate club, she learns that speaking up for herself and the people she loves creates a power she never knew she had.

Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation

by Stuart Gibbs

Albert Einstein created a code that could help – or destroy – the world. Decades later, an enemy organization is searching for this code, and the CIA needs the help of a genius to find it and solve its mystery. Enter Charlie Thorne. Too young to get a driver's license, Charlie is on the hunt for clues to unravel one of the modern world's greatest mysteries...before time runs out.

The First Rule of Punk

by Celia C. Pérez

Following the First Rule of Punk can be hard when being yourself is not "normal" at your new school. When the chance to try out for the school annual talent show comes up, she finds a few like-minded misfits to form a rock band. What could really go wrong? What happens when you don't fit in? You make the show your own.

Genesis Begins Again

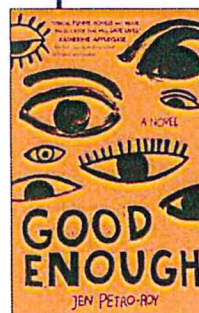
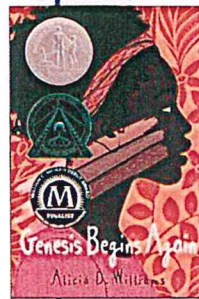
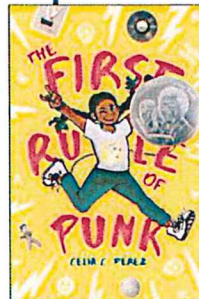
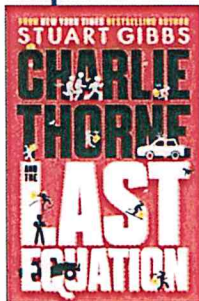
by Alicia D. Williams

Thirteen-year-old Genesis has a lot of things she'd like to fix in her life. Most of all, Genesis believes that if she can just change the color of her skin, everything would be better. When her own family believes her dark skin puts her at a disadvantage, how can Genesis possibly learn to love herself?

Good Enough

by Jen Petro-Roy

Riley is sick. She has been put in a treatment center for kids who suffer from eating disorders. Faced with a roommate who breaks the rules and an estranged family who doesn't fully understand her sickness, Riley has to work to be able to see herself as more than just a number on a scale.



Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

by Dusti Bowling

Born without arms, thirteen-year-old Aven Green has been raised to believe that she can do anything. She becomes determined to show her new friend Connor that his Tourette's Syndrome shouldn't keep him from living his best life. Between helping out Connor and solving a mystery at her parents' new western theme park she certainly has her plate full.

Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish

by Pablo Cartaya

Eighth-grader Marcus Vega is having a hard time. After being suspended, he and his family take a trip to Puerto Rico to try and rebuild. Marcus meets some interesting people during this time and along the way he learns the true meaning of family.

Pet

by Akwaeke Emezi

Jam was always told that monsters are no more. After she accidentally brings a creature to life from a painting, she learns that everything is not as it seems. She must keep her wits about her to be able to clearly see the difference between lies and reality. Will Jam be able to find the monster and stand up for herself?

Snapdragon

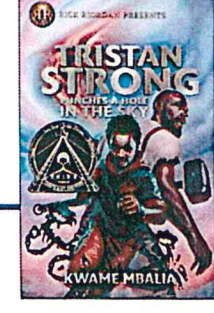
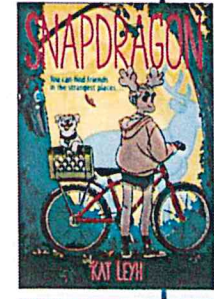
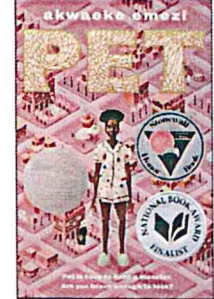
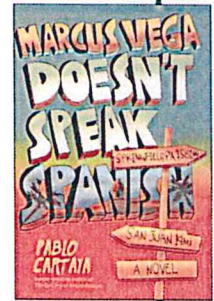
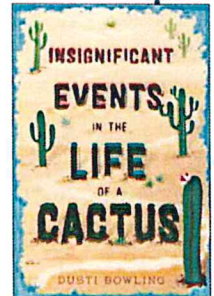
by Kat Leyh

When outcast Snapdragon befriends rumoured town "witch" Jacks, she learns about her own powers and inner strength. In this coming-of-age magical realism graphic novel, we discover that those that are unfairly judged hold their own magical stories and oftentimes we find connections, love and family in the most unusual places.

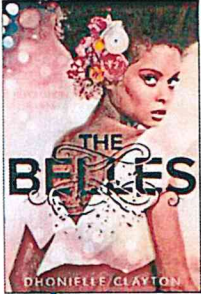
Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky

by Kwame Mbalia

Seventh-grader Tristan Strong is struggling with the death of his best friend, whose journal of stories has become Tristan's prize possession. One night, a creature steals it from him. In a struggle to reclaim it, Tristan punches a hole into the MidPass. This puts him face to face with battling African gods and legends. Can he outwit Anansi the spider to seal the hole and find his way home?

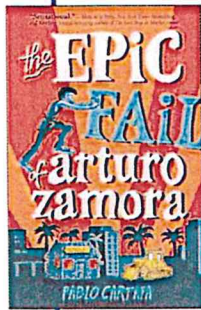


2021 Nutmeg Book Award Middle School Nominees Grades 7-8



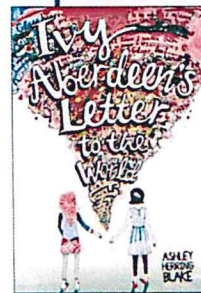
The Belles by Dhonielle Clayton

In the world of Orléans, beauty is valued above all else. When Camellia turns 16 she becomes a Belle, given the power to transform the ugly for a price...However this beautiful world is covering an ugly secret and Camellia must decide how far she is willing to push her powers to uncover the horrible truth.



The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora by Pablo Cartaya

Summer vacation life in Miami is simple for thirteen year old Arturo: play ball, relax with Grandma's delicious cooking, and work a few shifts washing dishes at his family's restaurant. When a slick new developer comes to town, everything gets complicated quickly. Now all he has to do is save the restaurant, unite the town, and win the girl. There's no way he can fail, as his family always says "lo mas importante, el el amor y la fe."



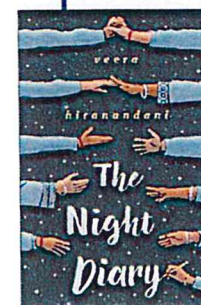
Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World by Ashley Herring Blake

Twelve year-old Ivy keeps her deepest secret in her notebook...which gets lost in the chaos when her home is leveled by a tornado. As her family is picking up the pieces, she's trying to put her identity together. When Ivy meets a peculiar girl, she feels a connection, but she's afraid of her feelings. Ivy has to figure out who she is and face the world after destruction.



New Kid by Jerry Craft

7th grader Jordan Banks really wants to attend Art School, but his parents have other plans for him: going to a prestigious private school, where he faces being one of the only students of color. Can the new kid find his place in his new school culture while staying true to himself?

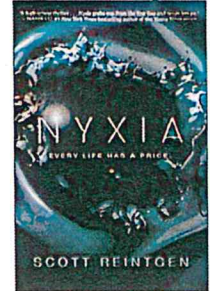


The Night Diary by Veera Hiranandani

Nisha was ripped away from all she had ever known during India's 1947 Partition. Nisha, (half-Muslim, half-Hindu) and her family have just days to leave their home. In a series of diary entries she describes her difficult journey to a new India. As a refugee, Nisha searches to find her identity after leaving everything behind.

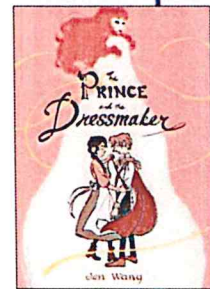
Nyxia by Scott Reintgen

In a not-too-distant future where corporations control space exploration, a group of ten teenagers compete for coveted jobs on a newly discovered planet. Emmett Atwater has everything to gain and nothing to lose—except his life. This book is 'Hunger Games' meets 'Ready Player One,' in space.



The Prince and the Dressmaker by Jen Wang

Prince Sebastian has to find a bride. At least, that's what his parents say. Sebastian has other plans. With the help of his best friend, the dressmaker Frances, he spends his nights dressed as the fashion icon Lady Crystallia—but Frances has her own dreams. Can they both keep each other's secrets and still stay true to themselves?



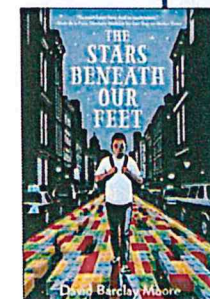
Small Spaces by Katherine Arden

When things start to get creepy on a field trip to a local farm, Ollie notices similarities between what's happening, and the events in an old book she found. A mist rises and strangers give her ominous warnings about small spaces and a smiling man. Will Ollie be able to save herself and her classmates?



The Stars Beneath Our Feet by David Barclay Moore

It's been a year since Lolly's older brother was shot on 125th Street. In Harlem, your friends can provide protection but they can also get you killed. Lolly has always found an escape in designing fantasy Lego worlds. But now the real world is calling. Will the streets that claimed his brother claim Lolly too?



The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor

People have always looked at Mason differently. After his best friend Benny was found dead on Mason's family farm, things get even worse. Now, when Mason's new best friend Calvin goes missing, everyone looks to Mason for answers. But will anyone believe him?

