

2021

summer reading guide

READING MIDDLE GRADE



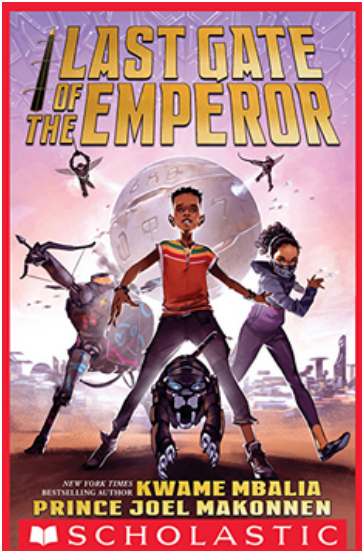


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a new kind of adventure

How about a trip to another galaxy? Or a road trip camping outdoors and fixing Ford trucks across the US? The kids in this category are going on new adventures, stepping outside their comfort zones.



304 pages

Last Gate of the Emperor

Published: May 6

Ages: 8+

A fast-paced sci-fi adventure set in a futuristic Ethiopian city, complete with holovids, floating markets, and a pet bionic lioness. 12-year-old Yared Haywat discovers secrets about his identity as a virtual reality game quickly becomes a real-life battle to save his home.

Liked this? Try: *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky* by Kwame Mbalia

The Road to Wherever

Published: May 11

Ages: 9+

11-year-old June (short for Junior) goes on a life-changing road trip with his second cousins after his father disappears. Along the way, they fix Ford trucks, meet some Ford owners with unforgettable stories, and maybe help June find himself? Moving and heartwarming.

Liked this? Try: *Clean Getaway* by Nic Stone



272 pages



416 pages

Alone

Published: January 12

Ages: 10+

12-year-old Maddie is left behind in a strange turn of events when an impending attack leads to her entire town being evacuated. In this dystopian middle grade verse novel, Maddie has to fend for herself with a dog as her sole companion. Immersive and educational.

Liked this? Try: **96 Miles** by J.L. Esplin

Not All Heroes

Published: May 18

Ages: 8+

After the death of her little brother, 11-year-old Zinnia joins a team of Real Life Superheroes, along with her 19-year-old aunt. However, Zinnia quickly learns that being a hero is not always easy. Quirky, heartfelt, and inspiring.

Liked this? Try: **Right As Rain** by Lindsey Stoddard



336 pages

Squad Goals

Published: April 6

Ages: 9+



304 pages

Awkward tween Magic Poindexter wants to follow in her athletic family's footsteps by attending summer cheer camp. But when her bestie joins the popular crew in camp, Magic has to figure it out on her own. Funny, relatable, and entertaining.

Liked this? Try: **Love Double Dutch** by Doreen Spicer-Donnelly

books to hug

Ever finished a book and just had a strong urge to hug it? Couldn't wipe a grin off your face? Or maybe some happy tears? These kids are making their dreams come true and (hopefully) winning your heart in one fell swoop.



288 pages

Pawcasso

Published: May 25

Ages: 8+

After she lies about being the owner of basket-wielding adorable dog shopping in town, lonely 11-year-old Jo is accepted and befriended by the other kids. But what happens when the secret gets out? Find out in this surprising, compulsively readable graphic novel.

Liked this? Try: *A Dog-Friendly Town* by Josephine Cameron

The Chance to Fly

Published: April 13

Ages: 9+

A big-hearted story about a girl in a wheelchair with musical theater dreams. Nat Beacon moves to a new city and finds her tribe in this #OwnVoices middle grade book.

Liked this? Try: *Upstaged* by Diana Harmon Asher



240 pages



320 pages

A Place to Hang the Moon

Published: February 2

Ages: 8+

Three orphaned kids in 1940's England are looking for their forever home in the English countryside where they've been evacuated. Through a series of awful foster home experiences, the kids keep up their spirits by means of books, the town library, and holding on to each other. A cozy, unforgettable story.

Liked this? Try: *Across the Pond* by Joy McCullough

Allergic

Published: March 2

Ages: 8+

Feeling a bit lost as her parents are expecting a new baby and her little brothers already have each other, Maggie is determined to find a pet she can love. But she's crushed when she discovers that she's allergic to fur. A sweet, poignant graphic novel.

Liked this? Try: *Twins* by Varian Johnson



240 pages

Amina's Song

Published: March 9

Ages: 8+



288 pages

Amina has returned from a summer in Karachi ready to share her culture with everyone... but she's stuck. A new school project and a new music producer friend may just be the starters she needs. Heartwarming, family-centered sequel to *Amina's Voice*.

Liked this? Try: *A Thousand Questions* by Saadia Faruqi



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- One YA book
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girls figuring it out

Coming-of-age stories are my favorite. The girls in these books are brave, creative, smart, and sometimes emotionally messy. They don't always make the right choices, but they sure make for complex, riveting stories.



256 pages

Starfish

Published: March 9

Ages: 9+

A powerful novel in verse about a girl taunted for her weight. Ellie finds allies in her father, a therapist, and a new best friend as she learns to starfish and take up space.

Liked this? Try: *All of Me* by Chris Baron

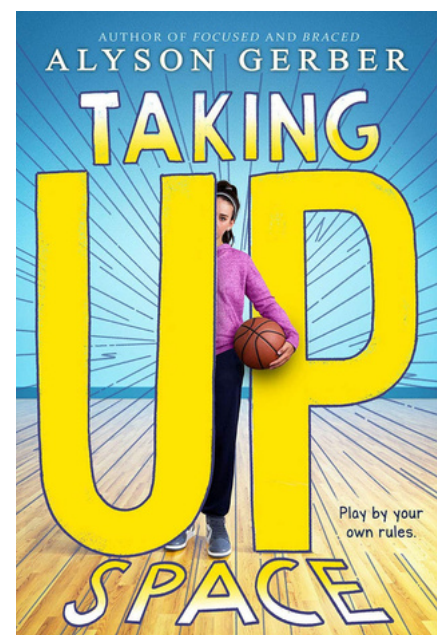
Taking Up Space

Published: May 18

Ages: 9+

Sarah's changing pubescent body means she's hungrier and a little clumsy on the court. Her desire to remain useful to her team, combined with her mother's issues with food lead Sarah into disordered eating patterns. Timely, with an important message for tweens and adults alike.

Liked this? Try: *Braced* by Alyson Gerber



272 pages

The Kate in Between

Published: May 18

Ages: 9+



304 pages

Kate gets caught on camera saving her best friend Haddie's life. But what all the news crews and celebrities who interview her don't know is that she was among the bullies who put Haddie's life in danger too. Complex, absolutely riveting, and brilliantly written.

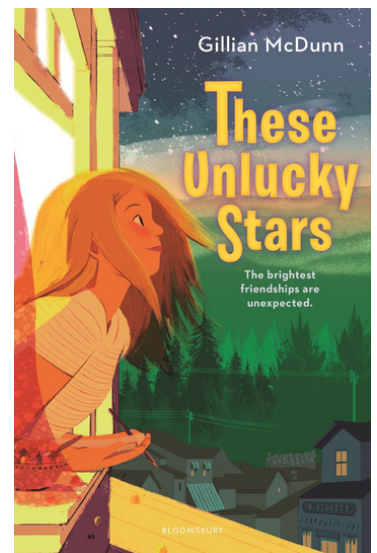
Liked this? Try: *Let's Pretend We Never Met* by Melissa Walker

These Unlucky Stars

Published: March 2

Ages: 8+

Annie is convinced that she is unlucky and the reason her mom left. After a prank gone wrong, she's stuck running errands for a grouchy old woman named Gloria. With Gloria's help and the town's float parade, Annie learns that life is often what you make of it.



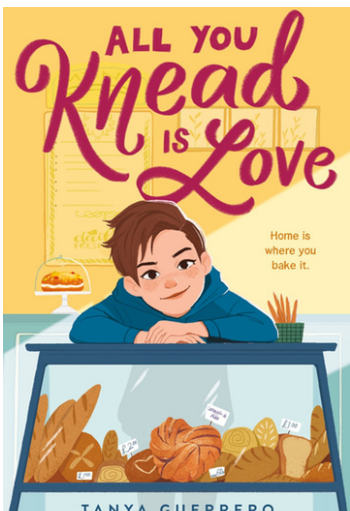
288 pages

Liked this? Try: *Macy Macmillan and the Rainbow Goddess* by Shari Green

All You Knead Is Love

Published: March 30

Ages: 10+



384 pages

When Alba's mother sends her off to Barcelona to live with her Abuela and escape her violent father. Alba is withdrawn at first, but Barcelona is full of loving friends who become family and a bakery where Alba learns to make sourdough bread. That is, until the bakery is threatened with closure.

Liked this? Try: *Measuring Up* by Lily LaMotte, Ann Xu



family is... complicated

Mothers and their daughters, blended families, a missing sibling, a surprise stepbrother, and family secrets take center stage in the stories in this category.



224 pages

Red, White, and Whole

Published: February 2

Ages: 9+

It's the 1980's and 13-year-old Reha is caught between her Indian immigrant parents' cultures and her American culture. In the midst of all that, her mother is diagnosed with leukemia. A searing, heartbreaking, and heart-mending verse novel about family, community, and the 80's.

Liked this? Try: *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani

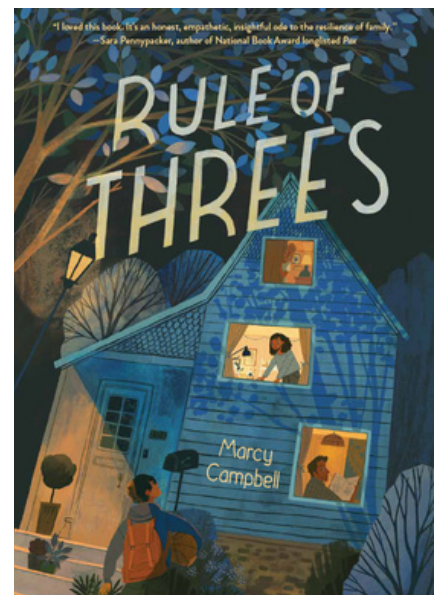
Rule of Threes

Published: May 11

Ages: 10+

Maggie's life is changing fast. One of her best friends is withdrawing from her and her dad's son from an extramarital affair moves in with them after his mother goes to rehab for opioid addiction -- and he's attending her school. A unique look at a family facing real, tough issues.

Liked this? Try: *Where We Used to Roam* by Jenn Bishop



320 pages

Forever This Summer

Published: July 6

Ages: 9+



336 pages

Georgie and her mama are in Louisiana helping out Great Aunt Vie. Then Georgie meets Markie, a foster kid with a limb difference. Between helping Markie find her real mom, setting up a charity talent show, and learning family secrets, Georgie is booked and busy.

Liked this? Try: *The Only Black Girls in Town* by Brandy Colbert

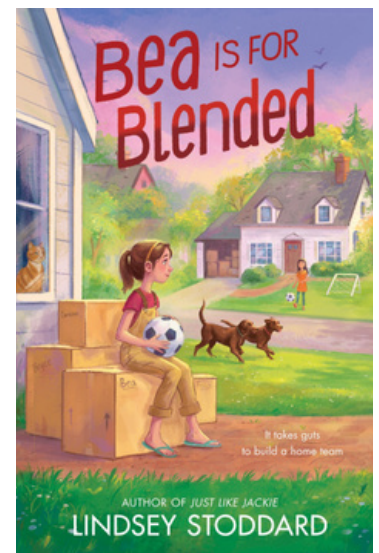
Bea Is for Blended

Published: May 4

Ages: 8+

When Bea's mom marries her archnemesis's father, they go from a family of two to a family of six with one on the way. New to middle school, she's trying to start a girls soccer team and maybe make new friends? This heartfelt novel tackles bullying, family dynamics, and identity.

Liked this? Try: *Two Naomis* by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

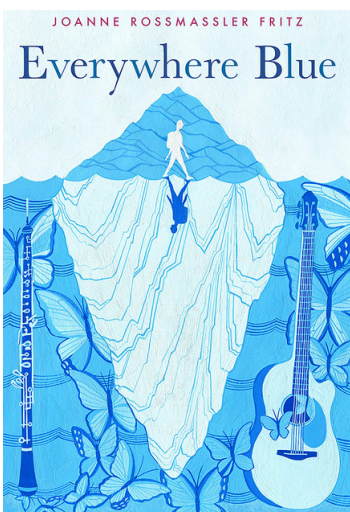


304 pages

Everywhere Blue

Published: June 1

Ages: 9+



256 pages

Maddie's musical family loses their harmony when her older brother disappears from his college campus. Her parents leave town, her sister is angry all the time, and Maddie feels lost. Music, climate change, and family are at the heart of this arresting verse novel.

Liked this? Try: *We Dream of Space* by Erin Entrada Kelly

put the "b" in bff stories

Good friendships are a balm for the soul, and the kids in this category find friends that make them the best versions of themselves. These are some of the best stories about fighting for a bond that's worth the effort.



240 pages

The Best Worst Summer

Published: May 4

Ages: 8+

A charming story about two sets of best friends and the time capsule that connects them. Alternately narrated by two girls: Melissa in the summer of 1989 and Peyton in the present. Don't miss this engaging summer mystery.

Liked this? Try: *A Place at the Table* by Saadia Faruqi and Laura Shovan

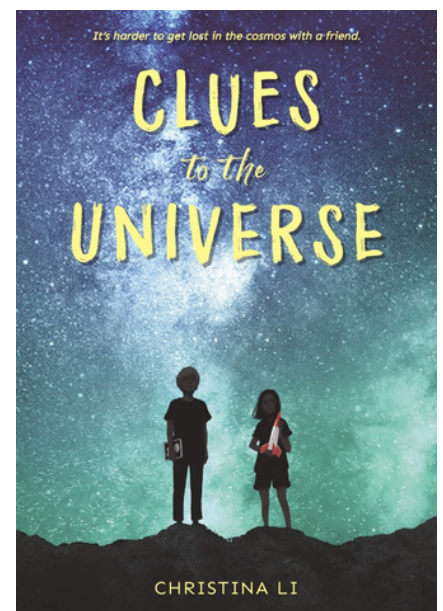
Clues to the Universe

Published: January 12

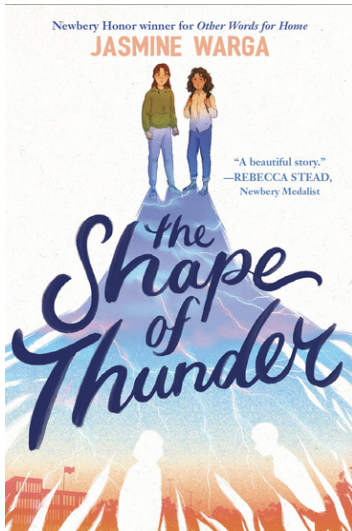
Ages: 9+

Ro and Benji form an unlikely friendship to reach their goals. His: Find his famous comic book author who also happens to be his dad. Hers: Build and launch the rocket she planned with her dad before he died. A classic BFF story with plenty of heart and science.

Liked this? Try: *Lemons* by Melissa Savage



304 pages



288 pages

The Shape of Thunder

Published: May 11

Ages: 9+

Cora and Quinn were besties before Quinn's brother killed Cora's sister in a school shooting. Quinn is sure that if they can figure out a way to time travel, she and Cora can be friends again. Achingly beautiful, full of grief, but also hope.

Liked this? Try: *The Distance to Home* by Jenn Bishop

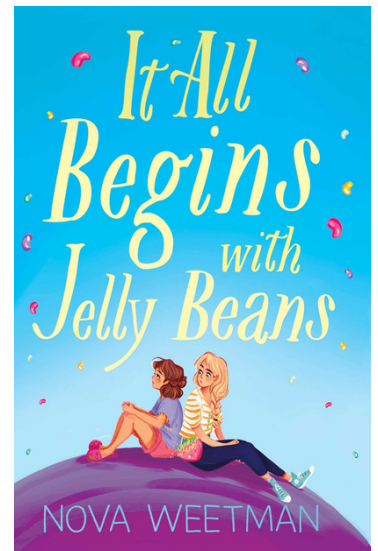
It All Begins with Jelly Beans

Published: June 8

Ages: 8+

Meg and Riley meet in the Nurse's office; Meg is there for anxiety, Riley for a diabetes sugar drop. The girls bond over jelly beans and help each other figure out who they want to be. An utterly enjoyable friendship story.

Liked this? Try: *The Way to Bea* by Kat Yeh



256 pages

The Magical Imperfect

Published: June 15

Ages: 9+



336 pages

1989, San Francisco. Etan has selective mutism and spends most of his time with his grandfather. But when he meets Malia, a girl with severe eczema, both kids find healing in their friendship and in their close-knit community. A satisfying, heartwarming verse novel.

Liked this? Try: *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus* by Dusti Bowling

under the radar

Five incredible stories that should not be flying under your radar. A girl whose people-pleasing behavior does more harm than good, a book with clever storytelling, and a young middle grade book set in Nigeria.

**336 pages**

Saint Ivy: Kind at All Costs

Published: May 18

Ages: 9+

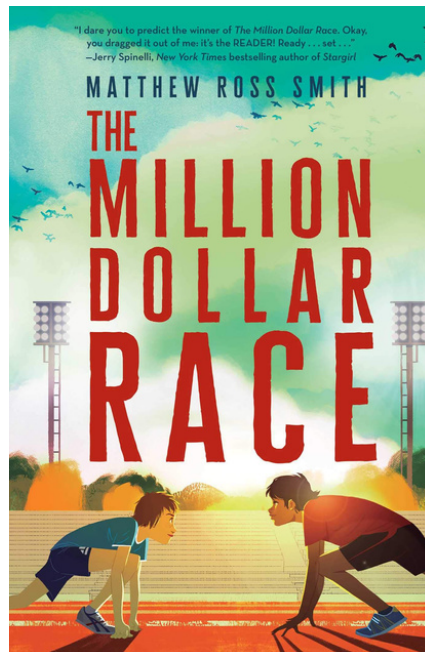
Ivy needs to be good to people, even when it's bad for her. That's why she pretends to be okay with her mom being a surrogate, a kid at school asking her to let him copy her homework, and never sharing her problems with her friends. But can she keep up the pretense? A thought-provoking novel.

The Million Dollar Race

Published: January 19

Ages: 9+

Speedy runner Grant Falloon gets disqualified from a million-dollar racing contest because his unconventional parents never got him a legal birth certificate. This sets off an unbelievably ridiculous sequence of events, including creating a new country. Told in prose and interview sessions, this book covers male friendships, sports, and identity.



224 pages



320 pages

Reckless, Glorious, Girl

Published: February 23

Ages: 10+

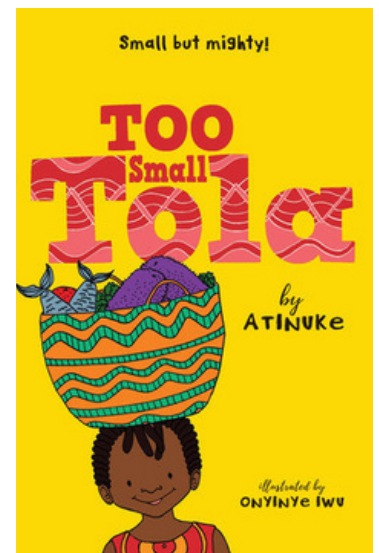
It's the summer before seventh grade and Bea Miller longs to be more: to have the figure of a woman, to know the dad who died before she was born, to be accepted by the popular kids (even though she has the best girlfriends and a cool grandmother). A stirring, atmospheric verse novel.

Too Small Tola

Published: March 2

Ages: 7+

A delightful illustrated early middle grade book about a girl who is small, but mighty. Follow Tola on three adventures in the metropolitan city of Lagos. By the beloved author of the *Anna Hibiscus* series.



96 pages

365 Days to Alaska

Published: January 19

Ages: 8+



272 pages

Rigel is devastated when her parents separate and her mom moves her and her sisters from bush living in Alaska to Connecticut. Her father promises that he'll come get her in one year, once he's settled. But as time passes, Rigel bonds with a crow at school, is making new friends, and isn't so sure about leaving anymore.

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