



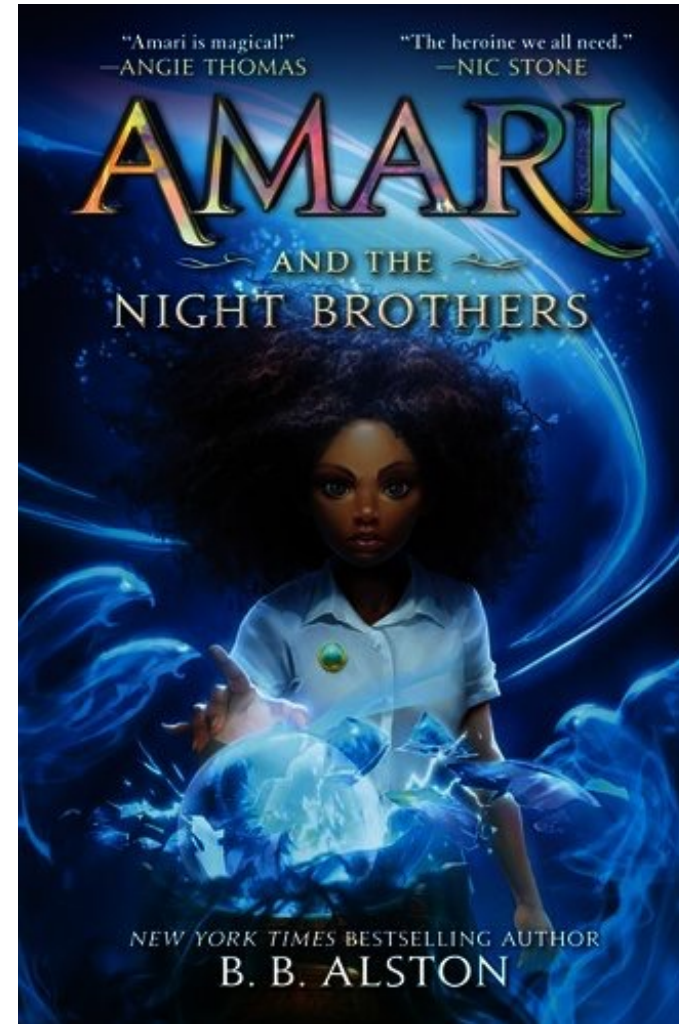
2021-2023 PROJECT LIT – MIDDLE GRADE SELECTIONS

Find one you love!

AMARI AND THE NIGHT BROTHERS

BY: B.B. ALSTON

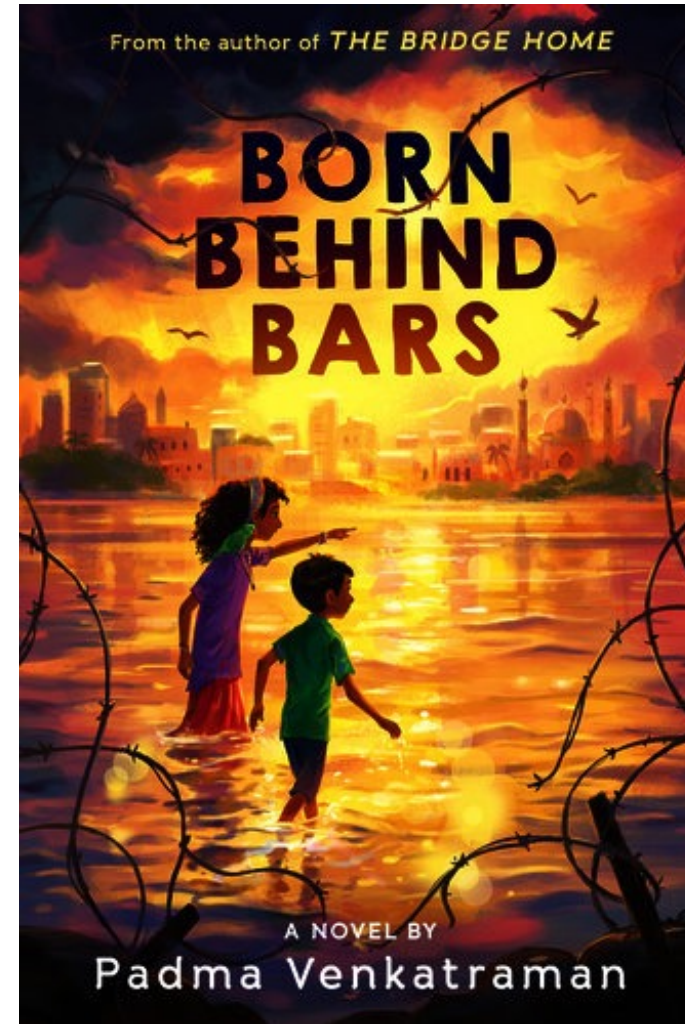
Amari Peters has never stopped believing her missing brother, Quinton, is alive. Not even when the police told her otherwise, or when she got in trouble for standing up to bullies who said he was gone for good. So when she finds a ticking briefcase in his closet, containing a nomination for a summer tryout at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs, she's certain the secretive organization holds the key to locating Quinton-if only she can wrap her head around the idea of magicians, fairies, aliens, and other supernatural creatures all being real. Now she must compete for a spot against kids who've known about magic their whole lives. No matter how hard she tries, Amari can't seem to escape their intense doubt and scrutiny - especially once her supernaturally enhanced talent is deemed "illegal." With an evil magician threatening the supernatural world, and her own classmates thinking she's an enemy, Amari has never felt more alone. But if she doesn't stick it out and pass the tryouts, she may never find out what happened to Quinton.



BORN BEHIND BARS

BY: PADMA VENKATRAMAN

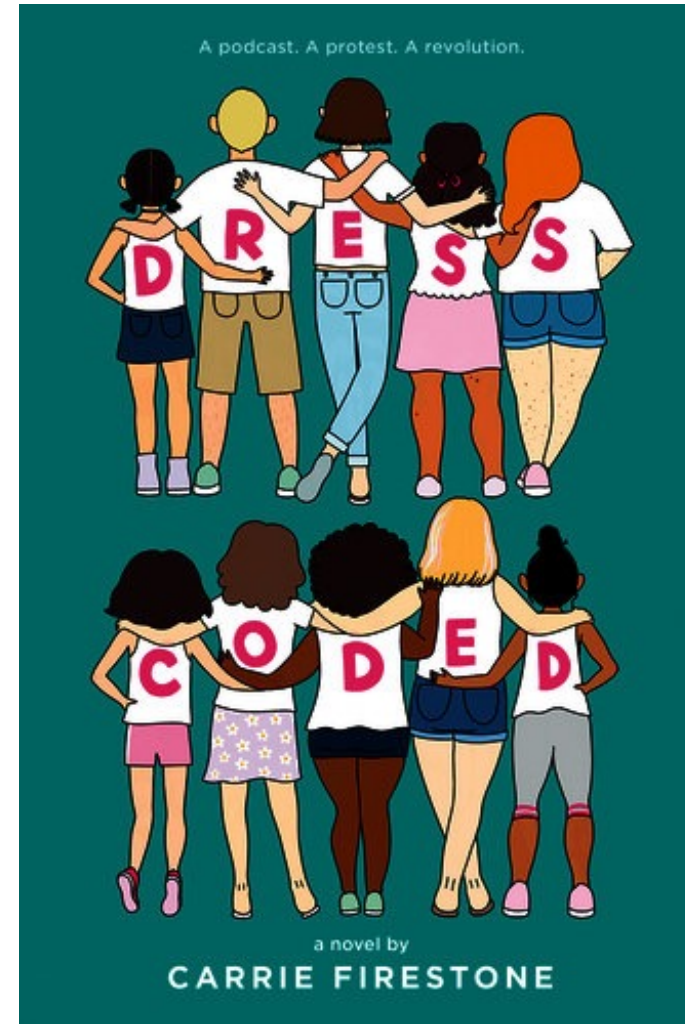
The author of the award-winning *The Bridge Home* brings readers another gripping novel set in Chennai, India, featuring a boy who's unexpectedly released into the world after spending his whole life in jail with his mom. Kabir has been in jail since the day he was born, because his mom is serving time for a crime she didn't commit. He's never met his dad, so the only family he's got are their cellmates, and the only place he feels the least bit free is in the classroom, where his kind teacher regales him with stories of the wonders of the outside world. Then one day a new warden arrives and announces Kabir is too old to stay. He gets handed over to a long-lost "uncle" who unfortunately turns out to be a fraud, and intends to sell Kabir. So Kabir does the only thing he can--run away as fast as his legs will take him. How does a boy with nowhere to go and no connections make his way? Fortunately, he befriends Rani, another street kid, and she takes him under her wing.



DRESS CODED

BY: CARRIE FIRESTONE

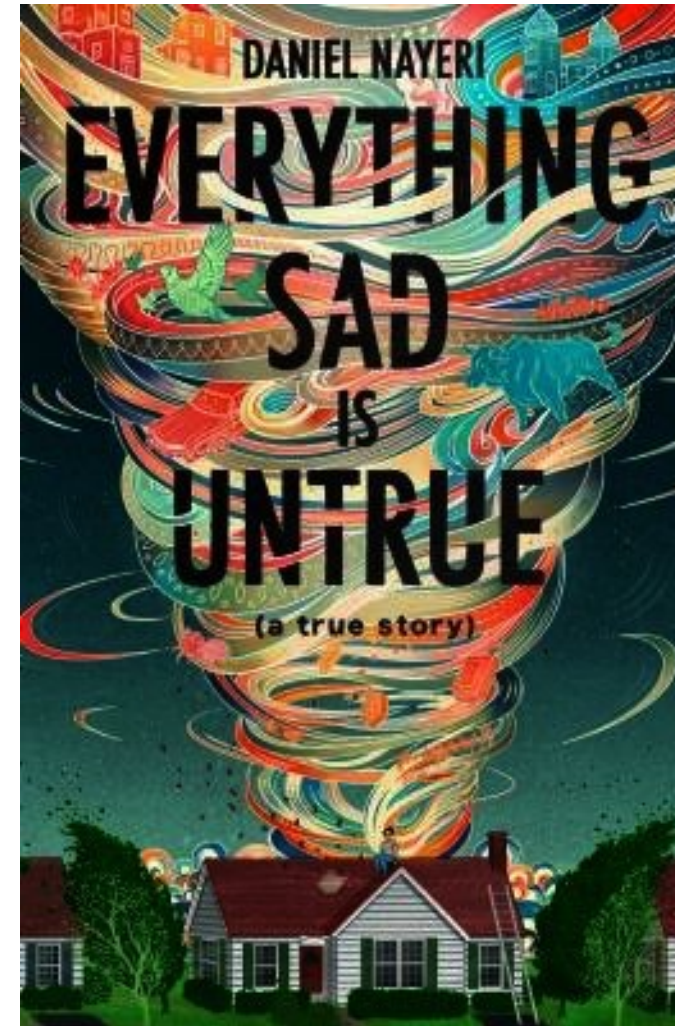
In this debut middle-grade girl-power friendship story, an eighth grader starts a podcast to protest the unfair dress code enforcement at her middle school and sparks a rebellion. Molly Frost is FED UP... ..Because Olivia was yelled at for wearing a tank top. ..Because Liza got dress coded and Molly didn't, even though they were wearing the exact same outfit. ..Because when Jessica was pulled over by the principal and missed a math quiz, her teacher gave her an F. ..Because it's impossible to find shorts that are longer than her fingertips. ..Because girls' bodies are not a distraction. ..Because middle school is hard enough...And so Molly starts a podcast where girls can tell their stories, and before long, her small rebellion swells into a revolution. Because now the girls are standing up for what's right, and they're not backing down.



EVERYTHING SAD IS UNTRUE

BY: DANIEL NAYERI

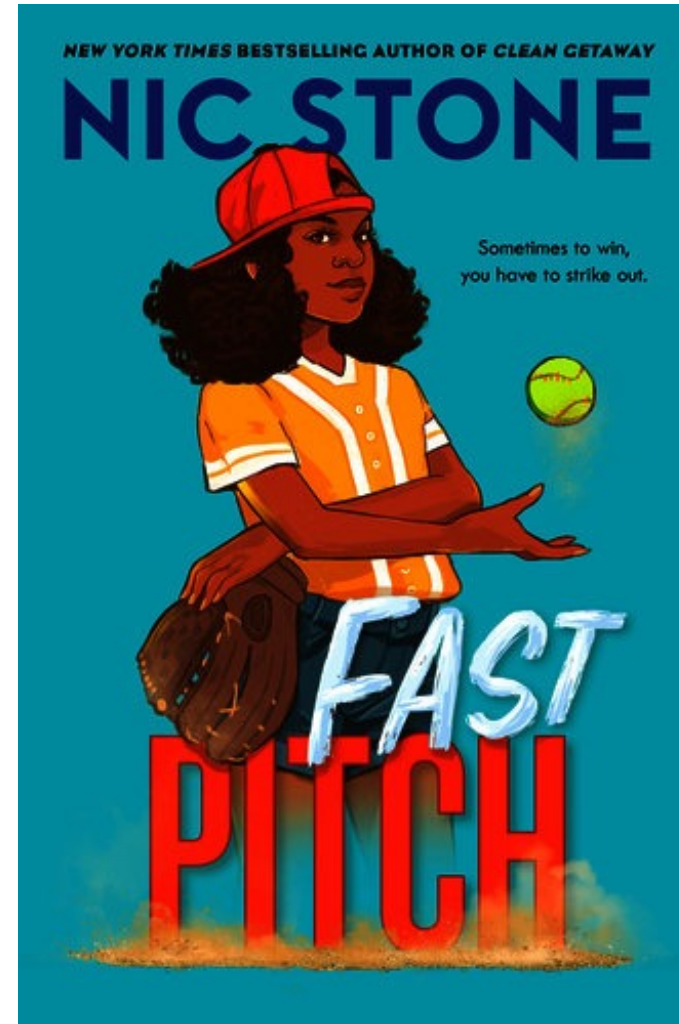
At the front of a middle school classroom in Oklahoma, a boy named Khosrou (whom everyone calls "Daniel") stands, trying to tell a story. His story. But no one believes a word he says. To them he is a dark-skinned, hairy-armed boy with a big butt whose lunch smells funny; who makes things up and talks about poop too much. But Khosrou's stories, stretching back years, and decades, and centuries, are beautiful, and terrifying, from the moment his family fled Iran in the middle of the night with the secret police moments behind them, back to the sad, cement refugee camps of Italy and further back to the fields near the river Aras, where rain-soaked flowers bled red like the yolk of sunset burst over everything, and further back still to the Jasmine-scented city of Isfahan. We bounce between a school bus of kids armed with paper clip missiles and spitballs to the heroines and heroes of Khosrou's family's past, who ate pastries that made people weep and cry "Akh, Tamar!" and touched carpets woven with precious gems. Like Scheherazade in a hostile classroom, Daniel weaves a tale to save his own life: to stake his claim to the truth. And it is (a true story). It is Daniel's.



FAST PITCH

BY: NIC STONE

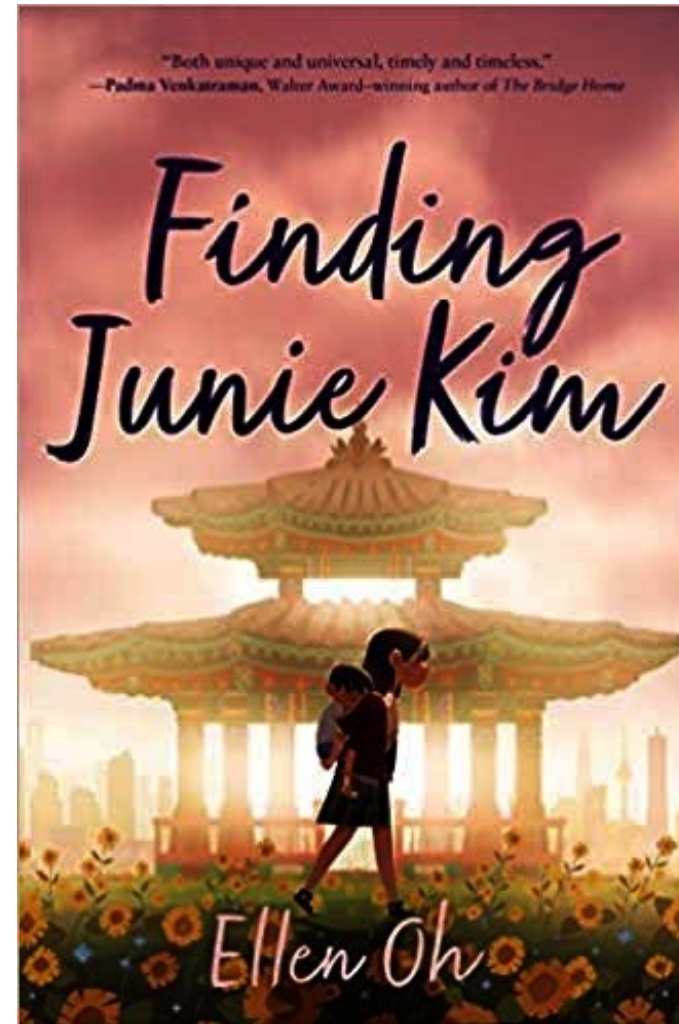
From #1 New York Times bestselling author Nic Stone comes a challenging and heartwarming coming-of-age story about a softball player looking to prove herself on and off the field. Shenice Lockwood, captain of the Fulton Firebirds, is hyper-focused when she steps up to the plate. Nothing can stop her from leading her team to the U12 fast-pitch softball regional championship. But life has thrown some curveballs her way. Strike one: As the sole team of all-brown faces, Shenice and the Firebirds have to work twice as hard to prove that Black girls belong at bat. Strike two: Shenice's focus gets shaken when her great-uncle Jack reveals that a career-ending--and family-name-ruining--crime may have been a setup. Strike three: Broken focus means mistakes on the field. And Shenice's teammates are beginning to wonder if she's captain-qualified. It's up to Shenice to discover the truth about her family's past--and fast--before secrets take the Firebirds out of the game forever.



FINDING JUNIE KIM

BY: ELLEN OH

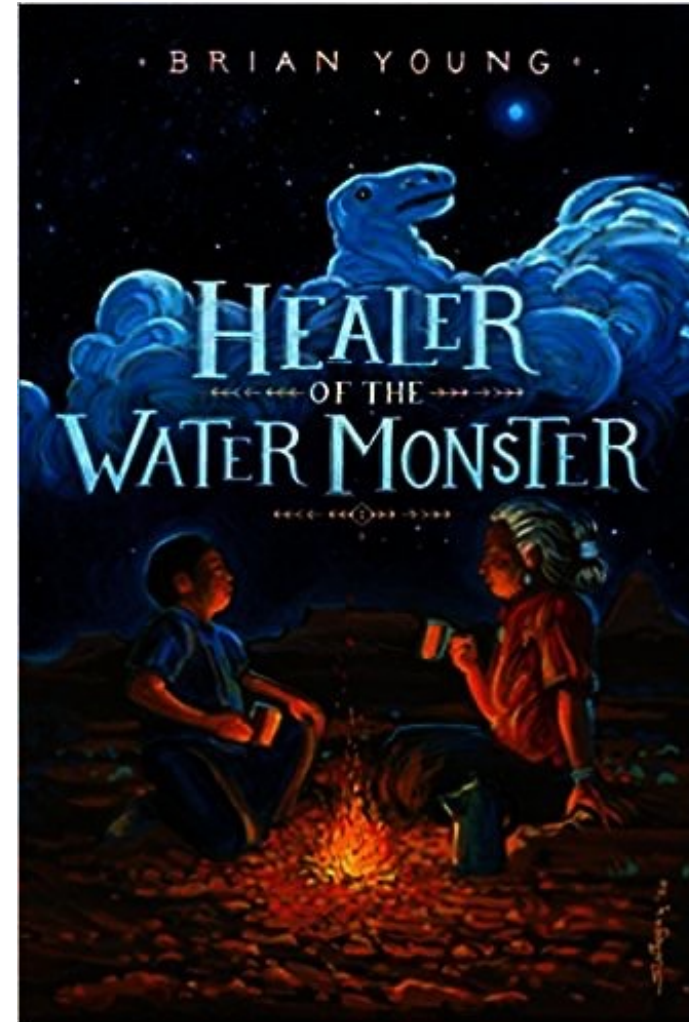
A captivating coming-of-age, own voices novel about Korean American Junie Kim. While facing racist vandalism at her middle school, Junie learns of her grandparents' experiences as lost children during the Korean War and finds her inner strength. Junie Kim just wants to fit in. So she keeps her head down and tries not to draw attention to herself. But when racist graffiti appears at her middle school, Junie must decide between staying silent or speaking out. Then Junie's history teacher assigns an oral history project - and when Junie decides to interview her grandparents, she soon uncovers their unbelievable tales of bravery as kids during the Korean War. Junie must find the courage to do what is right, just as her grandparents did. And as racism becomes more pervasive at school, Junie now knows what she must do.



HEALER OF THE WATER MONSTER

BY: BRIAN YOUNG

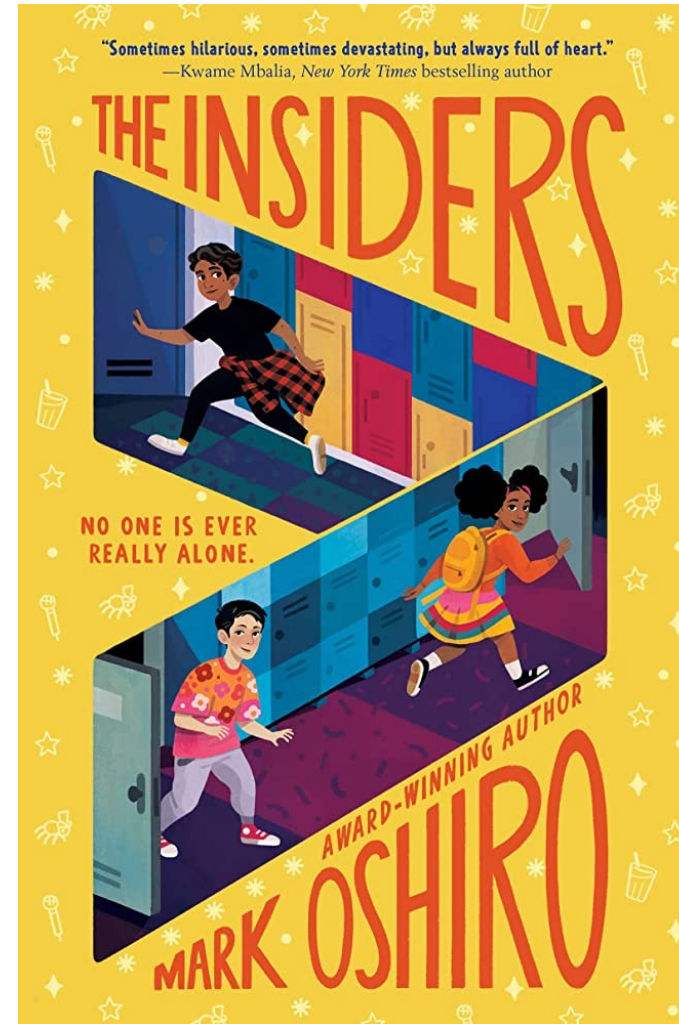
When Nathan goes to visit his grandma, Nali, at her mobile summer home on the Navajo reservation, he knows he's in for a pretty uneventful summer. Still, he loves spending time with Nali, and with his uncle Jet - though it's clear when Jet arrives that he brings his problems with him...One night, while lost in the nearby desert, Nathan finds something extraordinary. A Holy Being from the Navajo Creation Story - a Water Monster - in need of help...Now Nathan must summon all his courage to save his new friend. With the help of other Navajo Holy Beings, Nathan is determined to save the Water Monster, and to help Uncle Jet heal from his own pain.



THE INSIDERS

BY: MARK OSHIRO

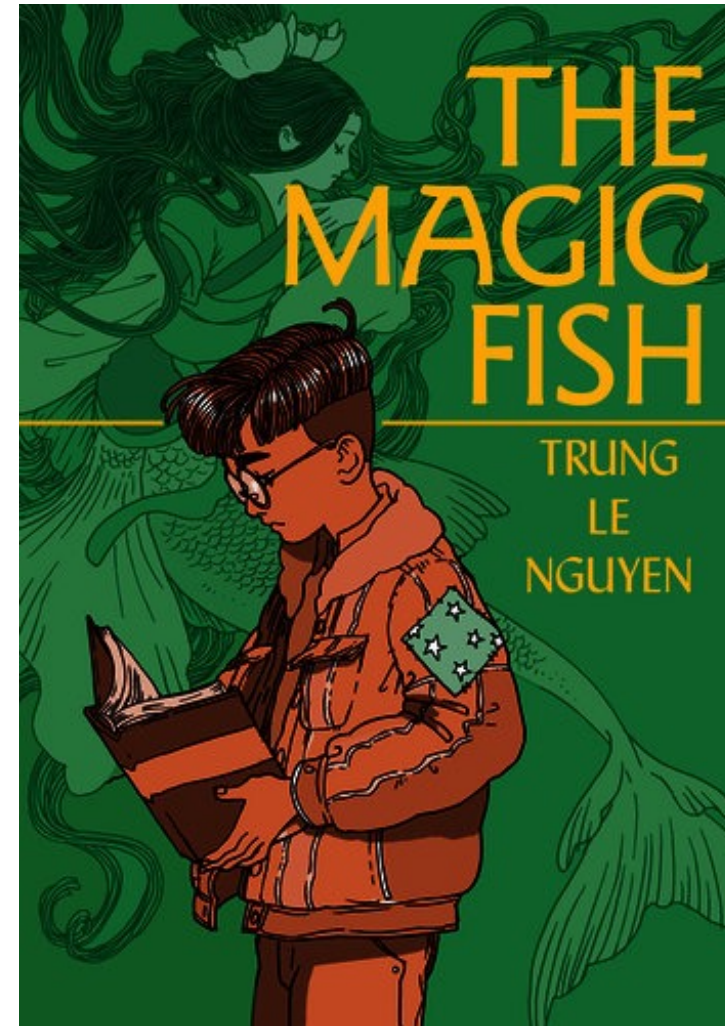
San Francisco and Orangevale may be in the same state, but for Hector Munoz, they might as well be a million miles apart. Back home in San Francisco, being gay didn't mean feeling different. But at Hector's new school, he couldn't feel more alone...Most days, Hector just wishes he could disappear. And he does. Right into the janitor's closet. But one day, when the door closes behind him, Hector discovers he's stumbled into a room that shouldn't be possible. A room that connects him with two new friends from different parts of the country - and opens the door to a life-changing year full of magic, friendship, and adventure.



THE MAGIC FISH

BY: TRUNG LE NGUYEN

Tien loves his family and his friends...but Tien has a secret he's been keeping from them, and it might change everything. An amazing YA graphic novel that deals with the complexity of family and how stories can bring us together. Real life isn't a fairytale. But Tien still enjoys reading his favorite stories with his parents from the books he borrows from the local library. It's hard enough trying to communicate with your parents as a kid, but for Tien, he doesn't even have the right words because his parents are struggling with their English. Is there a Vietnamese word for what he's going through? Is there a way to tell them he's gay? A beautifully illustrated story by Trung Le Nguyen that follows a young boy as he tries to navigate life through fairytales, an instant classic that shows us how we are all connected. The Magic Fish tackles tough subjects in a way that accessible with readers of all ages, and teaches us that no matter what--we can all have our own happy endings.



OPHIE'S GHOSTS

BY: JUSTINA IRELAND

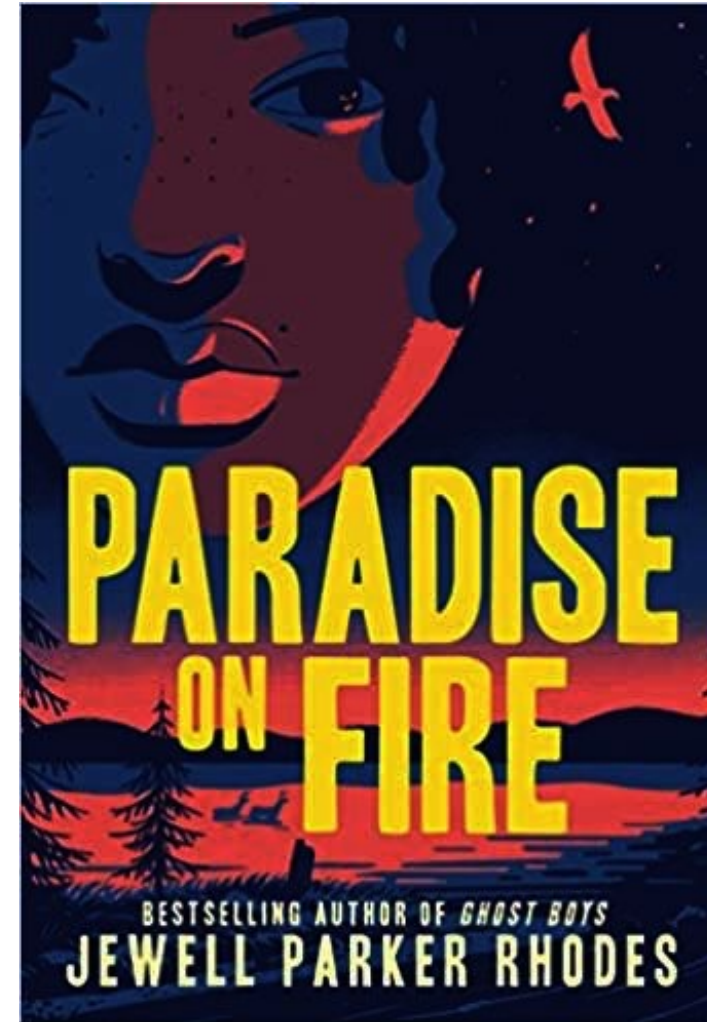
Ophelia Harrison and her family used to live in a small house in the Georgia countryside. But that was before the night in November 1922 and the cruel act that took her home and her father from her. Which just happened to be the same night that Ophie learned she can see ghosts...Now Ophie and her mother are stuck living in Pittsburgh with relatives they barely know. In the hopes of earning enough money to get their own place, Mama has gotten Ophie a job as a maid in the old manor house where she works. Daffodil Manor, like the wealthy Caruthers family who owns it, is haunted by memories and prejudices of the past and, as Ophie discovers, ghosts as well. Ghosts who have their own loves and hatreds and hungers and desires, ghosts who have wronged others and ghosts who have themselves been wronged...And as Ophie forms a friendship with one spirit whose life ended suddenly and unjustly, she wonders if she might be able to help, even as she comes to realize that Daffodil Manor may hold more secrets than she bargained for.



PARADISE ON FIRE

BY: JEWELL PARKER RHODES

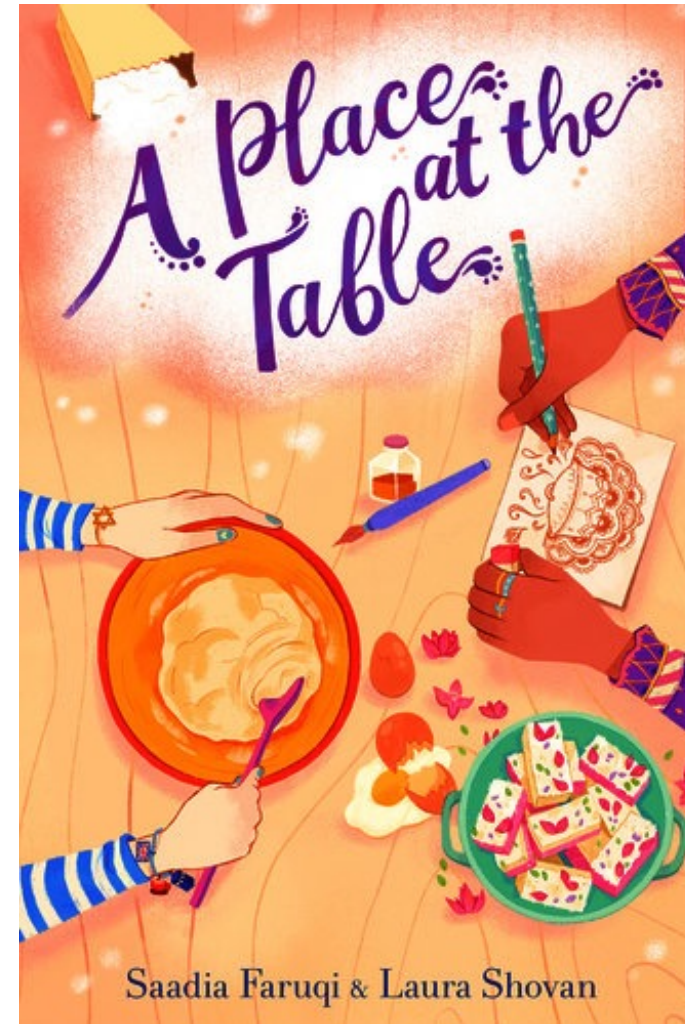
Addy is haunted by the tragic fire that killed her parents, leaving her to be raised by her grandmother. Now, years later, Addy's grandmother has enrolled her in a summer wilderness program. There, Addy joins five other Black city kids--each with their own troubles--to spend a summer out west. Deep in the forest the kids learn new (and to them) strange skills: camping, hiking, rock climbing, and how to start and safely put out campfires. Most important, they learn to depend upon each other for companionship and survival. But then comes a devastating forest fire...Addy is face-to-face with her destiny and haunting past. Developing her courage and resiliency against the raging fire, it's up to Addy to lead her friends to safety. Not all are saved. But remembering her origins and grandmother's teachings, she's able to use street smarts, wilderness skills, and her spiritual intuition to survive.



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

BY: SAADIA FARUQI &
LAURA SHO VAN

Sixth graders Sara and Elizabeth could not be more different. Sara is at a new school that is completely unlike the small Islamic school she used to attend. Elizabeth has her own problems: her British mum has been struggling with depression. The girls meet in an after-school South Asian cooking class, which Elizabeth takes because her mom has stopped cooking, and which Sara, who hates to cook, is forced to attend because her mother is the teacher. The girls form a shaky alliance that gradually deepens, and they make plans to create the most amazing, mouth-watering cross-cultural dish together and win a spot on a local food show. They make good cooking partners . . . but can they learn to trust each other enough to become true friends?



RED, WHITE AND WHOLE

BY: ROJANI LARROCCA

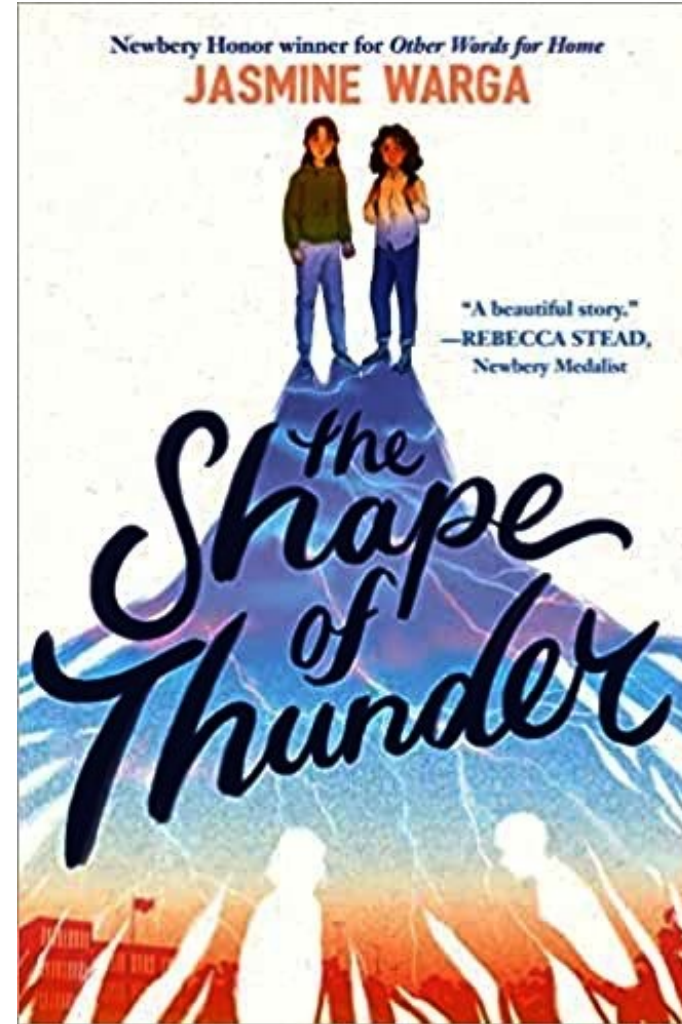
Reha feels torn between two worlds: school, where she's the only Indian American student, and home, with her family's traditions and holidays. But Reha's parents don't understand why she's conflicted - they only notice when Reha doesn't meet their strict expectations. Reha feels disconnected from her mother, or Amma, although their names are linked - Reha means "star" and Punam means "moon" - but they are a universe apart. Then Reha finds out that her Amma is sick. Really sick. Reha, who dreams of becoming a doctor even though she can't stomach the sight of blood, is determined to make her Amma well again. She'll be the perfect daughter, if it means saving her Amma's life.



THE SHAPE OF THUNDER

BY: JASMINE WARGA

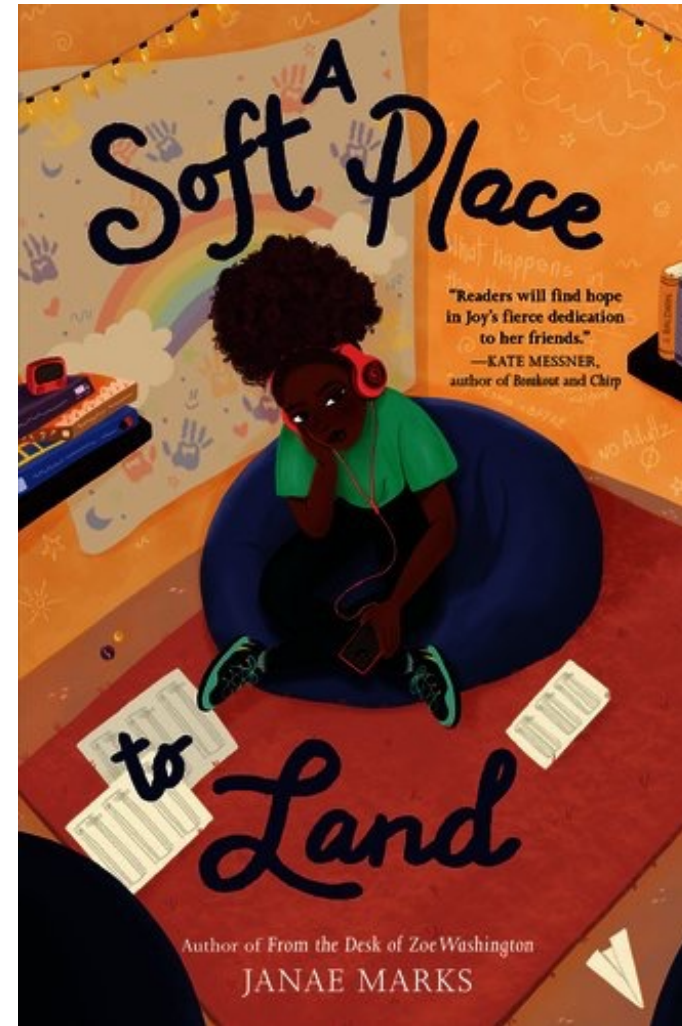
Cora hasn't spoken to her best friend, Quinn, in a year...Despite living next door to each other, they exist in separate worlds of grief. Cora is still grappling with the death of her beloved sister in a school shooting, and Quinn is carrying the guilt of what her brother did...On the day of Cora's twelfth birthday, Quinn leaves a box on her doorstep with a note. She has decided that the only way to fix things is to go back in time to the moment before her brother changed all their lives forever--and stop him...In spite of herself, Cora wants to believe. And so the two former friends begin working together to open a wormhole in the fabric of the universe. But as they attempt to unravel the mysteries of time travel to save their siblings, they learn that the magic of their friendship may actually be the key to saving themselves.



A SOFT PLACE TO LAND

BY: JANA E MARKS

When Joy's dad loses his job, suddenly home becomes a tiny apartment with thin walls, shared bedrooms, and tense arguments between Mom and Dad. Hardest of all, without enough funds, Joy's dreams of becoming a film score composer are put on hold. Joy's friendly new neighbor Nora lets Joy in on the complex's best-kept secret: the Hideout, a cozy refuge that only the kids know about. That's where Joy starts exchanging messages with another kid in the building who also seems to be struggling, until - abruptly, they stop writing back. What if they're in trouble? Joy has to find out who this mystery writer is, fast, but between managing a new dog-walking business with Nora, keeping on a brave face for her little sister, and worrying about her parents' marriage, Joy isn't sure how to keep her own head above water.



STAND UP, YUMI CHUNG!

BY: JESSICA KIM

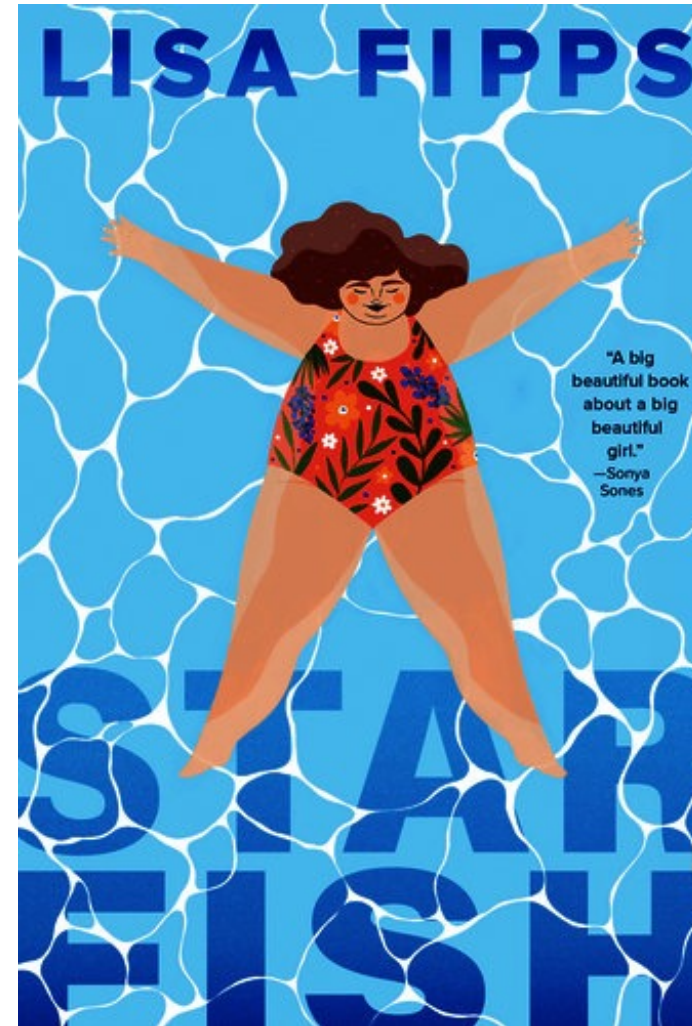
One lie snowballs into a full-blown double life in this irresistible story about an aspiring stand-up comedian. On the outside, Yumi Chung suffers from #shygirlproblems, a perm-gone-wrong, and kids calling her "Yu-MEAT" because she smells like her family's Korean barbecue restaurant. On the inside, Yumi is ready for her Netflix stand-up special. Her notebook is filled with mortifying memories that she's reworked into comedy gold. All she needs is a stage and courage. Instead of spending the summer studying her favorite YouTube comedians, Yumi is enrolled in test-prep tutoring to qualify for a private school scholarship, which will help in a time of hardship at the restaurant. One day after class, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favorite YouTube stars. The only problem is that the instructor and all the students think she's a girl named Kay Nakamura--and Yumi doesn't correct them. As this case of mistaken identity unravels, Yumi must decide to stand up and reveal the truth or risk losing her dreams and disappointing everyone she cares about.



STARFISH

BY: LISA FIPPS

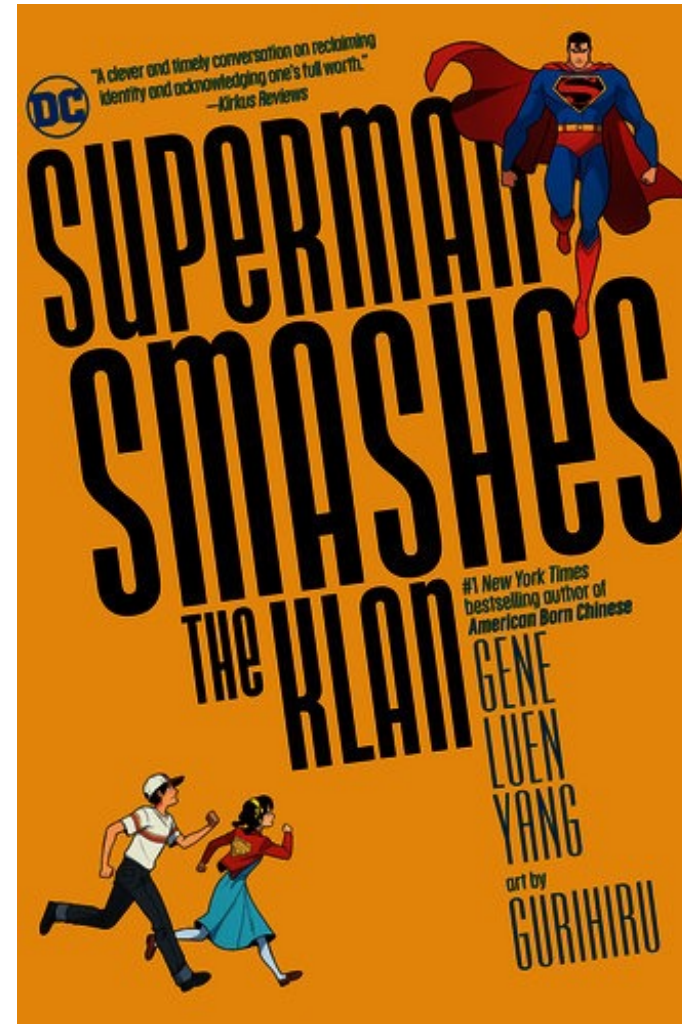
Ellie is tired of being fat-shamed and does something about it in this poignant debut novel-in-verse. Ever since Ellie wore a whale swimsuit and made a big splash at her fifth birthday party, she's been bullied about her weight. To cope, she tries to live by the Fat Girl Rules--like "no making waves," "avoid eating in public," and "don't move so fast that your body jiggles." And she's found her safe space--her swimming pool--where she feels weightless in a fat-obsessed world. In the water, she can stretch herself out like a starfish and take up all the room she wants. It's also where she can get away from her pushy mom, who thinks criticizing Ellie's weight will motivate her to diet. Fortunately, Ellie has allies in her dad, her therapist, and her new neighbor, Catalina, who loves Ellie for who she is. With this support buoying her, Ellie might finally be able to cast aside the Fat Girl Rules and starfish in real life--by unapologetically being her own fabulous self.



SUPERMAN SMASHES THE KLAN

BY: GENE LUEN YANG

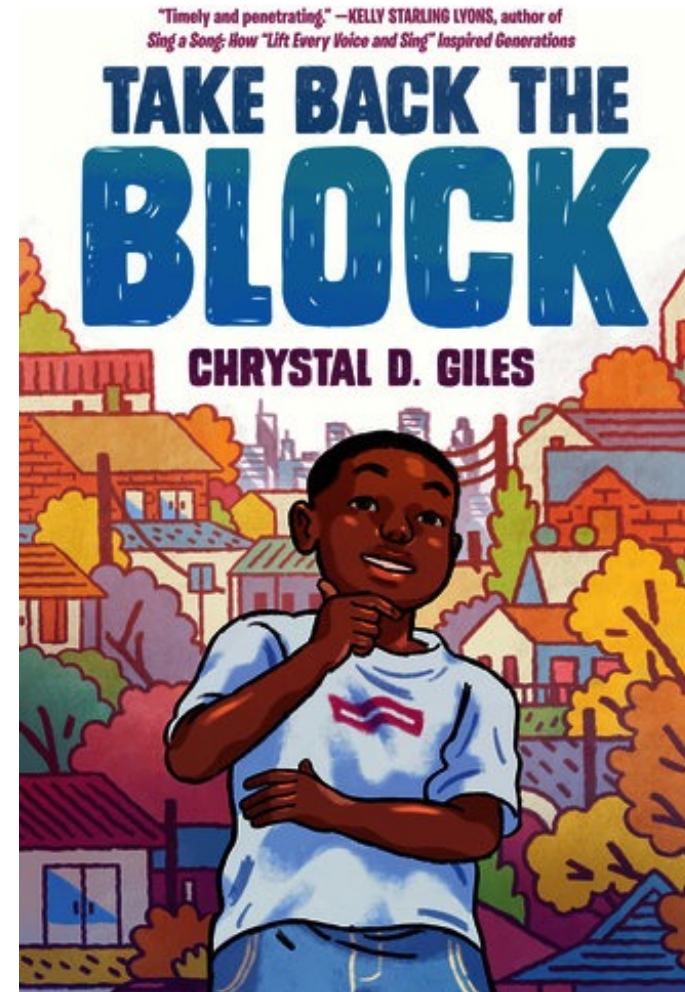
The year is 1946, and the Lee family has moved from Chinatown to Downtown Metropolis. While Dr. Lee is eager to begin his new position at the Metropolis Health Department, his two kids, Roberta and Tommy, are more excited about being closer to the famous superhero Superman! Tommy adjusts quickly to the fast pace of their new neighborhood, befriending Jimmy Olsen and joining the club baseball team, while his younger sister Roberta feels out of place when she fails to fit in with the neighborhood kids. She's awkward, quiet, and self-conscious of how she looks different from the kids around her, so she sticks to watching people instead of talking to them. While the Lees try to adjust to their new lives, an evil is stirring in Metropolis: the Klan of the Fiery Kross. The Klan targets the Lee family, beginning a string of terrorist attacks. They kidnap Tommy, attack the Daily Planet, and even threaten the local YMCA. But with the help of Roberta's keen skills of observation, Superman is able to fight the Klan's terror, while exposing those in power who support them--and Roberta and Superman learn to embrace their own unique features that set them apart. From multi-award-winning and New York Times bestselling author Gene Luen Yang comes an exciting middle grade tale featuring Superman.



TAKE BACK THE BLOCK

BY: CHRYSTAL D. GILES

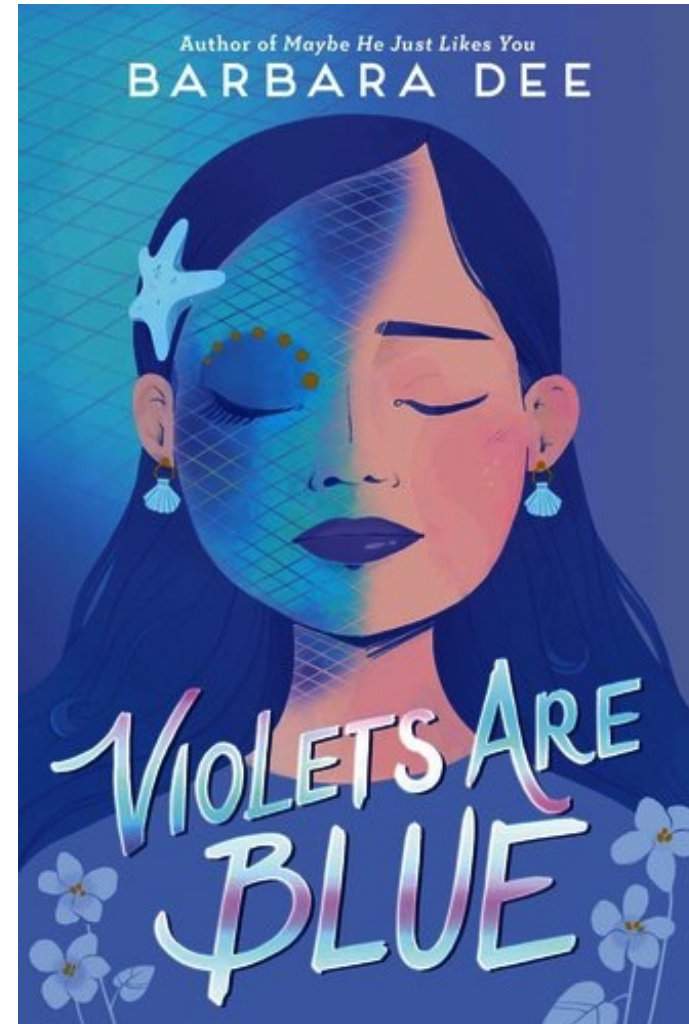
Brand-new kicks, ripped denim shorts, Supreme tee -- Wes Henderson has the best style in sixth grade. That--and hanging out with his crew (his best friends since little-kid days) and playing video games--is what he wants to be thinking about at the start of the school year, not the protests his parents are always dragging him to. But when a real estate developer makes an offer to buy Kensington Oaks, the neighborhood Wes has lived his whole life, everything changes. The grownups are supposed to have all the answers, but all they're doing is arguing. Even Wes's best friends are fighting. And some of them may be moving. Wes isn't about to give up the only home he's ever known. Wes has always been good at puzzles, and he knows there has to be a missing piece that will solve this puzzle and save the Oaks. But can he find it . . . before it's too late? Exploring community, gentrification, justice, and friendship, *Take Back the Block* introduces an irresistible 6th grader and asks what it means to belong--to a place and a movement--and to fight for what you believe in.



VIOLETS ARE BLUE

BY: BARBARA DEE

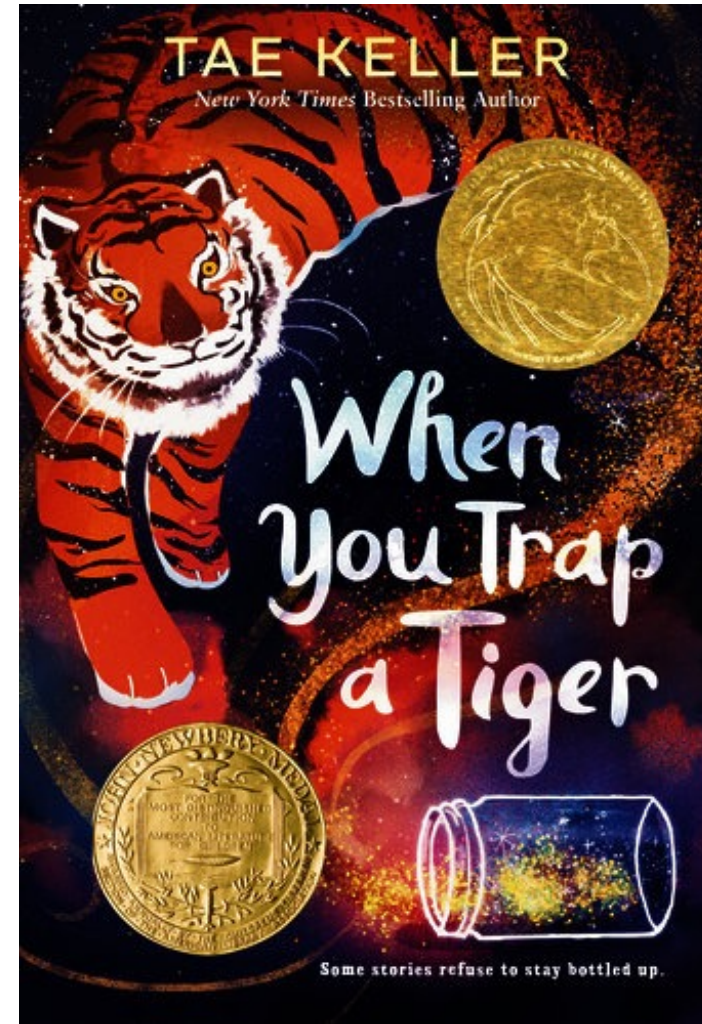
Twelve-year-old Wren loves makeup-special effect makeup, to be exact. When she is experimenting with new looks, Wren can create a different version of herself. A girl who isn't in a sort-of-best friendship with someone who seems like she hates her. A girl whose parents aren't divorced and doesn't have to learn to like her new stepmom. So, when Wren and her mom move to a new town for a fresh start, she is cautiously optimistic. And things seem to fall into place when Wren meets potential friends and gets selected as the makeup artist for her school's upcoming production of *Wicked*. Only, Wren's mom isn't doing so well. She's taking a lot of naps, starts snapping at Wren for no reason, and always seems to be sick. And what's worse, Wren keeps getting hints that things aren't going well at her new job at the hospital, where her mom is a nurse. And after an opening night disaster leads to a heartbreaking discovery, Wren realizes that her mother has a serious problem-a problem that can't be wiped away or covered up. After all the progress she's made, can Wren start over again with her devastating new normal? And will she ever be able to heal the broken trust with her mom?



WHEN YOU TRAP A TIGER

BY: TAE KELLER

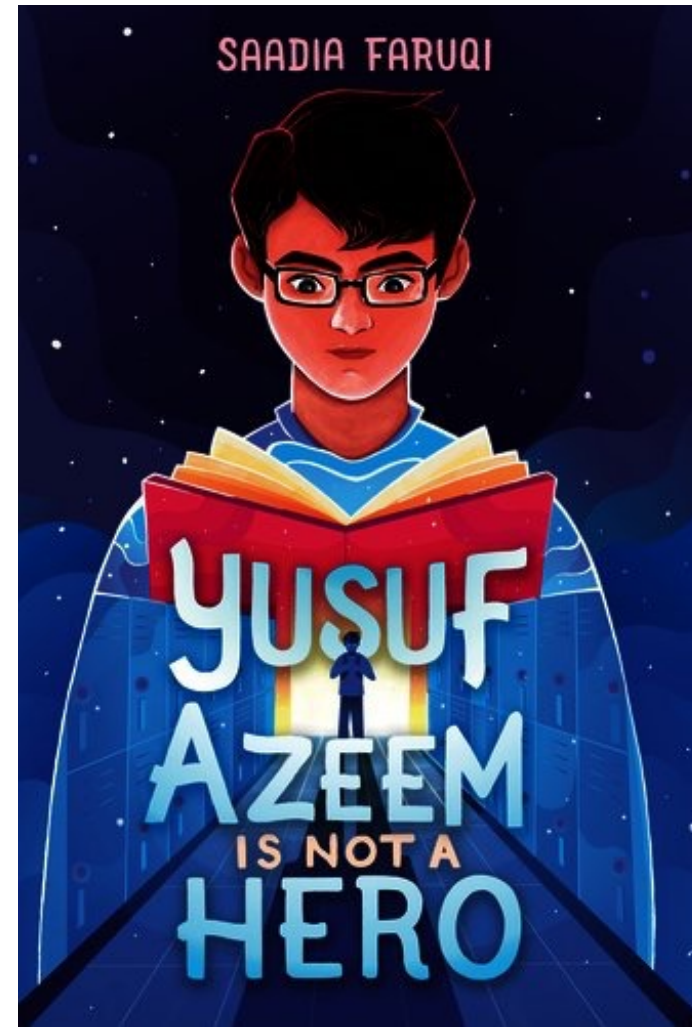
Would you make a deal with a magical tiger? This uplifting story brings Korean folklore to life as a girl goes on a quest to unlock the power of stories and save her grandmother. Some stories refuse to stay bottled up... When Lily and her family move in with her sick grandmother, a magical tiger straight out of her Halmoni's Korean folktales arrives, prompting Lily to unravel a secret family history. Long, long ago, Halmoni stole something from the tigers. Now they want it back. And when one of the tigers approaches Lily with a deal--return what her grandmother stole in exchange for Halmoni's health--Lily is tempted to agree. But deals with tigers are never what they seem! With the help of her sister and her new friend Ricky, Lily must find her voice...and the courage to face a tiger. Tae Keller, the award-winning author of *The Science of Breakable Things*, shares a sparkling tale about the power of stories and the magic of family. Think *Walk Two Moons* meets *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* !



YUSEF AZEEM IS NOT A HERO

BY: SAADIA FARUQI

Yusuf Azeem has spent all his life in the small town of Frey, Texas - and nearly that long waiting for the chance to participate in the regional robotics competition, which he just knows he can win...Only, this year is going to be more difficult than he thought. Because this year is the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, an anniversary that has everyone in his family on edge. After reading his uncle's journal from that time, Yusuf feels like he almost understands what the nation's fear and anger felt like...With "Never Forget" banners everywhere and a hostile group of townspeople protesting the new mosque, Yusuf realizes that the anger hasn't gone away. And soon, he will have to stand up to the bullies, with understanding, justice, and love.

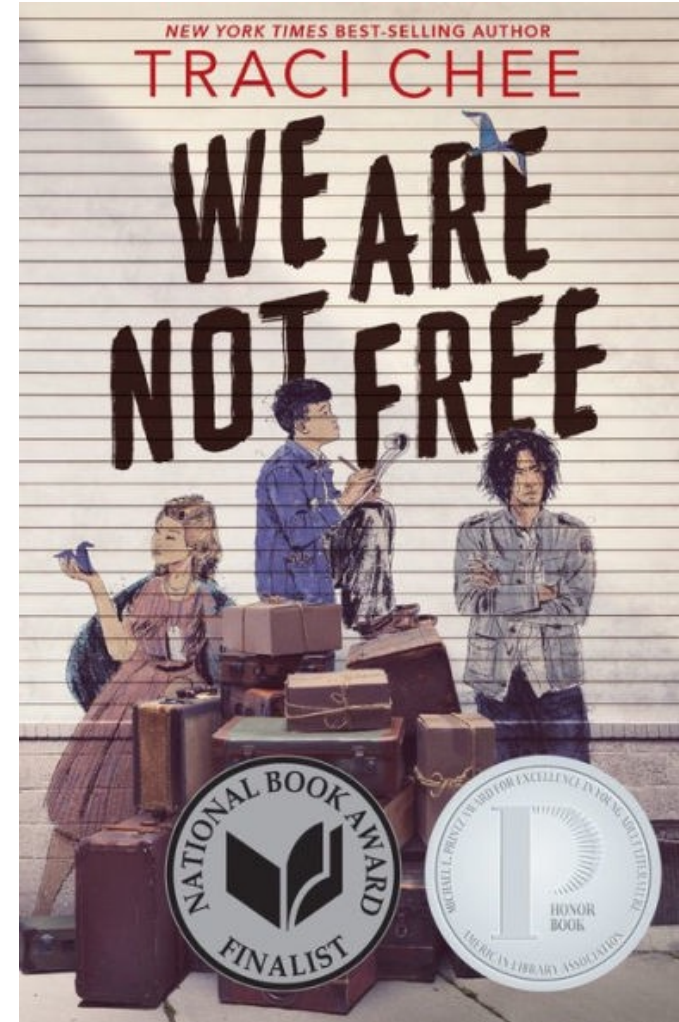


WE ARE NOT FREE

BY: TRACI CHEE

From *New York Times* best-selling and acclaimed author Traci Chee comes *We Are Not Free*, the collective account of a tight-knit group of young Nisei, second-generation Japanese American citizens, whose lives are irrevocably changed by the mass U.S. incarcerations of World War II.

Fourteen teens who have grown up together in Japantown, San Francisco. Fourteen teens who form a community and a family, as interconnected as they are conflicted. Fourteen teens whose lives are turned upside down when over 100,000 people of Japanese ancestry are removed from their homes and forced into desolate incarceration camps. In a world that seems determined to hate them, these young Nisei must rally together as racism and injustice threaten to pull them apart.

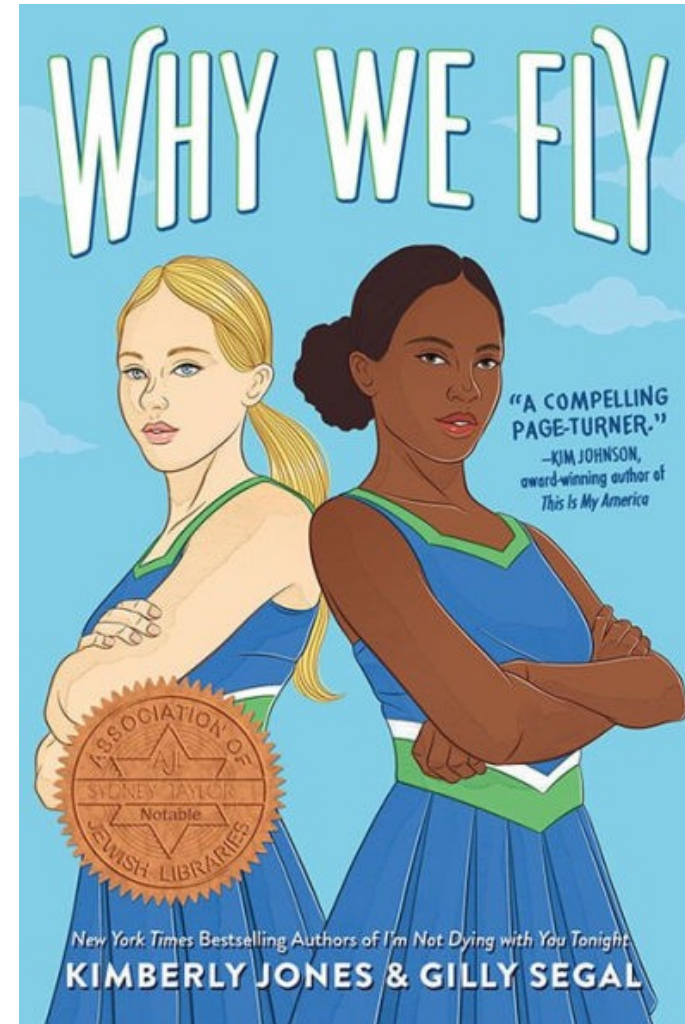


WHY WE FLY

BY: KIMBERLY JONES AND
GILLY SEGAL

With a rocky start to senior year, cheerleaders and lifelong best friends Eleanor and Chanel have a lot on their minds. Eleanor is still in physical therapy months after a serious concussion from a failed cheer stunt. Chanel starts making questionable decisions to deal with the mounting pressure of college applications. But they have each other's backs—just as always, until Eleanor's new relationship with star quarterback Three starts a rift between them.

Then, the cheer squad decides to take a knee at the season's first football game, and what seemed like a positive show of solidarity suddenly shines a national spotlight on the team—and becomes the reason for a larger fallout between the girls. As Eleanor and Chanel grapple with the weight of the consequences as well as their own problems, can the girls rely on the friendship they've always shared?



WHITE SMOKE

BY: TIFFANY D. JACKSON

The Haunting of Hill House meets *Get Out* in this chilling YA psychological thriller and modern take on the classic haunted house story from *New York Times* bestselling author Tiffany D. Jackson!

Marigold is running from ghosts. The phantoms of her old life keep haunting her, but a move with her newly blended family from their small California beach town to the embattled Midwestern city of Cedarville might be the fresh start she needs. Her mom has accepted a new job with the Sterling Foundation that comes with a free house, one that Mari now has to share with her bratty ten-year-old stepsister, Piper.

The renovated picture-perfect home on Maple Street, sitting between dilapidated houses, surrounded by wary neighbors has its . . . secrets. That's only half the problem: household items vanish, doors open on their own, lights turn off, shadows walk past rooms, voices can be heard in the walls, and there's a foul smell seeping through the vents only Mari seems to notice. Worse: Piper keeps talking about a friend who wants Mari gone.

But "running from ghosts" is just a metaphor, right? As the house closes in, Mari learns that the danger isn't limited to Maple Street. Cedarville has its secrets, too. And secrets always find their way through the cracks.



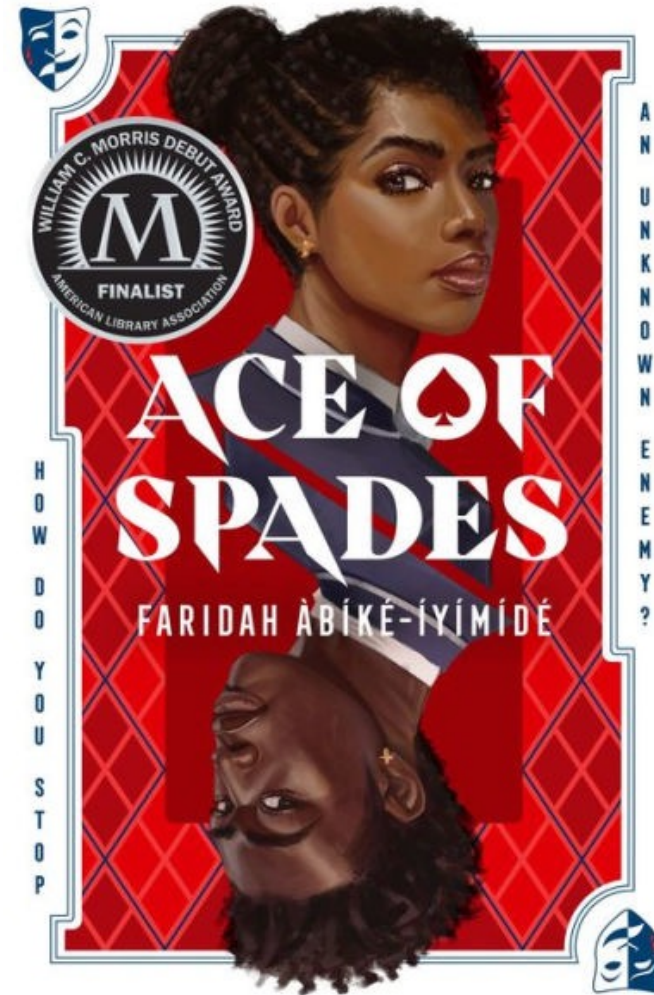
ACE OF SPADES

BY: FARIDAH ÀBÍKÉ-ÌYÍMÍDÉ

When two Niveus Private Academy students, Devon Richards and Chiamaka Adebayo, are selected to be part of the elite school's senior class prefects, it looks like their year is off to an amazing start. After all, not only does it look great on college applications, but it officially puts each of them in the running for valedictorian, too.

Shortly after the announcement is made, though, someone who goes by Aces begins using anonymous text messages to reveal secrets about the two of them that turn their lives upside down and threaten every aspect of their carefully planned futures.

As Aces shows no sign of stopping, what seemed like a sick prank quickly turns into a dangerous game, with all the cards stacked against them. Can Devon and Chiamaka stop Aces before things become incredibly deadly?

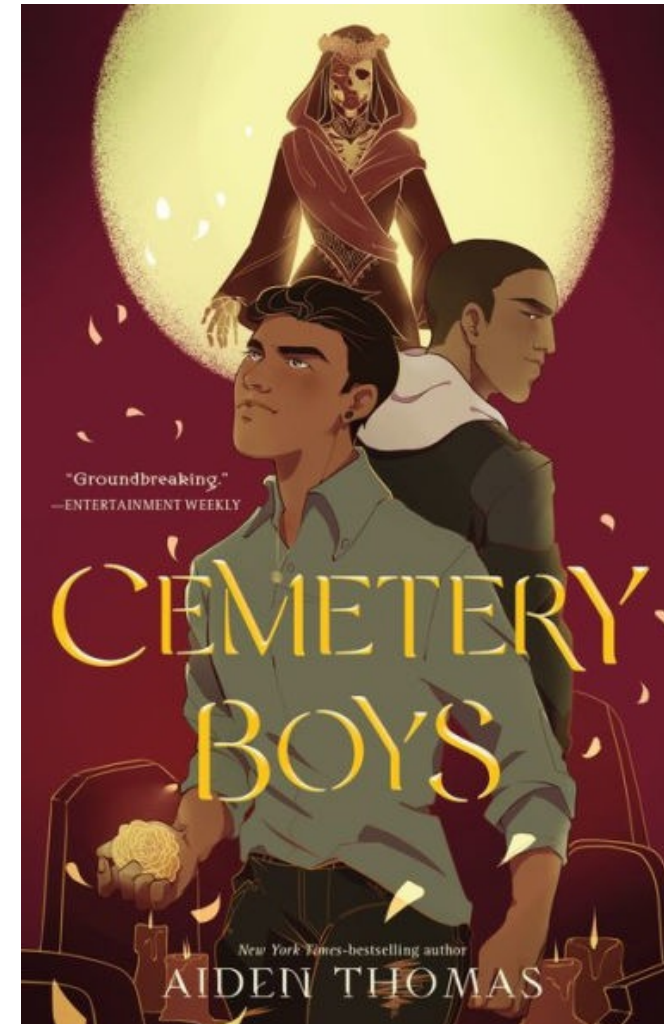


CEMETERY BOYS

BY: AIDEN THOMAS

When his traditional Latinx family has problems accepting his true gender, Yadriel becomes determined to prove himself a real brujo. With the help of his cousin and best friend Maritza, he performs the ritual himself, and then sets out to find the ghost of his murdered cousin and set it free.

However, the ghost he summons is actually Julian Diaz, the school's resident bad boy, and Julian is not about to go quietly into death. He's determined to find out what happened and tie off some loose ends before he leaves. Left with no choice, Yadriel agrees to help Julian, so that they can both get what they want. But the longer Yadriel spends with Julian, the less he wants to let him leave.



**HAPPY
READING!**

