Maine Student Book Award
A joint project of: Maine Library Association, Maine Association of School Libraries, and Maine Literacy Council
2016-2017 Reading List (2015 copyright)

Publisher, genre, suggested grade levels, and number of pages are indicated after each title.

Bailey, Linda. Seven Dead Pirates. Tundra Books. Fantasy/Humorous. Gr.4+. 296 pgs. Good read aloud. Lewis realizes his new bedroom — a secluded tower in his dead uncle’s mansion by the sea — houses seven ghostly roommates who need his help. The 200-year-old haunts team up with this selectively mute 12-year-old to reclaim their pirate ship from a local museum. The motley crew's escapades are hilarious and daring. ISBN: 978-1-77049-815-0.

Barry, Dave. The Worst Class Trip Ever. Disney/Hyperion. Humorous. Gr.4+. 214 pgs. Good read aloud. Eighth graders, on their way to Washington DC, notice two suspicious passengers. Are they plotting to bomb the White House? Kidnappings, a big snake, a hot girl who is described as “basically a Navy SEAL,” an angry cab driver, and not-so-sharp chaperones, make this an unforgettable trip. ISBN: 978-1-48470-849-1. (audio available)


Baskin, Nora Raleigh. Ruby on the Outside. Simon & Schuster. Realistic fiction. Gr.4+. 163 pgs. Ruby Danes’ mom has been in prison since Ruby was five. When she makes a new friend Ruby decides she needs to find out the details of her mother’s crime. Will her research threaten that friendship? A glimpse into what life is like when you can only see someone you love during visiting hours. ISBN: 978-1-44248-503-7.


Bond, Gwenda. Lois Lane: Fallout. Switch Press. Science fiction. Gr.6+. 303 pgs. A teenaged Lois Lane investigates a group of video-gaming bullies, the Warheads, at her new school. The strangely cohesive group is terrorizing a girl and there is something sinister about the high-tech video game they all play. Lois is a tough, clever heroine; and this is the fast-paced, intriguing beginning of a planned series. ISBN: 978-1-63079-005-2.


Chmakova, Svetlana. Awkward. Yen Press. Graphic novel/Realistic fiction. Gr.4+. 210 pgs. Peppi, a new girl at Berrybrook Middle School, fights social anxiety while trying to find friends and contribute to her new-found clique, the art club. A feud starts between the art and science clubs and focuses on the only spot left at the annual school fair. Peppi's struggles with her own conscience and with friends create interesting dilemmas. ISBN: 978-0-316-38132-1.


Foreman, Michael. The Tortoise and the Soldier: A Story of Courage and Friendship in World War I. Henry Holt. Historical fiction. Gr.4+. 115 pgs. Good read aloud. A tortoise found and adopted by a Royal Naval gunner during the Battle of Gallipoli, becomes the veteran's lifelong friend. A young journalist-wannabe interviews Henry Friston, the WWI veteran, about his pet tortoise, Ali Pasha, whose annual awakening signals spring in his British village. Friston not only tells the boy about his aged pet, but shares his war-time diary, photos, maps, and a realistic attitude toward war with the young interviewer. ISBN: 978-1-62779-173-1.
Gannon, Nicholas. The Doldrums. Greenwillow Books. Humorous. Gr.4+. 340 pgs. Can a girl with a wooden leg and two boys, one who obsesses about details, and another who is rarely allowed to leave his home, rescue grandparents who have gone missing on an iceberg in the Antarctic? Archer Helmsley, Oliver Glub, and Adelaide Belmont intend to try. This debut novel is a zany tale of endearing characters and courage, accompanied by a wealth of full-color and black-and-white illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-06-232094-0. (audio available)

Gill, Lewis. Moon Bear. Atheneum. Realistic fiction. Gr.5+. 368 pgs. A grisly tale, based on authentic conditions, depicts the life of Tam, a 12-year-old Laotian boy forced to work on a bear farm in the city to support his family living in the countryside. He tends bears “milked” for their bile which is sold as a health drink. Tam resolves to save a moon bear cub from this cruelty. Can he protect the bear? What about his own dream of freedom? ISBN: 978-1-48140-094-7.

Gonzalez, Christina Diaz. Moving Target. Scholastic Press. Adventure/Survival. Gr.5+. 248 pgs. Good read aloud. When her father takes a bullet meant for her, 12-year-old Cassie realizes she is the target of assassins. She learns she is a special member of an ancient bloodline with the ability to change world events. The first in a series, this suspenseful and action-packed adventure will have readers on edge as Cassie and her two allies, Asher and Simone, negotiate tense situations. ISBN: 978-0-545-77318-8.


Hale, Nathan. The Underground Abductor. Amulet Books. Graphic novel/Biography. Gr.4+. 125 pgs. The unique life of Harriet Tubman, who led hundreds of slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad in the 1800’s, is chronicled in this story. It covers her harsh childhood, her bouts with narcolepsy, her strange visions, and her life-saving journeys to rescue other slaves. Told engagingly in well-researched pictures and words, this is part of an appealing series of graphic novels about American history. ISBN: 978-1-41971-536-5.


Hilton, Marilyn. Full Cicada Moon. Dial Books. Poetic narrative/Historical. Gr.5+. 389 pgs. Mimi Yoshiko Oliver is the first girl of color in her 1969 Vermont school. Her father is African American; her mother, Japanese. She’s a unique girl, too, for her time. An aspiring astronaut, she wants to enter the science competition and take Shop Class instead of Home Economics. The description of this one year in her life validates the power of one voice speaking out. ISBN: 978-0-525-42875-6.

Holt, K.A. House Arrest. Chronicle Books. Poetic narrative/Realistic. Gr.5+. 298 pgs. Timothy, age 12, tries to use a stolen credit card to pay for medical expenses for his baby brother and is sentenced to house arrest for a year. His court-ordered journal details his difficult home life — with a single mom and brother who uses a trachea tube to breathe. A sympathetic guidance counselor and a probation officer give much-needed outside help to this family under siege. Timothy’s take on his situation is sometimes funny, sometimes heart-breaking. ISBN: 978-1-45213-477-2.

Hoose, Phillip M. The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Nonfiction. Gr.6+. 198 pgs. The amazing, true story of a handful of Danish teens who sabotaged their German occupiers, often on their bicycles. The boys decided, “if the adults would not act, we would,” and began stealing weapons, cutting enemy phone lines and setting German equipment on fire. Their bravery landed them in prison, but inspired a nationwide resistance movement. ISBN: 978-0-374-30022-7. (audio available)

Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. Fish in a Tree. Nancy Paulsen Books. Realistic fiction. Gr.4+. 276 pgs. Good read aloud. Ally can’t read; the letters dance and give her headaches. She’s been to seven schools in seven years, always managing to hide her disability. Usually she misbehaves to keep her secret and is labeled a behavior problem. Her new teacher, Mr. Daniels, realizes she’s dyslexic. Will Ally accept his help? ISBN: 978-0-399-16259-6. (audio available)

Jones, Kelly. *Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer*. Alfred A. Knopf. Humorous. Gr.4+. 216 pgs. Future chicken farmers can pick up tips for raising chickens along with protagonist Sophie, who moves to her great-uncle Jim's farm and inherits his extraordinary chickens (with superpowers). Letters to her beloved abuelita and Uncle Jim (both dead), are used to tell this unconventional story with an interesting twist. ISBN: 978-0-385-75552-8.

Korman, Gordon. *Masterminds*. Balzer + Bray. Science fiction. Gr.4+. 323 pgs. Good read aloud. Serenity, New Mexico, seems perfect until the kids who live there discover that trying to cross the town line is paralyzing. The town factory is not really manufacturing traffic cones. What else are the town officials (and their own parents!) not telling these children? An action-packed start to a thought-provoking series. ISBN: 978-0-06-229996-3. (audio available)

Lord, Cynthia. *A Handful of Stars*. Scholastic Press. Realistic fiction. Gr.4+. 184 pgs. Good read aloud. In the blueberry barrens in Downeast Maine, 12-year-old Lily is determined to raise money to pay for eye surgery for her beloved, elderly, blind dog. She meets Salma, a Hispanic girl from a migrant worker family, in Maine for the harvest. Salma decides to enter the Blueberry Queen pageant, as its first migrant contestant ever. The new friends grapple with prejudice and preconceived notions. ISBN: 978-0-545-70027-6. (audio available)


Merritt, Kory. *The Dreadful Fate of Jonathan York: A Yarn for the Strange at Heart*. Andrews McMeel. Graphic novel. Gr.4+. 124 pgs. When boring Jonathan York gets lost in spooky Halfrock Swamp, he needs to tell a story to pay for a safe place to spend the night. Without an entertaining tale, he will have to fend for himself in the swamp full of monstrous creatures with threatening-looking tentacles, elongated teeth, and other terrifying parts. Clever, detailed drawings and campfire-style stories-within-the-story make this creepily entertaining. ISBN: 978-1-44947-100-2.

Mlynowski, Sarah; Myracle, Lauren; and Jenkins, Emily. *Upside Down Magic*. Scholastic Press. Fantasy. Gr.4+. 196 pgs. Good read aloud. Nory’s magic is out of control. She can’t morph into a kitten; instead she ends up a weird, misbehaving hybrid — a beaver- or dragon-kitten. Her critical father enrolls her in a class for upside-down magic. Can she learn to manage her magic or should she even try? A promising start to a new series. ISBN: 978-0-545-80045-7. (audio available)

Nielsen, Jennifer A. *A Night Divided*. Scholastic Press. Historical fiction. Gr.4+. 317 pgs. Good read aloud. In 1961 Gerta’s brother and father suddenly find themselves walled out of their neighborhood as the Berlin wall goes up. Gerta, her brother Fritz, and their mother, left behind, spend four years under East Berlin’s repressive rule. The siblings decide to risk their lives digging a tunnel under the wall to escape. Photos from the actual wall in back matter add a chilling reality to this gripping narrative. ISBN: 978-0-545-68242-8. (audio available)

Oppel, Kenneth. *The Nest*. Simon & Schuster. Horror. Gr.5+. 244 pgs. A horrifying psychological drama about a sinister wasp who offers to replace a boy’s congenitally ill baby brother with “something better.” Steven, who is anxious and has OCD, is stung by a wasp from a nearby hive and starts having dreams about the hive’s queen. Steven’s parents are preoccupied with his brother’s deteriorating health, as Steven becomes more and more disturbed. Is the hive real or imagined? Can the wasps “fix” his brother? ISBN: 978-1-48143-232-0. (audio available)


Resau, Laura. *The Lighting Queen*. Scholastic Press. Historical fiction. Gr.5+. 323 pgs. A beautifully written tale of two cultures — Mixtec and Romany — meeting on the Hill of Dust in Mexico in the 1950’s. Teo, struggling with a broken family, meets Esma, who sings beautifully and calls herself the Gypsy Queen of Lightning. The two are told they will be lifelong friends and eventually save one another’s lives. Their intertwined destinies expose prejudice and celebrate enduring friendship amid subplots of paralyzing grief and the importance of dreams. ISBN: 978-0-545-80084-6. (audio available)
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