

Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books 2024-2025 for Grades 6-8



Adrift by Tanya Guerrero

Cousins Coral and Isa are so close that they're practically siblings; their mothers are sisters, and the two girls grew up on the same small island. When Coral and her parents leave on a months-long sea voyage amid the islands of Indonesia, Isa is devastated that they'll be kept apart, and the two vow to write to each other no matter what. Then the unthinkable happens, and Coral's boat capsizes at sea, where her parents vanish. Washed up on a deserted island, alone and wracked by grief, she must find the strength within to survive, and find her way back home. Meanwhile, Isa is still on Pebble Island, the only one holding out hope that her beloved cousin is still alive.



Fake by Ele Fountain

In a digital world it's hard to know what's real. Imagine a world where your only friends are virtual, and big tech companies control access to food, healthcare and leisure. This is Jess's world. But when she turns fourteen, Jess can go to school with other children for the first time. Most of them hate the 'real' world, but Jess begins to question whether the digital world is 'perfect' after all. Back home, her sister Chloe's life-saving medication is getting ever more expensive. Determined to help, Jess risks everything by using skills forbidden in the cyber-world, only to stumble on something explosive. Something that will turn her whole world upside down. It's up to Jess to figure out exactly what is real, and what is fake – Chloe's survival depends on it.



Falling Short by Ernesto Cisneros

Isaac and Marco already know sixth grade is going to change their lives. But it won't change things at home—not without each other's help. This year, star basketball player Isaac plans on finally keeping up with his schoolwork. Better grades will surely stop Isaac's parents from arguing all the time. Meanwhile, straight-A Marco vows on finally winning his father's approval by earning a spot on the school's basketball team.

But will their friendship and support for each other be enough to keep the two boys from falling short?



The Girl in White by Lindsay Currie

Mallory hasn't quite adapted to life in her new town of Eastport yet. Maybe it's because everyone is obsessed with keeping the town's reputation as the most cursed town in the US. And thanks to the nightmares she's had since arriving, Mallory hardly sleeps. Combined with the unsettling sensation of being watched, she's quickly becoming convinced there's more to her town. Something darker. When Mallory has a terrifying encounter with the same old woman from her dreams, she knows she has to do something—but what? With Eastport gearing up to celebrate the anniversary of their first recorded legend Mallory is forced to investigate the one legend she's always secretly been afraid of - Sweet Molly.



Hear Me by Kerry O'Malley Cerra

A year after being diagnosed with hearing loss, twelve-year-old Rayne is doing her best to live a "normal" life and act like nothing has changed. But her hearing keeps failing her. Even with hearing aids, she has trouble following conversations and hanging out with her friends the way she used to. Rayne's parents are pushing for her to get cochlear implants, which could restore her hearing—though she would hear sounds differently than she did before her hearing loss. Rayne isn't convinced the surgery for CIs is worth the risks and challenges. She begs her parents to consider other options, but they're not budging. With the surgery looming, Rayne sets off on a search for alternatives.



How to Stay Invisible by Maggie C. Rudd

Being alone is something Raymond is used to. Twelve-year-old Raymond Hurley has never had a place to call home. His free-wheeling parents move their family from town to town, but one day they just up and abandon him. All alone with nothing but a duffle bag full of clothes and his reliable pup, Rosie, he is forced to live in the woods behind his middle school. With a fishing pole in hand and survival guide checked out from the library, Raymond, he learns that his fate will depend not just on his wilderness skills, but on the people and animals he chooses to trust

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Mystery of the Radcliffe Riddle by Taryn Souder

When Grady and his dad learn that the town oddball, Eudora "Kooky" Klinch left something for them in her will, they can only imagine what it might be. When it turns out it's an old scrap of 300-year-old tapestry, they are bitterly disappointed. But the cloth comes with a note saying, "This is no ordinary piece of needlework. It's a treasure map. Riddles and Clues. To the victor go the riches." Grady's dad dismisses it, but Grady thinks this could be the chance of a lifetime. With the help of his friends Thad, Clemmie, and the town dog Ophelia, Grady is determined to crack the clues and find the treasure. However, more at risk than he bargained for, and after a house break in, solving this mystery just got a lot more dangerous.



New Dragon City by Mari Mancusi

No one predicted the dragon apocalypse. The dragons came suddenly and decimated the world as we knew it, including New York City. Three years later, Noah, his hardcore survivalist father, and a ragtag group of survivors are barely scraping by in this new reality. Noah has seen the damage these creatures can do firsthand. When it comes to dragons: It's kill or be killed. But a chance encounter between Noah and a young dragon forces him to question everything he thought he knew. With rumors spreading that there's a group of survivors living in harmony with dragons instead of hiding underground, Noah teams up with his fire-breathing ally to find out if peace between humans and dragons is really possible.



Over and Out by Jenni L. Walsh

Sophie has spent her entire life behind the Berlin Wall, guarded by land mines, towers, and attack dogs. Though she tries to avoid the secret police (Stasi) noticing her, when her beloved neighbor is arrested, Sophie is called to her principal's office. There, a young Stasi officer asks Sophie if she'll spy on her neighbor after she is released. Sophie doesn't want to agree, but in reality has no choice: The Stasi threaten to bring her mother, who has a disability from post-polio syndrome, to an institution if Sophie does not comply. Sophie is stuck, until she learns about family in the West. This could be what she needs to attempt an escape with her mother to freedom -- if she can invent her way out.



Ride On by Faith Erin Hicks

Victoria has always loved horses. But riding in competitions is high stakes, high stress, and shockingly expensive. And even though Victoria's best friend Taylor loves competing, Victoria has lost her taste for it. After a heartbreaking fight with Taylor, Victoria needs a new start—at a new stables. A place where she doesn't have to worry about anything other than riding. No competition, no drama, no friends. Just horses. Edgewood Stables seems ideal. There are plenty of horses to ride, and Victoria is perfectly happy giving the other riders the cold shoulder. But can she truly be happy with no friends?



Roll for Initiative by Jaime Formato

Riley Henderson has never taken a bus to school in her entire life. Or made an afterschool snack, or finished her homework on her own, or—ewww—done her own laundry. That's what her older brother Devin was for. But now Devin's gone and Riley is stuck alone in Florida with her mom. That is, until a cool nerd named Lucy gives Riley no choice but to get over her shyness and fear of rejection and become friends. The best part is . . . both girls are into Dungeons & Dragons. Soon, their party grows and with the help of her new D&D friends, Riley discovers that not only can she function without Devin, she kind of likes it. Now she has to help prove to her family she can take care of herself.



The Ruby Code by Jessica Khoury

Ash finds respite from his unhappy life in virtual reality games. One night, he spends his meager savings to help a homeless man, who thanks him with a copy of an old fantasy RPG called The Glass Realm. While exploring inside the game, Ash meets a seemingly humble NPC named Ruby. From the start, she seems different than most game characters, especially when they stumble across an in-game quest designed not for the player, but for Ruby to solve. But when Ruby develops powerful abilities that rewrite the very game code, they realize she is far more than a pre-programmed side character.



The Superteacher Project by Gordon Korman

Oliver Zahn, spitball champion and self-declared rule-wrecker of Brightling Middle School, is not a fan of his new homeroom teacher, Mr. Aidact. The guy is sort of stiff, never cracks a smile, and refers to them as "pupils." The worst part is he catches Oliver before he can pull any of his signature pranks! It's time for Oliver and his best friend, Nathan, to show the new teacher who's boss. Against all odds, Mr. Aidact starts to become the most popular teacher at Brightling. Still, Oliver and Nathan know that something is fishy. They're determined to get to the bottom of the mystery: What's the deal with Mr. Aidact?



A Work in Progress by Jarrett Lerner

Will is the only round kid in a school full of thin ones. So he hides...in baggy jeans and oversized hoodies, in the back row during class, and anywhere but the cafeteria during lunch. He's also got a crush on a girl named Jules who he knows he doesn't have a chance with but he can't help wondering *what if?* Will's best shot at attracting Jules's attention is by slaying the Will Monster inside him by changing his eating habits and getting more exercise. But the results are either frustratingly slow or infuriatingly unsuccessful. As he resorts to increasingly drastic measures to transform his appearance, Will meets skateboarder Markus, who helps him see his body and all it contains as an ever-evolving work in progress.