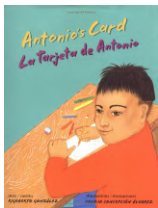


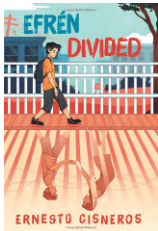
## Welcoming Schools & American Association of School Librarians Presents: Top 12 Recommended Books for Elementary and Secondary

All books featured below are recipients of awards from the American Library Association, its divisions, and/or offices.

### Elementary



**Antonio's Card.** Rigoberto Gonzales. Antonio loves words, because words have the power to express feelings like love, pride, or hurt. As Mother's Day approaches, Antonio must choose whether or how to express his connection to both his mother and her partner, Leslie. Rigoberto González's bilingual story about a nontraditional family resonates with all children who have been faced with speaking up for themselves or for the people they love.



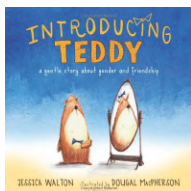
**Efrén Divided.** Ernesto Cisneros. Efrén Nava's Amá is his Superwoman—or Soperwoman, named after the delicious Mexican sopos his mother often prepares. Efrén worries about his parents; although he's American-born, his parents are undocumented. His worst nightmare comes true one day when Amá doesn't return from work and is deported across the border to Tijuana, México. Now more than ever, Efrén must channel his inner Soperboy to help take care of and try to reunite his family.



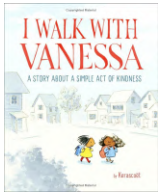
**Front Desk.** Kelly Yang. Mia Tang has a lot of secrets. Number 1: Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the Calivista Motel rooms where she lives, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the motel and tends to its guests. Number 2: If the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting immigrants stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed. Number 3: She wants to be a writer, but her mom thinks she should stick to math because English is not her first language. It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year.



**Genesis Begins Again.** Alicia D. Williams. There are ninety-six things Genesis hates about herself. She knows the exact number because she keeps a list. This deeply sensitive and powerful debut novel tells the story of a thirteen-year-old who must overcome internalized racism and a verbally abusive family to finally learn to love herself.



**Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship.** Jess Walton. Errol and his teddy, Thomas, are best friends who do everything together. One day, Errol can't figure out why Thomas is sad until Thomas finally tells Errol what teddy has been afraid to say: "In my heart, I've always known that I'm a girl teddy, not a boy teddy. I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas." And Errol says, "I don't care if you're a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend."



**I Walk with Vanessa.** Kerascoët. Inspired by real events, *I Walk with Vanessa* explores the feelings of helplessness and anger that arise in the wake of seeing a classmate treated badly, and shows how a single act of kindness can lead to an entire community joining in to help. By choosing only pictures to tell their story, the creators underscore the idea that someone can be an ally without having to say a word.



**Julián is a Mermaid.** Jessica Love. While riding the subway home from the pool with his abuela one day, Julián notices three women spectacularly dressed up. When Julián gets home, daydreaming of the magic he's seen, all he can think about is dressing up just like the ladies in his own fabulous mermaid costume. But what will Abuela think about the mess he makes — and even more importantly, what will she think about how Julián sees himself?



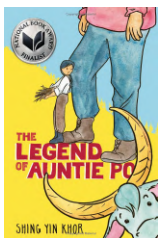
**Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community.** Robin Stevenson. For LGBTQ people and their supporters, Pride events are an opportunity to honor the past, protest injustice, and celebrate a diverse and vibrant community. The high point of Pride, the Pride Parade, is spectacular and colorful. But there is a whole lot more to Pride than rainbow flags and amazing outfits. How did Pride come to be? And what does Pride mean to the people who celebrate it?



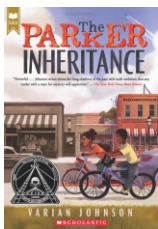
**Red: A Crayon's Story.** Michael Hall. Red has a bright red label, but he is, in fact, blue. His teacher tries to help him be red (let's draw strawberries!), his mother tries to help him be red by sending him out on a playdate with a yellow classmate (go draw a nice orange!), and the scissors try to help him be red by snipping his label so that he has room to breathe. But Red is miserable. He just can't be red, no matter how hard he tries! Finally, a brand-new friend offers a brand-new perspective, and Red discovers what readers have known all along. He's blue!



**The Book Thief.** Markus Zusak. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.



**The Legend of Auntie Po.** Shing Yin Khor. Aware of the racial tumult in the years after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, Mei tries to remain blissfully focused on her job, her close friendship with the camp foreman's daughter, and telling stories about Paul Bunyan—reinvented as Po Pan Yin (Auntie Po), an elderly Chinese matriarch. Anchoring herself with stories of Auntie Po, Mei navigates the difficulty and politics of lumber camp work and her growing romantic feelings for her friend Bee.



**The Parker Inheritance.** Varian Johnson. Candice discovers a mysterious old letter describing an injustice from decades ago. With the help of Brandon, a quiet and often bullied boy, she begins to decipher the clues with a story that leads them deep into their South Carolina town's history, a history full of ugly deeds and forgotten heroes.

## Secondary



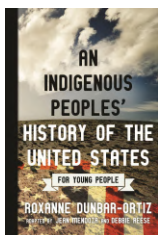
**A Snake Falls to Earth.** Darcie Little Badger. Nina is a Lipan girl in our world. She's always felt there was something more out there. She still believes in the old stories. Oli is a cottonmouth kid, from the land of spirits and monsters. Like all cottonmouths, he's been cast from home. He's found a new one on the banks of the bottomless lake. Nina and Oli have no idea the other exists. But a catastrophic event on Earth, and a strange sickness that befalls Oli's best friend, will drive their worlds together in ways they haven't been in centuries. And there are some who will kill to keep them apart.



**Across a Field of Starlight.** Blue Deliquanti. When they were kids, Fassen's fighter spaceship crash-landed on a planet that Lu's survey force was exploring. It was a forbidden meeting between a kid from a war-focused resistance movement and a kid whose community and planet are dedicated to peace and secrecy. As the empire begins a new attack against Fassen's people—and discovers Lu's in the process—the two of them have the chance to reunite at last. They finally are able to be together...but at what cost?



**All Boys Aren't Blue.** George M. Johnson. In a series of personal essays, prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist George M. Johnson's *All Boys Aren't Blue* explores his childhood, adolescence, and college years in New Jersey and Virginia. From the memories of getting his teeth kicked out by bullies at age five, to flea marketing with his loving grandmother, to his first sexual relationships, this young-adult memoir weaves together the trials and triumphs faced by Black queer boys.



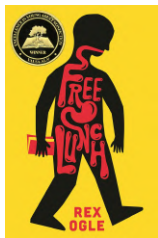
**An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People.** Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Going beyond the story of America as a country “discovered” by a few brave men in the “New World,” Indigenous human rights advocate Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz reveals the roles that settler colonialism and policies of American Indian genocide played in forming our national identity.



**Cemetery Boys.** 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.



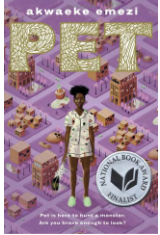
**Felix Ever After.** Kacen Callender. Felix Love has never been in love—and, yes, he's painfully aware of the irony. He desperately wants to know what it's like and why it seems so easy for everyone but him to find someone. What's worse is that, even though he is proud of his identity, Felix also secretly fears that he's one marginalization too many—Black, queer, and transgender—to ever get his own happily-ever-after. As he navigates his complicated feelings, Felix begins a journey of questioning and self-discovery that helps redefine his most important relationship: how he feels about himself.



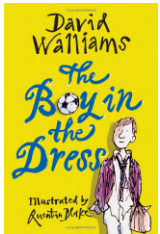
**Free Lunch.** Rex Ogle. Instead of giving him lunch money, Rex's mom has signed him up for free meals. As a poor kid in a wealthy school district, better-off kids crowd impatiently behind him as he tries to explain to the cashier that he's on the free meal program. The lunch lady is hard of hearing, so Rex has to shout. Unsparing and realistic, *Free Lunch* is a story of hardship threaded with hope and moments of grace. Rex's voice is compelling and authentic, and *Free Lunch* is a true, timely, and essential work that illuminates the lived experience of poverty in America.



**Lizard Radio.** Pat Schmatz. Fifteen-year-old bender Kivali has had a rough time in a gender-rigid culture. Abandoned as a baby and raised by Sheila, an ardent nonconformist, Kivali has always been surrounded by uncertainty. Strange occurrences and complicated relationships raise questions Kivali has never before had to consider. But she has a gift—the power to enter a trancelike state to harness the “knowings” inside her. She has Lizard Radio. Will it be enough to save her?



**Pet.** Akwaeke Emezi. There are no monsters anymore, or so the children in the city of Lucille are taught. Jam and her best friend, Redemption, have grown up with this lesson all their life. But when Jam meets Pet, a creature made of horns and colors and claws, she must reconsider what she's been told. Pet has come to hunt a monster, and the shadow of something grim lurks in Redemption's house. Jam must fight not only to protect her best friend, but also to uncover the truth, and the answer to the question—How do you save the world from monsters if no one will admit they exist?



**The Boy in the Dress.** David Walliams. The one thing Dennis has is soccer, he's the leading scorer on his team. When Dennis' friend Lisa discovers his stash of Vogue magazines, she convinces him to vamp it up and wear a dress to school. But the headmaster discovers his secret and delivers the worst punishment of all, Dennis is expelled from school and therefore forbidden to play in the soccer Final Cup! Can the team win the most important game of the year without their star player? And, more importantly, will Dennis gain the love and respect of his friends and family, even in a dress?



**The Life and Medieval Times of Kit Sweetly.** Jamie Pacton. Working at a cheesy medieval-themed restaurant in the Chicago suburbs, Kit Sweetly dreams of being a Knight like her brother. Company policy allows only guys to be Knights. So when Kit takes her brother's place, clobbers the Green Knight, and reveals her identity at the end of the show, she rockets into internet fame and a whole lot of trouble with the management. As other cast members join her quest, a protest forms. In a joust before Castle executives, they'll prove that gender restrictions should stay medieval—if they don't get fired first.



**The Other Boy.** M.G. Hennessey. Twelve-year-old Shane Woods is just a regular boy. He loves pitching for his baseball team, working on his graphic novel, and hanging out with his best friend, Josh. But Shane is keeping something private, and when a classmate threatens to reveal his secret, Shane's whole world comes crashing down. It will take a lot of courage for Shane to ignore the hate and show the world that he's still the same boy he was before. And in the end, those who stand beside him may surprise everyone, including Shane.