

Barakah Beats

Nimra is a 12 year old girl who is going to public school for the first time. Her best friend goes to that school, so she is a bit less nervous than she would have been. However, Nimra notices right away that her friendship is changing. Her best friend doesn't want to hang out with someone who wears a hijab or prays at school. Nimra wants to stay true to her beliefs and yet she also wants to fit in. Nimra is invited to join the "Barakah Beats" which could make her best friend want to hang out with her again. How can Nimra find true friendship and be true to herself while managing the social struggles of middle school? The positive message and the honest, fun nature of Nimra make this book a fantastic read!

"Thank you to the committee of wonderful Washington state librarians for nominating Barakah Beats! I'm honored to be among a list of incredible middle grade titles. I'm so glad that Nimra's important story about staying true to who you are will be able to reach even more readers. Thank you again and happy reading/voting to all the students!"

Battle Dragons: City of Thieves

Abel loves dragons. His childhood dream has been to earn his place among the society of Dragon Riders. However, his Dragon Rider exam ends in disaster, leaving his dreams crushed, along with his hopes of a more exciting life than the one he leads. But when his sister shows up with a secretive request, he gets more than he bargained for: a stolen dragon. Now he's tasked with pairing up with his dragon to battle rival groups or "kin." Abel's faced with keeping more secrets than a dragon has scales and choosing between his sister's supposed misdeeds and his brother's determined search for dragon thieves. In the end, Abel might not be so sure who the real enemy is. First book in a trilogy.

"What an amazing honor! And what good company! Thank you so much. I truly believe there's a book out there for every young reader if they can just find their way to it, and I'm so grateful that this list puts my book, among so many wonderful books, in front of so many young Washington readers. I write for the kids who aren't sure they'll ever tame a dragon and for the kids who need to know there is room enough on a dragon's back for all kinds of young people. It's a thrill to know this story might find some of those readers. Thank you for this honor!"

Ben Yokoyama and the Cookie of Doom

What if today were the last day of your life? When Ben Yokoyama gets a fortune inside a cookie that says, "Live each day as if it were your last," he decides that he must do everything on his bucket list in one day. With some help from his family and his best friend, Ben creates his bucket list and works to do the most important things. Along the way he helps others cross things off their lists all while getting himself in trouble in a variety of hilarious ways. Despite being repeatedly distracted from whichever task he's trying to complete, Ben never stops trying to accomplish all the best things in life in one short day. This fast-paced story with black and white illustrations throughout is a great series opener and Ben is sure to have lots of adventures in the subsequent books. First book in a trilogy.

“Thank you, librarians of the great state of Washington! We’re honored to find our book on this excellent list. Please let your readers know it’s not really about doom, but instead about forbidden cake and terrible haircuts and the importance of spending your days doing things you enjoy with people you love.”

Boys in the Back Row

Best friends Matt and Eric could be described as band geeks who sit in the back row playing the drums. They could also be described as comic book nerds who are obsessed with the character Sandpiper. Eric and Matt set out to plan one last adventure before Eric moves away, even if it means skipping out on their band trip to an amusement park without permission and a hop across town to DefenderCon to meet their comic book idol. As their plan grows, so does their friendship, all while fighting toxic masculinity and bullying. Overall, this book shows that the friendships boys have with each other can be full of fun, but also very meaningful.

“It’s an honor and a joy to know *The Boys in the Back Row* has been chosen as a candidate for the 2023-2024 Sasquatch Award! All my love and gratitude goes out to the public and school librarians of Washington state - they’re doing the work and fighting the good fight, and to have my work recognized by them is incredibly meaningful.”

Cece Rios and the Desert of Souls

Cece thinks she’s cursed with a Water sign and is an embarrassment to her family and community. She’s even in the shadow of her more beautiful and talented sister, Juana. But Juana is captured by the evil El Sombreron, Cece is determined to journey to Devil’s Alley to bring her back. She becomes a bruja and gets help from the criatura Coyote and others to try to rescue her sister and prove to everyone she is not a mistake.

“I’m so deeply honored to hear that CECE RIOS AND THE DESERT OF SOULS is a Sasquatch 2023-2024 nominee! My chiquita is in amazing company, and I’m sure she’d love to make friends with them all. A huge thank you to the librarians that dedicate their time, passion, and talents to helping children grow enthusiastic about reading and learning. You are the backbone of literature, and I’m honored you’d choose my novel to be part of that beautiful mission.”

Concealed

As part of the Witness Protection Program, Katrina (also known as Ivette, Joanna, and names A-H) has just moved with her parents AGAIN. Sometimes she wishes she could stay in one place or even remember who she actually is, but an accident erased her memory. In her most recent “home” in a trailer park, she befriends a homeschooled computer hacker named Parker who agrees to help her research her past based on what little she knows. But then her mom and dad go missing, so it’s time to get on the move and get some help. Parker ends up on the run with Katrina as she escapes to the safe house her parents told her about, but is the mysterious Agent X out to help her find her parents, or turn her over to the bad guys? And what about the information she and Parker are starting to uncover about her past that doesn’t line up

with anything she thought she knew? With twists and turns galore, this action/adventure mystery will keep you on the edge of your seat until the very end.

“I’m thrilled to have CONCEALED nominated for the Sasquatch Award because it will now reach new readers who, thanks to the program, will be encouraged to have a lifelong love of reading. Thank you for this honor!”

The Great Pet Heist

Butterbean is a dog. She lives in an apartment with Walt the cat, Oscar the mynah bird, and two rats named Marco and Polo. Mrs. Food, an elderly woman, takes care of them. When Mrs Food slips in Butterbean’s vomit and gets carted away, the animals know they are in trouble. If they don’t figure out how to take care of themselves, then someone will come and take them to “The Shelter.” Fortunately, there is a man who lives in the building that seems to have a fortune (maybe)! All these pets have to do is pull off a major robbery and they will be set for life. What could possibly go wrong? The ensuing adventure involves courage, a whole lot of luck, and some derring do as these clueless animals attempt to save themselves from a fate worse than death.

“Thank you -- I’m so honored to be included on a list with so many amazing books. Your students are going to have a tough choice to make!”

The Insiders

Hector is a Mexican 12 year old theater kid who moves from San Francisco to the inland town of Orangevale and immediately feels like an outsider. His new middle school doesn’t even have a theater or drama department! Used to being openly out, he’s relentlessly bullied by three male classmates for being gay. He seeks refuge in a janitor’s closet. One day, he discovers that the closet has transformed- and that he’s not alone.

Sal, a nonbinary Filipino and white middle schooler living in Phoenix, is also in the room. Next, Héctor and Sal meet Juliana in the room, a lesbian Black and Chinese middle schooler from Charleston. The room becomes their safe space inside their schools, a pocket dimension where they can meet up or be alone.

The room eventually becomes a portal to each other’s schools, where the three “insiders” help solve each other’s problems. They support when Juliana comes out to her parents. They help Sal realize they committed a racial microaggression against Juliana and apologize, learn, and heal. And, finally, they help Héctor with his bully.

The Insiders is an own voices fantasy blend of realistic fiction and magical realism. It reinforces the need for safe spaces, friendship, support, and living your truth.

A Kind of Spark

Addie is a young, autistic girl living in a small village in Scotland. When she learns about the people who lost their lives during the Scottish witch trials centuries before, she is horrified. She can’t believe that innocent people were persecuted, executed, and then forgotten by society.

Addie also feels a close bond with the accused witches because of the way she is mistreated by her classmates, teachers, and community members just for being different. Because of this, Addie makes it her mission to honor them by lobbying for a memorial in her village. Can Addie challenge how the people in her town see her, and her autism, and make her voice heard? Written by a neurodivergent author, this powerful book challenges myths and stereotypes about autism spectrum disorder while weaving a beautiful story about friendship, family, and celebrating our differences.

Maya and the Robot

Maya Robinson has just started fifth grade, and it hasn't gone as planned. Her two best friends are in a different class, and as the school year goes on, she feels they're beginning to drift apart. While helping out at a local store she discovers a broken robot named Ralph, and using her tech skills, manages to get him working again just in time for the science fair. But the science fair ends up being a disaster when Ralph suddenly starts a food fight! With wonderful black and white illustrations, humor, and plenty of STEM, this is a touching, own voices novel of friendship, community, and change.

Playing the Cards You're Dealt

Ten year old Ant is a card shark; Spades is his game and in his family tradition. So is winning. Except Ant didn't win the tournament last year. This year he's dealing with family secrets, his best friend (and also his Spades partner) getting grounded, and a father in and out of the house – he's not sure what is going on with him, but he knows he wants to make his father proud and impress him by being the best Spades player. Can Ant win this year?

Starfish

Ellie has been teased and bullied most of her life for being big. Kids have given her the nickname "Splash" ever since she wore a whale swimsuit at her birthday party. Her biggest bully is her mom, who believes that nagging Ellie about her weight will help her to lose it. Ellie even makes a list of "Fat Girl Rules" to hopefully lessen the negative attention she gets; like not moving too quickly so that she doesn't jiggle. Ellie's safe place is the swimming pool. In the weightlessness of the water, Ellie feels light and confident. Find out how Ellie eventually gains more confidence through the support and love of her new friend Catalina, her therapist and her dad. [Watch the background of the books from the author's own words!](#)

"I'm so appreciative of the Washington public and school librarians for nominating Starfish for the 2023-2024 Sasquatch Award. I love librarians, as readers can tell from the poem LIFESAVING LIBRARIANS in Starfish. I also love that fourth- through sixth,-graders get to vote for their favorite book, letting their voices be heard, because Starfish is all about letting everyone know they have a right to be seen, to be heard, to be noticed, and to take up their space in the world. No matter who wins, I am truly honored for Starfish to be a part of such an amazing award!"

"I'm not sure I've ever wanted to win an award as much as the Sasquatch because - hello - SASQUATCH!"