

## 2020-2021 Sasquatch Nominee Booktalks\*

*\*Written by committee members unless otherwise specified*

### **SMALL SPACES BY KATHERINE ARDEN**

Katherine Arden's atmospheric, supernatural thrill-ride, *Small Spaces*, is deliciously creepy and hard to put down. The story centers around 11 year-old Ollie. One day as Ollie rides her bike home from school, she discovers a weeping woman trying to get rid of a book in the river. Ollie reacts by snatching the book from the woman's hand and riding off--but not before the woman gives an unsettling warning: "avoid large places at night...keep to small." That night, Ollie becomes engrossed in the book's chilling story of love, loss and deal-making with the sinister "smiling man." The next day Ollie's class takes a field trip to a local farm. There, Ollie stumbles upon the graves of the people she's been reading about. Could the events in the book she took be true? Quickly, things go from creepy to creepier. The school bus breaks down as darkness approaches. The odd bus driver gives the same warning about keeping to small spaces. Ollie's broken watch begins a countdown and the digital display forms the word "RUN!" Ollie and two classmates take the warning seriously and head into the woods where they need to figure out how to save the class from the smiling man and his army of roving scarecrows.

### **FINDING LANGSTON BY LESA CLINE-RANSOME**

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### **SAVING WINSLOW BY SHARON CREECH**

In this short gem of a book, Sharon Creech has given us another tale memorial. Louie lives on the outskirts of town, where he has abysmal luck with pets. He can't keep anything alive, not even goldfish. Then one day, Dad comes home with a baby mini donkey. The donkey isn't healthy but Louie is determined to save him and keep him alive. So begins their time together. Helping keep Winslow alive also helps Louie deal with his brother Gus being far away in the army.

Louie and Winslow sleep together in the cellar. There Winslow is slowly coaxed into taking milk a few ounces at a time. Dad is always predicting that Winslow won't survive, but survive he does. Taking care of Winslow leads Louie into hoping that there are people helping to care for Gus, away in the army.

Winslow is also a magnet for other children in Louie's life. Nora is as skeptical as Dad about whether Winslow is going to live or die. She arrives in her baggy coat and yellow hat, full of negative attitude, yet now and then one catches glimpses of a different child beneath the exterior. Winslow works his magic on her and she gradually becomes friendly.

However, every donkey makes noise. As Winslow grows and gets stronger, he develops his voice. The neighbors are not amused. A braying donkey disturbs everyone including the baby trying to nap next door. Louie is now faced with another problem. What should he do about Winslow?

### **THISBY THESTOOP AND THE BLACK MOUNTAIN BY ZAC GORMAN**

Thisby Thestoop was found on the stoop outside the Castle Grimstone. She has spent her life as the caretaker of the beasts that live far down inside the Black Mountain. She doesn't get to see daylight, but she does get to tend to flora and fauna that some have never seen or heard of. When the prince and princess show up for an inspection, Thisby tags along to make sure they are safe. But the prince disappears and Thisby is left to help the princess escape and solve the mystery of the missing prince.

### **BAN THIS BOOK BY ALAN GRATZ**

What would you do if your favorite book disappeared from the library? And what if it didn't stop there, but was only the beginning? What if the person choosing the books for your school wasn't a librarian but someone convinced that books hurt kids? Would you complain, protest, whine or give up? Or would you decide *to take a stand*? This testament to the power of literature is also a call to arms and a timely reminder that rights must periodically be defended lest they be taken away. Never preachy or heavy handed, this fun read will make you think, feel and want to take action!

### **JUNIOR NINJA CHAMPION: THE COMPETITION BEGINS BY CATHERINE HAPKA**

[Homemade Video Booktalk by Committee Member Sarah T.](#)

### **THE SEASON OF STYX MALONE BY KEKLA MAGOON**

*The Season of Styx Malone* is a classic story of boys in summer, with time on their hands and more than a little mischief in their hearts. Brothers Caleb and Bobby Gene are good kids who do what they're told- sometimes. But the first chapter's barely finished before they're trading their little sister for a cache of fireworks. When they meet newcomer Styx, a street smart older boy, the hijinks get turned up a notch. A rollicking, hilarious story that feels classic and simultaneously up to date, *The Season of Styx Malone* gets deeper as it progresses and we learn more about the mysterious Styx. Readers will watch the boys grow up a little as the summer comes to a close in this thoroughly satisfying read.

### **NOWHERE BOY BY KATHERINE MARSH**

*Nowhere Boy* is an historical adventure story about refugees, friendship and belonging, an epic journey of teens dealing with problems created by adults.

Ahmed is a Syrian teen who flees after the bombing deaths of his mother and sister. He and his father escape with hopes to get to Britain but become separated near Greece in a horrible water disaster. Fearing his father has died, Ahmed tries to make his own way north, but gets robbed by traffickers and stranded in Belgium. There he hides out in an old wine cellar downstairs from Max, an American teen whose father is working for NATO. Max eventually discovers Ahmed and vows to help in an adventure that mirrors legends told about the very same neighborhood during WWII.

Both boys see themselves as Nowhere Boys, foreigners navigating personal issues and world events; violence, xenophobia, homophobia, and human trafficking while bonding over reading comics and growing orchids. Max struggles with having to repeat 6th grade in a French-language school, weary about other students and mistrusting adults. Ahmed deals with nightmares about deaths in Syria and at sea, hiding while undocumented, avoiding predators and bigots.

### **BOB BY WENDY MASS AND REBECCA STEAD**

For 5 years, Livy has forgotten about a specific mystery at her grandmother's house in Australia. Now she is back for a visit and things have changed. That part of Australia has been in a drought since her last visit. There are fewer animals at Grandma's house. When she walks in the door, something starts niggling at her brain. Something about a weird chicken. It continues as she holds a chess piece. She can't figure out why she would have wanted to bring it home with her, but it helps her mind to unlock a little more. Finally, she opens the closet door in the bedroom that she had slept in, and there he is...Bob. A little green creature wearing a sleeping suit with chicken feathers taped to it.

Bob has been waiting for 5 long years-although to him time doesn't have the same meaning as to Livy. Livy promised that she would help him find his family again and he has full confidence that she will succeed. He has occupied himself with a Lego pirate ship and the sounds that he could hear through the closet door. Now he is ready to go along with Livy to help find his family. But what family exactly?

First they must figure out who he is and then find his family. Along the way many other smaller mysteries are solved and even that huge mystery of the drought.

Read along for a tale of friendship and family. A tale that will resonate with the young and the old. None of you are too old to enjoy this story whether it be reading it to younger relatives or reading it for yourself.

## **CHESTER AND GUS BY CAMMIE MCGOVERN**

[Recorded Booktalk by Committee Member Becky R.](#)

## **EXPLORER ACADEMY: THE NEBULA SECRET BY TRUDI TRUEIT**

Cruz Coronado has been invited to join the elite Explorer Academy along with 23 other kids from around the world who are working towards becoming the next generation's greatest explorers. Right away Cruz makes friends and together, they are in for a wild ride. They encounter adventure, danger, and a discovery that Cruz's family has a mysterious past. It's up to them to figure out what that is, as someone starts following Cruz and trying their hardest to get rid of him. But why? Filled with codes, cool technology and illustrations - this book is a fast paced must read!

## **FRONT DESK BY KELLY YANG**

This is a story based on the author's life. Picture yourself running the front desk at a small motel... answering phones, handing out keys, checking people in, setting wake up calls... sounds easy, right? Not when you're working for a mean motel owner who cheats your family out of the money your family deserves with strict rules like one person has to be at the motel at all times. Which means Mia can't spend time with both of her parents outside the motel. Unfortunately, as immigrants from China, this is the best opportunity they have - not having to pay rent by living and working at the motel. How can she help get her family out of this mess of a situation? Through it all, Mia learns a lot about herself, family, friends, and the importance of kindness.

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