

2021-2022 Kentucky Bluegrass Award Master List for 6-8

The Blackbird Girls / Anne Blankman / Viking, 2020.

On a spring morning, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work--Chernobyl--has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In their new lives in Leningrad, they begin to learn what it means to trust another person. Oksana must face the lies her parents told her all her life. Valentina must keep her grandmother's secret, one that could put all their lives in danger. And both of them discover something they've wished for: a best friend. But how far would you go to save your best friend's life? Would you risk your own?

Charlie Thorne and the Last Equation / Stuart Gibbs / Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Decades ago, Albert Einstein devised an equation that could benefit all life on earth--or destroy it. Fearing what would happen if the equation fell into the wrong hands, he hid it. But now, a diabolical group known as the Furies are closing in on its location. In desperation, a team of CIA agents drags Charlie Thorne into the hunt, needing her brilliance to find it first--even though this means placing her life in grave danger. In a fast-paced global adventure, Charlie must crack a complex code created by Einstein himself, struggle to survive in a world where no one can be trusted, and fight to keep the last equation safe once and for all.

Genesis Begins Again / Alicia Williams / Atheneum, 2019.

Thirteen-year-old Genesis tries again and again to lighten her black skin, thinking it is the root of her family's troubles, before discovering reasons to love herself as is. There are ninety-six things Genesis hates about herself. She knows the exact number because she keeps a list. Like #95: Because her skin is so dark, people call her charcoal and eggplant--even her own family. But things aren't all bad. Genesis actually likes her new school; she's made a couple of friends, her choir teacher says she has real talent, and she even encourages Genesis to join the talent show. But how can Genesis believe anything her teacher says when her dad tells her the exact opposite? When Genesis reaches #100 on the list of things she hates about herself, will she continue on, or can she find the strength to begin again?

The Inheritance Games / Jennifer Lynn Barnes / Little, Brown & Company, 2020.

When Connecticut teenager Avery Grambs inherits vast wealth and an eccentric estate from the richest man in Texas, she must also live with his surviving family and solve a series of puzzles to discover how she earned her inheritance. Caught in a world of wealth and privilege, with danger around every turn, Avery will have to play the game herself just to survive.

Maybe He Just Likes You / Barbara Dee / Aladdin, 2019.

When boys in her class start touching seventh-grader Mila and making her feel uncomfortable, she does not want to tell her friends or mother until she reaches her breaking point. It doesn't feel like flirting--so what is it? Thanks to a chance meeting, Mila begins to find solace in a new place: karate class. Slowly, with the help of a fellow classmate, Mila learns how to stand her ground and how to respect others--and herself.

Out to Get You: 13 Tales of Weirdness and Woe / Josh Allen; Sarah Coleman, ill. / Holiday House, 2019.

A collection of thirteen short stories that reveals frightening secrets lurking in everyday objects. A stray kitten turns into a threatening follower. The street sign down the block starts taunting you. Even your own shadow is out to get you! Spooky things love hiding in plain sight.

Skyhunter / Marie Lu / Roaring Brook Press, 2020.

Talin is a Striker, a member of an elite fighting force that stands as the last defense for Mara, the only free nation in the world. When a mysterious prisoner is brought from the warfront to Mara's capital, Talin senses there is more to him than meets the eye. In this immersive world that is broken by war, danger waits around every corner and loyalty is life.

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky / Kwame Mbalia / Disney/Hyperion, 2019.

Seventh-grader Tristan Strong tumbles into the MidPass and, with allies from African American folklore like John Henry and Brer Rabbit, must entice the West African trickster god Anansi to come out of hiding and seal the hole Tristan accidentally ripped in the sky.

When Stars are Scattered / Victoria Jamieson / Dial Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent most of their lives in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is hard there: never enough food, achingly dull, and without access to the medical care Omar knows his nonverbal brother needs. So when Omar has the opportunity to go to school, he knows it might be a chance to change their future . . . but it would also mean leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day. Heartbreak, hope, and gentle humor exist together in this graphic novel about a childhood spent waiting, and a young man who is able to create a sense of family and home in the most difficult of settings.

Wink: Surviving Middle School with One Eye Open / Rob Harrell / Dial Books for Young Readers, 2020.

Ross Maloy just wants to be a normal seventh grader. He doesn't want to lose his hair, or wear a weird hat, or deal with the disappearing friends who don't know what to say to "the cancer kid." But with his recent diagnosis of a rare eye cancer, blending in is off the table. Based on Rob Harrell's real life experience, and packed with comic panels and spot art, this incredibly personal and poignant novel is an unforgettable, heartbreaking, hilarious, and uplifting story of survival and finding the music, magic, and laughter in life's weirdness.