



The Bluestem Award

Illinois' 3-5 Children's Choice Award

2013 Nominees



How Tía Lola Came to Stay by Julia Alvarez

JP ALV / AUDIO CD J F ALV

Since his parents' divorce, Miguel is having a tough time transitioning to a new life in Vermont, away from his father in New York. He doesn't see matters improving much once his Tía Lola comes from the Dominican Republic to help out his mami with Miguel and his sister. Aunt Lola is flashy and doesn't speak English, and with his own dark skin and hair, Miguel is already different from the other kids in his school – he doesn't need Tía Lola to make him stand out even more. In time, however, Miguel comes to care for and appreciate his aunt, and he also understands that they need each other, despite – or maybe, because of – their differences.

The Day-Glo Brothers by Chris Barton

J 535.352 BAR

Do you love highlighters or other things that are bright and fluorescent? Believe it or not, fluorescent colors were created in the 1930s by two brothers named Bob and Joe Switzer. Joe was crafty and enjoyed magic tricks, while older brother Bob hoped to be a doctor until an injury at work ended his dreams. During Bob's recovery, the brothers started playing with a homemade ultraviolet lamp and mixing their father's drugstore chemicals to make glowing paints and colors. Before they knew it, they'd created a whole new scheme of colors, which were used by everyone from department stores to the US Army in World War II.

The Name of This Book is Secret by Pseudonymous Bosch

J BOS / JP BOS / PLAYAWAY J F BOS

Although the book's narrator wouldn't think it's a very good idea for you to know this, I'm going to let you in on some important information anyway. Eleven-year-old Cass is a friendless survivalist with a backpack full of lifesaving, wilderness supplies that never leaves her side. Eleven-year-old Max-Ernest is a friendless, wanna-be comedian who talks too much, is too logical, and lives in a rather strange household. One day, Cass manages to get her hands on a box full of colorful and smelly vials of liquids and powders, brought to her grandathers' antiques shop by Gloria Fortune, "a real estate agent for the dead." The box came from the house of a dead magician, and through it, Cass and Max-Ernest soon find themselves becoming unlikely friends, breaking into the dead magician's house and stumbling upon a journal he kept. But some strangers – Dr. L and his cohort, glove-wearing Ms. Mauvais – are after this journal, too, for it holds a giant and mysterious secret. Not too long after their discovery of the book, Cass and Max-Ernest's schoolmate, talented artist Benjamin, goes missing, and Cass believes she knows who's responsible for his disappearance. Can she and Max-Ernest get to the bottom of the mystery and learn the secret before it's too late? Check out the rest of the Secrets series: *If You're Reading This, It's Too Late* (J BOS); *This Book is Not Good for You* (J BOS); *This Isn't What it Looks Like*; and *You Have to Stop This*.

Because of Mr. Terupt by Rob Buyea

J BUY / JP BUY

Seven kids find themselves new classmates in Mr. Terupt's fifth grade classroom on the first day of school. The kids are all different: Peter is a prankster; Jessica is the shy new girl; Luke is the smart one; Danielle is the one who lets others walk all over her; Anna has a bad home situation; Jeffrey just hates school; and Alexia is the bully. Together, the kids narrate the book throughout the school year – each section is a different month, and each chapter is from the point of view of one of the students. Even though the kids are all so very different, Mr. Terupt finds a way to form connections with each of them, making the classroom and school itself an enjoyable place for them to be. Then one day everything changes when a snowball catches Mr. Terupt in the head, and he is badly injured, landing him in the hospital. Though each of them feel responsible for his injury, they continue to be positively influenced and led by Mr. Terupt even from his hospital bed, as the students find new, open lines of communications and healing with each other and their families.

The Story of Snow by Mark Cassino

J 551.784 CAS

Snowflakes are so tiny! Have you ever wondered what they look like up close? Or how they even form in the first place? Did you know there are different kinds of snowflakes? Or that a snowflake is actually a clump of many smaller pieces called snow crystals? You'll learn all that and more in this fascinating book about snow. See up-close pictures of individual snowflakes and snow crystals, and even learn the best tips for catching and checking out your own when the next big snowfall hits!

Redwoods by Jason Chin

E 585.5 CHI

Sitting on a subway bench, a boy discovers a stray book about redwood trees. He's in for a surprise when he opens the book, as he's suddenly transported into a redwood forest! He soon learns all about the redwood tree, and you will too,

including facts on the heights of average redwoods and the most colossal redwoods called Titans. He also learns about how hardy the trees are – did you know that they are able to withstand forest fires or injuries to their upper branches? Did you realize that redwoods can make their own rain using the moisture in fog? Or that certain species of animals are only found in the oldest forests and redwoods? Or that the tallest redwood stretches as high as a 30-story skyscraper? Discover all this, and more, in this fun and fascinating trip through a redwood forest.

Love That Dog by Sharon Creech

J CRE / JP CRE / AUDIO CD J F CRE

Jack feels that poetry is something that he can't do because girls – not boys – write poetry. But as his teacher, Miss Stretchberry, introduces new poems in class written by famous authors, it takes time for Jack to eventually learn that he too can write poetry. At first, he is still unsure of his poetic abilities, telling Miss Stretchberry that he doesn't want his words displayed on the board, but then he gives in, allowing her to post them without his name because he doesn't feel his poems are good enough. When Miss Stretchberry reads a Walter Dean Myers poem in class one day, Jack finds a spark of inspiration, and he slowly works up the courage to believe in himself and his abilities, he asks Miss Stretchberry to begin adding his name to the poems he writes, and he questions why someone else has a poem on the board without their name on it – a poem he thinks is very good. After connecting to a certain Myers poem, Jack uses his newfound interest in writing free verse poetry as a therapeutic measure to help tell the story of his dog Sky.

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

J DIC / JP DIC / AUDIO CD J F DIC

Edward Tulane is a porcelain rabbit who belongs to a little girl named Abilene. Though she loves Edward, he doesn't necessarily love her back – he's saved all his love for himself, often gazing at his own reflection in the windows during the winter months and marveling over his wonderful handmade clothes and gold pocket watch. He's certainly not crazy about what Abilene and her family may talk about, and he hates the fact that he is always positioned at the dinner table with nothing to look at but the tablecloth. Abilene's grandmother Pellegrina quietly whispers her disappointment one night to Edward over his lack of love toward others, and soon after, he is lost at sea during a family cruise. Floating in the sea, Edward finally realizes that he does, in fact, love Abilene as much as she loves him, and he waits for her to come back for him. After almost a year at sea, Edward is rescued by a fisherman, and so he begins a series of new adventures during which he learns to love and be loved, but he also experiences terrible heartbreak and loss. Eventually, Edward closes his heart to the idea of letting others in. Will he ever learn to once again open up and trust others in order to find true happiness?

***Out of My Mind** by Sharon Draper

JP DRA / TEEN DRA*

This story is told from the point of view of 11-year-old Melody Brooks, who has cerebral palsy, which has rendered her unable to walk or talk her entire life. Even though she needs someone to feed her, dress her, and take her to the bathroom, she's super smart – and super frustrated by her doctors and teachers. They think that just because she can't talk or use her muscles properly, she's not capable of learning. Thankfully, Melody's parents and their neighbor Mrs. Valencia are there to treat her with the respect and dignity she so rightly deserves. When she finally gets a computer that allows her the gift of speech, Melody finds both immense joy and a huge disappointment in new opportunities, and her life begins to change.

The Familiars by Adam Epstein and Andrew Jacobson

J EPS / JP EPS / PLAYAWAY J F EPS

Aldwyn the cat is running for his life after stealing fish from a shop, so he darts into a pet shop to save himself. All he's looking for is a safe place, and what he doesn't expect is to become a young wizard-in-training's familiar (or magical animal), but that's what happens when Jack enters the shop and ends up purchasing Aldwyn. Aldwyn has no magical background – he's just a street cat, after all – but he soon has to prove his worth to two other familiars – bossy bluejay Skylar, and friendly tree frog Gilbert – who belong to Jack's friends. When Jack and his friends end up being kidnapped by a terrible witch, and it's up to Aldwyn and his new familiar friends to save the kids! This book, full of adventure, twists and magic, is the first in a series. If you find yourself hooked, check out book 2, *Secrets of the Crown* (J EPS).

Brendan Buckley's Universe and Everything in It by Sundee T. Frazier

J FRA / JP FRA / AUDIO CD J F FRA

Ten-year-old Brendan loves science, and he keeps a notebook in which he writes down what he calls his Big Questions, usually science-related, and then tries to find the answers to them. He is also biracial – his mother is white and his father is black. And he has only one grandparent left that he actually knows: Gladys, his father's mother. He's never met his mother's father, and his other two grandparents have passed away. One day while at the mall with Gladys, Brendan comes across a rock club meeting, which catches his attention since he is a budding geologist. He begins talking about the rock club to Ed DeBose, the man at the table, who turns out to be the grandfather he's never met! Brendan can't believe what, or who, he's stumbled upon! Can he figure out the answer to his newest Big Questions that deal with his estranged grandfather and the reason behind why he has no relationship with Brendan's own family?

The Thing About Georgie by Lisa Graff

J GRA / JP GRA

Georgie isn't like the rest of the kids in his fourth grade class. At only 42-inches tall, he has trouble with school furniture, he can't run track, and he isn't able to play video games or musical instruments. In the dog-walking business he started with his best friend Andy, Georgie has resigned himself to walking the poodles, something he's not very proud of, but other than that, life is pretty good for Georgie -- until he learns that things are starting to change. He finds out that his parents are having another baby (one that will probably be taller than him in no time); Andy starts hanging out with the new boy in school; Georgie gets paired up with Jeanie the Meanie for a big class project; and he's also nominated to play Abraham Lincoln in the class play. Will Georgie's life ever get back to normal?

Honus and Me by Dan Gutman

J GUT / JP GUT

Joe Stoshack loves baseball, but even though he's not very good at the game, he sure knows a lot about the players and their baseball cards. When his mom sends him next door to clean out his elderly neighbor's attic for \$5, the twelve-year-old finds something he least expects: a 1909 T-206 Honus Wagner baseball card – the most valuable card in the world – worth half a million dollars! Joe isn't sure if he should keep the card – it does belong to elderly Miss Young, after all – or if he should tell his mom about it, but before he can figure out what to do, he falls asleep and awakes that night to find the real Honus Wagner sitting in his room. Somehow, Honus has traveled through time to see Joe, but he's got to get back to 1909 in time for an upcoming baseball game, but how will he get there? And will Joe be able to travel back to 1909 with him? Once you've finished this one, check out the other books in the Baseball Card Adventures series by Dan Gutman (J GUT).

Touch Blue by Cynthia Lord

J LOR / AUDIO CD J F LOR

Eleven-year-old Tess lives on an island in Maine in the only home she's ever known, but her family may soon be forced to move if her school closes because of low enrollment. When some of the islanders come up with the idea of taking in foster children to increase the school's student population, Tess's family agrees. Thirteen-year-old Aaron becomes her foster brother, but he's not ready to accept a new family – he's still hurting and angry over being taken away from his alcoholic mother and then being shuffled between foster homes following his grandmother's death. Despite this, Tess, who believes in all kinds of lucky sayings and trinkets, wishes her hardest to make him feel at home, but will Aaron really be the answer to Tess's dilemma?

War Horse by Michael Morpurgo

J MOR / JP MOR / AUDIO CD J F MOR / E-BOOK

The year is 1914, and World War I is biting down hard in Europe when a farm horse named Joey finds himself being sold into service for the Army. Facing relentless training and a new, difficult life on the war front, Joey longs for his old life, wishing to be safely back on the farm with his friend Albert, the farmer's boy, by his side.

Captain Nobody by Dean Pitchford

J PIT / JP PIT / AUDIO CD J F PIT

With his parents working all the time, and his big brother Chris filling the role of the town's high school football star, ten-year-old Newt Newman is often overlooked by both his family and others. When Chris suffers a football injury that knocks him into a coma, Newt feels helpless to save the person he most cares about. But Newt's friends come to the rescue on Halloween, hoping to get his mind off all that's going on by picking him up for trick-or-treating and fashioning a costume for Newt out of Chris's outgrown clothes. And that's how Newt becomes Captain Nobody. He feels empowered in his new super hero costume, so he continues to wear it even after Halloween is over. And with his newfound courage, he's able to play hero to many – helping an elderly man find his way home, foiling a jewelry store robbery, and clearing the freeway for an airplane's emergency landing. Newt loves the fact that he can help so many others, but will he ever be able to come to Chris's rescue? Newt's friendly sense of humor and fun adventures will certainly have you rooting for Captain Nobody.

Guyku by Bob Raczka

J 811.6 RAC

This collection of haiku for guys celebrates the most fun parts of each season. The seventeen syllable poems and simple illustrations describe such things as playing in a creek, putting pennies on a railroad track, splashing in a puddle, climbing trees, and having icicle fights. One poem shows a boy counting snowflakes from his room while wondering, "How many million / flakes will it take to make a / snow day tomorrow?" This is a fun and accessible collection of haiku for guys – or anyone else – who enjoy the fun and wonderful opportunities offered by nature throughout the year.

Ruth and the Green Book by Calvin A. Ramsey

E RAM

Ruth can't wait to travel all the way from Chicago to Alabama to see her grandmother, and she is excited for this first vacation road trip with her family in their very own new car! But it's the early 1950s, and many white businesses don't want to sell or rent to African Americans like Ruth's family. At one gas station along the way, Ruth's father is able to purchase gas for the car, but she and her mother aren't even allowed to use the restrooms! Other businesses won't rent rooms to the family for them to stay overnight and sleep, so they're stuck sleeping in their car. They can't eat wherever they'd like to either, so they must eat picnic lunches instead of enjoying hot restaurant food. Ruth's feelings are hurt, and she is beginning to feel scared and sad that so many people refuse to do business with families like hers. Then one day at

a gas station, an attendant sells them a Green Book, filled with safe stops – businesses and people that will actually treat African American travelers with respect – and Ruth no longer has to be sad or scared on her southbound journey.

Mirror Mirror: A Book of Reversible Verse by Marilyn Singer

J 811.54 SIN

Think you know your classic fairy tales? This collection of poems turns fairy tales upside down and offers them up in a new light, and from a new point of view. Sure, as you know it, Cinderella sits in a corner polishing shoes while everyone else dances at the ball – but, wait! – turn the poem around to read from the bottom up, and you'll find that Cinderella is the sparkling gem of the evening while everyone else sits watching. And what about Little Red Riding Hood? Discover the classic tale from both her own and the wolf's points of view. Complete with complementing illustrations and a brief introduction to the *reverso* poetry format, this is a fun, new twist on the fairy tales you thought you knew.

The Shadows (Books of Elsewhere Vol. 1) by Jacqueline West

J WES / JP WES

Eleven-year-old Olive and her parents have just moved into a spooky old Victorian mansion that is already home to some strange antique paintings and three lively cats. Olive isn't crazy about the new house, so while her mathematician parents busy themselves solving math problems in the new home, she decides to explore the mansion and see if it might be hiding any secrets. First there are those strange cats who, believe it or not, actually talk to Olive! At first, she thinks they're friendly and trying to protect her, but she eventually learns they can't be trusted. And then she finds a pair of special glasses in the house that allow her to enter the creepy paintings on the walls and explore a dark new world called Elsewhere, which houses secrets, danger, and a trapped nine-year-old boy named Morton. It's beginning to seem as though Olive and her family aren't wanted in the mansion after all, but does she possess the power to confront the darkness and keep herself and her family safe? If you like this book, check out *Spellbound*, the second volume in The Elsewhere Chronicles series.



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