

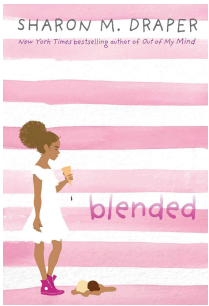
# Reading Bowl

## 2020-2021 Middle Grades Book List



### **Each Tiny Spark by Pablo Cartaya**

Emilia Torres has a wandering mind. It's hard for her to follow along at school, and sometimes she forgets to do what her mom or abuela asks. But she remembers what matters: a time when her family was whole and home made sense. When Dad returns from deployment, Emilia expects that her life will get back to normal. Instead, it unravels. Dad shuts himself in the back stall of their family's auto shop to work on an old car. Emilia peeks in on him daily, mesmerized by his welder. One day, Dad calls Emilia over. Then, he teaches her how to weld. And over time, flickers of her old dad reappear. But as Emilia finds a way to repair the relationship with her father at home, her community ruptures with some of her classmates, like her best friend, Gus, at the center of the conflict.



### **Blended by Sharon Draper**

Eleven-year-old Isabella's parents are divorced, so she has to switch lives every week: One week she's Isabella with her dad, his girlfriend Anastasia, and her son Darren living in a fancy house where they are one of the only black families in the neighborhood. The next week she's Izzy with her mom and her boyfriend John-Mark in a small, not-so-fancy house that she loves. Because of this, Isabella has always felt pulled between two worlds. And now that her parents are divorced, it seems their fights are even worse, and they're always about HER. Isabella feels even more stuck in the middle, split and divided between them than ever. And she's is beginning to realize that being split between Mom and Dad is more than switching houses, switching nicknames, switching backpacks: it's also about switching identities. It seems like nothing can bring Isabella's family together again—until the worst happens.

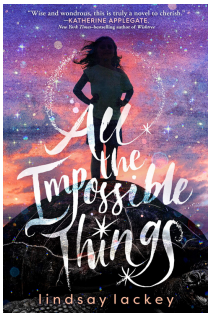
Isabella and Darren are stopped by the police. A cell phone is mistaken for a gun. And shots are fired.



### **The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise by Dan Gemeinhart**

Five years. That's how long Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have lived on the road in an old school bus, criss-crossing the nation. It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a car crash. Coyote hasn't been home in all that time, but when she learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished—the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box—she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington state in four days...without him realizing it. Along the way, they'll pick up a strange crew of misfit travelers. Lester has a lady love to meet. Salvador and his mom are looking to start over. Val needs a safe place to be herself. And then there's Gladys...

Over the course of thousands of miles, Coyote will learn that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all...but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her "once upon a time" into a "happily ever after."



### **All the Impossible Things by Lindsay Lackey**

Red's inexplicable power over the wind comes from her mother. Whenever Ruby "Red" Byrd is scared or angry, the wind picks up. And being placed in foster care, moving from family to family, tends to keep her skies stormy. Red knows she has to learn to control it, but can't figure out how. This time, the wind blows Red into the home of the Grooves, a quirky couple who run a petting zoo, complete with a dancing donkey and a giant tortoise. With their own curious gifts, Celine and Jackson Groove seem to fit like a puzzle piece into Red's heart.

But just when Red starts to settle into her new life, a fresh storm rolls in, one she knows all too well: her mother. For so long, Red has longed to have her mom back in her life, and she's quickly swept up in the vortex of her mother's chaos. Now Red must discover the possible in the impossible if she wants to overcome her own tornadoes and find the family she needs.

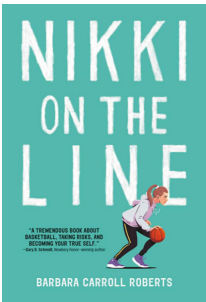


### **Planet Earth Is Blue by Nicole Panteleakos**

Twelve-year-old Nova is eagerly awaiting the launch of the space shuttle Challenger—it's the first time a teacher is going into space, and kids across America will watch the event on live TV in their classrooms. Nova and her big sister, Bridget, share a love of astronomy and the space program. They planned to watch the launch together. But Bridget has disappeared, and Nova is in a new foster home. While foster families and teachers dismiss Nova as severely autistic and nonverbal, Bridget understands how intelligent and special Nova is, and all that she can't express. As the liftoff draws closer, Nova's new foster family and teachers begin to see her potential, and for the first time, she is making friends without Bridget. But every day, she's counting down to the launch, and to the moment when she'll see Bridget again. Because Bridget said, "No matter what, I'll be there. I promise."

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### **Nikki On the Line by Barbara Carroll Roberts**

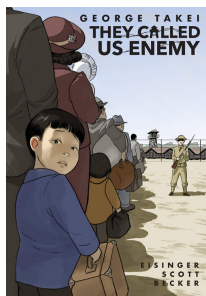
Thirteen-year-old Nikki Doyle's dreams of becoming a basketball great feel within reach when she's selected to play on an elite-level club team. But in a league with taller, stronger, and faster girls, Nikki suddenly isn't the best point guard. In fact, she's no longer a point guard at all, which leaves her struggling to figure out who she is and how she fits in. The stress piles on as Nikki's best friend spends more and more time with another girl on the team, and when her science teacher assigns a family tree project that will be impossible to complete unless Nikki reveals her most embarrassing secret. As if that's not enough to deal with, to cover the costs of her new team, Nikki has agreed to take care of her annoying younger brother after school to save money on childcare.

As the stakes rise on the basketball court, at school, and at home, Nikki's confidence plummets. Can she learn to compete at this new, higher level? And how hard is she willing to work to find out?



### **To Night Owl From Dogfish by Holly Goldberg Sloan and Meg Wolitzer**

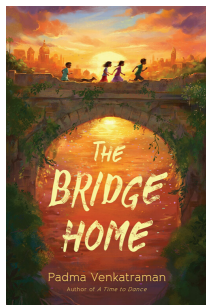
Avery Bloom, who's bookish, intense, and afraid of many things, particularly deep water, lives in New York City. Bett Devlin, who's fearless, outgoing, and loves all animals as well as the ocean, lives in California. What they have in common is that they are both twelve years old, and are both being raised by single, gay dads. When their dads fall in love, Bett and Avery are sent, against their will, to the same sleepaway camp. Their dads hope that they will find common ground and become friends—and possibly, one day, even sisters. But things soon go off the rails for the girls (and for their dads too), and they find themselves on a summer adventure that neither of them could have predicted. Now that they can't imagine life without each other, will Bett and Avery (who sometimes call themselves Night Owl and Dogfish) figure out a way to be a family?



### **They Called Us Enemy by George Takei**

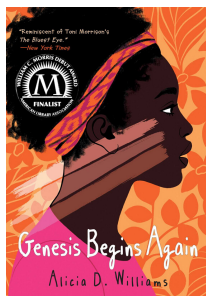
George Takei has captured hearts and minds worldwide with his captivating stage presence and outspoken commitment to equal rights. But long before he braved new frontiers in Star Trek, he woke up as a four-year-old boy to find his own birth country at war with his father's — and their entire family forced from their home into an uncertain future.

In 1942, at the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, every person of Japanese descent on the west coast was rounded up and shipped to one of ten "relocation centers," hundreds or thousands of miles from home, where they would be held for years under armed guard. *They Called Us Enemy* is Takei's firsthand account of those years behind barbed wire, the joys and terrors of growing up under legalized racism, his mother's hard choices, his father's faith in democracy, and the way those experiences planted the seeds for his astonishing future.



### **The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman**

Life is harsh in Chennai's teeming streets, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects look grim. Very quickly, eleven-year-old Viji discovers how vulnerable they are in this uncaring, dangerous world. Fortunately, the girls find shelter—and friendship—on an abandoned bridge. With two homeless boys, Muthi and Arul, the group forms a family of sorts. And while making a living scavenging the city's trash heaps is the pits, the kids find plenty to laugh about and take pride in too. After all, they are now the bosses of themselves and no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.



### **Genesis Begins Again by Alicia D. Williams**

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. And #61: Because her family is always being put out of their house, belongings laid out on the sidewalk for the world to see. When your dad is a gambling addict and loses the rent money every month, eviction is a regular occurrence. What's not so regular is that this time they all don't have a place to crash, so Genesis and her mom have to stay with her grandma. It's not that Genesis doesn't like her grandma, but she and Mom always fight—Grandma haranguing Mom to leave Dad, that she should have gone back to school, that if she'd married a lighter skinned man none of this would be happening, and on and on and on.

But things aren't all bad. Genesis actually likes her new school; she's made a couple 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? How can she stand up in front of all those people with her dark, dark skin knowing even her own family thinks lesser of her because of it? Why, why, why won't the lemon or yogurt or fancy creams lighten her skin like they're supposed to? And 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?