

KEYSTONE TO READING SECONDARY BOOK AWARDS 2019-2020
ANNOTATED HIGH SCHOOL BOOK LIST

Between the Lines by Nikki Grimes

Darrian dreams of writing for the *New York Times*. To hone his skills and learn more about the power of words, he enrolls in Mr. Ward's class, known for its open-mic poetry readings and boys vs. girls poetry slam. Everyone in class has something important to say, and in sharing their poetry, they learn that they all face challenges and have a story to tell—whether it's about health problems, aging out of foster care, being bullied for religious beliefs, or having to take on too much responsibility because of an addicted parent. As Darrian and his classmates get to know one another through poetry, they bond over the shared experiences and truth that emerge from their writing, despite their private struggles and outward differences.

(Fiction, grades 9-12)

Dry by Neal & Jarrod Shusterman

The drought—or the Tap-Out, as everyone calls it—has been going on for a while now. Everyone's lives have become an endless list of don'ts: don't water the lawn, don't fill up your pool, don't take long showers.

Until the taps run dry.

Suddenly, Alyssa's quiet suburban street spirals into a warzone of desperation; neighbors and families turned against each other on the hunt for water. And when her parents don't return and her life—and the life of her brother—is threatened, Alyssa has to make impossible choices if she's going to survive.(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Hey Kiddo by Jarrett Krosoczka

In kindergarten, Jarrett Krosoczka's teacher asks him to draw his family, with a mommy and a daddy. But Jarrett's family is much more complicated than that. His mom is an addict, in and out of rehab, and in and out of Jarrett's life. His father is a mystery -- Jarrett doesn't know where to find him, or even what his name is. Jarrett lives with his grandparents -- two very loud, very loving, very opinionated people who had thought they were through with raising children until Jarrett came along.

Jarrett goes through his childhood trying to make his non-normal life as normal as possible, finding a way to express himself through drawing even as so little is being said to him about what's going on. Only as a teenager can Jarrett begin to piece together the truth of his family, reckoning with his mother and tracking down his father.

(Graphic Novel/Autobiography, grades 9-12)

In Sight Of Stars by Gae Polisner

Seventeen-year-old Klee's father was the center of his life. He introduced Klee to the great museums of New York City and the important artists on their walls, he told him stories made of myths and magic. Until his death.

Now, forced to live in the suburbs with his mom, Klee can't help but feel he's lost all the identifying parts of himself—his beloved father, weekly trips to the MoMA, and the thrumming energy of New York City. That is until he meets wild and free Sarah in art class, with her quick smiles and jokes about his "brooding." Suddenly it seems as if she's the only thing that makes him happy. But when an act of betrayal sends him reeling, Klee lands in what is biting referred to as the "Ape Can," a psychiatric hospital for teens in Northhollow.

While there, he undergoes intensive therapy and goes back over the pieces of his life to find out what was real, what wasn't, and whether he can stand on his own feet again.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Ink, Iron, and Glass by Gwendolyn Clare

A certain pen, a certain book, and a certain person can craft entirely new worlds through a branch of science called scriptology. Elsa comes from one such world that was written into creation, where her mother—a noted scriptologist—constantly alters and expands their reality.

But when her home is attacked and her mother kidnapped, Elsa is forced to cross into the real world and use her own scriptology gifts to find her. In an alternative Victorian Italy, Elsa finds a secret society of young scientists with a gift for mechanics, alchemy, or scriptology—and meets Leo, a gorgeous mechanist with a smart mouth and tragic past. She recruits the help of these fellow geniuses just as an assassin arrives on their doorstep. (Fantasy, grades 9-12)

Lies You Never Told Me by Jennifer Donaldson

Gabe and Elyse have never met. But they both have something to hide.

Quiet, shy Elyse can't believe it when she's cast as the lead in her Portland high school's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Her best friend, Brynn, is usually the star, and Elyse isn't sure she's up to the task. But when someone at rehearsals starts to catch her eye--someone she knows she absolutely shouldn't be with--she can't help but be pulled into the spotlight.

Austin native Gabe is contemplating the unthinkable--breaking up with Sasha, his headstrong, popular girlfriend. She's not going to let him slip through her fingers, though, and when rumors start to circulate around school, he knows she has the power to change his life forever.

Gabe and Elyse both make the mistake of falling for the wrong person, and falling hard. Told in parallel narratives, this twisty, shocking story shows how one bad choice can lead to a spiral of unforeseen consequences that not everyone will survive. (Suspense/Thriller, grades 9-12)

Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo

Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking.

But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman, who her family can never know about.

With Mami’s determination to force her daughter to obey the laws of the church, Xiomara understands that her thoughts are best kept to herself. So when she is invited to join her school’s slam poetry club, she doesn’t know how she could ever attend without her mami finding out. But she still can’t stop thinking about performing her poems.

Because in the face of a world that may not want to hear her, Xiomara refuses to be silent.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 7-12)

Puddin’ by Julie Murphy

Millie Michalchuk has gone to fat camp every year since she was a little girl. Not this year. This year she has new plans to chase her secret dream of being a newscaster—and to kiss the boy she’s crushing on.

Callie Reyes is the pretty girl who is next in line for dance team captain and has the popular boyfriend. But when it comes to other girls, she’s more frenemy than friend.

When circumstances bring the girls together over the course of a semester, they surprise everyone (especially themselves) by realizing that they might have more in common than they ever imagined.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Sanctuary by Caryn Lix

Kenzie holds one truth above all: the company is everything.

As a citizen of Omnistellar Concepts, the most powerful corporation in the solar system, Kenzie has trained her entire life for one goal: to become an elite guard on Sanctuary, Omnistellar’s space

prison for superpowered teens too dangerous for Earth. As a junior guard, she's excited to prove herself to her company—and that means sacrificing anything that won't propel her forward.

But then a routine drill goes sideways and Kenzie is taken hostage by rioting prisoners.

At first, she's confident her commanding officer—who also happens to be her mother—will stop at nothing to secure her freedom. Yet it soon becomes clear that her mother is more concerned with sticking to Omnistellar protocol than she is with getting Kenzie out safely.

As Kenzie forms her own plan to escape, she doesn't realize there's a more sinister threat looming, something ancient and evil that has clawed its way into Sanctuary from the vacuum of space. And Kenzie might have to team up with her captors to survive—all while beginning to suspect there's a darker side to the Omnistellar she knows. (Fantasy, grades 9-12)

***The Falling Between Us* by Ash Parsons**

Just eight months ago, fifteen-year-old Roxanne Stewart was stuck in her tiny, middle-of-nowhere hometown with no prospects of leaving. But after her boyfriend, Joshua Blackbird, posts a performance of an original song on YouTube, he becomes an overnight sensation, catapulting to the dizzying heights of celebrity, and Rox joins him on the whirlwind ride of a massive national tour.

But it's not long before the never-blinking eye of fame begins weighing them both down--the constant hunger of managers, diehard fans who call themselves "Birdies," record execs, paparazzi, and even family, all leeching onto Joshua.

Then one day, Joshua Blackbird disappears. Was it a suicide? An accident? Rox will stop at nothing to find out the truth. (Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

***The Price of Duty* by Todd Strasser**

Jake Liddell is a war hero.

The military is considering awarding him a Silver Star, a huge honor for any soldier -- especially for the son of a military family.

Only Jake's questioning everything his family brought him up to believe.

Now at home, recovering from his physical wounds, the memories of what he experienced "over there" haunt him. Meanwhile, he feels pressure from all sides. Some people want him to speak out against the military system he was brought up to honor and respect. Others, like his famous grandfather (a general himself), are urging him to return to the battlefield to fight again.

Jake was raised to believe that fighting for one's country was a moral obligation. But now that he's seen firsthand the human cost of war, he is no longer sure.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Tradition by Brendan Kiely

Traditions at Fullbrook Academy: seniors escort freshmen to the Winter Ball; hockey players stack a puck in their window for each sexual conquest; and rich kids rule. Jules Devereaux is in her final year at Fullbrook and she is done with ex-boyfriends, friends, and the insidious privilege of her exclusive boarding school. James Baxter is on a hockey scholarship, a "do-over" after a disaster, trying to do the next right thing, attempting to keep a low profile because of his past.

(Realistic fiction, 9-12)

The Keystone to Reading Secondary Book Awards lists are created to give students a voice in the selection of the children's choice book awards presented each year at the annual KSLA Conference. The information presented in these books represents the thoughts and opinions of the authors and does not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the Keystone State Literacy Association.