

## **KEYSTONE TO READING SECONDARY BOOK AWARDS 2021-2022**

### **ANNOTATED HIGH SCHOOL BOOK LIST**

#### ***A Snake Falls to Earth*** by Darcie Little Badger

Nina is a Lipan girl in our world. She's always felt there was something more out there. She still believes in the old stories.

Oli is a cottonmouth kid, from the land of spirits and monsters. Like all cottonmouths, he's been cast from home. He's found a new one on the banks of the bottomless lake.

Nina and Oli have no idea the other exists. But a catastrophic event on Earth, and a strange sickness that befalls Oli's best friend, will drive their worlds together in ways they haven't been in centuries.

And there are some who will kill to keep them apart.

(Fantasy, grades 7-12)

#### ***Concrete Rose*** by Angie Thomas

If there's one thing seventeen-year-old Maverick Carter knows, it's that a real man takes care of his family. As the son of a former gang legend, Mav does that the only way he knows how: dealing for the King Lords. With this money he can help his mom, who works two jobs while his dad's in prison.

Life's not perfect, but with a fly girlfriend and a cousin who always has his back, Mav's got everything under control.

Until, that is, Maverick finds out he's a father.

Suddenly he has a baby, Seven, who depends on him for everything. But it's not so easy to sling dope, finish school, *and* raise a child. So when he's offered the chance to go straight, he takes it. In a world where he's expected to amount to nothing, maybe Mav can prove he's different.

When King Lord blood runs through your veins, though, you can't just walk away. Loyalty, revenge, and responsibility threaten to tear Mav apart, especially after the brutal murder of a loved one. He'll have to figure out for himself what it really means to be a man.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

***Donuts and Other Proclamations of Love*** by Jared Reck

It's easy to look at high school senior Oscar Olsson and think: *lost*. He hates school, struggles to read, and wants nothing to do with college. But Oscar is anything but lost--he knows exactly what he wants and exactly how to get it. Oscar and Farfar, the Swedish grandfather who's raised him, run a food truck together selling rullekebab and munkar, and Oscar wants to finish school so he can focus on the food truck full-time.

It's easy to look at Mary Louise (Lou for short) Messinger and think: *driven*. AP everything, valedictorian in her sights, and Ivy league college aspirations.

When Lou hijacks Oscar's carefully crafted schedule of independent studies and blocks of time in the Culinary Lab, Oscar is roped into helping Lou complete her over-ambitious, resume-building service project-reducing food waste in Central Adams High School. While Lou stands to gain her Girl Scout Gold Award, Oscar will be faced with a mountain of uneaten school apples and countless hours with a girl he can't stand.

With the finish line in sight, a relationship he never expected, and festival season about to begin (for good), the unthinkable happens, and Oscar's future is anything but certain.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

***In the Wild Light*** by Jeff Zentner

Life in a small Appalachian town is not easy. Cash lost his mother to an opioid addiction and his Papaw is dying slowly from emphysema. Dodging drug dealers and watching out for his best friend, Delaney, is second nature. He's been spending his summer mowing lawns while she works at Dairy Queen. But when Delaney manages to secure both of them full rides to an elite prep school in Connecticut, Cash will have to grapple with his need to protect and love Delaney, and his love for the grandparents who saved him and the town he has to leave behind.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

***Instructions for Dancing*** by Nicola Yoon

The construct of race has always been used to gain and keep power, to create dynamics that separate and silence. This remarkable reimagining of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America, and inspires hope for an antiracist future. It takes you on a race journey from then to now, shows you why we feel how we feel, and why the poison of racism lingers. It also proves that while racist ideas have always been easy to fabricate and distribute, they can also be discredited.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

**Lore** by Alexandra Bracken

Every seven years, the Agon begins. As punishment for a past rebellion, nine Greek gods are forced to walk the earth as mortals. They are hunted by the descendants of ancient bloodlines, all eager to kill a god and seize their divine power and immortality.

Long ago, Lore Perseous fled that brutal world, turning her back on the hunt's promises of eternal glory after her family was murdered by a rival line. For years she's pushed away any thought of revenge against the man—now a god—responsible for their deaths.

Yet as the next hunt dawns over New York City, two participants seek her out: Castor, a childhood friend Lore believed to be dead, and Athena, one of the last of the original gods, now gravely wounded.

The goddess offers an alliance against their mutual enemy and a way to leave the Agon behind forever. But Lore's decision to rejoin the hunt, binding her fate to Athena's, will come at a deadly cost—and it may not be enough to stop the rise of a new god with the power to bring humanity to its knees.

(Fantasy, grades 9-12)

**Singled Out: The True Story of Glenn Burke** by Andrew Maraniss

On October 2nd, 1977, Glenn Burke, outfielder for the Los Angeles Dodgers, made history without even swinging a bat. When his teammate Dusty Baker hit a historic home run, Glenn enthusiastically congratulated him with the first ever high five.

But Glenn also made history in another way—he was the first openly gay MLB player. While he did not come out publicly until after his playing days were over, Glenn's sexuality was known to his teammates, family, and friends. His MLB career would be cut short after only three years, but his legacy and impact on the athletic and LGBTQIA+ community would resonate for years to come.

(Non-fiction, grades 9-12)

***Six Crimson Cranes*** by Elizabeth Lim

Shiori'anma, the only princess of Kiata, has a secret. Forbidden magic runs through her veins. Normally she conceals it well, but on the morning of her betrothal ceremony, Shiori loses control. At first, her mistake seems like a stroke of luck, forestalling the wedding she never wanted. But it also catches the attention of Raikama, her stepmother.

A sorceress in her own right, Raikama banishes the young princess, turning her brothers into cranes. She warns Shiori that she must speak of it to no one: for with every word that escapes her lips, one of her brothers will die.

Penniless, voiceless, and alone, Shiori searches for her brothers, and uncovers a dark conspiracy to seize the throne. Only Shiori can set the kingdom to rights, but to do so she must place her trust in a paper bird, a mercurial dragon, and the very boy she fought so hard not to marry. And she must embrace the magic she's been taught all her life to forswear--no matter what the cost.

(Fantasy/Fairytales, grades 9-12)

***The Girls I've Been*** by Tess Sharpe

Nora O'Malley's been a lot of girls. As the daughter of a con-artist who targets criminal men, she grew up as her mother's protégé. But when her mom fell for the mark instead of conning him, Nora pulled the ultimate con: escape.

For five years Nora's been playing at normal. But she needs to dust off the skills she ditched because she has three problems:

#1: Her ex walked in on her with her girlfriend. Even though they're all friends, Wes didn't know about her and Iris.

#2: The morning after Wes finds them kissing, they all have to meet to deposit the fundraiser money they raised at the bank. It's a nightmare that goes from awkward to deadly, because:

#3: Right after they enter the bank, two guys start robbing it.

The bank robbers may be trouble, but Nora's something else entirely. They have no idea who they're really holding hostage . . .

(Thriller, grades 9-12)

***The Prison Healer*** by Lynette Noni

Seventeen-year-old Kiva Meridan has spent the last ten years fighting for survival in the notorious death prison, Zalindov, working as the prison healer.

When the Rebel Queen is captured, Kiva is charged with keeping the terminally ill woman alive long enough for her to undergo the Trial by Ordeal: a series of elemental challenges against the torments of air, fire, water, and earth, assigned to only the most dangerous of criminals.

Then a coded message from Kiva's family arrives, containing a single order: "*Don't let her die. We are coming.*" Aware that the Trials will kill the sickly queen, Kiva risks her own life to volunteer in her place. If she succeeds, both she and the queen will be granted their freedom.

But no one has ever survived.

With an incurable plague sweeping Zalindov, a mysterious new inmate fighting for Kiva's heart, and a prison rebellion brewing, Kiva can't escape the terrible feeling that her trials have only just begun.

(Fantasy, grades 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. (The book descriptions have been taken from outside sources.)