

KEYSTONE TO READING SECONDARY BOOK AWARDS 2024-2025
ANNOTATED HIGH SCHOOL BOOK LIST

Artifice by Sharon Cameron

Isa de Smit was raised in the vibrant, glittering world of her parents' small art gallery in Amsterdam, a hub of beauty, creativity, and expression, until the Nazi occupation wiped the color from her city's palette. The "degenerate" art of the Gallery de Smit is confiscated, the artists in hiding or deported, her best friend, Truus, fled to join the shadowy Dutch resistance. And masterpiece by masterpiece, the Nazis are buying and stealing her country's heritage, feeding the Third Reich's ravenous appetite for culture and art.

So when the unpaid taxes threaten her beloved but empty gallery, Isa decides to make the Nazis pay. She sells them a fake—a Rembrandt copy drawn by her talented father—a sale that sets Isa perilously close to the second most hated class of people in Amsterdam: the collaborators. Isa sells her beautiful forgery to none other than Hitler himself, and on the way to the auction, discovers that Truus is part of a resistance ring to smuggle Jewish babies out of Amsterdam.

But Truus cannot save more children without money. A lot of money. And Isa thinks she knows how to get it. One more forgery, a copy of an exquisite Vermeer, and the Nazis will pay for the rescue of the very children they are trying to annihilate. To make the sale, though, Isa will need to learn the art of a master forger, before the children can be deported, and before she can be outed as a collaborator. And she finds an unlikely source to help her do it: the young Nazi soldier, a blackmailer and thief of Dutch art, who now says he wants to desert the German army.

Yet, worth is not always seen from the surface, and a fake can be difficult to spot. Both in art, and in people. Based on the true stories of Han Van Meegeren, a master art forger who sold fakes to Hermann Goering, and Johann van Hulst, credited with saving 600 Jewish children from death in Amsterdam, Sharon Cameron weaves a gorgeously evocative thriller, simmering with twists, that looks for the forgotten color of beauty, even in an ugly world.

(Historical Fiction, grades 9-12)

Chaos Theory by Nic Stone

DETACHED

Since Shelbi enrolled at Windward Academy as a senior and won't be there very long, she hasn't bothered making friends. What her classmates don't know about her can't be used to hurt her—you know, like it did at her last school.

WASTED

Andy Criddle is not okay. At all.
He's had far too much to drink.
Again. Which is bad.
And things are about to get worse.

When Shelbi sees Andy at his lowest, she can relate. So she doesn't resist reaching out. And there's no doubt their connection has them both seeing stars . . . but the closer they get, the more the past threatens to pull their universes apart.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Chasing Pacquiao by Rod Pulido

Self preservation. That's Bobby's motto for surviving his notoriously violent high school unscathed. Being out and queer would put an unavoidable target on his back, especially in a Filipino community that frowns on homosexuality. It's best to keep his head down, get good grades, and stay out of trouble.

But when Bobby is unwillingly outed in a terrible way, he no longer has the luxury of being invisible. A vicious encounter has him scrambling for a new way to survive—by fighting back. Bobby is inspired by champion Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao to take up boxing and challenge his tormentor. But when Pacquiao publicly declares his stance against queer people, Bobby's faith—in his hero and in himself—is shaken to the core.

(Realistic Fiction, grades 9-12)

Promise Boys by Nick Brooks

The prestigious Urban Promise Prep school might look pristine on the outside, but deadly secrets lurk within. When the principal ends up murdered on school premises and the cops come sniffing around, a trio of students—J.B., Ramón, and Trey—emerge as the prime suspects. They had the means, they had the motive . . . and they may have had the murder weapon. But with all three maintaining their innocence, they must band together to track down the real killer before they are arrested. Or is the true culprit hiding among them?

(Realistic Fiction/Mystery, grades 9-12)

Saints of the Household by Ari Tison

Max and Jay have always depended on one another for their survival. Growing up with a physically abusive father, the two Bribri American brothers have learned that the only way to protect themselves and their mother is to stick to a schedule and keep their heads down.

But when they hear a classmate in trouble in the woods, instinct takes over and they intervene, breaking up a fight and beating their high school's star soccer player to a pulp. This act of violence threatens the brothers' dreams for the future and their beliefs about who they are. As the true details of that fateful afternoon unfold over the course of the novel, Max and Jay grapple with the weight of their actions, their shifting relationship as brothers, and the realization that they may be more like their father than they thought. They'll have to reach back to their Bribri roots to find their way forward.

(Realistic Fiction/Novel in Verse, grades 9-12)

Silver to the Bone by Alexandra Bracken

Born without a trace of magic, Tamsin Lark is no match for the sorceresses and Hollowers who populate the magical underground of Boston. But when the only parent she's ever known disappears without so much as a goodbye, she has no choice but to join in their cutthroat pursuit of enchanted relics to keep herself—and her brother, Cabell—alive.

Ten years later, rumors are swirling that her guardian found a powerful ring from Arthurian legend just before he vanished. A run-in with her rival Emrys ignites Tamsin's hope that the ring could free Cabell from a curse that threatens both of them. But they aren't the only ones who covet the ring.

As word spreads, greedy Hollowers start circling, and many would kill to have it for themselves. While Emrys is the last person Tamsin would choose to partner with, she needs all the help she can get to edge out her competitors in the race for the ring. Together, they dive headfirst into a vipers' nest of dark magic, exposing a deadly secret with the power to awaken ghosts of the past and shatter her last hope of saving her brother. . . .(Fantasy, grades 9-12)

Snow and Poison by Melissa de la Cruz

Known as Snow White, Lady Sophie has led a sheltered life in the mountains of Bavaria. *Until now.* Her father, the widowed Duke Maximilian, is at last remarrying, and on the day of his historic wedding, Sophie is making her high-society debut.

At the ball, Sophie charms the dashing Prince Philip, heir to the Spanish throne. But as Philip and Sophie start falling deeply in love, the king of Spain loses his temper. His wish is that Philip would marry a princess. And now, his command is Sophie's death.

In a quest for survival, Sophie seeks refuge in the home of seven orphans, the counsel of a witch, and the safety of her blade. With the looming threat of war upon her duchy, Sophie must ponder: Can she do right by her home *and* honor her heart's desire?
(Fantasy, grades 9-12)

Spice Road by Maiya Ibrahim

In the hidden desert city of Qalia, there is secret spice magic that awakens the affinities of those who drink the misra tea. Sixteen-year-old Imani has the affinity for iron and is able to wield a dagger like no other warrior. She has garnered the reputation as being the next great Shield for battling djinn, ghouls, and other monsters spreading across the sands.

Her reputation has been overshadowed, however, by her brother, who tarnished the family name after it was revealed that he was stealing his nation's coveted spice—a telltale sign of magical obsession. Soon after that, he disappeared, believed to have died beyond the Forbidden Wastes. Despite her brother's betrayal, there isn't a day that goes by when Imani doesn't grieve him.

But when Imani discovers signs that her brother may be alive and spreading the nation's magic to outsiders, she makes a deal with the Council that she will find him and bring him back to Qalia, where he will face punishment. Accompanied by other Shields, including Taha, a powerful beastseer who can control the minds of falcons, she sets out on her mission.

Imani will soon find that many secrets lie beyond the Forbidden Wastes—and in her own heart—but will she find her brother?

(Fantasy grades 9-12)

The Mona Lisa Vanishes by Nicholas Day and Brett Helquist

On a hot August day in Paris, just over a century ago, a desperate guard burst into the office of the director of the Louvre and shouted, *La Joconde, c'est partie!* The *Mona Lisa*, she's gone!

No one knew who was behind the heist. Was it an international gang of thieves? Was it an art-hungry American millionaire? Was it the young Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, who was about to remake the very art of painting?

Travel back to an extraordinary period of revolutionary change: turn-of-the-century Paris. Walk its backstreets. Meet the infamous thieves—and detectives—of the era. And then slip back further in time and follow Leonardo da Vinci, painter of the *Mona Lisa*, through his dazzling, wondrously weird life. Discover the secret at the heart of the *Mona Lisa*—the most famous painting in the world should never have existed at all.

(Nonfiction, grades 7-12)

Warrior Girl Unearthed by Angeline Boulley

Perry Firekeeper-Birch has always known who she is - the laidback twin, the troublemaker, the best fisher on Sugar Island. Her aspirations won't ever take her far from home, and she wouldn't have it any other way. But as the rising number of missing Indigenous women starts circling closer to home, as her family becomes embroiled in a high-profile murder investigation, and as greedy grave robbers seek to profit off of what belongs to her Anishinaabe tribe, Perry begins to question everything.

In order to reclaim this inheritance for her people, Perry has no choice but to take matters into her own hands. She can only count on her friends and allies, including her overachieving twin and a charming new boy in town with unwavering morals. Old rivalries, sister secrets, and botched heists cannot - will not - stop her from uncovering the mystery before the ancestors and missing women are lost forever.

Sometimes, the truth shouldn't stay buried.

(Mystery/Thriller, grades 9-12)

We Are All So Good At Smiling by Amber McBride

Whimsy is back in the hospital for treatment of clinical depression. When she meets a boy named Faerry, she recognizes they both have magic in the marrow of their bones. And when Faerry and his family move to the same street, the two start to realize that their lifelines may have twined and untwined many times before.

They are both terrified of the forest at the end of Marsh Creek Lane.

The Forest whispers to Whimsy. The Forest might hold the answers to the part of Faerry he feels is missing. They discover the Forest holds monsters, fairy tales, and pain that they have both been running from for 11 years.

(Novel in Verse/Fantasy, grades 9-12)

Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass by Meg Medina and Valentine Vargas

It's the beginning of sophomore year, and Piedad "Piddy" Sanchez is having a hard time adjusting to her new high school. Things don't get any easier when Piddy learns that Yaqui Delgado hates her and wants to kick her ass. Piddy doesn't even know who Yaqui is, never mind what she's done to piss her off. Rumor has it that Yaqui thinks Piddy is stuck-up, shakes her stuff when she walks, and isn't Latina enough with her white skin, good grades, and no accent. And Yaqui isn't kidding around, so Piddy better watch her back. At first, Piddy is more concerned with learning about the father she's never met, navigating her rocky relationship with her mom, and staying in touch with her best friend, Mitzi. But when the harassment escalates, avoiding Yaqui and her gang takes over Piddy's life. Is there any way for Piddy to survive without closing herself off from those who care about her—or running away?

(Graphic Novel, 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.)