

MPPL'S FAVORITE Children's books of 2023



NICHOLAS DAY AR BRETT HELQ

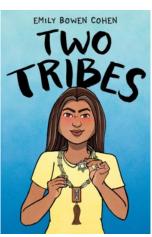






















How did we choose our favorite books? First we read a lot.

We looked for books with great writing and beautiful art.

We also looked for books that are appropriate for their intended audience.

Beyond that, how does anyone choose their favorite anything?

Your favorite color is probably the color that makes you happiest when you look at it or wear it.

Your favorite song reminds you of an experience, place, or time that you never want to forget.

Your favorite food makes you feel comforted and nourished.

It's the same with books and stories. We ultimately chose stories that made us feel, made us remember, made us keep reading late into the night, that made us want to explore.

We hope your next favorite book is also on this list. But if it's not, we understand--we know just how hard it can be to choose a favorite. Just remember, if you ever need help finding your next favorite book, you know where to find us.

Board Books



Don't mix up my puppy!

by Rosamund Lloyd BABY LLOYD, R. This adorable board book features a wheel that readers can spin to mix and match their very own puppies with special touch-and-feel textures.



Hello, baby : say hello in 15 languages! by Stillwell, Stephani BABY STILWELL,

S. This board book teaches toddlers how

to say"hello" in 15 of the world's most spoken languages, including English, Chinese, Navajo, Russian, Hindi and Italian.



My hair is like the sun

by St. Clair Detrick-Jules BABY DETRICK-JULES, S. This book features photographs of real children and their natural hairstyles

that share a powerful message of self-

love and affirmation.



The nose, toes and tummy book

by Sally Nicholls BABY NICHOLLS, S. Little ones can play silly games as they learn the names of their body parts, in this bright, colorful board book.



Some cats

by Lydia Nichols BABY NICHOLS, L. Perfect for cat lovers of all ages, this rhyming story is a celebration of our furry feline friends.

Picture Books, Fiction



An American story

by Kwame Alexander É ALEXANDER, K.

A picture book in verse that threads together past and present to explore the legacy of slavery during a

classroom lesson.



by Vashti Harrison E HARRISON, V. This emotional exploration of being big in a world that prizes small follows a young child's journey to self-love.



Bing! Bang! Chugga! Beep!

by Bill Martin E MARTIN, B. A clever young boy loves his old car, which has been everywhere, from the backyard to the sky, from the hills to the water, in this delightful singsong

story from an iconic children's author duo.



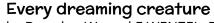
EVERY DREAMING

Cape

Bia

by Kevin Johnson E JOHNSON, K. After losing the person in his life he loves more than anything, a young child holds onto a cape as a source of comfort and strength as he navigates

the sadness and joy of his memories.



by Brendan Wenzel E WENZEL, B. This beautiful exploration of animal senses through dreams introduces a magical world of endless curiosity

where each creature is connected despite their differences.

Picture books, Fiction



I want to be spaghetti!

by Kiera Wright-Ruiz E WRIGHT-RUIZ, K.

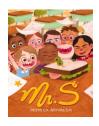
Even from Ramen's small shelf in the supermarket, they see spaghetti propaganda everywhere."I want to be

spaghetti!" they proclaim to the dismay of the rest of the instant noodle section.



Little land

by Diana Sudyk E SUDYKA, D. A breathtaking exploration of the connections between life and land central to the past, present and future of our planet.



Mr. S

by Monica Arnaldo E ARNALDO, M. When a kindergarten class arrives for the first day at school, they are greeted only by the words "Mr. S" on the chalkboard and a delicious-looking sandwich.



Oh no, the aunts are here by Adam Rex E REX, A.

This hilarious take on family reunions follows one girl's relatable visit from her overwhelming and overly enthusiastic aunts, who cause merry mayhem!



Pepita meets bebita by Ruth Behar E BEHAR, R. When Pepita, the puppy of the family, meets the brand-new bebita, she discovers this addition is why Mami and Papi are too busy to play and scratch her ears, but when they become the best of friends, Pepita

learns change can be good!



Plátanos go with everything

by Lissette NormanE NORMAN, L. Yesenia introduces readers to her favorite food--plâtanos--which go with everything, especially love, in this ode to the star of Dominican cuisine.





Say my name

by Joanna Ho E HO, J.

Children from different backgrounds introduce themselves and convey the meaning and history behind their names, emphasizing the importance of identity and saying names correctly.

There was a party for Langston by Jason Reynolds E REYNOLDS, J.

This finger-snapping, toe-tapping ode to the Word King and literary genius Langston Hughes invites readers to a heckuva party at the Schomberg

Library.



The walk

by Winsome Bingham E BINGHAM, W.

A young girl goes on an important walk with her Granny that brings together a community, lifts voices and encourages readers to speak up, stand up and say

what's on their minds.



When you can swim

by Jack Wong E WONG, J. Inviting children into the natural world and its watery wonders, this celebration of learning to swim, told

through expansive vignettes, follows a diverse cast of children and families as they experience the joy of nature's lessons.



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Early Readers & Transitional Chapter Books



The apartment house on Poppy Hill

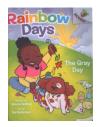
by Nina LaCour JF LACOUR, N. Determined to make two new tenants feel welcome, bighearted, curious and mischievous 9-year-old Ella, who knows all the neighbors except for the mysterious Robinsons who live on the

top floor, hopes a special celebration will change that.



Fox has a problem

by Corey R. Tabor ER TABOR, C. When Fox has a problem that causes all his friends to have problems too, they must work together to fix things before it's too late.



The gray day

by Valerie Bolling ER BOLLING, V. When it starts to rain Zoya and her puppy, Coco, rush back inside with their art supplies and find a creative way to add color and sparkle to a gray day!



Hoggy at bat

by Ethan Long ER LONG, E. Hoggy wants to hit the ball over the fence, but when he strikes out, the pressure is on. Can he learn to relax and enjoy a fun game with friends? Or will the pressure to win keep him from stepping up to the plate?



The lost mitten by Jannie Ho ER HO, J.

When Rabbit and Mouse finally find the owner of a lost red mitten, Rabbit has a hard time letting it go since red is his favorite color.



Salma makes a home

by Ahmad Danny Ramadan JF RAMADAN, A.

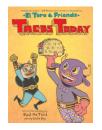
After a year, eleven months, and six days apart, Salma's dad is finally joining her family in their new home. Salma is happy to see her baba-but she's also worried. What if he misses Syria so

much that he leaves them again?



The story of Gumluck the wizard

by Adam Rex JF REX, A. Gumluck, a young, inexperienced wizard, does his best to help the local townspeople (and a small friendly ghost) with his sometimes critical raven sidekick, Helvetica.



Tacos today

by Raúl the Third ER, RAUL Young luchadores El Toro and his

Tip tap Sam : & Not a nut

This early reader features two short

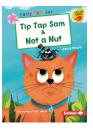
everywhere. What happens when he

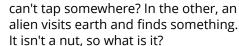
by Jenny Moore ER MOORE, J.

stories. In one, Sam likes to tap

friends take a break from training to get some tacos, but when they discover they don't have enough money for their favorite food, they come up with a creative solution to earn plenty of

dinero.





Trim sets sail

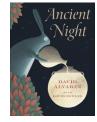
by Deborah Hopkinson ER HOPKINSON, D. With the help of Captain Flinders, Penny the ship's dog, and Will the ship's artist, tiny kitten Trim tests his limits and abilities on his way to becoming the ship's cat.

"Early readers [...] are controlled for vocabulary, length, sentence structure, and text format. While traditional picture books have rich, beautiful language, the words found in early readers are primarily those children already have in their speaking and listening vocabularies. Therefore, the main task is sounding out the words while reading since the meanings are already known. These books are often 32 pages, have a limited number of sentences on a page, and the text is formatted in a simple and regular way (no fancy fonts or text treatments)." "As children develop as readers, they begin to crave more sophisticated looking books—like the chapter books their older siblings might read. Transitional chapter books fill that need. Like early readers, they are often controlled for vocabulary and length. Some are as short as 32 pages and contain between 1,000-1,500 words. Others might be longer (48-64), but still under 2,500 words."

"Early readers and transitional chapter books serve an important function in a child's reading development. These books allow children time to develop the necessary skills, confidence, and love of reading that will put them on the path of becoming successful lifelong readers."

https://www.highlightsfoundation.org/2018/03/14/early-readers-and-transitional-chapter-books-what-are-they-and-why-are-they-important/stars/st

Folk, Fairy, and Religious Tales



Ancient night

by David Bowles E BOWLES, D. Ancient Night is a twist on two Nahua traditions: the rabbit which the Feathered Serpent placed on the moon, and Yaushu, the Lord Opossum who ruled the earth before humans came, and who stole fire from the gods

to create the sun.



Crowned : magical folk and fairy tales from the diaspora

by Kahran Bethencourt J 398.2 BET Crowned is a reimagined collection of classic fairy and folk tales that celebrate Black beauty and imagination that features the stunning photography

of CreativeSoul Photography.



Simon and the better bone

by Corey R. Tabor E TABOR, C. One day, down by the pond, Simon meets another dog just like him. And that dog has a bone just like his, only Simon over get him to trade when the

better! How will Simon ever get him to trade, when the other pup knows all the same tricks...?



Zhen Yu and the snake

by Erica Lyons E LYONS, E.

Based on the Talmudic tale of Rabbi Akiva's daughter and a snake, this stunning picture book follows Zhen Yu as she shows kindness to a stranger on the eve of her wedding, despite a prophesy that she will be bitten by a snake on that night, an act of generosity that changes her foretold fate.



The song that called them home

by David Robertson E ROBERTSON, D.

Lauren and her little brother James are pulled away by the Memekwesewak-creatures who live in and around water

and like to interfere with humans--and something even stronger must pull them back home.



Stories of the islands

by Clar Angkasa J GRAPH ANGKASA, C.

Based on the graphic novelist/ illustrator's favorite childhood stories and gorgeously illustrated with a dedicated color palette for each tale, this collection of reimagined

Indonesian fairy tales is filled with spectacular landscapes, deep emotions and a firm belief in the power of girls' stories.

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Picture book nonfiction



Darwin's super-pooping worm spectacular

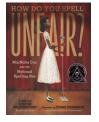
by Polly Owen J 592.64 OWE The silly true story of how Darwin discovered that the earthworm is one of the most important species on the planet.



Holding her own : the exceptional life of Jackie Ormes

by Traci N. Todd J B ORMES, J. An inspiring picture book biography of the first Black woman cartoonist to be

nationally syndicated in the U.S. who, in post-World War II America, stayed true to her art while remaining honest about the inequalities Black people had been fighting.

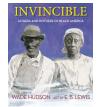


How do you spell unfair? : MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee

by Carole Boston Weatherford J B COX, M.

This true story follows eighth grade African American spelling champion MacNolia Cox, who left Akron, Ohio, in

1936 to compete in the prestigious National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., only to be met with prejudice and discrimination.



Invincible : fathers and mothers of Black America

by Wade Hudson J 973.0496 HUD This powerful book explores the birth of Black America and the little-known men and women who suffered and struggled to build a country, a culture,

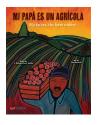
and institutions, showing the slow process by which Black Americans fought for justice over the course of many generations.



A llama is not an alpaca : and other mistaken animal identities

by Karen Jameson J 590.12 JAM A creative non-fiction picture book that

teaches readers the difference between animals that are sometimes confused for each other.



Mi papá es un agrícola / My Father, the Farm Worker

by J. Roman Perez Varela J SPANISH 305.963 VAR

From dawn to dusk, through sunshine, rainfall, and everything in between, he works his smooth hands until they

crack. He harvests plenty of gifts for everyone to enjoy in hope of a brighter future for his own--he is the backbone of our country. Beautifully illustrated with the gifted colors of Mother Earth and told from the perspective of a proud son, this heartfelt tale will take us on a journey through the hardships and tireless days of a field worker.



Not a monster

by Claudia Guadalupe Martinez J 597.858 MAR

An axolotl egg hatches and matures in the Xochimilco canals in Mexico City,

the only natural habitat of these unique salamanders that spend their lives in water.



Stars of the night : the courageous children of the Czech Kindertransport

by Caren Stelson J 940.5318 STE The powerful and sensitively told true story of the Czech Kindertransport, which rescued 669 children from Nazi

persecution on the eve of World War II.



Tenacious : fifteen adventures alongside disabled athletes

by Patty Cisneros Prevo J 796.0456 CIS

An introduction to fifteen fascinating disabled athletes and their many achievements, daily challenges, and joys.



Whale fall : exploring an ocean-floor ecosystem

by Melissa Stewart J 577.79 STE Bringing to life a fascinating real-life phenomenon, this stunning picture

book details a whale's end of life, when its body sinks to the ocean floor and becomes nourishment for all kinds of creatures and organisms year after year, decade after decade.

Middle Grade Fiction



Dear Mothman

by Robin Gow JF GOW, R. After the death of his best friend and the only other trans boy at school, Noah starts writing letters expressing his feelings to the humanoid creature Mothman and risks everything when he treks into the woods to prove Mothman's existence.



Eagle drums

by Nasuêgraq Rainey Hopson JF HOPSON, N.

This magical origin story of the Iñupiaq Messenger Feast, a Native Alaskan tradition, follows a young, skilled hunter who, confronted by a terrifying eagle god, is led on a harrowing journey.



Elf dog & owl head

by M. T Anderson JF ANDERSON, M. Quarantined with his family as a global plague ravages the world, Clay retreats to the woods where he meets a special little dog who leads him on surreal adventures where choosing the wrong path could cause them both to lose

their way forever.



The eyes & the impossible

by Dave Eggers JF EGGERS, D. An endearing and beautifully illustrated story of a dog who unwittingly becomes a hero to a park full of animals.



Good different

by Meg Eden Kuyatt JF KUYATT, M. Neurodivergent girl Selah, who always tries to keep her feelings in check, explodes at school one day, hitting a fellow student, and must figure out more about who she is in order to understand that different doesn't mean damaged.









The Guardian test

by Christina Soontornvat JF SOONTORNVAT, C. Accepted to the Guardian Academy on Lotus Island, where kids transform into magical creatures, young Plum finds herself struggling and might be forced to leave if she cannot embrace her inner animal soon.

The grace of wild things

by Heather Fawcett JF FAWCETT, H. Fleeing from the orphanage, Grace makes a deal with the witch in the nearby woods: if Grace can learn all the witch's spells, she must make Grace her apprentice, an agreement that leads to an unexpected bond and an unimaginable sacrifice.

Not an easy win

by Chrystal D. Giles JF GILES, C. Nothing has gone right for twelve-yearold year old Lawrence since his Pop went away, but after getting expelled from school for fighting he discovers the world of chess and things begin to change.

The Otherwoods

by Justine Pucella Winans JF WINANS, J.

Born with the ability to see monsters and travel to The Otherwoods, River Rydell has no choice but to confront this nightmarish place when their only friend is dragged into this terrifying world.

The probability of everything

by Sarah Everett JF EVERETT, S. When an asteroid has an 84.7% chance of colliding with the Earth in four days, 11-year-old Kemi, assembles a time capsule to capture her family's truth as she tries to come to terms with saying goodbye.

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Middle Grade Fiction



The rhythm of time

by Questlove JF QUESTLOVE After accidentally traveling back in time and rewriting the future, twelve-yearold best friends Rahim and Kasia must work together to restore their timeline.



Simon sort of says by Erin Bow JF BOW, E.

by Erin Bow JF BOW, E. Two years after surviving a school shooting, 12-year-old Simon moves to the only place in America where the internet is banned, finally getting a chance to spin his own story with the help of a new friend.



A spoonful of time

by Flora Ahn JF AHN, F. When she discovers she and her grandmother, Halmunee, can timetravel through Halmunee's Korean cooking, Maya eats her way through the past until a shocking discovery changes everything she thought she knew about family, friendship, loss and

time itself.

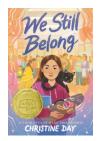


Treasure island : runaway gold

by Jewell Parker Rhodes JF RHODES,

J. "Entrusted with a real treasure map, Zane, along with his friends Kiko and Jack and his dog, Hip-Hop, arrives in Manhattan where he learns about the buried history of Black New Yorkers of

centuries past, and the gold hidden in those stories, while eluding a vicious rival skateboard crew.



We still belong

by Christine Day JF DAY, C. Wesley's hopeful plans for Indigenous Peoples' Day (and asking her crush to the dance) go all wrong--until she finds herself surrounded by the love of her Indigenous family and community at the intertribal powwow.

Middle Grade Nonfiction



Are we having fun yet? : the human quest for a good time

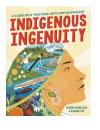
by Maria Birmingham J 790 BIR This nonfiction illustrated book for middle grade readers explores why and how people have had fun over the course of human history.



Chinese menu : the history, myths, and legends behind your favorite foods

by Grace Lin J 641.5951 LIN This visual and storytelling buffet takes readers to far-off times and marvelous places where they'll discover the

mouthwatering history, legends and myths behind their favorite American Chinese food.



Indigenous ingenuity : a celebration of traditional North American knowledge

by Deidre Havrelock J 500.89 HAV This wide-ranging STEM book celebrates the countless discoveries and technological inventions from Indigenous North Americans, showing

readers how to embrace the mindset of reciprocity, environmental responsibility and the interconnectedness of all life.



Is it okay to pee in the ocean? : the fascinating science of our waste and our world

by Ella Schwartz J 612.461 SCH With historical anecdotes, scientific backup and DIY projects, this funny, fascinating and fact-filled book features

information about the surprising uses of urine throughout history as well as the science of urine in bodies and in the world.



LOL 101 : a kid's guide to writing jokes

by David Roth J 818.602 ROT This hilarious how-to joke book for kids who want to channel their inner comedian provides easy-to-follow exercises to help them write jokes that really make people LOL.

Middle Grade Nonfiction



The Mona Lisa vanishes : a legendary painter, a shocking heist, and the birth of a global celebrity by Nick Day J 364.1628 DAY This nonfiction thriller is shot through with stories of crime and celebrity, genius and beauty, transporting readers back to turn-of-the-century Paris where they will bear witness to

the heist of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre.



Search for a giant squid : pick your path

by Amy Seto Forrester J 594.58 FOR A choose your own path style story that guides the reader through the very real job of being a teuthologist.



Ten-word tiny tales : to inspire and unsettle by Joseph Coelho J 808.3 COE

Is it possible to spin a tale using just ten words? Each tale is paired with an outstanding illustrator, and together words and pictures inspire creativity as young readers are prompted to

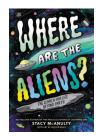
continue the story.



Unseen jungle : the microbes that secretly control our world

by Eleanor Spicer Rice J 579 SPI Aspiring young scientists (or kids who love to be grossed out) will discover a hidden world in which your health depends on a myriad of microbes,

houseflies get zombified by fungi, and termites are saving the planet one fart at a time.



Where are the aliens? : the search for life beyond Earth by Stacy McAnulty J 576.839 MCA This entertaining, science-based book explores of one of the universe's greatest mysteries: does life exist

Graphic Novels



Bea Wolf

by Zach Weinersmith J GRAPH WEINERSMITH, Z.

When their evil neighbor lays siege to Treeheart, a kid-forged sanctuary, the survivors of the onslaught call out for Bea Wolf--an unbreakable warrior with a penchant for mischief.



Enlighten me

by Minh Le J GRAPH LE, M. After standing up to a bully who made fun of his Vietnamese heritage, Binh is forced to participate in a silent meditation retreat where he unexpectedly loses himself in the stories of the Buddha's many past lives,

finding inner peace and belonging.



Four eyes

by Rex Ogle J GRAPH OGLE, R. When Rex finds out he needs glasses, he's beyond miserable. Dealing with the bullies at school, his family being broke, and an embarrassing lack of friends, he has way too much on his plate already.



Ghost book

by Remy Lai J GRAPH LAI, R. After saving William, a wandering soul wavering between life and death, from a terrifying fate, Judy Chen and her first-ever friend work together to return him to his body only to discover that in order for him to live, she must die.



Ink girls

by Marieke Nijkamp J GRAPH NIJKAMP, M.

Charged with treason after accusing the principessa's powerful brother of stealing from the city, Cinzia manages to escape and works with the principessa's daughter to expose the truth, following a whisper network of

girls who empower them to change the course of history.



beyond Earth?

Mount Prospect Public Library

Graphic Novels



Mexikid

by Pedro Martin J GRAPH MARTIN, P. "Pedro Martin's grown up in the U.S. hearing stories about his legendary abuelito, but during a family road trip to Mexico, he connects with his grandfather and learns more about his own Mexican identity in this moving and hilarious graphic memoir. Also

available in Spanish.



Shakti.

by SJ Sindu J GRAPH SINDU, S When the three meanest girls in school start casting spells, 12-year-old Shakti draws on ancient Indian magic to stop them but instead curses the entire town and must harness her own strength, power and empathy to save those she loves and end the hate.



The skull : a Tyrolean folktale

by Jon Klassen J GRAPH KLASSEN, J. In this thrilling retelling of a traditional Tyrolean folktale, brave girl Otilla finds herself lost in the dark forest after escaping a terrible danger then comes upon a cabin where she's hosted by a skull who's afraid of something, too.



Super Boba Cafe

by Nidhi Chanani J GRAPH CHANANI, N. V.1

When her granddaughter Aria comes to stay with her, making it her mission to turn her boba café around, Jing Li, who is the secret keeper of the monster of San Francisco, is overrun with

customers while Aria sneaks away to reason with the earthquake-causing monster.



Two tribes

by Emily Bowen Cohen J GRAPH BOWEN COHEN, E.

Feeling out of place at home and at her Jewish day school, Mia finds herself thinking more and more about her Muscogee father. Mia makes a plan to take a bus to Oklahoma to visit her dad and find the connection to her

Muscogee side she knows is just as important as her Jewish side.

Honorable Mentions



Batcat

by Meggie Ramm J GRAPH RAMM, M. Batcat loves being all alone in their home on Spooky Island. Up in their tree house, they pass the time playing video games and watching TV. But when Batcat suddenly finds themself haunted by an annoying, ice cream-

stealing ghost, they visit the local Island Witch for a spell to remove their ghastly guest permanently!



The biggest mistake

by Camilla Pintonato E PINTONATO, C.

As a little lion tries to catch his first gazelle, he finds the task more difficult than he expected.



How this book got Red

by Margaret Chiu Greanias E GREANIAS, M.

Red, a red panda who never gets to read about pandas like herself, only the black and white kind, decides to write

her own story to share with the world!



The lost year / : A Survival Story of the Ukrainian Famine

by Katherine Marsh JF MARSH, K. When his great-grandmother comes to stay with them during the pandemic, 13-year-old Matthew discovers a photo in her belongings that reveals a lifeshattering family secret, in this brilliant survival story set in alternating

timelines that connects the present day to 1930s Soviet Ukraine.



Some of these are snails

by Carter Higgins E HIGGINS, C. In this thought-provoking concept book, young readers will learn that even the most familiar things can be seen from infinite perspectives by exploring sorting, classification and patterns that tease the brain.