In this verse novel, half-Chinese, half-Jewish Alma comes to terms with her parents’ divorce, her mother’s move to a new state, a challenging end-of-the-year project, and her feelings about boys.

BLACK BIRD, BLUE ROAD
BY SOFIYA PASTERNACK
VERSIFY, 2022
ISBN: 9780358572039
This historical fantasy novel includes deep philosophical questions about life and death, alongside adrenaline-filled action, as a Jewish girl attempts to save her dying brother by any means necessary.

THE CHRONICLES OF DELTOVIA
BY OLIVIA JAIMES
ANDREWS MCMEEL, 2022
ISBN: 9781524871567
Middle-schoolers June, Misha, and Ollie decide to cowrite and illustrate their own book about a magical land called Deltovia. Their individual personalities and quirks come through in the different ways they approach the story and life.

THE DAVENPORTS
BY KRYS TAL MARQUIS
DIAL, 2023
ISBN: 9780593463338
In this historical fiction novel set in 1910s Chicago, a group of Black teens takes us into an often-overlooked side of American history: the lives of wealthy African Americans and their experience of classism, familial expectations, and gender norms.

DEMON IN THE WOOD
BY LEIGH BARDUGO,
ILLUSTRATED BY DANI PENDERGAST
ROARING BROOK, 2022
ISBN: 9781250624642
The first graphic novel in the Grishaverse world offers a new format for fans and welcomes those new to the series. Readers will dive into the Darkling’s backstory.

THE DOOR OF NO RETURN
BY KWAME ALEXANDER
LITTLE, BROWN, 2022
ISBN: 9780316441865
Kofi, an eleven-year-old boy from the village of Upper Kwanta, is ripped away from his family and community in this gripping novel in verse.

FRIZZY
BY CLARIBEL A. ORTEGA,
ILLUSTRATED BY ROSE BOUSAMRA
FIRST SECOND, 2022
ISBN: 9781250259622
Dominican tween Marlene learns to care for and appreciate her curly hair in this vibrant graphic novel about colorism, beauty standards, and self-acceptance.

GROWING PANGS
BY KATHRYN ORMSBEE,
ILLUSTRATED BY MOLLY BROOKS
RANDOM HOUSE, 2022
ISBN: 9780593301289
A graphic novel about the first time at sleepaway camp, feeling different as a homeschooled student, and traversing the ever-present effects of OCD.

I LIKE ME BETTER
BY ROBBY WEBER
INKYARD PRESS, 2023
ISBN: 9781335453648
Another heartwarming summer rom-com from Weber. When your summer plans fall apart, love can show up in unexpected places. Zack takes the fall for his soccer team and ends up having to do community service for the summer.

INVISIBLE
BY CHRISTINA DIAZ GONZALEZ,
ILLUSTRATED BY GABRIELA EPSTEIN
GRAPHIX, 2022
ISBN: 9781339194555
In this graphic novel, five middle-school students find out that they have been lumped together because their teachers assumed, since they all speak Spanish, that they’d have tons in common. This couldn’t be farther from the truth!

THE LAST MAPMAKER
BY CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT
CANDLEWICK, 2022
ISBN: 9781536204957
Sai, an assistant to Mangkon’s best mapmaker, is working hard to make her life better. A mapmaking trip to explore the Sunderlands, a place with dragons and other treasures, might be the way to achieve that.

LOLO’S LIGHT
BY LIZ GARTON SCANLON
CHRONICLE BOOKS, 2022
ISBN: 9781797212944
The morning after twelve-year-old Millie babysits for her neighbors, she learns that the infant she watched passed away.
overnight. This coming-of-age novel explores the complex, intertwining processes of loss, guilt, grief, and acceptance with honesty and empathy.

RABBIT CHASE
BY ELIZABETH LAPENSEE,
ILLUSTRATED BY K. C. OSTER
ANNICK PRESS, 2022
ISBN: 9781773216201
Aimée, a nonbinary Anishinaabe middle-schooler, is on a field trip when they are transported to an alternate dimension, in an Indigenous spin on Alice in Wonderland, leading them to explore their identity and culture.

RAIN RISING
BY COURTNE COMRIE
HARPERCOLLINS, 2022
ISBN: 9780063159730
In this novel in verse, middle-schooler Rain is secretly dealing with depression and low self-esteem. After her brother is brutally beaten in a hate crime attack, Rain confronts her trauma and begins a challenging yet rewarding journey to healing.

RIDE ON
BY FAITH ERIN HICKS
FIRST SECOND, 2022
ISBN: 9781250772817
In this graphic novel, Victoria loves to ride horses but is tired of riding competitions. When this leads to a disagreement with her best friend, she decides to start riding at Edgewood Stables. However, this also means meeting new people and maybe making new horse-riding friends.

SOLITO
BY JAVIER ZAMORA
HOGARTH, 2022
ISBN: 9780593498064
Javier is only nine years old when he makes the journey from El Salvador to the United States to reunite with his parents. During his trip, Javier faces the dangers that, similarly, thousands of children face today as they journey north to make it to the U.S. border.

SUMMER AND JULY
BY PAUL MOSIER
HARPERCOLLINS, 2020
ISBN: 9780062849366
Juillet accompanies her mother on a month-long work trip to a California beach town. There she meets surfer girl Summer, who helps Juillet come out of her shell. Each navigates their own family pain: Juillet’s parents are recently divorced; Summer’s brother is in a coma.

THE TROUBLED GIRLS OF DRAGOMIR ACADEMY
BY ANNE URSU
WALDEN POND PRESS, 2021
ISBN: 9780062275127
Constantly overshadowed by her older brother, who is rumored to hold the potential to become a heroic sorcerer, Marya is invited to a mysterious all-girls school where she begins to discover the truth about power and control.

TWIN CITIES
BY JOSE PIMIENTA
RANDOM HOUSE GRAPHIC, 2022
ISBN: 9780593442931
Twins Fernando and Teresa have always gone to school and hung out together in their hometown of Mexicali. But when Teresa decides to attend seventh grade across the border in Calexico, their sibling bond is put to the test.

WE’RE IN THIS TOGETHER: A YOUNG READERS EDITION OF WE ARE NOT HERE TO BE BYSTANDERS
BY LINDA SARSOUR
SALAAM READS, 2022
ISBN: 9781534439290
Sarsour, a Muslim Palestinian American woman, details her childhood and journey toward civic activism in this inspiring and informative adaptation of the memoir of one of the co-organizers of the historic Women’s March on Washington that took place on January 21, 2017.

DIGITAL
BOOK CLUB FOR KIDS
https://www.bookclubforkids.org/
Hosted by Kitty Felde, the Book Club for Kids podcast explores middle-grade books with real young people discussing each book, along with an interview with the author.

www.al.org/alsc
The 2023 Summer Reading Book List was created by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). Titles on this list were selected by members of ALSC’s Quicklists Consulting Committee.

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