



## RELATED READING LIST

The following annotated reading list was developed by members of the ALA Great Stories Club's Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Implementation Team to offer additional support for the “[Deeper Than Our Skins](#)” series. Great Stories Club program hosts are encouraged to recommend these titles for additional thematic exploration; plan supplemental programs using the list; or use project or local funding to expand the series to include discussion of one or more of these additional titles.

[Implementation Team](#) members include Wini Ashooh (Central Rappahannock Regional Library System), Edith Campbell (Cunningham Memorial Library at Indiana State University), and Vanessa “Chacha” Centeno (Sacramento Public Library).

**The Astonishing Color of After** by Emily X.R. Pane (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)  
Leigh, a biracial teen, struggles with identity, generational trauma, culture, and language. Wishing she felt more Taiwanese, Leigh describes herself as a “strange American girl, who doesn’t really speak the language of her ancestors.” Leigh finds it frustrating that her Irish American father reads, writes, and speaks the Mandarin language when she is the one with Chinese and Taiwanese blood running through her veins. Leigh characterizes the trauma of her mother’s suicide as “the breakage in the lines of my family’s history. The breakage widened by my mother turning into a bird.” She travels to Taiwan to meet her maternal grandparents for the first time. There Leigh is surrounded by the language, traditions, and spiritual teachings of her culture. Leigh’s story resonates with narratives of memory, identity, and the healing of generational trauma. “It has so much history, and history means colors.”

**The Authentics** by Abdi Nazemian (Balzer + Bray)  
Fifteen-year-old Daria Estfandyar lives in a predominately Persian American community in Los Angeles, where culture, fashion, popularity, and wealth determine social status. Proud of her history, Daria belongs to a group of friends called the Authentics. The Authentics pride themselves for being *real* — “being who they are versus who others want them to be.” When



assigned a project focusing on issues of genealogy, immigration, assimilation, and identity, the friends decide to do DNA genealogy testing. Daria's results shift her foundation of identity, family, and culture. By discovering her Mexican and Iranian ancestry, Daria processes her biological and adopted heritage while walking a path of self-discovery, forgiveness, and healing. Her story deconstructs demographic walls of ethnicity and race by exploring physical appearance, bloodline, family structure, and generational importance.

**Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood** by Trevor Noah [Spiegel & Grau]

This memoir by Trevor Noah chronicles his growing up in South Africa when apartheid was the law. During this time, interracial relationships were illegal and a biracial child like Trevor was against the law. He navigates the story with humor and wit but doesn't sugar-coat the conditions under which he lived. The story of Trevor Noah would be incomplete without honoring the strength and perseverance of his mother. This story is as much hers as it is Trevor's. A powerful story of resilience and the love of a family.

**Dear Martin** by Nic Stone [Crown Books for Young Readers]

Justyce McAllister is a good kid. He is an honor student and a good friend. One night he is out with one of his friends and they have an inflammatory encounter with a police officer. Justyce finds himself in handcuffs. He wonders how this situation escalated and turns his questions to Dr. Martin Luther King in a journal he keeps in order to help himself navigate his way through the confusion.

**Finding Fish** by Antwone Quenton Fisher [HarperCollins]

In this memoir, Antwone Fisher, a black man, describes the neglect and abuse that filled his childhood. He reflects on his feelings of being unwanted and unworthy because adults around him let him down. But he managed to find himself and create his own sense of worth after enlisting in the U.S. Navy. Fisher's story is an example of the profound effect our past has on us and of the strength of the human spirit to define our own worth.



### **The House of Purple Cedar** by Tim Tingle [Cinco Puntos Press]

*The House of Purple Cedar* is set in Skullyville, Oklahoma, at the turn of the 20th century. The New Hope Academy for Girls just burned down, and a new Indian agent has just arrived in town. Rose and her brother Jamey joined Amofa, their grandfather, for a trip into town, a rare treat that would replace their daily chores. They are members of the Choctaw Nation. This outing actually placed them in the right place at the wrong time. The town marshal appears, alcohol leads to events, and Amofa is struck with a board. How will he, how should he, react? *House of Purple Cedar* unfolds as a story of how those who are disempowered choose to react when they are abused.

### **How It Went Down** by Kekla Magoon [Square Fish]

After Tariq Johnson, a black teen, is killed by a white shooter, his community struggles to understand what went wrong. With each chapter told in the voice of a different community member, the complexities of community issues including violence, racism, poverty, crime, and justice soon surface.

### **Jumped In** by Patrick Scott-Flores [Henry Holt]

Sam lives with his grandparents near Seattle, Washington, the home of Nirvana. After being dumped there by his mother, he cuts himself off from the world. He buries himself in his hoodie and does as little as possible to get by. He's a slacker. Well, he's a slacker until he's assigned to work with Luis for a poetry slam. As the two young men struggle to find their voices, they also learn how to be friends.

### **Just Mercy [Adapted for Young Adults]: A True Story of the Fight for Justice**

by Bryan Stevenson [Delacorte Press]

In this nonfiction book, Stevenson, a black public interest lawyer and founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, writes about how he became embroiled in the U.S. penal system, particularly as it relates to those on death row. Stevenson brings attention to the



issues surrounding mass incarceration, particularly the overwhelming presence of black men locked away in the prime of their lives, not so much because of any guilt, rather because of the historical use of prisons to suppress black lives in this country. With the overarching theme of mercy, Stevenson conveys a spirit of hope for the United States.

**Long Way Down** by Jason Reynolds (Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books)

We meet Will as he is descending in an elevator with the intent of killing the person he believes killed his brother Shawn. Will knows “the rules.” The rules state that he must avenge his brother’s death. As the elevator descends it stops at every floor and new person gets on. The people getting on the elevator are all people from Will’s community, and they are all dead. They want to share their stories with Will and make him really think about what he is about to do. A haunting story ripped from the headlines with an ending that will stun you.

**Piecing Me Together** by Renee Watson (Bloomsbury USA Childrens)

Jade Butler, a junior, attends the prestigious St. Francis High School in Portland, Oregon, on a scholarship. She leaves her home at 6:30 every morning to travel outside her predominantly poor neighborhood and attend a school where she is one of three black students. Jade’s story is splattered with poetic descriptions of Spanish vocabulary and the art she uses to “give herself a way out. A way in.” Her story dismantles narratives of history, race, and privilege, to ask: how can a people’s culture and history become a mascot? Why do those people who can afford anything they want tend to receive stuff for free? Why is it that people of color having gained freedom throughout history, but often find themselves without real power? Jade’s strength and comfort in her own identity, from being a “big girl” with “hula hoop hips,” to the color of her “coal skin,” is illustrated throughout the pages.

**Refugee** by Alan Gratz (Scholastic Press)

This book includes three separate refugee stories that come to a remarkable intersection. The stories span generations and continents. Joseph is a Jewish boy living in Germany in the 1930s.



Isabel is a Cuban girl in 1994. Mahmoud is a Syrian boy in 2015. There is a common thread between them all as they search for safety. All three characters struggle as they search for a new home. They all share the hope for a better life and a country that will accept them and provide them with the freedom they deserve.

**Sway** by Kat Spears [St. Martin's Griffin]

Jesse Alderman is the kid you call on when you need something done — if you need tickets to a concert, a research paper for your history class, or to meet the girl of your dreams. Jess has made it a practice to never get close to anyone. The one thing Jesse never counted on was falling for a girl like Bridget. He is hired by the captain of the football team to find out everything he can about her. In the process of doing this, he fears that he has met someone he can talk to. Nothing scares Jesse more than allowing himself to show his vulnerable side.