

Diverse Books – 6 to 8th Grades

The books on this list highlight the lives of those who are often marginalized. These include books about people who identify as LGBTQ+, Hispanic & Latinx culture and lives, African American/Black Lives, Indigenous/Native American culture and lives, and those experiencing poverty and homelessness.

LGBTQ

Felix YZ by Lisa Bunker

When Felix Yz was three years old, a hyperintelligent fourth-dimensional being became fused inside him after one of his father's science experiments went terribly wrong. The creature is friendly, but Felix—now thirteen—won't be able to grow to adulthood while they're still melded together. So a risky Procedure is planned to separate them . . . but it may end up killing them both instead. This book is Felix's secret blog, a chronicle of the days leading up to the Procedure. Some days it's business as usual—time with his close-knit family, run-ins with a bully at school, anxiety about his crush. But life becomes more out of the ordinary with the arrival of an Estonian chess Grandmaster, the revelation of family secrets, and a train-hopping journey. When it all might be over in a few days, what matters most? Told in an unforgettable voice full of heart and humor, Felix Yz is a groundbreaking story about how we are all separate, but all connected too.

Hispanic & Latinx

Under the Mesquite by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

Lupita, a budding actor and poet in a close-knit Mexican American immigrant family, comes of age as she struggles with adult responsibilities during her mother's battle with cancer in this young adult novel in verse. When Lupita learns Mami has cancer, she is terrified by the possibility of losing her mother, the anchor of her close-knit family. Suddenly, being a high school student, starring in a play, and dealing with friends who don't always understand, become less important than doing whatever she can to save Mami's life.

The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora by Pablo Cartaya

Save the restaurant. Save the town. Get the girl. Make Abuela proud. Can thirteen-year-old Arturo Zamora do it all or is he in for a BIG, EPIC FAIL? For Arturo, summertime in Miami means playing basketball until dark, sipping mango smoothies, and keeping cool under banyan trees. And maybe a few shifts as junior lunchtime dishwasher at Abuela's restaurant. Maybe. But this summer also includes Carmen, a poetry enthusiast who moves into Arturo's apartment complex and turns his stomach into a deep fryer. He almost doesn't notice the smarmy land developer who rolls into town and threatens to change it. Arturo refuses to let his family

and community go down without a fight, and as he schemes with Carmen, Arturo discovers the power of poetry and protest through untold family stories and the work of José Martí.

African American/Black Lives

The Skin I'm In by Sharon G Flake

Maleeka suffers every day from the taunts of the other kids in her class. If they're not getting at her about her homemade clothes or her good grades, it's about her dark, black skin. When a new teacher, whose face is blotched with a startling white patch, starts at their school, Maleeka can see there is bound to be trouble for her too. But the new teacher's attitude surprises Maleeka. Miss Saunders loves the skin she's in. Can Maleeka learn to do the same?

Ghost by Jason Reynolds

A National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature. Nominated as one of America's best-loved novels by PBS's The Great American Read. Ghost wants to be the fastest sprinter on his elite middle school track team, but his past is slowing him down in this first electrifying novel of the acclaimed Track series from Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award-winning author Jason Reynolds.

The Stars Beneath Our Feet by David Barclay Moore

It's Christmas Eve in Harlem, but twelve-year-old Lolly Rachpaul and his mom aren't celebrating. They're still reeling from his older brother's death in a gang-related shooting just a few months earlier. Then Lolly's mother's girlfriend brings him a gift that will change everything: two enormous bags filled with Legos. Lolly's always loved Legos, and he prides himself on following the kit instructions exactly. Now, faced with a pile of building blocks and no instructions, Lolly must find his own way forward. His path isn't clear—and the pressure to join a "crew," as his brother did, is always there. When Lolly and his friend are beaten up and robbed, joining a crew almost seems like the safe choice. But building a fantastical Lego city at the community center provides Lolly with an escape—and an unexpected bridge back to the world.

Poverty & Homelessness

No Fixed Address by Susin Nielsen

Twelve-and-three-quarter-year-old Felix Knutsson has a knack for trivia. His favorite game show is Who What Where When; he even named his gerbil after the host. Felix's mom, Astrid, is loving but can't seem to hold on to a job. So when they get evicted from their latest shabby apartment, they have to move into a van. Astrid swears him to secrecy; he can't tell anyone about their living arrangement, not even Dylan and Winnie, his best friends at his new school. If he does, she warns him,

he'll be taken away from her and put in foster care.

Indigenous People/Native American

The Brave by James Bird

Collin can't help himself—he has a unique condition that finds him counting every letter spoken to him. It's a quirk that makes him a prime target for bullies, and a continual frustration to the adults around him, including his father. When Collin asked to leave yet another school, his dad decides to send him to live in Minnesota with the mother he's never met. She is Ojibwe, and lives on a reservation. Collin arrives in Duluth with his loyal dog, Seven, and quickly finds his mom and his new home to be warm, welcoming, and accepting of his condition. Collin's quirk is matched by that of his neighbor, Orenda, a girl who lives mostly in her treehouse and believes she is turning into a butterfly. With Orenda's help, Collin works hard to overcome his challenges. His real test comes when he must step up for his new friend and trust his new family.

Two Roads by Joseph Bruchac

A boy discovers his Native American heritage in this Depression-era tale of identity and friendship. It's 1932, and twelve-year-old Cal Black and his Pop have been riding the rails for years after losing their farm in the Great Depression. Cal likes being a "knight of the road" with Pop, even if they're broke. But then Pop has to go to Washington, DC—some of his fellow veterans are marching for their government checks, and Pop wants to make sure he gets his due—and Cal can't

go with him. So Pop tells Cal something he never knew before: Pop is actually a Creek Indian, which means Cal is too. And Pop has decided to send Cal to a government boarding school for Native Americans in Oklahoma called the Challagi School. At school, the other Creek boys quickly take Cal under their wings. Even in the harsh, miserable conditions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school, he begins to learn about his people's history and heritage. He learns their language and customs. And most of all, he learns how to find strength in a group of friends who have nothing beyond each other.

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