

## Diverse Books – 9 to 12<sup>th</sup> 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

#### **They Both Die at the End by Adam Silvera**

*On September 5, a little after midnight, Death-Cast calls Mateo Torrez and Rufus Emeterio to give them some bad news: They're going to die today. Mateo and Rufus are total strangers, but, for different reasons, they're both looking to make a new friend on their End Day. The good news: There's an app for that. It's called the Last Friend, and through it, Rufus and Mateo are about to meet up for one last great adventure—to live a lifetime in a single day.*

#### **Openly Straight by Bill Konigsberg**

*Rafe is a normal teenager from Colorado. He's been out since 8th grade, accepted by his peers & championed by his progressive parents. And while that's important, all Rafe really wants is to be a regular guy. To have his sexuality be a part of who he is, but not the headline, every single time. So when Rafe transfers to an all-boys' boarding school in New England, he decides to keep his sexuality a secret - not so much going back in the closet as starting over with a clean slate. But then he sees a classmate breaking down and realizes his own labels aren't well-concealed. And most of all, he falls in love with Ben...who doesn't even know that love is possible.*

### Hispanic & Latinx

#### **Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya**

*Exquisite prose and wondrous storytelling have helped make Rudolfo Anaya the father of Chicano literature in English. Indeed, Anaya's tales fairly shimmer with the haunting beauty and richness of his culture. The winner of the Pen Center West Award for Fiction for his unforgettable novel *Albuquerque*, Anaya is perhaps best loved for his classic bestseller, *Bless Me, Ultima*... Antonio Marez is six years old when Ultima comes to stay with his family in New Mexico. She is a curandera, one who cures with herbs and magic. Under her wise wing, Tony will probe the family ties that bind and rend him, and he will discover himself in the magical secrets of the pagan past—a mythic legacy as palpable as the Catholicism of Latin America. And at each life turn there is Ultima, who delivered Tony into the world...and will nurture the birth of his soul.*

#### **The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros**

*Acclaimed by critics, beloved by readers of all ages, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, *The House on Mango Street* is the remarkable story of Esperanza Cordero.*

*Told in a series of vignettes – sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous – it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become. Few other books in our time have touched so many readers.*

### African American/Black Lives

#### **The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas**

*Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.*

**Find these and more at**

[www.jcls.org](http://www.jcls.org)

## **The Freedom Summer Murders by Don Mitchell**

*A gripping true story of murder and the fight for civil rights and social justice in 1960s Mississippi. On June 21, 1964, three young men were killed by the Ku Klux Klan for trying to help black Americans vote as part of the 1964 Freedom Summer registration effort in Mississippi. The disappearance and brutal murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner caused a national uproar and was one of the most significant events of the civil rights movement. The Freedom Summer Murders tells the tragic story of these brave men, the crime that resulted in their untimely deaths, and the relentless forty-one-year pursuit of a conviction. It is the story of idealistic and courageous young people who wanted to change their county for the better. It is the story of black and white. And ultimately, it is the story of our nation's endless struggle to close the gap between what is and what should be.*

## **Poverty & Homelessness**

### **Find Layla: A Novel by Meg Elison**

*Underprivileged and keenly self-aware, SoCal fourteen-year-old Layla Bailey isn't used to being noticed. Except by mean girls who tweet about her ragged appearance. All she wants to do is indulge in her love of science, protect her vulnerable younger brother, and steer clear of her unstable mother. Then a school competition calls for a biome. Layla chooses her own home, a hostile ecosystem of indoor fungi and secret shame. With a borrowed video camera, she captures it all. The mushrooms*

*growing in her brother's dresser. The black mold blooming up the apartment walls. The unmentionable things living in the dead fridge. All the inevitable exotic toxins that are Layla's life. Then the video goes viral. When Child Protective Services comes to call, Layla loses her family and her home. Defiant, she must face her bullies and friends alike, on her own. Unafraid at last of being seen, Layla accepts the mortifying reality of visibility. Now she has to figure out how to stay whole and stand behind the truth she has shown the world.*

### **The Life and Medieval Times of Kit Sweetly by Jamie Pacton**

*Working as a Wench—i.e. waitress—at a cheesy medieval-themed restaurant in the Chicago suburbs, Kit Sweetly dreams of being a Knight like her brother. She has the moves, is capable on a horse, and desperately needs the raise that comes with knighthood, so she can help her mom pay the mortgage and hold a spot at her dream college. Company policy allows only guys to be Knights. So when Kit takes her brother's place, clobbers the Green Knight, and reveals her identity at the end of the show, she rockets into internet fame and a whole lot of trouble with the management. But this Girl Knight won't go down without a fight. As other Wenches and cast members join her quest, a protest forms. In a joust before Castle executives, they'll prove that gender restrictions should stay medieval—if they don't get fired first.*

## **Indigenous People/Native American**

### **An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for Young People by Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, Adapted by Jean Mendoza and Debbie Reese.**

*This is a young readers' adaptation of the adult title by the same name, and it looks at more than 400 years of history from an Indigenous perspective, challenging the popular and incorrect belief that the U.S. was discovered by white people. It looks at the history of colonialism and genocide, and how these institutions have formed the America we know today. This young readers' adaptation is full of age-appropriate and honest discussion guides that allow adolescents, young adults, and the teachers and parents in their lives have necessary conversations about the treatment of Indigenous people throughout history.*

### **#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women Edited By Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale**

*This anthology collection of essays, anecdotes, poetry, and artwork by Native American women is a beautiful and essential read. The editors have collected a wide variety of contributions that address everything from identity and discrimination to mental illness and sexuality. It's a fantastic and beautifully designed book that gives a voice to a variety of experiences and perspectives, and challenges stereotypes while also celebrating the resilience of Native American Women.*



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