

Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life by James Patterson

Rafe Khatchadorian has enough problems at home without throwing his first year of middle school into the mix. Luckily, he's got an ace plan for the best year ever, if only he can pull it off: With his best friend Leonardo the Silent awarding him points, Rafe tries to break every rule in his school's oppressive Code of Conduct. Chewing gum in class--5,000 points! Running in the hallway--10,000 points! Pulling the fire alarm--50,000 points! But when Rafe's game starts to catch up with him, he'll have to decide if winning is all that matters, or if he's finally ready to face the rules, bullies, and truths he's been avoiding.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba

When a terrible drought struck William Kamkwamba's tiny village in Malawi, his family lost all of the season's crops, leaving them with nothing to eat and nothing to sell. William began to explore science books in his village library, looking for a solution. There, he came up with the idea that would change his family's life forever: he could build a windmill. Made out of scrap metal and old bicycle parts, William's windmill brought electricity to his home and helped his family pump the water they needed to farm the land.

The War That Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

When a terrible drought struck William Kamkwamba's tiny village in Malawi, his family lost all of the season's crops, leaving them with nothing to eat and nothing to sell. William began to explore science books in his village library, looking for a solution. There, he came up with the idea that would change his family's life forever: he could build a windmill. Made out of scrap metal and old bicycle parts, William's windmill brought electricity to his home and helped his family pump the water they needed to farm the land.

Ungifted by Gordon Korman

The word gifted has never been applied to a kid like Donovan Curtis. It's usually more like Don't try this at home. So when the troublemaker pulls a major prank at his middle school, he thinks he's finally gone too far. But thanks to a mix-up by one of the administrators, instead of getting in trouble, Donovan is sent to the Academy of Scholastic Distinction (ASD), a special program for gifted and talented students.

It wasn't exactly what Donovan had intended, but there couldn't be a more perfect hideout for someone like him. That is, if he can manage to fool people whose IQs are above genius level. And that becomes harder and harder as the students and teachers of ASD grow to realize that Donovan may not be good at math or science (or just about anything). But after an ongoing experiment with a live human (sister), an unforgettably dramatic middle-school dance, and the most astonishing come-from-behind robot victory ever, Donovan shows that his gifts might be exactly what the ASD students never knew they needed.

The Boy on the Wooden Box by Leon Leyson

Even in the darkest of times—*especially* in the darkest of times—there is room for strength and bravery. A remarkable memoir from Leon Leyson, one of the youngest children to survive the Holocaust on Oskar Schindler's list.

Leon Leyson (born Leib Lezjon) was only ten years old when the Nazis invaded Poland and his family was forced to relocate to the Krakow ghetto. With incredible luck, perseverance, and grit, Leyson was able to survive the sadism of the Nazis, including that of the demonic Amon Goeth, commandant of Plaszow, the concentration camp outside Krakow. Ultimately, it was the generosity and cunning of one man, a man named Oskar Schindler, who saved Leon Leyson's life, and the lives of his mother, his father, and two of his four siblings, by adding their names to his list of workers in his factory—a list that became world renowned: Schindler's List.

This, the only memoir published by a former Schindler's List child, perfectly captures the innocence of a small boy who goes through the unthinkable. Most notable is the lack of rancor, the lack of venom, and the abundance of dignity in Mr. Leyson's telling. *The Boy on the Wooden Box* is a legacy of hope, a memoir unlike anything you've ever read.

Alone by Megan E. Freeman

When twelve-year-old Maddie hatches a scheme for a secret sleepover with her two best friends, she ends up waking up to a nightmare. She's alone—left behind in a town that has been mysteriously evacuated and abandoned.

With no one to rely on, no power, and no working phone lines or internet access, Maddie slowly learns to survive on her own. Her only companions are a Rottweiler named George and all the books she can read. After a rough start, Maddie learns to trust her own ingenuity and invents clever ways to survive in a place that has been deserted and forgotten.

As months pass, she escapes natural disasters, looters, and wild animals. But Maddie's most formidable enemy is the crushing loneliness she faces every day. Can Maddie's stubborn will to survive carry her through the most frightening experience of her life?

Breakout by Kate Messner

Nora Tucker is looking forward to summer vacation in Wolf Creek--two months of swimming, popsicles, and brushing up on her journalism skills for the school paper. But when two inmates break out of the town's maximum security prison, everything changes. Doors are locked, helicopters fly over the woods, and police patrol the school grounds. Worst of all, everyone is on edge, and fear brings out the worst in some people Nora has known her whole life. Even if the inmates are caught, she worries that home might never feel the same.

Told in letters, poems, text messages, news stories, and comics--a series of documents Nora collects for the Wolf Creek Community Time Capsule Project.

A Night Divided by Jennifer A. Nielsen

With the rise of the Berlin Wall, twelve-year-old Gerta finds her family suddenly divided. She, her mother, and her brother Fritz live on the eastern side, controlled by the Soviets. Her father and middle brother, who had gone west in search of work, cannot return home. Gerta knows it is dangerous to watch the wall, to think forbidden thoughts of freedom, yet she can't help herself. She sees the East German soldiers with their guns trained on their own citizens; she, her family, her neighbors and friends are prisoners in their own city.

But one day, while on her way to school, Gerta spots her father on a viewing platform on the western side, pantomiming a peculiar dance. Then, when she receives a mysterious drawing, Gerta puts two and two together and concludes that her father wants Gerta and Fritz to tunnel beneath the wall, out of East Berlin. However, if they are caught, the consequences will be deadly. No one can be trusted. Will Gerta and her family find their way to freedom?

Ground Zero by Alan Gratz

It's September 11, 2001. Brandon, a 9-year-old boy, goes to work for the day with his dad . . . at the World Trade Center in New York City. When two planes hit the towers, Brandon and his father are trapped inside a fiery nightmare as terror and confusion swirl around them. Can they escape -- and what will the world be like when they do?

In present-day Afghanistan, Reshmina is an 11-year-old girl who is used to growing up in the shadow of war, but she has dreams of peace and unity. When she ends up harboring a wounded young American soldier, she and her entire family are put in mortal danger. But Reshmina also learns something surprising about the roots of this endless war.

Amari and the Night Brothers by B.B. Alston

Quinton Peters was the golden boy of the Rosewood low-income housing projects, receiving full scholarship offers to two different Ivy League schools. When he mysteriously goes missing, his little sister, 13-year-old Amari Peters, can't understand why it's not a bigger deal. Why isn't his story all over the news? And why do the police automatically assume he was into something illegal?

Then Amari discovers a ticking briefcase in her brother's old closet. A briefcase meant for her eyes only. There was far more to Quinton, it seems, than she ever knew. He's left her a nomination for a summer tryout at the secretive Bureau of Supernatural Affairs. Amari is certain the answer to finding out what happened to him lies somewhere inside, if only she can get her head around the idea of mermaids, dwarves, yetis and magicians all being real things,

something she has to instantly confront when she is given a weredragon as a roommate.

Amari must compete against some of the nation's wealthiest kids—who've known about the supernatural world their whole lives and are able to easily answer questions like which two Great Beasts reside in the Atlantic Ocean and how old is Merlin? Just getting around the Bureau is a lesson alone for Amari with signs like 'Department of Hidden Places this way, or is it?' If that all wasn't enough, every Bureau trainee has a talent enhanced to supernatural levels to help them do their jobs – but Amari is given an illegal ability. As if she needed something else to make her stand out.

With an evil magican threatening the whole supernatural world, and her own classmates thinking she is an enemy, Amari has never felt more alone. But if she doesn't pass the three tryouts, she may never find out what happened to Quinton.

Almost an American Girl by Robin Ha

For as long as she can remember, it's been Robin and her mom against the world. Growing up in the 1990s as the only child of a single mother in Seoul, Korea, wasn't always easy, but it has bonded them fiercely together.

So when a vacation to visit friends in Huntsville, Alabama, unexpectedly becomes a permanent relocation—following her mother's announcement that she's getting married—Robin is devastated. Overnight, her life changes. She is dropped into a new school where she doesn't understand the language and struggles to keep up. She is completely cut off from her friends at home and has no access to her beloved comics. At home, she doesn't fit in with her new stepfamily. And worst of all, she is furious with the one person she is closest to—her mother.

Then one day Robin's mother enrolls her in a local comic drawing class, which opens the window to a future Robin could never have imagined.

When Stars Are Scattered by Omar Mohamed & Victoria Jamieson

Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent most of their lives in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is hard there: never enough food, achingly dull, and without access to the medical care Omar knows his nonverbal brother needs. So when Omar has the opportunity to go to school, he knows it might be a chance to change their future . . . but it would also mean leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day.

Heartbreak, hope, and gentle humor exist together in this graphic novel about a childhood spent waiting, and a young man who is able to create a sense of family and home in the most difficult of settings. It's an intimate, important, unforgettable look at the day-to-day life of a refugee, as told to *New York Times* Bestselling author/artist Victoria Jamieson by Omar Mohamed, the Somali man who lived the story.

Last Day on Mars by Kevin Emerson

It is Earth year 2213—but, of course, there is no Earth anymore. Not since it was burned to a cinder by the sun, which has mysteriously begun the process of going supernova. The human race has fled to Mars, but this was only a temporary solution while we prepare for a second trip: a one-hundred-fifty-year journey to a distant star, our best guess at where we might find a new home.

Liam Saunders-Chang is one of the last humans left on Mars. The son of two scientists who have been racing against time to create technology vital to humanity's survival, Liam, along with his friend Phoebe, will be on the very last starliner to depart before Mars, like Earth before it, is destroyed.

Or so he thinks. Because before this day is over, Liam and Phoebe will make a series of profound discoveries about the nature of time and space, and find out that the human race is just one of many in our universe locked in a desperate struggle for survival.

The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise by Dan Gemeinhart

Five years. That's how long Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have lived on the road in an old school bus, crisscrossing the nation. It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters in a car crash.

Coyote hasn't been home in all that time, but when she learns the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished - the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box - she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington state in four days...without him realizing it.

Along the way, they'll pick up a strange crew of misfit travelers. Lester has a lady love to meet. Salvador and his mom are looking to start over. Val needs a safe place to be herself. And then there's Gladys....

Over the course of thousands of miles, Coyote will learn that going home can sometimes be the hardest journey of all...but that with friends by her side, she just might be able to turn her "once upon a time" into a "happily ever after".

The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl by Staci McAnulty

Lucy Callahan was struck by lightning. She doesn't remember it, but it changed her life forever. The zap gave her genius-level math skills, and ever since, Lucy has been homeschooled. Now, at 12 years old, she's technically ready for college. She just has to pass 1 more test — middle school!

Lucy's grandma insists: Go to middle school for 1 year. Make 1 friend. Join 1 activity. And read 1 book (that's not a math textbook!). Lucy's not sure what a girl who does calculus homework for fun can possibly learn in 7th grade. She has everything she needs at home, where nobody can make fun of her rigid routines or her superpowered brain. The equation of Lucy's life has already been solved. Unless there's been a miscalculation?

Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus by Dusti Bowling

Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she'll have to answer the question over and over again.

Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It's hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven's about to discover she can do it all . . . even without arms.

Ali Cross by James Patterson

Ali Cross has always looked up to his father, former detective and FBI agent Alex Cross. While solving some of the nation's most challenging crimes, his father always kept his head and did the right thing. Can Ali have the same strength and resolve?

When Ali's best friend Gabe Qualls is reported missing, Ali is desperate to find him. At the same time, a string of burglaries targets his neighborhood---and even his own house. With his father on trial for a crime he didn't commit, it's up to Ali to search for clues and find his friend. But being a kid sleuth isn't easy---especially when your father warns you not to get involved!---and Ali soon learns that clues aren't always what they seem. Will his detective work lead to a break in Gabe's case or cause even more trouble for the Cross family?

Becoming Muhammad Ali by James Patterson & Kwame Alexander

Before he was a household name, Cassius Clay was a kid with struggles like any other. Kwame Alexander and James Patterson join forces to vividly depict his life up to age seventeen in both prose and verse, including his childhood friends, struggles in school, the racism he faced, and his discovery of boxing. Readers will learn about Cassius' family and neighbors in Louisville, Kentucky, and how, after a thief stole his bike, Cassius began training as an amateur boxer at age twelve. Before long, he won his first Golden Gloves bout and began his transformation into the unrivaled Muhammad Ali.

Fully authorized by and written in cooperation with the Muhammad Ali estate, and vividly brought to life by Dawud Anyabwile's dynamic artwork, *Becoming Muhammad Ali* captures the budding charisma and youthful personality of one of the greatest sports heroes of all time.

Greetings from Witness Protection by Jake Burt

A funny and poignant debut middle-grade novel about a foster-care girl who is placed with a family in the witness protection program, and finds that hiding in plain sight is complicated and dangerous. Nicki Demere is an orphan and a pickpocket. She also happens to be the U.S. Marshals' best bet to keep a family alive. . . .

The marshals are looking for the perfect girl to join a mother, father, and son on the run from the nation's most notorious criminals. After all, the bad guys are searching for a family with one kid, not two, and adding a streetwise girl who knows a little something about hiding things may be just what the marshals need.

Nicki swears she can keep the Trevor family safe, but to do so she'll have to dodge hitmen, cyberbullies, and the specter of standardized testing, all while maintaining her marshal-mandated B-minus average. As she barely balances the responsibilities of her new identity, Nicki learns that the biggest threats to her family's security might not lurk on the road from New York to North Carolina, but rather in her own past.

Dragon Pearl by Yoon Ha Lee

Thirteen-year-old Min comes from a long line of fox spirits. But you'd never know it by looking at her. To keep the family safe, Min's mother insists that none of them use any fox-magic, such as Charm or shape-shifting. They must appear human at all times.

Min feels hemmed in by the household rules and resents the endless chores, the cousins who crowd her, and the aunties who judge her. She would like nothing more than to escape Jinju, her neglected, dust-ridden, and impoverished planet. She's counting the days until she can follow her older brother, Jun, into the Space Forces and see more of the Thousand Worlds.

When word arrives that Jun is suspected of leaving his post to go in search of the Dragon Pearl, Min knows that something is wrong. Jun would never desert his battle cruiser, even for a mystical object rumored to have tremendous power. She decides to run away to find him and clear his name.

Min's quest will have her meeting gamblers, pirates, and vengeful ghosts. It will involve deception, lies, and sabotage. She will be forced to use more fox-magic than ever before, and to rely on all of her cleverness and bravery. The outcome may not be what she had hoped, but it has the potential to exceed her wildest dreams.