



## Sunshine State Young Reader's Award Program 2004-2005

Grades 6-8

Anderson, Laurie Halse. ***Fever 1793***. Aladdin Library, ©2002.

Yellow Fever quickly spreads through Philadelphia in 1793. Up until that tragic summer, teenager Mattie Cook lived a comfortable, interesting life with her mother and grandfather, who together run a profitable coffeehouse. All of this is shattered by the epidemic and Mattie must fight for her survival while facing hardships, illness, and death. This well-researched, riveting historical fiction novel, packed with drama and action, will appeal to a broad range of readers.

Bauer, Joan. ***Stand Tall***. Puffin, ©2004.

12-year-old Tree is the tallest student in his school at 6-foot-3. Because of his height, coaches want him to play basketball, and teachers expect him to act older than his age. But Tree's biggest problem is his parents' recent divorce. His life is further complicated by having to stay alternate weeks with each parent. Tree learns to cope by helping other people, including his likable Vietnam vet grandfather. Bauer gives her fans interesting characters, delightful scenes, and snappy dialogue in this heartfelt and humorous novel.

Bruchac, Joseph. ***Skeleton Man***. HarperTrophy, ©2003.

Sixth grader, Molly Brant, relies on her "warrior-girl" courage in this scary tale that mixes Mohawk lore and tradition into a contemporary story. After Molly's parents disappear, an eerie, stick-thin old man arrives claiming that he is her "uncle." After Molly moves into the "uncle's" house, she continues to look for her parents and to find some way out of the "uncle's" clutches. Molly finally finds the answers by interpreting her dreams and by staying true to the enduring strength and courage of her Native American women ancestors.

DiCamillo, Kate. ***The Tale of Despereaux***. Candlewick, ©2003.

In the first book of four, a sprightly, tiny mouse named Despereaux is banished to the rat-infested dungeons for having broken one of the mice's rules. In the second book, the reader meets Chiaroscuro, a light-loving rat who wants to escape the dungeon and live in the castle. Miggery Sow is described in the third book as an unhappy, abused servant who dreams of wearing Princess Pea's crown. But all three fascinating characters' lives connect in book four which shows that anyone can be heroic and change people's lives. Love, courage, and determination are powerfully presented in this inspiring and entrancing Newbery Award winner.

DuPrau, Jeanne. ***The City of Ember***. Random House, ©2004.

In a post-apocalyptic underground world, Assignment Day arrives for 12-year-olds Lina and Doon who receive their jobs as "pipeworks laborer" and "messenger." After trading jobs, the pair become detectives in search of the truth about their threatened subterranean city. Lina's grandmother accidentally uncovers instructions on how to escape from the dark world, and it is up to Doon and Lina to find the way out. The story's likable and courageous characters keep this science fiction thriller moving to the cliffhanger ending.

Griffin, Peni. R. ***The Ghost Sitter***. Puffin, ©2002.

10-year-old Susie does not understand why her parents and sister left their house and have not returned. Unfortunately, Susie does not realize that she was killed in a firecracker accident 50 years ago. While waiting for her own family to return, other families move in and out of the house. When Charlotte and her family move in, she starts communicating with Susie. Charlotte soon understands that Susie will not be able to stop haunting the house until she confronts her own death.

Jennings, Patrick. ***The Beastly Arms***. Scholastic, ©2003.

Nickel Dill sees the world through his camera lens and to him everyone looks like an animal. While searching for a new apartment, Nick and his mom find a vacancy in an unfamiliar part of town in a mysterious building called The Beastly Arms. Upon meeting the quirky owner, Mr. Beastly, Nick unsuccessfully tries to imagine what animal he resembles. Nick also wants to know why Mr. Beastly is so fond of Nick's pet kangaroo rat, Miriam. After moving into the apartment, Nick makes some remarkable discoveries which lead to an exciting, unexpected, and fantastic conclusion to this winsome novel.

Pearsall, Shelley. ***Trouble Don't Last***. Yearling, ©2003.

Eleven-year-old Samuel is yanked from his bed by old Harrison, a fellow slave. Together they begin their perilous journey on the Underground Railroad, moving from one safe house to the next. The journey is filled with many adventures and narrow escapes, but through it all, Samuel learns to be a stronger person who is able to cope with many difficulties. In this memorable, unsentimentalized account of two slaves' flight to freedom, the reader gains insights into prejudice, trust, family, and the indomitable human spirit.

Petersen, P.J. ***Rising Water***. Aladdin Library, ©2003.

After getting caught stealing a car, Kevin is assigned to an animal-rescue agency to serve his community service hours. Two teenaged volunteers, Tracy and her older brother Luke, teach Kevin about caring for the rescued animals. The trio's dangerous adventures begin when heavy rains cause the river to break through the levee and they offer to take food to a stranded pet. This fast-paced story that will appeal to reluctant readers quickly unfolds when the group investigates a suspected burglary at an unoccupied home.

Roberts, Willo Davis. ***Undercurrents***. Aladdin Library, ©2003.

14-year-old Nikki's mother dies and, within the year, her father marries a younger woman. Soon after the wedding, Crystal, the new step-mother, inherits a California coast beach house from her Aunt Edna. Nikki's dad insists the family spend their vacation there. However, from the time they arrive, Crystal acts strangely. The suspense and tension builds as Nikki tries to uncover her step-mom's secrets.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. ***Esperanza Rising***. Scholastic, ©2002.

Esperanza Ortega grows up on a large ranch in Mexico, but her life suddenly changes when her father is killed. She and Mama leave their comfortable life behind when they are forced to flee to a Mexican farm labor camp in California. At the camp, they learn to confront the challenges of hard physical work, as well as the economic problems caused by the Great Depression. Throughout this highly recommended book, Esperanza faces hardships and problems with courage and hope.

Tolan, Stephanie. ***Surviving the Applewhites***. HarperTrophy, ©2003.

This screwball contemporary comedy springs to life with the adventures of quirky characters and the infusion of offbeat humor. Tough guy Jake Semple meets his match in the eccentric Applewhites family who operate the unstructured Creative Academy. After Jake is sent there as a last chance for attending school, he resists getting involved with the manic household's creative, talented members, but he is finally pulled into Mr. Applewhite's little theater production of *The Sound of Music*. As this fast-paced and humorous tale unfolds, Jake embarks on a journey of self-discovery and begins to recognize his own potential.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. ***Flipped***. Knopf, ©2003.

From second grade to middle school, Juli Baker has had a crush on Bryce Loski. Unfortunately, Bryce does not feel the same way and, frankly, he thinks Juli is weird. The two teens alternately tell their stories and share their feelings and thoughts about one another as well as other serious problems. There are lots of egg jokes and humor in this novel, interspersed with realistic dialogue and social commentary. This fast-paced romantic comedy will be a sure hit with all young teens.

Veciana-Suarez, Ana. ***Flight to Freedom***. Scholastic, ©2004.

Thirteen-year-old Yara Garcia writes in her diary about her family's struggles in Cuba shortly after Castro's take over of the country. Her father is forced to work in the fields harvesting coffee while the family waits to emigrate to the United States. After the family finally moves to Miami, Yara begins the painful adjustment to the new language and cultural differences. Family tensions mount as they try to cope with loss, longing, and a new way of life.

Zindel, Paul. ***The Gadget***. Laurel Leaf, ©2003.

In 1945, Stephen moves from London to Los Alamos, New Mexico to live with his scientist father who is working on a secret project. Stephen's curiosity is piqued regarding the high level of security and mystery shrouding the military base and its occupants. Dr. Soifer, a hospitalized scientist, alerts Stephen to the dangers involved in the secret experiments, but Stephen does not fully comprehend the horrific consequences of "the Gadget" until the dramatic climax of this fast-paced historical fiction novel.