



## Sunshine State Young Reader's Award Program 2005-2006

### Grades 6-8

Avi. ***Never Mind!*** HarperTrophy, ©2005.

Seventh grade twins, Meg and Edward, are very different and cannot get along. Meg is tall, smart, pretty and attends an elite school. Edward is a short, creative free spirit who attends an "alternative" middle school. The twins take turns telling this engaging story of Meg's struggle with low self-esteem and her desire to be accepted into the High Achiever's Club. Edward, in the meanwhile, cannot resist meddling in Meg's plans and fabricates a story of monstrous proportions that leads to a makeshift band and cleverly funny scenes. Believable conversations, understanding parents, and hilarious moments move this story along to its ear-splitting ending.

Balliett, Blue. ***Chasing Vermeer.*** Scholastic Paperbacks, ©2005.

Fans of Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967) will enjoy this debut novel about two precocious classmates determined to solve a mystery about a missing Vermeer painting. The brainy twelve-year-olds Petra and Calder attend the University of Chicago Laboratory School where their teacher's unusual methods make learning an adventure. Their friendship flourishes as they join the quest to locate the masterpiece before it is too late. Puzzles, pentominos, codes, and patterns lend their unique clues to this intriguing, fast-paced mystery.

Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. ***Halfway to the Sky.*** Yearling, ©2003.

Gutsy, twelve-year-old Dani, short for Katahdin, hopes to escape dealing with her parents' divorce and the death of her 13-year-old brother by running away from home to hike the Appalachian Trail. She is retracing her family's history: her parents met and married on the trail and then named her after Mount Katahdin, the trail's end. Dani is furious when her mother finds her, but the two continue the journey together, develop a deeper relationship, and begin the healing process. This believable, engaging, and realistic story unfolds against the rugged backdrop of the Appalachian Mountains.

Choldenko, Gennifer. ***Al Capone Does My Shirts.*** Putnam, ©2004.

In 1935 twelve-year-old Moose and his younger, autistic sister, Natalie, move to Alcatraz Island where their father begins work as a prison guard. When Natalie is rejected by the special school in San Francisco, Moose must take care of her and reluctantly gives up playing baseball. Meanwhile, Moose meets the troublesome, but irresistible, warden's daughter, Piper, who has a talent for landing him into embarrassing situations. Also woven throughout the story are many references to the prison's famous inmate, mob boss Al Capone. Through this engaging, coming-of-age story, readers get a glimpse of what life was like on the infamous Alcatraz Island.

Codell, Esmé Raji. ***Sahara Special.*** Hyperion, ©2004.

Fifth grader Sahara Jones leaves a special needs class to join a mainstream classroom filled with difficult students that is taught by a nontraditional teacher, Madame Pointy. Shy Sahara yearns to be a writer and slowly begins to blossom under the gentle prodding of her teacher. To add to the realism of the urban setting, mild language is used but rebuked by the teacher during a few of the classroom conversations. Throughout this heartwarming story, Sahara and her fellow students' lives are transformed through a love of story and words.

Collins, Suzanne. ***Gregor the Overlander.*** Scholastic Paperbacks, ©2004.

Gregor and his two-year-old sister Boots fall down an air vent in their New York apartment laundry room and into the Underland, a fantastic subterranean world inhabited by translucent-skinned humans, giant talking cockroaches, spiders, and rats. Fast-paced action ensues as the unlikely warrior hero Gregor fulfills the prophecy to save the humans and his father from the warlike rats. This engrossing adventure will have fantasy fans quickly turning the pages and looking forward to the next Gregor challenge.

Creech, Sharon. ***Granny Torrelli Makes Soup.*** HarperCollins, ©2005.

Everyone should have an Italian grandmother like Granny Torrelli! She not only teaches twelve-year-old Rosie how to make soup, but she also teaches her about friendship and life. When Rosie and her best friend Bailey's friendship needs mending, Granny Torrelli has the perfect recipe. She shares stories that help Rosie understand

the ever-changing demands of friendship. These nourishing bits of wisdom are sprinkled throughout this skillfully written, humorous story that is filled with sage advice and spiced with Italian words.

Ferris, Jean. ***Once Upon a Marigold***. Harcourt Paperbacks, ©2003.

This quirky fantasy is filled with lighthearted fun and likeable characters from Edric the Troll to the doting father, King Swithbert. Taking center stage, however, are the lovely princess Marigold and strong-willed, clever, young Chris. Meanwhile, the evil mother, Queen Olympia, supplies the plot twists by planning to murder Marigold and the king in order to become the sole ruler of the country. This fast-paced story, filled with romance and comedic subplots, moves quickly to a satisfying conclusion.

Hansen, Joyce. ***One True Friend***. Clarion Books, ©2001.

Best buddies Doris and Amir return to their readers in this heartwarming novel. They tell their story through letters that reveal their solid friendship and realistic troubles. Amir and his siblings are separated after his parents die from AIDS. As the oldest, he feels compelled to search for and, hopefully, reunite his family. After living in several foster homes, he finally lands in a good home with his youngest brother. In the end, just like in real life, both Doris and Amir are faced with making difficult decisions.

Kehret, Peg. ***Escaping the Giant Wave***. Aladdin, ©2004.

The family spent three weeks planning their dream vacation to Oregon. Thirteen-year-old Kyle's dad was receiving the Salesman of the Year award and, as an added bonus, this would be Kyle's first time flying. The family's plans soon unravel after they arrive in the small Oregon beach town and progressively worsen when an earthquake and tsunamis hit the area. Kyle's fast thinking helps save his younger sister Bee Bee and himself during this traumatic time. A bibliography of books, Internet sites, a videorecording, and pamphlets are also included.

Nickerson, Sara. ***How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found***. HarperTrophy, ©2003.

Twelve-year-old Margaret can barely remember her father who mysteriously drowned. She is an outcast at school and eats her lunch in a bathroom stall. In the meanwhile, her mother suddenly decides to drive to an island and place a For Sale sign in front of a dilapidated mansion. Margaret and Boyd, the talented and lonely boy-next-door, set out to solve the multiple mysteries. Comic book lovers and mystery readers will delight in the merging of these two genres.

Park, Linda Sue. ***When My Name was Keoko***. Yearling, ©2004.

1940-1945 is a turbulent time in Japanese-occupied Korea. A brother and sister alternate telling Newbery Medalist Park's thoughtful and well-researched story. During this time, the Japanese government forbids the Japanese language spoken, forces families to change their names, and removes their national symbols. Throughout the historical fiction novel, the reader gains insights into the behind the scenes intrigue surrounding the resistance movement and the inner strength needed for these families to fight the war on their own turf.

Philbrick, Rodman. ***The Young Man and the Sea***. Scholastic, ©2005.

In this takeoff of the *Old Man and the Sea*, twelve-year-old Skiff deals with the death of his mother, a grieving father, and a sabotaging bully. With his father reduced to a grieving drunk and thousands of dollars needed to repair their boat, Skiff looks for ways to make money. After Tyler, the rich bully, sabotages his lobster pots, Skiff decides to fish out in the ocean for the huge bluefin tuna in his small 10-foot plywood boat. This leads to a heart-pounding adventure featuring Skiff's courage and endurance.

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley. ***The Unseen***. Yearling, ©2005.

Twelve-year-old Xandra feels out of place in her family of accomplished siblings and remote, business oriented parents. She finds refuge in befriending a succession of injured or homeless animals in the family basement. After rescuing a white egret in the nearby forest, she finds herself with a single feather after the bird mysteriously disappears. Xandra believes that the feather is magical and shows it to Belinda, a girl at school, who explains that the feather is a key to an unseen world. Follow the events in this fantasy to learn how Xandra eventually makes the connection between her anger and her experiences in an alternate world.

Vande Velde, Vivian. ***Heir Apparent***. Magic Carpet Books, ©2004.

A feisty 14-year-old heroine uses her father's birthday gift certificate to play the total-immersion game called Heir Apparent. The Citizens to Protect Our Children set up a picket line to protest the gaming center and eventually damage it, leaving Giannine in jeopardy of permanent brain damage while playing in the virtual reality game. She must battle her way through barbarian attacks, peasant uprisings, and a giant dragon with the help of ghosts, witches, wizards, and magical tools. Fantasy and gaming fans alike will delight in this action-packed adventure.