

Library Book Procurement List for LV Junior High School - November 2025

List procured by: R Burrhus, Campus Library Media Specialist

Book list reviewed for compliance with SB13 and HB 900 as outlined in [LVISD Library Collection Development Plan](#)

Books approved from this list may be purchased in any format (hardback, paperback, audio...etc) without the need for additional approval.

| Campus | ISBN | Title | Author/Artist | Review |
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| La Vernia JHS | 9780593484142 | ADVENTURES OF MARY JANE | JAHREN, HOPE | School Library Journal Starred 6/1/2024 Gr 7 Up—In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain gives a scant 30-or-so pages to Mary Jane, "the red-headed one." Twain's readers are left with the confidence that Mary Jane has stolen Huck's heart, but no backstory to explain how or why this should be so. In this companion piece to Twain's classic, Jahren delivers Mary Jane's story in vivid, heart-pounding, nail-biting, soul-stirring detail. It is 1846, and the trading posts and military outposts of northern Minnesota are the only world that 14-year-old Mary Jane Guild has ever known. Her world changes suddenly when a letter from Aunt Evelyn prompts her mother and Morfar (Swedish for grandfather) to send her on a mission of mercy. Mary Jane travels the Mississippi River from Minnesota to Illinois and on to Mississippi and back again. Along the way, she makes friends and foes, learns what it does and does not mean to believe in God and be given to good works, finds the value of the truth, the utility of a good lie, and discovers who she is and where she most belongs. Jahren's first foray into historical fiction is as meticulously researched as her nonfiction narratives without ever seeming tedious or pedantic. VERDICT This imaginative retelling of the story of Huck's red-headed sweetheart is a rollicking adventure full of rich characterizations that will be enjoyed by junior high and high school readers regardless of whether they have read the book that inspired it.—Kelly Kingrey-Edwards Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781646145218 | ALEBRIJES | HIGUERA, DONNA BARBA | Horn Book Guide 11/1/2023 On Higuera's barren post-apocalyptic Earth, Pocatels rule over the Spanish-speaking Cascabels, refugees from the San Joaquin Valley, forcing them to live in squalid tent cities, endure long hours harvesting potatoes, and subsist on next to nothing. Thirteen-year-old Leandro and his younger sister, Gabi, impoverished and orphaned Cascabels, plan to escape the Pox, as their settlement is called, but when Gabi is caught stealing a strawberry from a fruit seller, their scheme is thwarted. Leandro takes the blame, and he's sent to the Center of Banishment for the theft. He's given a choice: banishment or have his consciousness transferred to an alebrije, an Old World animal drone. He chooses the alebrije: as a drone hummingbird, he's free to fly from the confines of Pocatel, but his choice comes with conditions. For one, he's tasked with finding the daughter of one of the ruling directors and returning her to Pocatel. On his quest, Leandro uncovers the lies of the government; finds La Cuna, a legendary verdant paradise of the Cascabels; and discovers what it means to be a hero. With its social and environmental commentary, this fast-paced and imaginative novel tackles issues of deception and control and leaves one with a sense of wonder that a single flap of a wing or a solitary voice can bring about unimaginable change. An epilogue gratifyingly ties this book to Higuera's Newbery Award-winning The Last Cuentista (rev. 9/21). Yesica Hurd |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780525555087 | AMIL AND THE AFTER | HIRANANDANI, VEERA | School Library Journal Starred 2/1/2024 Gr 4—6—Hiranandani's Newbery Honor-winning The Night Diary is a family's story of survival. This companion novel is about their struggle to recover after life-changing trauma. Amil, twin sister Nisha, their father, grandmother, and family cook Kazi endured a harrowing flight from their home after the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan. Now living in Bombay, the family struggles to build a new life amid social and political unrest. While Nisha finds solace through writing, Amil expresses himself through drawing. Miranda's spot art effectively conveys Amil's longing for all that he has lost. But at 12, he'd also love to have a bicycle and a friend. How he gains both embodies the novel's themes of hope amid chaos and how kindness can save a life. Kazi advises Amil and Nisha: "Imagine if every person who wasn't suffering helped one person who was." A glossary of South Asian terms, words, and names is included but hardly needed as Hiranandani effortlessly incorporates the tastes, sights, sounds, and history of India in engaging prose. Flashbacks to the first novel round out the narrative and allow this sequel to stand on its own. VERDICT Accessible and engrossing, readers unfamiliar with the historic partition of India and Pakistan will nevertheless readily relate to a boy's yearning for stability in tumultuous times. A first purchase for all middle grade collections.—Marybeth Kozikowski Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780316592079 | ATTACKED! : PEARL HARBOR AND THE DAY WAR CAME TO AMERICA | FAVREAU, MARC | Booklist 11/1/2023 Grades 6-10 - "It was autumn when a Japanese spy began to gather information about military installations on Oahu, Hawaii, including one at Pearl Harbor. His findings enabled his country to carry out a successful attack on December 7, 1941. Much of the action took place on that day, but this book also reports on how America responded during the months that followed, from the retaliatory bombing of Tokyo to the incarceration of many Japanese Americans. Occasional archival photos illustrate the text. Favreau, whose previous books on American history include Crash (2018) and Unequal (2022), tells the story through the diverse participants and eyewitnesses to the action, from sailors and pilots on both sides to civilians who helped the wounded to President Roosevelt. While many good books on the Pearl Harbor attack are available at different reading levels, this volume is well researched and particularly attentive to offering one person's viewpoint at a time, giving a sense of immediacy to their individual experiences and intensity to their memories and observations. A very readable book on a topic of perennial interest." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250346872 | BLACK HOLE CHASERS : THE AMAZING TRUE STORY OF AN ASTRONOMIC | REDDING, ANNA CROWLE | School Library Journal Starred 10/1/2021 Gr 5—8—An intriguing and comprehensive look at the subject. The focus of this readable and captivating narrative is in detailing the history of black holes, following the lives of the lead scientists and how they became interested in black holes, and sharing the challenges, failures, and eventual success of the Event Horizon Telescope project. The short chapters have many asides highlighting scientists throughout history who contributed to our understanding of black holes. Lingo alerts appear throughout when a new term is introduced. The volume includes an extensive bibliography with books, articles, and websites where readers can go do further research. Redding's narrative on the lives of the scientists and their seemingly insurmountable challenge of capturing the first image of a black hole will immediately grab readers and pull them in. Her book explains complex ideas in easy-to-understand terms and sprinkles photos and interesting anecdotes throughout to flesh out the story. Kids will be enthralled by exceptional storytelling and inspired to learn more about the phenomenon, and astronomy overall. VERDICT Put in the hands of your aspiring scientists and readers with insatiable curiosity. An essential purchase.—Kristin Williamson, Metropolitan Lib. Syst., OK Copyright 2021 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781636913322 | BONES IN THE CLIFF : T. REX DISCOVERY | EASON, SARAH | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2022 Grades 3-6 - "'Starred Review" Fossils Uncovered! (6 titles) takes an appealing departure from traditional dinosaur series. In a graphic-novel format with adventurous illustrations and accessible text, each installment highlights a real-life paleontologist at work in the field as they discover a specific dinosaur or animal, pose a question or theory related to dinosaurs, and conduct research that leads to brand-new dino knowledge. Action-packed scenes with dinosaurs on the move allow readers to visualize the research process and dinosaur facts. In Bones in the Cliff, Susan Hendrickson discovers Tyrannosaurus rex bones in South Dakota's badlands and notices the dinosaur's fascinating traits, such as its great sense of smell. Each book concludes with a look at three dinosaurs that lived alongside the featured creature and a brief overview of paleontology. A clever combination of high-interest dinosaurs and problem solving." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593567760 | BORDERLANDS AND THE MEXICAN AMERICAN STORY | ROMO, DAVID DORADO | School Library Journal Starred 9/1/2024 Gr 4—8—A comprehensive and revelatory volume on Mexican American history. Dorado Romo adeptly manages to fit in the vast and complex history of Mexican Americans, from their Indigenous roots to current-day issues, in this volume for middle graders. Along the way, he dispels long-held and racist beliefs, like the Clovis theory, which posits that the first peoples appeared in North America not more than 12,000 years ago. Native archeology has concluded that the number is most likely 23,000 or more. The work also cuts through white supremacist perspectives of major events, such as the Alamo and the Mexican Revolution. The narrative is peppered with photos, reproductions, and sidebars. Every chapter concludes with thought-provoking discussion questions. Major topics like the Chicano Movement and immigration are covered with nuance. Profiles on important figures, such as writer Gloria Anzaldúa, muralist Judith Baca, and the students at Bowie High School, are seamlessly integrated into the sections. The writing is impassioned and accessible and will certainly inspire young people to further research not only Mexican American history but also what they've learned about other marginalized peoples in the United States. Back matter includes resources for young readers and a bibliography. VERDICT This fills in gaps and turns history on its head. An absolute must for nonfiction collections.—Shelley M. Diaz Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780063236172 | THE BOY WHO FOLLOWED HIS FATHER INTO AUSCHWITZ : A TRUE STORY RETOLD FOR YOUNG READERS | DRONFIELD, JEREMY | School Library Journal Starred 4/1/2023 Gr 7 Up—The young reader's edition of Dronfield's adult title of the same name is a heartrending and absolutely necessary read about the scope and depth of the Holocaust. Put together with meticulous research and interviews, this powerful work of narrative nonfiction follows the Viennese Kleinmann family and their many experiences before and during World War II. Most of the book focuses on Fritz, age 16 in 1939, and his father, Gustav, who are taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp and the many small and brave things they had to do to survive grueling, inhumane circumstances. For young people who only have an idea of what the Holocaust meant, Fritz's story will give them insight into how a father and son craftily and barely survived three concentration camps, including Auschwitz, until American liberation in 1945. The book also follows Fritz's brother Kurt, who at age 10 is sent to America and is taken care of by family friends. Dronfield met Kurt in 2013 when he was translating Fritz's book, which includes his father's secret journal. These shifts in point of view, between Fritz and Kurt, can be confusing, but the author's note and the time line at the end pull the stories together. Conversations are reconstructed, and readers will be absorbed by the life-or-death decisions Fritz and Gustav make together. VERDICT This essential work shows young readers how the Holocaust came to happen and how two amazing human beings survived its horrors.—Jamie Winchell Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250407641 | BRAVO! : POEMS ABOUT AMAZING HISPANICS | ENGLE, MARGARITA | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2017 Engle's poetry paints a diverse picture of the Latino community with an exquisitely curated selection of exceptional figures, some well known, others unrecognized even within their own communities. Lspez's vibrant portraits of each subject contain abstract visual nods to his or her life themes and work. Biographical notes are appended. Spanish-language edition also available. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781538172315 | THE BRONTES OF HAWORTH MOOR : HOW THE THREE DAUGHTERS OF A COUNT | BROWNING, DIANE | Kirkus Review 10/1/2023 Drawing on primary and secondary source material, this well-researched collective biography delves into the Brontë siblings' day-to-day lives in the parsonage of Haworth and explores their later achievements. The six Brontë children—Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne—weren't permitted to play with the local children but found solace and companionship with each other, playing, writing, and taking long walks on the moors. The children's educated and literary mother may have influenced their curate father, who came to support education for his daughters. But a disastrous foray in a harsh boarding school tragically led to the tuberculosis deaths of Maria, 11, and Elizabeth, 10, just a few years after the loss of their mother. Writing sustained the surviving siblings. Branwell and Charlotte, always close, continued to create their imaginary world, Angria; Anne and Emily had their own saga. Readers are shown how their insular yet creative childhoods set the tone for the sisters' classics, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, and Agnes Grey. Browning also introduces novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, explaining how her 1870 biography of Charlotte has been the source of many misconceptions about the family. This work presents a nuanced story of an extremely close-knit family, both supportive of and sometimes at odds with each other, often happy, but just as often suffering from grief, anxiety, and depression. Occasional black-and-white illustrations add little to the work. Thorough, nuanced, and well researched. (author's note, who's who, endnotes, bibliography, index) (Biography. 12-17) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781638931263 | CELESTIAL BANQUET | LIM, ROSELLE | Booklist 6/1/2025 Grades 7-12 - "Winning the Celestial Banquet would have many benefits for talented young noodle chef Cai; in addition to relieving her of the burden of needing multiple jobs just to survive, it could also solidify the independence and continued sovereignty of her peninsular home, always under threat of annexation by the larger Continent. Convincing her local minor god, Kama, to sponsor a three-person team is the first step; then she and her two teammates must travel far to the competition in Xianling. Meanwhile, those teammates—Bo, a poor local childhood friend; and Seon, a wealthy new acquaintance—are competing for her affection. To win a peach of immortality and all the accompanying boons, Cai must work with little experience to survive various trials, as well as untrustworthy and shifting alliances. Intricate world building creates a well-defined framework, and a complex competition with creative challenges keeps the plot moving steadily despite the expansive cast. Southeast Asian and Chinese influences abound, and though the food scenes are not as numerous as they could be, they are mouth-watering, nonetheless." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250813732 | CONTINENTAL DRIFTER | MACLEOD, KATHY | Horn Book Guide 5/1/2024 This introspective graphic memoir explores bicultural identity and the path toward self-acceptance. Like many students at her international school in Bangkok, Thailand, eleven-year-old Kathy is "luk khrueng," or "half child." Her father is American, and her mother is Thai, but Kathy identifies more as American and, though she appreciates Thai culture, she feels that she's not Thai enough. She looks forward to summers with her father's family in Maine, but this year she's acutely aware of how her family stands out there. She's also excited to spend three weeks away from her family at summer camp, but once there she struggles to fit in as campers ask rude questions about her heritage. ("Where is that?" "Do you mean Taiwan?") Kathy learns to embrace the unique qualities that connect her to both sides of her family and to her own mixed identity. Sprinkled throughout are elements of Thai culture and Thai language, depicted in Thai text with English translation, adding depth and cultural context. The pastel-toned panels, black-and-white flashback scenes, and cleanly drawn and expressively detailed characters complement the youthful, gentle tone of Kathy's internal dialogue. In an afterword, MacLeod shares her process making the book, comics she wrote as a child, and family photos. Kristine Techavanich |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526433 | CRYSTALS : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT ROCKS! | EASON, SARAH | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781338596632 | THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY : UNCOVERING TUTANKHAMUN'S TOMB | FLEMING, CANDACE | Booklist Starred Reviews 9/15/2021 Grades 4-8 - ""Starred Review" In Fleming's capable hands, the story of the boy king and Howard Carter's discovery of his tomb brims with enthusiasm, wonder, and mystique. While she doesn't sensationalize events, she does capitalize on the natural allure of thieves, treasure, and ancient curses, weaving all these through her account and thus ensuring her readers stay with her from start to finish. Easy-to-read but substantive, this history introduces readers to certain ancient Egyptian beliefs and practices, as well as important political and social circumstances in Carter's Egypt during the 1920s and '30s. Fleming expertly sets the scene and imbues both Carter and his benefactor, Lord Carnarvon, with personality as she unfolds events chronologically, highlighting Carter's meticulous excavation methods. Care is taken to discuss the negative impact of colonialism at work in Egypt during this time, and Carter's own flaws are likewise pointed out, most effectively in the chapter describing the irreverent handling of Tutankhamun's mummy. Fleming also tantalizingly traces the misfortunes of those connected with the tomb, showing easily how these were interpreted as an ancient curse, before thoroughly debunking this idea. Throughout the book, black-and-white period photographs show the tomb's treasures and key players at work (including captions that acknowledge unnamed Egyptian workers). Back matter outlines Tutankhamun's position in ancient Egyptian history and features a bibliography and source notes. A compelling peek at one of the world's greatest discoveries." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781669013624 | DARING WOMEN OF D-DAY : BOLD SPIES OF WORLD WAR II | TRUNFIO, ALESSIA | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/15/2023 Grades 3-5 - ""Starred Review" Many women served in WWII, sometimes in nontraditional roles, but most of their efforts have been classified or forgotten. The Daring Women Warriors of WWII series (4 new titles) highlights a few of these overlooked patriots in a graphic-novel format. The volumes present just enough background information on WWII to give context to each woman's difficult assignment. Two distinct fonts delineate concise, factual text from short, imagined dialogue meant to add interest and more detail. Each installment is illustrated by a different artist, adding variety to the series if read as a whole. Daring Women of D-Day focuses on Andrée Borrel and Lise de Baissac, the first women paratroopers in the world, and their work in the French Resistance. The books conclude with a summary of each woman's lasting contributions. An engaging treatment of real heroes from history." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593662595 | DARK! : WILD LIFE IN THE MYSTERIOUS WORLD OF CAVES | LEIGH, LINDSEY | School Library Journal 7/1/2024 Gr 3-7—Strap on your headlamp and dive into The Dark to learn about caves and the animals that live in them. With a clear introduction of what a cave is, this well-organized, nonfiction comic book digs into the types of animals that call caves home, full- and part-time. Creepy crawlies that kids love are explored, including threatened and endangered species such as salamanders, various fish, bats, and all sorts of insects—even humans are covered! The author illuminates various animal adaptations in interesting ways that will capture readers' attentions. Also highlighted are unique caves of the world, the importance of caves to humans throughout history, and cave conservation. The author did a wonderful job creating eye-catching, clear cartoon illustrations with text placed thoughtfully on the page to highlight the fascinating animals. Pronunciation guides and definitions throughout clarify new ideas and vocabulary. Animals are given quirky personalities with conversation bubbles, adding humor to keep readers interested. VERDICT With its compelling layout and interesting facts, this is an engaging book.—Melisa Bailey Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780593521687 | THE DEEP! : WILD LIFE AT THE OCEAN'S DARKEST DEPTHS | LEIGH, LINDSEY | Kirkus Reviews Starred 4/15/2023 Meet our aquatic neighbors, from sperm whales and vampire squid ("Velcomel") to pigbutt worms. "Well, hi there!" burbles a toothy deep-sea hatchetfish, swimming up to invite viewers on an unforgettable dive into ocean depths from the sunny epipelagic zone down to really deep, really dark hadalpelagic regions. Wonders aplenty await, from creatures with transparent heads and stomachs to sea angels, which change from male to female as they grow, carnivorous sponges, and siphonophores longer than blue whales. The author stoutly defends the reputations of the much maligned blobfish ("Blobfish? No, Blob Sculpin!") and demonstrates a sure sense of theater with, for instance, a "Supersize Squid Showdown," not to mention nods to the aforementioned pigbutt worm ("It's not every day you see flying buttocks soaring through the seas!") and the giant larvacean's "magnificent snot palace." In pursuit of a friendly vibe, Leigh puts smiles on the faces of creatures that have them (faces, that is) but otherwise draws her teeming wildlife in accurate detail. She also fills much of the open spaces in her mix of broad seascapes and inset panels with informative commentary and supplements the tour with closer looks at microenvironments such as hydrothermal vents and deadly undersea brine pools ("jacuzzi of despair") as well as special topics such as the continual descent of nutritious corpses and poop known as "marine snow." She ends with further resources and eco-activities for readers who share her patent enthusiasm for denizens of the deep. A broad and buoyant undersea venture. (index) (Graphic nonfiction. 10-13) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781984816351 | THE DIAMOND EXPLORER | YANG, KAO KALIA | School Library Journal 10/1/2024 Gr 4–7—Malcolm is a Hmong boy, quiet and sensitive, who lives on the prairies of Minnesota with his family and has felt like he never really fit in with the world around him. Readers are introduced to Malcolm through the views of those closest to him—parents, sisters, brother, teachers. As he gets older, he feels more disconnected from his family and his place in it. After he witnesses a shaman ceremony performed on his sister, he starts to collect stories from family members about their ancestors. Thus begins his spiritual journey, walking between worlds. He finds himself living out memories of his family—things he has never seen or heard of before, with people he's never met, experiencing their trauma alongside them. The shaman spirits of his ancestors are calling to him and it's time to answer. This is a moving story about a boy longing to feel a connection to his family and his identity. Yang's writing is beautiful, seamlessly transitioning from one character to another, and situations involving violence and death are handled with care. VERDICT A lovely fiction pick for readers who don't often see themselves represented in fiction, those interested in learning more about Hmong spiritual beliefs, or seeking a fantasy genre not often explored for this age group.—Kerri L. Williams Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781636913339 | DINOSAUR EATER : SUPERCROC DISCOVERY | EASON, SARAH | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2022 Grades 3-6 - ""Starred Review" Fossils Uncovered! (6 titles) takes an appealing departure from traditional dinosaur series. In a graphic-novel format with adventurous illustrations and accessible text, each installment highlights a real-life paleontologist at work in the field as they discover a specific dinosaur or animal, pose a question or theory related to dinosaurs, and conduct research that leads to brand-new dino knowledge. Action-packed scenes with dinosaurs on the move allow readers to visualize the research process and dinosaur facts. In Dinosaur Eater, Paul Sereno finds the bones of an ancient "SuperCroc" in the Saharan desert and uncovers how it ate dinosaurs. Each book concludes with a look at three dinosaurs that lived alongside the featured creature and a brief overview of paleontology. A clever combination of high-interest dinosaurs and problem solving." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250346575 | DON'T LOOK BACK : A MEMOIR OF WAR, SURVIVAL, AND MY JOURNEY | DENG, ACHUT | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/15/2022 Grades 7-12 - ""Starred Review" Southern Sudanese Deng's remarkable life story is one of loss and survival. It begins when her father is wounded in Sudan's never-ending civil war and her mother leaves to help nurse him. Their village is then attacked by rebels. When six-year-old Deng and her beloved grandmother attempt to flee, they are captured by the rebels, who murder her grandmother, thus leaving Deng alone in the world. Mercifully, a woman named Aduai, a former neighbor and friend of her mother, finds the girl and becomes her surrogate mother. Together, they are incarcerated, escape, and embark upon an impossibly difficult, two-month walk to the Kenyan refugee camp Kakuma. Tragically, Aduai dies at the camp, but somehow Deng—now 11—weathers this new loss as well. After nine years of grief and pain, during which she endures illness and sexual abuse, Deng is selected to go to America. The combined experience and talents of Hutton and Deng result in crisp, clear writing that is eminently readable. Deng's voice rings authentically through the telling, her resilient spirit eclipsing the grueling trials she was forced to endure. Though Deng's grandmother once told her to never look back, readers will thank Deng for disobeying her and sharing her moving, powerful story." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780374392116 | EARTHRISE : THE STORY OF A PHOTOGRAPH THAT CHANGED THE WAY W | MARCUS, LEONARD S | Horn Book Guide 5/1/2025 Children's literature scholar Marcus provides valuable insight into early NASA history with this account of the famous titular photograph, taken from lunar orbit by Bill Anders, of the Apollo 8 mission in 1968. After introducing Earthrise as "an image that changed the world," inspiring Earth Day and the environmental movement, Marcus looks back to the beginning of the space race with the Soviet launch of Sputnik and traces NASA's efforts to catch up and pull ahead before focusing on Apollo 8 and its crew. Readers meet "perfectionist" commander Frank Borman, "easygoing" navigator Jim Lovell, and "doggedly task-oriented" Anders, who was the official photographer as well as systems engineer. Contextualizing the voyage within the turbulence of the year 1968 and rumors of an upcoming Soviet moonshot, Marcus describes how Apollo 8's mission was hastily reoriented just four months before liftoff, amping up the tension. Quotes from transcripts enable Marcus to put readers in the capsule with Borman, Lovell, and Anders; Borman's spontaneous "Oh, my God" at the astronauts' first sight of Earth beyond the moon's horizon underscores the effect of the moment. It also helps twenty-first-century young people understand how the novelty of that vision made Earthrise the powerful statement it became, which Marcus discusses in the final chapters. Carefully captioned photographs and occasional dives into related topics enhance the presentation. Back matter includes a thorough bibliography and source notes. Vicky Smith |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781782509172 | THE EDGE OF THE SILVER SEA | MULLARKY, ALEX | School Library Journal Starred 2/1/2025 Gr 5 Up—No service. That's all Blair can think about when she and her parents land on the legendary Scottish isle of Roscoe. Her parents' dream has been to open a bed-and-breakfast on the island, but Blair can only think about what she's left behind: her friends and their fight to preserve the planet. How can she keep in touch with no phone service? Feeling totally abandoned, she spends her time roaming the island hoping she can convince her parents to return home. While exploring, she encounters Cailleach, a mythical character who professes to be the protector of the island's deer. She says she can ensure her parents return to the mainland if Blair will do three things for her. Blair readily agrees, but she has no idea how to make these things happen. She enlists the help of her new friend Alasdair, and they work together on the mission until one task goes horribly wrong. Blair is left friendless and has to figure things out on her own. However, Blair proves to be quite resourceful and is able to piece together the puzzle, discovering a few things about herself in the process. Readers will be captivated by a tale that weaves mythology, conservation, magic, and friendship into one engaging story that they will immediately read cover to cover. VERDICT Beautifully written and accompanied by a glossary and a map of the island, this is a book to be shared again and again. Highly recommended for all libraries.—Laura Fields Eason Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781636913360 | AN EGG THIEF? : OVIRAPTOR DISCOVERY | EASON, SARAH | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2022 Grades 3-6 - ""Starred Review" Fossils Uncovered! (6 titles) takes an appealing departure from traditional dinosaur series. In a graphic-novel format with adventurous illustrations and accessible text, each installment highlights a real-life paleontologist at work in the field as they discover a specific dinosaur or animal, pose a question or theory related to dinosaurs, and conduct research that leads to brand-new dino knowledge. Action-packed scenes with dinosaurs on the move allow readers to visualize the research process and dinosaur facts. An Egg Thief? sees Mark Norell unearth both baby-dinosaur and Oviraptor (aka egg thief) fossils and discover that this dinosaur wasn't stealing but protecting its eggs. Each book concludes with a look at three dinosaurs that lived alongside the featured creature and a brief overview of paleontology. A clever combination of high-interest dinosaurs and problem solving." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781669013464 | ELIZABETH FRIEDMAN : EXPERT CODEBREAKER OF WORLD WAR II | MONNIN, ALISHA | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/15/2023 Grades 3-5 - ""Starred Review" Many women served in WWII, sometimes in nontraditional roles, but most of their efforts have been classified or forgotten. The Daring Women Warriors of WWII series (4 new titles) highlights a few of these overlooked patriots in a graphic-novel format. The volumes present just enough background information on WWII to give context to each woman's difficult assignment. Two distinct fonts delineate concise, factual text from short, imagined dialogue meant to add interest and more detail. Each installment is illustrated by a different artist, adding variety to the series if read as a whole. Elizabeth Friedman traces the career of this expert codebreaker for the U.S. government, including her discovery of a Nazi spy ring in South America. The books conclude with a summary of each woman's lasting contributions. An engaging treatment of real heroes from history." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781338749571 | THE ENIGMA GIRLS : HOW TEN TEENAGERS BROKE CIPHERS, KEPT SECRETS, AND HELPED WIN WORLD WAR II | FLEMING, CANDACE | Horn Book Guide Starred 5/1/2024 Bletchley Park, a World War II cryptology center, operated in the English countryside where an extensive and complicated code-breaking operation allowed the Allies to decipher secret messages sent through German Enigma machines. Those transmissions included enemy plans for naval attacks, ship locations, ground positions, and bombing targets, and Fleming (Crash from Outer Space, rev. 11/22, among many others) reveals that the feat of decoding the thousands of pieces of information every day was largely executed by teenage girls and young women. Recruited with little or no knowledge of what their jobs would be, the code breakers were sworn to secrecy -- an oath that would remain unbroken for over thirty years. Fleming's account focuses on ten such young women (one of whom is an offsite radio operator) but, in a masterful presentation of related subject matter, seamlessly intersperses segments on larger historical events, beginning with the Battle of Britain and concluding with V-J Day; clear and thorough explanations of codes and ciphers; and technical advances that led to the use of computers. The girls' personal experiences, from coping with housing shortages, to falling in love, to discovering their future life's work, adds another dimension. Amid the often-tedious work of breaking the ciphers, moments of humanity appear: the joy of pinpointing an enemy bombing target on British soil; the recognition that a freshly bloodstained Nazi cipher book meant "somewhere this German airman was still bleeding, dying maybe...That really did bring the war close." Appended with an author's note, a bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, source notes, and an (unseen) index. Betty Carter |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781536240719 | FAERIE ISLE : TALES AND TRADITIONS OF IRELAND'S FORGOTTEN FO | QUINN, SINE | Kirkus Reviews Starred 1/15/2025 A collection of Irish myths and legends, some encouraging, most cautionary. Irish folklore is populated by faeries, or "the good people," as you'd best call them. They include creatures great and small, those of the land and of the sea, those who act as harbingers, and others who frankly just don't like to be bothered. Each well-researched entry includes a page of general description covering the creature's historical origins and traditional behaviors and temperament, as well as lessons to be learned, followed by a brief tale. "The Queen's Shoes" tells of a tiny leprechaun shoemaker who rewards a kindly young shepherd, while "At the Crossroads" centers on a brave young girl's encounter with the Headless Horseman. Quinn's writing has a folksy, intimate tone; readers will feel as though they're huddled by the fireside, listening to a gifted storyteller holding an audience spellbound. Even folklore enthusiasts will find unique depths within each jam-packed entry. Reminiscent of Stephen Gammell's work, Flynn's illustrations are grotesquely gorgeous—like the fae they depict, they are texturally rich, glowing with a unique allure and just a touch unsettling. Her use of color and negative space is haunting, well paired with the creatures depicted. Fantastic in all respects. (glossary) (Folktales. 7-13) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780316556217 | FATAL FORECAST : (YOUNG READERS EDITION) : AN INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF COURAGE IN A SA | TOUGIAS, MICHAEL J | Booklist Starred Reviews 9/1/2024 Grades 4-8 - ""Starred Review" Adding a second title to the True Survival series (following Abandon Ship!, 2023), Tougias adapts another of his adult books for middle-schoolers. This salty tale describes the harrowing three-day ordeal of two crews of lobster fishermen caught in a dangerous storm off the coast of Cape Cod in November 1980—a situation that occurred because the weather forecasting buoys weren't working properly. Tougias sets the scene and introduces readers to the crews from the Fair Wind and Sea Fever (a helpful list of characters and their vessels prefaces the main text) before describing their fate in riveting detail after the storm struck. Much of the story focuses on Fair Wind mariner Ernie Hazard, 33, who rode out huge waves in a raft for over 48 hours after a nearly 100-foot-tall wall of water capsized his boat. Tougias plunges readers into the action, rendering Hazard's experiences and the valiant rescue efforts of the Coast Guard and two other boat crews with pulse-pounding panache. While most survived, an appendix notes how several families of the deceased men briefly won a lawsuit against the National Weather Service until the judgment was reversed on appeal. Readers will be rooting for all these courageous men in this thrilling, edge-of-your-seat survival tale." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781682637852 | GALAPAGOS : ISLANDS OF CHANGE | BULION, LESLIE | School Library Journal 10/1/2023 Gr 4–6—Volcanoes erupting beneath the Pacific Ocean long ago gave rise to these lava-based islands. Poetry, short captions, and handsome illustrations introduce a bit of island history and some of the creatures. An introductory essay preceding the quick survey of species explains how plants and animals journeyed over and under ocean waters, over millions of years to become unique residents. The entry on zooplankton is followed by activities of the marine iguana, whale sharks, penguins, blue-footed booby, sea lion pups, sharks, and more during the dry season. As the season changes to warm and wet, painted locusts, lizards, finches, hawks, ghost crabs, giant tortoises, and more appear. Plants grow, but only the prickly pear cactus is shown—the emphasis throughout the book is the food chain, with many species eating others. The closing essay explains that now dying trade winds and human visitors are parts of climate change, disrupting the food chain of island inhabitants. A final note urges readers to be earth's stewards and protectors: "Let's choose a sustainable future, together." This attractive picture book array of animals will appeal to younger children, but the quick skim and terse wording in text segments and the many adult items in the generous array of end materials are for older readers. The poetry notes in the back matter might find fun use in high school English classes. VERDICT Likely to be most useful in the hands of creative teachers.—Margaret Bush Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250858528 | THE GARDEN JUST BEYOND | LEAVITT, LINDSEY | Booklist 7/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - "Maggie has been waiting all of her 14 years for a glimpse of the garden—and not the harvest garden just outside of her house, nor the greenhouse a little further on. She wants to see the garden, the locked one that provides her family with the incredible ingredients for their famous home-cooked meals. The perfect produce has magical effects on the mind, and though they used to share their transcendent table with townsfolk, they now reserve spots exclusively for wealthy clientele. An elated Maggie finally gets the go-ahead to make her first meal, but her garden visit is unlike any before, and it sets off a chain reaction that will uncover secrets stretching back generations and upend all of their lives. The spellbinding story expertly mixes magic with mystery, and the eccentric family, zany town traditions, and local folklore are a delight. Neurodivergent characters, including Maggie herself, are a welcome inclusion, and the inventive magic system feels particularly fresh. An incredibly creative consideration of what it takes to make and maintain a community." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781536236248 | THE GENIUS UNDER THE TABLE : GROWING UP BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN | YELCHIN, EUGENE | School Library Journal Starred 10/1/2021 Gr 5 Up—Yelchin has created an unforgettable portrayal of one family's experiences living in the Soviet Union during the Cold War in his ingenious memoir. Using expressive drawings, Yelchin enhances his story of growing up in Leningrad. Yevgeny, his brother Victor, father, mother, and grandmother all share one room in a communal apartment. Each figure is shown to be beautifully human, flaws and all. Victor is a wonderful ice skater who began by skating behind trucks in traffic; the father is a stern Communist who loves Russian poets, such as Osip Mandelstam; the mother works for the Vaganova Ballet School and adores Mikhail Baryshnikov; and the grandmother is keeping a secret about their grandfather. Every evening, all the furniture in their one room living space has to be moved to convert it into their bedroom. Yevgeny sleeps under the dining room table, where he draws on the underside of the table each night with a pencil he has taken from his father. When his drawings are discovered, Yevgeny earns the nickname of "The Genius Under the Table" from his family and begins to study drawing. With an engaging and likable subject, Newbery Honor author Yelchin offers a poignant look at growing up during Cold War—era Soviet Union that will fascinate readers. VERDICT Recommended for those who love captivating memoirs mixed with humor.—Susan Catlett, Green Run H.S., Virginia Beach Copyright 2021 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250247766 | THE GIRL WHO SANG : A HOLOCAUST MEMOIR OF HOPE AND SURVIVAL | NADEL, ESTELLE | Horn Book Guide 3/1/2024 At the start of this compelling graphic memoir, four-year-old Enia Feld lives a seemingly carefree life with her loving extended family in 1939 Borek, Poland. Though they are "very, very poor" -- and there are hints of antisemitism and violence to come -- Enia feels safe, secure, and well cared for, her voice constantly lifted in song. "And I thought we would be this happy forever." On September 1, though, Germany invades. The family's rights are continually eroded ("Things changed over the next two years. Slowly") until, inevitably, they are forced to flee for their lives. In five dramatic parts -- Innocence, Hidden, Liberation, A New Beginning, The Girl Who Sang -- this harrowing story is told and shown in clear sequential art that reflects the terror and grief of Enia's experiences in contrast with her early, pastoral-set days. When liberation finally occurs, after years of whispers in hiding, the once-vivacious girl has gone nearly silent, but it's in finding her voice that she is able to begin a new life in America. The history is deeply personal, as related by Nadel (who passed away in November 2023), and her intent is made clear in her concluding note: "I'm not going to be here forever. Someday there will no longer be Holocaust survivors still living...I want you, the young people, the next generation, to carry our stories on." An afterword, family photos, additional resources, an illustrator's note, and details about comics are appended. Elissa Gershowitz |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780063216280 | GIRLS TO THE FRONT : 40 ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN WHO BLAZED A TR | MATA, NINA | Kirkus Review 4/1/2025 Profiles in greatness. In her foreword, Mata describes how alienating it felt to learn a monolithic version of history: "What if I had opened a book and it told me an extraordinary story about a girl who looked like me?" Here she writes the work her younger self longed for—a celebration of 40 Asian American women who "pushed their way to the front." She covers both well-known subjects (author Amy Tan, fashion designer Vera Wang, vice president Kamala Harris) and those potentially less familiar (Mary Tape, a 19th-century Chinese American immigrant who fought for her children's right to an education; Gyo Fujikawa, a Japanese American children's book illustrator). Each entry is accompanied by an engaging portrait, surrounded by colorful doodles that playfully hint at their contributions. And though the profiles aren't in any chronological order, readers will get a taste of the historical events that shaped the lives of these women: An entry on actor Anna May Wong addresses the racism she confronted, as well as the practice of "yellow face"; a profile on historian Erika Lee touches on the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the California Gold Rush on her own family. Young readers and their caregivers will find this an accessible entry point for learning about these compelling women. A glossary is included, and quotes are interspersed throughout the book, though they aren't cited. Shines a much-needed spotlight on Asian American trailblazers. (list of other notable women, glossary) (Collective biography. 8-12) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9798765643280 | THE GREAT LEOPARD RESCUE : SAVING THE AMUR LEOPARDS | MARKLE, SANDRA | Booklist 9/1/2016 Similar in approach to Markle's The Great Monkey Rescue (2015), this handsome volume looks at efforts to rescue the Amur leopard. Called "the rarest big cats on Earth," these leopards live in the Asian taiga, west of Vladivostok. Their numbers have dwindled from around 2,400 in the wild during the 1950s to about 30 in 2007 and 50 today, because of disease, poaching, and significant loss of habitat when land was cleared for farming, logging, and mining. The discussion includes several practical, international efforts during the past 16 years to protect the Amur leopard, as well as an innovative plan for the future. Based on interviews with zoologists working in this field, the well-organized, cogently written text is enhanced by the many excellent photos, from shots of drones and firefighters protecting Russia's Land of the Leopard National Park (created in 2012) to close-ups of a leopard hunting and two cubs at play. An informative presentation showing what is being done to save this beautiful but critically endangered species. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9798765643297 | THE GREAT RHINO RESCUE : SAVING THE SOUTHERN WHITE RHINOS | MARKLE, SANDRA | Horn Book Guide 4/1/2019 Brought back from the edge of extinction in the twentieth century, white rhinoceroses are once again being hunted, now for their horns. Markle details conservation efforts with a sense of optimism, despite the current grim situation. The text, which also includes information about rhinos' anatomy, habitat, and behavior, is brought to life with many large, clear photos. Reading list, timeline, websites. Glos., ind. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781635923315 | HOW BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BECAME A REVOLUTIONARY IN SEVEN (NOT-SO-EASY) STEPS | WOELFLE, GRETCHEN | Kirkus Reviews Starred 12/1/2023 "Benjamin Franklin was a proud citizen of America all his life. And a proud subject of the British Empire. Until he wasn't." Deftly threading in quotes from her ever-quotable subject and dividing his life into formative experiences, Woelfle begins on a metaphorical note with 7-year-old Ben nadvely overpaying for a coveted toy: "Step #1 / Benjamin Franklin learned early, 'Do not give too much for the Whistle.'" From there she goes on to describe his long campaign to keep relations amicable between Britain and its American colonies. She points to the quick evolution of his views on slavery and also to his prescient proposal (in 1754!) that the colonies would greatly benefit from a union based on that of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy until at last he came to realize that "losing his 'rights and liberties' was too high a price to pay for any whistle—or any empire." Along with tracing the general arc of Franklin's rise in the commercial, scientific, and diplomatic realms, the author offers sidelights on some of his pastimes and inventions before closing with backmatter that includes separate reading lists for adult and younger readers. Woelfle's dynamic approach results in a personal, probing portrait of the Founding Father. In O'Brien's tongue-in-cheek ink drawings, small period figures with paper-white skin gesticulate, scurry about busily, or, in one amusing scene, fall comically victim to one of Franklin's infamous electrical pranks. A superb tribute to a foresighted patriot in peace and war. (author's and illustrator's notes, timeline, websites) (Biography. 8-10) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526402 | IGNEOUS ROCKS : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT ROCKS | EASON, SARAH | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593810880 | AN IMMENSE WORLD (YOUNG READERS EDITION) : HOW ANIMALS SENSE EA | YONG, ED | School Library Journal Starred 5/1/2025 Gr 4—Yong's young readers edition of his popular adult title is intriguing and thought-provoking. Each creature on Earth lives in its own sensory bubble, called an umwelt, and its senses are tuned to its needs. Yong describes attempting to understand another animal's umwelt as magical, and it most certainly is. Readers meet spiders who can see forward, sideways, and backward all at once, squirrels whose heart beats five times a minute in winter, and treehoppers who communicate by vibrations. Accompanying these profiles are delightful and colorful illustrations. Each chapter lists words to remember, defining new vocabulary entered in it, and "Ed's Field Notes" spotlights specific animals and their amazing senses. It ends with a call to conserve wildlife by understanding how people truly engage with their environment (not how they think they do), and a reminder that the wilderness is not distant, but in our backyards and city parks. The content is easy to understand and will hold readers' attention. VERDICT A fascinating tour through the world of animal senses, this will be popular with animal lovers and collectors of weird-but-true nature facts.—Laura Nan Hargrove Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780063360983 | IN THE SHADOW OF THE FALLEN TOWERS : THE SECONDS, MINUTES, HOURS, DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS, AND YEARS AFTER THE 9/11 ATTACKS | BROWN, DON | Publishers Weekly Starred 8/30/2021 Commemorating 9/11 two decades after the tragedy, Sibert Honoree Brown (The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees) offers a visual recollection of Sept. 11, 2001, that both humanizes and poignantly remembers an overwhelming chapter in U.S. history, portraying the experiences of real individuals who lived through the attacks and their aftermath. Sourced extensively from news articles, documentaries, and reports, the quotes and harrowing, accessibly worded stories of survivors, first responders, volunteers, and soldiers are rendered in evocative, muted black lines and washes of watercolor. Panels adeptly guide and sustain reader attention, with perspectives or subject matter shifting as intensity builds. Two-thirds of the graphic novel centers New York City on and around September 11, though accounts from the Pentagon attack and Shanksville plane crash are included. Notable is Brown's ability to depict, in this economical format, the event's wide-ranging aftereffects, including Islamophobia, the physical and mental health toll on workers dismantling "the Pile," and U.S. soldiers ending up on horseback in Afghanistan. An afterword provides updates through 2019, while additional back matter offers a heartbreaking read of the demographic statistics of victims, as well as an eight-page bibliography. Ages 12—up. (Aug.) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781728277035 | ISLE OF EVER | CALONITA, JEN | School Library Journal Starred 3/1/2025 Gr 5—The game is afoot! Can Benny, 12, solve the riddles left by her great-great-great-great-great grandmother before it's too late? Everly "Benny" Benedict, who is white, has always dreamed of a place to call home, and when a lawyer from Long Island explains her surprise inheritance from her successful ancestor Evelyn Terry, she jumps at the chance to claim it. But there's a catch: Benny must complete a series of riddles left by Evelyn and find a mysterious and seemingly magical island off the coast of Greenport before the Blood Orange Moon. Can she finish the game before the two-week deadline? Calonita's latest offers a page-turning mystery that will have readers on the edges of their seats. Throughout the game, Benny must reckon with Evelyn's past mistakes while trying to navigate newfound friendships, financial responsibility, and the road map to the utterly fantastical "Evelyn's Island." The fast-paced and satisfying collection of riddles through clues and diary entries are a feast for avid puzzle lovers. The stakes just get higher, and by the end, readers will be anxiously awaiting the sequel. The pacing is excellent, the character development enticing, and the finale positively nail-biting. VERDICT This thrilling adventure mystery will capture the spirit of play in every reader, making it a perfect addition to any library's middle grade collection.—Ashton Conley Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781669013549 | JANE KENDEIGH : BRAVE NURSE OF WORLD WAR II | DE LA VEGA, KAREN | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/15/2023 Grades 3-5 - ""Starred Review" Many women served in WWII, sometimes in nontraditional roles, but most of their efforts have been classified or forgotten. The Daring Women Warriors of WWII series (4 new titles) highlights a few of these overlooked patriots in a graphic-novel format. The volumes present just enough background information on WWII to give context to each woman's difficult assignment. Two distinct fonts delineate concise, factual text from short, imagined dialogue meant to add interest and more detail. Each installment is illustrated by a different artist, adding variety to the series if read as a whole. Jane Kendeigh describes how this U.S. Navy flight nurse trained to work on battlefields and survive during combat, skills put to use as she treated and helped evacuate wounded soldiers in both Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The books conclude with a summary of each woman's lasting contributions. An engaging treatment of real heroes from history." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780063279322 | KEEP IT LIKE A SECRET | ANDERSON, JOHN DAVID | School Library Journal 10/1/2024 Gr 5 Up—In this coming-of-age novel, 12-year-old Morgan and his older sister Claire, 18, are inseparable; they have always understood each other and have an unbreakable bond. That is, until Claire starts to argue with their mom more and spends more time outside of their house and away from Morgan. After a week, Claire finally contacts Morgan and wants to see him. The two embark on a day-long adventure where they visit some of Claire's favorite places, and Morgan meets her girlfriend. Morgan knows this is the time to save his relationship with his sister and bring her home, but Claire has other plans. This book is listed for middle grades, but due to the themes and family dynamics, it will be a better fit for middle school readers and up. Some preteens and young adults may be able to relate to Morgan's difficult circumstances, whether due to the actions of the parents or a sibling. There are bits and pieces of laughter and adventure, but sometimes that is not enough—and that comes to light for the siblings as they grow. VERDICT Although this book may not be for everyone, the themes and tones can be relatable; it will make a fitting book suggestion by a trusted adult to help children cope with tough at-home, sibling situations.—Maeve Dadds Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250838254 | LEARNING TO BE WILD : (A YOUNG READER'S ADAPTATION) : HOW ANIM | SAFINA, CARL | School Library Journal 10/1/2023 Gr 6 Up—Some things are inherited from generation to generation, like genes. Other things are learned by culture. Every group has a culture, be it humans, chimpanzees, macaws, or sperm whales. Adapted from ecologist Safina's Becoming Wild, this book is divided into the same three parts, but presented in a different order: Achieving Peace, Creating Beauty, and Raising Families. The short, direct sentences intersperse Safina's travels with research, which allows for smooth, easy-to-follow reading. The case for protecting animals—and their cultures—is strong throughout the text, as Safina demonstrates what is lost when culture is threatened or disappears altogether. Animal-loving readers will enjoy the storytelling and photographs that bring further life to the people and creatures introduced in the book. However, there are some missed opportunities to make the text more relatable to a younger audience. Analogies such as "a pressure cooker waiting to explode" or lamenting a time before the information age, something digital natives might not grasp, may alienate some of the intended audience. The lack of back matter or suggested reading might make it a difficult sell as a research aide for students. VERDICT Scientists-in-the-making will enjoy this glimpse into future possibilities.—Elissa Cooper Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781419771200 | LESSONS FROM OUR ANCESTORS : UNCOVERING ANCIENT WORLD WISDOM | DAVE, RAKSHA | School Library Journal 8/1/2024 Gr 3–7—Are equality, peace, and sustainability strictly modern values, or can objects from ancient civilizations reveal these virtues in the lives of our ancestors? That is the question at the heart of this text. Through archaeological evidence, Dave brings to life 14 distinct civilizations spanning 40,000 years and multiple continents with a focus on what the artifacts tell us about the contributions of women and children to history; egalitarian principles at work in the daily lives and work of ancient peoples; and efforts by communities of the distant past to live in harmony with the natural world. Each culture is discussed in a multi-page vignette that explores each group's embrace of a particular value like equality between the sexes or environmental consciousness, the archaeological evidence that supports the author's claims, and the significance and legacy of each culture for modern society. While the illustrations are copious, clear, and engaging, maps and time lines would make the stories here even more compelling and easier for young readers to grasp. Though the concluding discussion on archaeologist work and the glossary of key terms are a useful addition, an index and suggestions for further reading would round out the back matter. VERDICT This social history will appeal to upper-elementary and young junior high school readers who are curious about the past and its relation to a positive and peaceable future.—Kelly Kingrey-Edwards Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781662525940 | THE LOST ONES | RUNDBERG, JOHAN | Horn Book Guide Starred 3/1/2025 Rundberg's pair of 1880s detectives -- twelve-year-old orphan Mika from Stockholm's Public Children's Home and police detective Valdemar Hoff -- investigate the disappearance of a wealthy family's teenage daughter, Beatrice. "Children disappear all the time," says Mika, hearing of the case; Valdemar's answer, "I hardly need to tell you that some lives are valued more than others," voices a theme inherent in the series' earlier books, but that here takes on deeper, darker meaning. The pair realizes that Beatrice is pregnant and hiding from her parents, who want to dispose of the unwanted baby by sending Beatrice to the "Dark Angel" when it's time to give birth. Rundberg brings the Moonwind Mysteries full circle: the Dark Angel, having haunted the series from its first pages, emerges from the shadows as a person for whom "the unthinkable [has] become a habit." In a "brilliant...not to mention insanely dangerous" plan, Mika and Valdemar close in on the villain. This entry -- like the previous installments (beginning with The Night Raven, rev. 9/23) -- is exceptional: for its dry, witty humor and compelling plot; its characterizations, at once engaging and deeply respectful (Mika is indomitable: perceptive, adamant, compassionate, and vulnerable); and especially for the gravitas at the heart of its crime solving, an awareness of a deep inequity that resonates well beyond the stories' historical and geographical setting. Swedish noir for the young. Deirdre F. Baker |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781324019992 | MANY THINGS UNDER A ROCK : (YOUNG READERS EDITION) | SCHEEL, DAVID | Booklist 12/1/2024 Grades 5-8 - Grades 5-8 - Grades 5-8 - "This young readers' version of a behavioral ecologist's study of the giant Pacific octopus makes for great, educational reading. It may frustrate report writers looking for quick facts, but kids who enjoy informative nonfiction that unfolds like a story will be entertained by the author's slightly meandering narrative. He tells of working with tribal elders in Alaska, his research methodology, and his adventures deep underwater, tracking down elusive and solitary octopuses. He effectively communicates his passion and awe for these fascinating creatures and shares his ongoing scientific findings that debunk outdated, often contradictory assumptions about octopuses' life cycles. He recounts historic records of octopus infestations and subsequent disappearances in various parts of the world, dating back to the nineteenth century, and takes an open-ended view of myths, legends, and stories from the past featuring descriptions of huge, predatory monsters that may or may not have been octopuses. An eloquent addition for STEM collections, this cross-curricular offering touches on ocean and shoreline habitats, ecology, conservation, the effects of climate change, marine biology careers, and lots of octopuses." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526396 | METAMORPHIC ROCKS : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT R | EASON, SARAH | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526440 | MINERALS : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT ROCKS! | EASON, SARAH | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781536236217 | THE MISSING : THE TRUE STORY OF MY FAMILY IN WORLD WAR II | ROSEN, MICHAEL | School Library Connection Star 10/1/2020 Do not miss this compelling new memoir from the esteemed Michael Rosen. The content here centers around Rosen conveying his personal journey in uncovering his family's history. With great delicacy he explains the impact the Holocaust had on his parents, his great aunts and uncles, and various other family members. He purposefully shares the names and life stories of his aunts and uncles who were lost during the Holocaust. Moreover, he depicts the emotions, specifically the guilt and shame, felt by his parents and his uncles who did not live in persecuted regions. This memoir is sprinkled with references to the cultural, ethnic, and political problems commonly discussed today, but Rosen makes it clear that these references mostly comprise his personal opinions and fears. Chapters are consistently manageable in length, making this memoir well suited to book groups and read alouds. Educators can follow up with independent readers to talk through the seriousness of the book's subjects. Most chapters close with pieces of poetry that add another element to the memoir and convey his mental process as he learns more about his family's history. Captivated readers may seek out more stories like this, and Rosen has compiled a robust recommended reading list at the conclusion of this book. The curious set will be inspired to discover more of their own family stories following their reading of this title, presenting an opportunity for educators to curate lists of materials about the Holocaust and family genealogy to prepare for these inquiries. Caitlin Bennett HIGHLY RECOMMENDED |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780593488362 | MOONSTORM | LEE, YOON HA | School Library Journal 6/1/2024 Gr 7 Up—Hwa Young's first experience with Imperial lancers comes when they attack her clan on a rebel moon, destroying her home and rescuing her from the fallout. Six years later, Hwa Young is a student in a New Joseon military academy striving to become a lancer pilot, desperate to never be powerless again. Lancers are giant robots in the shape of Old Joseon's armored warriors, vital tools to enforce the Empress's will, and the strongest weapons in her arsenal. Hwa Young's rebel past makes it important she remains in step with everyone as she strives to be top of her class, because conformity is highly valued by the empire. Her fears and insecurities are a driving force in her character arc, especially when she ends up stranded with her classmates—who might be her allies but are definitely not her friends. The tension between Hwa Young's planner childhood and her loyalty to the Empire doesn't feel sincere, since readers never truly doubt which side will win out. Lee's concise prose explores themes of loyalty and colonialism, while always pushing the narrative forward. The story would have benefited from more time spent exploring the world and its inhabitants, as the propulsive plot keeps readers from becoming attached to the characters and their stakes. It features a Korean cast, with multiple nonbinary secondary characters. VERDICT Hand to readers who are too young for Xiran Jay Zhao's Iron Widow. An additional purchase for collections actively seeking more science fiction.—Emmy Neal Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250881656 | MOUNTAIN OF FIRE : THE ERUPTION AND SURVIVORS OF MOUNT ST. HELENS | BARONE, REBECCA E F | School Library Journal Starred 9/1/2024 Gr 5 Up—Right from the prologue, author and scientist Barone captivates readers with this narrative nonfiction account from real people involved in the events surrounding the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980. Barone also weaves in scientific facts and explanations of certain indicators of volcanic activity in an accessible informative manner for younger audiences. Dramatic tension, whether in the writing, the actual event, or both, builds as readers see the cascade of incidents happen in what feels like real time. Knowing the eventual conclusion of this series of events does not overshadow the uncertainty and unease felt by scientists, law enforcement, tourists, or residents of the area throughout the unpredictable nature and final eruption of the mountain looming above them. Told in a narrative approach, the accounts make readers feel as if they are part of the details and events being shared; this presses the point that some of the people involved could actually be someone readers know. A trigger warning may be necessary: the real-life aftermath of this tragic event is the loss of many lives and the destruction of many communities. VERDICT Don't judge a book by a dated-looking cover. This title is an engaging read and would be good for those seeking to boost nonfiction and historical collections with this explosive title.—Cat Miserendino Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781728460413 | MYSTERIOUS GLOWING MAMMALS : AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY SPARKS | PARROTT-RYAN, MARIA | School Library Journal Starred 9/1/2023 Gr 4 Up—When a scientist accidentally finds a glowing flying squirrel in his backyard, a whole chain of scientific events is set into motion. Did you know there are mammals that glow different colors under a UV light? Or that this is called bioluminescence, which differs from bioluminescence? How about what a naturalist, a chemist, and a biologist might have in common and what their specific roles are in a scientific discovery? This title answers all those questions and so many more. The narrative nonfiction format reads like an adventure novel, exploding with every text feature imaginable from maps and diagrams to an abundance of sidebars devoted to deep dives on things like how UV light works and differences between mammal species. The text is strongly aligned to curriculum standards, covering topics such as animal traits and classification while thoroughly exploring the scientific process through story and inquiry. Abundant full-color photographs are sprinkled throughout as well as a QR code which links to a YouTube video of the glowing flying squirrels. Young explorers are encouraged to think critically, look at the varying perspectives of a new discovery, and seek out their own observations. Parrot-Ryan urges, "Discoveries don't have to come in a flashy neon package to lead to some exciting science." An author's note, glossary, index, and suggested further reading are also included in the back matter. VERDICT A must-purchase for collections serving curious minds, suitable for upper elementary or middle grades.—Emily Beasley Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781419746345 | THE MYTHMAKERS : THE REMARKABLE FELLOWSHIP OF C.S. LEWIS & J.R.R. TOLKIEN | HENDRIX, JOHN | Horn Book Guide 11/1/2024 In this ambitious tandem biography of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, we are presented with two approaches to the lives and friendship of these noted writers. A straightforward linear biography, accompanied by copious illustrations, places the men in their historical contexts using dense and sophisticated prose. ("Militarism, intertwined alliances, and a misplaced nationalism fomented a desire for adventure on the field of battle.") A second route through the book involves two guides, a cartoon lion and wizard, who begin by leading us, in meandering graphic-format style, through the wide-ranging subject of mythology (the book ends with a similar examination of fairy tales) and later take their turn carrying the biographical material. In the individual life stories, Hendrix chooses well-worn through lines: Lewis's movement from atheism to Christian belief and Tolkien's struggle to be taken seriously as a writer of fantasy. It is, however, the story of platonic male friendship between "Jack" and "Tollers" that packs the biggest emotional punch. Hendrix captures, in this portrait of a meeting of minds, the particular joys of their friendship, its intensity, and its tragic unraveling. What went wrong? Professional jealousy? The inevitability of touchy writerly egos? Lewis's marriage? Readers are left to wander back through the pages, or consult other sources suggested in the exhaustive scholarly back matter (including extensive source notes, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index), to draw their own conclusions. Sarah Ellis |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250818379 | OASIS | GUOJING | Horn Book Guide Starred 3/1/2025 As this graphic novel opens, JieJie and her younger brother, Didi, press their way through a windswept landscape toward an isolated telephone booth in the desert. It's their way of reaching their mother, who works at a factory in the "paradise" city of Oasis to make ends meet. The next time they try, on Didi's birthday, they don't get through; worried, they trek across a vast wasteland, without water and with only the clothes on their backs, toward Oasis. Along the way, they stumble upon the remnants of an abandoned, obsolete AI robot, which they activate to play the role of a mother. Before long, they develop a loving relationship with this artificial life form, but how will it compare with their real mother? The story unfolds cinematically, with carefully orchestrated images capturing evocative facial expressions in dynamic exchanges between characters seeking refuge and familial reconciliation. Softly shaded charcoal-esque panels (in pencil, toner powder, and digital editing) create a bleak, atmospheric mood, with occasional bursts of vibrant light. Themes of struggling for survival, preserving family connections, embracing humanity, and cultivating love resonate throughout this endearing tale of perseverance marked by hope against all odds. Jerry Dear |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781459838956 | OCTOPUS OCEAN : GENIUSES OF THE DEEP | LEIREN-YOUNG, MARK | School Library Journal Starred 2/1/2025 Gr 4–7—Researchers are still discovering new things about octopuses (not octopi) almost every day, even new octopuses! There are at least 300 different kinds, ranging from species tinier than an eyeball to the giant pacific octopus, explored by award-winning author, filmmaker, and podcaster Leiren-Young in this installment of the "Orca Wild" series. The author chronicles his experiences with an octopus named Storm as part of his research. Delving deeply into the world of the cephalopods (octopus, squid, and cuttlefish species), including the newest research on intelligence and personality, his first-person account will leave readers feeling as if they're exploring the ocean alongside him. Incredible facts are still being unearthed about one of the smartest animals on the planet, like their brains being located behind their eyes and wrapping around their stomachs. Close-up color photographs throughout are vivid and fascinating. Engaging features include inset photos and text with enthralling facts sure to grab the attention of young readers. An entire chapter is devoted to chronicling the stories of escape-artist octopuses and other noted octopuses, such as Rambo, who learned how to use a waterproof camera. Included are a table of contents, glossary, resources, index, and quotes from figures like Jane Goodall. VERDICT Budding scientists and animal lovers will keep this stellar title in full circulation as they learn the mysteries and history of octopuses, from their biology, habitats, habits, and threats to their future.—Michele Shaw Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250326928 | OLIVETTI | MILLINGTON, ALLIE | Horn Book Guide 5/1/2024 Ernest is a quiet, shy boy fascinated by the Oxford English Dictionary. Along with his three siblings and his father, he is disturbed and mystified by the sudden disappearance of his mother, Beatrice. In his quest to find her, Ernest has two allies: outgoing friend Quinn and a sentient typewriter named Olivetti. Olivetti can see, hear, feel, and — though otherwise inanimate — communicate by typing (as long as someone provides paper). The typewriter also retains a memory of everything that was ever typed on him. His first-person narration alternates with Ernest's as the mystery plot deepens. Clues and shenanigans, quirks and magic, create a smokescreen for both Ernest and the reader, obscuring the real-world human story of a parent with cancer, which is gradually and poignantly revealed. In a surreal, rollicking conclusion, Ernest and his family, including the returned Beatrice, join forces with Olivetti to liberate and repair abandoned typewriters and create a revolution of joyful human-typewriter interaction. The point here could involve an upending of our dystopian AI worries, or could be as simple as a celebration of writing as a therapeutic endeavor in times of trouble. Either way, Ernest is a memorable character in an equally memorable family. Sarah Ellis |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780593856451 | OPPENHEIMER AND THE ATOMIC BOMB : YOUNG READERS EDITION OF AMERICAN PROMETHEUS | BIRD, KAI | School Library Journal 5/1/2025 Gr 5 Up—A dense but fascinating biography on the controversial "father of the atomic bomb," whose work has impacted all of humanity. Adapted from American Prometheus, the basis of the Oscar-winning film, this extensive work covers physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer's childhood, education, prominence as the scientific director of the Manhattan Project's Los Alamos Laboratory and the development of the atomic bomb, and the work he did to campaign for disarmament. Bird, Sherwin, and Singer present extensive details on his early brilliance, mental health issues, personal and political life, and the complicated creation of the single most deadly weapon to ever be used in war. While the writing is often compelling, the narrative sometimes gets bogged down by minutia that will make young readers' eyes glaze over, especially in the first half. The authors balance the text about Oppenheimer's life with sporadic insights into the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Plentiful black-and-white photos, diagrams, and pull quotes break up the text and back matter includes a list of historical figures, end notes, and index. VERDICT Despite some faults, this book is a strong choice for nonfiction shelves and as a curricular tie-in due to the significance of the subject's contribution to science and world history.—Shelley M. Diaz Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780823460236 | PINE ISLAND VISITORS | HORVATH, POLLY | Horn Book Guide 9/1/2023 Now happily settled after the drama of Pine Island Home (rev. 9/20), orphaned sisters Fiona, Marlin, Natasha, and Charlie face new challenges when their former guardian, Mrs. Weatherspoon, announces that she is arriving from Australia for a prolonged visit -- and unexpectedly shows up with a companion. Fiona, now fifteen, is furious that the nasty, intrusive, and demanding Jo seems to be ruining her family; she finds some solace in her journal, which becomes a friend, along with the teacher who responds to her entries. Meanwhile, Marlin is struggling with her outcast status at school and the lack of publisher interest in her cookbook, "Thirty Meals a Twelve-Year-Old Could Make and Did!"; Natasha turns out to be a prodigy on the violin but just wants to commune with the natural world; and youngest sibling Charlie desperately wants a dog. True to form, Horvath packs this sequel (which takes readers from the beginning of the school year through Christmas) with relatable incident, vivid dialogue, humor, and moments of profound reflection on the human condition. Martha V. Parravano |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781419743894 | A PLACE CALLED AMERICA : A STORY OF THE LAND AND PEOPLE | THERMES, JENNIFER | Horn Book Guide 11/1/2023 "Maps show how humans have used borders to divide the land into villages, towns, states, and countries. Much of the story of human history has been about the quest for land and who controls it." In this ambitious and comprehensive account, Thermes (The Indestructible Tom Crean, rev. 1/23) first chronicles European colonization and the aftermath it had -- and continues to have -- on Indigenous inhabitants of this continent. She goes on to describe successive waves of migration, both forced (the enslavement of Africans; Japanese incarceration during World War II) and voluntary, and mentions ongoing immigration issues. She weaves these narratives into larger political events, especially wars and territorial expansion. The design here is flawless: the illustrations, text, maps, and sidebars work in concert to synthesize and convey not only a large amount of complex information, but information that requires subtlety and nuance in its presentation (and though the art might sometimes be considered cozy, the text does not mince words: "The lie that a person with light skin was superior to one with dark skin tightened its grip"). Moreover, this extended nonfiction picture book has a slightly oversize trim, which, along with the pastel-colored illustrations rendered in watercolor, colored pencil, and ink, recalls the work of the d'Aulaires. This book too has the look and feel of a classic that readers will revisit time and again to fully absorb the details in both text and illustration. A selected bibliography recommends further resources, while an extensive timeline occupies both endpapers. Jonathan Hunt |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250833983 | POWER TO THE PARASITES! | WOOD, CHELSEA L | Booklist Starred Reviews 11/1/2024 Grades 4-8 - "'Starred Review' Slimy, squirmy, and even poop-flecked: the qualities about parasites that repulse us become food for thought (and luckily, nothing more) in this entertaining examination of the important roles they play in the environment. Fans of Brenna Maloney's Buzzkill (2022) and the jaunty manner in which it elevates insects will appreciate parasitologist Wood's personal and cheery approach to these often microscopic organisms. Following a brief introduction to parasites and their basic biology and reproductive methods, individual chapters conversationally focus on distinct parasites from around the world as well as their special survival skills. Each chapter is a generous mix of eews and aahs, whether inspecting a tiny cousin of the jellyfish that damages the spines of trout, the parasitoid wasp revered by farmers because its babies turn plant-eating aphids into "mummies," or the Nipah virus, which humans can acquire by accidentally drinking bat pee (don't worry, this is rare!). Woven throughout the creepiness, however, is science related to parasitic behavior and ecosystems, including their complex life cycles; how they reduce the number of unwanted (by human standards, anyway) hosts, like insects and rats; and ways parasites might help humans fight autoimmune diseases. Black-and-white cartoon spot art highlights some of these unusual parasite-host relationships. Utilizing pop-culture references and personal anecdotes, Wood delightfully demystifies these often-dreaded creatures." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593615614 | PUZZLED : A MEMOIR ABOUT GROWING UP WITH OCD | COOKE, PAN | School Library Journal 4/1/2024 Gr 6-8—A vulnerable account of trying to fit in, finding your place in the world, and the experience of being a regular teen while living with chronic intrusive thoughts. The vivid graphic representations of these intrusive thoughts in the main character Pan's mind tangibly illustrate the struggles that they face, while the supporting text demonstrates how they operate outwardly in the public sphere. Pan's thoughts, set in a blue-gray palette, become known as the Puzzle, which they try to solve through different regimens that seemingly overtake them. In contrast, Pan's public life is shown in brighter, more vibrant shades. In such an authentic representation, the content surrounding OCD may be triggering to some readers; however, the author gives a realistic and frank perspective to symptoms and signs of the disorder, while also dispelling the myths and stereotypes that are often associated with it. Puzzled includes other heavy topics, such as mental health, peer pressure, eating disorders, bullying, anxiety, faith, and family. VERDICT A powerful graphic novel memoir that gives readers an authentic account of life with OCD; for collections that include Sunshine by Jarrett J. Krosoczka and A Work in Progress by Jarrett Lerner.—Cat Miserendino Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780063428409 | THE QUEEN'S RISING | ROSS, REBECCA | School Library Journal 11/1/2017 Gr 8 Up—This debut is a sprawling girl-powered fantasy that pulls readers on an adventure that spans generations. Raised by her grandfather, Brienna knows nothing of her father except that he lives in Maevena, the troubled and violent kingdom to the north of her native Valenia. At 10, her grandfather spirits her away to Magnalia House in as much an effort to hide her from her father as to teach her to become a passion—an expert in one of the five Valenian virtues. Just as Brienna is on the verge of gaining her passion, she begins to have strange visions: memories of a Maeven man who may have been her ancestor. These visions lead Brienna into the thick of a plot to usurp Maevena's cruel King Lannon and place the country's rightful queen on the throne, but the more Brienna learns about her past, the more her future is endangered. Although the story starts off a bit slowly with Brienna's misadventures at Magnalia and plenty of luscious world-building, once the visions start, Ross expertly weaves Brienna's past and present into a compelling page-turner. Smart readers may find that the extensive front matter, including family trees of many of the characters, telegraph some of the narrative's twists and turns, but there are still plenty of surprises to keep readers guessing. VERDICT Hand this magical debut to teen readers who loved the close female friendships of Shannon Hale's Princess Academy or the sprawling epics of Sarah J. Maas's "Throne of Glass" series.—Mimi Powell, Library Systems and Services, Kissimmee, FL Copyright 2017 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781773069913 | THE REHEARSAL CLUB | FODOR, KATE | Booklist 3/1/2025 Grades 3-7 - Grades 3-7 - "This split-time novel begins in the present day with 12-year-old Paloma "Pal" Gallagher working to find her footing after a recent move to New York City. Pal's story is intersected with Olive's, who, in 1954, lived at the Rehearsal Club, a boarding house for young women looking to make it big on Broadway. Their stories begin to bleed into each other when, in the present day, Pal finally has the chance to stay with her sister, Naomi, at the famed Rehearsal Club and is enveloped in the energy and drama of the place. When curiosity gets the best of her, Pal stumbles across some old memorabilia and finds herself immersed in the decades-old secrets of the Rehearsal Club—secrets held by Olive. This quirky, funny mystery is the first by screenwriter-and-author duo Fodor and Petrou. An ode to New York City that prominently features the real-life Rehearsal Club in Midtown Manhattan, Pal's and Olive's stories are sure to delight readers of all ages, especially budding theater kids." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780399545474 | REMEMBER US | WOODSON, JACQUELINE | Booklist Starred Reviews 9/1/2023 Grades 4-8 - ""Starred Review" Sage is spending the summer before seventh grade doing her favorite thing in the world: playing basketball at the park in her beloved Bushwick neighborhood. She's the only girl on the court, but she knows she's as good as any guy in the close-knit bunch and dreams of playing professionally. A new kid, Freddy, quickly falls in with the sports set and becomes inseparable from Sage in particular. Though it may all sound idyllic, it's a supremely strange time in their corner of 1970s Brooklyn—homes are regularly burning to the ground in "The Matchbox," and Sage's mother is keen to relocate them to a safer part of town. A tragic death combined with a threatening confrontation on the basketball court sees the previously confident Sage question her place in every aspect of her world, and it takes all of her courage and the community strength to find her way again. The deeply moving novel from National Book Award winner Woodson is both elegant and accessible, and the pithy, lyrical approach works wonderfully here, with occasional chapters consisting of only a few dramatic lines. Bushwick and its inhabitants are fully fleshed out with incredible detail and immense tenderness, and Sage immediately feels like a dear friend. A poignant portrayal of a historic neighborhood and an outstanding ode to the grief and gift of growing older.HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Woodson is one of the most esteemed figures in children's publishing, and her historical fiction especially can't be missed." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9798765627457 | SACHIKO : A NAGASAKI BOMB SURVIVOR'S STORY | STELSON, CAREN | School Library Journal Starred 9/1/2016 Gr 5-8—Sachiko Yasui was just six years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on her hometown of Nagasaki. On August 9, 1945, she went from playing house with her friends to burying them. Yasui also lost a brother that day and would lose many more family members because of radiation sickness. Growing up, she was ostracized for her status as hibakusha, a bomb survivor. Despite her trauma and the bullying she faced, Yasui endured. She sought out inspiration from the likes of Helen Keller, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Their works allowed her to make peace with the events in her life. Stelson recounts hearing Yasui speak at a ceremony to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This event would spark a long and intimate process in which Stelson repeatedly met with and interviewed Yasui in order to tell her story. Frequent historical notes provide context to the events happening in the narrative: Japan's role in World War II, the issue of racism in the war, President Truman's ultimatum, the effects of radiation sickness, the U.S. occupation of Japan after the war, and more. Back matter includes a glossary of Japanese terms used in the book and detailed maps of where events took place. VERDICT This sensitive and well-crafted account of a Nagasaki bomb survivor is an essential addition to World War II biography collections for middle school students.—Deidre Winterhalter, Niles Public Library, IL Copyright 2016 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250216892 | SCIENCE COMICS : BRIDGES : ENGINEERING MASTERPIECES | ZETTWOCH, DAN | Booklist 5/1/2023 Grades 4-8 - "This informative offering from the reliable Science Comics series introduces Bea, Archie, Trudy, and Spence, members of a bridge fan club called B.A.T.S. The story follows the group as they travel across the globe, offering information about different types of bridges, such as beam, arch, truss, and suspension, along the way. Each member has a favorite type of bridge and gets an entire chapter dedicated to traveling to countries where some of the world's most iconic bridges are located. Librarians are no strangers to this sensational series, which presents factual information in a graphic storytelling format. Bridges brings the same high quality information and sophisticated storytelling to its readers as the rest of the titles in the series. The illustrations do a great job of providing excellent visuals of the stunning bridges throughout the story as well as displaying the facts in a way that is easy to understand. This is an easy pick for any school and public library collection." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626728219 | SCIENCE COMICS : CARS : ENGINES THAT MOVE YOU | ZETTWOCH, DAN | Booklist 6/1/2019 Grades 4-7 - Usually paced to highlight visual language, comics are not generally prized as educational texts. More plaudits, then, for First Second's Science Comics series' latest installment, in which they've reimagined the scope of comics again and demonstrated how useful comics can be for teaching scientific concepts. This slim volume about cars is jam-packed with information that is fueled rather than hampered by its visual language. In four sections that cover the invention, design, culture, and impact on the environment of cars, Zettwoch manages to survey essentially every scientific and mechanical development necessary to the creation and evolution of the automobile, from millions of years ago (fire and combustion) to the near future (driverless cars). The winding scenery that gives this journey warmth is historical anecdotes the world's first getaway car(?) and visual flourishes charting things like aesthetic transformations, land speed records, and weird cars. Illustrating all this data could make for unreadable clutter, but Zettwoch imbues his visually dense pages with personality and flow befitting his subject. Includes glossary, notes and bibliography. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250841292 | SCIENCE COMICS : DEEP SEA CREATURES : ADAPTING TO THE ABYSS | LAWRENCE, MIKE | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626721449 | SCIENCE COMICS : DINOSAURS : FOSSILS AND FEATHERS | REED, M K | School Library Connection 10/1/2016 <p>Science-themed, fact-filled graphic novels might not be an entirely new concept. Even so, this series covers some topics that could be unusual to the form. While dinosaurs might not be a terribly unique subject matter, certainly coral reefs are worthy of further study. Either way, there is no denying that the illustrations are as striking as the content. The titles share little in common, with different authors and illustrators for each. <i>Coral Reefs</i> has chapter breaks (which can prove tricky to spot) and <i>Dinosaurs</i> does not. <i>Dinosaurs</i> has a glossary, while <i>Coral Reefs</i> does not. This does not seem much of an issue as students should gravitate to the subjects in the series they have interest in. Even in cases in which a student is familiar with the subject covered, these will no doubt still prove refreshing and a thrill to flip through.</p> Joel Shoemaker RECOMMENDED |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626727687 | SCIENCE COMICS : DOGS : FROM PREDATOR TO PROTECTOR | HIRSCH, ANDY | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2018 Man's best friend is discussed in this volume of a continuing series exploring science topics via graphic-novel format. The history, genetics, and behavior of dogs are all touched on. The brightly colored comic-book art has a lighthearted, sometimes even silly, style that manages not to bury the detailed science lessons. Reading list. Glos. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250265845 | SCIENCE COMICS : ELECTRICITY : ENERGY IN ACTION | HIRSCH, ANDY | Kirkus Review 3/1/2023 Saving the world might not have been in Julie's holiday plans, but it sure beats doing homework. In a quasi-dystopian future, machines are the last bastions of defense between monsters and humans. Julie's Uncle Niko, a retired mech pilot, guards a lighthouse, keeping storms and monsters at bay with the help of Menlo, an automated defender. But when Menlo loses power and the monsters escape and begin wreaking havoc on the city, electricity might be the only thing that can put things right. The story blends fact and fiction; woven into the narrative are intricate, immersive illustrations of a variety of electromagnetic principles, including types of energy, power sources, and currents; voltage; and more. These topics are explained at a higher level than is typically found in children's books, demanding careful attention to ensure understanding. Some readers might get lost in the details even if they find the concepts interesting. The book often reads more like a series of infodumps, with an ostensibly connecting thread of plot the author occasionally remembers to check back in on. Hints at a wider world, one that's sustained primarily by renewable energy sources in the wake of human-induced environmental destruction, are intriguing but poorly developed. Julie and Uncle Niko are light-skinned. Informative but clumsily executed. (glossary) (Graphic nonfiction. 9-13) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250268853 | SCIENCE COMICS : FROGS : AWESOME AMPHIBIANS | PRINCE, LIZ | School Library Journal Starred 11/1/2023 Gr 3-8—Frogs are fascinating, frogs are phenomenal. Frogs are truly wonders of evolution, and the publisher's latest addition to the popular, plentiful "Science Comics" series dives headlong into exploring this amazing amphibian. Readers' proxy in this investigation is Fran, a kid recently relocated to a rural area from the big city who, when urged to explore by her dad, discovers a pond containing a slightly snarky tadpole who swiftly whisks her away to Amphibian Academy. There, Professor Sal A. Mander highlights the commonalities between Anura (the order comprised of frogs and toads), and other amphibians—primarily semipermeable skin and unique respiratory systems. From there, frogs become the focus: their metamorphosis from egg to adult; modes of communication (croak-based and otherwise); and environmental adaptations, such as wood frogs transforming into frogsicles and poisonous frogs signaling their inedibility through aposematism. Prince's illustrations are a perfect mix of colorfully cute—including visions of a rainbow of petite poisonous pals—and surprisingly precise, with detailed anatomical diagrams galore. The greatest strength of the comic is its commitment to illustrating broader points about amphibious animals with pinpointed examples of species differentiation, which will awe readers in their dizzying variety. VERDICT Prince's devoted investigation of frogs and toads offers effortless education for readers of all ages and levels of interest, poised to make an Anura aficionado of every reader.—Emilia Packard Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626727526 | SCIENCE COMICS : PLAGUES : THE MICROSCOPIC BATTLEFIELD | KOCH, FALYNN | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2018 In this volume of a continuing series exploring science topics via graphic-novel format, readers learn about plagues, their causes, and how they spread. A scientist communicates with different disease cells (pictured as a blobby face and appendages); this humorous artistic choice lightens a difficult topic. Behind the book's silly premise there's lots to learn from the detailed scientific discussions. Reading list, timeline. Glos. |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781626728233 | SCIENCE COMICS : POLAR BEARS : SURVIVAL ON THE ICE | GIALLONGO, ZACK | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626728264 | SCIENCE COMICS : ROCKETS : DEFYING GRAVITY | DROZD, ANNE | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250203960 | SCIENCE COMICS : ROCKS AND MINERALS : GEOLOGY FROM CAVERNS T | HIRSCH, ANDY | School Library Journal Starred 7/1/2020 Gr 5–7—Having pounced on a rock and exulted over its capture, Sedona, a weathered but robustly built field scientist, leads equally histrionic young Wally, her would-be assistant, on a brisk geophysical tour that begins with the big bang and proceeds with plenty of arm waving through the Earth's formation and on to the intricate stages of the rock cycle. Her narrative, despite being rich in specific details and technical terms (ophiolite, batholith, speleothems), never seems to crowd the mix of bright, energetic cartoon panels and ingenious infographics that illustrate it. Readers intrepid enough to follow from the bottom of our planet's oceans to the top of one of its tallest peaks (Mauna Loa, actually taller than Everest) will come away with clear ideas of the distinctive conditions that lead to the formation of dozens of minerals, rocks, and crystals, as well as a coherent overview of the complex processes that have been shaping Earth's surface for billions of years—and will continue to do so for billions more. VERDICT A rock-solid review for serious students of our planet's story, infused with humor and wonder.—John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York Copyright 2020 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626727953 | SCIENCE COMICS : SKYSCRAPERS : THE HEIGHTS OF ENGINEERING | KERSCHBAUM, JOHN | School Library Journal 10/1/2019 Gr 4–6—In a visual history of the innovations that have made it possible to design and construct tall buildings, a nerdy superhero flies his sidekick Quiz Kid on a worldwide tour, from Egypt's ancient Great Pyramid of Giza to Dubai's Burj Khalifa skyscraper, with stops to pay homage to notable achievements in engineering, such as Chicago's Home Insurance Building and New York's Flatiron Building. From there, the duo check out the structural features of modern skyscrapers, watch a building go up, and learn about the nitty-gritty of foundations, concrete, trusses, the role of mass dampers in reducing vortex shedding, elevators, and the evolution of greener structures. Though the dialogue bubbles sometimes swell to the bursting point with information, our tour guide's explanations are as clear as the cleanly drawn cartoon cutaways and construction sites. Quiz Kid's exclamations ("Kew!!", "Wowza!") lighten the text, as do his flashbacks about rescuing his inept mentor from supervillains. The content consistently rises above the cutesy expressions: "But up, up, and away you go! Conquering obstacle after obstacle with science!" VERDICT An engaging and welcome update to Lynn Curlee's Skyscraper or Chris Oxlade's Skyscrapers. -John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York Copyright 2019 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626721425 | SCIENCE COMICS : SOLAR SYSTEM : OUR PLACE IN SPACE | MOSCO, ROSEMARY | School Library Journal Starred 8/1/2018 Gr 3–5—In a rousing effort to cure her sick friend Sara's ennui, if not her cold, Jill fashions an imaginary spaceship, the Unbored, powered by "EnthusiPlasma"; crews it with space-suited versions of their pets; and sends it on a tour of the solar system—"underground oceans, huge storms, giant canyons" and all. Moving from the sun outward, the intrepid (well, mostly) Space Pets land on or fly by each planet (including Earth) and select moons. The onboard AI and Jill's snake, "Science Officer Slithers," deliver quick, accurate facts and "scareinteresting" observations. In his squared-off and inset cartoon panels, Chad mixes images of extraterrestrial wonders with awed or apprehensive reactions from the Space Pets, striking a visual balance between fact and fancy so that the tour never feels like an info dump. Following a suspenseful rescue on Uranus's moon Miranda, the itinerary ends at Pluto with tantalizing glimpses of the Kuiper Belt, the Oort cloud, and the stars and galaxies beyond. Readers who, like Sara, are ready for further exploration will be delighted to find the Unbored's EnthusiPlasma tanks fuller than ever. VERDICT A story line infused with humor and drama adds particular animation to this entry in the "Science Comics" series; budding astro-tourists in middle elementary grades will happily sign up for repeat journeys.—John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York Copyright 2018 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626728011 | THE SCIENCE COMICS : THE BRAIN : THE ULTIMATE THINKING MACHINE | WOOLLCOTT, TORY | Booklist Starred Reviews 11/15/2018 Grades 4-7 - "Starred Review" While out selling scout cookies, Fahama gets abducted by an evil scientist who wants to dissect her brain! Luckily, Dr. Cerebrum is easily distracted and spends most of the time teaching Fahama (and us) all about her brain before he can get a chance to remove it. The text is a little more hefty than previous installments in the Science Comics series, which is understandable, given the amount of information discussed—nearly everything in the brain and nervous system, even the five senses and how they relate to the brain, is touched on. Woolcott combats these new definitions and concepts with plenty of puns and story breaks featuring Fahama's irrepressible sister, Nour, who's out looking for her. Nour, who delivers such hilarious lines as, "this cookie tastes of burning and lies," will definitely keep readers plugging away through the more challenging passages. Gaudins does an equally great job of breaking down high-level concepts and making them easily accessible to the upper elementary crowd, with clearly drawn diagrams and illustrations of brain mechanics. Much like the accompanying text, Gaudins' cartoons help break down the academic concepts without being patronizing and, happily, while making learning fun. A particularly well-executed and thought-provoking installment in this reliable nonfiction series. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250143112 | SCIENCE COMICS : TREES : KINGS OF THE FOREST | HIRSCH, ANDY | School Library Journal Starred 8/1/2018 Gr 4–8—A newly fallen acorn is having doubts about becoming a tree, declaring that staying in one place like a statue is lonely and boring. But when a variety of woodland fauna and flora edify the young acorn about the dynamic functions of trees, he changes his mind. The details and vocabulary make this much more than a simple introductory book on the topic. Hirsch extensively covers various plant systems, trees' relationships with other life-forms, and how the environment and climate affect trees. The comic format is engaging and the artwork colorful and fun. Children will develop a deeper appreciation for and understanding of trees' important role in the planet's ecology and why their protection and survival are critical to a healthy world. VERDICT Another winner in the series, this title is an excellent addition to most libraries.—Jody Kopple, Shady Hill School, Cambridge, MA Copyright 2018 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781626727908 | SCIENCE COMICS : WILD WEATHER : STORMS, METEOROLOGY, AND CLI | REED, M K | School Library Journal 8/1/2019 Gr 3–6—In this "Science Comics" entry, fictive TV weatherman Stormin' Norman Weatherby schools featherbrained cohost Chase McCloud (and readers) in the essentials of meteorology—from the origins of the term to clouds, fronts, and the water cycle, plus tornados, hurricanes, lightning, and the causes and effects of climate change. Along with being exposed to extreme weather events both real ("Snowpocalypse") and bogus ("Sharknado"), readers will be inundated with easily absorbed information about meteorological gear and tools, blown through a compilation of "wild weather myths" (by consulting meteorologist Alicia Wasula), and pushed into keeping a general disaster plan and kit on hand. In neatly laid out panels, Hill alternates cartoon figures in a TV studio with diagrammatic views of atmospheric elements, molecules in action, and scenes of widespread destruction. VERDICT Readers are sure to be struck—not by lightning (one hopes) but by the scope and drama of the phenomena described in this breezy overview. -John Peters, Children's Literature Consultant, New York Copyright 2019 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526419 | SEDIMENTARY ROCKS : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT R | EASON, SARAH | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/1/2024 Grades 3-6 - ""Starred Review" Ah, the striated beauty of sedimentary rock. If you didn't appreciate it before, you will after reading this selection from The Rock Cycle Road Trip series (6 titles). Adorned with retro road signs, this book guides readers through the geological basics of sedimentary rocks and the rock cycle while also cruising by famous sites ("Rock Stop!") where such rocks can be seen. There are also frequent "Rock Star" profiles that describe an important type of sedimentary rock (e.g., rock salt, limestone, shale, sandstone), laying out a two-page graphic spread that notes the rock's characteristics, "hotspots" (locations where commonly found, indicated on a world map), boxed facts, and photos. It's an effective approach because it does more than pair text with examples. The information is integrated (or reintegrated) at each stop, helping readers to synthesize the concepts in real-world contexts. The importance of this ubiquitous rock comes through in discussions of fossils, fossil fuels, natural building materials, and groundwater. Closing tips for newly minted rock hounds are followed by a quiz to further chisel knowledge into their brains." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780063245990 | SEEDS OF DISCOVERY : HOW BARBARA MCCLINTOCK USED CORN AND CU | ALEXANDER, LORI | Horn Book Guide 3/1/2025 "It might seem unfair to reward a person for having so much pleasure over the years." Geneticist Barbara McClintock's (1902-1992) statement upon receiving the Nobel Prize in the category of Physiology or Medicine in 1983 sets the tone for Alexander's accomplished biography of an extraordinary life in science. The account begins with McClintock's childhood, when she showed early interest in and capacity for science at a time when few women were encouraged to do so. Throughout her career, despite sexism and others' misperceptions, McClintock persisted and thrived, most contentedly at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island, where as a research scientist she studied the genetics of maize and discovered "jumping genes," the relocation of DNA segments across the genome. Alexander's descriptions of laboratory and field work are detailed and effective at illustrating scientific experimentation. Most impressive is her equal attention to the conceptual practices of science, such as developing questions and models, scientific argumentation, and the importance of communicating ideas for scrutiny within the scientific community. Santo's digital illustrations use pastel shades to portray McClintock outdoors for work and for nature walks, in the laboratory, and presenting her research at conferences. Text boxes throughout provide background biology concepts and introduce important historical contributors such as Gregor Mendel and Rosalind Franklin. An illustrated timeline of McClintock's major life events, a glossary, and source notes are appended. Danielle J. Ford |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780823460649 | THE SELKIE'S DAUGHTER | BRENNAN, LINDA CROTT | School Library Journal Starred 12/1/2023 Gr 4-8—Brigit knows that in order to fit in, she must remove the webbing of skin that is growing between her fingers. Although painful, cousin Alys has always helped with this process. Kids at school aren't very accepting of her, given that she's half human, half seal. Being the daughter of a Selkie (seal woman), Brigit lives near Nova Scotia with her parents and little brother Willie. Thankfully, she develops some close friendships that end up being essential when she finds herself alone; her father has disappeared while fishing, and her mother has returned to the sea to find him. A large golden seal holds the key to the village's survival, as he is preventing the fish from being caught and even causing some of the storms that wreak havoc on the villagers and their way of life. The story is written in first person; Brigit and the other characters read as white. Have a tissue box nearby as heartbreak is in sure supply. The struggle between good and evil become blurred as readers are led to consider both sides, both of value. Topics presented include seal pup clubbing, diphtheria, bullying, food insecurities, storm destruction, and the cliques that come with small-town living. VERDICT Expertly told in poetic fashion, this book will hook its readers from sentence one. Highly recommended for all who love fantasy, tragedy, history, and folklore.—Tracy Cronce Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780063207783 | SEVERE AND UNUSUAL WEATHER | FOLEY, JESSIE ANN | Booklist Starred Reviews 5/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - ""Starred Review" Leaving no doubt about which characters to cheer and which to boo, Foley pairs two sixth-graders with very different temperaments but much common ground against a small-town big shot with an ugly secret. Hardly has tough Nadine arrived to stay with her grandma (while her mom goes through rehab back in Chicago) than she's paired up with meek, much-bullied classmate Francis for a special local-history project. They decide to do it on the strange and infamous tornado that hit without warning a dozen years ago, killing Francis' mom and several other residents and leaving him an infant survivor. This does not sit well with blustering Mayor Trevor Ray, who ruthlessly pressures them to pick another topic—for good reason, it turns out, as the young researchers soon uncover hints that the devastating storm might not have been entirely natural in origin. Notwithstanding Nadine's typically hard-nosed claim that no grown-ups have ever done her any favors, the author allows several members of the strong adult supporting cast to brave Ray's wrath with under-the-radar support—most winningly, town librarian Katie-Kate, an ex-marine with PTSD—on the way to a triumphant, thoroughly satisfying denouement, complete with heroic rescues, tearful reunions, and just deserts all round. A breezy, feel-good tale with whiffs of fantasy and wish fulfillment." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781916526426 | SOIL : HIT THE ROAD AND DISCOVER A WORLD THAT ROCKS! | EASON, SARAH | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781419767319 | SPYING ON SPIES : HOW ELIZABETH SMITH FRIEDMAN BROKE THE NAZI'S | MOSS, MARISSA | School Library Journal 10/1/2024 Gr 5 Up—British codebreaker Alan Turing has deservedly received much posthumous praise for his groundbreaking work during World War II; this book focuses on all-but-forgotten history-maker Elizebeth Smith Friedman, his female, American counterpart doing the same work, yet without the technology and a fraction of the staff. Moss introduces readers to Friedman, who, armed with an exceedingly clever mind and a strong sense of justice, helped bust alcohol and arms-selling rings during Prohibition by deciphering their secret messages. With the United States embroiled in WWII, Friedman's skills were called upon again to decipher messages sent by the Axis powers and those sympathetic to their cause. Her story is told through text and short, paneled illustrations at the beginning of each chapter. Although the mix of formats is clever, the illustrated segments rarely add to the visual appeal or the storytelling. Photographs of Friedman and other important players in her story, woefully saved for the back matter, provide a richer view into her life. The remainder of the back matter contains useful supplemental material, including a time line, glossary, and an author's note on types of codes and ciphers. VERDICT For all collections, this is a worthwhile biography about a WWII hero for history buffs and puzzle masters alike.—Alexandra Quay Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9798892328579 | STORIES OF SURVIVAL | EASON, SARAH | Booklist Starred Reviews 4/1/2025 Grades 4-6 - ""Starred Review" When the Titanic sank in April 1912, people around the world clamored to read news of the disaster and its survivors. Few could have predicted that more than a century later, books about the Titanic would remain among the most popular nonfiction choices in library collections for young people. Eason's account, based on "true stories of survivors," shines a spotlight on individuals who spent hours in a lifeboat waiting for rescuers or leapt into the cold Atlantic and survived to tell their exciting tales. Even after the Carpathia heard the Titanic's distress signal and arrived to rescue survivors, many had to face the fact that family members had not survived. In format and illustrations, the book looks like a graphic novel, which is sure to boost its appeal among young readers. The fast-paced narrative is dramatic, the writing is compelling, and the lively art is particularly well done. With titles such as Building the Ship of Dreams and Disaster Strikes, books in the Tragedy! Tales from the Titanic series (6 titles) will easily find their audience." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593533284 | SWIFTS : A GALLERY OF ROGUES | LINCOLN, BETH | Horn Book Guide 9/1/2024 Young detective Shenanigan Swift is at it again. In this sequel to The Swifts: A Dictionary of Scoundrels (rev. 1/23), a robbery of a painting at the family home leads our fearless and hilarious hero and her bevy of eccentric relatives to a new mystery and a new location: Paris. It turns out that the Swifts are linked to a French family, the Martinets. The two clans have been at loggerheads, off and on, since the Norman Conquest. The search for the Swifts' stolen painting leads them to become involved in a radical art-heist group whose mission is to steal art and return it to the original owners, a sort of Robin Hood enterprise. The plot is acrobatic in its complications. While the first book goofed around with the conventions of the English country house mystery, this one revels in the tropes of the stylish French "gentleman thief" tradition (think Arsene Lupin) while presenting the opportunity for outrageous wordplay in two languages and surprises aplenty. It keeps readers on their toes as it sparkles with energy, wit, and good humor. (Final art unseen.) Sarah Ellis |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780374390815 | THREE SUMMERS : A MEMOIR OF SISTERHOOD, SUMMER CRUSHES, AND | SABIC-EL-RAYESS, AMRA | Horn Book Guide 7/1/2024 After eleven-year-old Amra's brother's death from complications of Marfan syndrome, her mother's remedy for Amra's grief is to arrange for her cousin Zana to spend summers with Amra in Bihac, Bosnia. This vividly told and moving memoir takes place over three consecutive summers in the years leading up to the Bosnian Genocide (preceding the events of The Cat I Never Named, rev. 1/21). The first summer of romantic crushes and days spent lazing on the banks of the River Una helps Amra to heal. "I am ancient in the ways of trauma...but [Zana] shows me another way of being." A sense of impending violence, however, undergirds the book's carefree summer setting as simmering political and sectarian tensions slowly heat up. Tata (her father) is detained, interrogated, and loses his job, while anti-Muslim sentiments become more freely voiced. An author's note provides a timeline for the Bosnian Genocide along with a "where they are now" update. The book smartly contrasts more lighthearted preteen drama with looming ethnic and religious tensions, resulting in an engaging reflection on disability and ethnic difference. Julie Hakim Azzam |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780063311640 | THE TROUBLE WITH SECRETS | MILLINER, NAOMI | Publishers Weekly Starred 4/7/2025 Fallout from a tragedy opens this affectionate novel, which traces a close-knit Maryland family's tensions via alternating "Now" and "Before" sections. Readers grow close to each character as Jewish 12-year-old Becky narrates her experiences as the child of a rabbi who, closely watched by congregants, "always had to follow the rules." But when the young flautist's father forbids her from auditioning for the Junior All-County Honors Band so she can focus on preparing for her bat mitzvah, she follows her heart instead of the rules, and finds herself keeping secrets—both her own and 17-year-old sister Sara's—from their parents. Milliner (Super Jake & the King of Chaos) shows well-intentioned Becky, with Sara's help, figuring out when "maybe, sometimes, rules need to be broken," as well as juggling various pressures and her fondness for her family against her attempts to follow her own dreams. Offering warmth alongside a detailed account of Jewish traditions, a family trying its best in difficult situations, and a sensitive depiction of grief and its solaces, it's a rich and complex book for readers navigating new independence. Main characters read as white; a secondary character is of Indian heritage. Ages 8–12. Agent: Liza Fleissig, Liza Royce Agency. (Apr.) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781546104537 | UNDER ATTACK | SKRYPUCH, MARSHA FO | Booklist 12/1/2024 Grades 5-8 - Grades 5-8 - Grades 5-8 - "When a bomb slams into their apartment building in Mariupol on the first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 12-year-old Daria and her mom are separated from her dad and her twin sister, Rada. Surrounded by death and destruction, Daria and Mom shelter in a dank basement under constant bombardment for six weeks. An escape attempt leads to being captured and interrogated, and Daria is designated an official orphan, since her mother is deemed an unfit parent. Daria is shipped off to an orphanage deep within Russia, a quasi concentration camp where she's fed and sheltered but also subjected to endless pro-Russian propaganda. Daria is eventually adopted by a woman who's only interested in Daria's government monthly stipend. The woman's son, Anton, turns out to be an unexpected ally, and Daria eventually reunites with her mom and sister in a refugee camp in the Carpathian Mountains, though her dad remains a prisoner of war. This action-packed novel is a realistic, timely, and grim political indictment of the Russian persecution of the Ukrainian people." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781536226461 | UNSEEN JUNGLE : THE MICROBES THAT SECRETLY CONTROL OUR WORLD | RICE, ELEANOR SPICER | School Library Journal 11/1/2023 Gr 4 Up—Everything you ever did, and didn't, want to know about microbes! Broken down into four sections—house, yard, food, and you—this title explores the microbes that are living on us, in us, and all around us. Rice writes in a fun and humorous tone while discussing all the wonderful, and sometimes insidious, things microbes do. For example, a tiny wasp lays her eggs inside a ladybug and once it hatches, the baby wasp eats the inside of the ladybug and uses its shell to protect itself. Colorful cartoon illustrations are interspersed throughout the text alongside interviews with experts in various fields. Students will find this title engaging and easy to understand. While science can often be complicated, Rice expertly simplifies this topic for young readers. Bolded words are defined in the text and almost all microbe names have a phonetic spelling. Further reading and activities are included in the last chapter for students who want to know more information. A thorough bibliography is also included. VERDICT Fascinating. Recommended for all elementary and middle school collections.—Lisa Buffi Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781669013709 | VIRGINIA HALL : CLEVER SPY OF WORLD WAR II | CHOW, SAMANTHA FERIC | Booklist Starred Reviews 10/15/2023 Grades 3-5 - ""Starred Review" Many women served in WWII, sometimes in nontraditional roles, but most of their efforts have been classified or forgotten. The Daring Women Warriors of WWII series (4 new titles) highlights a few of these overlooked patriots in a graphic-novel format. The volumes present just enough background information on WWII to give context to each woman's difficult assignment. Two distinct fonts delineate concise, factual text from short, imagined dialogue meant to add interest and more detail. Each installment is illustrated by a different artist, adding variety to the series if read as a whole. Virginia Hall relates how Hall turned her desire to work in U.S. diplomacy into a position as a British spy in German-occupied France. The books conclude with a summary of each woman's lasting contributions. An engaging treatment of real heroes from history." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781481459211 | WALKIN' THE DOG | LYNCH, CHRIS | School Library Journal Starred 10/1/2024 Gr 5–9—In his family, Louis is known as the "inactive" who does not want to be involved with anyone or anything. He and his younger sister Faye have been homeschooled for years but, with his mother staying at a residential treatment facility for addiction, his father has decided that Louis will start public high school. His father tries to keep the family afloat, but he is dealing with his own issues, as well. Though younger than Louis, Faye has stepped into a motherly role while their mother stays at the Knoll. Their big brother Ike is a police cadet; Louis has a love-hate relationship with Ike, and Ike has a hate relationship with almost everyone. Lynch's skill at portraying complex family interactions extends to friendships as well. Louis is happily friendless and unbound by any societal ties apart from his nuclear family but, with his mother's urging and his father's desperate need, reaches out to the owner of the neighborhood's stinky dog and surprises everyone by quickly growing a successful dog-walking business. Not only does Louis become an entrepreneur, he makes two very important friends, Agatha and Cy, and he also widens his world and accepts that he must be an active part of life. Lynch's work is lyrical and compelling, but the ending feels a bit rushed. Due to mentions of assault and some rough language, the recommended age level for readers is middle school and up. VERDICT A marvelous modern family story. Readers who enjoy novels of animals and resilience like L.M. Elliott's <i>Bea</i> and the <i>New Deal Horse</i> will inhale Lynch's latest.—Susan Catlett Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781665950824 | WESTFALLEN | BRASHARES, ANN | Horn Book Guide 11/1/2024 When contemporary twelve-year-olds Henry, Frances, and Lukas dig up an old radio in one of their backyards, they find themselves speaking with children of the same age, and at the same location, in 1944. Alice, Lawrence, and Artie do not know the outcome of World War II, and they certainly do not understand the consequences of interfering with a timeline. Soon enough, small, seemingly heroic actions, such as stopping a fire at a beloved candy shop, start to mess with history in very serious ways. The U.S., in 2023, changes overnight to a nightmarish new reality in which the Nazis won WWII and now control the country, renamed Westfallen. The kids from the present and the past must team up to undo the colossal damage that has been done, stopping a spy and thus righting their mistakes, before Westfallen becomes a permanent reality. But that escapade is only the beginning of an adventure that will challenge readers to consider the past, the future, and the nature of history itself. Fascinating time-travel theories collide with historical fiction to set the scene for a story that is suspenseful, complex, and at times humorous. Rapid shifts between past and present might be confusing at first, but as the plot picks up, the details coalesce to form one seamless narrative. The cliffhanger ending will leave readers eager for the next installment in a projected series. Sarah Berman |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593430194 | WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A BIRD : ADAPTED FOR YOUNG READERS : FR | SIBLEY, DAVID ALLEN | School Library Journal Starred 10/1/2023 Gr 4–8—From well-respected birding expert Sibley comes this beautifully illustrated book for middle grade readers, delving into such questions as "Why do birds need feathers?" and "How do birds find food?" The writing is fairly detailed, yet each bird introduced is limited to a spread complete with a colored illustration, making it easier to digest the details. Sensibly organized, Sibley focuses on the essence of each bird species presented. With crows he may focus on behavior, yet with a finch he may choose to share information on feeding or nest building. For readers who may only glean tidbits, there are some mesmerizing facts. Did you know that feathers wear out, birds have no teeth, and all birds molt? In addition to excellent information about a variety of birds, there are occasional activities peppered throughout. There are bird species presented from across the entire United States. Whether readers live in an urban or rural area, we all have birds in our communities to observe and learn about. Sibley achieves this by sharing his own dedication to and fascination with our feathered friends, truly answering the titular question, "what it's like to be a bird?" VERDICT A superior volume of well-researched facts and figures; a must-have for young bird nerds.—Linda Annable Copyright 2023 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593752852 | WHO IS KATIE LEDECKY? | BUCKLEY JR, JAMES | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593888261 | WHO IS TRAVIS KELCE? | LABRECQUE, ELLEN | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781502673060 | WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION | SHEA, THERESE M | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - ""Starred Review" Readers familiar with American history will discover surprising facts and meet trailblazing women in the four books that comprise the Inside Guide: Women in U.S. History series (6 titles). Each volume challenges readers to reconsider their preconceived notions of the past. The American Revolution points out that women whose husbands served in the Continental Army sometimes followed their husbands' regiments, serving as nurses or disguising themselves as men and fighting against the British troops. Each book in this well-designed series features many colorful illustrations throughout, including reproductions of vintage portrait paintings and prints, as well as period photos of people and places mentioned in the text. An invigorating, informative look at American history." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781502673121 | WOMEN IN THE WILD WEST | SHEA, THERESE M | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - ""Starred Review" Readers familiar with American history will discover surprising facts and meet trailblazing women in the four books that comprise the Inside Guide: Women in U.S. History series (6 titles). Each volume challenges readers to reconsider their preconceived notions of the past. The The Wild West offers a lively introduction to the American West during the 1800s, challenging the stereotypical view created by TV shows and movies and suggesting that women who moved westward during the period often found freedom and economic opportunities there. Each book in this well-designed series features many colorful illustrations throughout, including reproductions of vintage portrait paintings and prints, as well as period photos of people and places mentioned in the text. An invigorating, informative look at American history." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781338882346 | WORLD WAR II CLOSE UP : THEY SAVED THE STALLIONS | HOPKINSON, DEBORAH | Kirkus Reviews Starred 10/1/2024 A multilayered account of the effort to save the Lipizzaner horses of Vienna during World War II. The famed Spanish Riding School of Vienna was named after the Spanish ancestors of the Lipizzaner breed. The beautiful white horses perform the intricate, difficult, balletic movements of dressage, an intensive riding discipline in which rider and horse must be in perfect communication and that takes years to master. But when the Second World War broke out, the horses—and, indeed, the existence of the then nearly 400-year-old school itself—were in danger. After the Germans annexed Austria, and the Allies subsequently began bombing Vienna, the riding school's director, Alois Podhajsky, knew that their days were numbered and that he had to get the beloved horses to safety. While the gripping story of the race to save the horses through Operation Cowboy is the main storyline, this narrative goes much further, providing background on the fascinating Podhajsky, the horrific oppression and murder of Jews and other marginalized people, and the roles of Black GIs and members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in the war zone. "Virtual field trips" throughout the book expand readers' experiences; Hopkinson wisely advises: "if a link doesn't work, please use it as an opportunity to practice your research skills. Need help with a search? Ask a librarian—that's what I do." Exquisite black-and-white photos enrich the text. This riveting account will hold readers spellbound. (author's note, cast list, glossary, timeline, bibliography, source notes, picture credits, index) (Nonfiction. 8-13) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593643884 | WORLD WITHOUT SUMMER : A VOLCANO ERUPTS, A CREATURE AWAKENS, | DAY, NICHOLAS | Kirkus Review 7/1/2025 A dramatic examination of both the immediate and long-term effects of recorded history's deadliest, most titanic blast: the 1815 eruption of Indonesia's Mount Tambora. "The word loud isn't loud enough. The word hot isn't hot enough. The word— / None of the words are enough." Award-winner Day offers readers a rousing recitation of the catastrophes resulting from this "unfathomable" natural disaster after the millions of tons of ash and sulfates belched out by the volcano created a worldwide "climate shock." The results included floods, fires, crop failures, violent storms, disease outbreaks, and upended seasons: "A Feedback Loop of Bad," as one chapter heading puts it. He also draws sweeping but plausible connections to less direct but no less consequential events, including Mary Shelley's contemporaneous Frankenstein—he sees the book's "transfixing weirdness" as "a story straight out of the madness that Tambora made"—and the beginnings of mass westward population movements in the U.S. and the development of modern meteorology. Day includes reflection questions for readers in several places and points to Tambora as a cautionary tale of what we will all face, climate-wise, if we don't heed the warning signs. We're inescapably part of our planet's story, and "we're not the main character." Short chapters, a breathless narrative style, and spacious typography contribute to this work's accessibility. Final art not seen. Urgent and terrifying. (bibliography, source notes, index) (Nonfiction. 10-14) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781525305511 | YELLOW SINGING SAIL : A MEMOIR OF AN ONLY CHILD IN CHINA | HUANG, YINFAN | Booklist Starred Reviews 6/1/2025 Grades 6-9 - ""Starred Review" A sensitive and imaginative child, Yinyin struggles to navigate changing, often unpredictable or uncomfortable family situations and rigid, often inexplicable expectations at school, even as she dreams of finding genuine friendships and a place of acceptance for her artistic inclinations. Picture-book illustrator Huang presents a tender and thoughtfully crafted graphic memoir of her childhood in 1990s China. Through a poignant series of episodic memories—exulting in the gift of a new mechanical pencil, exploring new spaces during a lonely stretch of summer, expressing individuality by wearing a "rebellious" hairstyle, yearning to be seen by the cool kids from another province—Huang's perfectly curated, sensitive observations of her own varying, deeply felt experiences capture the shifting inner landscape of any child growing up between duty and daydreams. With a somewhat more naive style than she uses for her witty single-panel cartoons for the New Yorker, Huang fills her simple linework with washes of blacks, reds, and greens in orderly panels to evoke Yinyin's world: structured, limited, but always minutely observed, emotionally authentic, and often revelatory. Rooted in specific cultural experiences, yet reflecting every kid's worries and hopes about feeling safe, finding friends, and feeling comfortable in one's own skin, Huang's honest and vulnerable self-portrait will resonate with tween and upper-middle-grade readers. An impressive and memorable author-illustrator debut from a promising new voice." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593125472 | ANGELICA AND THE BEAR PRINCE | NGUYEN, TRUNG LE | School Library Journal 9/1/2025 Gr 7 Up—In the midst of a sweet slice-of-life comic about some teens working at a local theater company is a heart-wrenching look at how different people cope with grief. Angelica (Jelly) lost her grandmother years ago and kept busy during her mourning. She now finds herself burnt out and unable to connect with the people who care about her. Meanwhile, Jelly's mother is handling her grief by trying to hold on too tightly. In a separate subplot, the theater owner lost her husband, and she finds that grief takes her by surprise. There are multiple views of loneliness and sorrow, but also many examples of finding joy, which is delightfully mirrored in the art on each page. Jelly finds she can communicate with a fan account of a character in the theater's play. Her best friend Chrissy finds confidence in portraying a princess. The characters each take their turn working through their daily struggles, big and small. The book's biggest setback is the pacing, with major problems getting solved quickly, relative to how many chapters it took to set up. Likewise, smaller issues are brushed aside or tidied up too neatly, and the story lacks breathing room in the second half. Jelly is depicted with tan skin and dark hair; Chrissy has pale skin and blond hair. VERDICT A lovely look at burnout, grief, and coming-of-age with just a dash of teenage romance as a treat.—Lauren Sullivan Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250158710 | BATTLESONG | TANNER, LIAN | Horn Book Guide 4/1/2018 When Gwin, whose people are traveling acrobats and musicians, attempts to rescue her captured father, she encounters Petrel, Fin, Sharkey, and Rain ([cf2]Icebreaker[cf1]; [cf2]Sunken's Deep[cf1]). They're seeking the Captain, a mechanical boy programmed with all the world's knowledge who can help them rebuild once the oppressive, anti-technology Devout are vanquished. The trilogy's myriad threads and heroes come together for a final confrontation and a triumphant close. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781338849912 | BLOOD IN THE WATER | JACKSON, TIFFANY D | School Library Journal Starred 6/1/2025 Gr 4–7—Jackson once again proves her brilliance at weaving suspense, heart, and truth into a story that refuses to let go. Twelve-year old Black girl and Brooklynite Kaylani's summer plans involve trying to fit into the elitist vibe of Martha's Vineyard, and clearing her incarcerated father's name. Then a boy turns up dead on the island and Kaylani is accused of stealing money. Her focus shifts to trying to clear her own name and finding out what happened to the teen. Was it really a shark attack—or was it murder? What makes this book shine isn't just the twists and turns of its plot, it's the voice. Jackson writes Kaylani with an ear so attuned to how preteens actually speak, think, and feel that every page feels authentic. Kaylani's voice is filled with the sharp wit, confusion, frustration, and hope of a contemporary 12-year-old. Her inflection and vulnerability are rendered with care and nuance, making her feel not just believable, but deeply relatable. This story deftly explores what it means to be "from the wrong side of the tracks" in a world that judges before it listens. Jackson doesn't shy away from tough topics—incarceration, classism, bullying, and how children carry burdens that aren't theirs—but she handles them with grace and empathy. The novel's emotional undercurrents are as powerful as the suspense that drives the plot. VERDICT A masterful middle-grade mystery that challenges, entertains, and lingers long after the final page. This one deserves a spot on every school and library shelf.—Jessica Clark Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780316480802 | THE BROTHERS HAWTHORNE | BARNES, JENNIFER LYNN | |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781250378361 | BUSTED | GEMEINHART, DAN | Booklist Starred Reviews 9/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - ""Starred Review" Oscar's childhood has never been ordinary. Orphaned at three days old, he has spent his life with his doting grandfather in the Sunny Hills Retirement Community, listening to Frank Sinatra, playing cards with the other residents, and occasionally delivering a eulogy at a funeral. Unwelcome change arrives in the form of a new owner and his young daughter, Natasha, followed by an immediate rent hike that will see Oscar and his grandfather evicted if they can't cough up the difference before the month is out. So when Jimmy Deluca, a surly resident with rumored ties to the Mob, taps Oscar (in exchange for a hefty reward) to help him break out of the home and tie up some loose ends, the bewildered boy feels like it's an offer he can't refuse. With the lively Natasha in tow, making them an unlikely trio, they end up on an adventure that will change all their lives in remarkable ways. The quirky story's quick tempo and sense of humor instantly enthrall, and Oscar's old-fashioned predilections combined with Jimmy's curmudgeonly quips are a recipe for hilarious high jinks. It's a rousing intergenerational romp that manages to be both entertaining and uplifting, reminding young readers that while right and wrong may sometimes be difficult to discern, simply trying to "do the good thing" will take you far." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250311214 | THE CHRONICLES OF NEVER AFTER | DE LA CRUZ, MELISSA | School Library Journal Starred 12/1/2020 Gr 4-7—"Once upon a time in the days of old, eleven fairies gathered at court before a child to hold. Only eleven, for the twelfth was dead and the thirteenth was missing." At the christening of Princess Eliana, members of the court speculate why the 13th fairy, Princess Carabosse, is missing. While the Kingdom assumes the baby has been born to King Vladimir and evil Queen Olga, the baby's actual mother is the newly dead Queen Rosanna. This series opener is broken into parts that tie the fairy tale to modern times. Part One begins with Filomena Jefferson-Cho embarking on an unexpected adventure. Filomena is a sixth grader in North Pasadena, CA, with overprotective adoptive author parents who are always telling her stories of fairies that steal kids. At school, Filomena is bullied and teased for being smart, adopted, and of mixed heritage (she is Black, Asian, and white), which propels her towards her love of reading and the "Never After" series. She, like many other die-hard fans, has eagerly awaited the 13th and final installment, only to be crushed to find out that the author mysteriously disappeared without completing the series. On her way home from the bookstore, she is followed by a boy who turns out to be the books' dashing hero, Jack the Giant Stalker. He claims the books are an actual history of the fairy tribes. Author de la Cruz injects humor into the fantastical adventure among the heavier topics, such as bullying. Jack and Alistair come to Filomena's aid, and the trio go through a portal into the real Never After. Filomena learns she may be the key to the missing Princess, and she and her new friends embark on a treacherous journey rife with dragons, ogres, and evil Queens. VERDICT This series debut has something for most readers—a complex female heroine, middle school angst, plenty of action, and magic—which will leave them eagerly turning the pages—Michele Shaw, formerly at Quail Run Elem. Sch., San Ramon, CA Copyright 2020 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780062306975 | THE CLOCKWORK GHOST | RUBY, LAURA | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2019 Codebreaking twins Theo and Tess Biedermann ([cf2]York: The Shadow Cipher[cf1]) and artistic puzzle-solver Jaime Cruz are still committed to solving the impossible-seeming Morningstar Cipher. The tweens aren't the only ones pursuing the treasure that supposedly awaits at the end of the Cipher, and danger is rapidly closing in. This second installment in Ruby's steampunk mystery series should enthrall fans. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9798347102372 | COACH | REYNOLDS, JASON | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781368014748 | DRAGON PEARL | LEE, YOON HA | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2019 Thirteen-year-old Min has a powerful secret: she's a fox spirit disguised as a human; she can shape-shift and use magic to alter others' perceptions. Min enthusiastically wields these powers when she ditches her "dismal life" on the barren planet Jinju to track down her brother Jun, a Space Forces cadet who's gone AWOL. Lee's richly detailed, cohesive, original vision is a lively mash-up of outer-space sci-fi and Korean culture and folklore. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593530252 | FINDING LOST | SLOAN, HOLLY GOLDBERG | Booklist 8/1/2025 Grades 4-7 - "Cordy's life was turned upside down when her dad died in The Accident. Since then, she's been living with her mom and younger brother in a converted boathouse, which sits in the shadow of the Big House, a vacation home where their mom works as a caretaker. Thankfully, Cordy has her best friend (Button), the world's best younger brother, and a terrific town library. When Cordy comes across a lost dog, she knows he needs her as much as she wants him. Through her efforts to help the dog, whose name becomes Lost, Cordy accidentally invites even more change into her life: her mom and the vet hit it off, an unexpected turn of events Cordy isn't too pleased about. First-person narration invites the reader into Cordy's introspective mind, as she follows her curiosity and learns not all change is bad. A fabulous cast of characters, from the loving librarian to Button's elderly neighbor, make this small Oregon town feel real. Lost sparks many an adventure while Cordy and her lovable crew heal and grow." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781546110811 | I SURVIVED THE JAPANESE TSUNAMI, 2011 | BALL, GEORGIA | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250079855 | ICEBREAKER | TANNER, LIAN | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2016 When Petrel, an orphan with no place or position in an isolated ship-bound society, saves a strange boy from the ice, she unwittingly destabilizes a truce among the ship's three "territories" while also putting it in danger from a machine-hating brotherhood. Character development and sinister agendas add interest, while the broader messages about trust and friendships (lost commodities in this world) provide deeper meaning. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593809891 | IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES | RUNDELL, KATHERINE | Horn Book Guide 9/1/2024 When Christopher finds a wounded baby griffin in a Scottish lake, his grandfather reveals that he is (and Christopher will be, when he comes of age) a guardian of the "waybetween" to an archipelago where the creatures of myth still live. Then Mal, a citizen of the Archipelago and the target of a deranged murderer, arrives in Christopher's world to reclaim her griffin, and Christopher chooses to go back to the Archipelago with her to protect her. There they chance upon Fidens Nighthand and the crew of the Neverfear. Nighthand is a Berserker sworn to protect the Immortal, the only being who can tend the source of the ancient magic upon which all creatures of myth depend. But a century ago the Immortal took a potion to forget the pain of existence, and every Immortal incarnated since then doesn't know their own fate. Suggestions that Mal is more than she appears to be grow into a plot of resolute earnestness, where the characters serve a noble purpose that binds them into a closely knit ensemble. Rundell successfully pulls off a powerful drama filled with self-sacrifice and great-heartedness and achieves full reader buy-in. Epic and interpersonal elements balance each other out, and the fresh take on fantastical creatures, in such sure and capable hands (with Mackenzie's black-and white illustrations interspersed), is entrancing and refreshing. Anita L. Burkam |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781484799895 | THE LAST LIFE OF PRINCE ALASTOR | BRACKEN, ALEXANDRA | Booklist 12/15/2018 Grades 4-7 - Prosper Redding was pretty sure he'd hit rock bottom when he found out he has a demon named Alastor living inside him. Then Alastor's terrifying demon-queen sister kidnapped Prosper's sister, Prue, and took her to the demon realm. Now, suddenly, Prosper and Alastor, who have been at vicious odds with each other, find themselves on the same side, at least for now: Alastor wants power, and Prosper just wants Prue, but they're both going to have to travel through the demon realm to get what they want. Alastor knows the way, and what else can Prosper do but make a deal with him—even if that deal means eternal servitude? But it's been a long time since Alastor's been home, and the place has changed quite a bit. This follow-up to The Dreadful Tale of Prosper Redding (2017) throws this boy-demon odd couple into an even more precarious position, and madcap, mystical high-jinks ensue. With its balance of magic, humor, and heart, this sequel is a surefire crowd-pleaser. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593707364 | THE LEGENDARY SCARLETT AND BROWNE | STROUD, JONATHAN | Horn Book Guide 5/1/2025 Stroud has much to wrap up in this third (seemingly final) volume of the exploits of fearsome Scarlett McCain and disheveled, telepathically gifted Albert Browne. In the dystopic, hostile landscape of postapocalyptic Britain, they and their company now have a double mission: to liberate banks of their funds and to free enslaved people and those about to be sold into slavery. Scarlett and Albert pursue personal quests as well: Albert wants to find his former prison and learn its secrets; Scarlett searches for her younger brother, lost to slavers years ago -- and all this in the context of a terrorizing force even greater than the pair's former enemy, the repressive Faith Houses. Now, it's a group arming itself with weapons unearthed from deep within the ravaged land, "weapons that destroy everything they touch." Stroud offers much activity and incident; dangerous, malicious terrain; risky schemes with explosive outcomes -- in short, there's barely a moment to stop and ponder. But even within the pressure of action, description, and bringing many threads together, Stroud's vivacity of phrasing has lost none of its verve. "Her pale face hung beneath her hat like a moon of vengeance in a blood-soaked sky," he writes in one of many unforgettable descriptive moments. Deirdre F. Baker |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781623541422 | LIMELIGHT : CURTAIN UP ON POETRY COMICS! | LATULIPPE, RENEE | School Library Journal 9/1/2025 Gr 4–7—In a book with an incredibly specific subject matter from LaTulippe, it would be easy to think this collection of poems would lose readers who are not deeply interested in the world of the stage. However, this is not the case. At its core, this is a series of love letters to an art form. There are so many pieces to making a theatrical production a reality, and each one is treated with dedication in these pages. Even the casual audience member will be captivated by the descriptions of each piece of the puzzle. From the writing of a script to the flypersons, the pit orchestra to the marquee outside—every aspect both scene and unseen (pun intended) is appreciated. Those less acquainted with theatrical terminology have nothing to fear; a glossary of theater terms is part of the back matter. For readers for whom poetry is a fascination in itself, the author explains each form presented, as well. Gonzales's limited color palette helps guide the eye across panels. The characters are illustrated with diverse skin tones and hair textures. VERDICT A graceful homage to theater as both a space and an art form, lovingly broken down to its individual parts to give each its moment in the spotlight.—Lauren Sullivan Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593564080 | MOMO ARASHIMA STEALS THE SWORD OF THE WIND | SUGIURA, MISA | Publishers Weekly 1/2/2023 A Japanese American 12-year-old must procure a magical artifact to save the world from monsters in this rollicking series opener by Sugiura (Love & Other Natural Disasters). Momo Arashima's widowed mother raised her on stories about Japanese gods, called kami, and monsters, called yo' kai. Momo also "tended to see things no one else could see," often confusing her supernatural visions with reality, and leading to her getting bullied by classmates and feeling like an outsider at Oak Valley Middle School. Her life becomes even more challenging, though, when she's attacked by a Japanese death hag and saved by a magical fox named Niko as well as bully Danny Haragan, a former Japanese friend adopted by white parents. Momo soon learns that her mother is a Shinto goddess, guardian of the Island of Mysteries, and that demons have escaped from the underworld into the mortal plane. To protect humankind, Momo, Danny, and Niko must travel across heaven and earth for an enchanted sword to defeat the yo' kai. Culturally specific details imbue this roller-coaster-feeling magical plot with authenticity and intrigue, while Momo's smart, funny narration and slowly reforming relationship with Danny ground their adventure in a thoughtful friendship tale. Ages 8–12. (Feb.) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593488362 | MOONSTORM | LEE, YOON HA | School Library Journal 6/1/2024 Gr 7 Up—Hwa Young's first experience with Imperial lancers comes when they attack her clan on a rebel moon, destroying her home and rescuing her from the fallout. Six years later, Hwa Young is a student in a New Joseon military academy striving to become a lancer pilot, desperate to never be powerless again. Lancers are giant robots in the shape of Old Joseon's armored warriors, vital tools to enforce the Empress's will, and the strongest weapons in her arsenal. Hwa Young's rebel past makes it important she remains in step with everyone as she strives to be top of her class, because conformity is highly valued by the empire. Her fears and insecurities are a driving force in her character arc, especially when she ends up stranded with her classmates—who might be her allies but are definitely not her friends. The tension between Hwa Young's planner childhood and her loyalty to the Empire doesn't feel sincere, since readers never truly doubt which side will win out. Lee's concise prose explores themes of loyalty and colonialism, while always pushing the narrative forward. The story would have benefited from more time spent exploring the world and its inhabitants, as the propulsive plot keeps readers from becoming attached to the characters and their stakes. It features a Korean cast, with multiple nonbinary secondary characters. VERDICT Hand to readers who are too young for Xiran Jay Zhao's Iron Widow. An additional purchase for collections actively seeking more science fiction.—Emmy Neal Copyright 2024 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593430408 | THE NOTORIOUS SCARLETT AND BROWNE | STROUD, JONATHAN | Horn Book Guide Starred 5/1/2023 "Scarlett's senses crackled with anticipation," Stroud writes in the second book (following The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne, rev. 1/22) in this fantasy series full of action, outlaws, dystopian societies, and post-apocalyptic ghoul. And crackle is the word, too, to describe Stroud's insouciant humor, energetic and witty invention, and underlay of empathy in this fizzingly paced adventure. Notorious outlaw Scarlett and the telepathically gifted Albert Browne are roped into the dangerous heist of a truckload of religious artifacts when they are blackmailed by Scarlett's old colleagues in theft, the Brothers of the Hand. The job goes as well as a theft can until it ends with capture and the gallows, thanks to the religious conglomerate that runs this future scorched-earth Britain. To say the stakes are high is an understatement, but that is Stroud at his best: we know the prodigiously skilled Scarlett and Albert -- hapless and unworldly though he may be -- will win through, but how? Stroud is as playful and inventive in plotting as he is in description ("back was [Scarlett's] least favorite direction"; a guard has "a face like a disappointed log"), making this novel both hilarious and suspenseful. It has admirable seriousness, to boot, as Scarlett and Albert each begin to face their own interior pain and rage, foreshadowing (one hopes) the next series entry to come. Deirdre F. Baker |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781665949552 | OUT OF MY DREAMS | DRAPER, SHARON M | Kirkus Reviews Starred 9/1/2024 A tween saves her neighbor's life and finds herself on an unexpected adventure. Twelve-year-old Melody Brooks, who has cerebral palsy, is looking out her window when she sees Miss Gertie, her elderly neighbor, fall. Melody, who is nonspeaking, uses her talking board to call 911. She's hailed as a hero and learns that Miss Gertie was once a celebrated film star who's now isolated from family back home in London. As the news spreads, Miss Gertie and Melody are sought out by the local media. Before long, Melody is invited to attend an international symposium that brings together "gifted and visionary young people" so they can "exchange ideas and strategize solutions to the problems of the world." Melody wonders what she could bring to such a gathering, but it means a trip to London for her and Miss Gertie. Accompanied by another trusted neighbor, Melody has a whirlwind of experiences, mostly positive. A major disappointment—an event she couldn't attend because the space wasn't wheelchair accessible—offers Melody something she can share with other conference participants. Among others from around the world, she connects with Elvira, who does wheelchair ballet and wants to help other wheelchair users participate in it, too. This latest volume is a worthy addition to a highly acclaimed and popular series. Through strong characterization and powerful storytelling, Draper once again successfully brings readers into Melody's mind, allowing them to see the world through her eyes. A warm and beautifully told narrative featuring a beloved character. (Fiction. 10-14) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593430392 | THE OUTLAWS SCARLETT AND BROWNE | STROUD, JONATHAN | Horn Book Guide 1/1/2022 In a dystopic Britain of the future, drastic events have left the land awash or turned it into a radiation-contaminated and desolate wilderness "infested with bandits, blood-otters, and wolves" -- not to mention cannibalistic humans called "the Tainted." "Normal" people live in scattered fortified Surviving Towns; anyone identified with a perceived deformity or abnormality is cruelly tortured or killed. Scarlett McCain has survived thanks to her wits, agility, and talents as a bank robber, but when she rescues hapless, unworldly Albert Browne after a strange bus accident, even she is amazed by the pursuit that ensues. Men, dogs, guns, explosives, and the mysteriously invincible Mrs. Calloway, Albert's former jailer, are never far behind as the two make their way by raft to the refuge of the Free Isles down the Thames River. Incisive, elegant action scenes, stuffed with daredevil escapes and shoot-'em-up confrontations, keep the story racing along in a turbulent stream of suspense and relief. Stroud's (author of the Bartimaeus trilogy and the Lockwood & Co. series) characteristic humor -- irony, sarcasm, a witty quickness -- lightens the tale's more dire themes of abuse and psychological damage. The story establishes a context and partnership that suggest future escapades, with characters ripe for development, plenty of unanswered questions, and a tantalizing treasure heist in the offing. Deirdre F. Baker |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781546138143 | OUTSIDE | HOLM, JENNIFER L | Kirkus Review 8/1/2025 A spirited 12-year-old contends with her cloistered life after an apocalypse. Over 10 years ago, the Great Poisoning killed most humans. Razzi lives in an old mansion named the Refuge with her parents, 7-year-old brother, Bing, and a handful of other adults and children. The kids are rarely allowed Outside, especially not since 12-year-old Ollie, a curious risk-taker, had a terrible accident and died while trying to explore. Razzi injures her knee during a game of Chase, which leads to a checkup and a serious diagnosis—she learns that she must have a heart transplant. Luckily, Refuge resident Saul is a Surgeon, and he successfully implants a greyhound's heart into Razzi. After the surgery, Razzi feels different: Her senses of hearing and smell are keener, and foods she used to love, like chocolate, now sicken her. When Razzi makes the momentous decision to run away, she learns that the world outside the Refuge is bigger than she could ever have imagined. Holm's adventure is riveting and appealing, featuring a reliable cast of characters and unfolding against a post-apocalyptic backdrop with zombie story vibes. Holm's mastery of pacing and her explorations of intergenerational trauma and forgiveness resonate, ensuring that they'll stay with readers long after the final pages. Razzi presents white, and names cue ethnic diversity in the supporting cast. An ambitious and thrilling examination of survival, trauma, and connection. (author's note) (Speculative thriller. 9-12) |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9780593706145 | PAPER DRAGONS : THE FIGHT FOR THE HIDDEN REALM | MCDERMOTT, SIOBHAN | Booklist Starred Reviews 2/1/2024 Grades 5-8 - ""Starred Review" Yeung Zhi Ging is certain she won't survive another year in her village. So when the time comes to decide which student will be awarded an elite apprenticeship in the immortals' underwater city, Hok Woh, proactive and determined Zhi Ging knows it has to be her. After an unorthodox admittance (and some near-death experiences), Zhi Ging arrives in Hok Woh to old rivalries and new friends. As the students compete to pass the magical challenges set by their teachers, Zhi Ging's mysterious magical abilities make her a subject of great interest—and great suspicion. An evil spirit on the loose in the mortal world has everyone on edge, and the great city under the sea may not be as secure as the immortals think. Inspired by her multicultural upbringing, McDermott's debut novel kicks off a new middle-grade fantasy series with a depth of lore that will appeal to genre readers. From magical, age-shifting face cream to an opulent, underwater society with a jellyfish-based communication system, this imaginative world delights at every turn. Great for fans of world building and magical schools, the richly imagined setting introduces readers to a world they'll be eager to keep exploring. Cantonese-inspired naming conventions contain Easter eggs that are explained in an author's note." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781665956079 | PLEASE PAY ATTENTION | SUMNER, JAMIE | Horn Book Guide 5/1/2025 In a series of entries in verse, sixth grader Bea Coughlin narrates the story of something important she wants us to "please pay attention" to. Bea tells her story slowly, revealing characters and their relationships in a controlled way that keeps readers intrigued as they put the different pieces together. We eventually learn that she has cerebral palsy, was adopted by Max (her NICU nurse) as a baby, has a penchant for dyeing her hair funky colors and doing magic tricks, and uses a wheelchair. The novel is organized into four sections ("Seek," "Hide," "Heal," and "Hope") and unfolds starting with "ten days before." It then counts down to the day a shooter enters Bea's school. Afterward, she confronts her vulnerability as a wheelchair user, while the steadfast Max provides a much-needed counterbalance: "you are a child, / and that was a tragedy, / and we will get through this together." She slowly processes the traumatic event through writing, therapeutic horseback riding, and, eventually, activism. In a letter, Bea implores her state's governor, and indeed all of us, to "please pay attention / and then / act." An emotionally gripping story about school violence, trauma, and recovery, whose focus on disability and mobility asks important questions about common assumptions and protocols of disaster preparedness and safety. Julie Hakim Azzam |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593809907 | POISONED KING | RUNDELL, KATHERINE | Kirkus Reviews Starred 7/1/2025 Following the events of Impossible Creatures (2024), a devoted Guardian teams up with a brave princess to fight her power-hungry uncle and save the Archipelago's dragons from a strange new threat. Jacques the dragon summons Christopher Forrester back to the Archipelago from the human world: Dragons are dying, and no one knows why. Meanwhile, on the island of Dousha, Princess Anya's grandfather, King Halam, has been murdered, and her father accused—though she knows he's innocent. When Christopher and Anya take refuge on the islet of Glimt, the Berserker Nighthand helps them see how their twin missions to save the dragons and free Anya's father are connected. They work together to create an antidote for the poison that's killing the dragons and to keep Anya and her father safe from her murderous uncle. Meanwhile, Nighthand and Irian, the part-neriid ocean scholar, pursue their own important secret mission. Divided into three parts—"Castle," "Dragons," and "Revenge"—and containing elements of fairy tales, fantasy, and Shakespeare, this story continues the storyline established in the series opener, yet because it introduces new characters and obstacles, it could also stand alone. Dark-blond Anya ("five feet tall and all of it claws") is a match for white-presenting Christopher, who, though he still misses Mal, finds that "it made a difference to have someone to move through the world with again. A friend changed the feel of the universe." Mackenzie's delicate, otherworldly art adorns the text. A spectacular return to a magical world. (map, bestiary) (Fantasy. 10-15) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781416968269 | REBELLION, 1776 | ANDERSON, LAURIE HALSE | Horn Book Guide Starred 5/1/2025 Thirteen-year-old Elsbeth Culpepper, maid to a judge, lives through the Siege of Boston only to find herself in a precarious situation when British troops depart the city, her Loyalist employer leaves with them, and her father goes missing. She lies her way into the employment of a Patriot spy, Mr. Pike, whose large household includes his wealthy ward, Hannah. But what Elsbeth doesn't count on is the smallpox epidemic that ravages Boston from spring until fall of 1776. As she continues her search for her father and contends with the housekeeper's displeasure, Elsbeth, who previously survived smallpox, nurses five of the Pike children and their mother through the inoculation process; she also gets swept up in Hannah's personal affairs and develops romantic feelings for a friend. War and disease speed up Elsbeth's maturation, as does an unexpected loss before the book's conclusion. Often a footnote in Revolutionary War history, the smallpox epidemic is the focus of Anderson's (Chains, rev. 11/08, and sequels) compelling and well-researched tale of human frailty and perseverance, fear and courage amid dire circumstances. Through Elsbeth's whip-smart first-person narration (with asides to readers in parentheses) plus quotes from historical letters opening each chapter, readers learn about the disease, its symptoms and deadlines, the measures taken to contain it, and people's fear of inoculation. Anderson's return to historical fiction highlights her mastery of the genre, with well-rounded characters, detailed storytelling, and timely subject matter that make it a must-read for today's youth. Cynthia K. Ritter |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781546179382 | RESIST : A STORY OF D-DAY | GRATZ, ALAN | Kirkus Review 5/1/2025 Knowing that her mother has been seized by the Nazis and will likely be shot at dawn, young Samira Zidane sets out on a seemingly hopeless rescue. In this slim side story featuring characters from 2019â€™s Allies (and first published as a free extra), suspense runs high as the 12-year-old French Algerian girl races through the night in June 1944 to reach Bayeaux, France, where captured members of the Resistance are being held before their scheduled executions. Even if she arrives in time, what can she do? Repeatedly rising to the occasion as she slips past Nazi soldiers, guides an Allied unit on a mission behind enemy lines, and finally arrives just in time to see her mother and other captives being led into the forest to dig their own graves, Samira proves herself to be as resourceful as her indomitable mother. Readers will find her courage all the more admirable as Gratz makes the danger of being a civilian caught between occupiers and invaders on that fateful night (or any other time) breathlessly palpable. The author depicts a diverse cast, along the way Samira meets characters identified as both Black and white. Tense, nonstop adventure in a historic setting. (Historical fiction. 10-12) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781665957632 | RIVER OF SPIRITS | TARGOSZ, SHANA | School Library Journal 5/1/2025 Gr 3-7—Senka knows the rules for Ferryers. She knows them well, and her guardian, Charon, quizzes her on them often. He also knows she's very likely to test the boundaries of those rules. Angry at being left behind, Senka disobeys Charon's instructions and finds herself in a world of never-ending trouble. When she gets lost in the Underworld without Charon's boat and her beloved messenger-raven to guide her, she faces down her worst nightmares. Plagued by evil chimera (some maybe not so evil, after all), plunged into murky rivers, puzzled by a ghoulish carnival of undead, trapped in a labyrinth, aided by swamp witches and twilight moths, it seems as if Senka may never find her way back to her home with Charon. The characters they meet along their journey ask home some of life's biggest questions: Does grief last forever? How does one escape the desire to connect with lost loved ones? How does one avoid losing oneself in the underworld of torment and despair? Truly terrifying and brilliantly written underwater scenes are filled with nightmarish monsters. VERDICT This excellent book includes heavy themes and some frightening scenes but is a fantastic adventure through the Underworld that will satisfy readers who are hungry for a deep dive into mythic fiction. Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780316591225 | THE SAME BACKWARD AS FORWARD | BARNES, JENNIFER LYNN | |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780063031029 | THE SECRET OF GLENDUNNY : THE HAUNTING | LASKY, KATHRYN | Booklist Starred Reviews 2/1/2022 Grades 4-7 - ""Starred Review" After being relentlessly hunted, beavers haven't been spotted in Scotland for 500 years. But the beavers aren't gone; they've simply gone into hiding, forming a secret enclave and an advanced society. There is only one rule that all beavers must follow: never be seen by a human. All progresses as it should until young Dunwattle, terrified by a ghostly apparition in his lodge, flees in panic and pops up in front of a bewildered professor. Dunwattle reveals the transgression to his best beaver friend and a wise swan, but another beaver outcast, Yrynn, having also seen the apparition, insists that the ghostly human girl needs their help, and they all must work together to untangle the mystery and protect their secret world. It's a marvelous adventure, and Lasky's gorgeous text has a proper, old-fashioned tone that lends gravity to the fantastical plot. There is an astonishingly detailed mythology, language, and history to the beaver world, and larger, relevant themes of immigration and racism are organically worked in. The tale doesn't shy away from occasional death and gore, but there are plenty of delightful details to keep it from getting too heavy. An abrupt ending may bewilder young readers, but the series promises to carry on in future installments. An enchanting introduction to a wonderful, new natural world." |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781645953289 | SETTING THE STAGE | CHAMPION, LINDSAY | Booklist 10/1/2025 Grades 5-8 - "Five personalities come together with their own varying drama backstage, showcasing the dynamics of a musical production from the perspective of the stage crew. There's Ella, an aspiring stage manager who dreams of managing national tours; her best friend, Levi, who assists with stage crew; siblings Rosa, the lead actress, and Sebastian, a sixth-grader new to crew; and Willow, a girl who just moved from New York and wants nothing to do with the show but is forced into volunteering as a detention sentence. Aside from the show drama and the ongoing prank war between cast and crew, each character has personal struggles to deal with as well. Levi is in foster care and wonders if he could ever belong, Rosa secretly struggles with dyslexia, Ella is overly relied on by her parents, and Sebastian has a burgeoning crush on Levi, who, in return, is crushing on Rosa. While this series starter frustratingly stops midway through with a "to be continued," theater fans are sure to devour the theatrics on and off the stage." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781338742305 | SHURI : A BLACK PANTHER NOVEL | STONE, NIC | Publishers Weekly 5/18/2020 At 13, Princess Shuri has already accomplished so much as a scientist that she's on the path to becoming Wakanda's minister of technology and advancement. Even with all of her achievements, though, her mother and T'Challa—her brother, king of Wakanda and the current Black Panther—still treat Shuri like a child who doesn't truly understand the propriety required of her. When the heart-shaped herb that ignites the Black Panther's powers begins rapidly dying, Shuri is appalled at her family's surprising lack of urgency regarding the problem. Frustrated, she and K'Marah, a protector in training, set off on a secret mission to find what's killing the plants and how to stop it before the last herb dies out forever. Girl power reigns supreme in this novel companion to the Black Panther universe, and Stone (Clean Getaway) engagingly portrays the mind of a genius, teenage princess (complete with mission log–esque journal entries). In Stone's handling, Shuri takes center stage and exhibits her intelligence, wit, and unique strengths while showing that a princess is more than enough to save a nation. Ages 9–12. (May) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781546126089 | SNOOP | KORMAN, GORDON | Kirkus Review 6/1/2025 A laid-up and bored seventh grader discovers that his seemingly ordinary North Carolina town is a hotbed of puzzling mysteries. Taking his classes remotely while confined to his home with two broken legs in the wake of a skiing accident, Carter quickly discovers that it's easy to hack local security cameras—but somewhat less easy to believe what he sees. Is his longtime crush Lacey really going out with sneering A-lister Maddox? Why is a stranger in a red Maserati parking in different spots all over town, day after day? Most startling of all, why are a red panda and other endangered creatures roaming the streets at night? Getting answers looks to be impossible, considering Carter's lack of mobility, particularly after an urgent call to the police about a supposed crime in progress only gets a bunch of classmates in trouble, which sends his reputation so far down the toilet that even his best friend ghosts him. Korman dishes up an expert mix of entertaining foolery, peer and family dynamics, and cautionary messages about both the ethical nuances of online snooping and the hazards of jumping to conclusions. Names cue some diversity in the cast. Funny and thought-provoking, no bones about it. (Fiction. 11-13) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780763642990 | SUMMONER | BOND, VICTORIA | School Library Journal Starred 9/1/2020 Gr 5 Up—In the final installment of the Zora and Me trilogy, readers return to life in Eatonville with 14-year-olds Carrie, Zora, and Teddy. A few years older, we find the trouble that always seems to follow this fictionalized version of acclaimed author Zora Neale Hurston has grown, too. When a white vigilante group sweeps through idyllic Eatonville, the first incorporated all-Black city in the United States, they leave the town reverberating with the shock of a man lynched within their borders. As with the other entries in this series, Zora's mind begins to spin a web of stories to explain the seemingly inexplicable events around her. Who is summoning the dead in Eatonville, and why? Through lush, descriptive language, readers see the trio wrestle with fear, grief, relationships, changing family dynamics, and of course, racism at the turn of the 20th century. With short chapters, Bond ushers readers through this well-crafted historical novel with hints of mystery. VERDICT Readers who are unfamiliar with the first two novels in the series will miss some of the allusions to earlier events, though the book could stand alone. However, the full character arcs unfold beautifully over the course of the trilogy, one that has a place in any school library.—Monisha Blair, Rutgers Univ., NJ Copyright 2020 Reed Business Information. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781250052179 | SUNKER'S DEEP | TANNER, LIAN | Horn Book Guide 10/1/2017 Twelve-year-old Petrel (Icebreaker) and the stranded crew of the ancient icebreaker Oyster are reluctantly rescued by the captain of the Rampart, a giant submersible. Slowly, the two groups bond and join together to resist the fanatical, world-ruling Devouts (a.k.a. Anti-Machinists) and restore knowledge to the world. Packed with action, adventure, and memorable characters; readers will clamor for the trilogy's final installment. |
| La Vernia JHS | 9780593616321 | TIME LIONS AND THE CHRONO-LOOP | SENEVIRATNE, MARTIN | Booklist 10/1/2025 Grades 5-8 - "Twins Patrick and Pearl's secret passions involve creative inventions, new discoveries, and historical exploration. With the help of Pearl's creation, the Chrono-loop, the twins travel back in time and accidentally change the course of history with one tiny misstep. In an effort to undo the damage, they meet the leaders of TIME (The Interdimensional Misconduct Enquiry), who ensure time travelers don't disrupt history. TIME is at odds with a new start-up company whose leader hopes to change all negative aspects of history in order to create a future utopia. Patrick and Pearl must decide which team to join. Do they think history should remain the same, or should they improve the world wherever (and whenever) they can? The fast-paced story includes healthy doses of Sri Lankan heritage, world history, and science in a way that keeps readers engaged while learning. With the door left open for a sequel, this genre-bending sf adventure will be the next series to recommend to lovers of the Rick Riordan Presents imprint." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781547616398 | THE TROUBLE WITH HEROES | MESSNER, KATE | Booklist Starred Reviews 4/1/2025 Grades 3-6 - ""Starred Review" Finn Connelly's dad was a 9/11 hero who left big boots to fill when he died during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two years later, still consumed by anger and frustration at his loss, Finn topples a tombstone belonging to a beloved trail steward, Edna. Edna's daughter offers Finn a deal: reparations in lieu of juvie. She charges him with hiking all 46 of Edna's beloved Adirondack High Peaks this summer, and to do it with Edna's slobbery dog, Seymour, in tow. Finn sets off, carrying his unresolved grief and snacks. Long hikes with volunteer trail "nannies" offer Finn wilderness education, along with solitude to process his loss, while a summer-school poetry assignment creates an outlet for the complicated emotions Finn unravels while remembering his father. Many mountains in, Finn begrudgingly admits he "didn't mean to love it but [he does]," and he ultimately finds peace and a connection with both Edna and his dad along the trails. The dynamic story is told in accessible verse interspersed with texts, photographs, and more, while Finn's journey delicately balances humor and sadness, blending introspection and plot. Prolific author Messner, herself "a proud 46er," tenderly proffers the healing power of nature couched with obvious admiration for the mountains. A gently reflective, bittersweet, and redemptive story." |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781536217438 | VANISHING OF LAKE PEIGNEUR : A GRAPHIC NOVEL BASED ON A TRUE | WOLF, ALLAN | School Library Journal 9/1/2025 Gr 4–7—The morning of November 20, 1980 started like any other day on Lake Peigneur—a freshwater lake two miles across, 10 feet deep, and "shaped like a Louisiana butter bean." But that day proved to be anything but ordinary when a massive whirlpool opened in the lake, pulling in billions of gallons of water along with an oil derrick, barges, trees, and structures along the shoreline. This graphic novel recounts the harrowing stories of the people who witnessed the lake's shocking disappearance. The narrative shifts perspectives among the witnesses who nearly lost their lives in the disaster, creating tension and highlighting the chaos and confusion of that extraordinary morning. Readers will be in suspense over what happened to the lake until the book's conclusion when causes of the disaster are revealed. While the story of Lake Peigneur is true, there are some fictional elements, such as composite characters, an abbreviated time line, and narration by Lake Peigneur itself. However, facts are carefully distinguished from fiction in the book's back matter and are drawn from quality sources, including interviews with survivors and the use of primary documents. Digital illustrations with muted, retro-feel colors support the narrative and provide details that enhance an understanding of what happened at Lake Peigneur, including maps and diagrams. VERDICT Readers who enjoy true-life mysteries and survival stories will be pulled into this book and inspired to learn more about this little-known but fascinating event.—Danielle Sachdeva Copyright 2025 Reed Business Information. |

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| La Vernia JHS | 9781338736113 | WAR GAMES | GRATZ, ALAN | Kirkus Review 9/1/2025 In his latest, prolific author Gratz takes on Hitler's Olympic Games. When 13-year-old American gymnast Evie Harris arrives in Berlin to compete in the 1936 Olympic Games, she has one goal: stardom. If she can bring home a gold medal like her friend, the famous equestrian-turned-Hollywood-star Mary Brooks, she might be able to lift her family out of their Dust Bowl poverty. But someone slips a strange note under Evie's door, and soon she's dodging Heinz Fischer, the Hitler Youth member assigned to host her, and meeting strangers who want to make use of her gymnastic skills to rob a bank. As the games progress, Evie begins to see the moral issues behind their sparkling facade the antisemitism and racism inherent in Nazi ideology and the way Hitler is using the competition to support and promote these beliefs. And she also agrees to rob the bank. Gratz goes big on the Mission Impossible-style heist, which takes center stage over the actual competitions, other than Jesse Owens' famous long jump. A lengthy and detailed author's note provides valuable historical context, including places where Gratz adapted the facts for storytelling purposes (although there's no mention of the fact that before 1952, Olympic equestrian sports were limited to male military officers). With an emphasis on the plot, many of the characters feel defined primarily by how they're suffering under the Nazis, such as the fictional diver Ursula Diop, who was involuntarily sterilized for being biracial. Fast-paced and plot-driven. (Historical fiction. 9-12) |
| La Vernia JHS | 9781338736106 | WAR GAMES | GRATZ, ALAN | Kirkus Review 9/1/2025 In his latest, prolific author Gratz takes on Hitler's Olympic Games. When 13-year-old American gymnast Evie Harris arrives in Berlin to compete in the 1936 Olympic Games, she has one goal: stardom. If she can bring home a gold medal like her friend, the famous equestrian-turned-Hollywood-star Mary Brooks, she might be able to lift her family out of their Dust Bowl poverty. But someone slips a strange note under Evie's door, and soon she's dodging Heinz Fischer, the Hitler Youth member assigned to host her, and meeting strangers who want to make use of her gymnastic skills to rob a bank. As the games progress, Evie begins to see the moral issues behind their sparkling facade the antisemitism and racism inherent in Nazi ideology and the way Hitler is using the competition to support and promote these beliefs. And she also agrees to rob the bank. Gratz goes big on the Mission Impossible-style heist, which takes center stage over the actual competitions, other than Jesse Owens' famous long jump. A lengthy and detailed author's note provides valuable historical context, including places where Gratz adapted the facts for storytelling purposes (although there's no mention of the fact that before 1952, Olympic equestrian sports were limited to male military officers). With an emphasis on the plot, many of the characters feel defined primarily by how they're suffering under the Nazis, such as the fictional diver Ursula Diop, who was involuntarily sterilized for being biracial. Fast-paced and plot-driven. (Historical fiction. 9-12) |