

Recommended Verse Novels

Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo: Xiamora is finding her voice through slam poetry as she tries to make sense of her challenging situation and cope with her mother's demands. New book by Acevedo: ***Clap When You Land***

Crossover Kwame Alexander: Basketball, growing up, finding your first love. Or try ***Booked*** about a football mad 12-year-old who hates books...

Finding Wonders: Three Girls Who Changed Science by Jeannine Atkins: Based on the real stories of Maria Merian, Mary Anning & Maria Mitchell, girls from different eras who grew up to become groundbreaking scientists.

Black Flamingo by Dean Atta: Exploring identity and what it means to be free to be yourself from the point of a mixed-race gay teen.

Unbound by Anne Burg: A 9 year old slave is called to work at the Big House – and she must keep her mouth shut. But she struggles not to voice the injustices she sees and experiences, and her family is at risk.

Heartbeat by Sharon Creech: A 12-year-old girl who loves running and drawing is trying to figure out some complex issues in her life. Or try ***Love That Dog*** or ***Hate That Cat***

One by Sarah Crossan: Conjoined twins attached from the belly down, navigating teenage years – and making impossible choices. Or try ***Toffee***, ***Moonrise*** or ***The Weight of Water***

The Deepest Breath by Meg Grehan – Eleven year old Stevie loves reading, sea creatures – and she is afraid of her attraction to other girls.

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse: 14 year old Billie-Jo is caught in the 1930's Oklahoma Dust Bowl living a life of despair, tragedy -- and yet moments of joy.

Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai: Based on the author's true story. Ha and her family left Vietnam as refugees, settling in Alabama; the novel describes Ha's experiences of loneliness, confusion, discrimination and friendship in her first year in the US.

In the Key of the Code by Aimee Lucido – Emmy perceives the world through music – and then joins a computer science club!

Full Cicada Moon by Marilyn Hilton: It is 1969, and Apollo 11 is about to go to the moon. Half black, half Japanese Mimi moves to almost all white Vermont. She wants to be an astronaut – but people only notice how she looks.

Run, Rebel by Manjeet Mann: Amber wants to be a professional athlete, but she fears her abusive and misogynistic father.

Sister Heart by Sally Morgan – An Aboriginal girl is taken from her family and sent to an institution far away from her home. Based on the true story of the ‘Stolen Generations’

Dust of Eden by Mariko Nagai: 13 year old Mina and her family have been sent to an internment camp during WWII because they are of Japanese descent.

Gloves Off by Louisa Reed: Lily is severely bullied in school, and life at home is complex too. Will boxing to help her to turn her life around?

Long Way Day by Jason Reynolds: Will’s brother has been shot in a gang crime, and Will is going to kill the person he thinks is responsible. He gets in the lift with a gun – and begins seeing and having conversations with dead people he knew. Or try ***For Everyone***, ‘a rallying cry to the dreamers of the world’.

The Moon Within by Aida Salazar: Celi is 11 years old, and her body is changing. An exploration of periods and puberty; gender fluidity; friendship; and Latinx culture and traditions.

The Colors of the Rain by R.L. Toalson: A powerful and nuanced historical verse novel set in Texas against the backdrop of desegregation, told from the point of view of a boy trying to understand racial tensions and his own grief.

Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga: A 12-year-old Syrian girl and her mother escape from their ravaged country and settle in America; this poignant novel explores identity, intolerance, resilience, language and cultural differences, bravery and kindness.

Kent State by Deborah Wiles: Told from 6 different points of view, this is a well-researched verse novel about the events at Kent State in 1970 when National Guard soldiers shot and killed Vietnam War protestors. Audible version is excellent as it is easier to tell the ‘voices’ apart (different actors – the paper book has only different fonts).

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson: A vividly imagined memoir of the author’s experiences growing up in South Carolina and New York during the Civil Rights movement. Or try ***Locomotion*** about a boy who has lost both his parents in a fire – and his sister has been put in a different foster home.