

Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books 2025 - 2026 List for Grades 6-8



Brick Dust and Bones by M.R. Fournet

Marius Grey hunts Monsters. He's not supposed to. He's twelve and his job as a Cemetery Boy is to look after the ghosts in his family's graveyard. He should be tending these ghosts and—of course—going to school to learn how to live between worlds without getting into trouble. But, Marius has an expensive goal. He wants to bring his mother back from the dead, and that takes a LOT of mystic coins, which means a LOT of Monster Hunting, and his mother's window to return is closing. If he wants her back, Marius is going to have to go after bigger and meaner monsters. Can Marius navigate New Orleans's gritty monster bounty-hunting market, or will he have to say goodbye to his mother forever?



Confessions of a Class Clown by Arianne Costner

Meet Jack Reynolds. Making people laugh is his life's work. Jack's wacky MyTube channel is really starting to take off. The only problem is, for the truly epic posts, he needs a collaborator. And, well, he doesn't exactly have any friends. So Jack has to swallow his pride and join the new after-school Speed Friendship club. But who would make the best partner in comedy? Brielle, Miss Perfect candidate for student body president? Mario, whose mom won't even let him have a smart phone? Or Tasha, the quiet, mysterious girl with a shaved head and a crocheted hat for every day of the week? One of these kids could help catapult Jack to internet fame . . . or even become a true friend. But what will it cost him to go viral?



Control Freaks by J.E. Thomas

The kids at Benjamin Banneker College Prep are a little... competitive. The minute Principal Yee announces an epic competition, seventh-grader Frederick Douglass Zezzmer knows he has to win. But it won't be easy. The competition doesn't just include STEM. It also has arts and sports. Not Doug's best subjects. Even worse, it's a TEAM competition. Doug gets paired with four middle school misfits no one else wants. Worst of all, if Doug doesn't win, he has to forget about becoming The World's Greatest Inventor and spend the summer in sports camp, with his scary stepbrother. With only a week to go, Doug launches a quest to turn his team of outcasts into winners... and maybe even friends.



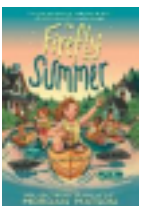
Curlfriends: New in Town by Sharee Miller

Charlie has a foolproof plan for the first day at her new middle school. Even though she's used to starting over as the new kid—thanks to her military family's constant moving—making friends has never been easy for her. But this time, her first impression needs to last, since this is where her family plans to settle for good. When not everything goes exactly to plan, like, AT ALL, Charlie is ready to give up on making new friendships. Then she meets the Curlfriends, a group of Black girls who couldn't be more different from each other, and learns that maybe there is a place for Charlie to be her true self after all.



The Fire, The Water, and Maudie McGinn by Sally J. Pla

Maudie always looks forward to the summers she spends in California with her dad. But this year, she must keep a troubling secret about her home life—one that her mom warned her never to tell. Maudie wants to confide in her dad about her stepdad's anger, but she's scared. When a wildfire strikes, Maudie and her dad are forced to evacuate to the beach town where he grew up. She desperately wants to learn to surf, but could she ever be brave enough? As Maudie navigates unfamiliar waters, she makes friends—and her autism no longer feels like the big deal her mom makes it out to be. But her secret is still threatening to sink her. Will Maudie find the strength to reveal the awful truth—and maybe even find some way to stay with Dad—before summer is over?



The Firefly Summer by Morgan Matson

For as long as Ryanna Stuart can remember, her summers have been spent with her father and his new wife. But this summer is different – she's received a letter from her estranged grandparents inviting her to stay with them at an old summer camp in the Poconos. Ryanna accepts. She wants to learn about her mom. She wants to uncover the mystery of why her father hasn't spoken to her grandparents all these years. She's even looking forward to a quiet summer by the lake. But what she finds are so many relatives who have memories of her mom from when she was Ryanna's age, clues to her past like a treasure map. Ryanna even finds an actual, real-life treasure map! Over the course of one unforgettable summer—Ryanna discovers a whole new side of herself and that, sometimes, the last place you expected to be is the place where you really belong.



The First State of Being by Erin Entrada Kelly

It's August 1999. For twelve-year-old Michael Rosario, life is as ordinary as ever—except for the looming Y2K crisis and his overwhelming crush on his sixteen-year-old babysitter, Gibby. But when a disoriented teenage boy named Ridge appears out of nowhere, Michael discovers there is more to life than stockpiling supplies and pining over Gibby. It turns out that Ridge isn't where he belongs. When Ridge reveals that he's the world's first time traveler, Michael and Gibby are stunned but curious. As Ridge immerses himself in 1999—fascinated by microwaves, basketballs, and malls—Michael discovers that his new friend has a book that outlines the events of the next twenty years, and his curiosity morphs into something else: focused determination. Michael wants—no, needs—to get his hands on that book. How else can he prepare for the future? But how far is he willing to go to get it?



Fowl Play by Kristin O'Donnell Tubb

When Chloe Alvarez's best friend Uncle Will dies, he leaves one last gift for Chloe: his African grey parrot, Charlie. The parrot has a vast vocabulary, and soon Chloe hears her say something odd: It was murder, followed by homicide and cyanide. Chloe becomes convinced her uncle Will's death was foul play. Why else wouldn't he have told anyone in the family—especially Chloe—that he was sick? With the help of her family, Chloe begins the investigation to uncover Uncle Will's murderer. The suspects: His nosy neighbor. An ex-girlfriend. A rude landlord. A loan shark. But it all leads to more questions than answers. Did someone really kill Uncle Will? Or could this journey help reunite Chloe's grieving family?



Heroes by Alan Gratz

December 6, 1941: Best friends Frank and Stanley have it good. With their dads stationed at the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii, the boys get to soak up the sunshine while writing and drawing their own comic books. World War II might be raging overseas, but so far America has stayed out of the fight. There's nothing to fear, right? December 7th, 1941: Everything implodes. Frank and Stanley are touring a battleship when Japanese planes zoom overhead, dropping bomb after bomb. As explosions roar and sailors scream, The war has come to them. If the boys make it through this infamous day, can their friendship—and their dreams—survive? Or has everything they know been destroyed?



The Hoop Con (Play the Game) by Amar Shah

Raam Patel is eager to prove himself ever since he didn't make the middle school's basketball team. So, when Hoop Con comes to town he is determined to be there and take his shot. His big moment proves to be unforgettable... but not in the way he'd hoped. Raam gets schooled by the camp's golden boy right in front of his NBA idol. To make matters even worse, this fail goes viral. Raam is used to being the underdog, but becoming the newest meme might be something even he can't overcome alone. He skips town in an effort to lay low and take a break from basketball. However, he's met with new courts, fresh kicks, and tough new competition, changing his whole outlook on the game. Raam has the skills, but now it's time to unlock the mental game.



The Lost Year by Katherine Marsh

Thirteen-year-old Matthew is miserable. His journalist dad is stuck overseas indefinitely, and his mom has moved in his one hundred-year-old great-grandmother to ride out the pandemic, adding to his stress and isolation. Matthew is stuck at home during the early days of the pandemic, and he would rather play video games than hang out with his 100-year-old great grandmother, GG. But Matthew's mom has other plans. Forced to unpack GG's storage boxes, Matthew finds a tattered black and-white photo in his great-grandmother's belongings that serves as a clue to a hidden chapter of her past, one that will lead to a life-shattering family secret.



Mid-Air by Alicia D. Williams

It's the last few months of eighth grade, and Isaiah feels lost. He thought his summer was going to be him and his boys Drew and Darius, hanging out, doing wheelies, watching martial arts movies, and breaking tons of Guinness World Records before high school. But now, more and more, Drew seems to be fading from their friendship, and though he won't admit it, Isaiah knows exactly why. Because Darius is...gone. Now, Drew can barely look at Isaiah. But Isaiah, already quaking with ache and guilt, can't lose two friends. So, he comes up with a plan to keep Drew and him together—they can spend the summer breaking records – for Darius.



Shinji Takahashi and the Mark of the Coatl by Julie Kagawa

Shinji Takahashi is just an ordinary kid. An ordinary homeschooled smart-alecky kid being raised by his globe-trotting aunt Yui. But when a magical guardian decides to use him as a conduit to awaken its power, Shinji's life takes a turn for the anything-but ordinary. On the run from Hightower Corporation who wants the guardian's power, Shinji must team up with a brilliant young tech whiz named Lucy, and the ragtag cast of characters from the Society of Explorers and Adventurers to return the guardian to its rightful home and release Shinji from its magic—which seems to be draining his life force. Time is ticking, the Hightower Corporation is in hot pursuit, and success or failure means life or death for Shinji.



Simon Sort of Says by Erin Bow

Simon O'Keeffe's biggest claim to fame should be the time his dad accidentally gave a squirrel a holy sacrament. Or maybe the alpaca disaster that went viral on YouTube. But the story the whole world wants to tell about Simon is the one he'd do anything to forget: the one starring Simon as a famous survivor of gun violence at school. Two years after the infamous event, Simon and his family move to the National Quiet Zone—the only place in America where the internet is banned. Instead of talking about Simon, the astronomers there are busy listening for signs of life in space. And when Simon makes a friend who's determined to give the scientists what they're looking for, he'll finally have the chance to spin a new story for the world to tell.



Skyriders by Polly Holyoke

Twelve-year-old Kiesandra's best friend is her winged horse, N'Rah. She, like every other person with a skysteed, can communicate with N'Rah through her mind. Their bond is critical when one day, monsters from long ago reemerge to ravage a nearby village. No one knows how to fight the fearsome chimerae except Kie's uncle . . . and now Kie. Injured in the battle, Uncle Dug makes her promise to bring his attack plan and weapons to the capital. Kie reluctantly agrees. At the palace, she and N'Rah attempt to gain the trust of the royals and train the army in Dug's lessons. But how can a young girl and her skysteed convince anyone that only they know how to defeat the deadly monsters?