

2009 Garden State Teen Book Awards Nominee Annotations

Fiction: Grades 6-8

Clay. David Almond.

Altar boys Davie and Geordie make friends with Stephen, a gifted sculptor. Although fascinated, Davie is frightened of Stephen's plans to create life out of his clay figures. Together, Stephen and Davie create a force larger and more monstrous than they could have ever imagined.

Ask Me No Questions. Marina Budhos.

Nadira and her family have lived in America as though they were legal citizens for years, but September 11th causes that comfort and security to disappear. As the family struggles to flee to the Canadian border, they are separated, and Nadira must learn how to be strong for herself and how to keep her family together.

Warrior Heir. Cinda Williams Chima.

Jack Swift discovers that his daily meds suppress phenomenal athletic powers -- he is actually a warrior of the mysterious Weiriling!

Incantation. Alice Hoffman.

In 1500 Spain, Estrella must grow up quickly when it is discovered that her family are Marranos -- Spanish Jews who secretly practice their religion for fear of retribution.

Standing Against the Wind. Traci L. Jones.

Patrice finds out about a scholarship to an elite boarding school in the south and realizes that this can be her ticket to getting out of the ghetto.

Born to Rock. Gordon Korman.

Young Republican Leo, who's staring down the loss of his scholarship to Harvard, has the opportunity to have his biological father put him through school. How? For a summer, Leo will serve as a roadie for his father's punk band as they tour the U. S.

Side Effects. Amy Goldman Koss.

Isabelle (Izzy) had a pretty average 15-year-old life with a dog named Pupkin, a best friend, an annoying little brother, and a crush on the elusive cute boy at school. Then she was diagnosed with lymphoma. Now she has to endure her mother, who can't seem to stop crying, nurses poking her very small veins, and vomiting -- lots of vomiting. Good thing she still has her sense of humor to keep her going through the haze of cancer until she gets to the other side.

Hattie Big Sky. Kirby Larson.

It is 1918 and sixteen-year-old orphaned Hattie gets unexpected news, providing her with an enormous opportunity. An uncle she never knew has left her his homestead in Montana, and all Hattie must do is fulfill the terms of his claim: fence and cultivate the land. Can she do it, and finally have a home of her own?

Black Duck. Janet Taylor Lisle.

Two boys walking along the beach, innocently looking for lobster pots, stumble across a body. Three hours later, when the police arrive, the corpse has disappeared. Now the sheriff is telling the two boys to keep their mouths shut and forget about the gunshot wound they saw in the dead man's neck. What kind of police force ignores a dead body?

Rules. Cynthia Lord.

Catherine wants her parents to pay more attention to her, but she knows that her autistic younger brother David always needs more help. She wants to have the chance to just be a normal kid, but things get more complicated when she develops a friendship with Jason, who is in a wheelchair.

Manga Claus : The Blade of Kringle. Nathaniel Marunas.

Samurai Santa uses his katana and wakizashi to battle a disgruntled elf and his possessed, numchuk-throwing ninja teddy bears, which will ruin Santa's Workshop if not stopped.

Kiki Strike : Inside the Shadow City. Kirsten Miller.

Elusive, enigmatic Kiki Strike joins up with Ananka to put together a motley crew of ex-Girl Scouts to explore the mysterious underworld of Manhattan. But nothing is what it appears to be -- most of all, not Kiki.

All of the Above. Shelley Pearsall.

Mr. Collins' inner city seventh grade math class couldn't care less about math . . . until he challenges them to break the record for creating the world's largest tetrahedron! Soon, students James Harris III, Rhondell, Sharice, and Marcel are meeting every day after school despite their differences in order to meet their goal. Will they make it?

Life as We Knew It. Susan Beth Pfeffer.

Miranda is living in rural Pennsylvania when a world-wide catastrophe strikes. The moon is hit by a meteor and knocked closer to the earth, setting off a series of disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes. This novel chronicles the story of Miranda and her family as they struggle to survive in this new reality.

Terrier. Tamora Pierce.

Beka Cooper joins the "Dogs" --Tortall's police force -- as a "puppy" at sixteen. It's a dangerous job, but she has a few useful talents up her sleeve!

A Drowned Maiden's Hair : A Melodrama. Laura Amy Schlitz.

Cheeky orphan Maud falls under the spell of her adoptive aunts, who harbor a cruel secret: they want to incorporate her into their séances to swindle a grieving mother. Maud's resolution to be perfectly obedient becomes a quest to set the Hawthorne sisters' misdeeds right.

Everlost. Neal Shusterman.

Killed in a car accident, Nick and Allie wander Everlost, a place populated by the souls of dead children. As "greensouls," their goal is to avoid Everlost's terrors, and they soon find themselves in an action adventure as they struggle against the fall to the center of the earth.

Sleeper Code : Part I : The Sleeper Conspiracy. Tom Sniegowski.

A narcoleptic young man finds that the vivid dreams he has while he's sleeping aren't dreams. His "disease" is actually manufactured to hide the fact that he is an accomplished assassin for the government -- a government that will do anything to keep him from discovering all the facts, including murder.

Cathy's Book : If Found Call (650) 266-8233. Sean Stewart.

Help Cathy solve the mystery involving her missing boyfriend. The book comes with all the clues you'll need, from notes scrawled on a napkin to a torn-up photo.

American Born Chinese. Gene Luen Yang.

This Printz Award-winning graphic novel ties together three seemingly distinct storylines to explore Chinese stereotypes, and draw insight into the world of a teenage boy who is the son of recent immigrants. This novel engages the intellect, emotions, and sense of humor of younger and older readers alike.

Fiction: Grades 9-12

The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation : Volume I : The Pox Party.

M. T. Anderson.

During Revolutionary Boston, Octavian and his mother, Cassiopeia, live with a society of rational philosophers who conduct experiments, create art, and study the human condition. When Octavian learns of his real role in the society, his life and self-conception are forever altered.

Tyrell. Coe Booth.

Fifteen-year-old Tyrell lives with his little brother and their mother in a roach-infested motel, after losing out on housing assistance. How is he supposed to do right by his family, give his girlfriend the attention she demands, stay in school, and keep himself out of jail like his father? This story about one boy's struggle against the odds is told in street talk and rings true.

The Road of the Dead. Kevin Brooks.

Ruben Ford has second sight, and he senses that his sister has been murdered on the grim moors of Devon. He and his older brother set off for Dartmoor to find her murderer, setting off a chain reaction of hostility and violence in the small, dying town where she was found.

Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist. Rachel Cohn and David Levithan.

Nick is a musician in a rock band. Norah is a rich girl from the suburbs who doesn't act like the other girls in her school. Told in alternating voices, this is the story of what happens when the two meet each other by chance.

What Happened to Cass McBride? Gail Giles.

What does it feel like to be buried alive? 'Mean girl' Cass McBride is about to find out when Kyle Kirby takes revenge on her for his little brother's suicide.

An Abundance of Katherines. John Green.

Ex-child prodigy Colin has a knack for being dumped by girls named Katherine, but his latest break-up spurs a road trip with his best friend, which might just lead him to a new kind of girl (not a Katherine!).

Devilish. Maureen Johnson.

Jane Jarvis risks it all to save her best friend Ally from the clutches of Lanalee, the seductively popular middle management representative for The Prince of Darkness. Who knew she'd find love with immortal hottie Owen in the process?

The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl. Barry Lyga.

Fanboy is mostly friendless until he meets Kyra, a Neil Gaiman-worshipping Goth girl who loves comics almost as much as he does. But while Fanboy is more truthful with Kyra than he's ever been with anyone, he discovers that she's been keeping some important secrets from him. Now he'll have to use some superpowers of his own to save their relationship.

Sold. Patricia McCormick.

Thirteen-year-old Lakshmi lives an ordinary life in Nepal, going to school and thinking of the boy she is to marry. Then her gambling-addicted stepfather sells her into prostitution in India.

Dairy Queen. Catherine Gilbert Murdock.

D.J., the lone daughter in a family of star male athletes, has given up basketball to help at the family farm. Not only has she had to give up playing ball, but she has agreed to train Brian, the rival school's quarterback, in exchange for help around the farm. Working with Brian has helped D.J. see herself in a new light and make a radical decision about her own goals.

King Dork. Frank Portman.

Tom Henderson, rock-and-roll wannabe, finds a copy of his deceased father's *The Catcher in the Rye* and starts questioning whether or not his father's death really was an accident.

Dead Connection. Charlie Price.

Psychic loner Murray, who can talk to the dead in the graveyard, hears the voice of a girl who has disappeared and been presumed murdered. Where is her body and who killed her?

Good Girls. Laura Ruby.

Sometimes what you do "in private" at a party, doesn't stay private. High school senior Audrey learns this lesson the hard way when a risqué cell phone picture of her with Luke DeSalvio starts circulating around her school.

Deogratias, a Tale of Rwanda. Jean Philippe Stassen.

Reluctant Rwandan genocide participant Deogratias' mind disintegrates in a series of powerful, disturbing flashbacks in this unforgettable graphic novel.

Knights of the Hill Country. Tim Sharp.

Hampton Green is the star player on the Kenisaw Knights football team who can make history by winning their fifth season in a row. His life is a pressure cooker. There is the team's need to succeed, his best friend, Blaine, who is pushing the definition of "competitive," and Sarah, the girl he likes, who is exactly the wrong girl for a jock . . . What's a guy to do?

The King of Attolia. Megan Whalen Turner.

As newly-crowned King of Attolia, after literally stealing and marrying the Queen, Gen must convince the rest of the Queen's Court and her subjects that he deserves the title.

Pride of Baghdad. Brian K. Vaughan.

When an air strike allows four lions to escape from the zoo in Baghdad, the animals find that freedom forced upon them isn't everything they had hoped for.

It's Kind of a Funny Story. Ned Vizzini.

Craig Gilner's compulsive studying and years of exceptional grades pay off when he is granted admission to an exclusive Manhattan High School; however, he finds it difficult to be just another student in a sea of over-achievers. As the pressure becomes too much to bear, Craig ends-up in a mental hospital, where he learns to tackle some of his issues.

The Rules of Survival. Nancy Werlin.

Written as a letter to his youngest sister, this is a 17-year-old boy's story of his and his sisters' psychological torment at the hands of their mother.

The Book Thief. Markus Zusak.

In this powerful story narrated by Death, young Liesel, orphaned and struggling to survive Hitler's war in Germany, finds salvation in stolen books.

Nonfiction: Grades 6-12

Unexplained: An Encyclopedia of Curious Phenomena, Strange Superstitions, and Ancient Mysteries. Judy Allen. **(Grades 5-9)**

Paranormal experiences, urban legends, superstitions, ancient mysteries, and unexplained events from across the globe are shared for all, as well as likely explanations.

Freedom Riders : John Lewis and Jim Zwerg on the Front Lines of the Civil Rights Movement. Ann Bausum. **(Grades 6-9)**

A compare-and-contrast method of exploring the lives of John Lewis and James Zwerg that helps teens understand the segregated experience of our country's past.

Eagle Blue : A Team, a Tribe, and a High School Basketball Season in Arctic Alaska. Michael D'Orso. **(A/YA)**

The members of a high school basketball team in Alaska work hard to succeed despite their remote location, old equipment, and the social issues faced as Gwich'in Indians.

The Poet Slave of Cuba : A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano. Margarita Engle. **(Grades 7+)**

Written in verse, this biography of Juan Francisco Manzano eloquently portrays the struggle of being a slave in Nineteenth Century Cuba, and the striving of a sensitive and talented soul toward freedom.

Escape! : The Story of the Great Houdini. Sid Fleischman. **(Grades 6-9)**

A biography of the amazing Harry Houdini written by a fellow magician in graphic format.

5,000 Miles to Freedom : Ellen and William Craft's Flight from Slavery. Judith Bloom Fradin and Dennis Brindell Fradin. **(Grades 6-9)**

This legendary escape story comes to life with colorful details of the times and circumstances of slavery.

The Adventures of Marco Polo. Russell Freedman. **(Grades 5-9)**

At seventeen, Marco Polo, the son of a merchant, leaves Venice to travel with his father and uncle to the Far East, where he spends several years in China as a respected member of Kublai Khan's court before returning home to recount his adventures and describe the fantastic sights he had witnessed

Stuff on My Cat. Mario Garza. **(A/YA)**

This is a very funny and quirky book that not only shows the photographer's cat in a number of humorous shots, but also gives advice on how to approach and handle your own pet when taking pictures.

The 9/11 Report : A Graphic Adaptation. Sid Jacobson. **(A/YA)**

This fascinating graphic novel follows the content of the 9/11 Commission's 2004 report, making it much more accessible to teen and adult readers.

Kampung Boy. Lat. **(Grades 5+)**

A memoir of growing up Muslim in a Malaysian kampung (village) in the 1950's. Told in a graphic novel format, this story is at times touching, at times humorous, and always entertaining.

Making Comics : Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels. Scott McCloud.
(A/YA)

A graphic novel about how great graphic novels can work with readers. Learning how the professionals put together all the elements of a story and illustrations is fun with this easy, fascinating read.

The Great Circle : A History of the First Nations. Neil Philip. **(Grades 7+)**

Unlike many tales of history as written from a European perspective, this book tells the history of the relations between the native peoples of North American and white European settlers from the point of view of the natives, taking into account the cultural, philosophical, political, and religious differences that lead to conflict.

Hardware : Jewelry from a Toolbox. Hannah Rogge. **(A/YA)**

A unique craft book that provides step-by-step directions for how to turn ordinary hardware into functional jewelry.

Body Type : Intimate Messages Etched in Flesh. Ina Saltz. **(A/YA)**

Body Type is: a) book about tattoos; b) photography book; c) book of quotations; or d) all of the above. Answer: d) all of the above and more!

I Don't Want to be Crazy. Samantha Schutz. **(Grades 9+)**

A memoir in verse that tells the story of a young woman diagnosed with a panic disorder, and how she struggles through her four years of college.

To Dance : A Ballerina's Graphic Novel. Siena Cherson Siegel. **(Grades 5+)**

An autobiographical exploration of a young woman's passion for ballet and dreams of becoming a professional dancer. She studies with some of the best dancers in the world, but suffers an injury at the age of 18, which shatters her dancing career forever. Despite this, Siegel's love for dancing cannot be shaken.

Team Moon : How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon. Catherine Thimmesh.
(Grades 5+)

Experience the story of Apollo 11 first landing on the moon, as told firsthand by the engineers, software experts, technicians, and many others who worked behind-the-scenes.

Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine? : The Art of Making Zines and Mini-Comics. Mark Todd and Esther Pearl Watson. **(Grades 9+)**

Leave behind the world of push-button publishing with a little hands-on crafting of your own self-distributed mini-comics and zines. This book is full of advice, step-by-step instructions, and super-charming illustrations.

Action Philosopher's Giant-Size Thing. Fred Van Lente. **(A/YA)**

A funny and delightful attempt to illustrate the philosophies and thoughts of the great thinkers like Descartes, Plato, Karl Marx, and Nietzsche.

Immersed in Verse : An Informative, Slightly Irreverent and Totally Tremendous Guide to Living the Poet's Life. Allan Wolf. **(Grades 6+)**

Poems : More than words.
Live a poet's life! Create,
explore, revise, slam.