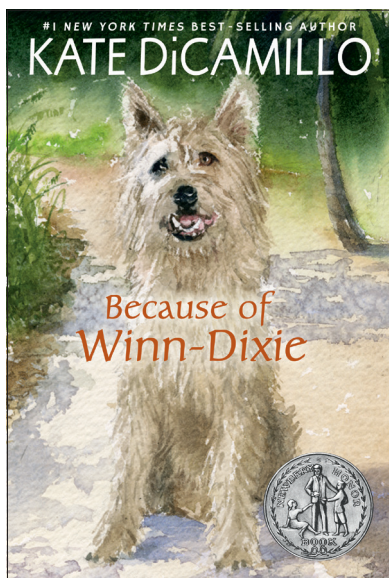


# CANDLEWICK PRESS

## CLASSROOM READS FOR GRADES 4–6

Whether you are reading aloud to your class or assigning titles for independent reading or book groups, this selection of middle-grade titles from Candlewick Press is sure to spark rich classroom discussions and help make connections across the curriculum.



### BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE by *Kate DiCamillo* (ages 9–12)

#### About the Book

A NEWBERY HONOR BOOK

One summer's day, ten-year-old India Opal Buloni goes down to the local supermarket for some groceries—and comes home with a dog. But Winn-Dixie is no ordinary dog. It's because of Winn-Dixie that Opal begins to make friends. And it's because of Winn-Dixie that she finally dares to

ask her father about her mother, who left when Opal was three. In fact, as Opal admits, just about everything that happens that summer is because of Winn-Dixie.

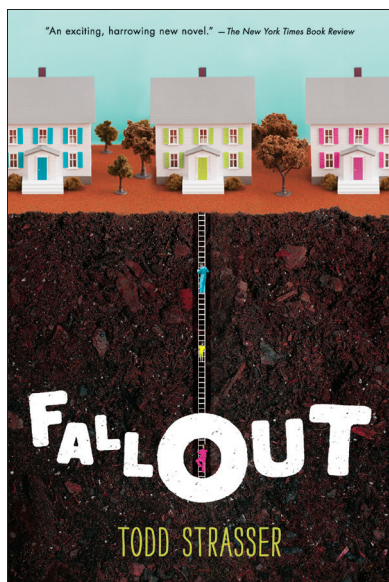
#### Discussion Starters

- Some literary characters make a very strong first impression, just the way some people do. Take a closer look at the novel's opening paragraph. How does Opal introduce herself to the reader? What do you discover about her life and her personality right from the start?
- Winn-Dixie is ugly, limping, and smelly, but Opal knows within moments that she loves him with all her heart. What makes the stray so irresistible? Why is Opal so ready for something to love?
- "Just about everything that happened to me that summer happened because of Winn-Dixie," Opal says. Do you agree with her? Is Opal underestimating her own role? How does Opal help her father out of his sadness? Because of her, what does he learn about himself as a father and a husband?

HC: 978-0-7636-5007-0 • PB: 978-0-7636-8086-2

Also available as an e-book

GRL R / Lexile 610L



### FALLOUT by *Todd Strasser* (ages 10–13)

#### About the Book

In the summer of 1962, the possibility of nuclear war is all anyone talks about. But Scott's dad is the only one in the neighborhood who actually builds a bomb shelter. When the unthinkable happens, neighbors force their way into the shelter before Scott's dad can shut the door. With not enough room, not enough food, and not enough air, life

inside the shelter is filthy, physically draining, and emotionally fraught. But even worse is the question of what will—and won't—remain when the door is opened again.

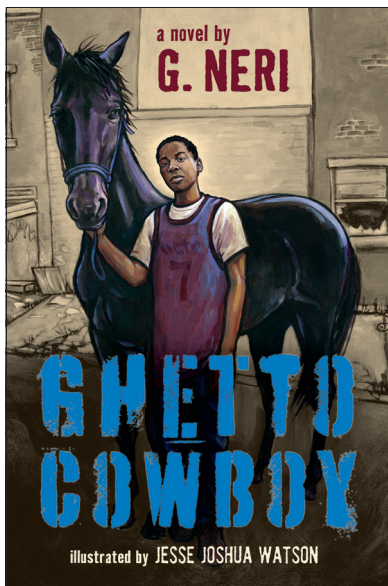
#### Discussion Starters

- Fallout is historical fiction, but it rewrites the past. What are the true historical events depicted in this novel? What are the imagined events? Why do you think the author chose to alter the facts of 1962? What do you think he is trying to tell us about the present?
- Before the attack, Mr. Shaw makes fun of the bomb shelter, but afterward he forces himself and his family into it and even keeps others out. Do you think he's a hypocrite? What would you have done in his situation?
- Mr. Porter believes that hope is "all we've got to keep us going." Why is hope so powerful? Why doesn't Mr. McGovern trust it?

HC: 978-0-7636-5534-1 • PB: 978-0-7636-7676-6

Also available as an e-book and in audio

GRL Z / Lexile 740L



**GHETTO COWBOY** by *G. Neri*, illustrated by *Jesse Joshua Watson* (ages 9–12)

### About the Book

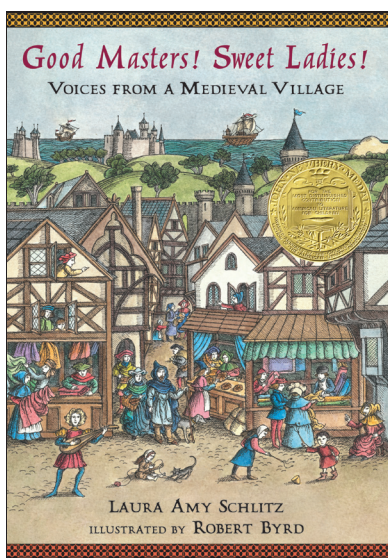
When Cole's mom dumps him in the mean streets of Philadelphia to live with the dad he's never met, the last thing Cole expects to see is a horse, let alone a stable full of them. He's pretty sure that cowboys aren't black, and they don't live in the inner city. But in his dad's 'hood, horses are a way of life. At first, all Cole can think about is how to

ditch these ghetto cowboys and get home. But when the City threatens to shut down the stables, he knows that it's time to step up and fight back. Inspired by the little-known urban riders of Philly and Brooklyn, this compelling tale of latter-day cowboy justice champions a world where your friends always have your back, especially when the chips are down.

### Discussion Starters

- Despite the fact that at different times both parents walk out on Cole, they both love him, and he comes to realize that. How do Mama and Harper communicate to Cole that he is loved?
- Trust is an important aspect of the Cowboy Way. When does Boo begin trusting Cole? When does Cole begin trusting Harper? When does Cole begin trusting himself?
- In chapter two, Cole says he stopped going to school because he didn't think he'd ever do anything great in his life. Later in the story, Harper tells Cole that "you never know what someone will do with his life once he finds himself." What does Cole find in this story? What are some of the things Cole accomplishes in the story that allow him to feel he can do anything? How do other young men find themselves? What can communities offer young people besides horses? What does your community offer?

HC: 978-0-7636-4922-7 • PB: 978-0-7636-6453-4  
Also available as an e-book and in audio  
GRL V / Lexile 660L



**GOOD MASTERS! SWEET LADIES! VOICES FROM A MEDIEVAL VILLAGE**  
by *Laura Amy Schlitz*, illustrated by *Robert Byrd* (ages 10–14)

### About the Book

A NEWBERY MEDAL WINNER  
Maidens, monks, and millers' sons—in these pages, readers will meet them all. There's Hugo, the lord's nephew, forced to prove his manhood by hunting a wild boar; sharp-tongued Nelly, who supports her family by selling live eels; and

the peasant's daughter, Mogg, who gets a clever lesson in how to save a cow from a greedy landlord. There's also mud-slinging Barbary (and her noble victim); Jack, the compassionate half-wit; Alice, the singing shepherdess; and many more. This witty, historically accurate, and utterly human collection forms an exquisite bridge to the people and places of medieval England and is equally suited to silent reading or readers' theater.

### Discussion Starters

- Think about the inequities of medieval society. Villeins and women were treated as property. Which people portrayed in the monologues have the best lives and the most freedom? Who seems the most hopeless? Why? Who in today's world might be living lives similar to those of the characters in the book?
- Illness and death were always close at hand in medieval life, as seen in some of the pieces in the book. Who in the book has experienced loss? How does the death of a family member affect those still alive?
- Did you notice that there is no mention of school in the book? What kind of education did children receive in medieval times? How did education differ according to class and gender?

HC: 978-0-7636-1578-9 • PB (B&W): 978-0-7636-5094-0  
PB (color): 978-0-7636-4332-4 • Also available as an e-book  
GRL Z





## KIZZY ANN STAMPS by Jeri Watts (ages 9–12)

### About the Book

In 1963, as Kizzy Ann prepares for her first year at an integrated school, she worries about the color of her skin, the scar running from the corner of her right eye to the tip of her smile, and whether anyone at the white school will like her. She writes letters to her new teacher in a clear, insistent voice, stating

her troubles and asking questions with startling honesty. The new teacher is supportive, but not everyone feels the same, so there is a lot to write about. An inspiring novel about opening your mind to the troubles and scars we all must bear—and facing life with hope and trust.

### Discussion Starters

- How does Kizzy Ann feel about starting at the newly integrated school? How do you think you would feel if you were Kizzy Ann? Have you ever had an experience that made you feel this way?
- How does Shag help Kizzy Ann make friends? How does Kizzy Ann's relationship with Frank Charles change over the course of the story?
- Did you enjoy reading a story written in letters and journal entries? Why do you think the author wrote the novel this way?

HC: 978-0-7636-5895-3 • PB: 978-0-7636-6976-8

Also available as an e-book  
GLR T / Lexile 920L



## SAME SUN HERE by Silas House and Neela Vaswani (ages 9–12)

### About the Book

Meena and River have a lot in common: fathers forced to work away from home to make ends meet, grandmothers who mean the world to them, and faithful dogs. But Meena is an Indian immigrant girl living in New York City's Chinatown, while River is a Kentucky coal miner's

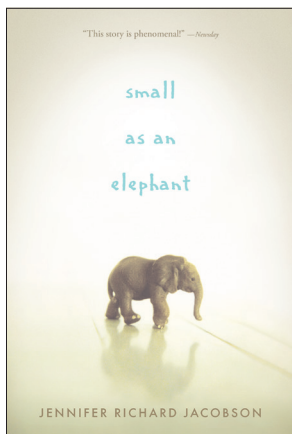
son. As Meena's family studies for citizenship exams and River's town faces devastating mountaintop removal, this unlikely pair become pen pals, sharing thoughts and, as their camaraderie deepens, discovering common ground in their disparate experiences. Narrated in two voices, this chronicle of two lives powerfully conveys the great value of being and having a friend and the joys of opening our lives to others who live beneath the same sun.

### Discussion Starters

- Why do Meena and River correspond using snail mail, not e-mail? How do letters differ from e-mail? How might their relationship have developed differently if they used only e-mail?
- What is mountaintop removal (MTR)? Why do coal companies use this mining process? Why do some of River's neighbors support MTR? Why do Mamaw and River oppose it?
- What is civil disobedience? How does Mamaw use it in her fight against Mountain Top Removal?

HC: 978-0-7636-5684-3 • PB: 978-0-7636-6451-0

Also available as an e-book and in audio  
GRL W / Lexile 890L



## SMALL AS AN ELEPHANT by Jennifer Richard Jacobson (ages 9–12)

### About the Book

Ever since Jack can remember, his mom has been unpredictable, sometimes loving and fun, other times caught in a whirlwind of energy and “spinning” wildly until it's over. But now she is gone, leaving him all alone on a campsite in Maine. Can he find his way back to Boston before the authorities realize what

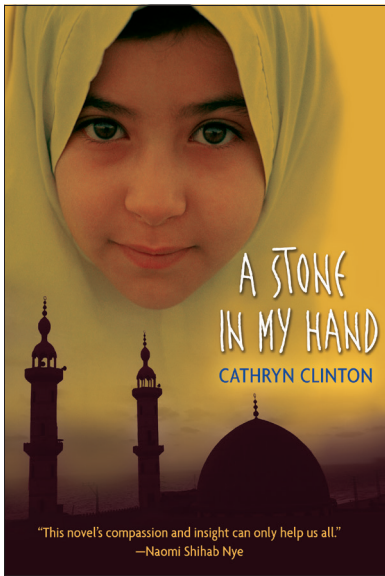
happened? Jack begins a journey that will test his wits and his loyalties—and his trust that he may be part of a larger herd after all.

### Discussion Starters

- Why does Jack's mom leave him? Do you think Jack is to blame?
- Why are elephants so important to Jack?
- Who helps Jack along the way? Why do each of these people help him?

HC: 978-0-7636-4155-9 • PB: 978-0-7636-6333-9

Also available as an e-book and in audio  
GRL U / Lexile 790L



**A STONE IN MY HAND** by Cathryn Clinton (ages 10–14)

**About the Book**

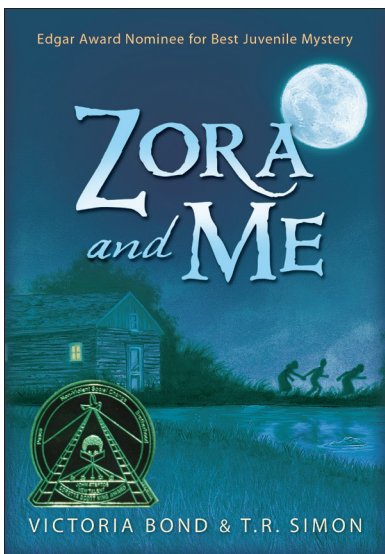
The year is 1988 in Gaza City, and it has been a month since eleven-year-old Malaak's father left to seek work in Israel, only to disappear. Every day Malaak climbs to the roof and waits. But her twelve-year-old brother, Hamid, has a different way of coping. He feels only anger, stoked by extremists who say violence is the only way

to change their fate. Malaak's mother begs him to stay away from harm, but Malaak lives in fear of losing her brother. What will it take for her to find her voice—and the strength to move past the violence that surrounds her?

**Discussion Starters**

- Daily life is a challenge for Malaak. When we first meet her, she hardly speaks to anyone. Explain why you think she is so quiet.
- When Malaak comes face-to-face with an Israeli soldier, she seems very frightened. What did she think would happen? What did you think would happen? If you were Malaak, what would you have done? What do you think it would be like to have soldiers from another country stationed in the city where you live?
- Malaak's brother Hamid and his friend Tariq become increasingly involved with a new group of friends who frighten Malaak. Why is she frightened? How is Hamid changing? Why do you think he is changing? Knowing what he thought about violence and extremism, what do you think Malaak's father would say to Hamid and Tariq if he could speak to them?

PB: 978-0-7636-4772-8 • Also available as an e-book  
GRL W / Lexile 540L



**ZORA AND ME** by Victoria Bond and T. R. Simon (ages 9–12)

**About the Book**

Whether she's telling the truth or stretching it, Zora Neale Hurston is a riveting storyteller. Her latest creation is a shape-shifting gator man who lurks in the marshes, waiting to steal human souls. But when boastful Sonny Wrapped loses a wrestling match with an elusive alligator named Ghost—and a man is found

murdered by the railroad tracks soon after—young Zora's tales of a mythical evil creature take on an ominous and far more complicated complexion, jeopardizing the peace and security of an entire town and forcing three children to come to terms with the dual-edged power of pretending.

**Discussion Starters**

- Who is the narrator of this novel? What do you know about her? Talk about her relationship with Zora. Why do you think the authors wanted to tell the story from her point of view?
- The narrator talks about the difference between a true story and a made-up one. She says, "Just because something's good listening doesn't necessarily make it true." Think about your own experience. Have you ever been in a situation where a story was stretched to make it more interesting?
- What are "white lies" according to Zora? How do white lies relate to the motto of Eatonville? Discuss places in the novel where people tell white lies. Why do they do it?

HC: 978-0-7636-4300-3 • PB: 978-0-7636-5814-4  
Also available as an e-book and in audio  
GRL U / Lexile 860L