KUCLC 2018 - Books for grades 5 through 8 and beyond...

Books I read and highly recommend: (in alphabetical order by title)

Middle Grade

**All’s Faire in Middle School** by Victoria Jamieson. (Dial Books, 9780525429982)  As Ren Faire season arrives and Imogene practices for her first paid job at the Faire, she also deals with middle school and negotiating friendships, quasi-friendships, fashion fails, and very poor judgment. **MG, graphic novel, homeschool, middle school, friends, NCTE Charlotte Huck Award nominee**

**Auma’s Long Run** by Eucabeth Odhiambo. (Carolrhoda Books, 9781512427844). Auma hopes to be track star and get a scholarship to university. But when a new sickness, AIDS, attacks her village, she must decide how to help her family. **MG, AIDS epidemic, Kenya,**

**Beyond the Bright Sea** by Lauren Wolk. (Dutton, 9781101994856) Crow was found floating on the sea by Osh mere hours after her birth. Now that Crow is 12, she has questions. A man searching for treasure disrupts their lives and sends Crow on a journey for answers. **MG, historical fiction**

**The Boggart Fights Back** by Susan Cooper. Margaret McElderry (9781534406292), 2018. An American developer wants to build a big horrible resort on Linnhe Loch. When Allie, James and the Old Creatures in the loch see what Mr. Trout is doing they join forces to stop him. **MG, fantasy**

**Castle in the Stars: The Space Race of 1869** by Alex Alice. (:01 Roaring Book Press, 9781626724938) A steam punk adventure that pits the idealistic King of Bavaria, and his race to reach the upper atmosphere, against the Prussian spies who surround him. Several youngsters, the King’s fiancee, and a clever engineer launch an airship towards outer space. **MG, graphic novel, steam punk.**

**Clayton Byrd Goes Underground** by Rita Garcia-Williams. (Amistad, 9780062215918) Even though Ms. Byrd, Clayton’s Mom, disapproves of her jazz playing Dad, Papa Byrd is Clayton’s best friend. Papa dies suddenly. Ms. Byrd gets rid of Papa’s things without consulting Clayton. Clayton runs off. His adventures on the subway with street performers open his eyes and give him a chance to use his harmonica in new and powerful ways. **MG, family, grief, National Book Award Finalist**

**Hello, Universe** by Erin Entrada Kelly. (Greenwillow, 9780062414151) Virgil wants to make friends with Valencia, the deaf girl in his class. He asks Kaori, a self proclaimed 10-year-old psychic for help. Valencia also asks Kaori and her little sister Gen for psychic help. Meanwhile, Chet Bullens, the class bully, plays a trick on Virgil that lands Virgil at the bottom of the well with only his pet guinea pig for company. Well-written and uplifting. **MG, bullying, introverts, Newberry Award winner.**
**Downward Spiral (Lock and Key #2)** by Ridley Pearson. (HarperCollins, 9780062399045) James Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes are roommates at Baskerville Academy in New England. James’ sister, Moria, also attends Baskerville. James is drawn deeper and deeper into the “family” business while Moria and Sherlock try to unravel Moriarty family secrets. **YA, MG, adventure, mystery**

**Funny Girl: Funniest. Stories. Ever.** Edited by Betsy Bird. (Viking, 9780451477316) Seriously, some of the funniest short stories by women and about girls. Young readers, guys included, will like these stories, poems, essays and comics. **MG, humor, short stories, collections**

**Granted** by John David Anderson. (Walden Pond Press, 9780062643889, 2018) Ophelia Delphinium Fidgets is a Granter, a fairy who can grant wishes, who has never granted a wish. Ophelia’s attempt to grant her first wish is fraught with traffic, humans, a slobbery dog, and a wish object that keeps changing hands. **MG, fantasy, wishes**

**Greetings from Witness Protection** by Jake Burt. (Feiwel and Friends, 9781250107114) She’s a street-wise orphan, sort of. The FBI offers her a “family” of her own in Witness Protection. The Internet, her “brother’s” resistance to being taken away from his friends, and the fact that her real father is still out there makes this girl’s job of keeping her new family safe almost impossible. **MG, YA**

**Lemons** by Melissa Savage. (Crown Books, 9781524700126) Lemonade Liberty Witt moves in with her grandfather in the little town of Willow Creek, CA, (Bigfoot Capital of the World) after Lemonade’s mother dies. Tobin Sky is the 11-year-old CEO of Bigfoot Investigators. Adventure! **MG, paranormal investigations, friendship, grief, family**

**Missy Piggle Wiggle and the Won’t-Walk-the-Dog Cure (Missy Piggle-Wiggle #2)** by Ann M. Martin. (Feiwel and Friends, 9781250071705). Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle’s great-niece, Missy Piggle-Wiggle takes over the job of finding remedies for childhood’s troublesome bad habits. Fun! **MG**

**Orphan Island** by Laurel Snyder. (Walden Pond Press, 9780062443410) Every year, a new orphan comes to the Island and the oldest orphan leaves. No one knows where they come from or go to. When one orphan refuses to leave, the Island fights back. Sad and scary and mysterious. **MG, fantasy**

**A Properly Unhaunted Place** by William Alexander. (Margaret K. McElderry, 9781481469159) Rosa’s mother is a librarian who specializes in ghost appeasement. BUT she has been sent to a town where there are NO GHOSTS AT ALL. Rosa’s new friend’s family works at the local Renaissance Faire. All is well until an apparition barrels into the Faire. **MG, fantasy, ghosts**

**Real Friends** by Shannon Hale and LeUyen Pham. (:01 Roaring Book Press, 9781626727854). This mostly autobiographical graphic novel follows young Shannon as she figures out how to find and be a real friend. **MG, graphic novel, friendship**
The Road to Ever After by Moira Young. (Feiwel and Friends, 9781250117298). 13-year-old Davy, an orphan, is ordered by elderly Miss Flint to drive her 200 miles to a seaside house where she intends to die - on her 80th birthday. A run in with the local parson convinces Davy to take the job, even though he can’t drive and Miss Flint is crotchety and sharp. MG, road trip, age, death and dying, acceptance, friendship

Sputnik’s Guide to the Earth by Frank Cotrell Boyce. (Walden Pond Press, 9780062643629) Sputnik told Prez that Prez has to find 10 things that are wonderful about Earth, or Earth will be destroyed. Sputnik reads Prez’s thoughts because Prez doesn’t talk. Prez’s foster family thinks Sputnik is a dog. Prez sees him as a weird little kid. There you have the set-up. This book is too good to miss. MG, aliens, family, foster care, adventure, humor

Tempests and Slaughter by Tamora Pierce. (Random House, 9780375847110, 2018) Arram and Ozorne are roommates at the University, where they are learning about Elemental Magic and their own gifts. The kitchen girl, Varice, is the third leg to this triangle of clever teens. Their world approximates ancient Rome, where slavery and cruelty and a strict class system still exist. The political pressures on Ozorne, as a member of the royal family, stress this friendship. SERIES!!!, MG, YA, fantasy

The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor. (Katherine Tegen Books, 9780062491497) Mason, big for his age and dyslexic, uses Dragon to record the stories of what happened when his friend, Bennie, fell from the tree house and died. His new friend, Calvin, super smart and super skinny, helps Mason find other secrets to help Mason’s family recover from too much grief. MG, grief, learning differences, bullying, responsibility

The War I Finally Won by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley. (Dial Books, 9780525429203) WWII still rages as Ada struggles with her feelings of worthlessness, even after her clubfoot has been fixed. When a German girl moves into the house, along with imperious Lady Thorton, the mismatched “family” has to learn to work together. It is Ada who heals rifts between the disparate players. MG, historical fiction

Wishtree by Katherine Applegate. (Feiwel and Friends, 9781250043221) Red is the neighborhood’s “wish tree”. People tie rags onto Red’s branches when they make a wish. When someone carves a hateful message into Red’s trunk, the trees owner plans to remove the tree. MG, diversity, acceptance, prejudice, nature

The Wonderling by Mira Bartok. (Candlewick, 9780763691219) #13 is a groundling - a fox person with only one ear. With help from another orphan groundling (a birdlike creature) #13 gets a name and escapes from the bleak orphanage that is his home. A fantastic Dickensian adventure where music holds a key to Arthur’s past. MG, fantasy
Young Adult

**Geekerella** by Ashley Poston. (Quirk Books, 9781594749476) Ellie Wittimer loves the TV show Starfield that she watched with her late father and she wants to go to the ExcelsiCon Costume Ball where the actor who plays Prince Carmindor will appear. She has her father’s old costume and has saved her pennies from the Magic Pumpkin food truck. Then her stepsisters strike. No fear! Fairy tales do come true - at Cons. **YA, romance, costume, conventions,**

**Life in a Fishbowl** by Len Vlahos. (Bloomsbury, 9781681190358) After Jackie’s father, dying from a brain tumor, agrees to an offer from an unscrupulous TV producer to turn his life into a reality TV show Jackie, turns to social media to reclaim her family’s privacy. **YA, grief, death and dying, reality TV, social media, MG for mature readers**

**Long Way Down** by Jason Reynolds. (Atheneum/Caitlin Dlouhy Books, 9781481438254) His brother is dead, so he takes his brother’s gun and gets on the elevator of his project highrise on the seventh floor. As the elevator clanks and groans to the lobby, someone from his past enters the car on each floor. This is a painful book to read and it will spark a lot of discussion. **YA, violence, guns, death, family, grief, Coretta Scott King Honor book, Newbery Honor Book**

**Piecing Me Together** by Renee Watson. (Bloomsbury, 9781681191058) When a black teen girl is beaten by the Portland police, Jade uses her art, her place in a Mentorship program, and her own tenacity to bring attention to this injustice. **YA, Coretta Scott King Award winner, Newbery Honor Book**

**The Speed of Life** by Carol Weston. (Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 9781492654490) Imagine dealing with the death of your mother and then barely a year later finding out that your father, a legislator, is dating the advice columnist you’ve been pouring your heart out to. **YA, grief, family, re-marriage**

**The Stars Beneath Our Feet** by David Barclay Moore. (Alfred A. Knopf, 9781524701246) Lolly deals with the death of his brother by building elaborate Lego structures. A gift of two garbage bags of Legos from his mother’s girlfriend makes the Lego project possible. When a news story uncovers exactly where those Legos came from, all heck breaks loose. **YA, realistic fiction, diversity, inner city, family,**

**Tess of the Road** by Rachel Hartman. (Random House, 9780062399045, 2018) Tess is Serafina’s younger half-sister, without a drop of dragon blood in her veins, but more than enough risk taking and curiosity to make her fascinating. **YA, fantasy, coming of age**
Together at Midnight by Jennifer Castle. (HarperTeen, 9780062250513, 2018). Two days after Christmas, Josh, Kendall and Max witness an accident on a Manhattan street. Max and Kendall take a dare from a diner waitress to do 7 random acts of Kindness by New Year’s Eve. Each chapter is from a different person's viewpoint. The chapters that give stories of the people the teens help are the best.  

YA, romance, kindness

Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers by Deborah Heiligman. (Henry Holt and Co., 9780805093391). Heiligman is able to write biographies about relationships that tug at our emotions. As Heiligman uncovers the story of the Van Gogh brothers and the loving, though flawed, family they came from, she asks the reader to wonder or imagine how the characters felt at different junctures in their lives. Keep a hanky handy. YA, biography, artists

2017 Books that I should have read (but did not)

Felix Yz by Lisa Bunker. (Viking, 9780425288504). In an experiment gone awry, Felix is fused with a hyper-intelligent being from the fourth dimension. Now 13, Felix can’t grow to adulthood unless this being is “removed”. The reviews are amazing. MG, science fiction,

First Rule of Punk by Celia Perez. (Viking, 9780425290408). Malu does not fit in from the first day of middle school. She likes zines, rock and roll, skateboarding. Her father reminds her of the first rule of punk: be yourself. MG, middle school, music, graphic novel

The Book of Dust #1: La Belle Sauvage by Philip Pullman. (Knopf, 978-0-375-81530-0) This is the first of a trilogy that predates His Dark Materials. Lyra is just an infant and 11 year old Malcolm Polstead must keep Lyra safe from her own parents. The repressive regime, a raging flood and searchers who will not give up keep the tension high in this new series. MG, YA, fantasy

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. (Balzer and Bray, 978-0-06-249853-3) This book is a stunner - from the first chapter (which I DID read). A young girl’s lifelong friend is shot by police - in front of her. She struggles to absorb this event, to distance herself from it in self-defense. The students at a her private school view this event and her neighborhood in a way that does not match her reality - an absorbing and timely read. YA, Black Lives Matter, race, Coretta Scott King Honor book

The Librarian of Auschwitz by Antonio Iturbe. (Holt, 978-1-62779-618-7). Based on the life of Dita Kraus, who, as a 14-year-old, hid and protected 8 books in the camp at Auschwitz. Necessary stuff. YA, historical fiction, World War II, holocaust
**A Skinful of Shadows** by Frances Hardinge. (Amulet, 978141972572-2). When Makepeace’s mother is killed in a riot, Makepeace tries to find answers. Her search leads to mysteries of her own family and ghosts become her best resource. Set during the English Civil War. **YA, historical fiction, fantasy**

**Warcross** by Marie Lu. (Random House, 9780399547966) Warcross is an addictive video game that operates through a brain/computer interface. Emika Chen’s desperate attempt to avoid eviction by hacking into the game uncovers her identity to millions. The game’s creator hires Emi to hunt down a mysterious hacker, Zero. Let the games begin! **YA, video games, future**

**NON-FICTION for Middle Grades and Young Adult (a sampling):**


**Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix**, written by Jacqueline Briggs Martin and June Jo Lee. (Readers to Eaters, 9780983661597) Part biography, part culinary adventure, this vibrant and energetic book captures the essence of the LA street food scene. **MG, YA Sibert Honor Book, culinary arts, street culture**

**Fault Lines in the Constitution: the Framers, their Fights, and the Flaws that Affect Us Today** by Cynthia Levinson and Sanford Levinson. (Peachtree Publishers, 9781561459452) This timely history of the US Constitution is well researched, includes little known bumps along the Constitution’s composition and gives examples of how our Democratic Republic works. **YA, history, law, politics**

**Girl Rising: Changing the World One Girl at a Time** by Tanya Lee Stone. (Wendy Lamb Books, 9780553511468) Girl Rising is a film featuring the stories of nine young women and their struggle for education and advancement around the world. Stone’s book follows that film and adds the stories of 13 more girls. **YA, world cultures, feminism, education, equality**

**Grand Canyon**, by Jason Chin. (Roaring Brook Press, 9781596439504). Through magnificent panoramic illustrations, meticulously researched diagrams and lucid text, Jason Chin has created a book as grand as the canyon itself. **MG, YA Sibert Honor Book, ecology, geology, Caldecott Honor book**

**Her Right Foot** by Dave Eggers, art by Shawn Harris. (Chronicle Books, 9781452162812). Formatted as a picture book, this history of the Statue of Liberty asks its readers to consider the way Lady Liberty is posed, composing a moving treatise to the importance of immigrants to our country. **All ages, history, patriotism**
How Many Guinea Pigs Can Fit on a Plane?: Answers to Your Most Clever Math Questions by Laura Overdeck. (Feiwel and Friends, 9781250072290). Guinea pigs and math! This book takes story problems to a whole new level. MG, math


I’m Just No Good at Rhyming: and Other Nonsense for Mischievous Kids and Immature Grown-ups by Chris Harris. (Little, Brown, 9780316266574). Move over, Jack Prelutsky! Chris Harris has your back if you want to retire. MG

Motor Girls: How Women Took the Wheel and Drove Boldly into the Twentieth Century by Sue Macy. (National Geographic, 9781426326974). Vintage photographs illustrate this history of the early days of the automobile with short bios of woman drivers of that era, quotes from news of the day and song lyrics and cartoons. MG, YA, automobile, history, feminism

Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask about Having a Disability by Shane Burcaw, illustrated by Matt Carr. (Roaring Brook Press, 9781626727717). In this candid book, award-winning writer Burcaw answers ten frequently asked questions about his life with a disability in a humorous and approachable manner. MG, YA Sibert Honor Book, disabilities, humor

#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women edited by Mary Beth Leatherdale and Lisa Charleyboy. (Annick Press, 9781554519576). The editors present a stereotype-busting, zine-like collection of personal essays, illustrations, and photos from and about the marginalized experiences of indigenous young women. YA, essays, Native Americans

The Playbook: 52 Rules to Aim, Shoot, and Score in this Game Called Life, by Kwame Alexander. (HMH, 9780544570979). Poems by Alexander and quotes from sports celebrities focus on what makes a good athlete and a successful person. MG, YA, poetry, sports, advice

Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators That Saved an Ecosystem, written by Patricia Newman. Published by Millbrook Press. Chemical runoff from California’s farms kills seagrass. But in Monterey Bay’s Elkhorn Slough, the seagrass is thriving. Brent Hughes doggedly pursues the answers to this puzzling ecological mystery. MG, YA, nature

Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers written by Deborah Heiligman and published by Godwin Books/Henry Holt, Read my review above. YA, biography

Booklists and websites:

Betsy Birds’ blog posts and lists:

Middle grade novels: http://blogs.slj.com/afuse8production/2017/12/30/31-days-31-lists-day-thirty-2017-middle-grade-novels/


Unique Biographies: http://blogs.slj.com/afuse8production/2017/12/26/31-days-31-lists-day-twenty-six-2017-unique-biographies/ You MUST look at these titles. I never heard of most of these people.

ALA Notable Books: http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/notalists/ncb Scroll down to the age group of your interest. There are great titles here.


About me: Karen Maurer

I have worked in public libraries in Children’s Services for 30 plus years.

I have a blog on which I review books - and write about other things. I post ALL my booklists on that blog so go there.

https://booksnstories.blogspot.com

I am a professional storyteller, a singer(?)/songwriter AND I own an accordion. Check out the CD I made with the youngest of my brothers on bandcamp;

https://chilesplay.bandcamp.com You can listen for free. The CD is also available on Amazon but a bandcamp download is cheaper.

Email me with questions and suggestions at bookkm@gmail.com

Thanks for supporting the Kutztown University Children’s Literature Conference.
Because I always forget something.

**The Book of Boy** by Catherine Gilbert Murdoch. Greenwillow, (9780062686206), 2018. Boy has a hump, no family and he talks to animals. He is shunned. But the pilgrim, Secundus, takes Boy on as a servant in a journey to discover the secrets of alchemy. **MG, historical fiction, fantasy**

**Ghost Boys** by Jewel Parker Rhodes. Little, Brown, (9780316262286), 2018. Jerome is killed when a policeman mistakes a toy for a gun. His ghost and the ghost of Emmet Till watch as Jerome’s family and community deal with the death. **MG, race relations, civil rights**

**The Hazel Wood** by Melissa Albert. Flatiron Books, (9781250147905), 2018. Alice is the granddaughter of an author whose only book has a cult following. When Alice’s mother disappears, Alice must find the Hazel Wood, her grandmother’s estate. A fan of the book helps her. Creepy, hopeless stories come alive from the book. **YA, horror, fantasy**

**It All Comes Down to This** by Karen English. Clarion Books, (9780544839571), 2017. In 1965, Sophie moved to the outskirts of LA, to a mostly white neighborhood. The riots in Watts are a backdrop to Sophie’s growing awareness to prejudice against her because of her color. **MG, race relations, historical fiction, Award nominee**

**The Journey of Little Charlie** by Christopher Paul Curtis. Scholastic, (9780545156660), 2018. When Charlie’s Pa dies and Cap’n Buck claims Charlie owes a LOT of money. Charlie agrees to work it off by hunting down some other people who owe Cap’n Buck money. BTW, Charlie is white and he’s hunting down escaped slaves. Sounds good and the reviewers LOVE it. **MG, slavery, South, historical fiction**

**Mapping the Bones** by Jane Yolen. Philomel Books, (9780399257780), 2018. Twins, Chaim and Gittel, their Mama and Papa move to the ghetto of Lodz. Eventually sent to a forced labor camp, their family is whittled down to the twins. The accident of their birth saves them but may lead to their death at the hands of a madman. **MG, YA, historical fiction, the Holocaust, twins**

**Parker Inheritance** by Varian Johnson. Arthur A. Levine, (9780545946179), 2018. Candice finds a letter her grandmother left for her in the attic that leads to a mystery, ancient misdeeds and misunderstandings and possibly to a treasure. **MG, mystery, civil rights,**

**Older than Dirt: a Wild but True History of Earth** by Don Brown and Michael Perfitt. HMH, (97805444805033), 2017. A graphic novel style examination of earth’s formation. **MG, non-fiction, geology, graphic novel**
Out of Left Field by Ellen Klages. Viking, (9780425288597), 2018. Set in 1957, this is the story of a girl’s struggle to play baseball on a boy’s team. MG, women’s rights, historical fiction

The Science of Breakable Things by Tae Keller. Random House (9781524715663), 2108. Natalie’s mother rarely leaves her bedroom since she lost her job. Natalie uses the scientific method to figure out a way to cure her mother’s depression. MG, mental illness, hope, science


The Unexpected Life of Oliver Cromwell Pitts by Avi. Algonquin, (9781616205645), 2017. After a flood, Oliver Cromwell Pitts wakes alone up to a ruined house and a village of people bent on revenge against his outspoken lawyer of a father. He is taken to the poorhouse to pay for his father’s “debts” and escapes by his wits alone. MG, historical fiction

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