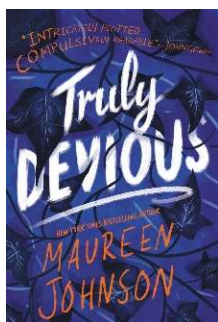


The half moon by Mary Beth Keane

When we meet Malcolm and Jess, they've been separated for a few months; the slow, painful culmination of secrets and regrets. For the typically convivial Malcolm, he finds his life suddenly in tatters, waiting for his wife to return and deeply underwater on his bar, *The Half Moon*. His beloved and assured Jess, after years of trying to conceive as her career and marriage stagnated, can feel her biological clock ticking, straining to understand a life so far off track. Over the course of a snow-covered week in the Hudson Valley, our characters reckon with the realities of approaching midlife, flinging for a glint of a path forward. This wonderful new book puts the heart and heartache of humanity on full display. Recommended for fans of Elizabeth Strout, J. Ryan Stradal, and Jennifer Close. ~Noah Weckwerth~

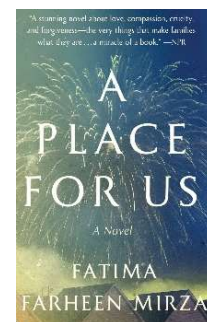


Truly devious by Maureen Johnson

Ellingham Academy has been a private school for the gifted, since its opening in the 1930s. Founder Albert Ellingham believed knowledge was a game, something adventurous to enjoy and pursue. When his wife and daughter were kidnapped, the only clue left behind was a cryptic note signed "Truly, Devious." Although Ellingham paid the ransom and followed the kidnappers' orders, he never saw his Iris or Alice again. Despite its gloomy past, Ellingham Academy remained a bastion of education, and true crime savant Stevie Bell is the newest student, surrounded by classmates with genius-level intellects in various fields. Stevie is determined to solve the Academy's tragic mystery, because the Ellinghams weren't the only victims. But when one of her housemates dies under suspicious circumstances, Stevie discovers that reading about a murder and solving one in real life are two very different things. One of the best things about Stevie as a protagonist is that she defies so many of the typical detective tropes: she's not an arrogant Sherlock-type who already knows everything about everything. She is awkward, she struggles, and she misunderstands things. And it is her ability to bounce back from these issues that makes her so admirable. ~Jay Robillard~

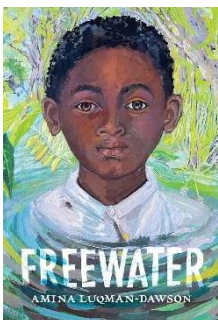
A place for us by Fatima Farheen Mirza

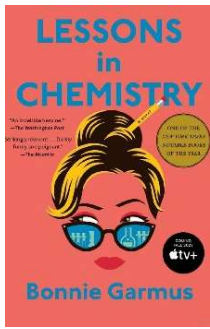
A Place For Us is the fictional story of an Indian-American Muslim family in California. The parents are very devout, and the two older sisters follow the parents' lead. The younger brother struggles to fit. He feels out of place and can't seem to be what the family and community expect of him. I generally like books that follow a linear timeline, but this book jumps around. It does so to provide experiences in the family from different perspectives. The themes about family are highly intricate and allow a lot of room for discussion – this book would be great for a book club. *Who tells the story? Who doesn't? Why?* There's also much to discuss about faith and love, especially where those values may cause internal tension. The denouement was so powerful I was in tears! Anyone who is part of a family -- especially if aspects of those relationships have ever been complicated or messy -- will find things that they can relate to in this story! ~Keegan Taylor~



Freewater by Amina Luqman-Dawson

Homer and his sister Ada are enslaved children on the Southern Plantation in South Carolina when their Mama decides to run away, taking them with her. Homer and Ada escape into the swamp but Mama is recaptured and returned to the plantation. As the odds are against two children surviving in the swamp on their own, they are fortunate to be rescued by a mysterious man named Suleman who takes them to a hidden community deep in the swamp. This community, Freewater, consists of little shared houses and bridges built in the tops of trees, all created by other former slaves and their families. Although the children feel safe with the residents of Freewater, Homer wants desperately to go back to rescue Mama. It's a dangerous idea because the slave hunters are still out there looking for them. Is Homer brave enough to try? This year's Newbery winner is based on real hidden communities, and is filled with suspense and interesting characters in addition to teaching a little-known piece of our history. Recommended for grades 4-8. ~Sue Daniels~



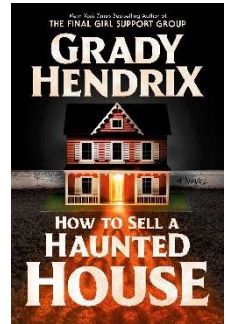


Lessons in chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

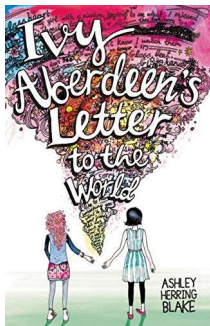
Southern California, 1961. Chemist Elizabeth Zott packs a lunch for her kindergartner and heads to work, not to a lab but to the set of the popular TV cooking show, "Supper at Six." The circuitous route she took in becoming a TV cooking star (and her dislike of this job) is the storyline of *Lessons in Chemistry*. Elizabeth Zott is a brilliant research scientist back before the women's movement existed. Independent, outspoken and unconventional, she approaches life, cooking and relationships on a scientific basis. This is a fast-moving story, frequently funny and occasionally sad. I liked the quirky personalities of the characters, including Elizabeth's dog, named "Six-thirty", whose role in the family cannot be overstated. The author brings resolution to Elizabeth's dilemma in an ending that I didn't see coming but thoroughly enjoyed. ~Nancy Arevalo~

How to sell a haunted house by Grady Hendrix

Death is not necessarily the end in horror. There are gaps left behind by those who are gone, forcing their loved ones to pick up the pieces in the midst of grief. Siblings Louise and Mark never got along - even in the best of times - but tensions between them reach an all-time high as they mourn the loss of their parents. The way Mark sees it, Louise abandoned their family at the first chance she got so she could live her own life in California. And from Louise's point of view, Mark is an aimless wastrel who never left Charleston and resents her success because it only highlights his failures. Now it falls to them both to clean out the family home and spruce it up to put it on the market. But something is working against their efforts. It's as if the house doesn't want to be sold. Are Louise and Mark's parents trying to make contact from beyond the grave? Or is there something more ominous haunting them? ~Jay Robillard~



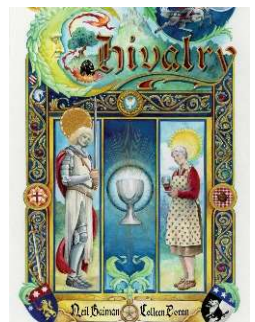
Ivy Aberdeen's letter to the world by Ashley Herring Blake



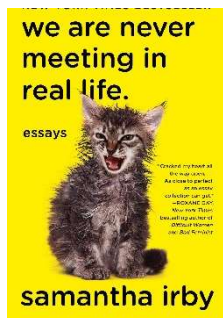
In this middle grade contemporary novel, Ivy Aberdeen experiences turmoil from without and from within. Feeling like a lost middle child, Ivy has been finding solace in her artwork, where she has been drawing pictures of girls holding hands. In the midst of drawing one evening, her house is destroyed by a tornado. Although her family all gets out safely, they spend the rest of the novel living in a hotel, displaced and scrambling to get stable again. On top of all this trauma, Ivy's sketch journal has disappeared, and someone begins sending her notes with her illustrations attached. Ivy's not sure what this mysterious person's intentions are, filling her with even more confusion and anxiety. Ivy is a wonderful girl, and her story is so heartwarming that it will leave you relieved and happy for this main character as she finds love and acceptance from the most important places in the end, especially from herself! Recommended for grades 4-7. ~Keegan Taylor~

Chivalry (graphic novel) by Neil Gaiman and Colleen Doran

Chivalry by Neil Gaiman and Colleen Doran made the ALA's 2022 Best Graphic Novels for Adults Reading List, deservedly. This short book was an absolute delight. Gaiman's signature dry wit and whimsy glimmers throughout the text, while Dorn's lush illustrations provide a sumptuous visual feast. The charming story could easily be shared with the whole family, though the emotional depth of some scenes may be over the heads of younger audiences. If you're a lover of imagination, this fresh addition to a classic tale is a must. ~Elizabeth Glaser~



We are never meeting in real life by Samantha Irby



If you enjoy the "these are my life struggles, let's laugh at them together" style but are looking for something less intentionally precious than David Sedaris, you can't go wrong with Samantha Irby. A tell-it-like-it-is blogger and freelance writer, Irby has self-deprecating humor for days. She is unapologetically, comically blunt. Reading the essays in this book feels like sitting down with your best friend and talking smack. And it's not like Samantha just sits and complains about everyone and everything. She turns the focus on herself plenty. She not only exposes her own bad habits, she magnifies them and dissects them. Dating, her shopping addiction, her distinctly unlovable cat Helen, each and every topic is tackled with wit as dry as the Gobi Desert. If you live in your sweatpants and your idea of making dinner

is ordering Door Dash, you'll feel right at home with this book. We don't always have to be "put together." Sometimes it's okay to be a catastrophe. ~Jay Robillard~