

2017 Gateway Award Nominees
Annotated by the *Saturday Morning Book Group* **
The winner is selected by students in grades 9-12

Adams, C. (2015). *Ruthless*. NY: Simon Pulse, ISBN-13: 978-1481422635, 248 pgs.

A fast-paced first-person novel of a teenage girl who has to escape a serial killer. Ruth is a girl who is captured by a serial killer who has already “punished” six other girls before her. A bit like the show 24, where everything is happening in real time and every action and reaction only makes everything worse. This story opens with Ruth kidnapped and trying to remember what happened. What unfolds is a harrowing escape where she runs naked through the woods (in November, in the mountains), tries to get help from neighbors who won’t let her in or help her, and ends up being buried alive. While technically this book ends on a happy ending (she doesn’t end up dead), the 250 pages it takes to get there feels extremely long. The pacing is fast and hard to put down, but in the end, it feels a bit demoralizing to even read. (FC)

Bardugo, L (2015). *Six of crows*. NY: Henry Holt and Co., ISBN-13: 978-1627792127, 480 pgs.

Ketterdam: a bustling hub of international trade where anything can be had for the right price-- and no one knows that better than criminal prodigy Kaz Brekker. Kaz is offered a chance at a deadly heist that could make him rich beyond his wildest dreams. But he can't pull it off alone...A convict with a thirst for revenge. A sharpshooter who can't walk away from a wager. A runaway with a privileged past. A spy known as the Wraith. A Heartrender using her magic to survive the slums. A thief with a gift for unlikely escapes. Six dangerous outcasts. One impossible heist. Kaz's crew is the only thing that might stand between the world and destruction—if they don't kill each other first. (Amazon)

Benway, R. (2015). *Emmy & Oliver*. NY: HarperCollins Publisher Inc. ISBN-13: 978-0062335098, 352 pgs.

On the 43rd day of second grade, Oliver disappeared. His father took him away for the weekend and never brought him back. For 10 years after he left, Oliver’s best friend, Emmy, wondered where he was. But she had given up hope of him returning. Until one day, when he did. At 17, Emmy has to navigate the waters of a best friend who isn’t the child she remembers, of parents who held on too tight, and of fighting for the things she wants. Emmy hopes to rekindle the friendship she lost, but she finds herself unsure about how to even begin. Everything about Benway’s storytelling is real: the characters, the dialogue, the situation. By addressing a situation as complicated as non-custodial parental kidnapping, Benway asks questions that stick with readers after the end. Through Emmy and Oliver’s stories, readers explore the complexities of friendship and growing up. This book is easy to fall into and is a quick and fun read. (BR)

Damico. G. (2015). *Hellhole*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, ISBN: 978-0-544-30710-0, 349 pgs.

Max is the ultimate dork. He loves paleontology, supports himself and his mom by working in a store for long hours and delights in winning cross-word puzzles. Mom spends most days in bed because she needs a heart transplant. When Max crosses the line, and steals a bobble-head cat for

his mom from the store owner, literally all hell breaks loose, and he finds his act has released one of Satan's devils to his household. His special devil, Berg, is a comical sort, who lives on junk food and beer, can change shapes, but isn't above killing people if Max doesn't do what he wants. How can Max get Berg to heal his mom and still keep his soul?? The book's characters are funny and strong and the plotline is fairly believable. Teens who love satire and horror may find this a fun read. (CJG)

Demetrios, H. (2015). *I'll meet you there*. NY: Henry Holt & Co. ISBN-13: 978-0805097955, 400 pgs.

In this table-turning novel about the thrill of defeat and the agony of victory, the new rule at Jack Logan's sports-crazy New Jersey high school is that all kids must play on a team. So Jack and a ragtag group of anti-athletic friends decide to get even. They are going to start a rebel JV soccer team whose mission is to avoid victory at any cost, setting out to secretly undermine the jock culture of the school. But as the team's losing formula becomes increasingly successful at attracting fans and attention, Jack and his teammates are winning in ways they never expected- and don't know how to handle. (Amazon.com)

Hand, C. (2016). *The last time we say goodbye*. NY: Harper Teen. ISBN-13: 978-0062318480, 400 pgs.

Alexis is struggling with the death of Tyler, her younger brother she adored. Ty, who seemed to have the world by the tail, was devastated by their parent's divorce and their dad's new girlfriend. When Ty commits suicide, Lex and her mom are left reeling. Her mom's depression is interrupted by her claim that Tyler was in the house, that she can feel him. While Alexis tries to help her mom, she is dealing with her own guilt. She is certain she could have stopped him. Now, nothing makes sense except math. Her 15-year old brother committing suicide just won't stop haunting her. She knows she should've answered that text he sent that night. It could've changed everything. This book is beautifully and hauntingly written, and fans of *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *All the Bright Places* will love this story. While dark, it is deeply hopeful. (BLB)

Hartzler, A. (2015). *What we saw*. NY: HarperTeen. ISBN-13: 978-0062338747, 336 pgs.

Aaron Hartzler's debut novel based on actual events has captured a deeply moving story surrounding the Steubenville rape case. Kate Weston can piece together most of the bash at John Doone's house: shots with Stacey Stallard, Ben Cody taking Kate's keys and getting her home early, the feeling that maybe Ben is becoming more than just the guy she's known since they were kids. But when a picture of Stacey passed out over Deacon Mills's shoulder appears online the next morning, Kate suspects she doesn't have all the details, and begins to ask questions: What really happened at the party after she left? Who was still there? What did they see? Aaron Hartzler takes an unflinching look at silence as a form of complicity. It's a book about the high stakes of speaking up, and the razor-thin line between guilt and innocence that so often gets blurred, one hundred and forty characters at a time. (Amazon Review, URL: <http://goo.gl/czQSxp>).

Karo, A. (2015). *Me, you, us also known as galgorithm*. NY: Simon Pulse, ISBN-13: 978-

1481440639, 320 pgs.

Shane Chambliss is a modern-day Cyrano in Aaron Karo's *Me, You, Us*. He is secretly helping the nerds, dorks and dweebs of Kingsview, California date the hottest girls in the school by using his tried-and-true "Galgorithm" (gal + algorithm) method. Shane's secret is kept from his best friend, Jak, and the rest of his classmates as he tells his clients "deny till you die." His tips reach a broader audience when he unintentionally starts helping his former math teacher and his secret begins to unravel, but not of course, before he discovers his own feelings of love. A very cute premise, likeable characters, and a relatable high school setting. (CR)

Katcher, B. (2016). *Improbable theory of Ana & Zak*. NY: Katherine Tegen Books. ISBN-13: 978-0062272782, 352 pgs.

In the vein of *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist* and *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*, Katcher captures his usual humor-through-angst style that is both hilarious and heartwarming. In this he said/she said romance two teens discover themselves during a frenetic first date at a sci-fi convention. When Ana Watson's little brother ditches his high school trip to go crazy at his first sci-fi "con," do-gooder Ana knows she better find him or her extra-controlling parents will never let her out of their sight. In desperation, she is forced to partner with classmate and slacker extraordinaire Zak Duquette to help find her brother before morning. In one night, while being chased by of costumed Vikings and zombies, Ana and Zak get to know one another in the most bizarre but real way possible. Before you know it, the nerd-fest transforms into something typically hormone driven, but told in Katcher's unique and endearing style, incorporating his real-life as a teacher/librarian into his story. We give him an emphatic A+! (BLB)

Klass, D. (2016). *Losers Take All*. New York: Square Fish. ISBN-13: 978-1250090591, 336 pgs.

Senior Jack Logan is an anomaly in his school and his family. Fremont High (Muscles High to those in the know) is the pinnacle in every sport – jocks rule all. When a new dictator of a principal passes the rule that every member of the teams must be allowed to play, losers finally get the chance to rule. Jack hasn't inherited his family's athletic prowess, so he's happy the losers will finally get the chance to show what they can do. This is a refreshing take on what is wrong with how we idolize athletes and winning, illustrated by the losers who take charge of teaching the winners how to lose. Losing with class is a hard lesson, but Jack and his friends are up to the task of teaching them. (BLB) (Also on the Truman list).

Laure, E. (2015). *This raging light*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN: 978-0-544-53429-2, 276 pgs.

In Laure's debut novel, the reader is immediately hooked with the title of the first chapter: Day 14. Day 14 of what? Day 14 of when Lucille and Wren's mom was supposed to return. She promised to be back by the first day of school. Somehow Lucille knew that really wasn't going to happen and it was up to her to take care of her little sister, Wren. With their dad in an institution, Lucille figures out how to get a part time job, pay bills, buy groceries, and still go to school. Every once in a while, a surprise arrives, and later Lucille learns there really were caring

and concerned people nearby even though she was afraid to see them. This moving story is difficult to put down, and makes readers question how they would function in a similar situation. (MM)

Lee, F. (2015). *Zero boxer*. Minnesota: Flux. ISBN: 978-0-7387-4338-7, 351 pgs.

This science fiction paper turner is definitely a high school level read with its mature content. The main character, Carr, has risen in the ranks of the Zero Boxing Universe. Similar to present day cage fighting, Carr has trained since he was seven to beat his opponents in the cube. The cube is a zero-gravity enclosure where two fighters face off to win in a brutal battle of physical and mental abilities. Win after win brings Carr to the ultimate fight for best zero boxer in the universe. As the pressure builds, Carr discovers a genetic secret that changes his life and throws him into a high-pressure choice. Lee does an exceptional job of engaging the reader in each and every move carried out in the cube, making this the book you don't want to put down. (DP)

Lee, S. (2015). *Under a painted sky*. NY: G.P. Putman's Sons. ISBN-13: 978-0-1475-1184-3, 384 pgs.

Since we live in Missouri, it is only natural to be curious about the characters and plot of this story set in our state in 1849. The main character is Samantha, a head-strong Chinese teenager who dreams of moving back to New York and becoming a professional musician. She is not happy in Missouri and doesn't always hide her feelings from her father. A terrible accident not only thwarts Samantha's hopes and dreams, it also forces her to grow up, think clearly, and make life-changing decisions as she runs from authorities to find help and a new life. This is a good read and interesting in a "close-to-home" way. (MH)

Lord, E. (2015). *The start of me & you*. NY: Bloomsbury, ISBN-13: 978-1619639386, 373 pgs.

Paige Hancock is known as the "Girl Whose Boyfriend Drowned." After a year of grief, Paige is determined to start living her life again. She makes a list of things to change her life, including dating her long-time crush, Ryan Chase. When Ryan is moved across the room, she finds herself with Ryan's geeky cousin, Max, instead. Although Max is the opposite of Ryan, they become fast friends and she begins to accomplish things on her list. Themes of this book include friendships, relationships at many levels, grief and choosing optimism over fear. This book made me cry. It was a little boring & tedious at the start, but by mid-point it was very interesting to read. (FC)

McGinnis, M. (2015). *A madness so discreet*. NY: Katherine Tegen Books. ISBN: 978-0-06-232086-5, 376 pgs.

The first 90 pages of this book are horrific. A young girl named Grace is in an insane asylum in Boston in the 1800's. She's there because she's been made pregnant by her father who is a senator. She endures unbelievable abuses. I could hardly force myself to read what happened to her and the other patients. But then at page 90 she is rescued from the asylum by a doctor who pretends to give her a lobotomy. Once out of that asylum she goes to a much more humane setting where she has to pretend to be lobotomized while secretly helping the doctor solve murders. The book is well written, but I would recommend starting with page 90. (JH)

Myers, K. K. (2015). *Inherit midnight*. NY: Bloomsbury. ISBN-13: 978-1619632196, 400 pgs.

Avery VanDemere and the rest of her privileged, scheming family are competing for a chance to inherit the family fortune. Avery feels like the black sheep of the family, careless about the wealth she has grown up in, only wishing she could have known her deceased mother. Avery learns that her grandmother has created a challenge for her heirs to prove themselves worthy of the piles of money they stand to inherit. While the competitions to unearth more clues are exotic and thrilling, the characters tend to feel more one-dimensional and some of the aspects of the story are clichéd. A fast-paced caper with a stunning twist, but it lacks a strong, likable heroine and emotional depth current YA books deliver. (FC)

Niven, J. (2015). *All the bright places*. Chicago: Ember. ISBN-13: 978-0385755917, 416 pgs.

It's not a usual morning when popular student Violet Markey stands on the ledge of her school's bell tower, six stories up, frozen in terror. Theodore Finch, also known to classmates as the Freak, stands on the ledge nearby. The Freak calms her down and gets her back on solid ground, and even suggests she's the one who talked him out of jumping. Violet has not been able to deal with the death of her older sister. Thus begins a friendship of Finch, who takes Violet to lame tourist attractions and challenges her to see the world poetically, tapping into her love of writing. He is the first person to understand the grief losing her sister has caused. Though Violet begins to recover from her devastating grief, Finch's demons continue to push him to the ledge of life. Too often, YA novels stay away from teen depression, skirting the issue or demonizing it. In this story, the too-common illness motivates both main characters to see the beauty in the world as a way to lift the veil shrouding them. Their journeys allow them to touch the lives of others, as well as connect them to one another. Beautifully written and addressing an important topic, Niven allows us into the hearts and minds of struggling teens. Finch's story especially will capture readers in a way that few will, lingering long after the last page is turned. (BLB)

Reynold, J. (2016). *The boy in the black suit*. NY: Atheneum. ISBN-13: 978-1442459519, 304 pgs.

Matthew Miller is in mourning, but that's not the only reason he's in a black suit. He is a senior in high school, and he has missed the first couple of weeks of his last year, because his mother has just died of cancer. He is struggling to find a reason for school, for friends, for functioning day-to-day. What's worse, he sees his father waiver and escape into a bottle. While Matt sat at the Cluck Bucket, a local eatery, Gus walks in and offers the teenager a job at his funeral home. It creeps Matthew out at first, but when he considers being around other people who must feel like him, in constant mourning, he thinks he might just visit and see what it's all about. Sitting in on a stranger's funeral, Matthew discovers a much-needed camaraderie when he spies the grieving wife. For the first time, he sees in someone else the pain he's shrouded in. And the cycle has begun – attending the funerals of those who are suffering just as he is. Until he meets the girl he knows only as “Renee,” he never considers a funeral as a stage of life. This powerful story, by the co-author of *All American Boys*, captures the struggle of accepting death as a part of life. (BLB)

Schneider, R. (2015). *Extraordinary means*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books, ISBN: 978-0-06-221716-5, 324 pgs.

The premise of this book is interesting. It's about teenagers in the near future who are in a sanatorium because they have antibiotic resistant TB. There isn't any cure, just as there wasn't earlier in our history, and the only treatment is isolation and rest. But the story itself is the time-honored tale of teenagers at a boarding school. As in all of those tales there's romance (and sex), rule breaking, and tragedy. The characters are interesting and diverse, which is important because this is basically a character driven story. (JH)

Spears, K. (2015). *Breakaway*. NY: St. Marten's Press. ISBN-13: 978-1250065520, 320 pgs.

Jason Marshall, Jaz to his friends, pulls the reader into his life and problems right away. His story opens soon after his younger sister's funeral. Lucky for Jaz, his soccer teammates and friends Chick, Mario, and Jordie are around to support him. His parents are not. His mom is too wrapped up in grief over their loss and his father is absent. But can the boys' friendship survive the changes that life brings? For Jason, a high school senior, that includes a possible romance with Raine. Kat Spears mixes emotions quite well in a rather genuine way in this coming-of age story. This is a great read for high school students who want a balanced mix of romance, friend relationships, and family issues. (AO)

Stevenson, N. (2015). *Nimona*. NY: Harper Teen, HarperCollins Children's Books. ISBN-13: 978-0062278227, 272 pgs.

Can a villain end up being the people's champion? This graphic novel turns the notion of hero and villain on its head when Nimona, a young shapeshifter, apprentices herself to Lord Blackheart, the village evil doer. Together, they go up against Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin, the designated hero. As Nimona and Blackheart work through the growing pains of becoming a villain duo, they uncover a dastardly plot of epic proportions that just may involve the Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics. The institute is not the only secret keeper in the story. Nimona, Blackheart, and Goldenloin have a few of their own. Stevenson has a few unexpected story-twists up her author sleeve, including a completely unexpected romance. (AO)

Tahir, S. (2016). *An ember in the ashes*. NY: Razorbill. ISBN-13: 978-1595148049, 480 pgs.

Laia is a slave. She has nearly nothing, but she does have her family. Until her brother is arrested and accused of a crime. Laia will do anything to save him, including working for a vicious master as a spy for the rebels who say they can save her brother. Her master works at the military school, training the Empire's greatest soldier. While gathering information, and risking her life Laia meets Elias, one of the finest soldiers of Empire. Soon they learn that neither of them are truly free and that they may have more impact on each other's destinies than they could imagine. The rich fantasy of this novel is carried well by the power of Laia's strength and character. As she fights for her brother, she tests the limits of her own power and capability. This novel perfectly blends themes of romance, friendship, and destiny. (BR)

Warga, J. (2015). *My heart and other black holes*. NY: Balzer + Bray. ISBN: 978-060232468-9, 302 pgs.

Aysel, 16 years old, physics nerd is incredibly depressed. She is afraid that she has the same

tendencies as her father, now in the penitentiary. There is a “black slug” in her that convinces her she is worthless. She is invisible at school and barely tolerates life at home with a stepfather and step-siblings. Aysel is looking for a way to commit suicide when she finds a website that offers a solution – find a partner to die with. When Aysel meets Roman their common goal begins to break down some of the layers of despair. Sometimes funny, often sad, but always honest, this book does not glamorize suicide. It tackles difficult issues with humor, grace and hope. A list of resources are listed at the end for more information on suicide. Although I wasn’t eager to read this book, I’m glad I did. (CJG)

Yoon, N. (2015). *Everything everything*. NY: Delacorte Press. ISBN-13: 978-0553496642, 336 pgs.

Madeline has been sick as long as she can remember, living in a bubble of a house protected by her mother, a doctor...HER doctor. When Madeline was little, her older brother and her dad died in a car wreck. Now, her mother is only happy when she's taking care of Madeline. Madeline has never known a life outside the confines of her prison home. Being homeschooled, her only reprieve is when her teachers come to visit. Then one day, she hears a moving truck next-door. She spies a family --mother, father, daughter, and a son about her age. And just when she's noticing him, he looks up at her standing in the window. Everything changes. When she connects with Olly, she learns that there is so much more to life than where she lives it. Then everything she knows comes into question and everything changes. Poignant, powerful story of two teens, much like Hazel and August and Eleanor and Park, coming to terms with life, however different it may be. The ending will spawn great conversation and leave the reader wanting more from Yoon. (BLB)

Zappia, F. (2015). *Made you up*. NY: Harper Collins, ISBN: 978-0-06-229010-6, 428 pgs.

Alex, the main character of the book has schizophrenia, and she isn't always sure what is real and what isn't. She has to move to a new school because she defaced the gym floor at her former school because of a hallucination. At the new school she becomes connected with a misfit group of students who have been assigned to work at sports events as a kind of community service. Miles, the leader of the group is enigmatic. He's extremely smart, but he also will do any outrageous thing as long as someone pays him to do it. Part of the story also revolves around a scoreboard that fell on a cheerleader in the past and killed her, and a present-day cheerleader who's obsessed with Miles. The story is difficult to follow, partly because some of it is a figment of Alex's imagination, and part of it isn't. About half way through I began to feel like the book had been written by a college student, and, sure enough, I was right. The book is compelling, but the writer needs more experience in crafting a book. (JH)

** Members of the Saturday Morning Book Group include: Linda Aulgur, Barri Bumgarner, Fran Colley, Carol Gilles, Marty Hawkins, Janice Henson, Nancy Knipping, Missy Morrison, Anna Osborn, Gennie Pfannenstiel, Debra Peters, Becca Rackley, Pam Riggs, Caitlyn Rosbach, Sharon Schneeberger, and Linda Wycoff.

