

2017 Truman Award Nominees
Annotated by the Saturday Morning Book Group**
Winner is selected by students in grades 6-8

Aveyard, V. (2015). *Red queen*. NY: Harper Teen, ISBN-13: 978-0062310644, 416 pgs.

Red Queen can best be described as a cross between *Hunger Games* and *X-Men*. Another dystopian trilogy with a female protagonist from the “have-not” part of the world, people of this society are separated by a caste system of “Reds” and “Silvers” (the color of their blood). Silvers have supernatural abilities and Reds do menial labor and are pawns in a war that isn’t truly theirs to fight. Our lead, Mare, meets a dark stranger and unloads her troubles at home as a Red, only to find out that he is a Silver prince, in line for the throne of the kingdom. Mare’s main struggle is that she is a Red, but finds out she has the supernatural powers of a Silver; she begins to overthrow the Silvers from within, all the while hiding her secret from those who’d like to see her dead. While there are three “love interests,” they are not the main focus of the book, and a twist towards the end reaffirms what Mare hears over and over throughout this first novel: “anyone can betray anyone.” (CR)

Barnes, J. L. (2015). *The fixer*. NY: Bloomsbury USA Childrens. ISBN-13: 978-1619635944, 400 pgs.

Tess Kendrick doesn’t really know her sister. She just knows what Ivy does. Ivy is a “fixer” for the elite of Washington D.C. Be it a political scandal or an embarrassing picture, Ivy can make it disappear ... for a price. Tess isn’t excited when Ivy takes her away from her ailing grandfather and enrolls her in the school of those power players whose secrets Ivy holds. As soon as Tess arrives, she finds herself branded as a fixer, too, even though she wants nothing more than to be alone. Before long, though, the problems between the sisters aren’t the only ones they are fighting to fix. This novel is *Scandal* for the YA world. The mix between fantasy political scandal and the allusions to real-life political events adds to the intrigue. Readers are instantly captured by the complicated relationship between the sisters and heart-stopping drama. The sequel, *The Long Game*, is also excellent. (BR)

Bond, G. (2015). *Fallout: Lois Lane*. North Mankato, MN: Switch Press, ISBN-13: 978-1630790059, 303 pgs.

Lois Lane is starting a new life in Metropolis. She is an Army brat, who has lived all over. Now her family is putting down roots in the big city, and Lois is determined to fit in. She steps into her new high school and finds it won't be that easy. A group known as the Warheads is making life miserable for another girl at school. They're messing with her mind via the high-tech immersive videogame they all play. Armed with her wit and her new job as a reporter, Lois decides to solve this mystery. Oh, and thanks to her maybe-more-than-a friend, a guy she knows only by his screen name, SmallvilleGuy, Lois Lane accomplishes her goal. Kirkus gives it a STARRED REVIEW. (SS)

Carson, R. (2015). *Walk on earth a stranger*. NY: Harper Collins. ISBN: 978-0-06-224291-4, 453 pgs.

A rare combination, Carson combines an historical gold rush story with magic. It is a combination that works to fascinate the reader with a tale set in the early 1800's. The main character, Leah, has the ability to sense when gold is near, a magical power that her parents have kept hidden to protect their daughter. When tragedy takes Leah's parents, she finds herself on a perilous journey westward as she travels with a wagon train to reach the gold rush fields of California. Danger and suspense follow Leah and her best friend, a half-white, half-Cherokee boy named Jefferson. It is a page turner! (DP)

Carter, A. (2015). *All fall down*. NY: Scholastic Press. ISBN-13: 978-0545755108, 320 pgs.

At the age of 16, Grace has gone to live with grandfather, the American ambassador to the country Adria. In her new home on Embassy Row, every move she makes is watched because every move is a statement from her country. Living under that kind of speculation wouldn't be easy, but it is nearly impossible for Grace, who can't shake the haunting memory of her mother's murder that no one wants to address. Within days of moving in, Grace's nightmares become reality once again as she realizes she is being hunted. Grace must keep it together in the face of her fears, of her confusion about the Russian boy-next-door, and of her desire to find a home with her grandfather. Grace struggles to carry the weight of how her own choices affect the perception of her country. She has to choose how to be herself in a world with expectations heavy with implications of world consequences. (BR)

Dunn, P. (2015). *Forget tomorrow*. Fort Collins, CO: Entangled Publishing, LLC. ISBN-13: 978-1633755154, 400 pgs.

In this first book of the dystopian series of the same name, readers meet Callie, who is awaiting a prophecy sent back from her future self. At first Callie worries about receiving a prophecy that fulfills her goal of becoming a chef. When the prophecy arrives, everyone is shocked. In it, Callie kills her talented younger sister. The mere revelation of her vision gets Callie arrested and sent to prison. There, she reconnects with Lucas, her long-lost childhood crush. This is definitely a book to hook high schoolers into a new dystopian series. No clear happy ending for Callie in this book, but lots of twists and turns to the last page. (AO)

Durango, J. (2015). *The leveller*. NY: HarperCollins Books. ISBN-13: 978-0062314000, 256 pgs.

What are parents to do when their teen is stuck in virtual-reality gaming world of the MEEP? Call Nixy Bauer, a virtual-reality bounty hunter known as a "leveller". When MEEP's creator, multi-millionaire Diego Salvador, needs help getting his own son out of that world, he calls on Nixy. Characters spend lots of time in the virtual world which is sure to appeal to gamers. Nixy's relationship with Wyn, Salvador's son and Nixy's target, will appeal to romance fans. Even historical fiction lovers might find something since Wyn builds a virtual reality world that is set in 1950's Havana, Cuba. As a sassy narrator, Nixy will appeal to high school students who love strong female characters in recently-popular dystopian novels. (AO)

Gratz, A. (2015). *Code of honor*. NY: Scholastic. ISBN: 978-0-545-69519-0, 278 pgs.

Kamran has it all—popular, star of the football team and homecoming king. Although his mother is from Iran, he and his brother (Darius, a former West Point cadet) feel 100% patriotic

Americans. All that changes when Darius is accused of being a terrorist and killing 58 people in Turkey. As the reports come in, Kamran realizes Darius *is* the person in the videos. He holds on to Darius's innocence and believes that in the video he sees codes that they used when both were little. Is Darius trying to tell him about the next strikes? Kamran loses his friends, is threatened and eventually taken by the US government to a secure facility to be questioned. There he meets some unlikely allies that help him prove his brother is innocent and in doing so, stop further terrorist attacks on American soil. This page-turner has plenty of action to keep teens interested. It also makes some serious points about Muslims in America, what it means to be patriotic and the nature of true friendship. (CJG)

Jamieson, V. (2015.) *Roller girl*. NY: Penguin Group. ISBN: 978-0-525-42967-8, 239 pgs. Astrid is going into middle school and experiencing all the angst associated with changing values. Her best friend is no longer interested in the same things, and doesn't share Astrid's new fascination with the roller derby culture. This graphic novel does an excellent job of engaging the reader with humor and very realistic scenarios and challenges of finding yourself. Bullying, and the importance of mentoring are also topics, along with some very funny and touching family dynamics. This wonderful book will appeal to both genders in upper elementary and the middle school crowd. Ages 8-13. (LA)

Klass, D. (2016). *Losers Take All*. NY: 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)

Lackey, M. (2015). *Hunter*. NY: Hyperion. ISBN: 978-1-4847-0784-5, 385 pgs.

Set in a world devastated by the Disarray, Lackey's main character, Joyeaux Charmand is a hunter. Trained in the remote mountains, Joy is sent to the capital city to use her training, fight the myriad of monsters that populate this dangerous world. Hunters in the capital are treated as celebrities, a situation that is difficult for the grounded Joy, who prefers simplicity in her life. A strong female protagonist, Joy discovers the capital is full of dangers and conspiracies the government tries to keep hidden. Lackey gives us complex characters in a fantastical world, engaging the reader to the last page and beyond! (DP)

Martin, J. (2015). *Tracked*. NY: Penguin Group. ISBN: 978-0-8037-4012-9, 402 pgs.

A science fiction novel packed with all the action a high school reader could want, Martin gives us a complex female lead, Phoebe Van Zant, Phee isn't afraid to tackle the suspenseful street racing world on the planet of Castra. After her father, a legendary street racer, disappears, Phee remains obsessed with racing as she navigates the challenges the sport offers. Martin gives us

amazing adrenaline filled descriptions of the racing scenes and a protagonist who isn't afraid to tackle the corrupt corporations that rule the government and the people of Castra. (DP)

Mead, R. (2015). *Soundless*. NY: Penguin Random House, ISBN: 978-1-59514-763-9, 266 pgs. (CG)

Fei lives in a remote village on the top of a mountain, cut off from everyone by steep grade and landslides. For as long as anyone can remember community members have been deaf. Minors dig ore out of the mountain, send it down the mountain and a zip line brings up food for the village. News is communicated by artists, creating large images and words. Fei is one of the artists. When the community members begin to also lose their sight, Fei and her friend, LiWei, realize they must try to find out what is going on. They begin a frightening journey rappelling down the mountain, to figure out who is controlling them. This page turner has a bit of magic at the end. A satisfying read! (CJG)

Meadows, J. (2015). *The orphan queen*. NY: HarperCollins. ISBN: 978-0-06-231738-4, 391 pgs.

Wilhelmina is a princess, a spy, and a threat. She was orphaned when the Indigo Kingdom conquered her homeland; ten years later, she is part of the Ospreys and, with them, hopes to take back her throne. This story is full of magic, even though it is forbidden in Wilhelmina's world. Will she use her powers to reclaim her kingdom? Or will this power ruin all possibilities to gain back what is lost? If you like fantasy and magic and terrifying danger, you will want to get involved in this story about Wilhelmina and her friends. (MH)

Priest, C. (2015). *I am Princess X*. Ill. K. Ciesemier, NY: Scholastic. ISBN: 978-0-545-90731-6, 227 pgs.

Two best friends, Libby and May, create their first Princess X comic together as fifth graders, and continue their comic until Libby dies tragically in a car accident with her mother. May suddenly begins seeing the princess everywhere, and is determined to believe Libby is really alive and needs to be rescued. Even though no one believes her, May finds the continuing comic and the story of Princess X on the Internet and is convinced it really is Libby. The combination of prose and graphic novel makes this story engaging to read. (MM)

Schmidt, G. (2015). *Orbiting Jupiter*. NY: Clarion Books. ISBN: 978-0-544-46222-9, 183 pgs.

Joseph is an 8th grade kid with an unusual background: he is a father and he tried to kill one of his teachers. Despite this background, Jack's family accepts Joe as a foster child on their dairy farm. Jack and his family soon understand that Joe's history is much more complicated than they first thought. They also come to love Joe and are determined to help him accomplish his one goal in life, to see his daughter Jupiter. Teachers may be hesitant to use this book in their classrooms because it's about very young parents, but that would be a shame. The family who takes Joe in demonstrate the kind of love and acceptance that we want all of our students to emulate. (JH)

Scott, K. (2015). *What waits in the woods*. NY: Scholastic, Inc. ISBN: 978-0-545-69111-6, 288 pgs.

Mystery lovers get ready. Scott gives us a book that unfolds like a horror movie. City girl, Callie, ignores her fears to go on a camping trip with her new friends. As the group work their way through the woods, they become desperately lost. Their harmless spooky stories take on new meaning as they realize someone is following them. Tension builds when the slightest sounds offer visions of the sinister and creepy. When Callie discovers a dead body, she has to decide who to trust and where to turn. (DP)

Stead, R. (2015). *Goodbye stranger*. NY: Random House Children's Books. ISBN: 978-0-375-99098-4, 289 pgs.

This is a "slice of life" story. It paints a portrait of the lives of a group of middle class teenagers in New York. It deals with friendships, relationships, and family dynamics centering around a group of girls from diverse backgrounds who have grown up together. Like all "slice of life" stories, not much happens, which is the biggest weakness of the book. But many girls will find the friendships appealing. (JH)

Stohl, M. (2015). *Black widow: Forever red*. Glendale, CA: Marvel Press, Disney Book Group. ISBN-13: 978-1484776452, 432 pgs.

The Avengers' Black Widow Natasha Romanoff thought she ended Ivan Somodorov, her own brutal teacher, when she saved Ava Orlaova from him eight years ago. But when children across Europe begin disappearing and Ava appears in the United States, Natasha must again face Ivan while dealing with her own memories of her own traumatic training to be a Russian superspy. Appearances by a couple of old friends, including Colson from S.H.E.I.L.D. and charming Tony Stark, make this new adventure feel as though you're stepping into a whole new Avenger's movie, with Black Widow in the leading role she deserves. Longtime Marvel fans and newcomers to Black Widow's adventures alike will love this novel. Stohl easily captures the fast-paced adventure and the biting humor that makes up Black Widow's charm. (AO)

Swendson, S. (2015). *Rebel mechanics: All is fair in love and revolution*. NY: Farrar Strauss Giroux for Young Readers. ISBN: 978-0-374-30009-8, 310 pgs.

This is an alternative history steam-punk book set in New York City in the late 1800's. In this version of history, the British won the Revolutionary War because they have magic. Magic helps to reinforce the class divisions in the U.S. The British have transportation devices and labor saving devices powered by magic. At the same time, the Americans have horse drawn carriages and oil lamps. Into this class divided city comes a teenage girl, Verity, a governess for a rich British family. However, she also gets drawn into a spy network of "Mechanics" (people who want to defeat the British and make a better life for the Americans by using steam powered machines). There is romance (even a potential love triangle), danger, and mystery. This first book in the series doesn't actually end, it just stops. I'm sure there are a lot of young people who would anxiously wait for the next 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.

