The Best New and Notable Books for 4-12 Readers
Judson Literacy in Motion Conference - 2015
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Novels for Upper Grade Readers (Grades 7-12)
*denotes titles with more mature content for readers

Mim begins the book by making the "move of her life" from Ohio to Mississippi with her father and new stepmother. When she learns that her mother is ill back in Cleveland, she boards a Greyhound bus to return to her and her past life. Her journey home takes her places, both physically and emotionally that she never expects.

Mare lives in a society where the red-bloods serve the silver-blooded elite. Through a series of events, she finds herself betrothed to the son of the king because of an unknown gift that she has and that gives her great power. In her new position, she can help the Red Rebellion as they look to rise up against the silver-bloods...but at what cost to herself and others?

Rio lives in the underwater city of Atlantia. She dreams are shattered when her twin sister Bay leaves her stranded below the water. With nothing left to lose, she decides to begin to answer the questions about her own mother’s death and why the divide exists between those above and below the water.

Sydney finds herself and her family falling apart after her brother, Peyton is convicted for a drunk driving accident. As she makes the decision to begin her life over at a new school, she finds a pizza shop and a family who may be just what she needs to begin to rebuild her life again.

The Romanovs are the last imperial family in Russia and have a rich history that has generated interest among readers for years. Told in a non-fiction narrative style, Fleming tells of the family members of the House of Romanov, as well as the lives of the peasants
who lived outside of the palace gates. Through the story, the reader develops an understanding of the history of the Russian monarch and the people who were a part of it. *Hubbard, J. (2014). *And we stay.* New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Emily Beam has transferred to an exclusive boarding school for girls halfway through the school year. As her story unfolds, we learn of the trauma that she has experienced because of gun violence. As she learns how to deal with the violence that she has seen and her "role" in it, she finds a way back to herself through writing and the friendships that she begins to develop with the girls around her.

The story of everyday life told from twelve different perspectives of the intertwined lives of the characters who range from teenagers to parents to teachers. The characters who have many differences in their existence begin to blur as their story unfolds finally giving the teens in the story a moment when they realize that the adults in their lives may know more than they give them credit for about "growing up."

After surviving an illness in a medieval-like world, survivors possess a strange "marking" that show them as a survivor of the plague. Adelina is one of these "malfettos," but she also has a gift, as do some of her fellow survivors. She becomes a member of the Dagger Society, a group who plan on escaping the planned genocide and place their leader, Enzo on the throne of Kenettra.

Theodore Finch saves Violet Markey from jumping from the ledge of the school tower. He has been also been contemplating jumping from the ledge near her. Thus begins a beautiful friendship that blossoms into a beautiful romance. Violet hides her secret, while Finch hides his demons. They do this while traveling the tourist attractions of Indiana for a school project, seeing the scenery of their state through "new eyes."

Finn and Sean are brothers. Sean is strong and good-looking. Finn is weak and "damaged." Rosza is a beautiful girl who comes along and changes their lives. One day she disappears, kidnapped by a stranger and Finn is the only one who can help her. Will he be able to save her and ultimately save himself and everyone in Bone Gap?
Graphic Novels for Upper Grade Readers (Grades 7-12)
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Rose and her family always vacation at the lake during the summer. She and her friend, Windy begin to experience the changes of growing up. As their lives change and as their families change, they realize that what is important may not change at all.

Novels for Middle Grade Readers (Grades 4-6)

Josh and Jordan love playing basketball almost as much as they love their father, a former professional basketball player. Josh, better known as Filthy McNasty, has skills that might take him to the pros just like his dad, but he is struggling with adolescence. A life changing event will help them all put not only basketball, but family, in perspective in a way that nothing else can ever do.

Iris is starting a new school in Oregon and is missing her old friend, Sarah. She trying to make new friends and when she learns the truth about Boris and his “miracle” birth story, she tells him about how she lost her friend Sarah and how a “miracle” saved her. When priests travel from the Vatican to authentic Boris’s “miracle story,” Iris looks forward to asking them questions to begin to makes sense of her own story.

Miles Murphy is unhappy about moving to a new town and a new school. He is most disappointed about leaving behind his reputation of being his town’s best prankster. However, when he arrives in Yawnee Valley, he learns that they already have a great prankster of their own. They square off against each other and the pranks begin!

Anna comes to Rosemont stay with her grandmother hoping to put her parents’ troubled marriage out of her mind for awhile. But she ends up in a situation that she didn’t expect when she observes a girl that appears to be being held against her will. Anna wants to help, but doesn’t know how when she doesn’t feel like the adults around her are listening to her. But she doesn’t give up when she feels that she needs to do the right thing.
Micah believes the stories that his grandfather has told him about the magical Circus Mirandus. When grandfather is dying, Micah sets out to find the Circus to discover that is real and to find the miracle that he needs to save his grandfather’s life.

Callum Hunt has been warned not to practice magic, he has even promised his father that he will not pass the test to get into The Magisterium. Unfortunately, the magic is stronger for him that he had originally thought and he finds himself a student there whether he planned it or not!

Ada has been hidden away by her mother because of her twisted foot. When her brother is heads off to war, Ada sneaks off with him. When Susan Smith takes the two in, Ada learns many things that she never could have before, but will that “freedom” be taken away and will they be sent home to their mother.

Stella is a young African American girl living in the depression era in segregated North Carolina. One night, she and her brother discover the Ku Klux Klan practicing close to their home. They realize that their lives are in danger in a way that they have not imagined in their small community of Bumblebee. Stella realizes that her words can bring strength not only herself, but her family and her community during this uncertain time in her community, but in our country.

Mark is a kid who has a dog, a notebook, and a dream to climb to the top of Mount Rainier. But he is also a kid who is sick and shouldn’t do that. So, he runs away to do what he has always dreamed of doing...even if it means risking his life.

Billy is spending the summer at the lake in a cabin that belongs to the mysterious Dr. Libris. Inside his house, there is a mysterious bookcase. When Billy looks at the books inside, he hears sounds from the other side of the lake. Are the stories that he is reading coming to life?

Trent is struggling with rage, but ultimately that rage is directly at himself. He begins the school year with the "ghosts" of having hit a hockey puck that struck a boy in the chest and killed him. Because of the guilt that he lives with, he pushes his family, teachers, and friends away. But unexpectedly a girl and a teacher "sneak" into his life and help him overcome the pain. He learns that although he can't control his past, he can control his future.


Mysti Murphy is dealing with more than she can manage sometimes. She is dealing with a mother who can't leave their house, a father who is unexpectedly hospitalized, newfound responsibilities at home, and a best friend who has decided to "experiment" not being her friend anymore. Will she have the courage to handle her new "life" with all its new challenges?


Star lives in a trailer park with her mother and older sister, Winter. Her classmates tease her because of where she lives and she has little hope of fitting in. One day she decides to start a poetry club after discovering the poems of Emily Dickinson. Will poetry be the thing that helps her finally "fit in" at school and find hope in her seemingly "hopeless" life?


Grace and her mother have always been their own family until her mother's sudden death. Grace finds herself with a grandmother that she doesn't know trying to make a life and make sense of the accident the killed her mother. A secret treasure hunt leads her to clues that helps her find the answers that she is looking for showing her the way to her "true" home.


Ellie's life is turned upside down when she meets a teenage boy who she discovers is her grandfather who has discovered the secret to reversing the aging process. He helps Ellie discover an interest in science and she begins to develop friendships at school as she begins to get to know him in a way that she never would have imagined.


"Everybody is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid." Ally finds herself in a new school and struggles to read. She has hidden it well for years. Mr. Daniels, her new teacher, has a plan to help her
whether she is ready...or wants it or not! Ally learns to be less of a trouble maker and to accept herself for who she is, the learner that she has the potential to be.

Ari and her brother, Gage are staying together because that has been their dying mother's wish for them. When they leave their foster mother, Jenna, they find themselves without a home. Ari is struggling to be a good student because she hopes to go to the Carter, the middle school for gifted students, where both her mother and brother have both gone before her. All this stress is affecting her ability to be who she wants to be and she struggles to keep the promises that she has made.

Mai is an American born California girl with a Vietnamese heritage who is looking forward to spending her summer vacation on the beach. Her plans change as she finds that she is accompanying her grandmother to Vietnam to find out what really happened to her husband during the Vietnam War. Her parents think that his will be a great opportunity to learn more about her heritage and her Vietnamese roots. Mai thinks that this is her family's heritage and not hers. As she travels with her grandmother, she learns that there is more to her family that "meets the eye."

Tommy is a bully who is hiding a tortured home life. His mother is abusive and possibly mentally ill. His sister is badly burned and is in the hospital. He has taken over her paper route to help out and then learns that someone in their community receives *The Daily Worker*, a communist newspaper. Tommy uses the newspaper to frame a local shopkeeper and the consequences of his actions affect not only Mr. McKenzie, but the entire community.

Lily and her blind dog, Lucky make a new friend, Salma who is a migrant worker in the blueberry fields near her Maine home. They begin painting bee boxes together for the store that Lily's grandparents own. Lily hopes to raise money for a surgery for Lucky to restore his eyesight. When Salma decides participate in the Blueberry Queen pageant at the Blueberry Festival, they will both have to make some decisions not only about their friendship, but about the surgery for Lily's dog, Lucky.

Ava finds a pencil that mysteriously gives her the answers that she needs on a math quiz. With the help of her friend, Sophie, she discovers that the pencil can answer any specific
question that it is asked. She then realizes that she has the ability to learn not only the answers to tests in school, but what her friends are thinking and what the future holds. What will she do with this "power" and what will she do with the information that she learns from the "magical" pencil?

Nic is a slave who stumbles upon an amulet that once belonged to Caesar and is filled with a magical power. Nic decides that he will use the power of the found bulla to gain his freedom. Instead he finds himself caught up in a conspiracy to overthrow the emperor and start a war that will begin in Rome. What choices will Nic make to use the powers for evil or for the "greater good" of others?

Kenny Wright is a boy with a secret identity...Stainlezz Steel. Stainlezz Steel is a superhero who champions the weak and defenseless. In his real life, he is "grandma's boy" and a member of the chess club (a target for bullies), but in his imagination he overcomes his shortcomings to become a hero to those students like him in his school.

Amira is a twelve year old girl living in a small village in Sudan when her village is attacked. She finds herself in a refugee camp and needs to find the strength to move forward with her life. She is given the gift of a red pencil and it opens her mind to a world of possibilities!

This genre-defying novel begins with Otto lost in the forest where he meets three mysterious sisters who help him find his way home and leave with a special magical harmonica. The harmonica is then woven into three different children's stories. Finally, their stories are combined into a conclusion that engages the reader in a very special way.

Ivy and Paul both run away and are on a secret road trip to Florida. Ivy is looking for her Mother who has run off with a preacher from the Great Good Bible Church. Paul is off to say good-bye to the space shuttle and his dream of being an astronaut. Their trip may turn out to be more than they expected to be..it may help them regain their faith in what is really important to both of them.

Theo is sent to live with his Uncle Raymond in Destiny, Florida after losing his both his parents and his grandparents. They arrive at Miss Sister's Boarding House and Theo finds a grand piano there that may help him find a piece of his former life. Music and baseball are two of the things that he loves. Will he be able to have those things when Uncle Raymond decides that it time to move when all Theo wants to do is to stay in Destiny?


Violet Diamond is a biracial girl who lives is a “white world.” She has questions about her father and his African American heritage. As she learns more about the “other side” of her family, she begins to feel her confidence “blossoming” as she realizes that her roots go deeper that she had ever realized they did.


An autobiographical story of her childhood, Jacqueline Woodson tells of her life in “two worlds” being raised in both South Carolina and New York during the racially charged 1960s and 70s, living with the remnants of the Jim Crow laws and the Civil Rights movement.

**Graphic Novels for Middle Grade Readers (Grades 4–6)**


An autobiographical graphic novel of Cece Bell's experiences of being deaf and wearing a hearing aid, the Phonic Ear. The Phonic Ear gives her the ability to hear, but makes her different from her peers when she just wants to fit in and make one true friend.


The true life story of Arminta Ross who was born a slave and later found her freedom north of the Mason-Dixon line. She then changed her name to Harriet Tubman and spent the rest of her life helping other slaves run away and find her freedom just like she did.


Astrid and Nicole are best friends and have done everything together until Astrid decides to go to roller derby camp. As her life changes during the summer before sixth grade, she learns that she is capable of not only roller derby, but growing up too!
Kristy, Mary Anne, Claudia, and Stacey are best friends and founding members of the Baby-sitters Club. Whether they are dealing with difficult toddlers or demanding parents, they are professionals, but the most important thing for these girls is maintaining their friendship.

**Picture Books for ALL Readers**

The Wimbledon family keeps being awakened by mysterious noises from all over the house. “It's only Stanley” is the answer each time Mr. Wimbledon investigates what their pet dog is doing. But what Stanley is really up surprises everyone, especially his owners at the end of this book.

A skunk appears in a tuxedoed man’s doorway and a game of “hide and seek” begins. The man wonders what the skunk wants and why he is following him. Finally, he buys a new house to finally get away from the skunk, but then something really surprising happens...

Callie’s family is moving from her lifelong home to a small apartment and everything they own is part of a yard sale. It is hard for Callie to watch people buy things that belong to their family and hold special meaning, especially her bike!

CJ and his grandmother ride the bus across town after church. He asks his grandmother questions and she reminds him about the beauty that surrounds them, some of which may be difficult for him to see...but it is there.

The Bunny family finds a wolf baby on their doorstep and “adopts” it without hesitation. Their daughter, Dot is the only one who realizes that Wolfie might eat them and tries to warn her parents to no avail. But one day when Wolfie is the one who is threatened, will Dot come to his rescue?

Stick and Stone become friends through unlikely circumstances, but their friendship is one that survives both good times and bad. When they are confronted by bullies they stand up for each other, just like true friends do!


A young clown gets separated from his family when he is accidentally "thrown" from the circus train. He is adopted by a lonely farmer and an unlikely friendship begins. When the clown's family arrives and they are reunited, what will happen to the farmer?


A blue crayon who is wearing a red wrapper suffers an "identity crisis." He receives advice from everyone, but ultimately has to decide who he really is and wait to see who his true friends will be.


Little Louie is telling a story, but it keeps getting messed up! He can't figure out how it is getting messed up or who is messing it up. He just knows that is not how a perfect story is supposed to be told. Will his story still be worth telling, imperfections and all?


"My pen tap-dances on the sky and draws clouds with its feet." Aurelio is an artist with a sketchbook and a vivid imagination. His drawings give him "power" in a world where he often feels powerless.


A rabbit and mouse plant tomato, carrot, and cabbage seeds. Other animals arrive to share the "fruits" of their labor. Feeling selfish, a fight ensues as they try to protect their bounty. When nothing is left, they all see that they have all lost. What will they do now? Are there other seeds to plant now to grow after selfishness and hatred have destroyed what they have worked so hard to grow?


A "pictureless book"... Everything written on the page needs to be read by the reader and the silliness ensues because the words are both funny and goofy at the same time!
The Dullards are a boring family. The home is boring, the food is plain, and their lives are monotonous. Mr. and Mrs. Dullard like it that way. Unfortunately, their children do not and have other ideas about their lives.

Sadie wants to deliver an elephant to her great-aunt Josephine who needs some special company because she lives alone. She, however, finds that sending an elephant to her aunt more difficult than she expected it to be. She enlists the aid of a cast of characters, including a unique postal worker, a band of monkeys, and others to help get her special delivery to where it is going.

An intergalactic retelling of the Cinderella story with a heroine who dreams of fixing spaceships and has a robotic mouse for a sidekick. When the Prince's Royal Space Parade arrives, Cinderella fixes a space ship, puts on a beautiful blue spacesuit and off she goes to make her dream come true!

Orion is scared of lots of things, but the thing that he most scared of is the dark! One night the dark decides to take Orion on an adventure during the nighttime hours. What will happen when their magical evening is over?

A young girl lives in an apartment in Paris that has a guardian angel nearby. She doesn't realize how far reaching the angel's wings are until the Nazis come to Paris. She and her family must flee or risk going to a concentration camp. In the woods, the meet resistance fighters who help them escape to England where she always remembers the stone angel who she believes always watches over them no matter where they are in the world.

Informational Books for ALL Readers
The true story of *The One and Only Ivan*, which tells of Ivan who was captured as a baby and brought to a shopping mall in Tacoma, Washington. His life changes when people picket...
to help him get a better life outside the walls of the mall and he is moved to the zoo in Atlanta, GA.


This book shows the reader a variety of nests and the homes that they provide to many animals. Some are birds and others may surprise you ...such as the orangutan!


Peter loved words and books. They were his best companions. Before long he decided to write a book of his own, but it wasn’t a book that told a story. It was a book that contained lists of words. He took his love of words and his love of books and brought the two together, creating a very special book...the thesaurus.


George Ferris was a man with a dream. His dream was to create a wheel that could defy gravity and give the 1893 World’s Fair goers a unique ride that they had never experienced before and that we still enjoy to this day.


The story of all the homes in the world. Home might be an apartment, a farm in the country, or even a shoe. This books opens the readers mind to the concept of what a "home" is and where a “home” might be anywhere in the world.


Four families in four different cities over four centuries create the same delicious dessert: a blackberry fool. The book details how the creation of the dessert changes of time from 1810 as a slave girl creates it to a boy in present day San Diego.


Eggs are the package that protects an animal’s young in the wild and they come in a range of sizes and shapes. This books shares a variety of animals and how their eggs are a important part of their life cycle.
In lyrical text, the sequoia tells it story through the seasons. It includes how it changes and how the animals in the forest take solace in the protection of the mighty Sequoia tree.

Vasya Kandinsky is a proper boy who does everything the proper boys are supposed to do, until one day he goes to an art class. There he opens a paint box and he begins to hear sounds. Kandinsky heard the sounds of the paints and the colors. His art showed the beauty of what happened when he “listened” to what the colors played to his ears.

Each day focuses on an important figure in African-American history and information about their important in history. Illustrations help deepen understanding of person and his/her historical significance.

"Some things are so huge or so old that it’s hard to wrap your mind around them. But what if we took these big, hard-to-imagine objects and events and compared them to things we can see, feel, and touch? Instantly, we’d see our world in a whole new way." This book helps readers better understand some “big” ideas and begin to think about things in both math and science differently.

The story of the Sylvia Mendez and her exclusion from a "Whites only" school in her community despite her ability to speak and write perfect English. Ten years prior to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Mendez family fought (and won) the end of segregated education in California.

The story of a young boy, his brother, his love of baseball, and his journey from the Dominican Republic to playing for the Boston Red Sox in the World Series. It focuses on the bond and admiration that he had for his older brother who was also a baseball player in the
Dominican Republican and Pedro’s inspiration for becoming a major league baseball player despite the obstacles that were in his way.

The story of Harry Colebourn, a veterinarian and soldier in training, and the bear that he adopted. He named the bear Winnie and she became the “mascot” of his company until he was shipped overseas and he gave her to the London zoo to ensure her safety. There a young boy named Christopher Robin enjoyed visiting her everyday and his father A.A. Milne enjoyed telling him stories about this special bear. We enjoy these stories to this day!

Two stories of both a girl and a boy who showed bravery in Pakistan standing up for the rights of children in their country to receive an education and the right to work in a safe environment. They both teach readers the importance of being unafraid to speak out against injustices and that one voice can make a difference.