

## Realistic Fiction Bibliography: 2020

### Grades K-2

Barnes, Derrick. **I Am Every Good Thing**. Nancy Paulson Books, 2020. ISBN: 9780525518778.

**Summary:** An upbeat, empowering, important picture book from the team that created the award-winning *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*

I am  
a nonstop ball of energy.  
Powerful and full of light.  
I am a go-getter. A difference maker. A leader.

The confident Black narrator of this book is proud of everything that makes him who he is. He's got big plans, and no doubt he'll see them through--as he's creative, adventurous, smart, funny, and a good friend. Sometimes he falls, but he always gets back up. And other times he's afraid, because he's so often misunderstood and called what he is not. So slow down and really look and listen, when somebody tells you--and shows you--who they are. There are superheroes in our midst- from the Publisher

**Audience:** While this book is a picture book it's a book for all ages.

Medina, Meg. **Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away**. Candlewick Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781536207040.

**Summary:** Evelyn Del Rey is Daniela's best friend. They do everything together and even live in twin apartments across the street from each other: Daniela with her mami and hamster, and Evelyn with her mami, papi, and cat. But not after today--not after Evelyn moves away. Until then, the girls play amid the moving boxes until it's time to say goodbye, making promises to keep in touch, because they know that their friendship will always be special. The tenderness of Meg Medina's beautifully written story about friendship and change is balanced by Sonia Sanchez's colorful and vibrant depictions of the girls' urban neighborhood.-from the Publisher

**Audience:** K-2 and up.

### Grades 3-4

Cisneros, Ernesto. **Efrén Divided**. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2020. ISBN: 9781713753155.

**Summary:** A young boy must become an adult overnight when his mother is deported. Twelve-year-old Efrén Nava's world is turned upside down the day he comes back from school and his mother is nowhere to be found. His neighbor Doña Chana tells him that an ICE raid was conducted at the supermarket and that Amá was picked up and deported to Mexico. When his father takes on a second job to make ends meet, Efrén becomes the primary caregiver for Mía and Max, his younger twin siblings. Unsure of how much information about his mother's fate to give them, Efrén tries his best to make Amá's miracles his own as he struggles to keep his siblings safe, feed them, and take them to school while still dealing with his own schooling. Taking care of Max, whose oxygen supply was cut off during childbirth and has learning disabilities, and figuring out which friends and adults to trust with his secret add layers of responsibility Efrén feels unprepared to deal with. Debut author Cisneros paints a vivid and palpable #ownvoices picture of the lost childhoods as children and parents are separated due to immigration issues. But even as Efrén's world seems to be crashing around him, Cisneros celebrates the kindness of the Mexican American community and its richness of food, culture, and resilient spirit. Honest and tender: a must-read.- Kirkus Reviews Starred

**Audience:** Ages 8-13

Colbert, Brandy. **The Only Black Girls in Town**. Little, Brown and Company, 2020. ISBN: 9780316456388.

**Summary:** A remarkable middle-grade debut from YA powerhouse Colbert (Little & Lion, 2017), *The Only Black Girls in Town* is a window into the heart and mind of Alberta, the sole African American girl in her small beach town's seventh grade until another Black family moves in across the street. Although she and her new neighbor could not be any more superficially different—Alberta is a California surfer and Edie is a goth girl from Brooklyn—they bond over their racial “otherness” in a realistic way. Being two of the few Black students in their school (a true-to-life representation of the microaggressions they experience is highlighted by a teacher calling Edie by Alberta's name, although they look nothing alike) brings the girls closer together, while navigating their middle-school dramas and changing family dynamics seems to drive them apart. Fortunately, a desire to uncover the identity of the author of a set of journals they find in Edie's home helps to keep their friendship from completely fracturing, and conflicts are resolved in a reasonable yet satisfying way. Several events central to Black history (the murder of Emmett Till and the Montgomery bus boycott, for example) are introduced without the story becoming didactic, adding depth to a sweet story featuring children of color trying to find their place in a society that tells them they do not fit. Strongly recommended for children's collections.-Booklist Starred Review

**Audience:** Grades 3-7

## Grades 5-6

Marks, Janae. **From the Desk of Zoe Washington**. Thorndike Press, a part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2020. ISBN: 9781432878009.

**Summary:** "This exceptionally sweet debut from Marks illustrates profound cracks in the American criminal justice system while telling an affecting story grounded in the middle-grade experience. The troubling ways race affects the characters...will facilitate important conversations about racial profiling and incarceration rates for people of color. Fortunately, Marks' capable storytelling and engaging characters also combine into a wondrous confection of a book, full of heart and hope and promise." -- *Booklist* (starred review)

**Audience:** Grades 5-8

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Before the Ever After**. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020. ISBN: 9780399545436.

**Summary:** What happens after all your dreams come true? ZJ's dad always wanted to be a football player. Through hard work, he achieved his goal and became an NFL player and hero to many. Unfortunately, his football fame came with a price. Now he experiences debilitating headaches, mood swings, and forgetfulness brought on by one too many concussions. ZJ remembers a time before his father changed; when his father would laugh, play with him and his friends, and support him with his music. That was the before-now he lives in the after. All ZJ has is memories of the incredible man his father was, and the fear of the unknown issue causing his father's problems. Set in the early 2000s when concussion research on NFL players was at its inception, Woodson's latest novel in verse conveys that not all success stories have a fairy-tale ending. Readers will feel an immediate connection to ZJ and his group of authentic, complex friends and family. The idea of showing the dark side of fame through the experiences of a young family member is a unique perspective that will resonate with readers of all ages. ZJ's story will stay with the audience long after the last page is read. VERDICT A first choice for all collections. A unique take on sports and fame told from an unexpected perspective, and another incredible read delivered by Woodson.-Ashley Leffel, Griffin M.S., Frisco, TX © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc.

**Audience:** Grades 4-Up