**24 Hours in Nowhere** by Dusti Bowling

Welcome to Nowhere! Nowhere, Arizona that is, a desert town deemed the “least livable town in the United States,” a place where dirt biking on a dusty track rules. And if you don’t enjoy that, you’re out of luck.

Thirteen-year-old Gus, smart but small for his age, lives in his grandma’s trailer and plans to ace the SATs and get out of town after high school. But for now, he’s just trying to survive. When a bully named Bo nearly forces Gus to eat a cactus, an unlikely thing happens. He is saved by Rossi, a Native American girl, new to town and an amazing rider, who gives up her bike to Bo. Determined to get the bike back, Gus goes into Dead Frenchman Mine for a piece of gold to trade the bully for the bike. He’s not alone though. Bo’s sent Matthew, one of his minions, to keep an eye on Gus, and soon they’re joined by Rossi and Gus’s former best friend Jessie in their adventures in the dangerous 100-year-old mine. And there really was a dead Frenchman. He was involved in a long-ago murder that has present-day family connections, adding a touch of mystery to the story.

As the kids navigate through the cave and all its terrifying dangers—from mountain lions and cave-ins to underground lakes—they keep talking to one another in conversations that are both hysterical and heart-felt. You’ll feel the dust and the heat and the hearts pounding, and you won’t forget these quirky, likable kids.

**Amal Unbound**by Aisha Saeed

Imagine that you are eleven years old and you are being forced to leave your family’s home to work as a servant. This is the punishment you have received for simply speaking up for yourself. You have to leave your siblings and parents behind and you are not sure when, or if, you might see them again.

It is modern day Pakistan and this is exactly what happens to Amal, a headstrong and ambitious young girl. She dreams of becoming a teacher, but instead she must now go and live at the estate of the Khan family, the rulers of her village. The head of the family is a cruel man, feared by everyone, and this is the person that Amal mistakenly disrespected at the market when she refused to let him order her around. As a punishment, she is taken from home and forced to be a servant in order to pay off her family’s debts. How will she be treated? How long will she have to stay? What kind of labor will she be forced to do? Amal soon enters a world that is not quite what she expected and she relies on her strength of character and determination to get herself through.

**The Ambrose Deception**by Emily Ecton

Melissa, Wilf and Bondi are in no way spectacular middle school students. They get average grades, they aren’t involved in activities and none of them are particularly “special” in any way, so when they are each chosen to compete for a ten-thousand-dollar scholarship competition everyone is confused. Why would these three be chosen?

Only one of them can win the scholarship and in order to do so, they have to be the first one to solve a series of clues that will take them around the city of Chicago. A scavenger hunt in the city sounds fun, right? Especially when you are given your own personal driver, a credit card and a cell phone to help you along the way. Soon enough though, they each realize that something strange is afoot. They suspect that the whole thing is a scam, so they join forces to figure out the biggest mystery of all. Why have they been sent on this wild goose chase? It turns out, these three kids are more exceptional than anyone, including themselves, realized.

**Hope in the Holler**by Lisa Lewis Tyre

Wavie Conley didn’t think that her living arrangements could get much worse than the run-down trailer park that she was used to, but she is proven wrong when she pulls up to the trashy farmhouse that is to be her new home. After Wavie’s mother dies she is sent to live with a horrid aunt, whom she has never met, and who soon proves to be a cruel and menacing witch. This is rural Kentucky and as far as Wavie is concerned, there is nothing redeeming about this horrible place. Then she meets Gilbert and Camille, who turn out to be just about the best sidekicks a kid could need.

In an attempt to prevent her aunt from gaining legal guardianship of Waivie, the trio embark on solving the mystery of Wavie’s absent and unknown father. How much information can three kids uncover about this mystery man? Will Wavie end up leaving the Kentucky holler that she so desperately wants to escape? There are some unexpected twists along the way as these three friends investigate and reveal some hidden secrets that will change Waivie’s life forever.

**Inkling** by Kenneth Oppel

In the quiet of the night, no noise was made. The only witness, Rickman, was on the prowl for something to eat. He was not a picky cat, just on the lookout for something of interest.

Suddenly, the ink turned glossy as though it were wet. Rickman witnessed the slow movement as the blob slinked off the page looking for somewhere safe. Refuge found on a piece of illustration  
board.

As the morning light seeps in through the window, young Ethan awakes. Readying for another day at school, Ethan grabs his illustration board and prepares for the school day. His art sketches   
are due and he has yet to create anything good.

Being the son of a famed graphic artist has its challenges. Everyone expects Ethan to be an artist too. The problem; Ethan can barely draw stick figures. That is until he discovers the ink blob right on his illustration board. He pokes at it and the blob recoils sending defensive   
spikes out like a sea urchin.

Slowly Ethan realizes the blob has a life and personality of its own, and a name. Inkling. It can draw, and learn, soaking up the ink of all the pages it travels across.   
As Ethan discovers Inklings secrets and power, can they help his dad’s writers block and Ethan’s creative juices? When classmate and foe Vika starts investigating Ethan’s new found artistic ability, she discovers Inkling.

What happens when the secret of Inkling leaks out? How will Ethan protect Inkling from those who want to profit from Inkling?

Delve into the depths of your imagination to discover what happens to Inkling.

**Just Like Jackie** by Lindsey Stoddard

Fifth grader Robinson Hart, named for the baseball famed Jackie Robinson, struggles with all things middle school and then some! She’s having run-ins with the class bully, and her family life is spiraling out of control. Struggling with anger management, Robinson is relegated to a support group at school. As Robbie starts to bond with those in the group, she fears she can’t confide her troubles.

When her temper boils over, her grandpa is forced to come to school to handle the situation. But can grandpa handle it? Each time he leaves the comforts of his home confusion becomes stronger as his Alzheimer’s progresses.

Robbie tries to balance and control her anger, for fear of being taken away from Grandpa, her only family member. She struggles against the clock, trying to keep people from finding out about Grandpa’s mental health and trying to learn all she can about the mom she never knew before Grandpa forgets all he knows.

Join Robinson and those around her as they struggle for answers, and to survive together.

**Lifeboat 12** by Susan Hood

It’s 1940, and England is embroiled in the nightmare of World War II. In an effort to evacuate some of the children from the worst of the bombings, they are loaded onto luxury ocean liners that will set sail to safer shores, where the they can wait out the war in safety. Thirteen-year-old Kenneth is one of the lucky ones chosen to leave England on the beautiful ship *City of Benares,* and indeed, life onboard seems like a dream come true---with warm, soft beds and delicious food. Kenneth is making new friends and having the time of his life…  
All that changes when, 3 days out on their journey to Canada, they are attacked by a German submarine, and the *City of Benares* sinks beneath the waves, victim to exploding torpedoes. Scrambling into a lifeboat with 5 other boys, Kenneth is now in a fight for his life---are the Germans hunting for survivors? How long can 5 city boys with no boating experience manage to stay alive on the ocean with little food or water, and no shelter?   
Read this exciting story, based on real characters and events, to find out.

**Lions & Liars** by Kate Beasley, Illustrated by Dan Santat

Doesn’t everybody want to be cool? Ten-year-old Frederick Frederickson wants to be *that* guy—“that guy who got laughs in class and walked through the school like he owned the place.” But he’s not. In fact, his friends tell him that in a world where kids are lions or gazelles, Frederick may just be more like the flea on a meerkat’s butt.

So when Frederick ends up stranded at Camp Omigoshee in a strange twist of fate, he decides to take the opportunity to reinvent himself and take on the identity of Dashiell Blackwood, a camper who hasn’t arrived. But what Frederick doesn’t know is that Camp Omigoshee is not your ordinary summer camp. It’s a disciplinary camp for troubled boys—and Dash Blackwood has a far-reaching reputation for being one of the toughest of all. Frederick enjoys the reluctant admiration of his bunkmates, Nosebleed, Specs, the Professor, and Ant Bite, until things fall apart just as a category 5 hurricane hits the camp.

This one’s filled with laugh-out-loud humor, adventure, and action, just perfect for any boy—or girl for that matter—who’s ever wanted to be more than a flea.

**Mad Wolf’s Daughter** by Diane Magras  
Drest is the first one to notice something is wrong. Surrounded by her sleeping brothers and father on the shore, she is sure someone is entering their protected cove. The others ignore her whispered warnings, until armored knights erupt out of the darkness, and a fierce battle begins on the beach. Drest is the youngest member of her father’s warband, and the only girl. When she follows her father’s orders to climb the cliffs, she becomes the only one to escape. She also witnesses one of the invaders push another knight over the edge. With her family gone, Drest knows she’s the only one who can rescue them, if she can find where they’ve been taken. Following her brother’s imagined voices, she seeks out the fallen knight, finding him injured but still alive, and offers aid in return for guidance to the castle. On their way, Drest is stalked by a dark figure with a horrible tie to her father, and helped by a witch she rescues from the stake. Joined by a boy seeking his destiny, the band draws ever closer to the castle, where Drest knows she must use all her training and knowledge to free her family. But the Mad Wolf’s Daughter has more in front of her than she realizes, as secrets and betrayals swirl within those castle walls.

**New Kid** by Jerry Craft

The title says it all – new kid, only this story offers more than dropping a new kid into an unfamiliar situation; Craft has provided us with an opportunity to look at racism. Middle schooler Jordan Banks gets to go to a fancy prep school in the Bronx and leave his Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan. Is he excited? NOPE! Jordon is an artist and just wants to go to art school, but here he is, freaking out about whether there’ll be other kids who are black or what how he’ll fit in. Of course, his parents are delighted since this school has a gorgeous campus and nearly unlimited resources for students… but still, Jordan worries.

What he finds, though, is that while there are kids who stereotype him, he realizes he’s kind of stereotyped others, too. Readers get a window into the world of micro-aggressions, and just may learn that people are people are people – kind, mean, charismatic, withdrawn – and it isn’t dependent on their race. The bottom line here is that this book is really, on its most basic level, about middle school and all that means for kids.

Graphic novel readers will enjoy this, especially the Telgemeier, Holm, and Jamieson book lovers.

**The Night Diary** by Veera Hiranandani

The only way for Nisha to communicate with her mother is in a diary, given to her as a gift on her 12th birthday. For Nisha’s mother died giving birth to her and her twin brother Amil, and now Nisha, who is painfully shy, feels as though she has someone to tell her feelings to as the familiar, comfortable world she has known begins to crumble.

It’s 1947, and India is gaining independence from British rule and splitting into two countries, India and Pakistan. At first there are hints of political and religious troubles, but then the violence and rioting become dangerous, and Nisha’s family— her brother, her Hindu father, and her grandmother—must leave behind their home, their belongings, and, perhaps worst of all, their dear Muslim cook and flee on a long, terrifying walk to cross the new border to safety.

You don’t have to be interested in religion or the politics of India to enjoy this book. If you pick it up, you’ll be caught up in Nisha’s story, and you’ll hold your breath as she experiences difficulties that are hard to imagine on her journey. But she continues to write and sort through her emotions.

Perhaps you write and you know how powerful it can be to put your feelings into words. Perhaps you love to cook, like Nisha. Or just maybe you can’t understand how people can still be torn apart by religion. Maybe you’ll even see a connection between Nisha’s journey and those families who are fleeing violence now in their own countries. However you connect, you *will* connect with this girl whose voice and spirit come through in every page, and you *will* keep turning the pages to the end!

**One- Third Nerd** by Gennifer Choldenko

Liam and his family have a big problem. Her name is Cupcake. Their poor dog is wetting everywhere and if they can’t stop it, Cupcake will need a new home. Liam and his two sisters need to come up with a plan. Dakota’s idea is to earn money to take Cupcake to the vet. What could they do to make money? Thinking scientifically, Dakota wants to sell items she thinks people will buy. Liam thinks cat litter and doggy diapers might work. The landlord has given them only so much time, so time is running out. What can they do to save Cupcake?

**Power Forward** by Hena Khan

What do you do when your passion is basketball, but your parents dream is to see you up on the stage, performing on your violin?  
Zayd lives to play basketball with his friends, and now is the time to double-down on practice time, with the tryouts for the gold basketball team coming up. Unfortunately, his traditional Pakistani parents see his sport as “only a game”, and demand that he spend all his time away from school and homework practicing his violin.  
What’s a kid to do??? Well, maybe he could tell a fib or two….just for now, until the tryouts? Maybe he could SAY he was going to lessons after school, but actually squeeze in extra game-time? Maybe if his parents SEE how he rocks it on the gold team, they will change their minds? Hmmm….

Read Power Forward for some great basketball play-by-play, and you just might learn something about trying for your dreams and how to really succeed.

**Ra, the Mighty: Cat Detective** by A.B. Greenfield

*It was a beautiful day in ancient Egypt. I, Ra-- the Pharoah’s cat, was enjoying the first of my many naps in the sun when I was disturbed by my friend Khepri, a lowly scareb beetle.   
 “Ra, it’s not good for you to lie around all day like this---you need another interest in life!” Khepri announced.  
“We can talk about it after my nap,” I said.  
But just then we heard a scrabbling sound, and a small, bedraggled cat popped over the wall---  
“I’m Miu. I live by the kitchens. And I need your help!”*

Thus begins this tale of mystery, palace intrigue, adventure, and friendship. For even though the mighty Ra may think he is too important to run around solving mysteries, could it be that he is actually a tiny bit bored? And even though he says he has no interest in the affairs of the kitchen help, could he actually be a little concerned that the little human girl, Tedimut, is being blamed for a crime she didn’t commit? With the help of his sidekick, the indomitable Khepri, who can roll dung with the best of them, can Ra use his knowledge of palace life to find out who stole the queen’s amulet?

Find out when you read Ra the Mighty Cat Detective!

**Saving Winslow** by Sharon Creech

Louie doesn’t know anything about donkeys but his dad just brought home a sickly, newborn mini donkey. Louie is determined to save the little guy, so he names him Winslow and begins to care for him. There is so much to do and so many questions. Louie wonders how long can a donkey live in your house? Can a donkey wear diapers? Why is Winslow so loud? What happens if the neighbors complain about the noise? Louie isn’t sure about the answers to his questions but he knows Winslow loves him. So, with help of his family and a new friend, Louie is going to do his best to protect Winslow.

**Short and Skinny** by Mark Tatulli

“Big things come in small packages.” Mark’s mom says that a lot. Mostly to Mark. It’s 1977, and Mark Tatulli is the smallest kid in Junior High. Even his little sister is taller than him. This unfortunate situation means that Mark is a favorite target to the school’s three biggest bullies, but he also has to put up with teasing from his own friends and family. Fed up, Mark decides this is the summer that’s going to change. Using the ads in the back of his comic books, he sends away for every “guaranteed” muscle builder and height enhancement he sees. As he waits for the miracle cures, he spends his summer riding his beloved bike, Thunderbolt, and drawing. Then Star Wars hits theaters. Mark is blown away, and realizes this is what he really wants- to tell mind-blowing stories that leave people cheering. He decides his real summer calling will be making a spoof of Star Wars, called “Star Bores,” and recruits his friends and siblings to fill roles like Obi-Dope Canteloupe, Princess Bleeia, and Barf Vapor. Mark will play the hero Fluke Skystumbler. Obsessed with his movie, Mark spends the rest of the summer making costumes and building sets, and creating some very unsafe special effects when his mom’s not home. At last, filming is done, and Mark’s psyched. But then, he realizes he can’t afford film editing equipment, none of his mail order cures work, his Ham Yoyo starts talking to Mark’s crush, and, worst of all, his beloved Thunderbolt gets stolen. Is Mark’s summer going to go down in flames? Or can the short guy really go up against incredible odds and come out on top?

**Small Spaces** by Katherine Alden

You will NEVER look at a scarecrow the same way again. This atmospheric and pretty scary book features Ollie, an 11 year old whose only comfort is in books. She encounters a wildly bizarre woman about to toss a book into the river, and before she even realizes it, Ollie grabs the book and takes off. She reads a strange and creepy story about Beth, the men who love her, and the SMILING MAN. Turns out, Beth made a deal with this guy, but no one gets what they want without the smiling man getting something in return.

On a fall harvest field trip to a local farm the very next day, Ollie realizes she knows the names on the tombstones in the little cemetery adjacent to the farm – is Beth’s story more than just fiction? When the bus breaks down on their way back to school, and in the dark, and at that perfect moment to create an eerie buildup of tension, the bus driver tells the kids in his care… “Best get moving. At nightfall they’ll come for the rest of you.” He also tells them “Avoid large places; keep to the small.” Ollie and two of her classmates are the only ones who listen and head into the woods. Hair-raising events reveal a sinister presence at the farm along with moving and expressive scarecrows, and could the smiling man be there, too? What did the bus driver mean about small spaces? Find out!

**Sweep: The Story of a Girl and her Monster** by Jonathan Auxier (OX EE AY)

Auxier’s masterfully woven historical fiction novel wraps in elements of Jewish mythology and magical realism to create the rich and beautiful story of Nan Sparrow. Raised by a chimney sweep, when he disappears and leaves her only a piece of charcoal – her “char”, Nan has to take up with the child-hating Wilkie Crudd who rules the sweep business and employs children to do this hard and dirty work. When a fellow sweep uses the feared “Devil’s Nudge” method to get her out of a chimney, a huge fire ensues in which Nan should have died – could it have been her char that saves her? When she unravels the true meaning of the char, Charlie is born – a Golem made from the very soot and ash she’s been using to keep warm at night. Letting Crudd believe she died in the fire, Nan and Charlie embark on a life together, but it’s tricky to keep both she and her Golem safe and hidden. You’ll be swept up (pun intended) into this Victorian era story of charm and ultimately of love. Multi-layered characters add to the believability of this heart-warming story, and you’ll want to find out what happens to Nan and her beloved char after they’re discovered and face real trials. This is just a delightful and beautifully written story with just the right amount of suspense – evocative of a Dickens novel.

**Two Dogs in a Trenchcoat Go To School** by Julie Falatko

When Sassy and Waldo’s boy Stewart starts coming home from school smelling like stress (and meat!), the two dogs know it’s up to them to rescue him. Realizing dogs aren’t allowed in school, the dogs find a trench coat to disguise themselves. Using the coat (and Waldo’s surprisingly good human language skills), the two pass themselves off as new student Salty Woofadoginton from Liver Ohio to infiltrate Stewart’s class. It turns out school is pretty awesome- there’s books, and pillows, and meat, and someone named Jim Class who lets them run around and chase frisbees! But something is still bothering Stewart, and it’s up to his trusty two dogs to sniff out the problem, and help their boy!

**The Unteachables** by Gordon Korman

Mr. Zachary Kermit is a burnt out teacher. One year left before early retirement and now he’s stuck with Room 117. Room 117, the unteachables. All the students that don’t fit anywhere else. Behavior problems, attitude problems, emotional problems, and educational problems. They are all here in room 117. It’s a nightmare for both sides. Mr. Kermit never thought he’d be teaching them, and the unteachables never thought they would get a teacher with a worse attitude than theirs. What a crazy combination but it might just work. Somehow, the unteachables might just be the class that Mr. Kermit needs.