

2020 – 2021 Kentucky Bluegrass Award Master List for 9-12 KBA

Athena Protocol / Shamin Sarif / Harper Teen, 2019.

Jessie Archer is a member of the Athena Protocol, an elite organization of female spies who enact vigilante justice around the world. Athena operatives are never supposed to shoot to kill—so when Jessie can't stop herself from pulling the trigger, she gets kicked out of the organization, right before a huge mission to take down a human trafficker in Belgrade. Jessie needs to right her wrong and prove herself, so she starts her own investigation into the trafficking. But going rogue means she has no one to watch her back as she delves into the horrors she uncovers. Meanwhile, her former teammates have been ordered to bring her down. Jessie must face danger from all sides if she's to complete her mission—and survive.

Bloodleaf / Crystal Smith / HMH Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Aurelia is a princess, but they call her a witch. Surrounded by spirits and burdened with forbidden magic, she lives in constant fear of discovery by the witch-hunting Tribunal and their bloodthirsty mobs. When a devastating assassination attempt reveals her magical abilities, Aurelia is forced to flee her country with nothing but her life. Alone and adrift in an enemy kingdom, Aurelia plans her revenge against the Tribunal. But there's something deeply amiss in her new home, too, and soon she finds herself swept into a deadly new mystery with a secretive prince, the ghost of an ancient queen, and a poison vine called Bloodleaf. Aurelia is entangled in a centuries-long game of love, power, and war, and if she can't break free before the Tribunal makes its last move, she may lose far more than her crown.

Cracking the Bell / Geoff Herbach / Katherine Tegen Books, 2019.

Isaiah loves football. It saved his life, giving him structure and discipline after his sister's death tore his family apart. But when Isaiah gets knocked out cold on the field, he learns there's a lot more to lose than football. All his friends are on the team, and Isaiah knows they can't win without him. The scholarship offer from Cornell is only on the table if he keeps playing. Without football, what would keep his family together and what would prevent him from sliding back into the habits that nearly destroyed him? Isaiah must decide how much he's willing to sacrifice for the sport that gave him everything, even if playing football threatens to destroy his future.

Field Notes on Love / Jennifer E. Smith / Delacorte Press, 2019.

It's the perfect idea for a romantic week together: traveling across America by train, until it isn't. Hugo's girlfriend dumps him with one parting gift: the tickets for their long-planned last-hurrah-before-university trip. Only, it's been booked under her name. Nontransferable, no exceptions. Mae is still reeling from being rejected from USC's film school. When she stumbles across Hugo's ad for a replacement Margaret Campbell (her full name!), she's certain it's exactly the adventure she needs to shake off her disappointment and jump-start her next film. A cross-country train trip with a complete stranger might not seem like the best idea, but to Mae and Hugo, both eager to escape their regular lives, it makes perfect sense. What starts as a convenient arrangement

soon turns into something more. But when life outside the train catches up to them, can they find a way to keep their feelings for each other from getting derailed?

Heroine / Mindy McGinnis / Katherine Tegen Books, 2019.

When a car crash sidelines Mickey just before softball season, she has to find a way to hold on to her spot as the catcher for a team expected to make a historic tournament run. Behind the plate is the only place she's ever felt comfortable, and not only do the painkillers she's been prescribed help her get there, they make her feel good. With a new circle of friends—fellow injured athletes, others with just time to kill—Mickey finds peaceful acceptance. But as the pressure to be Mickey Catalan heightens, her need increases, and it becomes less about pain and more about want, something that could send her spiraling out of control.

Lovely and the Lost, The / Jennifer Lynn Barnes / Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Kira Bennett's earliest memories are of living alone and wild in the woods. She has no idea how long she was on her own or what she had to do to survive, but she remembers the moment that Cady Bennett and one of her search-and-rescue dogs found her. Together with Cady's son, Jude, and their neighbor, Free, Kira works alongside Cady to train the world's most elite search-and-rescue dogs. When Cady's estranged father tracks his daughter down and asks for her help in locating a missing child, one of several visitors who has disappeared in the Sierra Glades National Park in the past twelve months, the teens find themselves on the front lines sooner than they could have ever expected. As the search through seven hundred and fifty thousand acres of unbridled wilderness intensifies, Kira becomes obsessed with finding the missing child. She knows all too well what it's like to be lost in the wilderness, fighting for survival, alone. But this case isn't simple. There is more afoot than a single missing girl, and Kira's memories threaten to overwhelm her at every turn.

Paul Big and Small / David Glen Robb / Shadow Mountain, 2019.

Paul Adams, an excellent rock climber, has always been short and his small size means he can hide from the bullies that prowl the halls of his high school. Top on his list of "People to Avoid" are Conor, Hunter, and Lily Small, the tallest girl in school. He might be able to be friends with "Big," a new kid from Hawaii who's got a way of bringing everyone into his circle and finding the beauty in even the worst of situations. When the three of them—Paul, Big, and Small—are assigned to the same group project, they form an unlikely friendship and Paul realizes that maybe Lily isn't so bad after all, that he might even actually like her, maybe even *more* than like her. Paul and Lily team up for a rock-climbing competition, but when Lily is diagnosed with leukemia, Paul ends up with Conor who is dealing with bullies of his own. Bullying in his school has got to stop.

Price of Duty / Todd Strasser / Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018.

Jake Liddell is a war hero. The military is considering awarding him a Silver Star, a huge honor for any soldier -- especially for the son of a military family. Only Jake's questioning everything his family brought him up to believe. Now at home, recovering from his physical wounds, the memories of what he experienced "over there" haunt him.

Meanwhile, he feels pressure from all sides: some people want him to speak out against the military system he was brought up to honor and respect; others, like his famous grandfather, a general himself, are urging him to return to the battlefield to fight again. Jake was raised to believe that fighting for one's country was a moral obligation. But now that he's seen firsthand the human cost of war, he is no longer sure.

They Called Us Enemy / George Takei / Top Shelf Productions, 2019.

In 1942, at the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, every person of Japanese descent on the west coast was rounded up and shipped to one of ten "relocation centers," hundreds or thousands of miles from home, where they would be held for years under armed guard. *They Called Us Enemy* is Takei's firsthand account of those years behind barbed wire, the joys and terrors of growing up under legalized racism, his mother's hard choices, his father's faith in democracy, and the way those experiences planted the seeds for his astonishing future. What does it mean to be American? Who gets to decide? When the world is against you, what can one person do?

With the Fire on High / Elizabeth Acevedo / Quill Tree Books, 2019.

Ever since she got pregnant freshman year, Emoni Santiago's life has been about making the tough decisions—doing what has to be done for her daughter and her abuela. The one place she can let all that go is in the kitchen, where she adds a little something magical to everything she cooks, turning her food into straight-up goodness. Even though she dreams of working as a chef after she graduates, Emoni knows that it's not worth her time to pursue the impossible. Yet despite the rules she thinks she has to play by, once Emoni starts cooking, her only choice is to let her talent break free.