

BOOKTALK

Realistic Fiction:

The Only Road by Alexandra Diaz

Jaime is sitting on his bed drawing when he hears a scream. Instantly, he knows: Miguel, his cousin and best friend, is dead.

Everyone in Jaime's small town in Guatemala knows someone who has been killed by the Alphas, a powerful gang that's known for violence and drug trafficking. Anyone who refuses to work for them is hurt or killed—like Miguel. With Miguel gone, Jaime fears that he is next. There's only one choice: accompanied by his cousin Ángela, Jaime must flee his home to live with his older brother in New Mexico.

Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy's treacherous and life-changing journey.

The Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

That's what fifteen-year-old Will has shoved in the back waistband of his jeans. See, his brother Shawn was just murdered. And Will knows the rules. No crying. No snitching. *Revenge*. That's where Will's now heading, with that gun shoved in the back waistband of his jeans, the gun that was his brother's gun. He gets on the elevator, seventh floor, stoked. He knows who he's after. Or does he? As the elevator stops on the sixth floor, on comes Buck. Buck, Will finds out, is who gave Shawn the gun before Will took the gun. Buck tells Will to check that the gun is even loaded. And that's when Will sees that one bullet is missing. And the only one who could have fired Shawn's gun was Shawn. Huh. Will didn't know that Shawn had ever actually USED his gun. Bigger huh. BUCK IS DEAD. But Buck's in the elevator? Just as Will's trying to think this through, the door to the next floor opens. A teenage girl gets on, waves away the smoke from Dead Buck's cigarette. Will doesn't know her, but she knew him. Knew. When they were eight. And stray bullets had cut through the playground, and Will had tried to cover her, but she was hit anyway, and so what she wants to know, on that fifth floor elevator stop, is, what if Will, Will with the gun shoved in the back waistband of his jeans, MISSES.

And so it goes, the whole long way down, as the elevator stops on each floor, and at each stop someone connected to his brother gets on to give Will a piece to a bigger story than the one he thinks he knows. A story that might never know an END...if WILL gets *off* that elevator.

Historical Fiction:

Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys

Winter 1945. WWII. Four refugees. Four stories.

Each one born of a different homeland; each one hunted, and haunted, by tragedy, lies, war. As thousands desperately flock to the coast in the midst of a Soviet advance, four paths converge, vying for passage aboard the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a ship that promises safety and freedom. But not all promises can be kept . . .

Fatal Throne by MT Anderson

If you were one of King Henry VIII's six wives, who would you be? Would you be Anne Boleyn, who literally lost her head? Would you be the subject of rumor and scandal like Catherine Howard? Or would you get away and survive like Anna of Cleves?

Meet them and Henry's other queens--each bound for divorce or death--in this epic and thrilling novel that reads like fantasy but really happened. Watch spellbound as each of these women attempts to survive their unpredictable king as he grows more and more obsessed with producing a male heir. And discover how the power-hungry court fanned the flames of Henry's passions . . . and his most horrible impulses.

Whether you're a huge fan of all things Tudor or new to this jaw-dropping saga, you won't be able to get the unique voices of Henry and his wives--all brought to life by seven award-winning and bestselling authors--out of your head.

This is an intimate look at the royals during one of the most treacherous times in history. Who will you root for and who will you love to hate?

Fantasy:

The Guinevere Deception by Kierstin White

Princess Guinevere has come to Camelot to wed a stranger: the charismatic King Arthur. With magic clawing at the kingdom's borders, the great wizard Merlin conjured a solution--send in Guinevere to be Arthur's wife . . . and his protector from those who want to see the young king's idyllic city fail. The catch? Guinevere's real name--and her true identity--is a secret. She is a changeling, a girl who has given up everything to protect Camelot.

To keep Arthur safe, Guinevere must navigate a court in which the old--including Arthur's own family--demand things continue as they have been, and the new--those drawn by the dream of Camelot--fight for a better way to live. And always, in the green hearts of forests and the black depths of lakes, magic lies in wait to reclaim the land.

Deadly jousts, duplicitous knights, and forbidden romances are nothing compared to the greatest threat of all: the girl with the long black hair, riding on horseback through the dark woods toward Arthur. Because when your whole existence is a lie, how can you trust even yourself?

King of Scars by Leigh Bardugo

Face your demons...or feed them. The dashing young king, Nikolai Lantsov, has always had a gift for the impossible. No one knows what he endured in his country's bloody civil war—and he intends to keep it that way. Now, as enemies gather at his weakened borders, Nikolai must find a way to refill Ravka's coffers, forge new alliances, and stop a rising threat to the once-great Grisha Army.

Yet with every day a dark magic within him grows stronger, threatening to destroy all he has built. With the help of a young monk and a legendary Grisha general, Nikolai will journey to the places in Ravka where the deepest magic survives to vanquish the terrible legacy inside him. He will risk everything to save his country and himself. But some secrets aren't meant to stay buried—and some wounds aren't meant to heal.

Science Fiction:

Steelheart by Brandon Sanderson

How far would you go for revenge if someone killed your father?

If someone destroyed your city?

If everything you ever loved was taken from you?

David Charleston will go to any lengths to stop Steelheart. But to exact revenge in Steelheart's world, David will need the Reckoners—a shadowy group of rebels bent on maintaining justice.

And it turns out that the Reckoners might just need David too.

Mystery:

A Heart in the Body of the World by Deb Caletti

Then...

Annabelle's life wasn't perfect, but it was full—full of friends, family, love. And a boy...whose attention Annabelle found flattering and unsettling all at once.

Until that attention intensified.

Now...

Annabelle is running. Running from the pain and the tragedy from the past year. With only Grandpa Ed and the journal she fills with words she can't speak out loud, Annabelle runs from Seattle to Washington, DC and toward a destination she doesn't understand but is determined to reach. With every beat of her heart, every stride of her feet, Annabelle steps closer to healing—and the strength she discovers within herself to let love and hope back into her life.

Annabelle's journey is the ultimate testament to the human heart, and how it goes on after being broken.

!!!!!!HONORABLE MENTIONS WE TALKED ABOUT AT THE END OF CLASS!!!!!!

Dry by Neal Shusterman

The drought—or the Tap-Out, as everyone calls it—has been going on for a while now. Everyone's lives have become an endless list of don'ts: don't water the lawn, don't fill up your pool, don't take long showers.

Until the taps run dry.

Suddenly, Alyssa's quiet suburban street spirals into a warzone of desperation; neighbors and families turned against each other on the hunt for water. And when her parents don't return and her life—and the life of her brother—is threatened, Alyssa has to make impossible choices if she's going to survive.

Becoming Kareem by Kareem Abdul Jabbar

At one time, Lew Alcindor was just another kid from New York City with all the usual problems: He struggled with fitting in, with pleasing a strict father, and with overcoming shyness that made him feel socially awkward. But with a talent for basketball, and an unmatched team of supporters, Lew Alcindor was able to transform and to become Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

From a childhood made difficult by racism and prejudice to a record-smashing career on the basketball court as an adult, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's life was packed with ""coaches"" who taught him right from wrong and led him on the path to greatness. His parents, coaches Jack Donahue and John Wooden, Muhammad Ali, Bruce Lee, and many others played important roles in Abdul-Jabbar's life and sparked him to become an activist for social change and advancement. The inspiration from those around him, and his drive to find his own path in life, are highlighted in this personal and awe-inspiring journey.

Price of Duty by Todd Strasser

Jake Liddell is a hero.

At least, that's what everyone says he is. The military is even awarding him a Silver Star for his heroic achievements—a huge honor for the son of a military family. Now he's home, recovering from an injury, but it seems the war has followed him back. He needs pills in order to sleep, a young woman is trying to persuade him into speaking out against military recruitment tactics, and his grandfather is already urging him back onto the battlefield. He doesn't know what to do; nothing makes sense anymore.

There is only one thing that Jake knows for certain: he is no hero.

Field Guide to the North American Teenager by Ben Phillippe

Norris Kaplan is clever, cynical, and quite possibly too smart for his own good. A Black French Canadian, he knows from watching American sitcoms that those three things don't bode well when you are moving to Austin, Texas.

Plunked into a new high school and sweating a ridiculous amount from the oppressive Texas heat, Norris finds himself cataloging everyone he meets: the Cheerleaders, the Jocks, the Loners, and even the Manic Pixie Dream Girl. Making a ton of friends has never been a priority for him, and this way he can at least amuse himself until it's time to go back to Canada, where he belongs.

Yet against all odds, those labels soon become actual people to Norris...like loner Liam, who makes it his mission to befriend Norris, or Madison the beta cheerleader, who is so nice that it has to be a trap. Not to mention Aarti the Manic Pixie Dream Girl, who might, in fact, be a real love interest in the making.

But the night of the prom, Norris screws everything up royally. As he tries to pick up the pieces, he realizes it might be time to stop hiding behind his snarky opinions and start living his life—along with the people who have found their way into his heart.

The Turnover by Mike Lupica

Gramps is Lucas's hero, which is second only to the fact that he is also Lucas's basketball coach. Gramps coached the team to victory in the championships last year, and when he decides to come out of retirement to coach another season, Lucas is thrilled. This season will absolutely be the greatest yet.

So when his English teacher challenges the class to write a biography of the person they most admire, Lucas can't think of anyone he'd rather write about.

Except...Gramps is being cagey. He avoids every question Lucas asks, and gets angry every time Lucas brings up his past as a hotshot basketball player. Lucas can't help but wonder—is there something Gramps is trying to hide? And if there is, will Lucas be prepared to face the truth about the man he thought he knew?

With basketball championships fast approaching, time is running out for Lucas to decide.