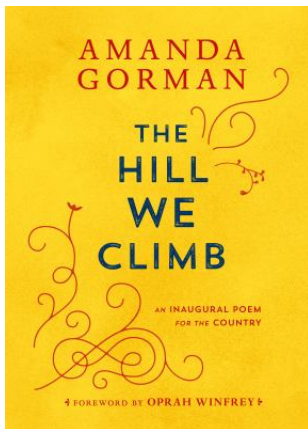


National Poetry Month Reading Recommendations for Teens

This list is not exhaustive nor completely representative of all of the amazing poetry and novels in verse available for our youth. It is, however, what we hope will be a jumping off point for our middle and high school students, and even adults, to seek out other titles like these.

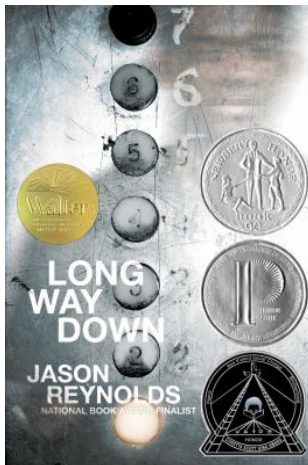
Please note: if a title you are interested in has a wait list, please don't hesitate to place a hold on it; holds lists are reviewed to ensure that items will most likely be available to borrow sooner than the wait time estimate given.



[The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman](#)

*If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade.
But in all the bridges we've made,
that is the promise to glade,
the hill we climb.
If only we dare.*

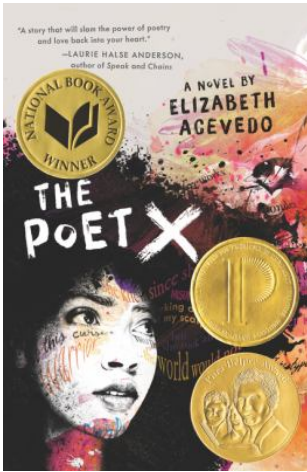
On January 20, 2021, Amanda Gorman became the sixth and youngest poet to deliver a poetry reading at a presidential inauguration. Taking the stage after the 46th president of the United States, Joe Biden, Gorman captivated the nation and brought hope to viewers around the globe. Her poem "The Hill We Climb: An Inaugural Poem for the Country" celebrates the promise of America and affirms the power of poetry.



[Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds](#)

*A cannon. A strap.
A piece. A biscuit.
A burner. A heater.
A chopper. A gat.
A hammer
A tool
for RULE*

Or, you can call it a gun. 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? 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.



[The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo](#)

*The summer is made for stoop-sitting
and since it's the last week before school starts,
Harlem is opening its eyes to September.
I scope out this block I've always called home.*

Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking. But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman, who her family can never know about.

Xiomara understands that her thoughts are best kept to herself. So when she is invited to join her school's slam poetry club, she doesn't know how she could ever

attend without her mami finding out. But she still can't stop thinking about performing her poems.

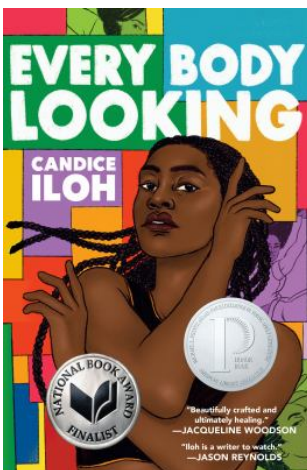
Because in the face of a world that may not want to hear her, Xiomara refuses to be silent.



[White Rose by Kip Wilson](#)

*My voice sounds
so calm telling these lies,
I barely recognize
the words as my own.*

Disillusioned by the propaganda of Nazi Germany, Sophie Scholl, her brother, and his fellow soldiers formed the White Rose, a group that wrote and distributed anonymous letters criticizing the Nazi regime and calling for action from their fellow German citizens. The following year, Sophie and her brother were arrested for treason and interrogated for information about their collaborators. This debut novel recounts the lives of Sophie and her friends and highlights their brave stand against fascism in Nazi Germany.

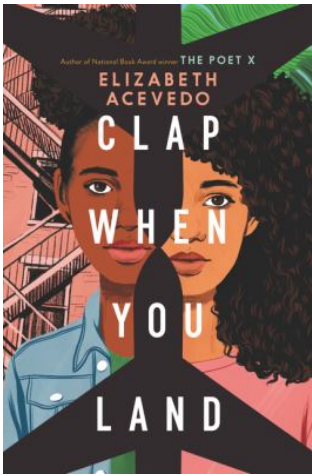


[Every Body Looking by Candice Iloh](#)

*We pull into my high school's parking lot
for the last day I will ever have to smile at these people like I ever belonged here / for
the ten minutes it takes Mama and me to get to the stands along the football field, a
place she has never seen / I imagine the sounds of our heels to be / like a song we
are for once dancing to together / today / I'm not angry / at her slurred speech / I'm
not angry / at her missing teeth / I'm not angry / at her fuss / I'm not angry / that she
looks nothing like / the last time I saw her / or that / I don't know when the next time
will be / for the ten minutes it takes Mama and me to get to the stands along the
football field / I'm just happy we're both here / alive*

When Ada leaves home for her freshman year at a Historically Black College, it's the first time she's ever been so far from her family—and the first time that she's been able to make her own choices and to seek her place in this new world. As she stumbles deeper into the world

of dance and explores her sexuality, she also begins to wrestle with her past--her mother's struggle with addiction, her Nigerian father's attempts to make a home for her. Ultimately, Ada discovers she needs to brush off the destiny others have chosen for her and claim full ownership of her body and her future.



[Clap When You Land by Elizabeth Acevedo](#)

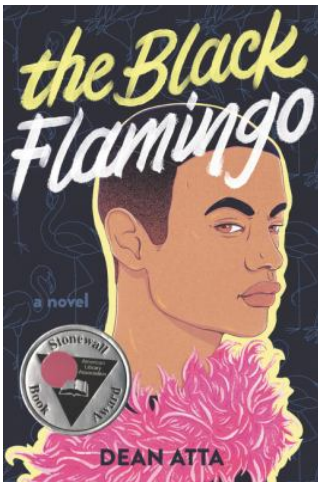
An airline employee / & two security guards / approach the crowd like gutter cats / used to being kicked. / & as soon as the employee utters the word accident / the linoleum opens / a gnashing jaw, a bottomless belly, / I am swallowed / by this shark-toothed truth.

Camino Rios lives for the summers when her father visits her in the Dominican Republic. But this time, on the day when his plane is supposed to land, Camino arrives at the airport to see crowds of crying people...

In New York City, Yahaira Rios is called to the principal's office, where her mother is waiting to tell her that her father, her hero, has died in a plane crash.

Separated by distance--and Papi's secrets--the two girls are forced to face a new reality in which their father is dead and their lives are forever altered.

And then, when it seems like they've lost everything of their father, they learn of each other.



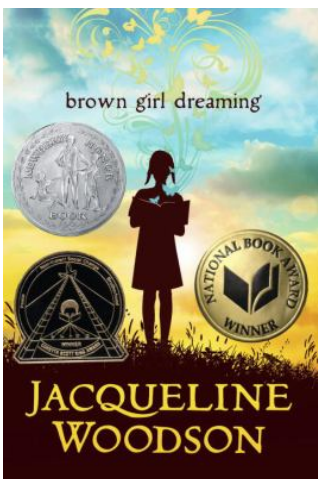
[The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta](#)

'Don't let anyone tell you / that you are half anything. You and Anna are / simply brother and sister. Don't let anyone tell you / that she's your half-sister. Don't let anyone tell you / that you are half-black and half-white. Half-Cypriot / and half-Jamaican. You are a full human / being. It's never as simple as being half and half.'

Michael is a mixed-race gay teen growing up in London. All his life, he's navigated what it means to be Greek-Cypriot and Jamaican--but never quite feeling Greek or Black enough.

As he gets older, Michael's coming out is only the start of learning who he is and where he fits in. When he discovers the Drag Society, he finally finds where he belongs--and the Black Flamingo is born.

Told with raw honesty, insight, and lyricism, this debut explores the layers of identity that make us who we are--and allow us to shine.



[Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson](#)

I am born on a Tuesday at the University Hospital Columbus, Ohio / USA— a country caught / between Black and White.

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both

accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child.

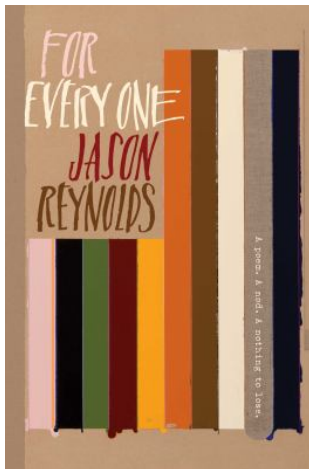


[Between the Lines by Nikki Grimes](#)

"Poetry? Why do I need to learn about poetry?"

"Because poetry, more than anything else, will teach you about the power of words. If you're going to be a reporter, that's something you need to understand." I nod, only half convinced. Poetry. That's a new one.

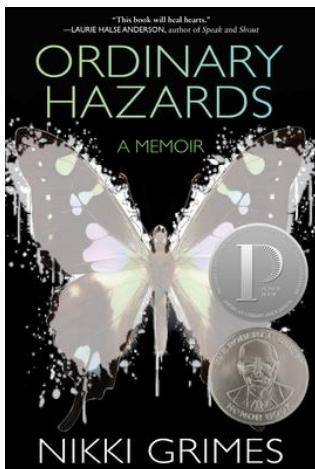
Darrian dreams of writing for the New York Times. To hone his skills and learn more about the power of words, he enrolls in Mr. Ward's class, known for its open-mic poetry readings and boys vs. girls poetry slam. Everyone in class has something important to say, and in sharing their poetry, they learn that they all face challenges and have a story to tell-whether it's about health problems, aging out of foster care, being bullied for religious beliefs, or having to take on too much responsibility because of an addicted parent. As Darrian and his classmates get to know one another through poetry, they bond over the shared experiences and truth that emerge from their writing, despite their private struggles and outward differences.



[For Every One by Jason Reynolds](#)

*THIS LETTER IS BEING WRITTEN
from a place of raw honesty and love
but not at all
a place of expertise
on how to make
your dreams come true.*

For Every One is just that: for every one. For every one person. For every one dream. But especially for every one kid. The kids who dream of being better than they are. Kids who dream of doing more than they almost dare to dream.



[Ordinary Hazards by Nikki Grimes](#)

*No one warned me
the world was full of
ordinary hazards
like closets with locks and keys.*

Growing up with a mother suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and a mostly absent father, Nikki Grimes found herself terrorized by babysitters, shunted from foster family to foster family, and preyed upon by those she trusted. At the age of six, she poured her pain onto a piece of paper late one night - and discovered the magic and impact of writing. For many years, Nikki's notebooks were her most enduring companions. In this accessible and inspiring memoir that will resonate with young readers and adults alike, Nikki shows how the power of those words helped her conquer the hazards - ordinary and extraordinary - of her life.