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March 2020

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STARS Citation

Gisclair, Emma, "Books and Bagels 2020 Bibliography" (2020). *Handouts and Brochures*. 1.
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Books and Bagels: The Best Books of 2019

UCF Curriculum Materials Center

March 5, 2020

Fiction

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *With the Fire on High*. New York: HarperTeen, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Contemporary Realism, Teen Parent, Cooking**—F Ace

Emoni has fought hard to have a normal high school education ever since having a baby freshman year. When her school finally offers a culinary class her senior year, she has to find a way to afford a trip to Spain and decide what she's willing to do to chase her dreams. **Walter Honor**

Ali, S.K. *Love From A-Z*. New York: Salaam Reads, 2019. Gr. 8-12, **Contemporary Realism, Romance, Qatar, Illness (multiple sclerosis)**—F Ali

When Zayneb is suspended because of an Islamophobic teacher, she heads for Doha, Qatar to visit her aunt. On the flight, she meets Adam, who is dropping out of college because of his multiple sclerosis diagnosis. The two instantly connect, but can they overcome distance, secrets, and the differences in their personalities?

Alkaf, Hanna. *The Weight of Our Sky*. New York: Salaam Reads, 2019. Gr. 8-12, **Historical Fiction (1969 Malaysia), Race and racism, Mental Illness (OCD)**—F Alk

In 1969 Kuala Lumpur, Melati believes her OCD is the result of a djinn inside her. As long as she counts everything in perfect sets of 3, the djinn will keep her mother safe. But when violence breaks out between the Chinese and Malays, Melati has to rely on her own strength to survive.

Berry, Julie. *Lovely War*. New York: Viking, 2019. Gr. 7-12, **Historical Fiction (WWI), Mythology, Romance**—F Ber

In the midst of World War I, four mortal lives are shaped by the whims and desires of the gods. A talented pianist, a British soldier, a Harlem musician, and a war orphan—their stories weave together as Aphrodite testifies before her husband's court.

* Craig, Erin. *House of Salt and Sorrows*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Fantasy, Retelling (12 Dancing Princesses), Horror**—F Cra

Annaleigh used to be the middle of twelve sisters. Now she's the second oldest of eight. When ghosts begin haunting the halls of their seaside manor, the rumors of a curse begin to seem more believable. Can Annaleigh save her family before she succumbs to madness?

Deaver, Mason. *I Wish You All the Best*. New York: PUSH, 2019. Gr. 8-12, **Contemporary Realism, Mental Illness (anxiety), LGBTQIA (nonbinary)**—F Dea

After being kicked out of their parents' house for coming out as nonbinary, Ben now lives with their estranged older sister. A new house means a new school, but an outgoing student named Nathan is determined to be Ben's friend. Maybe this is Ben's chance for a better, happier life.

Emezi, Akwaeke. *Pet*. New York: Make Me a World, 2019. Gr. 7-12, **Dystopian, Child Abuse, LGBTQIA (trans)—F Eme**

After the Angels exposed the Monsters of Lucille, everyone assumed that the city was safe. But when Jam accidentally gives life to a strange creature named Pet, who is here to hunt a Monster, she learns that hiding the darkness of the past doesn't mean that the darkness is gone. **Stonewall Honor, National Book Award Finalist, Walter Honor**

Kemmerer, Brigid. *A Curse So Dark and Lonely*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Fantasy, Retellings (Beauty and the Beast), Romance, Disability (cerebral palsy)—F Kem**

Prince Rhen is cursed to repeat the autumn of his 18th year, condemned to transform into a beast at the end of each cycle. Harper is trying to keep her family alive. When she is pulled from Washington D.C. to a magical land, she becomes Rhen's—and his kingdom's—last hope.

* Lee, Stacey. *The Downstairs Girl*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2019. Gr. 7-12, **Historical Fiction (1890 Atlanta), Newspapers—F Lee**

As a Chinese American girl in late 19th Century Atlanta, it's hard for Jo to find a place where she belongs. Until she starts writing an advice column for a local newspaper and gets the chance to address issues of race and gender. But as her columns become more controversial, her secret identity is threatened.

Menon, Sandhya. *There's Something About Sweetie*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2019. Gr. 8-12, **Contemporary Realism, Romance—F Men**

Sweetie is a plus-sized athlete who is happy with herself—but her mother is convinced that she can only have a good life if she loses weight. Ashish's parents are determined to find him a nice Indian girl, despite his protests. Each ready to prove their parents wrong, the two teens agree to a dating contract, but neither expects to fall in love.

Philippe, Ben. *The Field Guide to the North American Teenager*. New York: Balzer + Bray, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Contemporary Realism, New School—F Phi**

When Norris's mom moves them from Montreal to Austin, Texas, he's sure that 90s teen movies have prepared him for American high school. As he makes friends, gets a job, and tries to date the manic pixie dream girl, he begins to realize that you can't sort people into boxes. **Morris Award**

* Pool, Katy Rose. *There Will Come a Darkness*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Fantasy, Prophecies, Ensemble Cast—F Poo**

Before the Prophets disappeared, they made one last prophecy: three harbingers of an Age of Darkness and a new Prophet to stop it. One hundred years later, the lives of five young people are set on a collision course with each other. Who will destroy the world and who will save it? **Morris Finalist**

* Power, Rory. *Wilder Girls*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2019. Gr. 10-12, **Horror, LGBTQIA—F Pow**

Eighteen months ago, Raxter School for Girls was put under quarantine because of the mysterious Tox. If it doesn't kill the girls, it changes them—growing second spines, gills, and metal hands. When Hetty's best friend is taken by the scientists studying the Tox, she puts everything at risk to find out what's really going on.

* Ribay, Randy. *Patron Saints of Nothing*. New York: Kokila, 2019. Gr. 10-12, **Contemporary Realism, Philippines, Crime/Drugs—F Rib**

Jay hasn't visited his Filipino family in nearly a decade. But when his cousin is murdered in the government's war on drugs, he travels to Manila to learn what really happened to the kind, thoughtful boy he once knew. **National Book Award Honor**

Rogerson, Margaret. *Sorcery of Thorns*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Fantasy (sorcerers, demons)—F Rog**

Raised in one of the Great Libraries of Austermeer, Elisabeth knows that all sorcerers are evil. But when she is banished from the library for a crime she didn't commit, a young sorcerer named Nathaniel Thorn is the only person she can trust. If they can work together, they'll uncover a dangerous conspiracy.

Uehashi, Nahoko. *The Beast Player*. Translated by Cathy Hirano. New York: Godwin Books, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Fantasy (magical creatures), Coming of age—F Ueh**

Elin's mother was raised around the dangerous water serpents used by the army. But when her mother is executed, Elin flees to the neighboring kingdom, where she discovers a connection with their flying beasts and truths about her world that could threaten everything. **Printz Honor**

* Warga, Jasmine. *Other Words for Home*. New York: Balzer + Bray, 2019. Gr. 4-8, **Contemporary Realism, Novel in Verse, Immigration & Refugees (Syria)—F War**

As war overtakes more and more of their country, Jude and her mother leave Syria for safety in America. As Jude struggles to fit in at her new school, she also worries for her father and older brother—who has joined the revolution—back home. **Newbery Honor**

Wilde, Jen. *Going Off Script*. New York: Swoon Reads, 2019. Gr. 8-12, **Contemporary Realism, Romance, TV Writing, LGBTQIA (lesbian)—F Wil**

When Bex scores a writing internship on her favorite television show, it's nothing like she expected. Especially when the showrunner steals her script and rewrites her character as straight. It's up to Bex (and the actress she's crushing on) to fight back.

* Williams, Alicia D. *Genesis Begins Again*. New York: Atheneum, 2019. Gr. 5-8, **Contemporary Realism, Racism, Homelessness—F Wil**

Genesis keeps a list in her dresser of things she hates about herself. At the top: her dark skin and the fact that her family can't seem to stay in one house for long. When her alcoholic father moves them...again, Genesis finds new friends and a choir teacher who help her find her voice. **Newbery Honor, John Steptoe Award, Morris Finalist**

Picture books

Archer, Micha. *Daniel's Good Day*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019. Gr. PK-1, **Realism, Neighborhoods, Joy—P Arc**

As he explores his neighborhood, Daniel asks his neighbors to explain what a "good day" means to them. In the process, he defines his own criteria for a good day.

Brosgol, Vera. *The Little Guys*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Nature Fantasy, Forests, Bullying—P Bro**

When the little guys work together, nothing can stop them, but problems arise when they start bullying the other residents of the forest.

Hare, John. *Field Trip to the Moon*. New York: Holiday House, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Science Fiction (aliens), Wordless—P Har**

When a young girl is left stranded on the moon during a class fieldtrip, she makes friends with the group of aliens who come out of hiding.

Lebeuf, Darren. *My Forest is Green*. Illus. Ashley Barron. Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press, 2019. Gr. PK-1, **Realism, Nature (forests, ecosystems), Art—P Leb**

A young boy explores his urban forest and documents his discoveries through a variety of art mediums.

* Lee, Uk-Bae. *When Spring Comes to the DMZ*. Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2019. Gr. 1-3, **Realism, Korea, Refugees, Seasons—P Yi**

Over the course of a year, grandfather visits the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea several times. As the seasons change, the barriers between him and his home remain but nature has no awareness of national borders. **Batchelder Honor**

Lukoff, Kyle. *When Aidan Became a Brother*. Illus. Kaylani Juanita. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Realism, Family, New Siblings, LGBTQIA (transgender)—P Luk**

When Aidan was little, his parents dressed him in pretty dresses and decorated his room with pink, but now they understand that Aidan is a boy. As the birth of a new baby draws near, Aidan makes sure his sibling will feel welcomed and loved no matter who they are. **Stonewall Award**

* Lyons, Kelly Starling. *Going Down Home with Daddy*. Illus. Daniel Minter. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2019. Gr. 2-5, **Realism, Family—P Lyo**

Every year, Daddy's family gathers at the farm where they grew up. As everyone prepares to share their talents with the family, Alan worries that he has nothing special to share. **Caldecott Honor**

* Morris, Richard T. *Bear Came Along*. Illus. LeUyen Pham. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Animal Fantasy, Friendship—P Mor**

When various animals meet on an adventure down the river, they discover how different life can be when they enjoy it together. **Caldecott Honor**

Neilsen, Susin. *Princess Puffybottom...and Darryl*. Illus. Olivia Chin Mueller. Toronto, ON: Tundra Books, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Animal Fantasy, Family, Friendship—P Nei**

Princess Puffybottom rules the loyal subjects of her home in peace...until a new resident shows up: a smelly dog named Darryl. Will Puffybottom succeed in evicting Darryl from her home or will the two animals find common ground?

Newman, Leslea. *Gittel's Journey: An Ellis Island Story*. Illus. Amy June Bates. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2019. Gr. 2-5, **Historical Fiction, Immigration, Family Separation—P New**

Gittel is nervous about immigrating to America from her home country, but when mother isn't allowed on the ship, she has to undertake the journey on her own and find the family waiting for her on the other side. **Sidney Taylor Honor**

Quintero, Isabel. *My Papi Has a Motorcycle*. Illus. Zeke Peña. New York: Kokila, 2019. Gr. K-2, **Realism, Father and Daughter, Latin American Neighborhood—P Qui**

Daisy loves her regular rides with papi on his motorcycle. As they fly through their neighborhood, they greet familiar faces, but also note all of the small and big changes. **Belpré Honor**

Ransome, James E. *The Bell Rang*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Historical Fiction, Slavery, Family—P Ran**

When a young slave girl's brother runs away, she worries that he will be caught while also dreaming of freedom for herself one day. **Coretta Scott King Honor**

Raul the third. *¡Vamos! Let's Go to the Market*. Boston: Versify, 2019. Gr. K-2, **Animal fantasy, Spanish Vocabulary—P Rau**

Little Lobo delivers supplies to his busy border town Mercado, identifying the Spanish words for many objects along the way. **Belpré Honor**

* Sima, Jessie. *Spencer's New Pet*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Imagination, Wordless—P Sim**

Spencer takes his pet—a balloon dog—to the vet and the park. But the world is a dangerous place for a balloon.

* Stutzman, Jonathan. *Llama Destroys the World*. Illus. Heather Fox. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Animal Fantasy, Humor, Black Holes—P Stu**

“On Friday, llama will destroy the world.” Over the course of a week, llama makes several crucial mistakes that lead to a black hole that threatens to consume everything.

Wenzel, Brendan. *A Stone Sat Still*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2019. Gr. K-4, **Nature Realism, Perspective—P Wen**

A stone can be many things, depending on the perspective of the viewer: small, or massive, a mountain to climb, or simply a marker on a longer journey. And as the world around it changes, so does the stone's own existence.

Willems, Mo. *Because*. Illus. Amber Ren. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Realism, Music, Cause/Effect—P Wil**

In this story of cause and effect, a series of small events results in a young girl attending a concert, which changes the course of her life.

Graphic novels

Akiwenzie-Damm, Kateri. *This Place: 150 Years Retold*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: HighWater Press, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **History, First Nations, Canada, Anthology—GN Thi**

In this graphic novel anthology, true stories of Indigenous people are brought to the forefront. From the defense of fishing rights and land, to the harsh realities of children forced into foster care, Indigenous authors and illustrators show how they have fought and survived in a post-apocalyptic world.

Andrews, Ryan. *This Was Our Pact*. New York: First Second, 2019. Gr. 4-7, **Fantasy, Journeys, Friendship—GN And**

At each Autumn Equinox Festival, the town releases lanterns down the river. This year, a group of boys make a pact to follow the lanterns past the borders of their town to their mysterious destination, but they quickly give up until only two boys are left. A journey of magic and friendship follows.

Cavallaro, Mike. *Nico Bravo and the Hound of Hades*. New York: First Second, 2019. Gr. 3-6, **Fantasy, Mythology—GN Cav**

Nico works at a supply shop for gods and heroes, preparing them for epic quests but never going on one himself. But when Beowulf's descendant, Eowulf, announces her plan to slay Cerberus, Nico has to stop her before the souls of the Underworld are set loose.

Craft, Jerry. *New Kid*. New York: HarperCollins, 2019. Gr. 4-7, **Contemporary Realism, Race and Racism, Middle School—GN Cra**

Jordan wants to attend art school. Instead, his parents send him to a prestigious private school where he's one of only a few students of color. Drawing in his journal helps him make sense of the world around him, until it falls into the wrong hands. **Newbery Award, Coretta Scott King Award**

* Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. Adapted by P. Craig Russell. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019. Gr. 4-8, **Dystopian, Adaptations—GN Rus**

Jonas lives in the perfect community, where no one has to choose who to marry, where to work, or what to eat. But when he is selected to be the next Receiver of Memories, he learns about all of the beautiful—and painful—parts of life that he is missing out on.

Meconis, Dylan. *Queen of the Sea*. Somerville, MA: Walker Books, 2019. Gr. 5-9, **Historical Fiction, Convents, Queens—GN Mec**

Life in a remote island convent is all Margaret has ever known. But when the exiled Queen Eleanor of Albion arrives, Margaret and the nuns are pulled into her political drama and the young girl starts to wonder how she fits into the world outside the convent.

Rowell, Rainbow. *Pumpkinheads*. Illus. Faith Erin Hicks. New York: First Second, 2019, Gr. 9-12, **Contemporary Realism, Relationships, Change—GN Row**

Every autumn, Deja and Josiah work together at the pumpkin patch, but with college on the horizon, this is their last night. And Deja is determined to make it their best—with all the best snacks, forcing Josiah to finally talk to his crush, and an adventure.

Tamaki, Mariko. *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me*. New York: First Second, 2019. Gr. 9-12, **Contemporary Realism, Relationships, LGBTQIA--GN Tam**

Frederica is in love with Laura Dean, but their on-again-off-again relationship is beginning to take its toll on her mental health and her friendships. So she writes to an advice columnist to help her navigate the messiness that is teenage love. **Printz Honor, Walter Award**

Nonfiction

Alexander, Kwame. *The Undefeated*. Illus. Kadir Nelson. Boston: Versify, 2019. Gr. 3-6, **History, African American, Poetry—811.6 Ale**

Illustrations of historical figures and everyday people accompany Alexander's poem honoring black American history—both the triumphs and the trials. **Caldecott Award, Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Award**

Denise, Anika Aldamuy. *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*. Illus. Paola Escobar. New York: Harper, 2019. Gr. K-3, **Biography, Librarians—B Belpré**

After moving to New York City, Pura Belpré became the first Puerto Rican librarian NYPL's history. Serving the city's growing Spanish-speaking populations, she introduced bilingual story times and more Spanish books, leaving behind an enduring legacy. **Belpré Honor**

Grant, Benjamin & Sandra Markle. *Overview: A New Way of Seeing Earth*. New York: Crown Books for Young Readers, 2019. Gr. 3-6, **Earth Science, Human Geography—778.35 Gra**

Satellite images of natural landmarks like Niagara Falls and Mount Fiji, as well as human creations such as the Hoover Dam or a diamond mine, present a new perspective on our planet.

* Ogle, Rex. *Free Lunch*. New York: Norton Young Readers, 2019. Gr. 6-8, **Memoir—B Ogle**

Rex's mom never seems to have enough money...for food, for school supplies, for all their overdue bills. As he begins middle school, the differences between him and his wealthier classmates become more apparent. **Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Award**

Portis, Antoinette. *Hey, Water!* New York: Holiday House, 2019. Gr. PK-2, **Science—553.7 Por**

Illustrations explore the many forms and properties of water, as well as the important roles it plays on our planet and in our lives.

Sandler, Martin W. *1919: The Year That Changed America*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019. Gr. 7-9, **History, Race and Racism, Feminism—973.913 San**

From a flood of molasses to the fights for racial and gender equality, the events of 1919 illustrate many of the issues that affected early 20th century America. **National Book Award**

* Turk, Evan. *You Are Home: An Ode to the National Parks*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2019. Gr. PK-3, **Geography, United States—917.3 Tur**

An illustrated tour of the U.S. National Parks showcases the beauty of nature, while the text reminds readers that these pieces of land belong to all of us.