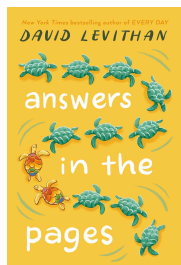


GLSEN Rainbow Library 3rd Grade - 5th Grade Book List

All the books on the below list are included in the 2025-2025 School Year Rainbow Library collection. With each title is a full-text review from *School Library Journal* (SLJ) or *Booklist Reviews* (printed with permission from the publishers), along with the awards the title has won. We encourage you to use this information when making book recommendations to students or when discussing these titles with families or other school staff.

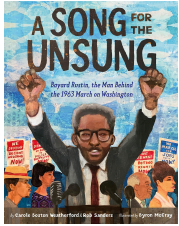
Rainbow Library books are selected based on reviews from major journals, such as *School Library Journal*, *Kirkus*, and *Booklist Reviews* and feedback from hundreds of educators and school librarians who previously received Rainbow Library sets. The grade-range for each title is in line with the grade-range provided by *School Library Journal* (or if unavailable, reviews from other reputable journals). Nearly all these titles have won awards or have been featured on reputable lists, such as the American Library Association (ALA) Rainbow Book List. To purchase LGBTQ+ affirming titles for grades K-12, please visit bookshop.org/shop/RainbowLibrary. A portion of proceeds goes back to supporting this program.



Answers in the Pages

David Levithan • Best for 3rd Grade - 7th Grade • Realistic Fiction

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List - Upper Elementary. "A timely and relevant release from prolific author Levithan, this slim tale showcases the turbulence and confusion of fifth grade as a school community tackles a classroom book challenge. The challenge is mainly rooted in a single sentence at the end of the assigned book that a mother happens to read when her son leaves it on the counter. Suddenly the classroom is in an uproar, with readers getting the play-by-play from a number of sources: Donovan, the kid who left the book out and whose mother is challenging it; Gideon and Roberto, two students paired up for a language arts project; and Rick and Oliver, the main characters in the controversial book. The interpretation of the novel and the nature of the challenge become a philosophical quagmire that the school leaders, parents, and students have to traverse, leaving family and friends on both sides of the issue. Levithan deftly addresses the heart of the problem with the words and mind of a student, "We are who we are...and we'll be who we'll be. A book can make us feel that, but it can't invent that. It's already inside us." The alternating points of view gives readers varying perspectives in the chaos. It is a swift ride highlighting the disconnect between students and adults, seemingly unbreakable alliances, and what happens when the weight of history enters the conversation. This heartfelt treatise on book banning and equality showcases how it feels to be stuck in the middle of a generational fight. Levithan has crafted a story that provides a window into a uniquely transitory age, one ripe for exploring the nuance of identity and the nature of personal prohibition, and which ultimately celebrates the messiness of being human, no matter the age. VERDICT An essential purchase for middle school libraries." (School Library Journal, Rachel Joiner)



A Song for the Unsung

Carole Boston Weatherford; Rob Sanders; Byron McCray • Best for 3rd Grade - 5th Grade • Biography

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List Top 10 Titles for Young Readers. "A rare tribute to a heroic figure of the civil rights movement. Distinctly underrecognized in books aimed at younger audiences (in large part because he was gay—which the authors note repeatedly), Bayard Rustin well merits the credit he gets here not only for organizing the renowned March on Washington (and speaking at it, too), but for actually introducing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the principles of nonviolent protest after learning pacifism at his Quaker grandmother's knee, being imprisoned as a conscientious objector during World War II, and traveling to India to learn from Gandhi's followers. As a younger man, he also sang in a touring quartet, and that musical theme is picked up with a playlist of spirituals and civil rights songs posted throughout. Notable in the generous backmatter is an image of the march's official program and an excerpted history of peaceful protest (post-Thoreau). McCray captures both a sense of the time's widespread turmoil and of the march's grand "mosaic of Americans" in collages that incorporate acrylics, scraps of newspaper, music, and decorated papers. Effectively raises the profile of an African American crusader who was stigmatized for more than his race alone." (Kirkus)



Dragon Pearl

Yoon Ha Lee • Best for 5th Grade - 6th Grade • Fantasy

"Min is a supernatural creature, a fox spirit, with the ability to use fox-magic, called the Charm, to change her appearance and persuade others to do things. All her life, her mother has told her to avoid using the Charm, as foxes are mistrusted and looked down upon by the rest of society. When an investigator comes to their home inquiring after her brother Jun, who he claims has deserted from his place in the Space Forces, Min takes matters into her own hands and goes in search of him. Her travels take her from a gambling house run by a disowned relative to the ship where her brother was last stationed, the Pale Lightning. The more Min learns about her brother's disappearance, the more she suspects foul play and all signs seem to be leading to the discovery of the Dragon Pearl, an ancient relic with great powers and value. The story's climax features multiple surprises and betrayals, in a quick but unhurried pace. Lee skillfully weaves Korean folklore into this space opera narrative, creating dynamic and relatable characters. The ending is satisfying, tying up loose ends, but leaving room for a sequel. VERDICT With ghosts, pirates, and a rollicking space adventure, there's a little something for everyone here. A recommended purchase for all middle grade collections." (School Library Journal, Kat Paiva)

Hazel Bly and the Deep Blue Sea

Ashley Herring Blake • Best for 4th Grade - 8th Grade • Fantasy



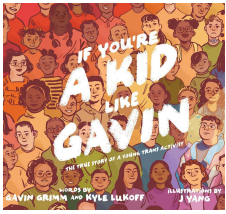
2022 Lambda Literary Award Children's - Middle Grade Finalist. "Twelve-year-old Hazel lost her mum in a tragic accident two years ago, and it feels like she's been losing parts of herself ever since. Now Hazel, her younger sister Peach, and her other mother, Mama, have left their family home and are bouncing around from town to town trying to outrun their grief. This summer they've settled into Rose Harbor, ME, a coastal town famous for its mythical mermaid. Hazel is introduced to the tale of the Rose Maid by her new neighbor Lemon. Lemon and her friends draft Hazel into their "MerSquad" despite her skepticism, slowly breaking down her walls. One friend, Jules, is nonbinary, and their fledgling romantic connection with Hazel is a sweet promise of hope that never seemed possible before. By opening up to others and leaning into the magic of something larger than herself, Hazel forges a new path forward. The rich character development and deft writing allow readers to empathize with Hazel. Hazel, her family, and most other characters are cued white; one secondary character is of Japanese descent. VERDICT Blake continues to expand her catalogue of positive, nuanced LGBTQ+ representation in middle grade novels. An honest and moving exploration of loss that highlights the healing power of reclaiming oneself and allowing hope to thrive." (School Library Journal, Sophie Kenney)



Rabbit Chase

Elizabeth Lapensée • Best for 3rd Grade - 5th Grade • Graphic Novel

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List - Upper Elementary. "'Columbus didn't discover America . . . If I could space-time travel, I'd stop him before he even got here,' says Aimée, a nonbinary Anishinaabe middle-schooler. This handily encapsulates the story's tone, which is poised between fantasy and the very real isolation of a bullied child. Embarking on a dreamlike Indigenous spiritual journey through the environs of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Aimée detours from their field trip to follow a white rabbit Trickster into battle with the land-grabbing Queen. The recognizable highlights of Lewis Carroll's surreal adventure make for an excellent way into what will be unfamiliar cultural ground for many young readers. Even as this engages with several significant and timely social issues (race, gender, bullying) in an accessible way, it also opens a window to seldom explored tribal cultures. The warm art highlights endearing characterizations, vast expanses of nature, and a realistically wide array of skin tones. The remote Aimée finally finds the solution to their spiritual conundrum in cooperation and companionship, encouraging young readers to value these instincts on their own adventures." (Booklist)



If You're a Kid Like Gavin

Gavin Grimm; Kyle Lukoff • Best for 2nd Grade - 5th Grade • Biography

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List - Early Elementary "The underlying theme of this true story about teenage trans student Gavin Grimm is that there are choices a kid can and can't make. Gavin had no choice about the fact that the world saw him as a girl when inside he knew he was a boy. He did have a choice to talk honestly about it. And when he got tired of using the nurse's bathroom as though he were a sick person, he had no choice but to try and get access to the boys' bathroom at school. Teachers gossiped and students bullied him, but he spoke out even louder about his rights-before the community, on the news, and in a successful court case brought by the ACLU. The kid-friendly and straightforward narration works with digitally created art that employs firm outlines and a muted palette to communicate Gavin's embarrassment, loneliness, and evolving courage. Framed throughout with the conditional "if" of the title, the text stumbles only once when it switches to, "Since you're a kid like Gavin Grimm," which unnecessarily narrows the audience. VERDICT All kids should be challenged to think about the message of standing up and fighting for what is right. Here is a worthy discussion-starter on an important topic for all collections." (School Library Journal, Jan Aldrich Solow)



Sylvia and Marsha Start a Revolution

Joy Michael Ellison • Best for 2nd Grade - 5th Grade • Biography

"Sylvia Rivera (1951-2002) and Marsha P. Johnson (1945-1992) played an important role in the fight for LGBTQ rights. Johnson, a Black trans woman and self-identified drag queen, befriended Rivera, a Puerto Rican American trans woman, on Halloween in 1963. Eventually, they founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), a group that helped homeless trans girls and provided them with a sense of community and safety. The pair worked to gain support in the larger gay rights movement. The text incorporates these facts into the narrative, but the central account of the Stonewall uprising is a simplified version of events. In additional biographical and historical information at the end of the book, Ellison and Silver acknowledge there are many accounts of the Stonewall Rebellion. Colorful illustrations of glamorous trans women strolling New York City streets reinforce an upbeat portrait of street life. A glossary and several pages of suggestions for adults, including discussion questions, resources, and student activities, are included. For a more complete history of the subject, try Rob Sanders's *Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution*. Other recent picture book portrayals of transgender children include Erica Silverman's *Jack (Not Jackie)* and Kyle Lukoff's *When Aidan Became a Brother*. VERDICT This volume could serve as a discussion starter to introduce children to activists who fought for transgender rights." (School Library Journal, Kathy Piehl)



The Deepest Breath

Meg Grehan • Best for 4th Grade - 5th Grade • Verse Novel

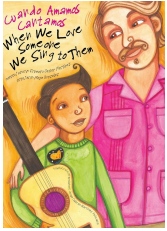
2022 ALA Rainbow Book List Top Ten for Young Readers. "Stevie is an 11-year-old girl who lives with "A squirming kind of/ Fear," like being underwater, "Deep down/ Where it isn't really blue/ But black/ Like bruises or ink or midnight." She keeps a giant notebook where she collects the information she might need to deal with Bad Things happening on land or at sea, and her mom is the kind who thinks hard to give Stevie "real and true answers"—to almost every question, except "What is the fizzy feeling in my chest?" This novel deftly lands at the intersection of ordinary concerns of early adolescence, extraordinary anxiety, and a confusing attraction to a friend of the same gender. Stevie's navigation of this intersection takes on poetic significance through a complex and extended ocean metaphor. She takes a deep dive into herself, coming—with the help of a sympathetic librarian!—to an understanding that renders the Bad Things into good ones." (School Library Journal)



You Only Live Once

Mark Oshiro • Best for 4th Grade - 5th Grade • Science Fiction

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List Top 10 Titles for Young Readers. "After a disastrous start to middle school, a talking dog offers David Bravo the chance to go back in time to fix the moment where it all went wrong—if only David could pinpoint where that moment was. Was it the school assignment about his culture and where he comes from? Or an unfortunate food poisoning incident that ruins his best friend's chance at making varsity cross-country? David keeps reliving certain moments up and down his time line, but instead of fixing things, he just keeps making them worse. Along the way, David must confront his feelings about his identity as a transracial adoptee (his mom is Japanese American and his dad is Mexican-Brazilian-American, his biological parents were Latinx, but the adoption was closed) and the true nature of his feelings for his best friend Antoine. Through his discussions with Fea, his 'non-corporeal time line guide' (who, in addition to appearing as a dog, also shows up as a mosquito, giraffe, and several other animals to great comedic effect) and her backstory, he learns that sometimes it's not past decisions, but future ones that matter most. VERDICT A funny and unexpected twist on the time loop novel with moving and memorable results." (School Library Journal, Jennifer Rothschild)



When We Love Someone We Sing To Them / Cuando Amamos Cantamos **(bilingual text)**

Ernesto Javier Martínez • Best for 2nd Grade - 3rd Grade • Realistic Fiction

2019 ALA Rainbow Book List. "A reclamation of the Mexican serenata tradition, follow the story of a young boy who asks his father if there is a song for a boy who loves a boy. *When We Love Someone We Sing to Them* reframes a treasured cultural tradition to include LGBTQ experience. In this book, we learn about the Mexican tradition of singing to family and loved ones through one boy who naturally assumes the tradition includes him and his experience. Watch a tradition expand as limitations are lifted to include everyone, all the way to remembering Xochipilli, the Mesoamerican deity of creativity, song, and dance. A perfect book to bring tradition and inclusion into the conversation and support our LGBTQ young ones in knowing that they belong and always have, while providing pride in both our Mexican heritage and our LGBTQ culture and history as families." (Reflection Press)