

## GLSEN Rainbow Library 6th Grade - 8th 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](https://bookshop.org/shop/RainbowLibrary). A portion of proceeds goes back to supporting this program.

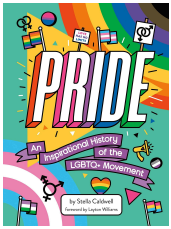


### **Los Chicos del Cementerio (en español)**

**Aiden Thomas • Best for 9th Grade - 12th Grade • Fantasy**

2021 ALA Rainbow Book List Top 10 Titles. National Book Awards for Young People's Literature, 2020 Longlist. "Yadriel is a transgender teen boy growing up in East L.A., where for centuries, brujos have been responsible for releasing the spirits of the dead, and brujas have healed the living. When Yadriel's family can't accept that he is a boy and not cut out for healing, Yadriel is forbidden from attempting the ritual to become a brujo. Refusing to abandon tradition and helped by his best friend Maritza, Yadriel completes the ritual in secret, but abruptly discovers that his cousin Miguel has just been murdered. When searching for Miguel's spirit, Yadriel and Maritza instead stumble upon murdered schoolmate Julian Diaz, who demands that Yadriel help find out what happened to him. Thomas is generally successful at weaving various Latinx customs and traditions into this #OwnVoices supernatural romance. Spanish words and phrases are liberally peppered throughout, and their meanings are generally clear from context. The occasionally repetitive writing has minimal cursing; the characters and their struggles are authentic, showcasing their need for acceptance from their loved ones but also their refreshing certainty about who they are and what they stand for. VERDICT: A whodunit with a tender and forbidden love story that will draw readers in as it gradually unfolds to a gratifying conclusion." (School Library Journal, Alea Perez)

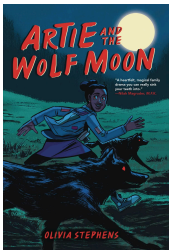
2021 ALA Rainbow Book List 10 Mejores Títulos. Selección Longlist del National Book Award, 2020. "Yadriel ha invocado a un espíritu y ahora no puede librarse de él. En el mundo de Yadriel, los nahualos liberan espíritus y las nahualas tienen la capacidad de sanar. Cuando su familia latina se muestra reticente a aceptar su identidad, Yadriel decide demostrarles que es un auténtico nahualo." (Kakao Books)



## ***An Inspirational History of the LGBTQ+ Movement***

**Stella Caldwell • Best for 6th Grade and Up • History**

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List - Middle School. "A short but global view of LGBTQIA+ milestones and important figures, this vibrant book shines all the colors of the rainbow on history that's largely only been told in black and white. Bright infographics, time lines, and notable quotations add visual interest, while one-page profiles of notable figures such as Oscar Wilde, Audre Lorde, and Marsha P. Johnson will be sure to motivate readers to seek out additional sources on their own. Starting with ancient human societies across the globe and moving through the centuries to today, this bird's eye view of LGBTQIA+ history will help young people find hope in how far we've come and gain inspiration for the necessary work still ahead. The author never balks at sharing hard truths about the hate and violence that many folks have faced throughout history; however, the major notes are positive, affirming, and full of pride. Inspiring messages from modern-day young adults offer many diverse perspectives and serve as a cleansing breath at the end of each chapter. VERDICT A highly accessible, entertaining, and visually engaging nonfiction book that is a recommended first purchase for all middle and high school libraries." (School Library Journal, Catherine Cote)



## ***Artie and the Wolf Moon***

**Olivia Stephens • Best for 5th Grade - 8th Grade • Fantasy**

2022 YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens. "When Artie disobeys her mom and sneaks out after dark to photograph a full moon, she discovers that her mother is a werewolf-and so is Artie. They return to her mom's hometown, home to a werewolf pack, so Artie can learn about her history. She soon realizes that there are things more sinister than werewolves and uncovers details about her father's disappearance while making new friendships and love interests. This exciting, plot-driven story will appeal to young teens struggling to find themselves and fit in. While Artie's quick acceptance that her mother is a werewolf seems a bit unbelievable, readers will easily overlook it. Artie is well developed; the supporting characters are less fleshed out but help move the action forward. The complicated family history and dynamics among some of the adults are genuine and relatable. The full-color, realistic illustrations are appealing, and the palette helps establish the tone for the different settings. Artie and her mother are Black. VERDICT Fans of graphic novels, realistic fiction, and the paranormal will all find something to enjoy in this book. Suggest it to those who devoured Emma Steinkellner's *The Okay Witch*." (School Library Journal, Ellen Conlin)



## Junior High

**Tegan Quin; Sara Quin • Best for 5th Grade - 8th Grade • Graphic Novel**

"Indie pop stars Tegan and Sara Quin team up with graphic novelist Walden to create a heartfelt, visually stunning coming-of-age story for tweens and teens. Twins Tegan and Sara have always been close, but after a move and a transition to middle school, they must contend with new friends, bullies, puberty, secrets, and worst of all—drifting apart. The story is largely based on their lives, but is set in present day (Tegan and Sara were actually teens in the 1990s). Walden's art, paired with the authors' lyrical words, create an emotionally resonant reading experience that is sure to mesh with adolescents' big feelings. Walden uses different color schemes to highlight each twin, accentuating their points of view and their growing distance. Although the twins experience some anxiety and emotional turmoil through friend drama, new romantic feelings, and beginning to question their sexuality, this is largely a very wholesome, comforting read that celebrates the power of shared creativity to bring people back together. Supplemental material contains photos and notebook pages of Tegan and Sara with their first musical efforts. VERDICT A first purchase for middle school libraries and highly recommended for fans of Svetlana Chmakova and Molly Knox Ostertag." (School Library Journal, Catherine Cote)



## King and the Dragonflies

**Kacen Callender • Best for 4th Grade - 7th Grade • Realistic Fiction**

Winner - 2020 National Book Award for Young People's Literature. 2021 ALA Rainbow Book List Titles for Young Readers. 2021 Coretta Scott King Book Award Honor Book. "This incredible middle-grade follow-up to Callender's debut novel Hurricane Child (2018) delves into one boy's journey to self-acceptance while wading through the profound grief that has engulfed his family. King, a Black child living by the bayous of Louisiana, is dealt the double blow of losing his beloved older brother while trying to contain an identity he is sure will cause his father to stop loving him. When his former best friend, the gay son of the local sheriff, runs away, the weight of expectations and secrets leads King to examine everything he thinks he knows about being brave, being a man, and being himself. Callender handles these threads with a dexterity that deftly weaves them all together into a cohesive whole and a dynamic tale that will resonate with children struggling to reconcile who they are with what they think society wants them to be. While the adults in this story struggle to adapt to their new reality, their ability to embrace love and assuage King's doubts about his place in his family is wonderfully affirming for children of all identities. Strongly recommended for all children's collections." (School Library Journal, Erin Reilly-Sanders)



## ***Thanks a Lot, Universe***

**Chad Lucas • Best for 5th Grade - 8th Grade • Realistic Fiction**

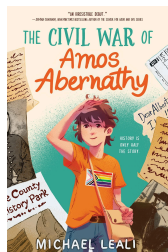
2022 ALA Rainbow Book List Top Ten for Young Readers. Kirkus Starred Review. "Author Lucas scores big with this debut. Readers follow Brian, who is white, and Ezra, who is Trinidadian and Polish, during the last weeks of seventh grade. Brian's family fractures when his father leaves in an attempt to avoid legal repercussions at his job and his mother attempts suicide. As Brian and his little brother find themselves in foster care, Brian's existing anxiety becomes overwhelming. Meanwhile, Ezra navigates rapidly changing friendships and struggles to share his sexuality with folks important to him. As the boys' bond grows, they truly see and uplift each other, illustrating the importance of honest friendships. Lucas's prose is funny and deeply empathetic, respecting readers' ability to handle heavy topics but lightened with frequent laugh-out-loud moments. The diverse cast of characters demonstrates the complexity of friendship and navigating difficult conversations. While similar real-world experiences are likely to be bumpier than portrayed here, the book's hope and positivity are infectious. Readers can learn a great deal from these characters. VERDICT Painfully real and radiantly hopeful, this is a recommended first purchase. Perfect for the transition from middle grade to young adult literature, this title would be at home in both collections, and certainly on middle school shelves." (School Library Journal Starred Review, Taylor Worley)



## ***Ellie Engle Saves Herself***

**Leah Johnson • Best for 6th Grade - 8th Grade • Fantasy**

"Twelve-year-old Ellie Engle is preparing to start junior high, and wondering what to do with the fluttery feelings she has for Abby, who has been the center of her universe as long as they've been friends. But when a random earthquake leaves Ellie with superpowers (including the ability to resurrect the dead), Ellie finds herself with bigger worries. Add to that her mom's struggles to pay the bills in the wake of a divorce, and Abby's determination to "make her mark" in their new school at all costs—including, perhaps, their friendship—and Ellie's whole world is turned upside down. Things get even worse when a viral video exposes her newfound powers and thrusts her into the spotlight. In lesser hands, these many plot threads might become tangled, but Johnson masterfully weaves them together to explore themes of belonging, identity, responsibility, friendship, heroism, and growing up. Ellie's voice is honest, warm, and sharply funny, and readers will enthusiastically root for her as she learns to love and celebrate herself for all that she is. Ellie is Black and Abby is Latina. VERDICT Joyful and magical. A first purchase for all collections." (School Library Journal, Lauren Strohecker)



## ***The Civil War of Amos Abernathy***

**Michael Leali • Best for 5th Grade - 8th Grade • Realistic Fiction**

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List Top 10 Titles for Young Readers. Golden Kite Award Winner. New York Public Library Best Books for Kids. Jane Addams Award finalist. Lambda Literary Award Finalist. "A well-written coming-of-age novel that encompasses many valuable topics-discrimination, teen relationships, friendship, the LGBTQIA+ community, and underrepresented history into one wonderful story. Amos, who is white, volunteers as a reenactor at the Living History Park along with his best friend, Chloe, who is Black. There they meet Ben, who becomes a fast friend to the duo and a burgeoning romantic interest for Amos. But their relationship faces some challenges, including Ben's religious family. Amos tells his story from his own point of view interspersed with letters to Albert D.J. Cashier, a Civil War soldier who, in the present day, might have identified as a trans man. Amos learns about Albert while he is researching LGBTQIA+ Americans throughout history, seeking representation of people like him from the past and hoping to win the Living History Park's exhibition competition. Readers will feel the tension as Amos and his friends fight discrimination to bring the project to fruition. Leali's character development is superb. The story begins in the present day, but readers learn of the events of the past year in Amos's commentary as well as his notes to Albert, which then converge again in the present. While this technique is insightful, the time shifts may prove slightly confusing to some readers. VERDICT Overall, an entertaining and engaging read with diverse characters and subject matter. A necessary addition to all collections seeking heartwarming tales of first crushes, and the importance of centering marginalized history." (School Library Journals, April Crowder



## ***The One Who Loves You the Most***

**medina • Best for 4th Grade - 9th Grade • Realistic Fiction**

2023 ALA Rainbow Book List - Middle School. "An uplifting narrative about the freedom and clarity labels can offer. Gabriela is a middle schooler on a journey of self-discovery. As a Honduran child adopted by a White mom, they have never felt completely comfortable with their body or their community. But things start to change when Abbie and Héctor enter their school. Abbie is an Indian and Peruvian American trans intersex girl, and Héctor is a Guatemalan American bisexual genderfluid person. Together, with understanding, patience, and lessons in Queer 101, they invite Gabriela to start exploring words that could fit them. Though Gabriela's crush on Maya is a sweet addition to the story, it's the friendship between Gabriela and their two new friends that makes the book shine. With their acceptance and love, Gabriela navigates middle school classes and turmoil, their mother's depression, and a world that isn't always welcoming to queer folks. With stellar adult characters, accessible prose, a diverse cast, and an uplifting narrative, the book tells a quick-moving story that can serve as a guide for adults to explore the LGBTQ+ lexicon with young people and help middle-grade readers discover, like Gabriela does, the power of understanding and identifying themselves. Gabriela and their friends offer queer kids a story with a happy ending. A sweet book that's sure to spread love and hopefulness." (Kirkus)



## **Camp Quiltbag**

**Nicole Melleby, A.J. Sass • Best for 4th Grade - 8th Grade • Realistic Fiction**

2024 ALA Rainbow Book List Top Ten for Young Readers “Summer camp is a classic setting in children's literature, but few are as warm and affirming as the camp in Melleby and Sass's novel. Told in alternating perspectives, the book follows two children during their first year at an LGBTQIA+ camp: eager but anxious Abigail (she/her), a recently out lesbian, is yearning for accepting friends, whereas aloof, nonbinary Kai (e/em) would much rather leave in favor of eir parkour training. The two make an unlikely alliance during a camp-wide competition. Through crushes and the big feelings that come with having a better understanding of yourself, they learn how fulfilling true friendship can be. Melleby and Sass manage to teach readers a lot about identity, empathy, and boundaries without bogging down the text or adopting a didactic tone. They also deploy just enough humor to remind readers that growing up is difficult and awkward, but not without its share of laughs. Although Kai and Abigail are depicted as white, a wide range of identities—not just gender and sexuality, but race, religion, and ability—are represented, and it only feels natural that all of these folks would be welcome at Camp QUILT BAG. VERDICT A timely and necessary addition to any elementary or middle school library, especially as LGBTQIA+ children are seeking examples of loving communities who fully embrace every part of them.” (School Library Journal, Alexandra Quay)