



## 2025 Evergreen Book Talks - Middle School

### ***All That's Left in the World***

**Erik J. Brown**

**Publisher: Balzer + Bray**

Book Talk by Stephanie Pender, Risdon Middle School

Andrew and Jamie are two teen boys facing the aftermath of a deadly pathogen that's wiped out most of the world's population. When they cross paths, they're battered, broken, and alone. But as they join forces and embark on a dangerous journey southward, trust becomes their lifeline. Yet, secrets lurk beneath the surface, threatening to unravel their bond and jeopardize their survival. Perfect if you like your characters witty and sarcastic and potentially in love.

### ***Shot Clock***

**Caron Butler & Justin A. Reynolds**

**Publisher: Katherine Tegan Books**

Book Talk by Sherri Ashlock, Nelsen Middle School

Middle-schooler Dante enjoys hanging out with his best friend Tony who is the country's number two ranked basketball player for his age group. But when Tony is shot and killed by the police on a neighboring basketball court, Dante is adrift. As the black community cries out for justice for honor student Tony, Dante tries reaching out to Tony's younger brother, but fails to connect. Then Dante decides to try out for Tony's AAU basketball team and is crushed to not make the team. However, the coach persuades Dante to be the team's statistician and acknowledge his nerdy side. The story is divided into four quarters and is full of riveting action-packed basketball scenes. Give this book a try if you want a gripping realistic story about family, brotherhood, basketball, injustice, poverty, and trauma—all told through the eyes of a funny, sad, frustrated black teen.

### ***Rain Rising***

**Courtne Comrie**

**Publisher: Harper**

Book Talk by Heather Goude, McKnight Middle School

Ready for an emotional rollercoaster? Meet Rain in "Rain Rising," a novel-in-verse by Courtne Comrie. She's thirteen, dealing with stuff that's much heavier than her bubbly personality lets on. Ever felt like that - alone in your struggles? Rain's grappling with self-doubt, especially compared to her superstar brother, Xander, and her best friend Nara. But when Xander gets hurt in a really bad way, Rain's world gets rocked. There's a silver lining, though. Rain finds this awesome after-school group led by her favorite teacher. With their support, she starts finding her strength and helps her family heal, too. If you're into poetic stories about friendship, self-discovery, and facing tough times head-on, "Rain Rising," is for you. Join Rain on her journey through life's ups and downs, where every raindrop teaches her something new about courage and resilience.

***Invisible*****Christina Diaz Gonzalez, Art by Gabriela Epstein****Publisher: Graphix**

Book Talk by J. J. Higgins, Kingsgate Library, KCLS

George finds himself volunteering with Sara, Dayara, Nico, and Miguel. He soon discovers that he was chosen to volunteer with these students because he speaks a little Spanish. The other kids speak only Spanish. The group is tasked to help the lunch lady after school, and find themselves slowly getting to know each other. However, after a few weeks, they are called to the principal's office because of something they did while volunteering.

***Wildoak*****C. C. Harrington****Publisher: Scholastic Press**

Book Talk by Tracy Anderson, Timberline Middle School

Maggie doesn't talk. At school, if someone asks her a question, or the teacher calls on her, she shuts her lips and refuses to speak. She hates the way people laugh at her because of her stutter, and hears the unkind things they say behind her back. When Maggie is shipped off to her estranged grandfather's house in Cornwall, she is both terrified of leaving home, and relieved to be away from the schoolmates and family members who taunt her. Once there, she falls in love with the wildness of the forest behind her grandpa's house. It's in these woods that she finds an abandoned and gravely injured snow leopard cub. When the villagers spot the cub and blame it for killing their livestock, she realizes that she must learn to use her voice, unsteady though it may be, to stand up for those who don't have one.

***Attack of the Black Rectangles*****Amy Sarig King****Publisher; Scholastic**

Book Talk by Heidi Bush, Northshore Middle School

Mac is excited to start sixth grade with his friends Marci and Denis, but when he finds out the town's most conservative critique is his new teacher, it doesn't seem so exciting anymore. Ms. Sett has rules - lots of rules - including having good posture and eating healthy. Ms. Sett also has gone to the extreme to protect her students from words she feels are too mature for them in their lit circle books by blocking them out with black rectangles. Mac isn't about to let anyone tell him what to read, and when his grandfather buys him a copy of the book that isn't censored, he's even more outraged. Follow Mac's journey as he fights for the right to read.

***Frizzy*****Claribel Ortega; Art by Rose Bousamra****Publisher: First Second**

Book Talk by J. J. Higgins, Kingsgate Library, KCLS

Marlene has to be very delicate with her hair. Before special celebrations, her mother takes her to the salon, which costs a lot of money, takes so much time, and is painful on Marlene's head. If she gets her hair wet, it becomes a mess of frizz and tangles, which frustrates her. Her aunt soon sees her plight and offers her solutions on tackling her unruly hair. Marlene soon discovers that not everyone takes care of their hair the same way. She learns to appreciate her uniqueness and even shows her mother a different way to take care of their hair.

***Air*****Monica Roe****Publisher: Farrar Straus Giroux**

Book Talk by Sherri Ashlock, Nelsen Middle School

Seventh grader “Hot Wheels” Emmie is desperately saving money to buy an extreme wheelchair like the professional athletes do as they “chair skate” and hurtle down jumps and spiral into the air. Emmie’s dad became overly protective when her mom died two years ago. Then her dad stays silent at a school meeting where the school assigns Emmie her own unwanted adult aide since she recently crashed her wheelchair at school. This is NOT what independent Emmie wants; she's crushed her dad didn't speak up like her mother would have. Even worse, Emmie’s aide is by her side ALL DAY LONG which she doesn't want or need. Then her school starts a fundraiser for Emmie to get her new wheelchair, but something feels off. As difficulties start stacking up for Emmie, can she find a way to cope and be herself without upsetting those that care about her?

***The Clackity*****Lora Senf****Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers**

Book Talk by Heather Goude, McKnight Middle School

Step into the eerie world of "The Clackity" by Lora Senf, where Blight Harbor, the seventh-most haunted town in America, holds secrets that will send shivers down your spine. Meet Evie Von Rathe, who lives with her Aunt Desdemona, the town's paranormal expert. When Desdemona mysteriously disappears into the abandoned slaughterhouse, Evie ventures into its shadows to find her. There, she encounters The Clackity, a sinister creature, who strikes a deal with Evie to rescue Desdemona. But the price involves confronting the ghost of John Jeffrey Pope, a notorious serial killer. As Evie navigates through a realm inhabited by witches, ghosts, and a memory-thief, she faces the chilling pursuit of Pope's ghost. Will Evie uncover the truth about Blight Harbor's dark past, or will she become another lost soul in its haunted depths? Dare to join Evie on her perilous journey, where every turn reveals new dangers and secrets waiting to be unearthed.

***Spells for Lost Things*****Jenna Evans Welch****Publisher: Simon & Schuster**

Book Talk by Stacia Bell, Madison Middle School

In *Spells for Lost Things* by Jenna Evans Welch (author of *Love and Gelato*), two teens are begrudgingly dragged to Salem, Massachusetts, but end up finding just what they need in each other and in this town that holds family secrets for both of them. Willow, feeling isolated and distant from her work-obsessed mother, is forced to travel to Salem after the passing of her mom’s twin sister, Sage, who Willow never even knew existed (and who may or may not be a WITCH!). Mason, who is on a quest to find his estranged mother who struggles with drug addiction, reluctantly moves to a new foster home in Salem to live under the care of his mother's childhood friend. Fate brings Willow and Mason together, igniting an instant connection as they try to solve an ancient family curse. Along the way, they are aided by a trio of eccentric great-aunts who all identify as witches! While the romance between Willow and Mason is definitely a focus (and so darn sweet), this story also tackles some heavier issues, especially complex and challenging relationships within families, which many kids will be able to relate to. Watch out or you just might fall under the “spell” of this story of love, belonging, and finding solace in unexpected places!