

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Loss and Grief Through the Reading of Novels (Intermediate)

Note:

The interest and reading levels listed in this bibliography are those given by the publishers. If the reviewing journals gave a different interest level(s) for a title then this was indicated after the publisher's interest level. I find the interest levels given by the reviewing journals to be more accurate.

The summaries, which are also from the publishers, are to give you a quick overview of each title. Note that some of the titles fit the theme loosely and others more tightly. The titles also range from "light-hearted" to more serious in nature.

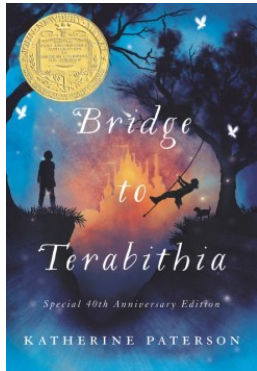
If a student needs the support of a digital copy, talk with your Learning Support Teacher, as ARC-BC is able to "rush" order digital titles they don't currently have in their collection. A very small number of the titles may also be available in an audiobook format, accessible through searching in Destiny. Your Teacher-Librarian can help you check for this.

If the LRC has 10+ copies of a title this was listed beside the title to provide you with the further flexibility of bringing in some titles to be used in a lit circle format.

Joan Pearce, May 2024

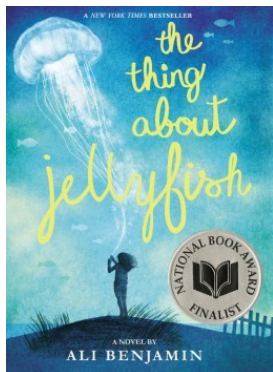
Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Loss and Grief (Intermediate)

Compiled by Joan Pearce
Novels



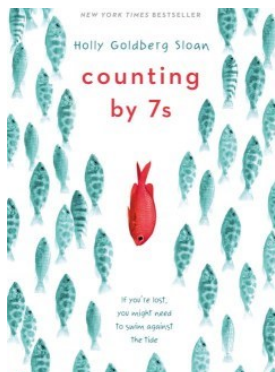
Bridge to Terabithia *LRC has 12
by Katherine Paterson, c1977 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.6)

"The life of a ten-year-old boy in rural Virginia expands when he becomes friends with a newcomer who subsequently meets an untimely death trying to reach their hideaway, Terabithia, during a storm."
- Follett



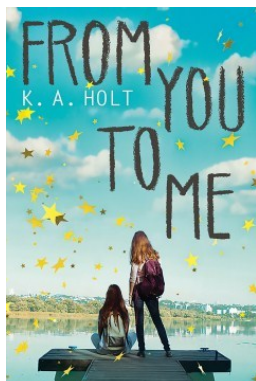
The Thing About Jellyfish *LRC has 12
by Ali Benjamin, c2015 (IL: 3-6, 4-7, 5-8; RL: 4.6)

"After her best friend dies in a drowning accident, Suzy is convinced that the true cause of the tragedy must have been a rare jellyfish sting--things don't just happen for no reason. Retreating into a silent world of imagination, she crafts a plan to prove her theory--even if it means traveling the globe, alone. Suzy's achingly heartfelt journey explores life, death, the astonishing wonder of the universe...and the potential for love and hope right next door." - Pub.



Counting by 7s *LRC has 12
by Holly Goldberg Sloan, c2013 (IL: 5-8, 7-10; RL: 5.3)

"Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now. Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world." - Pub.

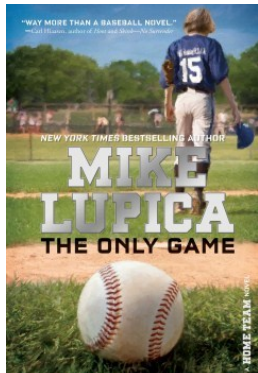


From You to Me
by K.A. Holt, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 7.0)

"On the first day of eighth grade Amelia finds a letter that her older sister Clara wrote to herself before she drowned, and it contains a list of the things Clara planned to do in her own eighth grade year--so Amelia, with the help of her best friend Taylor, resolves to complete the list, in the hope that it will bring some closure and ease her still raw emotions." - Follett

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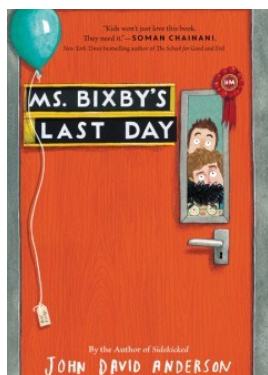


The Only Game *LRC has 12
by Mike Lupica, c2015 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.5)

"Sixth grade is supposed to be the year that Jack Callahan leads his team to a record-shattering season and the Little League World Series, but after the death of his brother he loses interest in baseball and only Cassie, star of the girls' softball team, seems to understand." - Follett



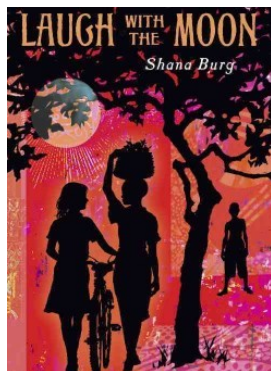
Missing Mike *LRC has 12
by Shari Green, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 5.0)
"Twelve-year-old Caera Donovan and her family flee a wildfire bearing down on their hometown of Pine Grove, with no time to find Caera's beloved dog Mike. Faced with the loss of everything she knows, Caera can't stand to lose Mike as well and seeks a way to sneak back to Pine Grove. When her plans are thwarted, she must learn to embrace a new definition of 'home.'" - Follett (Note: the story ends happily.)



Ms. Bixby's Last Day *LRC has 12
by John Anderson, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.2)

"Ms. Bixby unexpectedly announces that she is very sick and won't be able to finish the school year, and Topher, Brand and Steve come up with a plan to tell her how much she means to them." - Follett

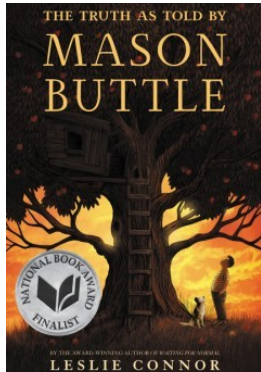
Kirkus: "The journey is poignant without being overly sweet, hitting just the right balance of humor and sadness." 4 * reviews



Laugh With the Moon
by Shana Burg, c2013 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.5)
"Thirteen-year-old Clare Silver is stuck. Stuck in denial about her mother's recent death. Stuck in the African jungle for sixty-four days without phone reception. Stuck with her father, a doctor who seems able to heal everyone but Clare. Clare feels like a fish out of water at Mzanga Full Primary School, where she must learn a new language. Soon, though, she becomes immersed in her new surroundings ..." - Pub.

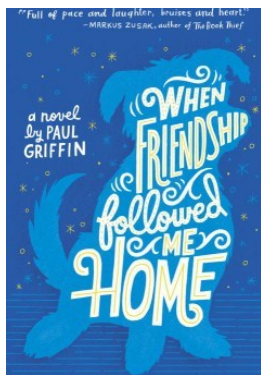
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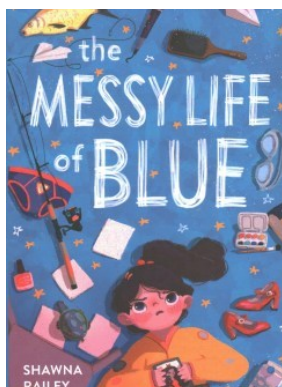
The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle *LRC has 12
by Leslie Connor, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 5-7; RL: 2.7?)

"Mason Buttle is the biggest, sweatiest kid in his grade, and everyone knows he can barely read or write. Mason's learning disabilities are compounded by grief. Fifteen months ago, Mason's best friend, Benny Kilmartin, turned up dead in the Buttle family's orchard. An investigation drags on, and Mason, honest as the day is long, can't understand why Lieutenant Baird won't believe the story Mason has told about that day."
- Pub.



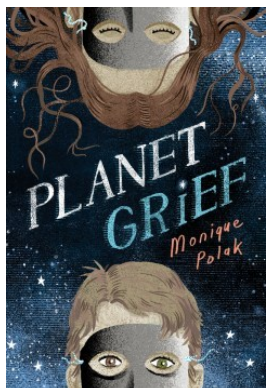
When Friendship Followed Me Home
by Paul Griffin, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.1)

"Seventh-grader Ben, always an outsider, is led into a deep friendship with Halley, who is being treated for cancer, by the special dog he and his adoptive mother take in."
- Follett



The Messy Life of Blue
by Shawna Railey, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4.7)

"Eleven-year-old Beulah "Blue" Warren, a fearless girl surrounded by boys, is beginning to forget her deceased mother but a new revelation gives her the strength to grieve for her mother once and for all."
- Follett

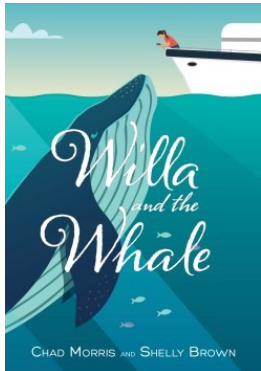


Planet Grief
by Monique Polak, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 6.0)

"In this novel for middle readers, a group of young teens gather for Grief Camp, where they confront their feelings and try to understand how grief affects everyone differently."
- Pub.

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Willa and the Whale

by Chad Morris, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 5-8; RL: 4.7)

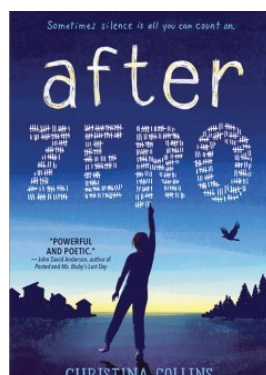
"Twelve-year-old Willa, grieving the loss of her mother, a renowned marine biologist, discovers she can talk to whales." - Follett



Planet Earth is Blue

by Nicole Panteleakos, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7)

"Twelve-year-old Nova is eagerly awaiting the launch of the space shuttle Challenger—it's the first time a teacher is going into space, and kids across America will watch the event on live TV in their classrooms. Nova and her big sister, Bridget, share a love of astronomy and the space program. They planned to watch the launch together. But Bridget has disappeared, and Nova is in a new foster home." - Pub.



After Zero

by Christina Collins, c2019 (IL: 3 -6, 4-7; RL: 5.1)

"When Elise leaves homeschooling for public school, she copes by speaking as little as possible, but soon her silence becomes an impediment to friendship and to dealing with family secrets." - Follett



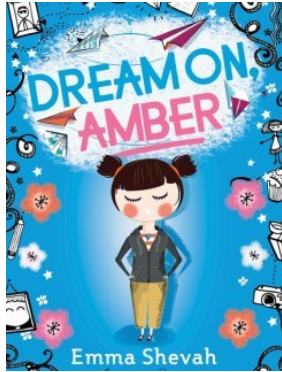
The Unforgettable Guinevere St. Clair

by Amy Makechnie, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.4)

"As ten-year-old Gwyn searches for a missing neighbor in her new town in Iowa, she learns much about her mother, who grew up there but has suffered from memory loss since Gwyn was four." - Follett

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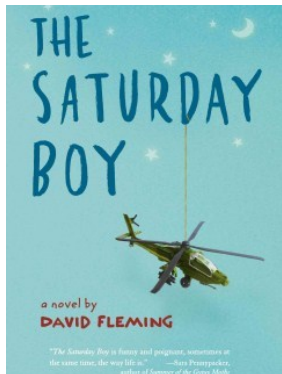
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Dream on Amber

by Emma Shevah, c2014 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.5)

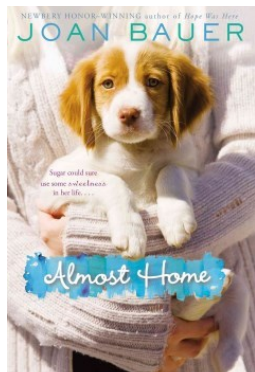
"There are some things in Amber Alessandra Leola Kimiko Miyamoto's life that she can't change. Like her mixed half-Japanese, half-Italian heritage, or her ridiculously long name. But the hardest thing about being Amber is that a part of her is missing: her dad. He left when she was little and he isn't coming back. So Amber will just have to figure out a way to fill that void for herself and her little sister—and she has a big imagination." - Pub.



The Saturday Boy

by David Fleming, c2013 (IL: 5-8. RL: 4.6)

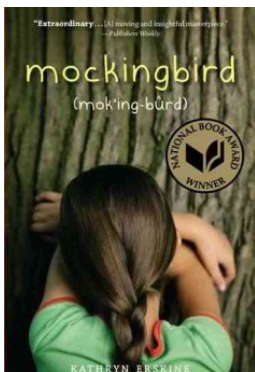
"Every school day seems to bring more trouble to eleven-year-old Derek, whose former best friend bullies him, while at home he deals with the long absence of his father, a Blackhawk helicopter pilot, and his mother's sudden moodiness." - Follett



Almost Home

by Joan Bauer, c2013 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.7)

"When twelve-year-old Sugar's grandfather dies and her gambling father takes off yet again, Sugar and her mother lose their home in Missouri. They head to Chicago for a fresh start, only to discover that fresh starts aren't so easy to come by for the homeless. Nevertheless, Sugar's mother has taught her to be grateful no matter what, so Sugar does her best. With the help of a rescue dog, Shush; a foster family; a supportive teacher; a love of poetry; and her own grace and good humor, Sugar comes to understand that while she can't control the hand life deals her, she can control how she responds." - Pub.



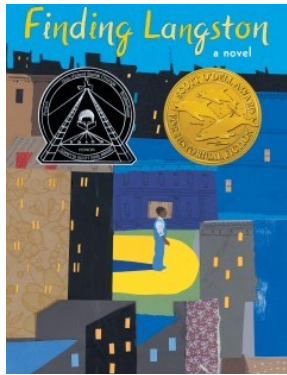
Mockingbird

by Kathryn Erskine, c2010 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 3.6)

"Caitlin has Asperger's. The world according to her is black and white; anything in between is confusing. Before, when things got confusing, Caitlin went to her older brother, Devon, for help. But Devon was killed in a school shooting, and Caitlin's dad is so distraught that he is just not helpful. Caitlin wants everything to go back to the way things were, but she doesn't know how to do that. Then she comes across the word closure—and she realizes this is what she needs..." - Pub.

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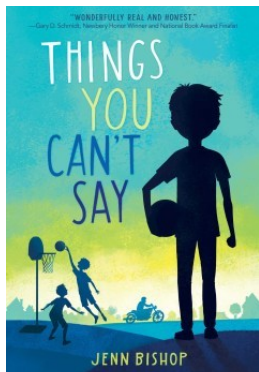
Finding Langston

by Lesa Cline-Ransome, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 3.2)
"When 11-year-old Langston's mother dies in 1946, he and his father leave rural Alabama for Chicago's brown belt as a part of what came to be known as the Great Migration. It's lonely in the small apartment with just the two of them, and at school Langston is bullied. But his new home has one fantastic thing. Unlike the whites-only library in Alabama, the local public library welcomes everyone. There, hiding out after school, Langston discovers another Langston, a poet whom he learns inspired his mother enough to name her only son after him." - Pub.



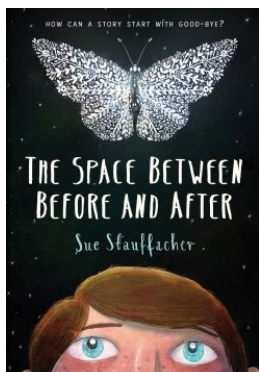
The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise *LRC 12

by Dan Geminhart, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.7)
"Five years. That's how long twelve-year-old Coyote and her dad, River, have lived on the road in an old school bus, criss-crossing the nation. It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters. Coyote hasn't been home in all that time, but when she learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished—the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box—she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington state...without him realizing it." - Pub.



Things You Can't Say

by Jenn Bishop, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 2.8?)
"Nothing is going right this summer for Drew. And after losing his dad unexpectedly three years ago, Drew knows a lot about things not going right. First, it's the new girl Audrey taking over everything at the library, Drew's sacred space. Then it's his best friend, Filipe, pulling away from him. But most upsetting has to be the mysterious man who is suddenly staying with Drew's family. An old friend of Mom's? Drew isn't buying that..." - Pub.



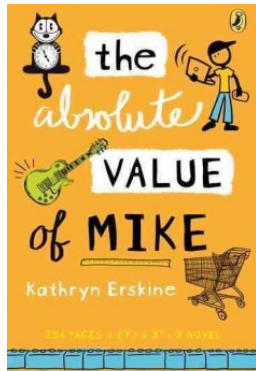
The Space Between Before and After

Sue Stauffacher, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.2)

"When 10-year-old Thomas's mother, who suffers from depression, disappears, he creates a fantasy narrative in which his mother is safe and sets in motion a path of healing, not just for himself, but for his father and aunt as well." - Follett

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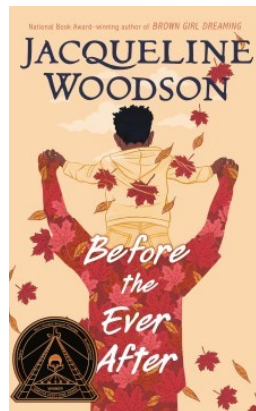
The Absolute Value of Mike

by Kathryn Erskine, c2011 (IL: 5-8, 6-9; RL: 3.5)
"Mike, a fourteen-year-old boy with a math learning disability, is sent to rural Pennsylvania for the summer to work on an engineering project, and while his plans to impress his mathematician father fall flat when Mike discovers the project has nothing to do with engineering, he learns much more valuable lessons while working with his eccentric, elderly aunt, a homeless man, and a punk rock girl as part of a town-wide effort to adopt a Romanian orphan." - Follett



Squint by Chad Morris, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 5-7; RL: 4.1)

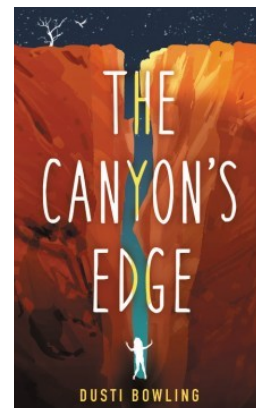
"Flint Minett has keratoconus, an eye disease, but desperately wants to win a comic book art contest so that he and his new friend McKell Panganiban will be better accepted at middle school." - Follett



Before the Ever After

by Jacqueline Woodson, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 4+; RL: 4.8)

"For as long as ZJ can remember, his dad has been everyone's hero...But lately life at ZJ's house is anything but charming. His dad is having trouble remembering things and seems to be angry all the time. ZJ's mom explains it's because of all the head injuries his dad sustained during his career. ZJ can understand that—but it doesn't make the sting any less real when his own father forgets his name. As ZJ contemplates his new reality, he has to figure out how to hold on tight to family traditions and recollections of the glory days, all the while wondering what their past amounts to if his father can't remember it." - Pub.



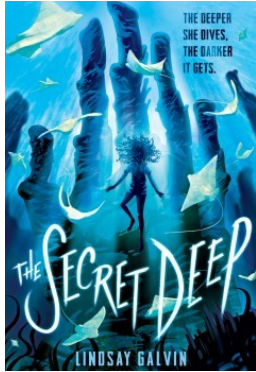
The Canyon's Edge

by Dusti Bowling, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.8)

"One year after a random shooting changed their family forever, Nora and her father are exploring a slot canyon deep in the Arizona desert, hoping it will help them find peace...But when they reach the bottom of the canyon, the unthinkable happens: A flash flood rips across their path, sweeping away Nora's father and all of their supplies. If Nora is going to save herself and her father, she must conquer her fears, defeat the Beast, and find the courage to live her new life." - Pub.

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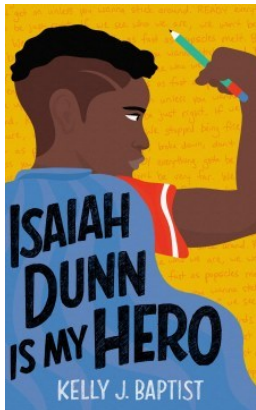
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The Secret Deep

by Lindsay Galvin, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 6-, 4-7; RL: 4.2)

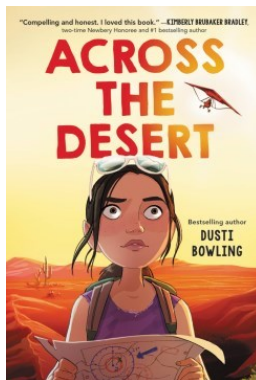
"When Aster wakes alone, stranded, on a tropical island, she has no idea what has happened, why she is there, or where to find her younger sister, Poppy...All she can remember is being on a boat with her aunt and other members of the eco-village where she was sent to live after the death of her mother...Though Aster can't think clearly, she feels the answers to all of her questions may lie beneath the sea. But nothing can prepare her for the secrets and revelations that she will uncover in her search for her sister...A secret with the potential to change medical history." - Pub.



Isaiah Dunn is my Hero

by Kelly J. Baptist, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.1)

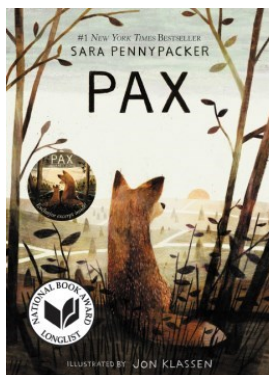
"Isaiah is now the big man of the house. But it's a lot harder than his dad made it look...And when things get really tough, there's Daddy's journal, filled with stories about the amazing Isaiah Dunn, who gets his superhero powers from beans and rice. Isaiah could use those powers right about now!" - Pub.



Across the Desert

by Dusti Bowling, c2021 (IL: 3-7, RL: 4.2)

"While using a public library computer to find help for her mother who is addicted to pain medicine, twelve-year-old Jolene witnesses a friend's livestreamed crash-landing in the Arizona desert and embarks on a journey to rescue her." - Follett



Pax

by Sarah Pennypacker, c2019 (IL: 3-7, RL: 5.3)

"After being forced to give up his pet fox Pax, a young boy named Peter decides to leave home and get his best friend back." - Pub

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Pax, Journey Home

by Sara Pennypacker, c2021 (IL: 3-7, RL: 5.0)

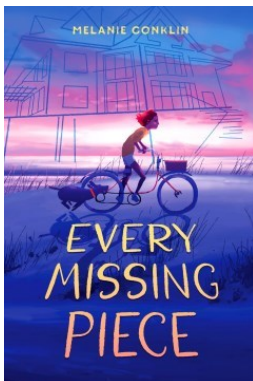
"It has been a year since newly orphaned Peter and his pet fox Pax, now a protective father, have seen each other, but their paths cross again when Pax's kit falls desperately ill forcing him to turn to the one human he knows he can trust." - *Follett*



In the Key of Us

by Mariama Lockington, c2023 (IL:4-8)

"Lockington's novel takes readers on a breathtaking, lyrical journey of the complexities of Black girlhood in a story about music, family, and recovery from loss. She weaves a tale that is both brutally honest and endearing, exposing the sincere flaws of her main characters in such a way that makes readers weep for each misstep and rejoice with each measure of success." - *Booklist*



Every Missing Piece

by Melanie Conklin, c2022 (IL: 3-7, RL: 4.7)

"Ever since her father died in a terrible accident, Maddy Gaines has worried a lot. She calls the police so often that she's on a first-name basis with the Sheriff. When a new boy moves to town, Maddy is convinced that he's not who he says he is--he's a boy who went missing six months ago. Maddy, her dog, her best friend, and her stepdad team up to see what he's hiding." - *Follett*