

# Realistic Fiction for Kids Ages 9-12

## **24 Hours in Nowhere**

Bowling, Dusti

**Find It: J BOW**

Welcome to Nowhere, Arizona, America's least livable town. For Gus, a bright 13-year-old with dreams of escaping, life there is made even worse by bully Bo Taylor. When Bo tries to force Gus to eat a spiny cactus, Rossi Scott, one of the best racers in Nowhere, rescues him by relinquishing her prized dirt bike. Gus agrees to do anything to get it back—even if it means going into a deadly mine to hunt for gold.

## **Accidental Trouble Magnet**

Mian, Zanib

**Find It: J MIA**

Imaginative Omar goes through the ups and downs of starting at a new school and making new friends with the help of his wonderful (and silly) Muslim family.

## **Amal Unbound**

Saeed, Aisha

**Find It: J SAE**

In Pakistan, Amal holds onto her dream of being a teacher even after becoming an indentured servant to pay off her family's debt to the wealthy and corrupt Khan family.

## **Amina's Voice**

Khan, Hena

**Find It: J KHA**

A Pakistani-American Muslim girl struggles to stay true to her family's vibrant culture while simultaneously blending in at school after tragedy strikes her community.

## **The Best at It**

Pancholy, Maulik

**Find It: J PAN**

Twelve-year-old Rahul Kapoor, an Indian-American boy growing up in small-town Indiana, struggles to come to terms with his identity, including that he may be gay.

## **The Best Man**

Peck, Richard

**Find It: J PEC**

Archer has four role models in his life--his dad, his grandfather, his uncle Paul, and his favorite teacher, Mr. McLeod. When Uncle Paul and Mr. McLeod get married, Archer's sixth-grade year becomes one he won't forget.

## **Black Brother, Black Brother**

Rhodes, Jewell

**Find It: J RHO**

Suspended unjustly from elite Middlefield Prep, Donte Ellison studies fencing with a former champion, hoping to put the racist fencing team captain in his place.

## **Blended**

Draper, Sharon M.

**Find It: J DRA**

Piano-prodigy Isabella, eleven, whose black father and white mother struggle to share custody, never feels whole, especially as racial tensions affect her school, her parents both become engaged, and she and her stepbrother are stopped by police.

**Clayton Byrd Goes Underground**

Williams-Garcia, Rita

**Find It: J WIL**

Feeling most alive when he plays music with his grandfather, aspiring bluesman Clayton Byrd is devastated when his grandfather passes away and his mother forbids him from playing the blues, losses that compel him to run away in the hope of joining other bluesmen on the road.”

**Clean Getaway**

Stone, Nic

**Find It: J STO**

An 11-year-old boy confronts the realities of race relations, past and present, and the mysterious agenda of his unconventional grandmother during an unplanned road trip through the once-segregated South.

**Count Me In**

Bajaj, Varsha

**Find It: J BAJ**

Told from two viewpoints, sixth-graders Karina and Chris use social media to stand up to racism in Houston, Texas, after an attack puts Karina's Indian-American grandfather in the hospital.

**Dream On, Amber**

Shevah, Emma

**Find It: J SHE**

Abandoned by her father at a young age, half-Japanese, half-Italian middle schooler Amber Miyamoto must devise a way for her and her sister to make it on their own while making friends at her new school.

**Everlasting Nora**

Cruz, Marie Miranda

**Find It: J CRU**

Forced to move to a Philippines shantytown when her father is killed, 12-year-old Nora rediscovers the human spirit's compassion when a new friend and his grandmother help her search for her missing mother.

**The Exact Location of Home**

Messner, Kate

**Find It: J MES**

This is a moving tale of family and friendship about a tech-savvy boy searching for his father during tough times.

**Finding Langston**

Cline-Ransome, Lesa

**Find It: J CLI**

Discovering a book of Langston Hughes' poetry in the library helps Langston cope with the loss of his mother, relocating from Alabama to Chicago as part of the Great Migration, and being bullied.

**Front Desk**

Yang, Kelly

**Find It: J YAN**

“After emigrating from China, ten-year-old Mia Tang's parents take a job managing a rundown motel, despite being exploited by the nasty owner, Mr. Yao. Mia works the front desk and tries to cope with fitting in at school.

**A Good Kind of Trouble**

Ramee, Lisa Moore

**Find It: J RAM**

Strictly following the rules to pursue her junior-high ambitions, 12-year-old Shayla must choose between her education and her identity when her sister joins the Black Lives Matter movement after a powerful protest.

**Hello, Universe**  
Kelly, Erin Entrada

**Find It: J KEL**

Lives of four misfits are intertwined when a bully's prank lands shy Virgil at the bottom of a well and Valencia, Kaori, and Gen band together in an epic quest to find and rescue him.

**A Home for Goddesses and Dogs**  
Connor, Leslie

**Find It: J CON**

After her mother dies, Lydia moves in with her aunts, finding a new family of inspiring women and loving dogs.

**Indian No More**  
McManis, Charlene Willing

**Find It: J MCM**

When Regina's Umpqua tribe is legally terminated and her family must relocate from Oregon to Los Angeles, she goes on a quest to understand her identity as an American Indian despite being so far from home.

**The Journey of Little Charlie**  
Curtis, Christopher Paul

**Find It: J CUR**

When his poor sharecropper father dies in an accident, leaving the family in debt, 12-year-old Charlie makes a deal with Cap'n Buck: track down and return fugitives accused of stealing from Buck for the debt to be repaid.

**The Key to Everything**  
Schmatz, Pat

**Find It: J SCH**

Reluctantly attending camp away from the uncle who saved her from foster care and an elderly neighbor who shares stories and warm cookies, 11-year-old Tash is dismayed when she returns home to discover her neighbor has gone missing. Tash is compelled test the power of a key the neighbor always insisted possesses magic.

**King and the Dragonflies**  
Callender, Kacen

**Find It: J CAL**

In a small but turbulent Louisiana town, one boy's grief takes him beyond the bayous of his backyard to learn there is no right way to be yourself.

**Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak**  
Cartaya, Pablo

**Find It: J CAR**

After a fight at school leaves Marcus facing suspension, his mother takes him and his younger brother, who has Down syndrome, to Puerto Rico to visit relatives they don't remember or have never met. While there, Marcus searches for his father, who left their family ten years ago and is somewhere on the island."

**Maybe He Just Likes You**  
Dee, Barbara

**Find It: J DEE**

When boys in her class start touching seventh-grader Mila and making her feel uncomfortable, she does not want to tell her friends or mother until she reaches her breaking point.

**Merci Suarez Changes Gears**

Medina, Meg

**Find It: J MED**

Thoughtful, strong-willed sixth-grader Merci Suarez navigates difficult changes with friends, family, and everyone in between.

**Miss Communication**

Holm, Jennifer L.

**Find It: J HOL**

After finally getting a cell phone, Babymouse tries to increase her popularity by becoming a social media queen.

**More to the Story**

Khan, Hena

**Find It: J KHA**

As features editor of her school newspaper, 13-year-old Jameela Mirza wants to impress her father by writing a spectacular story about the new student, but a misunderstanding and family illness complicate matters.

**My Year in the Middle**

Weaver, Lila Quintero

**Find It: J WEA**

In a racially polarized classroom in 1970 Alabama, Lu's talent for running track makes her a new best friend — and tests her mettle as she navigates the school's social cliques.

**New Kid**

Craft, Jerry

**Find It: J CRA**

When his parents send him to a prestigious private school known for academics, Jordan Banks finds himself torn between two worlds.

**Once You Know This**

Blejwas, Emily

**Find It: J BLE**

Fifth-grader Brittany struggles to plan, or even imagine, a future away from her mother's abusive boyfriend and the poverty and crime of Chicago's West Side.

**Posted**

Anderson, John David

**Find It: J AND**

When cell phones are banned at school, Frost and his friends start communicating through sticky notes left all over school before other kids join in, triggering a wave of bullying activities in the wake of a new girl's arrival.

**Prairie Lotus**

Park, Linda Sue

**Find It: J PAR**

"In 1880, a half-Chinese girl and her white father make a home in Dakota Territory in the face of racism and resistance."

**Rebound**

Alexander, Kwame

**Find It: J ALE**

In the summer of 1988, 12-year-old Chuck Bell is sent to stay with his grandparents, where he discovers jazz and basketball and learns more about his family's past."

**Reformed**

Weinberger, Justin

**Find It: J WEI**

Ian's always been the kid most likely to be bullied, which is why he appreciates aggressive Devon's friendship. However, when one of Devon's pranks goes terribly wrong, Ian becomes the youngest student in the Juvenile Academy for Noncompliant and Underachieving Students (AKA reform school). Somehow, he'll have to learn how to stand up for himself."

**Restart**

Korman, Gordon

**Find It: J KOR**

Chase doesn't remember falling off the roof. In fact he doesn't remember anything about himself. When he gets back to middle school, he begins to learn who he was through the reactions of the other kids--trouble is, he really isn't sure he likes the Chase being revealed. Can he take the opportunity amnesia's provided to restart his life?"

**Right as Rain**

Stoddard, Lindsey

**Find It: J STO**

Eleven-year-old Rain must adjust to a new normal after her brother dies and her family moves to New York City.

**Save Me a Seat**

Weeks, Sarah

**Find It: J VAR**

Ravi has just moved to the U.S. from India and has always been at the top of his class; Joe has lived in the same town his whole life and has learning problems. When their lives intersect in the first week of fifth grade, they're brought together by a common enemy (the biggest bully in class) and the need to take control of their lives."

**The Season of Styx Malone**

Magoon, Kekla

**Find It: J MAG**

Caleb Franklin and his younger brother, Bobby Gene, spend an extraordinary summer with their new, older neighbor, Styx Malone, a foster boy from the city.

**Slider**

Hautman, Pete

**Find It: J HAU**

Entering the world's greatest pizza-eating contest after secretly putting thousands of dollars on his mother's credit card, a young competitive eater finds his efforts complicated by family denial about his younger brother's autism.

**So Done**

Chase, Paula

**Find It: J CHA**

When best friends Metai and Jamila reunite after a summer apart, their friendship is threatened by the pressure of secrets, middle school, and looming auditions for a potentially life-changing new talented-and-gifted program.

**Some Places More Than Others** Find It: J WAT

Watson, Renee

Amara visits her father's family in Harlem for her twelfth birthday, hoping to better understand her family and herself, but New York City is not what she expected.

**Stella Diaz Has Something to Say**  
Dominguez, Angela

**Find It: J DOM**

Stella Diaz loves marine animals, especially her betta fish, Pancho. But Stella Diaz is not a betta fish. Betta fish like to be alone, while Stella loves spending time with her mom and brother and her best friend Jenny. Trouble is, Jenny is in another class this year, and Stella feels very lonely.

**True to Your Selfie**  
McCafferty, Megan

**Find It: J MCC**

Ditching her best friend and many favorite activities to be popular girl Morgan's sidekick, 12-year-old Ella struggles with her new friend's standards before discovering her talent for a sport Morgan forbids Ella to pursue."

**Well That Was Awkward**  
Vail, Rachel

**Find It: J VAI**

Setting aside her crush on a boy who prefers her best friend, Gracie helps her friend write clever texts to him, whose equally witty replies suggest he may be getting help with his own romantic messages.

**You Don't Know Everything, Jilly P!**  
Gino, Alex

**Find It: J GIN**

When her baby sister is born deaf, Jilly connects online with a fellow fantasy fan, who happens to be black and deaf, and begins to learn about the many obstacles in the world for people who are different from her.