Silver Birch Fiction 2027 Annotations

Beast Ballerz
Written by Wesley King
Illustrated by Steve Wolfhard
Published by Tundra Books

When eleven-year-old Baxter Brooks wakes up one morning with a sweet beard, he's pumped. How many fifth graders get to sport cheek mittens in math class? It's pretty much the greatest day of his life.

What he first assumes is insta-puberty, escalates . . . rapidly. He grows fangs, people scream, he almost gives a cat a heart attack . . . it's a total mess. When Bax gives his whole school a were-scare during a play, he's shuttled off to an academy for misfit monsters . . . and into the zany world of beast ball.
But if Bax wants to lead the long-suffering Pugs to triumph and solve the mystery of the Extremely Inconvenient Phantom, he'll have to learn to embrace his hairy werewolf alter ego. Yes . . . even the ankle scarves.

Welcome to Prodigium Academy, where *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* meets *Hotel Transylvania* in this middle-grade series featuring ludicrous artwork, loads of humor and a monster-sized heart.

Content / Discussion themes:
Body image

The Bloodstone Thief
Written by Sabina Khan
Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Laila Habib is having the worst birthday ever, as she's just discovered that her family's two-year stay in Houston, Texas, is going to be extended . . . indefinitely. With one foot in her current life and one foot back in her old home in Mumbai, she doesn't feel like she truly belongs anywhere

But her day only gets worse from there. Opening up what she thinks is a hidden birthday present, Laila unleashes an evil jinn from a magical amulet. Trapped there long ago by Laila's father, the jinn is eager for revenge, and drags Laila's father back to the magical world of Qaf.

To save her father, Laila must travel to Qaf, where she discovers that there's only one hope for freeing him. She must find the Bloodstone, an object that gives the holder absolute power. But doing so will require a quest that changes everything

Laila ever thought she knew about who she is, what she believes, and who she can trust. Not fully belonging in the jinn world or our own, Laila has to create her own community, forge friendships, and fight for her family—no matter who or what they are.

Content / Discussion themes:
Islamic mythology, family, immigration

Briarwood
Written by Natalie Hyde
Published by Cormorant Books - DCB Young Readers

Can you keep a secret?

Everyone at Camp Briarwood can. But what actually goes on inside this super-elite summer camp for brilliant young minds? Callie Garcia would do almost anything to see for herself.

When her teacher accuses her of cheating on the entrance exam, Callie fears she's lost her only chance to experience Briarwood … until she receives a job offer from the camp director himself. But the invitation seems to come with some strings attached — and danger. Armed with a scientific mind and a journal of ideas from her inventor great-grandfather, Callie dives into a wondrous world of technological marvels — and discovers a perilous game of cat and mouse between inventors and frauds.

Content / Discussion themes:
STEM, magic

The Ghosts of Bitterfly Bay
Written & Illustrated by Mary Averling
Published by Penguin Random House - G. P. Putnam's Sons

Maudie isn't your typical twelve-year-old girl—she's the ghost of one. Along with her best friend Kit and little brother Scratch, she haunts a cottage in the woods, doing her best to scare off the vacationers and forget her old life.

But everything changes when Kit and Scratch go missing. Maudie knows something terrible must have happened, and she's right: Longfingers—a monster from her own nightmares, with spidery fingers and needle-sharp teeth—has stolen her friends away.

Longfingers makes Maudie a twisted deal: find the key to a door in a mysterious cabin, or she'll never see her friends again. With nobody else to turn to, Maudie has to beg for help from Gianna, the living girl she's been haunting. Together, the girls search for a way to thwart the monster and save Maudie's friends.

But Maudie’s keeping secrets about the cabin and her past. Unless she finds a way to finally face the truth, she may never be able to rescue her friends from Longfingers’s grasp.

Content / Discussion themes:
Grief, loss

Hitting the Target
Written by Lorna Schultz Nicholson
Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

A novel that pairs exciting hockey action with the growing pains of navigating bullying and body image.

Manny is the enthusiastic, happy-go-lucky defenceman on Team Chaos. As the oldest of six kids, he fits right into a team environment and is used to backing up his teammates. He's also been working hard on his slapshot and has become a key part of his team's success. But when kids at school start teasing Manny about his weight, he becomes self-conscious and insecure. He tries to stand up for himself but gets in trouble for it. Then Manny decides the fastest way to get the teasing to stop is to stop eating just before a big out-of-town tournament, which makes everything worse -- on and off the ice. With the help of his family, coaches and teammates, Manny is able to focus on being healthy and loving himself just as he is.

Content / Discussion themes:
Body image, cyber bullying, sports

Kaboom!: Blast Off
Written by Jay Odjick
Illustrated by KC Oster
Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

When we meet Zack, he’s being looked after by his super-cool Auntie Jess and dreaming of one day being like his hero, slick business tycoon Konstantin Pierce. Zack’s parents are away — yet again — for their important careers in “refrigerator sales.” Little does Zack know their true identities: Greywolf and Shadowbird are F.U.S.I.O.N agents on a mission to protect Indigenous artifacts from a nefarious tomb-robber!

In this series launch, acclaimed creator and lifelong comics fan Jay Odjick introduces a superhero for our times.

Content / discussion themes:
Indigenous superheroes

My Sister the Werebeast
Written & Illustrated by Alina Tysoe
Published by Macmillan Publishers - First Second

Something strange is happening to Peanut—and her sisters are doing everything they can to keep it under control.

Mira and Rosie are determined to prove they've got everything handled. Between preparing for their school's upcoming combat trials and taking care of their adorable baby sister, they are absolutely, definitely in control of the situation. Probably.

There's just one small problem: Peanut is not an ordinary baby.

She cries so hard she floods the house. She occasionally breathes fire. And sometimes she transforms into a very soft—but very intimidating—creature with powers they can't explain and definitely can't expose.
So Mira and Rosie do what any responsible older siblings would do: they hide Peanut's abilities, clean up the chaos, and insist everything will be fine until their parents return. Easy, right?

But things quickly spiral when rumors of a dangerous werebeast spread through town and a mysterious monster hunter arrives looking for answers. Now the sisters must juggle training, secrecy, sibling chaos, and a growing supernatural mystery that threatens to expose everything.

Content / Discussion themes:
Family, responsibility, magic

Remember Me, Daphne
Written by Ceila Krampien
Published by Simon and Schuster - Atheneum Books for Young Readers

When a new family moves into the creepy old house across the street, sixth-grader Flora finds her wish for a best-best friend has finally come true. Her new neighbor Mac is sweet and charismatic. With Mac by her side, Flora feels like the upcoming school year will be a fresh start for her—no more anxiety or klutziness or not fitting in!

But despite their new friendship, not all is perfect. Mac fits in better with their classmates than Flora ever did. Mac's family seems to be holding back a big secret, something about a mysterious ex–best friend named Daphne who Mac won't ever talk about. And Mac's little brother, Danny, gives Flora the creeps. Strange things keep happening whenever he's around.

Is Flora's mind playing tricks? Or could it be that Mac's house is as haunted as it looks?

Content / Discussion themes:
Poltergeists, haunting

Time Surfers
Written by Kevin Sylvester
Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

Caleb Fisher is the right-hand to his time-surfer, scientist father, John. Together on their thick metallic ship, they travel at super speed into the past and rescue treasures that have otherwise been lost—priceless works of art from the torpedoed RMS *Lusitania*, a crown jewel threatened by a flood in 1216 CE England—all for the good of humanity and for the glory of the ruling Global Council. But there are rules for time surfers. Never bring back anything that could change the course of history. And never, under penalty of death, bring back another human being.

John Fisher is haunted by the loss of his wife in a mysterious incident, and he is always looking for a way to go deeper into the past and stay longer. John forbids Caleb to come on one particularly dangerous mission—to save ancient scrolls from the burning Great Library of Alexandria. But Caleb sneaks on board and what happens in 48 BCE returns with the Fishers into the future and changes their lives forever.

Content / Discussion themes:
Family, community

Touching Grass
Written by Kristy Jackson
Illustrated by Rhael McGregor
Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

Tristen would do anything to avoid going outside. The bugs sting, the snakes are poisonous, the heat will kill you if the cold doesn't, and bodies of water? Forget it. Tristen likes it best indoors, deep in his online world where it's safe, with his online friends. Something he has a hard time with IRL.

But Tristen is in trouble at school again, and the principal is threatening to kick him out of this third school in two years. His mom believes the answer is to get Tristen off the games and in touch with nature and his Dene roots. This means Tristen has to spend a week at a culture camp in the wilderness. It's his worst nightmare!

And at first it is a nightmare—no internet, no phone reception, no Bepsi!—and Tristen has no idea how to do any of the skills the other kids seem to do easily. But soon, with some surprising new friends, a few patient teachers and a little help from technology, Tristen begins to think he might be able to hack this nature stuff after all.

Content / Discussion themes:
Indigenous culture vs mainstream