

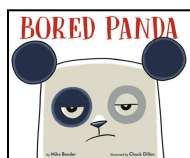
The Sunshine State Young Readers Award Junior Books 2026-2027

Picture Books:



The Great Dinosaur Sleepover written by Linda Bailey and illustrated by Joe Bluhm

Jake loves dinosaurs, so with his birthday coming up, he knows just what kind of party he wants - a dinosaur sleepover! Dino games, dino balloons, dino cake. Dino everything! But when the big day arrives, his friends all come down with the flu, and the party seems to be on the edge of extinction. Then, in the middle of the night, Jake hears a strange noise and goes to investigate. To his surprise, he finds some prehistoric party guests right there in his living room! They've invited themselves in to make sure Jake has a birthday he'll never forget - just don't tell the T-Rex!



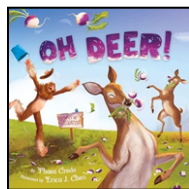
Bored Panda written by Mike Bender and illustrated by Chuck Dillon

For Panda, there is NOTHING worse than being bored. It's just so...boring. But what's a tech-loving panda to do when there's no electricity? Skeptical that the great outdoors will cure his boredom, Panda nonetheless sets out on a day full of surprises. They might even turn out to be *fun* surprises!



There's Something Odd About the Babysitter written by Elayne Crain and illustrated by John Ledda

Freddie has had many *many* babysitters over the years. And he's never liked a single one. So when a new one shows up, he's sure he's in for a boring night. Yet the babysitter seems nervous. Their table manners are appalling. And dinner is garbage. . . literally. But after Freddie decides to team up with the babysitter to turn the evening around, what started out as boring becomes a night he won't forget.



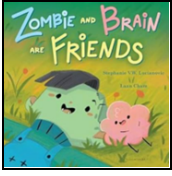
Oh Deer written by Phaea Crede and illustrated by Erica J. Chen

For Jasper, life as a sasquatch isn't too bad. He has a nice house in the woods where he lives alone. Just the way he likes it. Being around other animals can be a little stressful. So Jasper keeps to himself, and life is good, even if some days are a bit lonely. To keep himself busy, Jasper decides to grow a turnip garden. It's hard work but it's very satisfying. But one morning, just as the turnips are almost ready for harvest . . . disaster! Hungry deer have swooped in to eat Jasper's garden! Clever Jasper comes up with a way to thwart these turnip thieves. But as it turns out, the deer are even more clever. Though Jasper tries more and more ways to keep his veggies safe, nothing seems to work. Then the situation changes, and someone special needs some help. Maybe a little company isn't such a bad thing.

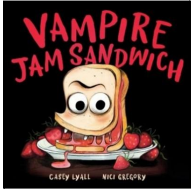


The Bakery Dragon written and illustrated by Devin Elle Kurtz

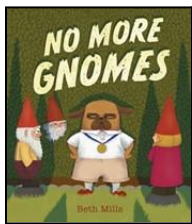
The heroic tale of a tiny dragon with a heart of gold and a taste for treats! A scrumptious picture book for fans of funny fairytales and fantastic beasts. Ember has always been different from the other dragons. His fearsome roar sounds more like a polite sneeze, and when he breathes fire, the villagers just pat his head and say *awwww*. Ember fears he'll never collect a respectable hoard of gold until a chance encounter with a baker causes his fortunes to turn (and his stomach to grumble). As the little dragon soon discovers, the gold you make is *way* better than the gold you steal-and gold that is shared? That's best of all.



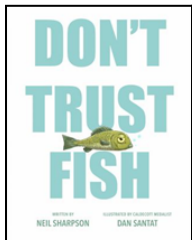
Zombie and Brain Are Friends written by Stephanie V. W. Lucianovic and illustrated by Laan Cham
Zeb comes from a family of farmers-*zombie* farmers. Each week they pickle, bake, fry, and sell their grain-fed, free-range brains to be enjoyed by the masses. Zeb understands that brains are food, not pets...until one day he comes across the tiniest, pinkest, squishiest brain he ever did see! Can he convince his parents that his brainy bestie is better off as a member of the family than family dinner?



Vampire Jam Sandwich written by Casey Lyall and illustrated by Nici Grehory
You may not have heard of the Vampire Jam Sandwich. But it's time you learned the truth. Once upon a time, a vampire (maybe his name is Terrence) took a bite of a jam sandwich (maybe he thought the jam was... something else). And you know what happens when a vampire bites you... That's right. The jam sandwich has become... A VAMPIRE JAM SANDWICH. Terrifying, stalking the streets at night, sneaking into people's homes in an endless search for MORE JAM!



No More Gnomes written and illustrated by Beth Mills
Herbert is the politest kid in town. He even has a medal to prove it! But his good manners are put to the test when his afterschool nanny, Ms. Goat, brings home a VERY RUDE garden gnome. Herbert tries to be polite about the inconsiderate imp. But then Ms. Goat gets another gnome . . . and another . . . and another! This is too much for Herbert. He can handle NO MORE GNOMES! But how can he tell that to Ms. Goat without being immensely, impossibly, inexcusably impolite?

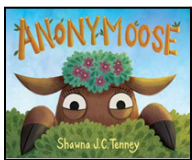


Don't Trust Fish written by Neil Sharpson and illustrated by Dan Santat

Why, dear reader, must you NEVER EVER trust fish?

- 1) They spend all their time in the water where we can't see them.
- 2) Some are as big as a bus--that is *not* okay.
- 3) We don't know what they're teaching in their "schools."
- 4) They are likely plotting our doom.

This nature-guide-gone-wrong is a hilarious, off-the-rails exploration of the seemingly innocent animals that live in the water.



Anonymoose written and illustrated by Shawna J. C. Tenney

Ana Moose feels most comfortable when she is hiding. Hiding is much more fun than knowing what to say or being picked last for the team. She enjoys being "Anonymoose"! Until one day, when she sees her classmate Peter building a fort. A fort could be a very good place to hide! But also, Ana starts to feel a connection with Peter. Will Anonymoose have enough courage to come out of hiding to make a friend?

Independent Readers:



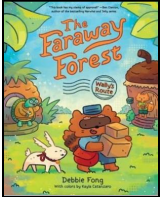
Box Tales: Grow Strawberries Grow! written and illustrated by James Burks

Beatrix and Box want to eat a million strawberries! But their only way to do it is to grow their own strawberry garden! But well, how do you plant a garden? Do fruits grow in the ground? Is there a Pickle Tree? Or a Blueberry Muffin Bush? Where are the magic beans? And what do you talk to your plants about if you want them to grow big and strong? The two friends plant. They water. They wait... and they wait... and they wait some more. They had no idea it takes this long for plants to grow. Who has the patience to wait this long? And who or what is nibbling on the leaves? Beatrix and Box's frustrations are growing faster than their garden. Will Beatrix and Box run out of patience and quit before their garden bears fruit, or will they feast on the goodies they grow?



Fairy Scout Friends: No Rain, No Rainbows written and illustrated by Hannah Fay

Rain is not your typical peaches-and-lollipops kind of fairy. She would choose muddy rainstorms over sunshine any day, hands down. Another thing she dislikes? Working in a group. So when her brand-new club is tasked with building a fairy house together, Rain decides she'd rather do her own thing. Because teamwork is never worth the trouble...right?



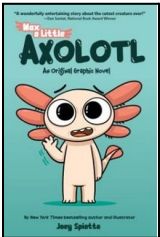
The Faraway Forest: Wally's Route written by Debbie Fong and colors by Kayla Catanzaro

Wally, the Faraway Forest's mail carrier, always tries his best. In addition to delivering packages of every shape and size, he and Bo, his best friend, also deliver kindness and a helping hand along the way. But can they win over their grumpiest neighbor, the cantankerous Mr. Sternbill? Wally and Bo are definitely going to try!



Katrina Hyena, Stand Up Comedian written by Sophie Kohn and illustrated by Aparna Varma

When the spotted hyenas in Katrina's clan laugh, it's meant as a warning to alert the clan that danger is near. But that's not why Katrina laughs. Katrina laughs because she thinks the world is just *sooooo* funny! This causes great frustration with the other hyenas. Every single time Katrina starts laughing, they think she's in danger and rush to help her. What if Gary the Lion is on the prowl?! Katrina, whose dream is to be a stand-up comedian, thinks her stressed-out clan worries too much about Gary, so she decides to help them relax by putting on a comedy show.



Max, a Little Axolotl written and illustrated by Joey Spiotto

It's Max's first day at Coral Elementary school. The school is filled with marine animals, like dolphins, crabs, and octopus. But none of the other students have ever seen an axolotl before... and they have SO MANY QUESTIONS. Where did Max live before? Is it true he can regrow any of his limbs? What happened to his old friends? This is too much attention for Max! *Hiccup!* Uh-oh... Max gets the hiccups when he's nervous. Can this little axolotl adjust to his new underwater school or will the pressure just be too much?