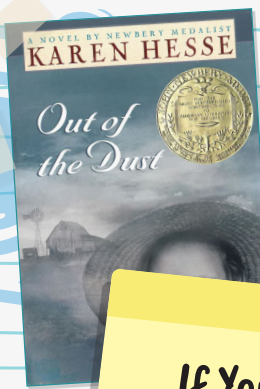
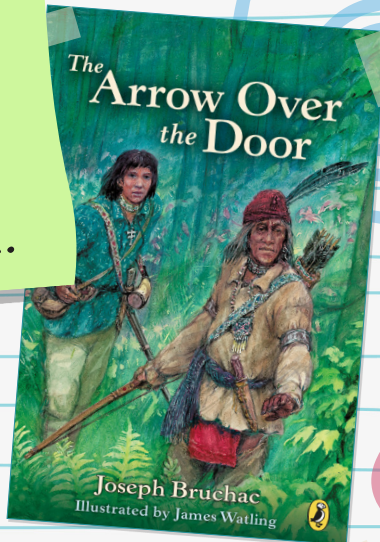
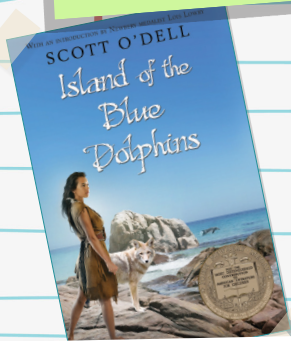


If You Teach  
Island of the  
Blue Dolphins,  
Try The Arrow  
Over the Door.

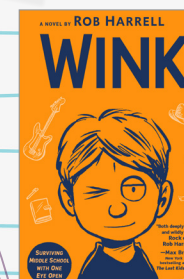
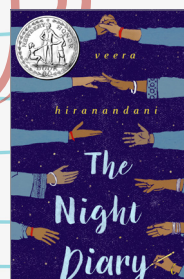
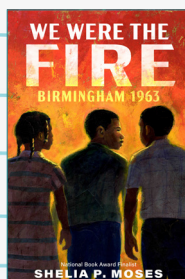
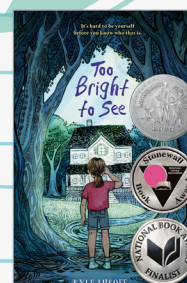
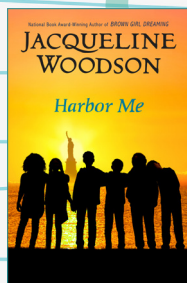
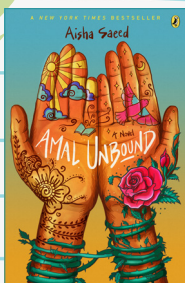
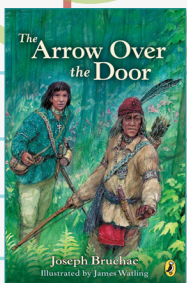


If You Teach  
Out of the Dust,  
Try The Night  
Diary.



# Read Alikes for Grades 4-8

## 13 Novels to Refresh Your Classroom Library





## DEAR EDUCATORS,

One of the surest ways to engage your students in a whole class (or even whole school) read is to use current literature. Now is the perfect time to review the titles taught in your school. With the current blossoming of literature for young people, more titles than ever are currently available to match curriculum needs and engage our students in new ways.

While some of the titles mentioned here are justifiably beloved works of great literary merit, others are widely recognized as outdated and problematic, and we do a great service to all our students when we allow ourselves to critically approach what we have long accepted as canon. Take time to review the titles you teach as well as reviewing some of the newer titles listed here. It can be expensive and time-consuming to seek out new class sets and create new curricular material, but these changes are worth making, as they can help our students excel and engage with material in ways we might not expect.

—ANGIE,  
SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

## Educator Bio




This brochure was written by Angie Manfredi. Angie has worked in public, special, and school libraries for the past sixteen years. She is currently a middle school librarian in the Southwest and believes that every child deserves the right to access relevant and engaging literature that accurately reflects their lives and the world around them. She likes sending snail mail, world cinema, and adventures.

## A NOTE FROM PENGUIN SCHOOL & LIBRARY:

We are so thrilled to have partnered with educator Angie Manfredi on this brochure. As she noted, we encourage you to take the time to read these new books, revisit the books you share with your young readers, and think of ways to introduce new themes, units, and topics to your class or library. A single book doesn't have a monopoly on a theme, topic, or unit, and we hope this brochure is helpful in bringing more books into your classroom library. We've also noted educator materials available for each book to help you further explore these titles.

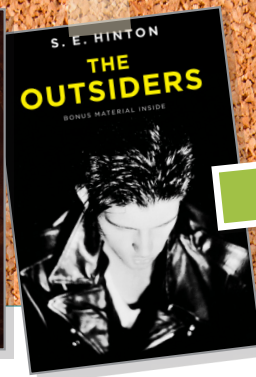
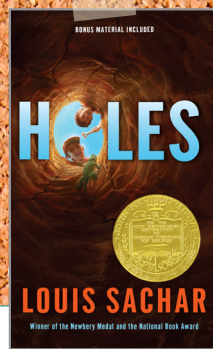
Sincerely,  
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS

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 **@PenguinClassroom**



If You Teach  
*Holes* or  
*The Outsiders* . . .

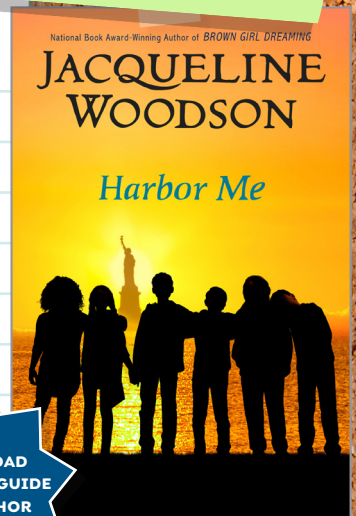


Try . . .  
*Harbor Me*  
by Jacqueline  
Woodson.

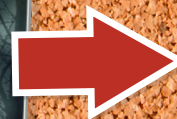
**WHY:** You'll find common themes about groups of kids coming together in challenging circumstances to own their voices and build a sheltering and nurturing community. Like *Holes* and *The Outsiders*, *Harbor Me* is unafraid to address real problems facing kids head on and also features a strong voice, a vivid setting, and kids building their own support networks without adult interference.

**BONUS:** *Harbor Me* touches on issues such as **bullying, family separation, and incarceration.** These are all access points for not only learning extension but direct connections to student's daily lives, **engaging them more immediately with the text.**

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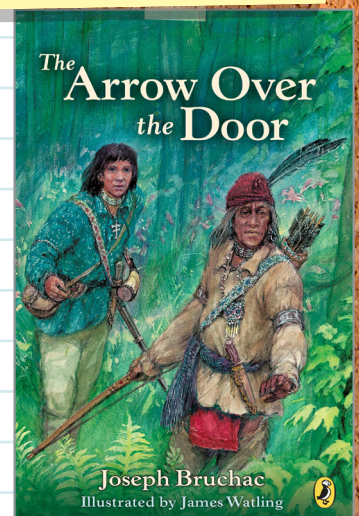
If You Teach  
*Island of the  
Blue Dolphins*  
or *Touching  
Spirit Bear* . . .



Try . . .  
*The Arrow  
Over the Door*  
by Joseph Bruchac

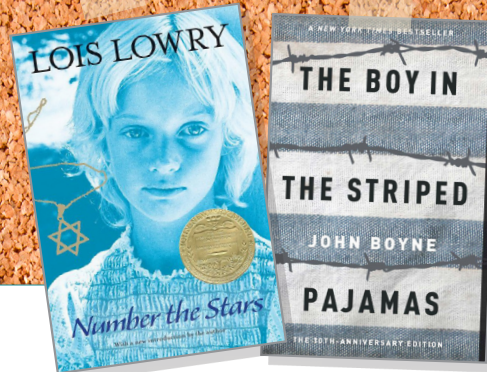
**WHY:** Like *Touching Spirit Bear*, this book encourages students to think about aggression and violence as disruptive and harmful forces, and like *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, it invites students into a specic historical era rich with period detail with a lead Native character. A key difference is this novel is about an Abenaki character and is written by an Abenaki author. Centering narratives by Indigenous authors makes for a more rewarding learning experience for our students.

**BONUS:** Bruchac's novel is also a **good addition to units about the American Revolution** and titles such as *My Brother Sam is Dead*, giving additional nuance and depth to **discussions of all the people and perspectives in the Americas in this era.**





If You Teach  
*Number the Stars*  
or *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*...

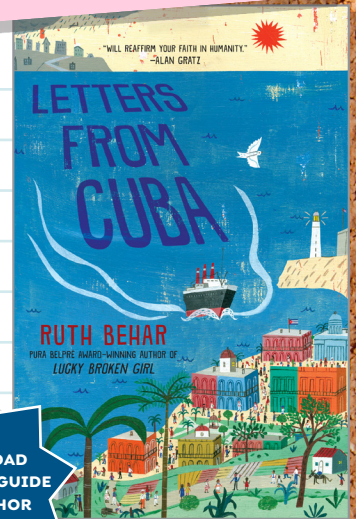


Try...  
*Letters from Cuba*  
by Ruth Behar

**WHY:** *Letters from Cuba*'s epistolary format is very teachable and a perfect choice for research extension activities. Like *Number the Stars*, it is a story about a refugee family separated in the shadow of WWII that delves into the pain of leaving your family and home. And, unlike *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, it is honest about the brutal horrors and injustice of Nazism and fascism. This title is also inspired by the author's own family experiences, so it centers a Jewish voice.

**BONUS:** *Letters from Cuba* also deals with the Jewish diaspora's struggles and joys in a setting many students may not be expecting, giving teachers a chance to further research opportunities about Cuba and Cuban luminaries like José Martí.

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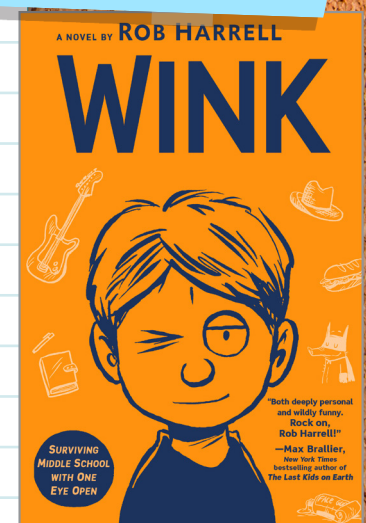
If You Teach  
*Wonder* or  
*Rules*...



Try...  
*Wink*  
by Rob Harrell

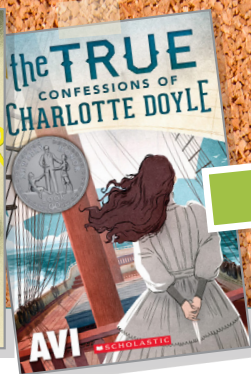
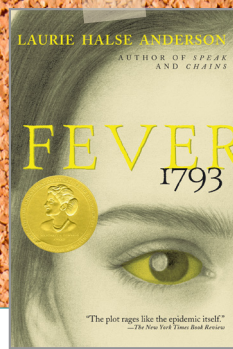
**WHY:** *Wink* will keep readers engaged and laughing with a candid and honest look at illness and disability. Like *Wonder* and *Rules*, *Wink* has themes of living with a chronic condition, developing friendships, and addressing bullying. It also deals with facial differences and friendships that falter (and some that blossom) when the main character deals with illness. Like *Wonder*, *Wink* features a main character who has a sense of humor and doesn't spend a lot of time feeling sorry for himself.

**BONUS:** Harrell is a graphic novelist, so thanks to the illustrations throughout, *Wink* has high reader appeal and numerous cross-curricular applications, including chances to develop visual literacy and potential lessons about disabled artists.





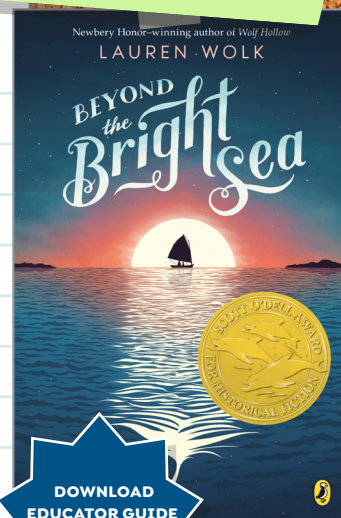
If You Teach  
*Fever 1793* or  
*The True Confessions*  
of Charlotte Doyle...



Try...  
*Beyond the*  
*Bright Sea*  
by Lauren Wolk.

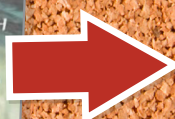
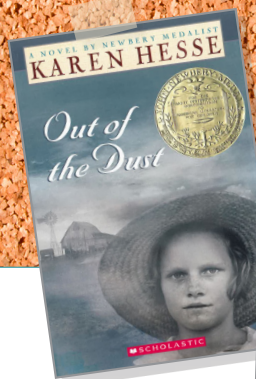
**WHY:** If you enjoy teaching historical fiction with plucky, bright, determined heroines who break out of the social conventions of their eras, *Beyond the Bright Sea* is a good fit. Set in the 1920s, *Beyond the Bright Sea*, like *Fever 1793*, takes place in a slightly less taught historical era and, like *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, has adventures and action. *Beyond the Bright Sea* also deals with empathy, found family, and gaining independence while spotlighting and uplifting characters often considered outcast.

**BONUS:** Driven by a **strong voice and vivid setting**, it's also a fit for historical fiction units, which often fall into the trap of only covering "big" historical moments and can **allow you to explore the "lesser known" historical and local eras and events.**



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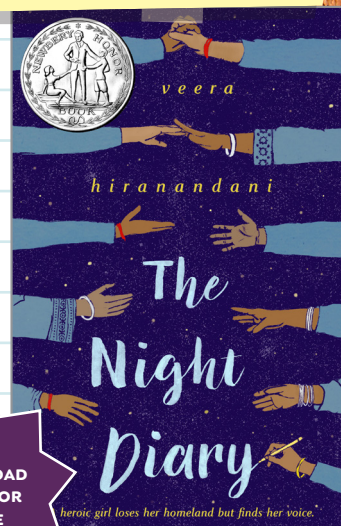
If You Teach  
*Out of the Dust*  
or *Rifles for*  
*Watie*...



Try...  
*The Night*  
*Diary*  
by Veera Hiranandani

**WHY:** If you teach themes of historical upheaval impacting families and altering cultural landscapes, try *The Night Diary*. Like *Rifles for Watie*, *Red Badge of Courage*, and other Civil War novels, *The Night Diary*, focusing on the 1947 Partition of India, deals with families being torn apart due to political reasons and gives readers a lot of material to dig into and research about ideological and political differences. Like *Out of the Dust*, *The Night Diary* is an emotional, nuanced, and expertly crafted look at the loss and growth the main character experiences set against the backdrop of an unforgettable era of history.

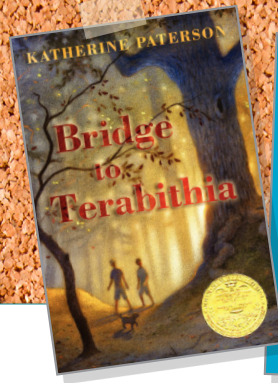
**BONUS:** *The Night Diary* also speaks to the refugee experience, so you can use it to **supplement material about refugee and migrant experiences past and present.**



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If You Teach  
*Bridge to  
Terabithia* or  
*Stargirl*...

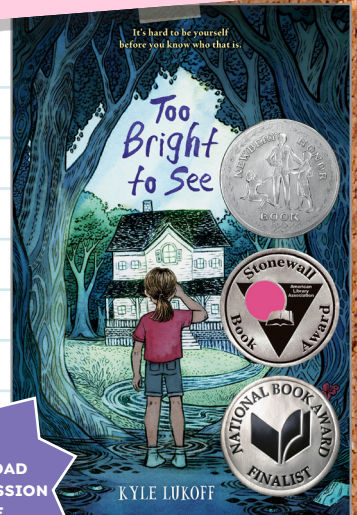


Try ...  
*Too Bright  
To See*  
by Kyle Lukoff

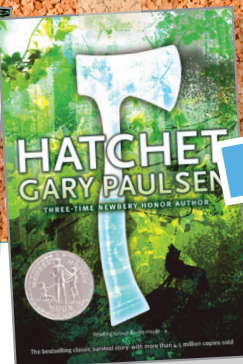
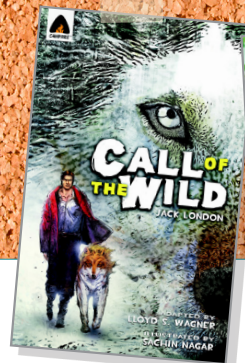
**WHY:** *Too Bright to See* explores how a world of imagination and friendship can change how we understand ourselves and the importance and rewards of being true to your inner self. This makes it a great choice for replacing or supplementing *Bridge to Terabithia* or *Stargirl*, stories students are drawn to for their rich, emotional cores. Like these novels, *Too Bright to See* also gives you a chance to teach about not only self-actualization but peer pressures and the shifting outside conflicts that make up so much of the middle school experience.

**BONUS:** This book is also a **good ghost story and has elements of horror**, so consider pairing it with works by **Mary Downing Hahn or Neil Gaiman**.

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GUIDE



If You Teach  
*Call of the  
Wild* or  
*Hatchet*...

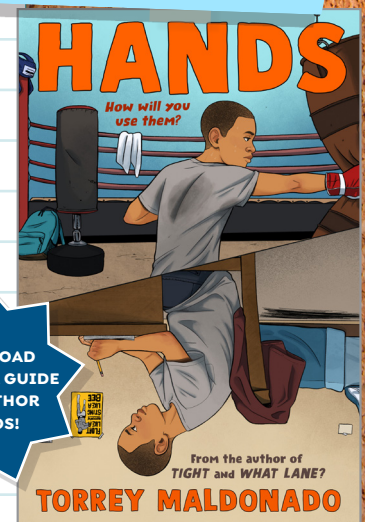


Try ...  
*Hands*  
by Torrey  
Maldonado

**WHY:** If you are looking for a short, dramatic text that raises questions about endurance and a deeper understanding of what makes a person a survivor and able to deal with hard situations, *Hands* is a good compliment or replacement to these two classic survival stories. Like these titles, *Hands* also has an extraordinarily well-rendered and immersive setting, giving students a chance to explore the impact of setting on character.

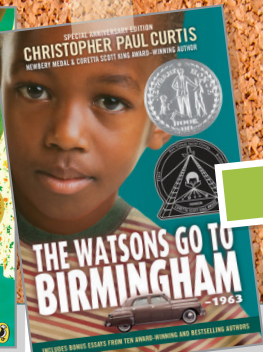
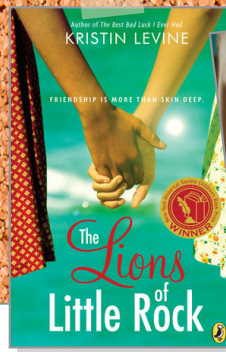
**BONUS:** This book is also about **surviving abuse and building resilience**, so think about pairing it with titles or units that focus on those themes. It is a **short read with a strong voice**, which also **makes it an ideal fit for a possible class read-aloud** if you cannot afford an entire class set.

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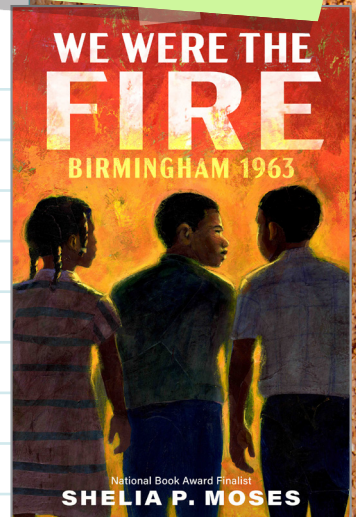
If You Teach  
*The Lions of Little Rock* or  
*The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*...



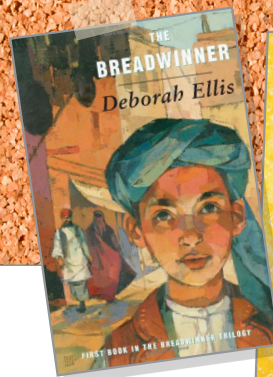
Try...  
*We Were the Fire*  
by Shelia P. Moses

**WHY:** Centering the Civil Rights movement on the lives of a Black American family living in the South, *We Were the Fire* also gives readers a chance to see how youth in the era became involved with marching and protesting for justice. Like *The Lions of Little Rock* and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, this title invites readers into the immediate world of challenging segregation and injustice even at great personal cost, centering a kid's point of view.

**BONUS:** With a believable child narrator and a well-realized, historically accurate setting, this is also an ideal title to supplement or replace adult titles you may be teaching about this era, including *To Kill a Mockingbird*.



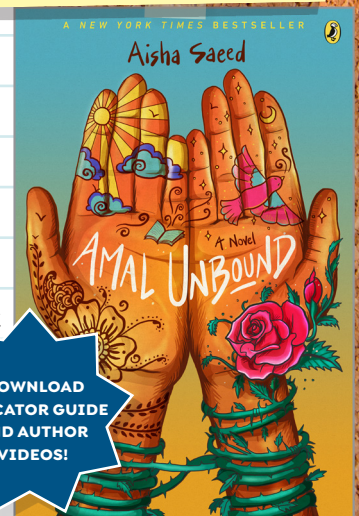
If You Teach  
*The Breadwinner* or  
*Sold*...



Try...  
*Amal Unbound*  
by Aisha Saeed

**WHY:** *Amal Unbound* is a gripping, character-driven story of a young girl breaking both societal and familial expectations to speak her own truth and find freedom in a situation that is centered on the subjugation and exploitation of the poor.. If you want to teach a book set in the Middle East, *Amal Unbound* takes place in Pakistan but deals with more current issues facing Pakistani youth, making it easier to find contemporary cross-curricular connections. *Amal Unbound* also offers a chance to teach a book about Muslim characters written by a Muslim author.

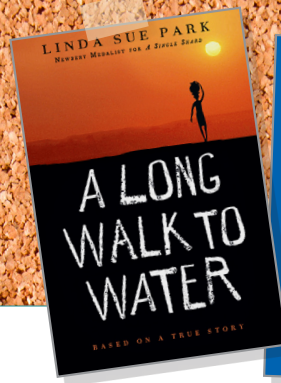
**BONUS:** *Amal Unbound* is a good replacement for a number of books by non-Muslim authors, including *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* and *Homeless Bird*. With strong setting and voice, *Amal Unbound* and its companion volume *Omar Rising* are good choices for both class read-alouds and one school/one book reads.



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If You Teach  
*A Long Walk  
to Water*  
or *Hoot*...



Try...  
*Thirst*  
by Varsha Bajaj

**WHY:** If you are looking for a story about water rights and environmental justice with real-world implications focusing on a character with an indomitable will and a desire to help others, *Thirst* is the perfect fit. Like *A Long Walk to Water* and *Hoot*, this title centers community building and illustrates the power in working together to change the world and challenge injustices. *Thirst* also looks at a more contemporary issue, so it will be easier to find more current outside material to support extension activities.

**BONUS:** *Thirst* is set in Mumbai, so it is another **good choice for a global selection**. It is fast-paced and action and character driven and **under two hundred pages**, so it's another selection that would be good for a single class read-aloud.

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If You Teach  
*Freak the Mighty*  
or *Out of  
My Mind*...



Try...  
*Aniana del Mar  
Jumps In*  
by Jasminne Mendez

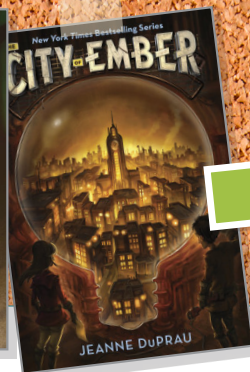
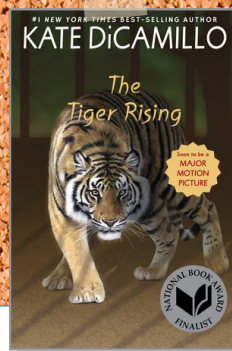
**WHY:** If you want a text that builds empathy and understanding for a disabled character while also showing the fullness of their gifts, try *Aniana del Mar Jumps In*. This is also a novel in verse, which gives readers a chance to explore voice and point of view, two elements that make *Freak the Mighty* and *Out of My Mind* popular with readers. Additionally, it looks at the impacts on daily life that chronic illness has and invites readers to think of ways they can thrive in new circumstances.

**BONUS:** The strong focus on sports (swimming and diving) adds high appeal to this as a title for a class read as well as provides additional extension activities. Numerous forms of poetry are used throughout and can serve as mentor texts for student writing. There are also a key subplots about **dealing with parental expectations, generational trauma, and finding ways to live comfortably and confidently in your body, all popular topics for discussion.**





If You Teach  
*The Tiger Rising*  
or *City of Ember*...

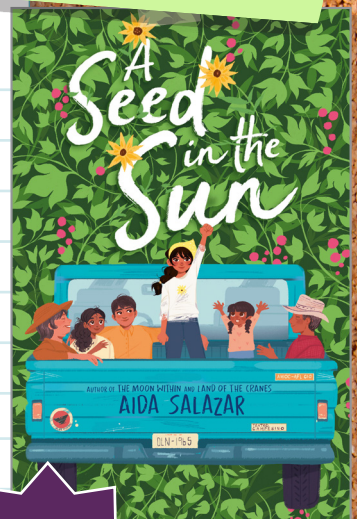


Try...  
*A Seed in the Sun*  
by Aida Salazar.

**WHY:** As historical fiction in verse, *A Seed in the Sun* is different in genre from the *The Tiger Rising* and *City of Ember*, but if you look a little closer, you'll find several similarities. Like *City of Ember* and *The Tiger Rising*, *A Seed in the Sun* is a book about finding the courage inside you to commit to doing what you know is the right thing, even when other forces—and adults—might try to dissuade you. Additionally, *A Seed in the Sun* also has strong friendships and main characters resisting the unjust hierarchies of power in their societies.

**BONUS:** With a **focus on labor organizers** like Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and Larry Itliong, the opportunity for cross-curricular research and extension activities are great with this title, and there's simply not a lot of titles on the market for this age group that offer a look at this period.

It's also a perfect compliment to the curriculum staple *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan.



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