

2025-2026 Kentucky Bluegrass Award Nominee List for 9-12

All the Fighting Parts / Hannah Sawyer / Henry N. Abrams, 2023

Sixteen-year-old Amina Conteh has always believed in using her voice as her weapon—even when it gets her into trouble. After cursing at a classmate, her father forces her to volunteer at their church with Pastor Johnson. But Pastor Johnson isn't the holy man everyone thinks he is.

The same voice Amina uses to fight falls quiet the night she is sexually assaulted by Pastor Johnson. After that, her life starts to unravel: her father is frustrated that her grades are slipping, and her best friend and boyfriend don't understand why the once loud and proud girl is now quiet and distant. In a world that claims to support survivors, Amina wonders who will support her when her attacker is everyone's favorite community leader.

When Pastor Johnson is arrested for a different crime, the community is shaken and divided; some call him a monster and others defend him. But Amina is secretly relieved. She no longer has to speak because Pastor Johnson can't hurt her anymore—or so she believes. To regain her voice and sense of self, Amina must find the power to confront her abuser—in the courtroom and her heart—and learn to use all the fighting parts within her.

Black Girl You Are Atlas / Renee Watson (author), Euka Holmes (illustrator) / Kokila / 2024

In this semi-autobiographical collection of poems, Renée Watson writes about her experience growing up as a young Black girl at the intersections of race, class, and gender. Using a variety of poetic forms, from haiku to free verse, Watson shares recollections of her childhood in Portland, tender odes to the Black women in her life, and urgent calls for Black girls to step into their power.

Brownstone / Samuel Teer / Versify / 2024

A father and daughter work together to renovate an old townhome and to build the relationship they never got to have. When Almudena's mother goes away for a summer, she meets her immigrant Guatemalan father for the first time. Almudena has so many questions for him like: Who are you? Why have we not met before? Where have you been my whole life? She cannot wait to ask, but when she arrives at her father's door, she finds out he can only say a few words in English. Since Almudena does not speak any Spanish, she must learn to rely on the people in her father's community for help. Will she be able to find a place for herself in her father's life and share in his heritage?

The Glass Girl / Kathleen Glasgow / Delacorte Press / 2024

Everyone in fifteen-year-old Bella's life needs something from her. Her mom needs her to help around the house, her dad needs her to not make waves, her ex needs her to not be so much. The only person who never needed anything from her was her grandmother—and now she's dead.

There's only one thing that dulls the pressure: alcohol. Vodka, beer, peppermint schnapps—alcohol smooths the sharp edges of Bella's life. And what's the big deal? Everyone drinks.

Besides, Bella can stop whenever she wants. But after she gets blackout drunk at a Thanksgiving party and wakes up in the hospital, it's time to face reality. And for Bella, reality means rehab.

The Last Bloodcarver / Vanessa Le / Roaring Brook Press / 2024

In the industrial city of Theumas, Nhika is seen not as a healer, but a monster that kills for pleasure. And in the city's criminal underbelly, the rarest of monsters are traded for gold. When Nhika is finally caught by the infamous Butchers, she's forced to heal the last witness to a high-profile murder.

As Nhika delves into the investigation, all signs point to Ven Kochin, an alluring yet entitled physician's aide. Despite his relentless attempts to push her out of his opulent world, something inexplicable draws Nhika to him. But when she discovers Kochin is not who he claims to be, Nhika will be faced with a greater, more terrifying evil lurking in the city's center... Her only chance to survive lies in a terrible choice—become the dreaded monster the city fears, or risk jeopardizing the future of her kind.

Lunar New Year Love Story / Gene Luen Yang / First Second / 2024

She was destined for heartbreak. Then fate handed her love. Val is ready to give up on love. It's led to nothing but secrets and heartbreak, and she's pretty sure she's cursed—no one in her family, for generations, has ever had any luck with love. But then a chance encounter with a pair of cute lion dancers sparks something in Val. Is it real love? Could this be her chance to break the family curse? Or is she destined to live with a broken heart forever?

The Reappearance of Rachel Price / Holly Jackson / Delacorte Press / 2024

Eighteen-year-old Bel has lived her whole life in the shadow of her mom's mysterious disappearance. Sixteen years ago, Rachel Price vanished and young Bel was the only witness, but she has no memory of it. Rachel is gone, long presumed dead, and Bel wishes everyone would just move on. But the case is dredged up from the past when the Price family agrees to a true crime documentary. Bel can't wait for filming to end, for life to go back to normal. And then the impossible happens. Rachel Price reappears, and life will never be normal again.

Rachel has an unbelievable story about what happened to her. Unbelievable, because Bel isn't sure it's real. If Rachel is lying, then where has she been all this time? And—could she be dangerous? With the cameras still rolling, Bel must uncover the truth about her mother, and find out why Rachel Price really came back from the dead . . .

Sky's End / Marc Gregson / Peachtree Teen / 2024

Exiled to live as a Low under the merciless rule of the Meritocracy, sixteen-year-old Conrad refuses to become heir to his murderous uncle. But when behemoth sky serpents attack the floating island of Holmstead and devour Conrad's ailing mother, Conrad cuts a deal to save the only family he has left. To rescue his sister from his uncle's clutches, Conrad must enter the Selection of the Twelve Trades.

Freshly recruited into Hunter, the deadliest of all the Trades, Conrad endures rigorous training, manipulative peers, and the Gauntlet—a brutal final challenge that pits Conrad's skyship crew against the very terrors that orphaned him. As Conrad competes in the lowest of stations, he overhears whispers of rebellion in the dark. Conrad had never known anything existed below the toxic black clouds of the Skylands . . . until now.

That's Not My Name / Megan Lally / Sourcebooks / 2023

Shivering and bruised, a teen wakes up on the side of a dirt road with no memory of how she got there—or who she is. A passing officer takes her to the police station, and not long after, a frantic man arrives. He's been searching for her for hours. He has her school ID, her birth certificate, and even family photos. He is her father. Her name is Mary. Or so he says.

When Lola slammed the car door and stormed off into the night, Drew thought they just needed some time to cool off. Except Lola disappeared, and the sheriff, his friends, and the whole town are convinced Drew murdered his girlfriend. Forget proving his innocence, he needs to find her before it's too late. The longer Lola is missing, the fewer leads there are to follow...and the more danger they both are in.

What the River Knows / Isabel Ibanez / Wednesday Books / 2023

Bolivian-Argentinian Inez Olivera belongs to the glittering upper society of nineteenth century Buenos Aires, and like the rest of the world, the town is steeped in old world magic that's been largely left behind or forgotten. Inez has everything a girl might want, except for the one thing she yearns the most: her globetrotting parents—who frequently leave her behind.

When she receives word of their tragic deaths, Inez inherits their massive fortune and a mysterious guardian, an archeologist in partnership with his Egyptian brother-in-law. Yearning for answers, Inez sails to Cairo, bringing her sketch pads and a golden ring her father sent to her for safekeeping before he died. But upon her arrival, the old world magic tethered to the ring pulls her down a path where she soon discovers there's more to her parent's disappearance than what her guardian led her to believe. With her guardian's infuriatingly handsome assistant thwarting her at every turn, Inez must rely on ancient magic to uncover the truth about her parent's disappearance—or risk becoming a pawn in a larger game that will kill her.