



SUPPLEMENTAL READING LIST

The following titles were selected by Jennifer Mann, Teen Librarian for the Ypsilanti District Library, to offer additional support for the “What Makes a Hero?” series. Great Stories Club program hosts are encouraged to recommend these titles for additional thematic exploration, plan supplemental programs using the list, or seek local funding to expand the series to include discussion of one or more additional titles.

Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepytus

In 1941, fifteen-year-old Lina, her mother and her brother are taken from their home by Soviet guards and sent to a Siberian work camp. This is a great historical novel depicting the cruel reality of 20th-century Soviet Union. Lina’s father is sentenced to death while she and her mother and brother are sent on a cattle train into the remotest region imaginable. Humiliated and degraded on a daily basis, Lina is forced to grow up quickly to try and keep her starving and overworked family together. What is so riveting about this book is the fact that sometimes simply surviving and waking to another day is courage enough. Based on a true story with historical notes.

Code Name Verity by Elizabeth Wein

Teen girl spy Queenie is the narrator of this World War II espionage story. When her spy plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France, Queenie is arrested by the Gestapo and interrogated by her Nazi captors. They give her a choice: reveal her mission or face execution. As she narrates her confession, she weaves it in such a way that leaves her interrogator rapt with her tale. In the spirit of Shahrazad and the Arabian Nights, this book is full of mystery, intrigue and conflicting views on courage.

A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness

This is a tale that artfully weaves fantasy and reality together, and as a reader, you easily forget where one

ends and the other begins. Conor O’Malley’s mother has cancer and she isn’t going to get better. No amount of hope can stop his fears from becoming reality ... or can it? When strange things begin happening at the same time every night, Conor begins to question what is real and what is imagined. Isolated and emotionally withdrawn, Conor’s fears call upon something ancient and powerful. *A Monster Calls* is a story that unravels the layers of truth in all our lives and the anger, sadness and contemplation one feels when coming to terms with it. From the original idea of award-winning author Siobhan Dowd — whose premature death from cancer prevented her from writing it herself — Patrick Ness’s magnificent storytelling has created a haunting and powerfully moving novel of humans and monsters, and the inability to always know the difference between the two.

Never Fall Down by Patricia McCormick

Eleven-year-old Arn Chorn-Pond was taken from his family in 1975 when the Communist Khmer Rouge came into power. This book recounts the brutality of starvation, violence and hard labor among a group of young Cambodians, many no older than elementary age. Arn survives this four-year-long atrocity through determination, resiliency and music. He is brought to America, but not without scars, recounting, “I am poison,” and “I hurt everything I touch.”



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***Nightbird* by Alice Hoffman**

Part modern fairy tale, part mystery, *Nightbird* is set in a small town where townsfolk believe in unseen monsters who steal from them and a family lives in secret with an ancient curse. In this remote place Twig Fowler, the lonely girl who is looking for friendship, and her brother, James, the boy who is unable to share his strangeness, both hope for something magical to happen. When a new family comes to town and moves into the cottage next door, everything is about to change.

Jenna Lamia does an excellent job of narrating, quite convincingly sounding like a bright, complex, yet forlorn twelve-year-old girl. Ms. Lamia captures the strange, ethereal essence of the tale and performs each character authentically. She delivers uncomfortable, sad scenes as well as enchants the reader with tender and touching ones. Ms. Lamia is a gifted narrator who tells this coming-of-age fantasy story perfectly.

Nightbird is recommended for reluctant readers looking for a story that sympathizes with adolescent isolation and insecurity, highlighting resilience, courage, and the importance of friendship and family as keys to overcoming them.

***Nimona* by Noelle Stevenson**

This story is a genre mash-up of medieval culture and high-tech society with a generous helping of humor. Lord Ballister Blackheart, a knight betrayed by the kingdom's champion, has assumed the role of a supervillain with the intent to expose the criminal

Institute of Law Enforcement. When a puckish young girl named Nimona shows up at Blackheart's doorstep, he can't say no to her when she wants to be his sidekick. Nimona's shapeshifter skills add an X-factor to an already alchemic mix of animosity and betrayal between Lord Blackheart and his nemesis, Sir Goldenloin. Despite her highly impulsive behavior and anger management issues, the two create a co-dependent bond of alliance against the evil regime.

***Port Chicago 50* by Steve Sheinkin**

A finalist for YALSA's 2015 Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Award, the book traces the virtually unknown story of fifty African American sailors convicted of mutiny by the U.S. Navy during World War II. Discrimination against African Americans was prevalent in the military, and the Navy was no different. In the 1940s, black enlisted men had only two options: to work in the kitchens or mess halls, or to load heavy ammunition onto ships with no safety precautions. After hundreds died in an explosion on the docks of San Francisco, black sailors refused to follow orders to continue loading the dangerous explosives, and the Navy charged the men with mutiny. Their story and their fight, spearheaded by Thurgood Marshall, became a rallying cry against discriminatory segregation policies.

The story's narrative and well-researched documentation make this an extremely compelling read. Sheinkin includes historical photographs, notes, interviews and court document to make this a rich historical experience.