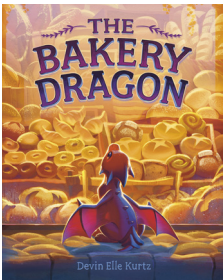


Iowa Goldfinch Award

2026–2027



BAKERY DRAGON KURTZ, D.

He couldn't steal treasure, so he learned to make it.

A young dragon named Ember fears he'll never grow up to be as mighty as the other dragons he lives with, who steal gold for their lairs and incite fear in humans. His first attempts to steal gold in the village fall flat and he avoids going home out of shame, falling asleep in front of a bakery. The kind baker takes him in and he soon learns how to make golden loaves of baked goods. After sharing them with his dragon friends, Ember gets them to part with their gold for more and learns that creating gold and sharing it with others is way more fulfilling than stealing it.



DON'T TRUST FISH! SHARPSON, N.

The truth about fish, according to someone who really can't stand them.

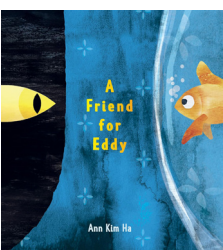
An unnamed narrator introduces three different animal classes—mammals, reptiles, and birds—before landing on fish and going off on a tangent via humorous commentary on their devious nature, such as, how they eat innocent crabs and really are trying to take over the world. Readers soon learn who the narrator really is and why they have a bias against fish.



ECHO REX, A.

An echo may copy your words, but a true friend gives you something real in return.

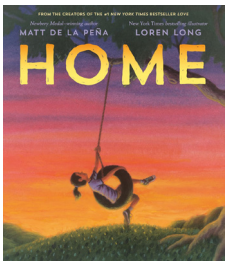
Junior, a boy who lives on the side of a mountain, makes friends with an echo that bounces in a canyon and always agrees with him. After a girl named Sandy moves in next door, he discovers she's not as agreeable as the echo, but realizes later that having a true friend is much more interesting than being around someone who always agrees with you.



A FRIEND FOR EDDY HA, A.

Eddy thinks he's found playmates—until one leap reveals a very hungry truth.

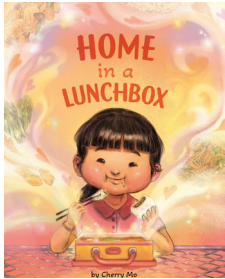
Eddy the goldfish is lonely and wishes he had a friend to play with, so when a little yellow fish appears outside his bowl one day, he's overjoyed. Another fish appears, and the three of them play hide-and-seek, dance together, have a staring contest, and giggle so hard the bowl fills with bubbles. Every day, Eddy looks forward to seeing his new friends and wishes he could be outside with them, so one day, he does the unthinkable and jumps right out of the bowl. He soon realizes he's stuck and can't swim or breathe, and when his friends appear, he discovers they aren't fish at all, they are the eyes of a cat.



HOME DE LA PENA, M.

What is home? It's a feeling, not a place.

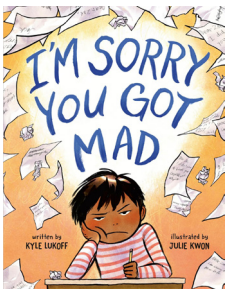
Explores the meaning of home, sifting through the sounds heard in a city, a harbor, and inside an eighteen wheeler. Discusses what losing a home could be like, due to a natural disaster, losing a job, or even just moving away. Reminds readers that homes can be rebuilt and home can be anywhere, as long as those they love are by their side.



HOME IN A LUNCHBOX MO, C.

New country, new school—lunchbox memories help Jun belong.

Young Jun has just moved from Hong Kong to America. The first week of school is frustrating since Jun can't speak or understand English. But each day when she opens her lunchbox, the foods there remind her of home and comfort her. The food catches the attention of a classmate and leads to Jun making new friends.



I'M SORRY YOU GOT MAD LUKOFF, K.

A boy learns how real apologies can heal hurt feelings.

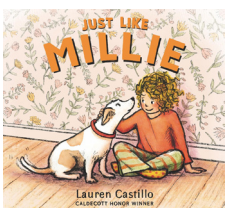
When Jack knocks over Zoe's castle and hurts her feelings, Jack is instructed to apologize to her and learns how to offer an apology that heals their relationship.



JUMP FOR JOY RUELLE, K.

A girl desperately wants a dog, and a dog longs for a home.

For as long as she has known about them, little Joy has wanted a dog. For as long as he can remember, Jump, a dog, has wanted to be with a kid. This is the story of their search for one another.



JUST LIKE MILLIE CASTILLO, L.

A rescue dog helps a shy girl make friends.

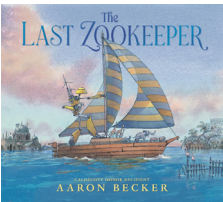
After moving to a new apartment, a young girl has a hard time making friends, until her mother adopts a rescue dog named Millie, who helps the girl feel safe when meeting new people.



KNIGHT OWL AND EARLY BIRD DENISE, C.

Two opposite birds must cooperate to protect their kingdom.

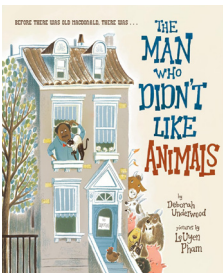
Knight Owl is Early Bird's hero, and she wants to be brave like him and protect the castle. But Knight Owl thinks Early Bird is too noisy and chatty, and she keeps him awake all day with her endless questions and then falls asleep on the job at night. The two birds must find a way to work together and be good knights despite their differences in order to protect the kingdom.



LAST ZOOKEEPER BECKER, A.

A robot rescues animals as rising waters reshape their world.

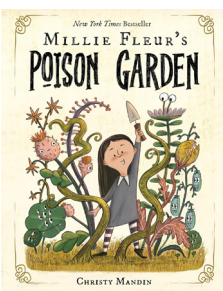
A wordless picture book that follows a robot zookeeper named NOA, that turns its shipbuilding hobby into a mechanism for saving the lives of endangered zoo animals as water rises all around them, making their home uninhabitable. Taking to the sea, NOA and the animals are beset by fierce weather and shipwrecked on a new land that offers them hope.



MAN WHO DIDN'T LIKE ANIMALS UNDERWOOD, D.

A tidy man who doesn't like animals accidentally creates a farm.

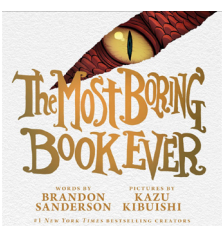
Imagines the story of how Old McDonald wound up on a farm with so many animals. According to this story, Old MacDonal was a man who preferred a tidy home to animals until a cat shows up on his doorstep and refuses to leave. He soon realizes living with a cat isn't so bad, and soon a host of other animals show up, one by one, until his house is filled to the brim with creatures and he decides to move to a farm to accommodate them all.



MILLIE FLEUR'S POISON GARDEN MANDIN, C.

A unique garden transforms a town afraid of differences.

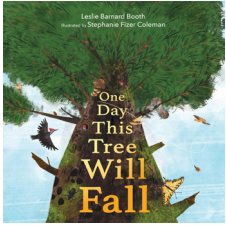
Millie Fleur La Fae and her mother move to Garden Glen where every house and garden looks the same. Millie Fleur begins planting a strange garden filled with unusual, unruly plants. The townspeople of Garden Glen protest and call the garden poison but Millie Fleur loves her unique garden. She decides to invite her classmates and teacher to tour the garden and soon Garden Glen is transformed by Millie Fleur's plants.



MOST BORING BOOK EVER SANDERSON, B.

A bored boy is catapulted into imaginary adventures.

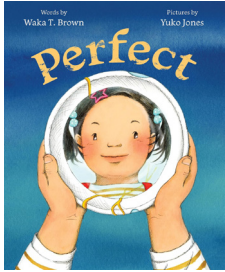
An ordinary boy is sitting in a chair watching clouds, thinking about laundry, looking for birds, and doing math homework when he is thrust on an imaginary adventure involving pirates, dragons, and other dangers.



ONE DAY THIS TREE WILL FALL BOOTH, L.

A fallen tree becomes a new forest full of life.

The narrator of this children's illustrated story questions the value of an old twisted tree that will eventually fall in the forest. Following the tree's life cycle from seed to healthy maturity to slow decline, the text explains that after the tree falls, its old life ends and a new one begins as it becomes an ecosystem unto itself, as a home for fungi, insects, woodland animals, and microscopic creatures, all of which are a valuable part of the forest.



PERFECT BROWN, W.

A girl learns beauty can come from imperfection.

A young girl named Miki wants everything to be perfect; if cookies aren't round she won't eat them; if her clothes or stuffed animals get a tear she doesn't want them anymore. When she drops a special teacup from her grandmother, Obaachan gathers the chipped remains and later returns with it intact—fixed using the Japanese art of kintsugi—and Miki learns the beauty of imperfection.



SOMETHING, SOMEDAY GORMAN, A.

A child transforms a neighborhood through a small, determined act.

A young child sees a pile of trash in their neighborhood and knows it should be cleaned up. When they are told there's nothing that can be done about it and they can't make a difference, they decide to try anyway. Through perseverance, the child learns how change happens, as they clean up a lot, gain a small following, build a garden bed, and cultivate plants that at first wither, but eventually flourish to provide for everyone in the neighborhood.



URSULA UPSIDE DOWN TABOR, C.

A catfish's world flips upside down...or is it right side up?

Ursula the catfish enjoys swimming each day through a river of weeds and searching for bugs below and in the sky. When a friendly fish points out that Ursula is swimming upside down, her world changes and soon she's confused about the right and wrong ways to do everything. Features illustrated pages directing readers to flip the book as they read.



YELLOW BUS LONG, L.

A forgotten bus discovers new purpose with unexpected friends.

A yellow school bus enjoys carrying children and older adults around town, and when it is forgotten, it still finds joy and purpose providing a home for the unhoused and a playground for goats in a farmer's field. In its final resting place, it continues to find happiness as a gathering place for new, unexpected friends.
