***Faking Normal* Courtney Stevenson**

Sixteen-year-old Alexi has a secret; something bad happened to her last summer, but she is not saying what. Publicly, she pretends that everything is alright, but privately, she counts compulsively and painfully scratches herself. She is, she thinks, “fresh out of happy,” but “faking normal” is a skill she learned last summer. Then Bodee—the quiet, shy boy next door—moves in with her family, and Alexi finds a friend and confidant. Meanwhile, an unknown boy begins leaving song lyrics for Alexi that have an uncanny capacity to capture her moods. She calls the boy Captain Lyric and realizes that she is falling in love with him. But who is he? And what is the secret Alexi resolutely continuing to keep? First-time novelist Stevens does a nice job of managing these unknowns, though many readers will have guessed the answers before the big reveals. Nevertheless, Alexi, though occasionally exasperating, is a well realized, sympathetic character, as is Bodee, and the resolution of their slowly evolving relationship is deeply satisfying.

***Nimona* Noelle Stevenson**

Lord Ballister Blackheart, a knight, has assumed the role of a supervillain in order to expose the nefarious schemes of the kingdom's front organization, The Institute of Law Enforcement. The kingdom's champion is Lord Blackheart's nemesis and former best friend, Sir Ambrose Goldenloin. Blackheart's prickly relationship with Goldenloin further explores the limits of their friendship. Enter the title character, a brash young shape-shifter who doggedly follows Ballister until he agrees to take her on as a sidekick. Nimona's skills as a shape-shifter up the ante in the ongoing rivalry between Ambrose and Ballister. Despite her anger management issues, the teen becomes Ballister's invaluable ally and together they form an alliance of mutual trust and dependence. Action scenes dominate as Nimona shifts with Hulk-like ferocity from frightful creatures such as a fire-breathing dragon to a docile cat or a timid child.

***The Chocolate War*** **Robert Cormier**

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the whole school comes apart at the seams. To some, Jerry is a hero, but to others, he becomes a scapegoat--a target for their pent-up hatred. And Jerry? He's just trying to stand up for what he believes, but perhaps there is no way for him to escape becoming a pawn in this game of control; students are pitted against other students, fighting for honor--or are they fighting for their lives?

***Taking Flight* Michaela DePrince**

In this moving memoir, DePrince, who in 1995 was born in war-torn Sierra Leone but went on to become an acclaimed professional ballerina, tells her story. Her struggles started early: it was discovered that she had vitiligo, a medical condition that results in blotchy, irregular patches of skin, and her biological parents both died when she was only three. DePrince was sold to an orphanage, where she was starved and abused and where she witnessed the brutal murder of her pregnant teacher, a memory that would forever haunt her. After the orphanage was bombed, DePrince and the other orphans fled to a refugee camp. When she was four years old, she and her best friend, Mia, were adopted by the same family and taken to live in the United States. Just before leaving, DePrince found a magazine photograph of a ballerina, and her dream of becoming a dancer was born. Her supportive family did everything they could to help her attain her goal, but the girl still encountered challenges, including prejudice from those who believed African American dancers to be less suited for the craft ("'Black girls just shouldn't be dancing ballet. They're too athletic. They should leave the classical ballet to white girls.'"). However, she persevered and succeeded, becoming the youngest principal dancer for the Dance Theatre of Harlem and joining the Dutch National Ballet. Though the text is accessible and engaging, there are events that are glossed over or not fully fleshed out, such as details of her adopted sister's medical problems. Overall, though, DePrince is an inspiring narrator, wise beyond her years. An uplifting story about overcoming the odds.

***Red Queen* Victoria Aveyard**

Seventeen-year-old Mare Barrow lives in a world where one's lot in life is determined by the color of one's blood. She was born a Red and has to make a living by pickpocketing and trying to dodge "the conscription" and being sent off to fight an ongoing war. Mare's resigned herself to the fact that she'll always serve the Silver, a genetically gifted group of people with supernatural abilities. A chance encounter with the prince causes Mare to suddenly find herself at the royal palace as a servant, where she discovers in front of everyone that she also has a unique gift. She is Red and Silver, and could be just the spark the Reds need to rise up against the oppressive Silvers. The king and queen quickly cover up Mare's anomaly by presenting her to the rest of the Silvers as a long-lost princess and betroth her to their second-born son. Now Mare is torn between playing the part of a Silver, and helping out the Scarlet Guard rebellion. The story has touches of the usual dystopian suspects. However, it's formulaic elements are far outweighed by the breakneck pace and engaging characters. There's a bit of teen romance, but luckily the characters are self-aware enough to realize its frivolity among the story's more important plot points

***Undertow* Michael Buckley**

 Lyric Walker used to be a "wild thing." At 14, she and her friends ruled the dilapidated beach community of Coney Island in Brooklyn, NY. Then one night, Lyric witnesses the arrival of the Alpha, strange creatures from the depths of the ocean, and learns a terrible secret her family has been keeping from her. Three years later, Coney Island is a police state, with the Alpha living in a containment camp on the beach, and furious protestors roam the streets. When six Alpha teenagers are forcibly integrated into the public high school, Lyric's complicated web of hidden truths threatens to unravel. In Lyric, Buckley has created a phenomenal new heroine. Smart and snarky, with rough edges and killer fashion sense, Lyric is a girl to be celebrated. Sharp political commentary and strong parallels to the treatment of minorities in the U.S. ground the world in reality, while the well-rounded and ethnically diverse supporting cast will cause readers to root for them. The climax feels a bit rushed, as revelations and plot developments quickly pile up, but the breathtaking action and cliff-hanger conclusion will leave teens desperate for more

***X*  Ilyasah Shabazz**

Malcolm Little’s parents have always told him that he can achieve anything, but from what he can tell, that’s a pack of lies—after all, his father’s been murdered, his mother’s been taken away, and his dreams of becoming a lawyer have gotten him laughed out of school. There’s no point in trying, he figures, and lured by the nightlife of Boston and New York, he escapes into a world of fancy suits, jazz, girls, and reefer. But Malcolm’s efforts to leave the past behind lead him into increasingly dangerous territory. Deep down, he knows that the freedom he’s found is only an illusion—and that he can’t run forever. *X*follows Malcolm from his childhood to his imprisonment for theft at age twenty, when he found the faith that would lead him to forge a new path and command a voice that still resonates today.

***A Time to Dance* Padma Venkatraman**

Veda, a classical dance prodigy in India, lives and breathes dance—so when an accident leaves her a below-knee amputee, her dreams are shattered. For a girl who’s grown used to receiving applause for her dance prowess and flexibility, adjusting to a prosthetic leg is painful and humbling. But Veda refuses to let her disability rob her of her dreams, and she starts all over again, taking beginner classes with the youngest dancers. Then Veda meets Govinda, a young man who approaches dance as a spiritual pursuit. As their relationship deepens, Veda reconnects with the world around her, and begins to discover who she is and what dance truly means to her.

***Jackaby* William Ritter**

Newly arrived in New Fiddleham, New England, 1892, and in need of a job, Abigail Rook meets R. F. Jackaby, an investigator of the unexplained with a keen eye for the extraordinary--including the ability to see supernatural beings. Abigail has a gift for noticing ordinary but important details, which makes her perfect for the position of Jackaby’s assistant. On her first day, Abigail finds herself in the midst of a thrilling case: A serial killer is on the loose. The police are convinced it’s an ordinary villain, but Jackaby is certain the foul deeds are the work of the kind of creature whose very existence the local authorities--with the exception of a handsome young detective named Charlie Cane--seem adamant to deny

***The Underground Girls of Kabul* Jenny Nordberg**

In Afghanistan, a culture ruled almost entirely by men, the birth of a son is cause for celebration and the arrival of a daughter is often mourned as misfortune. A *bacha posh*(literally translated from Dari as “dressed up like a boy”) is a third kind of child – a girl temporarily raised as a boy and presented as such to the outside world. Jenny Nordberg, the reporter who broke the story of this phenomenon for the *New York Times*, constructs a powerful and moving account of those secretly living on the other side of a deeply segregated society where women have almost no rights and little freedom.

***I’ll Give You the Sun* Jandy Nelson**

Fraternal twins and burgeoning artists Jude and Noah are inseparable until puberty hits and they find themselves competing for boys, a spot at an exclusive art school, and their parents' affections. Told in alternating perspectives and time lines, with Noah's chapters taking place when they are 13 and Jude's when they are 16, this novel explores how it's the people closest to us who have the power to both rend us utterly and knit us together. Jude's takes are peppered with entries from her bible of superstitions and conversations with her grandmother's ghost, and Noah continuously imagines portraits (complete with appropriately artsy titles) to cope with his emotions. In the intervening years, a terrible tragedy has torn their family apart, and the chasm between the siblings grows ever wider. Vibrant imagery and lyrical prose propel readers forward as the twins experience first love, loss, betrayal, acceptance, and forgiveness. Art and wonder fill each page, and threads of magical realism lend whimsy to the narrative.

***Beneath* Roland Smith**

Pat O'Toole has always idolized his older brother, Coop. He's even helped Coop with some of his crazier plans -- such as risking his life to help his big brother dig a tunnel underneath their neighborhood in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Coop is . . . different. He doesn't talk on the phone, doesn't use email, and doesn't have friends. He's never really cared for anything but the thrill of being underground and Pat. So it's no surprise to anyone -- even Pat -- that after a huge fight with their parents, Coop runs away. Exactly one year later, Pat receives a package containing a digital voice recorder and a cryptic message from his brother. He follows the clues to New York City, and soon discovers that Coop has joined the Community, a self-sufficient society living beneath the streets. Now it's up to Pat to find his brother -- and bring him home.

***A Thousand Pieces of You* Claudia Gray**

Marguerite Caine's physicist parents are known for their groundbreaking achievements. Their most astonishing invention, called the Firebird, allows users to jump into multiple universes—and promises to revolutionize science forever. But then Marguerite's father is murdered, and the killer—her parent's handsome, enigmatic assistant Paul— escapes into another dimension before the law can touch him. Marguerite refuses to let the man who destroyed her family go free. So she races after Paul through different universes, always leaping into another version of herself. But she also meets alternate versions of the people she knows—including Paul, whose life entangles with hers in increasingly familiar ways. Before long she begins to question Paul's guilt—as well as her own heart. And soon she discovers the truth behind her father's death is far more sinister than she expected.

***The Kiss of Deception* Mary E. Pearson**

In a society steeped in tradition, Princess Lia's life follows a preordained course. As First Daughter, she is expected to have the revered gift of sight--but she doesn't--and she knows her parents are perpetrating a sham when they arrange her marriage to secure an alliance with a neighboring kingdom--to a prince she has never met. On the morning of her wedding, Lia flees to a distant village. She settles into a new life, hopeful when two mysterious and handsome strangers arrive--and unaware that one is the jilted prince and the other an assassin sent to kill her. Deception abounds, and Lia finds herself on the brink of unlocking perilous secrets--even as she finds herself falling in love.

***Saint Anything* Sarah Dessen**

Sydney has always felt invisible.She's grown accustomed to her brother, Peyton, being the focus of the family’s attention and, lately, concern. Peyton is handsome and charismatic, but seems bent on self-destruction. Now, after a drunk-driving accident that crippled a boy, Peyton’s serving some serious jail time, and Sydney is on her own, questioning her place in the family and the world. Then she meets the Chatham family. Drawn into their warm, chaotic circle, Sydney experiences unquestioning acceptance for the first time. There’s effervescent Layla, who constantly falls for the wrong guy, Rosie, who’s had her own fall from grace, and Mrs. Chatham, who even though ailing is the heart of the family. But it’s with older brother Mac—quiet, watchful, and protective—that Sydney finally feels seen, really seen, at last.