

# trauma-informed diverse reading list



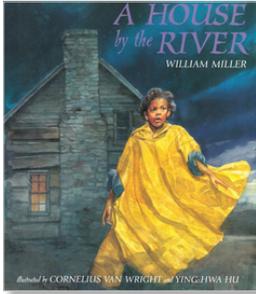
Art from *Bird*, written by Zetta Elliott,  
illustrated by Shadra Strickland

Many children experience trauma, or adverse childhood experiences, and go through times of extreme stress. Trauma has the ability to impact children's learning, social interactions and relationships, and overall well-being. Literature can be a safe space for young people to talk about characters' actions and situations and the ways that they navigated distressing scenarios. The following books showcase child protagonists who cope with trauma in a variety of ways and provide students the opportunity to discuss trauma through the lens of a relatable and engaging character.

- War and Displacement
- Loss and Death
- Natural Disaster
- Violence
- Family Trauma or Separation
- Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity
- Bullying
- Illness and Mental Health

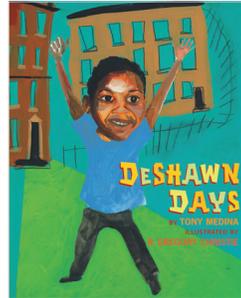
You can find this collection online at:  
[leeandlow.com/collections/trauma-informed-collection](http://leeandlow.com/collections/trauma-informed-collection)

# Grades PreK-2



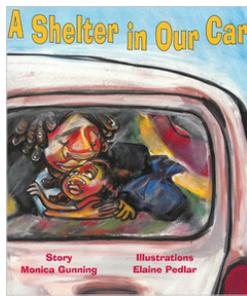
**A HOUSE BY THE RIVER**  
**Natural Disaster**

The story of a young girl who learns her rickety old house by the river is stronger than the fiercest storm because it is fortified by love and family.



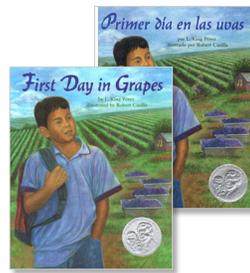
**DESHAWN DAYS**  
**Loss and Death**

In this uplifting story told in verse, a young boy living in the projects of the inner city speaks about his hopes, fears, and dreams.



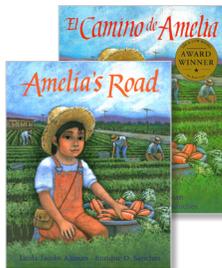
**A SHELTER IN OUR CAR**  
**Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**

In this heartwarming story, Zettie and her mama encounter temporary homelessness and are forced to live in their car, but with unwavering love, support, and determination, they know that they can meet all challenges.



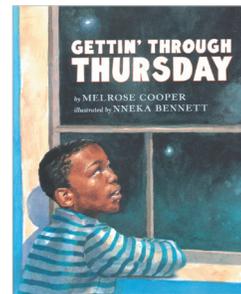
**FIRST DAY IN GRAPES**  
**Bullying**

All year long, Chico and his family move up and down the state of California, picking fruits and vegetables. When bullies confront Chico at his new school, he responds wisely and with strengths of his own. *Also available in Spanish*



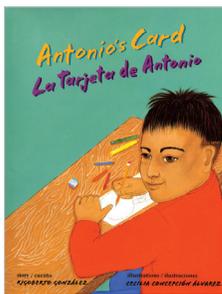
**AMELIA'S ROAD**  
**Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**

Amelia, a child of a migrant worker family, finds solace in a tree that inspires her to put her own roots down in a special way in this inspirational tale. *Also available in Spanish*



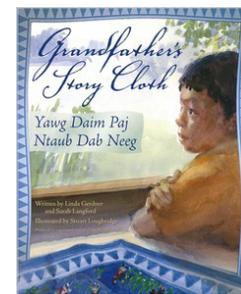
**GETTIN' THROUGH THURSDAY**  
**Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**

A young African American boy experiences the love and support of his family as they try to make ends meet each week.



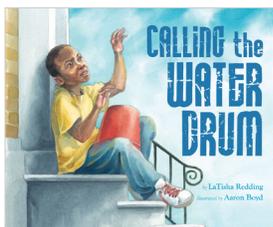
**ANTONIO'S CARD/LA TARJETA DE ANTONIO**  
**Bullying**

In this gentle LGBTQ story written by award-winning Chicano poet Rigoberto González, a young boy considers the right way to celebrate his mother and her partner on Mother's Day. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



**GRANDFATHER'S STORY CLOTH**  
**War and Displacement; Family Trauma or Separation; Illness and Mental Health**

Chersheng and his grandfather, who has Alzheimer's Disease, share a Hmong story cloth that brings Grandfather's memories of his life in Laos to life. Chersheng plans to capture his family's new life with his own art project.



**CALLING THE WATER DRUM**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity; Loss and Death**

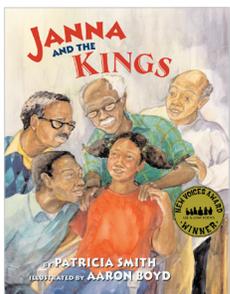
After a young Haitian boy loses his parents as they attempt to flee Haiti in a boat, he can only communicate with the outside world through playing his drum.



**GRANDMA'S PURPLE FLOWERS**  
**Loss and Death**

The story of a young girl who cherishes her frequent visits to her grandma, then finds a way to remember her with hope and joy after she passes away.

# Grades PreK-2



**JANNA AND THE KINGS**

**Loss and Death**

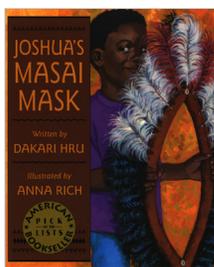
A young African American girl learns to keep her grandfather's memory alive by rediscovering their special place—the local barbershop where they spent Saturdays together.



**SOLEDAD SIGH-SIGHS/SOLEDAD SUSPIROS**

**Family Trauma or Separation**

A delicate and touching tale about Soledad, who dreads coming home to her lonely house every day after school, and her friends' lively ingenuity in dealing with this common concern. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



**JOSHUA'S MASAI MASK**

**Bullying**

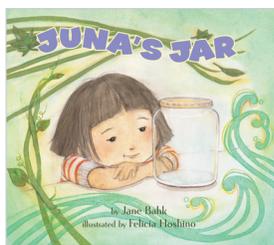
Joshua loves playing his kalimba, a traditional African musical instrument. After he wishes to be popular at the school talent show, where his classmates love rap, his uncle Zambei gives him a magical Masai mask that grants his wish and more.



**SPARKLE BOY**

**Bullying**

Young Casey loves sparkly things, but his older sister Jessie does not approve of his interest until an encounter with bullies helps her learn to accept and respect Casey for who he is.



**JUNA'S JAR**

**Loss and Death**

Juna, an imaginative Korean American girl, goes on magical adventures using her special kimchi jar in search of her best friend who moved away.



**THE BLUE ROSES**

**Loss and Death**

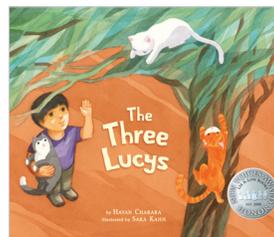
A contemporary Native American girl learns to understand the cycle of life after her beloved grandfather dies.



**PRIETITA AND THE GHOST WOMAN/PRIETITA Y LA LLORONA**

**Loss and Death; Illness and Mental Health**

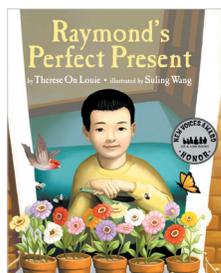
Readers are in for a magical journey in this reinterpretation of the famous Mexican legend of *La Llorona*, the ghost woman. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



**THE THREE LUCYS**

**War and Displacement; Violence; Family Trauma or Separation**

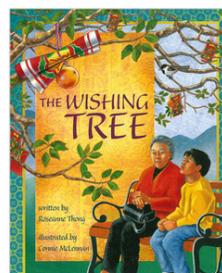
When his village comes under attack and he loses one of his beloved cats, a young Lebanese boy must learn to hope for a peaceful future.



**RAYMOND'S PERFECT PRESENT**

**Illness and Mental Health**

A Chinese American boy receives a nice surprise of his own when he surprises his mother in the hospital.

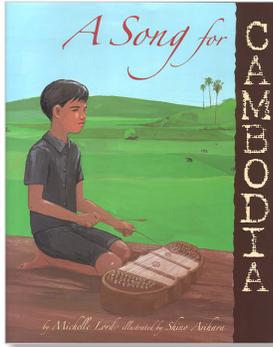


**THE WISHING TREE**

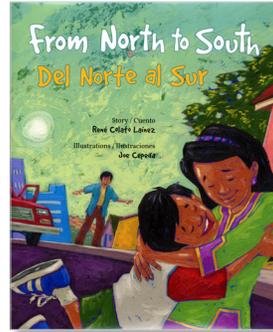
**Family Trauma or Separation; Loss and Death**

A touching story about the love between a boy and his grandmother, coping with her death, and the importance of appreciating what we already have in life.

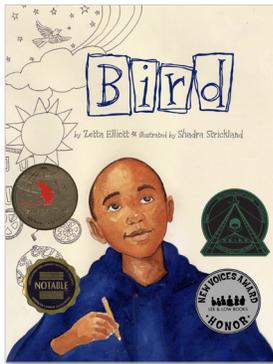
# Grades 3-5



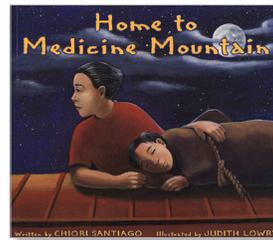
**A SONG FOR CAMBODIA**  
**War and Displacement; Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**  
 The inspirational true story of Arn Chorn-Pond, his early life in a children's work camp after his village was invaded by Khmer Rouge soldiers, and how music changed the course of his life.



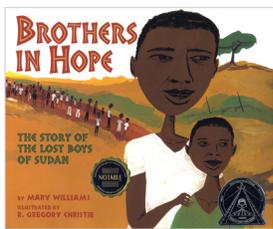
**FROM NORTH TO SOUTH/DEL NORTE AL SUR**  
**Family Trauma or Separation**  
 Author Renée Colato Lainez tackles the difficult subject of family separation with exquisite tenderness when José's Mamá has to return to Mexico for not having proper papers and his family faces an uncertain future. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



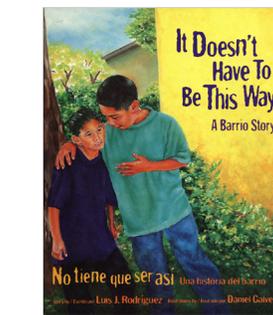
**BIRD**  
**Loss and Death; Illness and Mental Health**  
 An African American boy nicknamed Bird uses drawing as a creative outlet as he struggles to make sense of his grandfather's death and his brother's drug addiction.



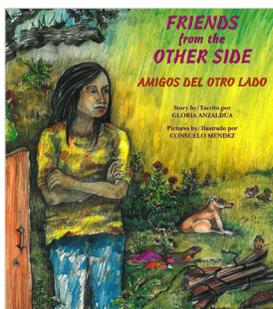
**HOME TO MEDICINE MOUNTAIN**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Bullying**  
 Two young Maidu Indian brothers, sent to live at a government-run Indian residential school in California in the 1930s, find a way to escape and return home for the summer.



**BROTHERS IN HOPE**  
**War and Displacement; Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**  
 After war destroys his village in southern Sudan, a young boy unites with thousands of other orphans to walk safely to a refugee camp. This powerful story of survival and brotherhood is based on true events.



**IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY/ NO TIENE QUE SER ASI**  
**Bullying**  
 A compelling tale of a young boy's encounter with the world of gangs—a world that author Luis J. Rodriguez knows firsthand. There is no easy answer to Monchi's dilemma, but the love and respect of his uncle help him find a way out. *Bilingual English/Spanish*

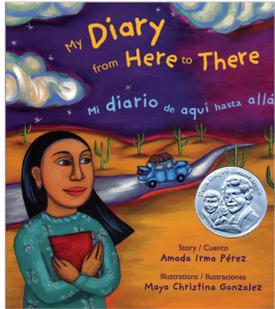


**FRIENDS FROM THE OTHER SIDE/ AMIGOS DEL OTRO LADO**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Bullying; Poverty, Homelessness or Economic Insecurity**  
 This poignant immigration story captures not only the hardship of daily life on the border, but also the beauty of the landscape and the dignity and generosity of spirit that Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants share. *Bilingual English/Spanish*

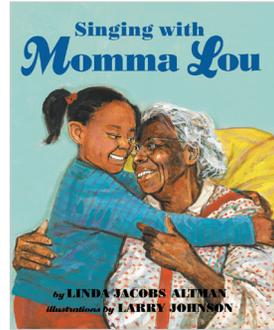


**MALALA YOUSAFZAI: WARRIOR WITH WORDS**  
**War and Displacement; Violence; Family Trauma or Separation**  
 The inspiring true story of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani girl who has become an international activist for universal education, with beautiful collage illustrations by award-winning artist Susan L. Roth. *Also available in Spanish*

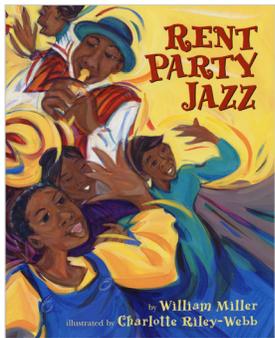
# Grades 3-5



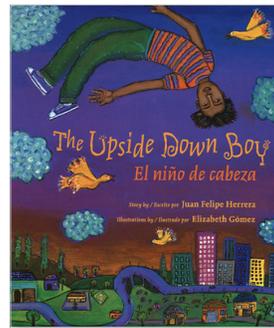
**MY DIARY FROM HERE TO THERE/ MI DIARIO DE AQUI HASTA ALLA**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**  
 Amada records her fears, hopes and dreams about moving from Mexico to the other side of the border in California in her trusted diary. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



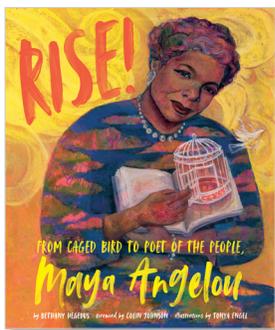
**SINGING WITH MOMMA LOU**  
**Illness and Mental Health**  
 A little girl searches for a way to help her grandmother, who suffers from Alzheimer's, restore her memories.



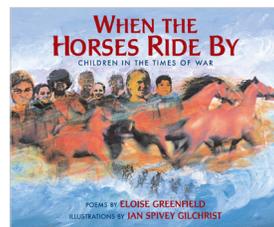
**RENT PARTY JAZZ**  
**Poverty, Homelessness, or Economic Insecurity**  
 An African American boy living in New Orleans in the 1930s raises money to pay the rent with the help of a popular jazz musician.



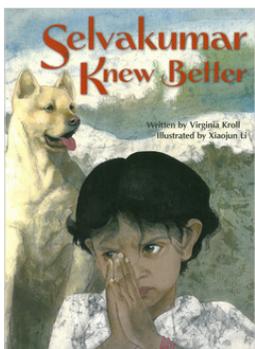
**THE UPSIDE DOWN BOY/EL NIÑO DE CABEZA**  
**Family Trauma or Separation**  
*The Upside Down Boy/El niño de cabeza* is former US Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera's engaging memoir of the year his migrant family settled down so that he could go to school for the first time. *Bilingual English/Spanish*



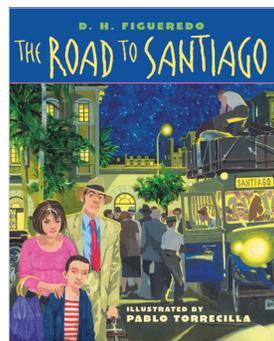
**RISE! FROM CAGED BIRD TO POET OF THE PEOPLE, MAYA ANGELOU**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Violence**  
 In celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, this beautiful biography of Maya Angelou describes how she rose above a childhood of trauma and emotional pain to become one of the most inspiring voices of our lifetime.



**WHEN THE HORSES RIDE BY**  
**War and Displacement**  
 A collection of poems about children throughout history, focusing on their perceptions of war and how war affects their lives.

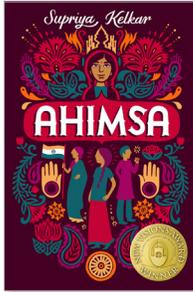


**SELVAKUMAR KNEW BETTER**  
**Natural Disaster**  
 The true story of a courageous and clever dog who saved a boy's life during the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 is sure to touch the hearts of readers of all ages.

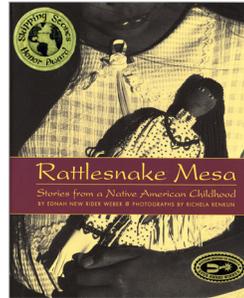


**THE ROAD TO SANTIAGO**  
**War and Displacement**  
 Alfredo and his parents need to get to Santiago for Christmas, but the war against the *rebeldes* has stopped all the trains. So the family finds a farmer with an old car . . . the start of an adventure they will never forget. This heartwarming story is based on author D.H. Figueredo's experience growing up in Cuba in the late 1950s.

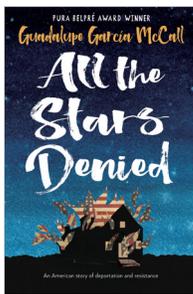
# Grades 6-8+



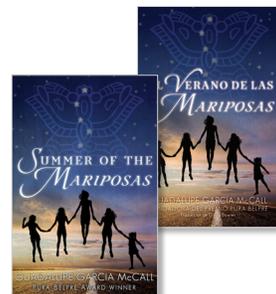
**AHIMSA**  
**Loss and Death; Family Trauma or Separation; Violence**  
 In this historical novel, Gandhi asks for one member of each family to join the fight for independence from the British, and when Anjali's mother is jailed for doing so, Anjali must step out of her comfort zone to take over her mother's work.



**RATTLESNAKE MESA**  
**Family Trauma or Separation; Bullying**  
 The true account of a spirited Native American girl's experiences growing up on a reservation and attending Phoenix Indian School in the 1920s, accompanied by photographs that recreate the time and place.



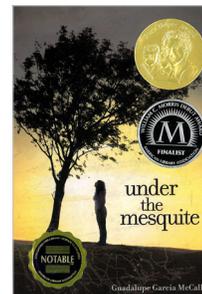
**ALL THE STARS DENIED**  
**War and Displacement; Family Trauma or Separation**  
 Guadalupe Garcia McCall tackles the hidden history of the United States and its first mass deportation event that swept up hundreds of thousands of Mexican American citizens during the Great Depression.



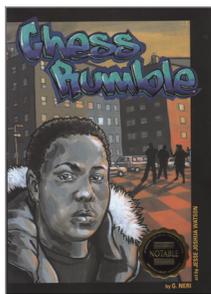
**SUMMER OF THE MARIPOSAS**  
**Loss and Death**  
 In this creative telling of *The Odyssey*, fifteen-year-old Odilia and her younger sisters embark on a journey to return a dead man to his family in Mexico and must outwit monsters and witches to make it home again. Also available in Spanish



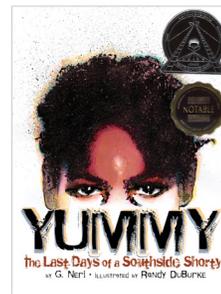
**ALICIA AFTERIMAGE**  
**Loss and Death**  
 A story of remembrance as well as an exploration of teen grief and healing, recounting the life and death of the author's sixteen-year-old daughter, as told through her parents' and friends' recollections, thoughts, feelings, and memories.



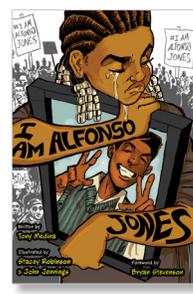
**UNDER THE MESQUITE**  
**Loss and Death**  
 Lupita, a budding actor and poet in a close-knit Mexican American immigrant family, comes of age as she struggles with adult responsibilities during her mother's long illness.



**CHESS RUMBLE**  
**Bullying; Violence**  
 In this story told in free verse, a troubled boy learns to use his mind instead of his fists through the guidance of an unconventional mentor and the game of chess.



**YUMMY: THE LAST DAYS OF A SOUTHSIDE SHORTY**  
**Loss and Death; Violence**  
 A graphic novel based on the true story of Robert "Yummy" Sandifer, an eleven-year-old boy from Chicago's South Side who was killed by his own gang members.



**I AM ALFONSO JONES**  
**Loss and Death; Family Trauma or Separation; Violence**  
 Perfect for fans of *The Hate U Give*: An unflinching graphic novel about the afterlife of a young man killed by an off-duty police officer.



**INDIAN NO MORE**  
**Family Trauma and Separation; War and Displacement**  
 In this middle grade novel set in the 1950s, a 10-year-old Umpqua girl and her family's tribal rights are terminated and they must relocate from their reservation in Oregon to Los Angeles, where they are expected to assimilate.

# trauma-informed diverse reading list

\*The terms used to categorize the listed books are not finite and are subject to individual interpretation. This list is not exhaustive nor meant to be definitive. We expect to explore generational and historical-level trauma in future resources and lists.

The following resources and organizations provide more information on how to help children experiencing trauma in your respective setting.

- **The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators.**

🔗 <https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u57/2013/child-trauma-toolkit.pdf>

- **“How to Help a Traumatized Child in the Classroom” from University of California Berkeley**

🔗 [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_silent\\_epidemic\\_in\\_our\\_classrooms](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_silent_epidemic_in_our_classrooms)



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