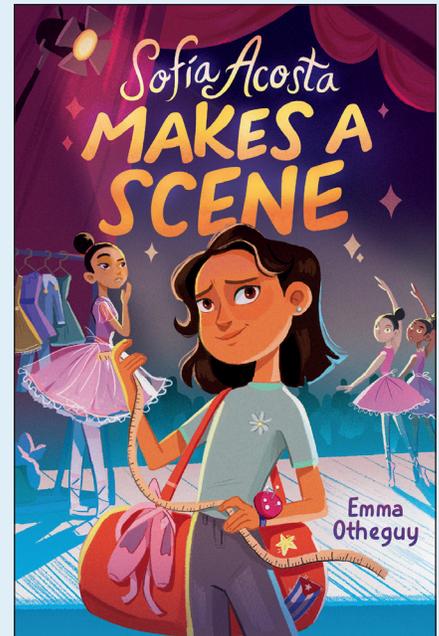
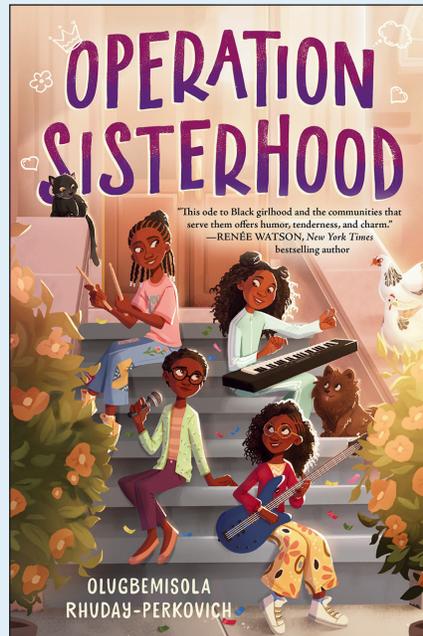
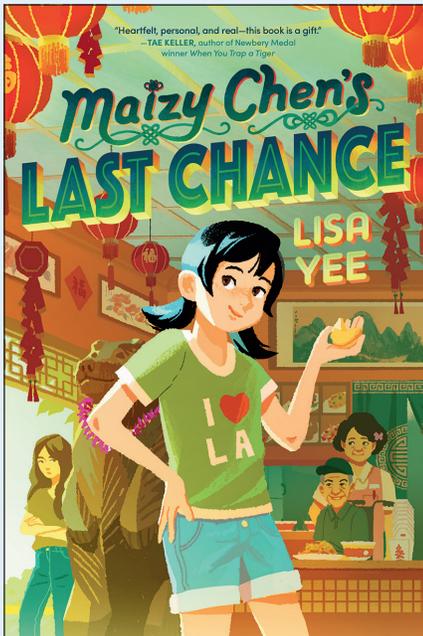


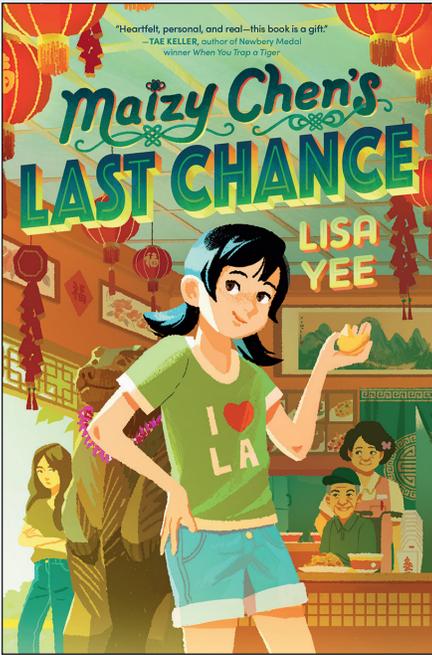


# MAGNIFICENT MIDDLE-GRADE

**Books for the middle-grade reader  
who wants to see their experiences  
reflected in stories**



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### Maizy Chen's Last Chance

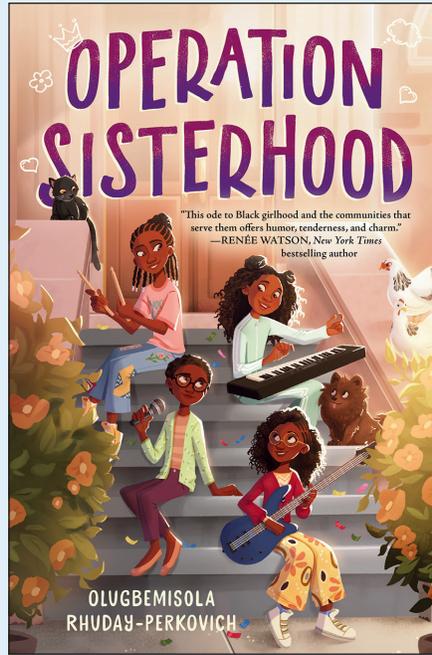
Lisa Yee

HC: 978-1-9848-3025-8

GLB: 978-1-9848-3026-5

EL: 978-1-9848-3028-9

Ages: 8-12



### Operation Sisterhood

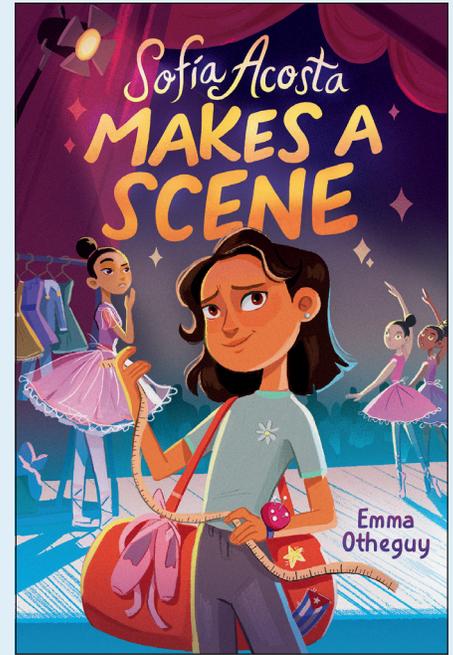
Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

HC: 978-0-593-37989-9

GLB: 978-0-593-37990-5

EL: 978-0-593-37991-2

Ages: 8-12



### Sofía Acosta Makes a Scene

Emma Otheguy

HC: 978-0-593-37263-0

GLB: 978-0-593-37264-7

EL: 978-0-593-37265-4

Ages: 8-12

## About this Guide

Middle-grade experiences are universal, which makes these stories wonderful tools to teach social-emotional skills, including empathy and confidence. These coming-of-age tales can help kids navigate unfamiliar and challenging situations by reminding them they are not alone. This guide provides discussion questions, prompts, and activity suggestions to facilitate insightful conversations about these books and their themes of self-discovery.



HC: 978-1-9848-3025-8  
GLB: 978-1-9848-3026-5  
EL: 978-1-9848-3028-9  
Ages: 8-12

## Maizy Chen's Last Chance

Lisa Yee

**Welcome to the Golden Palace—a restaurant that's part mystery, part history, and all family!**

Maizy has never been to Last Chance, Minnesota. Her mom's plan is just to stay for a couple of weeks until her grandfather recovers from an illness, but those plans change. As Maizy spends more time in Last Chance and at the Golden Palace, her family's restaurant, she makes some surprising discoveries.

**Themes:** Immigrant Experience, Family & Relationships, Racism & Prejudice, Friendship



Art © 2021 by Francesca Smith

### Discussion Questions

1. Based on the cover of *Maizy Chen's Last Chance*, what do you think this book is about? Who is on the cover?
2. Your family may have lived in the same place your whole life, or you may have moved around. What are some of the characteristics of the places you and your parents and grandparents have lived? What makes each place special? Who are the Indigenous inhabitants of those places?
3. When Maizy is exploring the town, she observes, "It seems like everything here is also something else. I wonder what the Golden Palace doubles as" (p. 16). As you read the story, make a list of what the Golden Palace doubles as.
4. Maizy's initial perceptions of some of the Last Chance residents turn out to be wrong. Pick one character—such as Lady Macbeth, Riley, or Principal Holmes—and track how she learns to see them differently over the course of the story. Cite specific evidence from the book.

### Activities

1. Racist bullying and discrimination happen multiple times throughout the story, both in the past and in the present. What resources are available to help young people understand race, racism, and bullying? Create a flyer with information, strategies, and resources to share with your friends and classmates.
2. Maizy writes messages on fortune cookies for the people in Last Chance. If you could make fortune cookies for Maizy, what messages would you write? Why? What messages would you write for other people in your life?

3. Explore the [Stop AAPI Hate](#) website. What is a hate crime? How are the hate crimes that have taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic a continuation of the history and hate crimes Lisa Yee writes about in *Maizy Chen's Last Chance* and in her author's note?
4. Think about a favorite scene from the book. Design your own book cover based on that scene.

### Praise for *Maizy Chen's Last Chance*

★ "Through this captivating story of the Chen family legacy, Yee makes the personal political, and prompts readers to consider what it means to be American."  
—*The Horn Book*, starred review

"A moving, engrossing story of a girl's transformative change and strengthened sense of belonging."  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Heartfelt, personal, and real—this book is a gift."  
—Tae Keller, Newbery Award-winning author

### Also by Lisa Yee



HC: 978-1-5247-6926-0  
GLB: 978-1-5247-6927-7  
EL: 978-1-5247-6928-4



HC: 978-1-1019-4065-5  
EL: 978-1-1019-4067-9

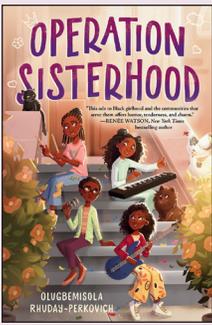


HC: 978-1-1019-4062-4  
EL: 978-1-1019-4064-8



HC: 978-1-1019-4059-4  
EL: 978-1-1019-4061-7

Discussion questions prepared by Sarah Park Dahlen, PhD. Sarah is an associate professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She cofounded and coedits *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature* and studies Asian American children's literature. [sarahpark.com](http://sarahpark.com)



HC: 978-0-593-37989-9  
GLB: 978-0-593-37990-5  
EL: 978-0-593-37991-2  
Ages: 8-12

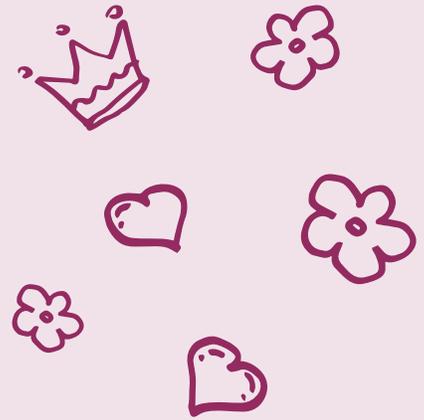
## Operation Sisterhood

Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

**Sisterhood can be found in the most unexpected places.**

Discover this joyful coming-of-age novel about the loyalty of sisters and the love of family from prolific, award-winning author Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich.

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Growing Up, Coming of Age



Art © 2022 by Brittany Bond

### Discussion Questions

1. Bo's family grows considerably after she and her mom move in with Bill. At first, she struggles to find her place in her new family. Describe a time when you felt you didn't fit in. How did it turn out? Did you feel more comfortable eventually? (For example: transferring to a new school, moving out of state, or meeting new family members.)
2. The blended family in *Operation Sisterhood* has four sisters; which sister's personality do you identify with most, and why? Do you think their chosen instruments reflect their personalities in any way? If so, how?
3. Throughout the book, Bo experiences a wide range of emotions; one moment, she is happy, then she is angry. When her mom and Bill get engaged, she outwardly expresses joy, but inside she is sad. Why do you suppose that is? Do you think she is experiencing a type of grief? Why or why not?
4. There are a lot of animals in Bo's new home, even a bearded dragon! If you could have any animal as a pet, what would it be and why?

### Activities

1. Music is essential to the family in the book; not only do the sisters all play instruments, but they also create playlists for certain household activities such as cleaning. Create a playlist that you might listen to during one of these activities with your family. What types of songs would you add? Are there any artists or songs that you simply must include because they are of significance to your family?
2. Write a song or poem that celebrates your family. You can include unique characteristics of different people, traditions, or even inside jokes.

3. Bo changes throughout in this story. She feels things she has never felt before, and sometimes it seems as though she doesn't have anywhere to turn. Create a soundtrack for this book to express her emotions as described in some of your favorite chapters or scenes. Try to include songs that depict a wide array of emotions.

### Praise for *Operation Sisterhood*

"Rhuday-Perkovich's love letter to New York City is brimming with heartwarming moments. . . . A loving display of family and community."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Rhuday-Perkovich interweaves Black culture with a realistic depiction of what a transition to a blended family—and being raised by a village—can look like."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"This ode to Black girlhood and the communities that serve them offers humor, tenderness, and charm."

—Renée Watson, Newbery Honor-winning author

"A beautiful, rich, and deeply comforting story about family and the powerful choice to live with joy, *Operation Sisterhood* is a book to savor."

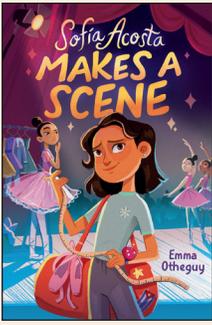
—Rebecca Stead, Newbery Award-winning author

### Edited by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich



TR: 978-0-525-64633-4  
HC: 978-0-525-64630-3  
GLB: 978-0-525-64631-0  
EL: 978-0-525-64632-7

Art © 2022 by Brittany Bond



## Sofía Acosta Makes a Scene

Emma Otheguy

**Stuck between different worlds, can she find her own rhythm?**

A poignant, coming-of-age story about a Cuban American girl trying to figure out where she belongs—both in her ballet-loving family and in the wider world.

**Themes:** Hispanic/Hispanic American Interest, Community, Family & Relationships, Art, Music & Theater

HC: 978-0-593-37263-0  
GLB: 978-0-593-37264-7  
EL: 978-0-593-37265-4  
Ages: 8-12



Art © 2022 by Miroslav Cizic

### Discussion Questions

1. Do you take part in any after-school activities? What are they? How long have you participated? Did your parents take part in a similar activity when they were your age? What do you find the most exciting or fun part of this activity and why?
2. The book opens with the planning of Mr. Kalinack's citizenship party, and Sofía is placed on the History and Contexts Committee; what do you think that means? Why might that be relevant to planning this type of party?
3. Sofía's family hosts a few dancers from Cuba who are planning to defect. What does that mean, and what circumstances might make a person choose to do this?
4. Sofía's best friend Tricia doesn't want "outsiders" moving into their community; being a second-generation immigrant, Sofía is hurt and confused by this notion. What would you do or say to a close friend of yours who felt the same way as Tricia? How do Sofía's relationships with Tricia and Laurita evolve throughout the book?
5. Do you think Laurita was justified in what she said to Sofía during their argument? Sofía describes how she felt after the fight: "A mix of stunned, angry, sad, and happy. Stunned at all of Laurita's words. Angry that she told me off. Sad that I know she's right." (p. 198) Have you ever felt like this? What did you do to make yourself feel better?

### Activities

1. Sofía thinks that to be an Acosta, she must be a ballerina. But throughout the book she discovers that her family is about more than ballet—it's about "amor y carino." Write about what makes you special. What are your hobbies and interests? How do you stand out from your family and friends?
2. Sofía and Laurita are assigned to the History and Contexts Committee and create a poster about immigration. Research and create your own poster about immigration. You can even research local community programs or organizations that assist immigrants.
3. When did your family come to this country? Do a little research to learn more.

### Praise for *Sofía Acosta Makes a Scene*

"Bighearted, nuanced, and insightful."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"This is fine fare indeed for balletomanes and a keenly felt examination of competing desires and familial expectations."

—*The Bulletin*

### Also by Emma Otheguy



TR: 978-1-5247-7325-0  
HC: 978-1-5247-7323-6  
GLB: 978-1-5247-7324-3  
EL: 978-1-5247-7326-7

# More Magnificent Middle-Grade Books from Notable Random House Children's Book Authors

## TAE KELLER, WINNER OF THE 2021 JOHN NEWBERY MEDAL

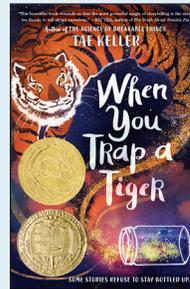


### *Jennifer Chan Is Not Alone*

New from Newbery Award-winning author Tae Keller comes an insightful story about shifting friendships, identity, and the power we all hold to influence and change one another.

**Themes:** Friendship, Bullies, Supernatural, Space

HC: 978-0-593-31052-6  
GLB: 978-0-593-31053-3  
EL: 978-0-593-31054-0



### *When You Trap a Tiger*

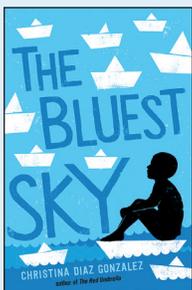
A girl goes on a quest to unlock the power of stories and save her grandmother.

**Themes:** Growing Up, Emotions & Feelings, Science & Nature

**Winner of the 2021 John Newbery Medal**

HC: 978-1-5247-1570-0  
GLB: 978-1-5247-1571-7  
EL: 978-1-5247-1572-4

## CHRISTINA DIAZ GONZALEZ



### *The Bluest Sky*

The gripping story of a Cuban family forced to decide who will leave and who will stay during the Mariel Boat Lift in 1980.

**Themes:** Hispanic American Interest, Historical Fiction, Family & Relationships

HC: 978-0-593-37279-1  
GLB: 978-0-593-37280-7  
EL: 978-0-593-37281-4



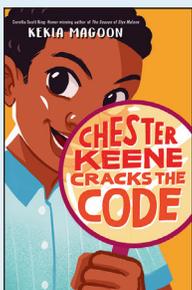
### *The Red Umbrella*

A moving story of country, culture, family, and what it truly means to be home.

**Themes:** Immigrant Experience, Family & Relationships, Historical Fiction/Twentieth Century

TR: 978-0-375-85489-7  
EL: 978-0-375-89628-6

## KEKLA MAGOON



### *Chester Keene Cracks the Code*

Cracking the code isn't all it's cracked up to be in this scavenger hunt adventure from Coretta Scott King Honor-winning author Kekla Magoon.

**Themes:** African American Interest, Family & Relationships, Friendship, Humor

HC: 978-1-5247-1599-1  
GLB: 978-1-5247-1600-4  
EL: 978-1-5247-1601-1



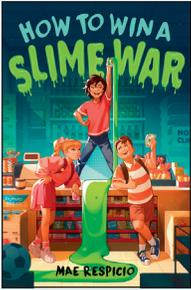
### *The Season of Styx Malone*

Two brothers embark on a madcap, heartwarming, one-thing-leads-to-another adventure in which friendships are forged and loyalties are tested.

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Friendship

TR: 978-1-5247-1598-4  
EL: 978-1-5247-1597-7

## MAE RESPICIO



### *How to Win a Slime War*

Two kids face off in an epic battle to see who can sell the most slime, while navigating sticky situations with friends and family.

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Coming of Age, Family & Relationships

HC: 978-0-593-30267-5  
GLB: 978-0-593-30268-2  
EL: 978-0-593-30269-9



### *The House That Lou Built*

A coming-of-age story that explores culture and family, forgiveness and friendship, and what makes a true home.

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Coming of Age

TR: 978-1-5247-1797-1  
HC: 978-1-5247-1794-0  
GLB: 978-1-5247-1795-7  
EL: 978-1-5247-1796-4

## KEREEN GETTEN



### *If You Read This*

A poignant coming-of-age story about a girl gifted with surprise letters from her late mother.

**Themes:** Coming of Age, Bullies, Death, Dying & Grief, Forgiveness

HC: 978-0-593-17400-5  
EL: 978-0-593-17401-2



### *When Life Gives You Mangos*

A rich lyrical mystery that is also a celebration of island life.

**Themes:** Death, Dying & Grief, Forgiveness

TR: 978-0-593-17399-2  
HC: 978-0-593-17397-8  
GLB: 978-0-593-31021-2  
EL: 978-0-593-17398-5

## KELLY J. BAPTIST

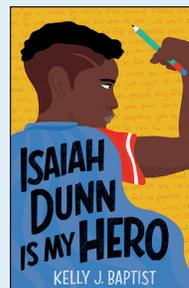


### *Isaiah Dunn Saves the Day*

Starting middle school is no joke! Friendship, community, and a love of words blend in this coming-of-age tale.

**Themes:** Growing Up, Family & Relationships, Friendships, Self-Discovery

HC: 978-0-593-42921-1  
GLB: 978-0-593-42922-8  
EL: 978-0-59-342923-5



### *Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero*

A coming-of-age tale about a boy who discovers a love of poetry after finding his late father's journal.

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Friendship, Self-Discovery

TR: 978-0593-12139-9  
HC: 978-0-593-12136-8  
GLB: 978-0-593-12137-5  
EL: 978-0-593-12138-2



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