Inclusive Literature Lists

The Billings Public Library supports and values and celebrates diversity and inclusion. We strive to curate a collection of resources that represents all demographics in our community’s tapestry. We believe an inclusive and welcoming community is a stronger community.

This list of inclusive and diverse literature that the youth of our community can see themselves in as well as use as a conduit to build compassion for others is brought to you on behalf of collaboration between the Human Relations Commission of the City of Billings, the Billings Public Library, and a children's literature assistant professor from Montana State University Billings.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and any recommendations for this list. We will take these into consideration as we continue to develop these lists.

**Mirror**
By Baker, Jeannie
Illustrator Baker, Jeannie
2010-11 - Candlewick Press (MA)
9780763648480 Check Our Catalog

*Awards:*

This innovative, two-in-one picture book follows a parallel day in the life of two families: one in a Western city and one in a North African village. Designed to be read side by side, these intriguing stories are told entirely through richly detailed collage illustrations. Full color. ...More

**I've Loved You Since Forever**
By Kotb, Hoda
Illustrator Mason, Suzie
2018-03 - HarperCollins
9780062841742 Check Our Catalog
New York Times #1 Bestseller

*I've Loved You Since Forever* is a celebratory and poetic testament to the timeless love felt between parent and child. This beautiful picture book is inspired by *Today* show co-anchor Hoda Kotb's heartwarming adoption of her baby girl, Haley ...More

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story
By Faruqi, Reem
Illustrator Lyon, Lea
2015-05 - Tilbury House Publishers
9780884484318 Check Our Catalog

*Notable Social Studies Trade Book For Young People 2016, a cooperative Project of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the Children's Book Council*

*Featured Book of the Month, Anti-Defamation League*

*American Library Association Notable Book for Children 2016*

*Skipping Stones Honor 2016*

*International ...More*

Deep in the Sahara
By Cunnane, Kelly
Illustrator Hadadi, Hoda
2013-10 - Schwartz & Wade Books
9780375870347 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

An Arab girl of the Sahara who wants to wear a malafa, the veiled dress worn by her mother and older sister, learns that the garment represents beauty, mystery, tradition, belonging, and faith. Full color. ...More

The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid
By Winter, Jeanette
Illustrator Winter, Jeanette
2017-08 - Beach Lane Books
9781481446693 Check Our Catalog

A celebrated author-illustrator presents a biography of architect Zaha Hadid, who grew up in Baghdad. As a Muslim woman, Hadid faced many obstacles, but she went on to design buildings all over the world. Full color. ...More
The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story
By Khalil, Aya
Illustrator Semirdzhyan, Anait
2020-02 - Tilbury House Publishers
9780884487548 Check Our Catalog

Kanzi's family has moved from Egypt to America, and on her first day in a new school, what she wants more than anything is to fit in. Maybe that's why she forgets to take the kofta sandwich her mother has made for her lunch, but that backfires when Mama shows up at school with the sandwich. Mama wears a hijab and calls her daughter Habibti (dear one). When she leaves, the teasing starts. ...More

The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq
By Winter, Jeanette
2005-01 - Houghton Mifflin
9780152054458 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

In war-stricken Iraq where civilians--especially women--have little power, a librarian in Basra struggles to save her community's priceless collection of books. ...More

My Beautiful Birds
By Del Rizzo, Suzanne
Illustrator Del Rizzo, Suzane
2017-03 - Pajama Press
9781772780109 Check Our Catalog

Behind Sami, the Syrian skyline is full of smoke. The boy follows his family and all his neighbours in a long line, as they trudge through the sands and hills to escape the bombs that have destroyed their homes. But all Sami can think of is his pet pigeons--will they escape too? When they reach a refugee camp and are safe at last, everyone settles into the tent city. But though the children ...More

My Great-Grandmother's Gourd
By Kessler, Cristina
Illustrator Krudop, Walter Lynn
2000-09 - Orchard Books (NY)
9780531302842 Check Our Catalog

Fatima is thrilled. Her village has a brand-new pump. No more camels hauling water. No more storing water in baobab trees. Life will be easier and better for all. Well, almost all. Fatima's grandmother refuses to change her ways. She insists upon preparing the baobab tree, just as her mother and grandmother did before her. The other villagers think she's foolish, but she doesn't care. She has ...More
The Camel in the Sun
By Ondaatje, Griffin
Illustrator Wolfsgruber, Linda
2013-10 - Groundwood Books
9781554983810 Check Our Catalog

Awards:
Middle East Book Awards (2014)

Inspired by a retelling of a traditional Muslim hadith, or account of the words or actions of the Prophet, which the author first heard in Sri Lanka, this is the story of a camel whose cruel owner only realizes what suffering he has caused when the Prophet appears and shows love to the animal.

The camel has worked its entire life for a man called Halim, carrying bundles of spices, dates, ...More

Planet Omar: Accidental Trouble Magnet
By Mian, Zanib
Illustrator Mafaridik, Nasaya
2020-02 - G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers
9780593109212 Check Our Catalog

An exciting #OwnVoices middle-grade debut starring a Muslim boy with a huge imagination

Welcome to the imaginative brain of Omar

Omar and his family have just moved, and he is NOT excited about starting at a new school. What if the work is too hard or the kids are mean or the teacher is a zombie alien?

But when Omar makes a new best friend, things start looking up. That is, ...More

Farah Rocks Fifth Grade
By Darraj, Susan Muaddi
Illustrator Mannaa, Ruaida
2020-01 - Stone Arch Books
9781496583390 Check Our Catalog

Farah and her best friend, Allie Liu, are getting excited to turn in their applications to the Magnet Academy, where they both hope to attend sixth grade. But when new girl Dana Denver shows up, Farah's world is turned upside down. As Dana starts bullying Farah's little brother, Samir, Farah begins to second-guess her choice to leave him behind at Harbortown Elementary/Middle School. Determined to ...More

It Ain't So Awful, Falafel
By Dumas, Firoozeh
2016-05 - Clarion Books
9780544612310 Check Our Catalog

Zomorod (Cindy) Yousefzadeh is the new kid on the block ... for the fourth time. California's Newport Beach is her family's latest perch, and she's determined to shuck her brainy loner persona and start afresh with a new Brady Bunch name--Cindy. It's the
late 1970s, and fitting in becomes more difficult as Iran makes U.S. headlines with protests, revolution, and finally the taking of American ...More

A Kid's Guide to Arab American History: More Than 50 Activities
By Dennis, Yvonne Wakim
Author Addasi, Maha
2013-01 - Chicago Review Press
9781613740170 Check Our Catalog

Dispelling common stereotypes, this exploration provides a contemporary as well as historical look at the people and experiences that have shaped Arab-American culture. Each chapter focuses on a different group and features activities that highlight their distinct arts, games, clothing, and food. Full color. ...More

Other Words for Home
By Warga, Jasmine
2019-05 - Balzer & Bray/Harperteen
9780062747808 Check Our Catalog

Awards:
Newbery Medal (2020)
Newbery Honor Book

A gorgeously written, hopeful middle grade novel in verse about a young girl who must leave Syria to move to the United States, perfect for fans of Jason Reynolds and Aisha Saeed.

Jude never thought she’d be leaving her beloved older brother and father behind, all the way across the ocean in Syria. But when things in her hometown ...More

The Turtle of Oman
By Nye, Naomi Shihab
2014-08 - Greenwillow Books
9780062019721 Check Our Catalog

Awards:

This accessible, exquisite novel shines with gentle humor and explores themes of moving, family, nature, and immigration. It tells the story of Aref Al-Amri, who must say good-bye to everything and everyone he loves in his hometown of Muscat, Oman, as his family prepares to move to Ann Arbor, Michigan. This is acclaimed poet and National Book Award Finalist Naomi Shihab Nye’s first novel set in ...More

The Treasure of Maria Mamoun
By Chalfoun, Michelle
2016-07 - Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Byr)
9780374303402 Check Our Catalog

Winner of the 2017 Arab American Book Award
Twelve-year-old Maria lives a lonely, latchkey-kid's life in the Bronx. Her Lebanese mother is working two nursing jobs to keep them afloat, and Maria keeps her worries to herself, not wanting to be a burden. Then something happens one day between home and school that changes everything. Mom whisks them to an altogether different world on ...More

**Escape from Aleppo**
By *Senzai, N. H.*
2018-01 - Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books
9781481472173 [Check Our Catalog](#)

"Filled with kindness and hope, but also with the harsh realities of the horrors of war, this heartbreaking book is a necessary reminder of what many people live through every day." -- *Booklist* (starred review)

Nadia's family is forced to flee their home in Aleppo, Syria, when the Arab Spring sparks a civil war in this timely coming-of-age novel from award-winning author ...More

**Playing Atari with Saddam Hussein: Based on a True Story**
By *Roy, Jennifer*  
Author *Fadhil, Ali*
2018-02 - Houghton Mifflin  
9780544785076 [Check Our Catalog](#)

At the start of 1991, eleven-year-old Ali Fadhil was consumed by his love for soccer, video games, and American television shows. Then, on January 17, Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein went to war with thirty-four nations led by the United States.

Over the next forty-three days, Ali and his family survived bombings, food shortages, and constant fear. Ali and his brothers played soccer on ...More

**Sadiq and the Desert Star**
By *Nuurali, Siman*  
Illustrator *Sarkar, Anjan*
2019-08 - Picture Window Books  
9781515838784 [Check Our Catalog](#)

When Sadiq's father leaves on a business trip, he worries he'll miss his baba too much. But Baba has a story for Sadiq: the story of the Desert Star. Learning about Baba's passion for the stars sparks Sadiq's interest in outer space. But can Sadiq find others who are willing to help him start the space club of his dreams? ...More