WNC BOOK LISTS

TOPIC CURATED TITLE SUGGESTIONS



HOW TO USE
THIS RESOURCE

In this resource you will find a curated list of books about people trying to stay alive and survive as well as a variety of accompanying materials.

How to Use This Resource

1. Choose a title from the animal main character list.
2. Scan the QR code to play the read-aloud video.
3. Students complete the response sheet while listening.
4. Students vote: Would you keep reading?
5. Display the book cover poster to build classroom book buzz.

Classroom Use Ideas Quick List:

- First Chapter Friday
- Sub plans
- Book tasting stations
- Library preview lessons
- Early finisher reading activities

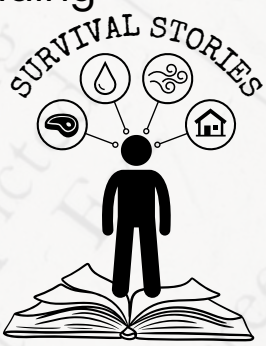
To check the reading level, video length or to find a book purchasing link, look at this Google Doc that organizes ALL of my First Chapter Friday read aloud videos alphabetically.

Table of Contents

Page 2: Instructions/Table of Contents
Page 4: What is Frist Chapter Friday?
Pages 5-6: Book Tracking Charts
Page 7: Book List
Page 8: Full List Book Cover Poster
Pages 10-29 Individual Book First Chapter Friday Sheets
Pages 31-49: Individual Book Posters

** More resources will be added in the future including a Reading Round Up Video to briefly explain every video on this list and possibly even some thematic coloring sheets.
As always, please email me with any title requests or questions. (wordnerd@amandazieba.com)

HAPPY READING!



MUST TRY

Word Nerd Daily

an app from Amanda Zieba



First Chapter Friday Videos

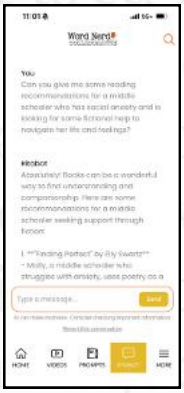


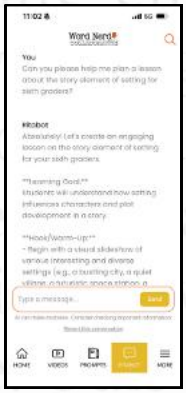
Writing Prompt Library

FREE!



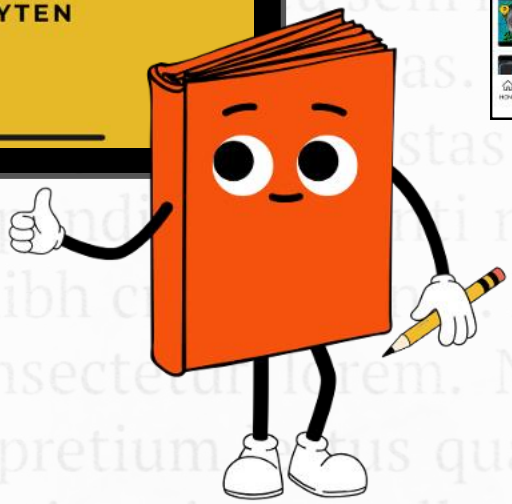
ChatBot for Reading Recs and Lesson Planning





Brain Break Videos





AVIALBLE FOR APPLE AND ANDROID DEVICES



FIRST CHAPTER Friday Videos

Not sure how First Chapter Friday works?

Check out this video for a full explanation and 4 implementation ideas.



If you prefer a written description in lieu of a video, click here.

Click here for a live, continually updated, Google Doc of the First Chapter Friday videos on my channel. Additionally you will find links to purchase the books and watch the read aloud videos, as well as book reading levels, genre/format, video length and more!

All my best,
Amanda Zieba

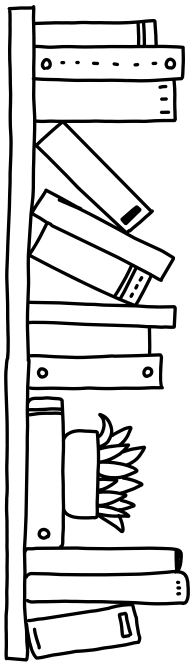
Teacher Planning Sheet

First CHAPTER Friday



DATE	TITLE	AUTHOR	GENRE	STUDENT REACTION?

Created by Amanda Zieba, The Word Nerd

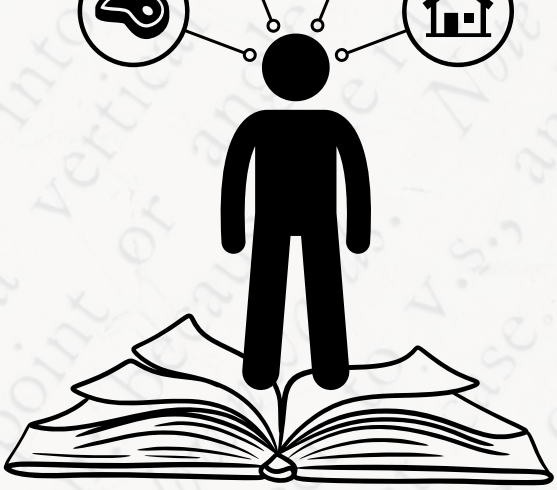


First CHAPTER Fridays

NAME: _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____
21. _____
22. _____
23. _____
24. _____
25. _____
26. _____
27. _____
28. _____
29. _____
30. _____
31. _____
32. _____

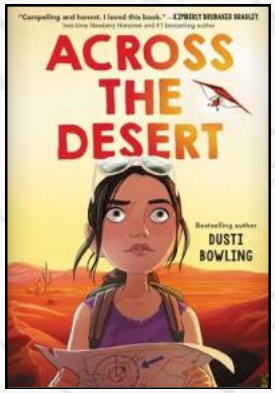
SURVIVAL STORIES



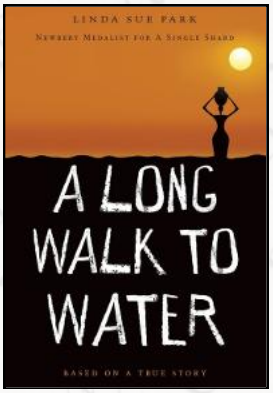
These books are about people trying to stay alive and survive. Despite their varied settings and situations, each character faces a very dangerous situation that threatens their life.

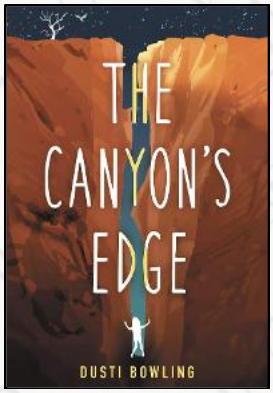
Across the Desert by Dusti Bowling
Alone by Megan E. Freeman
A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park
The Canyon's Edge by Dusti Bowling
Deadlands by Skye Wegner Melki
Endangered by Eliot Schrefer
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
The Explorer by Katherine Rundell
Gather by Kenneth M. Cadow
Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys
Lifeboat 12 by Susan Hood
Louder than Hunger by John Schu
The Lost Year by Katherine Marsh
Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli
Refugee by Alan Gratz
Small as an Elephant by Jennifer Richard Jacobson
Wild Bird by Wendelin Van Draanen
The Wild Robot by Peter Brown

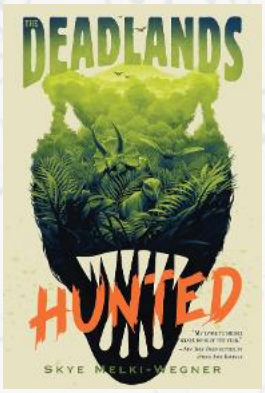
SURVIVAL STORIES

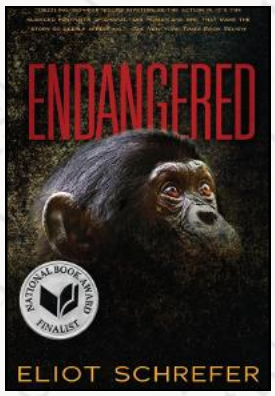


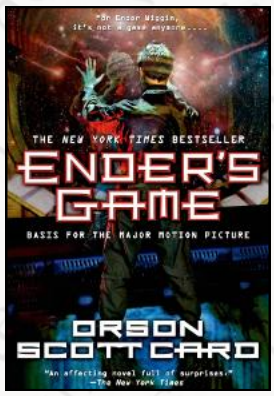




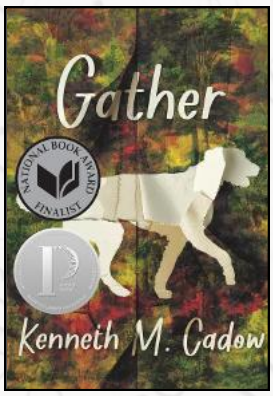


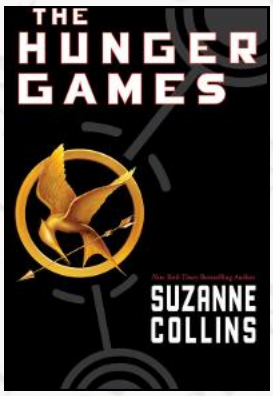


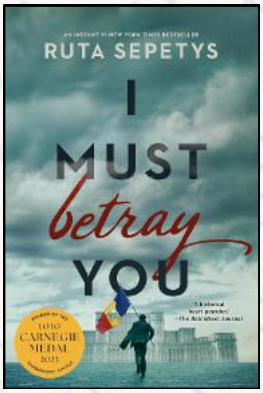


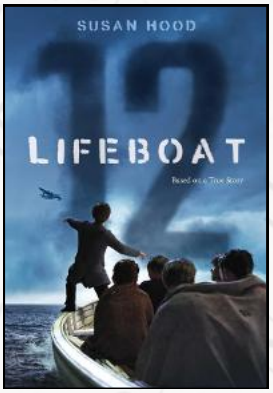


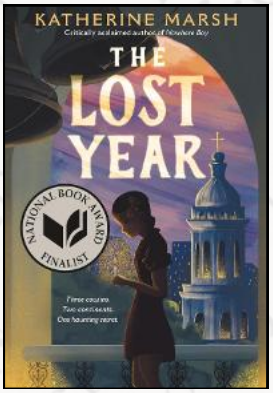


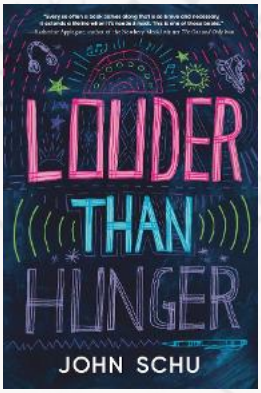


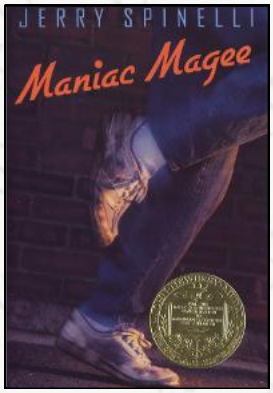




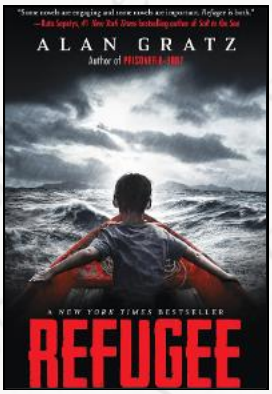


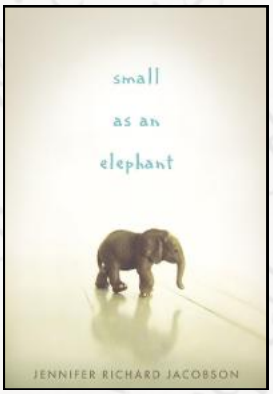


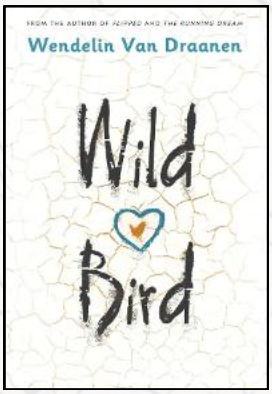














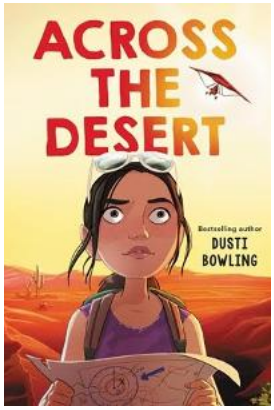
WNC BOOK LISTS * TOPIC CURATED TITLE SUGGESTIONS

INDIVIDUAL BOOK SHEETS



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Across the Desert by Dusti Bowling

Includes Author Interview!

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

Twelve-year-old Jolene spends every day she can at the library watching her favorite livestream: The Desert Aviator, where twelve-year-old 'Addie Earhart' shares her adventures flying an ultralight plane over the desert. While watching this daring girl fly through the sky, Jolene can dream of what it would be like to fly with her, far away from her own troubled home life where her mother struggles with a narcotic addiction. And Addie, who is grieving the loss of her father, finds solace in her online conversations with Jolene, her biggest—and only—fan.

Then, one day, it all goes wrong: Addie's engine abruptly stops, and Jolene watches in helpless horror as the ultralight plummets to the ground and the video goes dark. Jolene knows that Addie won't survive long in the extreme summer desert heat. With no one to turn to for help and armed with only a hand-drawn map and a stolen cell phone, it's up to Jolene to find a way to save the Desert Aviator. Packed with adventure and heart, Across the Desert speaks to the resilience, hope, and strength within each of us.

Who Wrote It?

DUSTI BOWLING grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona, where, as her family will tell you, she always had her nose in a book. She released her first middle grade novel in 2017 and hasn't stopped writing since.

Dusti's books have won all sorts of amazing awards! And the best part is she keeps coming out with new books all the time. Currently, she is up to 7!!

Dusti currently lives in Eagar, Arizona with her husband, three daughters, several tarantulas, some guinea pigs, a gopher snake named Burrito, and a cockatiel named Gandalf the Grey. Yes, her real name is Dusti and yes she really does have all of those pets! You can learn more about Dusti and her books at www.dustibowling.com.



AR Reading Level: 4.2 Lexile Level: currently unavailable

I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Alone

by Megan E. Freeman

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

When twelve-year-old Maddie hatches a scheme for a secret sleepover with her two best friends, she ends up waking up to a nightmare. She's alone—left behind in a town that has been mysteriously evacuated and abandoned.

With no one to rely on, no power, and no working phone lines or internet access, Maddie slowly learns to survive on her own. Her only companions are a Rottweiler named George and all the books she can read. After a rough start, Maddie learns to trust her own ingenuity and invents clever ways to survive in a place that has been deserted and forgotten.

As months pass, she escapes natural disasters, looters, and wild animals. But Maddie's most formidable enemy is the crushing loneliness she faces every day. Can Maddie's stubborn will to survive carry her through the most frightening experience of her life?

Who Wrote It?

Megan E. Freeman attended an elementary school where poets visited her classroom every week to teach poetry, and she has been a writer ever since. Alone is Megan's first book and it took her 8 years to write! The idea for it came she read I read Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell in a Mother-Daughter Book Club. She was thinking about Karana being left behind on the island, and I wondered what might happen if a modern-day seventh grader was left behind in a Colorado town. Ideas for poems come from things I see or hear or smell or taste, or from thoughts that pass through my mind. I love to travel, and wherever I go, I explore until I find a local bookstore. I always buy at least two books (one book of poetry by a local poet and one other book I'm excited to read). Then I take a picture of the store so I can remember it.



She used to live in northeast Los Angeles, central Ohio, northern Norway, and on Caribbean cruise ships. Now she lives in northern Colorado. You can learn more about Megan on her website: www.meganefreeman.com.

AR Reading Level: 4.7

Lexile Level: 690L

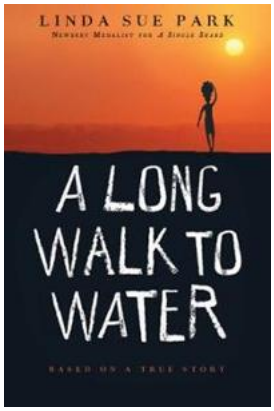
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

A Long Walk to Water begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about two eleven-year-olds in Sudan, a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the 'lost boys' of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way. This book includes an afterword by author Linda Sue Park and the real-life Salva Dut, on whom the novel is based, and who went on to found Water for South Sudan.

Who Wrote It?

Linda Sue Park is the author of the Newbery Medal book A Single Shard, many other novels, and several picture books, She lives in Rochester, New York, with her family, and is now a devoted fan of the New York Mets. Her parents immigrated to the US from Korea and she loves cooking, snorkeling and knitting. For more infromation visit www.lspark.com.



AR Reading Level: 5.0 Lexile Level: 720L

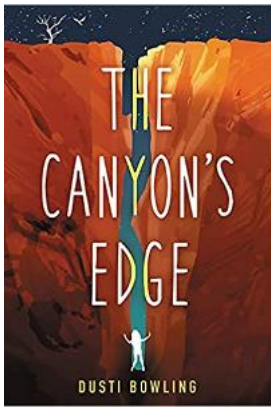
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

The Canyon's Edge by Dusti Bowling

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

Hatchet meets Long Way Down in this heartfelt and gripping novel in verse about a young girl's struggle for survival after a climbing trip with her father goes terribly wrong.

One year after a random shooting changed their family forever, Nora and her father are exploring a slot canyon deep in the Arizona desert, hoping it will help them find peace. Nora longs for things to go back to normal, like they were when her mother was still alive, while her father keeps them isolated in fear of other people. But when they reach the bottom of the canyon, the unthinkable happens: A flash flood rips across their path, sweeping away Nora's father and all of their supplies.

Suddenly, Nora finds herself lost and alone in the desert, facing dehydration, venomous scorpions, deadly snakes, and, worst of all, the Beast who has terrorized her dreams for the past year. If Nora is going to save herself and her father, she must conquer her fears, defeat the Beast, and find the courage to live her new life.

Who Wrote It?

DUSTI BOWLING grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona, where, as her family will tell you, she always had her nose in a book. She released her first middle grade novel in 2017 and hasn't stopped writing since.

Dusti's books have won all sorts of amazing awards! And the best part is she keeps coming out with new books all the time. Currently, she is up to 7!!

Dusti currently lives in Eagar, Arizona with her husband, three daughters, several tarantulas, some guinea pigs, a gopher snake named Burrito, and a cockatiel named Gandalf the Grey. Yes, her real name is Dusti and yes she really does have all of those pets! You can learn more about Dusti and her books at www.dustibowling.com.



AR Reading Level: 4.8 Lexile Level: 750L

I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

The Deadlands
by Skye Melki-Wegner

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

Wings of Fire meets Jurassic Park in this action-adventure middle grade debut series by Skye Melki-Wegner about five outcasts—and former enemies—who are the only hope to save their warring kingdoms from impending doom.

Battle rages between the dinosaur kingdoms of Cretacea. When the Fallen Star struck, it brought death and despair, ash and toxic rain. But some dinosaurs survived . . . and were changed. Their minds grew alert. They learned to speak. To dream. To wage war. As the two remaining dinosaur kingdoms fight for territory, Eleri, the disgraced son of a prince, is exiled from his home for saving an enemy soldier. Banished to the merciless Deadlands, a terrifying desert full of tar pits, poisonous gas, and ruthless carnivores, he must join forces with a group of questionable allies—including the enemy soldier he saved—to avoid becoming prey. When Eleri and his fellow exiles discover the horrific truth behind the war, the unlikely heroes must do all they can to save their kingdoms from a lurking predator. . . and a secret plot that might destroy them all.

Who Wrote It?

Skye Melki-Wegner started writing as soon as she could hold a pen. She was immediately drawn to fantasy — and soon her notebooks overflowed with dragons, pixies, wizards and various magical shenanigans. After graduating with an honors degree in law, she decided to pursue her passion and prioritized writing fantasy



books over pursuing a legal career. Sky lives in Melbourne, Australia. Visit Skye's website here.

AR Reading Level: N/A

Lexile Level: N/A

I want to read this book: YES / NO

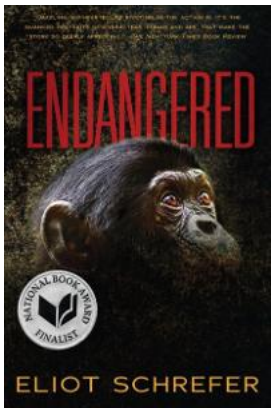
WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *

Name _____ Date _____



Endangered
by Eliot Schrefer

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

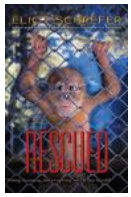
What's It About?

Congo is a dangerous place, even for people who are trying to do good. When Sophie has to visit her mother at her sanctuary for bonobos, she's not thrilled to be there. Then Otto, an infant bonobo, comes into her life, and for the first time she feels responsible for another creature. But peace does not last long for Sophie and Otto. When an armed revolution breaks out in the country, the sanctuary is attacked, and the two of them must escape unprepared into the jungle. Caught in the crosshairs of a lethal conflict, they must struggle to keep safe, to eat, and to live. In ENDANGERED, Eliot Schrefer plunges us into a heart-stopping exploration of the things we do to survive, the sacrifices we make to help others, and the tangled geography that ties us all, human and animal, together.

The other 3 books in the series are...







Who Wrote It?

Eliot wrote a fantasy novel when I was in eighth grade, which featured loads of glowing blue swords, archers in green leather, and monsters rearing in anguish. After a childhood spent in Illinois, Connecticut, California, Maryland, and Florida, Schrefer attended Harvard University, where he graduated with High Honors in French and American literature. After a year teaching at a boarding school in Rome, he settled down in New York City. His works have been translated into many languages including German, Russian, Polish, Taiwanese, Bulgarian, and Japanese. Most recently, Schrefer joined the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson's low residency MFA program, as well as the MFA in writing for children at



Hamline University. You can find him on Twitter @EliotSchrefer, and online here at www.EliotSchrefer.com.(A full interview, in which Eliot asks himself questions, can also be seen on his website. :)

AR Reading Level: 6.2

Lexile Level: 900L

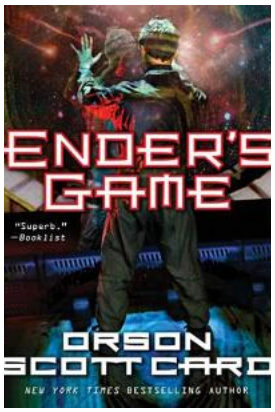
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Ender's Game
by Orson Scott Card

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

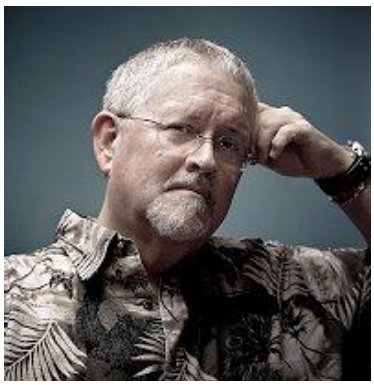
What's It About?

In order to develop a secure defense against a hostile alien race's next attack, government agencies breed child geniuses and train them as soldiers. Young Ender is the Wiggin drafted to the orbiting Battle School for rigorous military training. Ender's skills make him a leader in school and respected in the Battle Room, where children play at mock battles in zero gravity. Yet growing up in an artificial community of young soldiers Ender suffers greatly from isolation, rivalry from his peers, pressure from the adult teachers, and an unsettling fear of the alien invaders. The war with the Buggers has been raging for a hundred years, and the quest for the perfect general has been underway for almost as long. Ender's two older siblings are every bit as unusual as he is, but in very different ways. Between the three of them lie the abilities to remake a world. If, that is, the world survives.

Orson Scott Card's Ender's Game is the winner of the 1985 Nebula Award for Best Novel and the 1986 Hugo Award for Best Novel.

Who Wrote It?

Card was born in Washington and grew up in California, Arizona, and Utah. As a child he enjoyed reading and playing in the marching band. ard graduated from high school at the end of his junior year. He won a Presidential Scholarship to BYU which he entered as an archaeology major. Like many young artists in love with their art, Card resented all the hours that the university required him to "waste" on general education re= quirements; as a novelist, however, he found that those were the most useful parts of his college education. Besides his writing, he teaches classes and workshops and directs plays. Card currently lives in Greensboro, NC, with his wife, Kristine Allen Card.



AR Reading Level: 5.5 Lexile Level: 780

I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *

Name _____ Date _____



The Explorer

by Katherine Rundell

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

Fred, Con, Lila, and Max are flying back to England from the Amazon jungle when their plane crashes—and the pilot dies upon landing. Stranded, scared, and totally alone, they must rely on their instincts, courage, and each other to survive. When Fred finds a mysterious map, it leads them not just to a hidden ruin... but to a secret that could change everything. This is one of my favorite middle grade books of all time—a masterfully written, high-stakes survival story with deep emotional threads and an unforgettable setting. Trust me, you'll be hooked from the first page.

Who Wrote It?

Katherine Rundell spent her childhood growing up in 3 different countries: England, Zimbabwe and Belgium! She is now an internationally bestselling writer Her books have sold millions of copies, been translated into 40 languages and have won numerous prizes. Her stories often feature adventurous plots, elements of fantasy, and connections to the real world, with themes of survival, discovery, and the natural world. She begins each day with a cartwheel and believes that reading is almost exactly the same as cartwheeling: it turns the world upside down and leaves you breathless. In her spare time, she enjoys walking on tightropes and trespassing on the rooftops of Oxford colleges.



AR Reading Level: 4.5

Lexile Level: 600L

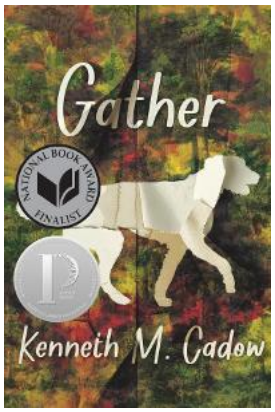
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Gather
by Kenneth M. Cadow

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

** I'd recommend this book for grades 7+. Please know there are trigger warnings related to addiction and extreme poverty. More about this information can be found in the video description box. **

What's It About?

Ian Gray isn't supposed to have a dog, but a lot of things that shouldn't happen end up happening anyway. And Gather, Ian's adopted pup, is good company now that Ian has to quit the basketball team, find a job, and take care of his mom as she tries to overcome her opioid addiction. Despite the obstacles thrown their way, Ian is determined to keep his family afloat no matter what it takes. And for a little while, things are looking up: Ian makes friends, and his fondness for the outdoors and for fixing things lands him work helping neighbors. But an unforeseen tragedy results in Ian and his dog taking off on the run, trying to evade a future that would mean leaving their house and their land. Even if the community comes together to help him, would Ian and Gather have a home to return to?

Told in a wry, cautious first-person voice that meanders like a dog circling to be sure it's safe to lie down, Kenneth M. Cadow's resonant debut brings an emotional and ultimately hopeful story of one teen's resilience in the face of unthinkable hardships.

A 2023 National Book Award Finalist
A Michael L. Printz Honor Book

"Arguably one of the finest novels of the year."—Booklist (starred review)

Who Wrote It?

Ken grew up in Poughkeepsie, NY next to the Hudson River and surrounded by trees. as one of 7 siblings. He loved the outdoors and spent a lot of time exploring the woods and salt marshes around his house. He says he has terrible handwriting and sold his first story for twenty-five cents. Ken read A LOT. His fifth grade teacher told him, 'I hope you don't burn your eyes out this summer,' - meaning, don't read too many books! Lol! Old Yeller, The Animal Family, James and the Giant Peach and Dominic were some of this favorites. As grown up, Ken is a teacher and co-principal. He writes in a cabin near his house. Gather is his first book and it has won 3 awards. He has a wife, 3 children and a dog, Quinnie.



Photo by Lars Blackmore

AR Reading Level: Unavailable

Lexile Level: 970L

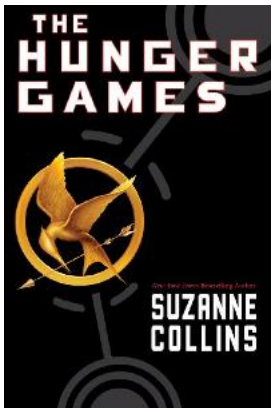
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol is harsh and cruel and keeps the districts in line by forcing them all to send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before-and survival, for her, is second nature. Without really meaning to, she becomes a contender. But if she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.

Book 1 in a series of 3
Also a movie!
23 million copies sold!

Who Wrote It?

In 1991, Suzanne Collins began her professional career writing for children's television. She worked on the staffs of several Nickelodeon shows, including the Emmy-nominated hit Clarissa Explains it All and The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo. Thinking one day about Alice in Wonderland, she was struck by how (in New York City) you're much more likely to fall down a manhole than a rabbit hole and, if you do, you're not going to find a tea party. What you might find...? Well, that's the story of Gregor the Overlander, the first book in her five-part fantasy/war series, The Underland Chronicles, which became a New York Times bestseller. It has been sold into 21 foreign territories.



Her next series, The Hunger Games Trilogy, is an international bestseller. The worldwide box for the entire franchise was nearly 3 billion. Her books have sold over 100 million copies worldwide.

AR Reading Level: 5.3

Lexile Level: 810L

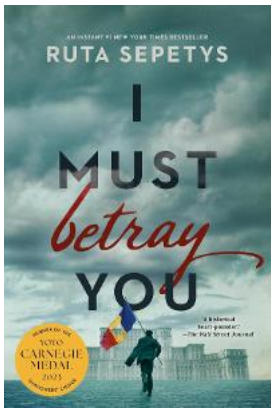
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

A gut-wrenching, startling historical thriller about communist Romania and the citizen spy network that devastated a nation – Romania, 1989. Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren't free to dream; they are bound by rules and force. Amidst the tyrannical dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu in a country governed by isolation and fear, Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer. He's left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves—or use his position to creatively undermine the most notoriously evil dictator in Eastern Europe. Cristian risks everything to unmask the truth behind the regime, give voice to fellow Romanians, and expose to the world what is happening in his country. He eagerly joins the revolution to fight for change when the time arrives. But what is the cost of freedom? Master storyteller Ruta Sepetys is back with a historical thriller that examines the little-known history of a nation defined by silence, pain, and the unwavering conviction of the human spirit.

Who Wrote It?

Ruta is the daughter of a Lithuanian refugee. Born in Michigan, she was raised in a family of artists, readers, and music lovers. She is passionate about the power of history to foster dialogue and global understanding. Her research and writing on human resilience have earned her invitations to speak at NATO, European Parliament, the U.S. Capitol, the Library of Congress, and Embassies worldwide. She has been awarded fellowships from The University of Oxford in England and The Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy. The New York Times Book Review declared, 'Ruta Sepetys acts as champion of the interstitial people so often ignored—whole populations lost in the cracks of history. She is deeply grateful for her Baltic heritage— even if it means she has a name that no one can pronounce. Ruta lives with her family in the hills of Tennessee.


Photo Credit: Laura Smith

AR Reading Level: 4.3

Lexile Level: 500L

I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK


Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.



PREVIEW & PREDICT

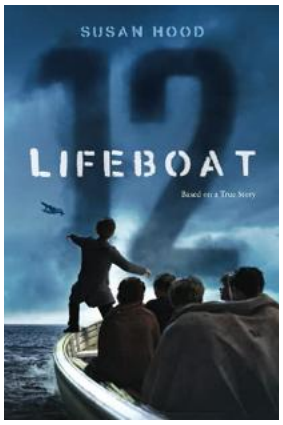
Read Aloud Video

Look at the objects featured on the YouTube thumbnail and book cover and then make a few predictions.



I predict this story will be about...

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Lifeboat 12 by Susan Hood

Includes Author Interview!

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

With Nazis bombing London every night, it's time for thirteen-year-old Ken to escape. He suspects his stepmother is glad to see him go, but his dad says he's one of the lucky ones—one of ninety boys and girls to ship out aboard the SS City of Benares to safety in Canada. Life aboard the luxury ship is grand—nine-course meals, new friends, and a life far from the bombs, rations, and his stepmum's glare. And after five days at sea, the ship's officers announce that they're out of danger. They're wrong. Late that night, an explosion hurls Ken from his bunk. They've been hit. Torpedoed! The Benares is sinking fast. Terrified, Ken scrambles aboard Lifeboat 12 with five other boys. Will they get away? Will they survive?

A Junior Library Guild Selection
The 2019 Golden Kite Middle Grade Fiction Award Winner
A 2019 ALSC Notable Children's Book
The 2019-2020 Lectio Book Award Winner
The 2020-2021 Florida Sunshine State Young Readers Award List
The 2020 Oklahoma Library Association's Children's Sequoyah Book Award Winner
The Connecticut Book Award Winner

Who Wrote It?

Where I was born: Brooklyn, New York
Where I went to college: Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts
Where I got my first (real) job: Scholastic in New York City
Where I live now: A small town in coastal Connecticut

Little-known facts:

- Until I was 10, I had really long braids. Really long!
- My eyes are green, but most people think they're blue. They change, depending on the color I'm wearing.
- I was the youngest person in my hometown with a library card.
- My mom adored animals, so we always had a parade of pets, two or three at a time. They were mostly dogs and cats, but also included fish, turtles, a parakeet, and rabbits.

Discover more facts about Susan on her amazing website: www.susanhoodbooks.com!



AR Reading Level: 4.0

Lexile Level: 610

I want to read this book: YES / NO

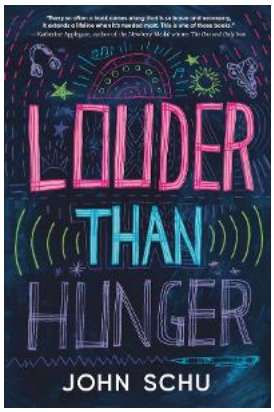
WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *

Name _____ Date _____



Louder Than Hunger

by John Schu

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

Jake volunteers at a nursing home because he likes helping people. He likes skating and singing, playing Bingo and Name That Tune, and reading mysteries and comics aloud to his teachers. He also likes avoiding people his own age . . . and the cruelty of mirrors . . . and food. Jake has read about kids like him in books—the weird one, the outsider—and would do anything not to be that kid, including shrink himself down to nothing. But the less he eats, the bigger he feels. How long can Jake punish himself before he truly disappears? A fictionalized account of the author's experiences and emotions living in residential treatment facilities as a young teen with an eating disorder, Louder than Hunger is a triumph of raw honesty. With a deeply personal afterword for context, this much-anticipated verse novel is a powerful model for muffling the destructive voices inside, managing and articulating pain, and embracing self-acceptance, support, and love.

Who Wrote It?

John Schu has made a career out of advocating for the people and things he cares about most: kids, books, and the people that connect them. He was named a Library Journal Mover and Shaker for his dynamic interactions with students and his passionate adoption of new technologies as a means of connecting authors, illustrators, books, and readers. He is the children's librarian for Bookelicious, a part-time lecturer at Rutgers University, and shares his love of reading with countless educators and students around the world. He served as the Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic Book Fairs for almost 6 years. Louder Than Hunger relays many of Johns personal experiences of having an eating disorder in 7th grade. Learn more about John, here.



AR Reading Level: N/A

Lexile Level: N/A

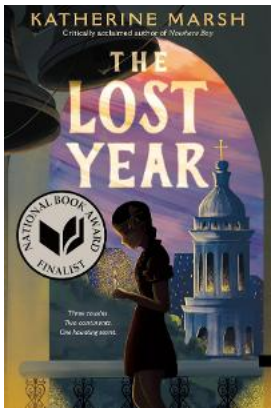
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

The Lost Year
by Katherine Marsh

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

Thirteen-year-old Matthew is miserable. His journalist dad is stuck overseas indefinitely, and his mom has moved in his one-hundred-year-old great-grandmother to ride out the pandemic, adding to his stress and isolation.
But when Matthew finds a tattered black-and-white photo in his great-grandmother's belongings, he discovers a clue to a hidden chapter of her past, one that will lead to a life-shattering family secret. Set in alternating timelines that connect the present-day to the 1930s and the US to the USSR, Katherine Marsh's latest novel sheds fresh light on the Holodomor—the horrific famine that killed millions of Ukrainians, and which the Soviet government covered up for decades.

From the author of Nowhere Boy—called 'a resistance novel for our times' by The New York Times—comes a brilliant middle-grade survival story that traces a harrowing family secret back to the Holodomor, a terrible famine that devastated Soviet Ukraine in the 1930s.

Who Wrote It?

Katherine grew up in Yonkers, New York in the home of her Ukrainian grandma who taught her to love stories and borscht. er parents, an artist/videographer and a stay-at-home mom, didn't have much money but we always had books; Mother Goose and the Little Bear stories with Maurice Sendak's wonderful etchings were some of my favorites. A former journalist and managing editor of The New Republic, Besides writing, I like to read, cook for friends and family, travel, correspond with friends, family and readers around the world, study languages (in addition to speaking some French and Russian, I'm learning Ukrainian), do puzzles, and visit off-beat museums. Most of all, I like to spend time with my family. My husband, two children and I live in Washington, DC with two cats, a rabbit, a bunch of fish, a frog and an axolotl. Learn more about Katharine and her books at www.katherinemarsh.com



AR Reading Level: N/A

Lexile Level: 710L

I want to read this book: YES / NO

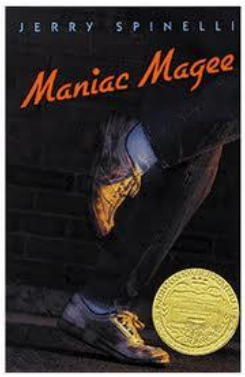
WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *

Name _____ Date _____



Maniac Magee
by Jerry Spinelli

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

A Newbery Medal winning modern classic about a racially divided small town and a boy who runs.

Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee might have lived a normal life if a freak accident hadn't made him an orphan. After living with his unhappy and uptight aunt and uncle for eight years, he decides to run--and not just run away, but run. This is where the myth of Maniac Magee begins, as he changes the lives of a racially divided small town with his amazing and legendary feats.

<u>A few interesting facts...</u>

1. Maniac Magee was partially inspired by a motown song.
2. According to Jerry Spinelli, the South African goverment bough several hundred copies of Maniac Magee to promote anti-aoatheid efforts.
3. There's a movie adaptation of Maniac Magee and Jerry Spinelli is not a fan!
4. Maniac Magee won the Newbery Award in 1991.

Who Wrote It?

Jerry did not always want to be a writer. First he dreamed of being a cowboy and then a baseball player. When he wrote a poem about a football field in high school and that poem was published, he switched his dreams to writing. He went to Gettysburg University and afterward studied writing at John Hopkins. He worked as the editor of department store magazine and wrote in his free time... which was challenging at times because he and his wife had 6 noisy kids! But he must have managed to get some work done, because now, 30 years later he has written 21 books, some of them, like Maniac Magee, are award winning! To hear Jerry's writing advice and answers to FAQ, head to his website: www.jerryspinelli.com.



AR Reading Level: 4.7 Lexile Level: 820L

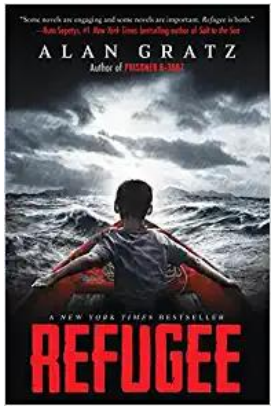
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Refugee
by Alan Gratz

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . .ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . .MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . .All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of tomorrow. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

** New York Times Bestseller!

Who Wrote It?

Alan was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, home of the 1982 World's Fair. After a carefree but humid childhood, Alan attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a College Scholars degree with a specialization in creative writing, and, later, a Master's degree in English education. He now lives with his wife Wendi and his daughter Jo in Asheville, North Carolina, where he enjoys playing games, eating pizza, and, perhaps not too surprisingly, reading



books. Alan has traveled to 39 states and 6 countries to talk with readers about his books! You can learn more about Alan by visiting his website: www.alagratz.com.

AR Reading Level: 5.3 Lexile Level: 800L

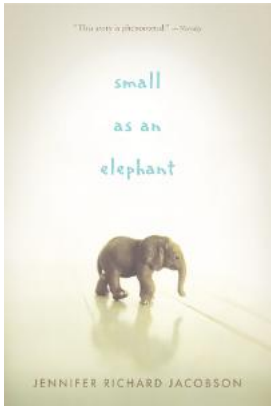
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Small as an Elephant
by Jennifer Richard Jacobson

Includes Author Interview!

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

Read Aloud Video

What's It About?

"A deeply perceptive look at the universal fear of abandonment." — Booklist (starred review)

Ever since Jack can remember, his mom has been unpredictable, sometimes loving and fun, other times caught in a whirlwind of energy and 'spinning' wildly until it's over. But now she is gone, leaving him all alone on a campsite in Maine. Can he find his way back to Boston before the authorities realize what happened? With nothing but a small toy elephant to keep him company, Jack begins a journey that will test his wits and his loyalties — and his trust that he may be part of a larger herd after all.

- Modern day survival story mixed with mental health awareness.

Who Wrote It?

Coming from a long line of educators, I always knew I'd be a teacher. I didn't always know I'd be a writer, but somehow it turned out that way. I kept a diary since the age of nine, and I won the Edith Bird Bass Essay Contest as a senior in high school in my hometown of Peterborough, NH. The mother of two young children, I accepted the challenge of reading and reviewing 400 picture books for an educational company in the process of creating reading anthologies. Soon after this gig ended, I went on a writing retreat and wrote my first saleable book, A Net of Stars. 3 years later I had my first signing and a few of those children from my first-grade class came to say hello. They were seniors in high school. www.jenniferjacobson.com



AR Reading Level: 4.7

Lexile Level: 690L

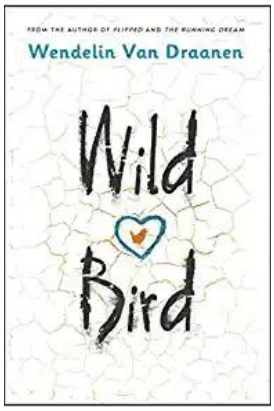
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

Wild Bird
by Wendelin Van Draanen

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

3:47 a.m. That's when they come for Wren Clemmens. She's hustled out of her house and into a waiting car, then a plane, and then taken on a forced march into the desert. This is what happens to kids who've gone so far off the rails, their parents don't know what to do with them anymore. This is wilderness therapy camp. Eight weeks of survivalist camping in the desert. Eight weeks to turn your life around. Yeah, right.

The Wren who arrives in the Utah desert is angry and bitter, and blaming everyone but herself. But angry can't put up a tent. And bitter won't start a fire. Wren's going to have to admit she needs help if she's going to survive.

This book is for 7th graders and up.

This book has a connection to the story Jungle Book and other Disney movies!

Who Wrote It?

I was born on January 6th to Dutch immigrants (Peter & Mieske Van Draanen) in Chicago, IL. When I was very young, my family moved to California, where I still reside. I grew up with two brothers and a sister. We did a lot of camping and backpacking as a family, and also as Scouts, where we learned useful survival skills and also to appreciate nature. I taught computer science and math at the high school level for 15 years. I began writing because I went through some awful times and learned



that writing can help you sort out your troubles and find focus. To learn more about Wendelin, read her memoir: Hope in the Mail or in the interview at the end of this video.

AR Reading Level: 4.4 Lexile Level: 680L

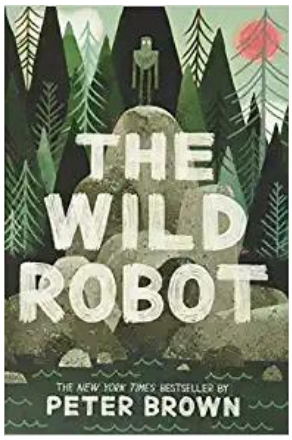
I want to read this book: YES / NO

WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTube from the Word Nerd.

* FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY * FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY *



Name _____ Date _____

The Wild Robot by Peter Brown

Read Aloud Video

Here is a little background information about our First Chapter Friday title and its creator. Feel free to add your own notes and thoughts in the bottom box.

What's It About?

Can a robot survive in the wilderness?

When robot Roz opens her eyes for the first time, she discovers that she is all alone on a remote, wild island. She has no idea how she got there or what her purpose is--but she knows she needs to survive. After battling a violent storm and escaping a vicious bear attack, she realizes that her only hope for survival is to adapt to her surroundings and learn from the island's unwelcoming animal inhabitants.

As Roz slowly befriends the animals, the island starts to feel like home--until, one day, the robot's mysterious past comes back to haunt her.

This book is accompanied by illustrations by the author that brings the book to life in a delightful second dimension.

Who Wrote It?

Peter has always loved telling stories. Growing up in New Jersey, he told stories by drawing whimsical characters and scenes from his imagination. As a teenager, he fell in love with writing and began telling his tales with words. While studying illustration at Art Center College of Design, Peter's love of both words and pictures led him to take several courses on children's books, and before long he knew he'd found his calling.
After graduating from Art Center Peter moved to New York City to be closer to the publishing industry. He was working on animated TV shows when he signed a book deal to write and illustrate his first picture book, Flight of the Dodo. He has since written and illustrated many books and won several awards. Peter lives in Philadelphia, PA. Check out the FAQ on his website to learn more about this author/illustrator: www.peterbrownstudios.com.



AR Reading Level: 5.1 Lexile Level: 740L

I want to read this book: YES / NO

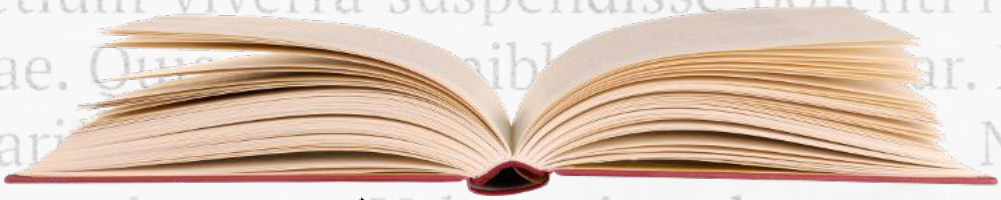
WHAT I THINK



Use this graphic organizer with the First Chapter Friday videos on YouTubefrom the Word Nerd.

INDIVIDUAL BOOK POSTERS

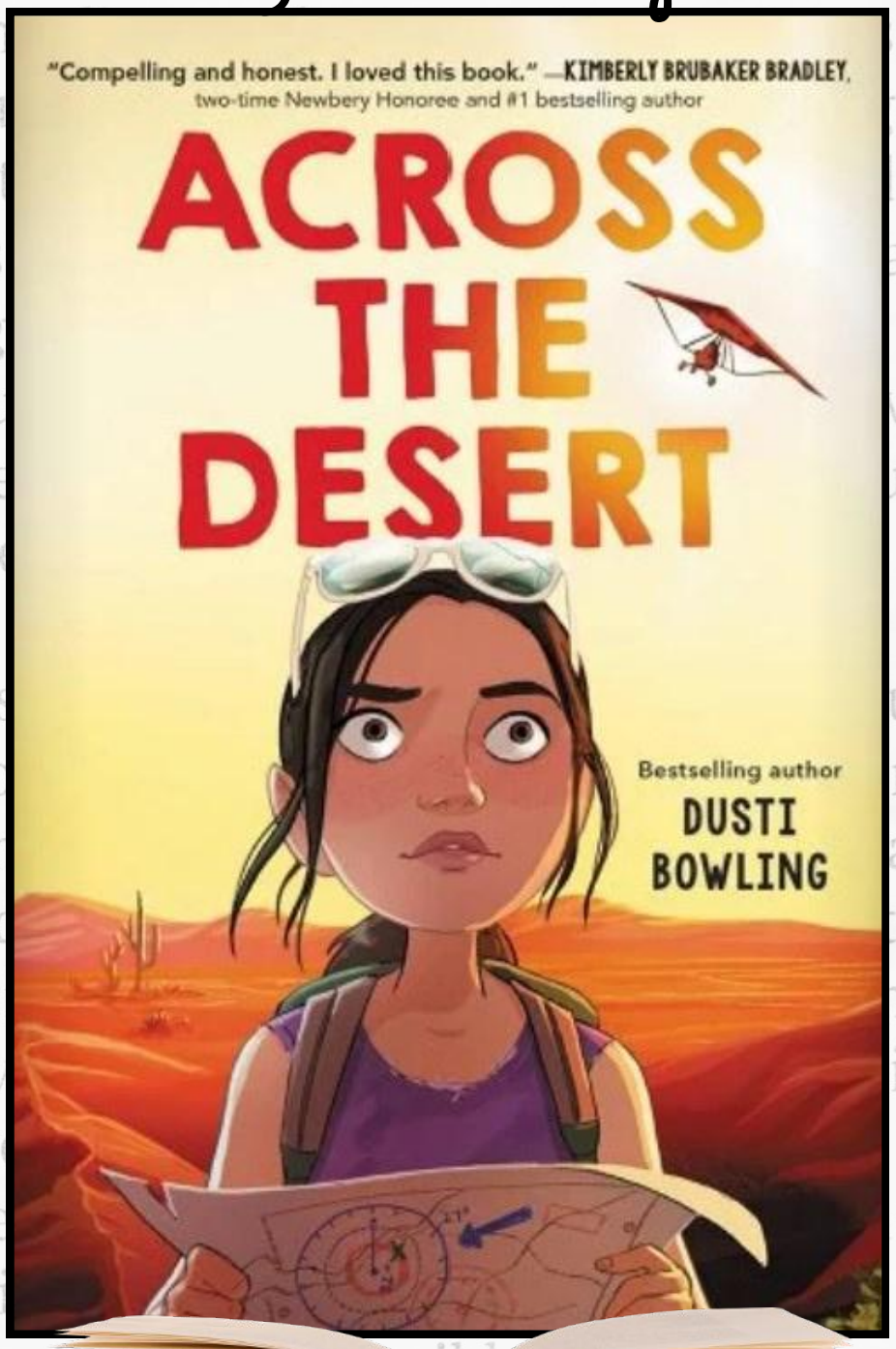




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

ACROSS THE DESERT

By Dusti Bowling



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

ALONE

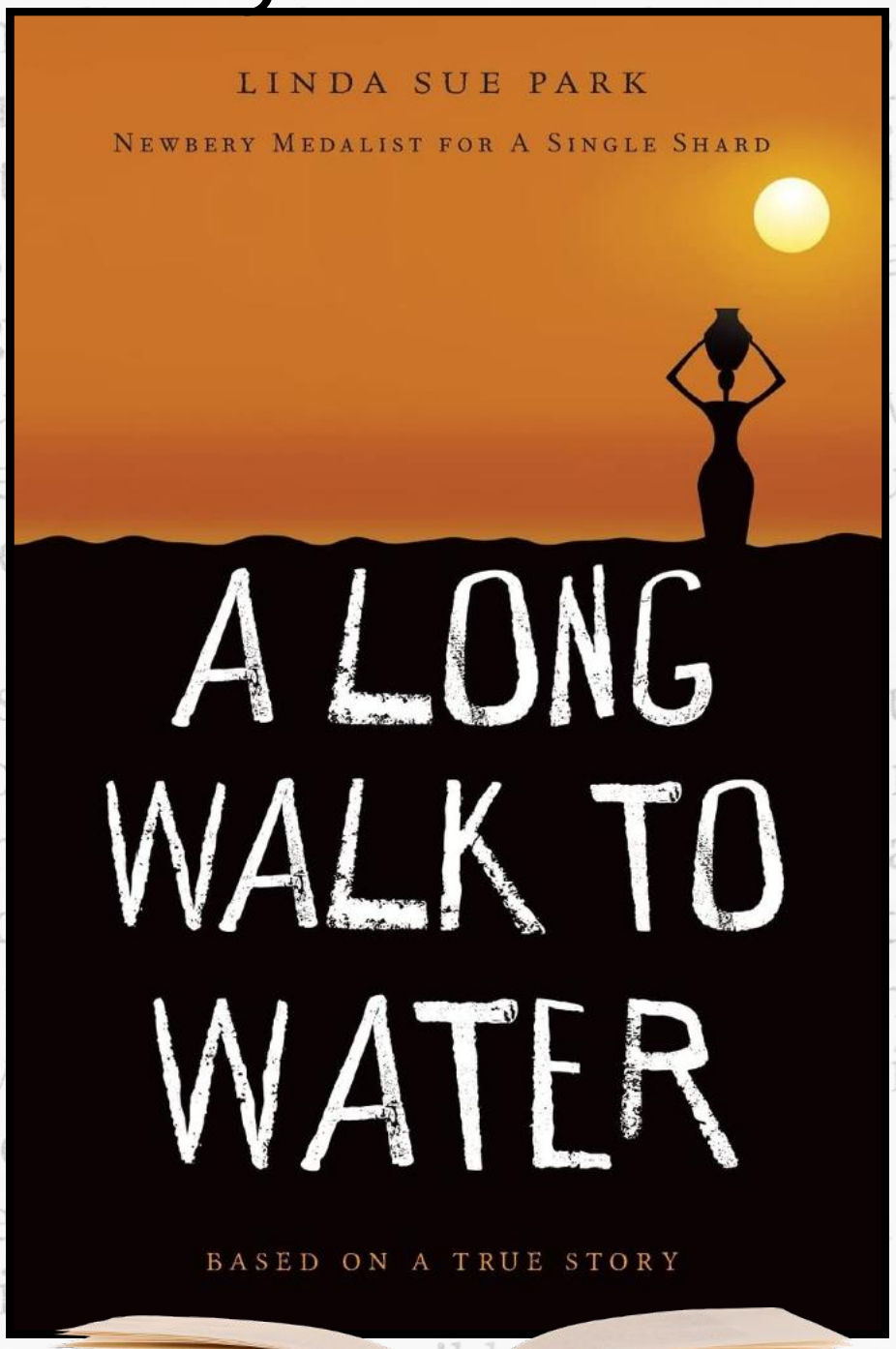
By Megan E. Freeman



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

A LONG WALK TO WATER

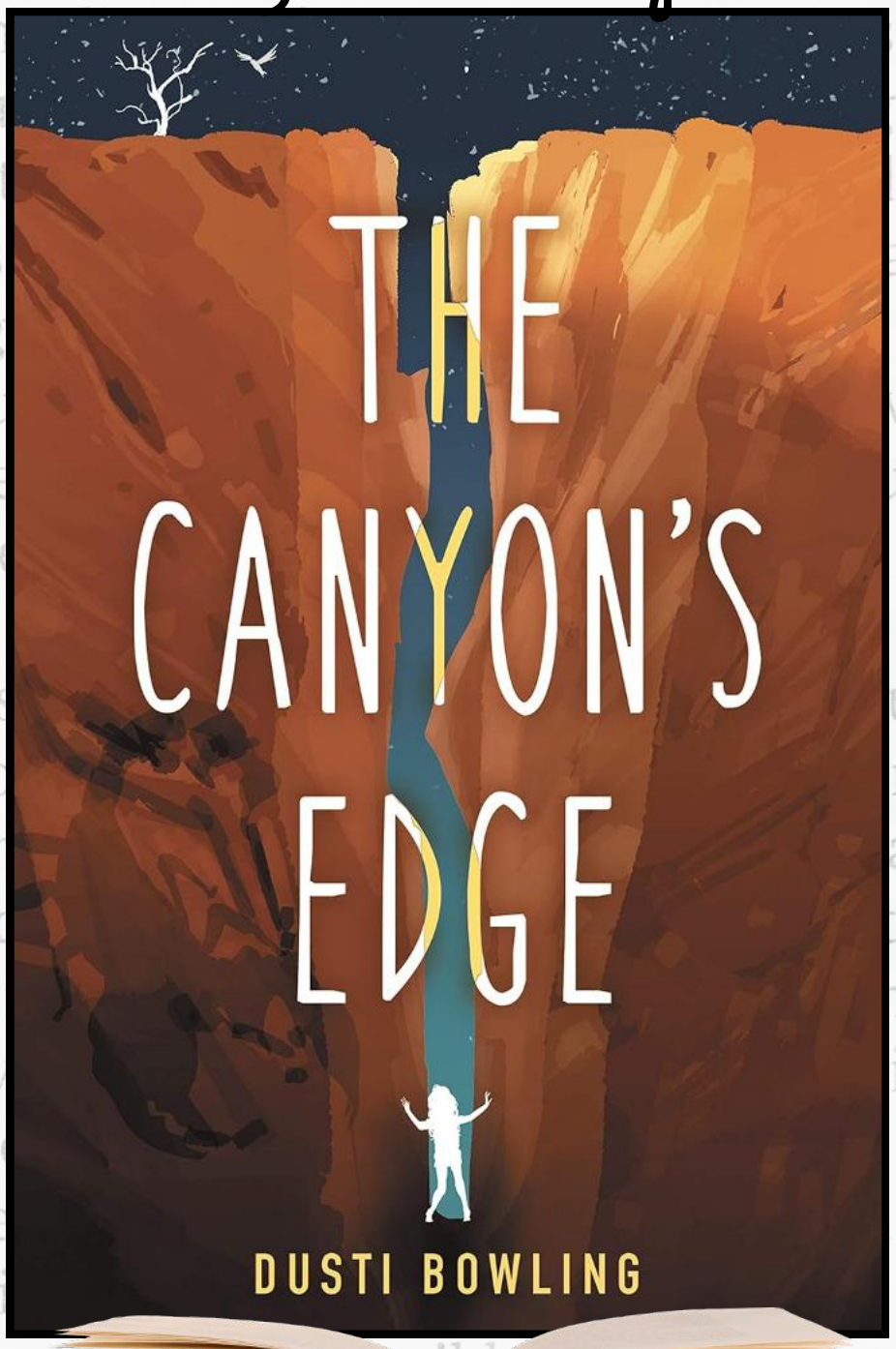
By Linda Sue Park



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE CANYON'S EDGE

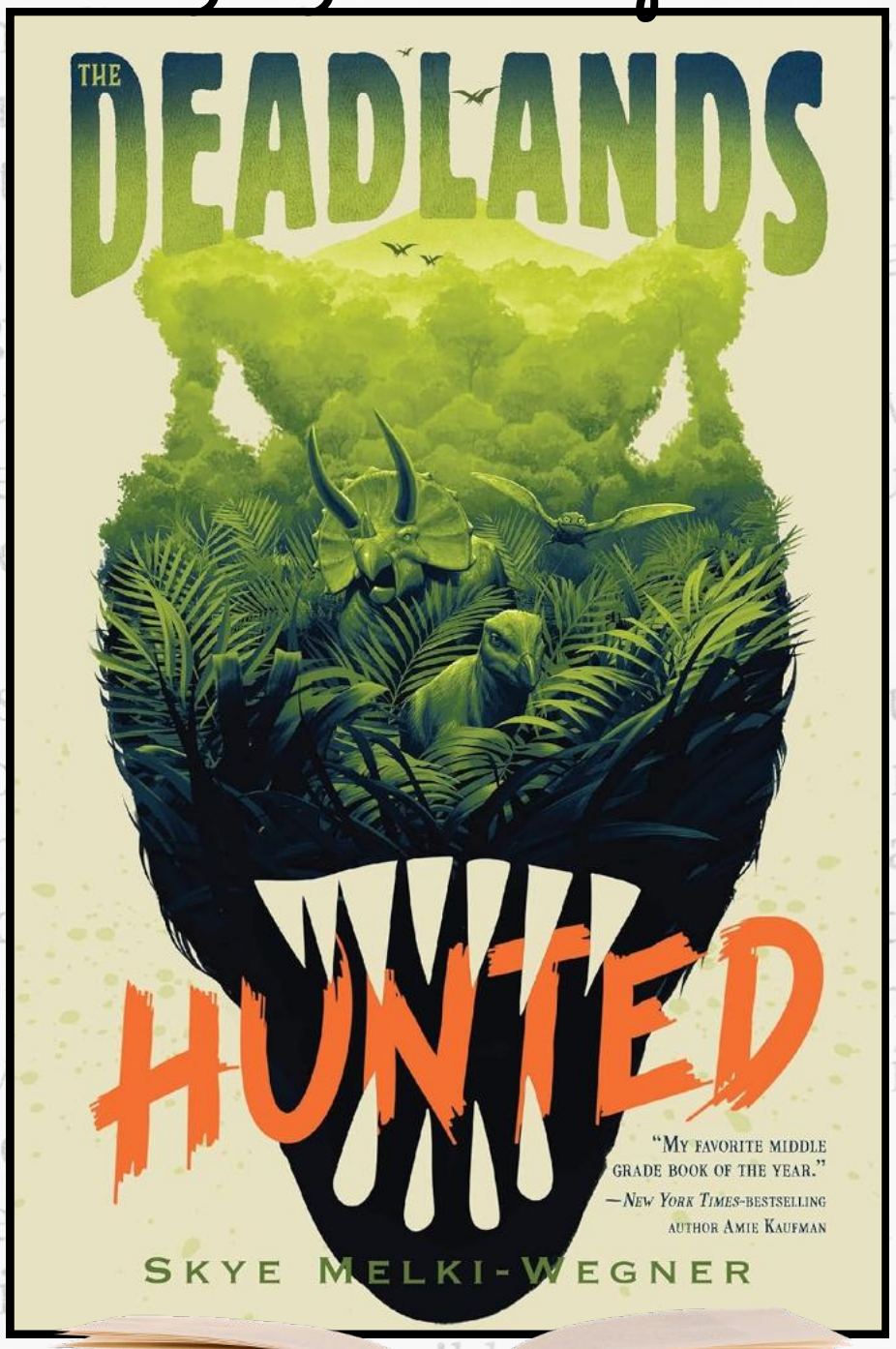
By Dusti Bowling

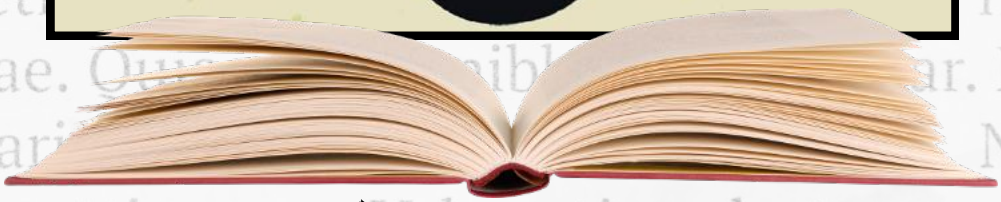


FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE DEADLANDS

By Skye Melki-Wegner

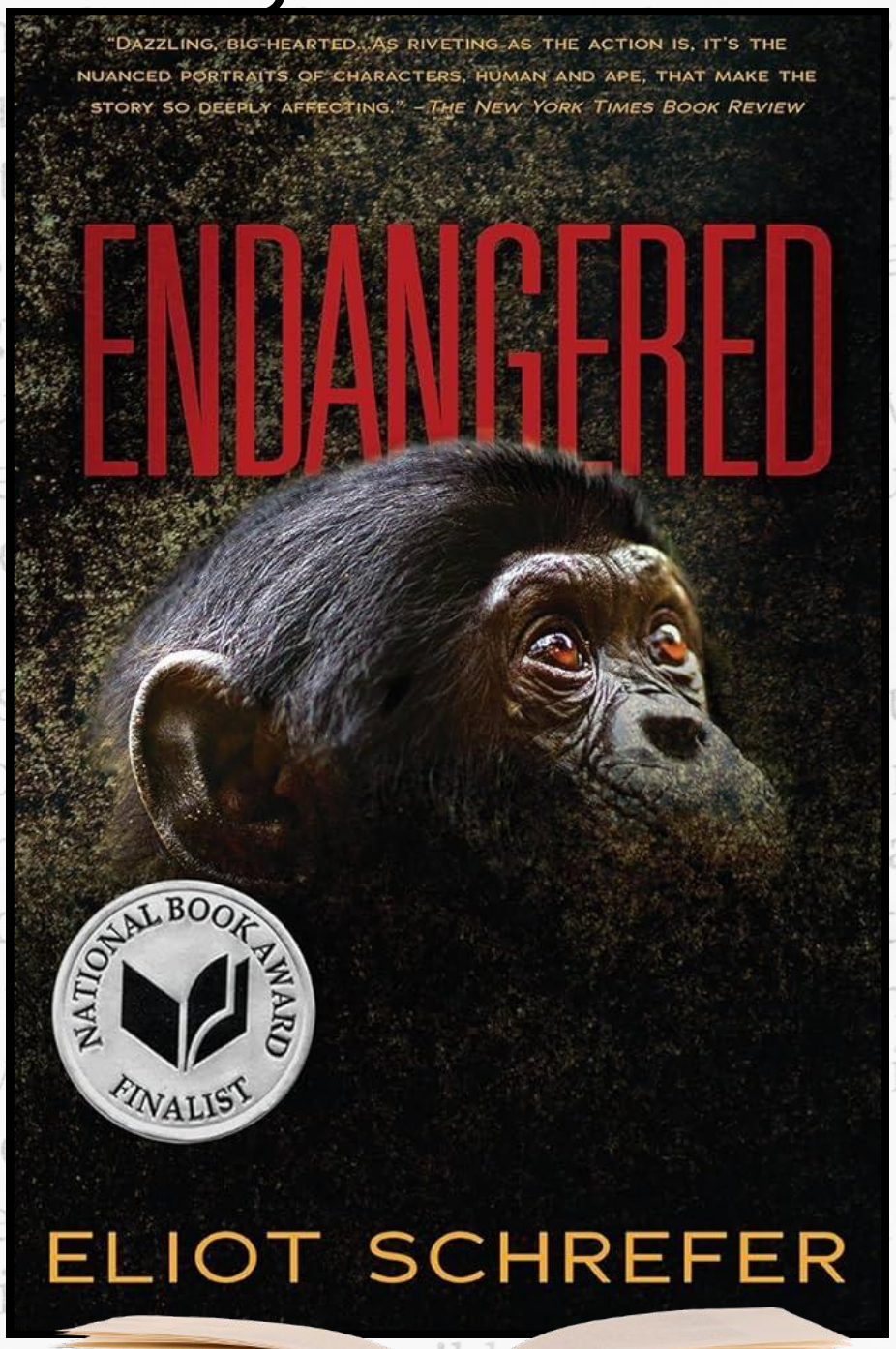




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

ENDANGERED

By Eliot Schrefer

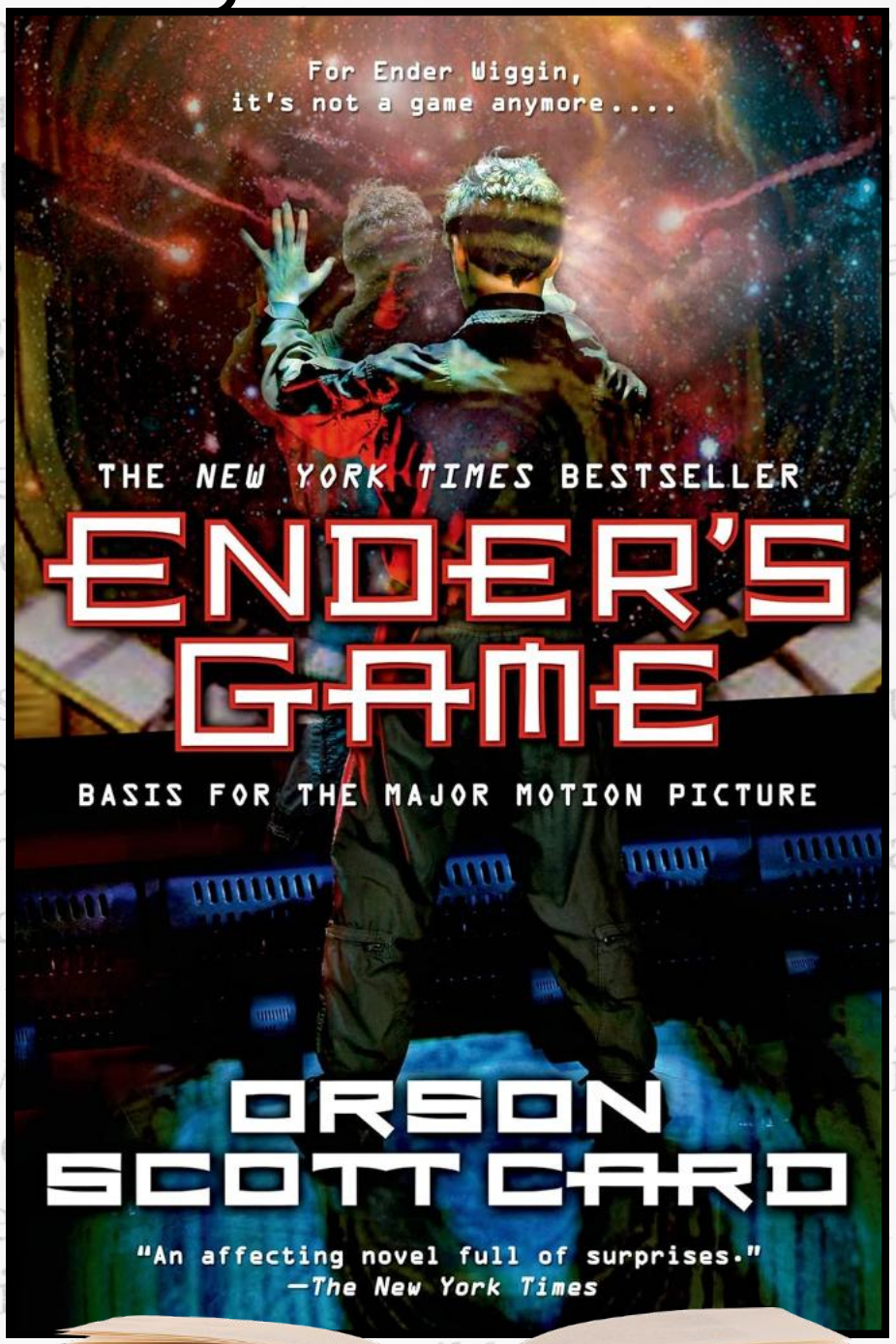




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

ENDER'S GAME

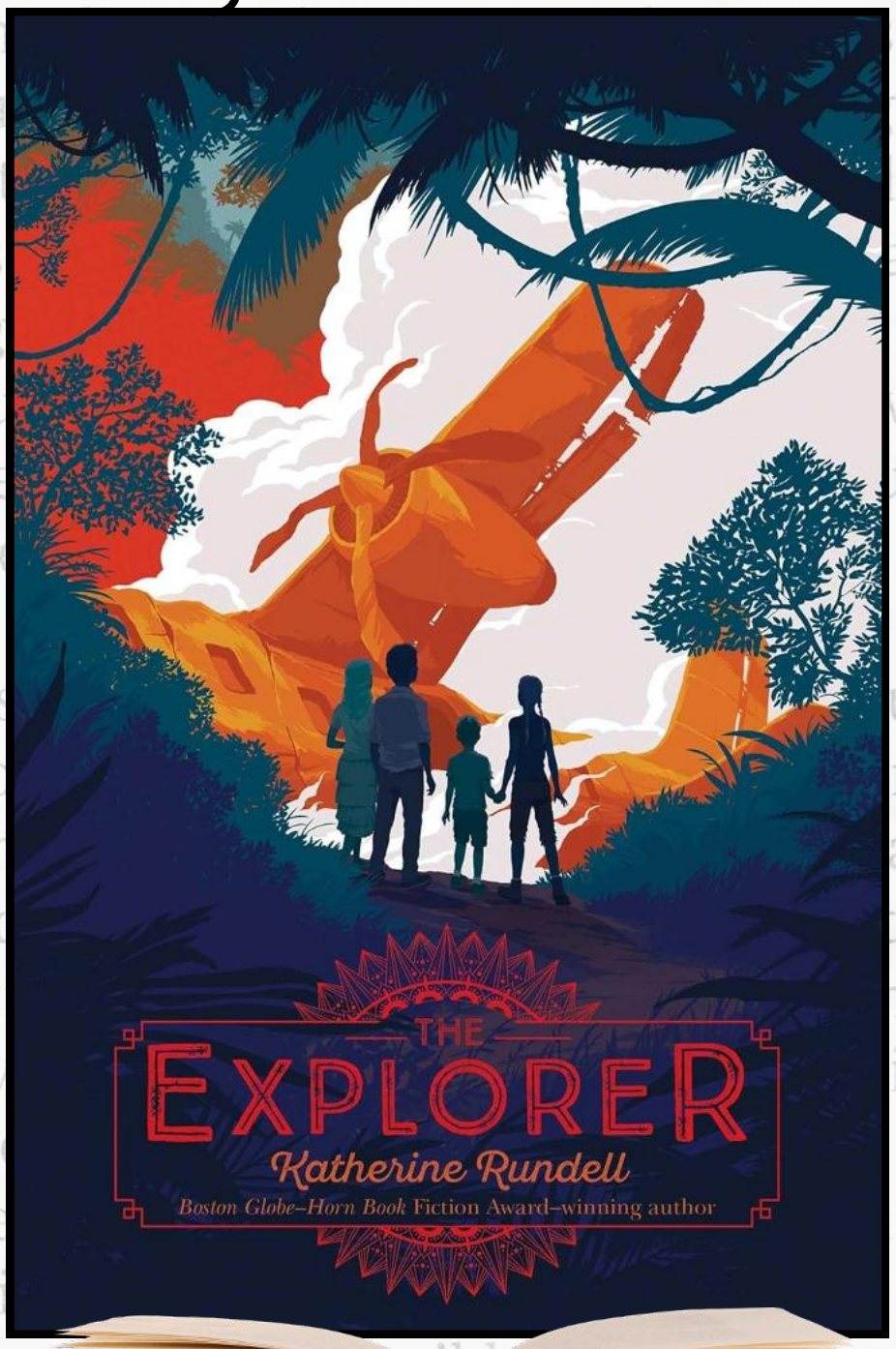
By Orson Scott Card



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE EXPLORER

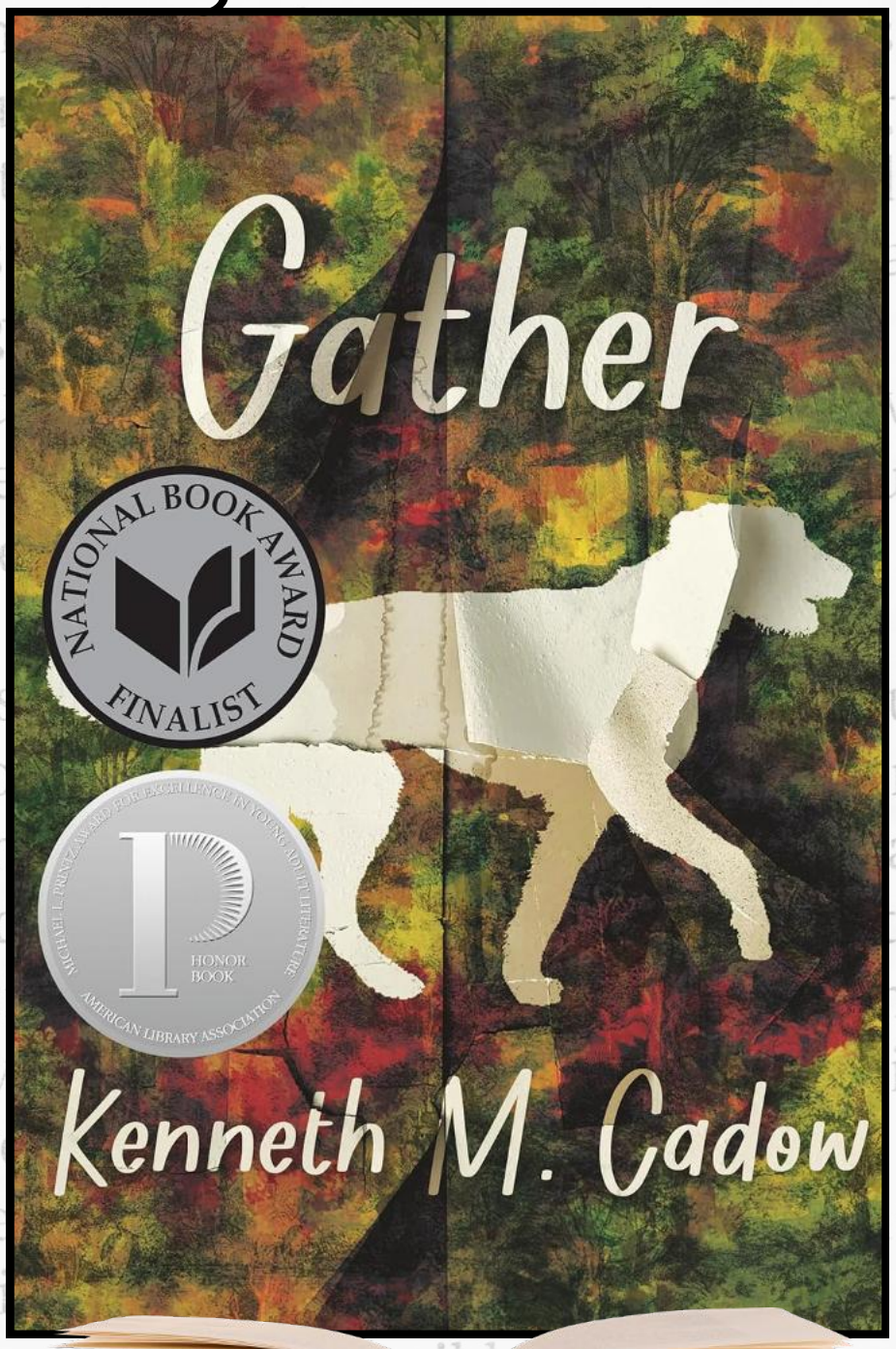
By Katherine Rundell



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

GATHER

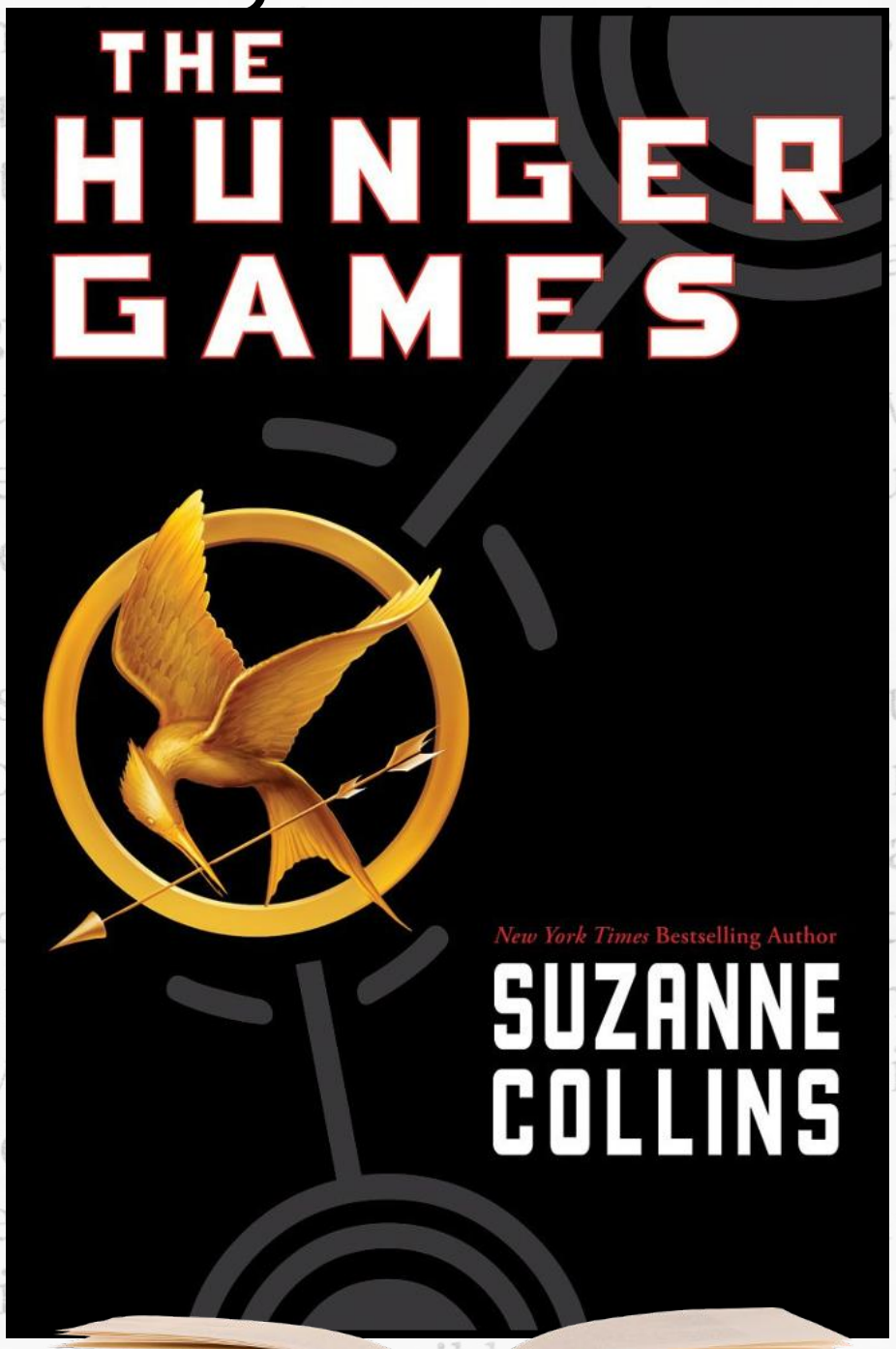
By Kenneth M. Cadow

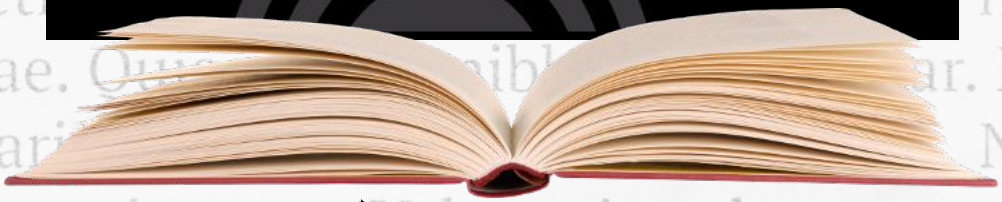


FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE HUNGER GAMES

By Suzanne Collins

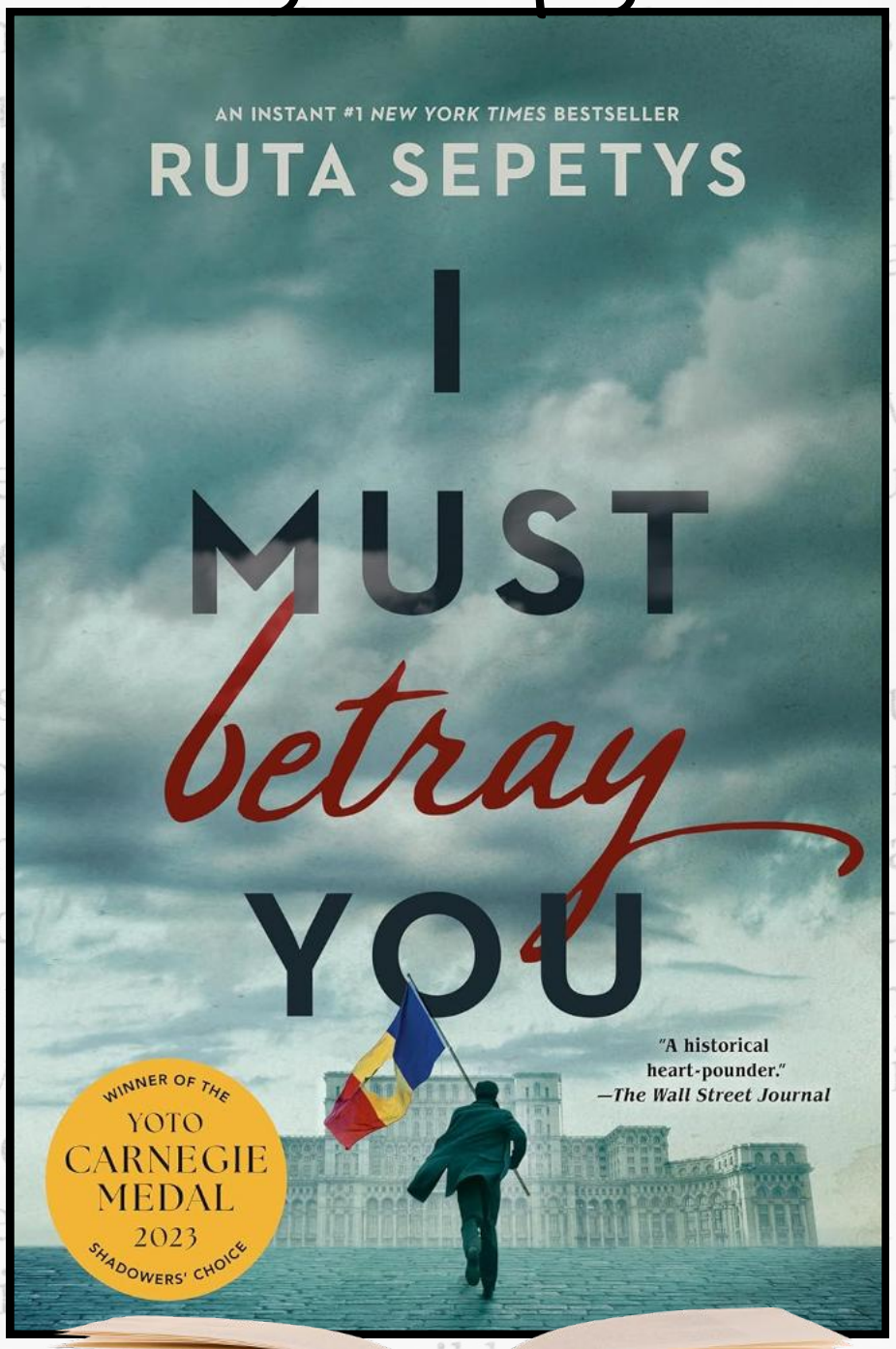




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

I MUST BETRAY YOU

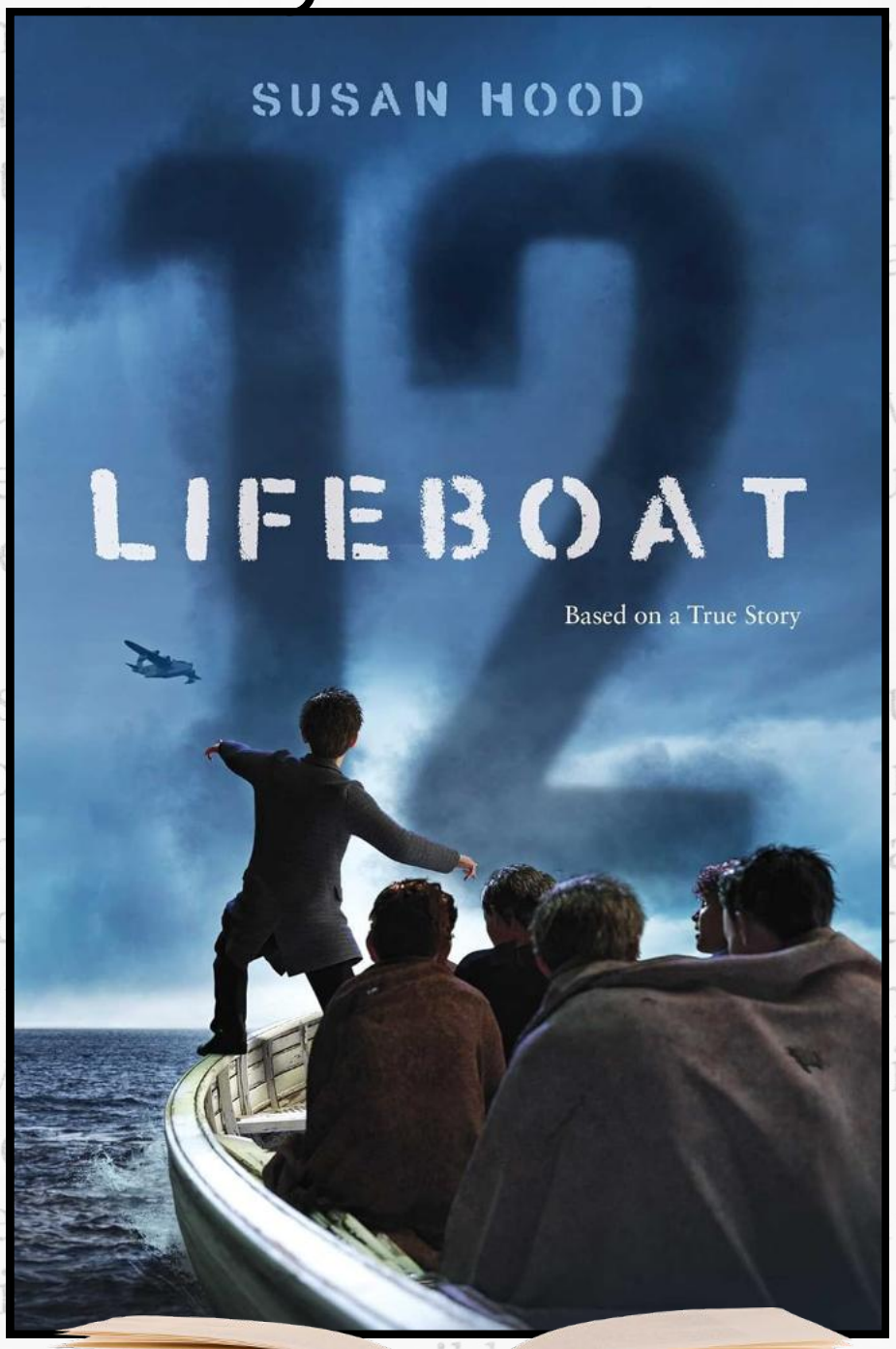
By Ruta Sepetys

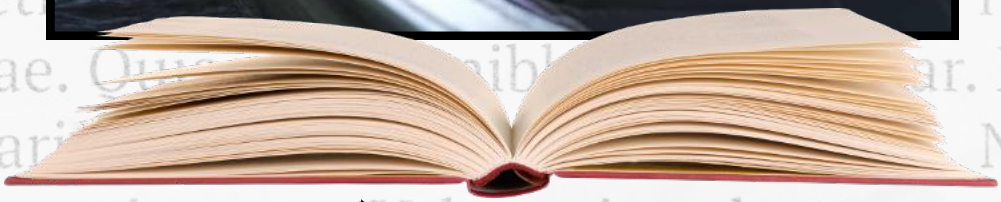


FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

LIFEBOAT 12

By Susan Hood

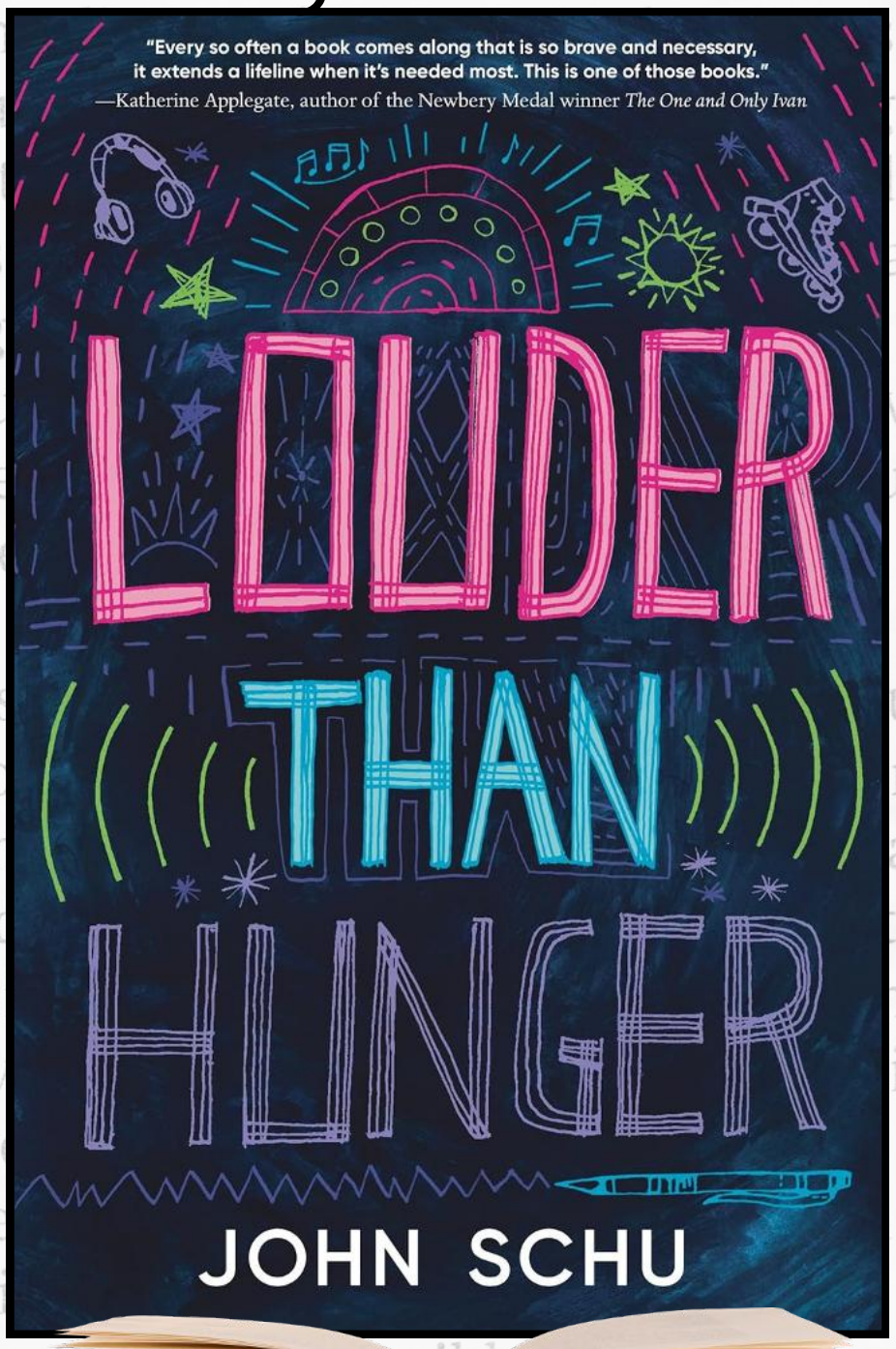




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

LOUDER THAN HUNGER

By John Schu

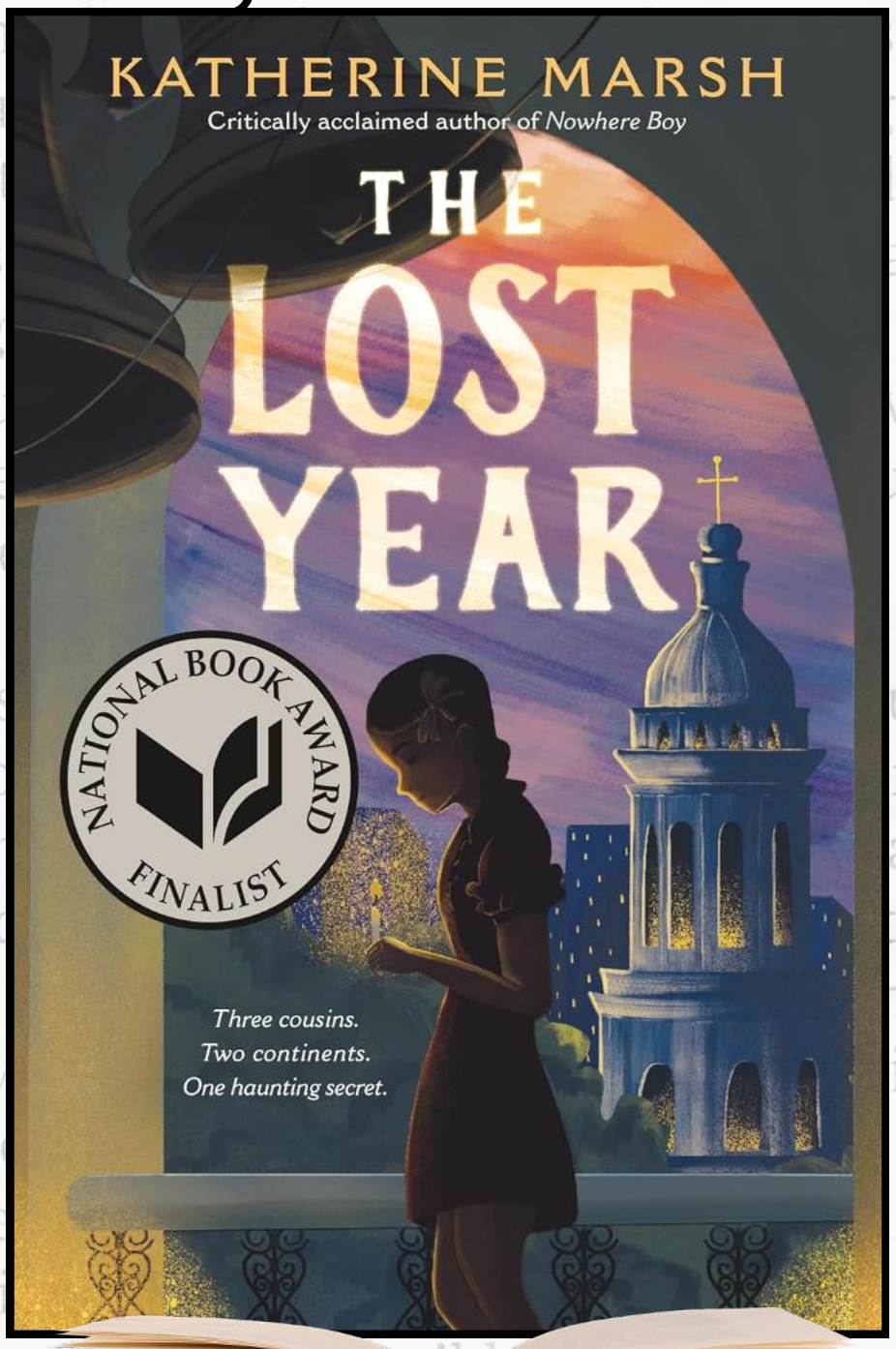




FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE LOST YEAR

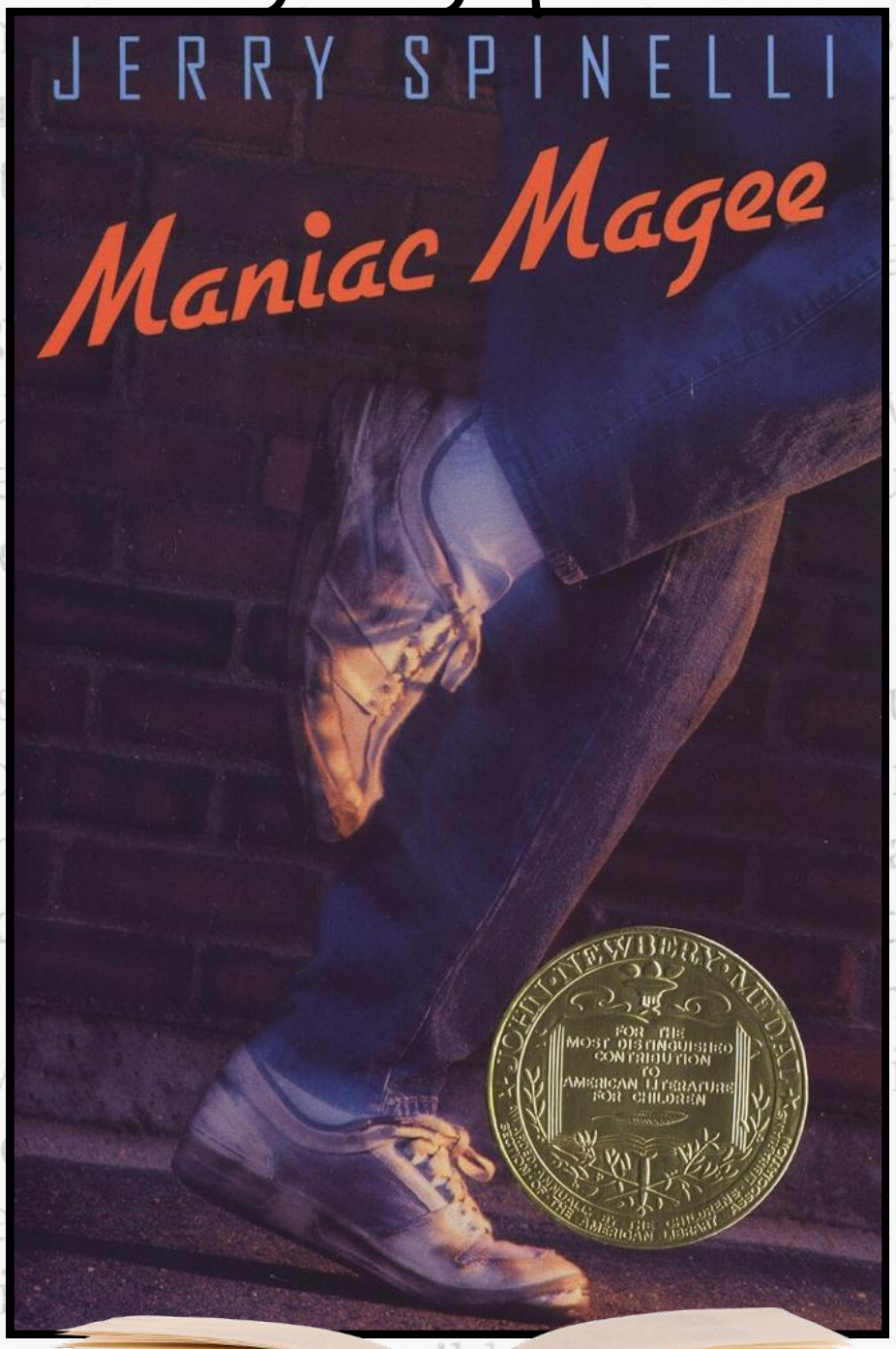
By Katherine Marsh



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

MANIAC MAGEE

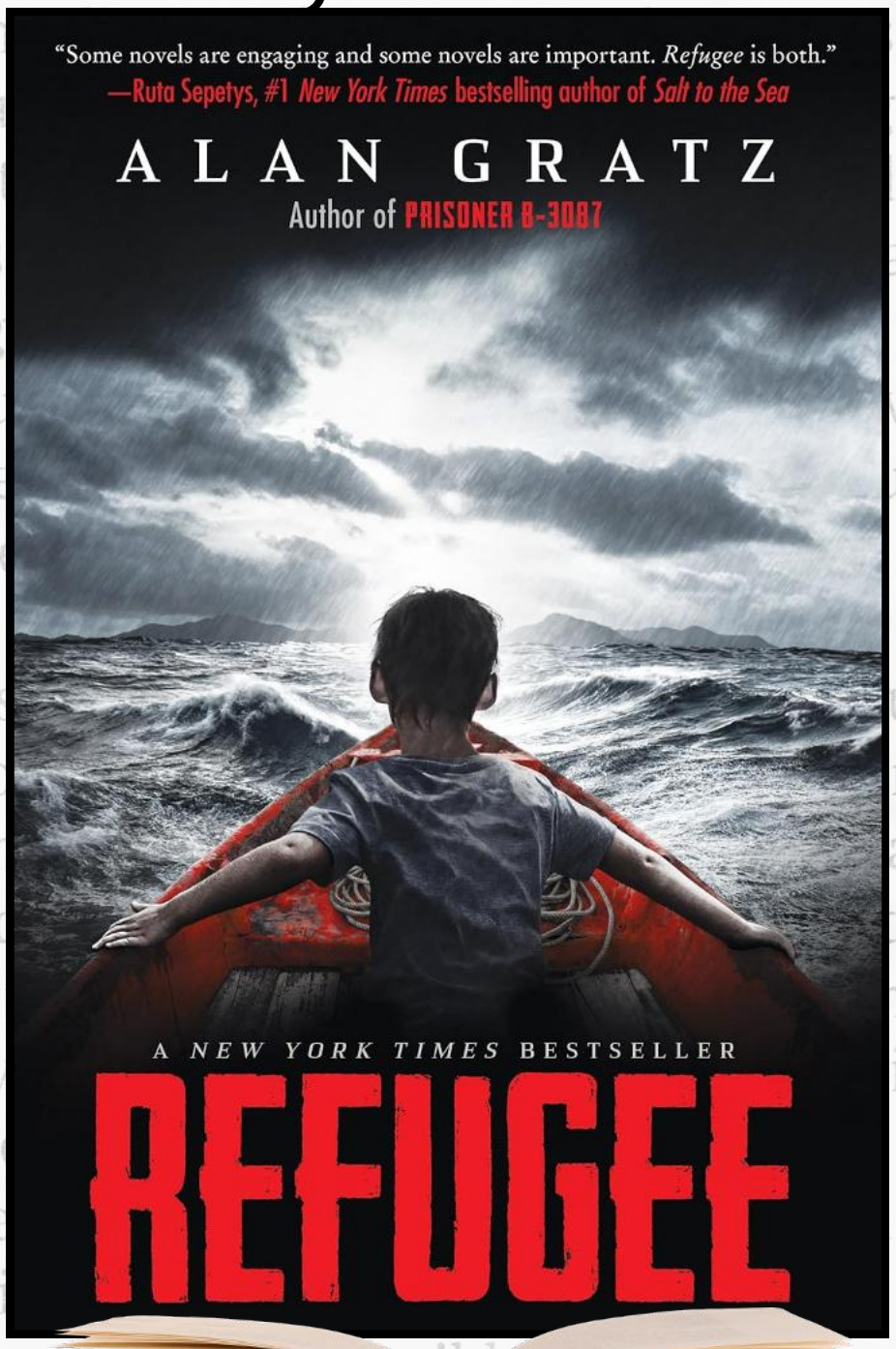
By Jerry Spinelli



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

REFUGEE

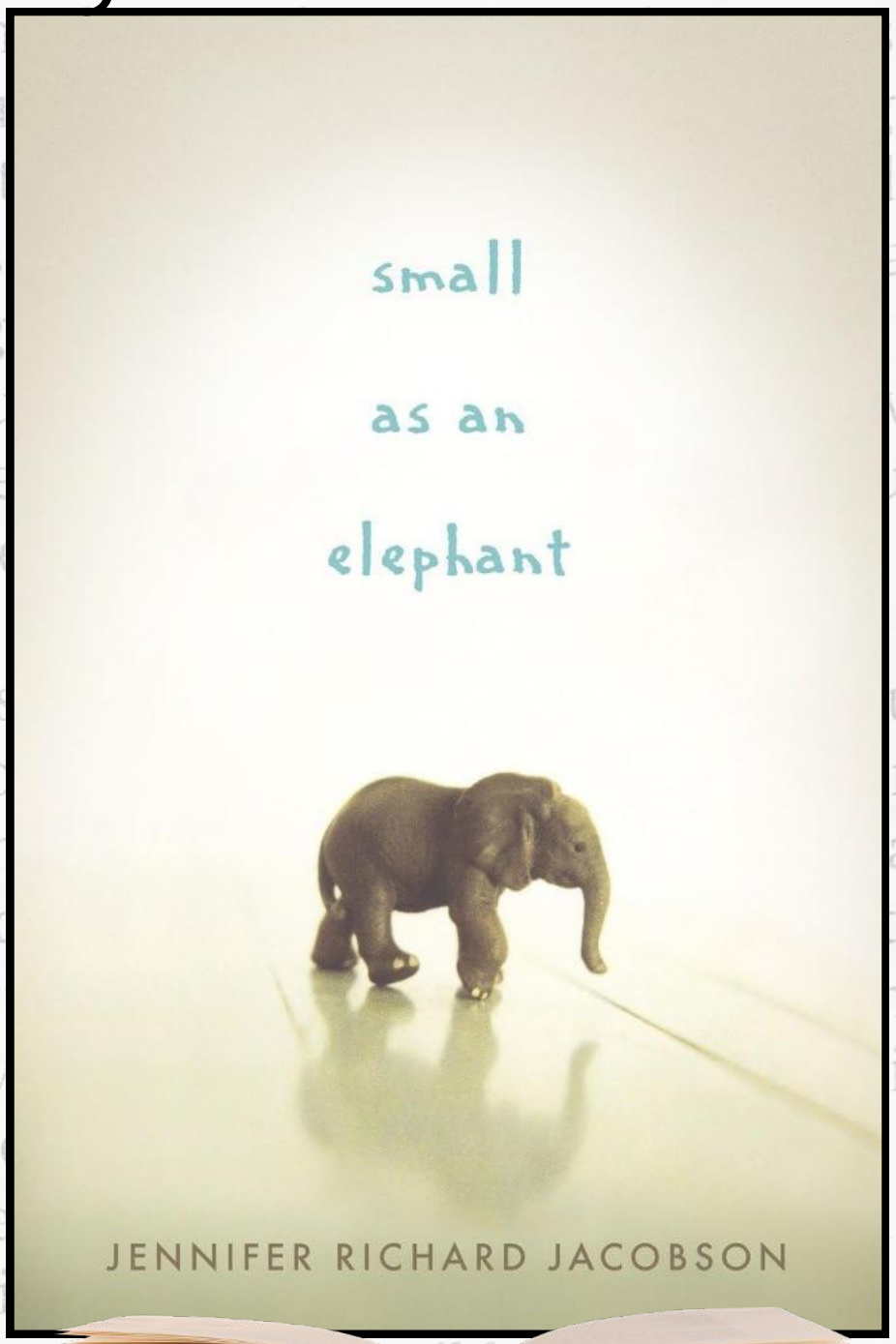
By Alan Gratz



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

SMALL AS AN ELEPHANT

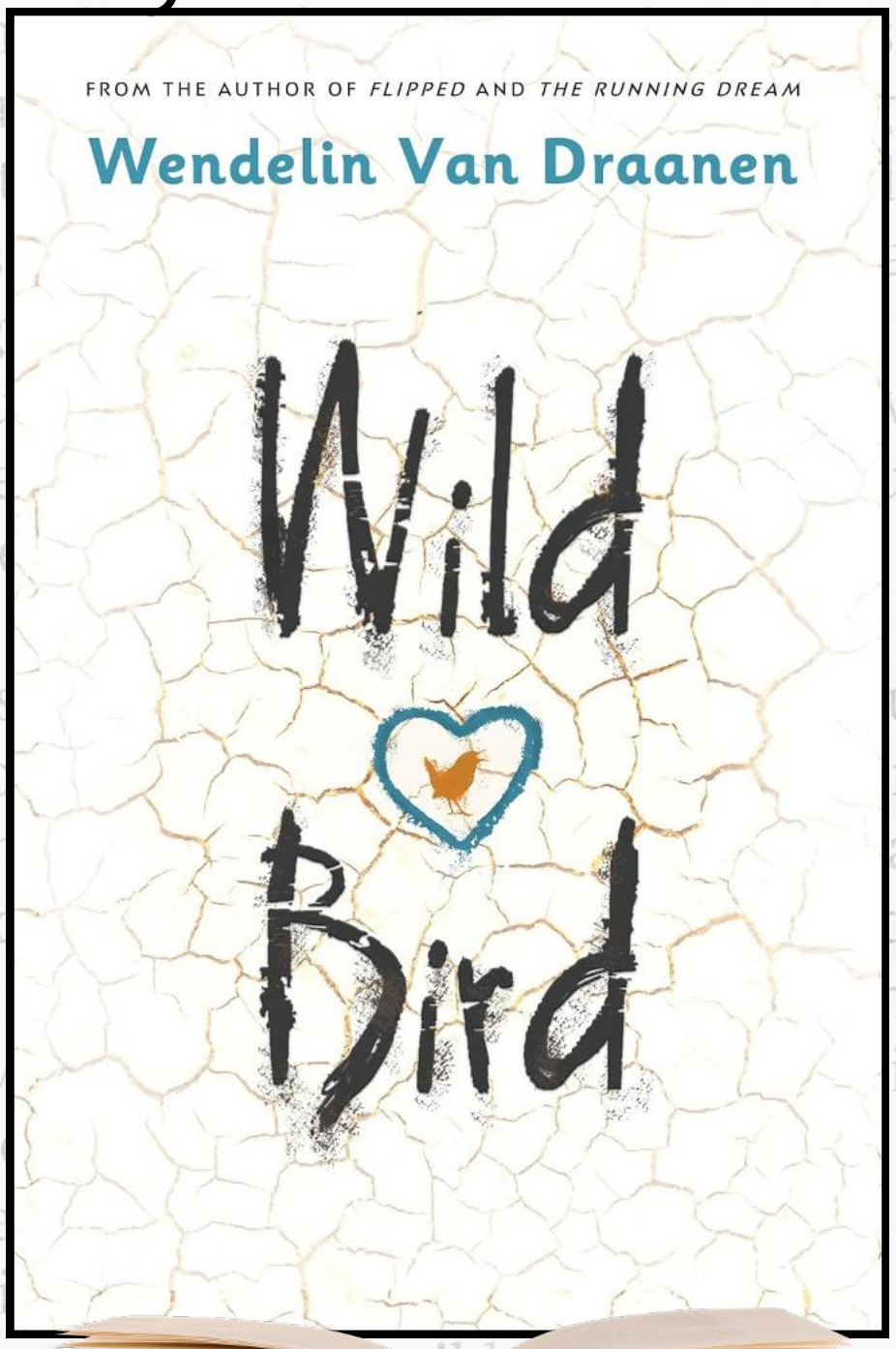
By Jennifer Richard Jacobson



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

WILD BIRD

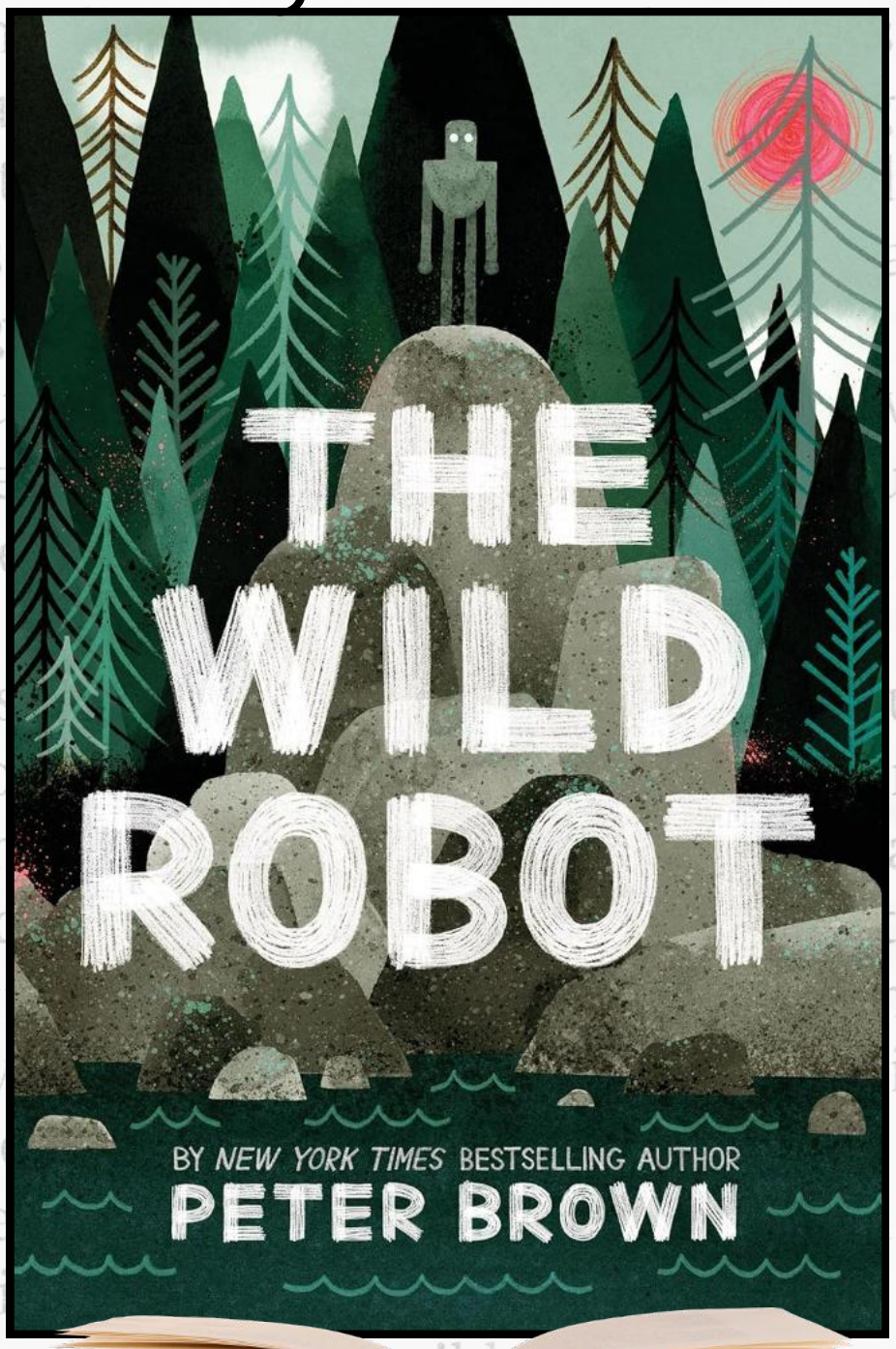
By Wendelin Van Draanen



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY

THE WILD ROBOT

By Peter Brown



FIRST CHAPTER FRIDAY