



# Mark Twain Award

2026 Nominees

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## The Pumpkin Princess and the Forever Night

by Steven Banbury J BAN

After escaping an orphanage, Eve meets the mythical Pumpkin King who adopts her. Eve moves to Hallowell Valley — home to spirits and monsters. But just when she believes she’s found her place, a sinister scheme threatens to take everything from Eve unless she can stop it.

## The Night War

by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley J BRA  
During World War II, twelve-year-old Miriam secretly spirits other Jewish people out of Nazi-occupied France after being separated from her family and forced into hiding.

## Carter Avery’s Tricky Fourth-grade Year

by Rob Buyea J BUY  
Carter Avery initially dreads his new teacher Ms. Krane, but he quickly discovers she can channel his restlessness. When he learns of efforts to replace her, he embarks on a mission to save her job.

## And Then, Boom!

by Lisa Fipps J FIP  
After his mom leaves again, Joe and his grandmum are left to deal with the chaos she left them. For comfort, Joe enjoys comic books where superheroes experience “and then, boom” moments, where everything threatens to go bust but somehow resolves.

## Heroes: A Novel of Pearl Harbor

by Alan Gratz J GRA  
Frank and Stanley have it good at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, with the sparkling water and a front-row view to huge battleships. In their minds, war is far away, and their comic books are the most important concern. And then, December 7, 1941, everything explodes.

## Popcorn

by Rob Harrell J HAR  
Andrew’s trying to survive Picture Day, which is easier said than done when it seems like the whole world is out to get him. As the day continues, a kernel of worry threatens to pop and turn into a public panic attack, his worst fear.

## Slugfest

by Gordon Korman J KOR  
Forced to take Physical Education Equivalency, aka “Slugfest,” in summer school so he can keep his spot on the JV football team, Yash recruits his fellow PE rejects to train with him and pass this course, an endeavor that turns into a summer he’ll never forget.

## The Night Librarian

by Christopher Lincoln J GN NIG  
The New York Public Library is a favorite place for twins Page and Turner. But lately the books are bursting with magic and villains are escaping from their books. It’s up to Page, Turner, a mysterious night librarian and assorted storybook characters to save the library.

## The Sherlock Society

by James Ponti J PON  
Twelve-year-old Alex Sherlock, his sister Zoe and their friends spend their summer investigating the many “cold cases” their grandfather accumulated during his years as a reporter. First up is Al Capone and a buried treasure.

## On A Wing and A Tear

by Cynthia Leitich Smith J SMI  
Mel and Ray may be from different Indigenous Nations, but they have become like siblings since their families moved in together. Soon, they host a distinguished guest in an old oak tree: great-grandfather Bat. Despite his injured wing, Bat will lead in the rematch of the legendary Great Ball Game in Georgia. Grampa Charlie offers to drive Bat from Chicago, with Mel and Ray determined to join the road trip and help out.

## Light and Air

by Mindy Nichols Wendell J WEN  
In 1935, Halle and her mother come down with tuberculosis and are sent to a hospital tucked away in the woods of upstate New York. Free of her worried and difficult father, Halle discovers joy, family and the healing power of honey on the children’s ward. But when Mama suffers a lung hemorrhage, their future is thrown into question.

## A Royal Conundrum

by Lisa Yee J YEE  
Olive hasn’t always made the best decisions, but being sent to a reform school seems a bit extreme. Then she sees RASCH, a former castle turned prison that’s now a “reforming arts school.” When Olive joins a class of misfits, she starts to feel a part of something. When RASCH is in danger of closing, Olive and her friends must save their school from shutting down.





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