

## Library Lines by Olivia Martello, Kirkland Town Library Staff

### Back to School Books

I've always loved back-to-school time. As a kid, I looked forward to the new clothes, new notebooks, and new Scooby-Doo lunch bag I would get every year. Though I'm older now, the feelings of excitement and renewal still linger. These books feature school settings and capture the back-to-school spirit for readers of all ages.

The *Miss Bindergarten* series by Joseph Slate contains fun books for younger kids. They can be read in any order and tell the stories of Miss Bindergarten's kindergarten class. I used to read these to my brother in the days when he was still shorter than me. The stories are fun and the pictures are colorful, and if you're reading to someone young, you might enjoy it just as much as they do!

*New Kid* is a graphic novel by Jerry Craft that tells the story of twelve-year-old Jordan, who struggles to adjust as one of the only Black students in his new private school. Though things improve as he makes friends, he still faces bullying from classmates and experiences racist microaggressions, all while trying to balance his new school friends and old neighborhood friends. This is the first graphic novel to win the Newbery Medal, and as you dive into the story and lively illustrations, you'll see why.

*Twins* by Varian Johnson is another graphic novel worth mentioning. *Twins* is about twins Maureen and Francine, who find themselves drifting apart as middle school starts. It's a great read to help kids understand family and change.

*Ghost* by Jason Reynolds is about a seventh-grader named Castle, who calls himself Ghost. He joins a track team that requires him to stay out of trouble in school, which he struggles with as he gets bullied. Through his position on the team and his relationship with his coach, Ghost learns to stop running from his past and who he is, and instead run towards who he wants to be in the future. The book is funny and heartfelt, and though there are some heavy topics, it never feels dark. There are three more books featuring the other characters, and we have them all!

I'm biased on this one, because Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is one of my favorite books, but it does an excellent job at capturing the fears and anxieties of high school. Charlie is a shy teenager about to start his freshman year, writing about his fears, family dramas, and emerging confidence as he makes friends and learns to live in the face of past trauma. I love it as much now as I did at fourteen, and you can find comfort and hope in Charlie's story no matter what your age. We also have the movie!

*The Secret History* by Donna Tartt creates a college setting so rich and detailed it fully surrounds you as you read. You'll feel like you're really at Hampden College in Vermont with protagonist Richard, who joins a circle of students studying Greek classics. All is not as beautiful as the campus seems, and as Richard's bond with his friends grows, he finds out a deadly

secret within the group that pushes them into more violence and deceit. Even as the suspense grows, you'll want to savor every one of Tartt's words.

*Educated* by Tara Westover is an unconventional back-to-school story, but one that still shows the joys, stresses, and importance of education. Westover's memoir tells of her childhood in Idaho, where her parents keep her and her siblings isolated from the world. Westover doesn't receive formal schooling until her brother encourages her to attend Brigham Young University. Immersed in this new place, Westover must adapt to the changes of college and the world, with the economic strain of maintaining her scholarship. Westover's story continues with her graduate degree and a series of family problems that shape her future. Through it all, you'll be inspired by Westover's determination and pursuit of education.