

Finding Light in Darkness  
By Ruth Gilbert, Youth Librarian

Happy December! It's dark. It's cold. And the shortest day of the year is coming up on December 21. While it can be easy to dread a day with so little daylight, the winter solstice can also be a time to slow down and recharge before busy days of travel, big family meals, and last-minute shopping. On such a dark day, it can help to think about light, whether it's the literal light of the sun or flickering candles on a winter's evening or the flicker of hope that you have for the year to come. Whatever the past year brought you, the solstice can help to remind us that darkness never lasts forever. For some cozy reading moments with the children in your life, check out these books about darkness, light, and hope.

"The Night World," by Mordicai Gerstein. This picture book starts in darkness with a little boy wishing his cat Sylvie a good night. But Sylvie wants to explore, so the boy tiptoes around the house with her. They glimpse the strange shadows of their home in the dark, but soon a little light starts to peek in the windows. They step outside as the light grows until finally there is a bright sunrise and the world around them is bright and colorful.

"Finding Fire" by Logan S. Kline. This wordless picture book has rich, immersive illustrations that tell the story of a cave boy who has volunteered to go searching for fire after his family's campfire goes out. He runs into some trouble and comes close to losing hope, but after helping and then befriending a baby mastodon he's more determined to succeed than ever. You'll be rooting for the boy and mastodon as they struggle to keep their light alive.

"The Sun is Late and So is the Farmer" by Philip C. Stead and Erin E. Stead. A mule, a milk cow, and a miniature horse wait for the sunrise that never seems to come in this gorgeous, quiet picture book. They ask the wise Barn Owl what they can do, because if the sun never rises, the farmer will sleep and sleep, and breakfast will never come. She tells them to travel to the edge of the world, where they'll find Rooster, who will know what to do. So they gather up all their bravery and amble to the edge of the farm just as the rooster crows, day breaks, and the farmer fetches them for their breakfast.

"The Rough Patch" by Brian Lies. A fox named Evan does everything with his dog, but their favorite pastime is spending time in Evan's garden. When the unthinkable happens and the dog dies, Evan hacks his beloved garden to bits and lets spikey, ugly weeds grow instead. Despite his neglect, a pumpkin vine sprouts and a giant pumpkin grows. When Evan decides to take it to the county fair, he reconnects with experiences and people he loves, and realizes it may be time to open his heart again.

"Change Sings: A Children's Anthem" by Amanda Gorman and Loren Long. Amanda Gorman's presidential inaugural poem is the text to this lyrical, hopeful picture book. The accompanying pictures illustrate how children can affect change through kindness and bravery.

I hope these titles bring your families a little light this December!