

2020 Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults

The 2020 Amazing Audiobooks list consists of 35 titles; with 30 fiction and 5 nonfiction audiobooks, selected from 63 official nominations, which were posted and discussed in blog posts on The Hub (<http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/about/selected-lists-the-hub/amazing-audiobooks-nominees/>).

Members of the 2020 Amazing Audiobooks Blogging Team are: Coordinator Samantha Neiman, Sun Prairie Public Library, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin; Coordinator Brittany Marie Garcia, Rancho Cucamonga Public Library, Rancho Cucamonga, California; Kit Ballenger, KitonLit, Chevy Chase, Maryland; Dawn Zimmerer Collins, Madison County Library System, Canton, Mississippi; Cyndi Hamann, Arlington Heights Memorial Library, Arlington Heights, Illinois; Danielle Jones, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon; Christie Kimsey, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, California; Teka McCabe, Briarcliff High School & Briarcliff Middle School, Manor, New York; Erin Phemester, Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County, Youngstown, Ohio; Dr. Wendy Stephens, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama; Sarah Ressler Wright, RB Hayes High School, Delaware, Ohio; Kiera Vargas, Tennessee State University: Language, Literature, Philosophy Department, Nashville, Tennessee;

***indicates a top ten (<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/2020-top-ten-amazing-audiobooks-young-adults>) selection**

Akata Warrior by **Nnedi Okorafor**, narration by **Yetide Badaki**. Tantor Audio. 2019. \$42.99. ISBN: 978-1-9773-0243-4. Sunny Nwazue continues to develop her magical powers, and after being separated from her Anyanwu, Sunny and her friends are sent on an adventure to set things right in the spirit world. Badaki gives each character their own voice, maintains the perfect pace, and pronounces everything beautifully.

The Beast Player by **Nahoko Uehashi**, translation by **Cathy Hirano**, narration by **Caitlin Kelly**. Macmillan Audio. 2019. \$57.99. ISBN: 978-1-2502-1202-3. Elin's path to becoming a beast doctor has led her to cultivate a magical power to communicate with the Royal Beasts, but this puts both her and her charges at risk for becoming a tool of war. Hirano's voice grows with Elin as does the empathy felt.

****Becoming*** by **Michelle Obama**, narration by **Michelle Obama**. Random House Audio. 2018. \$44.99. ISBN: 978-0-5256-3367-9. Memoir of Michelle Obama's journey from child to professional and insights into her time as FLOTUS. Michelle's honest and heartfelt candor allows listeners to vicariously experience the many vicissitudes of her political and personal life.

Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America by **Ibi Zoboi, Tracey Baptiste, Coe Booth, Dhonielle Clayton, Brandy Colbert, Jay Coles, Lamar Giles and Leah Henderson**, narration by **Bahni Turpin and Ron Butler**. HarperAudio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-8541-8. Seventeen authors. Seventeen stories. Seventeen unique and distinct experiences about being young and black in America. An empowering book for teens showing whatever your interests, whatever your skills, whatever your shade, you are enough. Turpin and Butler's versatility makes each story is distinctly different and each character their own person.

Brave Face: A Memoir by **Shaun David Hutchinson**, narration by **Shaun David Hutchinson**. Simon & Schuster Audio. 2019. \$49.99. ISBN: 978-1-5082-8614-1. Author's ultimately hopeful memoir of growing up in the 1990's battling depression, and coming into his own awareness of his sexuality at a time when the world was deeply homophobic and the AIDS crisis dominated the American psyche. Hutchinson narrates his story as no one else could, bringing to life his trials and tribulations.

Cheshire Crossing by **Andy Weir**, narration by **Sophie Amoss, Brittany Pressley, Kristen DiMercurio, Rebecca Soler, Lisa Flanagan, James Monroe, Neil Hellegers, Sean Patrick Hopkins, Peter Coleman, and Peter Bradbury**. Random House Audio. 2019. \$38.00. ISBN: 978-0-5931-0288-6. After returning from Neverland, Wonderland, and Oz, Wendy, Alice and Dorothy are all sent to a boarding school for girls who are "maladjusted." Soon they are entering each other portals encountering villains and allies from different worlds. A full cast audio brings this graphic novel to life.

Daisy Jones & the Six by **Taylor Jenkins Reid**, narration by **Jennifer Beals, Benjamin Bratt, Judy Greer and Pablo Schreiber**. Random House Audio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-4529-0. The tell-all of rock's sensation Daisy Jones & the Six rise to fame, and to their sudden disbandment. This behind the scenes look at what makes, and breaks, a band is expertly narrated with a full cast bringing the mockumentary feel three dimensional.

****Dig*** by **A.S. King**, narration by **A.S. King, Mike Chamberlain, Tonya Cornelisse and Kirby Heyborne**. Listening Library. 2019. \$64.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-3817-9. Five white estranged cousins pick away at the thin veneer of their grandparents' respectability, finding themselves while uncovering family secrets that have flourished while buried. The raw delivery of the four distinctive narrators suits the layered characters, while the intensifying plot lures in listeners with quirky delivery and character-driven complexity.

Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald - Makers, Mysteries and Magic by **Pottermore Publishing, Mark Salisbury, and Hana Walker-Brown**, narration by **Jennifer Beals, Benjamin Bratt, Judy Greer and Pablo Schreiber**. Pottermore Publishing. 2018. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-7811-0145-2. Get a backstage view on the making of the Crime of Grindelwald with over 100 hours of interviews with the cast and crew. Narrated by an animated and funny Dan Folger.

****The Fountains of Silence*** by **Ruta Sepetys**, narration by **Maite Jáuregui, with Richard Ferrone, Neil Hellegers, Joshua Kane, Liza Kaplan, and Oliver Wyman**. Listening Library. 2019. \$59.99. ISBN: 978-0-5931-0566-5. Under the fascist dictatorship of General Franco, Daniel Matheson arrives in Madrid and fate introduces him to Ana, whose family's interweaving obstacles reveal the lingering grasp of the Spanish Civil War and chilling definitions of fortune and fear. A full cast embodies the time period and brings the story to life.

Frankly in Love by **David Yoon**, narration by **Raymond J. Lee**. Listening Library. 2019. \$49.99. ISBN: 978-0-5931-0559-7. Frank Li is Korean-American, who's parents have one rule when it comes to romance, 'Date Korean,' which proves complicated when Frank falls for Brit, who is smart, beautiful, and white. Lee voices Frank with an earnest tenderness befitting a high school senior in the throes of first love.

****Heroine*** by **Mindy McGinnis**, narration by **Brittany Pressley**. HarperCollins Audio. 2019. \$34.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-8681-1. When a car crash sidelines Mickey just before softball season, she must keep her spot as the catcher. Her prescribed pills do more than ease the pain; they make her feel good. Pressley delivers this book with the strength of a no-excuses athlete who slowly starts to rationalize her descent into drug dependency.

****Hey Kiddo*** by **Jarrett J. Krosoczka**, narration by **Jarrett J. Krosoczka, Jeanne Birdsall, Richard Ferrone, and Jenna Lamia**. Scholastic Audio. 2019. \$34.99. ISBN: 978-1-3386-0454-2. Born to a heroin-addicted mother and an unknown father, Jarrett explores how his grandparents adopted him, what led him to become an artist, and his struggles and joys along the way. Jarrett himself narrates the book with a full cast, including many people from his actual life narrating their own voices.

Hollow Kingdom by **Kira Jane Buxton**, narration by **Robert Petkoff**. Blackstone Audio. 2019. \$34.99. ISBN: 978-1-5491-8209-9. S.T., a domesticated crow, enjoys hanging out with his owner Big Jim, then Big Jim's eyeball falls out of his head. The zombie apocalypse from the perspective of animals. Petkoff's genius narration captures S.T.'s voice perfectly, bringing the foul-mouthed crow front and center, and lands all the punny humor the book is laden with.

How Long 'Til Black Future Month by **N. K. Jemisin**, narration by **Shayna Small, Gail Nelson-Holgate, Robin Ray Eller, and Ron Butler**. Hachette Audio. 2018. \$25.98. ISBN: 978-1-5491-4728-9. Culinary delights explore memory and what we hold on to, dragons rise up in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and Death has to learn survive after mankind is gone. The narrators are superb, each story is of the same caliber and flow into one another seamlessly.

****Internment*** by **Samira Ahmed**, narration by **Soneela Nankani**. Hachette Audio. 2019. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-5491-4876-7. In a near dystopian future, seventeen-year-old Layla Amin and her family are forced into an internment camp for Muslim Americans. After some time, Layla and her allies stage a revolution against the camp's Director. Nankani's narration amplifies the tense atmosphere and embodies Layla's inner turmoil during difficult times.

****Let Me Hear a Rhyme*** by **Tiffany D. Jackson**, narration by **Adenrele Ojo, Korey Jackson, Adam Lazarre-White, and Nile Bullock**. HarperCollins Audio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0629-1433-0. Tiffany D. Jackson tells the story of three Brooklyn teens who plot to turn their murdered friend into a major rap star by pretending he's still alive. Four narrators beautifully voice the perspectives of four very different young people coming up in a 1997 and 1998 pre-gentrification Brooklyn landscape.

Lovely War by **Julie Berry**, narration by **Jayne Entwistle, John Lee, Dion Graham, Nathaniel Parker, Steve West, Fiona Hardingham, and Allan Corduner**. Listening Library. 2019. \$69.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-3826-1. The full cast brings narratorial range and nuance to Berry's sweeping World War I epic, exploring giddy romance as well as the weary introspection of a generation lost in brutal trench warfare. Tender stolen moments between a soldier boy and a piano girl lend universality to this heart-wrenching romance.

****On the Come Up*** by **Angie Thomas**, narration by **Bahni Turpin**. HarperCollins Audio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-4069-1. Bri's life has not been easy, but her family's struggles grow when her mom loses her job. Bri dreams of becoming a famous rapper as an answer to their troubles. In Bri's quest to

become a rapper, she must decide what she is willing to compromise. Turpin's skilled narration brings all of the distinct characters to life.

Notes from a Young Black Chef by **Kwame Onwuachi** and **Joshua David Stein**, narration by **Kwame Onwuachi**. Random House Audio. 2019. \$66.50. ISBN: 978-1-9848-3990-9. A new, and honest Kitchen Confidential. Onwuachi coming of age story into the restaurant world from New York City to the most elite restaurant in Washington DC. Not everything was a success for Onwuachi, and his honesty adds authenticity to his memoir that teens will appreciate.

The Opposite of Always by **Justin A. Reynolds**, narration by **Nile Bullock**. HarperAudio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-8647-7. Jack has fallen in love hard for Kate. After her premature death, Jake finds himself back in time at night that they first met. Is he here to get a second chance at saving her? Bullock captures Jack's vulnerability and persistence in trying to save Kate.

Pan's Labyrinth by **Guillermo del Toro** and **Cornelia Funke**, narration by **Thom Rivera**. HarperCollins Audio. 2019. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-5592-3. A few years past the end of the Spanish Civil War, Ofelia moves next to an overgrown labyrinth. There she meets a faun and some fairies that send her on terrifying and crucial tasks. Rivera's accented narration imbues a magical element to this creepy allegorical tale placing the reader in the Spanish countryside.

Patron Saints of Nothing by **Randy Ribay**, narration by **Ramón de Ocampo**. Listening Library. 2019. \$59.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8603-3. After his cousin Jun's sudden death, high school senior Jay Reguero heads to the Philippines for answers. No one in his family wants to talk about as it is one more fatality tide to President Duterte's war on drugs. The emotional range Jay goes through is beautifully expressed by Ocampo.

Roller Girl by **Victoria Jamieson**, narration by **Almarie Guerra, Jesse Bernstein, Ron Butler, Abigail Caro, Robbie Daymond, Giordan Diaz, Em Eldridge, Christopher Gebauer, Kim Mai Guest, Kirby Heyborne, Hillary Huber, Rachel Jacobs, Jorjeana Marie, Kathleen McInerney, Alex McKenna, Cassandra Morris, P.J. Ochlan, Adenrele Ojo, Georgette Perna, Kate Reinders, Tara Sands, Monika Felice Smith, and Bahni Turpin**. Listening Library. 2019. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8233-2. Astrid falls in love with the sport of roller derby when her mom takes her to a bout, but then finds that joining roller derby is much harder than she expected. The full cast is incredibly impressive, featuring more than 25 narrators, including Guerra who shines as the primary narrator.

****Shout*** by **Laurie Halse Anderson**, narration by **Laurie Halse Anderson**. Listening Library. 2019. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8239-4. In free verse, Anderson shares reflections, rants, and calls to action deeply personal stories from her life. Anderson's voice starts small, mimicking the powerlessness of her childhood, and develops strength as she does, finding her stride as she discovers the library and speaks of favorite teachers who helped her.

Spin by **Lamar Giles**, narration by **Bahni Turpin, Shawana Carter, and Sisi Aisha Johnson**. Scholastic Audio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-1-3385-7639-9. With legions of listeners tuned to her SoundCloud as DJ ParSec, Paris has risen from coastal Virginia to international fame. But when she's found dead, two estranged friends work together to get justice. The three powerhouse narrators alternate in voicing distinct young women with different takes on what happened to ParSec.

Stain by **A.G. Howard**, narration by **Tim Bruce**. Blackstone Audio. 2019. \$44.99. ISBN: 978-1-9825-8740-6. An epic tale of a prophecy to reunite the sun and moon through two kingdoms with the marriage of a moonlight princess born to the sun realm and sunlight prince born to the night realm. Tim Bruce's narration is superb. He gives each character and creature their own unique voice.

Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful by **Arwen Elys Dayton**, narration by **Michael Crouch, Karissa Vacker, Brittany Pressley, Christopher Gebauer, Ari Fliakos, and Rebecca Lowman**. Listening Library. 2019. \$64.99. ISBN: 978-0-5256-3915-2. In a prospective future, six individuals' stories are told on how science, gene editing, and extreme body modifications affected their lives, society, and the world. Every story is narrated with a new found depth and perspective keeping this eerie future possible as the listener propels further into the future.

The Things She's Seen by **Ambelin Kwaymullina & Ezekiel Kwaymullina**, narration by **Miranda Tapsell**. Listening Library. 2019. \$37.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8440-4. Since Beth died her dad is drowning in grief, and is the only one who can see and hear her. Beth hopes a mystery will remind her detective father that he is still alive. Tapsell manages to be at once quiet, transportive, and suspenseful, a difficult balance to strike in narration.

Thirteen Doorways, Wolves Behind Them by **Laura Ruby**, narration by **Lisa Flanagan**. HarperAudio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0629-6513-4. The unforgettable story of two young women, one living and one dead, dealing with loss, desire, and the fragility of the American dream during WWII. Both of the main characters are expertly narrated by Lisa Flanagan, immersing the listener both in the time period and overall mood of the book.

Two Can Keep a Secret by **Karen M. McManus**, narration by **Erin Spencer and Kirby Heyborne**. Listening Library. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8237-0. True crime fan, Ellery, and her twin brother Ezra move to a town where a high school girl was killed five years ago. Ellery is intrigued by the old crime, but when new threats surface, she could be in danger. Amoss and Heyborne bring distinctive yet complementary narration to life making each character easy to recognize and authentic.

We Set the Dark on Fire by **Tehlor Kay Mejia**, narration by **Kyla Garcia**. HarperCollins Audio. 2019. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-0-0629-0795-0. Graduating top in her class, Daniela Vargas was the first wife of two to be matched with the rising politician Mateo, the other wife, her long-time rival. Garcia conveys the angst and determination of both main characters' voices and delivers both the range of emotions and vocal pitches needed for the entire cast of characters.

White Bird by **R. J. Palacio**, narration by **Hillary Huber, Emily Ellet, Robbie Daymond, Graham Halstead, Lauren Ezzo, Sean Patrick Hopkins, Robert Fass, Michael Crouch, Tristan Morris, Adam Alexi-Malle, P.J. Ochlan, Karissa Vacker, Elizabeth Knowelden, and Lisa Flanagan**. Listening Library. 2019. \$24.99. ISBN: 978-1-9848-4748-5. Palacio's debut graphic novel about Grandmère's story, as a young Jewish girl hidden away in Nazi-occupied France during World War II, demonstrates the power of kindness to change hearts, build bridges, and even save lives. A full cast that captures both the tension of high stakes instances and tender ones of human goodness.

Wicked Fox by **Kat Cho**, narration by **Emily Woo Zeller**. Listening Library. 2019. \$27.50. ISBN: 978-1-9848-8605-7. While living in Seoul, Gu Miyoung, a gumiho, a nine-tailed fox that takes the form of a human female and survives by eating the souls of evil men, kills a goblin to save Jihoon, tying their fates together, but only one's life can be saved. Woo Zeller breathes life to the full range of characters.

With the Fire on High by **Elizabeth Acevedo**, narration by **Elizabeth Acevedo**. HarperAudio. 2019. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-0-0628-8679-8. Emoni Santiago's life has been tough decisions for her daughter and her Abuela. The one place she can let all that go is in the kitchen and once Emoni starts cooking her talent breaks free. Acevedo breathes life into her words and truly makes the story come alive.