



Find new books, meet favorite authors at Texas Teen Book Festival

INSIGHT-AND-BOOKS By Sharyn Vane - Special to the American-Statesman



TEXAS TEEN BOOK FESTIVAL

At the Texas Teen Book Festival, you can hear your favorite authors speak as well as pick up new books to read and get your books signed. Contributed by Texas Teen Book Festival

Posted: 12:00 a.m. Friday, September 29, 2017

This year's Texas Teen Book Festival keynote authors instill thrills in young readers, from creating an immersive world of online combat to crafting an armed standoff in verse.

Best-selling authors Marie Lu and Jason Reynolds anchor a lineup that includes writers from nearly every genre along with signings, writing and educators' workshops, a costume contest and the brand-new iTent.

"This multipurpose space is designed to bring fans closer to their favorite author and to allow additional opportunities to learn, create and share," explains Jen Bigheart, public relations director for the event, which is under the Texas Book Festival umbrella. On tap in the iTent are book talks helmed by fest sponsor BookPeople and the Texas Library Association, zine making with writer Jennifer Mathieu and cartoonist/illustrator Tillie Walden, and "Ask Me Anything" sessions with a sampling of authors.

The programming's all free thanks to sponsors, and unlike many book events, attendees can bring three books from home to be signed for every book purchased at the sales tent.

The keynote speakers this year are both prolific authors. Lu penned the “Legend” and “Young Elites” trilogies before earlier this month releasing “Warcross” (Putnam/Penguin, \$18.99), which follows teenage hacker and bounty hunter Emika Chen after she’s tapped to go undercover in a game played by millions worldwide. Lu, who worked in the gaming industry before turning to young adult fiction, creates a compelling world and a storyline that explores ethics in technology in addition to Emika’s adventures. (Opening keynote, 10 a.m.; “Smart Is the New Black” panel, 2:30 p.m.; signings at 8:30 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.)

Reynolds’ “Ghost” was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2016. He’s already longlisted for the same honor for “Long Way Down” (Simon & Schuster, \$17.99), which takes place over 60 seconds, just enough time for 15-year-old Will to decide if he’s going to shoot the man who murdered his brother. Told in stark, gripping verse, “Down” tracks Will’s descent in an elevator, with each person getting on giving him another perspective on his eventual decision. (Closing keynote with We Need Diverse Books essay presentations, 4:15 p.m.; “To Thine Own Self Be True” panel, 11:15 a.m.; signings at 8:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.)

The Fierce Reads panelists all spotlight fiercely independent protagonists in their novels, from National Book Award nominee Mitali Perkins’ cross-generational look at Indian-American women (“You Bring the Distant Near,” Farrar, Straus & Giroux/Macmillan, \$17.99) to Caleb Roehrig’s teenager thrown under suspicion after his estranged girlfriend disappears (“Last Seen Leaving,” Feiwel and Friends, \$17.99). Rounding out the panel is Mathieu, whose “Moxie” (Roaring Brook Press, \$17.99) centers on the feminist revolution Viv starts at her small-town Texas high school, and Anna-Marie McElmore, whose “Wild Beauty” (Feiwel and Friends, \$17.99) is a lush tale about a quintet of magical cousins who can summon flowers from their hands but who’ve been warned that anyone with whom they fall in love will vanish forever. (“Fierce Reads” panel, 2:30 p.m.)

Perkins also will moderate a featured panel focusing on stories of immigration, along with Adi Alsaid (“North of Happy,” Harlequin Teen, \$18.99), Francisco X. Stork (“Disappeared,” Scholastic, \$17.99) and Diana J. Noble (“Evangelina Takes Flight,” Pinata Books, \$10.95). (“Where I Belong” panel, 12:30 p.m.)

Austinite Lizzie Velasquez, who became a celebrated anti-bullying speaker after she was viciously mocked online due to a rare genetic condition that affected her facial development, will speak on her debut, “Dare to Be Kind: How Extraordinary Compassion Can Change Our World” (Hachette, \$22), a nonfiction look at her life that’s also an invitation to extreme kindness. (1:30 p.m.)

Other standouts include E. Lockhart, whose blockbuster 2014 “We Were Liars” earned comparisons to “Gone Girl.” Her newest is “Genuine Fraud” (Delacorte/Random House, \$18.99), which highlights another unreliable narrator, Jule, as she relates the last year of her life in reverse. (“Of Myth and Mystery” panel, 3:30 p.m.; signings at 8:30 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.)

Vampire aficionado? Check out reinvented horror novel “Hunting Prince Dracula” (Patterson/Hachette, \$18.99), Kerri Maniscalco’s sequel to New York Times bestseller “Stalking Jack the Ripper.” Maniscalco’s heroine Audrey Rose heads to Romania, home of one of the best schools of forensic medicine — and Vlad the Impaler. (“Smart Is the New Black” panel, 2:30 p.m.)

And fans of “Doctor Who” and “Firefly” will gobble up “Invictus” (Little, Brown, \$18.99), “Wolf by Wolf” author Ryan Graudin’s new futuristic sci-fi adventure featuring Far, the son of a time-traveling Recorder from the future and a Roman gladiator from the past. (“Smart Is the New Black” panel, 2:30 p.m.)

Texas Teen Book Festival

When: 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Oct. 7

Where: St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress Ave.

Cost: Free

Information and full schedule: texasteenbookfestival.org