

# Statesman

---

Entertainment & Life

## 10th Texas Teen Book Festival features Nic Stone, Marissa Meyer

By Sharyn Vane / Special to the American-Statesman

Posted Sep 28, 2018 at 11:40 AM

Updated Sep 28, 2018 at 11:40 AM

A decade ago, librarians partnered with BookPeople to bring 16 authors to Westlake High School for the inaugural Austin Teen Book Festival, drawing some 500 attendees.

Fast forward, and the event has grown to become the Texas Teen Book Festival, which attracts top-notch talent from across the country, as well as Austin's own robust literary community. Now under the aegis of the Texas Book Festival, the free event draws more than 35 authors and thousands of fans to St. Edward's University, the festival's venue since 2014.

"Texas Teen Book Festival has truly become a beloved and indispensable part of the Texas YA lit scene," says Meghan Goel, programming director. "It's been amazing to watch this festival grow from a grassroots effort of librarians and booksellers in 2008 into a major, nationally renowned book festival that brings together top YA authors and thousands of our community's young readers, year after year."

This year's lineup includes keynoters Nic Stone, whose 2017 debut "Dear Martin" was a New York Times best-seller, and father/son duo Neal and Jarrod Shusterman, who teamed to write the post-apocalyptic "Dry" (Simon & Schuster, \$18.99). Neal Shusterman won the National Book Award in 2015 for "Challenger Deep."

In keeping with its roots, the festival offers a variety of ways to connect with authors, from panel appearances to signings to interactive programming in the iTent, which includes multiple "Ask Me Anything" sessions with authors, as well as a session for teens to create their own graphic novel. New this year to the

schedule is the #TTBF Trivia Contest, hosted by “Remnant Chronicles” creator Mary E. Pearson, and a fan meet-up for “Renegades” trilogy author Marissa Meyer.

Stone, who opens the festival with her keynote, won wide acclaim for 2017’s “Dear Martin,” which focused on high-school senior Justyce McAllister’s struggles with everyday racism. Her new book, “Odd One Out” (Crown/Penguin, \$17.99), features a diverse trio of friends who explore their ever-shifting relationships, identity and sexuality. (10 a.m. keynote, RCC Gym; 2:30 p.m. “Relationship Status” panel, Mabee Ballroom; 3:30 p.m. “Ask Me Anything” panel, iTent)

Jarrold Shusterman, who writes and directs for television and film, first teamed with his prolific author dad, Neal, on a short story for the best-selling 2016 anthology “UnBound.” The two wanted to work together again, and the result is “Dry,” which imagines a California suburb that quickly devolves into chaos after an acute drought eliminates water service. The book already has been optioned by Paramount, and the Shustermans are working on the screenplay. (11:15 a.m., “Cracks in the Crystal Ball” panel, Mabee Ballroom; 1:15 p.m. keynote, RCC Gym)

Austin-based Cynthia Leitich Smith is a doyenne of children’s literature. The New York Times-bestselling author has written numerous picture books and the “Tantalize” and “Feral” young-adult series in addition to curating the nationally acclaimed Cynsations blog on children’s literature, teaching at the Vermont College of Fine Arts and serving as an advisory board member of the We Need Diverse Books effort. (She was also in the lineup for the very first iteration of the festival.)

Her latest book for young adults, “Hearts Unbroken” (Candlewick, \$17.99), focuses on Louise, a young Native high-school journalist who fights against her town’s hostile reaction to inclusive casting of her school’s production of “The Wizard of Oz.” “Unbroken” marks the first Native protagonist since 2002 for Leitich Smith, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. (2:30 p.m., “Relationship Status” panel, Mabee Ballroom; 3:30 p.m., “Ask Me Anything” session with Nic Stone and “Anger is a Gift” author Mark Oshiro, iTent)

Marissa Meyer first rose to prominence with the “Lunar Chronicles” series,

futuristic fairy-tale reboots that began with “Cinder.” Her newest series focus on “Renegades” – humans who are also superheroes because of their extraordinary abilities. In the first book, young Nova wants to infiltrate the group of prodigies for revenge, because they couldn’t save her parents and baby sister. Once inside, she meets Adrian, who also hunts for justice. Meyer’s second book in the planned trilogy, “Archenemies” (Feiwel & Friends, \$19.99), arrives in November; 50 fest-goers who preorder the book will also get access to a signing and swag event with Meyer. (3:30 p.m., Fierce Reads panel, Mabee Ballroom)

The lineup also includes two-time Carnegie award-winner Patrick Ness, whose work has frequently found favor in Hollywood: “A Monster Calls” was adapted into a 2016 feature film, and the movie of his “Chaos Walking” sci-fi series, starring Tom Holland and Daisy Ridley, is slated for a 2019 release. His newest is a reimagined version of “Moby-Dick” – from the whale’s point of view — called “And The Ocean Was Our Sky” (HarperTeen, \$19.99). He’ll pair with fest favorite David Levithan, whose “Nick & Nora’s Infinite Playlist” became the 2008 movie with Michael Cera. Levithan’s latest is “Sam and Ilsa’s Last Hurrah” (Knopf, \$17.99) which he wrote with Rachel Cohn, his co-author for “Nick & Nora.” (3:30 p.m., “Flipping the Script” panel, RCC Gym. Ness also appears at 11:15 a.m. on the “Plot Twist” panel, Jones Auditorium; Levithan also appears at 2:30 p.m. on the “Relationship Status” panel, Mabee Ballroom.)

[swizdavane@gmail.com](mailto:swizdavane@gmail.com); (512) 632-8347