


# Hayfield Readers' Choice Titles 2011-2012

By Ben Mikaelson

	<p><b><i>Touching Spirit Bear</i></b></p>	<p>Cole Matthews is angry. He is a bully and gets in fights at school. Then he goes too far. After beating up a ninth-grade classmate to the point of brain damage, Cole is facing a prison sentence. But then he is offered an alternative called Circle Justice, based on Native American traditions, in which victim, offender, and community all work together to find a healing solution. Privately, Cole sneers at the concept, but he's no fool--if it gets him out of prison, he'll do anything. Ultimately, Cole ends up banished for one year to a remote Alaskan island, where his arrogance sets him directly in the path of a white bear, called a spirit bear. Taking his anger out on the bear, he is mauled almost to death. What will happen to Cole now?</p>
	<p><b><i>Ghost of Spirit Bear</i></b></p>	<p>After a year in exile on an Alaskan island as punishment for severely beating another student, Cole Matthews returns to school in Minneapolis having made peace with himself and his victim, but transitioning back into society and high school is not easy. He knows that if he gets into another fight, he will violate his parole and have to go to jail. Will Cole be able stay out of trouble, or will his anger resurface as he faces the taunts of his classmates and the difficulty of high school?</p>
	<p><b><i>Red Midnight</i></b></p>	<p>When soldiers burn his Guatemalan village and kill his family, 12-year-old Santiago escapes with his 4-year-old sister, Angelina. Before leaving, his uncle instructs Santiago to take his kayak and head for the United States. It is a long journey and they have little food or water. They must face strong sun, wind, and waves in a small boat. Can they really make it to Florida? And if they do, what happens then?</p>
	<p><b><i>Rescue Josh McGuire</i></b></p>	<p>A daring rescue...or a deadly risk? Ever since Josh's older brother died, his father has been drinking too much and taking his anger out on Josh. But when his father orphans a bear cub on a hunting trip, it's more than Josh can stand. Josh insists on bringing the defenseless cub home, only to find out he must surrender it to game officials. Knowing the cub will be given to researchers or killed, Josh decides to take the bear cub and hide in the mountains. He vows to stay there until the hunting laws are changed and he is allowed to keep the cub. But surviving in the mountains becomes dangerous when the snow comes and he has little food, water, or shelter. Will Josh survive? And what will happen to the cub?</p>
	<p><b><i>Countdown</i></b></p>	<p>14-year-old Elliott Schroeder is ecstatic and surprised when he is selected by NASA to become the first Junior Astronaut. He receives training and his assignment-- to talk from orbit via short-wave radio to ham-radio operators around the world. This sounds like a great assignment and he enjoys most of the people he talks with. However, one boy irritates him immensely. Every night Elliott begins talking to Vincent Ole Tome, but soon they begin arguing about religious and cultural beliefs. Vincent is a young Masai herder who dreams of going to school, but his father would prefer for him to become a warrior. Soon the world is tuning in nightly to listen to their arguments. Will they be able to reconcile their differences?</p>
	<p><b><i>Stranded</i></b></p>	<p>Self-conscious about her appearance and her abilities ever since she lost her foot in an accident four years ago, 12-year-old Koby feels most at home on the water. Not only does she love living on her family's sailboat, but she revels in her time alone aboard a dinghy that she navigates through the Florida Keys. One day she discovers a wounded pilot whale caught in a net and helps as it delivers a calf. Hoping to see the whales again, she looks for them and finds them beached and dying. Can she do anything to help save these whales?</p>
	<p><b><i>Petey</i></b></p>	<p>In 1920, Petey was born with cerebral palsy. His parents did everything they could to care for him, but the doctors diagnosed him as an idiot and encouraged the family to place the infant in a state asylum. Petey's family struggled with his care, and finally made the difficult choice to leave him at the state institution. Because of the cerebral palsy, Petey could not talk clearly and had difficulty communicating with others. But those that spent time with Petey quickly learned that he was smart, had feelings, and a great sense of humor. Still, he remained institutionalized for much of his life? Will Petey ever have a family again, or will he spend his whole life in the state mental asylum? What would happen to him today?</p>
	<p><b><i>Sparrow Hawk Red</i></b></p>	<p>Ricky Diaz lives with his father Benito in an Arizona border town. Benito, formerly with the Drug Enforcement Agency, is teaching his son to fly-- illegally, since Ricky's only 13. Ricky overhears a conversation between the DEA and his father and learns that his mother didn't die accidentally, as he's been told, but was murdered by drug cartel members. These men have now stolen a DEA radar-equipped plane that the DEA would like Benito to get back. Benito refuses the mission, but Ricky is desperate for revenge. Ricky runs away to Mexico, disguising himself as one of the many homeless children. Will he really be able to steal the plane from the heavily guarded compound?</p>