

Recommended Reading For Grades 5-8

Note: *Within lists, the titles tend to move toward higher reading levels.*

Fantasy

Byng, Georgia

Molly Moon

Fans of Roald Dahl and Lemony Snicket's dark humor will enjoy these stories of a spirited English orphan who discovers she has the power of hypnosis. And, as with nearly every good book today, "they're making a movie out of it!"

Gaiman, Neil

The Graveyard Book

If you like a little horror mixed with your fantasy, you might like this book. A family is murdered but the baby escapes to the nearby cemetery. The ghosts there raise him as Nobody Owens. Follow Nobody on his many adventures in the graveyard and outside it, as he grows up to get revenge on the person who killed his family. This 2008 Newbery winner is really about growing up different from the other kids and becoming the hero of your own life.

White, E.B.

Charlotte's Web & Stuart Little

A talking pig? A charming spider? A mouse that escapes the City for the country? The lyrical language and story telling of E.B. White can not be matched today. These classic stories are so much better than the movies that most kids think of upon hearing the titles. Read the originals!

Riordan, Rick

The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson and the Olympians)

These books are adventures about contemporary kids in New York City who discover their true identities as demigods of Ancient Greece. They battle dangerous monsters from Ancient Greek mythology and legend as they also lead "normal kid" lives. The popular series is a modern twist on the classic myths.

Paolini, Christopher

Inheritance Trilogy (Eragon, Eldest & Brisingr)

Begun when the author was just a teenager, this story and its sequels follow a poor farm boy as his destiny as a dragon rider is revealed. This classic quest story has won fans of the Lord of the Rings trilogy and Harry Potter.

Pullman, Philip

His Dark Materials Trilogy

As much mystery as fantasy, advanced readers will enjoy *The Golden Compass*, *The Amber Spyglass* and *The Subtle Knife*. Follow Lyra and her animal spirit (daemon) as she is embroiled in battles between the forces of good and evil and upon which the destiny of the universe depends.

Jacques, Brian

The Redwall Series

Like other stories such as *The Wind in the Willows* or *The Rescuers*, this series features animals in human situations. The Redwall Abbey is the central location for medieval sagas of good guys and gals battling evil doers and settling ancient scores. Beautiful writing, intricate plots and even recipes, carry the adventures over nearly 20 sequels.

Classics

Wilder, Laura Ingalls

Farmer Boy (Little House on the Prairie series)

Some people consider these books dated, but see if you don't enjoy the descriptions of daily life on a 19th century farm. Based on her family's actual experiences, the Little House books celebrate the rewards of hard work and a life that centers on family. Boys especially like Farmer Boy, the third book in the series of nine, for its story line about Almanzo Wilder and his life on a big farm in New York State.

Norton, Mary

The Borrowers

This fantasy tale is about "little people" who live secretly side-by-side with a normal English family in the countryside. Since the 1950s readers have enjoyed this adventure story and the resourceful ways the borrowers recycle household objects like postage stamps for paintings and match boxes for storage.

Speare, Elizabeth George

The Witch of Blackbird Pond

Set in Colonial America, this story about the way outsiders were perceived by the early Colonists begins a bit slowly but the voices of the headstrong teenager Kit, as well as the Quaker "outsider" Hannah Tupper -- suspected of being a witch -- soon compel the reader. Winner of the Newbery Award, the story includes many historically accurate details of colonial life in Connecticut.

Taylor, Theodore

The Cay

Philip is a racially bigoted boy who becomes blind and shipwrecked after his boat is torpedoed by the Germans during World War II. His survival is dependent upon his learning to accept and trust his only companion, Timothy, an older Black man. Written in 1969, this story has been criticized for stereotyping but the author's writings make clear his intention to write positively about race relations as he experienced them at the time. A great book to read and discuss.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson

The Secret Garden

This classic story has been made into several good movies but the book is still the best. Ten year old Mary is orphaned and comes to live in a lonely house on the Yorkshire moors where she discovers an invalid cousin Colin and the "nature boy" Dickon and together they unlock the mysteries of the secret garden.

Alcott, Louisa May

Little Women

The classic story of Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy in nineteenth-century New England is a bit long for most middle school readers but some will persevere and be rewarded by this engaging story (saga really) of life in America – on the home front - during the civil war.

Dahl, Roald

Boy: Tales of Childhood

The popular children's author had an eccentric early life. This autobiography presents humorous and unusual anecdotes from the author's childhood including almost losing his nose in a car accident, the "great mouse plot" of 1924, and many other boarding school pranks and stories.

White, T.H.

The Sword in the Stone

Advanced readers will enjoy this classic tale of the boy who would be King Arthur. First published in 1938, this fictionalized telling of British history and Camelot features the wizard Merlin, Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table.

Mystery, Adventure, & Sci Fi

Sachar, Louis

Holes & Small Steps

Holes is a funny and fantastical story about the twists and turns of life and how bad guys do, eventually, get what's coming to them. The story ultimately displays a deep understanding of friendship and compassion for society's underdogs. Mr. Sachar has written many books for children. If you like *Holes*, try the sequel, *Small Steps*.

Paulsen, Gary

Brian's Winter & Hatchet

What would you do if you were stranded on a desert island alone? How would you survive? Read about Brian who finds himself in the north woods after a plane crash as he must find food, survive wild animals, and create a shelter that will ward off the approaching winter.

Abrahams, Peter

Down the Rabbit Hole (Echo Falls Mystery)

Echo Falls seems like a nice quiet suburban town. But looks can be deceiving. Ingrid just got the starring role in local production of *Alice in Wonderland* but the director has had an accident. Or was it an accident? After the murder of a local woman, Ingrid realizes she's going to have to undertake a series of secretive adventures to help track down the killer.

Konigsburg, E. L.

The View From Saturday

Four brilliant but shy students have a tea party every Saturday. Each has their own individual stories and they develop a special bond that attracts the attention of their teacher, a paraplegic, who chooses them to represent their sixth-grade class in the Academic Bowl competition. A humorous and smart story of friendship.

Raskin, Ellen.

The Westing Game

Think you are good at solving mysteries? Try this one! An eccentric millionaire dies mysteriously. An unlikely assortment of heirs must solve the mystery of his death before they can claim their inheritance. The book's clever plot twists have kept readers entertained for many years.

Stead, Rebecca

When You Reach Me

Sixth grader Miranda lives with her mom in New York City. Find out why she keeps finding mysterious notes that predict the future, why she and her best friend Sal aren't getting along, and what her obsession with the book *A Wrinkle In Time* has to do with it all, in this excellent mix of realism and science fiction. Newbery Award winner 2009.

Flanagan, John

Ruins of Gorlan (The Ranger's Apprentice series)

Fifteen year old Will and his friends are orphans and wards of Castle Redmont. Their only hope in improving their lives is to be chosen for apprenticeship in a trade. Will hopes to be chosen for battleschool but is too small. Instead he's chosen by the mysterious Rangers. But being a Ranger is more difficult, dangerous and rewarding than he imagined. Follow Will on many adventures – from wild boars to strange creatures with magical powers who threaten the kingdom – as he helps protect the fief from an evil warlord.

Collins, Suzanne.

The Hunger Games

Set in a grim future where poverty and war and "televised reality" are a constant part of life for many, this story examines how kids are able to be resilient and to survive. Suspenseful and even romantic at times, this story revolves around a gruesome annual tradition of "kill or be killed" called the "hunger games." There is some graphic violence but this book will keep you up late at night eager to find out how it all ends.

Graphic Novels

Smith, Jeff

Bone

Maybe you like quest stories like the Lord of the Rings but aren't up for thousands of pages? Bone is for you! This series of about 10 books is really a quest story about the adventures of three cousins, Fone Bone, Phoney Bone and Smiley Bone who are run out of Boneville.

Selznick, Brian

The Invention of Hugo Cabret

Hugo, an orphan who lives in a Paris train station, meets a mysterious toy seller and his goddaughter and suddenly his biggest secret is jeopardized. A great big book, this engrossing adventurous story is told largely in picture format with beautiful pencil like illustrations.

Avi

City of Light City of Dark

Many kids have enjoyed books by Avi but might not know he also wrote this comic-book novel. The futuristic story takes place in NYC and features two children who unwittingly come to possess a bus token that sets them on a race against time to save their city. Illustrations by Brian Floca.

Gonick, Larry

The Cartoon History of the Universe

If you like reading history but want a quick and funny version, try these. You can learn actual facts while reading a comic strip! Volumes I-III will take you from the Big Bang up through the Renaissance.

Speigelman, Art

Maus I and II

The success of these books is largely responsible for creating and popularizing the genre "graphic novels." Maus is written in two volumes and is the author's personalized account of the Holocaust as seen through the eyes of his parents' experience in Germany. Both author and illustrator, Art Speigelman has won many awards for his work. Mr. Speigelman also edits the *Little Lit* series of comic book style stories for kids.

Hergé

The Adventures of Tintin

These comics were written by a Belgian author mostly in the 1930s and 1940s. They are translated from the French. The exotic locations and adventures of the reporter Tintin and his dog Snowy continue to be popular despite being described by some as perpetuating cultural and racial stereotypes. Are the crime solving adventures that take place among cigar smoking gangsters in Chicago and drug smugglers in India dated or still relevant? Let me know what you think!

Humor

Paulsen, Gary

Lawn Boy

Thinking about a summer job? Find out how a twelve year old becomes a "thousandaire" who has his own stock broker, and "owns" a prizefighter named "Joey Pow." It all begins with the simple gift of an old lawn mower from his grandmother! Quirky characters and a lot of practical advice about running a business, all make for a different style of fiction from popular author Paulsen.

Anderson, M. T.

Whales on Stilts!

Readers who love the Lemony Snicket books will appreciate the off-beat humor in this darkly thrilling mystery. Three junior sleuths must save the world from an evil genius who really does plan to use whales on stilts with laser-beam eyes to take over the world. As the book jacket predicts: "Monstrous thrills! Gruesome chills! Sidesplitting laughs!"

Realistic Fiction

DiCamillo, Kate

The Miraculous Adventures of Edward Tulane

A cold-hearted china rabbit may not seem realistic but the beautiful writing about the people who come to own the rabbit over the years, and how their love (or neglect) changes the doll's heart from cold and arrogant, to warm and generous, rings true. It is a tale for everyone. Ms. DiCamillo has written other highly recommended books including *A Tale of Desperaux* and *Because of Winn Dixie*.

Creech, Sharon

Granny Torrelli Makes Soup

Granny Torrelli tells stories from her childhood to help her granddaughter Rosie and her friend Bailey - who happens to be blind. They are discovering that, as they get older, their relationship is getting more complicated. Wisdom from Granny, soup recipes, and adventures with an adopted dog, make this a compelling and sweet story about growing up. Sharon Creech is a Newbery Award winning author of many books for kids.

Ryan, Pam Munoz

Esperanza Rising

How would you handle moving to a foreign country? What if it also meant going from rich to poor? Based on real experiences of the author's family members, *Esperanza Rising* is the story of one girl's struggles as she experiences loss, poverty, separation and humiliation and ultimately rises above it. It is an inspirational story that may resonate with many immigrants' experiences.

Clements, Andrew

Frindle

Who decides what a word means? Why does one person's definition have to be the one everyone uses? Read what happens when a kid decides to create a new word for "pen." Andrew Clements' books capture how middle schoolers begin to assert independence and the increasing importance of friend relationships. *A Week in the Woods* and *School Story* are other titles by Clements to enjoy.

Hiaasen, Carl

Hoot

Hiaasen writes funny stories about serious topics. In this one, endangered species need to be saved from greedy developers. Hiaasen uses easy to understand descriptions and a lot of dialogue to explore environmental themes while also addressing issues like friendship and bullying.

Perkins, Lynne Rae

Criss Cross

A writing style that includes poems and haiku set this story apart from other books aimed at middle school readers. This is a slow moving "gentle story" featuring alternating chapters from a different character's point of view. Newbery winner in 2006.

Lord, Cynthia

Rules

Twelve year old Catherine has an autistic younger brother David. Like all kids her age, Catherine just wants to fit in and be "normal." But life with David at times makes this impossible. Looking after and teaching her brother to understand "rules" about life turns Catherine into an empathetic person and the great writing helps the reader know how complicated everyone's lives -even the "normal" ones - really are. Newberry Honor award winner.

Bruchac, Joseph

The Warriors

This story is told from the point of view of passionate lacrosse player and Native American, Jake Forrest. In addition to learning how to fit into his new (fancy prep) school, Jake struggles to blend his way of playing lacrosse with his new team's style of play. This is both a good sports story as well as a thought provoking examination of the role of sports in our culture.