

BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY FIELDSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS

CREATED MAY , 2010

More book lists to come soon!

We welcome your feedback!

Please email suggestions and comments to Laurie Hornik at Lhornik@ecfs.org.

BOOK LISTS BY GENRE:

1. Classics with Middle School Appeal
2. Coming of Age
3. Fantasy
4. For Readers Who Think a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Books with a Graphic Format
5. For Readers Who were STRUCK by *The Lightning Thief*
6. "Green" Books: Books about Science, Nature, and Sustainability
7. Historical Fiction
8. Memoir
9. Mysteries and Detective Stories
10. Realistic Teen Fiction
11. Science Fiction
12. Sports
13. Survival and Adventure

Σ indicates easier books

Book descriptions adapted from product descriptions and reviews on Amazon.com

© indicates challenging books

★ indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

© **Animal Farm** by George Orwell

In this satire of Soviet Communism, the oppressed animals of Manor Farm oust their human master and take over management of the land. Everyone willing works overtime, and for one glorious season, they are happy. But when the pigs, who have declared themselves leaders, are corrupted by power, the common animals are left hungry and exhausted, no better off than when humans ran the farm.

Annie John by Jamaica Kincaid

Growing up in Antigua, Annie John deals with her changing relationships with the people she loves the most.

★ **Cannery Row** by John Steinbeck

Henri the artist searches for pieces of wood to build a boat, even though he is afraid of water. Dora Flood, who owns a bordello, is also known for her charitable donations and good works. Lee Chong, the grocer, is at once generous and tight-fisted, and Doc, the marine biologist, is both the loneliest and the most popular man in all of Cannery Row. Readers will enjoy following Mack and his friends as they go on a frog hunt to collect specimens for Doc and getting to know these characters who are rich only in friendship.

Fences by August Wilson

[play]

Set during the beginnings of the civil rights movement, it also concerns generational change and renewal, ending with a celebration of the life of its protagonist, even though it takes place at his funeral. Critics and scholars have lauded August Wilson's work for its universality and its ability, especially in "Fences", to transcend racial barriers and earned him the titles of "America's greatest playwright" and "African American Shakespeare."

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes

Algernon is a lab mouse who gets an experimental brain operation that raises his IQ. Charlie, a mentally disabled man, undergoes the same operation, and his intelligence expands. But then Algernon suddenly and unexpectedly begins to deteriorate. Will the same happen to Charlie?

Heidi by Johanna Spyri

Orphaned at a young age, Heidi must live with her gruff grandfather above a small Alpine village.

© ★ **The Hobbit** by J. R. R. Tolkien

Bilbo Baggins is a quiet and contented hobbit whose life is turned upside down when he joins the wizard Gandalf and thirteen dwarves on their quest to reclaim stolen treasure. Tolkien creates an entire world of creatures, geography, culture, and adventures and continues it into the **Lord of the Rings** trilogy.

© **Invisible Man** by Ralph Ellison

This book chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. Searching for a context in which to know himself, he exists in a very peculiar state.

© **The Joy Luck Club** by Amy Tan

The Joy Luck Club explores the bond between four daughters and their mothers. The daughters know one side of their mothers, but they don't know about their earlier never-spoken-of lives in China.

A Little Princess by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Sara Crewe is has only known life as the pampered daughter of a rich man, but while she's away at boarding school he dies leaving her a poor orphan who must now live as a servant at the school. See also **The Secret Garden** by Burnett.

Little House on the Prairie series by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura Ingalls Wilder recounts her life growing up with Ma and Pa and her sisters, Mary and Carrie, in Wisconsin and Kansas in the 1800s.

© **The Old Man and the Sea** by Ernest Hemingway

An aged Cuban fisherman goes head-to-head (or hand-to-fin) with a magnificent marlin in this classic tale of physical and moral challenge. For a modern take on this tale, see Rodman Philbrick's **The Young Man and the Sea**.

Peter Pan by J. M. Barrie

This is the rollicking adventure you know from pop culture as well as a sophisticated and philosophical read.

© **Piano Lesson** by August Wilson

[play]

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1990, this play is part of Wilson's cycle about African-American life in the 20th century. The action takes place in Pittsburgh in 1936 at the house of a family of African-Americans who have migrated from Mississippi. The conflict centers around a piano that was once traded by the family's white master for two of the family's ancestors. Boy Willie and Berniece, the siblings who inherit the piano (carved to show family history), argue about whether or not to sell it. Berniece's climactic refusal to allow Boy Willie to move the piano exorcises both the literal and figurative ghost of the white slave owner who has been haunting the family.

© ★ **Pride and Prejudice** by Jane Austen

This comedy of manners focuses on the five Bennet sisters their mothers' desire to marry them off well. Enter the rich Mr. Darcy. For a (bizarre) modern version, see *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith.

★ **The Red Pony** by John Steinbeck

Raised on a ranch in northern California, Jody Tiflin is well-schooled in the hard work and demands of a rancher's life. He is used to the way of horses, too; but nothing has prepared him for the special connection he will forge with Gabilan, a hot-tempered pony his father gives him. With Billy Buck, the hired hand, Jody tends and trains his horse, restlessly anticipating the moment he will sit high upon Gabilan's saddle. But when Gabilan falls ill, Jody discovers there are still lessons he must learn about the ways of nature and, particularly, the ways of people.

© **Song of Solomon** by Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison's novel is at once a romance of self-discovery, a retelling of the black experience in America that uncovers the inalienable poetry of that experience, and a family saga luminous in its depth, imaginative generosity, and universality. It is also a tribute to the ways in which, in the hands of a master, the ancient art of storytelling can be used to make the mysterious and invisible aspects of human life apparent, real, and firm to the touch.

© **To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee

In a small Alabama town, young Scout Finch and her brother, Jem, grow to understand that prejudice is a very real aspect of their world no matter how subtle it seems. Through their neighborhood wandersing, and by watching their father defend a black man in court, they learn that the world isn't always fair.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

Francie grows up in the slums of Brooklyn during the early part of the twentieth century, and life treats her badly. But like the Tree of Heaven that grows out of cement or through cellar gratings, resourceful Francie struggles against all odds to survive and thrive.

Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne

Originally published in 1870, Verne's amazing undersea adventure is one of the earliest science fiction novels ever written. Since that time, generations of readers have plunged below the ocean's waves with Captain Nemo and his first-ever submarine, *The Nautilus*. It's a voyage of exploration and the imagination.

© **Woman Warrior** by Maxine Hong Kingston

Maxine Hong Kingston grew up in two worlds: "solid America," the place he parents emigrated to, and th China of her mother's "talk-stories."

The Yearling by Marjorie Kinnnan Rawlings

When Jody adopts an orphaned fawn, he makes it a part of his family and his best friend. But life in the Florida backwoods is harsh, and so, as his family fights off wolves, bears, and even alligators, and faces failure in their tenuous subsistence farming, Jody must finally part with his dear animal friend.

COMING OF AGE

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

Absolutely Positively Not by David LaRochelle

Steven DeNarski, 16, is determined that he is absolutely, positively not gay. He covers his Superman posters with pictures of women in bikinis, hangs out with the hockey players at lunch, and embarks on a series of disastrous dates with girls from his class. It doesn't work. When he reluctantly tells his friend Rachel that he is gay, she wants him to celebrate by telling his family and forming a gay-straight alliance in his high school the following day. The first-person narrative moves from personal angst to outright farce as Steven finds quiet support, as well as betrayal, in unexpected places.

© **All the Pretty Horses** by Cormac McCarthy

John Grady Cole, 16, crosses from Texas into Mexico in 1949, and, along with his friends, learns some things about romance and growing up.

Am I Blue? Coming out of the Silence by Marion Dane Bauer

This collection of 18 short stories by recognized children's and young adult authors explores the various meanings of gay/lesbian identity in the lives of teenagers.

Annie John by Jamaica Kincaid

Growing up in Antigua, Annie John deals with her changing relationships with the people she loves the most.

Σ **Autobiography of a Part-Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie

Arnold Spirit, growing up on a Spokane Indian reservation, expects disaster when he transfers from the reservation school to the rich, white school in Reardan. He begins to form friendships and joins the basketball team. Meeting his old classmates on the court, Arnold grapples with questions about what constitutes one's community, identity, and tribe.

Σ ★ **Because of Winn-Dixie** by Kate DiCamillo

Because of Winn-Dixie, a big, ugly, happy dog, 10-year-old Opal learns 10 things about her long-gone mother, makes new friends, and finds her place in the world.

★ **Before We Were Free** by Julia Alvarez

Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre is too involved with her own life to be more than dimly aware of the growing menace all around her, until her last cousins and uncles and aunts have fled from the Dominican Republic to America and a fleet of black Volkswagens comes up the drive, bringing the secret police to the family compound to search their houses. Gradually, through overheard conversations and the explanations of her older sister, Lucinda, she comes to understand that her father and uncles are involved in a plot to kill El Jefe, the dictator, and that they are all in deadly peril.

Born Confused by Tanuja Desai Hidier

Dimple Lala, an Indian-American teenage girl living in New Jersey, is trying to figure out where she fits in – in her family, dating relationships, and in the world.

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Σ ★ **Bud, Not Buddy** by Christopher Paul Curtis

Bud (not “Buddy”) is an orphan on the run from abusive foster homes and Hoovervilles in 1930s Michigan. When he sets off to track down his father, he gets into all sorts of trouble involving monsters, vampires, and even a real live girl.

Σ ★ **Chasing Redbird** by Sharon Creech

Always the quiet (and often forgotten) middle child in a bustling family, Zinnia's life begins to change when she stumbles upon a hidden, overgrown pathway that stretches from the edge of her family's farm into the great unknown.

China Boy by Gus Lee

This story of seven-year-old Kai Ting, set in the tough Panhandle District of San Francisco in the 1950s, includes all of the classic fairy-tale conventions: a wicked stepmother; a bully, Big Willie Mack, who lives to beat Kai into pulp; Toussaint La Rue, a street-wise friend; and the YMCA “Knights” who teach Kai to stand up for himself. Readers will weep with Kai when he’s locked out of the house and left as prey to the McAllister street bullies. They’ll laugh with him when he confuses English idioms and ethnic street slang. They’ll root for him during his survival training at the Y where he transforms his body into a disciplined fighting machine, and cheer loudly when he learns to deal with the ghosts who haunt him.

★ **The Chocolate War** series by Robert Cormier

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the

Σ **Criss Cross** by Lynne Rae Perkins

This book is about Debbie and Hector and some other 14-year-olds, but it is also about those moments in our lives when a decision is made that sends a person along one path instead of another.

Cuba 15 by Nancy Osa

Violet Paz, growing up in suburban Chicago, barely knows Spanish, and her dad refuses to talk about his Cuban roots, so it's a real surprise when Abuela insists that Violet have a grand *quinceanero*, the traditional Latina fifteenth-year coming-of-age ceremony. But Violet wouldn't be caught dead in any onstage ceremony wearing a ruffled pink dress and a tiara. Violet narrates her own story, which is specific to Cuban culture and also transcends that culture to speak to all readers.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

For those who were drawn in by Percy Jackson’s learning difficulties and triumphs, meet Christopher, the autistic narrator—and most unusual amateur detective--determined to solve the murder of his neighbor’s dog.

★ **Dandelion Wine** by Ray Bradbury

It is 1928 and 12-year-old Douglas Spaulding is growing up in the Midwest. This is a realistic novel by the author we may know better for his science fiction.

The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate by Jacqueline Kelly

As the only girl in an uppercrust Texas family of seven children at the turn of the 20th century, Calpurnia, eleven, is expected to enter young womanhood with all its trappings of tight corsets, cookery, and handiwork. Unlike other girls her age, Callie is most content when observing and collecting scientific specimens with her grandfather. Bemoaning her lack of formal knowledge, he surreptitiously gives her a copy of *The Origin of Species* and Callie begins her exploration of the scientific method and evolution, eventually happening upon the possible discovery of a new plant species.

★ **Fever 1793** by Laurie Halse Anderson

Based on an actual epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia that wiped out 10% of the city's population in just three months, this book focuses on 16-year old Mattie Cook whose life is shattered when her mother falls prey to the disease. Mattie's sufferings change her in ways she could not have predicted.

Geography Club by Brent Hartinger

Russel is gay, and he knows he better keep it secret or he'll be a total outcast in his small-town high school. But then he discovers that there are others like him, including his best friend Min and gorgeous, popular baseball player Kevin. They form a support group, calling it the "Geography Club" to cover up its true nature. The club members discuss their lives and to relate to one another openly and honestly. Eventually, however, intense peer pressure and insecurity take their toll.

★ **Going Bovine** by Libba Bray

In this ambitious novel, Cameron, a 16-year-old slacker whose somewhat dysfunctional family has just about given up on him, as perhaps he himself has, when his diagnosis of Creutzfeldt-Jacob, "mad cow" disease, reunites them, if too late. The heart of the story, though, is a hallucinatory—or is it?—quest with many parallels to the hopeless but inspirational efforts of Don Quixote, about whom Cameron had been reading before his illness.

Green Angel by Alice Hoffman

Green, named for her gardening talent, is 15 years old when tragedy strikes. She watches as the city across the river explodes into smoke and fire, claiming her beloved family. Faced with grief and an anarchic world, Green finds solace in daily tasks and in the pain of the tattoos that she begins to draw on herself. Slowly, she connects with survivors, especially a mysterious boy who helps her replant her garden.

Σ ★ **Hatchet series** by Gary Paulsen

Thirteen-year-old Brian is the only survivor of a small plane crash and must learn to fend for himself in the Canadian woods. This is an amazing, realistic piece of fiction.

© **The Highest Tide** by Jim Lynch

Miles O'Malley "learned early on that if you tell people what you see at low tide they'll think you're exaggerating or lying when you're actually just explaining strange and wonderful things as clearly as you can" and "People usually take decades to sort out their view of the universe, if they bother to sort at all." At thirteen, Miles "did all his "sorting during one freakish summer in which [he] was ambushed by science, fame and suggestions of the divine."

★ **How I Live Now** by Meg Rosoff

In a story set in the near future, fifteen-year-old Daisy and her cousins Edmond and Piper find their world changed forever when England is invaded and occupied an enemy.

© ★ **How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents** by Julia Alvarez

Fifteen tales vividly chronicle a Dominican family's exile in the Bronx, focusing on the four Garcia daughters' rebellion against their immigrant elders.

★ **Hush** by Jacqueline Woodson

When Toswiah's police officer father witnesses two white cops killing a black boy, he does the right thing and testifies, compelling his family into the witness protection program. Now Toswiah is Evie and everything and everyone she knows has changed. She copes the best she can and tries to figure out who she is and who she is becoming.

★ **Jazmin's Notebook** by Nikki Grimes

Jazmin is 14 years old growing up in Harlem in the 1960s. She records her observations and her dreams in her notebook, and this book is that notebook..

© **The Kite Runner** by Khaled Hosseini

Amir, growing up rich in Afghanistan in the 1970s, and Hassan, a servant in Amir's household, are inseparable as children until an unspeakable event changes their relationship forever.

Kira-Kira by Cynthia Kadohata

The Japanese-American Takeshima family moves from Iowa to Georgia in the 1950s when Katie, the narrator, is just in kindergarten. Though her parents endure grueling conditions in the poultry plant where they work, they create a loving, stable home for their children. Katie's older sister Lynn teaches her about everything from how the sky, the ocean, and people's eyes are special to the injustice of racial prejudice. The two girls dream of buying a house for the family someday and even save \$100 in candy money. When Lynn develops lymphoma, it's heartbreaking, but through her worsening illness, Katie does her best to remember Lynn's "kira-kira" (glittery) outlook on life.

★ **Looking for Alaska** by John Green

Sixteen-year-old Miles goes to boarding school to find real friends, real adventure, and real challenges. He finds all three in this engrossing and intense novel about growing up. (Alaska is the name of a girl here—not that state.)

Out of the Pocket by Bill Konigsberg

Senior quarterback Bobby Framingham is tired of keeping secret that he's gay. He confides in a close friend who promises not to tell, and then does. Suddenly Bobby is in the spotlight. His best girl friend is hurt and disgusted. His coach insists that he's not really gay. His teammates' reactions range from supportive to freaked out to furious. In the meantime, his father undergoes treatment for cancer, and the football team comes together to prepare for a championship game. This thought-provoking, funny, and ultimately uplifting story defies stereotypes about coming out and team sports.

★ **Return to Sender** by Julia Alvarez

This contemporary immigration story is told through the alternating viewpoints of two young people in Vermont: Tyler, whose family must take in illegal migrant Mexican workers to make ends meet and Mari, a daughter of the Mexican family who work for Tyler's family.

Saints of Augustine by P. E. Ryan

Teens Charlie and Sam were best friends, until Sam stopped speaking to Charlie. The chapters alternate between the two boys' viewpoints and show struggles with an alcoholic father, emerging sexual identity, and other powerful issues.

© **The Secret Life of Bees** by Sue Monk Kidd

Lily Owens is growing up in South Carolina in the mid-1960s, raised by her cruel father but cared for by Rosaleen, her African-American nanny.

A Separate Peace by John Knowles

Set in the summer before WWII, this classic coming-of-age novel tells of boarding school roommates Gene and Phineas, whose complex friendship draws out the best and the worst characteristics in each of them.

A Step from Heaven by An Na

When at four years old Young Ju takes her first plane ride to emigrate from Korea to California, she is sure she's on her way to heaven. But it doesn't take the girl very long to realize that America is not heaven. Young, her parents, and her new baby brother struggle to adjust: learning a new language, dealing with government bureaucracy, adults working two jobs each, and children embarrassed by their parents' behavior. Woven throughout Young's story, beginning when she's four and ending when she's about to go to college, is the abuse she faces from her alcoholic father as well as the small joys she encounters in her family life.

★ **A Summer Life** by Gary Soto

In this lively collection of short essays, Gary Soto recreates in vivid detail the sights, sounds, smells, and textures he knew as a child in his Fresno, California neighborhood. The child's world is made up of small but meaningful acts—killing ants with his Buddha toy, putting bottle caps on the bottoms of his shoes to make taps, wearing his Uncle Shorty's shirt to imagine what his experience of the Korean War was like. Soto's experiences from age five to seventeen will make readers smile and wince at these honest memories of growing up.

Tales of the Madman Underground by John Barnes

Karl Shoemaker, in group therapy at school since fourth grade, turns a new leaf on the first day of senior year, 1973. His goal is to be normal and avoid therapy while still keeping his friends, who are all part of the Madman Underground. What's that? Read the book and find out!

© **To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee

Set in the small Southern town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Depression, *To Kill a Mockingbird* follows three years in the life of 8-year-old Scout Finch, her brother, Jem, and their father, Atticus—three years punctuated by the arrest and eventual trial of a young black man accused of raping a white woman. Though her story explores big themes, Harper Lee chooses to tell it through the eyes of a child. The result is a tough and tender novel of race, class, justice, and the pain of growing up.

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Tough Boy Sonatas by Curtis Crisler and Floyd Cooper

[poetry format]

In this collection of 38 poems, an unflinching narrative offers a view of the boys who run within the confines of the industrial town of Gary, Indiana. There's the grandson hurting under the lost smile of an addicted grandmother; the classroom daydreamer who feels that the lopsided view of history he is being taught is whitewashing away his chances to be a contender; and Millicent, the tomboy who crushes with her snarl and good right cross. The speakers represent voices that are rare in books for youth, and their furious yearning for justice, love, safety, sex, and a good education is unforgettable, as is their hope.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

Francie grows up in the slums of Brooklyn during the early part of the twentieth century, and life treats her badly. But like the Tree of Heaven that grows out of cement or through cellar gratings, resourceful Francie struggles against all odds to survive and thrive.

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© **The Alchemist** by Paulo Coelho

Santiago begins a journey from Spain to Morocco in search of riches, but a series of fateful encounters lead him much farther and bring him much more. Santiago's story is about becoming self-empowered, overcoming depression, and believing in dreams.

★ **Artemis Fowl series** by Eoin Colfer

Twelve-year-old Artemis Fowl is the most ingenious criminal mastermind in history. With two trusty sidekicks in tow, he hatches a cunning plot to divest the fairyfolk of their pot of gold. The blending of fantasy, science fiction and realistic details make this a very unusual read.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Even if you know the story (and you probably do!) it's worth reading the original for its clever language and excellent storytelling.

★ **Alanna: The First Adventure series** by Tamora Pierce

In the land of Tortall, women cannot be warriors, so ambitious Alanna switches places with her twin, Thom, to take his place as a knight in King Roald's palace.

★ **Beauty** by Robin McKinley

This is a detailed, exciting retelling of "Beauty and the Beast."

★ **Briar Rose** by Jane Yolen

In this unusual retelling of a fairy tale, Briar Rose (commonly known as Sleeping Beauty) is linked to the Holocaust—a far-from-obvious connection that she makes perfectly convincing. Rebecca, who has grown up hearing her grandmother Gemma tell an unusual and frightening version of the Sleeping Beauty legend, realizes when Gemma dies that the fairy tale offers one of the very few clues she has to her grandmother's past.

Dealing with Dragons series by Patricia Wrede

Cimorene, princess of Linderwall, is a tomboy heroine who would rather be captured by a dragon than be bored in her parents' castle.

★ **Ella Enchanted** by Gail Carson Levine

In this retelling of Cinderella's story, her frustrating obedience to her evil stepsisters was caused by an unfortunate spell that she must break in order to be free. See other fantasy and princess-related titles by this author.

★ **Eragon series** by Christopher Paolini

Written when Paolini was a teenager himself, this is the story of a teenager who happens upon a dragon's egg and finds himself, the last of the Dragon Riders, a key player in the war different groups of fantastical creatures.

© ★ **Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders** by Neil Gaiman

This is a collection of short science fiction and fantasy stories and poems by the author of *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*.

© ★ **The Golden Compass** series by Philip Pullman

This incredibly sophisticated fantasy focuses on Lyra, an orphan growing up in a fantastical alternate-universe version of Oxford University, in which every person has a magical daemon who follows her around.

★ **The Graveyard Book** by Neal Gaiman

This is 2009 Newbery Award winner by the author of **Coraline** tells the story of Nobody who grows up in a graveyard, adopted by the ghostly inhabitants. Nobody learns to survive in the world of the dead so he can survive in the world of the living.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie

When Rashid's storytelling ability dries up, his son Haroun travels on a quest to find mysterious forces that block the Sea of Stories, from which all stories come. The book contains humor, wordplay, fantasy, and epic battle, and it is ultimately a metaphor for the forces in the world that limit free speech and those who fight to keep telling stories.

© ★ **The Hobbit** by J. R. R. Tolkien

Bilbo Baggins is a quiet and contented hobbit whose life is turned upside down when he joins the wizard Gandalf and thirteen dwarves on their quest to reclaim stolen treasure. Tolkien creates an entire world of creatures, geography, culture, and adventures and continues it into the **Lord of the Rings** trilogy.

★ **Inkheart** series by Cornelia Funke

Meggie's father, Mo has a wonderful—and terrible—ability to bring characters from books to life. But the flip side is that he also can accidentally bring characters from his real life INTO the books, and they can't get back out. Meggie does not know about her father's talent or its implications, but that doesn't mean she won't get pulled into some evil plots against Mo and some adventures that will challenge her.

Σ ★ **The Lightning Thief** series by Rick Riordan

Percy Jackson feels like a misfit, but he never guesses that the reason could lie in his being half-mortal/half Greek god. But learning his true identity is only the beginning of his adventures, filled with action, adventure, and plenty of mythological creatures.

Σ ★ **The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe** series by C. S. Lewis

Lucy and her siblings find their way through a closet in an old house to the magical land of Narnia.

★ **The Merlin Effect** series by T. A. Barron

In this blend of Arthurian legend and modern oceanography, thirteen-year-old Kate and her father plunge through a whirlpool and end up fighting Nimue, Merlin's enemy.

Σ **The Name of the Book is Secret** by Pseudonymous Bosch

The reader is warned on page one "Do not read beyond this page!" But readers who dare to read on anyway will learn about a mysterious society with a secret and dangerous purpose.

★ **Redwall series** by Brian Jacques

Led by the young mouse Matthias, the small animals that inhabit Redwall Abbey have dazzling adventures of good triumphing over evil.

Red Spikes by Margo Lanagan

This is a collection of fantastical and bizarre short stories—some scary, some fairy-tale-like, and some like nothing you've read before.

Savvy by Ingrid Law

For generations, the Beaumont family has harbored a magical secret. They each possess a "savvy" -a special supernatural power that strikes when they turn thirteen. Grandpa Bomba moves mountains, her older brothers create hurricanes and spark electricity . . . and now it's the eve of Mibs's big day.

★ **The Sea of Trolls** by Nancy Farmer

In this medieval fantasy, Jack and his little sister Lucy are kidnapped and end up on a dangerous quest across the Sea of Trolls.

Σ ★ **Tuck Everlasting** by Natalie Babbitt

Ten-year-old Winnie Foster doesn't realize that the fountain of youth is on her family's property. This leads to her entanglement in some crazy adventures and to her having to make an almost impossible decision.

Under the Baseball Moon by John H. Ritter

Mixing softball and fusion music with some crazy characters and a bit of magic, Ritter spins an unusual tale that will certainly appeal to sports fanatics and mystery fanatics alike.

Water: Tales of Elemental Spirits by Robin McKinley & Peter Dickinson

The authors are both fantasy writers in their own right, and here they collaborate on a set of tales related to water and filled with a sense of myth.

A Wizard of Earthsea series by Ursula K. Le Guin

Like Harry Potter, Sparrowhawk is surprised to find out that he will be trained as a wizard and has an extraordinary fate. Earthsea is a spectacularly detailed imaginary world, and the four tales about it are among the most famous fantasy book cycles written.

Σ ★ **A Wrinkle in Time series** by Madeleine L'Engle

Meg and her brother Charles Wallace must adventure through time and space to rescue their scientist-father, who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government related to wrinkles in time. Fans of this series should also check out **When You Reach Me** by Rebecca Stead.

FOR READERS UNDER THE SPELL OF HARRY POTTER

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

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Σ ★ **The Secret of Platform 13** by Eva Ibbotson

The door between our world and the enchanted Island is only open for nine days every nine years. Unfortunately, in the last minutes before it closes in 1983, the baby prince of the Island is kidnapped by a nasty woman named Trottle. Who will rescue the prince?

© **The Sword and the Stone** by T. H. White

This is first book of **The Once and Future King**, upon which the musical **Camelot**—as well as most of our modern ideas about King Arthur—is based. Here, the wizard Merlin teaches his young pupil, Arthur (called “Wart”), about the world by changing him into different animals.

A Wizard of Earthsea *series* by Ursula K. Le Guin

Like Harry Potter, Sparrowhawk is surprised to find out that he will be trained as a wizard and has an extraordinary fate. Earthsea is a spectacularly detailed imaginary world, and the four tales about it are among the most famous fantasy book cycles written.

★ Beauty by Robin McKinley

This is a detailed, exciting retelling of “Beauty and the Beast.”

© Dracula by Bram Stoker

This is the vampire story that started them all.

© I Capture the Castle by Dodi Smith

Recently reissued because it was one of J. K. Rowling’s favorite books, this is a romantic, atmospheric tale of two girls who are indeed growing up in a (kind of run-down) castle and are looking for love and their places in the world.

★ Owl in Love by Patrice Kindl

Owl, fourteen, narrates her own story and is clearly pretty comfortable with her were-owl identity. Her struggles are more typical to her age, especially her infatuation with her science teacher, Mr. Lindstrom, whom she is able to spy on in her owl state each night. This is a funny and unusual quick read.

★ Romiette and Julio by Sharon Draper

This is a modern retelling of Romeo and Juliet, with forbidden love at its center.

Savvy by Ingrid Law

For generations, the Beaumont family has harbored a magical secret. They each possess a "savvy" -a special supernatural power that strikes when they turn thirteen. Grandpa Bomba moves mountains, her older brothers create hurricanes and spark electricity . . . and now it's the eve of Mibs's big day.

Shiver by Maggie Stiefvater

For years, Grace has been fascinated by the yellow-eyed wolf that saved her from its pack when she was a child. Sam, bitten by a wolf as a boy, is that wolf. Long obsessed with each other at a distance, they finally meet after a wolf hunt (inspired by the apparent death of a local teen) sends a wounded and temporarily human Sam into Grace's arms.

★ Thirsty by M. T. Anderson

Chris finds his teenage lusts becoming the thirst for the undead. While this vampire novel has the usual horror, action, relationships, and ethical dilemmas, it is also a particularly good example of the genre.

FOR READERS WHO HUNGER FOR MORE BOOKS LIKE *THE HUNGER GAMES*

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

★ **Alanna: The First Adventure** series by Tamora Pierce

In the land of Tortall, women cannot be warriors, so ambitious Alanna switches places with her twin, Thom, to take his place as a knight in King Roald's palace.

Σ ★ **The Case of the Missing Marquess: An Enola Holmes Mystery** series by Nancy Springer

The author has imagined a much younger sister for the famous Sherlock Holmes, in the person of Enola, age fourteen, who solves mysteries in her own right, all the time pushing up against the strictly conventional rules for females in Victorian England.

Dealing with Dragons series by Patricia Wrede

Like Katniss, Cimorene is a strong female protagonist. A princess and a tomboy, she would rather be captured by a dragon than be bored in her parents' castle.

★ **Ender's Game** series by Orson Scott Card

Young Ender Wiggin is among a group of children to be genetically engineered to have superior military minds. His mission is to win the Earth's long war with an alien insectoid race by completely destroying their homeworld. Like Katniss, Ender must fight to win a game with great consequences.

Σ ★ **Holes** by Louis Sachar

Like in **The Hunger Games**, the main character (here, a boy with the unfortunate name of Stanley Yelnats), must use his wits to survive in an environment filled with strange, mysterious rules and pieces of a story that he must figure out.

★ **I Am the Cheese** by Robert Cormier

Adam's whole life feels like a game and he is not sure why. In this suspenseful thriller, the reader tries, along with Adam, to figure out what is going on in Adam's world.

The Maze Runner by James Dashner

Like **The Hunger Games**, this is a dystopic adventure in which children must survive in a created environment and figure out how to escape—in this case, from a mysterious maze.

Σ ★ **The Uglies** series by Scott Westerfeld

Tally Youngblood lives in a futuristic society that conditions its citizens to believe that they are ugly until age sixteen when they'll undergo an operation that will change them into carefree "pretties." This dystopic novel explores the clashing human desires for beauty and conformity as well as individuality and free will.

★ **Unwind** by Neal Shusterman

In a society where unwanted teens are salvaged for their body parts, three runaways fight the system that would "unwind" them.

Σ indicates easier books

Book descriptions adapted from product descriptions and reviews on Amazon.com

© indicates challenging books

★ indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

FOR READERS WHO THINK A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND

WORDS: BOOKS WITH A GRAPHIC FORMAT

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang

[graphic format]

This intelligent and emotionally challenging graphic novel is made up of three individual plotlines: the determined efforts of the Chinese folk hero Monkey King to shed his humble roots and be revered as a god; the struggles faced by Jin Wang, a lonely Asian American middle school student who would do anything to fit in with his white classmates; and the sitcom plight of Danny, an All-American teen so shamed by his Chinese cousin Chin-Kee (a purposefully painful ethnic stereotype) that he is forced to change schools. Each story works well on its own, but these parallel tales come together in a powerful climax that destroys the hateful stereotype of Chin-Kee while leaving both Jin Wang and the Monkey King satisfied and happy to be who they are.

© **Cartoon Guide to the Environment** by Larry Gonick and Alice Outwater

[graphic format]

Using the ecological collapse of Easter Island as an example of a failing environment, the authors present the historical, scientific, and ethical backgrounds to the environmental challenges faced currently, and in the near future, by all humanity. Nothing less than the fate of life on Earth lies in the balance, which makes for an engrossing plot, made more poignant by the scientific research and data that back it up. Black-and-white cartoons clearly explain, define, and graphically display terms, events, and situations.

Cartoon History of the United States by Larry Gonick

[graphic format]

This is a comprehensive, hilarious, often irreverent graphic history of our great country.

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species: A Graphic Adaptation* by Michael Keller

[graphic format]

This graphic adaptation of Darwin's original breakthrough work also includes some history about the book and some updates about what is now understood about evolution.

Clan Apis by Jay Hosler

[graphic format]

The life story of Nyuki the honeybee is a combination of authoritative science; appealing black-and-white drawings; and dialogue replete with humor, pubescent angst, political sloganeering, and more. Nyuki's colony undertakes migration to a new hive, is beset by a woodpecker, and hibernates through a winter that yields to a revitalizing spring. The bees are nicely individualized, as are the plants and other insects that figure into their lives, and there are a number of clever touches. This is the sort of science book that fiction and comics readers will enjoy.

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood series by Marjane Satrapi

[graphic format]

Marji recounts her tween years (ages 10 – 14) growing up during the Islamic revolution in Iran.

© **Maus series** by Art Spiegelman

[graphic format]

Spiegelman, a stalwart of the underground comics scene of the 1960s and '70s, interviewed his father, Vladek, a Holocaust survivor. Based on interviews with his father, Spiegelman has created a comic-book version of the Holocaust, with the Jews as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the French as frogs, and the Americans as dogs.

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The Sandwalk Adventures: An Adventure in Evolution Told in Five Chapters by Jay Hosler [graphic format]
In this very wacky book, Charles Darwin must convince follicle mites living in his left eyebrow that he is not their creator and that evolution happens.

Stitches by David Small [graphic format]
In this memoir, children's book illustrator David Small recounts focuses on his early adolescence and the family and medical hardships that challenged him.

T-Minus: The Race to the Moon by Jim Ottaviani [graphic format]
What happens when you take two global superpowers, dozens of daring pilots, thousands of engineers and scientists, and then point them at the night sky and say "Go!?" The whole world followed the countdown to sending the first men to the moon. This book is the story of the people who made it happen, both in the rockets and behind the scenes.

FOR READERS WHO WERE STRUCK BY THE LIGHTNING THIEF

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

★ **Artemis Fowl series** by Eoin Colfer

Twelve-year-old Artemis Fowl is the most ingenious criminal mastermind in history. With two trusty sidekicks in tow, he hatches a cunning plot to divest the fairyfolk of their pot of gold. The blending of fantasy, science fiction and realistic details make this a very unusual read.

★ **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time** by Mark Haddon

For those who were drawn in by Percy Jackson's learning difficulties and triumphs, meet Christopher, the autistic narrator—and most unusual amateur detective—determined to solve the murder of his neighbor's dog.

★ **Dread Locks** by Neal Shusterman

This is a dark, contemporary retelling of the Greek myth of Medusa—the one with the snaky hair.

Σ **The Fairy Tale Detectives** by Michael Buckley

Here, fairy tales, rather than Greek myths, are real, and it is up to two sisters, descendents of the famous Grimm storytelling brothers, to navigate the fairy tale forest and solve some mysteries. This is the first in the **Sisters Grimm** series.

★ **Goddess of Yesterday** by Caroline B. Cooney

The author of realistic popular fiction including **The Face on the Milk Carton** delivers this retelling of **The Iliad** with all the familiar characters: the shallow and amoral Paris, the wailing prophetess Cassandra, and Hector, the big, straight-talking sweetheart.

★ **Haroun and the Sea of Stories** by Salman Rushdie

When Rashid's storytelling ability dries up, his son Haroun travels on a quest to find mysterious forces that block the Sea of Stories, from which all stories come. The book contains humor, wordplay, fantasy, and epic battle, and it is ultimately a metaphor for the forces in the world that limit free speech and those who fight to keep telling stories.

Σ **Iris, Messenger** by Sarah Deming

Twelve-year-old Iris enjoys reading **Bulfinches Mythology**, but she is surprised to find mysterious messages popping up in the book's pages, and she is even more surprised to learn that the Greek gods are actually living nearby in New Jersey.

★ **Lost in the Labyrinth** by Patrice Kindl

In this retelling of the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, Ariadne's younger sister, Princess Xenodice takes center stage. This tale is steeped in action as well as Greek mythology with—like the labyrinth itself—some surprising twists along the way.

★ **Mythology** by Edith Hamilton

This may be the most famous compilation of Greek myths. If you crave the original stories, they are all here!

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★ indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

Quiver by Stephanie Spinner

This is a detailed retelling of the Greek myth of Atalanta. Abandoned as a baby, Atalanta is saved by the goddess Artemis who teaches her to be a talented archer and the “swiftest of mortals.” Still, Atalanta’s life is not an easy one: she must continually fight against gender stereotypes that cast women as weak and try to stay true to her own values along the way. See also **Quicksilver**, about the Greek god Hermes, by this author.

The Shadow Thieves series by Anne Ursu

Hades and the underworld of Greek mythology are real in this adventure story in which Charlotte and her cousin Zee find themselves at the center of a nefarious underworldly plot. This is the first in the **Cronus Chronicles** series.

Σ ★ **A Wrinkle in Time** series by Madeleine L’Engle

Meg and her brother Charles Wallace must adventure through time and space to rescue their scientist-father, who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government related to wrinkles in time. Like **The Lightning Thief**, this incredibly creative and surprising story is driven by strong, unusual, characters with serious problems to solve.

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“GREEN” BOOKS: SCIENCE, NATURE, AND SUSTAINABILITY

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

★ **The Ancient One** series by T. A. Barron

When an untouched forest of ancient redwoods is discovered on Native American holy grounds in the Oregon wilderness, a band of unemployed loggers sees only an opportunity to earn a living, not thinking of either the ecological or the spiritual consequences of felling the trees. Anxious to preserve the wilderness, Kate and her great-aunt Melanie set off to stop the loggers. Once in the forest, Kate is catapulted 500 years into the past, where she is caught in a fatal struggle over the very same wilderness.

© **Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food** by Barbara Kingsolver

This book chronicles the year that Barbara Kingsolver, along with her husband and two daughters, made a commitment to become locavores—those who eat only locally grown foods—many that they grew themselves.

© **Cartoon Guide to the Environment** by Larry Gonick and Alice Outwater

[graphic format]

format]

Using the ecological collapse of Easter Island as an example of a failing environment, the authors present the historical, scientific, and ethical backgrounds to the environmental challenges faced currently, and in the near future, by all humanity. Nothing less than the fate of life on Earth lies in the balance, which makes for an engrossing plot, made more poignant by the scientific research and data that back it up. Black-and-white cartoons clearly explain, define, and graphically display terms, events, and situations.

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species: A Graphic Adaptation* by Michael Keller [graphic format]

This graphic adaptation of Darwin's original breakthrough work also includes some history about the book and some updates about what is now understood about evolution.

Chew on This by Charles Wilson

Chew on This is a not-always-appetizing look at the fast-food industry's growth, practices, and effects on public health.

Clan Apis by Jay Hosler

[graphic format]

The life story of Nyuki the honeybee is a combination of authoritative science; appealing black-and-white drawings; and dialogue replete with humor, pubescent angst, political sloganeering, and more. Nyuki's colony undertakes migration to a new hive, is beset by a woodpecker, and hibernates through a winter that yields to a revitalizing spring. The bees are nicely individualized, as are the plants and other insects that figure into their lives, and there are a number of clever touches. This is the sort of science book that fiction and comics readers will enjoy.

The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate by Jacqueline Kelly

As the only girl in an uppercrust Texas family of seven children at the turn of the 20th century, Calpurnia, eleven, is expected to enter young womanhood with all its trappings of tight corsets, cookery, and handiwork. Unlike other girls her age, Callie is most content when observing and collecting scientific specimens with her grandfather. Bemoaning her lack of formal knowledge, he surreptitiously gives her a copy of *The Origin of Species* and Callie begins her exploration of the scientific method and evolution, eventually happening upon the possible discovery of a new plant species.

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★ **Flush** by Carl Hiaasen

Noah's dad is sure that the owner of a casino boat is flushing raw sewage into the harbor. Now Noah is determined to succeed where his dad had failed, and will sink the crooked casino and prove the boat owner is dumping illegally.

Σ ★ **Hatchet series** by Gary Paulsen

Thirteen-year-old Brian is the only survivor of a small plane crash and must learn to fend for himself in the Canadian woods. This is an amazing, realistic piece of fiction.

© **High Tide in Tucson** by Barbara Kingsolver

Displaying a diverse background and multiple interests, Barbara Kingsolver has written about subjects as varied as the biological clock of hermit crabs, tourist wanderings in Benin, and visiting an obsolete Titan missile site. Recurring themes throughout these essays are the wonder and excitement of parenting; the respect for all creatures, religions, and points of view; and the importance of the natural world in our lives. Reports from Hawaii to her own aquarium show the author to be a curious and sensitive observer.

Hungry Planet: What the World Eats by Peter Menzel

This photo-journal depicting what 30 culturally diverse families from 24 different countries eat for a week shows the incredible diversity in what—and how much—people eat across the world.

Σ ★ **Hoot** by Carl Hiaasen

Roy finds himself strangely entangled in a conflict Mother Paula's Pancake House and a young boy who wants to save the burrowing owls that make their home on the land on which the new restaurant is slated to be built.

An Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore

[adult/YA editions]

Gore presents numerous pieces of evidence that global warming is occurring and is a serious threat to the planet's stability.

Material World by Peter Menzel and Charles C. Mann

In this photojournal, meet 30 families from 30 different countries, learn about their work, their attitudes, and what material possessions they do (and don't) have. For each family, there is a photo of them outside their home surrounded by all of their material possessions. See also **Women in the Material World** by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio for a celebration of women's role in societies around the world.

Σ ★ **My Side of the Mountain** by Jean Craighead George

Every kid thinks about running away at one point or another; few get farther than the end of the block. Young Sam Gibley gets to the end of the block and keeps going--all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he sets up house in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel for companions and his wits as his tool for survival.

Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan

[adult/YA editions]

Through a combination of researched facts and personal anecdotes, Michael Pollan explores issues involving eating and food in from all different angles

The Sandwalk Adventures:

An Adventure in Evolution Told in Five Chapters by Jay Hosler

[graphic format]

In this very wacky book, Charles Darwin must convince follicle mites living in his left eyebrow that he is not their creator and that evolution happens.

Σ ★ **Scat** by Carl Hiaasen

When their unpopular biology teacher goes missing in a suspicious fire during a field trip to the Black Vine Swamp, Nick and Marta don't buy the headmaster's excuse for her absence and decide to do some investigating of their own.

Σ ★ **Seedfolks**, Paul Fleischman

In an abandoned and rat-infested lot, a girl decides to plant a few lima beans. Though they are strangers to each other, the neighbors find ways to contribute: planting their own seeds, making improvements, sharing their time. Each of the thirteen chapters is told by a different character—young and old, male and female, Vietnamese and Haitian and Indian. As their individual stories become one story, the lot becomes a garden, and the neighborhood becomes a community.

★ **Before We Were Free** by Julia Alvarez

Twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre is too involved with her own life to be more than dimly aware of the growing menace all around her, until her last cousins and uncles and aunts have fled from the Dominican Republic to America and a fleet of black Volkswagens comes up the drive, bringing the secret police to the family compound to search their houses. Gradually, through overheard conversations and the explanations of her older sister, Lucinda, she comes to understand that her father and uncles are involved in a plot to kill El Jefe, the dictator, and that they are all in deadly peril.

Bone by Bone by Bone by Tony Johnston

In a small town in 1950s Tennessee, nine-year-old David, who is white, and Malcolm, who is black, are blood brothers. Although David's racist father has forbidden their friendship, the boys enjoy wild, free-spirited adventures, exploring caves and acting out their favorite stories, until the racism gets closer to home and can no longer be ignored.

The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak

Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger, the nine-year-old girl who steals books even before she can read them.

Σ **The Boy in the Striped Pajamas** by John Boyne

There is much Bruno does not understand about the tall fenced-in area near his family's new house. Still, he longs to be an explorer and makes friends with the boy on the other side of the fence who wears striped pajamas. This friendship, and the things Bruno does not understand, leads to devastating consequences.

★ **Chains** by Laurie Halse Anderson

Set in NYC at the beginning of the American Revolution, *Chains* addresses the price of freedom both for the nation and for individuals through the story of Isabel, a slave sold at the age of five to a cruel family.

Charles and Emma by Debora Heiligman

As much as Darwin is interested in wedded life, he is afraid that a family will take him away from the revolutionary work he is doing on the evolution of species. However, he finds the perfect mate in Emma. Although highly congenial, Charles and Emma were on opposite sides when it came to the role of God in creation. Using the couple's letters, diaries, and notebooks as well as documents and memoirs of their relatives, friends, and critics, the author shows how Darwin's love for his intelligent and deeply religious wife was an important factor in his scientific work. Just as the pair embodied a marriage of science and religion, this book weaves together the chronicle of the development of a major scientific theory with a story of true love.

Σ ★ **The Devil's Arithmetic** by Jane Yolen

When twelve-year-old Hannah is transported back to a 1940's Polish village, she experiences the very horrors that had embarrassed and annoyed her when her elders related their Holocaust experiences.

The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate by Jacqueline Kelly

As the only girl in an uppercrust Texas family of seven children at the turn of the 20th century, Calpurnia, eleven, is expected to enter young womanhood with all its trappings of tight corsets, cookery, and handiwork. Unlike other girls her age, Callie is most content when observing and collecting scientific specimens with her grandfather. Bemoaning her lack of formal knowledge, he surreptitiously gives her a copy of *The Origin of Species* and Callie begins her exploration of the scientific method and evolution, eventually happening upon the possible discovery of a new plant species.

★ **Fever 1793** by Laurie Halse Anderson

Based on an actual epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia that wiped out 10% of the city's population in just three months, this book focuses on 16-year old Mattie Cook whose life is shattered when her mother falls prey to the disease. Mattie's sufferings change her in ways she could not have predicted.

Kira-Kira by Cynthia Kadohata

The Japanese-American Takeshima family moves from Iowa to Georgia in the 1950s when Katie, the narrator, is just in kindergarten. Though her parents endure grueling conditions in the poultry plant where they work, they create a loving, stable home for their children. Katie's older sister Lynn teaches her about everything from how the sky, the ocean, and people's eyes are special to the injustice of racial prejudice. The two girls dream of buying a house for the family someday and even save \$100 in candy money. When Lynn develops lymphoma, it's heartbreaking, but through her worsening illness, Katie does her best to remember Lynn's "kira-kira" (glittery) outlook on life.

Leonardo's Shadow: Or, My Astonishing Life as Leonardo da Vinci's Servant by Christopher Grey

Giacomo has a lot to do: run errands, fend off the merchants who try to collect debts, and try to solve the mystery of why Leonardo refuses to work on his great masterpiece, "The Last Supper."

★ **Milkweed** by Jerry Spinelli

Here is Nazi-occupied Warsaw during World War II, as seen through the eyes of a curious, kind, heartbreakingly naïve orphan just trying to survive.

Σ **Nothing to Fear** by Jackie French Koller

Thirteen-year-old Danny and his family are struggling to make ends meet in New York during the Great Depression. His father, out of work, takes to the road to find employment, and Daniel is left in charge of his expecting, ailing mother and his baby sister. Things go from bad to worse, until the family is rescued by someone who, at first blush, appears to be worse off than they. Daniel is an engaging protagonist who goes through rites of passage familiar to young teens—first girlfriend, shaving, and the sudden realization that he is taller than his mother. He must also come to terms with his father's death and mother's remarriage. The story imparts the flavor of the time, and the strong plot line and numerous interesting supporting characters will hold readers' attention.

Σ ★ **Number the Stars** by Lois Lowry

A touching story of loyalty and friendship as ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen and her best friend Ellen Rosen cope with life in Nazi-occupied Copenhagen.

Toning the Sweep by Angela Johnson

Fourteen-year-old Emily goes with her mother to the desert to help her grandmother, Ola, pack up to move. She soon learns that Ola has cancer and is moving to Cleveland to live out the rest of her days. The three women take turns narrating their stories, revealing the hardships—including the lynching of Ola’s husband in 1964 Alabama—that have made them strong.

Σ ★ **The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963** by Christopher Paul Curtis

The year is 1963, and Byron Watson is the bane of his younger brother Kenny’s existence. Constantly in trouble for one thing or another, from straightening his hair to lighting fires to freezing his lips to the mirror of the new family car, Byron finally pushes his family too far. Momma and Dad send him to the Deep South to spend the summer with his tiny, strict grandmother. Soon the whole family is packed up, ready to make the drive from Michigan straight into one of the most chilling moments in American history: the bombing of the Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church.

Σ ★ **Witness** by Karen Hesse

[poetry format]

It is 1924, and a small Vermont town finds itself under siege--by the Ku Klux Klan. Using free verse, Newbery Medal-winning author Karen Hesse allows eleven unique and memorable voices to relate the story of the Klan’s steady infiltration into the conscience of a small, Prohibition-era community.

Autobiography of a Face by Lucy Grealy

A gracefully written account of one woman's physical and spiritual struggle to surmount childhood cancer, permanent disfigurement, and, ultimately, "the deep bottomless grief...called ugliness."

Σ ★ Bad Boy by Walter Dean Myers

This memoir takes the reader through Myers' development as a person and a writer, from his early childhood in the Harlem of the '40s through his difficult adolescent and growing identity as a black man. Myers has written many novels for middle school readers including **Scorpions**, **Monster**, and **Fallen Angels**.

© Black Boy by Richard Wright

This book, aptly subtitled "American Hunger," is Wright's account of his tumultuous upbringing in the Jim Crow South and his subsequent exodus to Chicago. The "Hunger" refers to both physical hunger of poverty and a mental hunger for knowledge.

Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself by Joseph Bruchac

"Sonny" Bruchac didn't know why he lived with his grandparents when his parents' home was just up the road, or why his grandfather was so defensive about his dark skin. But as Sonny grew up, he was drawn to all things Indian long before he knew of his grandfather's hidden Abenaki roots. This memoir weaves stories and themes from Native American cultures in with the scenes from the past that shaped Bruchac's life.

Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah

Blamed for the loss of her mother, who died shortly after giving birth to her, Mah is an outcast in her own family. When her father remarries and moves the family to Shanghai to evade the Japanese during WWII, Mah and her siblings are relegated to second-class status by their stepmother.

Σ The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez

Francisco Jimenez was born in Mexico, entered California illegally as a very young child, and spent his boyhood alternating between migrant farm work and the classroom. Each of these autobiographical short stories is simple, direct, and redolent with the smells of the earth, the sounds of the ever-changing home with its growing number of siblings, and the experiences each new schoolroom offers. The frustrations range from those specific to poverty and migrancy, including the inability to follow up on promises made by a good teacher because the family moves on the day the offer of trumpet lessons has been proffered, through the universal experience of an older brother saddled with an ignorant younger sibling. Lifting the story up from the mundane, Jimenez deftly portrays the strong bonds of love that hold this family together.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Anne Frank's diaries of hiding from the Nazis for two years have always been among the most moving and eloquent documents of the Holocaust.

Σ **The Endless Steppe: Growing up in Siberia** by Esther Hautzig

Ten-year-old Esther Rudomin describes “the end of [her] lovely world” when her family is arrested in 1941 and taken from their home and exiled to Siberia.

Facing the Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna by Joseph Lekuton

Lekuton grew up in Kenya’s poorest tribe, herding cows and playing in hyena holes before he was accepted into a fancy Nairobi high school and went to college in the U.S. Now he teaches in Virginia, but he has never lost his Masai roots.

© **The Glass Castle** by Jeannette Walls

This is the remarkable true story of Walls’ unique childhood: she and her siblings mostly took care of themselves, with their parents eventually choosing to be homeless even as the children became successful adults.

High Tide in Tucson by Barbara Kingsolver

Displaying a diverse background and multiple interests, Barbara Kingsolver has written about subjects as varied as the biological clock of hermit crabs, tourist wanderings in Benin, and visiting an obsolete Titan missile site. Recurring themes throughout these essays are the wonder and excitement of parenting; the respect for all creatures, religions, and points of view; and the importance of the natural world in our lives. Reports from Hawaii to her own aquarium show the author to be a curious and sensitive observer.

© **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** series by Maya Angelou

The first of five volumes of autobiography, this book recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learned a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there.

In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer by Irene Opdyke

When World War II began, Irene Gutowna was a 17-year-old Polish nursing student. She spent a year hiding out in the forest tending to the ragtag remnants of a Polish military unit; was captured and raped by Russians; was forced to work in a Russian military hospital; escaped and lived under a false identity in a village near Kiev; and was recaptured by the Russians. Back in her homeland, she, like many Poles, was made to serve the German army, and she eventually became a waitress in an officers’ dining hall. She made good use of her position: risking her life, she helped Jews in the ghetto by passing along vital information, smuggling in food and helping them escape to the forest. When she was made the housekeeper of a German major, she used his villa to hide 12 Jews, and at enormous personal cost, kept them safe throughout the war. Irene’s experiences as a teen and young woman remind adolescents everywhere that their actions count, that the power to make a difference is in their hands.

© **Journey from the Land of No** by Roya Hakakian]

From a child’s point of view on Tehran during the takeover of the Ayatollah Khomeini, Hakakian paints pictures of a changing Iran, from a land immersed in the poetry of life and discovery to one that spoke of militaristic prayer and repression, where Jewish people were once again subject to anti-semitism and where women were stripped of many of their rights.

🌟 **Knots in my Yo-Yo String** by Jerry Spinelli

In this montage of sharply focused memories, Spinelli reconstructs the experience of growing up during the '50s through all five senses. He invites readers to gaze upon the same stars he studied as a child; to listen for the whistle of Mrs. Seeton calling all the kids home to their suppers; to smell the aroma of the Adam Scheidt Brewing Company; to savor the taste of Texas Hot Wieners; and to feel the colliding teeth during his first kiss with Kathy Heller. Wedged between sometimes painful, more often hilarious scenes of adolescent angst are quiet, contemplative moments when young Spinelli develops his artistic imagination replaying the days' events and pondering such mysteries as time, space and the origin of knots in his yo-yo string. As Spinelli effortlessly spins the story of an ordinary Pennsylvania boy, he also documents the evolution of an exceptional author.

Maus series by Art Spiegelman

[graphic format]

Spiegelman, a stalwart of the underground comics scene of the 1960s and '70s, interviewed his father, Vladek, a Holocaust survivor. Based on interviews with his father, Spiegelman has created a comic-book version of the Holocaust, with the Jews as mice, the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the French as frogs, and the Americans as dogs.

Σ 🌟 **My Life in Dog Years** by Gary Paulsen

The author of **Hatchet** describes some of the dogs that have had special places in his life, including his first dog, Snowball, in the Philippines; Dirk, who protected him from bullies, and Cookie, who saved his life.

🌟 **Never in a Hurry: Essays on People and Places** by Naomi Shihab Nye

Nye is a Palestinian American poet and novelist married to a Swedish American living in Texas. This collection of essays for young adults are autobiographical reflections of people and places she has encountered throughout her life.

Night series by Elie Wiesel

This is the harrowing story of the time Wiesel spent in a Holocaust death camp as a teenager.

Σ **Owls in the Family** by Farley Mowat

The adventures of two owls who shake up an entire neighborhood and turn a house topsy-turvy. For more true animal adventures by this author see **The Dog Who Wouldn't Be**.

Persepolis I & II by Marjane Satrapi

[graphic format]

Satrapi was nine when fundamentalist rebels overthrew the Shah of Iran. While Satrapi's radical parents and their community initially welcomed the ouster, they soon learned a new brand of totalitarianism was taking over.

Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution by Ji-li Jiang

In this very personal account of living through the Cultural Revolution in China in the late 1960s, Jiang describes the terrible things that were done to her, her family, and her neighbors in the name of revolution.

Stitches by David Small

[graphic format]

In this memoir, children's book illustrator David Small recounts focuses on his early adolescence and the family and medical hardships that challenged him.

Σ indicates easier books

Book descriptions adapted from product descriptions and reviews on Amazon.com

© indicates challenging books

🌟 indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

Σ ★ **A Tarantula in My Purse: and 172 Other Wild Pets** by Jean Craighead

The author of *Julie of the Wolves* and *My Side of the Mountain* here tells the true stories of the various animals that have passed through her house, from "The Screech Owl Who Liked Television" to "The Goose and the Duck Who Were Arrested for Disturbing the Peace."

Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood by Ibitisam Barakat

This moving memoir of a Palestinian girl's experiences during the Six-Day War and its aftermath is presented in beautifully crafted vignettes. Detained by soldiers during an ordinary bus trip, she was prompted to try to recall her shattered childhood and share her experiences with others around the world. She begins with a description of her three-year-old self, temporarily separated from her family in their first frantic flight from their Ramallah home as the war began. Careful choice of episodes and details brings to life a Palestinian world that may be unfamiliar to American readers, but which they will come to know and appreciate.

Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time [adult/YA editions]

by Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin

A failed mountain-climber, taken in by a small Pakistani village, promises to build the impoverished town's first school. This project grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Available in both adult and young-adult editions.

To Be a Slave by Julius Lester

What was it like to be a slave? Drawn from slave narratives of the 1800s and interviews of ex-slaves conducted in the 1930s, the stories collected in this book describe living conditions under a bondage that negated one's humanity. Passion and emotion emanate from these passages, as those affected describe slave trade, the auction block, resistance to slavery, plantation life and emancipation. Readers experience slaves as human beings, and while the dehumanizing aspects of slavery are made abundantly clear, the book serves more as a testament to the human spirit of those who endured or survived.

★ **Travels with Charley** by John Steinbeck

With his dog Charley, John Steinbeck set out in his truck to explore and experience America in the 1960s. As he traveled over 10,000 miles through thirty-eight states, Steinbeck talked with different people, noting the passing of region speech, falling in love with Montana, and chronicling the racism he encountered in New Orleans. Readers will enjoy savoring the vivid details preserved in this memoir.

Σ **Within Reach: My Everest Story** by Mark Pfitzer & Jack Galvin

In May 1996, Mark Pfitzer at age sixteen was the youngest climber on Mount Everest to reach 26,000 feet, and his gripping autobiography focuses exclusively on his mountain climbing achievements.

© **Woman Warrior** by Maxine Hong Kingston

Maxine Hong Kingston grew up in two worlds: "solid America," the place he parents emigrated to, and th China of her mother's "talk-stories."

Σ Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Wartime Sarajevo by Zlata Filipovic

From September 1991 through October 1993, young Zlata Filipovic kept a diary. When she began it, she was eleven years old, concerned mostly with friends, school, piano lessons, MTV, and Madonna. As the diary ends, she has become used to constant bombing and snipers; severe shortages of food, water, and gas; and the end of a privileged adolescence in her native Sarajevo.

© ★ **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

These classic detective stories of Holmes and Watson have stood the test of time. A particular favorite is **Hound of the Baskervilles**. See also **The Case of the Missing Marquess**, a modern take-off on the original Holmes starring his younger sister.

© ★ **And Then There Were None** by Agatha Christie

Ten strangers are invited to an island by a mysterious host. Once his guests have arrived, the host accuses each person of murder. Unable to leave the island, the guests begin to share their darkest secrets—until they begin to die. Also see **Murder on the Orient Express** and other Christie titles.

★ **Briar Rose** by Jane Yolen

In this unusual retelling of a fairy tale, Briar Rose (commonly known as Sleeping Beauty) is linked to the Holocaust—a far-from-obvious connection that she makes perfectly convincing. Rebecca, who has grown up hearing her grandmother Gemma tell an unusual and frightening version of the Sleeping Beauty legend, realizes when Gemma dies that the fairy tale offers one of the very few clues she has to her grandmother's past.

Σ **The Case of the Missing Marquess: An Enola Holmes Mystery series** by Nancy Springer

The author has imagined a much younger sister for the famous Sherlock Holmes, in the person of Enola, age fourteen, who solves mysteries in her own right, all the time pushing up against the strictly conventional rules for females in Victorian England.

Σ **Chasing Vermeer series** by Blue Balliet

Sixth graders Petra and Calder team up to solve the mystery of a missing painting. Along the way, there are plenty of other puzzles and patterns to intrigue the reader, including hidden pentomino messages in the illustrations.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

Christopher, the autistic narrator, comes across his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork. When Christopher is accused of murdering the dog, he resolves to discover who is really to blame.

★ **The Da Vinci Code** by Dan Brown

Robert Langdon, a famous symbologist, must solve the mystery of a terrible murder while avoiding being blamed himself. His detective work leads him to learn about more about an ancient secret society and about the Holy Grail.

Down the Rabbit Hole series by Peter Abrahams In this first book in the Echo Falls mystery series, 13-year-old Ingrid finds herself in the middle of both the community theater production of *Alice in Wonderland* and a local murder mystery.

★ **The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm** by Nancy Farmer

It is the year 2194 in Harare, Zimbabwe and the three over-protected children of General Amadeus Matsika have been kidnapped. Can the three unlikely detectives from an agency known as The Ear, the Eye and the Arm come to their rescue? This Newbery award winner blends futurism and African tribal folklore in imaginative and surprising ways.

Σ **Gilda Joyce series** by Jennifer Allison

Ever since her father died two years ago, eighth grader Gilda Joyce has been working on sharpening her psychic skills, both in an attempt to communicate with him and to solve spooky mysteries.

Σ ★ **I Am the Cheese** by Robert Cormier

Adam's whole life feels like a game and he is not sure why. In this suspenseful thriller, the reader tries, along with Adam, to figure out what is going on in Adam's world.

Σ **I'd Tell you I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You series** by Ally Carter

This is the first in the Gallagher Girl series, following 15-year-old Cammie Morgan's adventures at Gallagher Academy, a top-secret boarding school for girls who are spies-in-training.

★ **I Know What You Did Last Summer** by Lois Duncan

Julie and her three friends are hiding a terrible secret, but someone seems to know and to be exacting his own justice on them. See other suspenseful titles by this author, including **Killing Mr. Griffin**, about some teenagers who accidentally kill their teacher.

Σ **The Invention of Hugo Cabret** by Brian Selznick

With amazing illustrations, this graphic novel takes the reader on an adventure through Paris on a spellbinding mystery.

Liar by Justine Larbalestier

Micah declares herself a liar and calls her own reliability as a narrator into question on the first page of this dark, gripping page-turner. When Zach, the boy with whom she might or might not be romantically involved, goes missing, Micah tries to tell the story of her tortured relationships with Zach and her classmates, teachers and family. Is Micah a killer?

© ★ **Murder on the Orient Express** by Agatha Christie

This famous classic mystery stars Christie's famous detective Hercule Poirot and takes place aboard a train.

Σ **The Mysterious Benedict Society series** by Trenton Lee Stewart

Four children who respond to an ad seeking "gifted children looking for special opportunities" find themselves in a world of mystery and adventure.

© **The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series** by Alexander McCall Smith

Precious Ramotswe is Botswana's one and only lady private detective. Through a set of diverse cases, the reader comes to know Precious, the interesting characters who hire her, and the country that she calls home.

Σ **The 39 Clues Book I: The Maze of Bones** series by Rick Riordan

This is the first in a ten-book series (planned by Riordan, but written by different authors). Orphans Amy and Dan must compete with other relatives to win a great fortune by collecting 39 clues. Along with action and mystery, the book has plenty of humor and a web-connection as well (www.the39clues.com).

Under the Baseball Moon by John H. Ritter

Mixing softball and fusion music with some crazy characters and a bit of magic, Ritter spins an unusual tale that will certainly appeal to sports fanatics and mystery fanatics alike.

★ **The Westing Game** by Ellen Raskin

This is an unusual tricky mystery with zany characters and plenty of clues, many hinging on word play. Was I wrong! This book might be accessible to younger readers, but no one who loves a mystery with incredible characters. See similar books by the author, including *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I Mean Noel)*.

Σ **When You Reach Me** by Rebecca Stead

Growing up in NYC in the 1970s, sixth-grader Miranda has several mysteries to puzzle over: Why has her best friend Sal ditched her? Who has been sending her mysterious notes that somehow predict the future? And can her favorite book, **A Wrinkle in Time**, possibly help her now?

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★ indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

★ **An Abundance of Katherines** by John Green

Colin is a genius who has dated nineteen girls, all named Katherine, and spends his spare time trying to create a mathematical equation to predict love. See Green's other novels, including **Looking for Alaska**.

★ **Boy Meets Boy** by David Levithan

Set in an idealized town where kids mix easily and being gay is just not a big deal, Levithan's novel focuses on love and relationships—straight and gay—and the typical and angst-ridden problems that come with them. See Levithan's other books—such as **Wide Awake**—for more stories that include gay characters but are not specifically about being gay.

★ **Bronx Masquerade** by Nikki Grimes

[poetry format]

The 18 students in Mr. Ward's English class love Fridays – the day they can be the most themselves sharing their poetry with the class. Poet Nikki Grimes reveals her 18 characters through the poetry they write. The book is not just a collection of poems though; it is a fully developed novel made up of poems and prose, blended seamlessly together.

★ **The Chocolate War** series by Robert Cormier

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the whole school comes apart at the seams. Also see other titles, including **I Am the Cheese**, by this author.

© ★ **The Chosen** by Chaim Potok

In 1940s Brooklyn, New York, an accident throws Reuven Maltzer and Danny Saunders together. Despite their differences (Reuven is a Modern Orthodox Jew with an intellectual, Zionist father; Danny is the brilliant son and rightful heir to a Hasidic rebbe), the young men form a deep, if unlikely, friendship. Together they negotiate adolescence, family conflicts, the crisis of faith engendered when Holocaust stories begin to emerge in the U.S., loss, love, and the journey to adulthood.

Σ **Firegirl** by Tony Abbott

Tom, a seventh grader, tells about the arrival of Jessica, a new student who the others have trouble accepting because of her appearance.

Σ ★ **From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler** by E.L. Konigsburg

Fed up with life in suburban Connecticut, and wanting an adventure that will make her more appreciated by her family and "different" to herself, twelve-year-old Claudia Kincaid decides to run away from home to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

I Am a Genius of Unspeakable Evil and I Want to be Your Class President by Josh Lieb

With plenty of sci-fi, fantastical, and comic elements, this story of Oliver, an overweight 12-year-old from Omaha is set against a realistic backdrop. Oliver fools his family and classmates into thinking that he is slow-witted while in fact he is the third-richest person in the world and is plotting to attain his goal of world domination.

★ **If You Come Softly** by Jacqueline Woodson

This is the story of an interracial romance, and the reader finds out in the prologue that tragedy is coming. Woodson fully develops both characters: Ellie, an upper-middle-class white girl who has just transferred to Percy, an elite New York City prep school, and Jeremiah, one of her few African American classmates, whose parents (a movie producer and a famous writer) have just separated.

Keesha's House by Helen Frost

[poetry format]

The house in the title isn't really Keesha's; it belongs to Joe. His aunt took him in when he was twelve, and now that he's an adult and the owner of the place, he is helping out kids in the same situation.

Make Lemonade series by Virginia Euwer Wolff

[poetry format]

Fourteen-year-old LaVaughn, in order to earn money for college, takes a job babysitting for Jolly, an abused, seventeen-year-old single parent who lives with her two children in squalor.

Σ ★ **A Mango-Shaped Space** by Wendy Mass

Mia has been keeping a secret for years: she sees colors when reading or hearing numbers, letters, or words. When she finds out that her condition has a name, synesthesia, and that other people have it too, she begins an exciting journey of self-discovery. Also see other titles by this author, including **Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life**.

★ **Meet the Austins** series by Madeleine L'Engle

The author of **A Wrinkle in Time** has created this realistic series about Vicky Austin and her family. The books do not need to be read in order. Some notable ones are **A Ring of Endless Light**, in which Vicky befriends an aspiring marine biologist and gets to know dolphins; and **The Young Unicorns**, which is set on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

★ **The Outsiders** by S. E. Hinton

This enduring classic is the story of the Curtis brothers - Daryl, Sodapop, and Ponyboy, who are struggling to keep what's left of their family together in 1960's Oklahoma. This ground-breaking novel – one of the first directed at teenagers, was written when Hinton was herself a teenager. See her other titles as well, including **That Was Then, This is Now** and **Rumble Fish**.

★ **The Pigman** series by Paul Zindel

Tenth graders John and Lorraine take turns narrating how a prank phone call they made led to their strange relationship with the "Pigman" a fat, balding old man obsessed with collecting pig figurines. See other titles by this author as well.

Σ **Rules** by Cynthia Lord

Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. In an effort to keep life on an even keel, Catherine creates rules for him (It's okay to hug Mom but not the clerk at the video store), and the book is organized around these rules.

Σ **Saffy's Angel** series by Hilary McKay

When her grandfather dies, he leaves Saffron Casson a stone angel. Believing that the stone angel is in Italy, Saffy stows away on her best friend's family trip. This is the first in a series of books about Saffy and her brothers and sisters (all named after oil-paint colors by their artist mother).

Σ ⚡ **The Schwa was Here** by Neal Shusterman

When Anthony "Antsy" Bonano and his friends meet Calvin Schwa, they are impressed and puzzled by his ability to appear and disappear before their very eyes. Antsy concocts a moneymaking scheme based on the Schwa's invisibility that seems promising until he and his friends overreach and are caught by the town's legendary mean millionaire. This is a hilarious, sometimes complex story with plenty of quirks and surprises.

⚡ **Speak** by Laurie Halse Anderson

After traumatic events at a party, Melinda chooses not to speak rather than to give voice to what really happened. See other titles by this author, including **Wintergirls**, about a girl dealing with anorexia.

Σ ⚡ **Stargirl** series by Jerry Spinelli

Leo learns about love, loss, and the cost of popularity when an unusual girl who calls herself "Stargirl" comes to his school.

Σ **When You Reach Me** by Rebecca Stead

Growing up in NYC in the 1970s, sixth-grader Miranda has several mysteries to puzzle over: Why has her best friend Sal ditched her? Who has been sending her mysterious notes that somehow predict the future? And can her favorite book, **A Wrinkle in Time**, possibly help her now?

© 1984 by George Orwell

This classic dystopic novel tells of a world in which a totalitarian government reigns supreme and “big brother” is always watching.

Σ ★ **Among the Hidden** series by Margaret Haddix Peterson

Born third at a time in an imagined future when having more than two children per family is illegal and subject to seizure and punishment by the Population Police, Luke has spent all of his twelve years in hiding. To what extent is Luke willing to defy the government in order to have a life worth living?

© **Aye, and Gomorrah** by Samuel Delany

A father must come to terms with his son's death in the war. In Venice an architecture student commits a crime of passion. A white southern airport loader tries to do a favor for a black northern child. The ordinary stuff of ordinary fiction—but with a difference! These tales take place twenty-five, fifty, a hundred-fifty years from now, when men and women have been given gills to labor under the sea. Huge repair stations patrol the cables carrying power to the ends of the earth. Telepathic and precocious children so passionately yearn to visit distant galaxies that they'll kill to go. Brilliantly crafted, beautifully written, these are Samuel Delany's award-winning stories, like no others before or since.

Σ ★ **Elsewhere** by Gabrielle Zevin

Killed by a hit and run driver, fifteen-year-old Liz now lives in Elsewhere with the grandmother who died before she was born. Instead of growing older, people in Elsewhere grow younger until they become babies and are reborn onto Earth again.

★ **Ender's Game** series by Orson Scott Card

Young Ender Wiggin is among a group of children to be genetically engineered to have superior military minds. His mission is to win the Earth's long war with an alien insectoid race by completely destroying their homeworld.

Eva by Peter Dickinson

Following a terrible car crash, Eva awakens to find herself in a hospital bed. Medical science has allowed doctors to pull her functioning brain from her crushed body and put into the able body of a chimpanzee. Who is Eva now: girl or chimpanzee?

★ **Fahrenheit 451** by Ray Bradbury

In the future, firemen don't put out fires—they start them in order to burn books. Like everyone in his society, Guy Montag never questions anything until he meets a girl who tells him of the past, when people were not afraid to think for themselves.

★ **Feed** by M. T. Anderson

This brilliantly ironic satire is set in a future world where television and computers are connected directly into people's brains when they are babies. Narrated by a boy who knows only his own consumerist society, this book takes a sophisticated look at what our values today would look like magnified.

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes

Algernon is a lab mouse who gets an experimental brain operation that raises his IQ. Charlie, a mentally disabled man, undergoes the same operation, and his intelligence expands. But then Algernon suddenly and unexpectedly begins to deteriorate. Will the same happen to Charlie?

Σ **The Girl Who Owned the City** by O. T. Nelson

When a plague sweeps over the earth killing everyone except children under twelve, ten-year-old Lisa organizes a group to rebuild a new way of life.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series by Douglas Adams

In this hilarious, crazy novel, Earthling Arthur Dent is grabbed from Earth moments before a cosmic construction team obliterates the planet to build a freeway.

★ **House of the Scorpion** by Nancy Farmer

Matt was created as a clone of Matteo Alacran, feudal drug lord of the country of Opium. When he realizes what fate has in store for him and other cloned children, he must flee for his life. It is up to Matt and other "lost children" to fight the establishment and transform their country.

★ **How I Live Now** by Meg Rosoff

In a story set in the near future, fifteen-year-old Daisy and her cousins Edmond and Piper find their world changed forever when England is invaded and occupied an enemy.

Σ ★ **Hunger Games** series by Suzanne Collins

Sixteen-year-old Katniss does all that she can to help her family survive in their post-apocalyptic world, even taking her sister's place in the dangerous Hunger Games.

Σ ★ **The Last Book in the Universe** by Rodman Philbrick

Following the Big Shake, which destroyed most of civilization, a small group of individuals (the "proovs") retreated to Eden, learned how to improve themselves genetically, and sealed their environment off from the sprawling ruins inhabited by the remaining "normals." This is the story of Spaz and some other colorful "normals" who, although barely surviving themselves, must try to bring the truth to "Eden" about the real state of the world.

© ★ **The Martian Chronicles** by Ray Bradbury

This series of connected stories set in the future tells of Earth's attempts to conquer Mars and the ways in which the Earthlings are instead enchanted by what they find there.

Tanglewreck by Jeanette Winterson

Tanglewreck is the name of the 500 year-old house where eleven-year-old Silver lives with her aunt as the prophesied Keeper of the Clock. This combination of sci-fi and fantasy is filled with strong characters, futuristic technology, questions about time and space, mystery, and humor.

★ **Unwind** by Neal Shusterman

In a society where unwanted teens are salvaged for their body parts, three runaways fight the system that would “unwind” them.

Σ ★ **Uglies series** by Scott Westerfeld

Tally Youngblood lives in a futuristic society that conditions its citizens to believe that they are ugly until age sixteen when they will undergo an operation that will change them into carefree “pretties.” This dystopic novel explores the clashing human desires for beauty and conformity as well as individuality and free will.

Σ ★ **A Wrinkle in Time series** by Madeleine L'Engle

Meg and her brother Charles Wallace must adventure through time and space to rescue their scientist-father, who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government related to wrinkles in time. Fans of this series should also check out **When You Reach Me** by Rebecca Stead.

SPORTS

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

★ **Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories** by Chris Crutcher

These six short stories all feature athlete protagonists dealing with different challenges and circumstances. See novels—all revolving around sports—by this author as well.

Dairy Queen by Catherine Gilbert Murdock

Fifteen-year-old D.J. Schwenk is a busy girl between helping out on her family farm, trying out for her school's football team, and dealing with a whole host of family and friend issues.

© **Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series** by Eliot Asinof

This is the true tale of talented but clueless ballplayers, manipulating gamblers, money-hungry owners, and corrupt politicians, all coming together to create the greatest scandal the world of baseball has known.

© **Friday Night Lights** by H. G. Bissinger

A journalist documents the 1988 season of a high school football team in Texas—and its effect on the community that is obsessed with it.

Σ ★ **Heat** by Mike Lupica

Michael Arroyo is a thirteen-year-old Cuban American who lives in the shadow of Yankee Stadium, desperately trying to fulfill his dream of making it big in baseball. See other sports titles by this author.

The Last Shot by Darcy Frey

Journalist Frey (a Fieldston alum) follows four promising high school basketball stars as they try to make it out of their neighborhood and make it big.

© ★ **Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game** by Michael Lewis

In 2002, the Oakland Athletics achieved a spectacular winning record while having the smallest player payroll of any major league baseball team. Though people assume that big-name hitters and pitchers are the key to success, Billy Beane, the general manager, examined the statistical data on baseball and figured out more affordable ways to build a winning team.

Σ ★ **Slam** by Walter Dean Myers

Greg Harris tells of the year in which he transfers to a magnet school for the arts, a more academically challenging, mostly white school. After being the star of his Harlem high school team, he has to learn to fit in and be a team player at his new school.

Toby Wheeler, Eighth Grade Bench Warmer by Thatcher Heldring

Toby Wheeler is a self-professed gym rat—he plays basketball down at the rec center but has never played for his school. When he does make the school team, he's the twelfth man—the last one ever sent in to a game

★ **Whale Talk** by Chris Crutcher

T. J. Jones is black, Japanese, and white, and he knows what's it's like to be different.. In defense of other "misfits," he assembles a swim team (in a school with no pool) to help others earn athletic respect and letter jackets.

SURVIVAL AND ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED BY FMS ENGLISH TEACHERS

© **The Alchemist** by Paulo Coelho

Santiago begins a journey from Spain to Morocco in search of riches, but a series of fateful encounters lead him much farther and bring him much more. Santiago's story is about becoming self-empowered, overcoming depression, and believing in dreams.

© **The Call of the Wild** by Jack London

This gripping story follows the adventures of Buck, the loyal dog who is stolen from his comfortable family home and forced into the harsh life of an Alaskan sled dog. Passed from master to master, Buck embarks on an extraordinary journey that ends with his becoming the legendary leader of a wolf pack.

Σ **The Cay series** by Theodore Taylor

In 1942, 11-year-old Phillip is escaping from the threat of war when he is blinded and adrift on a life raft with an old black man and a cat. In order to survive, Phillip must learn to overcome his physical challenges as well as his own prejudices.

Σ ★ **Dogsong** by Gary Paulsen

Only Oogruk, the shaman who owns the last team of dogs in the village, understands Russel's longing for the old ways and the songs that celebrated them. After Oogruk's death, Russel takes his dogs on a 1400-mile journey by dog sled across ice, tundra, and mountains seeking his own "song."

Σ ★ **Hatchet series** by Gary Paulsen

Thirteen-year-old Brian is the only survivor of a small plane crash and must learn to fend for himself in the Canadian woods.

© **Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster** by Jon Krakauer

A journalist-mountaineer, Krakauer tells his own story of barely surviving death in 1996 when climbing Mt. Everest. See also Jon Krakauer's **Into the Wild**, about a man who gave up the comforts of society to live alone in the Alaskan wilderness.

Σ ★ **Julie of the Wolves series** by Jean Craighead

Julie (whose Eskimo name is Miyax) is thirteen, an orphan, and unhappily married. When she runs away from her husband's parents' home, she hopes to reach San Francisco and her pen pal. Instead, she gets lost in the Alaskan tundra and finds she must depend on her Eskimo instincts—and the acceptance of a wolf pack—to survive.

© **The Life of Pi** by Yann Martel

On the surface, this is the story of a boy who is stranded on a lifeboat with a tiger, but underneath it is the story of much, much more.

Σ indicates easier books

Book descriptions adapted from product descriptions and reviews on Amazon.com

© indicates challenging books

★ indicates that the author has other excellent books for middle school readers.

Σ ★ **My Side of the Mountain** series by Jean Craighead George

Every kid thinks about running away at one point or another; few get farther than the end of the block. Young Sam Gibley gets to the end of the block and keeps going--all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he sets up house in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel for companions and his wits as his tool for survival. See other adventure titles by this author.

Σ **Peak** by Roland Smith

Peak, a fourteen-year-old with a passion for climbing, is arrested for scaling tall buildings in NYC and sent off to live with his mountaineer father in Thailand. Peak's father gives him the chance to be the youngest person to climb Mt. Everest, but does Peak's father have motives of his own? And are they in Peak's best interest?

The Twenty-One Balloons by William Pene du Bois

Professor William Waterman Sherman intends to fly across the Pacific Ocean. But through a twist of fate, he lands on the volcanic island Krakatoa and discovers a world of unimaginable wealth, eccentric inhabitants, and incredible balloon inventions. This classic fantasy-adventure won the 1948 Newbery Medal.

© ★ **A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail** by Bill Bryson

Not much of an outdoorsman, Bryson decides nevertheless to hike the 2100-mile Appalachian Trail. This is his informative and funny account of his adventure and the characters he met along the way.

Σ **Within Reach: My Everest Story** by Mark Pfitzer & Jack Galvin

In May 1996, Mark Pfitzer, at age sixteen, was the youngest climber on Mount Everest to reach 26,000 feet, and his gripping autobiography focuses on his mountain climbing achievements.