



SUMMER READING LIST*

Build a Better World ~ Grades 7-8

Suggested hero-themed summer reading titles
compiled for the Connecticut Department of Education by
Linda Williams, Connecticut State Library and CT Librarians

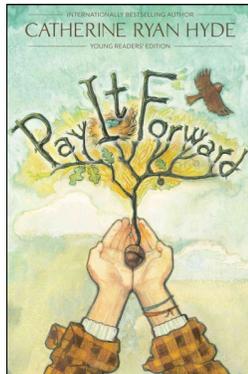
FICTION

Stella by Starlight by Sharon M. Draper

When a burning cross set by the Klan causes panic and fear in 1932 Bumblebee, North Carolina, fifth-grader Stella must face prejudice and find the strength to demand change in her segregated town. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 740

One for the Murphys by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

After heartbreaking betrayal, Carley is sent to live with a foster family and struggles with opening herself up to their love. | [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 520



Pay It Forward (Young Readers Edition) by Catherine Ryan Hyde

Trevor McKinney, a twelve-year-old boy in a small California town, accepts his teacher's challenge to earn extra credit by coming up with a plan to change the world. His idea is simple: do a good deed for three people and instead of asking them to return the favor, ask them to 'pay it forward' to three others who need help. | Lexile: 610

A Death-Struck Year by Makiia Lucier

When the Spanish influenza epidemic reaches Portland, Oregon, in 1918, seventeen-year-old Cleo leaves behind the comfort of her boarding school to work for the Red Cross. | [NCSS](#), [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 600

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

When the Sudanese civil war reaches his village in 1985, eleven-year-old Salva becomes separated from his family and must walk with other Dinka tribe members through southern Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya in search of safe haven. Based on the life of Salva Dut, who, after emigrating to America in 1996, began a project to dig water wells in Sudan. | [NCSS](#), [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 720

All of the Above by Shelley Pearsall

Five urban middle school students, their teacher, and other community members relate how a school project to

build the world's largest tetrahedron affects the lives of everyone involved. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 950

Ghost by Jason Reynolds

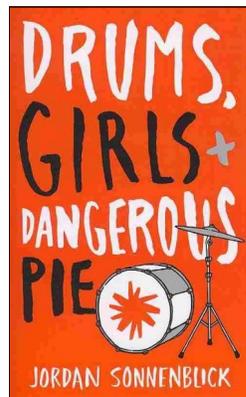
Ghost, a naturally talented runner and troublemaker, is recruited for an elite middle school track team. He must stay on track, literally and figuratively, to reach his full potential. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 730

Faith, Hope, and Ivy June by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

During a student exchange program, seventh-graders Ivy June and Catherine share their lives, homes, and communities, and find that although their lifestyles are total opposites they have a lot in common. | Lexile: 900

Counting by Sevens by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Twelve-year-old genius and outsider Willow Chance must figure out how to connect with other people and find a surrogate family for herself after her parents are killed in a car accident. | [ALA](#), [NCTE](#), [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 770



Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie by Jordan Sonnenblick

When his younger brother is diagnosed with leukemia, thirteen-year-old Steven tries to deal with his complicated emotions, his school life, and his desire to support his family. | [ALA](#), [Nutmeg](#)

Shadow on the Mountain by Margi Preus

In Nazi-occupied Norway, fourteen-year-old Espen joins the resistance movement, graduating from deliverer of illegal newspapers to courier and spy. | [ILA](#), [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 730

Endangered by Eliot Shreffer

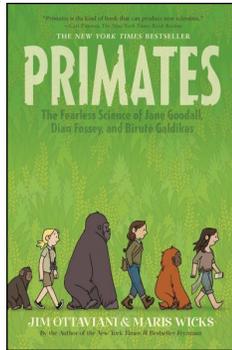
Sophie is not happy to be back in the Congo for the summer, but when she rescues an abused baby bonobo she becomes more involved in her mother's sanctuary—and when fighting breaks out and the sanctuary is attacked, it is up to Sophie to rescue the apes and somehow survive in the jungle. | [ALA](#), [NCTE](#), [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 900

SUMMER READING LIST*

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Primates: The Fearless Science of Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Birute Galdikas by *Jim Ottaviani & Maris Wicks*

This is the true story of three scientists who risked their lives for research that forever changed the way we think of primates—including ourselves. | [ALA](#), [NSTA](#)



NONFICTION

It's Your World--If You Don't Like It, Change It: Activism For Teenagers by *Mikki Halpin*

A how-to reference guide to becoming politically active for teens includes youth activists resources, contact lists for local and national governments, information on the upcoming presidential election, various success stories, and more. | [NYPL Books for the Teen Age](#)

The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club by *Phillip M. Hoose*

The true story of a group of boy resistance fighters in Denmark after the Nazi invasion. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 970

The Girl from the Tar Paper School by *Teri Kanefield*

Describes the peaceful protest organized by teenager Barbara Rose Johns in order to secure a permanent building for her segregated high school in Virginia in 1951, and explains how her actions helped fuel the civil rights movement. | [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1100

The Next Wave: The Quest to Harness the Power of the Oceans by *Elizabeth Rusch*
Explores the use of ocean waves as a renewable energy source. | [NSTA](#) | Lexile: 1070

How the Beatles Changed the World by *Martin W. Sandler*
Fifty years after the British invasion began, Martin

Sandler explores The Beatles' long-lasting impact on the world. | [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1160

BIOGRAPHY

Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice by *Phillip M. Hoose*

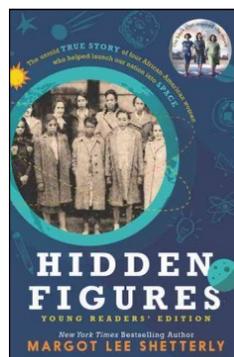
Presents the life of the Alabama teenager who played an integral role in the Montgomery bus strike, once by refusing to give up a bus seat, and again, by becoming a plaintiff in the landmark civil rights case against the bus company. | [ALA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1000

A Volcano Beneath the Snow: John Brown's War Against Slavery by *Albert Marrin*

A biography of American abolitionist John Brown, discussing his childhood, his career and family, and his involvement in the abolition movement during the Civil War in which he led a raid on a military armory at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. | [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 990

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by *William Kamkwamba & Bryan Mealer*

Presents a story of how an African teenager built a windmill from scraps to create electricity for his home and his village, improving life for himself and his neighbors. | [ILA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 860



Hidden Figures: The Untold True Story of Four African-American Women Who Helped Launch Our Nation Into Space by *Margot Lee Shetterly*

Explores the previously uncelebrated but pivotal contributions of NASA's African-American women mathematicians to America's space program, describing how Jim Crow laws segregated them from their white counterparts despite their groundbreaking successes. | Lexile: 1120

Trailblazers: 33 Women in Science Who Changed the World by *Rachel Swaby*
Profiles thirty-three women who have made notable contributions to science, including Maria Gaetana Agnesi, Virginia Apgar, and Rachel Carson. | [NSTA STEM](#) | Lexile: 1130

*Many listed books were selected as exemplary by one or more of the following organizations: the *American Library Association* (ALA), the *International Reading Association* (IRA), the *National Council for the Social Studies* (NCSS), the *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE), the *National Science Teachers Association* (NSTA), the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) or the *United States Board on Books for Young People* (USBBY). Other awards as noted.



SUMMER READING

Favorites & Classics

For Grades 7-8

Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson

When their owner dies at the start of the Revolution, Isabel and her younger sister are sold to Loyalists in New York, where Isabel is offered the chance to spy for the Patriots. | Lexile: 780

City of Orphans by Avi

In 1893 New York, thirteen-year-old Maks, a newsboy, teams up with Willa, a homeless girl, to clear his older sister, Emma, from charges that she stole from the brand new Waldorf Hotel, where she works. Includes historical notes. | Lexile: 570

Zombie Baseball Beatdown by Paolo Bacigalupi

While practicing for their next baseball game, thirteen-year-old friends Rabi, Miguel, and Joe discover that the nefarious activities of the Delbe, Iowa, meatpacking plant have caused cows to turn into zombies. | Lexile: 650

Diamonds in the Shadow by Caroline B. Cooney

The Finches, a Connecticut family, sponsor an African refugee family of four, all of whom have been scarred by the horrors of civil war, and who inadvertently put their benefactors in harm's way. | Lexile: 750

Elijah of Buxton by Christopher Paul Curtis

In 1859, eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman, the first free-born child in Buxton, Canada, which is a haven for slaves fleeing the American south, uses his wits and skills to try to bring to justice the lying preacher who has stolen money that was to be used to buy a family's freedom. | Lexile: 1070

Eva by Peter Dickinson

After a terrible accident, a young girl wakes up to discover that she has been given the body of a chimpanzee. | Lexile: 1010

Whirligig by Paul Fleischman

While traveling to each corner of the country to build a whirligig in memory of the girl whose death he caused, sixteen-year-old Brian finds forgiveness and atonement. | Lexile: 760

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

After the grisly murder of his entire family, a toddler wanders into a graveyard where the ghosts and other supernatural residents agree to raise him as one of their own. | Lexile: 820

House of Dies Drear by Virginia Hamilton

A black family of five moves into an enormous house once used as a hiding place for runaway slaves. Mysterious sounds and events as well as the discovery of secret passageways make the family believe they are in grave danger. | Lexile: 670

Chomp by Carl Hiaasen

When the difficult star of the reality television show "Expedition Survival" disappears while filming an episode in the Florida Everglades using animals from the wildlife refuge run by Wahoo Crane's family, Wahoo and classmate Tuna Gordon set out to find him while avoiding Tuna's gun-happy father. | Lexile: 800

Standing Against the Wind by Traci L. Jones

As she tries to escape her poor Chicago neighborhood by winning a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, shy and studious eighth-grader Patrice discovers that she has more options in life than she previously realized. | Lexile: 780

The Silver Kiss by Annette Curtis Klause

A mysterious teenage boy harboring a dark secret helps Zoë come to terms with her mother's terminal illness. | Lexile: 690

Ask My Mood Ring How I Feel by Diana Lopez

When thirteen-year-old Erica "Chia" Montenegro finds out her mother has breast cancer, she makes a promise to God to raise money for breast cancer awareness and discovers that when family and friends work together, miracles can happen. | Lexile: 700

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives. | Lexile: 760

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson

After his anger erupts into violence, Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the native American Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life. | Lexile: 670



SUMMER READING

Favorites & Classics

For Grades 7-8

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

Left alone on a beautiful but isolated island off the coast of California, a young Indian girl spends eighteen years, not only merely surviving through her enormous courage and self-reliance, but also finding a measure of happiness in her solitary life. | Lexile: 1000

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the Canadian wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce. | Lexile: 1020

All of the Above by Shelley Pearsall

Five urban middle school students, their teacher, and other community members relate how a school project to build the world's largest tetrahedron affects the lives of everyone involved. | Lexile: 1000

The River Between Us by Richard Peck

During the early days of the Civil War, the Pruitt family takes in two mysterious young ladies who have fled New Orleans to come north to Illinois. | Lexile: 740

The Wee Free Men by Terry Pratchett

Tiffany, a young witch-to-be in the land of Discworld, teams up with the Wee Free Men, a clan of six-inch-high blue men, to rescue her baby brother and ward off a sinister invasion from Fairyland. | Lexile: 680

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

In this story about the perils of popularity, the courage of nonconformity, and the thrill of first love, an eccentric student named Stargirl changes Mica High School forever. | Lexile: 590

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind

by Suzanne Fisher Staples

When eleven-year old Shabanu, the daughter of a nomad in the Cholistan Desert of present-day Pakistan, is pledged in

marriage to an older man whose money will bring prestige to the family, she must either accept the decision, as is the custom, or risk the consequences of defying her father's wishes. | Lexile: 970

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

by Mildred D. Taylor

A black family living in the South during the 1930s are faced with prejudice and discrimination which their children don't understand. | Lexile: 920

The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien

Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return. | Lexile: 1000

Izzy, Willy-Nilly by Cynthia Voigt

A car accident causes fifteen-year-old Izzy to lose one leg and face the need to start building a new life as an amputee. | Lexile: 790

Howl's Moving Castle

by Diana Wynne Jones

Eldest of three sisters in a land where it is considered to be a misfortune, Sophie is resigned to her fate as a hat shop apprentice until a witch turns her into an old woman and she finds herself in the castle of the greatly feared wizard Howl. | Lexile: 800

The Pigman by Paul Zindel

A teenage boy and girl, high school sophomores from unhappy homes, tell of their bizarre relationship with an old man. | Lexile: 950

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Death tells the story of a young German girl, Liesel, whose book-stealing and story-telling talents during World War II help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors. | Lexile: 730

FAVORITE SERIES

The Princess Diaries series by Meg Cabot

Artemis Fowl series by Eoin Colfer

Young Wizards series by Diane Duane

The Rangers Apprentice by John Flanagan

Lunar Chronicles by Marissa Meyer

The Squire's Tales series by Gerald Morris

The News Crew series by Walter Dean Myers

Song of the Lioness quartet by Tamora Pierce

His Dark Materials series by Phillip Pullman

Divergent trilogy by Veronica Roth

Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel series by Michael Scott

The Tillermans series by Cynthia Voigt

Leviathan series by Scott Westerfield
