

A SUMMER READING LIST FOR CHILDREN: BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AGES

BY THE SCOUT GUIDE *June 13, 2020*

After months of making their way through distance learning programs with their children, many parents are embracing the slower pace of summer days. While these next few months may look very different than they have in years past in a variety of ways, spending a few hours in the shade (or curled up in a chair with the air conditioning running) with a good book will undoubtedly remain a popular seasonal pastime for all ages. For advice on which titles to put on our kids' to-read lists, we asked three booksellers for their recommendations for summer 2020. Here, Amanda Kranias of the [Blue Manatee Literacy Project](#) in Cincinnati, Ohio, Laura Taylor of [Oxford Exchange](#) in Tampa Bay, Florida, and Julia McCrea Kudravetz of [New Dominion Bookshop](#) in Charlottesville, Virginia, share

their top picks, from picture books that will delight little ones to YA novels certain to engage even the most reluctant teen reader.

PICTURE BOOKS (AGES 3-8)

***Saturday* by Oge Mora**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: In this warm and tender story by the Caldecott Honor-winning creator of *Thank You, Omu!*, join a mother and daughter on an up-and-down journey that reminds them of what's best about Saturdays: precious time together. This special book tackles both racial diversity and class diversity in a way that feels authentic.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: The Poetry of Mister Rogers, lyrics by Fred Rogers, illustrations by Luke Flowers, recommended by Julia McCrea Kudravetz: Mr. Rogers is having a well-deserved moment—the kindness, compassion, and respect he showed for children still serves as a wonderful guide today. This marvelous illustrated book collects the words to his songs, and just might bring a tear to your eye or have you singing along. The lessons are great for children, and like the best books for children, reach out to parents as well. Use this as a conversation-starter, a sing-along, or a nostalgia trip!

***My Best Friend* by Julie Fogliano**, recommended by Laura Taylor: What could be more beautiful than a blossoming friendship? *My Best Friend* is a heartwarming story that explores just what happens when two young girls meet for the first time in the park and experience the joy of each other's friendship.

***The Circus Ship* by Chris Van Dusen**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: With stunning artwork and a rhyming text, the illustrator of the popular Mercy Watson books tells a tale of human-animal connection full of humor and heart. Expect repeated reading sessions as children pore over panoramic spreads that invite them to find each of the 15 animals as they navigate running aground off the coast of Maine.

***The Bluest of Blues: Anna Atkins and the First Book of Photographs* by Fiona Robinson Abrams**, recommended by Julia McCrea Kudravetz: This lovely picture book tells the story of Anna Atkins, a 19th century girl who became a pioneer in the new field of photography with her father's encouragement. Her blue-and-white botanical cyanotypes have recently been on display

at MOMA and the Princeton University Art Museum. Curious kids will be interested to learn about the first pinhole cameras and Anna's trailblazing images of the flowers and ferns she found in her environment. Pair the book with a classic "sunprint" craft afternoon!

Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o, recommended by Laura Taylor: *Sulwe* is a truly inspiring picture book that delves into colorism and the beauty of being unique. Follow along with Sulwe as she embarks on a magical journey of self-discovery.

Usborne's Big Picture Book: Dinosaurs by Laura Cowan, recommended by Julia McCrea Kudravetz: Need I say more? If you know a child going through the "dinosaur phase," this is the perfect gift. Colorful drawings, lively, readable text, and exciting section headings such as "Sea Beasts" and "Massive Dinosaur Fight!" ensure that dino-mania continues every bedtime! Usborne's educational books are famous for their illustrations, and these do not disappoint.

A Book for Escargot by Dashka Slater, illustrated by Sydney Hanson, recommended by Laura Taylor: This interactive picture book follows a snail who only wants two things: to be your favorite animal and reach the tasty salad waiting for him at the end!

Little Tree by Loren Long, recommended by Amanda Kranias: This gentle but powerful story about a young tree who holds tight to his leaves, even as everyone else lets theirs drop, is a heartfelt ode to the challenges of growing up and letting go. This book is as poignant for parents as it is for kids—and quite perfect for graduates.

MIDDLE GRADE (AGES 8-12)

Here in the Real World by Sara Pennypaker, recommended by Laura Taylor: At summer camp, anything can happen. A daydream-prone boy and a girl who plants secret gardens protect their sanctuary from impending doom in *Here in the Real World*.

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Koningsburg, recommended by Julia McCrea Kudravetz: This is a Newberry-award winning classic that I always love to recommend to kids going back to discover the "greats." It's new to them! Two siblings, Claudia and Jamie, run away from home to New York (in a kinder, gentler time), hiding out at the

Metropolitan Museum of Art and scavenging coins from the fountains. Ever dream of climbing into the exhibits? Our two young heroes do, and solve the mystery of who carved a statue of an angel that has been anonymously donated to the museum. (Spoiler alert: the secret can be found in Ms. Frankweiler's files). I just love this book for its intelligent treatment of children and its dry humor.

Clean Getaway by Nic Sonte, recommended by Amanda Kranias: Set against the backdrop of the segregation history of the American South, this road-trip story by a *New York Times* Bestselling author through American race relations past and present follows an eleven-year-old boy who is about to discover that the world hasn't always been a welcoming place for kids like him, and things aren't always what they seem —his G'ma included.

The One and Only Bob by Katherine Applegate, recommended by Laura Taylor: *The One and Only Bob* tells the story of a courageous dog as he embarks on a dangerous journey. Join Bob, Ivan, and Ruby in this stunning sequel as he tries to find his long-lost sibling with the help of some very close friends.

Pippa Park Raises Her Game by Erin Yun, recommended by Amanda Kranias: Ideal for summer reading, middle-grade readers will cheer on Korean American Pippa Park in this compelling reimagining of *Great Expectations*. Navigating friendships and cyberbullying at a new school, Pippa reinvents herself and discovers who she really is.

Theodore Boone Kid Lawyer by John Grisham, recommended by Julia McCrea Kudravetz: John Grisham is famous for his adult legal thrillers, but he also writes these swiftly-paced and socially-minded tales for young readers. The protagonist, Theo Boone, is the Doogie Howser of the law, solving cases that just happen to come his way and giving legal advice to his schoolmates. In *Kid Lawyer* (the first in a series that could keep a kid reading all summer), Theo solves a crime and establishes himself as the best legal mind in town (under the age of 15!). Perfect for readers interested in social justice and the law, with a little mystery thrown in.

A Field Guide to Getting Lost by Joy McCullough, recommended by Amanda Kranias: In this story told from alternating perspectives, a girl with a passion for science and a boy who dreams of writing fantasy novels must figure out how to get along now that their parents are dating in this lively, endearing novel. Offering a realistic snapshot of modern families and the challenges that arise when trying to blend them, this character-driven story handles their inner turmoil with sensitivity and doesn't skimp on plot.

***Black Brother, Black Brother* by Jewell Parker Rhodes**, recommended by Laura Taylor:

Trey and Donte have always been brothers, but the world doesn't see them the same way. Unlike his brother, Donte is bullied by the other kids at Middlefield Prep because of his darker skin. He finds his refuge in fencing, but he finds his journey to being accepted is more complicated than he ever imagined. With his brother and mentors, will he be able to stand up for himself?

YOUNG ADULT (AGES 12-18)

***Kent State* by Deborah Wiles**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: This book, from a two-time National Book Award finalist, focuses on one of the darkest moments in our history—when American troops killed four American students protesting the Vietnam War. Told from the perspective of a protestor, Guardsman, townie, and student, Deborah Wiles's *Kent State* gives a moving, terrifying, galvanizing picture of what happened that weekend in Ohio—an event that, even 50 years later, still resonates deeply.

***The First Conspiracy* by Brad Meltzer**, recommended by Laura Taylor: Today, George Washington is known as the first president of the United States, but in the 18th century, he was known as the leader of a revolution against the indomitable British Empire. Historian Brad Meltzer shows the intricate and secret plot devised to take him down, and how Washington managed to evade it in the days leading up to July 4th, 1776.

***The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* by Suzanne Collins**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: At long last, *Hunger Games* fans can get their hands on this long-teased prequel. In Collins' new book, she takes us back to the 10th annual Hunger Games where Coriolanus Snow is preparing for his one shot at glory as mentor in the Games to a female tribute in District 12. The odds are not in his favor.

***Chain of Gold* by Casanda Clare**, recommended by Laura Taylor: Cordelia wants to be a hero, but her family wants her to be a bride. When a new, unknown demon strikes London, she has a chance to prove herself. *Chain of Gold* continues the *Shadowhunters* saga as the first book to the brand-new *Last Hours* series. This magical setting is perfect for both new readers and long-time fans alike.

***Don't Call the Wolf* by Aleksandra Ross**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: This gorgeous fantasy, inspired by a Polish fairy tale, features a fierce young queen, exhausted young soldier, and a fearsome golden dragon. The twisty journey is full of tension, romance, and folklore.

***Anna K* by Jenny Lee**, recommended by Laura Taylor: Anna lives a sparkling life at the pinnacle of Manhattan society; she has a boyfriend, a dog, and always makes her Korean-American father proud. But upon a chance encounter with Alexei, who has a reputation as a bad boy, her world turns upside down as they fall desperately in love. In an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's classic *Anna Karenina*, Jenny Lee brings a story of first love and heartbreak to dazzling city light.

GRAPHIC NOVELS (AGES 8-16)

***Astronauts: Women on the Final Frontier* by Jim Ottaviani, illustrated by Maris Wicks**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: This lovely graphic novel tells the untold story of the trail-blazing women of Group 9, NASA's first mixed gender class, and the challenges they undertook convincing the powers that be that women had a rightful place in space.

***Once Upon a Space Time* by Jeff Brown**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: From the acclaimed author of the Jedi Academy books comes the first release in a hilarious space-themed graphic novel series. The story follows two normal kids who have been selected to leave Earth and join their new alien classmates on an intergalactic research mission to Mars. Hijinx and hilarity ensure.

***The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander, illustrated by Dawud Anyabwile**, recommended by Amanda Kranias: This is a fresh look at the Newbery Medal-winning book. The story is told in verse set against the backdrop of evocative illustrations. Lively poems—a mix of free verse and hip-hop—draws the reader in while using basketball as a metaphor for life. This graphic novel will resonate with fans of the original book and inspire a new audience of players, artists, and poets.

LIVING

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The Top Books for Elementary Students

TeacherVision Advisory Board Member Heather provides a great list of leveled summer reads for elementary students, including fantasy, historical fiction, some silliness, and plenty of opportunities to stave off "summer slide."

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Topics :

Teaching Advice

A Teacher's Perspective

Classroom Ideas



by Heather Aulisio

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While summertime is a glorious and monumental occasion in the lives of most elementary students, parents can worry that between all the playing, swimming, and gaming, their little learners are going to regress with their reading fluency and comprehension. You can keep their minds engaged and their skills fresh by introducing them to some awesome summer reads. Approved by teachers, these summer reading recommendations are sure to hold a child's interest and can be easily toted along to the beach, read by the pool, and enjoyed before bedtime.

Here are some of the top summer reading picks for early elementary, elementary, and advanced reading levels.

Early Elementary (K-2)

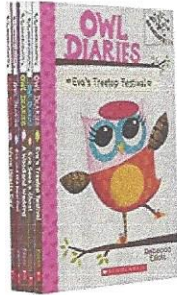
Aggie the Brave by Lori Ries



Designed for beginning readers, this boy and his dog adventure totally connects with young readers. After Aggie has to go to the vet, Ben learns how to face his fears and spend a night without his best buddy. The third book in a series, children will want to read the rest!

Themes: Friendship

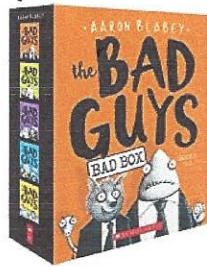
Owl Diaries by Rebecca Elliot



This series is part of an early chapter book line called Branches, which is aimed at newly independent readers. Its high-interest content, fast-paced plots, and relatable illustrations; these books boost reading confidence and help readers grow.

Themes: Realistic Fiction

The Bad Guys by Aaron Blabey



This set contains the first five books of the series. Filled with laugh-out-loud moments and graphic illustrations, kids will have a hard time putting these books down as they take daily journeys with wolf, shark, snake, and piranha.

Themes: Humor, silliness

Elementary (3-4)

I Survived the San Francisco Earthquake by Lauren Tarshis



Lauren Tarshis has a knack for making students feel as though they've literally stepped back in time. With descriptive language, facts, and a little fiction thrown in, you have one enticing book for an elementary student. An added bonus? Once they're hooked, there are many others in the series to enjoy!

Themes: Historical Fiction

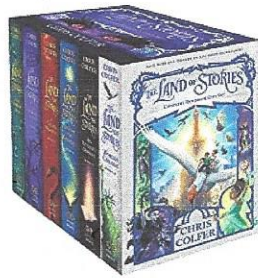
Dragonbreath by Ursula Vernon



Book 1 of 11. The main character, Danny Dragonbreath, can't breathe fire, but has no fear. This modern remake of a comic book format introduces funny characters and situations kids can connect with!

Themes: Humor, crazy adventures

The Land of Stories by Chris Colfer

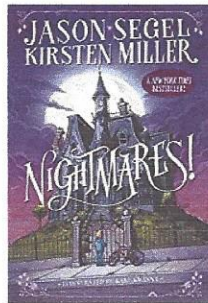


This box set comes complete with the first 6 books of the series. Fascinating and powerful, twins Alex and Conner enter into a foreign land full of magic and fairy tale characters kids grow up reading about.

Themes: Fantasy, adventure

Advanced Reading Levels

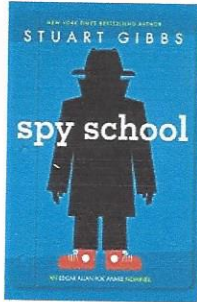
Nightmares! by Jason Segel and Kirsten Miller



Delightfully entertaining, this hilarious and frightening novel set requires a boy named Charlie and a group of kids to face their fears in order to save their town. With three books in the series, kids will be begging you to read the rest by the end of summer!

Themes: Fantasy, humor

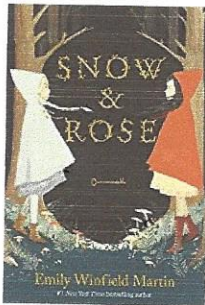
Spy School by Stuart Gibbs



Ben Ripley, an undercover nerd, is on his way to becoming a super star detective because his life depends on it! Thrown into a junior CIA academy, could everyone's safety come down to him? Funny and mysterious, kids connect with this awkward character and his extraordinary circumstances.

Themes: Mystery, humor

Snow and Rose by Emily Winfield Martin



Main characters Snow and Rose had no idea they were in a fairy tale. The story of two sisters put under terrible spells in an enchanted forest, this book is full of beautiful full color illustrations and unusual but relatable characters. This unique story will truly resonate with older readers.

Themes: Fantasy, adventure

These leveled books are highly-esteemed and are just what your elementary-aged kiddos need to foster their love for reading and implement some "school" time during the summer. Check them out today and be sure to bundle them up for your vacay or staycay! Regardless of your plans, your children are sure to love them.

Which books are on your summer reading lists? Share with us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

Heather Auliso is a third grade teacher in Pennsylvania. She has been a teacher for nearly 15 years and holds multiple degrees and certifications. A freelancer for The Mailbox and other education-related clients and publications, she enjoys writing in order to help and entertain fellow teachers. She currently resides with her husband, Bryan; son, Matthew; and two pugs, Lily and Leo.