



SUMMER READING LIST*

Build a Better World ~ Grades 9-12

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

FICTION

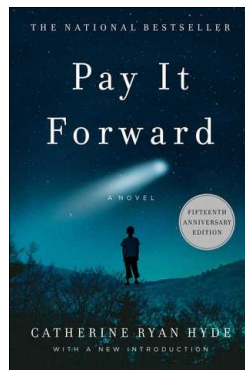
Audacity by Melanie Crowder

A historical fiction novel in verse detailing the life of Clara Lemlich and her struggle for women's labor rights in the early 20th century in New York. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1120

Starbird Murphy and the World Outside by

Karen Finneyfrock

Starbird has spent the first sixteen years of her life on a commune in the woods of Washington State. When she gets her Calling to become a waitress at the farm's satellite restaurant in Seattle, it means leaving behind the only place she's ever known and entering the World Outside. | Lexile: 820



Pay It Forward by Catherine Ryan Hyde

A young boy who believes in the goodness of human nature sets out to change the world with his seemingly simple plan, but he soon learns that some people are not willing to help him. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 630

Flight Behavior by Barbara Kingsolver

Tired of living on a failing farm and suffering oppressive poverty, bored housewife Dellarobia Turnbow, on the way to meet a potential lover, is detoured by a miraculous event on the Appalachian mountainside that ignites a media and religious firestorm that changes her life forever.

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel

The sudden death of a Hollywood actor during a production of "King Lear" marks the beginning of the world's dissolution in a story told at various past and future.

A Step Toward Falling by Cammie

McGovern

After failing to come to Belinda's aid while she was being attacked, Emily and another classmate are

punished by being forced to work at a community center for people with disabilities, but they are put to the ultimate test when Belinda finally returns to school and they must find a way to make amends to her. | Lexile: 730

Eight Girls Taking Pictures by Whitney Otto

A tale inspired by the lives of famous twentieth-century female photographers traces the progression of feminism and photography in various world regions as each woman explores private and public goals while balancing the demands of family and creativity. | [ALA](#)

Out of Nowhere by Maria Padian

Performing community service for pulling a stupid prank against a rival high school, soccer star Tom tutors a Somali refugee with soccer dreams of his own. | [Nutmeg](#) | Lexile: 670

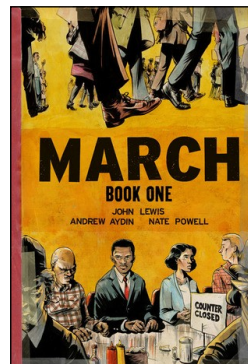
The Lucy Variations by Sara Zarr

With her chance at a career as a concert pianist passed, Lucy Beck-Moreau decides to help her ten-year-old piano prodigy brother, Gus, map out his own future, even as she explores why she enjoyed piano in the first place. | [ALA Outstanding Books for the College Bound](#) | Lexile: 610

I am the Messenger by Marcus Zusak

After capturing a bank robber, nineteen-year-old cab driver Ed Kennedy begins receiving mysterious messages that direct him to addresses where people need help, and he begins getting over his lifelong feeling of worthlessness. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 640

GRAPHIC NOVELS



March: Book One by John Lewis

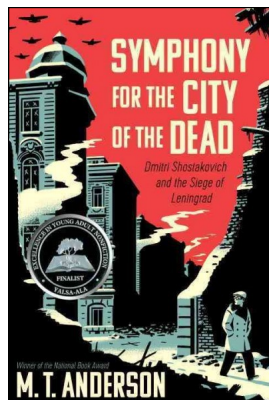
A first-hand account of the author's lifelong struggle for civil and human rights spans his youth in rural Alabama, his life-changing meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the birth of the Nashville Student Movement. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 760

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NONFICTION

Symphony for the City of the Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad by *M. T. Anderson*

An account of the Siege of Leningrad reveals the role played by Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich and his Leningrad Symphony in rallying and commemorating their fellow citizens. | [ALA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 990



Eyes Wide Open: Going Behind the Environmental Headlines by *Paul Fleischman*

A summary of today's environmental challenges also counsels teens on how to decode conflicting information, explaining the role of vested interests while identifying the sources behind different opinions, helping teens make informed choices. (BT) Environmental protection. Environmental quality. | [NSTA](#) | Lexile: 1080

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope by *William Kamkwamba & Bryan Mealer*

A true story of tenacity and imagination describes 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. | [ALA](#), [NSTA](#) | Lexile: 960

Smarter Than You Think: How Technology Is Changing Our Minds for the Better by *Clive Thompson*

Shows how every technological advance, from the printing press to the Internet, has been disparaged, caused hand-wringing, and has generated anxious predictions of doom, but actually has augmented human life for the better. | [ALA Outstanding Books for the Cllege Bound](#)

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide by *Nicholas D. Kristof*

Discusses the oppression of women in the developing world, sharing example stories about victims and survivors who are working to raise awareness, counter abuse,

and campaign for women's rights. | [ALA Outstanding Books for the College Bound](#)

BIOGRAPHY

Ida M. Tarbell: The Woman Who Challenged Big Business - and Won! by *Emily Arnold McCully*

Follows the life of Ida Tarbell, the nineteenth-century author/journalist whose articles on the corrupt practices of John D. Rockefeller and Standard Oil Company resulted in legislation against trusts. | [ALA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1120

Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race by *Margot Lee Shetterly*

An account of the previously unheralded but pivotal contributions of NASA's African-American women mathematicians to America's space program describes how they were segregated from their white counterparts by Jim Crow laws in spite of their groundbreaking successes. | [ALA](#)

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by *Bryan Stevenson*

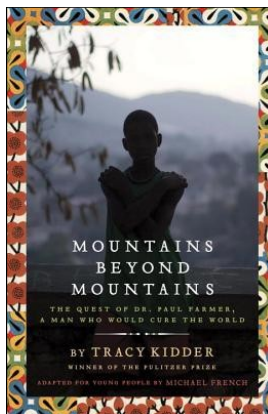
The founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama recounts his experiences as a lawyer working to assist those desperately in need, reflecting on his pursuit of the ideal of compassion in American justice. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 1130

I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by *Malala Yousafzai*

When the Taliban took over the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one fifteen year-old girl decided to speak out. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 1000

Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man who Would Cure the World adapted by *Michael French*

Chronicles the life of Paul Farmer, focusing on his efforts to diagnose and cure infectious diseases and to bring modern medicine to the countries and people who need them most. | [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1120



*Many listed were selected as exemplary by one or more of the following organizations: the *American Library Association* (ALA), the *International Literacy Association* (ILA), 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 9-12

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by *Sherman Alexie*

Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white farm town school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. | Lexile: 600

Speak by *Laurie Halse Anderson*

A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda's freshman year in high school. | Lexile: 690

Feed by *M. T. Anderson*

In a future where most people have computer implants in their heads to control their environment, a boy meets an unusual girl who is in serious trouble. | Lexile: 770

The Handmaid's Tale by *Margaret Atwood*

Set in the near future, America has become a puritanical theocracy and Offred tells her story as a Handmaid under the new social order. | Lexile: 750

Squashed by *Joan Bauer*

As sixteen-year-old Ellie pursues her two goals--growing the biggest pumpkin in Iowa and losing twenty pounds herself--she strengthens her relationship with her father and meets a young man with interests similar to her own. | Lexile: 930

Love in the Time of Global Warming

by *Francesca Lia Block*

After a devastating earthquake destroys the West Coast, causing seventeen-year-old Penelope to lose her home, her parents, and her ten-year-old brother, she navigates a dark world, holding hope and love in her hands and refusing to be defeated. | Lexile: 890

Weetzie Bat by *Francesca Lia Block*

Follows the wild adventures of Weetzie Bat and her Los Angeles friends, Dirk, Duck, and My-Secret-Agent-Lover-Man. | Lexile: 960

Kindred by *Octavia Butler*

A young African-American woman is mysteriously transferred back in time leading to an irresistible curiosity about her family's past. | Lexile: 580

Ender's Game by *Orson Scott Card*

Young Ender Wiggin may prove to be the military genius Earth needs to fight a desperate battle against a deadly

alien race that will determine the future of the human race. | Lexile: 780

The Perks of Being a Wallflower by

Stephen Chbosky

A series of letters to an unknown correspondent reveals the coming-of-age trials of a high-schooler named Charlie. | Lexile: 720

Girl Overboard by *Justina Chen*

After a snowboarding accident, Syrah Cheng, a billionaire's daughter, must rehabilitate both her knee and her self-esteem while forging relationships with those who accept her for who she is. | Lexile: 960

The House on Mango Street by *Sandra*

Cisneros

A young girl living in a Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago ponders the advantages and disadvantages of her environment and evaluates her relationships with family and friends. | Lexile: 850

Just Listen by *Sara Dessen*

Isolated from friends who believe the worst because she has not been truthful with them, sixteen-year-old Annabel finds an ally in classmate Owen, whose honesty and passion for music help her to face and share what really happened at the end-of-the-year party that changed her life. | Lexile: 810

Copper Sun by *Sharon M. Draper*

Two fifteen-year-old girls--one a slave and the other an indentured servant--escape their Carolina plantation and try to make their way to Fort Moses, Florida, a Spanish colony that gives sanctuary to slaves. | Lexile: 820

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close by

Jonathan Safran Foer

Follows nine-year-old Oskar Schell as he encounters a number of interesting characters in his search for information about his father, who died in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and tries to find the lock that fits the mysterious key he left behind. | Lexile: 940

The Fault in Our Stars by *John Green*

Sixteen-year-old Hazel, a stage IV thyroid cancer patient, has accepted her terminal diagnosis until a chance meeting with a boy at cancer support group forces her to reexamine her perspective on love, loss, and life. | Lexile: 850



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Favorites & Classics

For Grades 9-12

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime by *Mark Haddon*

Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically-gifted, autistic fifteen-year-old boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret information about his mother. | Lexile: 1180

Seraphina by *Rachel Hartman*

In a world where dragons and humans coexist in an uneasy truce and dragons can assume human form, Seraphina, whose mother died giving birth to her, grapples with her own identity amid magical secrets and royal scandals, while she struggles to accept and develop her extraordinary musical talents. | Lexile: 760

Game by *Walter Dean Myers*

If Harlem high school senior Drew Lawson is going to realize his dream of playing college, then professional, basketball, he will have to improve at being coached and being a team player, especially after a new--white--student threatens to take the scouts' attention away from him. | Lexile: 800

Monster by *Walter Dean Myers*

While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken. | Lexile: 670

Persepolis by *Marjane Satrapi*

Contains black-and-white comic strip images in which the author shares the story of her life in Tehran, Iran, where she lived from ages six to fourteen while the country came under control of the Islamic regime. | Lexile: 380

Midwinterblood by *Marcus Sedgwick*

Seven linked vignettes unfold on a Scandinavian island inhabited--throughout various time periods--by Vikings, vampires, ghosts, and a curiously powerful plant. | Lexile: 770

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by *Betty Smith*

Young Francie Nolan, having inherited both her father's romantic and her mother's practical nature, struggles to survive and thrive growing up in the slums of Brooklyn in the early twentieth century. | Lexile: 810

Buried Onions by *Gary Soto*

When nineteen-year-old Eddie drops out of college, he struggles to find a place for himself as a Mexican American living in a violence-infested neighborhood of Fresno, California. | Lexile: 850

Marcelo in the Real World by *Francisco X. Stork*

Marcelo Sandoval, a seventeen-year-old boy on the high-functioning end of the autistic spectrum, faces new challenges, including romance and injustice, when he goes to work for his father in the mailroom of a corporate law firm. | Lexile: 700

Jumped by *Rita Williams-Garcia*

The lives of Leticia, Dominique, and Trina are irrevocably intertwined through the course of one day in an urban high school after Leticia overhears Dominique's plans to beat up Trina and must decide whether or not to get involved. | Lexile: 600

How to Save a Life by *Sara Zarr*

Told from their own viewpoints, seventeen-year-old Jill, in grief over the loss of her father, and Mandy, nearly nineteen, are thrown together when Jill's mother agrees to adopt Mandy's unborn child but nothing turns out as they had anticipated. | Lexile: 710

SERIES

Weetzie Bat series by *Francesca Lia Block*

Finishing School series by *Gail Carriger*

The Mortal Instruments series by *Cassandra Clare*

The Hunger Games series by *Suzanne Collins*

The Maze Runner series by *James Dashner*

The Rangers Apprentice series by *John Flanagan*

Earthsea series by *Ursula K. Le Guin*

Life as We Knew It series by *Susan Beth Pfeffer*

His Dark Materials series by *Philip Pullman*

The Raven Cycle by *Maggie Stiefvater*

Shiver trilogy by *Maggie Stiefvater*

Daughter of Smoke and Bone series by *Laini Taylor*
