

Shorter or Easier
Great Books

The Watsons go to Birmingham, 1963, Curtis

A funny retelling of a family's life in Flint, Michigan.

Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck

A beautiful tale of friendship and hardship... a true classic

Old Yeller, Gipson

A story of a boy and his dog

Something Upstairs, Avi

A retold ghost story with time travel

The 13th Floor: a ghost story by Sid Fleischman

When his older sister disappears, twelve-year old Buddy Stebbins follows her back in time and finds himself aboard a seventeenth century pirate ship captained by a distant relative.

The Million Dollar Shot by Dan Gutman

Eleven-year old Eddie gets a chance to win a million dollars by sinking a foul shot at the NBA finals.

My Dog, Skip Willie Morris

A funny memoir about man's best friend

Grab Hands and Run by Frances Temple

After his father disappears, twelve-year-old Felipe, his mother, and his younger sister set out on a difficult and dangerous journey, trying to make their way from their home in El Salvador to Canada.

Virtual War by Gloria Skurzynski

In a future world where global contamination has necessitated limited human contact, three young people with unique genetically engineered abilities are teamed up to wage a war in virtual reality.

Tae's Sonata by Hemi Balgassi

Tae, a Korean American eighth grader, tries to sort out her feelings when she is assigned a popular cute boy as a partner for a school report and later has a falling out with her best friend.

Kokopelli's Flute by Will Hobbs

Thirteen-year-old Tepary discovers an old flute in a cliff dwelling in New Mexico, and through its power learns about Native American magic.

No Turning Back: A Novel of South Africa by Beverly Naidoo

When the abuse at home becomes too much for twelve-year-old Siphon, he runs away to the streets of Johannesburg and learns to survive in a post-apartheid world.

The Apprenticeship of Lucas Whitaker by Cynthia DeFelice

After his family dies of consumption in 1849, twelve-year old Lucas becomes a doctor's apprentice.

Flash Fire by Caroline Cooney

As fire sweeps through a canyon near Los Angeles, teenagers Danna and Hall Press and other children whose parents are not around must work together to save themselves.

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman

One by one, a number of people of varying ages and backgrounds transform a trash-filled inner-city lot into a productive and beautiful garden, and in doing so, the gardeners themselves are transformed.

The Night the Heads Came by William Sleator

When aliens abduct both Leo and his artist friend Tim, Leo tries to determine why these creatures from outer space want particularly to use his friend's talent.

Wrestling Sturbridge by Rich Wallace

Stuck in a small town where no one ever leaves and relegated by his wrestling coach to sit on the bench while his best friend becomes state champion, Ben decides he can't let his last high school wrestling season slip by without challenging his friend and the future.

***Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman**

The thirteen-year-old daughter of an English country knight keeps a journal in which she records the events of her life, particularly her longing for adventures beyond the usual role of women and her efforts to avoid being married off.

Surviving the Applewhites by Stephanie S. Tolan

Realistic fiction, 2003 Newberry Medal Honor Book

This book is a timeless tale of how a boy learns to succeed in the world. Jake Semple, is a 13-year-old who has been kicked out of “all the schools in Rhode Island”.

The Tale of Despereaux by K. DiCamillo

Fantasy

This heartwarming story includes an abundance of contrasts, such as good and bad, light and dark, up and down, loyalty and treachery. These contrasts are found in a story about a good mouse, a bad rat, a princess named Pea, and a slow-witted girl who has been dealt some bad luck and now wants to be a princess.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan

CRCT suggested reading

Esperanza Rising is an adventurous and historical book about a young girl who lives a wonderful life on her father's ranch in Mexico. She lives a life of privilege, believing this life will last forever. Little does she know that her life is about to change drastically when a tragic incident occurs.

Crispin: The Cross of Lead by Avi

Fiction with historical focus

In this Newberry Medal-winning novel, Crispin is falsely accused of murder and must flee his medieval town to save his life. But, just as he is leaving, he learns from the village priest that his parents' origins --- and fates---might be more mysterious than he ever imagined.

Forbidden Forest: The Story of Little John and Robin Hood by Michael Cadnum
Historical fiction

Newberry Medal, Georgia Book Award Nominee

Forbidden Forest is the story of Little John's induction into Robin Hood's infamous band of thieves. On the run, Little John finds himself torn between the need to survive, and doing so at the cost of his morals.

Phoenix Rising by Karen Hesse

Fiction: contemporary issues

Young adult level

After a catastrophic accident at a nuclear plant not far from their small New England sheep farm 13-year-old Nyle Sumner and her grandmother slowly discover they have been spared from direct radiation. Gran decides to take in two evacuees, 15-year-old Ezra Trent and his mother, who were exposed to the radiation. The bleak setting of the book serves as a backdrop for the sensational interaction among the main characters.

Miracle's Boy by Jacqueline Woodson

Realistic fiction

Coretta Scott King Author Award

Young adult level, 192 pages

Focus: both boys and girls

Jacqueline Woodson's Miracle's Boys is the story of three boys left alone after their mother's death. Lafayette, the thirteen-year-old narrator, feels responsible for his mother's death and the impact it has had on older brothers. His oldest brother turned down a college scholarship to work full-time to support the brothers so that social services would not separate the family.

Boy: Tales of Childhood by Roald Dahl

Nonfiction, humorous autobiography

Roald Dahl tells hundreds and hundreds of really wonderful experiences and thoughts from his own childhood, from his birth through college. For example, Roald almost lost his ear in a car accident. Students will learn how Roald Dahl conceived the idea for his book, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse

Fiction

Set in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl, this is the story of 14 year-old Billie Jo. Told in diary form as a series of free-verse poems, the book is a realistic portrait of the Depression-era with entries dated from the winter of 1934 through the winter of 1935. Readers explore the hardships of living on a family wheat farm.
