

Reading Part Two: What Should My Kids Read?

Keeping our children reading throughout the year is important. We recently looked at ways you can encourage your children to read, but you may now be wondering what exactly your children should be reading. As the Manager of the Reading Center at Boys Town High School and a parent myself, I have compiled a list of book your kids (no matter their age) are sure to love reading this year, along with descriptions.

Don't forget to come back and let us know in the comments which books were your children's favorites! We'd love to hear about what books were the biggest hits in your home.

Pre-K (Emerging Readers)

I Saw an Ant on the Railroad Track (2006) by Joshua Prince

A colorful, suspenseful, and poetic story about a wandering ant in search of a snack, and a compassionate switchman who tries to save him from an oncoming train.

God Loves Me More Than That (2008) by Dandi Daley Mackall

A beautifully rhymed and illustrated ABC book about how God's love is higher, deeper, wider, bigger, louder, and softer than even the highest, deepest, widest, biggest, loudest and softest things on earth.

Shark in the Dark (2009) by Peter Bently

A rhyming story about a mean, greedy shark and the sea creatures who work together to teach him a lesson.

Giraffes Can't Dance (2012) by Giles Andreae

A precious story about a giraffe that is ridiculed by the other animals for being a terrible dancer and gets a little help from a friend in finding the "right music." It teaches children the lesson that being unique is okay and that they can still be good at something even if they have to go about it a little "differently."

This is Not My Hat (2012) by Jon Klassen

An underwater tale about a little fish who takes a hat that doesn't belong to him and the larger fish that pursues him to reclaim it. This book is a good conversation starter about respecting the property of others.

The Very Cranky Bear (2014) by Nick Bland

A compassionate tale about four animal friends who seek shelter in cave and must find a way to comfort the angry and tired bear that inhabits it in order to stay.

Look! (2015) by Jeff Mack

A hilarious story about an attention-hungry gorilla, a television-loving boy and a friendship that develops over books.

A is for Musk Ox (2012) by Erin Cabatingan

A laugh out loud story of two animals, which through their banter, pair each letter of the alphabet with descriptive terms or characteristics of an often forgotten animal, the musk ox.

Grades Kindergarten-2nd (Ages 5-8)

Where the Sidewalk Ends (1974) by Shel Silverstein

An outrageously funny collection of poems filled with nonsense rhymes, crazy characters silly words, and simple drawings.

The Magic School Bus (various titles) by Joanna Cole

A classic collection of books for K-2 students that combine fun stories with neat facts, humor, and illustrations.

I Need My Monster (2009) by Amanda Noll

An imaginative, creepy, and comforting story of a little boy who can't fall asleep without the familiar nightly scares of his favorite monster.

Those Shoes (2009) by Maribeth Boelts

A story about a boy who envy's learns the difference between wants and needs.

Blackout (2011) by John Rocco

A digital-age story of a disconnected family that comes together in the midst of a blackout. It reminds us that despite technology, we are never too busy to interact with other in our homes, neighborhood, and greater community.

The Other Side (2001) AND Each Kindness (2012) by Jacqueline Woodson

Two heartwarming books that embrace diversity and teach lessons about how even small acts of kindness can change the world.

The Matchbox Diary (2013) by Paul Fleischman

A story of an Italian immigrant who shares his childhood memories with his great-granddaughter, through a "diary" of saved objects that commemorate the most important events of his life.

Here's Hank (various titles) by Henry Winkler

A hilarious collection of chapter books based upon the real-life experiences of the author, Henry Winkler (a.k.a. "The Fonz"). These stories describe the antics of a boy with undiagnosed learning difficulties, whose impulsiveness, disorganization, and clown-like tendencies routinely get him into hot water.

I Just Don't Like the Sound of No! (2011) by Julia Cook

A story about accepting no for an answer and disagreeing the right way. Julia Cook helps little ones learn how to be the best they can be in this useful book.

Grades 3rd-5th (Ages 9-11)

Watsons go to Birmingham-1963 (2000) by Christopher Paul Curtis

Narrated by 10-year-old Kenny, this is the story about Kenny's middle-class black family and their visit to Grandma and South Birmingham that puts them in the middle of history.

Wonder (2012) by R.J. Palacio

A story about a boy named August that teaches the reader not to judge people by how they look or what they are like.

Zach's Lie/Jack's Run (2003/2007) by Roland Smith

Jack's Run is the sequel to Zach's Lie, and both books will be hard for your young reader to put down. The story is about Jack's family, his father's lie and the subsequent results that follow.

King of the Mound: My Summer with Satchel Paige (2013) by Wes Tooke

When Nick is diagnosed with polio, everyone is devastated. Wanting to continue playing baseball, he begins working for the owner of a minor league team where he meets Satchel Paige. This heart-warming story is all about overcoming the odds.

Mockingbird (2011) by Kathryn Erskine

A moving novel that proves everything is not black and white and that the world is full of color.

I am Malala (2015) by Malala Yousafzai

The remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

The Junction of Sunshine and Lucky (2014) by Holly Schindler

A book about hope that will remind readers that one girl's trash really is another girl's treasure.

Cardboard (2012) by Doug TenNapel

An imaginary tale of cardboard creatures that have come to life and a boy who is now responsible for saving his town from disaster.

Grades 6th-8th (Ages 12-14)

Maze Runner Series (2014) by James Dashner

A series of young adult science fiction adventure novels, this series will be a hit for fans of the Hunger Games series.

Divergent Series (2014) by Veronica Roth

Similar to the Maze Runner series, this is another series of young adult science fiction adventure novels. The story is set in post-apocalyptic dystopian Chicago and is a thrilling tale from start to finish.

Boy in the Striped Pajamas (2006) by John Boyne

Set in Berlin 1942, this is a heartbreaking story about a friendship that ultimately has devastating consequences.

Stormbreaker (2000) Anthony Horowitz

The Alex Rider series is a very popular one among middle-school readers and Stormbreaker takes readers on a thrilling ride of a boy (Alex) and his attempt to outsmart those who want him dead.

The House of the Scorpion (2004) by Nancy Farmer

Matteo Alacran is seeking his own purpose in his life. This riveting story takes readers on his journey to be free.

Counting by 7s (2014) Holly Sloan

A moving novel about being an outsider, coping with loss and discovering the true meaning of family.

One Came Home (2014) by Amy Timberlake

Full of adventure and mystery, this book is a love song to the natural world. It has also won many awards, including the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Juvenile Novel.

I Capture the Castle (2003) by Dodie Smith

A story told through 17-year-old Cassandra Mortmain's journal. Readers will witness all of the changes in the Mortmain household firsthand from the words of Cassandra by the time she closes her final diary.

Grades 9th thru 12th (Ages 15-18)

Paper Towns (2009) by John Green

With the movie version hitting theaters this summer, teens will enjoy discovering the real Margo on paper first.

The Fault in our Stars (2014) by John Green

Insightful and bold, this story brilliantly explores the funny, thrilling and tragic business of being alive and in love.

If I Stay (2010) by Gayle Forman

A heart aching, yet beautiful, book about the power of love, the true meaning of family and the choices we all make.

The Book Thief (2007) by Markus Zusak

Perfect to teach the importance of reading, this is an unforgettable story (set during WWII in Germany) about the ability of books to feed the soul.

Unbroken (the young adult adaptation) (2014) by Laura Hillenbrand

This riveting read will introduce teens to one of history's most thrilling survival epics. Just make sure they select the young adult adaptation when picking up a copy to read.

Darius and Twig (2014) by Walter Dean Myers

This is a great novel about friendship and the need to live one's own dream.

The Everest Files (2014) by Matt Dickenson

Eighteen-year-old Ryan Hart sets out to solve a mystery about disappearances and death in the Himalaya. What he discovers is a shocking tale of lies, betrayal and obsession.

Farhenheit 451: The Authorized Adaptation (2009) by Ray Bradbury and Tim Hamilton

A tightly monitored world where thinking is dangerous and books are forbidden has become a way of life for Guy Montag. In this adaptation, the original story has been made even more powerful with this gorgeously imagined graphic novel.