



The 50 Books KIDS LOVE MOST

Diary of a Wimpy Kid



Wings of Fire

The Week Junior surveyed more than 200 children across the US about the books they enjoyed so much that they would recommend them to other kids. We turned their selections into this one-of-a-kind list that features books from all your favorite genres. Start your summer reading with these page-turners!

LEGENDARY SERIES



THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB

By Ann M. Martin, adapted and illustrated by Ellen T. Crenshaw

Nineteen books from the classic series about seventh-graders who start a child-care business have been turned into graphic novels, and *The Week Junior* readers find them hilarious and relatable. "It's fun to get caught up in the adventures," said Ava, 10. The 18th installment, *Jessi Ramsey, Pet-Sitter*, dives into the wacky world of caring for a houseful of pets, including snakes! Ages 8–12



DIARY OF A WIMPY KID

By Jeff Kinney

This ongoing series of 20 books starring middle-schooler

Greg and his pals makes kids laugh as much as ever. "I read the first one when I was 7, and I still enjoy reading the books now," said Leo, 13. Beckett, 11, thinks the secret to

the series' success is spinning ordinary happenings (like a birthday party in the latest installment, *Party Pooper*) into funny situations. Kids say the illustrated journal-style entries are fun. Ages 8+



DOG MAN

By Dav Pilkey

Filled with hijinks and heart, the 14-book series centers on the title character, a police officer who is half dog and half human. "The *Dog Man* series is the best because the plots are ridiculous," said Sawyer, 10. "All the silliness makes me laugh." In the latest installment, *Dog Man: Big Jim Believes*, Dog Man and his friends must save their city from evil (but adorable) Space Cuties. Ages 7–11



HARRY POTTER

By J.K. Rowling

This blockbuster, seven-book fantasy series "not only transports you to another amazing world but also introduces you to magical characters that feel so close they

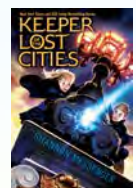
could be your friends," said Ivan, 13. Lyann, 11, also found the descriptive prose easy to imagine: "There are so many details in the words that I can literally picture the setting in my head." The series finale, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, contains the Battle of Hogwarts, which "provides a very good conclusion to an outstanding series of books," according to Matthew, 9. Ages 8+



I SURVIVED

By Lauren Tarshis

What did it feel like on the deck of the Titanic after the ship hit an iceberg or on the battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, during the Civil War? In this long-running historical fiction series packed with photographs, a fictional child protagonist navigates a real event, bringing the subject matter to life. "It's a super-fun way of learning about history," said Clara, 9. Ages 8–12



KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES

By Shannon Messenger

In the opener to the epic fantasy series that intertwines adventure and magic, a 12-year-old telepathic girl discovers that she's actually an elf! "This series is full of bright and complex characters who are trying

to save both the human race and elves," said Ivan, 13. "I love this series because it's so fun to read about Sophie's adventures with her gifted and kind friends," added Shirya, 12. Ages 8–12



THE LAND OF STORIES

By Chris Colfer

This six-book series "combines stories and fairy tales everyone already knows and loves, then puts a new and fun twist on them," according to Micah, 12. The opener, *The Wishing Spell*, begins when twins fall into a book of fairy tales. Our readers felt they did the same: "This story is so cool because it has characters from fairy tales kids read about when they were younger," said Eloise, 12. Added Micah: "I wish I could be the main character." Ages 8–12

Enter to win books!

This summer, we challenge you to read three books. They can be from this reading list or any books you choose. Once you've read them, with an adult's help go to tinyurl.com/TWJUS-ReadingChallenge2026 to enter our sweepstakes for a chance to win books. Five kids will win! All winners will be drawn at random. The deadline to enter is August 5.

Symbol key



Classic



Newbery Medal or Honor



Made into a TV show or movie



The Baby-Sitters Club

The Week Junior • June 5, 2026

BOOKS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS



PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS

By Rick Riordan

"Woven like an ancient Greek scarf"

is how 10-year-old Amélia aptly describes the plot of this seven-book series starring Percy, a boy who is the demigod son of the Greek ruler of the sea. She added, "I like how it educates you about Greek mythology but at the same time makes you laugh." The series opener, *The Lightning Thief*, contains the "perfect amount of fighting and drama," noted 11-year-old Kyla. Ages 8+



WINGS OF FIRE: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

By Tui T. Sutherland, illustrated by Mike Holmes

Dragon battles practically pop off the page in the graphic novel adaptation of the best-selling *Wings of Fire* series. "There are many arcs in the story and each book is written in a different dragon's point of view, which makes the plot more interesting," said Lyann, 11. Ten-year-old GiGi added, "I like it because it has a lot of action and the illustrations are cool." Ages 8–12



THE VANDERBEEKERS

By Katrina Yan Glaser

If our readers could be part of a fictional family, joining the five Vanderbeeker siblings in their New York City brownstone would be a popular option. "This is the most perfect series with the quirkiest and most fun kids!" said Paige, 13. In the series debut, *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street*, the siblings have to persuade a landlord to renew their lease so they don't have to move. Ages 8–12

FANTASY FAVORITES



DRAGON PEARL

By Yoon Ha Lee

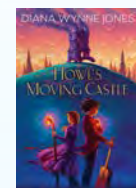
In this novel inspired by Korean mythology, a 13-year-old girl runs away from her home planet to search for her missing brother. "I've probably read the book over 20 times!" said Jocelyn, 11. "It's very suspenseful and exciting, and I'd recommend it to any middle-grade reader who enjoys diverse fantasy books." If you're a fan, check out the sequel *Tiger Honor*. Ages 8–12



GROWING HOME

By Beth Ferry, illustrated by The Fan Brothers

An enchanted fish tank sets the stage for this charming story filled with delightful characters. A grumpy goldfish, inquisitive spider, and two houseplants receive magical powers when they're splashed with water from the tank. They must work together to protect their human family from an unscrupulous antique dealer. "The characters are funny and help each other solve exciting problems," said Archer, 8. Ages 8–12



HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

By Diana Wynne Jones

Published last fall, the deluxe 40th-anniversary edition introduces this magical fantasy to another generation of readers. A girl, left old by a witch's curse, flees to a wizard's castle and makes a dangerous deal



Growing Home

with a fire demon to regain her youth. "The story is creative, and the characters are otherworldly!" said Barrett, 12. Ages 10–14



IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES

By Katherine Rundell, illustrated by Ashley Mackenzie

A fantastic storyline with lots of adventure, amazing characters, and a lesson in bravery are among the reasons *The Week Junior* readers recommended this blockbuster series opener. A boy discovers a hidden portal to a group of islands where magical creatures still roam, but an evil force threatens them. "It's very suspenseful and opened my mind," said Henry, 9. Ages 8+



THE LAND OF ROAR

By Jenny McLachlan, illustrated by Ben Mantle

Eleven-year-old twins have to rescue their grandfather from a world with dragons and ninja wizards. No one else is better suited to the challenge because the twins actually created the world, which they thought was make-believe, when they were little. "This fantasy novel is magical, and it blew my mind the first time I read it," said Eloise, 12. The sixth (and final) book in the series is expected to be published next year. Ages 8–12



THE MARVELLERS

By Dhonielle Clayton

Harry Potter meets *Keeper of the Lost Cities* in the opener of the four-book *Conjureverse* series featuring an 11-year-old girl who is the first person from her race to attend a centuries-old school that

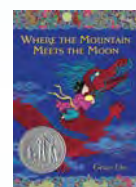
floats in the clouds. When a criminal escapes and a teacher goes missing, it will be up to the girl and her classmates to figure out what's behind their disappearances. "The book teaches kids to stand up for themselves," said Evelyn, 8. Ages 8–12



THE STARS OF WHISTLING RIDGE

By Cindy Baldwin

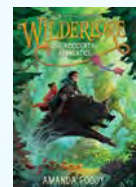
A girl who steals her mother's wish jars to secure a home in North Carolina finds herself torn when she finds out that magic is being drained from her town. "A heartwarming story about friendship, sisterhood, and the place that you call home leaves a lasting message," said Emma, 11. "I couldn't put this book down." Ages 8–12



WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON

By Grace Lin

This masterpiece, inspired by Chinese folklore, features the journey of a poor girl who seeks the Old Man of the Moon to bring her family more wealth. But she discovers that gratitude—not money—brings happiness. "I've read this book four times! I love it because it is just unbelievable," said 9-year-old Kate. "It always gives me a good feeling." Ages 8–12



WILDERLORE

By Amanda Foody

In the opener to the five-book series, an 11-year-old boy bonds with a magical beast and travels through mysterious woods to protect the world from evildoers. After crossing many hurdles, he has to decide whether to return home or continue his adventures. "The *Wilderlore* series is so much fun! It's like *Pokémon* meets *Avatar*!" said Paige, 13. Ages 8–12

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Summer of Reading



A WRINKLE IN TIME

By Madeleine L'Engle

Published more than 60 years ago, the story of a teen girl who time-travels to locate her father who mysteriously disappeared is still captivating modern readers. "This sci-fi book with strange worlds and mysterious creatures is one of my favorites because it brings to life what isn't possible and makes it possible," said Emily, 13. *Ages 10–14* ❤️⭐

MYSTERY FAVORITES



BLOOD IN THE WATER

By Tiffany D. Jackson

A Black girl vacationing on Martha's Vineyard investigates the death of a popular teenager. Did he drown? Was he attacked by a shark? Or was he murdered? What she finds out changes her life. "Blood in the Water is suspenseful, has many great twists, and leaves you guessing to the end," said Charley, 10. *Ages 10–14*



BOOK SCAVENGER

By Jennifer Chambliss Bertman

Friends who love solving puzzles stumble upon a mysterious book, *The Gold-Bug*, that they think was created by their literary idol before he was attacked and went into a coma. What secrets might the book reveal? "The exciting story kept me on my toes," said Emma, 11. "There were so many different elements of mystery that excited me, and there were a lot of 'What?' and 'Wow!' moments." *Ages 8–12*



LOOT

By Jude Watson

March's father was a jewel thief, so when his dying words were "find jewels," March assumed he'd be looking for precious stones. Instead, his dad meant Jules, his long-lost sister! "Loot is a thrilling, edge-of-your-seat book that keeps you wanting to read more," said Sara, 10. What the siblings decide to do when they unite will totally surprise you. *Ages 8–12*

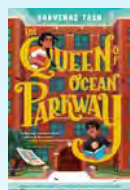


MURDER AT THE MUSEUM

By Alasdair Beckett-King, illustrated by Claire Powell

The first book in the Montgomery Bonbon series "is funny, and it keeps you in suspense until the end!" said Amélia, 10. Ten-year-old Bonnie disguises herself with a wig and fake mustache to crack the case

of a theft at a local museum. "I loved the book because you can relate to Bonnie, and it's also very fast-paced and witty," added Amélia. *Ages 8–12*

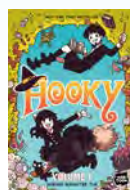


THE QUEEN OF OCEAN PARKWAY

By Sarvenaz Tash

An 11-year-old podcaster from New York City and her friend travel through time investigating the mysterious disappearance of their neighbor. Sunny, 12, said, "Even though time travel isn't possible, or at least it hasn't proven to be yet, the author makes you easily believe that it is." *Ages 8–12*

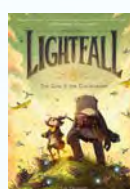
GRAPHIC NOVEL FAVORITES



HOOKY

By Miriam Bonastre Tur

This trilogy kicks off when twin witches miss the bus to their magic school and decide to "play hooky" (skip school) and find a magical instructor of their own. "I really liked this book because the story is awesome, and I loved the colorful speech bubbles," said Amélia, 10. "For anyone who likes magic and fun, this is perfect!" *Ages 8–12*



LIGHTFALL

By Tim Probert

Both the artwork and the writing are top-notch in this four-book series about two pals trying to save the world from going dark forever. "It is

an unlikely friendship, and the plot keeps you interested," said Macy, 11. "The artwork is vivid, magical, and immersive." *Ages 8–12*



MY SISTER THE WEREBEAST

By Alina Tysoe

This hilarious graphic novel may remind you of *The Incredibles*, with a sprinkle of *The Babysitters Club*. While their monster-hunting parents are away, siblings must take care of their baby sister who has started to acquire supernatural abilities, like breathing fire and shape-shifting. "This amazing book is about embracing differences in a fun, touching way," said Rory, 12. *Ages 8–12*



NEW KID

By Jerry Craft

The only graphic novel to ever win a Newbery Medal, *New Kid* explores the complexities of race, friendships, and privilege in the most entertaining way. A Black seventh-grader doesn't feel like he fits in anywhere when he transfers to a prestigious, mostly white school. "New Kid is my favorite graphic novel because it tells a good story," said Anaya, 11. *Ages 8–12* ⭐



PARACHUTE KIDS

By Betty C. Tang

After a dream vacation in California, three siblings from the East Asian country of Taiwan remain in the US while their parents fly home. They strive to balance household tasks and schoolwork without getting on each other's nerves. "Parachute Kids helps you understand what it's like to move to a new country, builds empathy, and teaches you about different cultures and experiences," said Laasya, 12. *Ages 8–12*



Restart

Summer of Reading



REALISTIC FICTION FAVORITES



ALONE

By Megan E. Freeman

In this novel in verse, a 12-year-old wakes up to find that everyone in her Colorado town has been suddenly evacuated except her. She even has to live in an empty apartment! "It's so moving, and you feel like your heart might leave your body in tears, but you also feel like the main character is your best friend," said Rory, 12. *Ages 10–14*



CONFETTI GIRL

By Diana López

After Lina's mother dies, she must navigate the challenges of middle school in Texas without much support. "She finds out she can't play volleyball for this season because of her bad grades," said Simone, 10. Mexican traditions, such as *cascarones* (hollowed, painted eggshells filled with confetti), are sprinkled throughout the novel. *Ages 8–12*



COUNTING BY 7s

By Holly Goldberg Sloan

Following the death of her adoptive parents in a tragic accident, a 12-year-old, who is comforted when he counts by 7s, finds a loving support system in some of the least expected places. "The book shows how very different people can come together and help each other when they need it most," said Annie, 12. Added Charley, 10: "You will feel like you know each of the characters personally by the end of the story." *Ages 10–14*



EVERY SOUL A STAR

By Wendy Mass

Three teens meet at an astronomy camp for a solar eclipse and learn about stars, friendship, and themselves. "The story is really sweet and makes you think about how people can be different but still connect," said Georgia, 11. Told from the first-person perspectives of each of the teens, the book also contains facts about astronomy. *Ages 8–12*



HEAT

By Mike Lupica

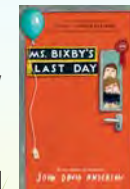
A 12-year-old Cuban American pitcher in New York City covers up his father's death so he's not separated from his older brother. Meanwhile, he needs to find a way to prove his age so he can participate in the Little League World Series. "Even though the book is for sports fans, the story isn't all sports, so anyone can enjoy it," noted Drew, 10. *Ages 10–14*



THE LABORS OF HERCULES BEAL

By Gary D. Schmidt

After his parents pass away, a seventh-grader's teacher gives him a surprising assignment: Re-create the 12 modern versions of the labors of Hercules (a mythological hero celebrated for strength and bravery). As Gwendolyn, 12, explained, "Each of the labors is something that helps him figure out who he is and who he wants to be." *Ages 10–14*



MS. BIXBY'S LAST DAY

By John David Anderson

Three sixth-grade boys go on a quest all over town to collect the favorite

Meet our Author Ambassadors!

Throughout our Summer of Reading campaign, *The Week Junior* will feature new stories from these literary heavyweights. You will be able to find them in our Book Club column on page 22.

KWAME ALEXANDER

The Newbery Medal-winning author, known for *The Crossover* series, is launching a new series of graphic novels! *The Brainstormer: Money Talks* follows three best friends who team up to earn enough to buy the coolest new phone.



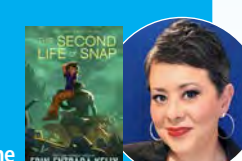
TIFFANY D. JACKSON

The popular author is releasing a follow-up to her best-selling middle-grade book, *Blood in the Water*. Debuting in August, *Ghost in the Night* is an edge-of-your-seat murder mystery that takes place in Savannah, Georgia.



ERIN ENTRADA KELLY

A two-time Newbery Medalist ventures into the dystopian (broken world) genre with *The Second Life of Snap*. A resourceful 12-year-old who thinks she doesn't like robots changes her mind when she meets Snap, one that has a limited battery life.



JEFF KINNEY

The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* creator will debut another spin-off this August—*Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Friendly Spooky Stories 2*. It's a collection of hilariously terrifying tales with monsters, ghouls, and giant insects. Keep the lights on!



BRANDON MULL

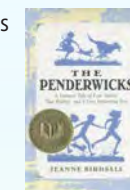
The author of the epic *Fablehaven* fantasy series is back with a new series: *Guardians*. In the first book, *Forbidden Mountain*, kids face a darkness that threatens their world. The cliffhanger ending will leave you eager for the next volume.



THE PENDERWICKS

By Jeanne Birdsall

The five-book series follows four sisters from childhood to adulthood. In the opener, *A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy*, the family travels to the Berkshires in Massachusetts for their summer vacation. Mae, 9, said, "It's funny and has a lot of adventures." *Ages 8–12* ❤️



The Penderwicks

Murder at the Museum



How this book list came together

To compile our list of 50 books, we invited children across the country to tell us what their all-time favorite books from different genres are and why. We also asked our current and former Junior Council members to share the books they love most. The books that received the most votes made it onto the list. It's full of award-winning reads with diverse characters, magical plots, and suspenseful moments—and proof that kids make the best book critics!

Parachute Kids



BOOKS, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND AUTHORS COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS



Summer of Reading



THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF COYOTE SUNRISE
By Dan Gemeinhart

Twelve-year-old Coyote persuades her father to drive cross-country to retrieve a memory box she buried in her old neighborhood, which is about to be demolished. Marinn, 9, shared her favorite quote from the book: "It's hard, though, when everyone carries around a heart inside them that is so loud and strong and so easily broken." Ages 8–12



NUMBER THE STARS

By Lois Lowry
It's 1943, and the Nazis occupy Denmark in World

War II. A brave 10-year-old helps her family hide her Jewish best friend by pretending she's her older sister. Later, she delivers a secret package to a boat that's helping her friend and other Jewish refugees escape to Sweden. "It's a sweet story about friendship and family," said Emma, 11. "Every chapter ends on a cliff-hanger, which makes you want to read more!" Ages 9+ ❤️🌟



THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE

By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
A 10-year-old living in London during

World War II escapes from her abusive mother to be with her brother in the English countryside. "This book is about finding love even through pain," said Kyla, 11. "It has humor, history, drama, and so much love. It makes you feel good inside and out." Ages 9+ 🌟

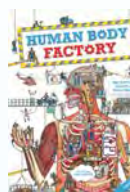
NONFICTION FAVORITES



ALL THIRTEEN

By Christina Soontornvat
Packed with incredible pictures, this book captures

the drama of an 18-day rescue operation to save soccer players and their coach who were trapped in a cave in Thailand. Fern, 13, said: "I love the perspectives of this scary event." The author shares her experience meeting the team. Ages 8+ 🌟



HUMAN BODY FACTORY

By Dan Green, illustrated by Edmond Davis
This oversize science book delves into your insides. It begins with the brain, described as the control center

"bossing all of the body's activities." Fun-to-read blurbs and the illustrations set this book apart. Maverick, 8, said, "I give the illustrator a thumbs-up!" Ages 8+



THE MONA LISA VANISHES

By Nicholas Day, illustrated by Brett Helquist
Did you know that Leonardo da Vinci's famous masterpiece was stolen from the

Louvre museum in Paris in 1911? This fast-paced true story takes you back in time, from the creation of the painting in the 1500s. "It's history, thrills, and fun in one crazy book," said Caroline, 10. Ages 10+



REBEL DOGS! HEROIC TALES OF TRUSTY HOUNDS

By Kimberlie Hamilton
This illustrated

book features heroic dogs that have done amazing things. You'll discover a canine that found a cave complex filled with prehistoric paintings and a pack of dogs who helped protect penguins. "I liked reading about cool things dogs have done!" said Tommy, 7. Ages 8+



UNDEFEATED

By Steve Sheinkin
If you love a good underdog sports story, this book

about Jim Thorpe (1887–1953), star of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School football team, is it. "Not many people know about Jim Thorpe, but he's probably the best athlete of all time," said Elijah, 12. This fascinating volume chronicles the rise of the first superstar Native American football player despite experiencing racism on and off the field. Ages 12+



RESTART

By Gordon Korman
What would you do if you lost your memory? After

falling off a roof, a middle-school bully can't recall his past actions, but his victims fill him in. Now he's at a crossroads—should he start fresh or pick up where he left off? "It's so interesting to get a perspective on someone with amnesia," said Fern, 13. Ages 8+



THE WHIZ MOB AND THE GRENADINE KID

By Colin Meloy, illustrated by Carson Ellis
This fun caper, set in France in 1961, centers on a 12-year-old pickpocket who joins a gang dubbed The Whiz Mob. But soon the tables are turned, and the pickpocket is the American

victim of a con! "It's a funny and thought-provoking story with beautiful language, vivid descriptions, and detailed illustrations that bring it to life," said 12-year-old Dax. Ages 8–12

HISTORICAL FICTION FAVORITES



THE NINE MOONS OF HAN YU AND LULI

By Karina Yan Glaser
Han Yu, a boy who lives in ancient China, and Luli, a girl living in New York City in 1931, both navigate difficult circumstances—a plague and the Great Depression.

"Their stories intertwine in a way that makes you want to turn the pages," said Sunny, 12. Kennedy, 10, adds that the beautifully written story has "big surprises." Ages 8+ 🌟



THE PARTITION PROJECT

By Saadia Faruqi
For a journalism class project, a Pakistani American girl

documents her grandmother's difficult experiences during the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan (the division of British India into two independent nations, Pakistan and India). "The story offers an engaging, heartfelt, and accessible way for young readers to learn about this event through personal stories," said Inaya, 8. "It also tells the importance of family history." Ages 10–14

The Whiz Mob and the Grenadine Kid



My summer reading memories

Fill out this form so you can capture who you are as a reader right now! Save it in a special place and look at it again next summer so you can see if your choice in books has changed or stayed the same. Happy reading!

Name _____

Age _____

Book I enjoyed most this summer: _____

Place where I most liked reading: _____

Best book I've ever read: _____

Favorite character: _____

Favorite author: _____

Favorite genre: _____

Book I hope to read next: _____

Kids' favorite genres revealed

The Week Junior's readers told us they love to read about imaginary worlds the most.

48% Fantasy

28% Realistic fiction

10% Mystery

5% Nonfiction

5% Science fiction

4% Historical fiction

BOOKS AND ILLUSTRATIONS: COURTESY THE PUBLISHERS