



Roller Girl

The 50 Books KIDS LOVE MOST



The Week Junior asked more than 200 children across the country about the books they loved so much that they would recommend them to other kids. We turned their picks into this one-of-a-kind list that features books in all your favorite categories. Get ready for a super summer of reading!

FAVORITE FANTASIES & SCI-FI



BEYOND MULBERRY GLEN
By Millie Florence,
illustrated by
Astrid Sheckels
(Waxwing Books)

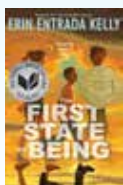
Eleven-year-old Lydia must leave her cherished home in Mulberry Glen to protect her family from evil forest dwellers. "I love this whimsical story about Lydia's struggle with change, and the powerful themes of light and darkness really empower me!" said Lola, 13. "This book feels like sunshine on rainy days." Ages 9+



FABLEHAVEN
By Brandon Mull,
illustrated by
Brandon Dorman
(Shadow Mountain)

A hidden refuge for mythical creatures, Fablehaven is under threat from evil forces. Unbeknown to Kendra and her brother, their grandfather is the refuge's caretaker. Setting out to save Fablehaven and their family,

"the characters show great energy and emotion throughout the book," said Charlie, 10. Ages 9+



THE FIRST STATE OF BEING
By Erin Entrada Kelly
(HarperCollins)

Calling it a "delightful blend of sci-fi and realism that's both funny and emotional," 11-year-old Luna recommended this time-traveling tale set in 1999. Ridge, a boy from 200 years in the future, suddenly appears at an apartment complex in Delaware. The life of a 12-year-old resident will never be the same. Ages 8–12



THE GOOSE GIRL
By Shannon Hale
(Bloomsbury Children's Books)

This retelling of a classic fairy tale in which a princess spends her first years learning the language of birds is pure magic. It remains true to the original while including new elements. "It's the best book ever," said Cora, 11. Ages 8–12



GREENWILD
By Pari Thomson
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books for Young Readers)

To find her missing mom, Daisy flees through a hidden doorway and finds herself

in a magical world. But someone wants to destroy it and prevent her from seeing her mother again. "The story is exciting, and the descriptions make you feel like you're actually there," said Phoebe, 9. Ages 8–12



HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS
By J.K. Rowling
(Scholastic)

The final novel in the seven-part blockbuster Harry Potter series proves to be the most exciting, according to *The Week Junior* panelists. The book not only contains the most battles (a highlight for 12-year-old Parthana) but also brings many connections to light. As 11-year-old Landon said, "It's fun to be able to put all the pieces together from all the other Harry Potter books." Ages 10+



A LIGHT IN THE MIST
By Erin Hunter
(HarperCollins)

The Broken Code story arc to the popular *Warriors* series wraps up with an epic premise: All five clans of Warrior cats must join forces to fight an imposter. "I love all the *Warriors* books because of the creative storylines and characters, but this story especially has a lot of really good parts," said Rory, 11. Ages 8–12



THE SON OF NEPTUNE
By Rick Riordan
(Disney Hyperion)

The second book of The Heroes of Olympus series is a reader favorite because Percy Jackson reappears. There's a problem, though: Percy has lost his memory and has no idea how he ever made it back to



Greenwild

Symbol key



Series



Classic



Newbery Medal or Honor

Enter to win books!

This summer, we challenge you to read three books. They can be from this list or they may be any books you choose. Once you've read them, with an adult's help go to tinyurl.com/TWJUS-ReadingChallenge2025 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 8.

Summer of Reading



Camp Half-Blood. "The series gets exciting when Percy goes on adventures to get his memory back," said Caley, 13. Ages 9+ 📖

According to 12-year-old Tahra, "The winding clues and storylines will make sure the ending catches you by surprise." Ages 8–12

A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall



FAVORITE ADVENTURES



THE ADVENTURES OF NANNY PIGGINS
By R. A. Spratt, illustrated by Dan Santat
(Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)

"Funny, entertaining, and memorable" is how 11-year-old Avery describes this story about a former circus-flying pig who gets hired to watch three wild children. The pig, who has no babysitting experience, gets into many hilarious situations that may remind you of those in *Matilda* and other books by Roald Dahl. Ages 8–12 📖



THE GOLDEN COMPASS
By Philip Pullman
(Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers)

Full of "heart-pounding scenes," according to 11-year-old Luke, this awesome adventure story is the first book in the His Dark Materials series. An orphan discovers a truth-telling device while trying to rescue her friend who has been kidnapped. Ages 10+ 📖



ICEBERG
By Jennifer A. Nielsen
(Scholastic Press)

It's 1912, and Hazel sneaks aboard the Titanic's voyage from England to New York in order to find work in America to support her mother and younger siblings who are in danger of losing their farm. Hiding in the cargo hold of the ship, she overhears crew members talking about a fire in the boiler room. Hazel, an aspiring journalist, starts to ask questions about the ship's safety, and her worst fears come true days later. Said 12-year-old Nash, "This book has a lot of action, and it's easy to follow." Ages 8–12



REDWALL
By Brian Jacques, illustrated by Gary Chalk
(Firebird)

A brave mouse needs to find a lost sword to protect his kingdom in the kickoff to this 22-book British series that was originally published in 1986. "It's an exciting adventure about medieval animals," said Graham, 10. "It's funny too." The series is famous for mouthwatering feasts that readers can practically taste through the pages. Ages 8–12 📖



THE WISHING SPELL
By Chris Colfer
(Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)

Twins Conner and Alex fall into the fairy-tale world in the first book of *The Land of Stories* series, a popular recommendation from *The Week Junior's* panelists. "I like how the author brings together well-known fairy-tale characters in a new way," said June, 10. The characters' adventures also engaged 9-year-old Charlie, who said, "This series makes you feel like anything is possible and takes any troubles away." Ages 8–12 📖

FAVORITE MYSTERIES



TO CATCH A THIEF
By Martha Brockenbrough
(Scholastic Press)

When someone steals the dragonfly staff that brings good luck to a sweet seaside town, 11-year-old Amelia and her stray dog have seven days before the important dragonfly festival to crack the case.



DAYBREAK ON RAVEN ISLAND
By Fleur Bradley
(Viking Books for Young Readers)

Three classmates find a dead body on an island during a seventh-grade field trip and miss their ferry back home. Stuck in the woods overnight, they try to solve the whodunit. "I like this author's writing style," said Cora, 11. (Look for other mysteries from Fleur Bradley too!) Ages 8–12



HOLES
By Louis Sachar
(Scholastic Gold)

Even though Stanley didn't steal a pair of shoes, he's found guilty and sent to a detention camp in the desert. There, he's forced to dig holes because a warden is secretly searching for buried treasure. Said 11-year-old Claire, "You can really feel what the characters are doing and thinking." Ages 10+ 📖



THE LOST LIBRARY
By Rebecca Stead and Wendy Mass
(Feiwel and Friends)

An 11-year-old's life changes overnight when a Little Free Library filled with weathered, old books suddenly appears in a small town. "The story has mystery, a cat, and every attribute I look for in a good book!" said Gerard, 9. Ages 9–12



NOT THE WORST FRIEND IN THE WORLD
By Anne Rellihan
(Holiday House)

Lou is still upset over a falling-out with her best friend when she receives a mysterious note from another classmate. Cece confides to Lou that she thinks she's been kidnapped by her dad and wants help to find her mom. "If Lou can figure out the mystery, she thinks she has one more shot at friendship," said Evie, 10. But as Lou goes about her detective work, the situation turns out to be less straightforward than she anticipated. Ages 8–12



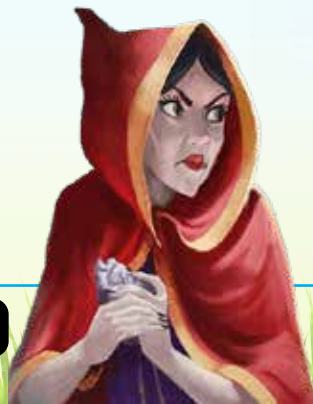
PUZZLEHEART
By Jenn Reese
(Henry Holt and Co. Books for Young Readers)

Perigee's grandparents built a bed and breakfast (a hotel in a house) but never opened it. Perigee hopes to find out what's causing the house's many frightful quirks, such as disappearing staircases and spinning knives. "This book is such a page-turner," said Jocelyn, 10. "It's really fun to try to solve the puzzle along with the characters." Ages 8–12



A STRANGE THING HAPPENED IN CHERRY HALL
By Jasmine Warga
(HarperCollins)

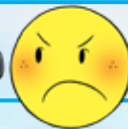
As a couple of kids take on the duty of solving the case of "Who stole the painting from the art museum?," the story becomes "super thrilling, clever, and heartfelt," said Grace, 11. She also reported that she was captivated by the book's descriptive language. Ages 8–12



**The Land of Stories:
The Wishing Spell**



Summer of Reading



Sisters



THE WILD ROBOT ESCAPES

By Peter Brown
(Little, Brown Books for Young Readers)

The second book in

the three-volume series is "more like an adventure" than the others, according to Gael, 9. Her favorite character, Brightbill, is trying to locate Roz, the robot who raised him from the time he was an egg. Will they be reunited? *Ages 8–12* 📖

FAVORITE GRAPHIC NOVELS



THE DRAGONET PROPHECY
By Tui T. Sutherland,
illustrated by Mike Holmes
(Graphix)

The first nine books in the best-selling Wings of Fire series have been turned into graphic novels, and *The Week Junior's* panelists are loving them. Whether you're new to the series or read the prose version of the first book, *The Dragonet Prophecy*, "it's fun to see how they're illustrated [as graphic novels]," said Kian, 10. *Ages 8–12* 📖



FETCH-22
By Dav Pilkey
(Graphix)

The eighth book in the best-selling Dog Man series stood out

as a favorite for *The Week Junior's* panelists. Dog Man and his Supa Friends have to save the world from

Dog Man:
Fetch-22

Barky McTreeface, a tree who is being controlled by 22 villainous tadpoles. "I like how the tadpoles make a song about Barky," said Rudy, 8. *Ages 7+* 📖



ROLLER GIRL
By Victoria Jamieson
(Dial)

The summer before middle school,

Astrid signs up for roller derby camp and has trouble keeping up with older campers. She's also growing apart from her best friend who went to a different camp. "This book reminds you that it doesn't matter if you fall," said Seraphina, 10. "The most important thing is picking yourself back up again." Margot, 11, also really likes the part where Astrid tries to get her mother to do dishes on roller skates. *Ages 8–12* ⭐



SISTERS
By Raina Telgemeier
(Graphix)

This wildly funny graphic novel

memoir (story about the author's life) takes place during a road trip from California to Colorado. Raina and her little sister haven't been getting along, but something happens to help them realize that they have to put aside their differences. "I can relate to the problems the sisters are having because I have a sister of my own," said Sage, 7. *Ages 7–12* 📖

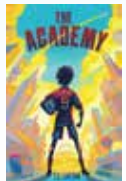


SWIM TEAM
By Johnnie Christmas
(HarperAlley)

A girl who moves from New York to

Florida makes a big splash in her new middle school. After learning how to swim, she joins the school's swim team with the goal of improving its lackluster record. "I love how the main characters learn about each other and find the best way to try to win the state championship swim meet," said Edith, 9. *Ages 8–12*

FAVORITE REALISTIC FICTION



THE ACADEMY
By T.Z. Layton
(First Touch Books for Young Readers)

Leo is the star of the soccer team at his small school in Ohio. A professional scout offers him the chance to try out for one of 11 slots at a prestigious soccer academy in London. With match play-by-plays, "the book is great for kids who love sports," said Kian, 10. "The author has great descriptions of the characters' feelings and the action in the games, which make you feel like you are there." *Ages 7–12* 📖



BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE
By Kate DiCamillo
(Candlewick Press)

A girl has a hard time adjusting to her new town until she finds a scruffy stray dog, whose outgoing personality helps her make connections. "I like this book because it tells the story of a girl who meets new friends in unlikely places," said Annora, 10. *Ages 8–12* ⭐📖



DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: SPECIAL CHEESIEST EDITION

By Jeff Kinney
(Amulet Books)

The fun, collectible

version of the first book in the blockbuster Diary of a Wimpy Kid series has a Swiss cheese theme, a nod to one of the story's most memorable moments. But that's not even the best reason to read it, according to our panelists. "Every single character gets in the way of Greg, the main character, which means that something new is always happening in the book," said Kai, 8. *Ages 8–12* 📖



THE FORT
By Gordon Korman
(Scholastic Press)

After a hurricane rips through their town, five classmates discover a hidden trapdoor that leads to "the fort," an abandoned shelter filled with food and entertainment. "They keep it a secret," said Ryan, 10. For weeks, they use the fort as a place to escape their problems, but their hideaway is in danger of being revealed. *Ages 8–12*



GOOSH
By Seth McLane
(Eagle Pad Press)

When Isaac's mom gets diagnosed with cancer, the seventh grader tries to distract himself by shooting hoops at a local park. There, he meets a former professional player who winds up becoming a pivotal influence in his life. "This book is a great read with complex emotions, NBA fame, and healing," said Aleen, 11. Even if you're not a basketball fan, other plots in the story will keep you reading. *Ages 10–14*

How this book list came together

To compile our list of 50 books, we asked children across the country to tell us what their all-time favorite books from different genres are and why. We also requested that our current and former Junior Council members 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!



Diary of a
Wimpy Kid

Summer of Reading



Meet our Author Ambassadors

In the next five issues of our Summer of Reading challenge, keep an eye out for interviews with these award-winning creators. You can find them in our Book Club column on page 23.



PABLO CARTAYA

It's evident from author and actor Pablo Cartaya's new release, *A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation*, that he enjoys traveling around the country. The fast-paced fantasy adventure chronicles an epic 10-day road trip from California to Florida featuring a boy and his disagreeable grandfather.



GRACE LIN

Author and illustrator Grace Lin received a Newbery Honor in 2011 for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Her latest illustrated fantasy adventure, *The Gate, the Girl, and the Dragon*, debuted in May to much acclaim. The characters are unforgettable!



MEG MEDINA

The winner of the 2019 Newbery Medal for *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*, Meg Medina served as a National Ambassador for Young People's Literature in 2023–24. Her new, enchanting novel, *Graciela in the Abyss*, comes out in July. It's her first published fantasy book!



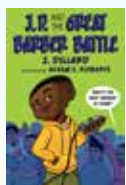
SF SAID

Tyger, an action-packed novel from this acclaimed British children's writer, was named one of the best books of 2023 by *The Week Junior's* sister magazine in the UK. As *Tyger* makes its way to US shelves this month, SF Said will share how he came up with the concept of a magical animal who helps to save a troubled world.



RITA WILLIAMS-GARCIA

From the time she was in kindergarten, Rita Williams-Garcia has loved to write. Her groundbreaking historical-fiction novel, *One Crazy Summer*, received a Newbery Honor in 2011. The book has recently been turned into a graphic novel, and Williams-Garcia will explain the transition.



J.D. AND THE GREAT BARBER BATTLE
By J. Dillard,
illustrated by
Akeem S. Roberts
(Kokila)

When J.D.'s mother gives him the worst haircut, he takes matters into his own capable hands. He uses

clippers to reshape his hairstyle, and it turns out so great that other people request haircuts. He even opens a barbershop in his bedroom! "There are so many cool things about this book," said Hattie, 11. This story is the first of three in the J.D. the Kid Barber series. *Ages 7–10* 📖



MAIZY CHEN'S LAST CHANCE
By Lisa Yee
(Random House
Books for Young
Readers)

Maizy and her mom spend the summer in Last Chance, Minnesota, where her grandparents run a restaurant. "Maizy and her family encounter racist people who steal a treasured wooden bear from their Chinese restaurant and demand ransom for its return," said Kyle, 11. "The story is very heartfelt, with a touch of mystery." *Ages 8–12* ★



OUT OF MY MIND
By Sharon Draper
(Atheneum/Caitlyn
Dlouhy Books)
Melody, a fifth
grader, is far

smarter than everyone realizes: "Even though she can't talk or walk because she has cerebral palsy, she joins the school math team," said Charlotte, 12. "I love that she doesn't let her disability stop her." When the math team competes in the championships in Washington, DC, Melody's photographic memory gives them an edge. *Ages 8+* 📖



THE UNDERCOVER BOOK LIST
By Colleen Nelson
(Pajamas Press)
When Tyson, the
class troublemaker,

is waiting for his school detention to start, he's sent to the library to choose a book to read. He finds a mysterious note that leads to an unlikely friendship with a book-loving classmate. "I couldn't put this story down," said Annabel, 10. "It teaches you not to judge or underestimate people." *Ages 8–12*

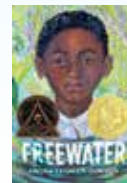


FAVORITE HISTORICAL FICTION



ALLIES
By Alan Gratz
(Scholastic Press)
This fast-paced novel unfolds over the course of one day:

June 6, 1944. That's when Allied forces freed France from Nazi control, a major step in ending World War II (1939–1945). This tale incorporates the perspectives of several young soldiers from various countries as well as two French girls. "It's great to learn about history from different points of view," said Luke, 10. *Ages 10+*



FREEWATER
By Amina
Luqman-Dawson
(JIMMY Patterson
Books)
Desperate for their

freedom, two enslaved siblings in the early 1800s escape to a community called Freewater. But their mother gets left behind, and they won't feel at peace until they can rescue her. "Even though this book is about a difficult topic, it's an enjoyable read about history all kids should know about," said Mateo, 10. *Ages 10+* ★



MAX IN THE HOUSE OF SPIES
By Adam Gidwitz
(Dutton Books for
Young Readers)
With "a lot of action

and funny moments," according to 9-year-old Gavin, this story about World War II (1939–1945) blends fantasy and historical fiction. A Jewish boy has to become a British spy to return to his parents in Germany, and a pair of magical spirits on his shoulders may be just what he needs. *Ages 8–12* 📖



Summer of Reading

Scary Stories
for Young Foxes



RED, WHITE, AND WHOLE
By Rajani LaRocca
(Quill Tree Books)
Set in 1983, this beautiful novel in

verse (poetry) centers on an Indian American girl whose mother is diagnosed with leukemia. All of a sudden, her concerns about boys, music, and dances are pushed aside. "It's an emotional journey told through stellar verse," said Fiona, 13. Ages 9+ ★



THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE
By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
(Dial)
Ada's foot is twisted,

and her mom is so embarrassed by her disability that she keeps Ada locked inside. When her mother sends her brother to London during World War II (1939–1945), Ada escapes to join him. "This is my favorite book because it mixes facts with an interesting story," said Miriam, 12. "Ada is a great main character." Ages 8–12 ★

FAVORITE SHORT STORIES



GREEKING OUT: EPIC RETELLINGS OF CLASSIC GREEK MYTHS
By Kenny Curtis and Jillian

Hughes, illustrated by Javier Espila
(National Geographic Kids)
This retelling of 20 classic Greek myths is "full of gods, heroes, demigods, and mortals that will make you love mythology and history," said Ocean, 8. The book's dynamic, colorful illustrations make it even more enticing to read. Ages 7+



THE ICE CREAM MACHINE
By Adam Rubin
(G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers)
This book's six quirky stories, each

titled "The Ice Cream Machine," are as enticing as a banana split! Even though all the tales are written by one author, "they're extremely different," said Claire, 9. The topics range from alien encounters to an ice cream eating contest. Ages 8–12



ONCE UPON AN EID
Edited by S.K. Ali and Aisha Saeed, illustrated by Sara Alfageeh
(Amulet)
Fifteen authors each contribute a

joyful short story about Eid, a Muslim holiday that marks the end of a month of fasting. "This book has a variety of different perspectives on how Muslims celebrate Eid," said Malaika, 12. One tale even involves brownies! Ages 8–12



SCARY STORIES FOR YOUNG FOXES
By Christian McKay
Heidicker, illustrated by Junyi Wu
(Square Fish)
Eight interconnected stories focus

on two foxes who have to face monsters, zombies, and other adversaries to find a den of their own. "It has many plot twists, but everything ties together nicely at the end," said Seraphina, 10. Illustrations enhance the book's eerie feel. Ages 8–12 ★



YOU ARE HERE: CONNECTING FLIGHTS
Edited by Ellen Oh
(Allida)
This book's enticing

premise hooked *The Week Junior* panelists. "It's about different kids

with different lives, but they're all stranded at a Chicago airport," said Lucy June, 9. Twelve popular Asian American authors each contribute a story, all of which have themes of identity and belonging. Ages 8–12

FAVORITE NONFICTION



GEORGE VS. GEORGE
By Rosalyn Schanzer
(National Geographic Kids)
This fascinating book explores the

American Revolution (1775–1787) from the perspectives of two leaders at the time: George Washington and King George III of England. "It's very informative," said Ryan, 10. It features many intriguing facts and quotes that you might want to share with your family. Ages 8–12



HISTORY SMASHERS: THE TITANIC
By Kate Messner, illustrated by Matt Aytch Taylor
(Random House Books for Young Readers)
Why is the Titanic, a famous

"unsinkable" ship from 1912, at the bottom of the ocean? The fourth book in the History Smashers series fills you in by using graphics, comic panels, and short blocks of text to make the information easier to understand. "This series tells you about how and why an event happened and uses many pictures," said siblings Ethan, 11, and Elizabeth, 9. Ages 8–12



MAMMOTH SCIENCE
By David Macaulay
(DK)
Science principles

like density, gravity, and reflection become much more understandable and fun in this guide. "It teaches

science in a way that is entertaining," said Naia, 10. "The illustrations make me laugh but still help me visualize what the author is saying." Ages 8+



THREE CUPS OF TEA: THE YOUNG READER'S EDITION
By Greg Mortenson, illustrated by David Oliver Relin.
Adapted by Sarah Thomson
(Viking Books for Young Readers)
This inspiring story "shows that when

one person is kind and generous, more people decide to be kind and generous," said Aalyah, 11. It focuses on Greg Mortenson, a mountaineer who needed to be rescued after a failed climb in Pakistan. He pledged to build a school and made good on his promise. Ages 10+



WHO WAS MARIE CURIE?
By Megan Stine and Who HQ, illustrated by Ted Hammond
(Penguin Workshop)
This biography is packed with

fascinating facts about the childhood and professional life of scientist Marie Curie (1867–1934). "Marie made a real difference in science and to women!" said siblings Hennessy, 10, and Dorothy, 9. "We loved reading about the problems she encountered and her achievements!" Ages 8–12

Kids' favorite genres revealed

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

44% Fantasy/science fiction

32% Realistic fiction

11% Mystery

8% Historical fiction

5% Nonfiction

Mammoth
Science

The Week Junior • June 13, 2025



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:



The place where I most liked reading:



Best book I've ever read:



Favorite character:



Favorite author:



Favorite genre:



Book I hope to read next: