

Boys and Reading

Great Books for Boys

Children’s author Jon Scieszka says that one of the main reasons boys don’t read is because they are not interested in the subject matter. Here is a list of books that will attract and hold their attention.

- Recommended reading lists for boys taken from the Family Education Network (<http://school.familyeducation.com/reading/fiction/37734.html>) and Guys Read (www.guysread.com).

AGES 4-8

Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus by Mo Willems. Will you let him drive?

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss. A little boy plants a carrot seed and waits patiently, tending to it carefully, while everyone around him insists that “it won’t come up.” His conviction is steadfast, however, and sure enough, a carrot worthy of first prize at any state fair springs forth from the earth.

Cars and Trucks and Things That Go by Richard Scarry. The Pig family takes a road trip to the beach for a picnic. The road is packed with hundreds of cars and trucks, vans and motorcycles, tractors and buses. The Pigs find chaos and adventure on the way to the beach and the opportunity to see vehicles they have never seen before. It’s an exciting day!

The Stupids Step Out by Harry Allard. The Stupid family and their dog Kitty have a fun-filled day doing ridiculous things.

Patrick’s Dinosaurs by Carol Carrick. When his older brother talks about dinosaurs during a visit to the zoo, Patrick is afraid, until he discovers they all died millions of years ago.

Night Driving by John Coy. As father and son drive into the night, they watch the sunset, talk about baseball, sing cowboy songs, and even change a flat tire before pitching camp at daybreak.

Chester’s Way by Kevin Henkes. Chester and Wilson share the same exact way of doing things, until Lilly moves into the neighborhood and shows them that new ways can be just as good.

Ira Sleeps Over by Bernard Waber. Ira is thrilled to spend the night at Reggie’s, until his sister raises the question of whether he should take his teddy bear.

Nate the Great by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat. Nate the Great, boy detective and pancake-lover, is on a case – who stole Annie’s painting of her dog, Fang? Garbed in deerstalker hat, trench coat, and rubbers (his mother insists), Nate follows all leads. With a deadpan style reminiscent of Sam Spade, Nate follows the clues and solves his case – and eats a lot of pancakes on the way.



The Stories Julian Tells by Ann Cameron. Julian, that quick fibber and wishful thinker, is great at telling stories. He can make people – especially his younger brother, Huey – believe just about anything. But some stories can get you into a pack of trouble, and that’s exactly where Julian and Huey find themselves all too often.

The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales by Jon Scieszka. Wonderfully quirky, this book breathes new life into traditional children’s stories. In these irreverent variations on well-known themes, the ugly duckling grows up to be an ugly duck, and the princess who kisses the frog wins only a mouthful of amphibian slime!

The Mouse and the Motorcycle by Beverly Cleary. A reckless young mouse named Ralph makes friends with a boy in Room 215 of the Mountain View Inn and discovers the joys of motorcycling.

AGES 9-12

The Baseball Card Adventure Series by Dan Gutman. Joe Stoshack can travel through time when he touches old baseball cards.

Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis. Ten-year-old philosopher Bud, “not Buddy,” is an orphan on the run in 1930s Michigan. He believes that Herman E. Calloway, standup-bass player for the Dusky Devastators of the Depression, is his father.

A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket. Dear Reader, I’m sorry to say that the book you are holding in your hands is extremely unpleasant. It tells an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children. Even though they are charming and clever, the Baudelaire siblings lead lives filled with misery and woe. From the very first page of this book when the children are at the beach and receive terrible news, continuing on through the entire story, disaster lurks at their heels. One might say they are magnets for misfortune.

The Adventures of Captain Underpants by Dav Pilkey. When George and Harold hypnotize their principal into thinking he’s the superhero Captain Underpants, he leads them to the lair of the nefarious Dr. Diaper, where they must defeat his evil robot henchmen.

Boys generally need more instructional time than girls do. In the larger, time limited classes of middle and high school teachers are unable to give boys as much one-on-one time. Therefore, they do not make as much progress in reading as girls do.



Holes by Louis Sachar. As further evidence of his family's bad fortune (which started with a curse on a distant relative), Stanley Yelnats is sent to a hellish correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J. K. Rowling. Rescued from the outrageous neglect of his aunt and uncle, a young boy with a great destiny proves his worth while attending Hogwarts School for Wizards and Witches.

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George. A young boy relates his adventures during the year he spends living alone in the Catskill Mountains, including his struggle for survival, his dependence on nature, his animal friends, and his ultimate realization that he needs human companionship.

There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom by Louis Sachar. An unmanageable, but lovable, 11-year-old misfit learns to believe in himself when he gets to know the new school counselor, who is a sort of misfit, too.

Bunnicula by Deborah Howe and James Howe. This book is written by Harold, whose fulltime occupation is Dog. He lives with Mr. and Mrs. Monroe and their sons, Toby and Pete. There's also a cat named Chester and a rabbit named Bunnicula. It's because of Bunnicula that Harold turned to writing – someone had to tell the full story of what happened in the Monroe household after the rabbit arrived.

Encyclopedia Brown by Donald J. Sobol. Whenever ten-year-old Leroy "Encyclopedia" Brown's father, the Chief of Police of Idaville, had a difficult case, Encyclopedia always managed to solve it at the dinner table. So, he decided to open his own detective agency.

James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl. For young James Henry Trotter, life with the exceedingly nasty Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker is pure misery. James dreams of a better life, but he's totally unprepared for the wild adventures ahead when he drops the magic crystals he receives from a strange old man. Before long, James is off on a weird, wonderful journey inside a giant peach with a bizarre group of companions!

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen. After a plane crash, 13-year-old Brian spends 54 days in the wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother – and learning to survive his parents' divorce.





Crash by Jerry Spinelli. Seventh-grader John “Crash” Coogan has always been comfortable with his tough, aggressive behavior, until his relationship with an unusual Quaker boy and his grandfather’s stroke make him consider the meaning of friendship and the importance of family.

Stuart Little by E. B. White. The adventures of the debonair mouse, Stuart Little, as he sets out in the world to seek out his dearest friend, a little bird who stayed a few days in his family’s garden.

■ 2008 Picks for Young Adult Readers

AGES 12-18

The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), the fastest-growing division of the American Library Association (ALA), offers these Top 10 recommendations for Young Adult Readers ages 12-18.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/quickpicks/08qp.cfm>

Class Pictures by Dawoud Bey. For the past 15 years, Dawoud Bey has been making striking, large-scale color portraits of students at high schools across the United States. Depicting teenagers from a wide economic, social and ethnic spectrum—and intensely attentive to their poses and gestures—he has created a highly diverse group portrait of a generation that intentionally challenges teenage stereotypes.

Quaking by Kathryn Erskine. Don’t call her Matilda. Her name is Matt. And don’t even think about getting close to her. She doesn’t need anyone. Can’t you tell by looking at her, dressed all in black with a spider painted on her face and her ice-cold stare? But most of all, do not bully her. She has been through it all already. But everything changes for fourteen-year-old Matt when she moves in with peaceful Quakers Sam and Jessica Fox, who are active in the movement against the war in the Middle East.

Thin by Lauren Greenfield. Critically acclaimed for *Girl Culture* and *Fast Forward*, Lauren Greenfield continues her exploration of contemporary female culture with *Thin*, a groundbreaking book about eating disorders. Greenfield’s photographs are paired with extensive interviews and journal entries from twenty girls and women who are suffering from various afflictions.

Graffiti L.A.: Street and Art by Steve Grody and James Prigoff. *Graffiti L.A.* provides a comprehensive and visual history of graffiti in Los Angeles as well as an in-depth examination of the myriad styles and techniques used by writers today.

Glass by Ellen Hopkins. Crank. Glass. Ice. Crystal. Whatever you call it, it’s all the same: a monster. And once it’s got hold of you, this monster never lets you go. Krista thinks she can control it.



Tupac Shakur Legacy, by Joseph Jamal. Presents the story of the rap artist, political spokesman, poet, actor, writer, humanitarian, and entrepreneur.

Safe by Susan Shaw. Safe. To Tracy, safe means having Mama close by. Years after her mother's death, Tracy still feels her presence. But the moment Tracy is forced into a car as she is walking home from school one day, safe is ripped away. In the aftermath of an unspeakable crime, thirteen-year-old Tracy must fight her way back to safety and find comfort in her mother's memory once again.

Unwind, by Neal Shusterman. In a society where unwanted teens are salvaged for their body parts, three runaways fight the system that would "unwind" them

Homeboyz by Alan L. Sitomer. When Teddy Anderson's little sister Tina is gunned down randomly in a drive-by shooting, the gangstas who rule the streets in the Anderson family's rapidly deteriorating neighborhood dismiss the incident as just another case of RP, RT-wrong place, wrong time. According to gangsta logic, Tina doesn't even count as a statistic. Teddy's family is devastated.

Thalia: Belleza!: Lessons in Lipgloss and Happiness by Thalia. She's had four number 1 hits and sold over 12 million albums worldwide. She's adored by telenovela fans in over 180 countries. She has her own ABC radio talk show. The icing on the cake? She's drop dead gorgeous. In this, her first book, Thalia delivers the ultimate guide to Latin beauty.

Reading is sometimes stereotyped as a "feminine" activity. When boys reach adolescence their gender identification becomes more important. If they believe reading is not a masculine activity, they will abandon it in order to demonstrate their masculinity.