



Renaissance

What  
**Kids** Are  
**Reading**  
2024 edition

Seat  
127



## Renaissance Student Artwork Contest Overall Winner

The student artwork featured on the cover and section-opening pages of this report was created by kids in grades pre-K–12 who took part in an art contest asking them to illustrate, “How reading makes you feel about the future.”



### About the Artist

**Iris C.**

Grade 8

*Reading on a train, imagining how the future looks through the window.*

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04/24



# Renaissance

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# Introduction

By Julianne Robar

**Reading Is the Future.** At Renaissance, we've always known the importance of reading in accelerating learning for all students. We first published this report 16 years ago, and we continue to update it, because we know that reading builds lifelong learners, furthers communication, sparks the imagination, and fosters innovation. For these reasons, and many more, we believe that reading is the future, and we've shaped the report this year with this theme in mind.

We know that reading matters, and that it will always matter, and we are excited to share what kids are reading today in order to inspire what they might read tomorrow. The more time kids spend reading, the more they practice critical skills, and the more they practice, the more proficient they become.

“The more time kids spend reading, the more they practice critical skills, and the more they practice, the more proficient they become.”

Why is it important to be a good reader? Reading helps us to process the information we encounter every day. Reading is a set of skills students need not just when they are younger; it's an activity they will perform to understand and actively participate in their world for their entire lives.

Reading can transport kids to new places and introduce them to new ideas every time they pick up a book. Just by reading, kids encounter new words to add to their vocabulary. We looked into just how many words kids are exposed to by reading daily throughout the course of their schooling, and the number is astronomical. Turn to the Research Analysis for Grades K–2, [found on page 18](#), to learn more.

## Julianne Robar

Senior Director Metadata & Product Interoperability, Renaissance

Julianne has led the development of content and learning progressions, including Renaissance Focus Skills, as well as Renaissance's content alignment strategy. Julianne's experience with the range of Renaissance products helps her determine how to connect content in order to provide recommendations for educators making decisions about what to teach and assign next.

Julianne has ventured into the use of AI to amplify the human expertise at Renaissance and has explored how AI can best support teachers and students in the classroom to deepen the learning experience. As a fellow in the inaugural EdSAFE AI Alliance's Women in AI cohort, Julianne expanded her knowledge of responsible use of AI in educational technology, which she continues to promote across the organization. Julianne earned her B.A. from the University of Ottawa, and B.Ed. from Lakehead University, Canada.







**The House in the Cerulean Sea**  
TJ Klune (4.4, UG, 620L)

## What I'm Reading

I usually have multiple books on the go—at least one fiction and one nonfiction. For fiction, I am currently enjoying *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune, which is a heartfelt story of how every child matters, which relates to our goal at Renaissance to See Every Student. On the nonfiction front, I am reading the leadership book *Dare to Lead*, by Brené Brown, to learn how to better have challenging conversations. I am finding Brown's book particularly useful in discussing AI and approaching the topic sensitively and respectfully, given that everyone has unique perspectives on AI and its role in the future.

Reading books provides entertainment and sometimes much-needed company or change of scenery, and practicing reading also improves students' reading achievement (see the [Research Analysis for Grades 3–5, page 30](#)). In fact, we found that when kids engage in reading for just 15+ minutes per day—just over a quarter of an hour—matched with a book they are interested in and can understand, they can make substantial strides in reading, as we explore in the analysis for [Grades 6–8 on page 42](#).

Reading practice is an opportunity for students to apply comprehension strategies they may be focusing on in class, such as identifying the main idea and making inferences or predictions, as well as other strategies they may have learned through trial and error, such as rereading sentences and passages to ensure understanding. A key outcome of reading practice is that kids are learning to think critically about text.

Critical thinking is essential as technological advancements, news coverage, social media posts, and more call on all of us to be critical thinkers and readers. For example, the release of ChatGPT, a free AI service from OpenAI, made artificial intelligence (AI) available to a broad audience including teachers and students, making AI more prominent and possibly more controversial than it had ever been in the past.

AI is not a new topic. The lists of Futuristic Finds that begin each grade-range section of this report include titles that were published as early as 1950. Nearly 75 years ago, *I, Robot*, by Isaac Asimov, was already addressing the tension between humans and technology, and other books on these lists propose ideas and advancements we are seeing emerge into reality today.

What is new about AI is its potential role in students' consumption of text. Recent AI Large Language Models (LLM)—think auto-complete when texting—consume massive amounts of information, and the more the AIs "read," the more content they "learn," and the more output they can then produce for human consideration. The potential for more reading material, addressing a broader range of topics and representing a wider range of readers, is unlimited.

With AI-generated content, *how* kids are reading becomes as important as *what* kids are reading—critical reading and thinking skills are key. AI-generated content must be questioned. Students need to bring a healthy dose of skepticism to such



content and practice skills like fact-checking and identifying bias. The more books students read, the more background knowledge they collect, which provides context for evaluating new content, whether AI- or human-generated.

“With AI-generated content, how kids are reading becomes as important as what kids are reading—critical reading and thinking skills are key.”

AI also has the potential to deepen students’ understanding of what they are reading. As students’ curiosity is sparked by new ideas they are exposed to in books, they can interact with AI as a kind of concierge to get recommendations for learning more about a particular topic. We give examples in the We Asked AI sections of this report that you’ll come across in each grade, in which we asked Microsoft Bing Chat (Copilot) to summarize common themes for the Top Print Titles and suggest an author or two to add to the list (for example, [see page 12](#)).

Interacting with AI also presents an opportunity to practice crafting questions that will elicit the best response. The more students read, the more communication styles students are exposed to, and the more perspective they have for honing the questions they ask of AI. This skill is referred to as *prompt engineering* and will be an essential part of the future workforce toolkit.

The *What Kids Are Reading* report provides insight into how students are selecting titles to expand their background knowledge and gain exposure to new ideas, as well as additional curated lists to inspire students to engage with books even more. Reading shapes students’ aspirations and dreams, and with the potential of AI to amplify these effects, the future is looking bright.









# Grades K–2

During early elementary school, students take huge strides in reading, beginning with connecting letter sounds and progressing to completing short chapter books independently in the span of just three grades. At this early stage, it's so important that kids spend time reading each day to practice this newly learned skill. Consider the lists in this section to help inspire kids in Grades K–2 to find their next great read:

- Signature Books, State by State
- Futuristic Finds
- Top Print Titles
- Popular Digital Books
- Authentic Spanish Literature
- Highest Rated Reads
- Recognizing Resilience

## Time to Explore

To guide your book search, note the readability information included for each title (ATOS level, interest level, and Lexile measure) and the tags that indicate whether books are nonfiction and/or have an accompanying Spanish quiz available in Accelerated Reader.

How much time should young kids spend reading each day? Learn more about *Establishing a Strong Reading Foundation* in Grades K–2 in the [Research Analysis on page 18](#).

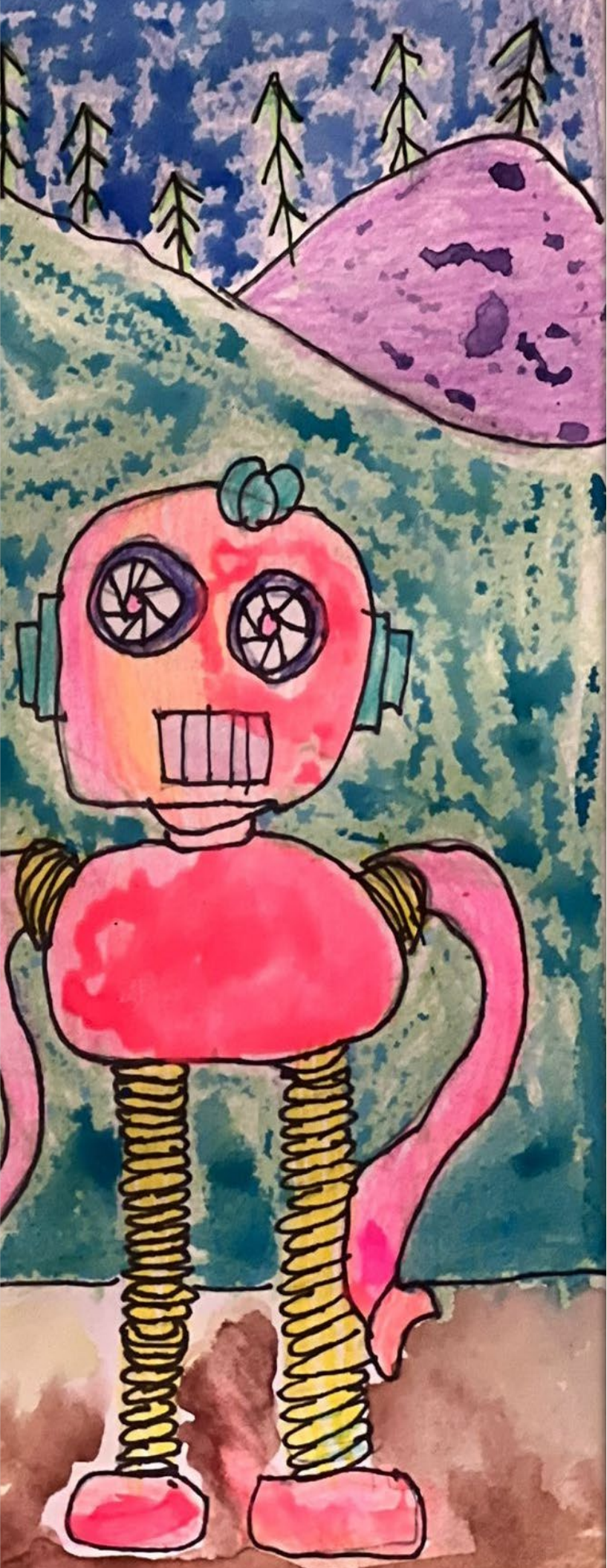
For more about how our data tell us what kids are reading, see [About the Report, page 58](#).

### About the Artist

**Sanya J.**

Grade 1

*A futuristic scene that was inspired by The Wild Robot by Peter Brown.*







## Signature Books, State by State

Of the top 100 books read in Grades K–2, covers shown in the map represent signature books where reading popularity in the state was in greatest contrast to the book's nationwide ranking.

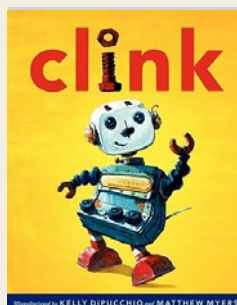


## Futuristic Finds

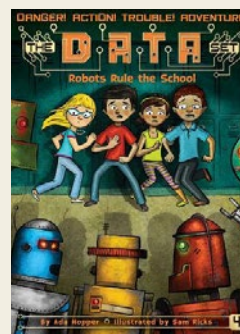
Forward-looking books—on topics like technology and artificial intelligence—set the stage for inspiration and innovation, opening kids' minds to question “what if” and imagine all that is possible.



**Boy + Bot**  
Ame Dyckman  
(1.2, LG, 380L)



**Clink**  
Kelly DiPucchio  
(3.1, LG)



**Robots Rule the School**  
Ada Hopper  
(3.6, LG, 490L)



**The Iron Giant**  
Ted Hughes  
(4.7, LG, 770L)



# Grade K

During the 2022–2023 school year, 145,466 kindergartners read about 21 print books and 6,865 words each. Overall, 47% of these books were read to kids, 26% were read with kids, and 27% were read independently. In total, 72,395 kindergartners spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for kindergartners?**

A: You might consider adding Misty Copeland and Maurice Sendak.

### Bunheads

Misty Copeland (4.5, LG, 950L)

### Where the Wild Things Are **SP**

Maurice Sendak (3.4, LG, 740L)



## We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top kindergarten titles share?**

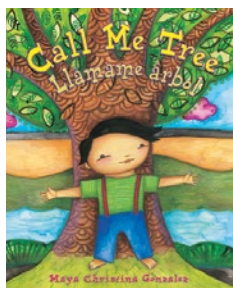
A: The books share a common theme of **exploration and discovery**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including school experiences, consequences, friendship and sharing, as well as animals and nature.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 **Biscuit Series **SP****  
Alyssa Satin Capucilli (0.7–1.8, LG, 140L–500L)
- 2 **The Pigeon Series **SP****  
Mo Willems (0.7–1.5, LG, 280L–470L)
- 3 **Dr. Seuss Collection **SP****  
Dr. Seuss (0.6–5.2, LG, 180L–1000L)
- 4 **Elephant and Piggie Series**  
Mo Willems (0.5–1.4, LG, 40L–330L)
- 5 **Pete the Cat Series**  
James Dean (1.2–4.3, LG, 160L–640L)
- 6 **David Series **SP****  
David Shannon (0.9, LG, 210L)
- 7 **The Very Hungry Caterpillar **SP****  
Eric Carle (2.9, LG, 460L)
- 8 **Big Egg**  
Molly Coxe (0.4, LG, 220L)
- 9 **If You Give . . . Series **SP****  
Laura Numeroff (1.0–2.7, LG, 170L–590L)
- 10 **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**  
Bill Martin Jr. (1.5, LG, 200L)

## Popular Digital Books

- 1 **Halloween Hide and Seek: Hidden Picture Puzzles**  
Jill Kalz
- 2 **The Amazing Life of Azaleah Lane**  
Nikki Shannon Smith (3.5, LG, 610L)
- 3 **Megalodon **NF SP****  
Janet Riehecky (1.6, LG, 450L)
- 4 **Fast Cars **NF****  
Barbara Alpert (2.9, LG, 710L)
- 5 **Cats **NF****  
Lisa J. Amstutz (1.0, LG, 300L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Llárame árbol (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Maya Christina González (1.2, LG)
- **Eric & Julieta: Es mío (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Isabel Muñoz (2.0, LG, 380L)
- **El Chavo: Una aventura a lo grande (libro bilingüe) SP**  
María Domínguez (2.4, LG, 560L)
- **Quizás algo hermoso: Cómo el arte transformó un barrio SP**  
F. Isabel Campoy (2.4, LG)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

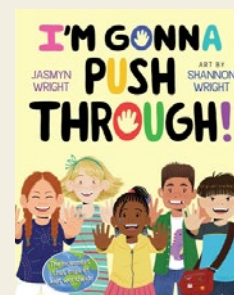
- **Furry Hamsters NF**  
Katie Kawa (0.9, LG, 270L)
- **My Favorite Sport SP**  
Robert Rosen (1.1, LG, 240L)
- **Watch Tulips Grow NF**  
Kristen Rajczak (0.9, LG, 200L)
- **Dwayne Johnson NF**  
Kaitlyn Duling (0.7, LG, 240L)

## Recognizing Resilience

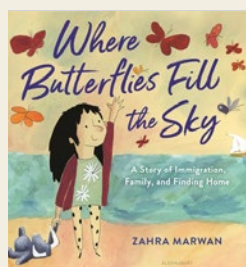
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Big**  
Vashti Harrison  
(1.7, LG)



**I'm Gonna Push Through! NF**  
Jasmyyn Wright  
(1.7, LG, 330L)



**Where Butterflies Fill the Sky: A Story of Immigration, Family, and Finding Home NF**  
Zahra Marwan (2.1, LG)



**Finding Papa**  
Angela Pham Krans  
(2.6, LG)



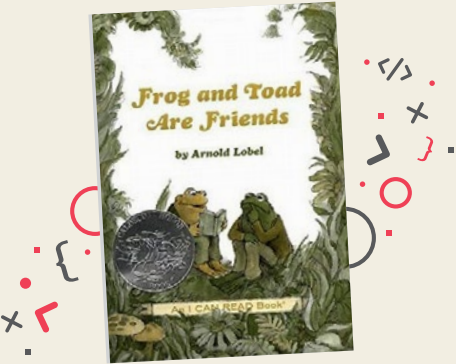
## Science of Reading

Reading experts and educators from across the country offer advice on assessing students for reading difficulties and literacy gaps as well as addressing those challenges with instruction and interventions grounded in the Science of Reading.



# Grade 1

During the 2022–2023 school year, 575,319 first graders read about 41 print books and 21,711 words each. Overall, 27% of these books were read to kids, 18% were read with kids, and 55% were read independently. In total, 241,390 first graders spent time reading digitally.



We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for first graders?**

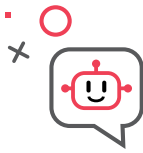
A: You might consider adding Arnold Lobel and Jacqueline Woodson.

**Frog and Toad Are Friends** **SP**

Arnold Lobel (2.9, LG, 400L)

**The Day You Begin** **SP**

Jacqueline Woodson (4.0, LG, 980L)



We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top first grade titles share?**

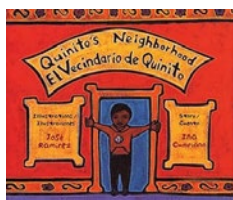
A: The books share a common theme of **learning through experiences**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including exploration and discovery, friendship and sharing, overcoming challenges, humor, as well as repetition and predictable text.

Top Print Titles

1	<b>Dr. Seuss Collection</b> <b>SP</b> Dr. Seuss (0.6–5.2, LG, 180L–1000L)
2	<b>Elephant and Piggie Series</b> <b>SP</b> Mo Willems (0.5–1.4, LG, 40L–330L)
3	<b>Biscuit Series</b> <b>SP</b> Alyssa Satin Capucilli (0.7–1.8, LG, 140L–500L)
4	<b>Fly Guy Series</b> <b>SP</b> Tedd Arnold (1.2–2.7, LG, 270L–530L)
5	<b>Pete the Cat Series</b> James Dean (1.2–4.3, LG, 160L–640L)
6	<b>The Pigeon Series</b> <b>SP</b> Mo Willems (0.7–1.5, LG, 280L–470L)
7	<b>Are You My Mother?</b> <b>SP</b> P.D. Eastman (1.6, LG, 240L)
8	<b>David Series</b> <b>SP</b> David Shannon (0.9, LG, 210L)
9	<b>Go, Dog. Go!</b> <b>SP</b> P.D. Eastman (1.2, LG, 240L)
10	<b>If You Give . . . Series</b> <b>SP</b> Laura Numeroff (1.0–2.7, LG, 170L–590L)

Popular Digital Books

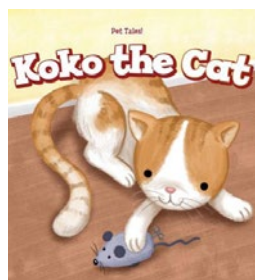
1	<b>The Dramatic Life of Azaleah Lane</b> Nikki Shannon Smith (3.5, LG, 490L)
2	<b>Scooby-Doo! and the Truth Behind Sea Monsters</b> <b>NF</b> Terry Collins (3.1, LG, 570L)
3	<b>Axolotls</b> <b>NF</b> Jaclyn Jaycox (3.3, LG, 490L)
4	<b>Cristiano Ronaldo</b> <b>NF</b> Mari Schuh (2.5, LG, 520L)
5	<b>Cats</b> <b>NF</b> Cari Meister (0.9, LG, 290L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **El vecindario de Quinto (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Ina Cumpiano (2.9, LG, 500L)
- **Los meros meros remateros (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Juan Felipe Herrera (3.0, LG)
- **¡Toca, Chavi, toca! (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Mayra L. Dole (3.1, LG)
- **Desplumado (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Juan Felipe Herrera (3.1, LG)



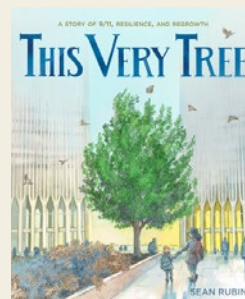
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

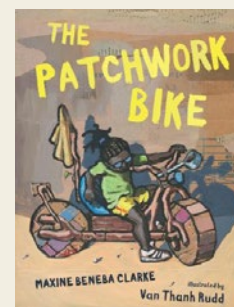
- **Koko the Cat SP**  
Caitie McAneney (1.1, LG, 260L)
- **A New Pet for Dear Dragon**  
Maria Conn (0.8, LG, 190L)
- **Cats NF**  
Mari Schuh (0.8, LG, 250L)
- **The Case of the Lost Frog**  
Cecelia Minden (1.0, LG, 180L)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**This Very Tree: A Story of 9/11, Resilience, and Regrowth NF**  
Sean Rubin (2.9, LG, 520L)



**The Patchwork Bike**  
Maxine Beneba Clarke  
(2.9, LG)



**Better Than You**  
Trudy Ludwig  
(3.3, LG, 640L)



**My Powerful Hair**  
Carole Lindstrom  
(3.5, LG)



## Reading Practice Essentials

As with any other skill, to make meaning from text, students at every grade level need to practice reading—in three distinct ways.



# Grade 2

During the 2022–2023 school year, 790,950 second graders read about 53 print books and 68,189 words each. Overall, 18% of these books were read to kids, 10% were read with kids, and 72% were read independently. In total, 390,217 second graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for second graders?**

A: You might consider adding Josh Funk and Raj Haldar.

### How to Code a Sandcastle

Josh Funk (2.7, LG, 530L)

### P Is for Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever

Raj Haldar (3.3, LG, 710L)



## We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top second grade titles share?**

A: The books share a common theme of **problem-solving**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including humor, life lessons, creativity and imagination, adventure and problem-solving, as well as nature and science.

## Top Print Titles

- Dr. Seuss Collection SP**  
Dr. Seuss (0.6–5.2, LG, 180L–1000L)
- If You Give . . . Series SP**  
Laura Numeroff (1.0–2.7, LG, 170L–590L)
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar SP**  
Eric Carle (2.9, LG, 460L)
- Bad Seed Series**  
Jory John (1.8–3.1, LG, 390L–550L)
- Click, Clack . . . Series SP**  
Doreen Cronin (1.0–2.7, LG, 290L–490L)
- Pete the Cat Series**  
James Dean (1.2–4.3, LG, 160L–640L)
- There Was an Old Lady . . . Series**  
Lucille Colandro (2.1–4.5, LG, 240L–540L)
- Dog Man Series SP**  
Dav Pilkey (2.3–2.7, LG, 280L–390L)
- Fly Guy Series SP**  
Tedd Arnold (1.2–2.7, LG, 270L–530L)
- The Pigeon Series SP**  
Mo Willems (0.7–1.5, LG, 280L–470L)

## Popular Digital Books

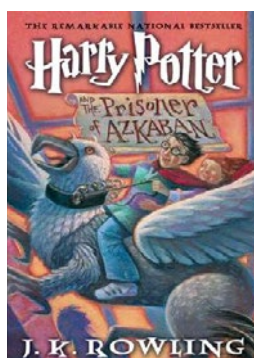
- The Scrumptious Life of Azaleah Lane**  
Nikki Shannon Smith (3.4, LG, 570L)
- Scooby-Doo! and the Truth Behind Werewolves NF**  
Mark Weakland (2.7, LG, 550L)
- Honestly, Red Riding Hood Was Rotten!: The Story of Little Red Riding Hood as Told by the Wolf SP**  
Trisha Speed Shaskan (2.0, LG, 460L)
- Valentine's Day NF SP**  
Rebecca Pettiford (1.0, LG, 290L)
- Beauty and the Beast**  
Disney Book Group



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Gracias (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Pat Mora (3.1, LG, 620L)
- **Tía Isa quiere un carro SP**  
Meg Medina (3.3, LG)
- **Abuelo y los tres osos (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Jerry Tello (3.5, LG, 610L)
- **En pos de la música (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Jennifer Torres (3.6, LG)



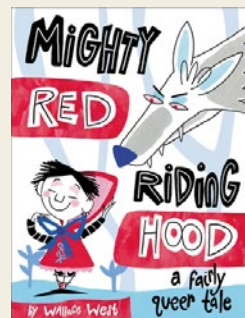
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **Harry Potter Series SP**  
J.K. Rowling  
(3.9–8.8, MG/MG+, 500L–1230L)
- **FGTeeV Series**  
FGTeeV (2.3–2.7, MG, 200L–360L)
- **Siberian Huskies NF**  
Nadia Higgins (1.0, LG, 250L)
- **Maggie and Wendel: Imagine Everything!**  
Cori Doerrfeld (0.5, LG, AD220L)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



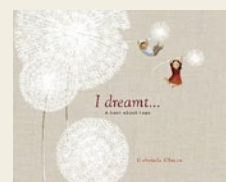
**Mighty Red Riding Hood:  
A Fairly Queer Tale**  
Wallace West (3.4, LG)



**Just Like Grandma**  
Kim Rogers (3.6, LG)



**The Good Hair Day**  
Christian Trimmer  
(3.7, LG)



**I Dreamt . . . A Book  
About Hope**  
Gabriela Olmos  
(3.7, LG, 620L)



## Create a Custom Report

Did you know you can use *What Kids Are Reading* data to customize booklists for individual students or groups, filtered by state, grade, reading level, and more?



## Research Analysis

# Grades K–2: Establishing a Strong Reading Foundation

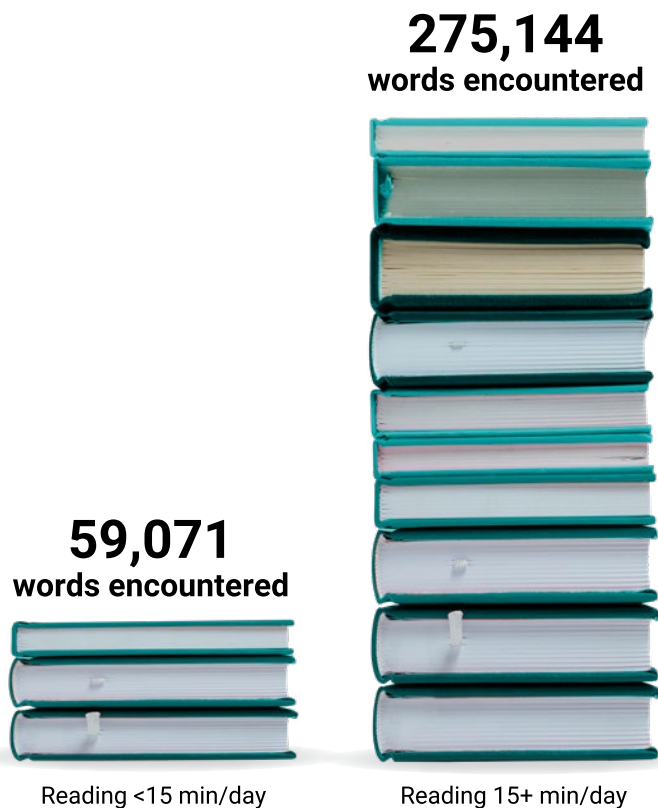
When kids first learn to read, it is so important that they regularly spend time practicing this new skill. Among the many benefits of reading, time spent on this activity serves as an indicator of word exposure, which contributes to overall vocabulary growth. How much reading practice time is enough? When we say daily reading, we mean just 15+ minutes per day.<sup>1</sup>

## Why should kids spend 15+ minutes reading each day?

Reading may look passive, but kids actively make meaning with each word they encounter. Researchers call this *incidental vocabulary learning*, and it means students need heavy exposure to both known and unknown vocabulary to develop literacy skills and build background knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Word exposure while reading is in addition to vocabulary learned through instruction.

Exploring our data, we found that cumulative word exposure by graduation for seniors who read just 15+ minutes per day throughout grades K–12 peaked at 6.8 million words, versus the 1.5 million words kids were exposed to when spending less time reading. For kindergarten through grade 2, students who read for 15 minutes or more daily encountered nearly 5 times as many—well over 200,000 more—words as kids who read for less time.

### The More Kids Read the More They'll Know



<sup>1</sup> Source: Accelerated Reader database, 2022–2023 school year.

<sup>2</sup> Webb, S. (2020). Incidental vocabulary learning. In S. Webb (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of vocabulary studies* (pp.225–239). Routledge.

## How can I inspire more students to spend enough time reading?

Only 49% of kids in grades K–2 read for 15+ minutes per day last school year, and in all grades combined just over half of students did so (51%). To inspire kids to put in the time, consider guiding them to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) topics, which may help spark their natural curiosity and echo individual interests.

Our data show that last school year, half of kindergartners read at least one STEM title (49%), and even more kids did so in grades 1 (66%) and 2 (77%)—on average, 71% for the early grades. With so many kids trying out STEM books, but this category representing only 10% of overall reading in the early grades, STEM is an untapped source of reading inspiration.

### STEM Books May Activate Reading Motivation

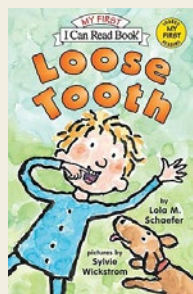


**71%**  
of kids try  
STEM books

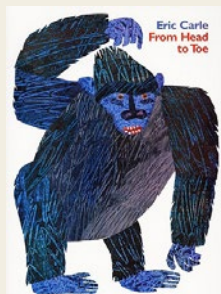
**Only 49% of kids in grades K–2 read for 15+ minutes per day.**

### Popular STEM Books for Grades K–2

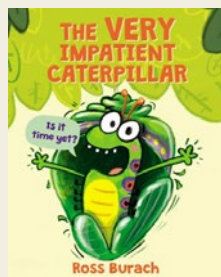
Consider these popular STEM titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com).



**Loose Tooth**  
Lola M. Schaefer  
(0.9, LG, 210L)



**From Head to Toe** **NF SP**  
Eric Carle (1.0, LG, 210L)



**The Very Impatient Caterpillar**  
Ross Burach (1.7, LG, 260L)



**A Color of His Own** **SP**  
Leo Lionni (2.3, LG, 490L)







# Grades 3–5

In the upper elementary grades, kids continue to grow as readers, taking on longer books and learning to gather information from text. It's important to keep these kids reading daily and to foster their motivation by helping them find stories and topics that resonate with them. Consider the lists in this section to help inspire kids in Grades 3–5 to find their next great read:

- Signature Books, State by State
- Futuristic Finds
- Top Print Titles
- Popular Digital Books
- Authentic Spanish Literature
- Highest Rated Reads
- Recognizing Resilience

## Time to Explore

To guide your book search, note the readability information included for each title (ATOS level, interest level, and Lexile measure) and the tags that indicate whether books are nonfiction and/or have an accompanying Spanish quiz available in Accelerated Reader.

Why is it important for kids to keep practicing reading regularly after they've learned this skill? Learn more about *Maintaining Reading Motivation* in Grades 3–5 in the [Research Analysis on page 30](#).

For more about how our data tell us what kids are reading, see [About the Report, page 58](#).

### About the Artist

**Galen C.**

Grade 4

*Imagining the future as I read.*









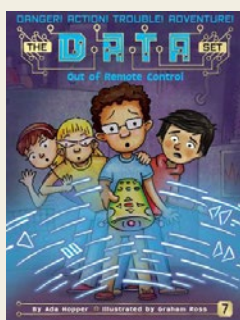
## Signature Books, State by State

Of the top 100 books read in Grades 3–5, covers shown in the map represent signature books where reading popularity in the state was in greatest contrast to the book's nationwide ranking.

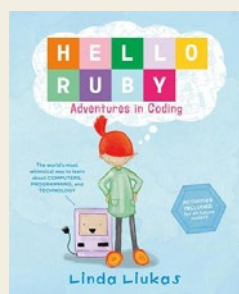


## Futuristic Finds

Forward-looking books—on topics like technology and artificial intelligence—set the stage for inspiration and innovation, opening kids' minds to question “what if” and imagine all that is possible.



**Out of Remote Control**  
Ada Hopper  
(3.6, LG, 510L)



**Hello Ruby: Adventures in Coding** **NF**  
Linda Liukas (4.4, LG)



**The Robo-Battle of Mega Tortoise vs. Hazard Hare**  
Stephanie Peters  
(2.6, MG, 270L)



**The Friendship Code**  
Stacia Deutsch  
(4.5, MG, 650L)



# Grade 3

During the 2022–2023 school year, 880,628 third graders read about 48 print books and 148,987 words each. In total, 458,369 third graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for third graders?**

**A:** You might consider adding Derrick Barnes and Meg Medina.

### Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut

Derrick Barnes (3.8, LG, 700L)

### Evelyn Del Rey Is Moving Away

Meg Medina (3.4, LG, 700L)



## We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top third grade titles share?**

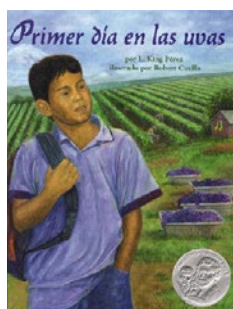
**A:** The books share a common theme of **the importance of personal growth and self-discovery**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including friendship and empathy, humor and adventure, acceptance and self-esteem, facing fears, as well as creativity and imagination.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 **Charlotte's Web** **SP**  
E.B. White (4.4, MG, 680L)
- 2 **Because of Winn-Dixie** **SP**  
Kate DiCamillo (3.9, MG, 670L)
- 3 **Dog Man Series** **SP**  
Dav Pilkey (2.3–2.7, LG, 280L–390L)
- 4 **Scaredy Squirrel Series** **SP**  
Mélanie Watt (3.0–3.6, LG, 580L–680L)
- 5 **The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs** **SP**  
Jon Scieszka (3.0, LG, 510L)
- 6 **A Bad Case of Stripes** **SP**  
David Shannon (3.8, LG, 610L)
- 7 **Dr. Seuss Collection** **SP**  
Dr. Seuss (0.6–5.2, LG, 180L–1000L)
- 8 **Bad Seed Series** **SP**  
Jory John (1.8–3.1, LG, 390L–550L)
- 9 **I Need My Monster Series**  
Amanda Noll (2.6–3.2, LG, 530L–600L)
- 10 **If You Give . . . Series**  
Laura Numeroff (1.0–2.7, LG, 170L–590L)

## Popular Digital Books

- 1 **Zeke Meeks vs. the Horrifying TV-Turnoff Week** **SP**  
D.L. Green (3.3, LG, 580L)
- 2 **The Scientific Life of Azaleah Lane**  
Nikki Shannon Smith (3.5, LG, 590L)
- 3 **Attack of the Mutant Lunch Lady: A Buzz Beaker Brainstorm** **SP**  
Scott Nickel (2.7, LG, 510L)
- 4 **Carla and the Jazzed-Up Scorch-Torch Funtastic Sneakers**  
Teens of Reach Incorporated (550L)
- 5 **The Stranger on the Stairs and Other Scary Tales** **SP**  
Michael Dahl (3.6, LG, 530L)



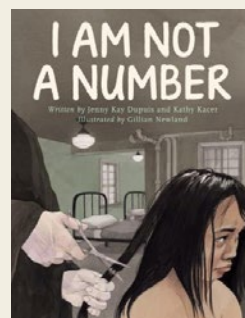
## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

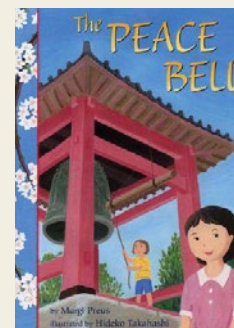
- **Primer día en las uvas** **SP**  
L. King Pérez (3.8, LG)
- **Mi papi tiene una moto** **SP**  
Isabel Quintero (3.9, LG, 640L)
- **Xóchitl, la niña de las flores (libro bilingüe)** **SP**  
Jorge Argueta (4.0, LG, 810L)
- **Mi diario de aquí hasta allá (libro bilingüe)** **SP**  
Amada Irma Pérez (4.0, LG, 740L)

## Recognizing Resilience

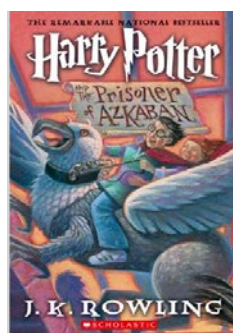
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**I Am Not a Number** **NF**  
Jenny Kay Dupuis  
(4.0, LG, 640L)



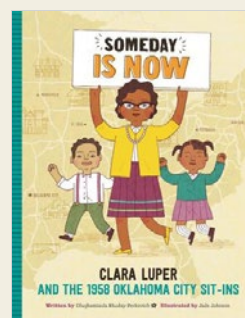
**The Peace Bell**  
Margi Preus  
(4.1, LG)



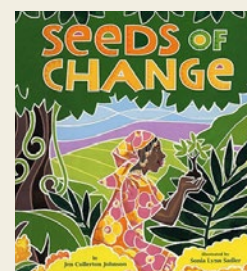
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **Harry Potter Series** **SP**  
J.K. Rowling  
(3.9–8.8, MG/MG+, 500L–1230L)
- **Hooky Series**  
Míriam Bonastre Tur (2.4–2.5, MG)
- **Keeper of the Lost Cities Series**  
Shannon Messenger  
(4.5–6.1, MG, 670L–890L)
- **The Land of Stories Series**  
Chris Colfer  
(3.6–6.4, LG/MG, 720L–860L)



**Someday Is Now: Clara Luper and the 1958 Oklahoma City Sit-Ins** **NF**  
Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich (4.6, LG, 850L)



**Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace** **NF**  
Jen Cullerton Johnson  
(4.8, LG, 820L)



## Trip Step Tips

Identifying Trip Steps—the most demanding skills students encounter while learning to read—helps teachers prioritize these essential skills.



# Grade 4

During the 2022–2023 school year, 866,596 fourth graders read about 36 print books and 243,061 words each. In total, 480,750 fourth graders spent time reading digitally.



**We Asked AI**  
**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for fourth graders?**

A: You might consider adding Levi Pinfold and Kobi Yamada.

**Black Dog**  
Levi Pinfold (3.0, LG, 600L)

**What Do You Do with a Chance**  
Kobi Yamada (2.7, LG)



**We Asked AI**  
**Q: What common themes do the top fourth grade titles share?**

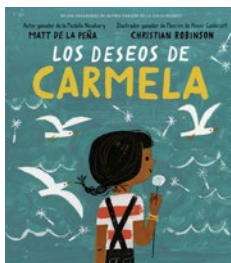
A: The books share a common theme of **self-discovery and personal growth**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including growing up and family dynamics, friendship and empathy, humor and adventure, self-discovery and confidence, as well as creativity and imagination.

## Top Print Titles

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | <b>Fudge Series</b><br>Judy Blume (3.3–3.6, LG/MG, 470L–560L)                          |
| 2  | <b>Because of Winn-Dixie SP</b><br>Kate DiCamillo (3.9, MG, 670L)                      |
| 3  | <b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series SP</b><br>Jeff Kinney (5.2–6.5, MG, 910L–1060L)         |
| 4  | <b>Dog Man Series SP</b><br>Dav Pilkey (2.3–2.7, LG, 280L–390L)                        |
| 5  | <b>Smile Series NF SP</b><br>Raina Telgemeier (2.4–2.6, MG, 290L–480L)                 |
| 6  | <b>Frindle SP</b><br>Andrew Clements (5.4, MG, 830L)                                   |
| 7  | <b>The One and Only Ivan Series SP</b><br>Katherine Applegate (3.6–4.2, MG, 570L–620L) |
| 8  | <b>Holes Series SP</b><br>Louis Sachar (4.2–4.7, MG, 660L–690L)                        |
| 9  | <b>Wonder Series SP</b><br>R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)                       |
| 10 | <b>A Bad Case of Stripes SP</b><br>David Shannon (3.8, LG, 610L)                       |

## Popular Digital Books

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Molly and the Twin Towers: A 9/11 Survival Story</b><br>Jessika Fleck (4.2, MG, 600L)            |
| 2 | <b>Hettie and the London Blitz: A World War II Survival Story</b><br>Jenni L. Walsh (4.2, MG, 600L) |
| 3 | <b>Zeke Meeks vs. His Big Phony Cousin</b><br>D.L. Green (3.4, LG, 620L)                            |
| 4 | <b>Super Scary Stories NF</b><br>Megan Cooley Peterson (3.6, LG, 600L)                              |
| 5 | <b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid SP</b><br>Jeff Kinney (5.2, MG, 950L)                                       |



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

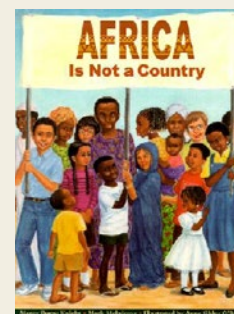
- **Los deseos de Carmela** **SP**  
Matt de la Peña (4.1, LG, 750L)
- **Martina una cucarachita muy linda: Un cuento cubano** **SP**  
Carmen Agra Deedy (4.3, LG, 560L)
- **Prietita y la llorona (libro bilingüe)** **SP**  
Gloria Anzaldúa (4.3, LG)
- **Amigos del otro lado (libro bilingüe)** **SP**  
Gloria Anzaldúa (4.3, LG)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Malala Yousafzai** **NF**  
Maria Isabel Sánchez  
Vegara (4.9, LG)



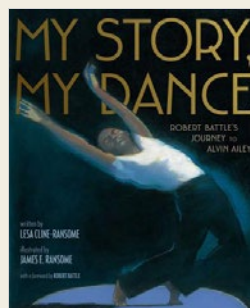
**Africa Is Not a Country** **NF**  
Margy Burns Knight  
(5.3, LG)



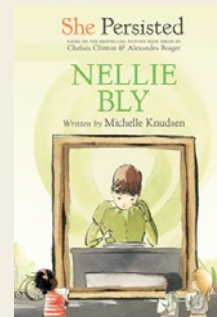
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **The Land of Stories Series**  
Chris Colfer  
(3.6–6.4, LG/MG, 720L–860L)
- **Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series** **SP**  
Rick Riordan  
(4.1– 5.6, MG, 590L–790L)
- **A Tale of Magic Series**  
Chris Colfer  
(5.9–6.3, MG, 830L–890L)
- **Harry Potter Series** **SP**  
J.K. Rowling  
(3.9–8.8, MG/MG+, 500L–1230L)



**My Story, My Dance:**  
**Robert Battle's Journey**  
**to Alvin Ailey** **NF**  
Lesa Cline-Ransom  
(5.4, LG, 970L)



**She Persisted: Nellie Bly** **NF**  
Michelle Knudsen  
(6.0, LG, 1010L)



## Supporting Struggling Readers

To best serve students who are struggling with reading, educators need robust assessment systems that utilize regular early reading screening and progress-monitoring assessments, both to help identify which students need additional support and to employ effective interventions.



# Grade 5

During the 2022–2023 school year, 827,189 fifth graders read about 27 print books and 302,362 words each. In total, 507,182 fifth graders spent time reading digitally.



We Asked AI

**Q:** Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for fifth graders?

**A:** You might consider adding Rick Riordan and J.K. Rowling.

**Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard: Sword of Summer** **SP**

Rick Riordan (4.8, MG, 630L)

**The Christmas Pig**

J.K. Rowling (5.9, MG, 850L)



We Asked AI

**Q:** What common themes do the top fifth grade titles share?

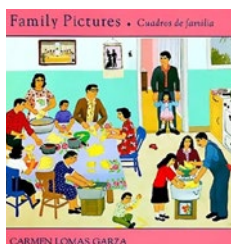
**A:** The books share a common theme of **friendship**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including overcoming challenges, historical and cultural awareness, friendship and empathy, fantasy and adventure, self-discovery, as well as humor.

### Top Print Titles

1	<b>Wonder Series</b> <b>SP</b> R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
2	<b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series</b> <b>SP</b> Jeff Kinney (5.2–6.5, MG, 910L–1060L)
3	<b>Brian's Saga</b> <b>SP</b> Gary Paulsen (5.5–5.9, MG/MG+, 960L–1140L)
4	<b>Esperanza Rising</b> <b>SP</b> Pam Muñoz Ryan (5.3, MG, 750L)
5	<b>Number the Stars</b> <b>SP</b> Lois Lowry (4.5, MG, 670L)
6	<b>Holes Series</b> <b>SP</b> Louis Sachar (4.2–4.7, MG, 660L–690L)
7	<b>Frindle</b> <b>SP</b> Andrew Clements (5.4, MG, 830L)
8	<b>Chronicles of Narnia Series</b> <b>SP</b> C.S. Lewis (5.4–5.9, MG, 660L–690L)
9	<b>Restart</b> Gordon Korman (5.1, MG, 730L)
10	<b>Smile Series</b> <b>NF SP</b> Raina Telgemeier (2.4–2.6, MG, 290L–480L)

### Popular Digital Books

1	<b>Hide-and-Creep</b> Jessica Freeburg (2.5, MG, 520L)
2	<b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Old School</b> <b>SP</b> Jeff Kinney (5.6, MG, 1020L)
3	<b>Maddy and the Monstrous Storm: A Schoolhouse Blizzard Survival Story</b> Julie Gilbert (4.1, MG, 560L)
4	<b>Jenika Sings for Freedom</b> Restavek Freedom Writers (630L)
5	<b>Have a Hot Time, Hades!</b> Kate McMullan (3.8, MG, 610L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Cuadros de familia (libro bilingüe) NF SP**  
Carmen Lomas Garza (4.3, LG)
- **La velita de los cuentos (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Lucía González (4.4, LG, 880L)
- **La fiesta de las tortillas (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Jorge Argueta (4.6, LG, 990L)
- **Martí y sus versos por la libertad (libro bilingüe) NF SP**  
Emma Otheguy (4.9, LG)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Going Places: Victor Hugo Green and His Glorious Book NF**  
Tonya Bolden (6.1, LG)



**Pashmina**  
Nidhi Chanani  
(2.3, MG, 240L)



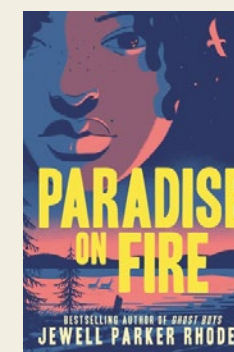
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **The Heroes of Olympus Series SP**  
Rick Riordan  
(4.5–5.2, MG, 640L–690L)
- **Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series SP**  
Rick Riordan  
(4.1–5.6, MG, 590L–790L)
- **Keeper of the Lost Cities Series**  
Shannon Messenger  
(4.5–6.1, MG, 670L–890L)
- **Fablehaven Series SP**  
Brandon Mull  
(4.8–5.6, MG, 700L–790L)



**A First Time for Everything NF**  
Dan Santat (2.6, MG)



**Paradise on Fire**  
Jewell Parker Rhodes  
(3.3, MG)



## Create a Custom Report

Did you know you can use *What Kids Are Reading* data to customize booklists for individual students or groups, filtered by state, grade, reading level, and more?



## Research Analysis

# Grades 3–5: Maintaining Reading Momentum

After establishing a 15+ minutes per day reading routine for students in the early elementary grades, it's important to keep that momentum going through the upper elementary grades. Our data show that kids who read daily for a quarter of an hour or more not only encounter more vocabulary but also are more likely to improve their overall reading achievement.<sup>1</sup>

## After learning to read, do kids really need to keep practicing this skill each day?

Yes. As kids move through their schooling, they transition from learning to read to also reading to learn. Kids still need to actively practice reading to further hone the strategies, vocabulary, and background knowledge they will continue to learn and use throughout their schooling and their futures lives.

Making time for this activity for just 15+ minutes per day is still the key (similar to the findings on [page 18](#)). In grades 3–5, we found that kids who began the year below benchmark in reading (below the 40th percentile rank) were 10% more likely to meet benchmark by spring on the Star Reading assessment when they read for 15+ minutes each day.

### At-Risk Readers Hit the Mark with 15+ Minutes per Day



Reading <15 min/day

**19%**  
likely to reach  
benchmark



Reading 15+ min/day

**29%**  
likely to reach  
benchmark

<sup>1</sup> Source: Accelerated Reader database, 2022–2023 school year.

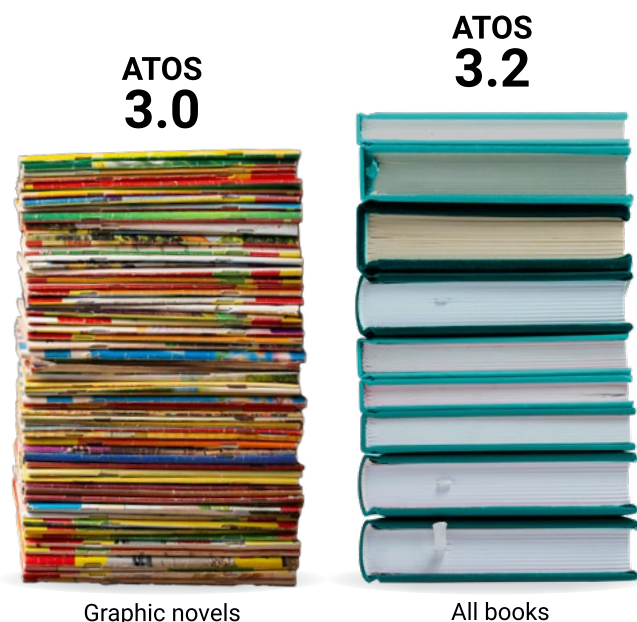
## How can I help to sustain students' interest in reading?

In upper elementary, kids move from early readers and picture books to chapter books of varying lengths. Graphic novels, with lots of visuals and short bits of text, may especially appeal to kids looking for high interest books in a nontraditional format.

Graphic novels illustrate a book's action in a unique way that may capture kids' attention where other books have not. For struggling, reluctant, or resistant readers, graphic novels may be the key to unlocking the joy of independent reading. And asking kids to try reading a graphic novel for "just 15 minutes" may make what they have typically viewed as an unwieldy "task" more manageable.

Concerned that graphic novels might not challenge students in the same ways that novels do? Our data tell a different story—graphic novels read last school year in grades 3–5 had similar reading levels to all books students read (on average, 3.0 versus 3.2), and kids understood graphic novels as well as traditional books, scoring 80% versus 81% on comprehension.

### Graphic Novels Stack up Well with Conventional Books



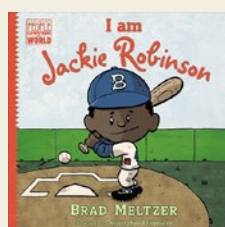
**Kids understood graphic novels as well as traditional books, scoring 80% versus 81% on comprehension.**

### Popular Graphic Novels for Grades 3–5

Consider these popular graphic novels and find others at [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com).



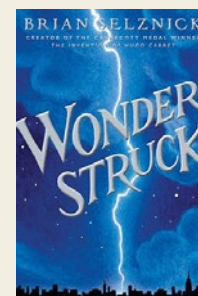
**Cat Kid Comic Club**  
Dav Pilkey (2.9, MG, 520L) **SP**



**I Am Jackie Robinson** **NF**  
Brad Meltzer (3.4, LG, 610L)



**When Stars Are Scattered**  
Victoria Jamieson  
(3.7, MG, 530L)



**Wonderstruck**  
Brian Selznick  
(5.4, MG, 830L)







# Grades 6–8

In middle school, new interests and opportunities abound, and reading may start to slide down kids' lists of priorities. However, spending quality time engaging with books in middle school can impact kids' reading achievement, as well as their overall development, helping them to tackle subject-area texts, learn more about their world, and develop empathy for others. Consider the lists in this section to help inspire kids in Grades 6–8 to find their next great read:

- Signature Books, State by State
- Futuristic Finds
- Top Print Titles
- Popular Digital Books
- Authentic Spanish Literature
- Highest Rated Reads
- Recognizing Resilience

## Time to Explore

To guide your book search, note the readability information included for each title (ATOS level, interest level, and Lexile measure) and the tags that indicate whether books are nonfiction and/or have an accompanying Spanish quiz available in Accelerated Reader.

Why is reading practice so critical in middle school even as other interests begin to crowd out this important pastime? Learn more about *Re-engaging Middle School Readers* in Grades 6–8 in the [Research Analysis on page 42](#).

For more about how our data tell us what kids are reading, see [About the Report, page 58](#).

### About the Artist

**Celia R.**

Grade 6

*Preserve nature today for a thriving world tomorrow.*











# Grade 6

During the 2022–2023 school year, 509,285 sixth graders read about 16 print books and 319,236 words each. In total, 326,776 sixth graders spent time reading digitally.



We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for sixth graders?**

A: You might consider adding Jerry Craft and Jen Wang.

New Kid

Jerry Craft (2.9, MG, 320L)

Stargazing

Jen Wang (2.5, MG, 510L)



We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top sixth grade titles share?**

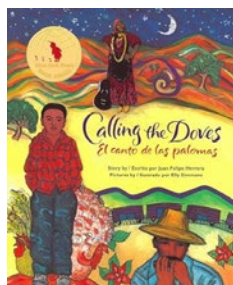
A: The books share a common theme of **the journey of self-discovery**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including adventure and survival, friendship and empathy, historical context, overcoming challenges, as well as fantasy and imagination.

### Top Print Titles

1	<b>Brian's Saga</b> <b>SP</b> Gary Paulsen (5.5–5.9, MG/MG+, 960L–1140L)
2	<b>Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series</b> <b>SP</b> Rick Riordan (4.1–5.6, MG, 590L–790L)
3	<b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series</b> <b>SP</b> Jeff Kinney (5.2–6.5, MG, 910L–1060L)
4	<b>Wonder Series</b> <b>SP</b> R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
5	<b>Bud, Not Buddy</b> <b>SP</b> Christopher Paul Curtis (5.0, MG, 950L)
6	<b>Number the Stars</b> <b>SP</b> Lois Lowry (4.5, MG, 670L)
7	<b>Freak the Mighty Series</b> Rodman Philbrick (5.0–5.5, MG/UG, 870L–930L)
8	<b>Holes Series</b> <b>SP</b> Louis Sachar (4.2–4.7, MG, 660L–690L)
9	<b>Restart</b> Gordon Korman (5.1, MG, 730L)
10	<b>Tuck Everlasting</b> <b>SP</b> Natalie Babbitt (5.0, MG, 770L)

### Popular Digital Books

1	<b>The Grin in the Dark</b> J.A. Darke (4.3, MG, 700L)
2	<b>Creepy Urban Legends</b> Blake Hoena (3.2, MG, 510L)
3	<b>Do Not Watch</b> J.A. Darke (4.8, MG, 710L)
4	<b>Lena and the Burning of Greenwood: A Tulsa Race Massacre Survival Story</b> Nikki Shannon Smith (3.9, MG, 580L)
5	<b>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Cabin Fever</b> <b>SP</b> Jeff Kinney (5.8, MG, 1060L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **El canto de las palomas (libro bilingüe) SP**  
Juan Felipe Herrera (5.2, LG)
- **Srta. Quince SP**  
Kat Fajardo (2.5, MG, 300L)
- **Caravana al norte: La larga caminata de Misael SP**  
Jorge Argueta (3.2, MG, 680L)
- **El espejo misterioso SP**  
Juan Sauvageau (3.2, MG)

## Recognizing Resilience

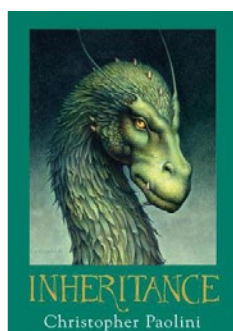
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**No Place Like Home**  
James Bird  
(3.9, MG, 590L)



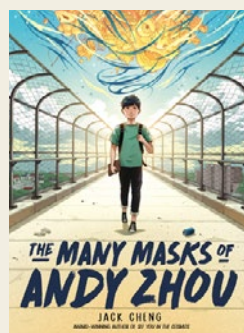
**Finally Seen**  
Kelly Yang  
(4.3, MG, 650L)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **The Inheritance Cycle Series SP**  
Christopher Paolini  
(5.6–7.8, UG, 710L–1050L)
- **Keeper of the Lost Cities Series**  
Shannon Messenger  
(4.5–6.1, MG, 670L–890L)
- **Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series SP**  
Rick Riordan (4.1–5.6, MG, 590L–790L)
- **The Heroes of Olympus Series SP**  
Rick Riordan  
(4.5–5.2, MG, 640L–690L)



**The Many Masks of Andy Zhou**  
Jack Cheng  
(4.4, MG, 690L)



**Lily's Promise**  
Kathryn Erskine  
(4.5, MG)



## Building Reading Trust

Encouraging kids to read just for the joy of it may be the key to truly sparking reading inspiration in your reluctant and struggling readers.



# Grade 7

During the 2022–2023 school year, 339,267 seventh graders read about 11 print books and 305,212 words each. In total, 242,180 seventh graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q:** Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for seventh graders?

**A:** You might consider adding Donna Gephart and Rebecca Stead.

### Death by Toilet Paper

Donna Gephart (4.7, MG, 790L)

### When You Reach Me

Rebecca Stead (4.5, MG, 750L)



## We Asked AI

**Q:** What common themes do the top seventh grade titles share?

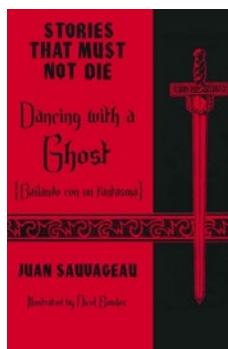
**A:** The books share a common theme of **overcoming adversity**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including coming of age, survival and resilience, friendship and empathy, adventure and fantasy, as well as understanding different perspectives.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 **The Outsiders** **SP**  
S.E. Hinton (4.7, UG, 750L)
- 2 **The Giver Quartet** **SP**  
Lois Lowry (4.9–5.7, MG/MG+, 680L–760L)
- 3 **Hunger Games Series** **SP**  
Suzanne Collins (5.3–6.1, MG+, 800L–860L)
- 4 **A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story** **SP**  
Linda Sue Park (5.0, MG+, 720L)
- 5 **Freak the Mighty Series**  
Rodman Philbrick (5.0–5.5, MG/UG, 870L–930L)
- 6 **Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series** **SP**  
Rick Riordan (4.1–5.6, MG, 590L–790L)
- 7 **Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series** **SP**  
Jeff Kinney (5.2–6.5, MG, 910L–1060L)
- 8 **Wonder Series** **SP**  
R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
- 9 **Refugee**  
Alan Gratz (5.3, MG, 800L)
- 10 **Brian's Saga** **SP**  
Gary Paulsen (5.5–5.9, MG/MG+, 960L–1140L)

## Popular Digital Books

- 1 **Ann Fights for Freedom: An Underground Railroad Survival Story**  
Nikki Shannon Smith (4.0, MG, 600L)
- 2 **Bone-Chilling Ghost Stories** **NF**  
Jen Jones (4.8, MG, 760L)
- 3 **Alice on the Island: A Pearl Harbor Survival Story**  
Mayumi Shimose Poe (4.5, MG, 680L)
- 4 **Haunting Urban Legends**  
Megan Cooley Peterson (3.9, MG, 570L)
- 5 **A Mango-Shaped Space**  
Wendy Mass (4.7, MG, 770L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Bailando con un fantasma** **SP**  
Juan Sauvageau (3.5, MG)
- **La tarjeta de Antonio (libro bilingüe)** **SP**  
Rigoberto González (3.6, MG)
- **Mi propio cuartito** **SP**  
Amada Irma Pérez (3.9, MG)
- **Campamento miedo** **SP**  
Jaime Alfonso Sandoval (4.2, MG)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Courage**  
Barbara Binns  
(4.5, MG, 660L)



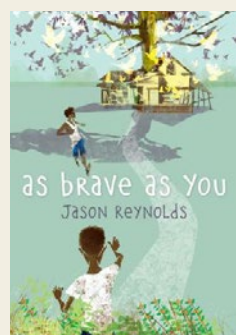
**Genesis Begins Again**  
Alicia D. Williams  
(4.5, MG, 670L)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **A Good Girl's Guide to Murder Series**  
Holly Jackson  
(5.1–5.4, UG, 700L–740L)
- **The Inheritance Cycle Series** **SP**  
Christopher Paolini  
(5.6–7.8, UG, 710L–1050L)
- **Keeper of the Lost Cities Series**  
Shannon Messenger  
(4.5–6.1, MG, 670L–890L)
- **Summer Series**  
Jenny Han  
(3.9–4.1, MG+/UG, 560L–600L)



**As Brave as You**  
Jason Reynolds  
(4.8, MG, 750L)



**Ancestor Approved:  
Intertribal Stories for Kids**  
Cynthia Leitich Smith  
(5.0, MG)



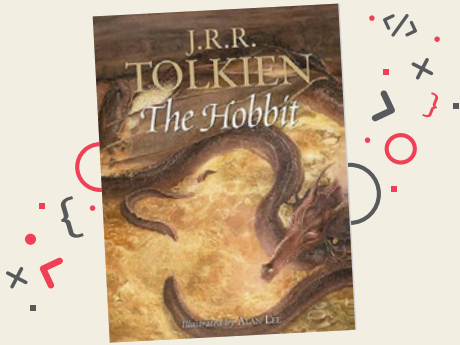
## Modeling the Magic

Boost student reading beyond the school day with effective, research-driven tips for reading at home and on the go.



# Grade 8

During the 2022–2023 school year, 300,775 eighth graders read about 9 print books and 313,682 words each. In total, 215,970 eighth graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for eighth graders?**

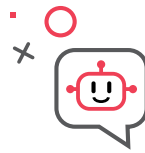
A: You might consider adding Sharon Creech and J.R.R. Tolkien.

## Walk Two Moons SP

Sharon Creech (4.9, MG, 770L)

## The Hobbit SP

J.R.R. Tolkien (6.6, UG, 1000L)



## We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top eighth grade titles share?**

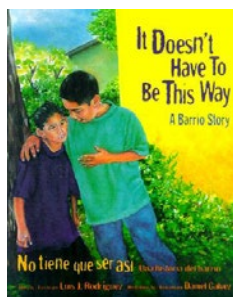
A: The books share a common theme of **coming of age**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including survival and resilience, friendship and empathy, historical context and understanding different perspectives, as well as horror and suspense.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 **The Outsiders** SP  
S.E. Hinton (4.7, UG, 750L)
- 2 **The Giver Quartet** SP  
Lois Lowry (4.9–5.7, MG/MG+, 680L–760L)
- 3 **The Tell-Tale Heart**  
Edgar Allan Poe (7.3, UG, 1350L)
- 4 **Hunger Games Series** SP  
Suzanne Collins (5.3–6.1, MG+, 800L–860L)
- 5 **The Monkey's Paw**  
W.W. Jacobs (6.5, UG, 420L)
- 6 **The Diary of Anne Frank**  
Frances Goodrich (3.1, MG, 1020L)
- 7 **Summer Series**  
Jenny Han (3.9–4.1, MG+/UG, 560L–600L)
- 8 **Wonder Series** SP  
R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
- 9 **The Boy in the Striped Pajamas** SP  
John Boyne (5.8, UG, 1000L)
- 10 **Refugee**  
Alan Gratz (5.3, MG, 800L)

## Popular Digital Books

- Say Cheese, Medusa!**  
Kate McMullan (3.8, MG, 610L)
- Encountering Ghosts: Eyewitness Accounts** **NF**  
Mari Bolte (3.9, MG, 630L)
- Nice Shot, Cupid!**  
Kate McMullan (4.2, MG, 590L)
- Take Your Pick of Monster Encounters** **NF**  
G.G. Lake (3.8, MG, 590L)
- Get to Work, Hercules!**  
Kate McMullan (3.7, MG, 530L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

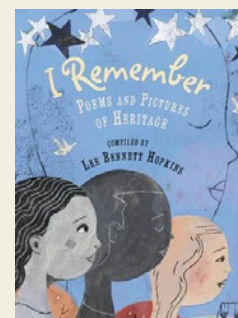
- **No tiene que ser así: Una historia del barrio (libro bilingüe) NF SP**  
Luis J. Rodríguez (4.3, MG)
- **Me dicen Güero: Poemas de un chavo de la frontera SP**  
David Bowles (4.4, MG+)
- **La tierra de las grullas SP**  
Aida Salazar (4.8, MG, 820L)
- **¿Qué es un soñador? (libro bilingüe) NF SP**  
Brenda Perez Mendoza (4.9, MG+, 720L)

## Recognizing Resilience

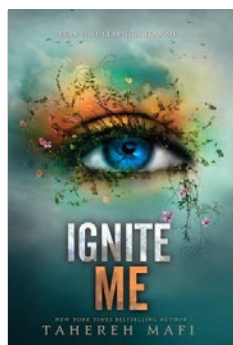
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Coyote Queen**  
Jessica Vitalis (5.0, MG)



**I Remember: Poems and Pictures of Heritage NF**  
Lee Bennett Hopkins (5.1, MG)



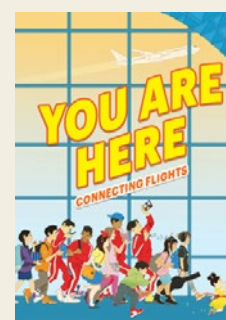
## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **Shatter Me Series**  
Tahereh Mafi (4.1–5.0, UG, 650L–790L)
- **Heartstopper Series**  
Alice Oseman (2.5–2.9, UG, 530L–540L)
- **It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG)
- **A Good Girl's Guide to Murder Series**  
Holly Jackson (5.1–5.4, UG, 700L–740L)



**How Do You Spell Unfair? MacNolia Cox and the National Spelling Bee NF**  
Carole Boston Weatherford (5.1, MG)



**You Are Here: Connecting Flights**  
Ellen Oh (5.1, MG)



## Create a Custom Report

Did you know you can use *What Kids Are Reading* data to customize booklists for individual students or groups, filtered by state, grade, reading level, and more?



## Research Analysis

# Grades 6–8: Re-engaging Middle School Readers

Each school year, our reading data echo research that shows that kids typically read the most books around fifth or sixth grade, before this number begins to erode as kids move through upper middle school and high school.<sup>1</sup> Yet, we also know that students who invest in quality reading practice time—reading for more minutes with greater understanding—experience far more growth in overall general reading achievement.<sup>2</sup>

## How does daily reading benefit students as other interests compete for their time?

Even as schedules fill for busy middle schoolers, dedicating time for reading is as important as ever. Taking a few minutes to read in the car on the way to an event or to wind down before bed may be just the break busy tweens and teens need—time particularly well spent as this practice may also contribute to significant achievement gains.

Using Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) that compare student growth with academic peers nationwide, we found that kids in grades 6–8 who read for 15+ minutes daily, while scoring 85%+ on their reading comprehension quizzes, scored an SGP of 52 on the Star Reading assessment, growing more than kids who read for less time and with less comprehension (<85%) who earned an SGP of 43.<sup>3</sup>

### Discerning Readers Pack in More Growth with 15+ Minutes per Day



1 Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1997). Early reading acquisition and its relation to reading experience and ability 10 years later. *Developmental Psychology*, 33(6), 934–945.  
Cunningham, A. E., & Stanovich, K. E. (1998). What reading does for the mind. *American Educator*, 22(1–2), 8–17.

2 Source: Accelerated Reader database, 2022–2023 school year.

3 SGPs range from 1–99 and are interpreted like Percentile Rank scores: [docs.renaissance.com/R57137](https://docs.renaissance.com/R57137). To learn more about student growth trends, visit: [www.renaissance.com/resources/how-kids-are-performing/](https://www.renaissance.com/resources/how-kids-are-performing/).

4 A student who read at least three books in a given series was considered to have read the series.

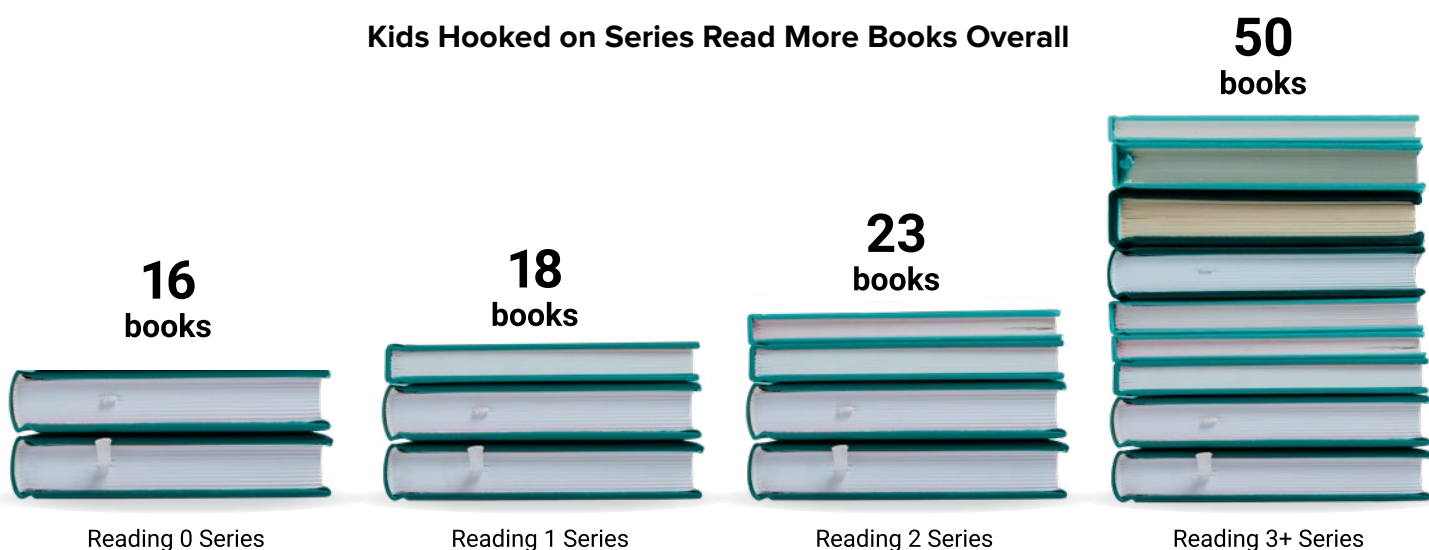
## How do I keep middle schoolers engaged in reading?

Guiding students in finding a book series may motivate middle school readers, as it's often hard to resist the next installment in a series after being drawn in by the first satisfying read.

Our data show benefits for students who engage in series reading. Kids with sustained interest in a series read more books, and more frequently, than kids not reading series titles.<sup>4</sup> The more series reading, the more books read, with the largest leap from 23 books read by kids engaged in two series to more than twice that—50 books—read by kids who read three or more series. Students engaged in multiple book series read for 46 minutes daily, nearly doubling the 24 minutes spent by kids reading non-series books.

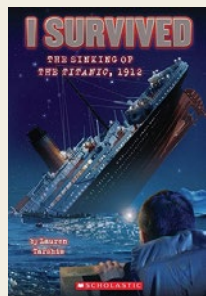
**Students engaged in multiple book series read for 46 minutes daily, nearly doubling the 24 minutes spent by kids reading non-series books.**

### Kids Hooked on Series Read More Books Overall



## Popular Book Series for Grades 6–8

Consider these popular book series and find others at [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com).



**I Survived Series** **NF SP**  
Lauren Tarshis  
(3.8–5.1, MG, 610L–970L)



**Dork Diaries Series** **SP**  
Rachel Renée Russell  
(4.2–5.4, MG, 660L–890L)



**Wings of Fire Series**  
Tui T. Sutherland  
(5.0–5.6, MG, 750L–790L)



**Spy School Series**  
Stuart Gibbs  
(5.2–6.1, MG, 730L–860L)





WITHIN

DEATH

THERE

COMES LIFE



# Grades 9–12

In high school, kids are working hard to prepare for what's coming next, whether they plan to enter higher education, technical training, military service, or the workforce. Much of the reading they take part in may be centered around their studies but should still include a balance of reading for enjoyment. Consider the lists in this section to help inspire kids in Grades 9–12 to find their next great read:

- Signature Books, State by State
- Futuristic Finds
- Top Print Titles
- Popular Digital Books
- Authentic Spanish Literature
- Highest Rated Reads
- Recognizing Resilience

## Time to Explore

To guide your book search, note the readability information included for each title (ATOS level, interest level, and Lexile measure) and the tags that indicate whether books are nonfiction and/or have an accompanying Spanish quiz available in Accelerated Reader.

As they near young adulthood, how do high schoolers' reading habits compare to what adults read? Learn more about the *Realities of High School Reading* in the [Research Analysis on page 56](#).

For more about how our data tell us what kids are reading, see [About the Report, page 58](#).

### About the Artist

**Jadyn M.**

Grade 10

*Reflecting how reading builds hope for the future—  
and the beauty that comes from reading.*





## Signature Books, State by State

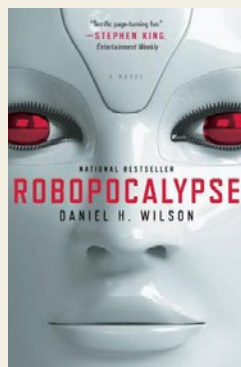
Of the top 100 books read in Grades 9–12, covers shown in the map represent signature books where reading popularity in the state was in greatest contrast to the book’s nationwide ranking.



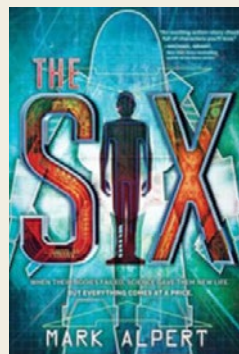
Source: Accelerated Reader, 2022–2023 school year. *Note*, in New Hampshire, none of the top 100 books were read in Grades 9–12, so there is no signature book to display.

## Futuristic Finds

Forward-looking books—on topics like technology and artificial intelligence—set the stage for inspiration and innovation, opening kids’ minds to question “what if” and imagine all that is possible.



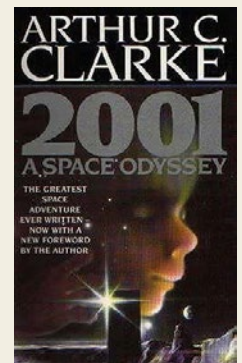
**Robopocalypse**  
Daniel H. Wilson  
(4.9, UG, 730L)



**The Six**  
Mark Alpert  
(5.7, UG, 780L)



**I, Robot**  
Isaac Asimov  
(6.1, UG, 820L)

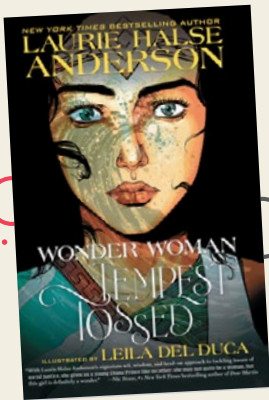


**2001: A Space Odyssey**  
Arthur C. Clarke  
(9.0, UG, 1060L)



# Grade 9

During the 2022–2023 school year, 57,502 ninth graders read about 6 print books and 220,185 words each. In total, 103,291 ninth graders spent time reading digitally.



We Asked AI

**Q:** Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for ninth graders?

**A:** You might consider adding Laurie Halse Anderson and Jason Reynolds.

**Wonder Woman: Tempest Tossed**  
Laurie Halse Anderson (2.8, UG)

**Long Way Down**  
Jason Reynolds (4.3, UG, 720L)



We Asked AI

**Q:** What common themes do the top ninth grade titles share?

**A:** The books share a common theme of **struggle**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including social injustice and prejudice, love and tragedy, survival and human nature, power and corruption, friendship and empathy, as well as personal growth and overcoming challenges.

Top Print Titles

1	<b>To Kill a Mockingbird</b> <b>SP</b> Harper Lee (5.6, UG, 790L)
2	<b>Of Mice and Men</b> <b>SP</b> John Steinbeck (4.5, UG, 630L)
3	<b>Romeo and Juliet</b> <b>SP</b> William Shakespeare (8.6, UG)
4	<b>The Most Dangerous Game</b> Richard Connell (5.3, UG)
5	<b>Night</b> <b>NF</b> Elie Wiesel (4.8, UG, 590L)
6	<b>It Ends with Us Series</b> Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG, 730L–780L)
7	<b>Animal Farm</b> <b>SP</b> George Orwell (7.3, UG, 1170L)
8	<b>Lord of the Flies</b> <b>SP</b> William Golding (5.0, UG, 770L)
9	<b>Hunger Games Series</b> <b>SP</b> Suzanne Collins (5.3–6.1, MG+, 800L–860L)
10	<b>Wonder Series</b> <b>SP</b> R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)

Popular Digital Books

1	<b>Creepy Urban Legends</b> <b>NF</b> Tim O'Shei (4.0, MG, 640L)
2	<b>Hit the Road, Helen!</b> Kate McMullan (4.0, MG, 610L)
3	<b>Vampires in the Movies</b> <b>NF</b> Adam Woog (9.2, MG+, 1150L)
4	<b>Scooby-Doo! A Science of Sound Mystery: A Song for Zombies</b> <b>NF</b> Megan Cooley Peterson (3.7, MG, 590L)
5	<b>Ghosts of the Rich and Famous</b> <b>NF</b> Emily Raij (4.1, MG, 760L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Iveliz lo explica todo** **SP**  
Andrea Beatriz Arango (5.1, MG+)
- **Senderos fronterizos** **SP**  
Francisco Jiménez (5.3, MG)
- **Invisible** **SP**  
Eloy Moreno (6.3, MG+, 960L)
- **Excelencia en las artes (libro bilingüe)** **NF SP**  
Brenda Perez Mendoza (6.0, MG+, 850L)

## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



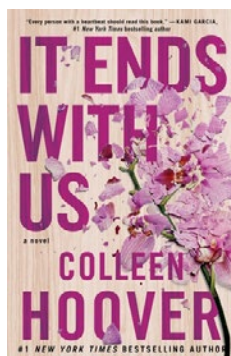
### Land of Broken Promises

Jane Kuo (5.2, MG+)



### When Clouds Touch Us

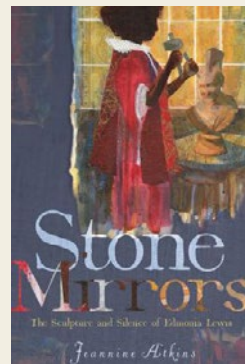
Thanhha Lai  
(5.4, MG, 880L)



## Highest Rated Reads

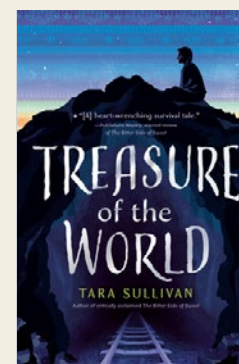
Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG)
- **Ugly Love**  
Colleen Hoover (4.5, UG)
- **Summer Series**  
Jenny Han (3.9–4.1, MG+/UG, 560L–600L)
- **November 9**  
Colleen Hoover (5.0, UG)



### Stone Mirrors: The Sculpture and Silence of Edmonia Lewis

Jeannine Atkins  
(5.4, MG, 860L)



### Treasure of the World

Tara Sullivan  
(5.5, MG, 820L)



## Boosting Reading Motivation

Explore 15 tips for motivating students at all stages of their reading journey, whether they're just beginning or preparing for future pursuits.



# Grade 10

During the 2022–2023 school year, 45,499 tenth graders read about 5 print books and 233,123 words each. In total, 50,387 tenth graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q:** Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for tenth graders?

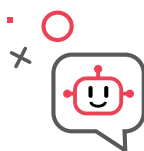
**A:** You might consider adding Sandra Benítez and Toni Morrison.

### **A Place Where the Sea Remembers**

Sandra Benítez (5.1, UG, 790L)

### **The Bluest Eye**

Toni Morrison (5.2, UG, 920L)



## We Asked AI

**Q:** What common themes do the top tenth grade titles share?

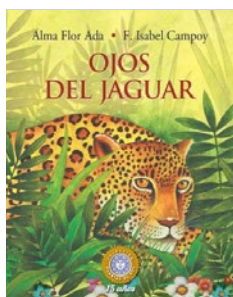
**A:** The books share a common theme of **struggle**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including social injustice and prejudice, survival and resilience, personal growth and overcoming challenges, power and corruption, as well as cultural conflict and change.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 Night NF**  
Elie Wiesel (4.8, UG, 590L)
- 2 To Kill a Mockingbird SP**  
Harper Lee (5.6, UG, 790L)
- 3 It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG, 730L–780L)
- 4 Lord of the Flies SP**  
William Golding (5.0, UG, 770L)
- 5 Of Mice and Men SP**  
John Steinbeck (4.5, UG, 630L)
- 6 Things Fall Apart**  
Chinua Achebe (6.2, UG, 890L)
- 7 Animal Farm SP**  
George Orwell (7.3, UG, 1170L)
- 8 Hunger Games Series SP**  
Suzanne Collins (5.3–6.1, MG+, 800L–860L)
- 9 Wonder Series SP**  
R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
- 10 The Maze Runner Series SP**  
James Dashner (5.0–5.7, MG/UG, 720L–810L)

## Popular Digital Books

- 1 What Do We Know About the Solar System? NF**  
Ian Graham (6.4, MG, 970L)
- 2 The Mexican-American War NF**  
John DiConsiglio (7.3, MG, 920L)
- 3 What Do We Know About Stars and Galaxies? NF**  
John Farndon (7.5, MG, 1120L)
- 4 Oliver Twist**  
Charles Dickens (11.3, UG)
- 5 Adaptation and Survival NF**  
Robert Snedden (5.0, MG, 1030L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

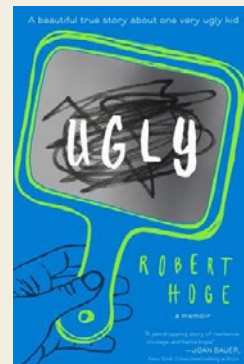
- **Ojos del jaguar** **SP**  
Alma Flor Ada (7.6, MG, 940L)
- **Yo no soy tu perfecta hija mexicana** **SP**  
Erika L. Sánchez (4.0, UG)
- **Yaqui Delgado quiere darte una paliza** **SP**  
Meg Medina (4.2, UG, 700L)
- **Aura** **SP**  
Carlos Fuentes (5.1, UG, 1110L)

## Recognizing Resilience

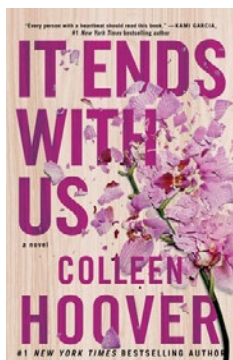
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Sail Me Away Home**  
Ann Clare LeZotte  
(5.6, MG)



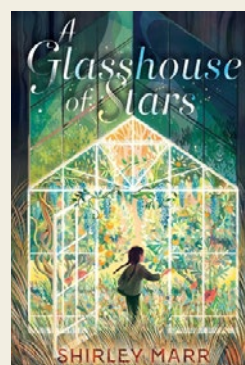
**Ugly**  
Robert Hoge  
(5.7, MG, 890L)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG)
- **Summer Series**  
Jenny Han (3.9–4.1, MG+/UG, 560L–600L)
- **November 9**  
Colleen Hoover (5.0, UG)
- **A Good Girl's Guide to Murder Series**  
Holly Jackson (5.1–5.4, UG, 700L–740L)



**A Glasshouse of Stars**  
Shirley Marr  
(5.8, MG, 870L)



**Tiger Daughter**  
Rebecca Lim  
(6.0, MG, 980L)



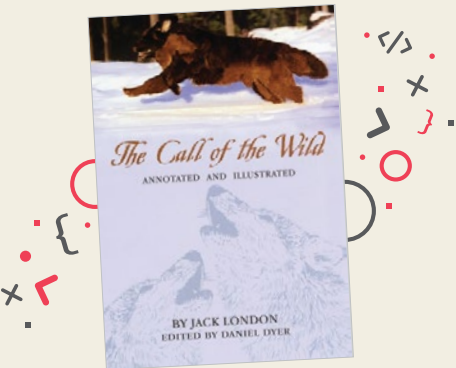
## Using AI Responsibly

We are committed to the purposeful, transparent, and equitable implementation of AI technologies in our Renaissance ecosystem.



# Grade 11

During the 2022–2023 school year, 30,959 eleventh graders read about 5 print books and 235,634 words each. In total, 36,861 eleventh graders spent time reading digitally.



We Asked AI

**Q: Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for eleventh graders?**

A: You might consider adding Jack London and Alice Walker.

**The Call of the Wild** **SP**

Jack London (8.0, MG, 1120L)

**The Color Purple**

Alice Walker (4.0, UG, 670L)



We Asked AI

**Q: What common themes do the top eleventh grade titles share?**

A: The books share a common theme of **the exploration of the human condition and the struggle for self-identity**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including society and class, personal growth and overcoming challenges, power and corruption, racial injustice and prejudice, love and relationships, as well as historical context.

Top Print Titles

1	<b>The Great Gatsby</b> <b>SP</b> F. Scott Fitzgerald (7.3, UG, 1010L)
2	<b>The Crucible</b> Arthur Miller (4.9, UG)
3	<b>It Ends with Us Series</b> Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG, 730L–780L)
4	<b>To Kill a Mockingbird</b> <b>SP</b> Harper Lee (5.6, UG, 790L)
5	<b>Of Mice and Men</b> <b>SP</b> John Steinbeck (4.5, UG, 630L)
6	<b>Fences</b> August Wilson (3.5, UG)
7	<b>Their Eyes Were Watching God</b> Zora Neale Hurston (5.6, UG, 890L)
8	<b>Fahrenheit 451</b> <b>SP</b> Ray Bradbury (5.2, UG, 890L)
9	<b>Wonder Series</b> <b>SP</b> R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
10	<b>November 9</b> Colleen Hoover (5.0, UG)

Popular Digital Books

1	<b>Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: A Graphic Novel</b> Jorge C. Morhain (3.2, MG, 360L)
2	<b>Moby Dick</b> <b>SP</b> Herman Melville (10.3, UG, 1150L)
3	<b>Stories of Women in the 1960s: Fighting for Freedom</b> <b>NF</b> Cath Senker (7.4, MG, 1050L)
4	<b>Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard</b> Jonathan Auxier (5.8, MG)
5	<b>Frankenstein</b> Mary Shelley (12.4, UG, 1040L)



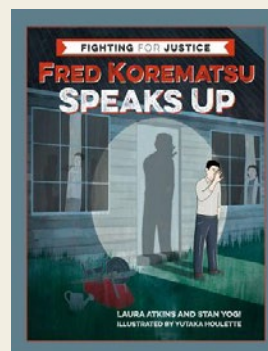
## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

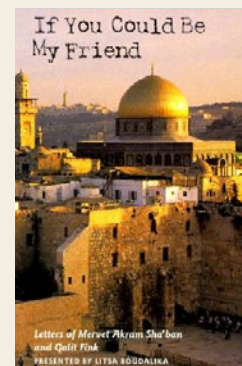
- **La corza blanca SP**  
Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (5.5, UG)
- **La celestina SP**  
Fernando de Rojas (6.2, UG)
- **Del amor y otros demonios SP**  
Gabriel García Márquez (8.0, UG)
- **La casa de Bernarda Alba SP**  
Federico García Lorca (8.1, UG)

## Recognizing Resilience

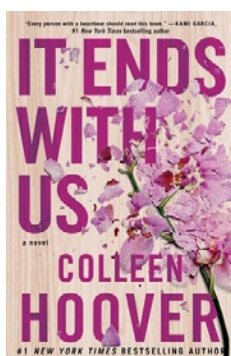
Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



**Fred Korematsu Speaks Up NF**  
Laura Atkins  
(6.1, MG, 930L)



**If You Could Be My Friend**  
Litsa Boudalika  
(6.3, MG)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG)
- **November 9**  
Colleen Hoover (5.0, UG)
- **Ugly Love**  
Colleen Hoover (4.5, UG)
- **A Good Girl's Guide to Murder Series**  
Holly Jackson  
(5.1–5.4, UG, 700L–740L)



**Change the Game NF**  
Colin Kaepernick  
(3.1, UG, 390L)



**Punching Bag NF**  
Rex Ogle (3.5, UG, 490L)



## Keeping Kids Reading

Explore four tips for motivating students to read for enjoyment throughout high school, which is key to their continued development in fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and more.



# Grade 12

During the 2022–2023 school year, 22,966 twelfth graders read about 5 print books and 247,553 words each. In total, 37,794 twelfth graders spent time reading digitally.



## We Asked AI

**Q:** Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for twelfth graders?

**A:** You might consider adding Charles Dickens and Cormac McCarthy.

### Hard Times

Charles Dickens (9.3, UG, 1060L)

### The Road

Cormac McCarthy (4.0, UG, 670L)



## We Asked AI

**Q:** What common themes do the top twelfth grade titles share?

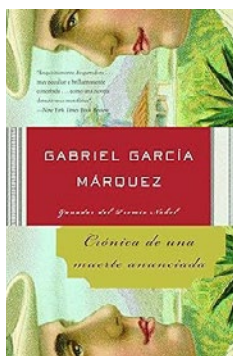
**A:** The books share a common theme of **the exploration of the human condition and the struggle of the characters against their circumstances**, while individually they explore a variety of topics, including power and ambition, personal growth and overcoming challenges, science and ethics, dystopia and totalitarianism, survival and resilience, and love and society.

## Top Print Titles

- 1 Hamlet**  
William Shakespeare (10.5, UG)
- 2 It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG, 730L–780L)
- 3 Macbeth**  
William Shakespeare (10.9, UG)
- 4 Frankenstein**  
Mary Shelley (12.4, UG, 1040L)
- 5 1984 SP**  
George Orwell (8.9, UG, 1090L)
- 6 The Maze Runner Series SP**  
James Dashner (5.0–5.7, MG/UG, 720L–810L)
- 7 Restart**  
Gordon Korman (5.1, MG, 730L)
- 8 Wonder Series SP**  
R.J. Palacio (3.5–4.8, MG, 370L–790L)
- 9 Pride and Prejudice SP**  
Jane Austen (12.0, UG, 1430L)
- 10 Animal Farm SP**  
George Orwell (7.3, UG, 1170L)

## Popular Digital Books

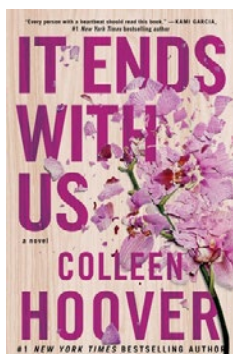
- 1 Dracula**  
Bram Stoker (6.6, UG, 1060L)
- 2 Twilight SP**  
Stephenie Meyer (4.9, UG, 720L)
- 3 Little Women SP**  
Louisa May Alcott (7.4, MG, 1210L)
- 4 Are Video Games Harmful? NF**  
Hal Marcovitz (1330L)
- 5 Cover Your Assets: The Teens' Guide to Protecting Their Money and Their Stuff NF**  
Kara McGuire (1090L)



## Authentic Spanish Literature

Authentic Spanish texts allow students to see their own lives and cultures reflected, while also learning about stories, characters, and traditions different from their own.

- **Crónica de una muerte anunciada** **SP**  
Gabriel García Márquez (8.1, UG)
- **El general en su laberinto** **SP**  
Gabriel García Márquez (8.9, UG)
- **Cien años de soledad** **SP**  
Gabriel García Márquez (9.9, UG, 1360L)
- **Don Quijote de la Mancha** **SP**  
Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (13.2, UG, 1080L)



## Highest Rated Reads

Here are the books that came out on top when kids in this grade were asked to rate their recent reads in Accelerated Reader.

- **It Ends with Us Series**  
Colleen Hoover (4.6–5.0, UG)
- **November 9**  
Colleen Hoover (5.0, UG)
- **Ugly Love**  
Colleen Hoover (4.5, UG)
- **Where the Crawdads Sing**  
Delia Owens (5.9, UG, 880L)

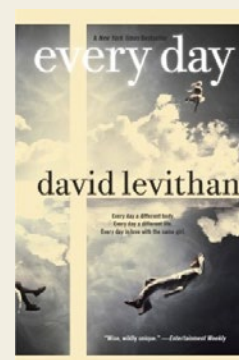
## Recognizing Resilience

Books allow us to recognize our shared humanity, helping readers to feel seen or to build empathy for the varied—and sometimes challenging, though often inspiring—journeys we all are traveling.



### Beneath the Wide Silk Sky

Emily Inouye Huey  
(4.4, UG)



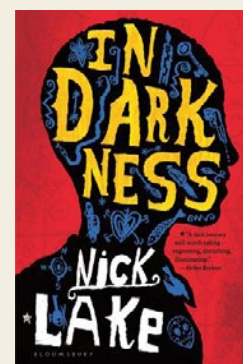
### Every Day

David Levithan  
(4.3, UG, 650L)



### The Girl Who Escaped ISIS: This Is My Story **NF**

Farida Khalaf  
(5.5, UG, 720L)



### In Darkness

Nick Lake  
(5.6, UG, 800L)



## Create a Custom Report

Did you know you can use *What Kids Are Reading* data to customize booklists for individual students or groups, filtered by state, grade, reading level, and more?



## Research Analysis

# Grades 9–12: Realities of High School Reading

Researchers, educators, and parents are sometimes surprised and concerned to see secondary students reading books below a grade 9 difficulty level, but does crossing the threshold into high school mean kids should focus solely on high-level texts? While it's true that some of the books students encounter will be written at higher difficulty levels, such as classics embedded within the curriculum, in reality, many kids will select books like those topping popular best sellers charts to read for enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

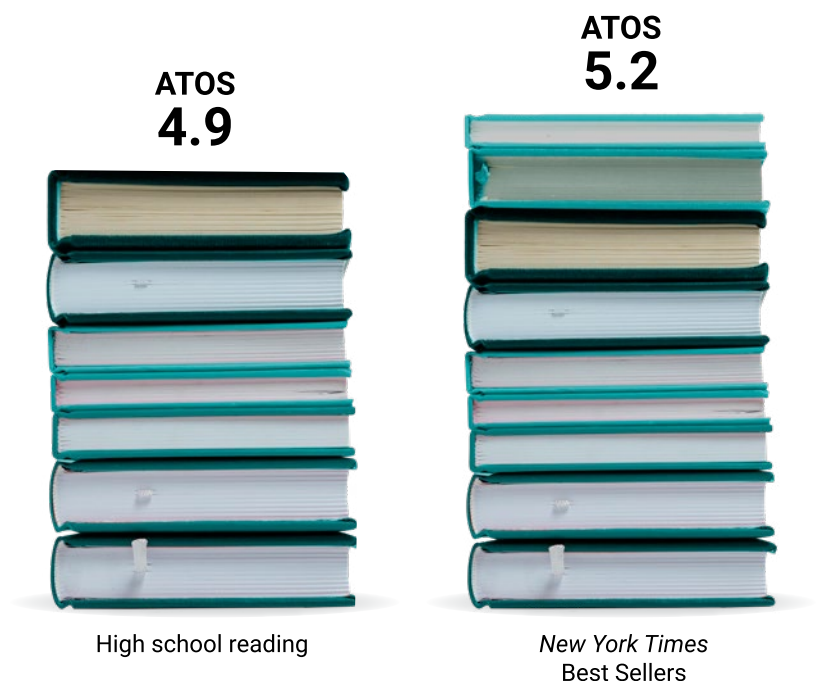
## How does high school reading compare to what adults typically read?

Examining recent *New York Times* Best Sellers,<sup>2</sup> we found that high schoolers read at levels commensurate with adults. On average, the best sellers had ATOS reading levels of 5.2 and upper grade interest levels, while our data show students in grades 9–12 read at a 4.9 ATOS overall last school year (about 4.9 for fiction and 4.7 for nonfiction).<sup>3</sup>

The 20+ best sellers with information on [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com) included books like *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid (4.5), *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig (5.2), and *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr (6.2).

Ideally, high school reading should comprise both the study of revered literary works and reading for enjoyment, keeping in mind the guideline that maintaining 85% comprehension, especially while engaged in reading for 15+ minutes daily, is likely to yield above-average growth (similar to the results on [page 42](#)).

### Teens' Book Choices Parallel Adults' Picks



<sup>1</sup> Source: Accelerated Reader database, 2022–2023 school year.

<sup>2</sup> NYT Combined Print & E-Book Fiction spanning the 2022–2023 and 2021–2022 school years: [www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/](http://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/)

<sup>3</sup> The ATOS Readability Formula uses average sentence length, word length, and word-difficulty level to estimate text difficulty on a grade-level scale; interest levels are based on publisher recommendations about the sophistication/maturity of a book's content, ideas, and themes.

## How many high school students read “high school level” books?

Modern authors typically write in more accessible ways than their classic counterparts, who employed the conventions of their time, such as formal vocabulary and lengthy, complex sentences. Of the top 100 fiction books read in each grade, 9–12, the few with reading levels of 9.0+ (below) were classics and likely part of the curriculum. What's more, some classic texts have levels matching best sellers, such as *Of Mice and Men* (4.5) and *The Crucible* (4.8).

Our data show that, on average, 12% of high school students read at levels 9.0 and above last school year. This percentage varied by grade, from 6% of freshmen, 14% of sophomores, and 11% of juniors, but even by senior year, less than a quarter of kids were reading high-level books (21%). Of all books read by high schoolers last year, only about 2% had reading levels of 9.0+.

### Top Books Read in High School at Levels 9.0 and Up

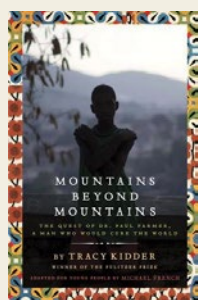
- **War and Peace**  
Leo Tolstoy (10.1, UG)
- **The Metamorphosis**  
Franz Kafka (10.5, UG, 1340L)
- **Julius Caesar**  
William Shakespeare (10.8, UG)
- **The Three Musketeers** **SP**  
Alexandre Dumas (11.3, UG, 960L)
- **The Fall of the House of Usher**  
Edgar Allan Poe (11.4, UG)
- **The Scarlet Letter** **SP**  
Nathaniel Hawthorne (11.7, UG)
- **Gulliver's Travels**  
Jonathan Swift (13.5, UG)

### Few High Schoolers Take on High-Level Books



## High-Level Contemporary Books for Grades 9–12

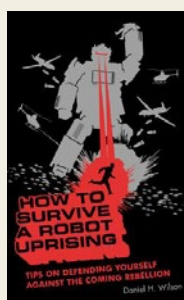
High-level books written by contemporary authors may bridge the gap between self-selected titles and curricular reading. Consider these titles and find others at [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com).



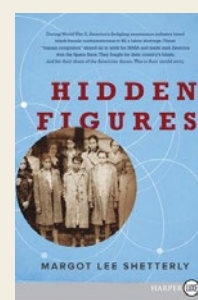
**Mountains Beyond Mountains** **NF**  
Tracy Kidder  
(8.6, MG+, 1120L)



**Wisdom's Kiss**  
Catherine Gilbert Murdock  
(8.8, MG+, 1220L)



**How to Survive a Robot Uprising**  
Daniel H. Wilson  
(9.2, UG, 1140L)



**Hidden Figures** **NF**  
Margot Lee Shetterly  
(9.7, UG, 1350L)



# About the Report

At Renaissance, reading is—and always has been—the future. To us, reading is the past, present, future, and everything in between. Reading is how all of us, young and old, big and small, learn about the world, gather information, process ideas, develop empathy, and feed our imaginations. Reading teaches us about the past and helps us to imagine the future.

Once kids learn to read, their world expands exponentially. Reading shows kids what's possible and transports them to new places, both real and imagined. Reading is steadfast. Kids can depend on reading as a way to escape, to explore, to relax, to learn, and to gain understanding of events that have happened earlier or are unfolding before us.

“Kids can depend on reading as a way to escape, to explore, to relax, to learn, and to gain understanding of events that have happened earlier or are unfolding before us.”

With each turn of the page, reading also prepares our kids for what's next. Though kids curled up with a book may look like they are “just reading,” a passive activity,

nothing could be further from the truth. While kids may indeed be relaxed and content while reading, their minds are hard at work.

While reading, kids decode words, process new information, draw on background knowledge, broaden their understanding of the world, and learn new vocabulary words. As they revisit sentences and reread passages, they solidify their comprehension of new words and concepts. They use reading strategies they've learned at school or developed through their own practice to engage deeply with the content and characters they encounter. And practicing all these skills helps kids become better readers and develop into critical thinkers, who are able to handle the texts and information they will be faced with in the future.

It is our hope that the *What Kids Are Reading* report helps all readers find their next great read or that very special book that gets them hooked on this invaluable pastime.



**179 MILLION  
BOOKS**



**5.4 MILLION  
STUDENTS**



**21,982  
US SCHOOLS**



## What's Inside

The *What Kids Are Reading* report data comprise two Renaissance sources: Accelerated Reader, which tracks students' reading comprehension of nearly any available book, and myON, which delivers titles directly to students via a massive digital reading platform. Together, these programs personalize reading practice for students by providing easy access to books and sharing actionable reading data with educators.

No other study captures student reading behavior on this scale. This report is brimming with insight into the books we know kids are truly reading, from beginning to end, as well as additional titles to inspire your readers.

**“No other study captures student reading behavior on this scale.”**

On the cover and within the report we've featured student artwork depicting how our current readers and future teachers, construction workers, doctors, artists, plumbers, engineers, librarians, and more, have expressed that reading makes them feel about the future (for details, [see page 63](#)). Julianne Robar, Senior Director Metadata & Product Interoperability at Renaissance, wrote the introduction to this year's report, drawing on her expertise in content development and artificial intelligence (AI), and sharing what she learned as part of the first EdSAFE AI Alliance Women in AI Fellowship.

To supplement our bona fide book lists, we used Microsoft Bing Chat (Copilot) in a few low-stakes ways throughout the report. First, we created two We Asked AI sections, where we queried Copilot about the Top Print Titles lists in each grade: (1) *What common themes do the top titles share?*, and (2) *Whom should we add to the list of popular authors for this grade?* Then we asked Copilot for help in developing the new Futuristic Finds booklists with the question, *What books on AI topics may have influenced some of the technological advancements we are seeing today?*

The report is organized by grade range, with each section beginning with a map of **Signature Books, State by State**, and a list of **Futuristic Finds** for each grade grouping. Individual grades include three ranked booklists, **Top Print Titles** (from Accelerated Reader, displayed as book series to allow for as many unique authors/titles as possible) and **Popular Digital Books** (from myON), as well as the new **Highest Rated Reads**, which displays the books kids rated highest in Accelerated Reader after reading (also shown as series). Each grade level also includes two curated book lists, featuring **Authentic Spanish Literature** and titles **Recognizing Resilience**.

All books in the report include readability information where available, including ATOS level, interest level, Lexile® measure, and tags indicating whether they are nonfiction and/or have an Accelerated Reader quiz available in Spanish. The report also features four research analyses, sprinkled within each grade-range section, which explore reading topics relevant to those grades.



## Accelerated Reader Publisher Partners

More than 150 publishers, imprints, brands, and divisions regularly provide titles to Renaissance to produce Accelerated Reader Reading Practice Quizzes. We work especially closely with our Accelerated Reader Publisher Partners:

- Amicus
- Bellwether Media
- Black Rabbit Books
- The Creative Company
- Kane Miller, A Division of EDC Publishing

## Matching Books to Kids

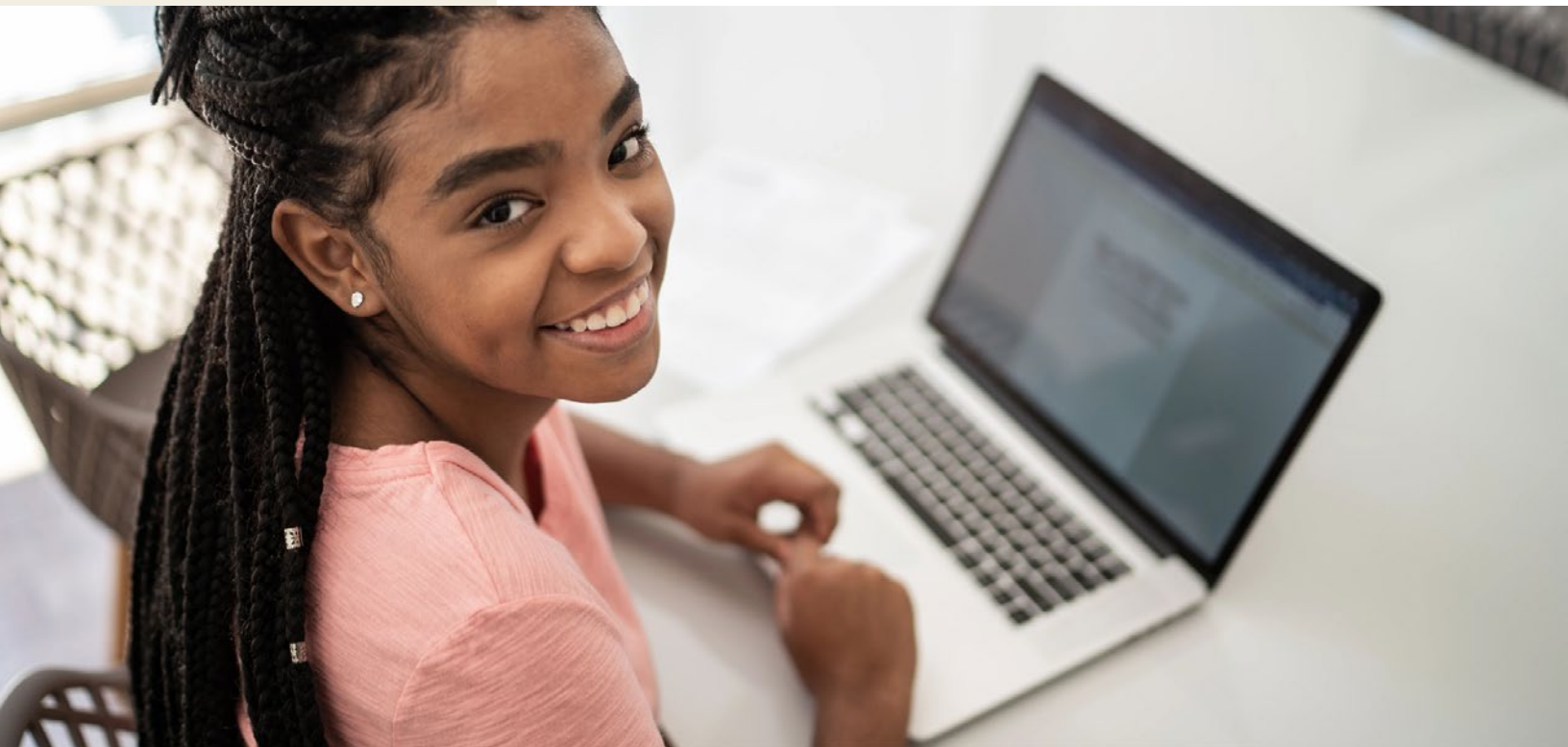
This report strives to inspire all students, whether they are avid readers or are resistant or reluctant to get started. When choosing a book to read, it's important to consider factors like content, structure, and a reader's motivation and level of background knowledge, as well as a book's text complexity and content.

The ATOS Readability Formula and the Lexile® Framework for Reading are two ways to estimate text complexity for books and other reading materials. Both ATOS and Lexile measures put readers and texts on the same scale to help match students with text at individualized difficulty levels.

ATOS considers three key predictors of text difficulty: average sentence length, average word length, and average word-difficulty level, and reports reading levels on a grade-level scale (e.g., an ATOS of 5.4 indicates text a typically performing fifth-grade student could likely read and understand by about mid-school year). Visit [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com) to find ATOS levels for virtually any book or analyze other text for free at [www.renaissance.com/resources/atos-analyzer/](http://www.renaissance.com/resources/atos-analyzer/).

To provide additional readability information, we pair ATOS levels with interest levels from publisher recommendations about the sophistication and maturity level of a text's content, ideas, and themes: LG (lower grades, K–3), MG (middle grades, 4–8), MG+ (middle grades plus, 6 and up), and UG (upper grades, 9–12), though whether a text is appropriate for a student is a local decision best made by students, educators, parents, and caregivers.

The Lexile® Text Analyzer evaluates a book's reading level by measuring text characteristics, such as sentence length and word difficulty, to determine its Lexile text measure—which can range from below OL for beginning readers to above 1600L for advanced texts. To see the Lexile text ranges by grade for students to be college and career ready, view the chart here: [lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/](http://lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/college-and-career-readiness/). MetaMetrics® Inc. provided the Lexile text measures in this report.



## About Accelerated Reader

Accelerated Reader helps teachers access data-based insights into student reading practice, manage personalized goal setting, and connect to a worldwide community of support (visit [www.renaissance.com/products/accelerated-reader/](http://www.renaissance.com/products/accelerated-reader/)).

**How it works:** Teachers set personalized reading goals for each student, using key factors for success: quantity (time spent reading), quality (reading comprehension), and difficulty (text complexity). Students individually select books to read, taking an Accelerated Reader comprehension quiz after finishing each one. Immediate feedback is shared with the student and teacher after each quiz, including comprehension level and number of words read.

With quizzes for 225,000+ books and new quizzes constantly added, Accelerated Reader offers students vast reading options and provides personalized reading suggestions, and any book with a quiz available can be found at [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com).

**The report data:** We studied Accelerated Reader records for 5.4 million K–12 students at 21,982 schools across all 50 states plus DC, who read 179 million books during the 2022–2023 school year (see table). *Note*, although the Accelerated Reader report sample is large and diverse, we recognize it is a convenience sample and may not represent all K–12 students at US schools.



### Create a Custom Report

Did you know you can use *What Kids Are Reading* data to customize booklists for individual students or groups, filtered by state, grade, reading level, and more?

## Students, Books, Words, and Average ATOS by Grade

Accelerated Reader database, 2022–2023 school year

Grade	Students	Books read	Average books read per student	Average words read by students	Average ATOS
K	145,466	3,051,611	21.0	6,865	1.4
1	575,319	23,733,176	41.3	21,711	1.7
2	790,950	42,270,823	53.4	68,189	2.4
3	880,628	41,940,647	47.6	148,987	2.9
4	866,596	31,558,598	36.4	243,061	3.3
5	827,189	21,942,351	26.5	302,362	3.7
6	509,285	7,956,096	15.6	319,236	4.1
7	339,267	3,590,016	10.6	305,212	4.3
8	300,775	2,587,729	8.6	313,682	4.6
9	57,502	316,802	5.5	220,185	4.7
10	45,499	237,347	5.2	233,123	4.9
11	30,959	153,702	5.0	235,634	5.0
12	22,966	118,771	5.2	247,553	5.1
K–12	5,392,401	179,457,669			





## About myON

myON is a student-centered, personalized literacy platform offering unlimited access to thousands of enhanced digital books and authentic, age-appropriate reporting on timely topics and current events via myON News (visit [www.renaissance.com/products/myon/](http://www.renaissance.com/products/myon/)).

**How it works:** On myON, students are matched to books based on reading level, grade-appropriateness, and interests. Teachers assign books or encourage students to self-select reading materials from up to 18,000 digital books for grades pre-K–12, including multiple formats (like graphic novels and picture books), various reading levels (including high-low and advanced materials), popular fiction and series, nonfiction focused on curriculum-aligned topics, and Spanish language texts. With robust interactive literacy tools, students interact deeply with texts, while teachers easily monitor their engagement, growth, and literacy success. myON provides helpful reports for educators and a Student Profile snapshot for students and families with information on individual reading activity. myON also enables students to easily record themselves reading aloud.

**The report data:** We examined the 142,014,694 times books were opened on myON during the 2022–2023 school year, combined with the 63 billion seconds books were read on the program (equivalent to spending more than 2,006 years reading nonstop).

With the extensive reading data our programs provide, we are able to present myriad reading options in the *What Kids Are Reading* report. As you guide students to books to spark or sustain their interest in reading, involve your readers in this process. Kids are particularly motivated by choice, which will likely lead them to both engage more deeply with what they are reading and naturally gravitate to reading more. And the more kids read, the more they will learn about the past and be prepared for their futures.

## About the Artwork

The student artwork featured on the cover and section-opening pages of the report was created by students in grades pre-K–12 who took part in an art contest asking them to illustrate, “How reading makes you feel about the future.”

In addition to the inspiring student winners’ artwork, ten honorable mentions are pictured here. Our sincerest thank you to all of the student participants—we are awed by your hard work and creativity.

We hope our readers continue to be energized and hopeful about all the future brings.

“How reading makes you feel about the future.”



Poorvi N., Grade K



Josephine P., Grade 1



Max A., Grade 2



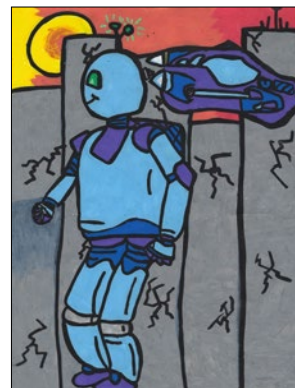
Sydney W., Grade 5



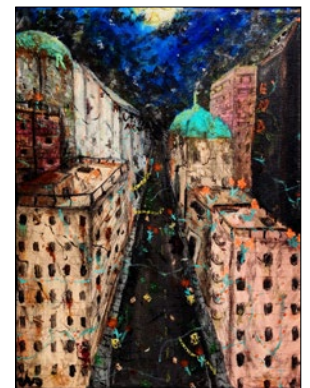
Erica C., Grade 5



Caroline S., Grade 6



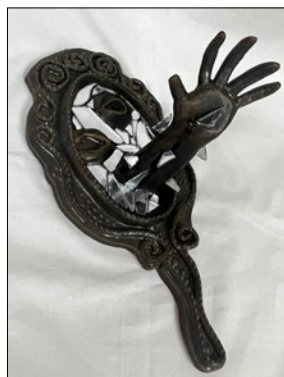
Margaret K., Grade 6



Alice T., Grade 8



Charlie S., Grade 9



Lily M., Grade 12





# A world of possibilities

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