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| **Title** | **Author** | **Lexile** | **Age/Grade** | **Date** | **Synopsis** |
| **Baseball Fever** | Hurwitz, Johanna | 760L | Ages 8-12 | 1981 | From Publishers Weekly - Desirous that his son's mind be on "higher things," nine-year-old Ezra's father cannot understand the boy's passion for the New York Mets. |
| **Because of Winn-Dixie** | DiCamillo, Kate | 610L | Ages 8-up | 2000 | From Publishers Weekly - DiCamillo's debut novel, a 2001 Newbery Honor Book, percolates with heartfelt emotion and eccentric Southern color as superbly performed by Tony Award-winning actress Jones. Ten-year-old Opal, lonely in the Florida town where she has just moved with her preacher father, instantly takes a shine to a scraggly stray dog she encounters in the local Winn-Dixie supermarket. The pooch, named for their meeting place, becomes a trusted companion with whom Opal can share her thoughts and fears, and her hurt, confused feelings about the mother who left the family when Opal was three. Winn-Dixie is soon helping Opal in other ways, too. The dog's "smile" and sweet temperament act as ice breakers that allow Opal to meet a whole new group of friends who grow to be an unusual extended family. Jones imbues her depiction of Opal with a tone of youthful, hopeful wonder and skillfully transforms her voice to distinguish the other older, life-weathered characters. A Tennessee native, she never sounds hokey as she adopts a Southern accent, and she effortlessly slips into a compelling storytelling rhythm. This is a top-notch treatment of an award-winning tale. |
| **Flush** | Hiaasen, Carl | 830L | Ages 10-12, Grade 5 Up | 2005 | In Flush, Carl Hiaasen's ecological concerns focus on illegal dumping of raw sewage from a floating casino. Noah Underwood's dad has sunk the gambling ship, the Coal Queen, in protest. Now the elder Underwood is launching a media campaign from his jail cell to raise public awareness since the sewage-spewing ship will soon be back in operation. Though Noah and his younger sister Abbey believe in their father's cause, they also fear their mother will file for divorce if he continues to react so outrageously to environmental issues. After a few false starts and run-ins with the casino owner's son and the ship's hired goon, the siblings come up with a plan to use food coloring to expose the hazardous dumping. Working with Shelly, the casino's bartender, and aided by a mysterious white-haired man, Noah and Abbey set their trap, but end up adrift off the Florida Keys. Rescue and an unexpected family reunion make their successful exposure of the corrupt casino owner even sweeter. It takes a few more plot twists before the Coral Queen is closed forever, and by then Noah's parents have learned better ways to manage their marital problems. Michael Welch's narration neatly balances the protagonist's earnest youthfulness with the story's humor. In the manner of Hoot (Knopf, 2002), Hiaasen's award-winning first foray into young adult novels, Flush deals with serious ecological and personal issues. With good insight into real world relationships plus a mix of solid citizens and offbeat good guys, this audiobook has broad appeal and will be valued in middle school, high school, and public libraries |
| **Frightful's Mountain** | George, Jean Craighead | 640L | Ages 8-12 | 1999 | Amazon.com - Fans of Jean Craighead George's My Side of the Mountain (a Newbery Honor Book) and On the Far Side of the Mountain will be delighted to return to upstate New York's Catskill Mountains for the conclusion of her trilogy, which appears 40 years after the first title's publication in 1959. Written because a young fan asked, "What happened to Frightful?" this volume tells how Sam Gribley's peregrine falcon--that's Frightful--has to make her own way in the world after Sam is forced to release her. Although told in the third person, the story is developed entirely from the bird's point of view. George's narrative follows the falcon through a series of dangerous adventures (involving DDT, electricity lines, and unscrupulous bird traders, to name a few) as she learns to depend on her own instincts. The environmental message is slightly heavy-handed, but it's wrapped in an enjoyable story from a much loved and astoundingly prolific author. You don't need to have read the earlier books to make sense of this one, though it may help. |
| **Hoot** | Hiaasen, Carl | 760L | Ages 10 to 15 | 2002 | From Publishers Weekly - With a Florida setting and proenvironment, antidevelopment message, Hiaasen (Sick Puppy) returns to familiar turf for his first novel for young readers. Characteristically quirky characters and comic twists will surely gain the author new fans, though their attention may wander during his narrative's intermittently protracted focus on several adults, among them a policeman and the manager of a construction site for a new franchise of a pancake restaurant chain. Both men are on a quest to discover who is sabotaging the site at night, including such pranks as uprooting survey stakes, spray-painting the police cruiser's windows while the officer sleeps within and filling the portable potties with alligators. The story's most intriguing character is the boy behind the mischief, a runaway on a mission to protect the miniature owls that live in burrows underneath the site. Roy, who has recently moved to Florida from Montana, befriends the homeless boy (nicknamed Mullet Fingers) and takes up his cause, as does the runaway's stepsister. Though readers will have few doubts about the success of the kids' campaign, several suspenseful scenes build to the denouement involving the sitcom-like unraveling of a muckity-muck at the pancake house. These, along with dollops of humor, help make the novel quite a hoot indeed. |
| **Loser** | Spinelli, Jerry | 650L | Ages 8-12 | 2002 | Donald Zinkoff is one of the greatest kids you could ever hope to meet. He laughs easily, he likes people, he loves school, he tries to rescue lost girls in blizzards, he talks to old ladies. The only problem is, he's a loser. Until fourth grade, Zinkoff's uncontrollable giggling in class, sloppy handwriting, horrible flute playing, bad grades, clumsiness, and ineptitude at sports go largely unnoticed. When he blows a race for his team, however, his transition to loserdom is complete: "[Loser] is the word. It is Zinkoff's new name. It is not in the roll book." Fortunately, he doesn't really notice. As he did in Stargirl, Newbery Medal-winning author Jerry Spinelli again explores the cruelty of a student body and how it does and doesn't affect one student, pure of spirit. Presumably if Loser makes one child view a "different kid" as a three-dimensional character, Spinelli will consider his book successful. |
| **Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo** | George, Jean Craighead | 740L | Ages 8-12, Grades 5-7 | 1992 | School Library Journal Synopsis -- The brilliant beginning of this novel will put readers in eager anticipation. In a secluded part of the Florida Everglades live a homeless, abused mother who has escaped her husband's violence; her daughter, Liza; and a 12-foot alligator. A few other down-on-their-luck individuals also share this lovely, undisturbed ecological habitat--until the big, harmless gator named Dajun begins giving shivers to new condominium dwellers nearby. Thus, a government agent is sent to dispatch Dajun pronto; Liza and her wooded band hope to find him first to provide a hidden sanctuary. In the end, new beginnings emerge for all. Despite the knockout first chapters, the book's pace slows a bit in the middle. The find-the-alligator premise provides no actual sightings or near-misses until the end. The quiet clues that Liza uses to locate Dajun, however, will win over nature-loving readers as well as those whose fascination with the animal world is just beginning. As in Who Really Killed Cock Robin? (HarperCollins, 1991), George brings great authenticity and knowledge to her mystery settings. Although the story is not as strong as in The Talking Earth (HarperCollins, 1983), many readers will want to enter this Everglades adventure. --Amy Nunley, Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, OH Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. |
| **My Side of the Mountain** | George, Jean Craighead | 810L (series) | Ages 8-12 | 1959 | Every kid thinks about running away at one point or another; few get farther than the end of the block. Young Sam Gribley gets to the end of the block and keeps going--all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he sets up house in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel for companions and his wits as his tool for survival. In a spellbinding, touching, funny account, Sam learns to live off the land, and grows up a little in the process. Blizzards, hunters, loneliness, and fear all battle to drive Sam back to city life. But his desire for freedom, independence, and adventure is stronger. No reader will be immune to the compulsion to go right out and start whittling fishhooks and befriending raccoons.  Jean Craighead George, author of more than 80 children's books, including the Newbery Medal-winning Julie of the Wolves, created another prizewinner with My Side of the Mountain--a Newbery Honor Book, an ALA Notable Book, and a Hans Christian Andersen Award Honor Book. Astonishingly, she wrote its sequel, On the Far Side of the Mountain, 30 years later, and a decade after that penned the final book in the trilogy, Frightful's Mountain, told from the falcon's point of view. |
| **Night of the Twisters** | Ruckman, Ivy | 790L | Ages 8-12 | 1984 | When a tornado watch is issued one Tuesday evening in June, twelve-year-old Dan Hatch and his best friend, Arthur, don't think much of it. After all, tornado warnings are a way of life during the summer in Grand Island, Nebraska. But soon enough, the wind begins to howl, and the lights and telephone stop working. Then the emergency siren starts to wail. Dan, his baby brother, and Arthur have only seconds to get to the basement before the monstrous twister is on top of them. Little do they know that even if they do survive the storm, their ordeal will have only just begun |
| **Redwall (Tale of Redwall)** | Jacques, Brian | 800L (series) | All ages. | 1986 | From Publishers Weekly - Only the lost sword of Martin the Warrior can save Redwall Abbey from the evil rat Cluny and his greedy horde. The young mouse Matthias (formerly Redwall's most awkward novice) vows to recover the legendary weapon. In the course of his quest, Matthias forges strong ties with various local animals. As much as the magic of the sword, it is the help of these new friends that enables Matthias to defeat Cluny once and for all. Jacques's clever use of detail creates an animal world as compelling as that of The Wind in the Willows. From the beginning, each of Redwall's characters is endowed with a unerringly distinct personality: there is a powerful badger named Constance; a mute squirrel named Silent Sam, who knows the forest better than anyone; and his mother Jess, a champion climber who leads a splendid rescue of a piece of the abbey's tapestry. This epic adventure contains elements of all grand quests, with heroic archetypes that will keep fans of Tolkein and King Arthur tales engaged to the final battle. Illustrations not seen by PW. |
| **Sideways Stories From Wayside School** | Sachar, Louis | 460L (series) | Ages 5 to 12 | 1978 | The Wayside School was supposed to be one story high, with 30 classrooms side by side; instead, it was built sideways, with 30 one-classroom stories. As befits such a strange school, these tales are a bit strange too. In one, Jason is stuck to his seat by a large wad of chewing gum. His teacher tries throwing ice water on him (to chill the gum to brittleness) and turning him upside down. She even contemplates cutting his pants off. Finally, though, he falls from his upside-down position when kissed (ugh!) by one of the girls in the class. Other tales include a bit of a moral, such as the story of Kathy, whose assumption that no one will ever like her is proved right, or the story of Bebe, who draws quickly but without artistic merit. The quirky humor in this book is appealing to children, and it makes a good read-aloud book for the younger set. --Richard Farr --This text refers to the Hardcover edition. |
| **Stargirl** | Spinelli, Jerry | 590L | Ages 12-up. | 2000 | "She was homeschooling gone amok." "She was an alien." "Her parents were circus acrobats." These are only a few of the theories concocted to explain Stargirl Caraway, a new 10th grader at Arizona's Mica Area High School who wears pioneer dresses and kimonos to school, strums a ukulele in the cafeteria, laughs when there are no jokes, and dances when there is no music. The whole school, not exactly a "hotbed of nonconformity," is stunned by her, including our 16-year-old narrator Leo Borlock: "She was elusive. She was today. She was tomorrow. She was the faintest scent of a cactus flower, the flitting shadow of an elf owl."  Jerry Spinelli, author of Newbery Medalist Maniac Magee, Newbery Honor Book Wringer, and many other excellent books for teens, elegantly and accurately captures the collective, not-always-pretty emotions of a high school microcosm in which individuality is pitted against conformity. |
| **Swear to Howdy** | Van Draanen, Wendelin | 620L | Ages 8-12 | 2003 | Russell Cooper is lucky. When he and his family move to Lost River, a toothy-grinned boy named Joey Banks takes him under his wing. Joey makes everything into an adventure--cavorting in his favorite swimming hole, target practice with his .22, catching frogs, and playing tricks on his annoying older sister Amanda Jane. When their boyish pranks would go awry, as they often did, Joey would swear "Rusty-boy" to secrecy: "Seems like Joey and me were always making pacts. Lots of pacts, leading up to that last one. 'Rusty,' he'd say to me. 'I swear to howdy, if you tell a soul...'" Van Draanen's tales of boyhood antics told by a boy with a down-home way of talking, brings back the spirit of Huck Finn, and, as in Huckleberry Finn, darker themes lurk beneath the surface. |
| **The Hot and Cold Summer** | Hurwitz, Johanna | 640L | Ages 8-12 | 1984 | Poor Rory and Derek. just as the boys are looking forward to their best summer ever, they're ordered to play host to a girl, named Bolivia, visiting nearby. "You'll love her," parents and neighbors insist -- but the ten-year-old best friends know better. After all, nobody consulted them about making their twosome a threesome. So the boys unleash Rory's revenge: clever schemes to avoid meeting or speaking with their unwanted guest. Sometimes, though, how you react to a new situation isn't quite the way you thought you were going to. Rory and Derek discover this -- and learn a few things about their own friendship, too -- during what turns out to be a most unpredictable summer. With her unerring ability to humorously evoke children's concerns and quandaries, Johanna Hurwitz has created yet another story sure to be popular with young readers. |
| **The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane** | DiCamillo, Kate | 700L | Ages 7-10, Grade 3-6 | 2015 | From School Library Journal - Starred Review. –This achingly beautiful story shows a true master of writing at her very best. Edward Tulane is an exceedingly vain, cold-hearted china rabbit owned by 10-year-old Abilene Tulane, who dearly loves him. Her grandmother relates a fairy tale about a princess who never felt love; she then whispers to Edward that he disappoints her. His path to redemption begins when he falls overboard during the familys ocean journey. Sinking to the bottom of the sea where he will spend 297 days, Edward feels his first emotion–fear. Caught in a fishermans net, he lives with the old man and his wife and begins to care about his humans. Then their adult daughter takes him to the dump, where a dog and a hobo find him. They ride the rails together until Edward is cruelly separated from them. His heart is truly broken when next owner, four-year-old Sarah Ruth, dies. He recalls Abilenes grandmother with a new sense of humility, wishing she knew that he has learned to love. When his head is shattered by an angry man, Edward wants to join Sarah Ruth but those he has loved convince him to live. Repaired by a doll store owner, he closes his heart to love, as it is too painful, until a wise doll tells him that he that he must open his heart for someone to love him. This superb book is beautifully written in spare yet stirring language. The tender look at the changes from arrogance to grateful loving is perfectly delineated. Ibatoullines lovely sepia-toned gouache illustrations and beautifully rendered color plates are exquisite. An ever-so-marvelous tale.–B. Allison Gray, John Jermain Library, Sag Harbor, NY Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. |
| **The Sign of the Beaver** | Speare, Elizabeth George | 770L | Ages 12 - up | 1983 | Amazon.com - When his father returns East to collect the rest of the family, 13-year-old Matt is left alone to guard his family's newly built homestead. One day, Matt is brutally stung when he robs a bee tree for honey. He returns to consciousness to discover that his many stings have been treated by an old Native American and his grandson. Matt offers his only book as thanks, but the old man instead asks Matt to teach his grandson Attean to read. Both boys are suspicious, but Attean comes each day for his lesson. In the mornings, Matt tries to entice Attean with tales from Robinson Crusoe, while in the afternoons, Attean teaches Matt about wilderness survival and Native American culture. The boys become friends in spite of themselves, and their inevitable parting is a moving tribute to the ability of shared experience to overcome prejudice. The Sign of the Beaver was a Newbery Honor Book; author Elizabeth Speare has also won the Newbery Medal twice, for The Witch of Blackbird Pond and The Bronze Bow. --Richard Farr --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.  From School Library Journal - Grade 3-6-By Elizabeth George Speare. Twelve-year old Matt is trying his best to survive on his own until his father returns to their cabin in the Maine wilderness with the rest of the family. Matt develops a deep friendship with a Native American boy. Matt must decide if he should continue waiting for his family or begin a new |
| **The Spy on Third Base** | Christopher, Matt | 610L (series) | Ages 7-9, Grade 2-4 | 1988 | School Library Journal Synopsis -- By carefully studying the way opposing players stand at the plate and the way they swing the bat, T.V. Adams is able to predict where they are likely to hit the ball. He puts his skill to use in his team's games with mixed results. Some teammates seem to resent his well-intentioned directions on how to play the hitters, a newspaper reporter mentions T.V.'s talent in a column, and an anonymous caller tells him not to use his "psychic" ability in the next game "or else." The lengthy descriptions of the game action leave little room for developing any of the problems, however, and the solutions come too quickly and simply. Children making the transition from beginning readers to "real" novels may find a use for this otherwise forgettable effort. Elaine Fort Weischedel, Turner Free Library, Randolph, Mass. |
| **The Tiger Rising** | DiCamillo, Kate | 520L | Ages 8-up | 2015 | Amazon.com - Kate DiCamillo's first novel Because of Winn-Dixie won a Newbery Honor in 2000 for the no-nonsense charm and wisdom of its down-home young heroine, Opal. Also set in Florida, The Tiger Rising is more of a short story in scope, the tale of 12-year-old Rob Horton who finds a caged tiger in the woods behind the Kentucky Star Motel where he lives with his dad. The tiger is so incongruous in this setting, Rob views the apparition as some sort of magic trick. Indeed, the tiger triggers all sorts of magic in Rob's life--for one thing, it takes his mind off his recently deceased mother and the itchy red blisters on his legs that the wise motel housekeeper, Willie May, says is a manifestation of the sadness that Rob keeps "down low."  Something else for Rob to think about is Sistine (as in the chapel), a new city girl with fierce black eyes who challenges him to be honest with her and himself. Spurred by the tiger, events collide to break Rob out of his silent introspection, to form a new friendship with Sistine, a new understanding with his father, and most important, to lighten his heart. This novel is about cages--the consequences of escape as well as imprisonment. The story and symbolism are clear as a bell, and the emotions ring true. --Karin Snelson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition. |
| **Trouble River** | Byars, Betsy | 770L | Ages 8-12 | 1989 | This historical fiction novel tells the story of Dewey and his grandmother and their trip down the river. Dewey and his grandmother have stayed behind at the cabin while his parents went to Hunter City so his mother could have her baby. Indians are sneaking around the cabin and Dewey sees them. Afraid for the lives, Dewey convinces his grandmother to get on the raft he has been building and they can head downstream. The two set off, grandma in her rocking chair and Dewey with his pole to guide them down the river and the family dog. A little further down streamthey stop at a neighbor’s house only to find it burned to the ground. Their only choice is to continue on to Hunter City. Deweyhas never traveled down the river so far, but it’s the only chance he and grandma have. They river brings its share of trouble but nothing as bad as the rapids. Somehow Dewey’s raft even makes it through the rapids and drops them at Hunter City. Dewey and his grandmother arrive safely but the raft has been worn out and drifts apart back to individual logs. Dewey’s parents are happily reunited with their family. |