

Suggested Summer Reading List for Middle School Boys

SPORTS

Ghost

by Jason Reynolds.

Ghost is the first book in a series of sports-themed novels by an excellent middle-grade author. Castle Crenshaw, nicknamed “Ghost” because of his talent for running away, is drawn into the local track team. Ghost, who lives with his hard-working single mother, isn’t sure he fits in with the team. He’s not the only one on the team that struggles, however, but with the help of supportive adults, the kids find their way. I enjoyed this book and appreciated the way Reynolds created complex individuals who struggle with difficult choices, even when they make the wrong decisions.

Booked

by Kwame Alexander.

Perhaps your sports fan is a reluctant reader. Free verse, like that in Booked, is actually great for reluctant readers. It flows rapidly and the pages are much less dense (and therefore less intimidating). Long winded description is replaced by to-the-point emotional experiences and action. Kwame Alexander’s book about 12 year old Nicky is marvelous. Nicky is navigating the usual middle school drama; he is looking forward to a soccer tournament, trying to figure out how to talk to a girl, and dealing with his parents’ separation. During his journey he learns to love books, and discovers that maybe his father’s love of words isn’t so bad after all.

Children of the Longhouse.

This is a historical novel narrated in alternating viewpoints between Ohkwa’ri and his twin sister Otsistia. The siblings are Mohawks living in the 15th century in what would later become upstate New York. Ohkwa’ri tells the elders he heard another boy planning activity that would break a peace accord with a neighboring tribe. His resentful new enemy plans to get his revenge during a game which is a predecessor of lacrosse.

The Hero Two Doors Down:

Based on the True Story of Friendship Between a Boy and a Baseball Legend by Sharon Robinson. 8 year old Steve lives in a Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn. Some of community are upset when they hear African-Americans are to be their new neighbors. Steve, an ardent baseball fan is elated to discover that his new neighbor is Jackie Robinson! A wonderful and thoughtful book about community, friendship and breaking barriers.

Guys Read: The Sports Pages, ed.

by Jon Scieszka.

A fun collection of 10 sports themed short stories by stellar children’s authors. Guys Read is a series aimed at encouraging boys to read. Authors include Anne Ursu, Jacqueline Woodson, Joseph Joseph Bruchac and Dan Gutman. A variety of sports are represented. I highly recommend the whole Guys Read series.

FUNNY

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key (series)

by Jack Gantos.

Joey is dealing with some tough situations, not least of which is the failure of Ritalin to control his ADD. This is a great book that addresses what insensitive adults would label “bad behavior” in school. It is at times humorous, but also deals with hard situations. National Book Award Finalist.



Almost Super

by Marion Jensen.

Two kids in a family of super heroes await the arrival of their powers. Those powers turn out to be duds, but that doesn't stop the kids from fighting for what they think is right.

Dragonbreath (series)

by Ursula Vernon

Danny Dragonbreath has a bit of a problem: he can't breath fire. In an effort to complete a school assignment, he drags his friend, Wendell off on an adventure, which doesn't turn out so well for Wendell, but Danny's breath might just finally save the day. This is a combo novel-graphic-novel book.

I, Funny: A Middle School Story (series)

by James Patterson

Filled with comic-style illustrations, Jamie narrates his own tale of his determination to become a stand up comic. He has a lot going on at home, but he decides to enter and win a comedy contest and won't let the judges give him the pity vote just because he is in a wheelchair

13 Story Tree House (series)

by Andy Griffiths

This is the most amazing tree house ever! I mean, it includes a machine that shoots marshmallows into your mouth! The boys who live in the tree house have some seriously wacky adventures and loads of illustrations bring everything to life. Each book in the series adds several stories to the house!

Pugs of the Frozen North

by Philip Reeve and Sarah McIntyre

This is for families and kids who enjoy a healthy dose of quirky humor. (— as you might guess from seeing the cover. I would also assert that the book is much, much better than the cover makes it look.) A shipping accident leaves a gaggle of pugs stranded in the snowy, frozen north. They are saved and adopted by a pair of kids, Sika and Shen. Sika and Shen harness the pugs in attempt to win the Great Northern Race, which ends at the home of a mythical man called Snowfather. There are many shenanigans along the race, including a bizarre encounter with noodle loving creatures.

Surviving the Applewhites

Jake has gotten kicked out of his last school and now has come to live with the eccentric, artistic, homeschooling Applewhite family. The father has taken on directing a local production of "The Sound of Music" and no one is more surprised than Jake when he finds he loves performing. I loved the quirky characters and the boundless energy of this book. When the family has to pull together to get the show up after they are blackballed by a local stage mom, the results are hilariously successful. I really enjoy how the story reinforces the necessity of cooperation when putting on a play. I also recommend this as a terrific read aloud. A 2003 Newbery Honor book

Phineas L. MacGuire . . . Erupts!: The First Experiment (From the Highly Scientific Notebooks of Phineas L. MacGuire)

Phineas (aka "Mac") goes through life looking at everything from a scientific angle. He observes, collects and applies data and when he is paired with the new kid at school for a science experiment they have to figure out how to work together. The writing is funny and clever and kids will easily relate to the characters. Plus, there are a lot of erupting volcanoes! The end of the book even includes several experiments for readers to try at home. Follow up the first book with Phineas L. MacGuire . . . Gets Slimed!, in which Mac experiments with penicillin and Phineas L. MacGuire . . . Blasts Off!, in which the subject is space exploration.



Big Nate

by Lincoln Pierce.

Nate knows he's meant for big things. REALLY big things. But things don't always go your way just because you're awesome. Nate barely survives his dad's toxic oatmeal before rushing off to school—minus his lunch. He body slams the no-nonsense principal. He accidentally insults his least favorite teacher, the horrifying Mrs. Godfrey (aka Godzilla). And school has barely started!

Trouble always seems to find him, but Nate keeps his cool. He knows he's destined for greatness. A fortune cookie told him so.

GET YOU THINKING

The Best Man

by Richard Peck.

This author is well known for his book, *A Long Way From Chicago*, but this newest release from him about a boy learning about the men he considers his role models.

The Apothecary (series) by

Maile Meloy.

A suspenseful, thrilling series set during the Cold War. Two friends seek to uncover the mystery surrounding an apothecary's book

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

by Sherman

This tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

All American Boys

by Brendan Kiely and Jason Reynolds

In this Coretta Scott King Honor Award–winning novel, two teens—one black, one white—grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

Eleven

by Tom Rogers.

Alex Douglas always wanted to be a hero. But nothing heroic ever happened to Alex. Nothing, that is, until his eleventh birthday. When Alex rescues a stray dog as a birthday gift to himself, he doesn't think his life can get much better. Radar, his new dog, pretty much feels the same way. But this day has bigger things in store for both of them.

This is a story about bullies and heroes. About tragedy and hope. About enemies with two legs and friends with four, and pesky little sisters and cranky old men, and an unexpected lesson in kindness delivered with a slice of pizza. This is *Eleven*: the journey of a boy turning eleven on 9/11.

ADVENTURE

The Worst Class Trip Ever

by Dave Barry.

In this hilarious novel, written in the voice of eighth-grader Wyatt Palmer, Dave Barry takes us on a class trip to Washington, DC. Wyatt, his best friend, Matt, and a few kids from Culver Middle School find themselves in a heap of trouble—not just with their teachers, who have long lost patience with them—but from several mysterious men they first meet on their flight to the nation's capital. In a fast-paced adventure with the monuments as a backdrop, the kids try to stay out of danger and out of the doghouse while trying to save the president from attack—or maybe not.

The Graveyard Book

by Neil Gaiman.

Bod is an unusual boy who inhabits an unusual place—he's the only living resident of a graveyard. Raised from infancy by the ghosts, werewolves, and other cemetery denizens, Bod has learned the antiquated customs of his guardians' time as well as their ghostly teachings—such as the ability to Fade so mere mortals cannot see him. Can a boy raised by ghosts face the wonders and terrors of the worlds of both the living and the dead?

Navigating Early

by Clare Vanderpool

From the author of Newbery Medal winner *Moon Over Manifest* comes the odyssey-like adventure of two boys' incredible quest on the Appalachian Trail.

When Jack Baker's father sends him from his home in Kansas to attend a boys' boarding school in Maine, Jack doesn't know what to expect. Certainly not Early Auden, the strangest of boys. Early keeps to himself, reads the number pi as a story, and refuses to accept truths others take for granted. Jack, feeling lonely and out of place, connects with Early, and the two become friends.

During a break from school, the boys set out for the Appalachian Trail on a quest for a great black bear. As Jack and Early travel deeper into the mountains, they meet peculiar and dangerous characters, and they make some shocking discoveries. But their adventure is only just beginning. Will Jack's and Early's friendship last the journey? Can the boys make it home alive?

Suggested Projects:

Comic Book- Create a comic book based on your book. Each page should be set up in a comic book format with illustrations and captions. Your comic book should retell the main ideas of the story including all required information.

Diorama- Using a small box, such as a shoe box, design and build a diorama of your favorite scene from your book.

Book Report- Write a report about your book. Be sure to describe the setting, main characters, plot, and your opinion.

Movie- Film yourself acting out your favorite scene with a friend or family member. Have fun with costumes, props, and set design!

Have another idea? Go for it! Be as creative as you can!