



High Interest Books for High School Students Reading Below Grade Level

- Alexie, Sherman. [The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian](#). New York: Little, Brown, 2007. [y ALEXIE] RL 4.0*
Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white school in town where the only other Indian is the school mascot.
- Anderson, Laurie Halse. [Wintergirls](#). New York, N.Y.: Viking, 2009. [y ANDERSON 2009] RL 4.1*
Eighteen-year-old Lia comes to terms with her best friend's death from anorexia as she struggles with the same disorder.
- Anderson, M.T. [Burger Wuss](#). Cambridge, Mass: Candlewick Press, 1999. [y ANDERSON] RL 3.5*
Hoping to lose his loser image, Anthony plans revenge on a bully which results in a war between two competing fast food restaurants, Burger Queen and O'Dermott's.
- Armstrong, Lance. [It's not about the bike: My journey back to life](#). New York: Putnam, 2000. [796.62 A734i 2000] RL 6.7*
This is the story of bicyclist and Tour de France winner, Lance Armstrong, his battle with cancer, and his ride to a Tour victory.
- Atwater-Rhodes, Amelia. [In the forests of the night](#). New York: Delacorte Press, 1999. [y ATWATERRH] RL 5.4*
Risika, a teenage vampire, wanders back in time to the year 1684 when, as a human, she died and was transformed against her will.
- Bodeen, S.A. [The compound](#). New York: Feiwel and Friends, 2008. [y BODEEN] RL 4.1*
Along with his parents and two sisters, Eli has spent six years in a vast underground compound built by his wealthy father to protect them from a nuclear holocaust.
- Collins, Suzanne. [The hunger games](#). New York: Scholastic Press, 2008. [y COLLINS 2008.] RL 5.2*
In a future North America, where the rulers of Panem maintain control through an annual televised survival competition, 16-year-old Katniss's skills are put to the test when she voluntarily takes her younger sister's place. [Catching fire](#) is the sequel.
- Crutcher, Chris. [Athletic shorts: Six short stories](#). Bantam, 1991. [y CRUTCHER] RL 6.0*
A collection of short stories featuring characters from earlier books by Chris Crutcher.
- Fleischman, Paul. [Whirligig](#). New York: H. Holt, 1998. [y FLEISCHMA] RL 4.9*
While traveling to each corner of the country to build a whirligig in memory of the girl whose death he causes, sixteen-year-old Brian finds forgiveness and atonement.
- Forman, Gayle. [If I stay](#). New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2009. [y FORMAN 2009] RL 5.3*
While in a coma following an automobile accident that killed her parents and younger brother, 17-year-old Mia weighs whether to live with her grief or join her family in death.

- Glenn, Mel. [Split image: A story in poems](#). New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000. [y811.5 G558s 2000] RL 4.6*
A series of poems reflect the thoughts and feelings of various people about the seemingly perfect Laura Li and her life inside and out of Tower High School.
- Halpern, Julie. [Get well soon](#). New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2007. [y HALPERN] RL 5.4*
When her parents confine her to a mental hospital, an overweight teenage girl – who suffers from panic attacks – describes her experiences in a series of letters to a friend.
- Harmon, Michael B. [The last exit to normal](#). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008. [y HARMON] RL 3.6*
Seventeen-year-old Ben is yanked out of his city life and plunked down into a small Montana town with his father and this father's boyfriend.
- Hijuelos, Oscar. [Dark dude](#). New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008. [y HIJUELOS 2008] RL 5.6*
In the 1960s, Rico Fuentes – a pale-skinned Cuban American teenager – abandons drug-infested New York City for the picket fence and apple pie world of Wisconsin.
- Holt, David. [The exploding toilet: Modern urban legends](#). Little Rock, Ark.: August House Publishers, 2004. [y398.2 H758e 2004] RL 6.5*
Here you'll find stupid criminals, government SNAFUs, scary stories, and a section featuring the Internet. These stories are too good not to pass on ...
- Hopkins, Ellen. [Impulse](#). New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2007. [y HOPKINS] RL 4.5*
Three teens who meet at Aspen Springs mental hospital after each has attempted suicide connect with each other in this novel in verse.
- Howe, Norma. [The adventures of Blue Avenger](#). New York: Henry Holt, 1999. [y HOWE] RL 6.2*
On his sixteenth birthday, David Schumacher decides to change his name to Blue Avenger, hoping to make a difference in his Oakland neighborhood and in the world.
- Hurley, Tonya. [Ghostgirl](#). Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2008. [y HURLEY 2008] RL 6.6*
Even dead, high school senior Charlotte Usher is as invisible to nearly everyone as she always felt. The sequel is [Ghostgirl: Homecoming](#).
- Johnson, Angela. [The first part last](#). New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003. [y JOHNSON] RL 4.7*
Bobby's carefree teenage life changes forever when he becomes a father and must care for his adored baby daughter.
- Koertge, Ronald. [Stoner and Spaz](#). Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2002. [y KOERTGE] RL 3.5*
A troubled youth with cerebral palsy struggles toward self-acceptance with the help of a drug-addicted young woman.
- Kostyal, K. M. [Trial by ice: A photobiography of Sir Ernest Shackleton](#). Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 1999. [j919.89 K86t 1999] RL 6.2*
Traces the adventurous life of the South Pole explorer whose ship, the Endurance, was frozen in ice and crushed, leaving the captain and crew to fight for survival.

- Levithan, David. [Boy meets boy](#). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. [y LEVITHAN] RL 4.5*
This is the story of Paul, a sophomore at a high school like no other: The cheerleaders ride Harleys, the homecoming queen used to be a guy named Daryl, and the gay-straight alliance was formed to help the straight kids learn how to dance.
- Marsden, John. [Tomorrow, when the war began](#). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995. [y MARSDEN] RL 6.3*
Seven Australian teenagers return from a camping trip in the bush to discover that their country has been invaded and they must hide to stay alive.
- Myers, Walter Dean. [Monster](#). New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999. [y MYERS] RL 5.1*
While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, 16-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script.
- Paulsen, Gary. [Soldier's heart: A novel of the Civil War](#). New York: Delacorte Press, 1998. [y] RL 5.7*
Eager to enlist, fifteen-year-old Charley has a change of heart after experiencing both the physical horrors and mental anguish of Civil War combat.
- Rhodes-Courter, Ashley. [Three little words: A memoir](#). New York: Atheneum, 2008. [y362.733 R476t 2008] RL 5.4*
Ashley spent nine years in foster care enduring many caseworkers, moving from school to school, and manipulative, humiliating and abusive treatment from one foster family.
- Runyon, Brent. [The burn journals](#). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. [y362.28 R943b 2004] RL 3.8*
Brent Runyon was fourteen years old when he set himself on fire. In this memoir, he describes that suicide attempt and his recovery over the following year.
- Ryan, Carrie. [The Forest of Hands and Teeth](#). New York: Delacorte Press, 2009. [y RYAN 2009] RL 5.8*
Orphaned Mary seeks knowledge of life, love, and especially what lies beyond her walled village – the unconsecrated; the aggressive flesh-eating people who were once dead.
- Schumacher, Julie. [Black box](#). New York: Delacorte Press, 2008. [y SCHUMACHE 2008] RL 4.1*
When her 16-year-old sister is hospitalized for depression and her parents want to keep it a secret, 14-year-old Elena tries to cope with her own anxiety and feelings of guilt.
- Sitomer, Alan. [The hoopster](#). New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2005. [y SITOMER] RL 4.9*
Andre Anderson loves to play basketball. When he is viciously attacked, it calls his whole world into question – even his deadly jumpshot. [Hip-hop high school](#) and [Homeboyz](#) complete the trilogy.
- Sleator, William. [The boxes](#). New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1998. [j] RL 4.2*
When she opens two strange boxes left by her mysterious uncle, 15-year-old Annie unleashes a swarm of telepathic creatures, with a power capable of slowing down time.
- Soto, Gary. [The afterlife](#). Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2003. [y SOTO] RL 5.2*
A senior at East Fresno High School lives on as a ghost after his brutal murder in the restroom of a club where he had gone to dance.
- Spinelli, Jerry. [Stargirl](#). New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. [y SPINELLI] RL 4.2*
(Also available in [Spanish](#))
In this story about the perils of popularity, the courage of nonconformity, and the thrill of first love, an eccentric student named Stargirl changes Mica High School forever.

- Stine, R.L. [Dangerous girls](#). New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003. [y STINE] RL 3.5*
After 16-year-old Destiny and her twin sister Livvy are turned into partial vampires at a summer camp, they try to find the “Restorer,” someone who can return them to normal. [The taste of night](#) is the sequel.
- Valdes-Rodriguez, Alisa. [Haters](#). New York: Little, Brown, 2006. [y VALDESROD] RL 4.2*
Having tried for years to deny her psychic abilities, high school sophomore Paski has disturbing visions about the popular girl at her new school in Orange County, California.
- Volponi, Paul. [Hurricane song](#). New York: Viking, 2008. [y VOLPONI 2008] RL 5.4*
High school sophomore Miles Shaw goes to live with his father – a jazz musician – in New Orleans, and together they survive the horrors of Hurricane Katrina.
- Werlin, Nancy. [The rules of survival](#). New York: Dial Books, 2006. [y WERLIN] RL 4.3*
Seventeen-year-old Matthew recounts his attempts, starting at a young age, to free himself and his sisters from the grip of their emotionally and physically abusive mother.
- White, Robb. [Deathwatch](#). New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1972. [y WHITE] RL 6.0*
Needing money for school, a college boy accepts a job as guide on a desert hunting trip and nearly loses his life.
- Williams-Garcia, Rita. [Jumped](#). New York: HarperTeen, 2009. [y WILLIAMSG 2009] RL 3.6*
The lives of Leticia, Dominique, and Trina are irrevocably intertwined after Leticia overhears Dominique’s plans to beat up Trina.
- Wolff, Virginia Euwer. [Make lemonade](#). New York: H. Holt, 1993. [y WOLFF] RL 5.0*
In order to earn money for college, fourteen-year-old LaVaughn babysits for a teenage mother. [True believer](#) and [This full house](#) complete the trilogy.
- Wong, Janet S. [Behind the wheel: Poems about driving](#). New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1999. [y811.5 W872b 1999] RL 4.6*
Thirty-six poems look at various aspects of driving – including passing the driver’s test, being pulled over by a cop, having an accident – treating them as metaphors for life.
- Zarr, Sara. [Story of a girl](#). New York: Little, Brown, 2007. [y ZARR] RL 4.5*
In the three years since her father caught her in the back seat of a car with an older boy, sixteen-year-old Deanna’s life at home and school has been a nightmare.

*Reading level figures come from the Renaissance Learning website (http://www.renlearn.com/store/quiz_advanced.asp). The first digit indicates the *average* grade level, and the second is approximately how far through that grade year. (RL 4.5 means a title could be read by an average 4th grade reader halfway through the school year.)

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Created by the Multnomah County Library School Corps, 503-988-6004, for grades 9-12, 7/12/05 [revised 08/09]