



## 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 farm town school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.
- Almond, David. [Kit's wilderness](#). New York: Delacorte Press, 2000. [y ALMOND] RL 3.7\*  
Thirteen-year-old Kit goes to live with his grandfather in the decaying coal mining town of Stonegate, England, and finds both the old man and the town haunted by ghosts of the past.
- Almond, David. [Skellig](#). Yearling Book, 2000. [j ALMOND] RL 3.5\*  
Unhappy about his baby sister's illness and the chaos of moving into a dilapidated old house, Michael retreats to the garage and finds a mysterious stranger who is something like a bird and something like an angel.
- Anderson, Matthew 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.
- Bloor, Edward. [Tangerine](#). San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1997. [y BLOOR] RL 4.3\*  
Twelve-year-old Paul, who lives in the shadow of his football hero brother Erik, fights for the right to play soccer despite his near blindness and slowly begins to remember the incident that damaged his eyesight.
- 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.
- 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--students, the librarian, parents, the principal, and others--about the seemingly perfect Laura Li and her life inside and out of Tower High School.
- Holt, David. [The exploding toilet: Modern urban legends](#). Little Rock, Ark.: August House Publishers, 2004. [y398.2 H758e 2004] RL 6.5\*  
Storytellers David Holt and Bill Mooney follow up their previous hit, [Spiders in the Hairdo](#), with a whole new collection of modern urban legends. 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 ...
- Howe, Norma. [The adventures of Blue Avenger](#). New York: Henry Holt, 1999. [y HOWE] RL 6.2\*  
On his sixteenth birthday, still trying to cope with the unexpected death of his father, David Schumacher decides--or does he--to change his name to Blue Avenger, hoping to find a way to make a difference in his Oakland neighborhood and in the world.
- 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. [Letters from the inside](#). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994. [y MARSDEN] RL 4.7\*  
The relationship between two teenage girls who become acquainted through letters intensifies as their correspondence reveals some of the terrible problems of their lives.

- 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, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken.
- Na, An. [A step from heaven](#). Asheville, NC: Front Street, 2000. [y NA] RL 5.2\*  
A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.
- 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 after being taken away from her mother. She endured many caseworkers, moving from school to school, and manipulative, humiliating and abusive treatment from one foster family. See how she survives and eventually thrives against the odds.
- Sitomer, Alan. [The hoopster](#). New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2005. [y SITOMER] RL 4.9\*  
Andre Anderson is a black teenager who loves to play basketball. When he is viciously attacked, it calls his whole world into question – even his deadly jumpshot.
- Sleator, William. [The boxes](#). New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1998. [j] RL 4.2\*  
When she opens two strange boxes left in her care by her mysterious uncle, fifteen-year-old Annie discovers a swarm of telepathic creatures and unleashes 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 sixteen-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.

- Trueman, Terry. [Stuck in neutral](#). New York: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2000. [y TRUEMAN] RL 5.7\*  
Fourteen-year-old Shawn McDaniel, who suffers from severe cerebral palsy and cannot function, relates his perceptions of his life, his family, and his condition, especially as he believes his father is planning to kill him.
- 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 high school in Orange County, California.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 written driver's test, being pulled over by a cop, and having an accident, and treat 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, but while dreaming of escaping with her brother and his family, she discovers the power of forgiveness.

\*These reading level figures come from the Renaissance Learning website ([http://www.renlearn.com/store/quiz\\_advanced.asp](http://www.renlearn.com/store/quiz_advanced.asp)).

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