

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026

Grade 3 and Grade 4

All book summaries are written by committee members or provided by the publishers.

Any available unabridged edition of a title is acceptable.

Albus, Kate. ***A Place to Hang the Moon***. Holiday House, 2021. In World War II, England, orphaned siblings William, Edmund, and Anna are evacuated from London to live in the countryside, where they bounce from home to home in search of someone willing to adopt them permanently.

Almond, David. ***Puppet***. Candlewick, 2024. A very touching story about a puppet master and his last creation, which comes to life and helps him make a friend and share his puppet-making skills with the next generation.

Applegate, Katherine. ***Odder***. Feiwel and Friends, 2022. A remarkable sea otter's life changes after a dangerous encounter with a shark.

Applegate, Katherine. ***Pocket Bear***. Feiwel and Friends, 2025. Pocket Bear is a tiny stuffed bear, originally made during World War I to comfort soldiers, who now lives over a century later as the beloved "mayor" of a home where old toys are restored and given new chances to be loved.

Applegate, Katherine. ***The One and Only Family***. Storytide, 2024. Along with his family, Ivan is loving life at the wildlife sanctuary while reminiscing about his time spent in the circus, his jungle upbringing, and his own twin's memory as he embraces fatherhood. *Series*

Barton, Chris. ***What Do You Do with a Voice Like That?*** Beach Lane Books, 2018. A biography about the life of Houston native Barbara Jordan, who was best known for her work as a lawyer, politician, and civil rights leader.

Borba, Adam. ***Outside Nowhere***. Little, Brown, 2022. After setting off one too many pranks, Parker is sent to work on an unusual farm in the middle of nowhere, where something extraordinary is growing underground.

Boxer, Elisa. ***Hidden Hope: How a Toy and a Hero Saved Lives during the Holocaust***. Abrams Books, 2023. The true story of teenager Jacqueline Gauthier and her toy duck that helped save Jewish families in Nazi-occupied France during World War II.

Broach, Elise. ***Duet***. Christy Ottaviano, 2022. A talented but reluctant piano student is coaxed into playing again by a singing goldfinch, and together, they work to unravel the mystery of a valuable missing piano.

Brooks, Molly. ***Sanity & Tallulah***. Hyperion, 2018. Sanity and Tallulah, who live in a space station, search the galaxy for Sanity's three-headed kitten. *Graphic novel*

Brown, Peter. ***The Wild Robot Escapes***. Little, Brown, 2018. After being captured by the Recons and returned to civilization for reprogramming, Roz is sent to Hilltop Farm, where she befriends her owner's family and animals, but pines for her son, Brightbill. *Series*

Chau, Alina. ***Marshmallow & Jordan***. First Second, 2021. Jordan's days as a star basketball player are over after an accident leaves her paralyzed from the waist down. She befriends Marshmallow, a mysterious white elephant, who helps Jordan discover a new sport. *Graphic novel*

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- Churnin, Nancy. ***The William Hoy Story: How a Deaf Baseball Player Changed the Game.*** Whitman, 2016. Deaf baseball player William Hoy helped to forever change the way baseball is played.
- Cline-Ransome, Lesa. ***Before She Was Harriet: The Story of Harriet Tubman.*** Holiday House, 2018. An evocative poem and opulent watercolors come together to honor a woman of humble origins whose courage and compassion make her larger than life.
- Cline-Ransome, Lesa. ***Finding Langston.*** Holiday House, 2018. Discovering a book of Langston Hughes' poetry in the library helps Langston cope with the loss of his mother, relocating from Alabama to Chicago as part of the Great Migration, and being bullied.
- Creech, Susan. ***Saving Winslow.*** Joanna Cotler, 2018. When Louis' dad brings home a scrawny, sickly newborn donkey, their connection is instant; while the adults around him say Winslow might not survive, Louis finds the faith and courage to believe in his donkey and himself.
- Crimi, Carolyn. ***Secondhand Dogs.*** Balzer + Bray, 2021. A group of rescue dogs must work together and courageously embark on a difficult journey to save one of their own.
- Dahl, Roald. ***Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.*** Puffin was first published in 1964. Delicious and mysterious adventures await our hero, Charlie Bucket, and four other lucky winners of the Golden Ticket contest on their private tour of Willy Wonka's infamous Chocolate Factory.
- Delargy, Flora. ***Rescuing Titanic: A True Story of Quiet Bravery in the North Atlantic.*** Wide Eyed Editions, 2021. The true account of the Carpathia crew's valiant efforts to save the lives of Titanic survivors in the icy North Atlantic.
- DiCamillo, Kate. ***Lost Evangeline.*** Candlewick, 2026. A gentle, fairy-tale-style story about a tiny girl who is separated from the shoemaker who raised her and must navigate the world on her own. I am running a few minutes late; my previous meeting is running over.
- Engle, Margarita. ***Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln.*** Atheneum, 2019. Teresa was a child prodigy at the piano. As her fame spread in the United States after her family emigrated from Venezuela, she received an invitation from President Lincoln to play at the White House. *Pura Belpré Illustrator Award 2020*
- Engle, Margarita. ***The Flying Girl: How Aida de Acosta Learned to Soar.*** Atheneum, 2018. This beautifully illustrated picture book tells the inspirational story of Aida de Acosta, the first woman to fly a motorized aircraft.
- Fairbairn, Nathan. ***Paws: Gabby Gets It Together.*** Razorbill, 2022. Three best friends, who love animals but can't own pets, work together to start a dog-walking business. *Graphic novel*
- Farley, Walter. ***The Black Stallion.*** Random House was first published in 1941. Set in the 1940s, a young boy and a wild stallion build a relationship of trust and a lifelong friendship after being shipwrecked and surviving on a deserted island together.
- Farook, Nizrana. ***The Girl Who Lost a Leopard.*** Peachtree, 2023. Twelve-year-old Selvi loves the animals that live in the mountains behind her home, particularly the beautiful golden leopard, Lokka. She is determined to protect him from the hunter Jansz, who threatens not only Lokka but also Selvi's family.

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- Ferry, Beth. ***Growing Home***. Simon & Schuster, 2025. A whimsical story about four unlikely housemates—a goldfish, a spider, a plant, and a violet—who discover magic and work together to protect the human family they love, celebrating friendship, teamwork, and belonging.
- Fleming, Candace. ***Polar Bear***. Neal Porter Books, 2022. Exploration of the life and habitat of a mother polar bear and her cubs.
- Forrester, Amy Seto. ***Search for a Giant Squid: Pick Your Path***. Chronicle Books, 2023. Readers join a team of scientists and experts on an expedition to the ocean’s twilight zone in search of the hard-to-find giant squid, making choices about their adventure along the way. *Series*
- Fulton, Kristen. ***Flight for Freedom: The Wetzel Family’s Daring Escape from East Germany***. Chronicle Books, 2020. Set in 1979, this is the true story of Peter Wetzel and his family, who made the daring escape over the Berlin Wall in their handmade hot air balloon, succeeding where others had failed, making freedom a reality and inspiring hope for their fellow East Berliners.
- Giovanni, Nikki. ***I am loved***. Atheneum, 2018. This collection of poems and art celebrates individuality, personal histories, diversity, and the universal and powerful value of love on all levels for everyone.
- Gottesfeld, Jeff. ***Twenty-one Steps: Guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier***. Candlewick, 2001. A tribute to the nameless fallen soldiers and the sentinels who guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.
- Gratz, Alan. ***Ban this Book***. Starscape, 2017. Amy Anne, who never gets in trouble, finds herself in the battle of a lifetime when a concerned parent in her school has her favorite book taken off the library shelf.
- Gray, Kristin L. ***The Amelia Six: An Amelia Earhart mystery***. Simon & Schuster, 2020. Eleven-year-old Millie and five other girls snowed in at Amelia Earhart’s Birthplace Museum in Atchison, Kansas, are on a scavenger hunt when the lights go out, and Amelia’s aviator goggles go missing.
- Green, Poppy. ***A New Friend***. Little Simon, 2015. After a long winter break, Sophie Mouse and her friends return to school to find a new student in their class, Owen the snake, who could cause a problem for Sophie and her fellow classmates. *Series*
- Harris, Chris. ***I’m Just No Good at Rhyming and Other Nonsense for Mischievous Kids and Immature Grown-ups***. Little, Brown, 2017. In the vein of Shel Silverstein, this collection of poems is filled with humor, nonsensical language, rhyme, wordplay, and even codes to crack.
- Harris, Chris. ***My Head Has a Bellyache: and More Nonsense for Mischievous Kids and Immature Grown-Ups***. Little, Brown, 2023. This lighthearted collection of humorous poems uses rhymes and clever wordplay to share silly and nonsensical stories.
- Hartman, Aubrey. ***The Lion of Lark-Hayes Manor***. Little, Brown, 2023. Twelve-year-old Poppy meets a water nymph and exchanges her favorite book for a lion, but her deal has unexpected consequences that Poppy must fight to correct.

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- Humphrey, Anna. ***Megabat***. Tundra Books, 2018. When Daniel moves into a new house in a new town, he thinks it might be haunted, but he is surprised to find a new friend who happens to be a fruit bat in need of some help to make the long journey back home. *Series*
- Jaggar, Louisa, and Sheri Becker. ***Sprouting Wings: The True Story of James Herman Banning, the First African American Pilot to Fly Across the United States***. Crown, 2021. James Herman Banning dreamed of touching the sky, and he became the first African American pilot to fly across the United States.
- Jenkins, Steve. ***The Frog Book***. Harcourt, 2019. An introduction to an assortment of the world's frog species, discussing a myriad of topics such as their colors, shapes, and sizes, their various habitats, and how they find food, escape danger, and attract a mate.
- Johnson, Terry Lynn. ***Sled Dog School***. Clarion, 2019. When eleven-year-old Matt must set up a business to save his failing math grade, he overcomes his self-doubt and gains two friends along the way.
- Keating, Jess. ***The Girl Who Built an Ocean: An Artist, an Argonaut, and the True Story of the World's First Aquarium***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. The inspiring tale of a seamstress-turned-scientist who invented the world's first aquarium at a time when women in STEM were startlingly rare.
- Kenny, Emily. ***The Extraordinary Adventures of Alice Tonks***. Rock the Boat, 2022. Alice Tonks desperately wants to make friends at boarding school, but being autistic, she's always found it hard to fit in. Then she discovers she is a 'switcher' and can talk to animals.
- Khan, Hena. ***Power Forward***. Salaam Press, 2018. Fourth-grader Zayd yearns to play basketball on the Gold Team, but when he skips orchestra rehearsals to practice, his parents forbid anything basketball-related, and tryouts are coming soon. *Series*
- Kelly, Erin Entrada. ***Felix Powell, Boy Dog***. Greenwillow, 2024. Animal communicator Felix's day takes a bizarre turn when a spell transforms the eight-year-old into a dog.
- Klostermann, Penny Parker. ***The Spider Lady: Nan Songer and Her Arachnid World War II Army***. Calkins Creek, 2025. This picture book biography tells the story of Nan Songer, who used her love of spiders to help the United States during World War II by collecting their strong silk and turning it into tools that helped the military.
- Korman, Gordon. ***Old School***. HarperCollins, 2025. After growing up with his grandmother in a retirement home, twelve-year-old Dexter Foreman is made to attend a "real" middle school. Dexter's old and new worlds unexpectedly cross as he struggles with fitting in, with unforeseen results.
- Krull, Kathleen. ***Fly High, John Glenn: The Story of an American Hero***. Harper, 2020. John Glenn was the first American astronaut to orbit Earth; he was also a devoted family man, a U.S. Senator, and a national hero who, for 95 years, never lost his love of flying.
- Lai, Remy. ***Pawcasso***. Holt, 2021. Eleven-year-old Jo discovers that a small lie can turn into a big problem when her town assumes a talented and fun-loving dog is hers. *Graphic novel*
- Lang, Heather. ***The Leaf Detective: How Margaret Lowman Uncovered Secrets in the Rainforest***. Calkins Creek, 2021. In this nonfiction book, learn how Margaret braved the odds to discover the secrets of trees from the rainforest.

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- Latham, Irene, and Charles Waters. ***Can I Touch Your Hair?: Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship.*** Carolrhoda Books, 2018. In this collection of poems in conversation, two students, one black and one white, learn to communicate, relate, and celebrate differences.
- Leiloglou, Carolyn. ***Between Flowers and Bones.*** WaterBrook, 2024. For those with the gift, paintings can serve as portals, and Georgia must use them to protect her family and the art world from evil forces, while overcoming her own insecurities and jealousy of her cousin Vincent's flashy abilities. *Series*
- Lloyd, Megan Wagner. ***Allergic.*** Graphix, 2021. Hoping to adopt a pet to find a sense of belonging in a busy family, Maggie is disappointed to discover she is severely allergic to anything with fur and tries to find a pet to love. *Graphic novel*
- Lloyd, Megan Wagner. ***Super Pancake.*** Alfred A. Knopf, 2023. After a prank by the Bacon Bullies accidentally grants Peggy Pancake superpowers, she teams up with her new friend and trusty sidekick, Luc Croissant, to become a superhero and protect Breakfast Town from the evil Dr. Breakfast Sandwich. *Graphic novel, series.*
- López, Diana. ***Sing with Me: The Story of Selena Quintanilla.*** Dial Books, 2001. A picture book biography that follows Selena's rise to success, from singing at her family's restaurant to performing at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in the Astrodome.
- MacColl, Michaela. ***Lady of the Lines: How Maria Reiche Saved the Nazca Lines by Sweeping the Desert.*** Astra Young Readers, 2025. This picture book biography tells the story of scientist Maria Reiche, who in 1941 discovered the giant animal and plant shapes of Peru's Nazca Lines, carefully mapped and studied them and worked her whole life to protect them so they could become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- MacLachlan, Patricia. ***Painting the Game.*** McElderry Books, 2024. In a story of great perseverance, Lucy loves to play baseball. Even as she trains relentlessly, Lucy wonders if she'll ever feel brave enough to share her progress with her mom and dad.
- McCarthy, Meghan. ***The Wildest Race Ever: The Story of the 1904 Olympic Marathon.*** Simon & Schuster, 2016. The exciting and bizarre true story of the 1904 Olympic marathon, which took place at the St. Louis World's Fair.
- McDonald, Andrew. ***Real Pigeons Fight Crime!*** Yearling, 2020. Rock the Pigeon considers working with the crime-fighting crew to uncover the mysteries of the disappearing breadcrumbs and the kidnapped bats in this first book of the series. *Series*
- McDonald, Megan. ***Judy Moody in a Monday Mood.*** Candlewick, 2021. When her teacher, Mr. Todd, makes Monday special by celebrating Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day, Judy Moody's frown is turned upside down, prompting her to come up with the perfect idea to make this the best week ever. *Series*
- McKissack, Patricia C. ***What is Given from the Heart.*** Schwartz & Wade, 2019. James Otis and his family live in poverty, yet his mother insists they need to help seven-year-old Sarah, whose family lost everything in a fire.

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- McNamara, Margaret. *The Dinosaur Expert*. Schwartz & Wade, 2018. When a classmate tells Kimmy, who dreams of being a paleontologist, that “girls aren’t scientists,” their teacher, Mr. Tiffin, teaches them otherwise.
- Messner, Kate. *The Next President: The Unexpected Beginnings and Unwritten Future of America’s Presidents*. Chronicle Books, 2020. Explore our nation’s presidents, learn what they were doing before they were president, and imagine what the next president could be doing right now – it could be you!
- Newman, Lesléa. *Gittel’s Journey: An Ellis Island Story*. Abrams Books, 2019. When it’s time for nine-year-old Gittel and her mother to leave their homeland and immigrate to America to start a new life, a health inspection forces Gittel to find the courage to leave her family behind; based on true stories told by the author’s grandmother.
- Nobleman, Marc Tyler. *Thirty Minutes Over Oregon: A Japanese Pilot’s World War II Story*. Houghton Mifflin, 2018. In this important and moving true story of reconciliation after war, beautifully illustrated in watercolor, a Japanese pilot bombs the continental U.S. during WWII—the only enemy ever to do so—and comes back 20 years later to apologize.
- Nolan, Janet. *Seven and a Half Tons of Steel*. Peachtree, 2016. This powerful story reveals how seven and a half tons of steel, once a beam in the World Trade Center, became the bow of a navy ship, showing how something remarkable can emerge from a devastating event.
- Ortega, Claribel A. *Frizzy*. First Second, 2022. This charming coming-of-age tale follows Marlene’s journey of self-acceptance and confidence as she learns to celebrate her naturally curly hair.
- Paeff, Colleen. *The Great Stink: How Joseph Bazalgette Solved London’s Poop Pollution Problem*. McElderry Books, 2021. Something smells in 19th-century London! Joseph Bazalgette designed London’s first comprehensive sewage system, saving thousands of lives from cholera outbreaks.
- Parry, Rosanne. *A Horse Named Sky*. Greenwillow, 2023. Sky is a young horse running free in the Wild West when he is captured for the Pony Express. He must then escape and return home to rescue his family.
- Pennypacker, Sara. *Leeva at Last*. Balzer + Bray, 2023. With the help of an orphaned badger, a risk-averse boy in a hazmat suit, and the town’s librarians, Leeva sets off to discover her own answer to the question, “What are people for?”--setting off a chain of events that will change Nutsmore forever.
- Perkins, Lynne Rae. *Violet and Jobie in the Wild*. Greenwillow, 2022. Mice Violet and Jobie, live in a human home but soon find themselves uprooted and must quickly adapt to an unfamiliar world.
- Peterson, Andrew. *On the Edge of the Dark Sea of Darkness*. WaterBrook, 2020. This fantasy adventure follows a trio of siblings and their dog as they escape an evil enemy, search for a lost treasure and use their courage and cleverness to survive in a magical and often hilarious world.
- Phelan, Matt. *Knights vs. Dinosaurs*. Greenwillow, 2018. Merlin sends the Knights of the Round Table on their most exciting and dangerous quest to face dinosaurs! *Series*

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- Riley, Scott. *The Floating Field: How a Group of Thai Boys Built Their Own Soccer Field*. Millbrook, 2021. There is no room on a small Thai island for a group of soccer-loving teens to play the game they love, so they create a floating field.
- Robinson, Sharon. *The Hero Two Doors Down: Based on the True Story of Friendship Between a Boy and a Baseball Legend*. Scholastic, 2017. Eight-year-old Steve Satlow is thrilled when Jackie Robinson moves into his Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn in 1948, although many of his neighbors are not. When Steve meets his hero, he is even more excited — and worried that a misunderstanding over a Christmas tree could damage his new friendship.
- Russell-Brown, Katheryn. *A Voice Named Aretha*. Bloomsbury, 2020. From a shy girl with a big voice to the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin touched millions across generations, not only with her songs but with her exemplary life, inspiring hope, respect, and freedom.
- Sachar, Louis. *Wayside School Beneath the Cloud of Doom*. Harper, 2020. The kids and teachers at Wayside School are back, but the looming Cloud of Doom has them all in a tizzy as they race to collect toenail clippings and prepare for the Ultimate Test. *Series*
- Saltzberg, Barney. *The Smell of Wet Dog: and Other Dog Poems and Drawings*. Neal Porter, 2024. Twenty-seven poems about man's best friend, including all the good, bad, and stinky smells that go along with owning or knowing a dog, illustrations included.
- Simon, Coco. *Emily's Cupcake Magic!* Simon Spotlight, 2024. Emily Green struggles with changing schools and feeling left out, then faces self-doubt when a baking contest makes her worry about living in her stepsister Katie's shadow. With encouragement to bake "The Emily Way," she learns to believe in herself and embrace her own talents. *Series*
- Sís, Peter. *Nicky & Vera: A Quiet Hero of the Holocaust and the Children He Rescued*. Norton, 2021. In Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, Nicholas Winston saved the lives of almost 700 children. Vera's family was among those he helped.
- Smith, Emma Bland. *The Gardener of Alcatraz: A True Story*. Charlesbridge, 2022. Prisoner Elliott Michener began tending the gardens at Alcatraz. Through his work, he found new interests and skills, ultimately transforming his life.
- Smith, Emma Bland. *How Science Saved the Eiffel Tower*. Capstone, 2022. The builder of the Eiffel Tower works to save it from demolition by demonstrating its usefulness as a site for cutting-edge scientific experiments.
- Smith, S. D. *The Green Ember*. Story Warren Books, 2014. Two sibling rabbits embark on an adventure to save their family and find their place in a world consumed by tragedy and promise. *Series*
- Stabler, David. *Kid Athletes: True Tales of Childhood from Sports Legends*. Quirk Books, 2015. Hilarious childhood biographies and full-color illustrations show how Tiger Woods, Gabby Douglas, Bruce Lee, Billie Jean King, and other budding sports champions faced kid-sized challenges growing up. *Series*
- Stead, Rebecca and Wendy Mass. *The Lost Library*. Feiwel and Friends, 2023. When a mysterious little free library guarded by a large orange cat appears overnight, eleven-year-old Evan plucks two weathered books from its shelves, never suspecting that his life is about to change.

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- Stone, Tanya Lee. ***Pass Go and Collect \$200: The Real Story of How Monopoly Was Invented***. Holt, 2018. This exciting nonfiction picture book tells the bold and fascinating story behind one of the world's most beloved board games.
- Stremer, Jessica. ***Great Carrier Reef***. Holiday House, 2023. A remarkable story chronicling the conversion of the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany from a thriving warship to the world's largest artificial reef.
- Tavares, Matt. ***Crossing Niagara: The Death-Defying Tightrope Adventures of the Great Blondin***. Candlewick, 2016. An illustrated account of the daredevil of Niagara Falls, the Great Blondin, who walked from America to Canada across the Niagara River on a rope.
- Tavares, Matt. ***Hoops***. Candlewick Press, 2023. Inspired by a true story, in 1976, Judi and her friends led the first girls' basketball team at their school in an undefeated season while creatively raising community support and fighting for equal treatment. *Graphic novel*
- Thomson, Sarah L. ***Two Friends, One Dog, and a Very Unusual Week***. Peachtree, 2023. Strait-laced fifth grader Emily's world is turned upside down when a new neighbor and free spirit, Rani, moves in with her dog Otto.
- Tonatiuh, Duncan. ***Soldier for Equality: José de la Luz Sáenz and the Great War***. Abrams Books, 2019. Sáenz, a Mexican American World War I hero, fought for equality and founded the oldest Latino civil rights organization in the United States.
- Turk, Evan. ***You are Home: An Ode to the National Parks***. Atheneum, 2019. The beauty of all living things, animals, plants, and people is celebrated in rich verse and art in a coast-to-coast tour of the United States, emphasizing the precious nature of all life and experience.
- Wallace, Sandra Neil. ***Between the Lines: How Ernie Barnes Went from the Football Field to the Art Gallery***. Simon & Schuster, 2018. The true story of NFL star Ernie Barnes, a man who pursued his lifelong dream of becoming an artist after his football career ended.
- Walsh, Jenni L. ***Operation: Happy: A World War II Story of Courage, Resilience, and an Unbreakable Bond***. Zonderkidz, 2024. To keep her family together and deal with the impacts of World War II, a little girl and her best friend, her dog Happy, make a bucket list.
- Wang, Jen. ***Stargazing***. First Second, 2019. Growing up in the same Chinese American suburb, perfectionist Christine and artistic, confident, impulsive Moon become unlikely best friends whose friendship is tested by jealousy, social expectations, and illness. *Graphic novel*
- Watson, Renée. ***Ways to Make Sunshine***. Bloomsbury, 2020. Ten-year-old Ryan is learning that life means lots of changes, like moving, her father's new job, a frustrating older brother, and her best friend moving away, but Ryan makes sunshine out of it all, shining it back on those around her.
- Watson, Tom. ***Trouble at Table Five: The Candy Caper***. HarperCollins, 2020. Molly, Simon, and Rosie will do anything to know how many candies are in Principal Shelton's jar. *Series*

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