

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026

Grade 5

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

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. *Historical fiction*

Amos, Shawn. ***Cookies & Milk***. Little, Brown, 2022. Eleven-year-old Ellis discovers family secrets, makes new friends, and adjusts to his parents' recent divorce during a hijinks-filled summer helping his father open the world's first chocolate chip cookie shop in 1976 Hollywood. *Historical fiction*

Bagley, Jessixa. ***Duel***. Simon & Schuster, 2023. Two sisters, Lucy and GiGi, navigate their rivalry and grief over their father's death, culminating in a high-stakes fencing duel that will either mend or further fracture their relationship. *Sports fiction, graphic novel*

Banbury, Steven. ***The Pumpkin Princess and the Forever Night***. Little, Brown, 2024. Attempting to escape from a terrible orphanage on Halloween, Eve is rescued by the Pumpkin King and taken to Hallowell, a secret community of the undead that faces a dark evil from within. *Scary, series*

Barnes, Derrick. ***Who Got Game? Baseball: Amazing but True Stories!*** Workman, 2020. This nonfiction book explores pivotal but lesser-known baseball players, such as Rube Foster, Hank Greenberg, Lizzie Murphy, and Sadaharu Oh, as well as a variety of sensational stories, radical records, and colossal comebacks. *Nonfiction*

Bertman, Jennifer Chambliss. ***Sisterhood of Sleuths***. Little, Brown, 2022. When twelve-year-old Maizy finds a box of vintage Nancy Drew books, along with an old photograph of three women, at her mom's thrift store, she starts to investigate on her own. *Mystery*

Bradley, Fleur. ***Midnight at the Barclay Hotel***. Viking, 2020. Five murder suspects are invited to the haunted Barclay Hotel for a weekend getaway, and it is up to twelve-year-old JJ and eleven-year-old Penny—and a lonely ghost—to figure out who committed the crime. *Mystery*

Calejo, Ryan. Charlie Hernández & the ***League of Shadows***. Aladdin, 2018. The chase is on after Charlie Hernández wakes up mysteriously sporting horns and feathers, which leads him to reexamine his abuela's tall tales of Latin American ghouls and monsters and to solve an ancient mystery that might be at the heart of his parents' disappearance. *Fantasy, series*

Calonita, Jen. ***Isle of Ever***. Sourcebooks, 2025. After moving to New England, Benny receives a surprise visit from a lawyer who informs her that she will inherit a vast estate from a relative, but only if she solves a series of riddles and finds an island that appears on no map. *Mystery, series*

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- Cartaya, Pablo. ***A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation***. Kokila, 2025. After losing his dad, Gonzalo Alberto Sánchez García ends up on an epic cross-country road trip with his grumpy and reclusive abuelo, who also happens to be a famous fantasy author with an upcoming book launch party in Miami. *Action & Adventure, Pura Belpré Children's Author Honor Book*
- Chan, A.Y. ***The Legendary Mo Seto***. Aladdin, 2024. Mo Seto can't wait to audition for a martial arts movie and meet her idol, but when she realizes her mom won't let her try out and that she is too short to qualify, she takes matters into her own hands and finds herself learning more about family secrets than she ever expected. *Action & Adventure, series*
- Chan, Ruth. ***Uprooted: A Memoir About What Happens When Your Family Moves Back***. Roaring Brook, 2024. When Ruth Chan and her family relocate from Toronto to Hong Kong, her father's stories about family resilience help her navigate the upheaval. *Graphic memoir*
- Connor, Leslie. ***Anybody Here Seen Frenchie?*** Katherine Tegen, 2022. When eleven-year-old Aurora's best friend, Frenchie, an autistic boy, goes missing in coastal Maine, she sets out to find him. *Realistic fiction*
- Craft, Jerry. ***New Kid***. Harper, 2019. Jordan Banks navigates his way through seventh grade as a new African American student at a prestigious school. *Realistic fiction, graphic novel, Newbery Medal*
- Day, Christine. ***We Still Belong***. Heartdrum, 2023. Wesley's hopeful plans for Indigenous Peoples' Day (and asking her crush to the dance) go all wrong until she finds herself surrounded by the love of her family and community at the intertribal powwow. *Realistic fiction*
- Day, Nick. ***The Mona Lisa Vanishes: A Legendary Painter, a Shocking Heist, and the Birth of a Global Celebrity***. Random House, 2023. This fast-paced true heist story explains how the theft of the Mona Lisa in 1911 made it the most famous painting in the world. *Nonfiction*
- Downing, Erin Soderberg. ***When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Peach Pie***. Pixel + Ink, 2021. The Peach kids get a summer they didn't expect when their dad shows up with a food truck and an idea to help them bond after losing their mother. *Realistic fiction, series*
- Eggers, Dave. ***The Eyes and the Impossible***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2023. Johannes, a free dog living in an urban park by the sea, acts as the "eyes" of the park and shares his findings with the three bison elders, but some major changes threaten to alter both the park and everything Johannes knows about himself. *Action & Adventure, Newbery Medal*
- Elliot, Laura. ***Bea and the New Deal Horse***. Katherine Tegen, 2023. When thirteen-year-old Bea and her sister are abandoned by their father in 1929, they are taken in by a family friend in exchange for farm work and bond with a stubborn horse. *Historical fiction*

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Glaser, Karina Yan. ***A Duet for Home***. Clarion, 2022. After sixth graders June and Tyrell form a friendship over a shared love of classical music in the homeless shelter where they live, they work to oppose the city government's harmful policies. *Realistic fiction*

Gratz, Alan. ***Ground Zero***. Scholastic, 2021. Brandon is visiting his dad on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, when the attack comes. Reshmina is a girl in Afghanistan who has grown up in the aftermath of that attack but dreams of peace, becoming a teacher, and escaping her village and the narrow role that the Taliban believes is appropriate for women. Both are struggling to survive; both are changed forever by the events of 9/11. *Historical fiction*

Harrington, C.C. ***Wildoak***. Scholastic, 2022. Twelve-year-old Maggie's stutter makes school extremely hard, but life is changed forever when she finds Rumpus, an abandoned snow leopard, in a forest in Cornwall. *Historical fiction*

Hiranandani, Veera. ***The Night Diary***. Dial Books, 2018. Shy twelve-year-old Nisha, forced to flee her home with her Hindu family during the 1947 partition of India, tries to find her voice and make sense of the world falling apart around her by writing to her Muslim mother in the pages of her diary. *Historical fiction*

Holm, Jennifer L. ***The Lion of Mars***. Random House, 2021. A smart and curious boy named Bell lives on Mars with a small group of kids and adults, and when the adults start mysteriously getting sick, it is up to the kids to figure out how to help. *Science fiction*

Johnson, Varian. ***Twins***. Graphix, 2020. When best friends and twin sisters Maureen and Francine start sixth grade, they begin to grow apart and figure out who they are as individuals. *Realistic fiction, graphic novel*

Jurmain, Suzanne. ***Murder on the Baltimore Express: The Plot to Keep Abraham Lincoln from Becoming President***. Yellow Jacket, 2021. This book chronicles the amazing true story of Abraham Lincoln's cross-country train trip for his inauguration, which took Lincoln through some very hostile parts of the country with no protection and a deadly assassination threat. *Nonfiction*

Kadohata, Cynthia. ***Saucy***. Atheneum, 2020. When eleven-year-old Becca, a quadruplet, finds a sick pig on the side of the road, her life is changed forever. *Realistic fiction*

Kelly, Lynne. ***The Secret Language of Birds***. Delacorte, 2024. When Nina goes to an overnight summer camp in Texas for the first time, she navigates new friendships and learns how to protect rare whooping cranes. *Realistic fiction*

Kim, Jessica. ***Stand Up, Yumi Chung!*** Kokila, 2020. Comedy-loving Yumi Chung is faced with a moral dilemma when a case of mistaken identity grants her an exciting opportunity. *Humor*

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Korman, Gordon. ***Faker***. Scholastic, 2024. With a con artist father, Trey and his sister are in on the con, but when Trey takes an ethics class at his new school, he begins to question his father's schemes. *Realistic fiction*

Landis, Matthew. ***National Archive Hunters: Capitol Chase***. Pixel + Ink, 2024. Ten-year-old twins Ike and Iris race to catch the thief stealing valuable historical artifacts before their family is framed for the crimes. *Mystery, series*

Lee, Stacey. ***Winston Chu vs. the Whimsies***. Disney, 2023. Winston Chu saves the owner of a curiosities shop from a robbery, only to be gifted a broomstick and dustpan for his trouble—items that turn out to be more of a curse than a blessing when they sweep away important things, like his baby sister. *Fantasy, series*

Leigh, Lindsey. ***The Dirt!: Wild Life Under the Soil's Surface***. Penguin, 2025. Dig into the soil and discover a vibrant ecosystem of underground flora and fauna. *Nonfiction*

Leiren-Young, Mark. ***Octopus Ocean: Geniuses of the Deep***. Orca Book Publishers, 2025. Get to know the often-overlooked geniuses of the high seas – incredible octopuses! *Nonfiction*

Lyall, Casey. ***Gnome Is Where Your Heart Is***. Greenwillow, 2023. Years ago, Grandpa Walt claimed he met an alien, and when his memory begins to fail him, his granddaughter Lemon decides to carry on the hunt, even though her dad is dead set against it. *Science fiction*

Marks, Janae. ***From the Desk of Zoe Washington***. Katherine Tegen, 2020. Aspiring baker Zoe Washington reconnects with her father by writing letters to him while he is in prison. *Realistic fiction*

Messner, Kate. ***History Smasher: Ancient Egypt***. Random House, 2025. Explore the truths and myths about the pharaohs, pyramids, and art of Ancient Egypt. *Nonfiction*

Nielsen, Jennifer A. ***Words on Fire***. Scholastic, 2019. While Audra is on the run from Cossack soldiers and in search of her missing parents, she realizes the importance of the mission to save the Lithuanian language and culture and puts herself in danger to become part of the resistance in 1893 Russian-controlled Lithuania. *Historical fiction*

Ponti, James. ***City Spies***. Aladdin, 2020. After hacking into the NYC juvenile justice system, Sara Martinez gets a surprise when a British secret agent rescues her from the detention center and takes her to a secret location in Scotland to join forces with four teenage spies on a mission to outwit an evil genius. *Action & Adventure, series*

Reeves, Jordan, and Jen Lee Reeves. ***Born Just Right***. Aladdin, 2019. Though Jordan Reeves was born with a “little (left) arm,” her positive attitude and determination led her to invent a prosthetic arm

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at a STEM summer camp and to establish the Born Just Right Foundation to help others fully engage in life. *Memoir*

Richards, Natalie D. ***15 Secrets to Survival***. Delacorte, 2023. After disrupting a middle school competition, four classmates are forced to spend winter break together on a wilderness survival expedition that goes awry when their guide disappears. *Action & Adventure*

Rose, Caroline Starr. ***The Burning Season***. Nancy Paulsen, 2025. When a wildfire breaks out in the Gila Mountains of New Mexico, Opal must face her fears of fire and use her new training as a lookout to save the forest and her family. *Action & Adventure*

Soontornvat, Christina. ***The Last Mapmaker***. Candlewick, 2022. When twelve-year-old Sai joins a celebrated mapmaker as his assistant to chart the southern seas, it turns out she's on a much bigger and more dangerous adventure than she could have ever imagined. *Fantasy, Newbery Honor Book*

Standish, Ali. ***The Improbable Tales of Baskerville Hall***. HarperCollins, 2023. Young Arthur Conan Doyle, of Sherlock Holmes fame, is offered a rare spot at the exclusive Baskerville Hall, where he becomes embroiled in a dangerous caper involving a secret society. *Mystery, series*

Sullivan, Tom. ***Escape at 10,000 Feet: D.B. Cooper and the Missing Money***. Balzer + Bray, 2021. This gripping nonfiction account details the 1971 airplane hijacking, the only unsolved one in U.S. history. *Graphic nonfiction*

Warga, Jasmine, ***A Rover's Story***. Balzer + Bray, 2022. Resilience, a Mars rover, begins to develop human-like feelings as it learns from the NASA scientists who assembled it. *Science fiction*

Warga, Jasmine. ***A Strange Thing Happened in Cherry Hall***. Harper, 2024. Someone has stolen a painting from the Penelope L. Brooks Museum, where Rami Ahmed's mother works, supervising the cleaning crew. Will Rami be able to use the help of his classmate, a ghost, and a tortoise to solve the mystery and clear his mother's name? *Mystery*

Wilson, Misty. ***Play Like a Girl: A Graphic Memoir***. Balzer + Bray, 2022. Seventh grade is hard enough, but being a girl who loves football creates even more challenges. *Graphic memoir*

Wolf, Allan. ***The Day the Universe Exploded My Head: Poems to Take You into Space and Back Again***. Candlewick, 2019. This book of funny, informative poetry about our solar system includes dynamite illustrations and opportunities for readers to perform multi-part poems. *Poetry*

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