

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

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

Any available unabridged edition of a title is acceptable.

- Alkaf, Hanna. ***Queen of the Tiles***. Salaam Reads, 2022. A year after her best friend died at a Scrabble tournament, a flurry of social media posts from the dead girl's account prompts 15-year-old Najwa Bakri to investigate what happened to the "Queen of the Tiles." *Mystery, suspense*
- Allen, Crystal. ***Between Two Brothers***. Balzer + Bray, 2024. Isaiah is a 13-year-old whose strong bond with his brother, Seth, is tested when his brother (a promising athlete with a Texas A&M scholarship) is involved in a car wreck. Isaiah, his family, and the community provide hope in this heartfelt novel. *Realistic fiction*
- Anderson, Laurie Halse. ***Rebellion 1776***. Atheneum, 2025. Elsbeth Culpepper, a thirteen-year-old girl, works as a servant for a rambunctious family during Boston's fight for independence from the British. Abandoned by her father, she shows spirit and humor as she navigates the rising rebellion and a smallpox epidemic. *Historical fiction*
- Asimov, Isaac. ***The Stars, Like Dust***. First published in 1951. At the death of his father, Biron Farrill becomes involved in the plot to rebel against the Tyranni, who have conquered many worlds. *Classic science fiction, mystery, series*
- Avery, Annaliese. ***The Immortal Games***. Scholastic, 2024. Consumed with anger and vowing revenge after her sister's death, Ara trains for and then is chosen to participate in the Immortal Games (a competition between the gods); she and eleven others battle to survive a series of deadly challenges. *Fantasy*
- Baptiste, Tracey. ***Boy 2.0***. Algonquin, 2024. When 13-year-old Coal turns invisible after a scary encounter with the police, he immediately sets out to figure out what's happening to him and discovers some family secrets along the way. *Science fiction, series*
- Berry, Julie. ***Lovely War***. Viking, 2019. The Greek goddess Aphrodite recounts two tales of tragic love during World War I. She seeks to answer the age-old question: 'Why are Love and War eternally drawn to one another?' but her quest for a conclusion that will satisfy her jealous husband uncovers a multithreaded tale of prejudice, trauma, and music, revealing that War is no match for the power of Love. *Mythology, magical realism; the audiobook version is highly recommended*
- Bishop, Jenn. ***Free Throws, Friendship, and Other Things We Fouled Up***. Chronicle Books, 2023. Basketball player Rory has just moved to Cincinnati with her father, a Division 1 coach, when she hits it off with the rival college team's daughter, Abby. Still, their friendship is threatened when they realize their dads' rivalry goes deeper than on the court. *Sports fiction*
- Bowen, Fred. ***Hardcourt: Stories from 75 Years of the National Basketball Association***. McElderry Books, 2022. This basketball history presents an exciting overview of the players who made the NBA such a success and includes a brief history of the game's origins and evolution. *Nonfiction*
- Bowling, Dusti. ***The Beat I Drum***. Union Square Kids, 2025. When ninth-grader Connor starts over at a new high school, he has to make new friends, deal with tics caused by his Tourette's syndrome, and navigate family drama. *Realistic fiction, stand-alone in a series*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

- Brashares, Ann and Ben Brashares. **Westfallen**. Simon & Schuster, 2024. In this dual-timeline novel, three kids in 1944 America connect (via radio) with three modern-day kids and inadvertently changed history, resulting in an America under Nazi control. *Science fiction, series*
- Bruchac, Joseph. **Voices of the People**. Reycraft Books, 2022. This collection of poems dramatizes the lives of men and women who contributed to Native American and Indigenous Peoples' histories, and contemporary Native American artworks provide fascinating connections to the poems. *Poetry*
- Choldenko, Gennifer. **The Tenth Mistake of Hank Hooperman**. Alfred A. Knopf, 2024. With no one else to turn to after being left alone by his mother in their apartment for a week with his three-year-old sister Boo, middle-schooler Hank has no choice but to ask an almost-stranger for help. *Realistic fiction*
- Deuker, Carl. **Shadowed**. Clarion, 2024. After always playing his family's favorite sport, soccer, as expected, Nate comes into his own as a basketball player and a person by playing on a team with his outcast neighbor, Lucas. *Sports fiction*
- DeVillers, Julia. **Meet me at Wonderland**. Aladdin, 2025. Coco is thrilled to be working for her family's amusement park for the summer, even if it means dressing up as the park's moose mascot, but the summer gets even more interesting when she meets a new hire named Henry. *Romance*
- Donnelly, Jennifer. **Stepsister**. Scholastic, 2019. Ella's stepsister, Isabelle, is deemed ugly, wicked, and doomed to a life of misery until she decides to take action to change her fate. *Classic retelling, fantasy*
- Elliott, David. **The Seventh Raven**. Clarion, 2021. A gripping retelling of the Grimms' fairy tale about seven brothers transformed into ravens and a young sister determined to find them and break the spell. Told in verse, the storytelling's rhythm takes on a haunting mood. *Novel in verse, fantasy*
- Fleming, Candace. **Crash from Outer Space: Unraveling the Mystery of Flying Saucers, Alien Beings, and Roswell**. Scholastic, 2022. A strange explosion and scattered debris in the desert outside Roswell, New Mexico leads to a series of UFO stories that escalate into conspiracy tales of government secrecy. *Narrative nonfiction, Margaret A. Edwards Award 2026*
- Freeman, Megan E. **Alone**. Aladdin, 2021. When she decides to have a secret sleepover, twelve-year-old Maddie is accidentally left behind when her whole town is evacuated, leaving her to fend for herself in a world without any other human beings. *Novel in verse, adventure, survival, has a companion novel*
- Goodwin, Doris Kearns, adapted by Ruby Shamir. **The Leadership Journey: How Four Kids Became President**. Simon & Schuster, 2024. The leadership qualities of four Presidents (Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson) are presented, with a discussion of how these individuals met leadership challenges during turbulent times. *Nonfiction*
- Gonzalez, Christina Diaz. **Concealed**. Scholastic, 2021. In this mystery thriller, Katrina and her family have been on the run for years. Still, with the help of a computer whiz named Parker, Katrina searches out the truth about her identity and the danger that has ensnared her family. *Mystery, science fiction*
- Greenwald, Tommy. **The Right Call**. Amulet Books, 2025. Pitcher phenomenon Cal Klondike's baseball career looks bright until it all goes wrong under the pressure of being the best. *Sports fiction, series*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

- Hale, Shannon. ***Friends Forever***. First Second, 2021. Based on the author's own experiences as an 8th grader, this graphic novel shows the stress of trying to be a "perfect" teenager and the path to self-acceptance and focusing on one's strengths. *Graphic memoir, stand-alone in a trilogy*
- Hardinge, Frances. ***The Unraveller***. Amulet Books, 2023. Suspenseful with a dash of horror, this story features a youth who has the power to "unravel" curses; when he links up with a girl who was once cursed, they try to foil a devious organization's plot to gain power by controlling curses. *Dark fantasy*
- Henry, April. ***Girl Forgotten***. Little, Brown, 2023. When seventeen-year-old Piper Gray starts a true crime podcast investigating a seventeen-year-old murder case, she puts her life in danger as she digs deep into the mysteries of the past. *Mystery, suspense*
- Higuera, Donna Barba. ***The Last Cuentista***. Levine Querido, 2021. When the destruction of Earth by a comet is imminent, Petra Peña and her scientist parents, along with other selected humans, escape via starship. After being put into stasis, they expect to be cared for by volunteer monitors until their arrival on the habitable planet Sagan in 380 years, but things do not go as planned. *Science fiction, Newbery Medal 2022, Pura Belpré Author Award 2022*
- Hirsch, Rebecca E. ***Where Have All the Birds Gone? Nature in Crisis***. Twenty-First Century Books, 2022. The bird crisis is explained through stories of extinct birds, as well as environmental hazards that endanger them. *Nonfiction*
- Hood, Susan. ***Alias Anna: A True Story of Outwitting the Nazis***. HarperCollins, 2022. The true story of how young Ukrainian Jewish piano prodigies Zhanna and her sister Frina outplayed their pursuers while hiding in plain sight during the Holocaust. *Novel in verse, biography*
- Jackson, Tiffany D. ***Blood in the Water***. Scholastic, 2025. When twelve-year-old Kaylani arrives on Martha's Vineyard with some family friends, she expects a summer of beaches, books, and bike rides, but instead, she finds herself trying to solve a murder mystery when a popular teenager is found dead. *Mystery*
- Jarrow, Gail. ***Blood and Germs: The Civil War Battle Against Wounds and Disease***. Calkins Creek, 2020. Would you want to be a Civil War surgeon? Before modern medicine, injuries during the war were a grisly, life-and-death matter. Read about the heroes, leaders, and technology of the time in this colorful and surprising nonfiction title. *Nonfiction*
- Jarrow, Gail. ***White House Secrets: Medical Lies and Cover-Ups***. Calkins Creek, 2025. The American president holds immense power worldwide, but this work explores the medical ailments that nine presidents have hidden from the American public. *Narrative nonfiction*
- Kelly, Erin Entrada, and Kwame Mbalia. ***On Again, Awkward Again***. Amulet Books, 2025. Two teens survive family drama, friendship disasters, and peak awkwardness during their first year of high school—only to discover that sometimes everything going wrong leads to exactly the right person in this laugh-out-loud rom-com. *Romance*
- Kelly, Scott. ***Endurance: My Year in Space and How I Got There***. Crown, 2018. Ever wonder what it is like to live in space? NASA astronaut Scott Kelly details his journey from a problem student to a fighter pilot, Space Shuttle commander, and yearlong inhabitant of the International Space Station. *Memoir*
- Korman, Gordon. ***Slugfest***. Balzer + Bray, 2024. Considering he is already playing on the high school's JV football team, 8th grader Yash can hardly believe he's in summer school taking a PE class; soon, he bonds with other students over their slightly wacky former home economics teacher-turned-coach as

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

they compete in a citywide flag football tournament. *Sports, humorous fiction*

- Langeland, Deirdre. ***Meltdown: Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Disaster in Fukushima***. Roaring Brook, 2021. It is March 11, 2011, and the fourth-largest earthquake ever measured creates a tsunami that not only hits northeast Japan but also results in the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, one of the worst nuclear disasters on record. *Nonfiction*
- Larsen, Mylisa. ***Playing through the Turnaround***. Clarion, 2022. Can a handful of jazz band students take a stand to help save student clubs and enrichment classes that are threatened by school budget cuts? *Realistic fiction*
- Larson, Hope. ***Salt Magic***. Margaret Ferguson Books, 2021. Twelve-year-old Vonceil Taggart, willing to risk everything to set things right, leaves her family's Oklahoma farm in 1919, seeking the salt witch who cast a spell that turned their spring to saltwater. *Fantasy, historical fiction, Maverick Award 2023*
- Lim, Elizabeth. ***Six Crimson Cranes***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2021. The exiled Princess Shiori must unravel the curse that turned her six brothers into cranes, and she is assisted by her spurned betrothed, a capricious dragon, and a paper bird brought to life by the power of her magic. *Fantasy, series*
- Lin, Ann Sei. ***Rebel Skies***. Tundra Books, 2024. When the airship where Kurara lives is destroyed by a dangerous creature created by Crafters who can form and control paper, her life of servitude ends, but she also learns her best friend, Haru, is not who she thought he was. *Fantasy, series*
- Marianayagam, Maria. ***No Purchase Necessary***. Harper, 2025. Ajay Anthonipillai, an 8th grader at a new school, faces a choice when a stolen candy bar turns out to contain a million-dollar prize, forcing him to grapple with fitting in, helping his struggling family, and being true to himself. *Realistic fiction*
- Marsh, Katherine. ***The Lost Year***. Roaring Brook, 2023. Struggling with loneliness during the pandemic shutdown, 13-year-old Matthew finds an old photo of his grandmother and starts to uncover family secrets about her experiences during the Holodomor (Ukrainian famine). *Historical fiction, National Book Award Finalist*
- Meadows, Jodi. ***Bye Forever, I Guess***. Holiday House, 2024. When shy 8th grader Ingrid, who loves video games, fantasy books, and her popular, anonymous social media account, stands up to a mean “frenemy,” she inadvertently starts drama at school. *Realistic fiction, romance*
- Mejia, Tehlor Kay. ***It Happened to Anna***. Delacorte, 2024. For as long as she can remember, Sadie has been haunted by a sinister ghost, so when she finds a new friend and her ghost disappears, she hopes her life will finally improve. *Horror*
- Messner, Kate. ***Tracking Pythons: The Quest to Catch an Invasive Predator and Save an Ecosystem***. Millbrook, 2020. Wade through South Florida with scientists dedicated to finding and controlling the Burmese python population, an invasive species from Southeast Asia. This nonfiction title is full of photos and fascinating facts for snake and nature lovers, as well as just plain curious readers. *Nonfiction*
- Monsef, Kiyash. ***Once There Was***. Simon and Schuster, 2023. When Marjan’s father, a veterinarian to magical creatures, dies, Marjan must take on his caseload and help preserve the world order. *Fantasy*
- Morrison, Laurie. ***Keeping Pace***. Abrams Books, 2024. Grace and Jonah have an intense rivalry in school and on the running trail, but is always winning always worth it? *Realistic fiction*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

- Newman, Patricia. ***Giant Rays of Hope: Protecting Manta Rays to Safeguard the Sea***. Millbrook, 2024. The magnificence of Giant Manta Rays is explored by combining fascinating science with an environmental message, showing how a single individual inspired a movement that began with educating children and the community. *Nonfiction*
- Nott, Dan. ***Hidden Systems: Water, Electricity, the Internet, and the Secrets Behind Systems We Use Every Day***. Random House Graphic, 2023. Discover the history, development, and engineering challenges posed by society's most essential infrastructures. *Nonfiction, graphic novel*
- Oh, Axie. ***The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea***. Feiwel & Friends, 2022. In this retelling of a Korean folktale, Mina is swept away to the spirit realm to awaken the sleeping sea god and save her family and homeland from deadly storms. *Fantasy*
- Oppel, Kenneth. ***Bloom: The Overflow***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2020. Anaya, Petra, and Seth race to save their family, friends, and island community against a mysterious, deadly plant invasion, only to discover that part of the mystery lies deep within themselves. *Science fiction, thriller, trilogy*
- Paulsen, Gary. ***Gone to the Woods: Surviving a Lost Childhood***. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. In this riveting and inspiring memoir, the author of *Hatchet* and other wilderness survival stories tells his own true-life survival story beginning at age five and continuing through young adulthood. *Memoir*
- Ponti, James. ***The Sherlock Society***. Aladdin, 2024. Twelve-year-old Alex Sherlock and his friends spend their summer in Miami investigating the many "cold cases" their grandfather accumulated during his years as a reporter--first up, Al Capone and a buried treasure. *Mystery, series*
- Reynolds, Jason. ***Coach***. Atheneum, 2025. Set in the 1990s, all Otie Brody wants is to run track and try the long jump like his hero Carl Lewis, but worries arise when his dad and his prized Air Jordans go missing. *Sports fiction, series*
- Reynolds, Justin A. ***Miles Morales Shock Waves: A Spider-Man Graphic Novel***. Graphix, 2021. Except for having special powers such as turning invisible and shooting webs from his wrists, Miles is a normal kid juggling typical teenage problems, but when an earthquake hits his mother's hometown in Puerto Rico, and a classmate's father disappears, Miles must kick things into high gear. *Graphic novel, series*
- Rhodes, Jewell Parker. ***Black Brother, Black Brother***. Little, Brown, 2020. Biracial Donte and his brother attend Middlefield Prep, and Donte presents as black while his brother, Trey, presents as white. Their school experiences couldn't be more different, especially when Donte gets unjustly arrested. *Realistic fiction*
- Rundell, Katherine. ***Impossible Creatures***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2024. When the creatures of the Archipelago, a haven for magical beings, start dying, Christopher and Mal must race to save both the magical creatures and their entire world. *Fantasy, series*
- Sanderson, Brandon. ***Skyward***. Delacorte, 2018. Branded as the daughter of a coward after her father abandons his team and is killed in battle, young Spensa sets her sights on claiming the stars by becoming a pilot and seeking retribution for her father's death by taking on their age-old enemy, the Krell. *Science fiction, trilogy, novellas*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

- Sandler, Martin W. **1919: The Year That Changed America**. Bloomsbury, 2019. Sandler shows the many shockwaves hitting the country in 1919: the end of World War I and the resulting race riots, the Great Molasses Flood, the Red Scare, labor unrest, and the temperance movement all brought significant changes to American society. He compares those trends with what is happening now to show how history affects the current situation. *Nonfiction*
- Sandler, Martin W. **Shipwrecked! Diving for Hidden Time Capsules on the Ocean Floor**. Astra Young Readers, 2023. Three million shipwrecks lie beneath the waves, holding time capsules to human history. Explore seven wrecks and the people, technology, and marine archeology that goes into finding and recovering them. *Narrative nonfiction*
- Schmidt, Gary D. **The Labors of Hercules Beal**. Clarion Books, 2023. When Hercules Beal's teacher assigns him a project to explore the Twelve Labors of the mythological Hercules in real life, the seventh grader ends up learning a lot about himself and his community. *Realistic fiction*
- Schu, John. **Louder than Hunger**. Candlewick, 2024. Jake, a 13-year-old boy recently admitted into a treatment facility for anorexia nervosa, battles with the voice in his head urging him to eat less while learning to reconnect with what brings him joy, such as his grandmother, musical theater, and the poetry of Emily Dickinson. *Realistic fiction, Schneider Family Book Award Honor 2025*
- Schwab, V.E. **Gallant**. Greenwillow, 2022. Olivia Prior has grown up in Merilance School for Girls with no past except for her one treasure, her mother's journal so when a letter arrives inviting her to come home to the ruinous manor, Gallant, she seizes the chance to find out about her family. *Dark fantasy*
- Sepetys, Ruta. **The Bletchley Riddle**. Viking, 2024. Siblings Jakob and Lizzie find themselves at Bletchley Park, the home of WWII codebreakers working to decrypt the Nazi's Enigma cipher, where the two struggle to unravel a mystery surrounding their mother's disappearance against the backdrop of the Battle of Britain and Hitler's feared invasion. *Historical fiction*
- Sepetys, Ruta. **I Must Betray You**. Philomel, 2022. 17-year-old Cristian Florescu is forced to spy on an American ambassador's teenage son, but how does one survive in a Romanian society that is surrounded by suspicion and treachery? *Historical fiction*
- Sheinkin, Steve. **Bomb, Graphic Novel: The Race to Build and Steal the World's Most Dangerous Weapon**. Roaring Brook, 2023. Combining historical facts with the pacing of a thriller, this graphic novel adapts Sheinkin's award-winning book Bomb using three storylines—spies, sabotage, and scientific breakthroughs—leading up to the historic creation of the atomic bomb in Los Alamos, New Mexico. *Graphic novel, nonfiction*
- Siegel, Rebecca. **Loch Ness Uncovered: Media, Misinformation, and the Greatest Monster Hoax of all Time**. Astra Young Readers, 2024. The sightings and media frenzy surrounding the Loch Ness Monster are explored in this fast-paced story of the people and events that influenced the legends of Scotland's "monster." *Narrative nonfiction*
- Springer, Nancy. **Enola Holmes and the Black Barouche**. Wednesday Books, 2021. The witty, independent, and clever Enola Holmes jumps on a case with her older brother Sherlock Holmes when Flossie, the wife of the Earl of Dunhynch, is suspiciously reported dead. *Mystery, series*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

- Strange, Lucy. ***Sisters of the Lost Marsh***. Chicken House, 2023. Willa Fernsby must navigate her family's future after her bitter Dadda, believing in the curse of the six daughters, gives her older sister Grace away in exchange for a horse just as the seasonal Full Moon Fayre arrives in town. *Mystery, Odyssey Audiobook Honor 2024*
- Tolkien, J. R. R. ***The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again***. First published 1937. Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return. *Classic fantasy, series*
- Warga, Jasmine. ***Other Words for Home***. Balzar + Bray, 2019. Jude and her mother flee Syria as violence erupts in neighboring towns. As Jude tries to navigate a new home, school, and friendships, she discovers inner courage as she becomes her own person. *Novel in verse, contemporary historical fiction, Newbery Honor 2020*
- Willis, Sarah Clawson. ***Band Nerd***. HarperAlley, 2025. When 12-year-old Lucy starts at a new arts-focused middle school, she must navigate new friendships and band battles while dealing with problems at home. *Graphic novel*
- Wilson, Kip. ***White Rose***. Verify, 2019. Based on true events, this novel in verse tells the compelling story of Sophie Scholl, an activist in World War II Nazi Germany who refused to be a bystander and instead risked everything to stand up against injustice. *Novel in verse, historical fiction*
- Wolf, Allan. ***Junius Leak and the Spiraling Vortex of Doom***. Candlewick, 2025. Sent to stay on his uncle's houseboat in Louisiana while his parents "figure things out," Junius Leak finds a lot of surprises—pirates, feuds, and even a vanishing lake. *Adventure*
- Wolkenstein, M. Evan. ***Turtle Boy***. Delacorte, 2020. Seventh-grader Will's Bar Mitzvah community service project, visiting an incurably ill older boy in the hospital, leads to a life-changing friendship for them and those around them. *Realistic fiction*
- Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Remember Us***. Nancy Paulsen, 2023. The Bushwick neighborhood is known as "The Matchbox," because arsonists set fire to buildings. Sage is fighting her own "fires"—wanting to excel in basketball and torn between leaving neighborhood friends with the prospect of a fresh start by moving to a safer neighborhood. *Realistic fiction*
- Yang, Gene Luen. ***Lunar New Year Love Story***. First Second, 2024. Like everyone else in her family, Val is unlucky in love and is convinced she is cursed until a chance encounter with a pair of lion dancers makes her reconsider her stance on love. *Graphic novel, romance*
-

Compiled by:

Christina Bell (Chair), *The Kinkaid School*

Joan Lange, formerly at *Annunciation Orthodox School*

Ashleigh Manion, *Second Baptist School*

Caitlin Muckleroy, *Duchesne Academy*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 7 and Grade 8

Stephanie Penttila, *The John Cooper School*

Aaryn Silva, *The Kinkaid School*

Copyright © 2026 Houston Area Independent Schools Library Network