

Great Reads for 3rd to 5th Graders

Titles from lists by the American Library Association and the Association of Library Service to Children

Aquicorn Cove

O'Neill, Katie

Find It: J GN AQU

When Lana and her father return to their seaside hometown to help clear the debris of a big storm, Lana remembers how she's missed the ocean and her aunt's strong, reassuring presence. As Lana explores the familiar beach, she discovers a colony of Aquicorns, magical seahorse-like creatures living in the coral reef. Lana rescues an injured Aquicorn and cares for it with the help of her aunt, who may know more about these strange creatures than she'll admit. When a second storm threatens the town, choices made years ago about how to coexist with the sea arise. Lana realizes she'll need to find strength to stand on her own, even when it means standing up to the people she's always relied on.

The Bridge Home

Venkatraman, Padma

Find It: J VEN

Life is harsh in Chennai's streets, so runaway sisters Viji and Rukku's prospects look grim. Eleven-year-old Viji quickly discovers how vulnerable they are. Fortunately, the girls find shelter and friendship on an abandoned bridge. With two homeless boys, Muthi and Arul, the group forms a family of sorts. While scavenging the city's trash heaps in the pits, the kids find plenty to laugh about and take pride in. After all, they're no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. When illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to seek help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.

The Cardboard Kingdom

Sell, Chad

Find It: J GN CAR

Follow the adventures of a group of neighborhood children who make costumes from cardboard and use their imagination to create adventures with knights, robots, and monsters.

Clayton Byrd Goes Underground

Williams-Garcia, Rita

Find It: J WIL

Clayton feels most alive when playing the blues with his grandfather, Cool Papa. Devastated when Cool Papa dies and his mother forbids his music, Clayton runs away, joining bluesmen on the road.

Drawn Together

Lê, Minh

Find It: E LE

A boy and his grandfather cross a language and cultural barrier using their shared love of art, storytelling, and fantasy.

Flying Lessons and Other Stories

Edited by Ellen Oh

Find It: J FLY

From basketball dreams and family fiascoes to first crushes and new neighborhoods, this anthology, written by award-winning children's authors, celebrates the uniqueness and universality in all of us.

For Black Girls Like Me

Lockington, Mariama

Find It: J LOC

Eleven-year-old Makeda dreams of meeting her African American mother, while coping with serious problems in her white adopted family, a cross-country move, and being homeschooled.

The Forgotten Girl
Brown, India Hill

Find It: J BRO

When eleven-year-old Iris sneaks out to make snow angels, she doesn't expect to raise the ghost of Avery Moore.. Bringing to light the segregated and abandoned black cemetery seems like the perfect way for Avery get the recognition she craves and will also be a good idea for the school project about the history of her small North Carolina town, where racial tensions are never far from the surface. However, it seems if Avery gets everything she wants, Iris will join her as a ghost, best friends forever.

Front Desk
Yang, Kelly

Find It: J YAN

Mia Tang has a lot of secrets. Number 1: She lives in a motel, not a big house. Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the rooms, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the Calivista Motel and tends to its guests. Number 2: Her parents hide immigrants. If the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting them stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed. Number 3: She wants to be a writer, but how can she when her mom thinks she should stick to math because English isn't her first language? It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year. Can hold on to her job, help the immigrants and guests, escape Mr. Yao, and go for her dreams?

Granted
Anderson, John David

Find It: J AND

Young fairy Ophelia gets her first wish granting assignment and discovers that, although the fate of the fairy world rests on her completing her task, the job of granting a human's wish is anything but easy.

Hello Universe
Kelly, Erin Entrada

Find It: J KEL

Virgil feels out of place in his crazy-about-sports family. Valencia is deaf, smart, and loves nature. Kaori is a self-proclaimed psychic, whose little sister, Gen, always follows her around. Chet wishes the weird kids would stop being so different so he can concentrate on basketball. When Chet pulls a prank trapping Virgil and his pet guinea pig at the bottom of a well, Kaori, Gen, and Valencia begin a quest to find him.

The House That Lou Built
Respicio, Mae

Find It: J RES

Longing for an escape from her extended Filipino family, Lou plans to build a tiny house on land she inherited from her father, but difficulties quickly arise.

I Remember: Poems and Pictures of Heritage
Edited by Lee Bennett Hopkins

Find It: J 811.6 HOP

A collection of works by poets and illustrators of diverse backgrounds sharing memorable childhood and family experiences and reflecting on their different heritages, traditions, and beliefs.

Indian No More
McManis, Charlene Willing

Find It: J MCM

When Regina's Umpqua tribe is legally terminated and her family must relocate from Oregon to Los Angeles, she goes on a quest to understand her identity as an Indian despite being so far from home.

Julián is a Mermaid

Love, Jessica

Find It: E LOV

While riding the subway with his abuela, Julián notices three women spectacularly dressed. Their hair billows in brilliant hues, their dresses end in fishtails, and their joy fills the train. At home, all he can think about is dressing up in his own mermaid costume: a butter-yellow curtain for his tail, the fronds of a potted fern for his headdress. What will Abuela think about the mess he makes? More importantly, what will she think about how Julián sees himself?

Knights vs. Dinosaurs

Phelan, Matt

Find It: J PHE

With the realm at peace and few dragons about, the Knights of the Round Table are bored, so Merlin sends them to face the most terrible lizards of all: dinosaurs.

Lalani of the Distant Sea

Kelly, Erin Entrada

Find It: J KEL

Twelve-year-old Lalani Sarita takes on the impossible task of traveling to legendary Mount Isa. Generations of men and boys have died on the quest; how can a timid young girl in a tiny boat survive the epic tests of the archipelago?

Let 'Er Buck!: George Fletcher, The People's Champion

Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux

Find It: J BIO FLETCHER

African American George Fletcher loved horses from an early age. When he unfairly lost the 1911 Pendleton Round-Up to a white man, the outraged audience declared him "people's champion."

Lety Out Loud

Cervantes, Angela

Find It: J CER

Lety Muñoz's first language is Spanish, and she likes to take her time putting her words together. She loves volunteering at Furry Friends Animal Shelter because the dogs and cats don't care if she can't find the right word. Lety jumps at the chance to write animal profiles for the shelter, but grumpy classmate Hunter also wants to write profiles, so they become a team. Hunter, not much of a team player, devises a secret competition to decide the official shelter scribe: whoever helps get their animals adopted faster wins. The loser scoops dog food. Lety reluctantly agrees, but she worries if the shelter finds out, they'll kick her out of the volunteer program and she won't be able to adopt her favorite dog at the shelter!

Liberty Arrives: How America's Grandest Statue Found Her Home

Byrd, Robert

Find It: J 974.71 BYR

An informative, illustrated history of the Statue of Liberty and how it came to America

The Lost Girl

Ursu, Anne

Find It: J URS

When they are separated for the first time since birth, Iris and Lark struggle with insecurities over their individual identities at the same time things begin to go missing around town.

Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble

Meriano, Anna

Find It: J MER

Wanting to be a part of her family's Día de los Muertos preparations, Leonora sneaks out of school to discover her mother, aunt, and older sisters have been keeping a secret.

Mañanaland

Ryan, Pam Muñoz

Find It: J RYA

Max loves the legend Buelo tells him about a mythical gatekeeper who guides brave travelers on a journey into tomorrow so Max sets out on a dangerous quest to discover if he is true of heart and what the future holds. His only guides: a treasured compass, a mysterious stone rubbing, and Buelo's legend.

Me and Marvin Gardens

King, A.S.

Find It: J KING

Obe Devlin spends a lot of time cleaning up the creek running through what's left of his family's once-extensive farmland. He worries about what the nearby developers are doing and the pollution it causes. One day, Obe finds a strange creature by his creek that eats plastic; soon the animal he calls Marvin Gardens becomes his secret, which he believes needs to be protected from pretty much everybody.

Mighty Jack

Manley, Curtis

Find It: J GN HAT

Jack might be the only kid who dreads summer, but he has a good reason: his single mom takes a second job in the summer, leaving him to watch his autistic kid sister, Maddy. It's a big, boring responsibility because Maddy doesn't talk. Ever. One day, Maddy does talk, telling Jack to trade their mom's car for a box of mysterious seeds. What starts as a normal garden quickly grows into a magical jungle with tiny onion babies; huge, pink biting pumpkins; and, on one night that changes everything, a dragon.

Other Words for Home

Warga, Jasmine

Find It: J WAR

Sent with her mother to the safety of a relative's home in Cincinnati when violence erupts in her Syrian Jude worries for the family members left behind as she adjusts to a new life with unexpected surprises.

Pie in the Sky

Lai, Remy

Find It: J LAI

Jingwen just moved to a new country. School is torture, making friends is impossible since he doesn't speak English, and he often has to look after his little brother, Yanghao. To distract himself, Jingwen dreams about making the cakes on the menu of Pie in the Sky, the bakery his father planned to open before he unexpectedly died. The only problem is Mama's major rule: the brothers can't use the oven while she's at work. How will they keep their cake-making a secret from Mama?

Real Friends

Hale, Shannon

Find It: J GN REA

When her best friend Adrienne starts hanging out with the most popular girl in class, Shannon questions with whether she and Adrienne will stay friends and if she is part of the clique.

Rocket to the Moon!

Brown, Don

Find It: J GN ROC

Taking readers through the history of rocket building, this book explores the people and technology that made the moon landing in 1969 possible.

Sanity & Tallulah

Brooks, Molly

Find It: J GN SAN

Sanity and Tallulah live in a space station at the end of the galaxy. When Sanity's illegally created three-headed kitten escapes, the girls have to turn their home upside down to find her in this graphic novel.

Soldier for Equality: José de la Luz Saenz and the Great War

Tonatiuh, Duncan

Find It: J BIO SAENZ

José de la Luz Sáenz, or Luz, was born in the United States but experienced prejudice because of his family's Mexican heritage. When World War I broke out, Luz joined the Army's Intelligence Office in Europe because he could learn languages quickly. However, despite his hard work, Luz often didn't receive credit for his contributions. Upon returning to the U.S., he joined other Mexican-Americans who he met in the army to fight for equality leading to the creation of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the oldest Latino civil rights organization

Some Places More Than Others

Watson, Renée

Find It: J WAT

Amara visits her dad's family in Harlem, hoping to better understand her family and herself, but New York isn't what she expects.

Stanley Will Probably Be Fine

Pla, Sally J.

Find It: J GN STA

After fainting during a school assembly, Stanley uses his time in a safe room to begin drawing a comic book superhero and then enters a treasure hunt so that he can win passes to Comic Fest.

Stargazing

Wang, Jen

Find It: J GN STA

Growing up in the same Chinese-American suburb, perfectionist Christine and artistic, impulsive Moon become unlikely best friends, whose friendship is tested by jealousy, social expectations, and illness.

Stella Díaz Has Something to Say

Dominguez, Angela

Find It: J DOM

Stella wants to befriend the new boy, but sometimes accidentally speaks Spanish, not English, and pronounces words wrong, making her turn roja. Also, she has to overcome her fear of public speaking.

Sweeping Up the Heart

Henkes, Kevin

Find It: J HEN

After an eventful spring break, seventh-grader Amelia Albright's life changes forever.

To Night Owl From Dogfish

Sloan, Holly Goldberg

Find It: J SLO, J CD SLO

Initially unhappy about being sent to the same summer camp after their fathers start dating, Bett and Avery, two 11-year-old girls, begin scheming to get their dads back together after a break-up.

The Undefeated

Alexander, Kwame

Find It: J 811.6 ALE

This poem is a love letter to black life in the United States, highlighting the unspeakable trauma of slavery, the faith and fire of the civil rights movement, and the grit, passion, and perseverance of some of the world's greatest heroes. The text is also peppered with references to the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others, offering deeper insights into the accomplishments of the past, while bringing stark attention to the endurance and spirit of those surviving and thriving in the present.