

Summer Reading Ideas for 5th Graders

Compiled by Julie Reimer & Kay Trapp, Library Media Specialists
Turtle Lake Elementary School, Summer 2008



- ***Home of the Brave*** by Katherine Applegate – Told through the eyes of Kek, a 5th grader from Sudan who has lived in refugee camps, this wonderfully-written story puts being new to a country in perspective. Kek comes to Minnesota in the winter, having never seen snow nor felt extreme cold. As he learns English and adjusts to the culture, he longs to have his mother join him. The language is captivating, and the story is incredible!
- ***The World Made New: Why the Age of Exploration Happened & How It Changed the World*** by Marc Aronson & John W. Glenn – The causes of world exploration (like religion, competition, wealth, glory, knowledge), the people and cultures influenced by exploration, the explorers who investigated uncharted places, and the consequences of exploration (disease, transferred species, populations, migration, and more). The illustrations are from prints, paintings, and engravings from various time periods.
- ***The Traitor's Gate*** by Avi – When John Huffman's father is arrested in 19th century London, the young man must work to discover the facts behind his father's involvement in a secret mission, while trying to provide for the family by way of a stubborn relative. A crafty character named Sary the Sneak attempts to help him.
- ***The Daring Book for Girls*** by Andrea Buchanan and Miriam Peskowitz – From games of tag to rules about softball to making a tree swing, this book has an incredible amount of interesting and useful information. Make a whistle from a willow branch. Fold the "coolest paper airplane ever." Learn how to be a spy. This thick book makes all sorts of intriguing discoveries and projects possible.
- ***Artist to Artist: 23 Major Illustrators Talk to Children About Their Art*** by Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art – Each of the famous illustrators featured in this book shares a story of their own artistic experience, along with a self-portrait, bits of their works, and something from their childhood art. Read the thoughts from people like Tomie dePaola, Chris Van Allsburg, Rosemary Wells, and other favorite children's book artists.
- ***Hey Batta Batta Swing!: the Wild Old Days of Baseball*** by Sally Cook and James Charlton – Travel in time to learn the history of baseball's uniforms, equipment, team names, and nicknames. Alongside the text, jargon is defined in the margins (e.g., a frozen rope was a hard-hit line drive). The cartoon-like illustrations are fitting for the time period.
- ***Matilda Bone*** by Karen Cushman – Matilda is a young, orphaned girl who has been deposited by Father Lefredus at the home of Peg the Bonesetter in Blood and Bone Alley to learn the woman's trade. Matilda is certain the coarse woman knows nothing about medicine, but as she observes and learns, she realizes something to the contrary.
- ***Gone-Away Lake*** by Elizabeth Enright – When Foster and Portia board the train to spend the summer with their cousins, they never imagine the adventures they will find on the lakeshore where a marvelous resort community once stood. This book won the Newbery Honor in 1958
- ***Whale Port*** by Mark Foster – Though the town of Tuckanucket in this book is a fictional place, it is truly like all the whaling ports along the Atlantic Coast. The book follows the Taber family from their settling in New England in 1638 through their development of buildings and businesses, as well as detailing the catastrophes the people faced through the centuries. Tools, trades, and topics important to the times are presented in art and text.
- ***Who Was First?: Discovering the Americas*** by Russell Freedman – Though we celebrate Christopher Columbus every year with a holiday in October, much debate continues about whether he really was the person to discover the Americas. In this thoughtful book, the author presents the cases of other people who most likely explored and populated the region prior to 1492.
- ***Ansel Adams: America's Photographer*** by Beverly Gherman – Ansel Adams was a gifted musician, and his mother had high hopes for him as a pianist. Yet it was his love of the California wilderness and photography that earned him a place in American history. He was highly involved in the Sierra Club, and his photographs of various points in Yosemite National Park are notable.
- ***Music of Dolphins*** by Karen Hesse – Narrated by Mila, a young girl discovered by the Coast Guard, this thoughtful story imagines her life as a child raised by dolphins and studied by humans. As she learns a spoken language and comes to understand the humans, she acquires a love of music that sustains her spirit.
- ***The Dangerous Book for Boys*** by Conn Iggulden and Hal Iggulden – Though not only for boys (and not really dangerous), this book will appeal to boys, their dads, and any other person who wants to try some new things. Learn to tie various knots, read about interesting tidbits from famous battles, and discover things about nature.
- ***Top Secret: a Handbook of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Writing*** by Paul Janeczko – Have you ever wanted to learn Pig Latin or write a Rosicrucian cipher? Learn to write codes and ciphers, to break codes, and to create concealment messages using the tips and explanations in this helpful book. Famous codemakers and codebreakers are also featured.
- ***The Best Beekeeper of Lalibela: A Tale from Africa*** by Christine Kessler – In Almaz's Ethiopian village, she is scorned because of her wish to be a beekeeper, an occupation not typical for her gender. Only Father Haile Kirros encourages her to keep trying, and Almaz eventually brings sweet and pure honey to the market.

- **Edward's Eyes** by Patricia MacLachlan – Edward was an amazing baseball player, greatly admired by his brother Jake. Edward learned to throw a perfect knuckleball and could flawlessly track a ball speeding toward him in the batter's box. In a freak accident, their lives change, and Jake must understand his brother's incredible gifts.
- **The Real Benedict Arnold** by Jim Murphy – Throughout U.S. History, Benedict Arnold has been perceived as a traitor to his country, siding with the British while he was an officer in the American army. The author uses primary resources to trace the man's character, intelligence, and fateful decision in this interesting biography.
- **Jazz** by Walter Dean Myers – Poems about the American musical form of jazz play through the pages of this colorful book. The rhythms and beats will engage your brain and your voice as you read and recite the words about styles, musicians, instruments, and musical sessions. The author's son created the stunning artwork!
- **Red Butterfly: How a Princess Smuggled the Secret of Silk Out of China** by Deborah Noyes – Based on a Chinese legend, this is the story of a young girl who must leave her father's kingdom to marry the king of Khotan (around AD 100 and AD 500) in a land far different from her own. Her maidservant hides silkworms and mulberry seeds (for the silkworms eat mulberry leaves) in her headdress!
- **Tap Dancing on the Roof** by Linda Sue Park – Sijo, a Korean form of poetry, have specific syllabic guidelines (6-8 syllables per line for 6-line poems; 14-16 syllables per line for 3-line poems), as well as a "twist" at the end. In her poem about breakfast, for example, the twist involves sleeping. Her notes help you write them yourself.
- **Thank You, Mr. Falker** by Patricia Polacco – Based on the author's real-life experiences, this story is about Trisha's frustrating fifth grade year of school when she still cannot read like her classmates. After much taunting and teasing, her teacher, Mr. Falker, tutors her and provides the bridge to learning and self-confidence.
- **Wild About Minnesota Birds: A Youth's Guide to the Birds of Minnesota** by Adele Porter – Whether you're in the backyard or on a hike in a state park, the photographs and facts in this book will help you identify the birds you encounter!
- **This is Rome** by Miroslav Sasek – Travel to this famous Italian city in words and vibrant illustrations to learn of its history from the ancient times to the present day. First published in 1960, it has been updated to include current information. Check out the many other books done by the artist/author about other places in the world.
- **Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices of a Medieval Village** by Laura Amy Schlitz – The collection of 23 short plays comes from the voices of the younger village residents who share bits of their lives and work with readers. Interspersed with their stories are notes that define terms and mannerisms from the time period and detailed explanations of things like the Crusades. This book won the 2008 Newbery Medal.
- **The Wednesday Wars** by Gary D. Schmidt – Holling Hoodhood must spend every Wednesday afternoon with Mrs. Baker, his teacher, while all the Jewish and Presbyterian students are at religion classes. Even though he thinks it will be an awful experience, the two connect through Shakespeare, baseball, and running. Historical, realistic, and humorous fiction combine for a fabulous book, a 2008 Newbery Honor Book.
- **The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain** by Peter Sís – Raised in Czechoslovakia, the author experienced a life of secrecy, lies, corruption, and discrimination unlike anything most people can imagine. As he discovers truth and witnesses snatches of freedom, he begins to pull away from government direction and explore on his own. The illustrations contain only black, white, and red, the color of Communism, until his freedom blossoms into color. This book won both a Caldecott Honor Medal and the Sibert Medal for information books.
- **Long Ball: the Legend and Lore of the Home Run** by Mark Stewart and Mike Kennedy – From the home run's history to ten famous long balls to the most remarkable home runs, this book runs the bases with facts and stories behind the fabulous feat.
- **The Arrival** by Shaun Tan – This wordless book is not for the beginning thinker. Through the sepia-toned illustrations, travel with an immigrant to a new place. Imagine all the new things he encounters, and join him in his discovery of the overwhelming situation of being new to someplace.
- **Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon** by Catherine Thimmesh – From the engineers who designed the lunar module to the people who sewed the space suits to the thousands of people at Kennedy Space Center who worked behind the scenes, the journey of Apollo 11 to the moon involved more than just the three astronauts on board. Read the story behind the historic event in space!
- **Surviving the Applewhites** by Stephanie Tolan – This 2003 Newbery Honor Book is quirky, humorous, and a bit unbelievable. When Jake, a young juvenile delinquent, comes to live with the rather odd Applewhite family, he has no idea of just what he will discover about himself amidst their acting, directing, poetry-writing, and daily life.
- **The Mysteries of Harris Burdick** by Chris Van Allsburg – When a mysterious man brings drawings to a publisher, the publisher knows the stories must be made available in print, but the man is not heard from again! Not a typical picture book, this book only tells part of the stories. Readers must decide on the rest. Use your imagination to create stories about the amazing drawings and words in this book!
- **Get Up and Go: the History of American Road Travel** by Sylvia Whitman – From the tracks Native American's made in the sand and soil to the intricate highway system of the present day, this book offers a history of traveling the roads of our country. Read about the people and problems of road travel and plan a trip of your own.
- **Simple Sleight of Hand: Card and Coin Tricks for the Beginning Magician** by Paul Zenon – Using the detailed instructions and full-color photographs, learn the tricks behind your favorite card and coin tricks...and even become an expert at doing the tricks for others.