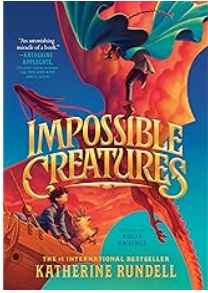


HRRB Annotated Reading List 2026-2027

Elementary School (4th and 5th grade)

***All books are on at least a mid-4th grade reading level and many contain sensitive topics. Please read all summaries. Students who make the Book Team will be required to read all 10 books.**

REQUIRED SUMMER BOOKS-*Must be read before the first meeting in August*

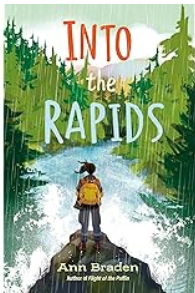


[Impossible Creatures by Katherine Rundell \(368 pages\)](#)

The day that Christopher saved a drowning baby griffin from a hidden lake would change his life forever.

It's the day he learned about the Archipelago—a cluster of unmapped islands where magical creatures of every kind have thrived for thousands of years, until now. And it's the day he met Mal—a girl on the run, in desperate need of his help.

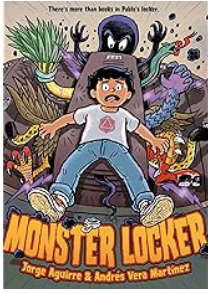
Mal and Christopher embark on a wild adventure, racing from island to island, searching for someone who can explain why the magic is fading and why magical creatures are suddenly dying. They consult sphinxes, battle kraken, and negotiate with dragons. But the closer they get to the dark truth of what's happening, the clearer it becomes: no one else can fix this. If the Archipelago is to be saved, Mal and Christopher will have to do it themselves.



[Into the Rapids by Ann Braden \(176 pages\)](#)

When a super-storm hits Addy's remote mountain town, knocking out the bridge and cutting her home off from the main road, she worries that she won't be able to get to the survival camp she's been looking forward to attending. The camp's the place where her parents met, and where Addy plans to hone her skills and honor their legacy. But now there's no power and it's also like a light has been switched off in her mom, who's been

triggered by the raging river and memories of Addy's dad dying in a similar storm. The two of them are feeling particularly stranded as they've never bothered to befriend any neighbors. But now Addy keeps running into her classmate Caleb on the hill above her house where they both go to get cell service. Caleb's frantic about a missing neighbor, and Addy's amazed to see how he's able to connect with folks to get help. Then Caleb offers to help her get to camp—but can she trust him? She always thought of him as an enemy—but maybe she was partially to blame for his frostiness? The storm has brought so many questions swirling to the surface and has made Addy feel it's time to take some leaps of faith. When she agrees to travel with Caleb by canoe, this sets off a remarkable string of events and the biggest test of her survival skills. More importantly, it sets Addy on a road to understanding that she's not in this adventure of life alone--and that a good thing.



[Monster Locker by Jorge Aguirre and Andrés Vera Martínez \(256 pages\)](#)

In this first volume of a thrilling middle grade graphic novel series, a sixth-grader named Pablo discovers his locker is a portal to the realm of monsters!

For hundreds of years, something in the basement of Glenfield Middle School has waited for its chance to open a portal into the realm of monsters. Now its time has come, and the school is going to need a hero. Pablo Ortiz . . . isn't that guy. All he wants to do is lie low and get through middle school in one piece. So when Pablo accidentally opens the portal and summons a vengeful Aztec goddess, he'll need the butt-kicking skills of his new friends and the wisdom passed down by his abuela to take her on.



[Spark by Chris Baron \(320 pages\)](#)

Finn and his friend, nicknamed Rabbit, live in a rural area that's been hit hard by wildfires. Families were displaced and school was interrupted. Moreover, their beloved forest is suffering -- animals and plants haven't been able to come back, and the two friends wonder if there's anything they can do to help. Rabbit's uncle, a science teacher, is part of a study that may help bring the forest back to life, but Finn and Rabbit wonder if the forest can wait. And what if another fire comes in the meantime? They believe a small part of the forest -- the forest heart -- that survived the wildfire may hold the key to regrowth, but first, they have to find it and then convince the adults around them to listen.

COMPLETE READING LIST--All books must be completed by the end of November

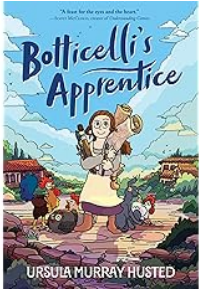


[The AI Incident by J. E. Thomas \(256 pages\)](#)

The Wild Robot meets Restart when Colorado's unluckiest foster kid battles a rogue AI robot at school.

Malcolm Montgomery is the new kid at Shirley Chisholm Charter Middle School. In no time at all, he's been slapped with the weird kid label. Is it because he's a foster kid who's been in nine homes? Or maybe because he burps when he gets nervous...which is often? Malcolm has a plan to finally get adopted by a forever family before it's too late. But then on Visiting Professionals' Day, his school invites Dr. Alphonse Hatch, president of Hatch-ED—one of the fastest-growing artificial intelligence companies in the state—to give a presentation. Dr. Hatch brings his AI-powered robot, and events get set in motion that create...THE INCIDENT.

An irresistible MG novel about the role of AI in schools and in our lives...and what it means to be human.



[Botticelli's Apprentice by Ursula Murray Husted \(Graphic novel 277 pages\)](#)

This funny, empowering graphic novel from rising star Ursula Murray Husted is a gorgeously illustrated glimpse into the forgotten history of Renaissance Italy, following an ambitious young girl's quest to become an apprentice to the famous Sandro Botticelli.

Life as a chicken girl isn't so bad, but Mella wants more. Though girls can't be official apprentices to artists in Florence, Mella has been secretly teaching herself to paint while tending to artist Sandro Botticelli's chickens.

When one of Botticelli's actual apprentices discovers Mella's work, he threatens to take full credit for it. Why does it matter who drew it if it's good?

With the help of unexpected allies, an important patron, and a tenacious stray dog named Blue, Mella must summon all her courage, smarts, and skills to prove her worth and demand the recognition she deserves.

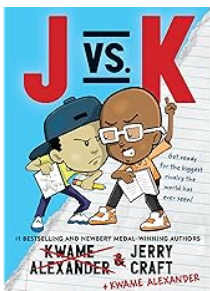


[The Creepening of Dogwood House by Eden Royce \(272 pages\)](#)

At night, Roddie still dreams of sitting at his mother's feet while she braids his Afro down. But that's a memory from before. Before his mom died in a tragic accident, leaving Roddie to navigate his grief and loss alone. Before he was taken in by an aunt he barely knows. Before his aunt brought him to Dogwood House, the creepiest place Roddie has ever seen. It was his family's home for over a hundred years. Now the house—abandoned and rotting, draped in Spanish moss that reminds him too much of

hair—is his home too.

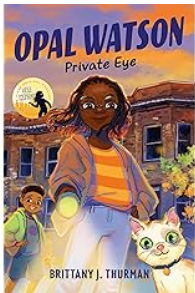
Aunt Angie has returned to South Carolina to take care of Roddie and reconnect with their family's hoodoo roots. Roddie, however, can't help but feel lost. His mom had never told him anything about hoodoo, Dogwood House, or their family. And as they set about fixing the house up, Roddie discovers that there is even more his mother never said. Like why she left home when she was seventeen, never to return. Or why she insisted Aunt Angie always wear her hair in locs. Or what she knew of the strange family secrets hidden deep within Dogwood House—a chilling paranormal mystery where the past has awoken again, and is reaching out to Roddie...



[J vs. K by Jerry Craft and Kwame Alexander \(240 pages\)](#)

When a super-storm hits Addy's remote mountain town, knocking out the bridge and cutting her home off from the main road, she worries that she won't be able to get to the survival camp she's been looking forward to attending. The camp's the place where her parents met, and where Addy plans to hone her skills and honor their legacy. But now there's no power and it's also like a light has been switched off in her mom, who's been triggered by the raging river and memories of Addy's dad dying in a similar storm. The

two of them are feeling particularly stranded as they've never bothered to befriend any neighbors. But now Addy keeps running into her classmate Caleb on the hill above her house where they both go to get cell service. Caleb's frantic about a missing neighbor, and Addy's amazed to see how he's able to connect with folks to get help. Then Caleb offers to help her get to camp--but can she trust him? She always thought of him as an enemy--but maybe she was partially to blame for his frostiness? The storm has brought so many questions swirling to the surface and has made Addy feel it's time to take some leaps of faith. When she agrees to travel with Caleb by canoe, this sets off a remarkable string of events and the biggest test of her survival skills. More importantly, it sets Addy on a road to understanding that she's not in this adventure of life alone--and that a good thing.



Opal Watson: Private Eye by Brittany J. Thurman (224 pages)

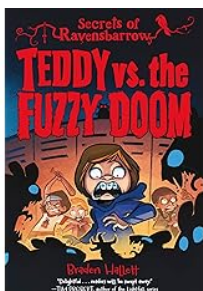
Opal Watson, Private Eye introduces an exciting new middle grade mystery series based on the popular original Pinna podcast that feels like a modern-day version of Harriet the Spy.

Opal Watson loves being a detective. When her neighbor's cat goes missing or her grandmother loses her cherished cookbook, Opal is on the case. And there is no mystery she cannot solve.

Returning home to Chicago after spending the summer with her Meme Augustine in New Orleans, Opal is nervous to begin school. Despite her parents' confidence, they worry about her making new friends and dealing with her Retinitis Pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease. When Opal gets paired with a new student, Ivy, to work on their history project together, she is hesitant—after all, she only needs her cousin, Frank, and her best friend, Madison.

But school quickly becomes the least of her worries. Madison has heard disturbances in the apartment building she and Opal live in, the Crescent. Renovations are being done, but it's unclear where the noises are coming from that are upsetting all her neighbors. Even worse, the old building is the target of developers wanting to tear it down. As Opal begins to investigate, she realizes this will be her toughest case yet.

Can Opal solve the mystery at the Crescent and save her home? And what hidden truths will she uncover along the way?



Teddy vs. The Fuzzy Doom by Braden Hallett (288 pages)

Starting at a new school is hard enough for an anxious kid like Teddy. But Ravensbarrow Elementary seems extra unsettling. First, there are the zombie-like kids and teachers, with their vacant stares and strange, echoey voices. Then there are the hamsters. So. Many. Hamsters. With their scrabbly claws and beady eyes and . . . wait. Can those hamsters talk?

Teddy must face old fears (making friends) and new ones (evil hamsters!) in this frightening and fast-paced, hilarious, and heartfelt debut.