

Grade 7 Book Lists

The list below includes class texts, mentor texts, book club choices, and independent reading choices

The Short Story Unit

"Mother and Daughter" by Gary Soto

A young girl's mother helps her fix a ruined dress for a school dance using creative but ultimately unsuccessful methods. The story highlights the loving and often humorous bond between the two characters.

"The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe

An unnamed narrator insists on their sanity while detailing how they murdered an elderly man because of his unsettling "vulture eye." The narrator's guilt eventually manifests as a beating heart that leads to a confession.

"A Day's Wait" by Ernest Hemingway

A young boy mistakenly believes he is dying after misinterpreting his body temperature in Celsius as Fahrenheit. The story explores his silent courage and the eventual relief when his father clarifies the misunderstanding.

"Stolen Day" by Sherwood Anderson

A young narrator convinces himself he has inflammatory rheumatism to get out of school, only to realize the complex emotions of seeking attention and the reality of his own health.

"Charles" by Shirley Jackson

A kindergarten boy constantly tells his parents about a troublesome classmate named Charles who misbehaves every day. The parents are shocked to eventually discover that their own son is the one causing the trouble.

"Miss Awful" by Arthur Cavanaugh

A strict substitute teacher changes the dynamic of a relaxed classroom by enforcing rigorous discipline and high standards. Though the students initially resent her, they eventually learn the value of integrity and hard work.

"After Twenty Years" by O. Henry

Two friends agree to meet at a specific location twenty years after parting ways to seek their fortunes. The reunion takes a dramatic turn when one man realizes his old friend has become a wanted criminal.

"The Naming of Names" by Ray Bradbury

Earth colonists on Mars gradually lose their memories of home and physically transform to adapt to their new environment. The story examines the fluid nature of identity and the inevitable influence of a foreign setting.

"Chanclas" by Sandra Cisneros

A young girl feels embarrassed at a family party because she is wearing old, clunky shoes with her new dress. Through dancing, she overcomes her self-consciousness and finds joy in the celebration.

"The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

In a small village, residents gather for an annual ritual that appears to be a normal civic event but has a dark purpose. The story explores the dangers of blindly following tradition as one villager is randomly selected for sacrifice.

The Novel Unit

"The Giver" by Lois Lowry

In a colorless society where memories are suppressed, a boy named Jonas is chosen to inherit the community's collective history. He eventually escapes to find a world filled with both pain and true beauty.

Drama Unit

"The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" by Rod Serling

When a neighborhood experiences strange occurrences, the residents quickly turn on one another in a state of paranoid hysteria. It is eventually revealed that aliens are manipulating them to prove that humanity is its own worst enemy.

Poetry

"The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost

A traveler comes to a fork in the road and must choose between two paths in a yellow wood. The poem reflects on the nature of choices and the lingering curiosity about the life that might have been lived on the other path.

"The Climb" by Miley Cyrus

This song describes the personal journey of facing challenges and the importance of perseverance. It emphasizes that the experience of working toward a goal is more significant than the actual achievement.

"Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe

This lyrical poem tells the tragic story of a profound love between the narrator and a beautiful maiden by the sea. Despite her untimely death, the narrator remains devoted to her memory and their eternal spiritual connection.

"The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

This poem contrasts the fleeting nature of human life with the eternal cycle of the tides. While individual travelers come and go, the ocean remains constant and indifferent to human passage.

"I Like to See it Lap the Miles" by Emily Dickinson

This poem uses vivid imagery to describe a train as a powerful, iron creature traveling through the landscape. It captures the speed and mechanical wonder of the locomotive during the industrial era.

"Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden

The speaker reflects on his father's quiet, hardworking nature and the unnoticed sacrifices he made for the family. It is a poignant exploration of the "austere and lonely offices" of love that go unrecognized in childhood.

"Oranges" by Gary Soto

A young boy experiences his first date while walking to a drugstore to buy candy for a girl. He uses an orange as partial payment for the treat, marking a tender moment of childhood growth.

"Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou

This powerful poem serves as a resilient anthem against oppression and historical injustice. The speaker asserts her strength and dignity, declaring that she will continue to rise despite any attempts to hold her down.

Nonfiction Book Club List

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the American Meal by Eric Schlosser

An investigative work that exposes the industrialization of food production and its consequences for American society, covering everything from worker rights to the marketing of unhealthy products to children.

The Boys Who Challenged Hitler: Knud Pedersen and the Churchill Club by Phillip Hoose

A group of Danish schoolboys forms a secret club to sabotage German occupiers during World War II. Their brave actions helped inspire a larger national resistance movement in Denmark.

Unbroken: An Olympian's Journey from Airman to Castaway to Captive by Laura Hillenbrand

The survival story of Louis Zamperini, an Olympic runner who became a prisoner of war during World War II. It details his incredible endurance through a plane crash at sea and brutal captivity.

The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water by Charles Fishman

An exploration of the global water crisis and the essential role water plays in human survival and industry. It warns of future scarcity while highlighting the need for better management of this precious resource.

Chasing Lincoln's Killer by James L. Swanson

A fast-paced historical account of the 12-day manhunt for John Wilkes Booth following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. It details the conspiracy, the escape, and the eventual capture of the notorious killer.

"The President Has Been Shot!" The Assassination of John F. Kennedy by James L. Swanson

This non-fiction work provides a detailed, minute-by-minute account of the events surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy. It explores the investigation, the pursuit of Lee Harvey Oswald, and the national impact of the tragedy.

The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics by Daniel James Brown

The true story of the American rowing team that overcame immense odds to win gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It highlights the power of teamwork and the resilience of the human spirit during the Great Depression.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan

This book traces the origins of various food chains to show where our meals actually come from. It encourages readers to think about the ecological and health impacts of their dietary choices.

Bomb: The Race to Build--and Steal--The World's Most Dangerous Weapon by Steve Sheinkin

This book chronicles the high-stakes race to develop the atomic bomb during World War II, involving scientists, spies, and military leaders. It provides a thrilling account of the technological breakthrough that changed the world forever.

Imprisoned: The Betrayal of Japanese Americans During World War II by Martin Sandler

A historical look at the unjust internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. It features first-hand accounts and photographs to illustrate the resilience of families who lost their freedom.

Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know about Fast Food by Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson

This adaptation for young readers examines the history and impact of the fast-food industry on health and culture. It reveals the secrets behind food production and encourages critical thinking about what we eat.

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai

The memoir of Malala Yousafzai, who was targeted by the Taliban for advocating for girls' education in Pakistan. It tells her inspiring story of survival and her continued global fight for the right to learn.

We Beat the Street by George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt, Sampson Davis, and Sharon Draper

Three childhood friends from a tough neighborhood in Newark make a pact to stick together and become doctors. This non-fiction account follows their journey as they overcome systemic obstacles to achieve their dreams.

The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives by Dashka Slater

A non-fiction account of a hate crime involving two teenagers on a public bus in Oakland, California. It examines the complexities of gender identity, race, and the juvenile justice system.

We Are Displaced by Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai shares the stories of various displaced girls she has met in refugee camps around the world. It emphasizes the human toll of war and the incredible courage of those seeking safety.

Symphony for the City of the Dead by M.T. Anderson

This book tells the story of composer Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad during World War II. It explores how a symphony became a powerful symbol of resistance and hope for a starving city.

Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg by Irin Carmon and Shana Knizhnik

A biography of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg that explores her life, legal career, and status as a pop-culture icon. It details her fierce advocacy for gender equality and civil rights.

8th Grade Book Lists

The list below includes class texts, mentor texts, book club choices, and independent reading choices

The Short Story Unit

"The Landlady" by Roald Dahl

A young businessman checks into a cozy bed-and-breakfast, only to discover that the landlady has a sinister and lethal obsession with her guests. The story builds suspense as he slowly realizes he is trapped in a deadly situation.

"Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl

A housewife kills her husband in a fit of rage and then cunningly covers up the crime using a frozen leg of lamb as a weapon. The story takes a dark, humorous turn as she feeds the evidence to the unsuspecting investigators.

"The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury

Two parents grow increasingly concerned when their children become obsessed with a high-tech nursery that can project any environment they imagine. The story culminates in a terrifying realization that the virtual reality has become more real—and dangerous—than life itself.

The Novel Unit

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

A classic novel about the rivalry between two teenage gangs—the Greasers and the Socs—and the struggle for belonging in a divided society. It remains a profound exploration of class, friendship, and the difficult transition to adulthood.

"Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost

This poem reflects on the fleeting nature of perfection, youth, and beauty in the world. It suggests that all things, no matter how precious, must eventually fade or change.

"We Real Cool" By Gwendolyn Brooks

This poem depicts the lives of young men who embrace a rebellious, carefree lifestyle while facing the inevitable consequences of their choices. It uses rhythmic, staccato language to highlight the fleeting nature of their youth and the tragic end that awaits them.

"What Love Isn't" by Yrsa Daley-Ward

This poem deconstructs the common misconceptions about love, defining it instead through actions, patience, and vulnerability. It serves as an honest, grounded exploration of what true, healthy connection looks like.

Social Issue Book Clubs

The Wave

Based on a true experiment, a teacher creates a classroom movement to demonstrate how easily students can be manipulated by authoritarian ideals. The novel serves as a chilling warning about the dangers of conformity and the fragility of democracy.

The Hate U Give

After witnessing the fatal shooting of her childhood friend by a police officer, a teenage girl must find the courage to speak up and fight for justice. The novel offers a timely and powerful look at race, same-sex relationships, activism, and finding one's voice.

The Secret Life of Bees

Set in the South during the Civil Rights Movement, a young girl runs away to find information about her mother and discovers a new family of beekeeping sisters. It is a beautifully written story about healing, love, and the power of female community.

They Both Die At The End

In a world where people are notified that they are going to die within 24 hours, two strangers meet to live a lifetime in a single day. The story is a poignant exploration of mortality, friendship, and the beauty of living fully. LGBTQ+ protagonists, relationships.

Girl in the Blue Coat

In Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, a young woman becomes involved in the resistance by helping to hide Jewish children. The novel is a gripping exploration of moral courage and the personal cost of resistance during wartime and features a critical subplot involving a hidden romantic relationship between two girls.

Ghost

A talented boy with a troubled past finds a path forward when he joins an elite track team. Through the mentorship of his coach, he learns to confront his demons rather than running away from them.

Mr. Touchdown

A historical profile of an influential football coach and his impact on the game and the athletes he guided. It highlights the life lessons learned on the field and the legacy of mentorship.

Roll of Thunder, Hear Me Cry

Set in the South during the Great Depression, this story follows a Black family fighting to keep their land and maintain their dignity in the face of intense racial hatred. It is a powerful testament to family strength and the fight for justice.

A Very Large Expanse Sea

A young Muslim girl navigates the challenges of high school while dealing with prejudice and the struggle to fit in after 9/11. She finds an unexpected connection with a boy who helps her see the world differently.

The Night Diary

Set during the 1947 partition of India, a young girl records her experiences in a diary as she and her family are forced to flee their home. It is a powerful story about finding identity and hope amidst the chaos of displacement.

Poetry**"I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman**

This poem celebrates the diverse voices and contributions of working-class Americans across various professions. It paints a vibrant picture of a nation built by the collective spirit and labor of its individual citizens.

"I, Too" by Langston Hughes

The speaker asserts his place in American society, responding to the exclusion and discrimination he faces as a Black man. He expresses a hopeful vision of a future where he is recognized as an equal and integral part of the nation.

"First They Came for the Jews" by Pastor Martin Niemöller

This powerful poem highlights the dangers of apathy and the importance of speaking out against injustice. It describes how the failure to stand up for others eventually leads to the speaker's own persecution.

"Shoulders" by Naomi Shihab Nye

The speaker contemplates the responsibility we have to protect the vulnerable, using the imagery of a father carrying his sleeping child on his shoulders. It is a gentle reminder of the weight and duty inherent in love and parenthood.

"Waiting in Line at the Drugstore" by James Thomas Jackson

The poem captures a quiet, observational moment of life in a small town, reflecting on the mundane experiences that define our daily existence. It emphasizes the beauty found in simple, everyday interactions and reflections.

Nonfiction Book Club List**"The Borden Murders" by Sarah Miller**

A detailed exploration of the infamous 1892 Lizzie Borden murder case, examining the evidence, the suspects, and the lingering questions. It provides a fascinating look at the intersection of historical true crime and media sensationalism.

"Obsessed" by Allison Britz

A teenage girl struggles with undiagnosed OCD, describing her descent into a world of intrusive thoughts and irrational rituals. It provides an intimate look at her difficult road to diagnosis and recovery.

"Bonnie and Clyde" by Karen Blumenthal

This non-fiction work strips away the myth of the infamous outlaw couple, detailing their true story of crime, violence, and eventual downfall. It provides a grounded historical look at the impact they had during the Great Depression.

"Flowers in the Gutter" by K.R. Gatty

This history tells the story of the Edelweiss Pirates, a group of young Germans who actively resisted the Nazi regime. It honors their defiance and the incredible risks they took in the name of freedom and morality.

"Life in Motion" by Misty Copeland

A memoir of the first African American woman to be promoted to principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre. It chronicles her struggle to break barriers in a demanding industry while overcoming personal adversity.

"Witch-Hunt" by Ian Rankin

An exploration of the history of witch trials and the social hysteria that led to the persecution of innocent people. It serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of fear and the abuse of power.

"Stamped" by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds

This book provides a clear, accessible history of racist ideas in America and how they have been shaped and challenged over time. It encourages readers to understand the past to build a more equitable future.

"Clara's War" by Clara Kramer, Kathy Kacer, and Stephen Glantz

This true story documents how a young girl and her family survived the Holocaust by hiding in an underground bunker. It is a harrowing and courageous account of endurance and the risks taken by those who helped them.

"Stick Figure" by Lori Gottlieb

A memoir based on the author's teenage diaries that recounts her struggle with anorexia and the superficiality of high school culture. It is an honest and sometimes humorous look at the pressures of adolescent life.

"Chinese Cinderella" by Adeline Yen Mah

This memoir tells the heartbreaking and inspiring story of a young girl growing up in China who is treated as unwanted by her family. Through her love of literature and persistence, she manages to transcend her circumstances and pursue her dreams.

"Letters To A Bullied Girl" by Olivia Gardner

A collection of letters written to a teenager who was being severely bullied, illustrating the impact of community and words of kindness. It serves as a reminder of the power of empathy in overcoming isolation and hostility.

"I Will Always Write Back" by Caitlin Alifirenka, Liz Welch, and Martin Ganda

An unlikely pen-pal correspondence between a girl in America and a boy in Zimbabwe evolves into a life-changing friendship. Their story highlights the power of connection and how one small act of kindness can bridge worlds.

"Throw Like A Girl" by Sarah Henning

A star athlete must balance her athletic ambitions with the pressures of teenage social dynamics after a humiliating incident. The story explores themes of redemption, growth, and the importance of perseverance.

"Into Thin Air" by Jon Krakauer

A harrowing firsthand account of the 1996 Everest disaster that led to the tragic loss of several climbers. It provides a sobering look at the dangers of high-altitude mountaineering and the human desire to conquer the impossible.

"Americanized" by Sara Saedi

This memoir shares the humorous and often difficult experience of growing up as an undocumented immigrant in America. It highlights the author's journey to navigate her identity, her family's status, and the typical struggles of teenage life.

"They Called Themselves The KKK" by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

This historical work provides a detailed look at the origin and impact of the Ku Klux Klan in America. It documents the group's history of violence and the long struggle for civil rights and racial equality.

"Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution" by Rob Sanders

A narrative nonfiction account of the Stonewall Inn riots, detailing the events that sparked the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement and the fight for equality.

"The Witches!" by Roald Dahl

A young boy and his grandmother uncover a plot by a group of child-hating witches to turn all the children in the world into mice. The story is a whimsical and thrilling adventure about the power of bravery in the face of evil.

"The Family Romanov" by Candace Fleming

This historical account details the downfall of the last Russian royal family and the events that led to the Russian Revolution. It provides an intimate look at their lives behind palace walls and the systemic failures that sealed their fate.

"The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank

This world-renowned diary documents the life of a Jewish girl hiding from the Nazis in an attic during World War II. Her personal reflections provide a deeply moving and timeless look at the human spirit during unimaginable circumstances.

"The Cage" by Ruth Minsky Sender

A harrowing memoir about a young girl's survival in the Holocaust, focusing on her experiences in the Lodz Ghetto and subsequent labor camps. It is a story of profound resilience and the promise to remember those who were lost.

"Hiroshima" by John Hersey

A landmark work of journalism that chronicles the stories of six survivors of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, offering a harrowing look at the immediate and long-term aftermath of the explosion.

"Looking Like the Enemy" by Mary Matsuda Gruenewald

A powerful account of a Japanese American woman who was unjustly interned during World War II. It details her experience of losing her freedom and her journey to heal from the trauma of discrimination.

"Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio" by Peg Kehret

An autobiographical account of the author's battle with polio as a child, detailing her time in the hospital, her recovery, and her resilience in the face of a life-altering illness.

"Blood, Bullets, and Bones" by Bridget Heos

This book explores the fascinating and gruesome history of forensic science and how it transformed criminal investigation. It details real-life cases where science became the key to solving complex and brutal crimes.

"Bubonic Panic" by Gail Jarrow

This gripping history chronicles the outbreak of the bubonic plague in San Francisco in the early 20th century. It details the public health crisis, the scientific investigation, and the racial prejudices that shaped the response to the epidemic.

"Fatal Fever" by Gail Jarrow

A historical investigation into the deadly typhoid fever outbreak in New York City and the tenacious health official who worked to stop it. It brings to life the intersection of medical discovery, urban sanitation, and public safety.

"#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women" edited by Mary Beth Leatherdale and Lisa Charleyboy

A powerful collection of poetry, art, and personal essays from indigenous women, challenging stereotypes and celebrating the diverse voices and strength of Native American heritage.

"The Movie Book" by DK

An expansive and visual guide to the history of cinema, covering the greatest films, directors, and movements that shaped the industry. It serves as an informative resource for anyone looking to understand the evolution of film as an art form.

"The Mamba Mentality" by Kobe Bryant

This book offers an inside look at the mindset, work ethic, and philosophy that defined the legendary basketball player's career. It serves as a guide for anyone looking to achieve excellence through dedication and discipline.