



Forest Of Reading[®]

2026 Kid Committee List

Red Maple Readers

Ages 12-14, Grades 7-8

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best books for schools and libraries

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Suggested Reading List



Best of All Worlds by Kenneth Oppel (Penguin Teen Canada)

Xavier Oaks doesn't particularly want to go to the cabin with his dad and his dad's pregnant new wife, Nia. But family obligations are family obligations, and it's only for a short time. So he leaves his mom, his brother, and his other friends behind for a week in the woods. Only... one morning he wakes up and the house isn't where it was before. It's like it's been lifted and placed... somewhere else.

When Xavier, his dad, and Nia go explore, they find they are inside a dome, trapped. And there's no one else around...

Until, three years later, another family arrives.

Is there any escape? Is there a reason they are stuck where they are? Different people have different answers – and those different answers inexorably lead to tension, strife, and sacrifice.



The Curse of Heartwood Academy by Marty Chan (Orca Book Publishers)

Fifteen-year-old Allie Lau is not excited to attend Heartwood Academy, a posh boarding school deep in a remote forest.

Subject to the whims of senior students, Allie faces an initiation ritual called the test, which requires her and other new students to spend the entire night in the forest. The senior students warn that a ghost lurks in the woods, preying on those who trespass. Allie braves the test, but when she accidentally kicks over a gravestone in an overgrown burial site, she finds herself pursued by some kind of zombie.



Digger: Dig or Die! by Deborah Cholette and Illustrated by Davide Ortu (One Elm Books)

Climate change is presently a worldwide concern. However, what is not often mentioned is that greenhouse gas emissions not only affect Earth's lower atmospheric layers but that they also affect Earth's outer layers which protect us from solar particles entering our atmosphere and damaging satellites, power grids and aircraft electrical systems.

In this dystopian middle grade novel *Digger: Dig or Die!*, a climate change disaster forces humanity to search for safety as Earth's atmosphere escapes into space. Narrated by siblings Nick and Lily, the story follows their resourcefulness in aiding neighbors. Nick's digging prowess and Lily's strategic planning become vital as oxygen diminishes. Nick unveils a plan to create a lifesaving network of tunnels as breathable air disappears. Lily crafts a communication system with walkie-talkies and baby monitors to share critical information. A frantic race ensues to complete tunnels before food and oxygen become scarce; it's a tense battle for survival in a world teetering on the edge of extinction.

Suggested Reading List



***The Experiment (The Factory, Book 2)* by Catherine Egan (Scholastic Canada)**

It's been only moments since Asher Doyle made an impossible decision – a matter of seconds since he set off a time bomb on the rooftop of the Factory that would change his life forever.

At least, it felt like only moments to Asher. But he was wrong.

In reality, twenty years have passed since that fateful night. Twenty birthdays, and yet Asher is still the same thirteen-year-old boy he was when he arrived at the Factory. Asher Doyle, The Boy Frozen in Time.

And it gets worse: Not only is his best friend, Vi, twenty years older – she's the new director of the evil place she and Asher swore to bring down. What could possibly have happened to make her switch sides?

As Asher wraps his head around all he's lost, he finds himself at the center of an experiment at the hands of his former ally and best friend. It's up to him and a new group of friends to expose what new sinister secrets lie buried at the Factory – if he manages to make it out alive...



***Fierce Voice* by Susan Currie (Common Deer Press)**

Words bawling...Melody howling...Fierce Voice rising

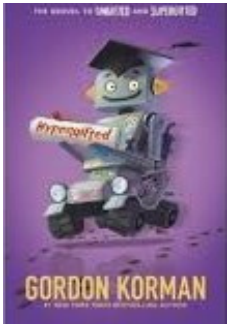
Iz has everything she's ever wanted: she's found the foster home of her dreams and is attending the prestigious music school she moved heaven and earth to get into. But secrets from her past keep threatening to spill into the present, and Iz is sure that her newfound loved ones will abandon her if they learn of her terrible history.

Despite these fears, Iz does her best to settle into her new life. Hoping to give at-risk children the musical experiences she longed for when she was little, she joins with her classmates and Teo (the boy she sort of kissed and then ghosted all summer) to start a musical outreach program at the community centre she used to go to.

She isn't quite prepared for the chaotic group of children she's paired with. And she's even less ready for Skye, an angry foster kid who challenges everything Iz holds dear, gets a little too close for comfort, and has her own terrible secret.

To help Skye, Iz must make a dreadful choice—a decision that could free them both from their demons or completely destroy everything Iz has fought so hard for. Is raising her voice worth the risk?

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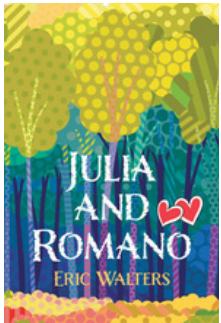


***Hypergifted (Ungifted, Book 3)* by Gordon Korman (Scholastic Canada)**

School has never been a problem for twelve-year-old super-genius Noah Youkilis—at least not until he gets an admission letter to the prestigious Wilderton University. The last thing Noah wants is to go straight from eighth grade into college. Will his life ever just be normal?!

Meanwhile, Noah's best friend, Donovan, has been looking forward all year to a summer of doing nothing. But when Wilderton allows Noah to bring a friend for the summer term, Donovan's parents jump at the chance. Suddenly, Donovan's summer of slack has turned into hanging with Noah and working as a summer camp counselor for professors' kids.

Once they arrive on campus, Noah's determined to fit in—and to him, that means joining the top-secret Society of the Gavel. But becoming a Gaveler is harder than it seems, and it's made all the harder when Noah and Donovan smuggle Wilderton's mascot, a two-hundred-pound pig named Porquette, into their dorm. Now Noah and Donovan must combine all their middle-school smarts to keep their pig-sized secret, fix a haywire AI program before it pretty much ends the world, and keep track of Donovan's campers.



***Julia and Romano* by Eric Walters (DCB Young Readers)**

Forced to move across the country for her mom's new job, Julia Anderson hates everything about her new home in Campbell River — until she meets Cody Romano, a cute and charming guy who soon becomes a friend, then something more. But just when things are finally looking up, Jules and Cody realize their families are on opposite sides of an environmental issue that's dividing their small coastal community in half, stirring up strife, spite, and even sabotage.

Hiding secret dates from gossiping neighbors and their parents, Jules and Cody must risk it all to be together, lest their relationship end before they can find out how far it can go.



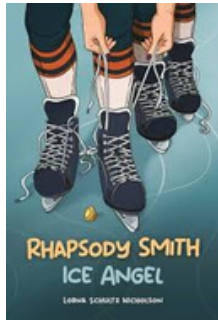
***Last Year with Maddy* by Anna Rosner (Yellow Dog)**

Can best friends Aviva and Maddy survive the hardest year of their lives without each other?

Twelve-year-olds Maddy Li-Quinn and Aviva Adelman are the best of friends, innately connected through their love of the arts: Aviva loves to read poetry and Maddy is a gifted violinist. However, over the course of a painful year, very different family struggles drive the two girls apart. Maddy encounters violence in the home, and Aviva's baby brother faces a difficult diagnosis.

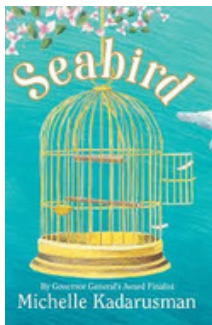
To cope with the stress, Aviva's mother suggests she write a book about her friendship with Maddy. In an attempt to heal through the written word, Aviva becomes the funny, feisty protagonist of her own book, reflecting back on her life, and realizing that she, too, has made many mistakes along the way.

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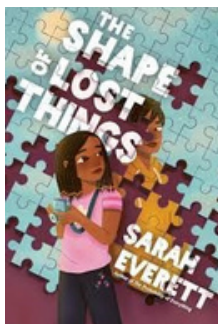
Rhapsody Smith, Ice Angel by Lorna Schultz Nicholson (Yellow Dog)

Rhapsody "Rap" Queen Smith, lives with her grandparents and plays for the Ice Angels hockey team, a tight group of girls who spend time together outside of hockey and school. Her focus is on improving her power plays and crossovers until she meets Marion, an older woman who spends her days sitting on a bench outside the arena. Nobody seems to know who she is, but there are two mysterious things about her: she has an in-depth knowledge of hockey strategy and she wears a 1990 Women's World Cup ring. When Marion's ring goes missing, Rap and her friends are determined to find it. Who is Marion, and why does she know so much about hockey? The Ice Angels work together to find out.



Seabird by Michelle Kadarusman (Pajama Press)

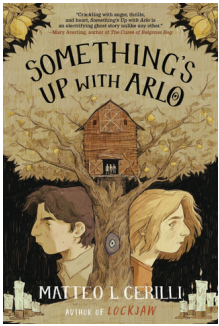
Inspired by a true story, *Seabird* follows the early teen years of Kartini, whose forced isolation ignites her desire for freedom and the right to have a say in the decisions that shape her life. Kartini was born in 1879 during Dutch-colonized Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies. Due to her high-born status, Kartini is forced to enter home seclusion just before her twelfth birthday with the intention that she will remain home until she is married. During seclusion, Kartini, who is fluent in the Dutch language, begins a self-directed education and writes letters to a former schoolmate named Lesty. This period of isolation sparks her interest in feminist thinking and ignites her desire to improve education opportunities for all Javanese girls and women. In *Seabird*, Governor General's Award finalist Michelle Kadarusman shows us that no matter how powerless you feel, your voice can have great impact, and by virtue of writing down your dreams and ideas, you can inspire generations to come.



The Shape of Lost Things by Sarah Everett (HarperCollins)

Skye Nickson's world changed forever when her dad went on the run with her brother, Finn. It's been four years without Finn's jokes, four years without her father's old soul music, and four years of Skye filling in as Rent-a-Finn on his MIA birthdays for their mom. Finn's birthday is always difficult, but at least Skye has her best friends, Reece and Jax, to lean on, even if Reece has started acting too cool for them. But this year is different because after Finn's birthday, they get a call that he's finally been found. Tall, quiet, and secretive, this Finn is nothing like the brother she grew up with. He keeps taking late-night phone calls and losing his new expensive gifts, and he doesn't seem to remember any of their inside jokes or secrets. As Skye tries to make sense of it all through the lens of her old Polaroid camera, she starts to wonder: Could this Finn be someone else entirely? And if everyone else has changed, does it mean that Skye has to change too?

Suggested Reading List



***Something's Up with Arlo* by Matteo L. Cerilli (HarperCollins)**

For as long as Nero can remember, she's been "haunted" by Arlo. He's always had her back, especially as Nero navigates her workaholic mother, irritable father, even the mega-jerks at school. Nero's been caught too many times looking at "nothing" and talking to "no one," which officially made her "the weird girl." So when she has the chance to start over as "normal" at a prestigious private school, Nero is hopeful that things will change for the better. If she can get top grades at a top school, maybe she'll stop feeling like she's never good enough. Maybe her parents will finally see her—and she'll stop feeling like a ghost too.

But on Nero's first day at her new school, something's up with Arlo, something very wrong: her best friend has suddenly turned on her. Glitching electronics, flickering lights, bad smells and cold drafts are only the beginning. Arlo is changing into something scary. And the only clues he gives Nero leave her with more questions than answers. If she wants to save Arlo and their friendship, Nero will have to break old cycles. She will have to let herself be seen, let in new friends, and—worst of all—say goodbye to the past.



***The Water You're Swimming In* by Rachel Schwartz Fagan (Orca Book Publishers)**

Noah is used to being a straight-A student, swim champ and all-around easy kid.

But things haven't been the same since Noah's older brother Jamie ran away to Halifax, leaving only a note behind. His parents spend every free second on the phone or driving to Halifax to try to find Jamie, and Noah is left trying to mask his anxiety and grief by pretending to be the perfect son who does everything right. But inside he feels like crying and gets a knot in his stomach whenever he thinks of Jamie.

Some warmth returns to their home when Grandma Aisling comes to stay, bringing her fiddle and her genius for making chocolate cake with her. At school, funny and kind Alysha joins his class and Noah has a new friend to distract him from his worries. When a swim competition is announced with the grand prize being a trip to Halifax, Noah knows he has to win it so he can go to Halifax himself—and get Jamie back.

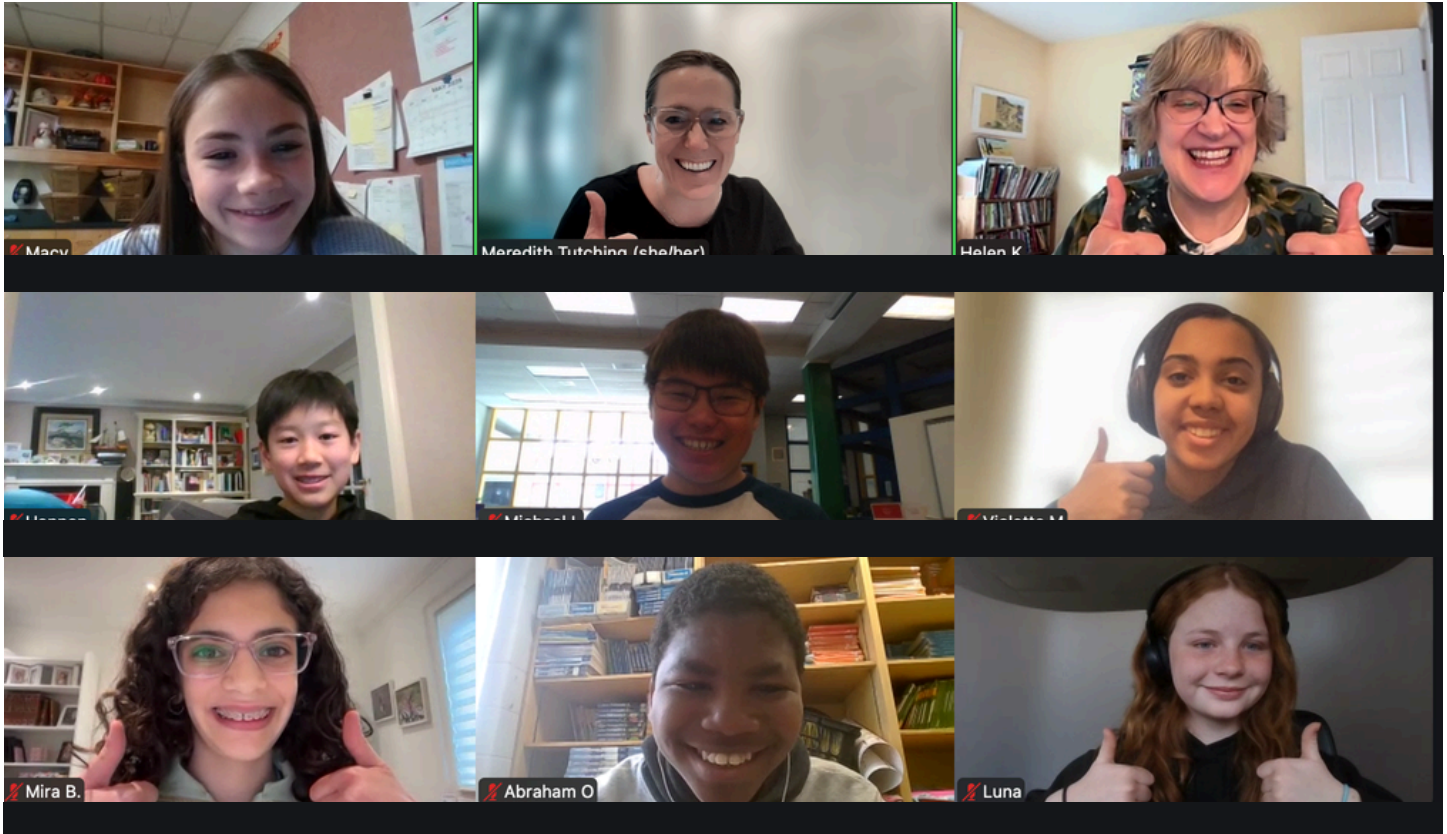


***The World's End (The Misewa Saga, Book 6)* by David A. Robertson (Tundra Books)**

Eli must embrace his unique heritage and make an impossible decision about his future, and the future of Misewa, in this thrilling last adventure in the award-winning, Narnia-inspired Indigenous middle-grade fantasy series.

Eli, Morgan and Emily manage to free themselves from captivity as the battle between the humans, animal beings and Bird Warriors rages on. But there's another, more personal battle, as Eli and an unlikely ally fight to save Mahihkan's life through a previously forbidden portal. When the Sleeping Giant rumbles to life, the stakes hit an all-time high, and Eli has to reach deep within himself to summon the power so that he can protect Misewa against the dangers of colonization... forever.

Red Maple



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