Rising 5th Graders

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Middle School, the Worst Years of My Life

By James Patterson
Reading Level: V

It's Rafe Khatchadorian's first day at Hills Village Middle School, and it's shaping up to be the worst year ever. He has enough problems at home without throwing his first year of middle school into the mix, but luckily he's got an ace plan for the best year ever, if only he can pull it off. With his best friend, Leonardo the Silent, awarding him points, Rafe tries to break every rule in his school's oppressive code of conduct. Chewing gum in class: 5,000 points! Running in the hallway: 10,000 points! Pulling the fire alarm: 50,000 points!

But not everyone thinks Rafe's plan is a good idea, especially not the teachers, parents, and bullies who keep getting in his way. Will Rafe decide that winning is the only thing that matters? Are things about to go from magic to tragic?
Evan and his sister Jessie usually get along just fine, until he finds out that she’s skipping third grade. That means she’ll be in his fourth grade class next year, showing him up every day with her perfect grades. Now Evan doesn’t want her help with his lemonade stand, even though he could really use her math skills to make a profit.

Jessie, who sometimes finds people more puzzling than math problems, doesn’t understand why Evan won’t team up with her, so she starts her own lemonade stand. Soon brother and sister are waging an all-out war for customers. Can Evan figure out the math to make more than he’s spending? And can Jessie attract customers and navigate a new friendship without Evan’s help?

Told in the alternating voices of Jessie and Evan, and including kid-friendly business advice, this believable story illustrates the grudges, misunderstandings, and unconditional support that make sibling relationships unique.
The Red Pyramid

By Rick Riordan
Reading Level: W

Since their mother’s death, Carter and Sadie have become near strangers. While Sadie has lived with her grandparents in London, her brother has traveled the world with their father, the brilliant Egyptologist, Dr. Julius Kane. One night, Dr. Kane brings the siblings together for a research experiment at the British Museum, where he hopes to set things right for his family. Instead, he unleashes the Egyptian god Set, who banishes him to oblivion and forces the children to flee for their lives.

Soon, Sadie and Carter discover that the gods of Egypt are waking, and the worst of them - Set - has his sights on the Kanes. To stop him, the siblings embark on a dangerous journey across the globe - a quest that brings them ever closer to the truth about their family, and their links to a secret order that has existed since the time of the pharaohs.

Current 5th graders say: "This book is full of danger and adventure. I’d give it five stars and encourage you to read the whole series!"
Eddie Ball enters the poetry contest sponsored by Finkle Foods and wins. He must make a basket from the foul line at the NBA Finals to win a million dollars.
The Homework Machine
By Dan Guttman
Reading Level: Q

The unlikely foursome made up of a geek, a class clown, a teacher's pet, and a slacker - Brenton, Sam "Snick," Judy and Kelsey, respectively, - are bound together by one very big secret: the homework machine. Because the machine, code named Belch, is doing their homework for them, they start spending a lot of time together, attracting a lot of attention. And attention is exactly what you don't want when you are keeping a secret. Before long members of the D Squad, as they are called at school are getting strange Instant Messages from a shady guy named Milner; their teacher, Miss Rasmussen, is calling private meetings with each of them and giving them pop tests that they are failing, and someone has leaked the possibility of a homework machine to the school newspaper. Just when the D Squad thinks things can't get any more out of control, Belch becomes much more powerful than they ever imagined. Soon the kids are in a race against their own creation, and the loser could end up in jail... or worse!

Current 5th graders Say: "I loved The Homework Machine, especially Snikwad. If you like funny books, you will enjoy this."
Coke and Pepsi McDonald didn’t want to jump off a cliff. They didn’t want to get hit by poisoned darts from blowguns either. And they certainly don’t want to get locked in their burning school, thrown into a pit at the top of a sand dune, or drowned in a vat of liquefied SPAM. But what are you supposed to do when you’re being chased across the country by your insane health teacher and two guys in bowler hats who are trying to kill you? One thing’s for sure, it’ll be a snap for Coke and Pep to write their essays on “How I Spent My Summer Vacation.”

Want to join in the fun? Fire up the old Google Maps and follow the McDonald twins as they get chased from the Pez museum to the largest ball of twine in the world.
August Pullman is not an ordinary ten-year-old kid. Sure, he’s a huge Star Wars fan, he loves his dog, and he’s got a pretty good sense of humor. But August was born with a craniofacial abnormality, a genetic defect that caused his facial features to be severely deformed. His life has never been "normal."

Despite his differences, August and his parents decide to transition him from home school to private school now that he’s entering fifth grade. It’s the start of middle school, they reason, so everyone will be new. But August has to deal with so much more than just being new. Will he make friends? Will he decide to stay at the school? And can the people around him learn to see past his appearance?

This brilliant, sensitive story, narrated not only by August, but also by his older sister, his classmates, and other kids in his life, takes an insightful look at how one person’s differences can affect the lives of so many others.

Current 5th graders say: "I really enjoyed this book. The story, told from different points of view, gets a 5 star review from me."
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A Mango-Shaped Space

By Wendy Mass
Reading Level: V

Thirteen-year-old Mia Winchell appears to be the most normal kid in her family. Her younger brother Zack keeps a chart of all the McDonald’s hamburgers he’s eaten in his lifetime. Her older sister Beth dyes her hair a different color every week and might be a witch. But Mia knows she is far from ordinary. She is keeping something from everyone who knows her: the fact that sounds, numbers, and letters have color for her.

When trouble in school finally convinces Mia to reveal her secret, she feels like a freak. Her family and friends have trouble relating to her as she embarks on an intense journey of self-discovery. By the time she realizes she has isolated herself from all the people who care about her, it is almost too late. She has to lose something very special in order to find herself.

Current 6th graders say:
Esperanza Rising

By Pam Muñoz Ryan
Reading Level: V

Esperanza thought she'd always live with her family on their ranch in Mexico, and that she'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home, and servants. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California during the Great Depression, and to settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard labor, financial struggles, or lack of acceptance she now faces. When their new life is threatened, Esperanza must find a way to rise above her difficult circumstance; Mama's life, and her own, depend on it.

Pam Munoz Ryan eloquently portrays the Mexican workers' plight in this abundant and passionate novel that gives voice to those who have historically been denied one.

Current 6th graders say:
Moose Flannagan moves with his family to Alcatraz so his dad can work as a prison guard and his sister, Natalie, can attend a special school. But Natalie has autism, and when she's denied admittance to the school, the stark setting of Alcatraz begins to unravel the tenuous coping mechanisms Moose's family has used for dealing with her disorder. When Moose meets Piper, the cute daughter of the Warden, he knows right off she's trouble. But she's also strangely irresistible. All Moose wants to do is protect Natalie, live up to his parents' expectations, and stay out of trouble. But on Alcatraz, trouble is never very far away.

Set in 1935, when guards actually lived on Alcatraz Island with their families, Choldenko's second novel brings humor to the complexities of family dynamics and illuminates the real struggle of a kid trying to free himself from the "good boy" stance he's taken his whole life.
Running Out of Time

By Margaret Peterson Haddix
Reading Level: W

When a diphtheria epidemic hits her 1840s village, thirteen-year-old Jessie discovers it is actually a 1996 tourist site under the observation of heartless scientists, and it is up to Jessie to escape the village and save the lives of dying children.
Orphan Island

By Laurel Snyder

Reading Level: V

On the island, everything is perfect. The sun rises in a sky filled with dancing shapes; the wind, water, and trees shelter and protect those who live there; when the nine children go to sleep in their cabins, it is with full stomachs and joy in their hearts.

And only one thing ever changes: on that day, each year, when a boat appears from the mist upon the ocean carrying one young child to join them — and taking the eldest one away, never to be seen again.

Today's Changing is no different. The boat arrives, taking away Jinny's best friend, Deen, replacing him with a new little girl named Ess, and leaving Jinny as the new Elder. Jinny knows her responsibility now — to teach Ess everything she needs to know about the island, to keep things as they've always been.

But will she be ready for the inevitable day when the boat will come back — and take her away forever from the only home she's known?
Rising 7th Graders

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Luke has never been to school. He's never had a birthday party, or gone to a friend's house for an overnight. In fact, Luke has never had a friend.

Luke is one of the shadow children, a third child forbidden by the Population Police. He's lived his entire life in hiding, and now, with a new housing development replacing the woods next to his family's farm, he is no longer even allowed to go outside.

Then, one day Luke sees a girl's face in the window of a house where he knows two other children already live. Finally, he's met a shadow child like himself. Jen is willing to risk everything to come out of the shadows. Does Luke dare to become involved in her dangerous plan? Can he afford not to?
Enter the world of ten-year-old Kenny and his family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. When Momma and Dad decide it's time for a visit to Grandma, Dad comes home with the amazing Ultra-Glide, and the Watsons head South to Birmingham, Alabama... toward one of the darkest moments in America's history.

A hilarious, touching, and tragic novel about civil rights and the impact of violence on one African American family.
When 12-year-old Patty Bergen, a Jewish girl living in a small town in Arkansas, thinks of her upcoming summer vacation, she only envisions clear blue skies and sunshine for miles around, even though her family life is dark and dreary. Her father doesn't seem to care for her, and her mother has grown into a bitter and angry woman. In short, Patty wishes that something in her life would change. When she hears that a local prison compound for POWs is going to be built in the small town where she lives, she's grateful that she can think about something else, even if it is a troubling thing to think about.

Change comes for Patty when she befriends a young German prisoner of war named Anton, who has escaped and is desperate for a place to hide. And he, like Patty, needs someone in his life whom he can trust. Although she's steadfast in her beliefs of what is right and wrong, Patty risks everything and agrees to hide Anton until it's safe. As their friendship grows, she realizes that she's unable to label him a Nazi (as most would do), and sees him as a frightened, young man. The two grow closer and soon find the hope, strength, and love they're unable to find from others, but the risks they endure may be too much for them to bear.
Touching Spirit Bear

By Ben Mikaelsen
Reading Level: Y

Whatever you do to the animals, you do to yourself. Remember that. At fifteen, Cole Matthews has been fighting and stealing for years. The punishment for smashing Peter Driscal's skull into the sidewalk — his most recent crime — is harsh. This time, Cole will have to choose between prison and Circle Justice. He will live either behind bars or in isolation for one year.

Cole chooses Circle Justice. But in the first days of his banishment to a remote Alaskan island, he is mauled by a mysterious white bear and nearly dies. Will the attack of the spirit bear destroy Cole's life or save his soul?
Refugee

By Alan Gratz
Reading Level: Y

A tour de force from acclaimed author Alan Gratz (Prisoner B-3087), this timely and powerful novel tells the story of three different children seeking refuge.

Josef is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world...

Isabel is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America...

Mahmoud is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe...

All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers, from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of tomorrow. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end.

Current 7th graders say:
Rising 8th Graders

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Salt to the Sea  Ruta Sepetys

World War II is drawing to a close in East Prussia and thousands of refugees are on a desperate trek toward freedom, many with something to hide. Among them are Joana, Emilia, and Florian, whose paths converge en route to the ship that promises salvation, the Wilhelm Gustloff. Forced by circumstance to unite, the three find their strength, courage, and trust in each other tested with each step closer to safety.

Just when it seems freedom is within their grasp, tragedy strikes. Not country, nor culture, nor status matter as all ten thousand people—adults and children alike—aboard must fight for the same thing: survival.

A tribute to the people of Lithuania, Poland, and East Prussia, Ruta Sepetys unearths a shockingly little-known casualty of a gruesome war, and proves that humanity can prevail, even in the darkest of hours.
In order to develop a secure defense against a hostile alien race's next attack, government agencies breed child geniuses and train them as soldiers. A brilliant young boy, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin, is drafted to the orbiting Battle School for rigorous military training. Ender's skills make him a leader in school and respected in the Battle Room, where children play at mock battles in zero gravity. Yet growing up in an artificial community of young soldiers Ender suffers greatly from isolation, rivalry from his peers, pressure from the adult teachers, and an unsettling fear of the alien invaders. His psychological battles include loneliness, fear that he is becoming like the cruel brother he remembers, and fanning the flames of devotion to his beloved sister. Is Ender the general Earth needs? But Ender is not the only result of the genetic experiments. The war with the Buggers has been raging for a hundred years, and the quest for the perfect general has been underway for almost as long.
As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom.

From acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson comes this compelling, impeccably researched novel that shows the lengths we can go to cast off our chains, both physical and spiritual.
The Hunger Games  Suzanne Collins

Could you survive on your own, in the wild, with everyone out to make sure you don't live to see the morning?

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol is harsh and cruel and keeps the districts in line by forcing them all to send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before - and survival, for her, is second nature. Without really meaning to, she becomes a contender. But if she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.

A National Book Award finalist, and winner of the 2009 Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction and the 2009 Margaret A. Edwards Award.
Malcolm wants to get to the NBA ASAP. Roko wants to be the pride of his native Croatia. Crispin wants the girl of his dreams. M.J. just wants a chance.

March Madness is in full swing, and there are only four teams left in the NCAA basketball championship. The heavily favored Michigan Spartans and the underdog Troy Trojans meet in the first game in the semifinals, and it's there that the fates of Malcolm, Roko, Crispin, and M.J. intertwine. As the last moments tick down on the game clock, you'll learn how each player went from being a kid who loved to shoot hoops to a powerful force in one of the most important games of the year. Which team will leave the Superdome victorious? In the end it will come down to which players have the most skill, the most drive, and the most heart.
Book summaries taken from Scholastic.