

For students in grades 6-12: (The books will be listed with those geared a bit more for 6th grade first and 12th grade last. Keep in mind that many 7th graders have read all of these and loved them. Depends on the student's maturity.) If you have trouble finding a couple of these books, try Amazon.com and look in the used books.

A Wrinkle in Time (Beloved sci fi about time travel. Best for younger readers.)

Where the Red Fern Grows (Beautifully written book about a boy and his dogs. Tear-jerker.)

The Borrowers (Delightful story about "little" people who live in our walls.)

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle (Historical fiction - girl on a sailing ship.)

Something Upstairs (Ghostly time travel and historical fiction about slaves.)

The Outsiders (15-yr-old author) (A classic about misunderstood teens. Kids love this book.)

The Giver (A sci-fi about a future world with many rules. Great for 6-10th)

Knee-deep in Thunder (A fantasy about a journey into a strange world.)

House of Stairs (A sci-fi about orphans. Can't give away the plot!)

The Hobbit (A classic fantasy and first book before the Lord of the Rings.)

Eragon (17-yr-old author) (Fantasy about dragons and life in a strange world.)

Ender's Game (Sci-fi about a future world where children are trained as leaders.)

Ender's Shadow (Parallel book and even better than Ender's Game!)

Speak (A troubled teen; suspense builds as reader slowly finds out why.)

And Then There Were None (Classic mystery; Agatha Christie's best. Keeps reader guessing!)

Eyes of the Dragon (Stephen King wrote it for his 12-yr.-old; it's NO baby book! 8-12)

Roots (Classic and wonderful; almost 900 pages; author traces his roots

back to capturing of slaves. My gifted 7th - 12th graders loved it!)

Flowers for Algernon (Classic lit.; involves coping with enhanced intelligence.)

Catcher in the Rye (A confused young man's funny/sad account of a time in his life.)

The Forever King (Now and then/ not exactly time travel; King Arthur legend.)

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Lit. Classic: Mental institution w/ unforgettable characters.)

The Doomsday Book (Time travel to the time of the Bubonic plague.)

Guilt by Association (All girls should read. Deals with a rape. Moms and daughters often both read and both rave about this book. 8-12)

Watchers (Involves dog w/ enhanced intelligence, a serial killer, and more.)

Swan Song (The ultimate good vs. evil after nuclear war. No one ever forgets this book. 900 pages of can't put it down. Scary but ends well.)

I edited this list several times to make sure I had named books that students truly loved and not just my personal favorites although the two do overlap much of the time! Many are not the books typically found on an English teacher's reading list although a few are. All are the books that were requested the most often, provoked the most interesting discussions, and were remembered and mentioned years after they were read. Many are from my own bookshelf that I would loan to my students who wanted a really good book, and they were not part of my curriculum (although I would give extra credit for students who read above and beyond the assigned books!)

Parents, I urge you to read these books, too. For some of the best bonding ever, read and discuss a great book with your kids. Kids really do like to have intellectual conversations about concepts and motivations of characters in good books. Encourage them to head for the internet to read about the author, read reviews about the book on Amazon.com, or to research any new or unfamiliar concepts or terms mentioned in the book. Keep your students' minds razor sharp and provide them with hours of good reading and the enjoyment and contentment that results from finishing a great book. Happy reading!