

2026 Summer Reading List - Grade 5

Grade 5 readers are sophisticated and ready for complex emotions, social issues, and layered plots. On-grade titles tackle friendship, family, and identity. Challenge titles are for readers ready for middle-grade depth.

ON-GRADE LEVEL · 5 BOOKS

Fiction

Chickenpox

Remy Lai

Twelve-year-old Abby quarantines with her wild siblings in 1994 Indonesia when the whole family gets chickenpox. Hilarious and heartfelt.

ISBN 9781250863300

Fiction

A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation

Pablo Cartaya

A road trip with a grandfather he barely knows helps Gonzalo grieve his father and discover who they both really are.

ISBN 9780451479754

Graphic novel

Oasis

Guojing

Two siblings befriend an intelligent robot in a dystopian desert world. A powerful, thought-provoking graphic novel for middle-grade readers.

ISBN 9781250818379

Fiction

The Nine Moons of Han Yu and Luli

Karina Yan Glaser

A 2026 Newbery Honor Book. Two eleven-year-olds — Han Yu in Tang Dynasty China in 731 C.E. and Luli in New York City's Chinatown in 1931 — face separate adventures connected across the centuries by courage, family, and steamed buns.

ISBN 9780063284432

Fiction

Blood in the Water

Tiffany D. Jackson

When a popular teen is found dead during summer on Martha's Vineyard, twelve-year-old Kaylani turns amateur sleuth to uncover the truth. A gripping, age-appropriate mystery — more Agatha Christie than horror.

ISBN 9781338849912

CHALLENGE READS · 3 BOOKS

Fiction

Pocket Bear

Katherine Applegate, illus. Charles Santoso

A #1 New York Times Bestseller. Pocket Bear was stitched as a good luck charm for a WWI soldier and now serves as mayor of the Second Chances Home for the Tossed and Treasured — a rescue home for abandoned toys. Warm, funny, and deeply moving.

ISBN 9781250904362

Fiction

Xolo

Donna Barba Higuera, illus. Mariana Ruiz Johnson

A creation tale from Aztec mythology illustrated in the style of the ancient Codex Borgia manuscript — rich, unusual, and unforgettable.

ISBN 9781646147021

Nonfiction

The Black Mambas

Kelly Crull

Forty-two pages about the women protecting endangered wildlife in Africa. Multilayered and inspiring.

ISBN 9798765627259

DIGITAL RESOURCES

National Geographic Kids

kids.nationalgeographic.com

STEM games, trivia, and quizzes.

Greeking Out

nationalgeographic.com/podcasts/greeking-out

Greek mythology stories from National Geographic.

Wow in the World

tinkercast.com/wow-in-the-world

Science and tech podcast for curious minds.