

Suggested Reading List

Middle School · Grades 6–8 · Ages 11–14

Fuller novels, more demanding history and science, plus first looks at trades, apprenticeships, and next-step education. The nonfiction section is meant to stimulate further reading and practical exploration—not to prescribe a single path after eighth grade.

These titles favor high-interest stories, classic adventure, biography of builders and discoverers, and practical nonfiction. Series are listed as one entry when the whole run is the point; start with the first or best-known volume. Adjust for reading level and interest.

Novels

1. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn — Mark Twain
2. Little Women — Louisa May Alcott
3. A Tale of Two Cities — Charles Dickens
4. Kidnapped — Robert Louis Stevenson
5. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea / Around the World in Eighty Days — Jules Verne
6. The Red Badge of Courage — Stephen Crane
7. Animal Farm — George Orwell
8. The Hiding Place — Corrie ten Boom
9. To Kill a Mockingbird — Harper Lee
10. The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring — J. R. R. Tolkien
11. Selected Sherlock Holmes stories — Arthur Conan Doyle
12. More Henty: By Pike and Dyke; The Lion of the North; With Clive in India; In the Heart of the Rockies
13. The Once and Future King — T. H. White (early sections)
14. Watership Down — Richard Adams
15. The Scarlet Pimpernel — Baroness Orczy
16. Captains Courageous — Rudyard Kipling
17. The Jungle Book — Rudyard Kipling
18. Ivanhoe — Walter Scott (or a solid abridgment)
19. The Count of Monte Cristo — Alexandre Dumas (abridged)
20. A Wizard of Earthsea — Ursula K. Le Guin (first book)

Informative Reading, Careers, and Pathways

21. Remaining Landmark and World Landmark titles (Andrew Carnegie and the Age of Steel; The Story of Atomic Energy; and others)
22. The Wright Brothers — David McCullough (young-reader or original)
23. Up From Slavery — Booker T. Washington
24. Biographies of inventors and industrialists (Edison, Ford, Carnegie — older treatments)
25. Shop and trade overviews: electrician, plumber, carpenter, mechanic, welder, HVAC, heavy equipment (BrightPoint, Jump!, or similar vocational series)
26. Tuttle Twins teen guides and Choose-Your-Consequence books

27. Economics in One Lesson — Henry Hazlitt (selected chapters)
28. Whatever Happened to Penny Candy? — Richard Maybury
29. The Way Things Work and Cathedral / Castle / Pyramid — David Macaulay
30. A Short History of Nearly Everything — Bill Bryson (selected chapters)
31. Books on the Constitution, selected Federalist essays, and the Declaration
32. Famous Men series continued, or Plutarch
33. More survival reading: additional Paulsen and George, or nonfiction such as Lost on a Mountain in Maine
34. Career exploration: working with your hands, construction, healthcare support, IT support, agriculture
35. Middle-school editions of skilled-trades handbooks (apprenticeship vs. two-year vs. four-year paths)
36. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens — Sean Covey
37. How to Read a Book — Mortimer Adler (introductory sections)
38. Books on farms, energy, transportation, and how an economy produces things
39. Explorer and scientist biographies (Shackleton, Faraday, Maxwell, Pasteur)
40. The Story of the World — volumes 3–4
41. Military history narratives written for this age (Ambrose-style WWII overviews)
42. Books on coding basics, electronics kits, and shop safety
43. “What people actually do” books on engineering, nursing, machining, and logistics
44. Age-appropriate excerpts on generalists vs. early specialization
45. Light college-prep: how credits, transcripts, and dual enrollment work
46. Entrepreneurship for teens (lawn service, repair shop, small online store — practical, not slogan-driven)
47. Classic civics and how public money is actually spent
48. Field identification and citizen-science projects
49. The Millionaire Next Door — Thomas J. Stanley (selected ideas)
50. A first look at Great Books lists so students can see the next mountain

How to use this list

This is a starting map, not a mandate. A student who finishes one adventure often wants the next book in the series, a related biography, or a hands-on skill. Vocational and college titles are included so families can see that “what comes next” includes trades, certificates, military technical training, two-year programs, and four-year study.

Availability varies. Many classics are in any public library; older history series such as Landmark and G. A. Henty are often found used or in reprint. Preview unfamiliar editions for reading level and suitability.