for Children in Grades 4-5 reading at a 7th Grade level

25 books chosen by the American Library Association & Children’s Book Council Joint Committee to provide guidance to parents, caregivers, teachers, librarians, and others interested in discovering books for children who read at an advanced level and are seeking more challenging, but still age-appropriate, books.

2020-2021
The Best at It
by Maulik Pancholy
HarperCollins Children’s Books / Balzer+Bray, 2019
An Indian American boy in Indiana, nervous about entering middle school, tries to follow his grandfather’s advice and become the best.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Young Reader’s Edition
by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer
Penguin Young Readers / Puffin Books, 2016
The memoir of William Kamkwamba, who created a windmill to bring lighting to his family home in Malawi. A true story about ingenuity from a pioneering spirit. ▲ Spanish.

The Bridge Home
by Padma Venkatraman
Penguin Young Readers / Nancy Paulsen Books, 2019
Four homeless children in India form a chosen family and support each other through difficult times in this debut novel.

*Front Desk
by Kelly Yang
Scholastic / Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018
A resourceful Chinese immigrant girl makes friends and solves mysteries while working at the front desk of the motel that her parents manage for an exploitive owner.

Girl Rising: Changing the World One Girl at a Time
by Tanya Lee Stone
Random House Children’s Books / Wendy Lamb, 2017
A compelling collection of stories of girls around the world who managed to get an education despite efforts to keep them from attending school.

Gracefully Grayson
by Ami Polonsky
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2014
Sixth-grader Grayson feels stuck in the wrong gender’s body but hopes to be cast as the female lead in the school play. An emotional and courageous journey of self-discovery to be one’s true self. ▲ Spanish.

Harbor Me
by Jacqueline Woodson
Penguin Young Readers / Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018
Six sixth graders meet weekly to talk about personal and global issues, providing safe harbors for each other.

Hurricane Child
by Kacen Callender
Scholastic Press, 2018
Set in the Caribbean (the U.S. Virgin Islands), this coming-of-age novel explores topics of loneliness, abandonment, friendship, and love.

Illegal
by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin. Illus. by Giovanni Rigano
Sourcebooks, 2018
A graphic novel exploring the plight of undocumented immigrants in which a Ghanian refugee child journeys to Europe to reunite with his siblings. ▲ Spanish.

The Inquisitor’s Tale: Or, The Three Magical Children and Their Holy Dog
by Adam Gidwitz. Illus. by Hatem Aly
Penguin Young Readers / Dutton, 2016
A medieval tale, told from multiple points of view, about three children with extraordinary gifts on an incredible journey.

Internment
by Samira Ahmed
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2019
This cautionary tale takes place in an internment camp in California for Muslim Americans, with a teen leading a revolution against the camp’s director and guards. ▲ Spanish.

The Journey of Little Charlie
by Christopher Paul Curtis
Scholastic Press, 2018
Set in 1858, a boy from South Carolina tries to settle a debt for his sharecropper family by accompanying a plantation owner on a journey to Canada to capture a fugitive slave. ▲ Spanish.

Legends, Icons & Rebels: Music that Changed the World
by Robbie Robertson et al.
Tundra Books, 2013
The lives of 27 musicians are showcased in thoughtful biographies, gorgeous artwork, and CDs of their music.
The Lightning Queen
by Laura Resau
Scholastic Press, 2016
A glimpse of the encounter between two fascinating but marginalized Mexican cultures—the Rom and the Mixtec Indians—while sharing an unlikely friendship that spans generations.

One Last Word: Wisdom from the Harlem Renaissance
by Nikki Grimes
Bloomsbury Children’s Books, 2017
Using the Golden Shovel poetic form, Nikki Grimes shares classic poetry and her own poems to bring the Harlem Renaissance to life for young readers.

Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story
by Caren Stelson
Lerner / Carolrhoda Books, 2016
After surviving the bombing of her hometown of Nagasaki, Sachiko Yasui’s story of the aftermath and her journey of healing is captured by biographer Caren Stelson.

Lincoln’s Grave Robbers
by Steve Sheinkin
Scholastic Press, 2013
A counterfeiting ring plotted to ransom Lincoln’s body to secure the release of their imprisoned ringleader. Then the Secret Service conducted a daring election night sting operation.

Pathfinders: The Journeys of 16 Extraordinary Black Souls
by Tonya Bolden
Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2017
A collection of sixteen mini-biographies of African-American trailblazers, brought to life with detailed histories and illustrations.

Samurai Rising: The Epic Life of Minamoto Yoshitsune
by Pamela S. Turner. Illus. by Gareth Hinds
Charlesbridge, 2016
Gareth Hinds’s stylish graphic adaptation of the Bard’s romantic tragedy offers modern touches—including a diverse cast that underscores the story’s universality.

Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95
by Phillip Hoose
Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012
This book shows the obstacles that shorebirds called rufa red knots face as a worldwide team of scientists and conservationists try to save them before it’s too late.

Promise of Change: One Girl’s Story in the Fight for School Equality
by Jo Ann Allen Boyce and Debbie Levy
Bloomsbury Children’s Books, 2019
In 1956, Jo Ann Allen was one of twelve African-American students who broke the color barrier and integrated Clinton High School in Tennessee.

The Watch that Ends the Night: Voices from the Titanic
by Allan Wolf
Candlewick Press, 2013
The Titanic story, told in verse (24 voices), with extensive back matter, including coded messages to decipher and historical documents.

The Night Diary
by Veera Hiranandani
Penguin Young Readers / Kokila, 2018
In 1947, as India was divided into two countries—India (for Hindus) and Pakistan (for Muslims)—a half-Muslim, half-Hindu girl wonders where she will be safe.

We Will Not Be Silent
by Russell Freedman
HMH Books for Young Readers / Clarion Books, 2016
The true story of the White Rose student resistance movement that defied Nazi Germany.

Refugee
by Alan Gratz
Scholastic Press, 2017

* asterisk denotes one book of a series. ▲ denotes Spanish edition available
We suggest the following sites for more book titles:
www.cbcbooks.org
www.alala.org/alsc

Questions?

American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
alsc@ala.org

The Children’s Book Council
54 W 39th St., 14 Floor
New York, NY 10018
cbc.info@cbcbooks.org