for Children in Grades K-1
reading at a 3rd 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
*Ada Twist, Scientist*
by Andrea Beaty. Illus by David Roberts
Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2016
A wonderful story told in rhyme, Ada asks questions and performs experiments to understand the world around her. Just like a scientist! ▲ *Spanish.*

*Detective Gordon: The First Case*
by Ulf Nilsson. Illus. by Gitte Spee
Gecko Press, 2016
A chapter book mystery starring Detective Gordon, a toad searching for the thieves behind a stolen stash of nuts in a woodland setting. ▲ *Spanish.*

Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures
by Kate DiCamillo. Illus. by K. G. Campbell
Candlewick Press, 2013
Flora rescues Ulysses from a vacuum cleaner and discovers he has incredible magical powers. He’s also a squirrel.

Do Not Lick This Book
by Idan Ben-Barak. Illus. by Julian Frost
Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group / Roaring Brook Press, 2018
Told from the point of view of Min the microbe, this is a perfect introduction to the microscopic world around us.

The Day the Universe Exploded My Head: Poems to Take You into Space and Back Again
by Allan Wolf. Illus. by Anna Raff
Candlewick Press, 2019
Blast off into space with a wide variety of space poems, from silly pun-filled verses to serious poems; notes on the poems and a glossary of space terms are included.

Echo Echo: Reverso Poems about Greek Myths
by Marilyn Singer. Illus. by Josée Masse
Mirror poems that are meant to be read backwards and forwards present two sides of classic Greek Myths.

I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark
by Debbie Levy. Illus. by Elizabeth Baddeley
The first Jewish woman to sit on the United States Supreme Court, Ginsburg’s life story and fight for equal rights for all is the subject of this biographical picture book.

Insect Superpowers
by Kate Messner. Illus. by Jillian Nickell
Chronicle Books, 2019

Mr. Wolf’s Class
by Aron Steinke
Scholastic / Graphix, 2018
A 4th grade first time teacher is anxious to have the first day of school go smoothly in this graphic novel.
National Geographic Book of Nature Poetry
by J. Patrick Lewis
National Geographic Kids, 2015
A broad variety of nature poetry paired with breathtaking photographs that celebrate how inspiring nature can be.

One Proud Penny
by Randy Siegel. Illus. by Serge Bloch
Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group / Roaring Brook Press, 2017
An interesting anthropomorphic penny travels from his birthplace in Philadelphia around the country, recounting his adventures.

*The Princess in Black
by Shannon and Dean Hale. Illus. by LeUyen Pham
Candlewick Press, 2014
The prim and perfect princess has an alter ego who dresses all in black and saves the kingdom from various threats. ▲ Spanish.

*Pugs of the Frozen North
by Philip Reeve. Illus. by Sarah McIntyre
Random House Children’s Books / Yearling, 2016
A lively step up from early chapter books, Not-So-Impossible Tales are packed with big adventure, quirky misfits, and two-color art on almost every page.

The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip-Hop
by Carole Boston Weatherford. Illus. by Frank Morrison
Little Bee Books, 2019
The history of hip-hop, including its roots in folktales, spirituals and poetry, and the art and dance that co-evolved with it.

*Sam Wu is Not Afraid of Ghosts
by Katie Tsang and Kevin Tsang. Illus. by Nathan Reed
Sterling Children’s Books, 2018
A zany boy has one problem after another trying to convince his classmates that he isn’t a scaredy-cat.

Snowman - Cold = Puddle
by Laura Purdie Salas. Illus by Micha Archer
Charlesbridge, 2019
A collection of seasonal poems that creatively incorporate math language and concepts.

The Stuff of Stars
by Marion Dane Bauer. Illus. by Ekua Holmes
Candlewick Press, 2018
Gorgeously illustrated, this book explores nothing less than the formation of the universe.

The Thing about Bees
by Shabazz Larkin
Readers to Eaters, 2019
A love letter to the author/illustrator’s two sons that describes how important bees are.

Trombone Shorty
by Troy Andrews. Illus. by Bryan Collier
Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2015
The true story of a musician who bucked the odds to achieve his dreams.

*Weekends with Max and His Dad
by Linda Urban. Illus. by Katie Kath
HMH Books for Young Readers, 2018
Third-grader Max pursues neighborhood adventures with his dad as they both adjust to recent changes in their family.

Wet Cement: A Mix of Concrete Poems
by Bob Raczka. Illus. by Theodore Taylor III
Concrete poetry is always popular because it is so visually pleasing. This book won’t disappoint.

Whoosh!: Lonnie Johnson’s Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions
by Chris Barton. Illus. by Don Tate
Charlesbridge, 2016
This biography of the NASA engineer who accidentally invented one of the best toys of all time is inspiring and engaging. ▲ Spanish.
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Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart  
by Candace Fleming  
Random House Children’s Books / Yearling, 2019  
A riveting look at the life, disappearance, and search for legendary aviatrix Amelia Earhart.

Echo  
by Pam Muñoz Ryan  
Scholastic, 2015  
In a story that blends folktale and realism, a harmonica connects three musically-talented children from different periods in history.

Genius!: The Most Astonishing Inventions of All Time  
by Deborah Kespert  
Thames and Hudson, 2015  
Young readers are introduced to the stories of the thinkers and inventors that helped shape our modern world, such as Archimedes, da Vinci, Gutenberg, James Watt, the Wright brothers, and Tim Berners-Lee.

The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merian’s Art Changed Science  
by Joyce Sidman  
HMH Books for Young Readers, 2018  
A biography of Maria Sibylla Merian, a pioneering 17th-century scientist and artist who documented the metamorphosis of butterflies.

Go for the Moon: A Rocket, a Boy, and the First Moon Landing  
by Chris Gall  
Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group / Roaring Brook Press, 2019  
A boy creates his own adventures to accompany the Apollo 11 astronauts in this picture book filled with scientific details and fun facts.

Her Own Two Feet: A Rwandan Girl’s Brave Fight to Walk  
by Meredith Davis & Rebeka Uwitonze  
Scholastic / Focus, 2019  
A Rwandan girl born with clubfeet moves to America and endures numerous surgeries in this story of faith and perseverance.

Migrations: Open Hearts, Open Borders  
by ICPBS (various authors). Illus. by various  
Candlewick Studio, 2019  
Postcard images of birds (and words) by 50+ creators from all over the world send messages of hope for human migration.

Mountain Dog  
by Margarita Engle. Illus. by Aleksey and Olga Ivanov  
A novel in verse told from two points of view: Tony, whose mother is incarcerated, and Gabe, a search-and-rescue dog who helps Tony learn about life in the wilderness.

The One and Only Ivan  
by Katherine Applegate. Illus. by Patricia Castelao  
Inspired by the true story of a captive gorilla who spent 27 years in an enclosure in a shopping mall.

The Parker Inheritance  
by Varian Johnson  
Scholastic, 2018  
A multigenerational family story set in South Carolina explores the history of racism in a mystery with elements of The Westing Game.

A Place to Belong  
by Cynthia Kadohata. Illus. by Julia Kuo  
Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing / Atheneum, 2019  
Story illuminating the history of post-WWII Japan, told through a Japanese-American girl whose family was expatriated and had to join her grandparents on a farm outside Hiroshima.

The Poetry of Us  
by J. Patrick Lewis  
National Geographic Kids, 2018  
A wide variety of old and new poets, poetic techniques, forms, and topics covering life in the United States, from large cities to rural areas.
Random Body Parts: Gross Anatomy
Riddles in Verse
by Leslie Bulion. Illus. by Mike Lowery
Peachtree Publishing Company, 2015
Anatomy riddles with high-level vocabulary and a Shakespeare theme.

*The Serpent’s Secret
by Sayantani DasGupta
Scholastic Press, 2018
A New Jersey sixth grader discovers that she might be an Indian princess who must solve riddles and battle demons to save the world.

What Elephants Know
by Eric Dinerstein
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2016
A renowned scientist depicts the complexities of life in the Nepalese Borderlands during the 1970s and the delicate relationship between man and nature.

The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus
by Jen Bryant. Illus. by Melissa Sweet
Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2014
Roget is more than the creator of the thesaurus, this extensive biography shows many aspects of his life, from his list-loving childhood to his inventions. ▲ Spanish.

*Science Comics: Trees: Kings of the Forest
by Andy Hirsch
Macmillan Children’s Publishing Group / First Second, 2018
A personified acorn (and its woodland friends) teach us about phototropism, the mycorrhizal network, and other science details behind the growth of a tree.

*The Wild Robot
by Peter Brown
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2016
Robot Roz is marooned on a desert island and becomes part of the wildlife family, but her new life is threatened when her creator discovers her new home.

What Do You Do with a Voice Like That?
by Chris Barton. Illus. by Ekua Holmes
Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing / Beach Lane Books, 2018
This celebration of Congresswoman and African-American pioneer Barbara Jordan contains rich back matter that asks readers to think about how to use their own gifts toward a greater good.

*Wings of Fire: The Graphic Novel
by Tui Sutherland. Illus. by Mike Holmes
Scholastic / Graphix, 2013
Graphic novel adaptation of the popular fantasy series shows the world of warring dragons in full color.

Women in Science: 50 Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World
by Rachel Ignotofsky
Ten Speed Press, 2016
Profiles of 50 women leaders in STEM, as well as an illustrated scientific glossary and supplemental information.

* asterisk denotes one book of a series. ▲ denotes Spanish edition available
We suggest the following sites for more book titles:

www.cbcbooks.org
www.ala.org/alsc

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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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Refugee
by Alan Gratz
Scholastic Press, 2017

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.

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.

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.

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.
We suggest the following sites for more book titles:
www.cbcbooks.org
www.al'a.org/alsc

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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