

Summer 2022
Reading list for Year 7 and Y8 students

READING IS ESSENTIAL

“The more you read, the more things you know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

This is a famous quote by Dr Seuss. And it’s 100% accurate. Reading is fundamental in helping us find and convey information. It is an essential skill that we develop at a very young age and it lasts for a lifetime.

At Oxford High School we understand why reading is beneficial to all of us and we encourage our students to be passionate readers. The importance of reading comprehension is essential to understanding the world around us so whether you enjoy reading to relax and unwind, or to voraciously devour facts, figures and opinions, research shows that those who read for pleasure have advanced levels of text comprehension and have higher levels of achievement across the curriculum than those who do not. Being able to respond to literature of many kinds in creative and inspiring ways is helped enormously by reading a wide range of styles and genres for pleasure - people who read are better at writing.

The list below contains some great books which will provide a common foundation of literary experience on which you can continue to build. It contains a range of titles which are suitable for readers aged 11-12.

It is grouped by category to help you choose - try to read with an open and questioning mind and stop to think more about what things mean. Here are some ideas of how engaged, active readers read:

- They can predict what will happen next in a story using clues they gain from reading
- They create questions about the main idea, message or plot
- They monitor understanding of the sequence, context or characters
- They stop to clarify parts of the text that have confused them
- They connect events in the text to prior knowledge or experience.

I hope you’ll find something here which inspires you - go beyond and try something different!

Fiction Books

The Sleeper and the Spindle Neil Gaiman

Winner of the CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal 2016. A deluxe edition of the thrillingly reimagined fairy tale by the magical partnership of award-bedecked, best selling Neil Gaiman and Children's Laureate Chris Riddell. Award-winning Neil Gaiman shows all his storytelling skills in this gripping fusion of familiar fairy tales told in a dark-hearted version with some original characters. Especially a bold-hearted queen. Not far from where the queen lives, a princess is under the spell of an enchantress who has put a whole country to sleep. Despite it being the eve of her wedding day, the bold queen decides to take action. Slipping into her mail shirt she arms herself with her sword and sets off out of the palace accompanied by the three dwarves who will lead her through the tunnels...The dark magic, great courage and spell-binding imagination that power this story is perfectly realised in Chris Riddell's awesome illustrations.

Here Lies Arthur Philip Reeve

Prize-winning author Philip Reeve gives a brilliant new take on the legend of King Arthur. Myrddin rides with Arthur spinning tales for and about him but what is the truth and can Gwyna discover it? Bridging the past and present Here Lies Arthur is the story of how heroes and the legends about them are made. Winner of the prestigious 2008 CILIP Carnegie Medal. On winning the CILIP Carnegie Medal he said "I didn't believe it at first, but as I got over the shock and it began to sink in, I felt totally honoured. It is very special to win the CILIP Carnegie Medal. It has such a history and I admire so many past winners' work it is quite humbling to be ranked alongside them." "Here Lies Arthur is an outstanding book, and deserving winner,' said Tricia Adams, Chair of the 12 strong librarian judging panel. 'Reeve's is a consistent story-telling voice that brings us a subtle and credible retelling of the King Arthur myth. It is both a page turning adventure story and a clever historical novel. It also has clear political resonance for our times, demonstrating humanity's need to sustain hope and optimism, and our tendency to favour myth over reality to achieve that end.'

When the Sky Falls Phil Earle

Shortlisted for the Yoto Carnegie Medal 2022 No wonder he is angry! Bombs are raining down on the city that Joseph is sent to as an evacuee. And anyway, who came up with the stupid idea that he should live with Mrs F. who doesn't even like children! He knows he should just run away but where would he go? Instead, he finds himself inexorably drawn into Mrs F's life and the zoo and the animals she is fighting to keep safe – in particular, Adonis, the powerful silverback gorilla. Every night when the bombs fall, Mrs F rushes to the zoo. She risks her life to be with her animals safe knowing that, if the very worst happens and the zoo is bombed she will have to take exceptional and radical action. Will she be brave enough? And would Joseph be? In this deeply moving story of Joseph's journey of self-discovery Phil Earle not only tells a brilliant story of a child's emotional development but also adds an important and true dimension to World War 2 stories.

I Am The Minotaur Anthony McGowan

Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 This is a gritty yet touching story of one teenager's struggles with bullying and isolation, written by Carnegie Medal Winning author Anthony McGowan, and is perfect for less-confident readers.

The Wolf Road Richard Lambert**Longlisted for the UKLA Book Award 2022 ages 11-14 |**

November 2020 Debut of the Month Nimbly navigating a fine thread between real-world tragedy and elemental inner demons, Richard Lambert's *The Wolf Road* is a stunning coming-of-age thriller about a boy's battle with bereavement, and the wolf that holds the key to his healing. It's un-put-down-able and emotionally haunting in perfectly balanced measures. Fifteen-year-old Lucas's life unravels when he discovers his parents were killed in a car crash caused by a dog. In an instant "the world didn't make sense", and now he must live with his nan, an "odd woman in purple DMs" (and socially-conscious solicitor) he's only met twice in his life. Despite his angry protests, Lucas has no choice but to move to Nan's cottage in the Lake District, certain the offending dog was, in fact, a wolf. It's not long before wolves infiltrate all aspects of his life - at school he reads *The Call of the Wild* (a book "about a dog that really wants to be a wolf"). Local TV news reports on a local farmer who believes his livestock is being killed by a wild wolf. And then lupine menace encroaches on Lucas's reality when he hears and glimpses what must be the wolf. As he wonders whether it's coming for him, to "finish off the family after Mum and Dad," he confronts his wildest pains in the wilds of the mountains. While the theme of loss - and Lambert's inventive handling of it - will chime with readers who loved Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*, this also has great appeal for fans of emotion-driven adventures, such as Piers Torday's nature-rich novels. Other plot strands skilfully untangle the complex relationship between Lucas and his Nan. The faltering understandings reached between grandmother and grandson are a joy to witness, as is the bond Lucas forms with Debs, a Sylvia Plath-reading goth-punk.

Skellig David Almond

Skellig is a delightful story that captures the reader's attention from the intriguing opening line. The story centres on the character of Michael, a young boy who has just moved house. Michael is coping with a baby sister who is ill and a 'thing' he discovers in the garage that has lost the will to live. Michael calls on his unusual neighbour Mina to help him to save *Skellig* and through this experience opens himself up to the magic and mystery of nature and of life. *Skellig* is a story of love and faith, simply told, that imparts a message of optimism to young readers. *Skellig* won the 1998 Carnegie Medal and the 1998 Whitbread Book Award for best children's book.

Tuck Everlasting Natalie Babbitt

This powerful and poignant novel asks profound questions about the meaning of life and the possibility of living forever. The Tuck family have found the fountain of youth in spring water and for them eternal life is a reality. Whether this gift is a blessing or a curse is explored in this novel. When ten-year-old Winnie Foster stumbles into the family and a stranger seems close to exploiting the secret the Tucks must take action to protect Winnie and the secret. This text can be read at different levels and provides excellent opportunities for classroom discussion and composing.

The Cry of the Wolf Melvin Burgess

The Cry of the Wolf, a cautionary tale about extinction and survival, is set in Britain where a hunter is determined to shoot the last wolves left alive in the wild. Ben unwittingly assists the stranger before he realises the danger the hunter presents. Ben and his family then do all they can to save the wolves, Silver and Conna and their cubs. The final confrontation between Grey Cub, the sole survivor, and his parents' killer, turns the hunter into the hunted. With its clear descriptions and compelling narrative this novel will have strong appeal in the classroom.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes Eleanor Coerr

Set in Hiroshima in the 1950s, this is the story of eleven-year-old Sadako who develops leukaemia as a result of radiation from the atomic bomb. The 'thousand paper cranes' of the title refers to a belief that a sick person will be made healthy again by the gods if she can make a thousand paper cranes. The story tells of Sadako's determination to put the story to the test. This simple tale of love and hope is a powerful text to use in the classroom.

King of Shadows Susan Cooper

This time-shift novel takes young Nat Field back to Shakespeare's time. Nat is rehearsing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the rebuilt Globe Theatre, when he is stricken with bubonic plague. He wakes to find himself in a play with Will Shakespeare – Cooper provides authentic detail from the Elizabethan Age as a backdrop to Nat's growth as an actor and a person. This is an excellent novel to study in companionship with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Walk Two Moons Sharon Creech

This story uses the technique of embedded storytelling to explore the mysteries that surround the young heroine's past. Sal's life has been completely disrupted by an event in the past involving her mother. With her grandparents, she embarks on a journey across the USA to 'discover' the truth. The story of the car journey is at times humorous, at times poignant. Implanted in it are a multitude of other stories about school, friends, other mothers, fathers and children. As the stories weave their way towards a conclusion and the mysteries are unravelled, we are carried with them to an overwhelming affirmation of the importance of the family. 1995 Newbery Medal Winner.

Catherine, Called Birdy Karen Cushman

Set in the Middle Ages, this is a story of Birdy, the teenage daughter of a minor lord and lady in Lincolnshire. Birdy keeps a diary and as her father tries to marry her off to different suitors she records not only her reactions and evasions but also presents a clear portrait of life in the Middle Ages. In this funny and engrossing novel, Catherine may sound like a mediaeval *Adrian Mole* but the Author's Note provides background information that helps to position the reader in the historical reality.

The First Book of Samuel Ursula Dubosarsky

Twelve-year-old Samuel Cass finds himself in familiar Dubosarsky territory – an urban, professional-class family whose fabric is taut with tension as all members struggle to find their individuality in the complexity of relationships and cultural diversity. The past poignantly echoes in the actions of Samuel's grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, to hold the family together. The author's prose sparkles with absolute clarity.

Parvana Deborah Ellis

Deborah Ellis' story of a twelve-year-old living in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime conveys, with disturbing immediacy, the plight of a people living in a society where basic freedoms are denied. After her brother's death, her mother and sister as adult women are confined to the family home and her father is imprisoned by the authorities. It is up to Parvana to provide for the family. In doing so she meets others who are suffering as she is and learns strategies of survival in a world where women become prisoners in the home from adolescence onwards.

Hitler's Daughter Jackie French

Four country children waiting for the school bus in the rain occupy themselves with taking turns telling stories. It is Anna's turn and the story she begins takes the children to Nazi Germany and the world of Hitler's daughter, Heidi. Anna, usually a great storyteller, finds this one difficult! It is clear that, for her, Heidi is more than a character in a make-believe story. As the children become more and more involved in Heidi's story, they explore the moral and ethical issues it raises in their own conversations and with their parents. The book offers many opportunities for exploring methods of narration and the interconnectedness of fact and fiction.

Two Weeks with the Queen Morris Gleitzman

Colin is sent to England by his parents when his little brother is dying of leukaemia. He sets out to find the 'best doctor in the world' and is thrown out of both Buckingham Palace and a major London hospital. He helps a man whose friend is dying of AIDS in hospital and learns the importance of being with loved ones in a crisis. Then, for this reason, he returns home. Funny as well as sad, the book is accessible on a wide range of reading levels. (See also Bumface and The Other Facts of Life.)

Thunderfish Simon Higgins

This action-packed sea rescue adventure is set in the future. Kira is a rich, female protagonist whose aim is to save refugees attacked by pirates on the high seas. The book deals with a number of moral dilemmas, decisions relating to piracy, individual responsibility and the dubious power of the press, highlighted in sensationalised gossip columns and headlines. The thriller is compelling and easy reading with an interesting twist to complete the story. The characters are believable and the twenty-first century technology is fascinating.

Secrets in the Fire Henning Mankell

Sofia and her sister stray from the village path in war-torn Mozambique and a landmine kills her sister and shatters Sofia's legs. Secrets in the Fire is based on the true story of a young girl in Mozambique and how she struggles to recover from the devastation the war has left. This is a moving and sobering story that allows students to share the experiences of adolescents in desperate circumstances

The Keeper of the Isis Light Monica Hughes

This is a science fiction story that explores issues of prejudice and growing up. Olwen Pendennis is the Keeper of the Isis Light and with her robot, Guardian, she has lived alone on the highlands of planet Isis since the death of her parents. Isis is a harsh planet with only the valleys providing an atmosphere that is breathable. When a group of colonists arrives on Isis from Earth, Olwen is hopeful that she can make new friends but the modifications necessary for her survival repel those she would like to befriend.

The Binna Binna Man Meme McDonald and Boori Monty Pryor

This novel introduces young people coming to terms with their identity and heritage. The story covers a trip to a relative's funeral and the response of different generations to the grief of untimely death. The Binna Binna man of the title is a presence who encourages appropriate behaviour and respect for traditional ways. While true to the oral tradition of storytelling, the language is accessible.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone JK Rowling

Harry Potter is no ordinary boy but comes of wizard stock and when he finds himself at Hogwarts School for Wizards he begins to recover from the cruelty and ignorance of his upbringing by his uncle and aunt. This best-selling fantasy of wizards and wonder makes for enchanting reading as Harry battles evil with good friends and humour. The novel calls on a wide variety of traditional children's literary genres that students can explore. Winner of Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award for 1999

Haroun and the Sea of Stories Salman Rushdie

Haroun and the Sea of Stories is a delightful tale about a storyteller who loses his ability to tell tales. His son struggles to recover his father's special gift by doing battle against mysterious forces attempting to destroy the seas of inspiration from which all stories are derived. Funny, allusive and fast-paced, this story will provide many opportunities for students to respond and compose.

Holes Louis Sachar

In a Texas wasteland at Camp Green Lake, in a juvenile detention facility where there is no lake, boys are forced to dig countless holes to improve their character. Stanley Yelnats finds himself at Camp Green Lake, the innocent victim of mistaken identity. He discovers that the character building is a cover for the warden (who paints her fingernails with rattlesnake venom) and her search for something hidden in the desert. The novel moves between time with humour and craft. It has a wonderfully twisted ending and its deep understanding of friendship and compassion make it an outstanding classroom text. Winner of the Newbery Award in 1999.

The Bad Beginning Lemony Snicket

Poor Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire! They have the misfortune to lose their parents and despite their intelligence, charm and resourcefulness they are exceptionally unlucky. This leads to many difficult and dangerous experiences, which inevitably amuse and entertain. This irreverent and twisted tale should prove popular in the classroom and there are several sequels.

Bone Music David Almond

Unrivalled in his capacity to conjure soulful truths that transcend time and place, David Almond's writing never fails to get to the very heart of what it is to be human and, though its setting is modern, Bone Music is a sublimely timeless masterpiece - a raw, pure, measuredly lyrical story of a girl discovering deep bonds to nature and the distant past. "Why had her bliddy mother brought her here?" city girl Sylvia complains. There's no phone signal in the wilds of Northumberland, where her mother was born, where they're currently staying. On her first night here, Sylvia is disturbed by haunting music: "It was like something she'd dreamed before, like something coming from inside her as well as from outside her, like something she'd heard before." Then she meets a young musician, Gabriel, who wisely remarks - out of the blue - that "the world's bloody awful, isn't it? ... It's bloody awful and it isn't bloody awful. It's bloody marvellous". His wisdom has timely, timeless resonance: "Something's wrong, isn't it?"

REAL LIFE

- Be Resilient: How to Build a Strong Teenage Mind for Tough Times by Nicola Morgan
- 50 Speeches that made the modern world, edited by Andrew Burnet
- Going Solo by Roald Dahl
- The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
- Mud, Sweat and Tears by Bear Grylls
- Women in Sport by Rachel Ignotofsky
- Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah
- Becoming by Michelle Obama | adapted for younger readers
- No One is too Small to make a Difference by Greta Thunberg
- I am Malala by Malala Yousafzai
- Unheard Voices by Malorie Blackman
- Sea of Whispers by Tim Bowler
- Make more noise by Edited by Emma Carroll
- Where I belong by Gillian Cross
- The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis
- The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
- Coram Boy by Jamila Gavin
- Cold Bath Street by A.J. Hartley
- A Nest of Vipers by Catherine Johnson
- Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs
- Cinderella is Dead by Kalynn Bayron
- Looking Glass Wars Trilogy by Frank Beddor
- In the Shadow of Heroes by Nicholas Bowling
- The Dark is Rising Series by Susan Cooper
- Coraline by Neil Gaiman
- The Woman in Black by Susan Hill
- Savannah Grey by Cliff McNish
- The Ruby in the Smoke Quartet by Philip Pullman
- The Midnight Palace by Carlos Ruiz Zafon In times past...
- The Wheel of Surya by Jamila Gavin
- Smith by Leon Garfield
- Shadow of the Minotaur by Alan Gibbons
- Once by Morris Gleitzman
- Out of Hitler Time by Judith Kerr
- Picnic at Hanging Rock by Joan Lingard
- Beowulf by Michael Morpurgo
- Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys
- Echo Mountain by Lauren Wolk
- The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak
- Noughts & Crosses by Malorie Blackman
- A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens
- Grimm's Fairy Tales by The Brothers Grimm
- The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Mark Haddon
- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C. S. Lewis
- The Giver by Lois Lowry
- The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern
- A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness
- Wonder by R. J. Palacio
- Murder Most Unladylike by Robin Stevens

GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY

- A Short History of Nearly Everything by Bill Bryson
- A History of the World in 100 Objects by Neil MacGregor
- Black and British by David Olusoga
- The Silk Roads by Peter Frankopan

LIFESTYLE & CREATIVE ARTS

- A Journey through Art a global history by Aaron Rosen
- This Book is not Rubbish by Isabel Thomas
- The Shakespeare Book - DK Big Ideas Series
- All About Theatre - National Theatre

MATHS & SCIENCE

- 100 Essential Things you Didn't Know about Maths & the Arts by John D. Barrow
- Scientists who changed history by Victoria Heyworth-Dunne et al
- Things to Make and Do in the Fourth Dimension by Matt Parker
- The Secret Life of the Periodic Table - Dr Ben Still

PLAYS

- My Sister Sadie by Alan Ayckbourn
- Coram Boy - adapted by Helen Edmundson, based on the novel by Jamila Gavin
- War Horse - adapted by Nick Stafford, based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo

POETRY

- Poems that make Grown Women Cry - edited by Anthony and Ben Holden
- Clouds cannot cover us by Jay Hulme
- Poems to live your life - Chosen and illustrated by Chris Riddell
- Winning Words inspiring poems for everyday life - Chosen by William Sieghart

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

- The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas by John Boyne
- Really Really Big Questions by Stephen Law
- Philosophy for Kids by David A. White