

Healthy Reading Grades 5-8

Annotated Book List



The annotated book list contains titles from past **Battle of the Books (BOTB)** lists for grades 5 - 8, and some older titles that may already be in your library that relate to health issues but have never appeared on the BOTB lists. We've labeled these **Other Recommended Books**. The third category, **Books On Our Shelf**, has other titles that may be new to some Alaska school libraries.

The books in each category are listed here in alphabetical order by title. In the Chart of Alignment the titles are generally grouped in order of level of reading difficulty. As always, the reading ability of the individual student or group should dictate the reading selection level. Many of these titles will work equally well in fourth and eighth grades, depending on the reader. Teachers will want to read the books before assigning sections.

Battle of the Books - Annotated Book List

5th/6th Grade List

Bridge to Terabithia - Paterson, Katherine (FIC PAT) (13 chapters, 128 pages, a few illustrations)

Fifth grader Jess Aarons, whose dream is to become the fastest runner in his class in rural Virginia, learns many lessons about running, friendship, ambition, honesty and imagination as he befriends the new girl in the neighborhood, Leslie. This book is an excellent portrayal of dying at a young age and how a friend and family deal with their loss.

Flip-Flop Girl - Paterson, Katherine (FIC PAT) (14 chapters, 120 pages, no illustrations)

Grieving their father's death, nine-year-old Vinnie, five-year-old Mason and their mother move to a small town to live with grandma. Coping with grief and healing, guilt and jealousy, Vinnie and Mason find help from another outcast, Lupe, and a sensitive teacher. Vinnie regains her equilibrium and gains a friend in a book of good, solid Katherine Paterson writing.



Green Book - Walsh, Jill Paton (FIC WAL) (7 chapters, 69 pages, no illustrations)

A small band of colonists leave dying Earth on an old spaceship. Their four year journey will take them to the planet that will be their next home. The survival of the colonists is in jeopardy as the old equipment dies and the families pool their thinking and resources to build homes and find a way to provide food. The story is told simply and will provide many topics to ponder and discuss.

Hang Tough, Paul Mather - Slote, Alfred (FIC SLO) (17 chapters, 156 pages, no illustrations)

Paul's passion is baseball, but first he has to win a bigger battle with leukemia. Despite a lengthy hospital stay Paul helps his team and works to get back to the pitcher's mound.

Joey Pigza Swallows the Key - Gantos, Jack (FIC GAN) (15 chapters, 154 pages, no illustrations)

Joey is a great kid, but he can't stay still and he can't pay attention. When a classmate is accidentally injured, it's time to remove Joey from the classroom and get special help. This book has a great voice for middle schoolers; many students will recognize Joey in themselves and others. The story offers great hope for modifying the wiring to bring school success to an ADHD student. Unit companion: Joey Pigza Loses Control by Gantos is the sequel.

The Midwife's Apprentice - Cushman, Karen (FIC CUS) (17 chapters, 122 pages, no illustrations, Newbery Medal)

Homeless in the 14th century, a young waif is taken in from the dung heap by the village midwife. As the story unfolds Brat becomes Alyce and slowly gains confidence and competence in her profession. Along the way she acquires the three things she wants most: "a full belly, a contented heart and a place in this world." The setting is vivid and so are the character descriptions. Unit companion: Borning Room Fleischman, Paul (FIC FLE)

Summer of the Swans - Byars, Betsy (FIC BYA) (22 chapters, 142 pages, a few illustrations, Newbery Medal)

This summer Sara feels awkward; she doesn't fit anywhere. She's confused and miserable. Then Charlie, her younger mentally retarded

brother, wanders away from home. The search changes dynamics within the family and clears up misunderstandings with friends. Sara realizes the depth of her caring for Charlie and begins an important friendship.

Toughboy and Sister - Hill, Kirkpatrick (FIC HIL) (22 chapters, 122 pages, no illustrations, set in Interior Alaska)

Toughboy, aged 11, and Sister, aged 9, lose their mother and a newborn baby and are taken to summer fish camp by their father. They are stranded far out on the Yukon River when their father drinks too much and dies in a boating accident. This is a tale of courage and self-sufficiency on the part of the two young people in rural Alaska. Unit companions: Winter Camp Hill, Kirkpatrick (FIC HIL) and Eagle's Shadow Martin, Nora (FIC MAR)

Winter Camp - Hill, Kirkpatrick (FIC HIL) (35 chapters, 185 pages, no illustrations, set in Interior Alaska)



After they are orphaned Toughboy and Sister live with Natasha, an elder in their Yukon River village. Natasha takes them out of school in November so they can trap and learn the old ways. An old miner and trapper, Nelson, shows up at their cabin and tells more stories of how the old ones lived. Nelson is badly injured by a moose and Natasha goes for help in -45 degree temperatures. Toughboy and Sister stay and care for Nelson and keep themselves from freezing to death for days, until a helicopter rescues them. Unit companions: Toughboy and Sister Hill, Kirkpatrick (FIC HIL) and Eagle's Shadow Martin, Nora (FIC MAR)

Words of Stone - Henkes, Kevin (FIC HEN) (24 chapters, 152 pages, no illustrations)

Blaze has many fears, is the shortest boy in his class, and each year in July buries one imaginary friend and develops a new one. Joselle moves next door and tries to see herself through Blaze's eyes. "Depending on her mood, she would see a fat, loud girl who, strangely, played music on her teeth. Or a strong, beautiful girl capable of mesmerizing boys and their families." This is a story of the ups and downs of their friendship.

Yolonda's Genius - Fenner, Carol (FIC FEN) (18 chapters, 211 pages, no illustrations)

Yolonda is smart and tough. She can read people and she's big for her age, so no one messes with her or her charge, younger brother Andrew. Andrew has trouble speaking and reading, but Yolonda is convinced he's a musical

genius. When bullies smash Andrew's precious harmonica, Yolonda's work is cut out for her to bring the music back to Andrew and bring the world to see Andrew's genius.

7th/8th Grade List



Downriver - Hobbs, Will (FIC HOB) (18 chapters, 204 pages, no illustrations)

“Hoods in the Woods” is the name given the group of teen-agers signed up for a nine-week outdoor educational experience in Utah and Arizona. Told by 15-year-old Jessie, this adventure story is about self-confidence and risk, friendship and trust. These troubled teens discover who they really are as they survive many adventures on land and river around the Grand Canyon.

Eva - Dickinson, Peter (FIC DIC) (3 parts, 19 chapters, 219 pages, no illustrations)

For students studying current issues of genetic engineering, cloning, or transplantation, *Eva* is a great fiction accompaniment. Thirteen-year-old Eva is in a serious accident and in a long coma. Amazing medical intervention is taken to save her life and she is forced into a kind of life no one has ever lived before. The price paid as well as a future view of the world, will spark many interesting discussions.

Face on the Milk Carton - Cooney, Caroline B. (FIC COO) (18 chapters, 184 pages, no illustrations)

One day at school, fifteen-year-old Janie recognizes her picture as the little girl on the milk carton who was kidnapped twelve years earlier. Dismayed that it could be true, she struggles to find out the truth of the events that changed the lives of two families forever. This is a gripping story that explores many conflicts of everyday teenage life as well as the experience of knowing life will never be simple or the same again. Unit companions: Whatever Happened to Janie? by Cooney is the sequel.

Slake's Limbo - Holman, Felice (FIC HOL) (15 chapters, 117 pages, no illustrations)

Slake is small and shy, living with his auntie in a cramped apartment in New York City. After years of being teased by other kids, he decides one day to take the subway for a ride...a ride that changes his life. Slake ends

up living in a subway wall cave with a rat for company. Slake learns about his strengths, friendship and human compassion.

Walk Two Moons - Creech, Sharon (FIC CRE) (44 chapters, 280 pages Newbery Medal)

An aura of mystery pervades this travelogue. Thirteen-year-old Salamanca and her unusual grandparents are traveling from Ohio to Idaho on the route that Sal's mother took when she left the family. Their plan is to arrive by Sal's mother's birthday and Sal passes the time by telling the story of her friend, Phoebe. Along the way readers come to know a cast of fascinating characters.

Whatever Happened to Janie? - Cooney, Caroline B. (FIC COO) (23 chapters, 199 pages, no illustrations)

Janie Johnson or Jennie Spring? Who is the real person? In this continuation of the story Janie returns to the Spring family by legal agreements to go to school and live. She struggles daily. The police reopen the case and try to tap into her memories of the kidnapping. This is another engrossing story that raises many issues of personal and family identity. Unit companion: This is the sequel to Face on the Milk Carton Cooney, Caroline B. (FIC COO)

Other Recommended Books- Annotated Book List

Benni & Victoria: Friends Through Time - Aust, Patricia (FIC AUS) (22 chapters, 115 pages, many full page illustrations)



Ten-year-old Benni hasn't seen his mother in months and although he has tried, he's no longer able to survive and fool the system on his own. He ends up in a state-run residential school where we watch him work and not work through his adjustment and guilt. Through time travel Benni stumbles into the life of a young girl who attended the school in the mid-1800's. Although the plot is a bit improbable even for a time travel novel, the issues of abandonment by parents because of drug and alcohol abuse and the resulting pain to the abandoned child will strike a chord with many children. Many issues related to foster care and adoption are suggested and his time travel friend brings some hope for Benni's future.

Borning Room - Fleischman, Paul (FIC FLE) (7 chapters, 101 pages, no illustrations)

From 1820 to 1918 the events of a family are chronicled by recalling the births, deaths and illnesses that occur in a single small room of the house - the borning room. As the narrator says, "It's not a room that's seen much use. But the times it has stand up in my memory more than the months and years in between. Most of my life's turnings have taken place here." Much of the time span takes place in the Civil War era. Unit companion: Midwife's Apprentice - Cushman, Karen (FIC CUS)

The Boy Who Drank Too Much - Greene, Shep (FIC GRE) (15 chapters, 157 pages, no illustrations)

Buff is new in town and in school from Canada. He's been skating since he was four and his dad wants to relive his own pro hockey playing days through his son. Buff tries to handle the stress of making new friends and the hockey team with alcohol. The death of Buff's mother prior to the start of the story provides a strong interwoven story line of the handling of grief.

The Goats - Cole, Brock (FIC COL) (11 chapters, 184 pages, half page illustrations at each chapter)

A boy and a girl are designated the "goats" at camp. As a prank they are stripped and abandoned on a small nearby island. The goats escape, but have no intention of returning to camp. Their adventures as they find strength in themselves and their growing friendship reveal the many attitudes of the world toward young teens. The author's voice is remarkable for appealing to middle school students.

Missing May - Cynthia Rylant (FIC RYL) (12 chapters, 89 pages, no illustrations, Newbery Medal)

Summer was six years old when she came home to make a family with Aunt May and Uncle Ob. The two old people gave Summer love and turned their place into "a house just meant for a child." Now, six years later, May has died and neither Summer nor Ob can find what they need to ease their sorrow. This is a powerful book about grief and finding hope to go on.

Out of the Dust - Hesse, Karen (FIC HES) (227 pages, format style is free verse poetry, no illustrations, Newbery Medal)

Fourteen-year-old Billie Jo lives in the Oklahoma dust bowl during the Great Depression. An accident causes the deaths of Ma and the new baby. It also burns Billie Jo's hands, which causes intense mental and physical pain for the young pianist. With a strong spirit and loving heart, she eventually forgives, reconnects with her father and finds hope for her future.

Second Star to the Right - Hautzig, Deborah (FIC HAU) (10 chapters, 151 pages, no illustrations)

Fourteen-year-old Leslie seems to have a good life in place, yet she begins to starve herself and when will she stop? She says, "When I'm thin, that's when. And I'll know when I'm thin because I'll be happy." Eventually Leslie is eating but three curds of cottage cheese a day and is hospitalized. Even so, she continues to lose weight and seems unable to resolve her issues. In the 20 years since this book was published, a major difference is that the same problem is more prevalent and is now easier for professionals to identify. The conclusion of this novel offers a slight ray of hope, but no easy answers. This book is a great discussion springboard for eating disorders and self and society's image.

What Jamie Saw - Coman, Carolyn (FIC COM) (10 chapters, 126 pages, no illustrations)



This book begins, "When Jamie saw him throw the baby, saw Van throw the little baby, saw Van throw his little sister Nin, then they moved." The baby is okay and the book shows the devastation of child abuse from the viewpoint of an onlooker, a third grader. Feelings of fear and indecision pervade the book. This is an easy read with powerful content.

Books On Our Shelf - Annotated Book List

Balto and the Great Race - Kimmel, Elizabeth (636.73 KIM) (14 chapters, 101 pages, b/w illustrations on some pages, Stepping Stone Book, copyright 1999)

A retelling of the 1925 diphtheria epidemic in Nome with an exciting detailed story of the sled dogs and their race. This book reads like narrative fiction. Unit companion: Running Out of Time Haddix, Margaret (FIC HAD)

Civil War on Sunday - Osborne, Mary Pope (E OSB) (10 chapters, 74 pages, b/w illustrations on some pages, copyright 1999)

The Magic Tree House Series combines fantasy and historical fiction in a popular series for young readers. In # 21 of the series Annie and Jack meet nurse Clara Barton and help her treat wounded soldiers in the time of the Civil War in America. The afterword explains Barton's role in the founding of the American Red Cross.

Fever 1793 - Anderson, Laurie Halse (FIC AND) (29 chapters, epilogue and appendix, 251 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)

In August 1793, people began dying of yellow fever. Until frost in November finally killed the dreaded mosquito carriers, day-to-day survival became the mission of the citizens. In three months this epidemic killed about 5000 people, about 10% of the population of Philadelphia. This well-researched historical fiction traces one family's struggles and triumphs in this period. Unit companion: Running Out of Time Haddix, Margaret (FIC HAD)

Ghost Boy - Lawrence, Iain (FIC LAW) (52 chapters, 326 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)

Harold Kline is an albino, who lives at the edge of the prairie at the end of World War II. Considered a freak by the townspeople, he is alienated and spends his days in the lonely company of his dog. When he learns that the circus is on the way, Harold runs and joins it. In his long journey he learns lessons of acceptance, love and confidence from a troupe of people also considered freaks. This novel is a good one to discuss differences, relationships, and control over your life.

Hope Was Here - Bauer, Joan (FIC BAU) (21 chapters, 186 pages, no illustrations, Newbery honor award, copyright 2000)

Hope is a 16-year-old girl who has taken a strong name because "hope is just about the best thing a person can have." When you've finished this book you'll be able to run a first-rate diner and a small town campaign for mayor. Optimism and humor abound in this book. One of the many strong characters to admire has leukemia and demonstrates great courage in the way he lives and makes a difference in Hope's life and his community.

Joey Pigza Loses Control - Gantos, Jack (FIC GAN) (14 chapters, 196 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)



Joey, an ADHD special ed student, is about to spend six weeks with his dad, a recovering alcoholic, and grandma, a heavy smoker with emphysema. Mom has mixed feelings since her ex-husband is just like Joey, only bigger. Baseball may be the path to bring Joey and his dad together until Joey's dad starts drinking heavily again and flushes Joey's meds down the toilet. Joey is a character many students will recognize. Unit companion: Joey Pigza Swallows the Key Gantos, Jack (BOTB 5-6 list)

Matilda Bone - Cushman, Karen (FIC CUS) (17 chapters, 154 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)

Set in the Middle Ages in a small English village, this book gives an interesting, historical picture of illness, injury and medicine, as they knew it at the time. Fourteen-year-old Matilda is brought to Blood and Bones Alley by Father Leufredus, who has cared for her and lectured her about a saintly life, since her parents died. He goes off to London, leaving her to learn a trade with Red Peg the Bonesetter. Matilda learns about helping others as well as how to think and feel for herself.

Mick Harte Was Here - Park, Barbara (FIC PAR) (10 chapters, 89 pages, no illustrations)

Usually when you make a poor decision, you luck out. Once in a while, something changes forever. Mick never fell off his bike, so he refused to wear a bike helmet. Now the lives of Phoebe and her family and friends have been turned upside down. Unit companion: Taste of Blackberries Smith, Doris Buchanan (FIC SMI)

Running Out of Time - Haddix, Margaret (FIC HAD) (25 chapters, 184 pages, no illustrations)

When a diphtheria epidemic hits her 1840 village, thirteen-year-old Jessie discovers it is actually a 1996 tourist site under unseen observation by heartless scientists, and it's up to Jessie to escape the village and save the lives of the dying children.

Sang Spell - Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds (FIC Nay) (17 chapters, 176 pages, no illustrations)

Josh is hitchhiking through Appalachia when he finds himself a prisoner in a village of people known as Melungeons. Can he survive and can he escape? Or does he really want to? This fantasy has mystery and adventure

as well as a strong historical fiction element that is further explained in the afterword. The title refers to ginseng, called 'sang, the major cash crop for the community.

Silent to the Bone - Konigsburg, E. L. (FIC KON) (25 chapters, 269 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)

In the middle of a 911 call, Branwell becomes mute. His injured baby half-sister enters intensive care and Branwell is accused as the perpetrator. The unraveling of the mystery and the revelations that facilitate the return of Branwell's speech are told through the voice of best friend Conner. This book offers many strong topics for discussion, including secondhand tobacco smoke and babies, shades of honesty, an adolescent boy's sexuality, and vivid details of the hurts that can occur in split families. The vocabulary in this book needs a capable reader.

Unit companion: Speak Anderson, Laurie Halse (FIC AND)

Speak -Anderson, Laurie Halse (FIC AND) (4 chapters, 198 pages, no illustrations, copyright 1999)

Melinda starts her first day of high school as an outcast. All her old friends refuse to speak to her or taunt her with names. She is the one who called the cops at a summer party. Melinda moves through the year afraid and refusing to speak to most people. Late in the school year she reveals that she was raped at the party and she finds her voice again. Unit companion: Silent to the Bone Konigsberg, E. L. (FIC KON)

Turnabout - Haddix, Margaret Peterson (FIC HAD) (223 pages, no illustrations, copyright 2000)

In the year 2000 Melly and Anny Beth were old and ready to die. But when offered the chance to be young again by participating in a top-secret experiment called Project Turnabout, they agreed. They received injections that made them grow younger, and it seemed like a miracle. But when the injections that were supposed to stop the unaging process turned out to be deadly, Melly and Anny Beth decided to run for their lives.

Now it is 2085. Melly and Anny Beth are teenagers. They have no idea what will happen once they are babies again, but they do know they will soon be too young to take care of themselves. They need to find someone to help them before time runs out, once and for all...

