

Summer Reading List



Grades K-5

A Words in the Wild - themed book list centered around themes of nature, culture, social justice, and of course, the power of **words**. Curated with care by our in-house children's book specialist, Paige Clark. Enjoy!

'Ohana Means Family

Written by Ilima Loomies, Illustrated by Kenard Park

Synopsis: "Told in the cadence of *The House that Jack Built*, we follow the growing process on a taro root farm through the lens of Hawaiian culture, concluding with the Hawaiian ohana sharing a pot of poi."

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *How can food bring us together? How does the food shared within a culture reveal something about the community as a whole? I love how this book introduces a reader to Hawaiiin culture through new vocabulary.*

Ada Twist, Scientist

Written by Andrea Beaty, Illustrated by David Roberts

Synopsis: "Inquisitive Ada Twist is determined to identify a mysterious smell. Her mission includes some not-so-successful science experiments, supportive parents, and insatiable curiosity."

Other books by author: *Rosie Revere, Engineer; Iggy Peck, Architect*

Reading level: 5-7 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *I love all of Andrea Beaty's STEM books - and I know that students do, too! I love how these books emphasize that curiosity comes first when studying anything scientific - if we aren't passionate, we will not learn as much - an important lesson to learn!*

The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend

By Dan Santat

Synopsis: "In four delightful 'visual chapters,' Beekle, an imaginary friend, undergoes an emotional journey looking for his human. Santat uses fine details, kaleidoscopic saturated

colors, and exquisite curved and angular lines to masterfully convey the emotional essence of this special childhood relationship.”

Reading Level: 4-7

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *A child’s relationship with their imaginary friend is a powerful thing - I still remember the names and stories of all of the imaginary friends I had when I was younger. This is a beautiful tribute to a beautiful relationship.*

All in a Drop: How Antony van Leeuwenhoek Discovered an Invisible World

Written by Lori Alexander, Illustrated by Vivien Mildenberger

Synopsis: “With accessible language and illustrations, this biography introduces readers to the everyday man who invented a powerful microscope that could magnify the living world to an astonishing scale.”

Reading level: 8-12 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *Microscopes allow us to discover what appears to be a whole world that is initially invisible to us. A student’s first glance through a microscope can be a magical experience, but who invented the microscope to begin with? What did people do before microscopes? What would we do without microscopes?*

All that Trash: The Story of the 1987 Garbage Barge and Our Problem with Stuff

By Megan McCarthy

Synopsis: “In 1987, a garbage barge spends five months adrift in the Atlantic, unsuccessfully attempting to find a place to dump its contents.”

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *What happens when we throw things out? Do they ever really go away? We all know that deep down the answer to this question is unequivocally no, but do we ever push ourselves to think more about these questions?*

All the Way to Havana

Written by Margarita Engle, Illustrated by Mike Curato

Synopsis: “In this beautifully illustrated book, a family drives to Havana, Cuba, in their well-worn car, experiencing the sights and sounds of the streets.”



Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This journey through Cuba shows the beautiful culture of the island. What are all the beautiful things we can see from just our car windows?*

An Ambush of Tigers: A Wild Gathering of Collective Nouns

Written by Betsy R. Rosenthal, Illustrated by Jago

Synopsis: "This collection of humorous illustrations and clever word play introduces children to the wide variety of animal groups, such as a prickle of porcupines and a tower of giraffes."

Reading level: 5-9 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is a really fun way to learn so many new vocabulary words! Who knew there were so many different names for groups of animals?*

The Book Rescuer: How a Mensch from Massachusetts Saved Yiddish Literature for Generations to Come

Written by Sue Macy, Illustrated by Stacy Innerst

Synopsis: "With dramatic art, this picturebook biography tells the story of Aaron Lansky's mission to save Yiddish literature."

Reading level: 5-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is an incredible (true!) story about the importance of preserving literature and language - and how stories are foundational for communities.*

The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World's Coral Reefs

Written by Kate Messner, Illustrated by Matthew Forsythe

Synopsis: "Ken Nedimyer's single-minded passion for restoring the ocean's coral reefs is reflected through riveting illustrations and accessible narrative."

Reading level: 5-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *Based on the life of Ken Nedimyer, this beautifully illustrated book encourages students to get curious about how they can make an impact and solve some of the bigger climate change problems in our world - it only takes one person sometimes!*



The Cazuela that the Farm Maiden Stirred

Written by Samantha R. Vamos, Illustrated by Rafael Lopez

Synopsis: “Nothing is better than a delicious bowl of arroz con leche unless, of course, a host of farm animals have a hand in the preparation! Lopez’s blazing illustrations for the rhythmic, rollicking cumulative tale, *The Cazuela that the Farm Maiden Stirred* radiate a cheerful exuberance and are peppered with Latino cultural details that extend Vamos’ perky narrative.”

Reading level: 3-6 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *I love how this book gives readers an opportunity to learn a few Spanish words. Also, it shows the process of a farm to table food - how do we get all the ingredients to make a meal?*

Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night

Written by Joyce Sidman, Illustrated by Rick Allen

Synopsis: “Welcoming her readers into the ‘wild, enchanted park’ that is the night, Joyce Sidman has elegantly crafted twelve poems rich in content and varied in format. Companion prose pieces about nocturnal flora and fauna are as tuneful and graceful as the poems. This collection is ‘a feast of sound and spark.’”

Reading level: 6-9 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This book contains many lovely little poems (some rhyme, others do not). This is all about various animals that are nocturnal - so these may be animals we have never seen before!*

The Desert Is Theirs

Written by Byrd Baylor, Illustrated by Peter Parnall

Synopsis: “A spare, lyrical text tells of the relationship of the Papagos people to their environment—‘we share . . . we only share.’ The paintings are dramatic and are reminiscent of the layers of colors found in sand paintings.”

Reading level: 5-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *A beautiful tribute to the Papagos people and their relationship to the desert. The desert can sometimes appear to be a rather barren place, but this book challenges all appearances.*



Digging for Words: José Alberto Gutiérrez and the Library He Built

Written by Angela Burke Kunkel, Illustrated by Paola Escobar

Synopsis: “José Alberto Gutiérrez, a garbageman in Bogotá, Colombia, collects books along his route and creates a library for children to read and borrow in his neighborhood on Saturdays.”

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This children’s book, based on a true story, takes on mythical proportions as books become secret buried treasure that are sought out by the community. The library becomes a palace filled with wonder where anything and everything can be learned.*

Frederick

By Leo Lionni

Synopsis: “The other field mice scurry to gather food for winter while Frederick gathers warm thoughts. In the deep of winter when the food has run out, Frederick is called upon to share his supplies. Collages enhance this story that proves ‘we do not live by bread alone.’”

Reading level: 3-7 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *A family of mice prepare for the winter, but one mouse, Frederick, prepares by gathering something other than food; he gathers words, instead. In the cold of winter, his poem uplifts his family (who initially thought he was shirking his responsibilities during the preparation).*

Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story

By Juana Noble Martinez-Neal

Synopsis: “A sweetly illustrated concept book that informs from cover to cover through the lens of a contemporary family. From shape to smell, readers learn how shared traditions of fry bread transcend land, tribal nations, and time. With extensive supporting notes, Fry Bread is both joyful celebration and an important cultural history.”

Reading level: 3-6 years



☆ **Paige's Review:** *This book feels like a recipe (a very simple one, too!) but made into a story. How can food bring us together within our community but also extend to outside of our immediate community?*

Grandpa Green

By Lane Smith

Synopsis: "Elaborate topiary sculptures give visual form to memories in a wildly fanciful garden tended by a child and his beloved great-grandfather. Using an inspired palate, Lane Smith invites readers to tour a green lifetime of meaningful moments."

Reading level: 5-9 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *I love the idea of nature holding our memories - a way that we can live on within our communities and families in a different way. I also love the focus on the color green - makes us think of colors that might define our own lives (in nature or in general).*

Hey, Water!

By Antoinette Portis

Synopsis: "Hey, Water! celebrates water in its many forms and pathways, speaking to the youngest reader with simple--but not simplistic--language, clear labels, contrasting colors, and varied scale that convey accurate information on every page. Supporting diagrams and a note on conservation expand this concept book for a broader audience."

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *Water is everywhere! This book is pretty simple in its premise - where are all the places we can find water? However, it encourages students to look (everywhere) to see where we use water. This is a great book to start a conversation about conservation because of the importance of water in all of our lives.*

Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera

Written by Candace Fleming, Illustrated by Eric Rohmann

Synopsis: "The life cycle of a worker honeybee, including the many roles she plays within her colony, unfold alongside detailed, closeup illustrations."

Reading level: 6-9 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *A great book for both children and adults! We could never know enough about bees and the importance of bees in our ecosystems. This an in-depth look*



at what goes on inside the hive with great illustrations. Might inspire future beekeepers of America!

How to Read a Book

Written by Kwame Alexander, Illustrated by Melissa Sweet

Synopsis: "Bright collage illustrations and poetic imagery depict many of the countless ways to savor a book."

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This book has a lot going on. The illustrations could be distracting, but the words, written in verse, juxtapose the "collage" illustrations that cover each page - some pages are pullouts as well. I loved this book's take on how to read, or appreciate, books, and I think it could encourage students to think of other ways they read books.*

I Face the Wind

Written by Vicki Cobb, Illustrated by Julia Gorton

Synopsis: "A Vicki Cobb Science Play book, I Face the Wind asks the young to think like scientists as it leads them through experiments and observations about wind. Cobb's simple text and Gorton's dynamic illustrations invite participation."

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is more of an "activity book" and less of a picture book, but I really love how it goes through a mini scientific method by highlighting the importance of observing nature before drawing any conclusions about it.*

I Talk Like a River

Written by Jordan Scott, Illustrated by Sydney Smith

Synopsis: "A young person with a stutter feels isolated. His father helps him understand that his speech moves like the ebb and flow of the river, giving him a new understanding of his way of speaking."

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is the first book I've read about stuttering. It simultaneously emphasizes the importance of words while also highlighting how those who struggle with their speech can be alienated. Through an appreciation of nature, however, the protagonist, a young boy, develops his voice and is able to describe his favorite place - a river - to his class.*



If You Take Away the Otter

Written by Susannah Buhrmann-Deever, Illustrated by Matthew Trueman

Synopsis: “What happens to an entire habitat when a single element is depleted by hunters? Through striking illustrations, the role of sea otters over time in the Pacific Coast of North America is explored in detail.”

Reading level: 5-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This book explores the concept of a “keystone species” in a way that students can comprehend the importance of certain animals in ecosystems. Also, it highlights how human influence can damage ecosystems and what that means for the community as a whole in the Pacific Coast.*

Me...Jane

By Patrick McDonnell

Synopsis: “Watching the birds and squirrels in her yard, a young girl discovers the joy and wonder of nature. In delicate and precise India ink and watercolor, McDonnell depicts the awakening of a scientific spirit. A perceptive glimpse of the childhood of renowned primatologist Jane Goodall.”

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This is a great introduction to Jane Goodall’s life and emphasizes how her passion for animals encouraged her to observe nature closely to see what she could discover. The illustrations have a “field journal” feel to them, making it look like we are reading a young Jane’s sketchbook of all the things she has found in nature.*

Moth

Written by Isabel Thomas, Illustrated by Daniel Egneus

Synopsis: Rich illustrations help describe the survival and evolutionary adaptations of the peppered moth.

Reading level: 6-10 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *Before reading this book, I was skeptical that a children’s book would be able to tackle Darwin’s theory of natural selection, but I was pleasantly surprised by this book’s efforts to illustrate a complex topic - and do it in a way that young children can comprehend.*



The Night Gardener

Written by Terry Fan, Illustrated by Eric Fan

Synopsis: A dreary town comes to life through the efforts of a mysterious nocturnal gardener, whose fantastic topiaries amaze and empower a young boy.

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is a unique but simple story about how nature can bring a community together. Though it was published quite recently, the illustrations feel "vintage."*

Outside In

Written by Deborah Underwood, Illustrated by Cindy Derby

Synopsis: "This picture book explores the ever-present lure of the outdoors as it appears at our windows and tempts us with sounds and fragrances, even as we spend most of our time inside."

Reading level: 4-7 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is a timely book (published during the pandemic). Although this is a story with few words, I loved the watercolor illustrations and the emphasis on how nature "calls" us to observe its beauty - even when we are stuck inside.*

The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus

Written by Jen Bryant, Illustrated Melissa Sweet

Synopsis: "Sweet's inspired mixed media illustrations illuminate the personality and work of a man passionately interested in many things. Her collages combine disparate elements to create a cohesive whole, echoing the ways in which Roget ordered the world into lists that evolved into his groundbreaking thesaurus."

Reading level: 7-11 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is a really unique design for a children's book (collage style). Encourages appreciation for words and what they can create.*

Salma the Syrian Chef

Written by Danny Ramadan, Illustrated by Anna Bron



Synopsis: “Salma misses her mother’s smile and laughter and hopes making her favorite Syrian dish will bring back her smile. When preparing the dish doesn’t go as planned, Salma’s community comes together to help finish the dish and celebrate her success.”

Reading level: 4-7 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This is an incredible book about the power of community and the role food plays in our lives - and the ways food can bring us together.*

The Storm Book

Written by Charlotte Zolotow, Illustrated by Margaret Bloy Graham

Synopsis: “A little boy watches in wonder as the day turns ominously gray and still, a storm approaches, and breaks forth. He asks his mother questions and she replies with reassuring answers. Each two-page spread of text is followed by a double-page spread of illustrations, most of them showing a driving rain.”

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This is an older book, but its incredible descriptions of weather and plants makes it timeless. What are the signs nature gives us to warn that there is a storm on the way?*

The Storyteller

By Evan Turk

Synopsis: “During a time of drought, a storyteller and his apprentice weave a complex tale to rescue their city from a menacing sandstorm.”

Reading level: 4-8 years

☆ **Paige’s Review:** *This is definitely a more advanced story, but the illustrations are incredible. Allows readers to appreciate the beauty of storytelling. Also takes place in Morocco and expands on Moroccan traditions and stories.*

Together We Grow

By Susan Vaught

Synopsis: “A timely story of empathy and inclusion (and baby opossums!) that practically radiates warmth.”

Reading level: 4-8 years



☆ **Paige's Review:** *A book with few words but beautiful illustrations about all the animals who live in a barn. What happens when a new animal wants to join?*

Little Wise Wolf

By Gijs van dre Hammen

Synopsis: "A Dutch import with a sweet, forested charm."

Reading level: 2-7 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *The color palette used in this text is perfect. It's a short story of castles and kings (all the characters are animals), but it feels simpler - in a good way. Van dre Hammen employs us to remember that while there can be so much to learn from books, we also learn quite a bit from each other. This book highlights the journeys we go through in life in which we feel we are on our own but allows us to remember those who help us along the way. Little Wise Wolf, because he knows everything from books, is asked to heal the king (a lion). On his journey to heal the king, he meets all the members of his community that he has never seen before - Little Wise Wolf preferred to stay inside and read his books despite encouragement to come outside.*

Every Color of Light

By Hiroshi Osada

Synopsis: "Written by a poet and illustrated in a dreamy, contemplative style, a perfect reminder to breathe and appreciate the beauty of the natural world."

Reading level: 4-7 years

☆ **Paige's Review:** *Though this book is limited in words, the illustrations make up for it. This beautiful poetic tribute to all aspects of nature will encourage students to observe nature closely.*

The Ocean Calls: A Haenyeo Mermaid Story

By Tina Cho

Synopsis: "Swirling lines and saturated colors bring to life the mystery, danger, and allure of diving under the sea."

Reading level: 5-8 years



☆ **Paige's Review:** *This is a beautifully illustrated story about the Haenyeo tradition of Korea. Haenyeo are female divers who harvest sea creatures from the ocean. This story highlights the relationship between a grandmother and her daughter and reflects on what it means to be brave. Cho also emphasizes the beauty of the ocean and all the things that can be found down under.*

