

New Best Summer Books

By Hannah Trierweiler

When a colleague and friend gives you a new kids' book and says, "You have to read this," you pay attention. That's why we asked a team of top teachers and librarians to share new favorites for summer. Here are their picks for every reader, each bearing a teachers' stamp of approval.

Best for BIG imaginations

TOYS GO OUT, by Emily Jenkins, illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. This collection of illustrated short stories about "a knowledgeable stingray, a toughy little buffalo, and someone called Plastic"—all toys that come to life—is "a perfect read-aloud," says one librarian. "I've been recommending it to anyone who will listen." *Grades K-3*

Best for class clowns

17 THINGS I'M NOT ALLOWED TO DO ANYMORE, by Jenny Offill, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. A somewhat mischievous, totally adorable little girl ticks off what's verboten, from stapling her brother's hair to ordering Mom around like a waitress. "I laugh out loud every time I read this book," says a teacher fan. *Grades K-2*

Best for pet owners

MR. PUSSKINS: A LOVE STORY, by Sam Lloyd. Teachers adore this "sweet and funny" story about a crabby kitty fed up with his doting owner, Emily. ("Blah-de-blah blah blah" is what he hears when Emily professes her love.) All this changes, however, when Mr. Pusskins runs away, only to learn it isn't so easy in the big world. *Grades K-2*

Best for small-town kids

(MAIN STREET) WELCOME TO CAMDEN FALLS AND (MAIN STREET) NEEDLE AND THREAD, by Ann M. Martin. Martin makes her return to series fiction (for the first time since *The Baby-Sitters Club*) with two heartwarming tales about sisters Flora and Ruby. After their parents die, the girls reluctantly go to live with their grandmother in tiny Camden Falls, eventually coming to call their new town home. These are old-fashioned stories—in a good way, teachers say. *Grades 3-6*

Best for daydreamy poets

BUTTERFLY EYES AND OTHER SECRETS OF THE MEADOW, by Joyce Sidman, illustrated by Beth Krommes. Sidman follows up on the Caldecott-winning *Song of the Water Boatman* with a volume of sunshine-filled poems about meadow life. It recently won a Cybil, an award bestowed by kid-lit bloggers (find out more about the Cybils—click on May/June Links at www.scholastic.com/instructor). *Grades K-5*

Best for beginning readers

MERCY WATSON GOES FOR A RIDE, by Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen. Mercy, aka "the porcine wonder," is the recipient of a Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor and cheers from newbie readers everywhere. Her next adventure, *Mercy Watson, Princess in Disguise*, hits shelves this summer. *Grades 1-3*

Best for little zoologists

HIPPO, NO RHINO!, by Jeff Newman. Your animal experts will be bursting at the seams as they figure out Rhino's dilemma in this near-wordless picture book, teachers say. The zookeeper has placed a sign that says "Hippo" on Rhino's cage. What will Rhino do? *Grades K-2*

Best for budding philosophers

JEREMY FINK AND THE MEANING OF LIFE, by Wendy Mass. When Jeremy receives a mysterious box from his

father, who has recently passed away, he must go on a journey to find the key—as well as what it all means. Sounds heavy, but mostly "this is a story of friendship, life, and growing up," say teachers. We love Jeremy's bond with best friend Lizzy. *Grades 3-6*

Best for drama queens

A DROWNED MAIDEN'S HAIR, by Laura Amy Schlitz. Everything about this old-fashioned melodrama is over the top, from the main character (a wronged orphan) to the plot (think mysteries and betrayal), but the 19th-century heroine is completely "lovable," according to one teacher. *Grades 6-8*

Best for the kids stuck on space

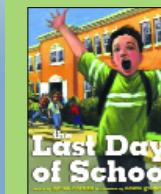
TEAM MOON, by Catherine Thimmesh. "I loved subtitle of this nonfiction story, *How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*," says a librarian. Packed with photos and unusual facts, *Team Moon* won the 2007 Robert F. Sibert award for informational texts. *Grades 3-8*

Best for beachcombers

FLOTSAM, by David Wiesner. We weren't surprised this stunning wordless picture book—about a boy who finds an underwater camera on a visit to the ocean—took home the Caldecott. Teachers confirm that like *Tuesday*, Wiesner's first award-winner, *FLOTSAM* "invites kids to open the door to their imaginations." *Grades K-5*

Best for the last day of school

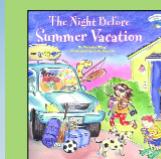
The books below aren't all new, but they're all a nice send-off to your year.



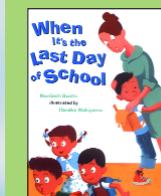
1. **The Last Day of School**, by Louise Borden. A child remembers the final day of school, especially giving the perfect end-of-year-gift to his teacher.



2. **Last Day Blues**, by Julie Danneberg. Ms. Hartwell's students plan the perfect class gift for their teacher. This book shows the story from multiple perspectives.



3. **The Night Before Summer Vacation**, by Natasha Wing. This is a new take on the Clement Moore Christmas poem, and provides a fun rhyme about preparing for summer.



4. **When It's the Last Day of School**, by Meribeth Boelts. James is determined to be on his best behavior on the last day of school.



5. **Miss Bindergarten Celebrates the Last Day of Kindergarten**, by Joseph Slate. Miss Bindergarten's class, together for the first and 100th day in other popular books, pack up for summer.

—Samantha Cleaver



summer books

Best for reluctant readers

BONE #5: ROCK JAW, by Jeff Smith. Are students already complaining about summer reading? Skip the weighty problem novel (think dead parents or pets) and put this graphic-novel series on your list instead. “Almost everyone in my class keeps up with the saga of the Bone cousins,” shares one teacher.

Grades 4 and up

Best for beverly cleary buffs

CLEMENTINE, by Sara Pennypacker, illustrated by Marla Frazee. “I don’t remember another character that I fell in love with so quickly,” raves a judge about spunky Clementine, whom readers

frequently compare to Cleary’s Ramona Quimby. Don’t miss *The Talented Clementine*, the brand-new sequel. Grades 1–3

Best for older sibs

RULES, by Cynthia Lord. The little brother in this charming debut novel has autism, but anyone who’s ever wished for a “normal” family will relate to 12-year-old Catherine’s struggles. Teachers promise that many a classroom discussion will spin out of this Newbery honoree—on friendship, disabilities, and rules for life. Grades 4–7

Best for survivors

EGGS, by Jerry Spinelli. The newest bibliotherapy from the author of *Stargirl* and *Maniac Magee* pairs up two kids who’ve been through more than their

years would indicate: 9-year-old David, whose mother was killed in an accident, and 13-year-old Primrose, who has never met her father. Grades 4–8

Best for die-hard romantics

A TRUE AND FAITHFUL NARRATIVE, by Katherine Sturtevant. Meg, a 16-year-old girl in the 17th-century, wants nothing more than to be a writer. She’s also torn between her father’s apprentice and best friend’s brother, who’s been kidnapped by pirates. Teachers call it a captivating love story that muses on issues of creativity and freedom. Grades 6–8

Best for kleenex investors

THE RULES OF SURVIVAL, by Nancy Werlin. It doesn’t get more real than Werlin’s National Book Award finalist, the story of a boy and his two sisters living at the mercy of their abusive mother. Told in letters from the boy to his younger sister, it’s a tale of triumph as much as sorrow. Grades 6–8

Best for civil libertarians

THE HIGHER POWER OF LUCKY, by Susan Patron, illustrated by Matt Phelan. By now you know about a certain controversial word on the first page of this year’s Newbery winner. Let’s move on,

says one of our judges, who’s been sharing Lucky’s story with fans of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. “Kids relate to Lucky’s authentic insecurities and problems.” Grades 3–6

Best for fantasy fans

RIVER SECRETS, by Shannon Hale. “A trip to Bayern is the perfect vacation,” proclaims a librarian who’ll be sharing Hale’s magical world with her patrons this summer. If, after reading this tale of heroism and war, your kids are craving more, point them to Hale’s *The Goose Girl* and *Enna Burning*. Grades 6–8

Best for outsiders

AMERICAN BORN CHINESE, by Gene Luen Yang. A National Book Award finalist and winner of the 2007 Printz award, Yang’s graphic novel gets at the essence of being on the fringe. The three interweaving stories move fast, say teachers, and keep kids hooked. Grades 6–8

Best for the culture curious

DOES MY HEAD LOOK BIG IN THIS? by Randa Abdel-Fattah. Amal is your average 16-year-old, chasing after the cutest boy in school. Except that she’s chosen to wear the *hijab*, or veil. Amal must contend with what that means today. Grades 6–8

Best for historians

UP CLOSE: ROBERT F. KENNEDY, by Marc Aronson. What makes this new RFK bio stand out from the rest? Concise language, say teachers, and analogies that tweens and teens will understand. It’s part of a brand-new biography series, and written by an author of award-winning nonfiction for young adults. Grades 6–8

Best for bards in training

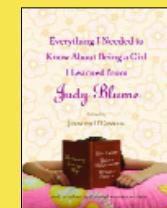
LOVING WILL SHAKESPEARE, by Carolyn Meyer. Meyer gives us a glimpse of Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare’s wife, in her latest piece of historical fiction, which one librarian sums up as “lovely and sad.” Readers may also be interested in Lisa Klein’s *Ophelia*, a retelling of *Hamlet* from the heroine’s point of view. Grades 6–8

Best for the bunk bed-bound

BABYMOUSE #6: CAMP BABYMOUSE, by Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm. Everyone enjoys this graphic-novel series about the ups and downs of an average middle school mouse, reports one teacher, “not just the girls.” In the newest installment, Babymouse makes her foray into the wilderness. Will she have the best summer ever? Grades 4–7

We Didn’t Forget About You!

What should you put in your beach tote? Here’s what’s on our list.



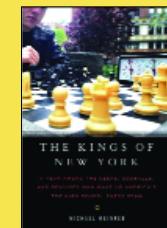
1. *Everything I Needed to Know About Being a Girl I Learned from Judy Blume*, edited by Jennifer O’Connell. Essays that pay tribute to a favorite author.



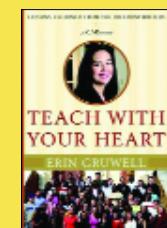
2. *Little Big Minds*, by Marietta McCarty. McCarty argues for introducing philosophy in the classroom, drawing on a program she has implemented and developed in schools nationwide.



3. *Austenland*, by Shannon Hale. This YA author takes a grown-up turn with the story of a woman obsessed with Jane Austen’s Mr. Darcy (specifically Colin Firth’s Mr. Darcy).



4. *The Kings of New York*, by Michael Weinreb. The true story of a high school chess team from Brooklyn that went on to win the national championship, dubbed “the *Friday Night Lights* of chess.”



5. *Teach With Your Heart: Lessons I Learned From the Freedom Writers*, by Erin Gruwell. Learn from the H.S. teacher who inspired the film *Freedom Writers*.

About Our Judging Panel

- **Rubi Bothwell** teaches second grade in Houston, Texas.
- **Ali Bruinsma** is a children’s librarian in Aberdeen, South Dakota.
- **Sarah Fitzpatrick** teaches sixth grade in Seattle, Washington.
- **Mary Lee Hahn** teaches fourth and fifth grade in Ohio. With Franki Sibberson, she blogs at <http://readingyear.blogspot.com>.
- **Franki Sibberson** teaches fifth grades in Ohio and is the author of *Still Learning to Read: Teaching Students in Grades 3–6*.
- **Jennifer Sommer** is a children’s librarian in Ohio.