Best for BIG imaginations

TOYS GO OUT, by Emily Jenkins, illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. This collection of illustrated short stories about “a knowledgeable stinkray, 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 Jeff Newman. “This funny” story about a crabby kitty fed up with its 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 1–3

Best for pet owners

MR. PUSSKINS: A LOVE STORY, by Sam Lloyd. Teachers adore this “sweet and funny” story about a cranky 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 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 Cybil—click on May/June Lanks 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, a “lovable 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 Loyce. 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—tore home the Caldecott. Teachers confirm that like Tuesday, Wisner’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 Weiz. 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

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.

W hen 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 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 4–6

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 Tiniest 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 honor—on friendship, disabilities, and rules for life. Grades 4–7

EGGS, by Jerry Spinelli. The newest book 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 Davit, 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 her best friend’s brother, who’s been kidnapped by pirates. Teachers call it a captivating love story that mocks fads 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 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 interwoven stories move fast, say teachers, and keep kids hooked. Grades 6–8

Best for 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

About Our Judging Panel
• Rubi Bethwell teaches second grade in Houston, Texas.
• Ali Brunsma is a children’s librarian in Aberdeen, South Dakota.
• Sarah Fitzpatrick teaches sixth grade in Seattle, Washington.
• Marietta McCarty argues for introducing philosophy in the classroom, teaching in the classroom, teaching philosophy in the classroom, and introducing philosophy in the classroom.
• Jennifer Sommer is a children’s librarian in Ohio.

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 D’Oench. 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.
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.