

## 6th Grade Honors Syllabus

All books for honors courses must be purchased by students and parents.

### Unit 1 Finding Courage

Summer Reading
<a href="#">Rising 6th Grade Summer Reading Novel Choices</a>  <a href="#">Summer Reading Novel Projects</a>

### Unit 2 Through an Animal’s Eyes

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Black Beauty</b> by Anna Sewell	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Old Yeller</b> by Fred Gipson	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 3 Surviving the Unthinkable

Novel Study	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam

5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Hatchet</b> by Gary Paulsen	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 4 Discovering Your Voice

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Beethoven in Paradise</b> by Barbara O'Connor	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Amos Fortune, Free Man</b> by Elizabeth Yates	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 5 Never Give Up

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
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5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>The Outsiders</u></b> by S.E. Hinton	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>Across Five Aprils</u></b> by Irene Hunt	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	.

**Materials:**

Composition Notebook

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Black Beauty by Anna Sewell **OR** Old Yeller by Fred Gipson

Beethoven in Paradise by Barbara O'Connor **OR** Amos Fortune, Free Man by Elizabeth Yates

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton **OR** Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt

**Book Summaries:**

**Black Beauty** by Anna Sewell (Lexile 1020)

As a colt growing up in the countryside, Black Beauty enjoys life with his friends and mother. After being trained, he is sold to a squire and is well cared for by the estate’s grooms. He works as a carriage and riding horse and develops a friendship with Ginger, a hot-headed horse who was mistreated when she was young. After three years, the horses are sold. As a carriage horse for his new owners, Beauty is forced to wear the painful bearing rein. After he is injured by a drunk driver, Beauty no longer makes a fashionable carriage horse, and his life begins to go downhill as he is bought and sold several times. He is forced to endure hard labor and his health declines. Although it seems Beauty’s luck has changed when he is bought by a kind London cabbie named Jerry Barker, Jerry becomes ill and his family must sell the horse. Bought and sold by several owners, Beauty is worked until he collapses. He is sold to a kind farmer and his grandson, who help restore him to health. They sell him to a family whose groom cared for Beauty as a young horse. He spends the rest of his days contentedly in the countryside.

**Old Yeller** by Fred Gipson (Lexile 910)

Fourteen-year-old Travis Coates has been charged with looking out for his mother and little brother Arliss while his father is away on a cattle drive. One day an ugly yellow dog shows up and won't leave. Travis doesn't think much of Old Yeller until the dog saves Arliss from a bear. From then on, he warms to the dog, who continues to prove himself indispensable by saving Travis from being gored by wild hogs and protecting Mama, Arliss, and a neighbor girl from a mad wolf. Tragically, Old Yeller is injured in his fight with the wolf and has likely contracted hydrophobia (rabies). Travis is left with no other choice but to shoot him. Travis's father returns and brings Travis a horse, his reward for being "the man of the family" while his father is away. Still grieving, Travis finds his spirits lifted by a pup sired by Old Yeller.

**Hatchet** by Gary Paulsen (Lexile 1020)

As Hatchet begins, 13-year-old Brian Robeson is being flown in a two-person plane to spend the summer with his father, a mechanical engineer working in the Canadian oil fields. Brian is haunted by his parents' recent divorce and "the Secret" behind it. His focus suddenly changes, however, when the pilot suffers a heart attack and dies. Brian manages to bring the plane down on a lake and swim to land, but all he has besides the clothes on his back is a hatchet that his mother gave him. Thoughts of a quick rescue swiftly fade, and Brian must learn to survive in the wilderness. Through trial and error, Brian can build a shelter, get a fire going, and find and hunt food. As days turn into weeks, he becomes more resourceful and more determined to survive. After fifty-four days on his own, and after surviving fear, hunger and thirst, encounters with wild animals, and even a tornado, Brian is rescued—but he has been forever changed.

**Beethoven in Paradise** by Barbara O'Connor (Lexile 680)

Twelve-year-old Martin Pittman shares a deep love of music with Wylene, a shy and lonely adult neighbor. Martin has taught himself to play the harmonica and longs to buy a violin from the pawnshop, but his father forbids it. Ed Pittman forces Martin to play on the baseball team and then berates him for his poor performance. Wylene comes up with a plan for Martin to secretly play the violin in her trailer. Martin spends many blissful hours there, mastering the instrument and delighting her with his playing. Eventually, Martin's father learns about the arrangement, and he takes the violin. When Martin finally stands up for himself, his father smashes the violin. Undeterred, Martin finds a new instrument to master, one his father won't find so easy to destroy—a saxophone.

**Amos Fortune, Free Man** by Elizabeth Yates (Lexile 1090)

At-mun is the son of the king of the At-mun-shi, a pagan African tribe that has always been a free people and that, in turn, does not enslave others. Then, in 1725, slave traders ambushed the At-mun-shi. Fifteen-year-old At-mun and others are captured and sold to a slave trader who brings them to America. Thus, within a few months, At-mun becomes Amos, the property of Caleb Copeland in Boston, Massachusetts, and begins a life of servitude that will last for

another 45 years. From the age of 60 until his death at 91, Amos lives as a free man; purchases the freedom of three women and one child; becomes a well-respected tanner, landowner, and community member; and does as much good for others as he possibly can.

**The Outsiders** by S.E. Hinton (Lexile 750)

Ponyboy Curtis, 14, and his brother Soda, 16, are being raised by their older brother, Darry, after their parents die in a car accident. The boys belong to the greasers, an informal gang of poor white boys. The book opens with Ponyboy leaving a movie theater. He's jumped by a group of Socs, a rival gang of wealthy boys from the other side of town. The following night, at a drive-in theater, Ponyboy and his greaser friends Dally and Johnny meet Soc girls, including Cherry Valance, with whom Ponyboy feels a connection. Later that night, Bob, Cherry's drunk boyfriend, jumps Ponyboy and nearly drowns him. After Johnny kills Bob, Dally helps them flee to an abandoned church in the country. When Dally comes to retrieve them, the church catches fire with young children inside. Ponyboy and Johnny rush into the building to save them. The boys are deemed heroes, but Johnny sustains serious injuries. On the night of a big rumble with the Socs, Johnny dies at the hospital. Unable to cope with his friend's death, Dally deliberately points an unloaded gun at the police, knowing they will kill him. A judge absolves Ponyboy of his role in Bob's death. The book concludes with Ponyboy responding to a class assignment by writing the first line of the novel, a signal that writing may help him face his grief and trauma.

**Across Five Aprils** by Irene Hunt (Lexile 1100)

Across Five Aprils tells the tale of a boy's coming of age during the U.S. Civil War. It begins with nine-year-old Jethro Creighton helping his mother plant potatoes on an April morning in 1861. Jethro's large family soon learns that fighting has broken out, and Jethro naively finds this news of war exciting. Jethro's brothers, cousin, and teacher go off to fight for the North—while one brother, Bill, chooses to fight for the South. Over the next few years, Jethro learns what war really is. Some members of the community terrorize Jethro's family about Bill's choice (while others come to their defense); one brother is killed in combat; Jethro's father has a heart attack; and Jethro witnesses his cousin's plight as a starving deserter. Jethro also matures physically and mentally by doing a man's work on the farm, deciphering generals' strategies, and teaching himself proper English. Thus, by the novel's end, he has come to understand "the adult world of trouble" that didn't seem "real enough to dim the goodness" of that first April morning.

## 7th Grade Honors Syllabus

All books for honors courses must be purchased by students and parents.

### Unit 1 Taking Action

Summer Reading
<a href="#">Rising 7th Grade Summer Reading Novel Choices</a>  <a href="#">Summer Reading Novel Projects</a>

### Unit 2 Reality Check

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</u></b> by Elizabeth George Speare	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>A Christmas Carol</u></b> by Charles Dickens	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 3 Inspired by Nature

Novel Study	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
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6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>My Side of the Mountain</u></b> by Jean Craighead George	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 4 The Terror and Wonder of Space

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>A Wrinkle in Time</u></b> by Madeleine L'Engle	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>Ender's Game</u></b> by Orson Scott	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 5 More Than a Game

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
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6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Slam</b> by Walter Dean Myers	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Baseball in April and Other Stories</b> by Gary Soto	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**Materials:**

Composition Notebook

The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Speare **OR** A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle **OR** Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Slam by Walter Dean Myers **OR** Baseball in April and Other Stories by Gary Soto

**Book Summaries:**

**The Witch of Blackbird Pond** by Elizabeth George Speare (Lexile 850)

Following the death of her grandfather and the bankruptcy of his Barbados plantation, Katherine "Kit" Tyler sails to Wethersfield, Connecticut, to live with an aunt and uncle. Raised in privilege, Kit is unprepared for the cold welcome she receives in Wethersfield and the daily rigors of Puritan life. As she struggles to adjust to her new life, she is befriended by Hannah, a gentle and wise Quaker woman. At Hannah's home on Blackbird Pond, Kit finds an inner sense of strength and peace. Her budding sense of belonging is upset when a virulent fever strikes the town, and she and Hannah are accused of causing it through witchcraft. With Kit's help, Hannah escapes an angry mob, but Kit is forced to stand trial. The testimony of a girl Kit taught to read and write helps clear her of all charges. During the long winter that follows, Kit



dreams of returning to Barbados but eventually realizes that she has become attached to New England and the people there—especially the young sea captain with whom she has fallen in love.

**A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens (Lexile 900)

On Christmas Eve, Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly money lender who despises Christmas, is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley, his late business partner. Marley is suffering in chains for eternity, his punishment for a lifetime of ignoring the needy. He announces that three spirits will visit Scrooge to help him avoid the same fate. The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his childhood, his young adulthood, and his development into a miser; the Ghost of Christmas Present shows him scenes of people filled with holiday cheer; and the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come shows a future in which Scrooge has died, unmourned. Scrooge vows to mend his ways. He awakens on Christmas morning and begins seeking out others, including his nephew Fred and the family of Bob Cratchit, his clerk. Scrooge becomes known as a genuinely good person—and as someone who always celebrates Christmas.

**My Side of the Mountain** by Jean Craighead George (Lexile 810)

Sam Gribble is miserable living in a small New York City apartment with his parents and eight siblings. So, he sets out to find his great-grandfather Gribble's abandoned farm in the Catskill Mountains. Sam plans to live off the land using his wits and bare hands. On the way, an old man shows Sam how to build a fire, and a town librarian directs him to books on wilderness survival. Once in the mountains, Sam quickly learns to build a cozy shelter, hunt and fish, and forage for food. He trains a wild falcon to help him hunt and to keep him company. Sam befriends Bando, a school teacher who has lost his way in the woods. Bando teaches him new skills. When newspapers start circulating stories about a "wild boy" living alone in the forest, Sam fears that his secret place will be discovered by reporters and city dwellers. His fears are soon realized—but the change is not entirely unwelcome. After more than a year of solitude in the woods, Sam is happily surprised when his entire family arrives at the old Gribble farm to make it their permanent home.

**A Wrinkle in Time** by Madeleine L'Engle (Lexile 740)

Meg Murry lives with her three brothers and their mother; her father has been missing for over a year. A strange visitor named Mrs. Whatsit arrives and mentions the word tesseract. The following night Meg, her brilliant little brother Charles Wallace, and their new friend Calvin O'Keefe are spirited away by Mrs. Whatsit and her companions, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which. On the planet Uriel, the Mrs. W's explain that they use the tesseract, the fifth dimension of time and space, to travel among planets. They tell the children that Meg's father had been experimenting with the tesseract when he disappeared, and now it is up to them to save him. Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin travel to the dark planet of Camazotz to confront IT, the evil being who has trapped Mr. Murry. In their efforts to rescue him, Charles Wallace's mind becomes enslaved to IT. Only Meg can save her brother. With the power of love, she breaks

IT's mental hold on Charles Wallace. Mrs. Whatsit tesses them home, where the Murry family is reunited.

**Ender's Game** by Orson Scott Card (Lexile 780)

Andrew Wiggin, nicknamed "Ender," is six years old when he leaves his beloved sister, Valentine, and sadistic brother, Peter, for Battle School. There, military men manipulate Ender's experiences to turn him into a brilliant, self-reliant commander in the hope that he will lead humanity to victory in its third war against the Formics, an insect-like alien race also called "buggers." Five grueling years later, Ender succeeds at what he thinks is his final test, only to discover that he's actually directed the real annihilation of the bugger race. Grief-stricken, guilt-ridden, and exhausted, Ender collapses. On Earth, meanwhile, Peter executes the final phase of a long-developing political takeover to become humanity's supreme ruler. Valentine convinces Ender to colonize a former bugger planet with her, and Ender finds a greater purpose.

**Slam** by Walter Dean Myers (Lexile 750)

Harlem teenager Greg "Slam" Harris was one of the stars of the basketball team at his former school. Then he transfers to a public art school. He gets off on the wrong foot with his new coach, who thinks he has "attitude" and often keeps Slam on the bench. Slam struggles to prove himself on the team; his grades need to improve; he can't figure out where he stands with his girlfriend; his grandmother is dying; and he suspects that his childhood friend Ice is dealing drugs. Eventually, his team comes together, and they make it to the championships. With the help of his girlfriend, Slam applies more focus to his academic work. When Slam finds out that Ice is indeed dealing drugs, the relationship shatters, which pains Slam, even though he can take solace in basketball and has other friends, family members, and mentors to lean on.

**Baseball in April and Other Stories** by Gary Soto (Lexile 830)

This collection of eleven short stories presents the lives of preteens and teenagers who live in Fresno, California. Various cultural references in the stories place the setting approximately in the mid-1980s. Although the stories differ, they generally focus on concerns that many preteens and teens have: wanting to be accepted and successful, getting along with family members, cultivating friendships and romantic relationships, and more. Soto writes about these matters with warmth and optimism, leaving readers to believe that the challenges they face can be overcome.

## 8th Grade Honors Syllabus

All books for honors courses must be purchased by students and parents.

### Unit 1 Gadgets and Glitches

Summer Reading
<a href="#">8th Grade Teen Summer Reading Novel Choices</a> <a href="#">Summer Reading Novel Projects</a>

### Unit 2 The Thrill of Horror

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</u></b> by Robert Lewis Stevenson	<i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i>  Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b><u>Coraline</u></b> by Neil Gaiman	<i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i>  Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.	

### Unit 3 Places We Call Home

Novel Study	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
3 Days	2 Days	1 Day

<p><b>Seedfolks</b> by Paul Fleischman</p>	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	
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### Unit 4 The Fight for Freedom

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<p><b>Soldier's Heart</b> by Gary Paulson</p>	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
5 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<p><b>North by Night</b> by Katherine Ayres</p>	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

### Unit 5 Finding Your Path

Students will form novel study groups by choosing one of the options below. The teacher will facilitate the novel study groups by providing elements of the study guide to students as they move through the literature.

Novel Study <i>Student Option 1</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam

6 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Reaching Out</b> by Francisco Jiménez	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**OR**

Novel Study <i>Student Option 2</i>	Novel Project Student Choices	Novel Exam
8 Days	2 Days	1 Day
<b>Criss Cross</b> by Lynne Rae Perkins	<p><i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i></p> <p>Students may do additional work or pick two for extra credit at teacher discretion, but one of the <i>Choices: Analyze or Create</i> must be completed first.</p>	

**Materials:**

Composition Notebook

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Lewis Stevenson **OR** Coraline by Neil Gaiman

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman

Soldier's Heart by Gary Paulson **OR** North by Night by Katherine Ayres

Reaching Out by Francisco Jiménez **OR** Criss Cross by Lynne Rae Perkins

**Book Summaries:**

**The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** by Robert Lewis Stevenson (Lexile 1060)

Mr. Utterson, a lawyer, hears an alarming story about how a man named Mr. Hyde injured a small child. Utterson's client and old friend, Dr. Jekyll, has named the very same man as his sole beneficiary. Utterson asks his friend whether Mr. Hyde has some particular hold on him; Dr. Jekyll assures Utterson that he can be rid of Hyde at any time. A year later, a prominent gentleman is viciously murdered. A witness recognizes Mr. Hyde before he flees. Things return to normal for a time, but then Dr. Jekyll suddenly disappears. His butler seeks Utterson's assistance. They break into Jekyll's laboratory to find the body of Mr. Hyde, who has just taken poison. A letter left by Dr. Jekyll reveals his secret—Mr. Hyde is his evil half. Jekyll has used the last dose of the potion he took for his transformations. Trapped in the form of Mr. Hyde, he has opted for suicide over capture by the police.

**Coraline** by Neil Gaiman (Lexile 740)

Coraline Jones and her parents move into a big old house divided into separate flats, or apartments. One day, Coraline unlocks a door and finds a passage leading to a flat just like her own. In this alternate reality, she meets another mother and father who offer delicious food and urge her to stay forever—if only she will allow them to sew buttons where her eyes are. Coraline politely declines but soon learns that the other mother is a beldam (or witch) who has taken her real parents and locked the door to their real flat. Coraline strikes a bargain: if she can find her parents and locate the souls of three ghost children, the beldam must let them all go. After confronting many grotesque and horrifying illusions, Coraline completes her mission, but the beldam won't honor the agreement. Coraline steals the key to her real flat and escapes. However, the beldam's right hand, severed when the door was shut, follows Coraline back to her world. Coraline rigs an ingenious trap, and the hand falls down a deep well just as it grasps for the precious key.

**Seedfolks** by Paul Fleischman (Lexile 710)

The novel is set in a Cleveland neighborhood that has seen many changes. One young girl inadvertently sets more changes in motion when she decides to plant some lima bean seeds in the corner of a vacant lot. She wants to feel closer to her father, who has passed away. Soon, others in the neighborhood take notice; as the year progresses, a garden grows in the vacant lot, each patch wildly different. As the vegetables and flowers grow, so does the garden community. The gardeners and neighbors start to realize that even people who were initially strangers can help, support, and care for each other.

**Soldier's Heart** by Gary Paulson (Lexile 1000)

In 1861, lured by thoughts of adventure, 15-year-old Charley Goddard lies about his age so he can join the Army and fight in the Civil War. He doesn't understand what the war is about, but he believes it will make him a man. The horrors of his first battle, at Bull Run, force Charley to face his own mortality. Charley learns to become an effective soldier, but he also learns that there is no glory in killing, watching others be killed, or trying not to get killed. Badly wounded at Gettysburg, Charley returns home as a young man who is broken both physically and mentally.

**North by Night** by Katherine Ayres (Lexile 750)

In 1851, 16-year-old Lucinda Spencer of Atwater, Ohio, is a typical teenage girl of her era, with a choice of suitors: Jonathan Clark, a Presbyterian like herself, and Jeremiah Strong, a Quaker. Lucinda also has a secret. For years, her family has been active in the Underground Railroad, helping fugitive slaves reach freedom in Canada. Lucinda becomes involved in helping a group of ten fugitives. It's a particularly dangerous mission; the slave owner is in the Atwater area, actively pursuing the group. When the group leaves for Canada, Cass is pregnant and ill, and she stays behind. Lucinda helps to care for her. After her baby, Hope, is born, Cass unexpectedly dies. Lucinda is distraught but determined to deliver Hope to her aunt in Canada. On the journey, Lucinda is almost caught. She claims the baby is her own

and escapes. Lucinda flees with Hope to Canada, knowing that she may never return to Ohio again.

**Reaching Out** by Francisco Jiménez (Lexile 910)

The memoir begins in 1962. Frank (Francisco) and his family are on the road, taking Frank to begin his studies at Santa Clara University. Frank worries about doing well in his classes and fitting in with the largely Anglo college culture. In time, however—through the encouragement of a few friends, counsel from some of his professors, and determination—he excels. An ongoing concern for him is being separated from his relatives and his guilt about not being able to provide them with more financial support. He almost drops out of school but remains when he realizes that he can help them more in the future once he is a teacher, the profession for which he is training. In college, Frank comes to recognize the kindness of strangers and various ways he can help others. In his senior year, he attends a march with the National Farm Workers Association, and his ideas about social justice develop. Ultimately, Frank graduates and prepares to begin graduate studies at Columbia University.

**Criss Cross** by Lynne Rae Perkins (Lexile 820)

One summer day, 14-year-old Debbie Pelbry loses a necklace with her name on it. As the necklace passes through different hands, its meandering path mirrors the paths of Debbie and her peers as their lives crisscross. The teenagers search for love, discover new talents, and slowly make progress along the path to adulthood. Debbie wonders whether a few romantic days with a boy visiting from California “counts” as love. Hector, who has learned to play the guitar but failed in his pursuit of a girl he likes, eventually finds Debbie’s necklace and returns it to her. The necklace nearly brings Hector and Debbie together, but the moment just isn’t right— another crisscross.