

50(ish) Brilliant Books to Read during Years 8 and 9



- All the books on this list may be borrowed from the school library
- This list contains just 1 title per author. Most of the authors have written other equally good books. If you enjoy reading a particular book, then do try other books by the same author.
- Titles in italics are the first in a series.

Ahmed, Sufiya	Secrets of the henna girl	Zeba is a British girl of Pakistani heritage. She is about to begin A Levels when her family take her to Pakistan and force her to marry a man she has never met.
Alexie, Sherman	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian	A disabled Native American teenager struggles to succeed against the odds. This portrayal of life on an American Indian reservation is brutally honest. It has won literary awards but has also been banned in some schools in the United States.
Almond, David	A Song for Ella Grey	A retelling of the classical myth Orpheus and Eurydice. A contemporary teenage love story set in Tyneside.
Anderson, Laurie Halse	Wintergirls	A disturbing tale about the reality of life with an eating disorder.
Beckett, Bernard	Genesis	A girl is interviewed for entry to an elite academy, but all is not as it appears. Philosophical. Challenging.
Berry, Julie	All the Truth That's in Me	Judith is abducted from her village. Two years later she returns without her tongue. Unable to speak and illiterate, how can she tell her story?
Blackman, Malorie	<i>Noughts and Crosses</i>	A dystopia set in a racially divided society not unlike South Africa under apartheid, but with an important twist.
Boyne, John	The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas	An easy read, but you can only fully appreciate this story when you have studied the Holocaust.
Brooks, Kevin	The Bunker Diary	A gruesome thriller. Six people, including 16 year old Linus, the narrator, are kidnapped and imprisoned in an underground bunker.
Carroll, Lewis	Alice in Wonderland	Forget any adaptations of this fantasy you may have read or viewed when you were younger, the actual text is a challenging read.

Casale, Alexia	The Bone Dragon	Alexia's adoptive parents couldn't be more supportive. She's also doing well at school. But her life has not always been so good and needs to come to terms with her past before she can move on.
Cassidy, Anne	Looking for JJ	Jennifer Jones was just 10 years old when she murdered another child. Six years later she has been released from prison with a new identity. But there are those who want revenge.
Collins, Suzanne	<i>The Hunger Games</i>	A dystopian thriller. The ultimate reality TV show where the unsuccessful contestants die.
Conaghan, Brian	When Mr Dog Bites	Dylan Mint suffers from a form of Tourette's Syndrome. He has uncontrollable outbursts of abusive language. His only wish is to be "normal", especially now when he has overheard a conversation intimating he has only months left to live. Not suitable for those who are easily offended.
Crossan, Sarah	The Weight of Water	A novel written in blank verse about a Polish teenager who has moved to England.
Dickens, Charles	A Christmas Carol	Classic Christmas ghost story about Scrooge, the miser. You probably know the story, but have you actually read it? A good introduction to Dickens.
Donnelly, Jennifer	A Gathering Light	Set in USA at the beginning of the 20 th century, this complex novel is both a murder mystery and about a teenage girl forced to choose between marriage and a career.
Dowd, Siobhan	A Swift Pure Cry	15 year old Shell's life in Rural Ireland in the 1980s is difficult enough, without the added complication of finding herself pregnant.
Flood, C J	The Infinite Sky	A contemporary <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> . When a travelling family move onto land owned by her family, Iris and Patrick fall in love. But the relationship is doomed.
Frank, Anne	The Diary of a Young Girl	The diary of the Jewish girl who hid from the Nazis in an attic is a must read book for every teenager.
Furniss, Claire	The Year of the Rat	The "rat" is 16 year old Pearl's new baby sister Her mother died giving birth to "rat" and Pearl is so wrapped up in her own grief, she has no time for anyone else
Gaarder, Jostein	Sophie's World	A mystery story which is also an excellent introduction to philosophical analysis for teenagers.
Gaiman, Neil	The Graveyard Book	Fantasy story about an orphan raised by ghosts in a graveyard. Funny, surreal.
Gardner, Sally	Tinder	A retelling of the fairy tale The Tinderbox by Hans Anderson. Dark, scary, bloody.
Green, John	The Fault in our stars	A bittersweet love story where both teenage protagonists have terminal cancer.

Hearn, Julie	The Merrybegot	Puritanism meets Paganism head on in this historical novel set during the Civil War.
Lake, Nick	Hostage Three	A thriller which gives an insight into the history and politics of Somalia. Somali pirates capture a British teenager and her family who are sailing round the world.
Landman, Tanya	Buffalo Soldier	Charlotte is a slave who has been given her freedom at the end of the American Civil War. But with no home or family, how can she survive?
Lockhart, E	We Were Liars	A psychological thriller with a shocking ending. Cadence spends every summer with her extended family on their private island. But this year all is not as it appears.
Morpurgo, Michael	Private Peaceful	During World War One, two brothers are fighting on the Western Front. Only one of them will return to their Devon home.
Muchamore, Robert	<i>The Recruit</i>	First in an action packed series. James is recruited into <i>Cherub</i> , a secret organisation for teenage spies.
Ness, Patrick	<i>The Knife of Never Letting Go</i>	Dystopia or allegory of the colonisation of America? Gratuitous scenes of violence and torture? Misogynistic? You decide.
Oppel, Kenneth	Half Brother	Ben's father is studying chimpanzees. So Ben gets a chimpanzee sibling called Zan. But as Zan grows and becomes destructive, important decisions must be made.
Peet, Mal	Life: an Exploded Diagram	It may be the "Swinging Sixties" and nuclear annihilation may be imminent, but in rural Norfolk, working class boys, even clever ones with prospects like Clem, are not supposed to have a relationship with the daughter of a wealthy landowner.
Pratchett, Terry	The Amazing Maurice & his Educated Rodents	A humorous retelling of <i>The Pied Piper</i> . The action takes place in Pratchett's fantasy "Discworld" and this book may serve as an introduction to the series.
Rees, Celia	Witch Child	An historical novel set in the mid-1600s. When her grandmother is accused of witchcraft, Mary escapes on a Puritan ship bound for The New World.
Rosoff, Meg	How I Live now	When Daisy goes to live with her cousins in England, at first life is idyllic. But with the outbreak of war the young people are left to survive on their own.
Rowell, Rainbow	Eleanor and Park	The school year 1986-1987 was a magical one for two teenage misfits from Nebraska, USA. It was the year they met and fell in love.
Sedgwick, Marcus	My Swordhand is Singing	A scary gothic vampire story set in an unnamed Eastern European country. The vampires here are definitely not benign like those in <i>Twilight!</i>
Smith, Dodie	I Capture the Castle	The fictional journal of a 17 year old girl from an eccentric and penniless family who live in a dilapidated castle.

Skuse, R J	Dead Romantic	A modern and amusing version of Mary Shelley's classic gothic novel, <i>Frankenstein</i> . Two teenage girls set out to create the perfect boyfriend in a school science lab.
Sutcliffe, William	The Wall	A political thriller set in Israel / Palestine, though the countries are never named. Joshua discovers a tunnel in the wall that divides his country from its neighbour.
Suzuma, Tabitha	<i>A Note of Madness</i>	Flynn is a gifted young pianist studying at the Royal College of Music. He also suffers from Bipolar Disorder.
Talley, Robin	Lies we Tell Ourselves	1959, the height of the US Civil Rights Movement. Sarah is one of the very first black students at Jefferson High. But their reception is far from welcoming.
Taylor, Mildred	<i>Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry</i>	A modern classic. The story of a black family from Mississippi during the Great Depression of the 1930s.
Tolkien, J R	The Hobbit	Bilbo Baggins was a home-loving hobbit. He never wanted to go on a dangerous quest. But sometimes we have to do things we would rather not, and by doing so we become a better person. You should read this book first before going on to <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>
Townsend, Sue	<i>The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13¾</i>	This fictional diary remains as funny as it was when it was first published over 30 years ago. It is also an excellent social history of teenage life during the 1980s.
Valentine, Jenny	Finding Violet Park	When Lucas finds an urn containing the ashes of Violet Park in a minicab office in Kentish Town, he decides to find out as much as he can about this mystery woman.
Westerfeld, Scott	<i>Uglies</i>	Tally is an Ugly. She is counting the days until her 16 th birthday when a simple operation will rid her of all her physical imperfections and transforms her into a Pretty But is the operation more than it purports to be?
Williamson, Lisa	The Art of Being Normal	David is a 14 year old boy who is sure that he is female. He is determined to do whatever it takes to become a woman, though the hurdles are enormous.
Yoon, Nicola	Everything, Everything	A love story. Maddie is so deeply in love with Olly that she will do anything to be with him, even if that means she will certainly die.
Zephaniah, Benjamin	Refugee Boy	Alem's father is Ethiopian and his mother is Eritrean. The 2 countries are at war with one another and Alem is not safe in either. So his father takes him on a holiday to London and abandons him.
Zusak, Markus	The Book Thief	Life in Nazi Germany as experienced by a young girl living with foster parents in a poor part of Munich. Long, sad and narrated by death, this is a demanding read.