



# SUMMER READING LIST\*

## Libraries ROCK! ~ Grades 7-8

*Suggested music-themed summer reading titles  
compiled for the Connecticut Department of Education  
by Linda Williams, Connecticut State Library*

### FICTION

#### **Guitar Notes** by Mary Amato

Tripp, who plays guitar only for himself, and Lyla, a cellist whose talent has already made her famous but not happy, form an unlikely friendship when they are forced to share a practice room at their high school. | [Nutmeg 2015](#) | Lexile: 680

#### **For Freedom: The Story of a French Spy** by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Despite the horrors of World War II, a French teenager pursues her dream of becoming an opera singer, which takes her to places where she gains information about what the Nazis are doing--information that the French Resistance needs. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#), [Nutmeg 2007](#) | Lexile: 580

#### **Things Hoped For** by Andrew Clements

Seventeen-year-old Gwen, who has been living with her grandfather in Manhattan while she attends music school, joins up with another music student to solve the mystery of her grandfather's sudden disappearance. | Lexile: 770

#### **The Musician's Daughter** by Susanne Dunlap

In eighteenth-century Vienna, Austria, Theresa seeks a way to help her family financially while investigating the murder of her father, a violinist in Haydn's orchestra at the court of Prince Esterhazy, after his body is found near a gypsy camp. | Lexile: 950

#### **If I Ever Get Out of Here** by Eric Gansworth

Seventh-grader Lewis "Shoe" Blake from the Tuscarora Reservation has a new friend, George Haddonfield from the local Air Force base, but in 1975 upstate New York there is a lot of tension and hatred between Native Americans and Whites--and Lewis is not sure that he can rely on friendship. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#) | Lexile: 870

#### **Five Flavors of Dumb** by Antony John

Eighteen-year-old Piper becomes the manager for her classmates' popular rock band, called Dumb, giving her the chance to prove her capabilities to her parents and others, if only she can get the band members to get along. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#) | Lexile: 890

#### **Mindblind** by Jennifer Roy

Fourteen-year-old Nathaniel Clark, who has Asperger's Syndrome, tries to prove that he is a genius by writing songs for his rock band so that he can become a member of the prestigious Aldus Institute, the premier organization for the profoundly gifted. | [Nutmeg 2014](#) | Lexile: 580

#### **Echo** by Pam Munoz Ryan

Lost in the Black Forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and finds himself entwined in a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica--and decades later three children, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California find themselves caught up in the same thread of destiny in the darkest days of the twentieth century, struggling to keep their families intact, and tied together by the music of the same harmonica. | [ALA](#), [ILA](#), [NCTE](#) | Lexile: 680

#### **This Song Will Save Your Life** by Leila Sales

Nearly a year after a failed suicide attempt, sixteen-year-old Elise discovers that she has the passion, and the talent, to be a disc jockey. | [ALA](#), [Nutmeg 2016](#) | Lexile: 720

#### **Drums, Girls & Dangerous Pie** by Jordan Sonnenblick

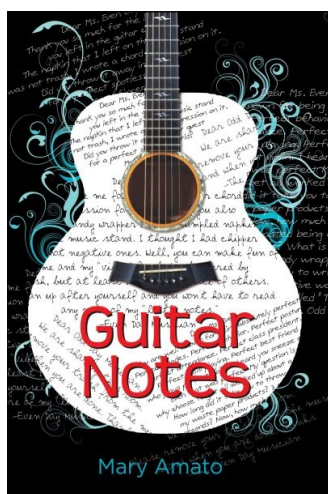
When his younger brother is diagnosed with leukemia, thirteen-year-old Steven tries to deal with his complicated emotions, his school life, and his desire to support his family. | [ALA](#), [Nutmeg 2010](#) | Lexile: 940

#### **After Tupac & D Foster** by Jacqueline Woodson

In the New York City borough of Queens in 1996, three girls bond over their shared love of Tupac Shakur's music, as together they try to make sense of the unpredictable world in which they live. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 750

#### **When the Black Girl Sings** by Bil Wright

Adopted by white parents and sent to an exclusive Connecticut girls' school where she is the only black student, Lahni Schuler feels like an outcast, until she attends a local church where she hears gospel music for the first time. | Lexile: 730



# SUMMER READING LIST\*

## **Playing for the Commandant** by Suzy Zall

A young Jewish pianist at Auschwitz, desperate to save her family, is chosen to play at the camp commandant's house. How could she know she would fall in love with the wrong boy? | [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 700

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### GRAPHIC NOVEL

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## **Rickety Stitch and the Gelatinous Goo**

**#1:** The Road to Epoli by Ben Costa (2017)

A walking, talking, singing skeleton minstrel who has mysteriously retained his soul within the confines of the dungeon where he has been imprisoned departs with his sidekick, a gelatinous monster, to investigate clues about his identity in snippets of a song he hears in his dreams. | Lexile: 360

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### NONFICTION

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## **The Mysteries of Beethoven's Hair** by

Russell Martin & Lydia Nibley (2009)

Introduces the life of the Austrian composer, along with the story of a lock of his hair cut by a barber after his death, which was kept by various owners and the analysis of which revealed the high level of lead present in the composer's body. | [NSTA](#) | Lexile: 1400

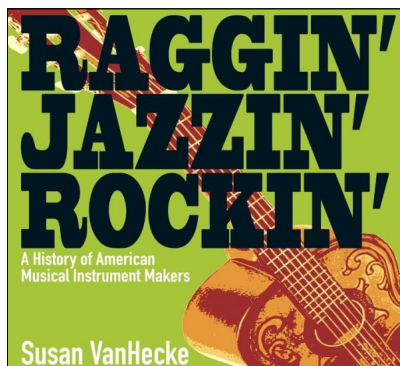
## **Rhythm Ride:** A Road Trip Through the

Motown Sound by Andrea Davis Pinkney

A narrative history of the Motown music label covering the historical context, personalities, and ongoing legacy of the "sound of young America." | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 1030

## **Raggin' Jazzin' Rockin':** A History of American Musical Instrument Makers by Susan VanHecke

Presents a history of the invention of musical instruments, including the inventors who created Zildjian cymbals, the Steinway piano, the Martin guitar, the Hammond organ, and the Moog synthesizer. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 1090



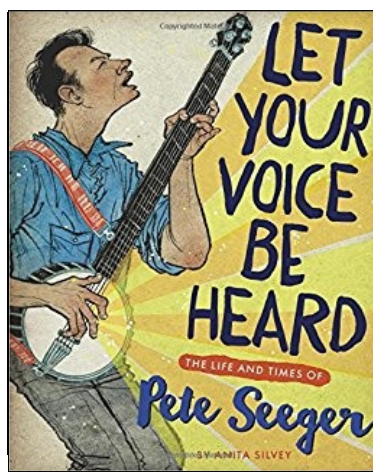
## **Legends, Icons & Rebels:** Music That Changed the world by Robbie Robertson, Jim Guerinot, Sebastian Robertson & Jared Levine

A tribute to more than two dozen legendary music artists who significantly influenced the landscape of music for generations to come, from Ray Charles and Bob Dylan to Chuck Berry and Johnny Cash. | [ILA](#)

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### BIOGRAPHY

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## **The Voice That Challenged a Nation:**

Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights by Russell Freedman

An account of the life of a talented and determined artist who left her mark on musical and social history is drawn from Anderson's own writings and

other contemporary accounts. | [ALA](#), [NCSS](#) | Lexile: 1180

## **Jazz A-B-Z:** An A to Z Collection of Jazz Portraits by Wynton Marsalis, illustrated by Paul Rogers

Profiles twenty-six of the jazz greats of all time, from Count Basie to Louis Armstrong, through a review of their work, their life stories, and their greatest hits by one of today's top jazz performers. | [ILA](#)

## **Music Was It:** Young Leonard Bernstein by Susan Goldman Rubin (2011)

Biography of composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein. | [ALA](#) | Lexile: 970

## **Let Your Voice Be Heard:** The Life and Times of Pete Seeger by Anita Silvey

Discusses the life and career of the folk singer, tracing his career and influence as a singer and surveying his political development.. | Lexile: 1050

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\*Many listed books were selected as exemplary by one or more of the following organizations: the American Library Association (ALA), the International Literacy Association (ILA), the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) or the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY).



# SUMMER READING

## Favorites & Classics

*For Grades 7-8*

### **Chains** by Laurie Halse Anderson

When their owner dies at the start of the Revolution, Isabel and her younger sister are sold to Loyalists in New York, where Isabel is offered the chance to spy for the Patriots. | Lexile: 780

### **City of Orphans** by Avi

In 1893 New York, thirteen-year-old Maks, a newsboy, teams up with Willa, a homeless girl, to clear his older sister, Emma, from charges that she stole from the brand new Waldorf Hotel, where she works. Includes historical notes. | Lexile: 570

### **Zombie Baseball Beatdown** by Paolo Bacigalupi

While practicing for their next baseball game, thirteen-year-old friends Rabi, Miguel, and Joe discover that the nefarious activities of the Delbe, Iowa, meatpacking plant have caused cows to turn into zombies. | Lexile: 650

### **Diamonds in the Shadow** by Caroline B. Cooney

The Finches, a Connecticut family, sponsor an African refugee family of four, all of whom have been scarred by the horrors of civil war, and who inadvertently put their benefactors in harm's way. | Lexile: 750

### **Elijah of Buxton** by Christopher Paul Curtis

In 1859, eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman, the first free-born child in Buxton, Canada, which is a haven for slaves fleeing the American south, uses his wits and skills to try to bring to justice the lying preacher who has stolen money that was to be used to buy a family's freedom. | Lexile: 1070

### **Eva** by Peter Dickinson

After a terrible accident, a young girl wakes up to discover that she has been given the body of a chimpanzee. | Lexile: 1010

### **Whirligig** by Paul Fleischman

While traveling to each corner of the country to build a whirligig in memory of the girl whose death he caused, sixteen-year-old Brian finds forgiveness and atonement. | Lexile: 760

### **The Graveyard Book** by Neil Gaiman

After the grisly murder of his entire family, a toddler wanders into a graveyard where the ghosts and other supernatural residents agree to raise him as one of their own. | Lexile: 820

### **House of Dies Drear** by Virginia Hamilton

A black family of five moves into an enormous house once used as a hiding place for runaway slaves. Mysterious sounds and events as well as the discovery of secret passageways make the family believe they are in grave danger. | Lexile: 670

### **Chomp** by Carl Hiaasen

When the difficult star of the reality television show "Expedition Survival" disappears while filming an episode in the Florida Everglades using animals from the wildlife refuge run by Wahoo Crane's family, Wahoo and classmate Tuna Gordon set out to find him while avoiding Tuna's gun-happy father. | Lexile: 800

### **Standing Against the Wind** by Traci L. Jones

As she tries to escape her poor Chicago neighborhood by winning a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, shy and studious eighth-grader Patrice discovers that she has more options in life than she previously realized. | Lexile: 780

### **The Silver Kiss** by Annette Curtis Klause

A mysterious teenage boy harboring a dark secret helps Zoë come to terms with her mother's terminal illness. | Lexile: 690

### **Ask My Mood Ring How I Feel** by Diana Lopez

When thirteen-year-old Erica "Chia" Montenegro finds out her mother has breast cancer, she makes a promise to God to raise money for breast cancer awareness and discovers that when family and friends work together, miracles can happen. | Lexile: 700

### **The Giver** by Lois Lowry

Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives. | Lexile: 760

### **Touching Spirit Bear** by Ben Mikaelson

After his anger erupts into violence, Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the native American Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life. | Lexile: 670







# SUMMER READING

## Favorites & Classics

*For Grades 7-8*

### **Island of the Blue Dolphins** by *Scott O'Dell*

Left alone on a beautiful but isolated island off the coast of California, a young Indian girl spends eighteen years, not only merely surviving through her enormous courage and self-reliance, but also finding a measure of happiness in her solitary life. | Lexile: 1000

### **Hatchet** by *Gary Paulsen*

After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the Canadian wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce. | Lexile: 1020

### **All of the Above** by *Shelley Pearsall*

Five urban middle school students, their teacher, and other community members relate how a school project to build the world's largest tetrahedron affects the lives of everyone involved. | Lexile: 1000

### **The River Between Us** by *Richard Peck*

During the early days of the Civil War, the Pruitt family takes in two mysterious young ladies who have fled New Orleans to come north to Illinois. | Lexile: 740

### **The Wee Free Men** by *Terry Pratchett*

Tiffany, a young witch-to-be in the land of Discworld, teams up with the Wee Free Men, a clan of six-inch-high blue men, to rescue her baby brother and ward off a sinister invasion from Fairyland. | Lexile: 680

### **Stargirl** by *Jerry Spinelli*

In this story about the perils of popularity, the courage of nonconformity, and the thrill of first love, an eccentric student named Stargirl changes Mica High School forever. | Lexile: 590

### **Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind**

by *Suzanne Fisher Staples*

When eleven-year old Shabanu, the daughter of a nomad in the Cholistan Desert of present-day Pakistan, is pledged in

marriage to an older man whose money will bring prestige to the family, she must either accept the decision, as is the custom, or risk the consequences of defying her father's wishes. | Lexile: 970

### **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**

by *Mildred D. Taylor*

A black family living in the South during the 1930s are faced with prejudice and discrimination which their children don't understand. | Lexile: 920

### **The Hobbit** by *J. R. R. Tolkien*

Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return. | Lexile: 1000

### **Izzy, Willy-Nilly** by *Cynthia Voigt*

A car accident causes fifteen-year-old Izzy to lose one leg and face the need to start building a new life as an amputee. | Lexile: 790

### **Howl's Moving Castle**

by *Diana Wynne Jones*

Eldest of three sisters in a land where it is considered to be a misfortune, Sophie is resigned to her fate as a hat shop apprentice until a witch turns her into an old woman and she finds herself in the castle of the greatly feared wizard Howl. | Lexile: 800

### **The Pigman** by *Paul Zindel*

A teenage boy and girl, high school sophomores from unhappy homes, tell of their bizarre relationship with an old man. | Lexile: 950

### **The Book Thief** by *Markus Zusak*

Death tells the story of a young German girl, Liesel, whose book-stealing and story-telling talents during World War II help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors. | Lexile: 730

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## FAVORITE SERIES

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**The Princess Diaries** series by *Meg Cabot*

**Artemis Fowl** series by *Eoin Colfer*

**Young Wizards** series by *Diane Duane*

**The Rangers Apprentice** by *John Flanagan*

**Lunar Chronicles** by *Marissa Meyer*

**The Squire's Tales** series by *Gerald Morris*

**The News Crew** series by *Walter Dean Myers*

**Song of the Lioness** quartet by *Tamora Pierce*

**His Dark Materials** series by *Phillip Pullman*

**Divergent** trilogy by *Veronica Roth*

**Secrets of the Immortal Nicholas Flamel** series by *Michael Scott*

**The Tillermans** series by *Cynthia Voigt*

**Leviathan** series by *Scott Westerfield*

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