

The Librarian's Favorite Books: What Made Me a "Reader"

Eric Noah

I am what you would call "a reader" -- I read, I love to read, and I can't live without reading. I loved it so much as a child that I grew up to first get a degree in English and then get a degree in library studies and become a school librarian.

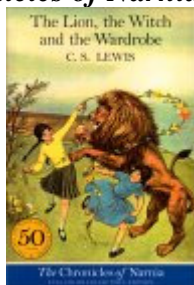
I was looking through our library catalog recently and was struck by how many of the books we have here were part of my life as I grew up, years and years ago. The books I read then influenced how I turned out. And some of the book selections made by me are certainly a result of what I personally enjoyed (and think some middle school students might enjoy as well). So I put together the lists below.

What are these lists good for? Well, they're certainly not a list of every book I ever read. Nor do they contain every *good* book I ever read. But every book below is a) one that influenced me in some way, b) of potential interest to middle school-aged readers, and c) already in our library. Take a look -- if you need an idea for a good book to read, maybe you'll find that you and I have some things in common!

Books from my youth and teen years that might appeal to Middle School-aged readers

- We have all of these books!
- Note that some of these might seem like they're for a "younger reader" -- but you never know when you're going to run across a good book, and a classic is a classic no matter your age.
- Also note how many deal with talking animals – especially mice or rats! :)

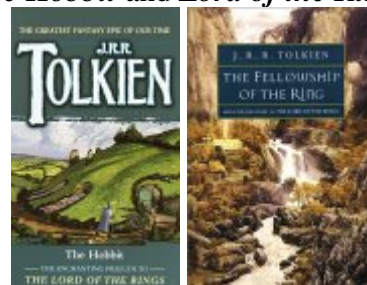
Chronicles of Narnia series



C.S. Lewis

Children visit a land of talking animals.

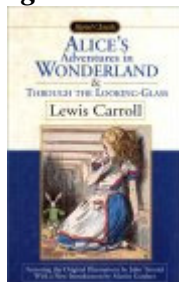
The Hobbit and *Lord of the Rings*



J.R.R. Tolkien

Tales of hobbits, elves, dwarves, and other people of Middle Earth.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass*



Lewis Carroll

Little girl falls through rabbit hole and mirror, finds her self in a funny, twisted world.

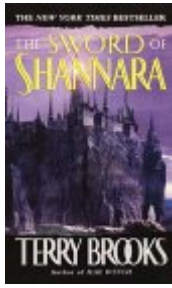
Sword of Shannara

Fairy Tales and Classical Greek & Roman Mythology



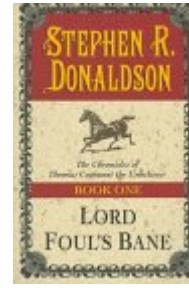
Age-old stories of heroes and wonders.

Chronicles of Thomas Covenant series



Terry Brooks

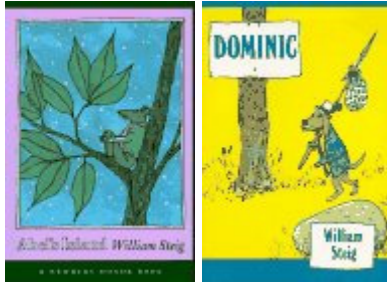
The quest for a legendary sword.



Stephen R. Donaldson

A diseased man is transported to a world that begins to heal him.

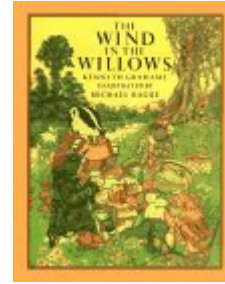
Abel's Island and Dominic



William Steig

Tales of talking animals and nature.

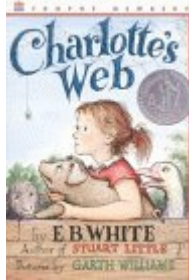
Wind in the Willows



Kenneth Grahame

A society of animal "gentlemen."

Charlotte's Web



E.B. White

Pig and spider are friends.

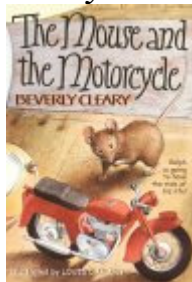
My Side of the Mountain



Jean Craighead George

Boy learns to survive in the wilderness.

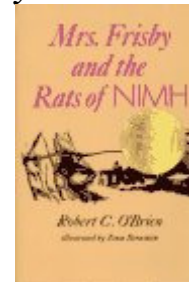
Mouse and the Motorcycle and Runaway Ralph



Beverly Cleary

Tales of a mouse with wanderlust.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

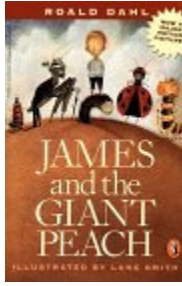


Robert C. O'Brien

Super-intelligent rats face disaster.

James and the Giant Peach and the Willy Wonka books

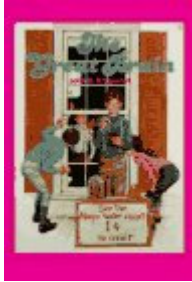
The Phantom Tollbooth



Roald Dahl

Boy voyages with insect friends inside giant fruit.

Great Brain series



John D. Fitzgerald

Smart older brother puts talents to a variety of uses.

The Jungle Book (the real thing, not the cartoon!)



Rudyard Kipling

Boy raised by wolves and a bear named Baloo.

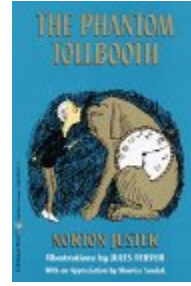
The Twenty-One Balloons



William Pene du Bois

Balloonist discovers secret island inhabited by super-wealthy people.

Escape to Witch Mountain and The Forgotten Door



Norton Juster

Milo visits strange world full of wordplay.

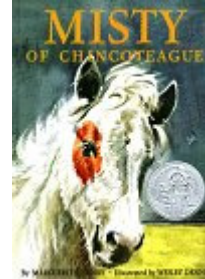
Encyclopedia Brown series



Donald Sobol

Kid detective solves mystery after mystery.

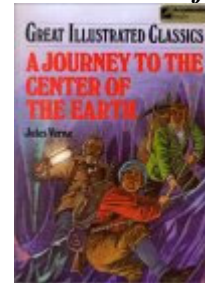
Misty of Chincoteague and others in that series



Marguerite Henry

Tales of spirited horses.

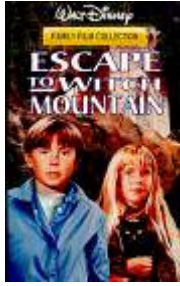
Journey to the Center of the Earth



Jules Verne

Adventure underground.

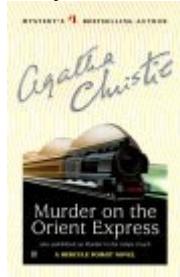
Tripods trilogy



Alexander Key

Children with strange powers and stranger origins.

Murder on the Orient Express, And Then There Were None, and The Murder of Roger Ackroyd among many, many other murder mysteries



Agatha Christie

Classic murder mysteries.

Star Trek novels (some favorites include *How Much for Just the Planet, Killing Time, and The Wounded Sky*)



Various Authors

They boldly go where none have gone before.

"Time Quartet" series (*A Wrinkle in Time*, etc.)



Madeleine L'Engle

Children take strange trips through time and space.

The Rescuers series



John Christopher

Aliens rule the earth in the future.

Harriet the Spy



Louise Fitzhugh

Girl likes to spy on classmates and neighbors.

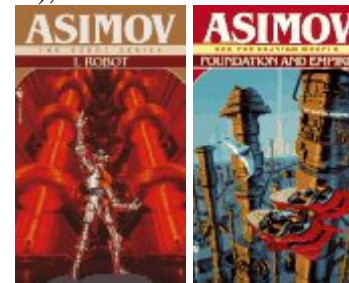
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy series



Douglas Adams

Hilarious sci-fi series.

Science fiction short story collections like *I Robot*, the Robot Mysteries books (starting with *Caves of Steel*), and the ***Foundation*** series



Isaac Asimov

Robots and humans play key role in fate of human civilization.

Other books (these are out of print so I couldn't find cover pictures, but we have them in the library!)



Margery Sharp

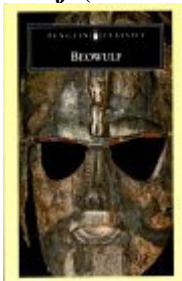
I know what you're thinking ... but before Disney got their hands on them, these were really fun adventure stories featuring, you guessed it, talking mice.

- **Danny Dunn** series
- **Outside** (Andre Norton)

Books I was forced to read in high school and ended up liking

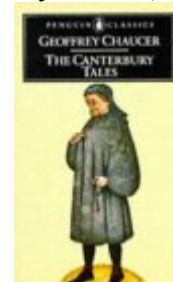
- Hey, they were classics when I was in high school. The biggest surprise to me was that "classic" usually meant really, really good.
- Many middle school students will find some of these books to be very challenging reading.
- Again, the LMTC has all of these books!

Beowulf (selections)



Warrior defeats the ancient monster, Grendel.

Canterbury Tales (selections)



Geoffrey Chaucer

Every person on a Medieval journey has a story to tell.

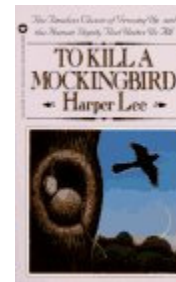
Hamlet, Macbeth, and Romeo & Juliet



William Shakespeare

Classic plays of heroism, love, and villainy.

To Kill a Mockingbird



Harper Lee

Brother and sister confront racism in the South.



Aldous Huxley

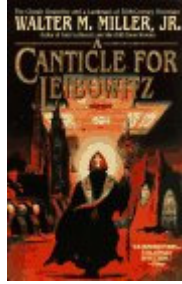
The future's really messed up.



George Orwell

Again, the future's really messed up.

A Cantic for Liebowitz



Walter Miller

The Catholic Church becomes the chief political power after a nuclear war nearly destroys civilization.

Flowers for Algernon



Daniel Keyes

Mentally challenged man undergoes experiment to increase his intelligence.

The Outsiders



S.E. Hinton

Are these losers a gang ... or a family?

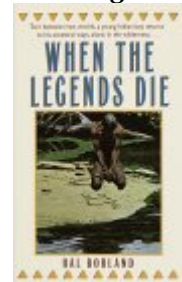
The Learning Tree



Gordon Parks

African-American boy comes of age during the Depression.

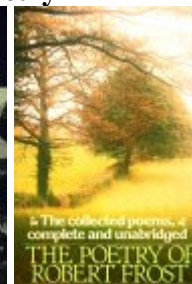
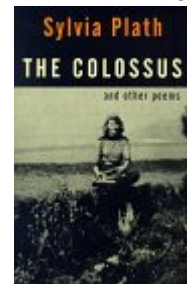
When the Legends Die



Hal Borland

Native American boy becomes rodeo rider to escape his past.

Poetry

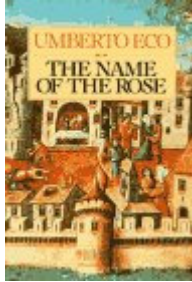


Sylvia Plath, Robert Frost, Emily Dickenson, etc.
Forget about red roses, blue violets -- these are words that help you search your soul.

Significant books from my adulthood that might appeal to middle school students

- I continue to read mysteries, mythology, science fiction and fantasy, even as a grown-up! :)
- Some middle school students will find these books to be challenging reading.
- Again, the LMTC has all of these books!

The Name of the Rose



Umberto Eco

A medieval mystery.

Neuromancer



William Gibson

This novel started the "cyberpunk" genre of sci-fi.

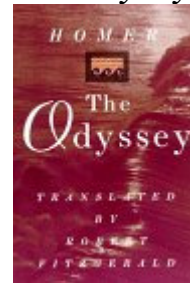
Dune series



Frank Herbert

A desert planet ... giant sand worms ... and a dangerous spice that helps some see the future.

The Odyssey



Homer

On the way home after the Trojan War, Odysseus has lots of adventures.

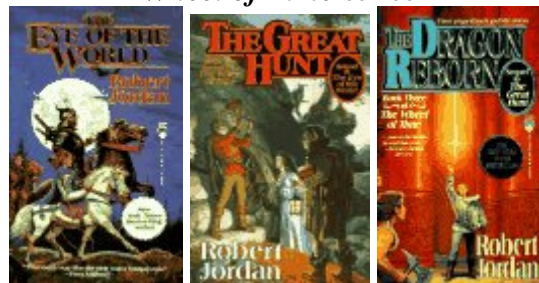
Song of Ice & Fire series



George R.R. Martin

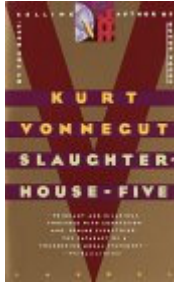
Nations clash in a world where winter lasts for years.

Wheel of Time series



Robert Jordan

A young man struggles against a prophecy that could make him powerful or destroy him.



Kurt Vonnegut

WWII bombing of Dresden, Germany sends a soldier on a strange psychological trip.

The Bell Jar



Sylvia Plath

Young woman thinks she might be going insane.

A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass



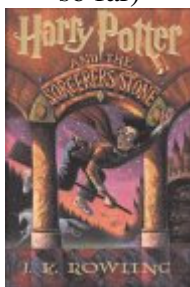
Frederick Douglass

Biography of a former slave.

Books from my adulthood that I wish had read when I was younger

- These books are more geared for young readers than the previous list. I wish I'd run into them when I was in middle school.
- It's never too late to go back in time and rediscover your love of reading.
- Again, the LMTC has all of these books.

Harry Potter series (Ok, I've only read the first book so far)



J.K. Rowling

Boy wizard attends wizard school.

Treasure Island

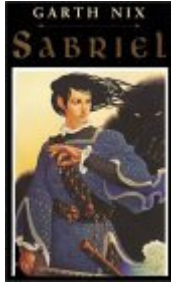


Robert Louis Stevenson

Boy travels with pirates, including Long John Silver.

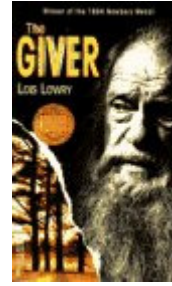
Sabriel

The Giver



Garth Nix

Girl travels into dangerous territory to save her father.



Lois Lowry

In a perfect society, a boy meets a strange old man who teaches him to see things as they truly are.

The Blue Sword and The Hero and the Crown



Robin McKinley

Stories of fantasy and adventure.