

L.G.'s Awesome Book List: Young Adult

I'm a writer, and I homeschool, thus I collect children's books. After sending a bunch of book recommendations to a friend, I realized I ought to turn the list into a blog post. I've read all these books unless I've noted otherwise. I preferred fantasy, adventure, and historical fiction as a kid, so those flavors are pretty prominent. I admit I may not be the best judge of reading level, so know your child's ability! The list is alphabetical by title, and series are listed under the first book in the series.

My philosophy of children's literature

I expect literature to widen a child's world, help them work through difficult topics in the safety of their imagination, and expand their vocabulary and language skills such as rhyme, alliteration, similes, and metaphors. But ultimately, I expect books to teach truth and beauty along with sin and its consequences. I don't believe depressing or nihilistic endings make sense from a Christian worldview, but saccharin-sweetness is equally problematic. I'm not afraid of scary books as long as the hero or heroine triumphs.

I have placed a blue heart next to books I think are more boy-oriented or pink next to girl-oriented. I could easily label them all purple since I grew up loving Jack London, Rudyard Kipling, and other books often recommended for boys. Still, I do think some books are more boyish or girly than others and deserve those labels. You know your kids best, so use or ignore the colors at your discretion.



I highly recommend searching out your local used bookstore for these titles, especially if you're looking for some of the vintage ones. I don't get any money for this list, so I'm not going to give you links or suggestions other than you should buy books as cheap as you can! I also believe in having extra copies of particularly good books so they can be loved into retirement and replaced.

Happy reading!

Young Adult

The Adoration of Jenna Fox by Mary E. Pearson (but not the rest of the series)

Excellent science fiction that asks questions about human value and how far you should go to save a life.

All Our Yesterdays

Time travel done right! I have never read the sequel and never will because, as far as I'm concerned, this book had a perfect ending.

Arena by Karen Hancock

I read this book in college and came out wondering how on earth I'd never heard of the author. I usually describe it as "*Pilgrim's Progress* in space with a dash of Lewis's space trilogy."

The Charlatan's Boy by Jonathan Rogers ♥

This book oozes atmosphere. It's a quirky story in the vein of Mark Twain starring an equally quirky main character.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

I sincerely wish I'd read this book as a teen. As a nerdy child, I would have identified with his sense of isolation and worries about living up to his potential. Also, there are laser battles in zero gravity!

The Endless Steppe by Esther Hautzig

A young girl grows up exiled with her family in Siberia. This is a true story, but it reads like a novel.

Erebos by Ursula Poznanski ♥

If your teen is a gamer, give them this book! A teen hears about a game being passed around his school. Once he gets his hands on a copy, he finds more than he bargained for. I was hooked until the last page.

Expiration Day by William Campbell Powell

Humans are producing fewer and fewer babies, but Tania is a real girl in a world of teknoids: robot replacements for the children other parents can never have. As Tania grows older, she realizes most of her friends are robots and has to grapple with what it means to be human. The writing style of this book hooked me from page one.

Fin's Revolution series: *Fiddler's Gun* and *Fiddler's Green* by A.S. Peterson

Excellent historical fiction from the Rabbit Room! The first book is set in Georgia at the beginning of the American Revolution. Fin Button is one of the most memorable heroines I've read in a long time, and the books are bursting with atmosphere and humor.

Finding Alice and *The Other Side of Darkness* by Melody Carlson ♥

It is rare to find a Christian author addressing mental illness. *Finding Alice* is about schizophrenia, and *The Other Side of Darkness* is about obsessive-compulsive disorder. I was pleasantly surprised at the accuracy of the symptoms as well as how Carlson slowly draws the reader toward a Christian perspective on mental illness, compassion, and healing. Since many young adults struggle with anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses, these books address issues that many teens will, unfortunately, find familiar.

The Forest of Hands and Teeth series by Carrie Ryan: *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, *The Dead-Tossed Waves*, and *The Dark and Hollow Places* ♥

I thought zombies were stupid until I read this series. These books are less about zombies and more about surviving in a broken world. The third isn't as good as the first two and

there are clean romances in each book. Parents and teens will have plenty of fodder for discussion about life and death, following rules, and what it means to sacrifice.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

I read this book in high school and saw a stage adaptation. I will never forget it. Lee captures racism, prejudice, and injustice in a way that will leave you unsettled and determined to change things long after you finish the book.

Life as We Knew It, The Dead and the Gone, and This World We Live In by Susan Beth Pfeffer

I don't endorse the fourth (and last) book in the series, but these three were absorbing. When I read the first one, I looked up at a chapter break and thought, "Oh, thank God that we have electricity!" It was 103 degrees outside, but in my head, I was in the depths of frigid winter with only the heat of a wood stove and a quilt to keep me alive.

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen ♥

Jane Austen's first novel is the famous author at her sarcastic best, skewering the gothic novel genre with hilarious narrative asides. This is my favorite Austen novel and a good introduction to her style. Follow it up with *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*.

An Old-Fashioned Girl by Louisa May Alcott ♥

This book is a precious gift from a mentor that I will always treasure. I loved all the characters and seriously considered naming a child Polly after the heroine.

The Partial Sequence- Partial, Fragments, and Ruins by Dan Wells

Read this series with your child and discuss the ending, which is darker than expected for YA. I think parents and teens would have a lot to talk about regarding hope, redemption, and our role on this planet God has gifted us.

The Red Rising Saga: Red Rising, Golden Son, and Morning Star by Pierce Brown

The third book in this series has the distinction of being one of five books in the world ever to make me cry. Darrow was born a Red, the lowest class in a massive interplanetary empire. When he discovers he has been lied to his whole life about his role and his future, he chooses revolution. I have not read the last two books, *Iron Gold* or *Dark Age*, but I will update this review once I do.

Till We Have Faces by C.S. Lewis

This is a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche that will spark lots of discussion about sisterhood, love, and jealousy. It's my favorite story by C.S. Lewis even more than the Narnia series.

The Time Machine by H.G. Wells

The Morlocks! The flesh-eating Morlocks! This book freaked me out in the best ways. If you have a teen who likes science, get them started on H.G. Wells.

The *Uglies* series by Scott Westerfeld: *Uglies, Pretties, Specials, and Extras* ♥

This is a compelling science fiction series about the quest for superficial beauty that is great for sparking discussion. *Extras* is written as part of the same universe as the first three but takes place in a different part of the world with different characters. Westerfeld released new books in the *Uglies* universe, and I'll probably be adding them to this list once I've had time to read them.

Victoria Grace the Jerkface by S.E. Clancy

This contemporary YA novel is equal parts hilarious sarcasm and heart-tugging sweetness with a gentle clean romance. And Victoria Grace is decidedly *not* a jerkface.

Wickers Bog: A Tale of Southern Gothic Horror by Mike Duran

Yes, Christian horror exists. And yes, it's excellent! Duran succeeded in making me shiver more than once in this novella, which is saying something when you write supernatural/horror yourself!

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L'Engle

This book is appropriate for middle grade, teens, and adults. Read it in all these phases of life, and you will gain something different each time. Meg Murray is my personal heroine, especially since I'm a brunette with glasses and a challenging temperament. I can't say I enjoyed L'Engle's other works. I never went past book two because the level of weirdness was too much.