

# Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers

(This list was compiled by a group of adults and teens from the San Francisco Bay Area for VOYA-Voice of Youth Advocates. They have chosen the following titles from the nearly two hundred books submitted by publishers.)



***Crossing the panther's path*** by Elizabeth Alder

Sixteen-year-old Billy Caldwell, son of a British soldier and a Mohawk woman, leaves school to join Tecumseh in his efforts to prevent the Americans from taking any more land from the Indians in the Northwest Territory.

***Before we were free*** by Julia Alvarez

In the early 1960s in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Anita learns that her family is involved in the underground movement to end the bloody rule of the dictator, General Trujillo.

***First French kiss and other traumas*** by Adam Bagdasarian.

Author recounts humorous, sad, traumatic, romantic, and confusing episodes from his childhood.

***The Angel factory*** by Terence Blacker

Spurred on by his best friend, twelve-year-old Thomas uncovers two major family secrets: that he was adopted, and that his perfect-seeming family is part of an other-worldly organization.

***Walking naked*** by Alyssa Brugman.

Megan leads the charmed life of a popular high school student until the day she gets a detention and meets a social outcast at their Australian school. Their fleeting friendship changes her life.

***The rag and bone shop*** by Robert Cormier.

Trent, an ace interrogator from Vermont, works to procure a confession from an introverted twelve-year-old accused of murdering his seven-year-old friend in Monument, Massachusetts.

***Comfort*** by Carolee Dean

Fourteen-year-old Kenny Roy Willson fantasizes about escape from his hometown of Comfort, Texas, following his alcoholic father's release from prison.

***Parvana's journey*** by Deborah Ellis

Sequel to *The Breadwinner*, this novel opens with the funeral of Parvana's father and goes on to tell the story of her trek across ravaged Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban.

***Flood*** by James Heneghan

After his mother and stepfather die in a Vancouver mudslide, eleven-year-old Andy Flynn having been saved by leprechauns, is taken by his stern aunt to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he meets the charming father he thought was dead, and where he must decide what place to call home.

***Hoot*** by Carl Hiaasen

Roy, who is new to his small Florida community, becomes involved in another boy's attempt to save a colony of burrowing owls from a proposed construction site.

***The misfits*** by James Howe

Four students who do not fit in at their small-town middle school decide to create a third party for the student council elections to represent all students who have ever been called names.

***Soldier boys*** by Dean Hughes

Two boys, one German and one American, are eager to join their respective armies during World War II, and their paths cross at the Battle of the Bulge.

***Straydog*** by Kathe Koja

Rachel, a teenager with a healthy dose of both aptitude and attitude, begins to feel at home volunteering at an animal shelter until the arrival of a feral dog with whom she senses a special kinship.

***Spellbound*** by Janet McDonald

Raven, a teenage mother and high school dropout living in a housing project, decides, with the help and sometime interference of her best friend Aisha, to study for a spelling bee which could

lead to a college preparatory program and four-year scholarship.

***Bloody Jack : being an account of the curious adventures of Mary "Jacky" Faber*** by L.A. Meyer  
Reduced to begging and thievery in the streets of London, a thirteen-year-old orphan disguises herself as a boy and connives her way onto a British warship set for high sea adventure in search of pirates.

***Lost at sea*** by Jonathan Neale

A brother and sister recount their harrowing experiences as they sail a small yacht across the Atlantic Ocean, after their mentally unstable mother's boyfriend is washed overboard.

***When my name was Keoko*** by Linda Sue Park

With national pride and occasional fear, a brother and sister face the increasingly oppressive occupation of Korea by Japan during World War II, which threatens to suppress Korean culture entirely.

***Trouble don't last*** by Shelley Pearsall

Samuel, an eleven-year-old Kentucky slave, and Harrison, the elderly slave who helped raise him, attempt to escape to Canada via the Underground Railroad.

***Paint by magic*** by Kathryn Reiss.

After his mom suddenly starts acting old-fashioned, eleven-year-old Conner is transported back to 1926, where he must discover and break the mysterious hold an obsessed artist has on his mom that is trapping her between times.

***Island boyz*** by Graham Salisbury

Short stories set in Hawaii: Island boyz -- The ravine -- Mrs. Noonan --Forty bucks -- The hurricane -- Aumakua -- Frankie Diamond is robbing us blind -- Waiting for the war-- The do store monkey -- Angel baby --Hat of clouds.

***Rockbuster*** by Gloria Skurzynski

In 1915, after being asked to sing at the funeral of executed songwriter and member of the international union, Industrial Workers of the World, Joe Hill, eighteen-year-old Utah coal miner Tommy Quinlan begins to accept his past and make decisions about his future.

***What my mother doesn't know*** by Sonya Sones

Sophie describes her relationships with a series of boys as she searches for Mr. Right.

***The game*** by Teresa Toten

Dani is placed in a psychiatric hospital in New York where she worries about how her younger sister will cope without her protection from their perfectionist father. The friendships she makes there help her to face the truth of what has happened to her own family.

***Finding H.F.*** by Julia Watts

H.F.'s grandmother has raised her with firmness and care, but now that she has become clear about her sexual identity, this high-schooler wonders about other aspects of her existence, including her missing mother.