

Suggested Decade Novels for Literature Circles

The 1930s

Ayres, Katherine. *Macaroni Boy*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2003.

In Pittsburgh in 1933, sixth-grader Mike Costa notices a connection between several strange occurrences, but the only way he can find out the truth about what's happening is to be nice to the class bully.

Chapman, Fern Schumer. *Is It Night or Day?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

In 1938, Edith Westerfeld, a young German Jew, is sent by her parents to Chicago, Illinois where she lives with an aunt and uncle and tries to assimilate into American culture, while worrying about her parents and mourning the loss of everything she has ever known.

Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

A twelve-year-old boy named Moose moves to Alcatraz Island in 1935 when guards' families were housed there, and has to contend with his extraordinary new environment in addition to life with his autistic sister.

Cummings, Priscilla. *Saving Grace*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2003.

When Grace's family is evicted from their Washington, D.C., apartment just before Christmas 1932, and she and her younger brothers are sent to the Mission, Grace wonders what will become of her sick older brother, her pregnant mother, and her out-of-work father.

Curtis, Christopher. *The Mighty Miss Malone*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2012.

With love and determination befitting the "world's greatest family," twelve-year-old Deza Malone, her older brother Jimmie, and their parents endure tough times in Gary, Indiana, and later Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression.

Henderson, Aileen Kilgore. *Hard Time for Jake Smith: A Story of the Depression Era*. Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2004.

In 1935 Alabama, when twelve-year-old MaryJake is abandoned by her financially-strapped parents and told to walk to the house of unknown relatives, she dresses like a boy and joins the household of an old widow before discovering secrets about her own family.

Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997.

In a series of poems, fifteen-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Depression.

Holm, Jennifer. *Turtle in Paradise*. New York: Random House, 2010.

In 1935, when her mother gets a job housekeeping for a woman who does not like children, eleven-year-old Turtle is sent to stay with relatives she has never met in far away Key West, Florida.

Ingold, Jeanette. *Hitch*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2005.

To help his family during the Depression and avoid becoming a drunk like his father, Moss Trawnley joins the Civilian Conservation Corps, helps build a new camp near Monroe, Montana, and leads the other men in making the camp a success.

Laskas, Gretchen Moran. *The Miner's Daughter*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books, 2007.

Sixteen-year-old Willa, living in a Depression-era West Virginia mining town, works hard to help her family, experiences love and friendship, and finds an outlet for her writing when her family becomes part of the Arthurdale, West Virginia, community supported by Eleanor Roosevelt.

Lasky, Katherine. *Ashes*. New York: Viking, 2010.

In 1932 Berlin, thirteen-year-old Gaby Schramm witnesses the beginning of Hitler's rise to power, as soldiers become ubiquitous, her beloved literature teacher starts wearing a jeweled swastika pin, and the family's dear friend, Albert Einstein, leaves the country while Gaby's parents secretly bury his books and papers in their small yard.

Peck, Richard. *A Long Way from Chicago*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1998.

A boy recounts his annual summer trips to rural Illinois with his sister during the Great Depression to visit their larger-than-life grandmother.

Vanderpool, Clare. *Moon over Manifest*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2010.

Twelve-year-old Abilene Tucker is the daughter of a drifter who, in the summer of 1936, sends her to stay with an old friend in Manifest, Kansas, where he grew up, and where she hopes to find out some things about his past.

The 1940s

Auch, Mary Jane. *One-Handed Catch*. New York: H. Holt and Co., 2006.

After losing his hand in an accident in his father's butcher shop in 1946, sixth-grader Norman uses hard work and humor to learn to live with his disability and to succeed at baseball, art, and other activities.

Bartoletti, Susan. *The Boy Who Dared*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008.

In October, 1942, seventeen-year-old Helmuth Hübener, imprisoned for distributing anti-Nazi leaflets, recalls his past life and how he came to dedicate himself to bring the truth about Hitler and the war to the German people.

Boyne, John. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: A Fable*. New York: David Fickling Books, 2006.

Bored and lonely after his family moves from Berlin to a place called "Out-With" in 1942, Bruno, the son of a Nazi officer, befriends a boy in striped pajamas who lives behind a wire fence.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Code Talker*. New York: Dial Books, 2005.

After being taught in a boarding school run by whites that Navajo is a useless language, Ned Begay and other Navajo men are recruited by the Marines to become Code Talkers, sending messages during World War II in their native tongue.

Davis, Tanita. *Mare's War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

Teens Octavia and Tali learn about strength, independence, and courage when they are forced to take a car trip with their grandmother, who tells about growing up Black in 1940s Alabama and serving in Europe during World War II as a member of the Women's Army Corps.

Ferrari, Michael. *Born to Fly*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2009.

In 1942, an eleven-year-old girl who longs to be a pilot and her family try to manage their lives in Rhode Island when the father goes to fight in World War II.

Klages, Ellen. *The Green Glass Sea*. New York: Viking, 2006.

It is 1943, and 11-year-old Dewey Kerrigan is traveling west on a train to live with her scientist father--but no one will tell her exactly where he is. When she reaches Los Alamos, New Mexico, she learns why: he's working on a top secret government program.

Meyer, Susan Lynn. *Black Radishes*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2010.

A Jewish family tries to escape the Nazis as told from the perspective of a clear-sighted and sensitive young boy.

Salisbury, Graham. *Under a Blood-Red Sky*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1994.

Tomikazu Nakaji's biggest concerns are baseball, homework, and a local bully, until life with his Japanese family in Hawaii changes drastically after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

Smith, Sherri. *Flygirl*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008.

During World War II, a light-skinned African American girl "passes" for white in order to join the Women Airforce Service Pilots.

Wolf, Joan. *Someone Named Eva*. New York: Clarion Books, 2007.

From her home in Lidice, Czechoslovakia, in 1942, eleven-year-old Milada is taken with other blond, blue-eyed children to a school in Poland to be trained as "proper Germans" for adoption by German families, but all the while she remembers her true name and history.

Wulffson, Don. *Soldier X*. New York: Viking, 2001.

In 1943 sixteen-year-old Erik experiences the horrors of war when he is drafted into the German army and sent to fight on the Russian front.

The 1950s

Crowe, Chris. *Mississippi Trial, 1955*. New York: P. Fogelman Books, 2002.

In Mississippi in 1955, a sixteen-year-old finds himself at odds with his grandfather over issues surrounding the kidnapping and murder of a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago.

Draper, Susan. *Fire from the Rock*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2007.

In 1957, Sylvia Patterson's life--that of a normal African American teenager--is disrupted by the impending integration of Little Rock's Central High when she is selected to be one of the first black students to attend the previously all white school.

Gorman, Carol. *Stumptown Kid*. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2005.

In a small Iowa town in 1952, eleven-year-old Charlie Nebraska, whose father died in the Korean War, learns the meanings of both racism and heroism when he befriends a black man who had played baseball in the Negro Leagues.

Hahn, Mary Downing. *Mister Death's Blue-Eyed Girls*. Boston: Clarion Books, 2012.

Narrated from several different perspectives, tells the story of the 1956 murder of two teenaged girls in suburban Baltimore, Maryland.

Holm, Jennifer. *Pennies from Heaven*. New York: Yearling, 2007.

As she turns twelve during the summer of 1953, Penny gains new insights into herself and her family while also learning a secret about her father's death.

Houston, Julian. *New Boy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

As a new sophomore at an exclusive boarding school, a young black man is witness to the persecution of another student with bad acne.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2004.

Chronicles the close friendship between two Japanese-American sisters growing up in rural Georgia during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the despair when one sister becomes terminally ill.

Kidd, Ronald. *Year of the Bomb*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009.

In 1955 California, as "Invasion of the body snatchers" is filmed in their hometown, thirteen-year-old Arnie discovers a real enemy when he and three friends go against a young government agent determined to find communists at a nearby university or on the movie set.

McKissack, Pat. *A Friendship for Today*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2007.

In 1954, when desegregation comes to Kirkland, Missouri, ten-year-old Rosemary faces many changes and challenges at school and at home as her parents separate.

Peck, Richard. *A Season of Gifts*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2009.

Relates the surprising gifts bestowed on twelve-year-old Bob Barnhart and his family, who have recently moved to a small Illinois town in 1958, by their larger-than-life neighbor, Mrs. Dowdel.

Shreve, Susan. *The Lovely Shoes*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2011.

In 1950s Ohio, ninth-grader Franny feels isolated and self-conscious at high school because of her deformed leg and feet, but her irrepressibly high-spirited mother is determined to find shoes for Franny to wear at the school dances.

Weeks, Sarah. *Pie*. New York : Scholastic Press, 2011.

When the Pie Queen of Ipswich passes away, she takes with her the secret to her world-famous piecrust recipe. Or does she? In her will, she leaves the recipe to her extraordinarily fat, remarkably disagreeable cat, Lardo.

White, Ruth. *Tadpole*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2003.

In rural Kentucky in 1955, Serilda Collins, single mother of four lively girls, discovers that her orphaned nephew is being subjected to brutality.

The 1960s

Curtis, Christopher. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Bell Books for Young Readers, 1995.

The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.

Flores-Galbis, Enrique. *90 Miles to Havana*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2010.

When unrest hits the streets of Havana, Cuba, Julian's parents must make the heartbreaking decision to send him and his two brothers away to Miami via the Pedro Pan operation. But when the boys get to Miami, they are thrust into a world where bullies seem to run rampant and it's not always clear how best to protect themselves.

Gantos, Jack. *Dead End in Norvelt*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011.

In the historic town of Norvelt, Pennsylvania, twelve-year-old Jack Gantos spends the summer of 1962 grounded for various offenses until he is assigned to help an elderly neighbor with a most unusual chore involving the newly dead, molten wax, twisted promises, Girl Scout cookies, underage driving, lessons from history, typewriting, and countless bloody noses.

Gonzalez, Christina Diaz. *The Red Umbrella*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

In 1961 after Castro has come to power in Cuba, fourteen-year-old Lucia and her seven-year-old brother are sent to the United States when her parents, who are not in favor of the new regime, fear that the children will be taken away from them as others have been.

Hobbs, Valerie. *Sonny's War*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

In the late 1960s, fourteen-year-old Cori's life is greatly changed by the sudden death of her father and her brother's tour of duty in Vietnam.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007.

A young soldier in Vietnam bonds with his bomb-sniffing dog.

Magoon, Kekla. *The Rock and the River*. New York: Aladdin, 2009.

In 1968 Chicago, fourteen-year-old Sam Childs is caught in a conflict between his father's nonviolent approach to seeking civil rights for African-Americans and his older brother, who has joined the Black Panther Party.

Martin, Ann. *Corner of the Universe*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2002.

The summer that Hattie turns twelve, she meets the childlike uncle she never knew and becomes friends with a girl who works at the carnival that comes to Hattie's small town.

Martin, Ann. *Here Today*. New York: Scholastic, 2004.

In 1963, when her flamboyant mother abandons the family to pursue her dream of becoming an actress, eleven-year-old Ellie Dingman takes charge of her younger siblings, while also trying to deal with her outcast status in school and frightening acts of prejudice toward the "misfits" that live on her street.

McMullan, Margaret. *Sources of Light*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Fourteen-year-old Samantha and her mother move to Jackson, Mississippi, in 1962 after her father is killed in Vietnam, and during the year they spend there Sam encounters both love and hate as she learns about photography from a new friend of her mother's and witnesses the prejudice and violence of the segregationists of the South.

Nolan, Hans. *Summer of Kings*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.

Over the course of the summer of 1963, fourteen-year-old Esther Young discovers the passion within her when eighteen-year-old King-Roy Johnson, accused of murdering a white man in Alabama, comes to live with her family.

Perkins, Lynn. *Criss Cross*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2005.

Teenagers in a small town in the 1960s experience new thoughts and feelings, question their identities, connect, and disconnect as they search for the meaning of life and love.

Sherlock, Patti. *Letters from Wolfie*. New York: Viking, 2004.

Certain that he is doing the right thing by donating his dog, Wolfie, to the Army's scout program in Vietnam, thirteen-year-old Mark begins to have second thoughts when the Army refuses to say when and if Wolfie will ever return.

Veciana-Suarez, Ana. *Flight to Freedom*. New York: Orchard Books 2002.

Writing in the diary which her father gave her, thirteen-year-old Yara describes life with her family in Havana, Cuba, in 1967 as well as her experiences in Miami, Florida, after immigrating there to be reunited with some relatives while leaving others behind.

Wiles, Deborah. *Countdown*. New York: Scholastic, 2010.

With the world hurtling toward nuclear war following the Cuban Missile Crisis, twelve-year-old D.C. native Franny Chapman must navigate the complex world of adolescence in 1960s America.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010.

In the summer of 1968, after travelling from Brooklyn to Oakland, California, to spend a month with the mother they barely know, eleven-year-old Delphine and her two younger sisters arrive to a cold welcome as they discover that their mother, a dedicated poet and printer, is resentful of the intrusion of their visit and wants them to attend a nearby Black Panther summer camp.

The 1970s

Block, Francesca. *Pink Smog: Becoming Weezie Bat*. New York: HarperTeen, 2012.

When Weezie Bat is a thirteen-year-old junior high school outcast mourning the life her family lost when their cottage in the Los Angeles hills burned down, her father leaves her alcoholic mother without telling either of them where he is going and Weezie learns how to stand up for herself and to find beauty in even the most difficult situations.

Carlton, Susan. R. F. K. *Love and Haight*. New York: Holt, 2012.

Seventeen-year-old Chloe brings her friend MJ to San Francisco, one of the few places where an abortion can be obtained legally in 1971, to get rid of Chloe's "Thing" while staying with her bohemian Aunt Kiki, experiencing hippie culture, and reconnecting with a former boyfriend.

Going, K. L. *The Liberation of Gabriel King*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005.

In Georgia during the summer of 1976, Gabriel, a white boy who is being bullied, and Frita, an African American girl who is facing prejudice, decide to overcome their many fears together as they enter fifth grade.

Johnson, Harriet McBryde. *Accidents of Nature*. New York: Holt, 2006.

Having always prided herself on blending in with "normal" people despite her cerebral palsy, seventeen-year-old Jean begins to question her role in the world while attending a summer camp for children with disabilities.

Lynch, Chris. *Gold Dust*. New York: HarperCollins, c2000.

In 1975, twelve-year-old Richard befriends Napoleon, a Caribbean newcomer to his Catholic school, hoping that Napoleon will learn to love baseball and the Red Sox, and will win acceptance in the racially polarized Boston school.

Murphy, Pat. *Wild Girls*. New York: Viking, c2007.

When thirteen-year-old Joan moves to California in 1972, she becomes friends with Sarah, who is timid at school but an imaginative leader when they play in the woods. After winning a writing contest together, they are recruited for an exclusive summer writing class that gives them new insights into themselves and others.

Salisbury, Graham. *Night of the Howling Dogs*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, c2007.

In 1975, eleven Boy Scouts, their leaders, and some new friends camping at Halape, Hawaii, find their survival skills put to the test when a massive earthquake strikes, followed by a tsunami.

Selznick, Brian. *Wonderstruck*. New York: Scholastic, 2011.

Having lost his mother and his hearing in a short time, twelve-year-old Ben leaves his Minnesota home in 1977 to seek the father he never knew in New York City, and meets there Rose, who is also longing for something missing from her life. Ben's story is told in words; Rose's in pictures.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Feathers*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2007.

When a new, white student nicknamed "The Jesus Boy" joins her sixth grade class in the winter of 1971, Frannie's growing friendship with him makes her start to see some things in a new light.

The 1980s

Castellucci, Cecil. *Rose Sees Red*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2010.

In the 1980s, two teenaged ballet dancers--one American, one Russian--spend an unforgettable night in New York City, forming a lasting friendship despite their cultural and political differences.

Chow, Cara. *Bitter Melon*. New York: Egmont USA, 2011.

With the encouragement of one of her teachers, a Chinese American high school senior asserts herself against her demanding, old-school mother and carves out an identity for herself in late 1980s San Francisco.

Day, Karen. *No Cream Puffs*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2008.

In 1980, when twelve-year-old Madison, who loves to play baseball, decides to play in her town's baseball league, she never envisions the uproar it causes when she becomes the first girl to join.

Hawkins, Aaron. *The Year Money Grew on Trees*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2010.

In early 1980s New Mexico, thirteen-year-old Jackson Jones recruits his cousins and sisters to help tend an elderly neighbor's neglected apple orchard for the chance to make big money and, perhaps, to own the orchard.

Moss, Jenny. *Taking Off*. New York: Walker, 2011.

In 1985 in Clear Lake, Texas, home of the Johnson Space Center, high school senior Annie Porter struggles with her desire to become a poet, but her resolve to pursue her dream is strengthened when she meets Christa McAuliffe, the first teacher to go into space.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *Dogtag Summer*. New York: Bloomsbury Books for Young Readers, 2011.

In the summer of 1980 before she starts junior high school in Santa Rosa, California, Tracy, who was adopted from Vietnam when she was six years old, finds an old ammo box with a dog tag and picture that bring up painful memories for both her Vietnam-veteran father and her.

The 1990s

Mead, Alice. *Soldier Mom*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Eleven-year-old Jasmyrn gets a different perspective on life when her mother is sent to Saudi Arabia at the beginning of the Persian Gulf War, leaving her and her baby half brother behind in Maine in the care of her mother's boyfriend.

Nichols, Janet. *Peace is a Four Letter Word*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2010.

When high school student Emily Rankin meets a radical English teacher, the popular cheerleader begins to question her own basic values, the war in Iraq, and the direction her future will take.

Sanders, Scott Loring. *Gray Baby: A Novel*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009.

Clifton has grown up in rural Virginia with the memory of his African American father being beaten to death by policemen, causing his white mother to slip into alcoholism and depression, but after befriending an old man who listens to his problems, Clifton finally feels less alone in the world.

Trueman, Terry. *Hurricane*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

A fictional account of one of the worst storms to hit the Caribbean--Hurricane Mitch in 1998--told from the perspective of a thirteen-year-old boy living in a small village in Honduras.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *After Tupac and D Foster*. New York : G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008.

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.