



SOME OF MR. TOPP'S VERY FAVORITE BOOKS FOR FIFTH GRADE

1. Anderson, M.T. **Jasper Dash and the Flame Pits of Delaware.** Grades 5-8.
Written for lovers of fantasy, mystery, action, and... Delaware, Jasper Dash is reminiscent of old Hardy Boys mysteries. M.T. Anderson tells the story of Jasper, Lillie, and Katie as they are drawn into the fantastical land of Delaware to help save the monks of a threatened monastery. But to do it they must elude gangsters, tyrannical government, and mountain squids. M.T. Anderson writes with genius humor, interwoven with great beauty and thoughtfulness. A must read for all humans aged nine to infinity.
2. Applegate, Katherine. **The One and Only Ivan.** Grades 4-6
Ivan, a gorilla living in a Big Top just off the interstate, loves his friends Stella, an aging elephant and Bob, a stray dog, and spends most of his time thinking about art. When Ruby, a baby elephant torn from her family arrives, Ivan decides he must use his art to help Ruby. An exquisitely told story of friendship, determination and hope.
3. Auxier, Jonathan. **The Night Gardener.** Grades 4-8.
Starved after weeks on the road, Irish orphans Molly and her brother Kip, arrive at their new place of employment finding the atmosphere so sinister that they nearly turn back. But necessity trumps fear and they cross the bridge into the sourwoods to the Windsor estate. There they find the Windsor house joined to a massive and ancient tree like a Siamese twin and the Windsor family as pale as ivory and as cold as stone. This intricately told story leads from one mystery to another – a crone of a storyteller who makes Molly promise to deliver her a story, a forbidden locked room, muddy footprints in the house each night, luminescent flowers that glow silver in the moonlight, and a mysterious silhouetted man who harvests nightmares, solving one mystery only to present another. Perfectly paced, offering up only enough to draw you to the next page, THE NIGHT GARDENER is a testament to the power of story and young Molly, as engaging a young heroine as you will find, is the very definition of the best in the human spirit.
4. Avi. **Sophia's War.** Grades 4-8.
SOPHIA'S WAR, is a marvel of pacing and suspense while steeping the reader in the rich history of the American Revolution. Children's literature and literature in general has been overwhelmingly male-centric, but, as he did with THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE, Avi brings another wonderful young heroine to life.
5. Bradbury, Ray. **The Halloween Tree.** Grades 4-8
On Halloween night in a Midwestern town, a group of costumed boys show up to pick up their leader, Pipkin. But Pipkin is deathly ill and can't join in – or, is that Pipkin running down the ravine. The boys give chase but dead end into a deathly dark mansion where they meet Mr. Moundshroud. Moundshroud makes them a deal – a journey back in time to learn first-hand the genesis of the various traditions of Halloween, then a choice. Will each of Pipkin's friends give up one year of their lives to save Pipkin. This is one of my very favorite books to read aloud, combining high adventure with great education.
6. Brooks, Terry. **Magic Kingdom for Sale/Sold.** Grades 5-8
Pure fun! A big shot lawyer, saddened by the death of his wife and disgusted with the practice of law, inquires after an ad in a Neiman-Marcus style Christmas catalogue. To his surprise, there is a kingdom for sale complete with a hapless wizard, knights, fair maidens and castles. Unfortunately this kingdom is just a bit run down and badly in need of a new king.

7. Coville, Bruce. **Always October.** Grades 4-7

An expansion of a short story called “My Little Brother is a Monster, ALWAYS OCTOBER explodes with excitement. Jake’s baby brother, LD, may be a monster (complete with fangs and fur!), but together with his best friend, Lily, Jake isn’t going to let anything happen to his brother, even if it turns out LD may be the key to saving the world—or destroying it. Soon Jake and Lily are on a perilous quest through Always October, a land populated with monsters. As an added bonus, ALWAYS OCTOBER introduces Sploot Fah, one of the most engaging characters to come along in a long while

8. DiCamillo, Kate. **Because of Winn Dixie.** Grades 4-7

The summer Opal and her father, the preacher, move to Naomi, Florida, Opal goes into the Winn-Dixie supermarket, and comes out with a dog - a big, ugly dog with a winning smile and a sterling sense of humor. Winn Dixie, makes friends more easily than Opal and Opal spends the summer collecting stories about all the slightly exotic but very human people that she meets because of Winn Dixie. A beautifully told tale of loss, friendship and healing.

9. Edmonds, Walter D. **Bert Breen’s Barn.** Grades 5-8

Set in 19th century Pennsylvania, a young boy decides the best way to a better life for his mother and two sisters is to buy Old Bert Breen’s barn and move it onto their land. But rumors of treasure hidden in the barn leads to some unwelcomed competition from some very unsavory characters. This is also on my personal list of top ten favorite books to read aloud, combining edge-of-your-seat mystery with top-notch historical fiction.

10. Hansen, Joyce. **Home is With Our Family.** Grades 5-8

In 1855 there was a thriving neighborhood of free black families bounded by 82nd and 89th streets and 7th and 8th avenues in upper Manhattan. When rumors surface that the city wants to condemn the neighborhood to build Central Park, The Peters family, along with their neighbors, struggle with how to save their community while their 13 year old daughter, Maria, has to deal with the terrifying secret that her new best friend, Anna, is a runaway slave. Inspired by the strength and grace of famed abolitionist and ex-slave, Sojourner Truth, Maria starts Stitching for Freedom, a sewing circle to help raise money to buy Anna’s freedom. Unfortunately events spiral out of control and soon Anna and Maria find themselves pursued by a slave-hunter who has been tracking Anna.

11. Hardinge, Frances. **The Lie Tree.** Grades 6-10

Faith’s addiction is a need to know, even if it requires a little eavesdropping — not something expected of a prim young Victorian lady. She wants to know why her father, a world renowned naturalist, has been declared a fraud and a cheat. And she especially wants to know why he has suddenly uprooted their family from the comfortable home in Kent and moved them to desolate Vane Island, all the while hording a mysterious box that everyone is forbidden to touch. In this spectacular novel for young adults, no relation is what it seems, each page begs for resolve but offers none and only those that finish will finally be able to breathe a sigh of relief for a wonderfully satisfying conclusion.

12. Knight, Mary. **Saving Wonder.** Grades 4-8

SAVING WONDER is a hymn to the power of words and friendship. After young Curley Hines loses his parents and sister to coal mining accidents he goes to live with his grandfather, Papaw, in Wonder Gap, Kentucky. Papaw, wanting a better life for Curley, begins to give him a new word each Sunday and, he hopes, a way out of Wonder Gap. But when Curley learns that Tiverton Coal plans to scrape the top of their beloved Red Hawk Mountain, Curley and his best friend, Jules, discover that words could be the key to saving their mountain.

13. McKinley, Robin. **Beauty.** Grades 5-12

This is a wonderful and unusual retelling of Beauty and the Beast. Robin McKinley favors strong female characters and Beauty is no exception. Her character is strong without being cruel and determined without arrogance. This one is also on my personal list of top ten favorite books to read aloud. My boys loved it and it was one of the few books that my wife wouldn't let us read unless she was home.

14. Salisbury, Graham. **Under the Blood Red Sun.** Grades 5-8

A young Japanese boy and his family living in Hawaii at the time of Pearl Harbor struggle to understand the hatred directed at them. Historical fiction at its best.

15. Sherman, Delia. **The Evil Wizard Smallbone.** Grades 3-8.

Welcome to the home of Evil Wizard, Zachariah Smallbone – engaging, perhaps even endearing – and proprietor of Evil Wizard Bookshop. Young Nick Reynaud finds a welcome within but also finds it impossible to get out. Unsure as to whether he is an apprentice wizard or a prisoner, Nick ultimately unravels a story that dates back 300 years and finds his best friend and ally to be the magic bookshop.

16. Townsend, Jessica. **Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow.** Grades 4-8.

Take two cups pure bubbling imagination, add a pinch of Harry Potter, a hint of Alice in Wonderland, A smidgen of The Wizard of Oz, and A dash of Mary Poppins, stir gently and you get NEVERMOOR. Morrigan, a cursed child, is doomed to die at midnight on her eleventh birthday. But Morrigan is anything but cursed, and if Jupiter North of the Wondrous Society has anything to say about it, she isn't about to die either. A delicious adventure awaits you.

17. Vanderpool, Clare. **Moon Over Manifest.** Grades 5-8

Set in depression America, 12 year-old Abilene can't understand why her drifter daddy has sent her to his boyhood home of Manifest, Kansas for the summer. Determined to unravel the mystery of her daddy's past, Abilene tries to piece together life in Manifest in 1917 via stories by the local fortune teller, a series of letters she discovers and articles from the local paper. What she discovers are stories within stories, a family and a home for her and her dad. The author's debut novel and winner of the Newbery Medal for 2011, this is historical fiction at its very best.