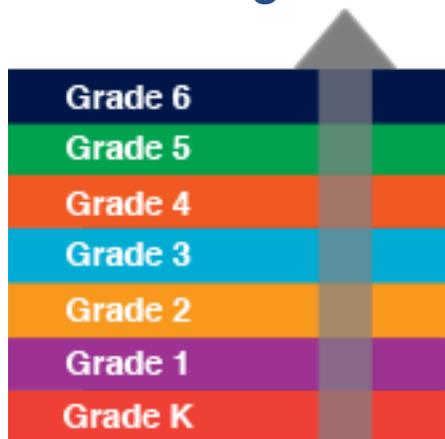


Parents we invite you to see the components of our English Language Arts Curriculum:



## Vertical Alignment



### **A Cohesive Framework**

The architecture of *Benchmark Advance* provides a framework that develops students content knowledge over time. All English Language Arts instruction occurs in the context of 10 content-focused knowledge strands that increase in complexity and build knowledge over time, within a grade level and also across grades K-6.

### **Engaging Texts That Build Knowledge**

Every topic is a unit. Every unit consists of three weeks of instruction. This framework provides ample time for students to be immersed in the topic, expanding their academic knowledge and vocabulary as they build literacy and language skills.

Students are provided wide, deep, and meaningful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that build knowledge. Whole-group instruction focuses on core, grade-level texts. Small-group instruction provides a wealth of leveled texts at a variety of levels and reader's theater to support differentiation. All texts are connected to the unit topic.

As students move to the next grade level, they will revisit these strands through the lens of the unit topic and an Essential Question that builds from prior years of instruction, supports grade-level standards and expectations, and promotes thinking about a topic or concept from many perspectives simultaneously.

## Unit Topic Sets



### **One Topic. Many Text Types.**

There are ten, three-week units in *Benchmark Advance*. Each unit focuses on one knowledge strand, or one topic—so students will build deep content knowledge by reading a variety of text types centered on one single topic. Both striving readers as well as those who need to be challenged will have ample time to internalize main vocabulary and concepts using oral language in collaborative conversations.

Each unit is organized by an Essential Question and enables students to dive deeply into each of the unit topics, which include Next Generation Science Standards as well as social studies standards.

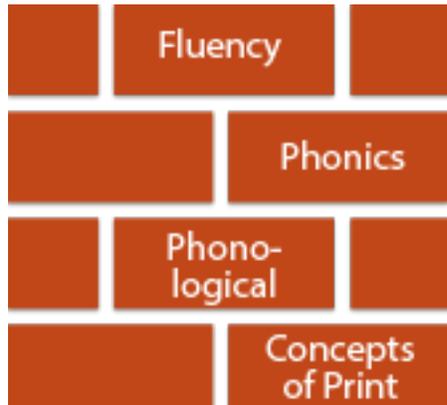
### **Building Depth of Knowledge K-6**

With *Benchmark Advance* students are building knowledge in these knowledge strands not only within a grade level, but also across their elementary school career.

### **Building a Strong Foundation from Day 1**

*Benchmark Advance* carefully and systematically provides students with a strong foundation in literacy. Foundational skills instruction begins on the very first day of school and continues each day as students move from phonological awareness to phonemic awareness, to phonics, and into a connected text. Picture Cards, Letter Cards, Word Cards, Sound/Spelling Cards, Elkonin Boxes, interactive games, and connected texts are provided as students build a strong foundation and become readers and writers.

## Foundational Skills



### **Authentic Practice**

Connected texts provide authentic practice, which is key to the transfer of phonics skills as students begin to see themselves as readers and writers! Students cement their learning in authentic practice that is presented in context of their texts. In Benchmark Advance foundational skills practice goes beyond simple worksheets and into meaningful practice opportunities - authentic and in context.

# Kindergarten

Reading Tips for Kindergarten Parents

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/7834>

## Reading in Kindergarten

In kindergarten, children begin to grow as independent readers and become more comfortable with reading, which is now part of their daily life. A kindergarten classroom is packed with words and labeled objects, and students read books, the day's schedules, class letters, songs, and poems throughout the day.

To build reading skills, your kindergartener:

- Learns all of the letters of the alphabet (upper case and lower case) and their sounds.
- Begins to “read” books himself, mainly by memorization (short books like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* are ideal for this!).
- Reads and listens to stories and then talks about the stories, including their plots, characters, and events.
- Follows words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
- Recognizes and can produce rhyming words.
- Recognizes several basic sight words such as I, my, you, is, and are. (You can help him practice with this [Sight Word Readers Parent Pack](#), which includes 25 little books that teach 50 of the most frequently used words in print.)
- Adds or substitutes individual sounds in simple, one-syllable words to make new words, such as replacing the “C” in “Cat” with an “R” to create the word “Rat.”

## Your Kindergarten Book Suggestions for Reading

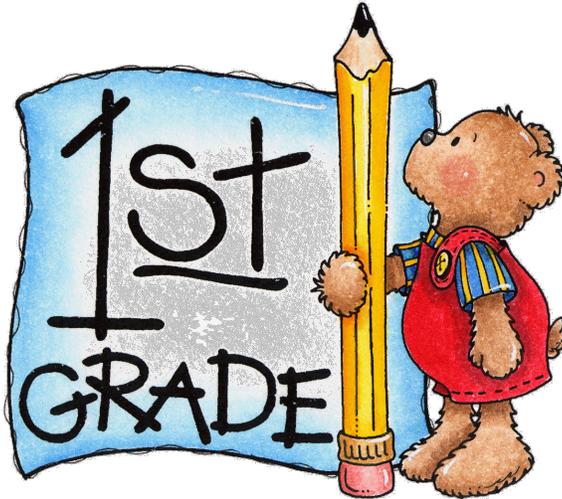
*Kindergarten Is Cool!* — Told from a second-person narrative, this rhyming book will reassure students anxious about their first day of kindergarten that school can be filled with fun! What's more, the sweet and bouncy tale will help boost your child's early reading skills in preparation for the big day — and throughout the year.

*We Are in a Book! (An Elephant & Piggie Book)* — Best friends Gerald and Piggie discover the joys of being “read” in this mind-bending, interactive story that teaches children how books are set up, all while using vocabulary just right for beginner readers in kindergarten.

*The Day the Crayons Quit* — A kindergartener's book collection wouldn't be complete without this famous tale! When Duncan wants to color, he finds out that his crayons have quit: Blue is tired of coloring skies and oceans, orange and yellow aren't speaking because they both believe they're the true color of the sun, and black is tired of just outlining things. This story provides endless laughs and teaches kindergarteners about plot and characters.

*The Lorax* — This Dr. Seuss classic uses large, vibrant illustrations paired with word plays and rhymes to introduce kindergarteners to the building blocks of language, and introduces students to the importance of protecting the environment around us.

*Clifford Goes to Kindergarten* — In an adorable tale about preparing for and going to kindergarten, Emily Elizabeth explores her new school— and Clifford even makes an appearance in the classroom! This book will prime your kindergartener for his first day of class and further build his growing reading abilities.



## Reading Tips for First Grade Parents

[http://www.pbs.org/launchingreaders/parenttips\\_3.html](http://www.pbs.org/launchingreaders/parenttips_3.html)

## Reading in 1st Grade

Building reading skills is an essential part of a first grader's learning process and academic success down the road. Even when students are not specifically learning "reading," they are constantly using this skill to learn other subjects—which is why it's crucial for your child's success in all subjects. As first graders develop their reading comprehension, they will talk more about certain topics and gain a deeper understanding of what they read.

### To build his reading skills, your first grader:

- Recognizes the features of a sentence (for example: first words, capitalization, and ending punctuation).
- Recognizes the spelling and sound of two letters that represent one sound, such as *th*, *ch*, *wh* (these are also known as digraphs).
- Learns to read regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- Understands how an "e" at the end of a word changes a vowel within the word.
- Breaks up longer words into syllables in order to read them.
- Reads grade-level words that have "irregular" spellings.

- Knows the difference between and reads fiction texts (such as *Mouse & Lion*) and non-fiction texts (like *Leo, the Snow Leopard*) with purpose and an understanding of the plot and important ideas and characters.
- Talks about and answers questions about the text he reads.
- Reads texts aloud at an appropriate speed and with expression.
- Compares different characters, events, or texts.
- Understands the purpose of and uses common features in a book, such as headings, tables of contents, and glossaries.
- Begins to read grade-appropriate poetry (such as *No Fair! No Fair! And Other Jolly Poems of Childhood*) and identifies words and phrases that relate to emotions and the senses.

**Fluency** is the ability to read “quickly, effortlessly, and efficiently with good, meaningful expression” (Rasinski, 2003). Fluency includes three main components:

**Word recognition** is identifying words accurately and quickly.

**Decoding** is the ability to figure out unknown words.

**Prosody** is the use of stress or emphasis, pitch or intonation, tempo or rate, the rhythmic or regularly reoccurring patterns of language, and appropriate phrasing (Kuhn, 2003).

## 5 easy ways parents can increase their child's reading fluency

Reading is one of the most important components of language learning and education. It forms the basis for learning how to read – only to learn from what we read. While most children gain the fundamentals of reading by the time they are in second grade, not every child develops the ability to read fluently. Reading fluency is more or less a skill that enables the reader to read **quickly, accurately, and with expression**.

If your child is struggling to read fluently, there are many strategies you can use at home to support this critical, lifelong skill. Don't worry! Any child who struggles with reading fluency can improve with practice, attention, and consistent feedback. Here are a few simple ways to get your kids reading pages and pages of text with absolute confidence.

- 1. Model fluent reading-** Young children are naturally pretty fast learners. The one thing that we often overlook is their ability to learn from others. One of the best ways to improve a child's reading fluency is to model it for him. Let the child see and hear what fluent reading should sound like. Make sure you include plenty of expressions and emotion while reading and model proper phrasing and pacing. Then ask your child to read the same passage in the same style or manner as you did.
- 2. Stopwatch readings-** Another strategy that works for improving reading speed, which is also a major part of fluency, is asking your child to read a given passage in a set time frame. Here's how it's done: Set a stopwatch for one minute, and have your child read a passage with as few errors as possible. Notice where your child stops or breaks his fluency and work on improving those areas. Perhaps there was a word he couldn't pronounce. Ask him to repeatedly pronounce the word after learning the meaning. Then once again, ask your child to read the passage with the timer set to one minute. This time the reading should be faster!

The one minute read works because it is a manageable chunk of time and your child will be able to practice several repeated reads in a row without losing focus or interest.

**3. Choral read aloud sessions-** "Choral reading," is when a teacher or parent reads aloud and asks the children to follow at the same pace. Choral reading is another way to show your child what fluent reading should sound like. Choosing a book at the child's independent reading level will make it easier for him/her to keep up with the accuracy and pace

**3. Marked reading-** Take a passage and ask your child to read while you silently follow on a copy of that same passage. Mark places where your child made mistakes (mispronunciation, skipped words, etc.) and keep practicing these words and passages. This can be done during the stopwatch reading exercise or a read aloud activity.

**5. Re-read favorite books-** Always encourage your child to re-read favorite books.

In fact, the more accustomed to reading a particular book your child is, the more fluent he becomes at reading it. This gives them the confidence, accuracy, and speed needed to read fluently without focusing on *just reading* and instead more on comprehending and mimicking expressions.

Lastly, the best way to improve childrens' reading fluency is by encouraging them to read more often while keeping speed, accuracy, and expression in mind. The more they read, the better they get! Modeling positive reading behavior sets the tone for reading in your household

## Your 1st Grade Book Suggestions for Reading:

*The Frog and the Toad Collection* — This well-known series will help your first grader transition to longer-form books. It's often used to teach children how to talk about character and plot, all while they enjoy the humorous stories about an unlikely friendship between two very different animals.

*Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* — Your first grader will be captivated by this variation of "Red Riding Hood," filled with mystery, suspense, and vibrant illustrations. It's a valuable opportunity for young students to learn how to compare different variations of the same story — and to gain insight into a culture that might be different from their own.

*The Giving Tree* — The widely loved story about a tree that gives all that she has to the person she loves will be a staple in your first grader's book collection, now and for years to come. A tale of generosity and self-sacrifice, this famous parable helps children move from short storybooks to longer blocks of text.

*Stink and the Attack of the Slime Mold* — First graders discover just how exciting reading is with this slimy, freaky, stinky, and super-funny homage to an oozy-goozy organism! A cross between vintage horror flicks and classic "Star Trek" episodes, this story includes factoids and comics at the end of each chapter to keep beginner readers engaged.

*Time Jumper* — Aimed at newly independent readers, this exciting story about jumping back in time to King Arthur's castle features easy-to-read text.



## Reading Tips for Second Grade Parents

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-second-graders>

### Reading in Second Grade

Second graders continue to develop their literacy skills as they learn more complex words and absorb longer, more rigorous texts in a variety of genres including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. Students also expand their reading comprehension skills as they talk about *what* they read, and develop more advanced ideas around those topics. Just like in previous years, second graders also continuously practice reading as they use texts for other subjects throughout the day.

#### To build reading skills, your second grader:

- Reads more complex words, such as two-syllable words.
- Reads words with common prefixes and suffixes, for example: *pre-*, *re-*, *un-*, *-able*, *-ad*, and *-er*.
- Reads grade-appropriate, irregularly spelled words (consult your child's teacher for a specific list of these words).
- Reads a variety of texts including fiction, non-fiction, fables, and poetry (such as the rhyming stanzas in the book *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin*).
- Understands the structure of a story, specifically the purpose of beginnings (introducing the text) and endings (concluding the text).
- Understands the most important details of a text—its main purpose and the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how.”
- Talks about characters' responses, main events, lessons learned, and important ideas or concepts.

- Begins to make connections within and between texts.
- Compares at least two different versions of the same story, such as two versions of a classic fairy tale (think *Little Red Riding Hood* and the Chinese variation, *Lon Po Po*).
- Reads at grade-level with correct accuracy, pace, expression, and comprehension.
- Self-corrects mistakes and re-reads when necessary.

## Your 2nd Grade Book Suggestions for Reading:

***Magic Treehouse Boxed Set (Books 1-4)*** — A favorite for countless second graders, the Magic Treehouse series will whisk your child away to past eras when two siblings discover a treehouse filled with enchanted books! This series showcases simple language and illustrations that build reading confidence in second graders.

***Captain Underpants #1-5: Full Color Pack*** — The Captain Underpants books have encouraged the love of reading in many young children, who love these silly texts filled with practical jokes and superhero antics. Humorous books like this one can help keep your child engaged with reading as he learns more about the basics of language, stories, plot, and characters.

***The Oregon Trail Boxed Set*** — Transport your second grader to 1850, when the biggest goal was to get to Chimney Rock with your family safely — passing through rugged mountains, wild animals, natural disasters, and fast-flowing rivers along the way. These books make reading particularly interactive with 22 possible endings in each (choose wrong, and you may not make it in time!).

***Dog Man*** — From the creator of Captain Underpants, this story reveals a new hero who digs into deception, claws after crooks, and rolls over robbers. When Greg the police dog and his cop companion are injured on the job, Dog Man emerges out of a life-saving surgery — but this heroic hound will need to resist the call of the wild to answer the call of duty.

***The Story of Ruby Bridges*** — An important book for your second grader's nonfiction collection, this story reveals the extraordinary journey of a 6-year-old who shaped history when she became the first African American to attend an all-white school.



## Reading Tips for Third Grade Parents

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-third-graders>

### Reading in 3rd Grade

After mastering literacy skills in earlier grades, 3rd graders become better and more independent readers. Third grade reading focuses on teaching kids how to think and talk about what they read in deeper and more detailed ways. Students read longer texts, and most read fictional chapter books.

Many reading lessons in 3rd grade are dedicated to writing and talking about the meanings, lessons, and important ideas in texts. Third graders are encouraged to develop their own points of view about books they read, and to discuss their ideas about a text or characters. Series books are important in 3rd grade, because they allow students to make connections between different books and talk about how certain characters develop. As 3rd graders explore a greater range of books and longer texts, they become more fluent readers and learn to read, define, and pronounce complex words.

## To build reading skills, your 3rd grader:

- Reads multi-syllable and grade-appropriate, irregularly spelled words (ask your child's teacher for a list of these words).
- Reads grade-level text with appropriate pace, accuracy, expression, and understanding.
- Self-corrects mistakes and re-reads when necessary.
- Talks about and answers questions about a text using specific examples from the text and connects different parts of a text.
- Reads a variety of texts including, fiction, non-fiction, fables, and poetry, and understands and talks about their main ideas and lessons.
- Begins to understand the difference between literal and non-literal text such as metaphors and analogies.
- Uses the text and context to determine the meaning of words.
- Is able to express his own point of view about characters or a text.
- Makes comparisons between books written by the same author and books in series that are about the same characters.

## Your 3rd Grade Book Suggestions for Reading:

**Ramona Boxed Set 1-4** — Introduce your third grader to Ramona and her sister Beezus, two classic characters who have captivated both children and adults for decades. Use these four books to discuss sibling relationships, and ask your third grader to share his point of view on each character.

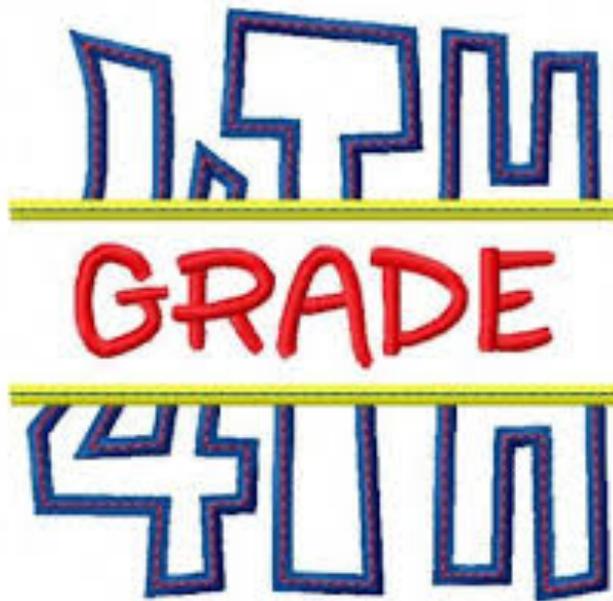
**The Bad Guys Box Set: Books 1-5** — In this hilarious bestselling series, the Bad Guys are scary and dangerous, but they want to be heroes, too! Your third grader will join them for five hilarious missions gone wrong in this collection, and will have the opportunity to compare the various plots and wacky scenarios in each book.

**What Would She Do? 25 True Stories of Trailblazing Rebel**

**Women** — An inspiring and empowering guide for your third grader's nonfiction collection, this book features 25 diverse women (from early world leaders such as Cleopatra to modern heroes like Malala Yousafzai!) and shares how they overcame huge obstacles to accomplish great things.

**Goosebumps Slappyworld Boxset #1-5** — Everyone's favorite dummy, Slappy, narrates this new *Goosebumps* series about mysterious happenings, evil twins, time travel with pirates, and many other mysterious and spooky occurrences! It's an entertaining and utterly fun way to introduce your third grader to longer chapter books.

**Sarai Saves the Music** — When her school cuts funding and her band program is the first to go, Sarai decides to organize a concert to raise money. When she and her bandmates promote the fundraiser on their video channel, Sarai's favorite singer notices it—but will she help save the music? A wonderful, relatable read for third graders, this book features fun illustrations and teaches the importance of standing up for what's important to you.



## Reading Tips for Fourth Grade Parents

<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/collection/what-to-expect-grade/guide-to-4t>

### Reading in 4th Grade

Much of the 4th grade reading curriculum teaches students how to analyze the books they read. Rather than just understand the plot and information given in a text, students are encouraged to think about the messages and how they relate to their own lives. They also compare texts to each other and make connections both within one text and across multiple texts.

In short, 4th graders begin to learn how to think and talk about a text to find deeper meanings and messages. This is done both with texts students read independently and those read by the whole class or smaller groups of students. Teachers may often use a class read-aloud to show students strategies for thinking about and analyzing what they read, encouraging them to do this in their own reading. Students also do this as they write in more detail about the texts they read.

## To build reading skills, your 4th grader:

- Uses specific examples from the text to explain characters' motivations, main events, central themes, or ideas about a text.
- Uses the context of a text to determine the meaning of a word.
- Understands and can explain the differences between narrative prose, drama, and poetry.
- Identifies and refers to the different parts of poems and plays, such as verses, settings, and characters.
- Interprets and connects information from illustrations, graphs, charts, or other sources related to the text.
- Identifies, compares, and contrasts different perspectives from which texts are written (for example, first and third person).
- Compares and contrasts the way different texts address the same issue, theme, or topic.
- Makes connections between people, events, or important ideas in a text.
- Uses previous knowledge to read unfamiliar multi-syllable words.
- Reads grade-level texts with accurate comprehension, pacing, and expression.

By the time your child has finished 3rd grade, it's probably become clear what kind of a reader she is. Whether she's an independent reader that devours all words in sight or a reluctant reader that needs coaxing with every page, it's always a good idea to partner up and create a reading list for summer break. This will keep your child's reading skills sharp through the summer months in anticipation of the more advanced reading requirements. Use these suggestions to create a 4th grade reading list that is catered to your child's specific interests:

## Your 4th Grade Book Suggestions for Reading

### Potter All the Time

For independent readers, every 4th grade reading list begins and ends with Harry Potter. But what if your child has burned through all seven volumes twice? Check out our [fantasy fixes for Potter fans](#) to keep your magic maven satisfying through the summer.

### Books for Boys

If your boy is reading averse, building a successful 4th grade reading list becomes trickier. Tales of adventure and intrigue that place a premium on fun can keep a struggling reader turning the pages. From the time-traveling hilarity of Jon Scieszka to the spine-tingling tales of creepmaster R. L. Stine, these [books for reluctant readers](#) will offer a gateway to reading for pleasure.

### 4th Grade Something

A reading list is the perfect opportunity to introduce your child to the wonders of Judy Blume. Wise, funny, and eminently accessible, [Blume's books](#) create invaluable opportunities for you to bond with your kids over books — because odds are you read them as a 4th grader yourself! And if you happened to miss them back in the day, start a summer parent-child book club and read them together!

### I SPY!

Finally, for an interactive book experience that might just prove to get the most reluctant reader hooked on books, try Walter Wick and Jean Marzollo's [I SPY series](#). Fantastic photos and rhyming riddles are the perfect summer vacation reading adventure. Careful, they're addictive!

# 5th Grade

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/reading-resources/language-and-literacy-milestones/fifth-grade-reading-tips-to-smooth-out-transition.html>

## Reading in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

Most of the 5th grade reading curriculum focuses on teaching students to understand and develop ideas about the texts they read. Fifth graders learn to support their ideas using specific details from books, and are expected to think carefully about (and ultimately use) quotes, facts, and events to develop opinions about a text and explain it. Students practice this as they read texts together as a class and independently, and their teachers often show them specific strategies they can use to do this. Fifth graders also expand these skills as they write extensively about what they read in every subject.

### To build reading skills, your fifth grader:

- Begins to use direct quotes from texts to explain and prove ideas about the reading.
- Reads a variety of genres including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
- Uses details from the text to summarize it, identify the main idea or theme, compare characters or events, or compare different texts of the same genre (for example, two fantasy texts such as *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*).
- Interprets and understands metaphors and comparisons made in a text.
- Identifies an author or narrator's point of view and explains how this affects the content of a text (for instance, Greg's perspective in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series).
- Compares multiple perspectives on the same event, idea, or theme.

- Uses the context of a text to determine the meaning of unknown words.
- Uses technology and digital media to further her understanding of a topic and to find answers to her questions.
- Gathers information about a topic from multiple sources.
- You Can't Read too Much  
The most important way you can support fifth grade reading is to make sure your child has plenty of time and encouragement to read for pleasure. Having a life-long love for reading is the key to unlocking many magic doors in life.

## Your 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Book Suggestions for Reading:

*Frindle* — As your fifth grader expands her vocabulary, she'll be captivated by this clever, funny book about creativity and the origins of words. Nick is a fifth grader who has plenty of ideas, but when he comes up with a new word for a pen — the “frindle” — it takes off throughout the nation, much to the dismay of his nonsense language arts teacher Mrs. Granger.

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* — In this gripping tale based on a true story, a young Native American girl named Karana spends 18 years alone on a deserted island off the California coast, proving herself to be a master of resourcefulness. This book will help your fifth grader examine a perspective she likely hasn't considered before — one of someone who had to courageously find a measure of happiness in a solitary life.

*The Boxcar Children Mysteries (Books 1-12)* — For nearly a century, the resourcefulness and tenacity of the Boxcar Children have enticed young readers, and the series will teach your fifth grader how to compare different characters and their points of view in a text. Equip her with this exciting collection of 12 books so she can follow along with the timeless adventures — as a bonus, the set also comes with free Boxcar activities and a poster!

*Brown Girl Dreaming* — Widen your fifth grader's exposure to poetry with this multi-award-winning memoir, in which author Jacqueline Woodson shares the poignant memories of her child in free-verse poems about growing up in New York and South Carolina in the 1960s and 1970s during the Civil Rights movement.

*Kira-Kira* — Katie Takeshima’s sister, Lynn, seems to have a perspective that makes everything kira-kira, or “glittering and shining.” Lynn teaches Katie everything she knows, even the reason why people stop on the street to stare at them when their family moves from a Japanese community in Iowa to Georgia in the 1950s. But when Lynn falls desperately ill, and the whole family begins to fall apart, it’s up to Katie to find a way to remind them that there is always something glittering in the future.