



Literature and Language Arts

Resource List for Grades 5 through 8

The Resources in this document can be used with the Literature and Language Arts Curriculum Packet for grades 5 through 8.

Books

Non-fiction and Biography

- Charles Dickens: Scenes from an Extraordinary Life, 2014 by Mick Manning (Illustrator), Brita Granstrom (Illustrator).
Excellent combination of historical facts, illustrations and cartoon strips really bring the great man's story to life. The key novels are fitted in chronologically so you get a sense of how they arose from the events of his life.
- The Dragon Grammar Book: Grammar for Kids, Dragons, and the Whole Kingdom, 2017 by Diane Mae Robinson (Author), Breadcrumbs Ink (Illustrator).
An easy-to-understand English grammar book with fun grammar lessons for middle grades and up. An excellent education reference for classroom and homeschool grammar lessons. The Dragon Grammar Book is the perfect grammar study guide to help readers learn the rules of grammar and improve language art skills with ease and enjoyment.
- The Emily Sonnets: The Life of Emily Dickinson, 2012 by Jane Yolen (Author), Gary Kelley (Illustrator).
She was quiet and fiercely private. She was bold and fiercely creative. And it wasn't until after her death that the world came to know her genius. In this book, beautiful sonnets and insightful biographical notes spotlight Emily Dickinson's schooling, seclusion, and the slant rhymes for which she became famous, while the artwork portrays the poet's 19th-century Massachusetts world, including her family, faith, and fears.
- The Extraordinary Mark Twain (According To Susy), 2010 by Barbara Kerley (Author), Edwin Fotheringham (Illustrator).
Susy Clemens thought the world was wrong about her papa. They saw Mark Twain as "a humorist joking at everything." But he was so much more, and Susy was determined to set the record straight. In a journal she kept under her pillow, Susy documented her world-famous father-from his habits (good and bad!) to his writing routine to their family's colorful home life.
- Funny Business: Conversations with Writers of Comedy, 2009 by Various (Author), Leonard S. Marcus (Editor).
There are many kinds of humor, but capturing their essence on paper is a remarkably difficult (and often undervalued) skill. So how do authors create books that not only stand the tests of time but also make us laugh? In thirteen fascinating interviews, well-loved writers of humorous books for children discuss an array of topics, from their sources of inspiration to the ways they began writing, from their revision processes to childhood anecdotes to the value they place on comedy in their work and lives.

- Jurassic Classics: The Prehistoric Masters Of Literature, 2018 by Saskia Lacey(Author), Sernur Isik (Illustrator).
Join everyone’s favorite dinosaurs as they walk you through some of the world’s most famous works of British and American literature. Begin with William Shakespeareasaurus and read about his life and highlights of his famous works, including dino-sized versions of his famous quotes: “But soft! There squats my fairest maiden!” Some other authors include Edgar Allan Terrordactyl and Jane Austenlovenator. After each dinosaur section, there is a brief but informative review of the real author and his or her work.
- Kid Authors: True Tales of Childhood from Famous Writers, 2017 by David Stabler (Author), Doogie Horner (Illustrator).
Every great author started out as a kid. Before the best sellers, fan clubs, and beloved stories we know today, the world's most celebrated writers had regular-kid problems just like you. Sam Clemens (aka Mark Twain) loved to skip school and make mischief, with his best friend Tom, of course! A young J. R. R. Tolkien was bitten by a huge tarantula, or as he called it, “a spider as big as a dragon.” Toddler Zora Neale Hurston took her first steps when a wild hog entered her house and started chasing her!
- Louisa: The Life of Louisa May Alcott, 2014 by Yona Zeldis McDonough (Author), Bethanne Andersen (Illustrator).
When Louisa May Alcott's Little Women was published in 1868, it was an instant success. Louisa drew on her experiences in writing the novel, but there's a lot more to her rags-to-riches story. Louisa came from a family that was poor but freethinking, and she started teaching when she was only seventeen years old. But writing was her passion.
- My Weird Writing Tips (My Weird School), 2013 by Dan Gutman (Author), Jim Paillot (Illustrator).
Dan offers tricks for spelling hard words, understanding the difference between similar words like “its” and “it’s,” and conquering grammar stumbling blocks like commas and apostrophes. He also teaches readers how to write an engaging story.
- Mythmaker: The Life of J.R.R. Tolkien, Creator of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, 2012 by Anne E. Neimark (Author).
J. R. R. Tolkien was far more than a fantasy book writer. His lifelong fascination with medieval texts and languages gave him a unique vision and endless inspiration for his tales. His broad interests made possible his creation of faery worlds and entire races of beings, as well as the languages, cultures, and characters that make his books as engaging today as they were fifty years ago. This clear and thoroughly researched biography of the creator of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings recalls the mystery of Tolkien’s imaginary worlds.
- Noah Webster: Man of Many Words, 2015 by Catherine Reef (Author).
Noah Webster (1758–1843) has a passion for words but cannot seem to find a vocation. He tries teaching, lawyering, lecturing, publishing, and writing. Late in life he finally settles down to complete his dictionary, drawing on his passion for language as well as his belief that a common American language will unite the country.
- Other-Wordly: Words Both Strange And Lovely From Around The World, 2016 by Yee-Lum Mak (Author), Kelsey Garrity-Riley (Illustrator).
Logophiles who’ve struggled for a word to express a particular “other-wordly” emotion, sight, or sensation will appreciate this slim, pretty compendium of evocative, little-known words and their definitions. Muted artwork nicely echoes the mood of the words, which are loosely grouped by association.

- Ox, House, Stick: The History of Our Alphabet, 2007 by Don Robb (Author), Anne Smith (Illustrator).
Bold collage illustrations and clear prose trace the origins of our familiar letters. From the proto-Sinaitic peoples, through the Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, this book follows the development of the Roman alphabet.
- Shakespeare: Explore the Life of History's Most Famous Playwright from His Elizabethan World: DK Eyewitness Books, 2015 by DK (Author).
Whether your reader has a special interest in theater, poetry, or the work of William Shakespeare, you're going to see a Shakespeare play, or you want to add depth and additional resources to Shakespeare's work that your student is studying in the classroom, this book is a great choice for you and your student to get to know the bard even better.
- Show; Don't Tell!: Secrets of Writing, 2004 by Josephine Nobisso (Author), Eva Montanari (Illustrator).
Innovative yet accessible writing strategies appropriate for both fiction and nonfiction are presented in this enchanting tale of a writing lion who holds court for a cast of animal friends. Aspiring writers learn the essential nature of nouns and adjectives and how to use them to express their individual visions so that they “show and don’t tell” every time.
- Will's Words: How William Shakespeare Changed the Way You Talk, 2016 by Jane Sutcliffe (Author), John Shelley (Illustrator).
The bard’s inventiveness with words is showcased in this look at London’s Globe Theatre. In lively, conversational text, verso pages present information interspersed with Shakespeare’s words or phrases boldfaced; the recto defines the phrase and identifies the play it comes from. Detailed pen-and-ink and watercolor scenes with varied perspectives brim with the bustle and jostle of London and its playgoers.
- The Word Snoop: A Wild and Witty Tour of the English Language!, 2009 by Ursula Dubosarsky (Author), Tohby Riddle (Illustrator).
Meet the Word Snoop. She's dashing and daring and witty as can be, and no one knows more about the evolution of the English language than she does. Luckily, she's spilling her secrets in this gem of a book. From the first alphabet in 4000 BC, to anagrams, palindromes, and modern-day text messages, readers will learn all about the fascinating twists and turns our fair language has taken to become what it is today.
- Zora!: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston, 2012 by Dennis Brindell Fradin (Author), Judith Bloom Fradin (Author).
Zora Neale Hurston was confident, charismatic, and determined to be extraordinary. As a young woman, Hurston lived and wrote alongside such prominent authors as Langston Hughes and Alain Locke during the Harlem Renaissance.

Fiction

- Brown Girl Dreaming, 2016 by Jacqueline Woodson (Author).
Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child’s soul as she searches for her place in the world.
- The Cheshire Cheese Cat: A Dickens of a Tale, 2014 by Carmen Agra Deedy (Author), Randall Wright (Author), Barry Moser (Illustrator).

Skilley, an alley cat with an embarrassing secret, longs to escape his street-cat life. He hopes to trade London's damp alleyways for the warmth of ye olde Cheshire Cheese Inn, so he strikes a bargain with Pip, an erudite mouse. Skilley will protect the mice who live at the inn, and in turn, the mice will provide Skilley with the thing he desires most. But when Skilley and Pip are drawn into a crisis of monumental proportions, their new friendship is pushed to its limits.

- Word of Mouse, 2018 by James Patterson (Author), Chris Grabenstein (Author), Joe Sutphin (Illustrator).

What makes Isaiah so unique? First, his fur is as blue as the sky, which until recently was something he'd never seen, but had read all about. That's right--Isaiah can read, and write. He can also talk to humans...if any of them are willing to listen! After a dramatic escape from a mysterious laboratory, Isaiah is separated from his "mischief" (which is the word for a mouse family), and has to use his special skills to survive in the dangerous outdoors, and hopefully find his missing family.

Magazines, Journals, Miscellaneous

- CRICKET Magazine: contemporary stories and classic literature from the world's best writers, paired with beautiful illustrations.
<https://shop.cricketmedia.com/CRICKET-Magazine-for-Kids>.
- Half Way Down the Stairs: A literary magazine for families to share... free!
<http://www.halfwaydownthestairs.net/>
- Stone Soup: the literary magazine and website written and illustrated by kids through age 13.
<https://stonesoup.com>

Online Links

- Dav Pilkey: Dav's Fun Stuff. Learn How to draw Captain Underpants, Create your own superhero cape, do a Robo-Boxers word challenge and more!
<http://www.pilkey.com/>
- The Federation of Children's Books Group: Websites by Children's Authors and Illustrators
<http://www.fcbg.org.uk/childrens-authors-and-illustrators/>
- Judy Moody Website: Read, play, learn with books.
<https://judymoody.com/>
- New Moon Girls Online: Dynamo site for girls has priorities right.
<http://www.newmoon.com/>
- Scholastic Kids Press Corps: Kid reporters (and readers) get schooled in journalism.
<http://magazines.scholastic.com/>

Background information for the Educator

- Literature Teaching Guides by Teacher Vision
<https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/literature-guide>
- Teaching Books: Literacy Connections
Manage the demands of implementing literacy instruction with materials that deepen the conversation and understanding of the books read in your classes.
<https://www.teachingbooks.net/>