



Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form

Year 8 recommended reading list for children aged 12-13

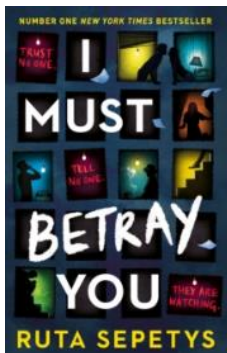
The following Year 8 reading list contains books suitable for children aged 12-13 in secondary school KS3 classes. These titles consist of a range of fiction and non-fiction for all abilities including the more able. This list of books contains stories by Adeline Yen Mah, Louis Sachar, Jamila Gavin, Anne Fine, Mark Haddon, Susan Hill, Lois Lowry, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Markus Zusak and more.



Thirteen by Tom Hoyle

There's a crazy cult that believes all boys born at the exact start of a new millennium must die before the end of their thirteenth year. And Adam is in their sights. 12 boys have perished so far. Can Adam outwit the cult before it's too late? This dark and gripping thriller delves into adolescence, exploring themes of morality, loyalty, and the high stakes of teenage choices and consequences.

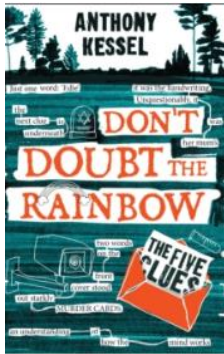
(Thriller)



I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys

Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but he lives with the ever-present danger of the secret police and can't write what he would like to. He faces an impossible choice: betray his loved ones and become an informant or go rogue and try to expose the truth. This gripping novel explores themes of oppression, truth and loyalty.

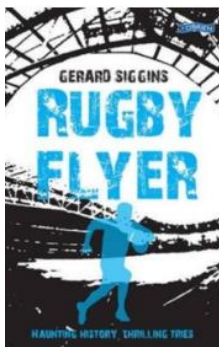
(Thriller)



The Five Clues by Anthony Kessel

This gripping murder-mystery thriller follows 13-year-old Edie Marble as he searches for the truth one year on from her mother's mysterious death. After finding a note from her mother, she follows a trail of clues that leads her to expose a pharmaceutical company's sinister secrets. What were they hiding and how far would they go to keep it secret?

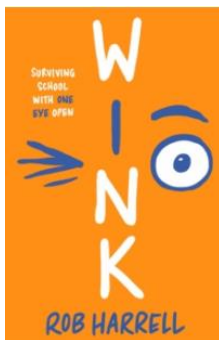
(Mystery)



Rugby Flyer by Gerard Siggins

When Eoin joins a prestigious rugby academy, he uncovers ghostly secrets and faces tough challenges both on and off the field. This sports-soaked thriller explores teamwork, friendship, and determination. Highly recommended for less confident readers.

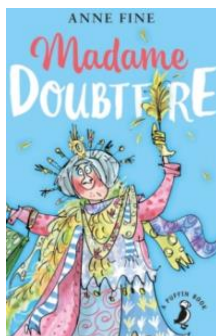
(Sport/Ghost story)



Wink by Rob Harrell

Based on the author's own experiences, the reader follows the life of Ross, a boy dealing with a devastating diagnosis of eye cancer. While he strives to maintain normality and his dignity, Ross finds imaginative and inspirational ways to get through life at school and at home.

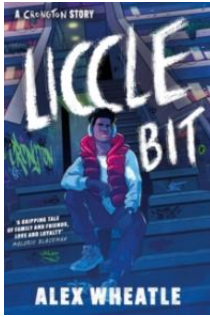
(Resilience/True story)



Madame Doubtfire by Anne Fine

Lydia, Christopher and Natalie's parents have divorced. When their mum looks to hire a nanny, their Dad, Daniel gets the job – using a cunning disguise. An easier read for Year 8 pupils.

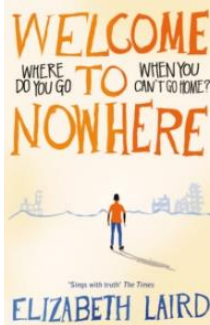
(Family)



Liccle Bit by Alex Wheatle

Lemar is desperate to catch the eye of Venetia. But he thinks that being short is holding him back and he believes his so-called friends when they dismiss his chances and call him 'Liccle Bit'. Suddenly someone is interested in him – a local crime lord – and Lemar is forced down a path that he might not be able to control.

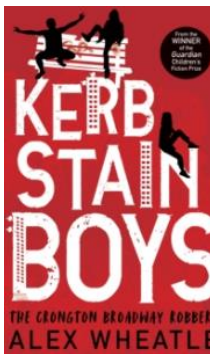
(Crime/Thriller/Diverse)



Welcome to Nowhere by Elizabeth Laird

Omar dreams of being a successful businessman and ruling the world. But living in Syria, this 12-year-old's dreams are set in a time and place where things can change rapidly – especially when his older brother finds himself in a dangerous situation and the whole family must flee to safety.

(War/Refugees)



Kerb Stain Boys by Alex Wheatle

Set in Briggy's world where his mum works all hours, his dad is unemployed and his older brother doesn't want to know, this story follows what happens when Briggy's friends cook up a dangerous plan that seems too good to be true.

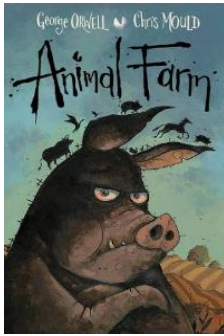
(Crime)



The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

A story of struggle, growing up, gangs and peer pressure. A classic of modern teenage fiction.

(Classic)



Animal Farm by George Orwell

George Orwell's text is set to new and vibrant cartoon-style illustrations by award-winning illustrator Chris Mould. The images help to lift a classic novel that is too often presented with typesetting from another era that 21st-century teens can find off-putting.

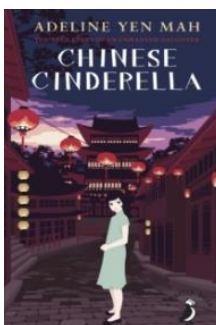
(Dystopia/Classic)



Be Resilient by Nicola Morgan

Ideal for teens, this book provides clear and practical advice on how to develop strategies, mental toughness and life-long skills to deal with what school and life throw at them. Situations such as COVID-19, who to trust, and keeping healthy are explored, and practical activities such as breathing techniques, visualising success and rationalising worries are detailed.

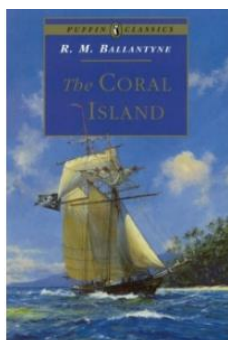
(Growth mindset)



Chinese Cinderella by Adeline Yen Mah

The unforgettable story of a young Chinese girl's struggle to find acceptance within her own family and her survival amongst siblings and parents who think she represents bad luck. She finds writing a form of release. Based on the author's own life.

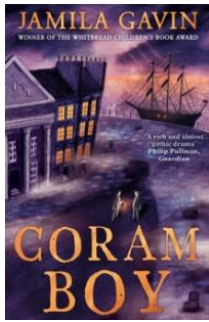
(Diverse/Family)



The Coral Island by R. M. Ballantyne

A boy's own story of Ralph, Jack and Peterkin who are shipwrecked on a coral island. As they work together and discover how to live and survive on the island their world is suddenly threatened by pirates

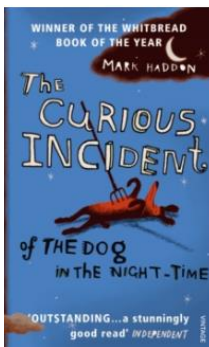
(Adventure/Classic)



Coram Boy by Jamila Gavin

A stunning period drama of deception, child stealing, mistaken identity and searching for long-lost families. An amazing piece of historical fiction.

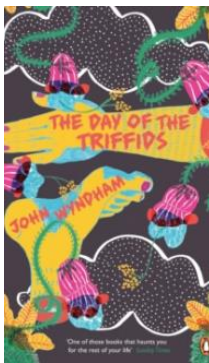
(Historical fiction)



The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon

Christopher isn't like other teenagers. He finds it difficult to talk to other people, hates being touched and reacts badly to certain colours. When the neighbour's dog is murdered he causes chaos trying to find out who did it.

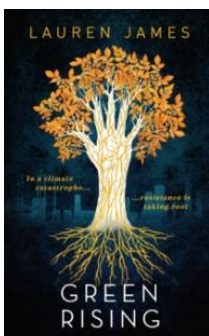
(Crime/Mystery)



The Day of the Triffids by John Wyndham

Bill wakes up to find he's the only person left on Earth who can see. Everyone else has been blinded by a mysterious meteor event. Can he save the world from extraterrestrial carnivorous plants?

(Science fiction)



Green Rising by Lauren James

Climate activist Gabrielle, heiress Hester, and fisherman's son Theo gain supernatural 'Greenfingers' powers to grow plants, as they embark on a thrilling mission to save the Earth from a climate emergency and avaricious, money-driven organizations.

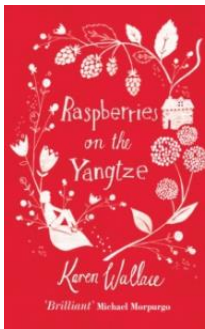
(Climate change)



Goggle Eyes by Anne Fine

Katy Killin is a world expert on her mother's disastrous boyfriends, and how to try and stop them from developing into unwanted stepfathers.

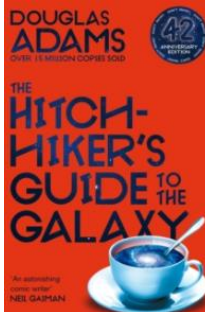
(Family)



Raspberries on the Yangtze by Karen Wallace

It began, said Nancy, 'the day my brother and I decided to poison our mother.' A memorable story about friendships and growing up from a child's point of view. An easier, yet poignant and thought-provoking, read for year 8 pupils.

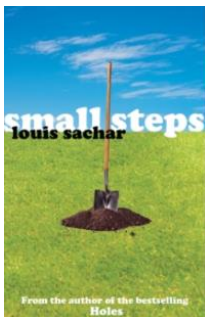
(Friendship)



The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy

Arthur's Friday doesn't start well when his house is demolished. The Earth is obliterated soon after, to make way for a bypass, and then he finds out his best friend is an alien. Can things get any worse?

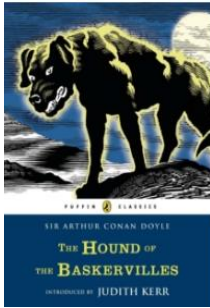
(Funny/Classic)



Small steps by Louis Sachar

The sequel to 'Holes'. Armpit is now a gardener living in Texas and trying to stay out of trouble by making the right choices. But things never seem to go his way.

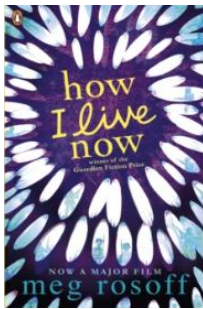
(Contemporary)



The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle

The Baskerville family is cursed by a ravenous supernatural dog intent on savaging them. Can Sherlock Holmes and Watson solve the mystery and save the family?

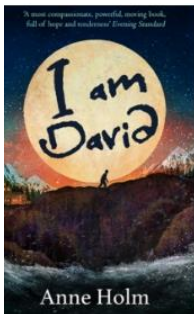
(Mystery/Classic)



How I Live Now by Meg Rosoff

Daisy, a streetwise American 15 year old and Edmond, her cousin from England are evacuated to the countryside. After briefly falling in love, her world is shattered by an unimaginable event. How will she live now?

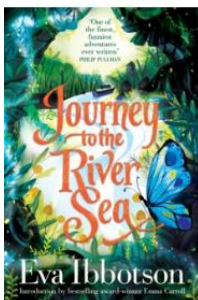
(Romance/Friendship)



I am David by Anne Holm

The story of 15 year old David's quest – escaping from the concentration camp where he has lived his life and travelling across a Europe unknown to him to try and find his home.

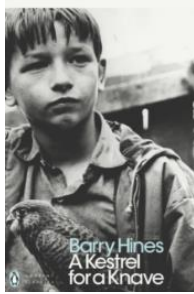
(Historical fiction)



Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson

An orphaned young girl and her governess travel thousands of miles from boarding school to South America with distant relatives. An exotic and wonderfully described adventure. An easier book to read for Year 8 children.

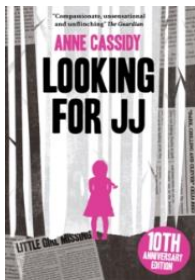
(Adventure)



A Kestrel for a Knave by Barry Hines

A modern classic and very popular with reluctant boy readers. Billy Casper is a troubled teen growing up in Barnsley. He finds an escape in Kes, a Kestrel, which transforms his life.

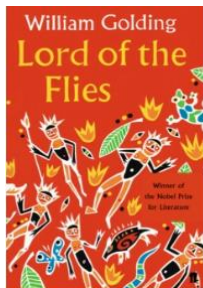
(Coming of age/Classic)



Looking for JJ by Anne Cassidy

A child killer is living a new life under a new identity after being released. How long can she keep her former life secret, and is she as evil as people believe?

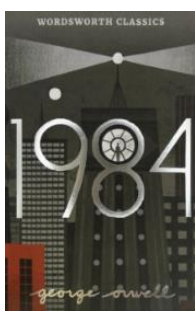
(Crime)



Lord of the Flies by William Golding

When a plane evacuating a group of schoolboy's crashes on a remote island, the boys are left to fend for themselves with no adult supervision. A modern classic.

(Classic)



Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell

The dystopian novel in which the terms 'big brother' and 'room 101' first appeared. Winston Smith works for the Ministry of Truth where his job is to rewrite history. He rebels and longs for freedom. A more challenging novel for students in Year 8.

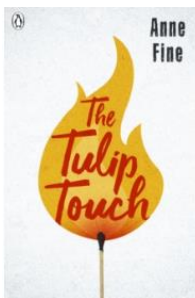
(Dystopia/Classic)



Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

George and Lennie follow the American Dream and head to California. However, Lennie gets into trouble with his boss's daughter-in-law – trouble that George might not be able to help him with.

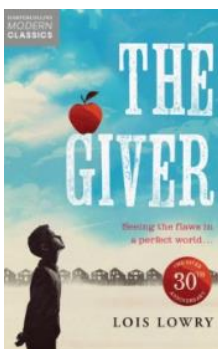
(Classic)



The Tulip Touch by Anne Fine

No one wants anything to do with Tulip, who is avoided by children and teachers alike. But Natalie is drawn to her and finds her dangerous and interesting. When things go too far, Natalie isn't able to stop events from spinning out of control, leading to a stunning and unexpected ending.

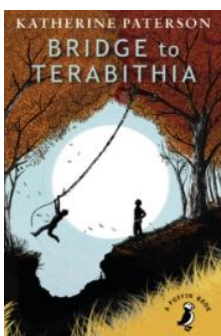
(Friendship)



The Giver by Lois Lowry

12-year-old Jonas lives in a world with no poverty, no crime, and where everyone is the same. But when he takes the role of "receiver of memory" he becomes one of the only people to understand how the world he lives in came about. A poignant read for Year 8.

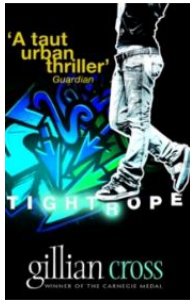
(Science fiction)



Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Jess creates the world of Terabithia to escape from his annoying family. Reached only by a rope swing, he and his friend Leslie live out their adventures, until an earth-shattering tragedy strikes.

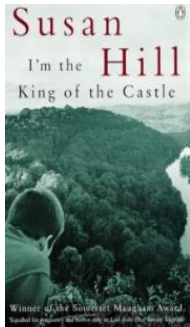
(Friendship)



Tightrope by Gillian Cross

Ashley has no idea that her late-night graffiti will change her life. First, she feels uncomfortable, then she receives notes and finally, she realises there's a stalker.

(Thriller)



I'm the King of the Castle by Susan Hill

Edmund doesn't want a new brother and immediately dislikes his stepbrother Charles, who he sees as an intruder in his own home. At home, Edmund terrorises Charles, but in Hang Wood there's a role reversal. A good book for Year 8 pupils to compare to Lord of the Flies.

(Classic)



The Woman in Black by Susan Hill

A chilling mystery about a woman in black who the villagers only talk about in terrifying true ghost stories.

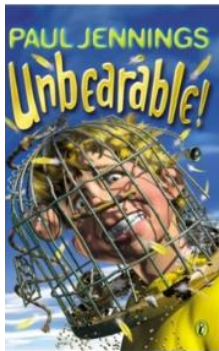
(Ghost story)



The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A spellbinding story about Misselthwaite Manor and an unwanted lonely child who discovers a hidden and magical garden.

(Fantasy)



Unbearable by Paul Jennings

A collection of eight weird, wonderful, strange and occasionally revolting short stories including 'Licked' and 'Smelly Feet'. A funny book for year 8 reluctant readers.

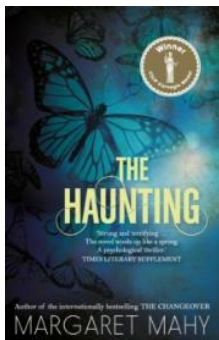
(Funny)



Treasure Island by R.L. Stevenson

The classic tale of Jim Hawkins and his adventure on the ship Hispaniola sailing to find hidden treasure. Intrigue, treachery, mutiny, castaways, crime and the menacing Long John Silver dominate this roller coaster of cliffhangers and surprises.

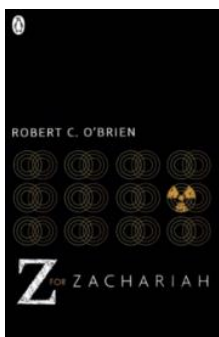
(Adventure/Classic)



The Haunting by Margaret Mahy

A story of a haunting, and a boy with a very special gift. A compelling and scary novel.

(Horror)



Z for Zachariah by Robert O'Brien

Ann Burden has survived a nuclear war by living in a valley free of radiation. When the only other person she knows becomes threatening, she decides to leave the valley to see if anyone else has survived.

(Post-apocalyptic)

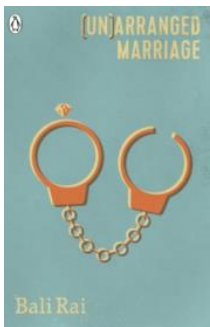


Shadowmancer by G.P. Taylor

Ann Burden has survived a nuclear war by living in a valley free of radiation. But when the only other person she knows becomes threatening, she decides to leave the valley to see if anyone else has survived. A more challenging book to read for Year 8 pupils.

(Fantasy/Post-apocalyptic)

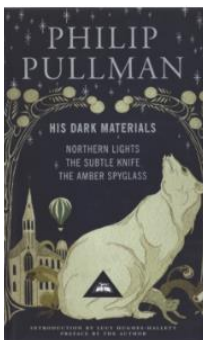
Notley High School – English lesson books



'(Un) Arranged Marriage' by Bali Rai

Manny wants to be a footballer or a pop star or write a bestseller. He doesn't want to get married to a girl he doesn't know. If they had bothered to open their eyes, they would have seen him@ seventeen, angry, upset but determined to choose his own path.

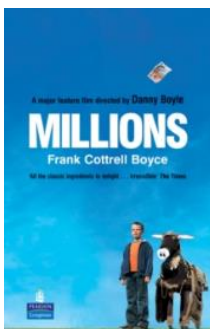
(Social issues/relationships)



His Dark Materials by Philip Pullman

Will and Lyra, whose fates are bound together by powers beyond their own worlds, have been violently separated. But they must find each other, for ahead of them lies the greatest war that has ever been.

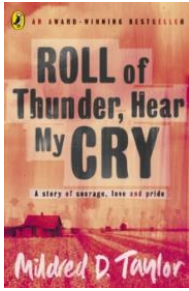
(Fantasy)



Millions by Frank Cottrell Boyce

Entertaining and highly original, this novel appeals strongly to all young readers. What are the themes? Bereavement, family, grown up, self discovery, responsibility, relationships, social conscience and money and its power to corrupt!

(Relationships)



Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

Cassie didn't understand why farming his own land meant so much to her father. During that year, in the 1930s, when the night riders carried destruction among her people, she learned that it was worth fighting for a principle even if it brought terrible hardships.

(Historical fiction/relationships)



Stone Cold by Robert Swindells

A tense thriller plot is combined with a perceptive and harrowing portrait of life on the streets as a serial killer preys on the young and vulnerable homeless. Link, aged 17, is distrustful of people until he pairs up with Deb, another homeless youngster.

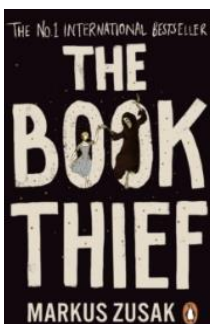
(Thriller/Teenage Fiction)



The 13th Reality Journal of Curious Letters by James Dashner

Atticus Higginbottom, a.k.a. Tick, is an average thirteen-year-old boy until the day he receives a strange letter informing him that dangerous - perhaps even deadly - events have been set in motion that could result in the destruction of reality itself. Tick will be sent twelve riddles that, when solved, will reveal the time and place of an extraordinary happening.

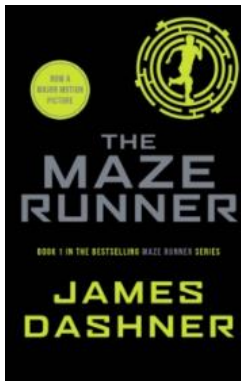
(Science Fiction/Reality)



The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Liesel, a nine-year-old girl, is living with a foster family on Himmel Street. Her parents have been taken away to a concentration camp. Liesel steals books. This is her story.

(Historical Fiction)



The Maze Runner by James Dashner

When the doors of the lift crank open, the only thing Thomas remembers is his first name. But he's not alone. He's surrounded by boys who welcome him to the Glade – a walled encampment at the centre of a bizarre and terrible stone maze.

(Science Fiction/Adventure)



Red Leaves by Sita Brahmachari

Aisha is a thirteen-year-old refugee living in London. Happy for the first time since leaving her war-torn home, she is devastated when her foster mother announces that a new family has been found for her and she will be moving on. Feeling rejected and abandoned, Aisha packs her bags and runs away, seeking shelter in the nearby woods.

(Social issues/Family)