

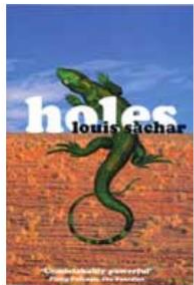
Barley Fields Primary School

Reading Spine

Upper Key Stage 2 - Year 6



A selection of great novels for Year 6 children. These books are the reading rites of passage that pave the way for the great literature that lies ahead. The books are intense reads, meaty books that are crafted beautifully. They will stay with the reader forever. These books are life-changers. Do read them before sharing with the class as some touch on challenging themes.



Holes

READ & RESPOND

Louis Sachar (Bloomsbury)

Invite the children to keep a diary for each of the key events – and by contrast, write a letter home from the camp. Together collect information about the main characters and discuss why they behave as they do. Ask: *Why did the author give Stanley a palindromic name?* Draw two timelines to track the present and past events. In role as journalists, encourage children to carry out interviews and write a news item for the start and end of the book. Ask: *Why is the book called 'Holes'?* Talk through all the possibilities. Discuss *'the holes in their lives'*. Then make a comparison with the film (it has a PG certificate, so you might want to check with parents before showing it). (See the *Read & Respond* title for further ideas.)



The Graveyard Book

Neil Gaiman

When a baby escapes a murderer intent on killing the entire family, who would have thought it would find safety and security in the local graveyard? Brought up by the resident ghosts, ghouls and spectres, Bod has an eccentric childhood learning about life from the dead. But for Bod there is also the danger of the murderer still looking for him - after all, he is the last remaining member of the family. A stunningly original novel deftly constructed over eight chapters, featuring every second year of Bod's life, from babyhood to adolescence. Will Bod survive to be a man?



Coraline

Neil Gaiman

There is something strange about Coraline's new home.

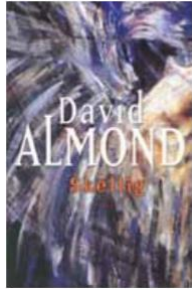
It's not the mist, or the cat that always seems to be watching her, nor the signs of danger that Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, her new neighbours, read in the tea leaves. It's the other house - the one behind the old door in the drawing room. Another mother and father with black-button eyes and papery skin are waiting for Coraline to join them there. And they want her to stay with them. For ever. She knows that if she ventures through that door, she may never come back.



The Hobbit

J.R.R. Tolkien (HarperCollins)

With the class create maps and a timeline for the adventure. Can they write messages in runic code? Invite them to write letters to Bilbo to persuade him to join the journey. Together create a set of instructions, such as 'How to Trap a Troll'. Role play the Troll scene in lesson. Invite them to write riddles for Bilbo to use against Gollum or the Dragon. Provide time to write Gollum's story, asking: *How did he get inside the mountain and how did he come by the ring?* Together write a poem listing what you would do with a magical ring. After each key part of the story, interview a child in the role of a dwarf and ask them about what has happened or create and film news bulletins. Challenge children to draw or describe Smaug, as well as write an 'end of term report' for Bilbo. Ask: *How has the journey changed him?* Work out the underlying pattern of the Quest story – and the key archetypal characters – then create your own quest in chapters.



Skellig READ & RESPOND

David Almond (Hodder)

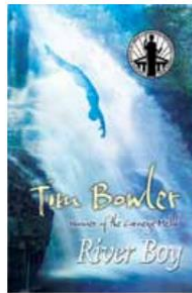
Together in class discuss Mina's views on education. Ask: *Who or what is Skellig? What is the book about? Invite them to collect key lines to talk about, such as 'truth and dreams are always getting muddled'.* In role as Mina, encourage children to write her diary extracts about what is happening. Perform and talk about 'Tyger' by William Blake. Provide time to write Michael's story for Miss Clarts in Chapter 33. Ask: *Why does Michael want to call the baby 'Persephone'?* Tell the class to read 'Mina – my story' and write a sequel to *Skellig*. (See the *Read & Respond* series for further ideas.)



Fireweed

Jill Paton Walsh (Hot Key Books)

This book benefits from background knowledge about the bombing of London in 1940 and the evacuation. Split the class in two with both halves keeping diary entries for the two main characters. Hold discussions after each chapter as this is a demanding read. Pause for 'think alouds' where children in role think aloud about their thoughts, hopes, motives, and so on. Discuss with the class what happens in the last two chapters. Ask: *Why is the story called 'Fireweed'?* Also, read *Dolphin Crossing* (Faber) by the same author (about Dunkirk).



River Boy

Tim Bowler (Oxford University Press)

This is another mysterious book and you should read it before reading it to the class. Ask: *Who, or what, is the 'river boy' and how can he be 'part of her'?* *What does Grandpa want? How can Jess 'be his hands'?* When reading Chapter 17 discuss the relationship between the painting and the river boy and Grandpa. Discuss the importance of the swim and ask: *how does this help Jess come to terms with Grandpa's death? By the end of the book who has changed and how?* At the end of the book discuss *the spirit of the river boy was in her alone.* Try to summarise what the book is about and what it means to the children. Some of these meanings might be private.



The White Horse of Zennor – The Giants Necklace story

Michael Morpurgo

A thrilling collection of myths, legends and ghost stories from War Horse author and former Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo.

Since the beginning of time, strange and mysterious things have happened here . . . At the furthest edge of Britain, where the sea gently washes over the land and myths brush against reality, lies Zennor. Set in a church town where men become beats and ghosts roam freely, these are haunting and unforgettable tales where magic lies around every corner.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

JOHN BOYNE

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

John Boyne

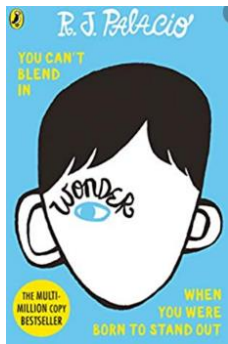
Nine-year-old Bruno has a lot of things on his mind. Who is the 'Fury'? Why did he make them leave their nice home in Berlin to go to 'Out-With' ? And who are all the sad people in striped pyjamas on the other side of the fence? The grown-ups won't explain so Bruno decides there is only one thing for it - he will have to explore this place alone. What he discovers is a new friend. A boy with the very same birthday. A boy in striped pyjamas. But why can't they ever play together?



The Arrival Picture book

Shaun Tan (Hodder)

Before reading this in class you may find it handy to explain immigration, especially the migration to America at the end of the 19th century (Ellis Island). Read carefully and discuss. Study each section at a time. Ask: *What is happening?* As there are no words, the reader has to work hard! Discuss in class how the story makes you feel – and how the characters seem to feel. (Being in a new country, migrants often feel at a loss in the same way that the reader does.) Discuss the three 'helpers'. Invite the children to write the letters that they send. Ask: *What is the story about? Are all the illustrations real or in someone's imagination? Are they symbols for anything?* Encourage the class to write story sections to go with different parts of the book or diary entries for characters. Also, read other Shaun Tan books, such as *The Lost Thing*, *The Red Tree* and *Rules of Summer* which makes a good model for writing. Also, check out picture books by Armin Greder, *The Island* and *The City* (Allen & Unwin).



Wonder

R J Palacio

'My name is August. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.'

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He *feels* ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?



Poetry Spine

- Collected Poetry for Children
- Ted Hughes Collected – Poems for children
- The Works – KS2
- Carol Ann Duffy – new and collected poems for children