

When Gifted Readers Hunt for Books

Literature is one of the most effective tools for enhancing students who have gifted and talented potential. Gifted readers are often avid readers, at least of material that is related to areas of keen interest. They tend to be capable of recognizing the metaphoric implications of readings, not only for the characters and the plots but also for themselves and their own life circumstances.

While no book should ever be restricted to any one group of readers, there are books that are likely to interest advanced readers. Particularly in the middle grades—the early adolescent years—youngsters with significant capabilities in intellectual, creative, leadership, academic, or artistic domains are prone to an array of social, emotional, and scholastic difficulties that are unique from those experienced by other youngsters of this age. Consequently, literature that has explicit applications to these young people can, first, serve to bolster their overall development and, second, enhance appropriate self-advocacy for their talents.

Although the following list of books is intended to provide a foundation for these high-ability youngsters, it is not comprehensive. While we must exercise professional judgment in narrowing book options based on what we know about each student, the ultimate book selection decisions must be left to individual students themselves based on their developing self-knowledge of interests, motivations, and needs for talent development.

Belle Prater's Boy. Ruth White. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996. 208 pp. Two cousins in Appalachia are united by secrets they keep about members of their families. However, intelligence, wit, and a struggle to find authenticity in a social structure rooted in facades also unite them.

Beware, Princess Elizabeth. Carolyn Meyer. Harcourt, 2001. 214 pp. The hurdles that the young Elizabeth Tudor faced on her way to the throne of England are portrayed. Her intelligence, drive, and hard work are emphasized as critical traits that enabled her to address those hurdles successfully.

Chocolate War. Robert Cormier. Bantam Doubleday, 1974. 272 pp. A bright high school freshman, enrolled at a prestigious preparatory school, experiences both acceptance and then exclusion simply because he elects to adhere to his principles. Emphasis is on self-awareness, self-development, and leadership.

Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child. Francisco Jimenez. University of New Mexico Press, 1997. 134 pp. A collection of autobiographical short stories detail the childhood experiences of a rising author. The development of self-identity and talent despite poverty and frequent migration is the focal point.

Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt. Patricia MacLachlan. HarperCollins, 1990. 136 pp. Gifted people surround the life of an 11-year-old cellist as she gradually learns to accept that some things evolve and cannot be forced. Along this journey, she also learns to accept the eccentricities of others as well as her own.

Flight of the Raven. Stephanie S. Tolan. HarperCollins, 2001. 304 pp. After an experimental living program is disbanded, a 9-year-old young man with unusual mental abilities searches for a new life. He is captured by a terrorist militia group and finds himself in a world of violence that challenges how he uses his special skills. This is a sequel to *Welcome to the Ark*.

Gadget. Paul Zindel. HarperCollins, 2001. 192 pp. An inquisitive 13-year-old young man leaves his mother in London during the Blitzkrieg for a seemingly safer location, joining his physicist father at Los Alamos, New Mexico. There, he becomes involved in the intrigue surrounding the development of the first atomic bombs.

Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook. Judy Galbraith and Jim Delisle. Free Spirit, 1997. 304 pp. Perhaps the most comprehensive guide for adolescents who wear the label "gifted and talented," this source reads like a "how to" book as well as like a collection of first-hand interviews.

Girls and Young Women Leading the Way. Frances A. Karnes & Suzanne M. Bean. Free Spirit, 1993. 168 pp. Twenty first-person stories of girls who utilize their leadership abilities range from projects for the homeless to programs to support endan-

gered species. The passion of each talented girl is accentuated as a means for developing readers' own talents.

Here's to You Rachel Robinson. Judy Blume. Bantam, 1994. 196 pp. When Rachel's brother is expelled from boarding school and returns home, his sarcasm challenges family relationships. Rachel, a gifted and talented seventh grader, at first blames her brother until she looks more analytically at her own life.

I Am the Cheese. Robert Cormier. Pantheon, 1997. 224 pp. As he searches for his father, a young man desperately tries to understand his secret past. He comes to understand, instead, that he must hide those memories if he is to remain alive.

I Hate Being Gifted. Patricia Hermes. Pocket Books, 1992. 128 pp. A sixth-grade girl learns what it is like to sacrifice peer acceptance when she is placed in her school's gifted program. Despite family support, she realizes that it will be her own intelligence that allows her to find happiness in school again.

In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer. Irene G. Opdyke. Vintage Anchor, 2001. 288 pp. This autobiography traces how a Polish teenager, who is separated from her family during Nazi occupation, uses her insight and cunning to save a number of Jews and to help many others.

Libby on Wednesday. Zilpha Keatley Snyder. Bantam Doubleday, 1991. 196 pp. Leaving homeschooling for a public middle school, a gifted girl learns first-hand about socialization. Forced to join a group of writing contest winners, she discovers talents in addition to her wisdom and wit.

The Mozart Season. Virginia Euwer Wolff. Scholastic, 2000. 256 pp. As a 12-year-old is faced with a summer of practice for a violin competition, she grapples with her talents and how they fit into the rest of her life.

MORE TITLES FOR G/T READERS

Dateline Troy by Paul Fleishman
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
Eva by Peter Dickinson
The Examination by Malcolm J. Bosse
Fate Totally Worse than Death by Paul Fleishman
Fighting Ruben Wolfe by Markus Zusack
Rumplestiltskin Problem by Vivian Vande Velde
Slap Your Sides by M.E. Kerr
Three NB's of Julian Drew by James M. Deem
View from Saturday by E. L. Konigsburg
You Don't Know Me by David Klass

Ordinary Genius: The Story of Albert Einstein. Stephanie S. McPherson. Lerner, 1997. 96 pp. Depicting Einstein against the backdrop of his Jewish heritage during the Nazi era, his difficulties in school, shyness, and inability to concentrate on anything not of interest to him are addressed openly. His mental activity, searching for more esoteric answers, is described.

Rookie Arrives. Dygard, Thomas J. Penguin Putnam, 1991. 197 pp. A high school third baseman sets his sights on the majors. As talented as he is, he is overly self-confident, foregoing college to sign with a professional team and then finding himself on the bench.

Running Out of Time. Margaret Peterson Haddix. Simon and Schuster, 1997. 192 pp. A young teen-aged girl's analytical abilities are tapped as her entire community comes to rely on her when disease sweeps over them. As she tackles the challenge, she discovers some things about her community that confound her task.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens. Sean Covey. Simon and Schuster, 1998. 266 pp. A "how-to" book that addresses virtually every aspect of developing a happy, fulfilling life as a teen, the real message is maximization of one's talents in a personally meaningful way.

Tangerine. Edward Bloor. Scholastic, 1998. 294 pp. A talented seventh-grade boy wants desperately to be a star soccer goalie and to achieve the same

status in his parents' eyes as his older football-playing brother. The story of sibling rivalry is cast against the latent violence of the older brother.

Thank You, Mr. Falker. Patricia Polacco. Philomel, 1998. 35 pp. Told in picture book style, this autobiographical account depicts great talent hidden behind learning problems. The author's struggle to learn to read takes place against a backdrop of peer abuse and adult intervention.

True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle. Avi. William Morrow, 1997. 229 pp. During an Atlantic voyage from school in England to home in Rhode Island, a 12-year-old girl learns quickly to rely on her intelligence and leadership abilities for survival amidst difficult circumstances.

Welcome to the Ark. Stephanie S. Tolan. William Morrow, 2000. 256 pp. Four highly intelligent youngsters are selected to participate in an experiment. Living as a family with two doctors as parental figures, they learn from one another and from other talented youth via the Internet. They soon recognize a shared concern about increasing world violence and a compelling desire to halt it.

When No One Was Looking. Rosemary Wells. Penguin Putnam, 2000. 224 pp. Talented in tennis, a 14-year-old girl struggles to win a championship while she also struggles with an envious sister and loving yet pushy parents. She examines the fine line between providing support for gifted athletes and pushing talents to extremes.

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