

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

All book summaries are provided by the publisher or written by committee members.

Any available unabridged edition of a title is acceptable.

- Acevedo, Elizabeth. ***With the Fire on High***. HarperTeen, 2019. Teen mother Emoni Santiago struggles to finish high school while pursuing her dream of becoming a chef. *Realistic fiction*
- Allen, Sarah Addison. ***Other Birds***. St. Martin's Press, 2022. When Zoey comes to claim her deceased mother's apartment on Mallow Island, she meets her quirky and secretive neighbors, including a girl on the run, two estranged middle-aged sisters, a lonely chef, a legendary writer, and three ghosts. *Realistic fiction*
- Arden, Katherine. ***The Bear and the Nightingale***. Del Rey, 2017. After Vasilisa's new stepmother forbids her family from honoring the household spirits at the edge of the wilderness in medieval Russia, misfortune stalks the village and evil creatures of the forest creep nearer. *Fantasy, series*
- Bardugo, Leigh. ***The Familiar***. Flatiron. 2024. In 16th-century Madrid, Luzia, a young kitchen servant, secretly uses magic to cope with her difficult circumstances while dreaming of a better life. When her magic is discovered, she's drawn into a competition where she must rely on her wits and an immortal familiar to survive the contest, the Spanish Inquisition, and a world where everyone has a secret agenda. *Fantasy*
- Bauermeister, Erica. ***The Scent Keeper***. St. Martin's Press, 2020. Growing up on a small island that only she and her father inhabit, Emmeline longs to understand the mysterious scents her father has stored in the little drawers lining the cabin walls. After her father's sudden death, Emmeline must learn to live in the real world and face secrets from her father's past. *Realistic fiction*
- Bennett, Brit. ***The Vanishing Half***. Riverhead Books, 2020. The Vignes twin sisters will always be identical, but after growing up together in a small, southern black community and running away at age sixteen, it's not just the shape of their daily lives that is different; it's everything. Ten years later, one sister lives with her black daughter in the same town she once tried to escape. The other secretly passes for white, and her white husband knows nothing of her past. Still, their fates remain intertwined. *Historical fiction*
- Boulley, Angeline. ***Firekeeper's Daughter***. Holt, 2021. Daunis, who is part Ojibwe, puts her college dreams on hold at the University of Michigan to care for her mother and reluctantly becomes involved in the investigation of a series of drug-related deaths. *American Indian Youth Award 2022, Printz Award 2022, William C. Morris Award 2022, mystery, series*
- Boulley, Angeline. ***Warrior Girl Unearthed***. Holt, 2023. Perry Firekeeper-Birch gets more than she bargained for during a summer internship when she is propelled into a mystery involving the disappearance and murder of Indigenous women and a heist to repatriate the remains of her tribal ancestors. *Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards 2023, mystery, series*
- Cameron, Sharon. ***Bluebird***. Scholastic, 2021. In 1946, teen Eva travels from the rubble of Berlin to America to seek justice and find the Nazi behind a horrific experiment called Project Bluebird. *Historical fiction*

HAI SLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

- Choo, Yangsze. ***The Night Tiger***. Flatiron, 2019. In 1930s Malaysia, a plucky dance-hall girl longing for adventure and a young houseboy seeking to fulfill his dead master's dying wish cross paths over the discovery of a severed finger that is shrouded in Chinese superstition and that may be connected to a series of grisly "tiger" attacks. *Historical fiction*
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. ***The Water Dancer***. Random House, 2019. Hiram Walker lost his mother and all memory of her when he was a child, but he is gifted with a mysterious power. Hiram almost drowns but is saved from the depths by a force, a blue light that lifts him and lands him a mile away. So begins an unexpected journey into the covert war on slavery that takes Hiram from the corrupt grandeur of Virginia's plantations to desperate guerrilla cells in the wilderness, from the coffin of the deep South to dangerously idealistic movements in the North. *Historical fiction*
- Contreras, Ingrid Rojas. ***Fruit of the Drunken Tree***. Doubleday, 2018. Two girls, one rich and one the maid of the rich girl's family, become friends despite their backgrounds and the violence that surrounds them in Colombia during the 1990s. *Historical fiction*
- Crane, Rebekah. ***The Upside of Falling Down***. Skyscape, 2018. Struggling with amnesia after surviving a plane crash, Clementine Haas escapes from the hospital where her father sits in the waiting room. She decides to abandon her old identity and hide out in the sleepy town of Waterville, Ireland, as she searches for herself in the company of Kieran O'Connell. *Realistic fiction*
- Deonn, Tracy. ***Legendborn***. McElderry Books, 2020. To discover the truth behind her mother's mysterious death, a teenage girl infiltrates a magical secret society called the Legendborn, which claims to be the descendants of King Arthur and his knights. *Coretta Scott King-John Steptoe Award for New Talent 2021, Ignyte Award-Young Adult-Best Novel 2021, NCETA Ragan-Rubin Award for Literary Achievement 2021, fantasy*
- Dimaline, Cherie. ***The Marrow Thieves***. Cormorant Books, 2017. Frenchie, an orphan from the Métis tribe, and his found family members have been on the run from the Recruiters, people intent on stealing Indigenous people to harvest their bone marrow to cure dreamlessness. *Amy Mathers Teen Book Award 2017, CODE Burt Award for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Young Adult Literature 2017, Dystopia*
- Durand, Élodie. ***Parenthesis***. Top Shelf Productions, 2021. A triumphant graphic memoir, *Parenthesis* narrates the author's experience with tumor-related epilepsy—losing herself and finding herself again. *Graphic novel*
- Dylan, Kate. ***Mindwalker***. Hodder & Stoughton, 2022. Sil Sarrah is a Syntex Corporation "Mindwalker" with a brain-implanted supercomputer that lets her remotely control field agents' minds, keeping them out of danger, but she finds herself caught between the corporation and anti-corporate rebels who want to take it down. *Science fiction, series*
- Eberhardt, Jennifer L. ***Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do***. Viking, 2019. A scientific, investigative, and personal look at bias in different aspects of our lives and what we can do about it. *Nonfiction*
- Elle, J. ***House of Marionne***. Razorbill, 2023. Quell, a 17-year-old girl who has been on the run for most of her life to stay ahead of the Dragun, hunters intent on killing those like Quell with dark magic, hides in plain sight at her grandmother's magical finishing school where she learns to be a debutante while navigating her feelings for her mentor—a Dragun in training. *Fantasy*

H AISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

- Finlay, Adrienne. *Your One and Only*. Houghton Mifflin, 2018. In a perfect world where only clones exist after humanity and human imperfections have died off, Jack, the only genuine human in existence, longs for acceptance. *Science fiction*
- Garmus, Bonnie. *Lessons in Chemistry*. Doubleday, 2022. Elizabeth Zott is not an average woman of the 1960s; she's a chemist who ends up hosting her own cooking show, where her unusual approach to cooking and her independent streak teach women to shake up a lot more in their lives than just their recipes. *Historical Fiction, humor*
- Girma, Tigest. *Immortal Dark*. Little, Brown, 2024. Orphaned heiress Kidan Adane infiltrates Uxlay University to find her missing sister, where she encounters vampire-like creatures called draniacs. The university is filled with morally grey figures, each hiding dangerous truths. As Kidan unravels its mysteries and navigates a simmering, perilous romance, she must confront her own violent nature and a looming threat that could upend the fragile balance between humans and vampires. *Horror*
- Green, John. *Everything is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection*. Penguin Crash Course Books, 2025. In 2019, John Green met Henry, a young tuberculosis patient in Sierra Leone, and their friendship inspired Green to advocate for better treatment, access, and awareness of healthcare inequities. *Everything Is Tuberculosis* tells Henry's story alongside the scientific and social history of TB, highlighting how human choices influence its impact and future. *Nonfiction*
- Gregson, Marc. *Sky's End*. Peachtree, 2024. Sixteen-year-old Conrad enters a deadly competition to restore his power and rescue his sister from their devious uncle. *Fantasy*
- Haig, Matt. *Midnight Library*. Viking, 2020. Nora Seed finds herself faced with the possibility of changing her life for a new one, following a different career, undoing old breakups, and realizing her dreams of becoming a glaciologist; she must search within herself as she travels through the Midnight Library to decide what is truly fulfilling in life, and what makes it worth living in the first place. *Fantasy*
- Hannah, Kristin. *The Great Alone*. St. Martin's Press, 2018. In Alaska during the 1970s, teenager Leni observes her parents cope with her father's PTSD and its effect on their relationship. As the family struggles to survive the brutal cold and dark landscape, Leni falls in love, discovers a supportive community, and copes with her family's difficult dynamics. *Historical fiction*
- Harmel, Kristin. *The Book of Lost Names*. Gallery Books, 2020. A historical novel about a young woman with a talent for forgery who helps hundreds of Jewish children flee the Nazis. Inspired by a true story from World War II. *Historical fiction*
- Harpman, Jacqueline. *I Who Have Never Known Men*. Transit Books, 2022. Thirty-nine women and one young girl, held captive in a closely guarded underground bunker, must learn to navigate life using their friendships with one another in this dystopian novel. Originally published in 1997. *Dystopia*
- Heller, Peter. *The River*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2019. An idyllic summer canoe trip down a Canadian river turns into a race for survival when a wildfire is spotted. The two young men overhear a violent argument in the woods, and the woman they overheard goes missing. *Adventure fiction*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

- Ishiguro, Kazuo. ***Klara and the Sun***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2021. Here is the story of Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, who, from her place in the store, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse and of those who pass on the street outside. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her. *Klara and the Sun* offers a look at our changing world through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator, one who explores the fundamental question: what does it mean to love? *Science fiction*
- Kingfisher, T. ***A House with Good Bones***. Tor Nightfire, 2023. In *A House with Good Bones*, Sam Montgomery returns to her mother's home in North Carolina, only to discover unsettling changes in the once-charming house. As she investigates her mother's fearful behavior, Sam uncovers hidden secrets that challenge the family's idyllic facade, leading her to confront a dark and buried truth. *Horror*
- Krueger, William Kent. ***This Tender Land***. Atria Books, 2019. Four orphans flee from heartless, ruthless caretakers and travel down the Gilead River in a canoe during the Great Depression in search of self and home. *Historical fiction*
- Kuang, R. F. (Rebecca F.). ***Babel***. Harper, 2022. Robin, a Chinese orphan raised in Great Britain, must decide between spying for an underground resistance movement or continuing his education and work in the great linguistic center, Babel, which dispenses the magical silver that powers the colonial systems of the world. *Alex Award 2022, Historical fantasy*
- Lee, Kristen R. ***Required Reading for the Disenfranchised Freshman***. Ember, 2023. At the request of her mother, seventeen-year-old Savannah Howard begins attending Wooddale University, a predominantly white, Ivy League school, where she deals with multiple racial incidents that cause her to step up and act. *Realistic fiction*
- Lehmann, Kat. ***Small Stones from the River: Meditations and Micropoems***. 29 Trees, 2017. Includes 180 original micropoems, haikus, tanka, and short prose entries that reflect on the beauty and wondrous nature of life. *Poetry*
- Liggett, Kim. ***The Grace Year***. Wednesday Books, 2019. Tierney James dreams of a better life—but as her own grace year draws near, she quickly realizes that there's more to fear about the grace year than the brutal elements and the poachers in the woods. *Science fiction, dystopia*
- Limón, Ada. ***Bright Dead Things***. Milkweed Editions, 2015. *Bright Dead Things* examines the chaos that is life, the dangerous thrill of living in a world you know you have to leave one day, and the search to find something that is disorderly and marvelous. *Poetry*
- Lockhart, E. ***Genuine Fraud***. Delacorte, 2017. Jule is on the run and hiding out in a resort in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Her story is told in reverse, with unpredictable twists that will keep readers guessing until the very end. *Mystery*
- Mandel, Emily St. John. ***Sea of Tranquility***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. "The award-winning, best-selling author of *Station Eleven* and *The Glass Hotel* returns with a novel of art, time, love, and plague that takes the reader from an island off Vancouver in 1912 to a dark colony of the moon three hundred years later, unfurling a story of humanity across centuries and planets. *Carnegie Medal for Excellence Nominee, science fiction*
- Marrs, John. ***The Passengers***. Berkley, 2019. Just as self-driving cars become the trusted, safer norm, eight people are in a terrifying situation. Suddenly, the doors lock, the cars have been completely taken over, and a mysterious voice informs them they are being driven to their death. Their panic is being

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

broadcast to millions around the world while the mysterious voice calls on the public to decide which person to save. *Mystery*

Mastai, Elan. *All Our Wrong Todays*. Dutton, 2017. In a twist of fate, Tom Barren travels from a utopian society to a dystopian wasteland. Will he go back to the idealistic world he came from or stay in the alternate reality that finally feels like home? *Science fiction*

McCrina, Amanda. *Traitor*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020. In the bloody ethnic fighting between Poles and Ukrainians during World War II that has claimed the lives of almost all of Tolya's loved ones, it's almost impossible for him to know who to believe in and even harder for him to know who to trust. *Historical fiction*

McManus, Karen M. *One of Us is Lying*. Delacorte, 2017. A modern-day Breakfast Club in which four students become murder suspects when the ruthless high school gossip blogger dies mysteriously in detention; they were the only ones in the room and everyone wants to know...who killed Simon Kelleher. *Mystery, series*

Miller, Madeline. *Circe*. Little, Brown, 2018. This is the intimate story of Circe, daughter of the sun god Helios, who could transform her enemies into wild beasts and was banished by Zeus to a deserted island, as she crosses paths with several famous mythological figures such as Odysseus, Daedalus, Icarus, Athena, and the Minotaur. *Fantasy*

Miranda, Megan. *The Last Guest House*. Simon & Schuster, 2019. A suspenseful novel about an idyllic town in Maine dealing with the suspicious death of one of their own--and her best "summer" friend, who is trying to uncover the truth...before fingers point her way. *Mystery*

Moreno-Garcia, Silvia. *Mexican Gothic*. Del Ray, 2020. A darkly enchanting reimagining of Gothic fantasy in which a spirited young woman discovers the haunting secrets of a beautiful old mansion in 1950s Mexico. *Horror*

Nezhukumatathil, Aimee. *World of Wonders: In Praise of Whale Sharks, Fireflies, and Other Astonishments*. Milkweed Editions, 2020. A collection of essays by an award-winning poet on the natural world and how it can teach and inspire us all. *Nonfiction*

Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*. Spiegel & Grau, 2015. Born the son of a Swiss white father and a black Xhosa mother during South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor Noah's existence was forbidden and punishable by law. Noah's remarkable story is told with an honesty that is refreshing, moving, and laugh-out-loud funny. *Nonfiction*

Nuila, Ricardo. *The People's Hospital: Hope and Peril in American Medicine*. Scribner, 2023. Through the heart-wrenching stories of five of his patients, Dr. Ricardo Nuila reveals the brokenness of America's healthcare system and how Ben Taub Hospital in Houston, Texas, a publicly funded hospital, is making a difference by emphasizing people over payments. *Nonfiction*

O'Farrell, Maggie. *The Marriage Portrait: A Novel*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. A novel set in Renaissance Italy, and centering on the captivating young duchess Lucrezia de' Medici. *Historical fiction*

Parks, Carrie Stuart. *Woman in Shadow*. Thomas Nelson, 2021. Darby Graham, a forensic linguist in need of a vacation, heads to a remote ranch in Idaho. Her rest is shattered before it even begins after an earthquake strikes and fires mysteriously appear around the town. With danger seemingly around

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

every corner, can Darby use her skills to reveal an arsonist, and can she trust the one man who seems to understand her? *Mystery*

Philippe, Ben. *The Field Guide to the North American Teenager*. Balzer + Bray, 2019. When Norris, a Black French Canadian, starts his junior year at an Austin, Texas, high school, he views his fellow students as clichés from "a bad 90s teen movie." *Morris Award, realistic fiction*

Quinn, Kate. *The Rose Code*. William Morrow, 2021. Joining the elite Bletchley Park code-breaking team during World War II, three women from very different walks of life uncover a spy's dangerous agenda years later against the backdrop of the royal wedding of Elizabeth and Philip. *Alex Award List 2022, historical fiction*

Reid, Taylor Jenkins. *Carrie Soto Is Back*. Ballantine Books, 2022. The year is 1989, and Carrie Soto, the "Battle Axe" of women's tennis, is thirty-two when she retires as the women's champion of professional tennis. Six years later, Carrie comes out of retirement determined to defend her title against the up-and-coming young star Nikki Chan. Can she overcome her aging body, her critics, and the strained relationship with her trainer father to reclaim her status as the greatest champion of all time? *Realistic fiction*

Rice, Waubgeshig. *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. ECW Press, 2018. Fear and panic grip the residents of the remote Anishinaabe reservation after prolonged power outages and dwindling food supplies. Turning to the ancient ways, the residents and their unlikely leader hope to restore order amid the chaos. *Dystopia*

Richardson, Kim Michele. *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek*. Sourcebooks, 2019. Cussy's story is set in the Appalachian Mountains in the 1930s and is inspired by the true lives of the blue-skinned people of Kentucky. With courage and determination, she sets out on her pack mule to deliver books and hope to families who desperately need both. *Historical fiction*

Roe, Robin. *A List of Cages*. Hyperion, 2017. Adam, a high school senior, rescues Julian, a freshman who happens to be his former foster brother, from an abusive situation. *Realistic fiction*

Ross, Rebecca. *Divine Rivals*. Wednesday Books, 2023. As gods awaken and war once again engulfs the world, rival journalists Iris Winnow and Roman Kitt form a secret bond through magically delivered letters that draw them from newsroom competition to the front lines, where love, family, and the fate of mankind hang in the balance. *Fantasy, series*

Schwab, V. E. *Invisible Life of Addie LaRue*. Tor Books, 2020. Making a Faustian bargain to live forever but never be remembered, a woman from early eighteenth-century France endures unacknowledged. 300 years later, she meets a man in a hidden bookstore who remembers her name. *Fantasy*

See, Lisa. *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*. Scribner, 2017. Three generations of women living in rural China adapt to life in the 20th century. Li-yan leaves a part of herself there as she embarks on a career as a businesswoman and tea expert, but finds more of a "home" in the USA than she ever expected. *Historical fiction*

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

- Shusterman, Neal, and Jared Shusterman. ***Dry***. Simon & Schuster, 2018. A lengthy California drought escalates to catastrophic proportions, turning Alyssa’s quiet suburban street into a war zone, and she is forced to make impossible choices if she and her brother are to survive. *Science fiction, dystopia, survival, adventure*
- Stamper, Vesper. ***A Cloud of Outrageous Blue***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2020. When Edyth loses everything in an instant, she is sent to live in the priory where she bumps into a boy from her past and learns to navigate her new life while falling in love during the Great Plague of 1348. *Magical realism, historical fiction*
- Stanton, Doug. ***12 Strong: The Declassified True Story of the Horse Soldiers***. Scribner, 2017. Immediately after 9/11, a small unit of the elite Special Forces was sent to Afghanistan to defeat the Taliban, using horses rather than tanks. *Nonfiction*
- Tahir, Sabaa. ***All My Rage***. Razorbill, 2022. A family extending from Pakistan to California deals with generations of young love, old regrets, and forgiveness. *Realistic fiction*
- Turton, Stuart. ***The 7½ Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle***. Sourcebooks, 2018. Every day Aiden wakes up in a different body on the day of a large party where Evelyn Hardcastle will die at the end of the night. Every day is a new chance to save her, but each host has unique ways of preventing him from solving the mystery. *Costa Book Award, mystery*
- Van Pelt, Shelby. ***Remarkably Bright Creatures***. Ecco, 2022. Tova Sullivan is a widow who befriends Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus, while working the night shift at Sowell Bay Aquarium. The unlikely friendship just may help Tova solve the 30-year mystery of her only son’s disappearance and heal the wounds of her past. *Realistic fiction*
- Weir, Andy. ***Project Hail Mary: A Novel***. Ballantine Books, 2021. While the Earth’s sun is dimming at an alarming rate, high school science teacher Ryland Grace wakes up alone on a spacecraft millions of miles away from home and tries to save humankind with the help of an unexpected ally in this exhilarating thrill ride of a novel. *Science fiction*
- Westover, Tara. ***Educated: A Memoir***. Random House, 2018. Growing up in Idaho in a Mormon survivalist family that values hard work over public education, the author shares stories about her nontraditional family life. With a desire to attend college, Ms. Westover prepares independently for entrance exams to enroll at Brigham Young and, eventually, at Cambridge for a Ph.D. *Alex Award 2019, nonfiction*
- Yoon, Daniel. ***Frankly in Love***. Putnam, 2019. High school senior Frank Li creates a foolproof plan to “fake date” a fellow Korean American so he can date a girl his parents won’t accept, but all does not go smoothly as he comes to question everything he knows about love, his family, and himself. *Realistic fiction*
- Zentner, Jeff. ***Goodbye Days***. Crown, 2017. “Where are you guys? Text me back.” Carver did not know his text would be the last his three best friends would see. He blames himself for the accident. As Carver deals with his grief, his friend’s grandmother requests that he spend a “goodbye day” with her to share memories and say a proper farewell to her grandson. Carver questions whether he is mentally ready for a “goodbye day” as other families begin asking for one, too. *Realistic fiction*
- Zevin, Gabrielle. ***Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. Sam and Sadie, video

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2025
Grade 11 and Grade 12

game designers, reconnect in college to launch a hit game that catapults them to superstar fame in the gaming industry, only to face rivalry, betrayal, tragedy, and love amid the spotlight. *Realistic fiction*

Zusak, Markus. *Bridge of Clay*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2018. Full of imagery, symbolism, and descriptive language, Zusak crafts a story about five Australian brothers, their pets, their parents, and a bridge. The novel's themes revolve around loss, grief, family, journey, and redemption. *Realistic fiction*

Compiled by:

Julia Beddingfield, *Second Baptist School*

Lakeisha Branch, *The Kinkaid School*

Erica DiBella (Chair), *St. John's School*

Kate Hall, *Episcopal High School*

Shannon Jones, *Episcopal High School*

Traci Marlowe, *Episcopal High School*

Daisy Ngo, *The Kinkaid School*

Suzanne Webb, *St. John's School*

Copyright © 2026 Houston Area Independent Schools Library Network