

HAISLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026
Grade 9 and Grade 10

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

Any available unabridged edition of a title is acceptable.

- Abawi, Atia. ***A Land of Permanent Goodbyes***. Penguin, 2019. After their home in Syria is bombed, Tareq, his father, and his younger sister seek refuge, first with extended family in Raqqa and then abroad. *Realistic fiction*
- Azar, Kiera. ***Thorn Season***. Storytide, 2025. The royal debutante "Rose Season" has begun, forcing Alissa into a treacherous web of intrigue, danger, and unexpected love, where she must conceal her forbidden powers and survive long enough to discover who she truly wants to be. *Fantasy*
- Barnes, Jennifer. ***The Inheritance Games***. Little, Brown, 2020. Avery Grambs' fortunes change instantly when billionaire Tobias Hawthorne dies and leaves Avery virtually his entire fortune, but Avery has no idea why -- or even who Tobias Hawthorne is. *Mystery, series*
- Biles, Simone, with Michelle Burford. ***Courage to Soar: A Body in Motion, A Life in Balance***. Zondervan, 2016. Olympic gold medalist Simone Biles describes how she overcame early difficulties with the help of her family and God to realize her dream of becoming an elite gymnast. *Nonfiction*
- Bowen, Natasha. ***Skin of the Sea***. Random House, 2021. Transformed by the goddess Yemoja into a Mami Wati, an African mermaid charged with collecting the souls of those who die at sea, Simi goes against the gods to save a living boy, Kola, from drowning. *Fantasy, series*
- Brody, Jessica. ***The Chaos of Standing Still***. Simon Pulse, 2017. Ryn, eighteen, trapped by a massive blizzard in the Denver airport, meets some unique characters who help her cope with survivor's guilt on the first anniversary of her best friend's death. *Realistic fiction*
- Brooks, Nick. ***Promise Boys***. Holt, 2023. Everyone inside and outside the prestigious Urban Promise Prep School, a school for low-income students with college aspirations, has an opinion on who killed principal Moore, but J.B., Ramon, and Trey, the students and the main suspects, know things about the school and the principal that could upset everything. *Mystery*
- Chokshi, Roshani. ***The Gilded Wolves***. Wednesday Books, 2019. Paris, 1889: In this city, no one keeps tabs on secrets better than treasure hunter and wealthy hotelier Séverin Montagnet-Alarie. But when the all-powerful society, the Order of Babel, seeks him out for help, Séverin is offered a treasure that he never imagined: his true inheritance. *Fantasy, series*
- Collins, Suzanne. ***Sunrise on the Reaping***. Scholastic, 2025. During the 50th Hunger Games Quarter Quell, twice as many tributes are taken, and when Haymitch Abernathy is chosen from District 12, he is torn from the girl he loves and forced into a brutal arena where he realizes he's been set up to fail but decides to fight in a way that will echo far beyond the Games. *Science fiction, dystopia, series*
- Crews, James, ed. ***How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope***. Storey, 2021. This poetry collection invites you to be still for a moment and reflect on the beauty and joy found, no matter what is going on in your life. *Poetry*

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- Crouch, Blake. ***Recursion: A Novel***. Crown, 2019. When investigating a suicide, New York City police officer Barry Sutton discovers an outbreak of a memory-altering disease caused by a new technology created to preserve treasured memories. *Science fiction*
- Dass, Sarah. ***Where the Rhythm Takes You***. Balzer + Bray, 2021. Set in Trinidad and Tobago and loosely based on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, it is a story about second-chance love, loss, and finding one's way. *Romance*
- Dayton, Arwen Elys. ***Stronger, Faster, and More Beautiful***. Delacorte, 2018. Six interconnected stories in near-future and far-future settings explore how far humans will go to stand out while continuing to fit in on the path to perfection. *Science fiction*
- Doty, James R. ***Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart***. Penguin, 2016. James Doty, a distinguished neurosurgeon, reflects on his impoverished childhood, his alcoholic father, and his career in medicine to show readers how it is fundamentally possible to change the thinking patterns in one's brain. *Nonfiction*
- Ewing, Eve L. ***Electric Arches***. Haymarket, 2017. A visually explosive collection of poetry and narrative prose that explores black girlhood and womanhood. *Alex Award 2018, poetry*
- Faizal, Hafsa. ***A Tempest of Tea***. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024. Arthie Casimir, a criminal mastermind, transforms her tearoom into an illegal bloodhouse for vampires, but when her establishment is threatened, she forms an unlikely alliance and assembles a misfit crew to infiltrate vampire society and uncovers a world-threatening conspiracy. *Fantasy, series*
- Forna, Namina. ***The Gilded Ones***. Delacorte 2021. When sixteen-year-old Deka undergoes the Ritual of Purity, everything goes disastrously wrong as her blood runs gold—the mark of impurity. Forced to choose between certain death or joining the emperor's army of elite alaki warriors, who defend the empire from the terrifying death shrieks, Deka soon discovers that nothing is as it appears. *Fantasy, series*
- Garber, Stephanie. ***Once upon a Broken Heart***. Flatiron Books, 2021. Desperate to stop her beloved from marrying another, sixteen-year-old Evangeline Fox strikes a deal with the mythic Prince of Hearts, leading her down a dangerous path that may ultimately end in her destruction. *Fantasy, series*
- Gervais, Alison. ***The Silence Between Us***. Blink, 2019. Deaf teen Maya Harris must navigate a new life and love in this #OwnVoices novel. When Maya is forced to attend a hearing school, she sets out to prove that her lack of hearing will not stop her from pursuing her dreams. *Realistic fiction*
- Grace, Adalyn. ***All the Stars and Teeth***. Imprint, 2020. Princess Amora Montara has spent her entire life training to be High Animancer—the master of souls. To secure her place as heir to the throne, she must prove her mastery of the monarchy's dangerous soul magic. She strikes a deal with Bastian, a mysterious pirate: he'll help her prove she's fit to rule if she'll help him reclaim his stolen magic. But sailing the kingdom holds more wonder—and more peril—than Amora anticipated. *Fantasy*
- Gray, Ayana. ***Beasts of Prey***. Putnam's, 2021. Sixteen-year-old indentured Beastkeeper Koffi and seventeen-year-old warrior candidate Ekon forge an unusual alliance and venture into the Greater Jungle to hunt down a monster that has been menacing their city for a century. *Fantasy, series*

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- Grolleau, Fabien. *Audubon: On the Wings of the World*. Nobrow, 2017. In the early 1800s, John James Audubon, an ornithologist, traversed America studying birds. Despite challenging weather and wildlife, he persevered to create beautiful illustrations that are still admired today. *Graphic novel*
- Harrow, Alix E. *The Ten Thousand Doors of January*. Orbit, 2019. A young woman embarks on a fantastical journey of self-discovery with the help of a mysterious book, good friends, and a bad dog. *Fantasy, historical fiction*
- Hitchcock, Bonnie-Sue. *The Smell of Other People's Houses*. Wendy Lamb, 2016. In quite possibly the best-titled novel in recent years, this redemptive coming-of-age story is told by four unique teen voices living in 1970s Alaska. *Historical fiction*
- Hunter, C. C. *This Heart of Mine: A Novel*. Wednesday Books, 2018. After a heart transplant, seventeen year-old Leah is plagued with dreams of the donor's suicide . . . or was it murder? Leah sets out to unravel the secret with the help of the donor's twin brother. *Realistic fiction*
- Ibañez, Isabel. *What the River Knows*. Wednesday Books, 2023. Set in 1884, nineteen-year-old Inez travels to Egypt after the sudden death of her parents to uncover the truth about their deaths, and as she attempts to unravel the mysteries her parents sought, she becomes a pawn in a larger game that threatens to kill her. *Fantasy, historical fiction, series*
- Katz, Jon. *Saving Simon: How a Rescue Donkey Taught Me the Meaning of Compassion*. Random House, 2015. In this heartfelt, thoughtful, and inspiring memoir, the author tells the story of his beloved rescue donkey, Simon, and the wondrous ways that animals make us wiser and kinder people. *Nonfiction*
- Klune, TJ. *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. Tor Books, 2020. A magical island. A dangerous task. A burning secret. Linus Baker lives in a tiny house with a devious cat and his old records. As a Case Worker at the Department in Charge of Magical Youth, he spends his days overseeing the well being of children in orphanages. He is unexpectedly given a curious and highly classified assignment: travel to Marsyas Island Orphanage, where six dangerous children reside. *Alex Award 2021, fantasy*
- Kooser, Ted. *Delights & Shadows: Poems*. Copper Canyon Press, 2004. This collection of poems by a former Poet Laureate of the United States describes the habits and struggles of daily life. *Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry 2005, poetry*
- Krosoczka, Jarrett. *Hey, Kiddo*. Graphix, 2018. In his deeply personal graphic novel memoir, Krosoczka illustrates the devastating impact his mother's addiction had on his childhood and how his supportive grandparents and his love of art ultimately saved his life. *Harvey Award, Black-Eyed Susan Award, graphic novel*
- Lee, Shannon, and Fonda Lee. *Breath of the Dragon*. Wednesday Books, 2025. Sixteen-year-old Jun, determined to restore his father's honor despite not being breathmarked, secretly enters the elite Guardian's Tournament, where he discovers he is fighting for the country's fate. *Fantasy*
- Lee, Stacey. *The Downstairs Girl*. Putnam's, 2019. Set in 1890, seventeen-year-old Jo Kuan serves as a lady's maid to the harsh Caroline Payne, the daughter of one of Atlanta's wealthiest men. In secret, she writes an advice column for high-society women under the pen name "Miss Sweetie." *Historical fiction*

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- Lim, Elizabeth. ***Six Crimson Cranes***. Alfred A. Knopf, 2021. The exiled Princess Shiori must unravel the curse that turned her six brothers into cranes. She is assisted by her spurned betrothed, a capricious dragon, and a paper bird brought to life by her own magic. *Fantasy*
- Limón, Ada. ***The Hurting Kind: Poems***. Milkweed Editions, 2022. Beautiful, simple language brings to life profound thoughts about life and our connections to self, others, and the world of nature we live within. *Poetry*
- Little Badger, Darcie. ***A Snake Falls to Earth***. Levine Querido, 2021. Fifteen-year-olds Nina and Oli come from different worlds--she is a Lipan Apache living in Texas, and he is a cottonmouth from the Reflecting World--but their lives intersect when Oli journeys to Earth to find a cure for his ailing friend, and they end up helping each other save their families. *Newbery Honor Book 2022, fantasy*
- Lowham, Elizabeth. ***Casters and Crowns***. Shadow Mountain, 2024. After Crown Princess Aria attempts to prevent war by negotiating with the magic-wielding Widow Morton, her failed bargain leaves her cursed to endure one hundred sleepless days that will end in her death—unless the charming Baron Reeves can break the spell. *Fantasy*
- Lucier, Makiia. ***Dragonfruit***. Clarion, 2024. Exiled after her father steals a legendary seadragon egg, Hanalei returns home years later, crossing paths with Prince Sam, who seeks a cure for his ailing mother. As they battle enemies and search for redemption, they discover the greatest danger may be the dragonfruit itself. *Fantasy*
- Marquis, Kristen. ***The Davenports***. Dial Books, 2023. The Davenports are one of the few Black families of immense wealth and status in 1910 Chicago, and the two daughters, Olivia and Helen, are finding their way and finding love--even where they are not supposed to. *Historical fiction*
- Méndez, Yamile Saied. ***Furia***. Algonquin, 2020. Seventeen-year-old Camila Hassan, a rising soccer star in Rosario, Argentina, dreams of playing professionally, in defiance of her father's wishes and at the risk of her budding romance with Diego. *Pura Belpre Author Award, 2021, realistic fiction*
- McGee, Katharine. ***American Royals***. Random House, 2019. An exciting glimpse into a speculative future where the heirs of George Washington reign in a court filled with intrigue, drama, and romance. *Romance, series*
- McNamee, Graham. ***Defender***. Wendy Lamb, 2016. Seventeen-year-old Tyne and her boyfriend Stick investigate a decades-old murder after she finds the body of a girl in the basement wall of her apartment building. *Mystery*
- McWilliams, Kelly. ***Mirror Girls***. Little, Brown, 2022. Biracial twin girls are separated at birth, one is white-passing. They reunite as teenagers in the 1950s in the state of Georgia and must navigate the horrors and ghosts of the past to end the family curse. *Historical fiction*
- Menon, Sandhya. ***When Dimple Met Rishi***. Simon Pulse, 2017. When Dimple Shah and Rishi Patel meet at a Stanford University summer program, Dimple is avoiding her parents' obsession with "marriage prospects," but Rishi hopes to woo her into accepting an arranged marriage with him. *Realistic fiction*
- Meyer, Marissa. ***Gilded***. Feiwel and Friends, 2021. After saving two magical maidens from the hellhounds of Erlking, Serilda, a poor miller's daughter with a talent for storytelling, is abducted by the demon and whisked away to his castle, where she is ordered to spin straw into gold, which she cannot do until a mysterious young man offers to help for a price. *Fantasy, series*

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- Montgomery, Sy. *The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness*. Atria Books, 2015. Explores the emotional and physical world of the octopus, a surprisingly complex, intelligent, and spirited creature -- and the remarkable connections it makes with humans, revealing what octopuses can teach us about consciousness. *Nonfiction*
- Moulite, Maika, and Maritza Moulite. *Dear Haiti, Love Alaine*. Inkyard Press, 2019. After an incident at school, seventeen-year-old Alaine is spending spring break in a "volunteer immersion project," toiling away under the ever-watchful eyes of Tati Estelle and her eagle-eyed mother at a new nonprofit in Haiti. *Realistic fiction*
- Nazemian, Abdi. *The Authentics*. HarperCollins, 2017. Daria, an Iranian-American teenager, is tired of the sameness of the school cliques, so she and her friends form the Authentics because they are unique and real. When a school project forces her to trace her family roots, unexpected secrets emerge. *Realistic fiction*
- Otis, Cindy L. *True or False: A CIA Analyst's Guide to Spotting Fake News*. Feiwel and Friends 2020. In *True or False*, former CIA analyst Cindy Otis takes readers through the history and impact of fake news over the centuries, sharing stories from the past and insights that readers today can gain from them. *Nonfiction*
- Pandian, Gigi. *Under Lock & Skeleton Key*. Minotaur, 2022. Following an accident, Tempest Raj returns home seeking the comfort and familiarity of family. While visiting a project for her family's renovation business, the body of Tempest's former stage double is discovered. Believing she was the intended target, Tempest is determined to unravel the mystery of this unsolvable crime. *Mystery, series*
- Padian, Maria. *How to Build a Heart*. Algonquin, 2020. When Izzy Crawford's father, a marine, dies in Iraq, her family moves to Virginia where she attends a private school on a scholarship. Fortunately, her family is selected for a new home by Habitat for Humanity, near where the very attractive Sam lives. Izzy grapples with accepting this new opportunity without leaving behind her old neighbor and best friend just when she's needed most. *Realistic fiction*
- Park, Patricia. *What's Eating Jackie Oh?* Crown, 2024. A Korean American teen defies her family's cultural expectations and immerses herself in the competitive cooking world. Read along for a story set in NYC with a feast of tv drama and side of domestic discoveries. *Realistic fiction*
- Pessl, Marisha. *Darkly*. Delacorte, 2024. "Dia" Gannon has long admired Louisiana Veda, the genius behind Darkly, a game company with a loyal fanbase. So, when Dia is unexpectedly selected for a highly competitive internship alongside six other teens from around the world, she's taken aback. She has never been the type of person who wins anything. Could it be too good to be true? *Mystery*
- Reynolds, Jason. *Ain't Burned All the Bright*. Atheneum, 2022. A smash-up of Jason Reynold's poetry and Jason Griffin's art that reflects upon our need for oxygen and what it means to breathe post pandemic. *Caldecott Honor Book 2023, Poetry and Art*
- Reynolds, Justin A. *Opposite of Always*. Katherine Tegen, 2019. Jack King, a high school senior, is determined to save Kate, a girl he fell hard for at a party, even though he is caught in a time loop in which she dies, and he wakes up the moment they first met. *Realistic fiction*

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- Roat, Sharon Huss. *How to Disappear*. HarperTeen, 2017. When Vicki's best friend moves away, she is consumed by loneliness and anxiety until, on a whim, she invents an Instagram account that forces her out of the shadows. *Realistic fiction*
- Roux, Madeleine. *A Girl Walks into the Forest*. Quill Tree Books, 2025. A journey through the dangerous Gottyar Wood on her way to marry a mysterious count leaves Valla disfigured and rejected, forcing her to find inner strength to survive and reclaim her life. *Fantasy, horror*
- Saedi, Sara. *Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2018. In this memoir set in the 1990s, teenage Sara keeps a diary of life as an Iranian American and her discovery that she and her family entered the United States as undocumented immigrants. *Nonfiction*
- Sedoti, Chelsea. *The Hundred Lies of Lizzie Lovett*. Sourcebooks, 2017. Seventeen-year-old Hawthorn, an endearing and awkward loner, becomes obsessed with the mysterious disappearance of the beautiful and popular Lizzie Lovett. *Mystery*
- Sepetys, Ruta. *The Fountains of Silence*. Philomel, 2019. At the Castellana Hilton in 1957 Madrid, eighteen-year-old Daniel Matheson connects with Ana Moreno through photography - and fate as Daniel discovers the incredibly dark side of the city under Generalissimo Franco's rule. *Historical fiction*
- Sharma, Nisha. *Radha & Jai's Recipe for Romance*. Crown, 2021. While attending the Princeton Academy of the Arts, dancer Radha is determined to invent herself from scratch and, after much convincing, helps Jai, the captain of the Bollywood Beats dance team, have a show-stopping senior year. *Realistic fiction*
- Sheinkin, Steve. *Impossible Escape: A True Story of Survival and Heroism in Nazi Europe*. Roaring Brook, 2023. From award-winning author Steve Sheinkin, a true story of two Jewish teenagers racing against time during the Holocaust--one in hiding in Hungary, and the other in Auschwitz, plotting escape. *Nonfiction*
- Shepherd, Peng. *The Cartographers*. William Morrow, 2022. When Nell's father is found dead in the New York Public Library, she sets out on a dangerous journey to uncover dark family secrets with the help of a mysterious, magical map. *Thriller, magical realism*
- Shusterman, Neal. *Scythe*. Simon & Schuster, 2016. In a Utopian world where there is no war, no unhappiness, and the creation of nanites has eliminated death, overpopulation is the only challenge facing the world. Scythes have been given the power to selectively kill or "glean" the population to keep growth in check. Rowan and Cirta, the newly selected apprentice scythes, internally struggle with "gleaning" and find that the world is no utopia. *Science fiction, series*
- Smith, Colby Cedar. *Call Me Athena: Girl from Detroit*. Andrews McMeel, 2021. This enchanting novel in verse captures one woman's struggle for equality, independence, and identity as a Greek immigrant in troubled 1930s America. *Historical fiction, novel in verse*
- Stevenson, Noelle. *Nimona*. HarperTeen, 2015. Nimona, a young shapeshifter with a knack for villainy, and Lord Ballister Blackheart, a villain with a vendetta, set out to prove that Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin and his friends are not the heroes everyone thinks they are. But Lord Blackheart soon realizes that Nimona's powers are as murky and mysterious as her past, and her unpredictable wild side might be more dangerous than he is willing to admit. *Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album 2016, graphic novel*

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- Stone, Nic. ***Dear Martin***. Crown, 2017. Writing letters to the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., seventeen-year-old college-bound Justyce McAllister struggles to face the reality of race relations today and how they are shaping him. *William C. Morris Award Finalist, realistic fiction, series*
- Takei, George. ***They Called Us Enemy***. Top Shelf Productions, 2019. Actor George Takei, best known for his role as Hikaru Sulu on *Star Trek*, reveals how, at the age of five, his family was forced into Japanese-American internment camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. *Asian/Pacific American Award for Young Adult Literature 2020, graphic memoir*
- Tamani, Liara. ***All the Things We Never Knew***. Greenwillow, 2020. Carli and Rex have an immediate connection and an understanding that must mean first love, but family secrets, disappointments, and basketball, which holds center stage in both their lives, all create complications. *Realistic fiction*
- Taylor, Emily. ***The Otherwhere Post***. Putnam, 2025. To investigate her father's past crimes, eighteen-year-old Maeve poses as a scriptomancy apprentice, which allows her to send letters between worlds. *Fantasy, mystery*
- Treuer, Anton. ***Where Wolves Don't Die***. Levine Querido, 2024. Ezra Cloud, an Ojibwe boy living in Northeast Minneapolis, is sent to a remote part of Canada to live and work with his grandfather after the local bully's house burns down and Ezra is named the prime suspect. *Minnesota Book Award, American Indian Youth Literature Honor 2026, realistic fiction*
- West, Jacqueline. ***Last Things***. Greenwillow, 2019. Anders Thorson, frontman of his metal band, Last Things, is unusually gifted, but strange things in the Minnesota woods near his hometown are threatening him, and then Thea, the new girl in town, shows up to protect him. *Horror, fantasy*
- Yang, Gene Luen. ***Dragon Hoops***. First Second, 2020. At the high school where Gene now teaches, the men's varsity basketball team, the Dragons, is having a phenomenal season that's been decades in the making. Each victory brings them closer to their ultimate goal: the California State Championships. Once Gene gets to know these young all-stars, he realizes that their story is just as thrilling as anything he's seen on a comic book page. *Graphic novel*
- Yang, Gene Luen. ***Superman Smashes the Klan***. D.C. Comics, 2020. When Dr. Lee moves his family to Metropolis, his son Tommy adjusts to the new neighborhood while his daughter Roberta feels out of place, so when the evil Klan of the Fiery Cross begins a string of terrorist attacks on the city, Superman fights them, and Roberta and Tommy soon learn to embrace the unique features that set them apart. *Graphic novel*
- Yoon, Nicola. ***Instructions for Dancing***. Delacorte, 2021. After picking up a book from the library, Evie, who has given up on love, gains the ability to see how other people's romantic relationships will end. *Realistic fiction, romance*
- Zentner, Jeff. ***In the Wild Light***. Crown, 2021. Attending an elite prep school in Connecticut on scholarship with his best friend from their small town in East Tennessee (and secret love), science genius Delaney Doyle, sixteen-year-old Cash Pruitt, deals with emotional pain and loss by writing poetry. *Realistic fiction*

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Zoboi, Ibi, and Yusef Salaam. *Punching the Air*. HarperCollins, 2020. Amal Shahid has always been an artist and a poet. But even in a diverse art school, he's seen as disruptive and unmotivated because of a biased system. Then, one fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighborhood escalates into tragedy. "Boys just being boys" turns out to be true only when those boys are white. *Walter Award, Novel in verse*

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