

**DragonCon 2015
Middle Grade Readers Handout
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MIDDLE GRADE LITERATURE

CHARACTERISTICS

Grades 5-8; some people say Grades 4-8.

The common wisdom is that kids like to read up. 10 year olds are reading about 12 year olds; 8 year olds reading about 10 year olds.

Usual age for protagonist between 9 and 12.

No romance. School stories; friends; adventure; pets; sports; mysteries. Bullies and mean girls and cliques...

Often it's a group or siblings; for example: brother and sister.

Parents aren't integral (kids have to start separating) but the parents are there to leave from and come back to. They can be orphans or in boarding school, but there will be some kind of adult around.

Like young adult books, the story needs to start quickly and move quickly; no meandering pace. Start with a hook and go from there.

Humor is often an element of the story.

They are at the beginning of coming of age, starting to become aware of themselves as independent beings, beginning to take action on their own and bearing the consequences.

A series can start young. If it's a series like Alice by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor or Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling, the character grows up in it. Alice and Harry were ten in their first books: The Agony of Alice and Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Because they grow up, a library may need to move later books to the teen section.

Distinction between 5th to 8th and HS readers. What teens are fascinated by, kids are not interested in. Complicated stories are ok for some middle grade readers. But issues in teen novels like Veronica Roth's Divergent are not issues for 8 year olds.

American Library Association's ALSC: Association of Library Services to Children – Newbery Award is for children up to age 14.

American Library Association's YALSA: Young Adult Library Services Association defines a young adult as being between the Ages of 12 and 18. These categories are not for a type of literature; they are target age groups.

Complexity of materials and how abstract the concept of the book is will determine the readership. According to the stages of cognitive development, deductive thinking is just starting in middle grades. The more abstract the concept, the less meaning it would have for middle grade readers.

A really good reader can read above grade level, but if the subject is so far from the concrete that they know or imagine, it will be harder for the less cognitive reader to follow.

Middle Grade books need to speak to just beyond the experiences of their audience. They should start where the young readers are and move them forward to just beyond that.

*****Most important thing of all is that it's a good story.**

Andrew Clemens, the author of Frindle has his thumb on the pulse of the middle grader. He captures how they think and feel and turns it into an interesting story. Lots of humor in his books

Gordon Korman, author of Nose Pickers from Outer Space, is another author who is extremely popular with middle grade readers. He should be. He wrote his first book when he was a middle grade student. Lots of humor in his books.

Fantasy and Science Fiction are genres that can be a “stretching” reading experience. Young people can suspend their disbelief more quickly than adults. They dive into these imaginative realm, not just with ease but with abandon. They long to be there. It is real for them.

A master of middle grade fantasy is Bruce Coville, author of the Magic Shop series. His new series is The Diary of a Mad Brownie. Enchanted Files #1. This is the first book of projected three titles. Hilarious. Written in diary format. Different characters featured in each title. Also Goblins in the Castle: A Minstrel Book. He started with My Teacher Is an Alien and My Teacher Ate My Homework.

Centaur Rising by Jane Yolen:

Features a family living on a farm. One of their horses has a foal, only it isn't really a foal, it's a baby Centaur. How can they keep him safe and hidden from the public who come to the farm for riding lessons?

Also: Pit Dragon Chronicles: #1 Dragon's Blood #2 Heart's Blood #3 A Sending of Dragons #4 Dragon's Heart;

The Young Merlin Trilogy: #1 Passenger #2 Hobby #3 Merlin

With Robert J. Harris: The Young Heroes Series:

The childhood of some of ancient Greece's most renowned legendary heroes. For Percy Jackson fans.

#1 Odysseus and the Serpent Maze #2 Hippolyta and the Curse of the Amazons #3 Atalanta and the Arcadian Beast #4 Jason and the Gorgon's Blood

The Whizz Pop Chocolate Shop by Kate Saunders

British. The family inherits a magic chocolate shop. Lots of Adventures. Fun & hilarious as they cope with nefarious threats.

Whatever After series by Sarah Mlynowski:

#1 Fairest of All #2 If the Shoe Fits #3 Sink or Swim #4 Dream On #5 Bad Hair Day #6 Cold as Ice #7 Beauty Queen

Fairytales Retellings. A brother and sister wind up in different fairy tales. First they mess things up; then they have to fix what they've messed up.

Spindlers by Lauren Oliver:

Features spider-like Spindlers. Set in England. Younger brother taken away to underground magic kingdom. Older sister goes to rescue him. Also: Liesl & Po: The adventures of an orphan girl, a lonely ghost, and a young alchemist's apprentice.

Stolen Magic by Gail Carson Levine. Sequel to: A Tale of Two Castles, which features Elodie (12) who journeys to Two Castles in hopes of studying acting but instead becomes an apprentice to a dragon, who teaches her to be observant and use reasoning, thus helping her to uncover who is poisoning the king.

Artemis Fowl #1 by Eoin Colfer:

When a twelve-year-old evil genius tries to restore his family fortune by capturing a fairy and demanding a ransom in gold, the fairies fight back with magic, technology, and a particularly nasty troll.

Sequels: #2 The Arctic Incident #3 The Eternity Code #4 The Opal Deception #5 The Lost Colony #6 The Time Paradox #7 The Atlantis Complex #8 The Last Guardian

The City of Ember. The Books of Ember #1 by Jeanne Duprau:

The city of Ember was built underground as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. Lina and her friend must decipher a secret message in order to save the city.

Sequels: #2 The People of Sparks #3 The Prophet of Yonwood #4 The Diamond of Darkhold

Once Upon a Marigold. Marigold #1 by Jean Ferris:

A young man with a mysterious past and a penchant for inventing things leaves the troll who raised him, meets an unhappy princess he has loved from afar, and discovers a plot against her and her father.

Sequels: #2 Twice Upon a Marigold #3 Thrice Upon a Marigold

Found. The Missing #1 by Margaret Peterson Haddix:

When thirteen-year-olds Jonah and Chip, who are both adopted, learn they were discovered on a plane that appeared out of nowhere, full of babies with no adults on board, they realize that they have uncovered a mystery involving time travel and two opposing forces, each trying to repair the fabric of time.

Sequels: #2 Sent #3 Sabotaged #4 Torn #5 Caught #6 Risked #7 Revealed #8 Redeemed

Also: Shadow Children: #1 Among the Hidden #2 Among the Imposters #3 Among the Betrayed #4 Among the Barons #5 Among the Brave #6 Among the Enemy #7 Among the Free

Ever After High Series by Shannon Hale:

#1 The Storybook of Legends #2 The Unfairest of Them All #3 A Wonderlandful World

Novels about high school students that 8 year olds love. These are the adventures of the children of fairy tale characters. Apple White is Snow White's daughter. She's on the side of good. The Evil Queen's daughter is supposed to be on the side of evil, but she doesn't want to be evil, so she won't say the necessary oath, causing all kinds of problems.

Also: The Newbery Honor-Winning Princess Academy and its sequels: #2 Palace of Stone #3 The Forgotten Sisters

Ever After High: The School Stories by Suzanne Selfors.

#1 Next Top Villain #2 Kiss and Spell #3 A Semi-Charming Kind of Life #4 Fairy's Got Talent

Shannon Hale turned the Ever After High series over to Suzanne Selfors whose contribution to the series consists of these school stories.

Skulduggery Pleasant #1 by Derek Landy:

When 12-year-old Stephanie inherits her weird uncle's estate, she must join forces with Skulduggery Pleasant, a skeleton mage, to save the world from the Faceless Ones.

Sequels: #2 Playing with Fire #3 The Faceless Ones

Savvy #1 by Ingrid Law:

Recounts the adventures of Mibs Beaumont, whose thirteenth birthday has revealed her "savvy"--a magical power unique to each member of her family--just as her father is injured in a terrible accident.

Sequels: #2 Scumble #3 Switch

Mister Monday. The Keys to the Kingdom #1 by Garth Nix:

Arthur's life is saved by a key shaped like the minute hand of a clock, but bizarre creatures from another realm are determined to take the key even if it means killing him.

Sequels: #2 Grim Tuesday #3 Drowned Wednesday #4 Sir Thursday #5 Lady Friday #6 Superior Saturday #7 Lord Sunday

The Wizard of Dark Street. The Oona Crate Mysteries #1 by Shawn Thomas Odyssey:

A young girl (12) has magical abilities. She lives with her uncle but guards the gateway to Faerie. After making a mistake, she decides she wants to use her reasoning skills instead of magic to solve mysteries.

Sequels: #2 The Magician's Tower #3 The Magician's Dream

Magyk. Septimus Heap #1 by Angie Sage:

The adventures of a young boy who grows up to be the ExtraOrdinary Wizard. He is 10 when his adventures begin.

Sequels: #2 Flyte #3 Physik #4 Quests #5 Syren #6 Darke #7 Fyre

Also: TodHunter Moon (World of Septimus Heap)

Set seven years after the events in the Septimus Heap series. The story of Alice TodHunter Moon, a young PathFinder who comes to the Castle with a Magyk all her own.

#1 PathFinder #2 SandRider

The Emerald Atlas. The Books of Beginning #1 by John Stephens:

Kate, Michael, and Emma have passed from one orphanage to another in the ten years since their parents disappeared to protect them, but now they learn that they have special powers-- and a fearsome enemy-- and embark on a prophesied quest to find a magical book.

Sequels: #2 The Fire Chronicle #3 The Black Reckoning

Other Middle Grade (School) Titles

Fortunately the Milk by Neil Gaiman

The Underneath by Kathi Appelt [Newbery Honor and National Book Award for Young People's Literature Finalist]

The True Blue Scouts of Sugar Man Swamp by Kathi Appelt [National Book Award for Young People's Literature Finalist]

Toys Go Out: Being The Adventures Of A Knowledgeable Stingray, A Toughy Little Buffalo, And Someone Called Plastic by Emily Jenkins [Illustrated Short Stories]

A Dragon's Guide to the Care and Feeding of Dragons by Laurence Yep

Myth-O-Mania by Kate McMullan

Heidi Heckelbeck by Wanda Coven

The Shadow of the Lantern by Teresa Flavin

The Courage of Cat Campbell by Natasha Lowe

Backwards Moon by Mary Losure

The Only Thing Worse Than Witches by Lauren Magaziner

Dreamwood by Heather Mackey

Castle Hangnail by Ursula Vernon

Bayou Magic by Jewell Rhodes

Pip Bartlet's Guide to Magical Creatures by Jackson Pearce

The Ever Afters series by Shelby Bach:

#1 Of Giants and Ice #2 Of Witches and Wind #3 Of Sorcery and Snow

#4 Of Enemies and Endings

Luck Uglies Trilogy by Paul Durham:

#1 The Luck Uglies #2 Fork-tongue Charmers #3 Rise of the Ragged Clover

Goddess Girls series by Joan Holub & Suzanne Williams:

#1 Athena the Brain #2 Persephone the Phony #3 Aphrodite the

Beauty #4 Artemis the Brave #5 Athena the Wise #6 Aphrodite the

Diva #7 Artemis the Loyal #8 Medusa the Mean #9 Pandora the

Curious #10 PHEME the Gossip #11 Persephone the Daring

#12 Cassandra the Lucky #13 Athena the Proud #14 Iris the Colorful

#15 Aphrodite the Fair #16 Medusa the Rich #17 Amphitrite the

Bubbly #18 Hestia the Invisible

Heroes in Training series by Joan Holub & Suzanne Williams:

#1 Zeus and the Thunderbolt of Doom #2 Poseidon and the Sea of Fury

#3 Hades and the Helm of Darkness #4 Hyperion and the Great Balls of

Fire #5 Typhon and the Winds of Destruction #6 Apollo and the Battle

of the Birds #7 Ares and the Spear of Fear #8 Cronus and the Threads

of Dread #9 Crius and the Night of Fright #10 Hephaestus and the

Island of Terror #11 Uranus and the Bubbles of Trouble #12 Perseus

and the Monstrous Medusa