



BIRCH HILL
PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY
Learn, believe, achieve together

Year 5

Reading list for families

September 2026

This year our Year 5 and Year 6 children learn together and share the same topics. This list brings together our guided reading and class read texts, favourite stories chosen for Year 5, and new books chosen by BookTrust for 2026–27.

How to use this list

Reading together and alone

Books for our topics

One set for each half-term

Year 5 favourites

Chosen by our teachers

New books for 2026–27

From BookTrust's Great Books Guide

Finding more books

Libraries and websites

How to use this list

In Year 5, most children read confidently on their own, but sharing books is just as important as ever. Reading aloud to your child lets them enjoy stories and ideas that are a little beyond what they would choose alone.

Reading alone

Chapter books, comics, graphic novels and information books all build independence and stamina. They all count as real reading.

Reading together

Longer or more challenging books are lovely to share. Talk about characters' choices, new words and what might happen next.

Let your child choose

Children read more when they choose books they feel drawn to. Use this list as a starting point, and let your child explore different kinds of books: funny stories, mysteries, poetry and information books.

Year 5 and Year 6 children learn together this year, so the topic books are the same on both year groups' lists. **Guided reading** marks the book your child studies in class, **Class read** marks the book read aloud to the class, and **Writing** marks the model text for writing.

Books for our topics

Each half-term our learning is built around a big question. Reading a book linked to the topic at home helps your child build knowledge and vocabulary, and gives you lots to talk about. Tap a title, where there is a link, to see its cover.

Autumn 1 What can we learn from William Shakespeare?

Refugee Boy [Guided reading](#) Benjamin Zephaniah

Alem, aged fourteen, is left alone in London while his parents' countries are at war. Thought-provoking; best talked about together.

The Goldfish Boy [Class read](#) Lisa Thompson

Matthew, who rarely leaves his room, is the last person to see a missing toddler. A mystery with a lot of heart.

Mr William Shakespeare's Plays Marcia Williams

Seven of Shakespeare's plays retold as lively comic strips.

Will Shakespeare Mysteries: The Stinky Stolen Toenails Kaz Penney and Sammy Elgie

Young Will Shakespeare turns detective in this silly Elizabethan crime caper. New for 2026–27.

Autumn 2 How was life for children affected during the Battle of Britain?

Digging for Victory [Guided reading](#) Cathy Faulkner

Bonnie wants to be a wartime hero like her brother, and uncovers a secret. A Second World War story told in verse.

Once [Class read](#) Morris Gleitzman

Felix, a Jewish boy in wartime Poland, sets out to find his parents. Powerful; best read with an adult to talk it through.

Goodnight Mister Tom Michelle Magorian

Evacuee Willie Beech is sent to live with gruff Tom Oakley. A classic story of the Second World War.

Letters from the Lighthouse Emma Carroll

Evacuated to the Devon coast in 1941, Olive tries to solve the mystery of her missing sister. Superb historical fiction.

Dance of Resistance Catherine Johnson and Katie Hickey

The true story of Josephine Baker: dancer, star and Second World War hero. In a dyslexia-friendly format. New for 2026–27.

Spring 1 In what ways can rivers shape our landscape?

River Boy [Guided reading](#) Tim Bowler

Jess's grandfather is determined to finish one last painting by the river of his boyhood. A moving, mysterious story.

Holes [Class read](#) Louis Sachar

Stanley Yelnats is sent to Camp Green Lake, where the boys dig holes all day. Clever, funny and full of surprises.

Spring 2 What can we do to keep our body and mind healthy?

A Place Called Perfect **Class read** Helena Duggan

Violet moves to a town where everyone wears special glasses and everything seems perfect. A gripping mystery.

I Tell Myself I'm Awesome Joshua Seigal and Chris Piascik

Poems about every kind of feeling, playing with rhyme and form. Good to read aloud together. New for 2026–27.

Summer 2 **How can I make a change? How have I changed?**

The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse **Class read** Charlie Mackesy

Gentle conversations about kindness, courage and friendship. A lovely book to share as children move on.

The Giant's Necklace **Writing** Michael Morpurgo

Cherry collects shells on a Cornish beach as a storm comes in. A haunting short story, and our model for suspense writing.

The Shell Keepers Truly Johnston

A family of miniature people, and a story about activism and protecting the environment, woven together. New for 2026–27.

Year 5 favourites

High-quality books to read with your child or for them to read on their own. Your local library is a wonderful, free place to find them.

Adventure, mystery and humour

Beetle Boy M. G. Leonard

Darkus sets out to find his missing father, helped by a giant, very clever beetle. Funny, gripping and full of real science. [Adventure](#)

The Kid Who Came From Space Ross Welford

When his twin sister vanishes, Ethan discovers the truth is out of this world. A page-turning adventure for our 'Are we alone?' topic. [Science fiction](#)

Modern classics and thought-provoking reads

The Iron Man Ted Hughes

A giant iron man appears on a cliff top, and only a young boy sees he might be a friend. A short, powerful modern fable by a former Poet Laureate. [Classic](#)

The Many Worlds of Albie Bright Christopher Edge

After his mum dies, Albie sets out through parallel universes to find her. Funny, clever and moving; it deals with bereavement, so is lovely to share together. [Talk about it together](#)

More books to try

- Cogheart – Peter Bunzl
- Mistletoe and Murder – Robin Stevens
- Car-Jacked – Ali Sparkes
- Little Bits of Sky – S. E. Durrant
- Destination: Space – Christopher Edge
- The Butterfly Lion – Michael Morpurgo
- King of the Cloud Forests – Michael Morpurgo
- Arthur, High King of Britain – Michael Morpurgo
- Laughter is an Egg – John Agard (poetry)
- Danny, the Champion of the World – Roald Dahl
- Moondial – Helen Cresswell
- Echo Mountain – Lauren Wolk
- The Wind Singer – William Nicholson

New books for 2026–27

Recently published books from BookTrust's Great Books Guide 2026–27 for 10 to 11-year-olds. Others from the guide appear in our topic lists above.

Fantasy, myths and magic

Medusa Gorgon's Bad Hair Day Bethany Walker and Katie Abey

Medusa is sent to a modern secondary school to recover a shield. A funny, doodle-filled diary rooted in Greek myth.

Legacy: The Shadow Rises Tom Fickling, Will Fickling and Zak Simmonds-Hurn

Trainee mage Scarlett must find her powers when dark forces threaten the empire. A fantasy graphic novel.

Swanfall Sophie Kirtley

Pip and his friends are drawn into the legend of the Children of Lir. A chilling tale inspired by Irish folklore.

Spirit Warriors Ashley Thorpe and Gashwayne Hudson

A magical adventure set in a fictional Jamaica.

The Last Wolf Rob Biddulph

A highly illustrated werewolf adventure, set in a world a little like ours.

Mysteries and adventures

Murder at Hotel Marvelo Ruth Lauren and Federica Fenna

A wizard is found dead at a hotel for magical beings. A mystery to solve.

The Starlight Rebel Lisette Auton

A futuristic adventure about standing up for what matters.

Nate Yu's Blast from the Past Maisie Chan

Nate, who is adopted, isn't interested in his Chinese heritage until the day he sees a ghost. Warm and thoughtful.

Funny books and non-fiction

The Dad Trap Ian Eagleton

William and Florence plot pranks to stop their dads dating. Funny and warm-hearted.

How to Survive an Apocalypse Coby Coonrad, Cameron Hardy and Victoria Stebleva

A tongue-in-cheek, full-colour guide to surviving the end of the world.

Finding more books

You don't need to buy books to read widely. Joining the library is free, and children can borrow lots of books at once.

Your local library – free to join, with books, audiobooks, eBooks and the Summer Reading Challenge.

BookTrust Great Books Guide 2026–27 – 100 recommended new books across all ages.

booktrust.org.uk/book-recommendations/great-books-guide

BookTrust Bookfinder – search thousands of recommended books by age and interest.

booktrust.org.uk/book-recommendations/bookfinder

BooksForTopics: Year 5 recommended reads – 50 books chosen for 9 and 10 year olds.

booksfortopics.com

Learn, believe, achieve together

Happy reading! If you would like more book ideas for your child, please ask their class teacher.

Birch Hill Primary School and Nursery, part of Maiden Erlegh Trust. September 2026.