

11+ PREPARATION

The 11+ Reading List

A curated selection of books for Year 5 and Year 6 students preparing for the 11+ — from gripping starters for reluctant readers to richer texts for advanced readers.

Year 5

Year 6

Ages 9–12

Vocabulary · Inference · Comprehension

Reluctant Readers (ages 9–12)

Books to get a hesitant reader hooked. Each is a strong story first — vocabulary, inference and comprehension follow naturally once a child is enjoying the page.

Alex Rider: Storm Breaker

Anthony Horowitz

Alex Rider, aged fourteen, becomes a secret agent — and a very good one. Get them hooked on this and they will consume the whole series.

Young Bond

Charlie Higson

In a similar vein to Alex Rider, this time featuring the younger version of the world's most famous spy.

When Did You See Her Last?

Lemony Snicket

In the town of Stain'd-by-the-Sea, Lemony Snicket has a new case: to find a missing girl.

Out of My Mind

Sharon Draper

Melody Brooks has the mind of an intelligent 11-year-old stuck in a body made stiff by cerebral palsy. A genuinely moving story.

The Number 7 Shirt

Alan Gibbons

For all those children who would always rather be playing football. The story of a boy who dreams of becoming a professional.

Arthur, High King of Britain

Michael Morpurgo

A historical novel by the maestro Morpurgo. The Arthurian legend's heady mix of history and fantasy is timelessly popular with children.

Young Merlin

Tony Bradman

More fantasy than fact. An exciting tale about Merlin, the most famous wizard in history.

The Wolves of Willoughby Chase

Joan Aiken

Bonnie and Sylvia are left with cruel Miss Slighcarp when their parents leave on a sea voyage. The fight to outfox her has gripped many reluctant readers.

The One and Only Ivan

Katherine Applegate

Inspired by the true story of Ivan the captured gorilla. A young elephant's arrival forces him to think – and see – differently.

The Iron Man

Ted Hughes

Not to be confused with the Marvel comic. Ted Hughes' Iron Man is a metal giant who appears from nowhere, striking fear into a local community. A wonderful fairy story.

Don't Go in the Cellar

Jeremy Strong

A funny book for readers at the younger end of this age range. Of course – what do children want to do if you tell them not to do something?

Advanced Readers

Once a child has confidence, these texts stretch comprehension, vocabulary and the ability to discuss themes – all of which are tested in the 11+ English and Verbal Reasoning papers.

Animal Farm

George Orwell

A political fable based on the Russian Revolution. The book reads as the story of a group of farm animals plotting to rebel against the humans who run the farm.

Carrie's War

Nina Bawden

Set during World War II, following the adventures of two evacuees, Carrie and her younger brother Nick. Often studied in schools for its literary merit and historical accuracy.

Charlotte's Web

E.B. White

The story of a pig named Wilbur who grows up on a farm and befriends a spider named Charlotte. Hugely popular with school children and a great addition to an 11+ reading list.

Goodnight Mister Tom

Michelle Magorian

A boy is evacuated from London to the country in WWII, where he befriends an elderly man named Mister Tom who provides him with a new experience of life.

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift

A classic satirical novel following a man named Gulliver who visits many fantastical lands. Themes of human nature and travel.

Lord of the Flies

William Golding

Children marooned on an island after a nuclear war must form a community to survive. The book follows the well-educated children's descent into chaos.

The Chronicles of Narnia

C.S. Lewis

A classic series of seven fantasy novels — children encounter a fictional world of mythical beasts, talking animals and magic. Adapted for television several times.

Want help putting this into practice?

Book a free diagnostic session at our Slough or High Wycombe centre — or online.

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