

Recommended Urban High School Youth Booklist

Developed by the Literacy Coalition of the
Duval County Public Schools and Jacksonville Public Library
to develop the love of reading in all students

Books available from the Jacksonville Public Library Collection

2006-2007

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Title	Author	Synopsis
The Perfect Shot Published date: September 2005	Elaine Marie Alpin	Someone has murdered Brian's girlfriend, Amanda. The police think it was her father. Brian is not so sure. However, everyone he knows is telling him to move on, get over it, and focus on the present. Focus on basketball. Focus on hitting that perfect shot.
Durango Street Published date: September 1967	Frank Bonham	When Rufus Henry gets out of work camp for Grand Theft Auto, he has only one place to go— back to Durango Street. Almost right away, he gets on the wrong side of the Gassers, has to join the rival Moors— and starts running for his life. Durango Street shows that gang violence is, sadly, nothing new— and nothing glamorous.
The Moves Make the Man Published date: September 1996	Bruce Brooks	Jerome Foxworthy will be the first black to integrate the biggest white school in Wilmington, North Carolina. This might not be an issue today but it was in the 60's. A realistic portrayal from Jerome's point of view.

<p>The Sixteenth Round: From Number 1 Contender to Number 45472</p> <p>Published date: September 2003</p>	<p>Rubin Carter</p>	<p>On May 26, 1967, the spiraling career of Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, then the top contender for the world middleweight boxing crown, came to a shuddering and tragic halt. He and a young man were found guilty of the murder of three white people in a New Jersey bar. Can he get a new trial? Was he unjustly convicted?</p>
<p>Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich</p> <p>Published date: August 1998</p>	<p>Alice Childress</p>	<p>The life of a thirteen-year-old Harlem youth on his way to becoming a confirmed heroin addict. Benjie's drug addiction is described from his own viewpoint and that of others involved in his life. He thinks he can quit anytime he chooses. Benjie comes across as a likeable, although unrealistic, teenager with many people who care about him.</p>
<p>Battle of Jericho</p> <p>Published date: January 2005</p>	<p>Sharon Draper</p>	<p>Sixteen-year-old Jericho is psyched when he and his cousin and best friend, Josh, are invited to pledge for the Warriors of Distinction, the oldest and most exclusive club in school. However, as the secret initiation rites grow increasingly humiliating and force Jericho to make painful choices, he starts to question whether membership in the Warriors of Distinction is worth it. How far will he have to go to wear the cool black silk Warriors jacket?</p>
<p>Tear of a Tiger</p> <p>Published date: February 2006</p>	<p>Sharon Draper</p>	<p>After a car accident kills Robert, Andy's best friend and teammate on the Hazelwood High Tigers, Andy does not know if he can go on. Consumed with guilt for driving the night of the accident after a long evening of drinking and partying, Robert considers suicide in the wake of the devastating tragedy.</p>
<p>The Skin I'm In</p> <p>Published date: January 2000</p>	<p>Sharon Flake</p>	<p>Thirteen-year-old Maleeka, uncomfortable because her skin is extremely dark, meets a new teacher with a birthmark on her face and makes some discoveries about how to love who she is and what she looks like.</p>
<p>Who Am I Without Him?</p> <p>Published date: September 2005</p>	<p>Sharon Flake</p>	<p>Twelve short stories about guys and girls testing out ways of communicating with one another, respecting each other, and respecting themselves. This is a complex, often humorous, and always on-point exploration of youth today determined to find self-worth . . . any way they know how.</p>
<p>Hole in My Life</p> <p>Published date:</p>	<p>Jack Gantos</p>	<p>The author relates how, as a young adult, he became a drug user and smuggler, was arrested, did time in prison, and eventually got out and went to college, all the while hoping to become a writer.</p>

September 2004		
Jazmin's Notebook Published date: January 2000	Nikki Grimes	Jazmin, an African-American teenager who lives with her older sister in a small Harlem apartment in the 1960s, finds strength in writing poetry and keeping a record of the events in her sometimes-difficult life.
Soulfire Published date: January 1998	Lorri Hewett	Todd Williams does not need to hear TV reports about life in the projects--he lives there. His mother is struggling to raise five kids, while his father sponges off a girlfriend. His brother is part of a gang and Todd's best friend, Ezekiel, is determined to stop them from recruiting the kids in the hood. Todd does not want to get involved. But suddenly he is trapped between them--and he has to choose.
The Outsiders Published date: May 2006	S. E. Hinton	Ponyboy can count on his brothers and on his friends. But not on much else besides trouble with the Socs, a vicious gang of rich kids whose idea of good time is beating up "greasers" like Ponyboy. At least he knows what to expect--until the night someone takes things too far.
Rumble Fish Published date: June 2006	S. E. Hinton	Rusty-James knows he is a tough teen, but he wants to be even tougher, just like his older brother, the Motorcycle Boy. He wants to stay calm and laugh when things get dangerous, be the strongest street fighter and the most respected guy this side of the river.
The First Part Last Published date: January 2005	Angela Johnson	Bobby struggles to accept his new role as a teenaged single father. Where is the baby's mother? Throughout the book, Bobby fights his own sleep deprivation and desire to hand off his baby daughter to someone else for caretaking. In one tense episode, he takes off to go spray-painting while a neighbor looks after the baby. In the end, we learn what has happened to the baby's mother. In this book, the author paints an honest, vivid portrait of a young man straddling the line between childhood and adulthood.
Heaven Published date: August 2000	Angela Johnson	At fourteen, Marley knows she has Momma's hands, Pops' love for ice cream, her brother does not get on her nerves too much, and Uncle Jack is a big mystery. However, Marley does not know all she thinks she does, because she does not know the truth. And the truth changes everything. It turns Momma and Pops into liars, makes her brother a stranger and Uncle Jack an even bigger mystery.

<p>The Brave</p> <p>Published date: September 1993</p>	<p>Robert Lipsyte</p>	<p>Sonny has been an outsider all his life. He has never fit into either world: the Moscondagas on the Reservation see him as white; whites see him as Indian. He heads for New York City where he steps into the middle of a drug war and tangles with a tough Harlem boxer-turned-cop named Alfred Brooks. Brooks seems to think that Sonny has the talent to make it to the top — to be a contender. But first Sonny has to learn to be smart, take control of his life, and beat the monster. Only it is not as easy as it sounds....</p>
<p>The Contender</p> <p>Published date: April 1987</p>	<p>Robert Lipsyte</p>	<p>Alfred Brooks is scared. He is a high school dropout and his grocery store job is leading nowhere. His best friend is sinking further and further into drug addiction. Some street kids are after him for something he did not even do. So Alfred begins going to Donatelli's Gym, a boxing club in Harlem that has trained champions. There he learns it is the effort, not the win, that makes the man — that last desperate struggle to get back on your feet when you thought you were down for the count.</p>
<p>The Giver</p> <p>Published date: September 2002</p>	<p>Lois Lowry</p>	<p>Jonas lives in a perfect society. There is no pain, poverty, divorce, delinquency, etc. In this society the Elders choose one's life's work. At the Ceremony of 12, Jonas is shocked to learn that he has been awarded the most prestigious honor. His assignment will be that of Receiver of Memories. He studies with "the Giver," a man he comes to love. Within time, he learns the horrifying secrets of this perfect society and must make a decision that will test his courage, intelligence, and stamina.</p>
<p>Number the Stars</p> <p>Published date: February 1998</p>	<p>Lois Lowry</p>	<p>A ten-year-old Danish girl's bravery is tested when Nazis threaten her best friend in 1943. This young Danish girl courageously helps save the family of her Jewish friend. The author was inspired by the letter of a young Dane, who, on the eve of his execution, reminded young and old to remember and from that remembering "create an ideal of human decency."</p>
<p>Beast</p> <p>Published date: May 2005</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>A visit to his Harlem neighborhood and the discovery that the girl he loves is using drugs give sixteen-year-old Anthony Witherspoon a new perspective both on his home and on his life at a Connecticut prep school.</p>
<p>Glory Field</p> <p>Published date: June 1998</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>A family's two hundred forty-one year history, from the capture of an African boy in the 1750s through the lives of his descendants. Read about their dreams and the circumstances which lead them away from and back to the small plot of land in South Carolina that they call the Glory Field.</p>

<p>Hoops</p> <p>Published date: March 1983</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>All eyes are on seventeen-year-old Lonnie Jackson while he practices with his team for a citywide basketball Tournament of Champions. His coach, Cal, knows Lonnie has what it takes to be a pro-basketball player, but warns him about giving in to the pressure. Cal knows because he, too, once had the chance—but sold out. As the Tournament nears, Lonnie learns that some heavy bettors want Cal to keep him on the bench so that the team will lose the championship. As the last seconds of the game tick away Lonnie and Cal must make a decision. Are they willing to blow the chance of a lifetime?</p>
<p>Monster</p> <p>Published date: December 2004</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>Steve Harmon is 16 years old and on trial for murder. His parents' hearts break as they watch the drama unfold from their seats in the back of the courtroom. Did Steve serve as the lookout when Bobo Evans and James King robbed the drugstore and then killed the store's owner in the commotion? Or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? Is he being framed by a couple of losers he used to call friends? In the tension-filled courtroom, reality begins to blur for Steve. Is he a monster?</p>
<p>Scorpions</p> <p>Published date: January 1996</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>After reluctantly taking on the leadership of the Harlem gang, the Scorpions, Jamal finds that his enemies treat him with respect when he acquires a gun--until a tragedy occurs.</p>
<p>145th Street</p> <p>Published date: February 1900</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>A salty, wrenchingly honest collection of stories set on one block of 145th Street. Some of these stories are private, and some are the ones behind the headlines. In each one, characters jump off the page and pull readers right into the mix on 145th Street.</p>
<p>Shooter</p> <p>Published date March 2005</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>Written in the form of interviews, reports, and journal entries, this is the story of three troubled teenagers, which ends in a tragic school shooting.</p>
<p>Slam!</p> <p>Published date: October 1998</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>Sixteen-year-old "Slam" Harris is counting on his noteworthy basketball talents to get him out of the inner city and give him a chance to succeed in life, but his coach sees things differently.</p>
<p>Young Landlords</p> <p>Published date: October 1989</p>	<p>Walter Dean Myers</p>	<p>Five devoted friends become landlords and try to make their Harlem neighborhood a better place to live.</p>

<p>I, Dred Scott</p> <p>Published date: January 2005</p>	<p>Shelia Moses</p>	<p>Born into slavery in Virginia in the late 1700s, Dred Scott had little to look forward to in life. But on April 6, 1846, Dred Scott and his wife, Harriett — their ownership having changed hands several times during adulthood — took the dangerous and courageous step to sue for their freedom, entering into legal battles that would last for eleven years.</p>
<p>The Legend of Buddy Bush</p> <p>Published date: September 2005</p>	<p>Shelia Moses</p>	<p>Although Pattie Mae Sheals has dreams of going to Harlem, where some of her family lives, she knows that Rehobeth Road in Rich Square is really home. But when her grandpa develops a brain tumor and her uncle Buddy Bush -- who's come to town from Harlem in his sky-blue Cadillac and pinstripe suit -- gets falsely accused of attempting to rape a white woman, Pattie Mae's world turns upside down. Unfortunately, things do not entirely happen for the best, but in the end, Pattie Mae's Harlem-bound dreams take shape.</p>
<p>Way Past Cool</p> <p>Published date: September 2006</p>	<p>Jess Mowry</p>	<p>Authentic, dark, suspenseful, inspiring--here is a novel about the street gangs of Oakland that brings alive the tension, drama, and pathos of America's urban reality in a totally fresh way. Rival gangs the Friends and the Crew--though they are enemies--share many common problems, especially the presence of a drug dealer bent on conquering their neighborhoods.</p>
<p>Carver, A Life in Poems</p> <p>Published date: April 1997</p>	<p>Marilyn Nelson</p>	<p>These 44 poems celebrate the revered African-American botanist and inventor, George Washington Carver. Raised by white slave owners, Carver left home in search of an education and eventually earned a master's degree in agriculture. While working at the all-black-staffed Tuskegee Institute, Carver's innovative research found new uses for crops such as sweet potatoes and peanuts while seeking solutions to the plight of landless black farmers.</p>
<p>A Wreath for Emmet Till</p> <p>Published date: April 2005</p>	<p>Marilyn Nelson</p>	<p>In 1955, people all over the United States knew that Emmett Louis Till was a fourteen-year-old African American boy lynched for supposedly whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. The brutality of his murder and the acquittal of the men tried for the crime drew wide media attention. Award-winning poet Marilyn Nelson reminds us of the boy whose fate helped spark the civil rights movement.</p>

<p>Holes</p> <p>Published date: March 2003</p>	<p>Louis Sachar</p>	<p>Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes. It does not take long for Stanley to realize there is more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.</p>
<p>Give a Boy a Gun</p> <p>Published date: April 2002</p>	<p>Todd Strasser</p>	<p>Gunshots echo through the gym. Two heavily armed students, Gary and Brendan, hold their classmates hostage at a high school dance. Their targets: the football players and teachers who have tormented them. Their weapons: semiautomatic rifles stolen from a neighbor. Their motive: revenge.</p>
<p>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</p> <p>Published date: January 2002</p>	<p>Mildred Taylor</p>	<p>The story of one African American family fighting to stay together and strong in the face of brutal racist attacks, illness, poverty, and betrayal in the Deep South of the 1930s.</p>
<p>If You Come Softly</p> <p>Published date: June 2006</p>	<p>Jacqueline Woodson</p>	<p>Miah and Ellie are in love. Theirs is a rare and special first love. However, the people around them do not see it that way. They can only see black and white: Miah is black, Ellie is white, and Jewish; and their love, no matter how real, is too strange and scary for the world they live in.</p>
<p>Miracle's Boys</p> <p>Published date: June 2006</p>	<p>Jacqueline Woodson</p>	<p>Seventh-grader Lafayette fears that he will become separated from his two brothers after the death of their mother. This book views household tensions through Lafayette's eyes. Readers will come to realize each character's internal conflicts and recognize their desperate need to cling together as a family.</p>
<p>Gangster Rap</p>	<p>Benjamin Zephaniah</p>	<p>Ray has trouble at home and trouble at school where he and his friends Prem and Tyrone are permanently suspended. Their headmaster decides to give them a second chance, a chance to live their dream of forming a rap group. Through a specialized social program, the boys are taught the business of the music industry, what it takes to record an album, and how to lay down a track. Within weeks, they have become the Positive Negatives, and within a few months, they have signed a record deal and are on their way to the top. However, their dream</p>

Published date: August 2004		soon becomes a nightmare as violence escalates around them. Suddenly, not only their careers but also their very lives are at stake. The Positive Negatives are determined to prove that you do not need to be a gangster to be a great rapper.
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Prepared by: Curriculum & Instruction, 2006