

20 Non-fiction Books to Read Before Leaving Middle School

The following is a list of titles that your middle school child may enjoy. Each book is listed with its title and author. Please note that recommendations are written with the typical grade 5-8 Transit Middle student in mind. Parents are the best judges of a book's suitability for their child based on their child's maturity, reading ability, interests, and values. Reading suggestions can also be found at the Transit Middle Library Website (WITS → Library → Book Suggestions).

An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

by Jim Murphy

- Provides an account of the yellow fever epidemic that swept through Philadelphia in 1793, discussing the chaos that erupted when people began evacuating in droves, leaving the city without government, goods, or services, and examining efforts by physicians, the Free African Society, and others to cure and care for the sick.

Bad Girls: Sirens, Jezebels, Murderesses, Thieves & Other Female Villains

by Jane Yolen and Heidi E.Y. Stemple

- Looks at twenty-six infamous females from throughout history, including Bloody Mary, Calamity Jane, and Bonnie Parker among others.

Bomb: The Race to Build and Steal the World's Most Dangerous Weapon

by Steve Sheinkin

- Examines the history of the atomic bomb, discussing the discovery of the behavior of uranium when placed next to radioactive material, the race to build a bomb, and the impact of the weapon on societies around the world.

The Boy on the Wooden Box: How the Impossible Became Possible – on Schindler's List: A Memoir

by Leon Leyson

- Leon Leyson describes growing up in Poland, being forced from home to ghetto to concentration camps by the Nazis, and being saved by Oskar Schindler.

Case Closed? Nine Mysteries Unlocked by Modern Science

by Susan Hughes

- Examines how developments in modern science, such as DNA analysis and spectroscopy, have helped to reopen archaeological mysteries about ancient cities, Egypt's first female pharaoh, a missing expedition to find the Northwest Passage, and more, with illustrations, maps, and photographs.

Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmet Till Case

by Chris Crowe

- Presents a true account of the murder of fourteen-year-old, Emmett Till, in Mississippi, in 1955.

The Good, the Bad, and the Barbie: A Doll's History and Her Impact on US

by Tanya Lee Stone

- Explores how Barbie has influenced generations of girls, discussing criticisms of the doll, her role in fashion, and her surprising popularity during her first fifty years.

I am Malala: The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban

by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb

- When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. On Tuesday October 9, 2012, she almost paid the ultimate price.

Just Don't Fall: A Hilariously True Story of Childhood, Cancer, Amputation, Romantic Yearning, Truth, and Olympic Greatness

by Josh Sundquist

- The author describes losing his left leg to cancer and his determination to become a ski racer in the 2006 Paralympics in Turin, Italy.

The Many Faces of George Washington: Remaking a Presidential Icon

by Carla Killough McClafferty

- Describes the project undertaken by historians, scientists, and artisans at Mount Vernon in 2005 to create accurate images of George Washington as he looked as a nineteen-year-old surveyor in the American wilderness, a forty-five-year-old general of the Continental Army, and the first president of the United States at fifty-seven, and reveals the results of their efforts.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: The Secrets Behind What You Eat - Young Readers Edition

by Michael Pollan

- Examines the origins of the different food chains that have sustained humans throughout history, discussing how certain foods and cuisines have become a popular part of people's daily diets.

A Really Short History of Nearly Everything – Young Readers Edition

by Bill Bryson

- Draws from the science fields of cosmology, astronomy, paleontology, geology, chemistry, physics, and others to examine key events in the history of science, beginning with the Big Bang.

Scaly Spotted Feathered Frilled: How Do We Know What Dinosaurs Really Looked Like?

By Catherine Thimmesh

- Examines the art of paleoartists and describes how we know what dinosaurs really looked like.

Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H.L. Hunley

by Sally Walker

- Tells the story of the "H. L. Hunley," the Confederate submarine that in 1864 became the first to ever sink an enemy ship but lay missing on the ocean floor for more than a century, describing its creation, its discovery, skeletons and objects found onboard, and facial reconstructions of several crew members by forensic anthropologists.

The Skull in the Rock: How a Scientist, a Boy, and Google Earth Opened a New Window on Human Origins

by Lee Berger and Marc Aronson

- Describes the discovery of two pre-human skeletons and how it relates to a new understanding of human evolution.

Spies of Mississippi: The True Story of the Spy Network that Tried to Destroy the Civil Rights Movement

by Rick Bowers

- Chronicles how the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission attempted to halt racial integration in the 1950s and 1960s through an extensive propaganda effort to label civil rights leaders and their followers as communists.

Stronger than Steel: Spider Silk DNA and the quest for Better Bulletproof Vests, Sutures, and Parachute Rope

by Bridget Heos

- Discusses the work scientists are doing with the golden orb weaver spider, whose web silk is nearly indestructible, and genetically engineered goats, whose milk contains the proteins needed to artificially spin the spider silk and produce it in a quantity that will make it realistic to use in health care, in body armor, in parachutes, and much more.

Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World

by Sy Montgomery

- Examines the life and accomplishments of Temple Grandin, whose childhood diagnosis of autism and love of cows led her to revolutionize the livestock industry.

Titanic: Voices from the Disaster

by Deborah Hopkinson

- Draws on stories from survivors and archival photographs to describe the history of the "Titanic" from its launch to its sinking.

Tracking Trash: Flotsam, Jetsam, and the Science of Ocean Motion

by Loree Griffin Burns

- Describes the work of a man who tracks trash as it travels great distances by way of ocean currents.