

JFO Summer Reading List for Children and Youth (curated from the depths of the internet)

Books are wonderful. Especially in a pandemic. Even more so when so much is happening in the world, and we need some help in making sense of it all. It is in this spirit that the JFO has curated the following reading list for children and youth in our community.

These books reflect the times we live in. Racism is alive and well. Antisemitism and xenophobia are increasingly mainstream. Building the world we want to live in tomorrow takes hard work, and a clear understanding of the world we live in today.

The books on this list are diverse in content, and authorship. From explicit treatments of violent racism, to complicated experiences in living on the racial and ethnic margins of society, to adventures and coming-of-age tales that center non-white protagonists.

We hope you'll take the time to review these book choices with your kids, and that within their pages your families will find inspiration, and food for your souls.

Picture Books:

Lailah's Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story, by Reem Faruqi

In a new school and new country, Lailah is excited to participate in the celebration of Ramadan — but wonders if her classmates will understand.

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match, by Monica Brown

To Marisol, “opposites” make a lot of sense. She has red hair and brown skin, loves polka dots and stripes, and eats peanut butter and jelly burritos. A bilingual affirmation of everyone’s right to not “choose.”

Let's Talk about Race, by Julius Lester

As Lester discusses how we all have a story, he brings up questions about why we think race is important and what it means to have a racial identity.

Snow in Jerusalem, by Deborah da Costa

Two boys living in Jerusalem--one Muslim, the other Jewish--are surprised to discover they've been looking after the same stray cat.

Yuvi's Candy Tree, by Lesley Simpson

Based on a true story, this book tells of Yuvi's extraordinary journey from Ethiopia to Israel.

For Middle- and High-School Youth

Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor, by Yossi Klein-Halevi

In a series of letters, American-born Israeli writer Yossi Klein Halevi discusses faith, pride, anger, and anguish, and his commitment to Israel as a morally responsible, democratic state.

Ronit and Jamil, by Pamela L. Laskin

This YA novel, written in verse, is a fresh retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* that takes place in modern-day Israel/Palestine. Separated by generations of conflict, two teenagers fall desperately into the throes of forbidden love.

The Watcher in the Shadows, by Chris Moriarty

A steampunk-inflected alternate-history novel set in a magic-drenched, dybbuk-haunted, early-20th-century Lower East Side.

All-American Boys, by Jason Reynolds

Two teens, one black, one white, grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

Ninth Ward, by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Lanesha is not in any way a victim — her strength and spirit lift Rhodes's award-winning, magical tale of a New Orleans' community's resilience in the face of Hurricane Katrina.

Mexican Whiteboy, by Matt de la Peña

The child of a Mexican father and blonde, blue-eyed mother, Danny doesn't speak Spanish, isn't "Mexican enough" for some, nor "White enough" for others.

How We Fight for Our Lives, by Saeed Jones

Jones tells the story of a young, black, gay man from the South as he fights to carve out a place for himself, within his family, within his country, within his own hopes, desires, and fears.

Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky, by Kwame Mbalia

A middle grade *American Gods* set in a richly-imagined world populated with African American folk heroes and West African gods.

Booked, by Kwame Alexander

Twelve-year-old Nick learns the power of words as he wrestles with problems at home, stands up to a bully, and tries to impress the girl of his dreams.