On My Honor by Bauer (750)
Have you ever had a best friend who was so different from you that you couldn't understand why you were friends? Joel Bates and Tony Zabrinsky are very different but they've been friends all their lives. Tony tends to be a bit reckless and daring. When he suggests they climb the bluffs at Starved Rock Park, Joel doesn't want to go but doesn't want to admit he's afraid. Along the way, Joel and Tony exchange dares and insults. When Joel dares Tony to swim out to the sandbar, he doesn't know that Tony can't swim. Tony tries anyway and is swept away. Think about what Joel has to do now—how does he go home, tell his dad, tell everyone? How does he get help? Find out how Joel deals with tragedy and his feelings of guilt.

The Penderwicks by Birdsall (800)
This is a fun tale of four sisters, a new friend, and his snooty mother. Rosalind, 12, has become the mother figure. Skye, 11, is fierce and hot-tempered. Jane, 10, is a budding writer of mysteries who has the disconcerting habit of narrating aloud whatever is occurring around her. Batty, four, is a shy little girl who always wears butterfly wings. The girls' father is a gentle, widowed botany professor who gives his daughters free reign but is always there to support or comfort them. The family dog, Hound, is her protector. The tale begins as the Penderwicks embark on a summer holiday in the Berkshire Mountains, at a cottage on the grounds of a posh mansion owned by the terribly snobbish Mrs. Tifton. Her son, Jeffrey, is a brilliant pianist, but her heart is set on him attending a military academy like her beloved father. This story is simple: the four sisters meet Jeffrey, and other towns-folk, during their holiday, and have adventures and near-disasters.

A Week in the Woods by Clements (820)
Eleven year old Mark moves to a small town in New Hampshire. He is instantly labeled lazy by his science teacher, Mr. Maxwell. Mark doesn't worry about Mr. Maxwell. This is just a temporary stay while his family gets settled. Yet Mark slowly starts to make friends and is looking forward to the school camping trip. The first night Mark gets in trouble and is told he will have to go home. Mark runs away and Mr. Maxwell goes after him. Yet the minutes they are gone turn to hours and they both become lost. How will they survive in the cold mountains and what discoveries will they make?

Because of Mr. Terupt by Buyea (560)
(THE IS ACTUALLY THE SUMMARY—GIVES a GOOD BOOKTALK)
It’s the start of fifth grade for seven kids at Snow Hill School. There’s . . . Jessica, the new girl, smart and perceptive, who’s having a hard time fitting in; Alexia, a bully, your friend one second, your enemy the next; Peter, class prankster and troublemaker; Luke, the brain; Danielle, who never stands up for herself; shy Anna, whose home situation makes her an outcast; and Jeffrey, who hates school.

Only Mr. Terupt, their new and energetic teacher, seems to know how to deal with them all. He makes the classroom a fun place, even if he doesn’t let them get away with much . . . until the snowy winter day when an accident changes everything—and everyone.
Crunch by Conner (490)
Imagine that all the fuel in America finally ran out. All at once. And imagine that your parents are hundreds of miles away on their anniversary trucking trip when it happens. This is exactly what happens to 14-year-old Dewey and his sisters and brothers. They are stuck at home, not sure when they will finally see their parents again. But Dewey has a plan: while they wait for their parents to come home they will continue their dad’s small at-home business of repairing bikes. But what do you think happens when nobody’s car will work anymore? How is everyone going to get around? Bikes. So pretty soon Dewey’s new business is not only hopping but becoming very overwhelming. He can’t say no to anybody that needs his help, and his brother and sister aren’t happy with him. But things are getting even worse, because someone in town is stealing stuff, and whoever it is may have found the perfect victims. After all, bike parts are suddenly worth a lot of money.

Lowji Discovers America by Fleming (510)
Raise your hand if you came here from another school or town. Raise your hand if you came here from another state. Maybe you found different accents here, or new stores, or new trends. Now raise your hand if you came from another country. A lot was different for you, wasn’t it? Kids didn’t do things the same way, maybe you didn’t understand everything people were saying. Well, that is what happened to Lowji when he and his family came to America...

Walk Two Moons by Creech (770)
Thirteen-year-old Sal Hiddle can’t deal with all the upheaval in her life. Her mother, Sugar, is in Idaho, and although Sugar promised to return before the tulips bloomed, she hasn’t come back. Instead, her dad has moved Sal from the farm she loves so much and has even taken up company with the unpleasantly named Mrs. Cadaver. The book tells the story of Sal’s trip to Idaho with her grandparents; as the car clatters along, Sal tells her grandparents the story of her friend Phoebe, who she met in Ohio, who receives messages from a “lunatic” and who must cope with the disappearance of her mother, just like Sal.

Frindle by Clements (830)
Have you ever wondered why we call a dog, dog? Who says a pen has to be called a pen? Why not called it a frindle? Nick Allen has always had plenty of great ideas, although some of them have gotten him in trouble- and really he just wants to liven things up at school. He has gotten away with a lot until he meets his match, Mrs. Granger. She is Nick’s fifth grade Language Arts teacher whose favorite book is the dictionary. Everyone knows she has eyes in the back of her head and will not tolerate any mischief. But, when Nick learns some interesting information about how words were created, suddenly he's got the inspiration for his best plan ever -- frindle. Things begin innocently enough as Nick gets his friends to use the new word. Then other people in town start saying frindle. Soon the school is in an uproar, and Nick has become a local hero. Mrs. Granger wants Nick to put an end to all this nonsense, so she threatens to keep kids who use the word after school. When parents find out about their kids being kept after school, they also want him to end the fiasco, but the funny thing is frindle doesn’t belong to Nick anymore. The new word soon spreads around the country and there’s nothing Nick can do to stop it.
The Lemonade War by Davies (630)
At the tail end of summer, Evan discovers that his younger sister, Jessie, who has just skipped third grade, will be not just in his grade, but in his fourth-grade classroom. Evan is really mad about it, but can’t explain it to Jessie—so instead, he gets nasty and mean. Jessie is really smart, but not about emotions, so the more she tries to make up with him, the more angry he gets. One of the things that they usually love doing together is having a lemonade stand, but when Evan goes off and has a lemonade stand with Scott—the school bully—Jessie decides that she will have one too—not as competition, but to encourage him to come join her fun. It doesn’t work, and Evan takes it as a call to war.

The Other Half of my Heart by Frazier (750)
This is a really interesting book about a set of 11-year-old twin girls who are very unique: one appears to be white, and the other appears to be black. How is that possible? IS that possible? It is, and it does happen. While this isn’t a true story of bi-racial twins, it is a really great peek into what life could be like for twins, or any siblings, that look very different racially. Kiera is outgoing, talks a lot and is very dramatic; she also has kinky black hair, dark eyes and dark skin. Minni has straight red hair, blue eyes, and such light skin that she turns red if she spends any time in the sun. Yet they are twins. While that isn’t a big deal to them—indeed they are best friends—they are starting to learn that their racial appearance does affect how they are treated by both strangers and family. But can they learn not to let it come between them?

My Side of the Mountain by George (810)
Have you ever thought about running away, maybe into the woods, to try and see if you could survive off of the land? That is exactly what Sam Gribley decides to do. He packs his bags—not a lot of stuff—and marches into the Catskill Mountains to look for the land that once housed his grandfather’s farm. Nothing is left of the farm, but Sam decides to stay and make a home for himself. What is so great about this book is the details of what Sam does to live. How he finds food and shelter, how he deals with the weather, and how he handles being isolated for months at a time. Head’s-up—don’t watch the movie. Huge disappointment.

Ida B by Hannigan (970)
Ida B's first days at school were not what she expected. In fact, she was miserable. When her mother spends the day in school with her, she agrees that it is not where Ida B belongs. So, for the next few years, Ida B is home schooled. She loves spending her free time outdoors talking to the trees and the brook. And she loves spending time with her parents. But then the unthinkable happens. Her mother is diagnosed with cancer. Now her mother is too tired to teach her and her father is too busy taking care of the farm and his family. So Ida B has to go back to public school. Will fourth grade be as bad as she believes? Can Ida B adjust to all the changes happening in her life?
Love, Aubrey by Lafleur (9-12 age)
This is the tear-jerker of ALL the tear-jerkers. It begins with Aubrey, 11-years-old, alone in her house. She has been alone for days, taking care of herself, waiting for her mom to come home. But her mom isn’t coming home anytime soon, because she is having a hard time dealing with losing her husband and daughter in a car accident—Aubrey’s dad and sister. Aubrey’s grandmother comes and takes her home with her. As you can imagine, Aubrey’s mom isn’t the only one having a hard time with losing her family—Aubrey misses them so much that she decides to write her sister and father letters, talking with them about her life, her new friend next door, and the things she does everyday. You can imagine how sad Aubrey is, that not only did she lose her sister and dad, she lost her mother and wonder why she left. What is so emotional about this book, is that every time is seems that Aubrey might have a good day, something reminds her of her loss, and the way the author writes about Aubrey’s feelings is so real. I know tear-jerkers are a scary type of book to read, but try to look at it this way: if an author can write a book that effects your emotions so much that even though the characters aren’t real you STILL feel sad for them, then it has to be a really good book. Give it a try.

Rules by Lord (780)
If someone says “Hi”, say “Hi” back. Say “Thank you” when someone gives you a present (even if you don’t like it). Don’t stand in front of the TV when other people are watching it. No toys in the fish tank.
Rules, rules…so many things David doesn’t understand! It’s hard enough for any twelve-year-old to make her way in adolescent society…but sooo much harder when you have an autistic little brother! Catherine loves David deeply, and protects him all she can, but his embarrassing behaviors present a real challenge in her search for the ideal best friend. One day, as Catherine sits sketching in the waiting room during one of David’s many therapy visits, she meets someone who really rocks her categories and changes her whole perspective on who she is and what kind of relationships matter most. What was it that turned her world upside down, and what is “normal”, anyway? Read Rules by Cynthia Lord.

Julia Gillian by McGhee (810) (3 books in this collection)
Do any of you have pets? Do you feel like your pet is your best friend? That is how Julia Gillian feels about her st. Bernard dog, Bigfoot. It’s summer vacation and Julia, with Bigfoot in tow, have some serious goals during the break: win the meerkat animal in the claw-drop machine at the hardware store; find something new that she is good at (since she has already perfected the art of papier-mâché); and finish reading the green book she picked up at the book store. Julia isn’t a big reader, but when she saw that the green book was about a kid and a dog, she figured it would be a great story. But when she starts to read it, she gets that icky-stomach feeling that something bad might happen. Like, maybe something bad might happen to the dog. Add to that that she can’t seem to win her meerkat, and her parents are always studying their schoolbooks or reading the paper—very depressing—and suddenly Julia’s summer isn’t so great.
Brilliant Fall of Gianna Z by Messner (Gr 3-8)
Gianna Zales throws all her energy into her art and running on the school's cross-country team. But when she is told she will not participate in the team sectionals if she does not complete her leaf-collecting science project, Gianna faces an uphill battle. Gianna begins to make progress on her project, but she hits one setback after another—lost leaves, sabotaged homework from her team rival, Bianca, and dealing with her grandmother’s failing memory. Her best friend Zig comes to her aid, helping Gianna with her project, and supports her as a steadfast friend. As the deadline closes in, Gianna is still behind, running a close race to stay on the team.

Losers, inc. by Mills (720)
Hi! My name is Ethan Winfield. I'm a sixth-grader at West Creek Middle School. I'm just a regular kid. You know, the kind of kid who, when a book report is due and the teacher says the minimum number of pages is 100, you go to the library to find a book that has no more than 103 pages. I don't even care what the book is about, just that it is short! When science fair time rolls around, my projects usually involve food samples and surveys. Hey, you can make one of those really cool charts and bar graphs to display your results and I figure that's something close to science. I have accepted my role as a minimum effort kid.

One day, my friend Julius and I decided that the only answer to our status at school was to dignify it with a certain kind of recognition. So, we formed Losers, Inc., a really exclusive club dedicated to maintaining the status of true losers! We were set, no school assignment was to be completed without that loser motto "I only did the bare minimum."

But then it happened. Miss Gunderson arrived at our school as a student teacher. She was gorgeous, stunning and when she spoke, her voice was soft, low and a bit husky Miss Gunderson spoke to our class about the "beauty and wonder of science". Coming from anyone else I would have gagged, but from her it was something special. A call to honor. A challenge to make her proud of me and notice me. I would have to create the most awesome science project of the year. I would have to be the WINNER! This year I would do even better than Peter, and why not. I had a new motivation. But there was this problem. this would violate everything that was sacred to Losers, Inc. and I was the president!

Wringer by Spinelli (690)
In Palmer’s town, everyone hates Pigeons. Or, at least it seems that way, because every August, the town releases 5,000 of them, just to shoot and kill them and turn them into fertilizer. What is even more worse, as far as Palmer is concerned, is that the 10-year-old boys in the town have a job to do during the pigeon release: to grab any pigeons that aren’t quite dead, and wring their necks. They are called Wringers. Palmer’s new buddies can’t wait to become Wringers; they consider it their duty to rid the town of the filthy birds. His new buddies also decide that Palmer can’t hang out with his friend Dorothy from across the street, because tough guys don’t hang out with girls. Problem is, Palmer doesn’t know how to stand up to his friends, so instead he pretends to be tough like them, and begins bullying everyone—even Dorothy—just to seem cool. But everything starts to get really complicated when a wild Pigeon befriends Palmer, and Palmer takes him in. Now not only is Palmer dreading August, but he is scared to death that soon his buddies will find out about his new pet.
My Life as a Book by Tashjian (880)
It’s summer, and when ornery Derrick does one too many stunts and refuses to read his assigned books, his parents send him to learning camp instead of on vacation to Martha’s Vineyard with his best friend. While Derrick hates to read, he does enjoy a good story— and finds many during the summer including a newspaper article buried in the attic that reveals a babysitter died trying to save him... on a beach in Martha’s Vineyard. This is a good choice for fans of Diary of a Whimpy Kid—not just because of the format, but because of Derrick’s direct communication with the reader and his goofy antics and jokes.

A Crooked Kind of Perfect by Linda Urban(730)
Zoe dreams of her graceful fingers flying over the piano keys, the music ending in a crescendo of roaring applause from the filled Carnegie Hall. She wants to be a concert pianist.

So Zoe is thrilled when her father goes out to buy her a piano. But her dreams of a baby grand are smashed when she comes home to find a Perfectone-D60—an electric organ. Her father’s fear of public places caused him to freak out in the music store—and buy the wrong instrument! Grudgingly Zoe gives the organ a try. Soon quirky Mabelline Person starts giving Zoe music lessons. But instead of Bach and Beethoven, Zoe finds herself playing TV theme songs and pop hits from the 60’s and 70’s!

When Mabelline signs Zoe up for the Perform-O-Rama music contest, Zoe forces herself to ignore the stark differences between her dreams and reality. Realizing she is the underdog in the contest, she needs to find a way to be perfect in a very imperfect situation. Can her fingers fly on the Perfectone-D60—and will she hear the audience fill the room with applause

Alabama Moon by Key (720)
Alone...all alone. Ten-year-old Moon stands by the grave where he just buried his dad. That grave is next to his mom’s. He is standing in the middle of the piney Alabama forest where he lived with his dad in a one-room camouflaged shelter half buried in the earth.

But he’ll be fine. He has learned how to survive; he’s self-sufficient, dependent on no one.

Moon’s dad was a Vietnam vet that distrusted people and hated the government. Before he died, his dad told Moon to go to Alaska and find other survivalists. With no money and no experience outside the woods, Moon sets off. But the lawyer who owns the land finds him and turns him over to Constable Sanders.

The jail is warm. There is a real bed and the food is great, though Constable Sanders is mean-spirited. Moon escapes only to be recaptured and sent to a boys’ home. There he meets Hall and Kit. The three boys make a daring escape to the Talladega National Forest where Moon
teaches the other two how to live on their own. They are surviving fine, and Moon is glad to have his two friends. He is not alone now.

But it isn't going to last. Constable Sanders is closing in again—this time with two dogs!