The purpose of the Texas Topaz Reading List is to provide children, teens, and adults with recommended nonfiction titles that stimulate reading for pleasure and personal learning. It is intended for recreational reading and is not designed to support any particular curriculum. Due to the diversity in age range and topics, Texas librarians should consider titles on this list in accordance with their own local collection development policies.

(*) Denotes a unanimous recommendation by the Texas Topaz Committee.

**GRADeS K-2**


Growing up in South Dakota, Ruth Mason starts to find strange clues to the past in her backyard. She collects her fossils, contacting universities and scientists from all over, because she knows she has something special. Although they ignore her at first, Ruth perseveres and makes one of the greatest discoveries in paleontological history!

*A History of Underwear with Professor Chicken* by Hannah Holt, illustrated by Korwin Briggs (Roaring Brook Press, 2022)

Professor Chicken provides an overview of what people wear underneath their clothes. Learn about men's and women's underwear, ranging from loincloths to briefs, animal skins to spandex, shifts to Spanx. Various cultures around the globe are visited and consideration is given to social class as well.

Ever wonder how movies get made? Author Megan McCarthy takes readers on a whirlwind journey of the history of the movies we know and love in this fun, educating read.

*Alice Waters Cooks Up a Food Revolution* by Diane Stanley, illustrated by Jessie Hartland (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2022)

*Alice Waters Cooks Up a Food Revolution* is a delicious nonfiction picture book biography about pioneering chef Alice Waters who kickstarted the organic food movement.

*Because Claudette* by Tracey Baptiste, illustrated by Tonya Engel (Dial Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2022)

Fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin’s activism launched the Montgomery bus boycott. Because of Claudette's brave stand against injustice, history was transformed.

*Born Hungry: Julia Child Becomes “the French Chef”* by Alex Prud'homme, illustrated by Sarah Green (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2022)

Julia McWilliams never fit the mold of what a proper young lady was supposed to be, and thank goodness! Julia chose adventure and intrigue before finally settling down with her husband only to realize she was not a good cook. With enthusiasm and a can-do attitude, Julia Child became one of the best chefs of all time, spreading her love of French cooking to the entire world.
**Celia Planted a Garden: The Story of Celia Thaxter and Her Island Garden** by Phyllis Root and Gary D. Schmidt, illustrated by Melissa Sweet (Candlewick Press, 2022)

Celia Laughton Thaxter was a poet, artist, gardener, and nature lover. She created beauty in a harsh island habitat that was visited by famous literary and artistic people of her time.

**Covered in Color: Christo & Jeanne-Claude’s Fabrics of Freedom** by Elisa Boxer, illustrated by Susanna Chapman (Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS, 2022)

A traumatic childhood under suppressive political rule leads the artist Cristo and his partner Jeanne-Claude to make it their mission to provide art and color in the world.

**Dig, Dance, Dive: How Birds Move to Survive** by Etta Kaner, illustrated by June Steube (Owlkids Books, 2022)

This entertaining book introduces the reader to interesting birds and bird behavior.

**Ducks Overboard! A True Story of Plastic in Our Oceans** by Markus Motum (Candlewick Press, 2021)

Follow the journey of a rubber duck lost at sea as we learn about plastic waste in our oceans and how that affects living creatures.

**Happy Sloth Day!** by April Pulley Sayre with Jeff Sayre (Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2022)

Spend the day with a sloth. This stunning photographic picture book is filled with facts about sloths and their ecosystem.
*I Am Ruby Bridges* by Ruby Bridges, illustrated by Nikkolas Smith (Orchard Books, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2022)

Ruby Bridges writes from her perspective of a six year old kid. She writes about her experience of going to school and how she became the first person of her color at her elementary school.


Inspired by a Harry S. Truman quote, *If You Want a Friend in Washington* is a wacky book about presidential pets throughout history. Brimming with fascinating facts, each group of presidential pets leads to a wackier set.

*Nina, a story of Nina Simone* by Traci N. Todd, illustrated by Christian Robinson (G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2021)

This picture book biography is a thoughtful introduction to singer Nina Simone. Through word and illustration, it shows Nina as a musical prodigy as a child and discusses her influence on the Civil Rights Movement.

*Pizza! A Slice of History* by Greg Pizzoli (Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2022)

*Pizza! A Slice of History* takes the reader on a delicious tour of how pizza became the world's favorite food.

*Plants on the Move* by Émilie Vast (Charlesbridge, 2021)

*Plants on the Move* chronicles the many ways plants and their seeds move—falling, clinging, burrowing, floating, via animal consumption or transport—in their quest to reproduce.
**Solitary Animals: Introverts of the Wild** by Joshua David Stein, illustrated by Dominique Ramsey (Rise x Penguin Workshop, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2022)

*Solitary Animals* is a beautiful nonfiction picture book that showcases solitary animals and the world they live in.

**The Astronomer Who Questioned Everything: The Story of Maria Mitchell** by Laura Alary, illustrated by Ellen Rooney (Kids Can Press, 2022)

*The Astronomer Who Questioned Everything* tells the fascinating, though not well-known, story of a remarkable nineteenth-century woman scientist and women's rights advocate. After winning that prize for discovering a comet, Maria Mitchell would go on to become the first professional female astronomer in the United States, first female member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and one of the first female college professors.


Explore our Solar System with Goldilocks and discover why Earth is called the Goldilocks zone compared to the other planets in the system.


*The Gravity Tree* explores the fabled apple tree that inspired Isaac Newton's theory of gravity. From a minor seed to a monumental icon, it inspired the world’s greatest minds, including Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking.

This fascinating story describes how a text message travels. Although it may seem like it only takes an instant, the journey of a text message is actually an adventure! From the electric signals in your brain to the glass fiber cables deep underwater, readers will learn there is much more to pressing send than meets the eye.

The Mother of a Movement: Jeanne Manford Ally, Activist, and Co-Founder of PFLAG by Rob Sanders, illustrated by Sam Kalda (Magination Press, an imprint of American Psychological Association, 2022)

Jeanne Manford was just a mother who loved her son, and the way she showed the world she loved him was to stand up for him and other members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Her devotion led to the start of the PFLAG group which still works today to support beloved family and friends in the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Only Woman in the Photo: Frances Perkins & her New Deal for America by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Alexandra Bye (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing, 2020)

This inspirational biography features the life of Frances Perkins, the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet. She was a force of nature, a champion of those in need, and a powerful voice for injustice.

The Strangest Thing in the Sea: And Other Curious Creatures of the Deep by Rachel Poliquin, illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler (Kids Can Press, 2021)

Can you guess who is the strangest creature in the sea? Is it a creature that looks like a land of candy? A fighter jet? Find out in this imaginative book full of color illustrations and puzzles.
**We Are the Supremes** by Zoë Tucker, illustrated by Salini Perera (Wide Eyed Editions, an imprint of The Quarto Group, 2021)

Tucker tells the story of one of the world's greatest "girl groups" which helped bring about the rise of Motown Records as well as social changes during the Civil Rights Era.

**Where Butterflies Fill the Sky: A Story of Immigration, Family, and Finding Home** by Zahra Marwan (Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2022)

Zahra Marwan presents her own story of emigrating from Kuwait as a child and making a new life in a new country. Marwan's Kuwait is a beautiful place, and her ancestors watch over her. Because her father lacks Kuwaiti citizenship, the entire family is considered stateless. They end up migrating from one desert to another — from Kuwait to New Mexico — and despite the sadness of missing family, customs, and a native language, Marwan finds new connections and forges a sense of belonging.

**GRADES 3-5**

*A Rose Named Peace: How Francis Meilland Created a Flower of Hope for a World at War* by Barbara Carroll Roberts, illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline (Candlewick Press, 2022)

While developing a new breed of rose, Francis Meilland must find a way to ensure its survival as World War II breaks out in France.

**Africa, Amazing Africa** by Atinuke, illustrated Mouni Feddag (Candlewick Press, 2021)

Africa, Amazing Africa explores the history, animals, resources, and cultural diversity of each African country. The author’s love of this continent shines through the rich text and colorful art.
Because of You, John Lewis: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Keith Henry Brown (Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2022)

This is the inspiring story of Tybre Faw and his friendship with his hero, John Lewis. Pinkney weaves together a riveting biography of Congressman Lewis along with Tybre's story, which is just beginning.

*Blips on a Screen: How Ralph Baer Invented TV Video Gaming and Launched a Worldwide Obsession* by Kate Hannigan, illustrated by Zachariah Ohora (Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, 2022)

As a technology inventor for the army, and at the beginning of the common household television, Ralph Baer came up with the idea of playing games on the TV. By tinkering and collaborating with peers Baer is known as the first video game inventor.


Blue is the color of the sky, oceans, and once the color of royalty. Follow the journey of the color blue and how it came from snails to plants and even impacted enslaved Africans.

*Cultured Donuts: Take a Bite Out of Art History* by Chloe Tyler (Flowerpot Press, 2022)

Take a journey through art history in this tasty book! Tyler exhibits a variety of art styles from van Gogh to Basquiat all in the form of a bright pink donut. This title also includes an extensive glossary as well as tips and tricks to create your own art.
Dazzlin' Dolly: The Songwriting, Hit-Singing, Guitar-Picking Dolly Parton by Suzanne Slade, illustrated by Edwin Fotheringham (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2022)

Dolly Parton was born singing and performing. Even when people around her said she wouldn't make it, she proved them wrong and became one of the best known and loved performers of all time.

Infinity: Figuring Out Forever by Sarah C. Campbell (Astra Young Readers, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2022)

How many stars can you count in the sky? Does it seem like the number is never ending? Counting can be a way to start thinking about what infinity really means, and how it affects the world around us.

¡Mambo Mucho Mambo! The Dance that Crossed Color Lines by Dean Robbins, illustrated by Eric Velasquez (Candlewick Press, 2021)

¡Mambo Mucho Mambo! tells the story of how Latin jazz brought people together through dance in a segregated 1940s New York.

*Packing for Mars for Kids* by Mary Roach (Norton Young Readers, an imprint of W. W. Norton & Company, 2022)

Do you have what it takes to survive in space? Mary Roach shares the challenges of life in space along with a generous helping of the unexpected, the odd, and the gross. This book will inspire both future space travelers as well as the engineers and designers who make such travel possible.
*Rescuing Titanic: A True Story of Quiet Bravery in the North Atlantic* by Flora Delargy (Wide Eyed Editions, an imprint of The Quarto Group, 2021)

*Rescuing Titanic* is the true story of the brave crew of the Carpathia as they speed through the night to help rescue the people on the sinking ship of the Titanic. Follow the journey of the Carpathia as the decision of the crew and captain helped rescue the survivors from the freezing sea.

*Road Trip! Camping with the Four Vagabonds: Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, and John Burroughs* by Claudia Friddell, illustrated by Jeremy Holmes (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2022)

Three of the world’s famous inventors and their naturalist author friend begin to take summer vacations together. Friends and family join them along the way. While experiencing nature, they play games, design inventions, and start a whole new type of vacation, the road trip.

*Sanctuary: Kip Tiernan and Rosie's Place, the Nation's First Shelter for Women* by Christine McDonnell, illustrated by Victoria Tentler-Krylov (Candlewick Press, 2022)

*Sanctuary* tells the story of Kip Tiernan, a compassionate woman who dedicated her life to helping those in need.


Discover the life of guitar legend Jimi Hendrix in this lyrical biography. Told in a series of verses, Hendrix's story jumps off the page with vibrant illustrations and songs.
The Deadliest Diseases Then and Now by Deborah Hopkinson (Scholastic Focus, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2021)

Follow the history of the world's major pandemics through time. Starting with the 14 century Great Morality (Black Plague), to 1918 Flu, to Covid-19. This journey shows the science behind treating pandemics and the discovery of the viruses themselves.

To The Front! Clara Barton Braves the Battle of Antietam by Claudia Friddell, illustrated by Christopher Cyr (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2022)

The Battle of Antietam was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War, and right on the front lines was Clara Barton the indefatigable nurse fighting to save as many lives as she could.

Washed Ashore Making Art from Ocean Plastic by Kelly Crull (Millbrook Press, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2022)

Artist Angela Haseltine Pozzi creates art using plastic found in the ocean. Each piece represents a sea creature affected by plastic. This book highlights some of the pieces with information about each creature.


A picture book about Asian American changemakers doing everything they dreamed of and inspiring all of us to reach for new heights.
Your Place in the Universe by Jason Chin (Neal Porter Books, an imprint of Holiday House, 2020)

*Ambushed! The Assassination Plot Against President Garfield* by Gail Jarrow (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, 2021)

Button Pusher by Tyler Page (First Second, an imprint of Roaring Brook Press, 2022)

Duet: Our Journey in Song with the Northern Mockingbird by Phillip Hoose (Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC, 2022)
songs, and scientific research and reveals a partnership - a duet - between it and humans.

**Fallout: Spies, Superbombs, and the Ultimate Cold War Showdown** by Steve Sheinkin (Roaring Brook Press, 2021)

It’s the end of World War II. The Soviet Union and the United States are warring for dominance on the world’s stage, soon to enter a period known as the Cold War. Spying is the name of the game as each country tries to anticipate and counteract the other's move. The Space Race is one arena; another is the nuclear arms race. The last reaches a fever pitch in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

**How to Build a Human In Seven Evolutionary Steps** by Pamela S. Turner, illustrated by John Gurche (Charlesbridge, 2022)

Did you know humans have evolved to crave gossip? Or that, when you think about it, early humans invented BBQ when they realized they could cook their meat? In this funny, thought provoking book, the growth of humanity is broken down into the simplest acts that have led us to the complicated species we are today.

**Lady Icarus: Balloonomania and the Brief, Bold Life of Sophie Blanchard** by Deborah Noyes (Random House Studio, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, 2022)

During the late 18th century when France was facing political unrest, the emergence of the hot air balloon came into the picture, entertaining the masses with this wonder and risky flights. This book follows the journey of the key figures in the early hot air balloon flights in France including Sophie Blanchard who represented females in this adventurous career.

**Master of His Fate: Roosevelt's Rise from Polio to the Presidency** by James Tobin (Christy Ottaviano Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company, 2021)

*Master of His Fate* is a biography of FDR focusing on his battle with polio and how his struggles with the disease shaped his character and set him on the course to become president.
**Modern Art Explorer** by Alice Harman, illustrated by Serge Bloch (Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2020)

*Modern Art Explorer* takes a close-up look at 30 prominent pieces of modern art from a diverse group of artists.

**Snoozefest: The Surprising Science of Sleep** by Tanya Lloyd Kyi, illustrated by Valéry Goulet (Kids Can Press, 2021)

How important is sleep? This book discusses the science of snoozing and the effect it has on our daily functions.


The young life of the visionary storyteller Octavia E. Butler is told in poems and prose. Born into the Space Race, the Red Scare, and the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, Butler experienced an American childhood that shaped her into a groundbreaking science-fiction storyteller.

**The Genius Under the Table: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain** by Eugene Yelchin (Candlewick Press, 2021)

In this affecting and unforgettable memoir, Eugene Yelchin recalls growing up in Cold War Russia. Yelchin’s drawings are sprinkled throughout this sad, at times humorous, survival story.


*The Hanmoji Handbook* is a full-color manual that playfully introduces and explains Chinese Han characters through the language of emoji.
**The Woman Who Split the Atom: The Life of Lise Meitner** by Marissa Moss (Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS, 2022)

Lise Meitner, the physicist who discovered nuclear fission, was a female Jewish scientist in Berlin during the early twentieth century. She had to fight for an education, a job, and equal treatment in her field. Meitner made groundbreaking strides in the study of radiation, but when Hitler came to power in Germany, she had to face not only sexism, but also life-threatening anti-Semitism as well. *The Woman Who Split the Atom* is a fascinating look at Meitner’s fierce passion, integrity, and her lifelong struggle to have her contributions to physics recognized.


Explore different desserts from different countries and across time in this graphic nonfiction format. Learn about the evolution of such scrumptious treats such as cake, ice cream, gummies, macarons, and others. Fun facts, baking science, and recipes accompany the colorful illustrations.

**GRADES 9-12**

**Black Birds in the Sky: The Story and Legacy of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre** by Brandy Colbert (Balzer + Bray, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2021)

The Greenwood district of Tulsa, Oklahoma was a thriving Black community in 1921. Known as the Black Wall Street, it was the home of many Black American professionals and entrepreneurs. Over a two-day period, beginning May 31st and continuing into the morning of June 1st, white neighbors from across the railroad tracks marched into Greenwood and burned more than 1400 homes and businesses, leaving almost 300 people dead and nearly 10,000 people homeless.


In the early 1970s, the US Constitution was challenged and the country’s democratic processes were in jeopardy. It all began with the break in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. As the truth of what happened came to light through the efforts of reporters and investigative
committees, it would soon be clear that the criminal activities unearthed would lead to the highest office in the land, the US presidency.

*I Could Not Do Otherwise: The Remarkable Life of Dr. Mary Edwards Walker* by Sara Latta (Zest Books, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2022)

A doctor and decorated war veteran, a revolutionary thinker and activist, Mary Edwards Walker is not a common name in today's history books, yet in her day, Dr. Walker received much attention - both positive and negative - for her dress, her views, and her demand for women's rights. This book explores the unorthodox life of a woman truly ahead of her time.

*Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI - Adapted for Young Readers* by David Grann (Crown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, 2021)

An adaptation of Grann's 2017 book for young readers, *Killers of the Flower Moon* tells the compelling story of several murders in 1920s Oklahoma, the exploitation of the Osage Community, and the birth of the FBI as they try to solve the case.


*Murder Among Friends* is the story of the cold calculation and execution of a murder by a pair of narcissistic, entitled young men who believed they had committed the perfect crime. Their trial included an unexpected twist employed by legendary defense lawyer Clarence Darrow. Fleming examines the backgrounds and motives of the killers as well as the aftermath and trial in striking detail, and in doing so tells a story that keeps readers enthralled throughout.

*Punching Bag* by Rex Ogle (Norton Young Readers, an imprint of W. W. Norton & Company, 2021)

A frequent witness to and often recipient of verbal, emotional, and physical abuse, Rex Ogle recounts the highs and lows of family life with his mother, stepfather, and younger stepbrother. This is a story of grief, pain, and, ultimately, survival.
**The Race of the Century: The Battle to Break the Four-Minute Mile** by Neal Bascomb (Scholastic Focus, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2022)

The four-minute mile was a barrier that many believed to be insurmountable, but from 1952-1954 three young men, Roger Bannister of England, John Landry of Australia, and Wes Santee of the US set their sights on being the first to break it. All three were students - amateurs - training around their studies and work. Yet on May 6, 1954, one of them succeeded.

**The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh** by Candace Fleming (Schwartz & Wade Books, an imprint of Random House Children’s Books, 2020)

*The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh* is a riveting biography of a complicated man. He was the first human to cross the Atlantic via airplane, a media sensation, an American hero, a Nazi sympathizer, a champion of Eugenics, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and much more. Fleming’s account is well-researched and utterly absorbing, never shying away from the contradictions and complexities of Lindbergh’s life.

**Unequal: A Story of America** by Michael Eric Dyson and Marc Favreau (Little, Brown and Company, 2022)

Told in a series of poignant biographical snapshots, Unequal demonstrates the challenges that people of color have faced in the quest for equal treatment in personal safety, financial gain, medical treatment, voting, housing, education, and more.

**Victory. Stand! Raising My Fist for Justice** by Tommie Smith, Derrick Barnes, and Dawud Anyabwile (Norton Young Readers, an imprint of W. W. Norton & Company, 2022)

"We had to be seen because we were not being heard." Odds are that if you don't know the name Tommie Smith, you would probably recognize the photo of him and John Carlos on the victory stand for the 200 meters in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. From sharecropping to California to San Jose State University to Mexico City and beyond, Tommie exemplified deep faith, hard work, and the desire to improve life for millions of Black Americans. This is the story of an American icon.
**ADULT FOR YOUNG ADULT**


Nyle DiMarco shares the joys and challenges of growing up as a 4th-generation Deaf man in a hearing world. Part of a community that includes around 10 million people in the US and close to 360 million world-wide, this model, actor, and producer is an activist for Deaf rights and education, advocating for individuals who are frequently misunderstood and underestimated.

*Letters to a Young Athlete* by Chris Bosh (Penguin Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2021)

NBA Hall of Fame member Chris Bosh reflects on the qualities and characteristics young athletes should strive to achieve in order to reach their highest potential and offers advice to challenge those who would become stronger, better players. Bosh offers anecdotes from his own life and career as well as examples of other professional athletes, both men and women, from a variety of sports.