

2025 Texas Topaz Nonfiction Reading List

Titles for Youth



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 3-5](#) [Grades 6-8](#) [Grades 9-12](#)

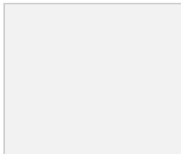
GRADES K-2

A Few Beautiful Minutes: Experiencing a Solar Eclipse by Kate Allen Fox, illustrated by Khoa Le (Little Brown and Company, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, 2023)



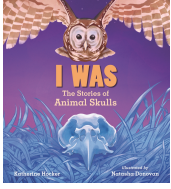
Follow along with a solar eclipse in this beautifully illustrated picture book. Animals and humans, portrayed in both bright colors and dark shadows, are all part of something extraordinarily special. Instructions are included for crafting your own sun viewer box.

****Daughter of the Light-Footed People: The Story of the Indigenous Marathon Champion Lorena Ramirez*** by Belen Medina, illustrated by Natalia Rojas Castro (Antheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2024)



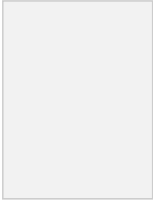
Daughter of the Light-Footed People by Belen Medina is a powerful story inspired by the history and culture of the Indigenous Acjachemen people. The book follows a young girl as she navigates the challenges of preserving her heritage and identity in the face of change. Through her journey, readers learn about the deep connection between her community and the land, as well as the resilience of her people. It's a powerful exploration of tradition, family, and the strength found in cultural roots.

I Was: The Stories of Animal Skulls by Katherine Hocker, illustrated by Natasha Donovan (Candlewick Press, 2024)



Poetic text and beautiful illustrations accompany a guessing game of sorts, as readers are encouraged to figure out which animal is represented by each bony skull. Additional information in the back matter helps readers to dive further into the science of animal bones, making connections between skull shapes and animal traits.

Log Life by Amy Hevron, (Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2024)



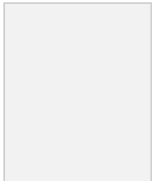
Log Life by Amy Hevron is a beautifully illustrated picture book that takes readers on a journey through the ecosystem of a fallen log. The book explores the various creatures that make the log their home, highlighting the interconnectedness of nature. Through poetic text and captivating artwork, Log Life offers young readers a glimpse into the hidden world of decomposition and life cycles in the forest.

Marcel's Masterpiece: How a Toilet Shaped the History of Art by Jeff Mack, illustrated by Jeff Mack (Henry Holt and Co., an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC, 2022)



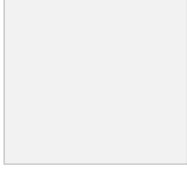
Can a toilet be art? That's the question at the center of this humorous and silly look at artist Marcel Duchamp. Colorful spreads of mixed-media and collaged letters draw direct inspiration from the Dada art movement that Duchamp championed.

****Mushroom Rain*** by Laura K Zimmerman, illustrated by Jamie Green (Sleeping Bear Press, 2022)



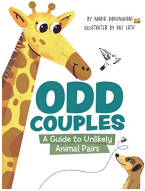
Gorgeous illustrations accompany lyrical text that reveal the mysteries surrounding the world of fungi. Readers will be enthralled by the unique features and life cycles of mushrooms, which are vastly different than any other living species on earth. Detailed facts, ideas for fun activities, and further reading suggestions are included at the end of the book.

Nothing: John Cage and 4'33" by Nicholas Day, illustrated by Chris Raschka (Neal Porter Books, an imprint of Holiday House, 2024)



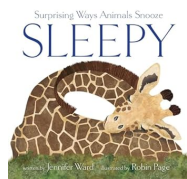
What is music? Can silence be music? Follow along at the first performance of one of John Cage's most thought provoking pieces, 4'33", and decide for yourself.

Odd Couples: A Guide to Unlikely Animal Pairs by Maria Birmingham, illustrated by Raz Latif (Owl Kids Books, 2023)



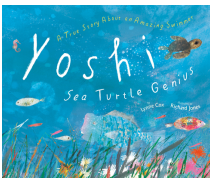
What does a hummingbird and a giraffe have in common? They both hum! Filled with fun facts about the most unlikely pairings, ODD COUPLES is an adorable, engaging way to introduce the animal world to younger children.

Sleepy: Surprising Ways Animals Snooze by Jennifer Ward, illustrated by Robin Page (Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2024)



Sleepy: Surprising Ways Animals Snooze by Jennifer Ward is a fun exploration of how different animals sleep. The book introduces readers to the unique and sometimes surprising sleep habits of various creatures, from napping sloths to dozing dolphins. With playful language and vivid illustrations, it offers a fun and educational look at the diverse ways animals rest and recharge. Perfect for young readers curious about the natural world.

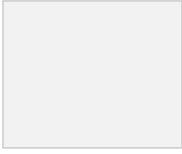
Yoshi, Sea Turtle Genius: A True Story About an Amazing Swimmer by Lynne Cox, illustrated by Richard Jones (Anne Schwartz, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2023)



An incredible tale that follows the extraordinary travels of a sea turtle who swam thousands of miles during the first years of her life, but was eventually caught in a fishing net. A fishing boat rescued her and she was placed in an aquarium exhibit for the remainder of her youth. Once fully grown, she was returned to the ocean where she swam an astounding 23,000 miles to return to her nesting grounds to lay her own eggs.

Grades 3-5

And Yet You Shine: The Kohinoor Diamond, Colonization, and Resistance by Supriya Kelkar (Candlewick Press, 2024)



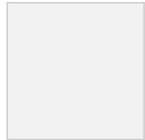
Story of the famous Kohinoor diamond as it passes hands from discovery to colonization.

Dive!: The Story of Breathing Underwater by Chris Gall, illustrated by Chris Gall (Roaring Brook Press, a division of Holtzbrinck Publishing, 2024)



For centuries humans have been seeking out ways to breathe underwater in order to explore and work in our mysterious oceans. Chris Gall expertly describes these historic attempts and the science that was used to improve breathing apparatuses over time. Crisp and colorful illustrations accompany the text and help draw the reader even deeper into this fascinating book.

****Erno Rubik and his Magic Cube*** by Kerry Aradhya, illustrated by Kara Kramer (Peachtree Publishing Company, 2024)



Follow Erno Rubik as he imagines and creates the now famous Rubik's Cube. His love for puzzles and three dimensional objects led to the ultimate puzzle through trial and error.

Gifts from Georgia's Garden by Lisa Robinson, illustrated by Hadley Hooper (Neal Porter Books, and imprint of Holiday House, 2024)



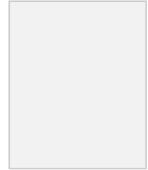
Georgia O'Keeffe, one of the most famous women in art history, lived independently in New Mexico, growing her own food and making her own clothes. Her garden and art enriched each other, and despite the era's prejudice against female artists, she thrived in her sanctuary well into old age.

Jose Feeds the World: How a Famous Chef Feeds Millions of People in Need Around the World by David Unger, illustrated by Marta Alvarez Miguens (Duopress, an imprint of Sourcebooks, 2024)



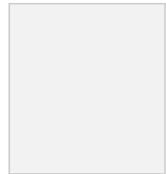
World-renowned chef Jose Andres grew up surrounded by authentic cooking, and he was determined to become a successful chef. When he was just 15, he obtained a prestigious assistant job at one of the most famous restaurants in the world. He began to notice how food made people feel better, and from there began his non-profit World Central Kitchen. This was to be a global organization that would provide free meals to people affected by natural and manmade disasters. His successful non-profit has fed people affected by COVID, the war in Ukraine, and more.

Lucy!: How Lucille Ball Did it All by Amy Guglielmo, illustrated by Brigette Barrager (Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS, 2024)



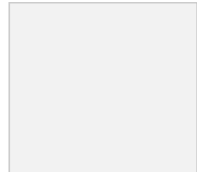
This is the inspiring story of Lucille Ball, a bold and funny rule-breaker who defied the odds to become a comedy legend. Despite being told she couldn't act, sing, or dance, Lucy found success, ultimately creating the iconic TV show I Love Lucy, which revolutionized television comedy.

Making Sense of Dog Senses: How Our Furry Friends Experience the World by Stephanie Gibeault, illustrated by Raz Latif (Owl Kids Books, 2024)



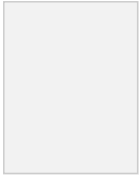
How do dogs experience the world around them? Through their senses of course. Discover how canine senses work and how they compare with humans.

****My Lost Freedom: A Japanese American World War II Story*** by George Takei, illustrated by Michelle Lee (Crown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2024)



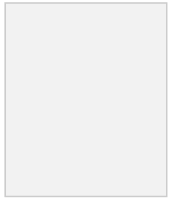
Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor many Japanese Americans were rounded up and taken to incarceration camps for the duration of WWII just because they were Japanese. George Takei was a child during this time born in the United States. This is his story from the point of view of his childhood self on what it is like living in these camps.

***Poetry Comics** by Grant Snider (Chronicle Books LLC, 2024)



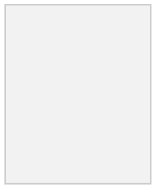
A year's worth of poetry comics that explores the inner lives of children while encouraging reflection and creativity.

***Small Shoes, Great Strides: How Three Brave Girls Opened Doors to School Equality** by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, illustrated by Alex Bostic (Carolrhoda, an imprint of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2023)



Capturing a little-known piece of civil rights history in museum-like spreads, this book provides readers with a wealth of historical details. Despite the inherent danger of their situation, the girls at the core of this story are still full of hope and innocence. Ample back matter will help older students to make connections between the past and our current day struggles with race and segregation.

Sweet Justice: Georgia Gilmore and the Montgomery Bus Boycott by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie (Random House Studio, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, 2022)



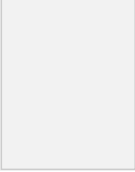
Georgia Gilmore was kicked off a bus in Montgomery after she had paid her 10 cents. She wasn't the only one determined not to pay another dime to the bus until it was fair. She participated in the bus boycott by raising money with her home cooked food.

The Bees of Notre-Dame by Meghan P. Browne, illustrated by E.B. Goodale (Random House Studio, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, 2023)



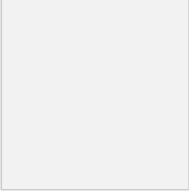
Notre Dame was badly damaged in a fire in 2019, but the bees that lived on the roof of the cathedral survived. This poetic story of hope encourages readers to follow the bees' example and work together to make their community a better place.

The Bone Wars: The True Story of an Epic Battle to Find Dinosaur Fossils by Jane Kurtz, illustrated by Alexander Vidal (Beach Lane Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing Division, 2023)



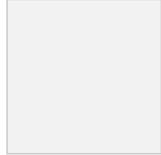
Do you love looking at museum dinosaur skeletons? Believe it or not, they're thanks to a fossil feud! Pals turned rivals, Marsh and Cope in the 1800s raced to unearth the most amazing dinosaurs. Secret codes, disguises - anything to win! Messy, sure, but their bitter fight unearthed a treasure trove of dinosaur bones that we still enjoy and marvel at to this day.

The Fabulous Fannie Farmer: Kitchen Scientist and America's Cook by Emma Bland Smith, illustrated by Susan Reagan (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, a division of Astra Publishing House, 2024)



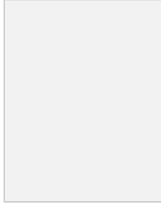
Recipes used to call for "a goodly amount" or a "pinch of" certain ingredients and cooking was more of a guessing game than an exact science. Frannie Farmer wanted to make it easier for anyone to learn to cook and follow a recipe, so she developed recipes using precise measurements and taught them in her cooking classes. She eventually wrote a cookbook that became a bestseller due to the easy new way her recipes could be followed.

****The Girl Who Figured it Out*** by Minda Dentler, illustrated by Stephanie DeHennin (Sourcebooks eXplore, an imprint of Sourcebooks Kids, 2024)



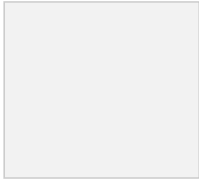
Minda Dentler made history as the first female wheelchair athlete to complete a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and 26.2-mile marathon triathlon using only her arms. Overcoming polio, adoption, surgeries, and numerous challenges, her persistence and determination inspire others to rethink possibilities despite setbacks.

****The Iguanodon's Horn: How Artists and Scientists Put a Dinosaur Back Together Again and Again and Again*** by Sean Rubin (Clarion Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2024)



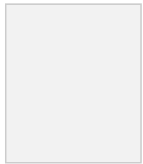
Science is a never ending process. This is especially true when it comes to dinosaurs. Follow along as scientists and the public learn about dinosaurs through our changing understanding of the Iguanodon.

****Thomas Jefferson's Battle for Science: Bias, Truth, and a Mighty Moose!*** by Beth Anderson, illustrated by Jeremy Holmes (Calkins Creek, an imprint of Astra Books for Young Readers, a division of Astra Publishing House, 2024)



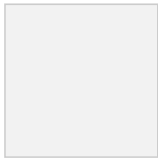
Young Thomas Jefferson had a passion for studying the natural world, inspired by scientist Count Buffon. However, when Buffon inaccurately portrayed America in his writings, Jefferson was outraged. He sought to prove Buffon wrong using scientific methods, showcasing a lesser-known aspect of Jefferson's life in this engaging picture book.

What's Inside a Caterpillar Cocoon?: and Other Questions About Moths & Butterflies by Rachel Ignotofsky (Crown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, 2023)



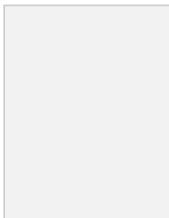
Side-by-side comparisons of moths and butterflies bring science to life in this beautiful picture book. Detailed illustrations and compelling informational text draw readers in and encourage them to explore the world of lepidopterans.

****Wings of an Eagle*** by Billy Mills and Donna Jannell Bowman, illustrated by S.D. Nelson (Little, Brown and Company, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2024)



A soaring biography of Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota). Inspired by his ancestors, Billy overcame challenges including poverty, health issues, and racism to win an Olympic Gold Medal.

World of Rot: Learn All About the Wiggly, Slimy, Super-Cool Decomposers We Couldn't Live Without by Britt Crow-Miller, illustrated by Bruno Valasse (Storey Publishing, an imprint of Workman Publishing, a division of Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2024)

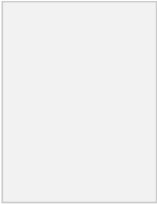


World of Rot: Learn All About the Wiggly, Slimy, Super-Cool Decomposers We Couldn't Live Without by Britt Crow-Miller is an engaging and educational exploration of decomposers and their essential role in ecosystems. The book introduces readers to the fascinating world of organisms like worms, fungi, and bacteria, highlighting how they break

down dead material and recycle nutrients back into the environment. Through accessible language and fun facts, the book emphasizes how these often-overlooked creatures are vital to the balance of nature, making life on Earth possible. Perfect for young readers and nature enthusiasts alike, *World of Rot* provides a fresh perspective on the importance of decomposition.

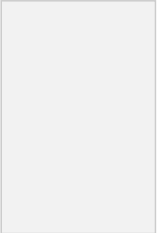
GRADES 6-8

Absurd Words: A Kids' Fun and Hilarious Vocabulary Builder for Future Word Nerds by Tara Lazar, illustrated by Michelle Mayhall (Sourcebooks eXplore, an imprint of Sourcebooks, 2022)



Similar to a dictionary, this book defines a variety of weird and silly words in the English language. Bonus sidebars share additional fun facts, including the etymological roots of a word, examples of terms borrowed from other languages, connections to pop culture, and even a poem or two!

Attacked!: Pearl Harbor and the Day War Came to America by Marc Favreau (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, 2023)



Attacked! offers a gripping retelling of the Pearl Harbor attack through the perspectives of diverse individuals who lived through the harrowing event on December 7, 1941. From the shock of the surprise assault to the aftermath that reshaped the nation, the book vividly portrays the human experiences amidst the chaos. With alternating narratives between key figures like FDR and firsthand accounts from soldiers and civilians, it provides a fresh understanding of this pivotal moment in history and its lasting impact on American identity and collective memory.

Kid-Ventors: 35 Real Kids and Their Amazing Inventions by Kailei Pew, illustrated by Shannon Wright (A Feiwel and Friends Book, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC, 2024)

Kids of all ages from around the world have developed Incredible inventions as a way to improve lives, solve problems, or just make life fun! Readers will learn how the Kid-Ventors came up with their ideas and persevered to make their inventions become a reality. Useful information about the invention process, STEM facts, patent and trademark information, and more will help readers better understand the invention process and guide them if they want to create their own invention.

Mountain of Fire: The Eruption and Survivors of Mount St. Helens, by Rebecca E.F. Barone (Henry Holt and Company, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC, 2024)

Before the deadly eruption of Mount St. Helens in the 1980s there were signs that an eruption was coming. Follow the scientists and citizens of the region on how they read the signs to determine when or if an eruption would take place. The book is full of suspense and details on this eruption.

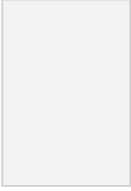
****Puzzled: A Memoir About Growing Up with OCD*** by Pan Cooke (Rocky Pond Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, 2024)

Pan grew up with intrusive thoughts and anxiety. He would brush his teeth over and over again, saying Hail Mary's every night until they were perfect, and getting freaked out hitting a bump in the road thinking he hit someone. It wasn't until an internet search later that he realized all the missing pieces to his puzzle were due to OCD.

Total Garbage: A Messy Dive Into Trash, Waste, and Our World by Rebecca Donnelly, illustrated by John Hendrix (Henry Holt and Company, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, 2023)


Eww. Have you ever wondered what happens when you throw your garbage away? Dig into the history of garbage, how we handle garbage, the effect of garbage on the planet, and solutions.

****Uprooted: A Memoir About What Happens When Your Family Moves Back*** by Ruth Chan (Roaring Brook Press, a division of Holtzbrinck Publishing Holdings Limited, 2024)



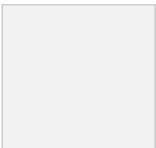
Thirteen year old Ruth grew up in Canada, but when her Chinese parents move the family back to Hong Kong she finds her life turned upside-down. She has to leave her friends and the only place she has ever known to find herself immersed in a new culture where she must struggle to speak the language, make new friends, and navigate a new school. Ruth struggles with her emotions, but eventually finds the strength she needs to navigate her new life. Along the way she learns that her parents experienced the same trepidation when they originally moved from China to Canada years ago. The author's graphic novel illustrations strengthen the story.

Where Are the Aliens?: The Search for Life Beyond Earth by Stacy McAnulty, illustrated by Nicole Miles (Little, Brown Books, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc, 2023)



Is there life beyond earth? Come along on a galactic ride as scientists search for the answer to the question "Where are the aliens?"

Who Got Game? Basketball: Amazing but True Stories! by Derrick Barnes, illustrated by Jez Tuya (Workman Publishing Co, Inc., a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc, 2023)



Amazing record setters and pioneers from basketball history are brought to life with exciting text and colorful illustrations. Each chapter features a player, coach, team or commentator who made an impact in the sport, but might not be commonly known to the reader. Included are a diverse array of different ages, ethnicities and genders. A great choice for sports fans, but will also draw in reluctant readers of all interests.