

10 books to help boost young boys' reading

Young boys are often 'reluctant readers', here is a Top 10 of books for boys plus some emailed suggestions.

1. Alex Rider Anthony Horowitz's series about a 14-year-old boy recruited by the British secret service has proved phenomenally popular: there are nine novels, from 2000's Stormbreaker to Scorpius Rising, released last March, suitable for readers aged around 10 and over; a number of spinoff short-story collections; a film; and a video game. "Definitely my No 1," says Ainsworth.

2. Harry Potter No list would be complete without JK Rowling's much-loved novels about a teenage wizard battling the evil Voldemort, while getting to grips with Quidditch, strange spells and first love. Their addictive qualities are likely to have young boys (and girls, of course) wanting to devour all seven in a row, quickly putting them ahead in the competition.

3. Young Bond Covering similar ground to Alex Rider, Charlie Higson's books – suitable for ages 10 and over — act as a compelling prequel to Ian Fleming's Bond series: here, we meet Bond as a 13-year-old at Eton in the 1930s. "007 should certainly give Harry a run for his money" was the verdict of Observer associate editor Robert McCrum on the second book, Blood Fever.

4. Horrid Henry Younger boys will love Francesca Simon's series about a perpetually naughty young boy and his butter-wouldn't-melt brother, Perfect Peter. Though unpopular in Simon's native US, over here we might even be permitted to call them a phenomenon: 20 books, a number of joke books, a series for early readers, a film, a stage show and a CITV cartoon series.

5. Flat Stanley This classic children's book, written in 1964 by Jeff Brown, tells the decidedly surreal tale of a boy named Stanley Lambchop who is flattened in the night by a collapsed pin-board. He makes the best of the situation by using his newly flattened state to slide into locked rooms, be used as a kite, and even posted in a letterbox. "A lot of boys of seven to nine are still not reading very well," Ainsworth says. "This book is really likely to engage them."

6. Artemis Fowl The anti-hero of Irish author Eoin Colfer's seven novels (the last is due out this summer) is like the Blofeld to Higson's Bond: a teenage criminal mastermind named Artemis Fowl II. "This is in the solid nine-12 years category," says Ainsworth.

7. Diary of a Wimpy Kid Boys aged seven and up will relate to American author Jeff Kinney's tales about a hopelessly uncool boy named Gregory. There are six books in the series, which originated on the website FunBrain.com, where it scored 20m hits over five years. "My own boys loved these books," Ainsworth says.

8. Captain Underpants In Dav Pilkey's series of amusingly illustrated novels, two primary-school boys accidentally hypnotise their headteacher, turning him into the eponymous superhero. Exuberant fun for younger boys.

9. The Cherub series Bestselling author Robert Muchamore became the subject of controversy last October, when a north London junior school cancelled his scheduled visit, citing a number of complaints from parents about the challenging subject matter of his books about a group of orphaned teenage spies (anyone sensing a pattern here?). "I always call it the EastEnders test – that broadly speaking nothing happens in my books that doesn't happen in an episode of EastEnders," Muchamore said in response.

10. Holes Louis Sachar's award-winning 1998 novel about a 13-year-old boy named Stanley Yelnats, sent to the juvenile detention centre Camp Green Lake after being wrongly accused of stealing a pair of shoes, will appeal to boys of 10 and over.

Suggestions be email from readers:

Philip Reeve's Mortal Engines trilogy and prequels

Michelle Paver's series of books - Ghost Hunter, Outcast, Soul Eater and Spirit Walker.

The Edge Chronicles by Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell and the Septimus Heap series by Angie Sage are fantastic page turners full of excitement and excellent characters. I'd also recommend anything else by Paul Stewart, Cornelia Funke's books and would endorse the suggestion of Phillip Reeve.

Terry Pratchett's books, both those aimed at younger readers and later the Discworld books are also popular with boys.

I can vouch for the following books: Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Captain Underpants and Horrid Henry.

Skulduggery Pleasant did it for my son, plus Malorie Blackman....oooooh and the Book Thief

Wonderful list - Artemis Fowl, Wimpy Kid and Captain Underpants continue to keep my 10 year old reading. Although he still loves Narnia and the Hobbit.

I would add 3 books by Oz writer Morris Gleitzmann. **Once, Now and Then**

All deal with the lives of two young children, Felix and Zelda, on the run from Nazis in wartime Germany. Gleitzmann manages to convey the horror of the war, padding its uncomfortable truths out with a very amusing narrative.

Dick King-Smith A mouse called Wolf short for Wolfgang Amadeus, a mouse with an unusual talent!

Kaye Umansky Crash 'n' bang

'Millions' by Frank Cottrell Boyce is a brilliant book to inspire boys

The books in The Guild Trilogy by Joshua Mowll are absolute gems.