

# Top 10 pulse-racing adventure books

## 1. [Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins](#)

It's a sci-fi dystopia, it's a romance, it's touching and brutal and real. But most of all it's a perfect adventure. Bow-wielding ass-kicking Katniss goes into the [Hunger Games](#) arena to save her younger sister from certain death. It's survival of the fittest – a terrifying fight to the death, so addictive and so exciting you'll be gnawing your knuckles to the bone by book two.

## 2. [Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson](#)

Jim Hawkins, the young son of the owners of an inn in Cornwall, comes of age in this fabulous tale of intrigue and mystery and treasure. It was published in 1883 and it's the original and best pirate adventure of all time. All the great elements are there – the treasure map (X marks the spot), the Black Spot, the desert island in the tropics and, of course, wonderful villains. Long John Silver steals the show. He is one of the finest baddies ever created, so charismatic that you never know which side you're on!

## 3. [Vernon God Little by DBC Pierre](#)

You can't help but identify with 15-year-old Vernon Gregory Little – he's trapped in a nightmarish small town in Texas, surrounded by people he doesn't understand and who don't understand him. When his only friend commits suicide after killing 16 bullying schoolmates, the finger of blame turns Vernon's way. The resulting adventure spree on the run to Mexico is a rollercoaster of emotions. This modern-day *Catcher In The Rye* is a masterpiece, and it's also the funniest book I've ever read, bar none.

## 4. [Holes by Louis Sachar](#)

Stanley Yelnats winds up in a juvenile detention centre for a crime he didn't commit. He and the other inmates have to dig one hole a day each in the dried up bed of Camp Green Lake, Texas. It's back-breaking work but it soon becomes clear that the vile warden Mr Sir is looking for something and he'll stop at nothing to get it. The characters are terrific and the twists and turns are even better. On top of that, there are some great one-liners:

Warden: Are you trying to be funny, or do you think I'm stupid?

Armpit: I wasn't trying to be funny.

#### 5. [The Machine Gunners by Robert Westall](#)

When I wasn't planning to run away to foreign climes, I was building dens in the woods out of turf and timber and defending them to the death in re-enactments of war. This gripping tale set in the second world war is about a group of children who find a machine gun from a crashed German fighter and 2,000 rounds of ammunition and play out those fantasies for real. They build their own fortress to defend their town from Luftwaffe air raids and take an enemy airman prisoner. The dilemmas and horrors of war are explored with real verve and skill – this is one of the first books that made me want to become a writer.

#### 6. [Rogue Male by Geoffrey Household](#)

This classic thriller written in 1939 is steeped in tension and suspense. An unnamed Englishman goes on the run after his plans to assassinate the dictator of a European dictator are foiled. In desperation, the Rogue Male must dig deep to find the resolve and resources to outwit his hunters. The plot is sensational – exciting, inventive and utterly convincing. The hero's never-give-in attitude helped inspire the action in Six Days as Cass goes head-to-head with her nemesis.

#### 7. [The Chrysalids by John Wyndham](#)

Another spellbinding sci-fi tale from the author of Day Of The Triffids. Wyndham conjures up a cruel post-apocalyptic world where any genetic deviation from the norm is ruthlessly punished. David and his friends have a deviation – they can communicate through thought alone. But how long can they keep it a secret from the stifling religious community around them? The sense of alienation and forced conformity is bleak, which makes the children's eventual flight all the more exhilarating.

#### 8. In The Blue Light Of African Dreams by Paul Watkins

Paul Watkins writes adventure of the highest order. I could easily put five of his books in this list, but I'll settle for two. The first has a lyrical title but don't let that put you off – it's pure Boy's Own. Airman Charlie Halifax is

shot down in 1918 and badly wounded. His exploits as a deserter, as an exile in the Foreign Legion and attempting to be the first man to fly non-stop across the Atlantic took my breath away when I first read them. Reminiscent of Hemingway, this classic will propel you into a bygone age of true explorers.

#### 9. *Calm At Sunset, Calm At Dawn* by Paul Watkins

If you've ever wondered what life is like as a trawlerman, look no further. As clear an account of wanderlust and the draw of the sea as I have ever read. James Pfeiffer learns the hard way about joining the crew of a deep-sea trawler off the coast of New England. All the mystical terror of the sea is condensed into this wonderfully paced novel. The descriptions of James trying to pull his weight on deck after his jaw's been shattered will make you thankful to be on dry land!

#### 10. [Touching The Void](#) by Joe Simpson

Joe Simpson's gut-wrenching true-life account of his disastrous mountaineering expedition to the Peruvian Andes pulls no punches. It lays it out pure and simple – what do you have to have inside to survive when all the odds are stacked against you? Stranded alone in a remote crevasse with a horribly broken leg, most of us would give up. This wonderful piece of writing lays bare both the triumph and the dark side of climbing.

#### 11. [Call Of The Wild](#) by Jack London

Seen through the eyes of a dog flung into the wilds of Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush, this is riveting old-school adventure at its best! It's the story of a tame dog called Buck who is stolen and sold into a sled team and his transformation from pet to working dog to wild freedom is raw and powerful. London is great at describing the relationship between men and dogs in the harsh Alaskan wilderness. Like all the great adventure novels, it plants a seed of yearning – one that cannot be ignored – a yearning to see these places for yourself.