

SERIES FOR SUMMER READING: GRADES 7-9

There are lots of parents out there who are looking for good books for their kids to read over the summer. Series are always a good bet, because if your kid likes the first one, there is a path to weeks of reading laid out ahead of them! So here are some great series that may appeal to your older middle school or younger high school readers. As it happens, most of them turn out to involve some kind of espionage!

CARTER, ALLY: The Gallagher Girl series

The first book is called *I'd Tell You I Love You, But Then I'd Have to Kill You*. It's about a boarding school for girls that looks from the outside to be designed for international students of wealth and privilege. But what it really teaches is how to be a spy! They have classes in things like martial arts, chemical warfare, and CIA codes. The town in which the school is located knows nothing about its true purpose, so when the girls mix with the "townies," which they do while learning to be "pavement artists" (good at tracking and following people), they have to maintain cover. The protagonist is the daughter of the headmistress, and has a crush on a townie boy. *There are six official books in the series, plus a few short e-novellas interspersed between them.*

CHILD, LAUREN: The Ruby Redfort series

The first book is called *Look Into My Eyes*. Ruby Redfort is a genius code-cracker with amazing powers of observation who is approached by a super-secret spy organization called Spectrum to work for them. She and her side-kick butler, Hitch, foil crimes and fight villains, even though Ruby is only 13. *This one is better suited to the younger end of this age group. It's a six-book series.*

COLFER, EOIN: The Artemis Fowl series

The first book is called *Artemis Fowl*. Artemis Fowl is a genius and a criminal mastermind. He is also 12. He decides, in order to restore the family fortune, to kidnap a fairy and hold him for a ransom of fairy gold. This may not have been the best idea.... The books are a funny mash-up of mythology and technology, and the protagonist, while technically the bad guy, is the one to root for. *There are eight books in the series.*

HOROWITZ, ANTHONY: The Alex Rider series

The first book is called *Stormbreaker*. Alex was orphaned when his parents died in a car crash, and lives with his uncle, an international banker. One day, men come to the door to tell Alex that his uncle has died, but when they say that it was an auto accident and that his uncle wasn't wearing his seatbelt, Alex knows this can't be right—since his parents died, both he and his

uncle have been meticulous about always buckling up. He finds his uncle's car at the wrecking yard, riddled with bullets, and challenges his uncle's employers to tell him the truth, which is that his uncle was a spy on a top-secret mission. And now MI6 has decided that Alex himself would be the perfect person to finish the mission—after all, who would suspect a teenage boy in these circumstances? *There are 12 books, great for reluctant readers. Follow up with the Jason Steed series by Mark A. Cooper. The first book is Fledgling.*

MacHALE, D. J.: The Pendragon Series

The first book is called *The Merchant of Death*. Bobby Pendragon is a regular guy—a 14-year-old basketball player with a family, a home, a dog, and a friend who might be a girlfriend. The only thing not so regular about him is his Uncle Press, who is super cool and who shows up from time to time with tall tales and great presents. One day, however, Uncle Press reveals to Bobby that it's his destiny to travel to alternate-dimension worlds in order to save the downtrodden from oppression. No thanks, says Bobby, I like my life just fine; but his uncle won't take no for an answer, and soon Bobby is on Denduron, in the middle of a revolution. *There are 10 books in the series, great for reluctant readers.*

SANDERSON, BRANDON: The Reckoners trilogy

The first book is called *Steelheart*. Ten years ago, there was some kind of burst in the sky that gave certain people extraordinary powers. The public called them Epics, and the initial expectation was that they would be superheroes. But with great gifts came the desire to rule the world, and it's not long before the Epics have parceled out territories and started oppressing their former fellow citizens. A group of ordinary humans rises up to study the Epics, find their weaknesses, and assassinate them. They are the Reckoners, and David's dream is to join them and defeat Steelheart, the Epic who killed his father. *Three books full of action and twists.*

STROUD, JONATHAN: Lockwood & Co.

The first book is *The Screaming Staircase*. The story takes place in an alternate England in which, for more than 50 years, the country has had to deal with "the Problem." The problem is an epidemic of ghosts—they're everywhere. Adults can't see them (but can be injured by them), but children and teens still have that ability, so several Psychic Investigations Agencies have formed and hired teams of teenagers armed with rapiers, silver chains, salt bombs, lavender, and holy water, to go out into the streets at night and lay the dead to rest. Unlike most of these agencies, Lockwood & Co. is run by the teens themselves, and is barely making it in competition with the big corporate firms. Anthony Lockwood, Lucy Carlyle, and George Cubbins are determined to make a name for their agency by spending the night in one of the most haunted houses in England and purging it of its haunts. *There are five books, plus an e-*

book short story that falls between books one and two. The mysteries are engaging, the haunted scenarios frightening, and the world-building excellent. A favorite of my two book clubs, spanning grades 6-9.

SHUSTERMAN, NEAL: The Skinjacker trilogy

The first book is *Everlost*. Shusterman, better known for his *Unwind* and *Arc of a Scythe* series (both too mature for this age group), first wrote this odd little trio about two children in a car crash whose souls don't get where they're supposed to go. Instead, Nick and Allie are caught in a between-life-and-death limbo called Everlost, a shadow of the living world where bands of lost children run wild and a girl named Mary is their queen. *There are three books that explore interesting questions about life and death, in an adventurous and unusual setting.*

WREDE, PATRICIA: The Enchanted Forest Chronicles

The first book is *Dealing with Dragons*. Cimorene is a princess who is not interested in the lifestyle. She wants to learn to fight with a sword, not to do nice needlework. Etiquette is a drag. And the princes! They all want to marry her, and they're all so dull! So Cimorene decides her best bet is to find a dragon to live with, to protect her from her destiny. *There are four books, and they are charming, quirky, and fun.*

SOME OTHERS:

FLANAGAN, JOHN: The Ranger's Apprentice series

KRISTIN MILLER: The Kiki Strike series

MICHAEL SCOTT: The Alchemyst series

TAMORA PIERCE: The Circle of Magic series