

Sound Learning Audiobook Collection Lists & Samples

Introduction to Summer Listening

“School's out for summer” proclaims the lyrics of a popular 1970s song by Alice Cooper. Kids are thrilled, but teachers and parents want to be sure kids don't fall prey to the dreaded summer slide, a term researchers have given to studies that show that students [can lose one to three months](#) of hard-won reading skills during the school break.

How can parents and other caring adults help kids keep literacy skills strong? Dr. Teri Lesesne (“Summertime and the Reading Is Required?” *Knowledge Quest*, v. 43, no. 5, p 46-49), children's literature and reading expert, as well as an enthusiastic audiobook advocate, recommends that we “CARE about readers” by offering kids “Choice, Access, Response, and Enthusiasm.” Lesesne’s suggestion is echoed by Search Institute, creator of a framework of 40 [Developmental Assets](#) for young people that are key to school success and development into successful and contributing adults. Search Institute names reading for pleasure as a core asset and suggests creating a family tradition of reading together each day, with all screen media—television, cell phones, tablets, computers—turned off. How can families follow the advice of Dr. Lesesne and Search Institute? Try the pleasurable magic of audiobooks!

Summer’s here, and the time is right for listening as families spend lots of time in the car: from pool to practice field or on trips to cross-country treks. Audiobooks turn those hectic travel times into shared literary experiences that banish boredom. Researchers have proven that audiobooks increase a listener’s vocabulary, comprehension skills, and fluency while educators advocate audiobooks for all ages, as listening is the fundamental language art which serves as the basis of reading, writing, and speaking skills. But most importantly, the power of a great story serves to connect listeners of all ages, creating bonds that foster those important assets that demonstrate CARE. Let your kids choose an audiobook CD or download titles from your public library to turn the family car into a traveling book club. Use the audio to spur discussion: What would you do if you were that character? How would you act in that situation? Can you predict what will happen next? Talking about the audiobooks is a great way to foster comprehension and response to literature without making it seem like a school assignment. And, with a family listen, the enthusiasm will grow without trying. Everyone will be hooked!

We've put together a list of terrific audiobooks for family listening, selected to satisfy wide-ranging interests and ages. There are fabulous stand-alone titles that will introduce new ideas, new cultures, and new worlds. Plus, we recommend great series that will spark the “potato chip effect”—start with the first title in the car, and young listeners will just have to listen to the entire series on their own.

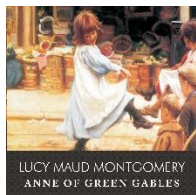
Check out each audio’s summary for an overview, then listen to the audio clip to sample the treat that’s in store for your child or your family when you listen together. If you need more suggestions, we recommend [Kids on the Go](#), an extensive list of audiobook titles from [AudioFile](#) for first grade through high school. If you're looking for audiobooks that you can share with

teens, be sure to try the 14 free weeks of downloads available from [SYNC](#), pairing a contemporary YA title with a classic, or required reading list title each week.

The Audio Publishers Association 2012 Consumer Survey found that adults listen while commuting in the car and traveling during vacations. Parents note that the second most common time youth under age 18 listen to audios is during vacation travel. Load up the family car with audiobooks, a terrific literacy tool when school's out for the summer. Listen up and defeat the summer slide!

As summer reading is, and should be, a much broader, free-flowing experience than reading for curriculum purposes, these titles are categorized into younger listeners and older listeners. All of the titles in the younger category would (unless noted in the annotation) be acceptable for families with a wide range of ages, from Kindergarten to 7th grade. Older listeners encompass 8th grade and up.

Summer Reading for Older Listeners – Individual Titles



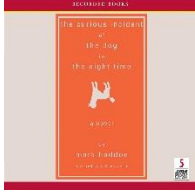
Anne of Green Gables, written by Lucy Maud Montgomery, narrated by Shelly Frasier, Tantor Audio, 2003

The well-loved classic story of the true meaning of family features red-haired, freckled, Anne, a lively orphan mistakenly sent in place of a boy to help at the Cuthberts farm on Prince Edward Island in Nova Scotia. Frasier's pacing and inflection capture the rhythms of early 20th century speech, lending an enhanced sense of genuineness to this fine production.



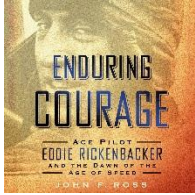
Black Dove, White Raven, written by Elizabeth Wein, narrated by Lauren Saunders and Maanuv Thiara, Bolinda Audio, 2015

Themes of flight and freedom are woven together in this historical novel set in 1935 Ethiopia, on the verge of war with fascist Italy. Teens Em (white) and Teo (black), their idyllic life shattered by inhumanity, politics, and bureaucratic absurdity, are well-wrought through the voices of Saunders and Thiara, who bring youthful, emotional, and cultural legitimacy to their narration.



[The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time](#), written by Mark Haddon, narrated by Jeff Woodman, Recorded Books, 2003

Listeners will gain insight into the perceptions of a teen on the Asperger’s spectrum as 15-year-old Christopher Boone investigates the mysterious death of a neighbor’s dog. Narrator Jeff Woodman flawlessly portrays a diverse cast of characters, opening a window into the hearts and minds of those different from ourselves.



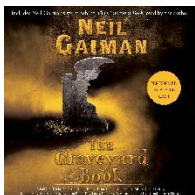
[Enduring Courage: Ace Pilot Eddie Rickenbacker and the Dawn of the Age of Speed](#), written by John F. Ross, narrated by Edward Herrmann, Macmillan Audio, 2014

Rickenbacker’s biography embodies the All-American success story: immigrant parents, rough-and-tumble childhood, adventurous thrill-seeking, love of technology, WWI war hero, self-made corporate leader. Edward Herrmann provides a sure-fire listen with edge-of-your-seat action, performed with sympathetic naturalism by a master of narrative nonfiction.



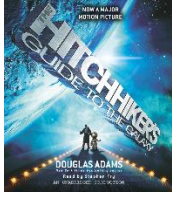
[Gabi, a Girl in Pieces](#), written by Isabel Quintero, narrated by Kyla Garcia, Listening Library, 2014

In a series of diary entries over the course of her senior year, Mexican American Gabi—Gabriella—struggles with family, friends, and self-image, as she seeks her own answer to what it means to be a good girl. Garcia’s flawless Spanish and culturally authentic pacing and inflection help to create this exceptional package.



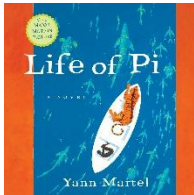
[The Graveyard Book](#), written by Neil Gaiman, narrated by a full cast, Harper Audio, 2014

In this enchanting fantasy, the human boy Bod is raised by a caring community of supernatural beings in a ghostly graveyard. Author Neil Gaiman superbly voiced the original Audie Award-winning audio of his Newbery and Carnegie Award-winning novel, but this new full-cast version takes audiobook production to a sublime level. Enthralling and magical, this is an unforgettable listening experience.



[*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*](#), written by Douglas Adams, narrated by Stephen Fry, Books on Tape, 2005

Stephen Fry's narration wrings every drop of humor from Douglas Adam's science-fiction classic through a voicing that varies from deadpan commentary by spaceship stowaways Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent to hilarious oddball alien encounters as the sole survivors of the human race travel the galaxy in search of the answer to life, the universe, and everything.



[*Life of Pi*](#), written by Yann Martel, narrated by Jeff Woodman, HighBridge, 2003

Told as a reminiscing interview, Pi recalls being stranded, as a 16-year-old, for 227 days aboard a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger companion. Jeff Woodman's narration clearly defines the shifting perspectives in Yann Martel's award-winning adventure novel, imbuing the production with fantastical realism that will trigger conversations pondering the allegorical meaning of Pi's journey.



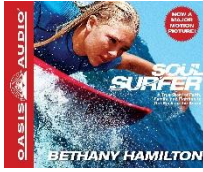
[*The Martian*](#), written by Andy Weir, narrated by R.C. Bray, Podium Publishing, 2013; CD edition distributed by Brilliance Audio, 2014

Science-fiction survival epic *The Martian* provides compelling appeal for mature teens, in a best-seller with occasional strong language, originally published for adults. R.C. Bray's thrilling narration propels listeners through shifting perspectives, from a lone American stranded on Mars, to his crew members en route back to Earth, and to the NASA team desperate to save the castaways.



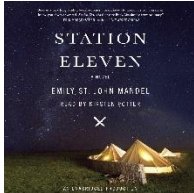
[*The Queen of the Tearling*](#), written by Erika Johansen, narrated by Katherine Kellgren, HarperCollins, 2014

In a future world that holds all the attributes of a medieval fairy tale, 19-year-old Kelsea must emerge from hiding and claim the throne. Narrator Katherine Kellgren conjures a feisty heroine in a fully-realized fantasy world through her impeccable performance of this adult novel, providing listeners with an enchanting tale that raises questions on honor and political power.



[*Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*](#), written by Bethany Hamilton, narrated by Eleni Pappageorge, Oasis, 2011

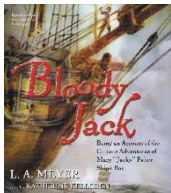
Bethany Hamilton shares the inspiring story of her life before and after losing an arm to a shark attack. Buoyed by her family and her Christian faith, Hamilton's story of courage and spiritual determination is well-served by Eleni Pappageorge's sturdy, uplifting performance.



[*Station Eleven*](#), written by Emily St. John Mandel, narrated by Kirsten Potter, Books on Tape, 2014

Emily St. John Mandel's National Book Award-winning novel details the results of a disturbingly possible flu pandemic in a work ideal for mature teens looking for a literary twist on the dystopian genre. Narrator Kirsten Potter's subtle, evocative voice and smooth pacing provides clarity during flashbacks while forging strong connections with an array of characters as survivors explore the role of the arts, culture, and community in the new political structure.

Summer Reading for Older Listeners – Series Titles

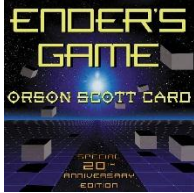


[*Bloody Jack Adventures*](#), written by L.A. Meyer, narrated by Katherine Kellgren, Listen & Live Audio

Katherine Kellgren embodies the roguish Mary/Jacky Faber from her beginnings on the streets of 18th century London to her life on the high seas and beyond. Creating a lively pantheon of characters with her vocal genius, Kellgren leads listeners from laughter to tears through 12 volumes of Meyer's swashbuckling adventure series.

- *Bloody Jack* (2007)
- *Curse of the Blue Tattoo* (2008)
- *Under the Jolly Roger* (2008)
- *In the Belly of the Bloodhound* (2009)
- *Mississippi Jack* (2009)
- *My Bonny Light Horseman* (2009)
- *Rapture of the Deep* (2010)
- *The Wake of the Lorelei Lee* (2010)
- *The Mark of the Golden Dragon* (2011)

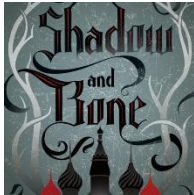
- *Viva Jacqueline!* (2012)
- *Boston Jacky* (2013)
- *Wild Rover No More* (2014)



[*The Ender's Game Series*](#), written by Orson Scott Card, narrated by a full cast, Macmillan Audio

Orson Scott Card received the 2008 Margaret A. Edwards Award honoring his significant and lasting contribution to writing for teens for his Hugo and Nebula Award-winning novel *Ender's Game*. Performed by a full-cast, these audio productions create a dazzling cinematic experience and bonus commentary by the author provides insight into his work.

- *Ender's Game: Special 20th Anniversary Edition* (2002)
- *Speaker for the Dead* (2002)
- *Xenocide* (2004)
- *Children of the Mind* (2004)



[*The Grisha Trilogy*](#), written by Leigh Bardugo, narrated by Lauren Fortgang, Brilliance Audio

Magic, mystery, and monsters mix in Ravka, a troubled country reminiscent of tsarist Russia, divided by a bleak, dark expanse known as the Shadow Fold. With subtle character voicing, Lauren Fortgang draws listeners into the story of Alina Starkov, a self-effacing orphan who discovers untapped magical powers that can either save or destroy her people. Listeners will be eager to learn the secrets of the royal court, the beautiful Grisha, and the powerful, charismatic Darkling.

- *Shadow and Bone* (2013)
- *Siege and Storm* (2013)
- *Ruin and Rising* (2014)

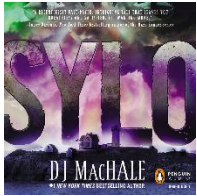


[*The Raven Cycle*](#), written by Maggie Stiefvater, narrated by Will Patton, Scholastic Audiobooks

Mystical and masterful, Will Patton's narration perfectly interprets author Stiefvater's mythic thrillers that chronicle the quest of five teens to awaken the powers of a buried Welsh king. Slipping easily from the feminine voice of small-town psychic Blue to the privileged masculine confidence of Gansey and his prep school cohorts, Patton

conveys the rural Virginia setting, supernatural mood, and romantic undertones with deft assurance.

- *Raven Boys* (2012)
- *The Dream Thieves* (2013)
- *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* (2014)



[SYLO Chronicles](#), written by D.J. MacHale, narrated by Andrew Bates

From a bucolic life on an island off the coast of Maine to the madness of a world at war, listeners will eagerly follow the exploits of 14-year-old Tucker Pierce and his friends as they rocket from one terrifying event to another in MacHale’s thrilling cinematic trilogy, held together by the measured pacing and conversational tone of narrator Andrew Bates.

- *SYLO* (Dreamscape, 2013)
- *Storm* (Dreamscape, 2014)
- *Strike* (Penguin, 2014)