

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.

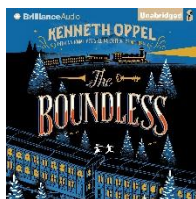
Summer Reading for Younger Listeners – Individual Titles



Bad Girls: Sirens, Jezebels, Murderesses, Thieves & Other Female Villains,

written by Jane Yolen and Heidi E.Y. Stemple, narrated by Barbara Rosenblat and the authors, Live Oak Media, 2014

Mother-daughter team Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple examine the lives and possible motivation behind 26 of history's most notorious women, among them Delilah, Salome, Bloody Mary, and Lizzie Borden. Rosenblat delivers each story with delicious sly restraint while Yolen and Stemple provide humorous rationale for this bad behavior.



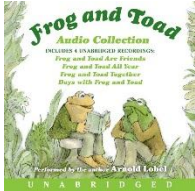
The Boundless, written by Kenneth Oppel, narrated by Nick Podehl, Brilliance Audio, 2014

Oppel combines fantasy and adventure when Will Everett climbs aboard the longest train in the world for a voyage across Canada. Set upon by cut-throat brakemen and roaring Sasquatch, Will is rescued by the wily members of the Zircus Dante, who have their own secrets to guard. Into this wild fray steps narrator Nick Podehl, creating distinct and lively vocal interpretations for this large and varied cast of characters.



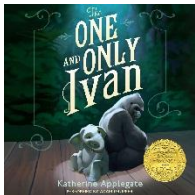
[**Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library**](#), written by Chris Grabenstein, narrated by Jesse Bernstein, Listening Library, 2014

Enthusiastic and energetic narration portrays a dozen 12-year-olds invited to spend the night in the elusive Mr. Lemoncello's new library. Once there, the students discover that friendship, determination, and good library skills are needed to solve the puzzles that will allow them to escape the building and win the grand prize in this rollicking adventure story.



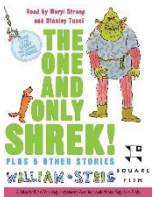
[**The Frog and Toad Audio Collection**](#), written and narrated by Arnold Lobel, HarperChildren's Audio, 2004

Beloved by beginning readers for over 45 years, the *Frog and Toad* series has an enduring place in children's literature. Author Arnold Lobel affectionately reads his timeless short chapter books *Frog and Toad Are Friends*, *Frog and Toad All Year*, *Frog and Toad Together*, and *Days with Frog and Toad*.



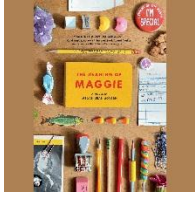
[**The One and Only Ivan**](#), written by Katherine Applegate, narrated by Adam Grupper, Recorded Books, 2013

The 2013 Newbery Medal winner highlights the plight of animals trapped at a roadside circus. Grupper is outstanding in his ability to define the various residents of the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade: the older, deep voice of silverback gorilla artist Ivan, or the young and vulnerable baby elephant, Ruby and, especially, the frenzied exuberance of the stray dog, Bob. An outstanding choice for family listening.



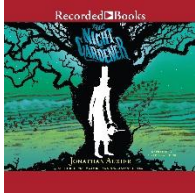
[**The One and Only Shrek! Plus 5 Other Stories**](#), written by William Steig, narrated by Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci, Macmillan Young Listeners, 2007

This compilation of six of William Steig's picture books communicates the beauty of his writing through the audio medium: *The Amazing Bone*, *Brave Irene*, *Spinky Sulks*, *Doctor De Soto*, *Caleb and Kate*, and the original *Shrek!* (which is nothing like the movie). Marvelous narration by Meryl Streep and Stanley Tucci reinvents these classic stories with performances that convey all of Steig's colorful nuances solely through the power of their voices.



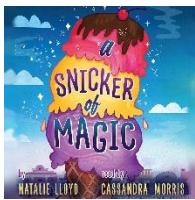
[*The Meaning of Maggie*](#), written by Megan Jean Sovern, narrated by Therese Plummer, Audible Studios, 2014

There have been scary, incomprehensible changes in 11-year-old Maggie Mayfield’s family since her dad’s legs “fell asleep” and he’s been confined to a wheelchair. Therese Plummer’s expert vocal interpretations convey the intense emotional ups and downs that Maggie describes in her memoir of this turbulent year.



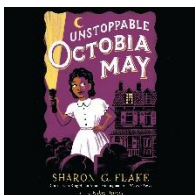
[*The Night Gardener*](#), written by Jonathan Auxier, narrated by Beverly A. Crick, Recorded Books, 2015

Jonathan Auxier’s spine-chilling ghost story offers a thoroughly engaging listen for tweens eager for a well-told tale tinged with horror. Beverly A. Crick’s British accent transports listeners to a lonely English manor house with mesmerizing, perfectly-paced storytelling that illuminates Auxier’s lovely language, literary allusions, and moral reflections on the value of trust and evil of greed.



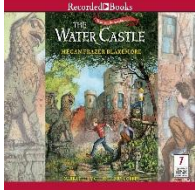
[*A Snicker of Magic*](#), written by Natalie Lloyd, narrated by Cassandra Morris, Scholastic Audiobooks, 2013

Felicity Pickle is in a quandary. She loves Midnight Gulch, but her wandering mama just can’t stay put. Morris narrates with a slight drawl that plunks listeners right down in this Southern mountain town with its sad history and lingering magic. Families will delight in Felicity’s magical words and will cheer as she and her new friends seek to right old wrongs.



[*Unstoppable Octobia May*](#), written by Sharon G. Flake, narrated by Bahni Turpin, Scholastic Audiobooks, 2014

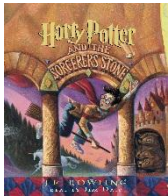
Convinced that her auntie’s new boarder is a vampire, 10-year-old Octobia May sets out to prove he’s up to no good in a hair-raising mystery set in the Jim Crow south. The fully-voiced reading showcases Turpin’s ability to add dimension to a multiplicity of characters, expanding the comedic elements of this complex, enjoyable story.



[*The Water Castle*](#), written by Megan Frazer Blakemore, narrated by Chris Henry Coffey, Recorded Books, 2014

Mystery and science fiction combine with alternating modern and historical narrative in a wholly believable tale enhanced by Coffey’s sturdy pacing and inflection. When Ephraim Appledore-Smith’s father is felled by a stroke, his mother moves their family to the ancestral home in Crystal Springs, Maine, a small town steeped in a legend of the local fountain of youth. Listeners will be breathless with anticipation as author and narrator build to the exciting climax.

Summer Reading for Younger Listeners – Series Titles



[*Harry Potter series*](#), written by J.K. Rowling, narrated by Jim Dale, Listening Library

Essential listening for all ages, whether a young listener encountering the wizarding world for the very first time, or a parent reliving a touchstone literary life experience. Jim Dale received the first Audio Publishers Association “Hall of Fame Award” for his tour-de-force achievement as the voice of the Harry Potter series, noting “each adventure is more riveting and exhilarating than its predecessor. The charm and humor of J.K. Rowling’s inventive magical world and its quirky and endearing characters are brought to full life by Jim Dale’s brilliant reading.”

- *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (1999)
- *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1999)
- *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2000)
- *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000)
- *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003)
- *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005)
- *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007)

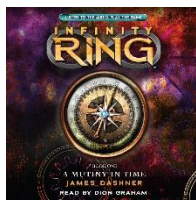


[*How To Train Your Dragon*](#), written by Cressida Cowell, narrated by David Tennant, Hachette

David Tennant performs Cowell’s popular series with a nimble and witty animation that will capture fans of the movies based on the books, and convert them to eager listeners. The heroic quests of young Viking Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III

provide a showcase for Tennant’s ability to infuse dialog with slapstick humor and generate magical creatures through a cacophony of grunts and growls.

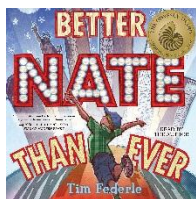
- *How to Train Your Dragon* (2013)
- *How to Be a Pirate* (2013)
- *How to Speak Dragonese* (2013)
- *How to Cheat a Dragon’s Curse* (2013)
- *How to Twist a Dragon’s Tale* (2013)
- *A Hero’s Guide to Deadly Dragons* (2013)
- *How to Ride a Dragon’s Storm* (2013)
- *How to Break a Dragon’s Heart* (2013)
- *How to Steal a Dragon’s Sword* (2014)
- *How to Seize a Dragon’s Jewel* (2014)
- *How to Betray a Dragon’s Hero* (2015)



[The Infinity Ring](#), written by various authors, narrated by Dion Graham, Scholastic Audiobooks

Defly combining science fiction with history, this series traces the efforts of two 5th-graders and their teen accomplice as they seek to repair history itself with the time-traveling power of the Infinity Ring. Dion Graham’s rich, dramatic narration captures listeners and guides them through a series written by six different top children’s authors. Be sure to extend reluctant reader’s enjoyment by suggesting the companion free online video games.

- *A Mutiny in Time* (2012)
- *Divide and Conquer* (2012)
- *The Trap Door* (2012)
- *Curse of the Ancients* (2013)
- *Cave of Wonders* (2013)
- *Behind Enemy Lines* (2013)
- *The Iron Empire* (2014)
- *Eternity* (2014)



[The Nate Foster series](#), written and narrated by Tim Federle, Simon & Schuster Audio

Thirteen-year-old Nate is obsessed with Broadway musicals—so much so that he runs away from home in order to land a part in *E.T.: The Broadway Musical*.

Author and Broadway star Tim Federle endearingly narrates his charming, humorous, semi-autobiographical works which lightly explore issues of family struggles, bullying, and sexual identity, entirely accessible for middle grade listeners.

- *Better Nate Than Ever* (2013)
- *Five, Six, Seven, Nate!* (2014)