**5TH GRADE READING SUGGESTIONS**

**Peak** by Roland Smith (Harcourt, 2007).
When 14-year-old Peak Marcello is caught scaling a skyscraper to place his signature graffiti tag, he is offered a choice: spend three years in juvenile detention or climb Mt. Everest with his long-absent father. Though the choice might be easy, the journey is not. Peak is physically and emotionally challenged by the grueling climb, the weather, and the politics and drama of climbing culture. And the pressure is on, because if Peak can reach the summit before his 15th birthday, he'll break a world record and gain glory and money. Peak is gripping and surprising, and though it's written for a middle-grade audience, readers young and old will be sucked in by the sharp writing and memorable characters. 246 pages.

**The Phantom Tollbooth** by Norton Juster, illustrated by Jules Feiffer (Yearling, 1988).
Described by many children as "the best book ever," this is fantasy at its best. Full of irony and insights, Juster created a masterpiece when he wrote *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Give this book to your child and let the wave of words and numbers sweep them into a fantastical world. A clever, almost indescribable book that you may already know about, but is too indispensable to keep from mentioning it here. First published in 1961. 255 pages.

**The Secret Garden** by Frances Burnett, illustrated by Tasha Tudor (HarperCollins, 1911).
Beautifully written, the book shows two selfish, disagreeable children transformed by the magic of nature and their own imaginations as they work to bring a near-dead garden back to life. For the serious kid reader, this is a stay-up-all night, flashlight-under-the-covers story with fine watercolor illustrations. Hodgson combines realism, mystery and moral sensibility to make a world children will love. 368 pages.

**Island of the Blue Dolphins** by Scott O'Dell (Yearling, 1971).
The Newbery Medal winner for 1961, this book could be seen as a precursor to Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* (see below). Karana is a 12-year-old Native American who refuses to abandon her 6-year-old brother when her island, Ghalas-at (off the Southern California coast) is evacuated. Shortly thereafter, he tragically dies after being attacked by wild dogs, and Karana begins her solitary wait for a ship to come for her. She waits 18 years. Karana survives by foraging, fishing in the ocean, defending herself from wild dogs and elephant seals, and hiding from the Aleut tribe. Told from her point of view, we share the details of her day-to-day life, watch the days turn into years, and wait for the ship to carry her off her lonely island. O'Dell based this novel on an actual historical figure, known as The Lost Woman of San Nicolas, who lived on the island from 1835-1853. 192 pages. **Pauline Harris**
**Number the Stars** by Lois Lowry (Houghton Mifflin Children's Books, 1989).
A brave Danish girl helps smuggle her Jewish friends to safety. Lowry's sense of timing and choice of details put readers in the middle of the story. A riveting read, but your kids may have questions afterward. 137 pages.

**The Homework Machine** by Dan Gutman (Simon & Schuster, 2006).
Young readers will recognize their classmates and maybe themselves in the key witnesses who describe the events (interrogation-style) leading up to the discovery, use and destruction of a computer that was supposed to make kids' lives easier. It didn't. 160 pages.

**Becoming Naomi Leon** by Pam Munoz Ryan (Scholastic, 2005).
Naomi Leon Outlaw is many things: a great sister, a kind granddaughter and an excellent soap carver, but she is having a harder time just being Naomi. Her journey to find her own true voice and reconnect with her father takes her from a trailer park in Lemon Tree, California, to a radish-carving festival in Oaxaca, Mexico. 272 pages.

**Maniac Magee** by Jerry Spinelli (Little, Brown, 1990).
A homeless orphan becomes a legend in a town divided by racism in this sometimes funny, sometimes moving, always exciting story. Jeffrey Magee's exploits may have made him famous, but reconciling a town filled with hate and finding a decent life for himself may be more than even he can manage. 184 pages. Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and Newbery Medal.

**The Sisters Grimm Book Two: The Unusual Suspects** by Michael Buckley (Scholastic, 2007).
Now that Sabrina and Daphne Grimm are living with their grandmother Relda in Ferryport Landing, New York, the time to start school has arrived. Daphne is in second grade, with Snow White as a teacher, and school could not be more fun. Sabrina, on the other hand, is in sixth grade and quickly discovers that the entire sixth-grade teaching staff is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Not only that, but the majority of the students sleep through every class and have not done their homework. When Sabrina's homeroom teacher, Mr. Grumpner, is found dead and dangling from a spider's web, the Grimm family must step in and try to solve the crime before more people get hurt. 290 pages.