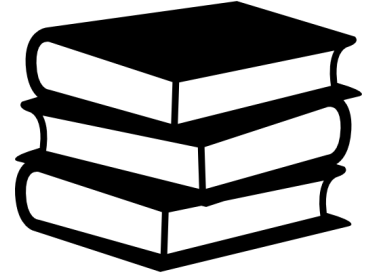


# ADVANCEMENT COURSES™

## Great Novels That Teach a Growth Mindset

*Use the characters in these great books to reinforce your child's growth mindset and sense of resiliency. You can read these books to or along with your child. Older children can read independently but within the same approximate timeframe as parent. After reading, use the experiences of the characters as a basis for discussions about overcoming challenges and persevering.*



### 1. Ponyboy Curtis from *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton

Ponyboy ultimately turns the tragedy of the recent death of his parents and three of his peers into resilience and a will to help others become less judgmental and to appreciate what they have by “staying gold.” Ponyboy also learns how to be sensitive and sympathetic in a bitter, divided world. He realizes that courage is remaining calm and peaceful while you find solutions that do not involve hatred, violence, or revenge.

### 2. Harry Potter from the *Harry Potter* series by J.K Rowling

Harry is orphaned and temporarily trapped in a horrible home where he is unwanted and unappreciated. He must persevere through obstacle after obstacle to protect his family and friends.

### 3. Lonnie Motion from *Locomotion* and *Peace, Locomotion* by Jacqueline Woodson

Orphaned at seven and separated from his sister,, Lonnie uses the power of poetry and letter writing to deal with loss and to artfully express his yearning for belonging. These books are perfect for teaching how we can use creativity and the written word to heal ourselves, and to inspire others to persevere.

### 4. Mia Hall from *If I Stay* by Gayle Forman

The sole survivor of a family car crash, Mia ponders the meaning of life without her parents and brother. Previously an outsider, Mia has an experience that renders her literally outside of her body, providing a perspective that is as agonizing as it is eye opening. Through this metaphysical metaphor, students join Mia on a journey of heartache that ends in hope.

### 5. Jeffrey Magee from *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli

Orphaned (twice) and perpetually running (from himself), Maniac takes a circuitous route in learning to finally face his fears instead of fleeing or giving up. While showing others that friends and family come in all colors and versions, Jeffrey shatters stereotypes and challenges segregation. Students will understand that the “knots” of life are untied when we embrace challenge, expect struggle, and enlist our resourcefulness to beat the odds.

## **6. James from *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl**

James is an orphan living with his two vile aunts until he embarks on an incredible adventure. He befriends unlikely characters and works as a team to solve problems.

## **7. The Baudelaire siblings from the *Series of Unfortunate Events* books by Lemony Snicket**

Three oppressed orphans endure alliterative adventures against the evil Olaf. Staying together through thick and thin, these children triumph over evil.

## **8. Dorothy Gale from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* series by L. Frank Baum**

An orphan girl swept far from home forms friendships, faces witches, and exposes a fraud.

## **9. Kenny from *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul**

**Curtis:** School bullies and his brother Byron torment Cockeye Kenny; but when a family vacation to the segregated South turns tragic and traumatic, it is Byron who twice rescues his “baby bruh.” Byron gently coaxes Kenny to reconcile with the monsters and angels that nearly destroy him. As Kenny makes peace with life’s joys and cruelties, readers realize that giving up is not an option.

**10. Karana from *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell:** Orphaned while witnessing the massacre of her father and many of her native island tribe, a young girl is inadvertently abandoned for eighteen years. Yet Karana endures and even thrives by embracing enemies, both animal and human. This profound, beautiful story about the power of forgiveness and the triumph of the human spirit spurs students to summon their inner strength in the face of despair and desolation.

**11. Brian from the *Hatchet* series by Gary Paulsen:** Brian enlists grit, guts, and the grandeur of nature to come to grips with himself, his parents’ divorce, and the harsh wilderness. Equal parts adventure and introspection, these stories instill inner and outer harmony, emboldening students to appreciate what they have and proving just how resilient humans can be.

**12. Cassie from the *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* saga by Mildred D. Taylor:** The Logans cling to their land and little victories amid poverty and prejudice in 1930s Mississippi. Although Mama strives to shield her children from the pain of racism, Cassie grows up fast as the seeds of the Civil Rights Movement are planted on her family farm. Students will grapple right along with the characters with the hard choices of standing down or standing up for yourself.

**13. Stanley from *Holes* and Armpit from *Small Steps* by Louis Sachar:** Sentenced to hard labor for a crime he did not commit, Stanley digs deep into a family curse that turns to fortune. This intricate, ingenious tale of friendship and fortitude will provoke debate about how much control we have over fate. Both books’ memorable multicultural characters embody the pluck and persistence of growth mindset.

**14. Meg from the *A Wrinkle in Time* books by Madeline L’Engle:** Swept into a strange, scary new dimension on a desperate search to save her father and brother, Meg summons the power of love to win the day. Alternately harrowing and heartwarming, the book allows readers to discover that darkness can only be defeated with the light inside us all.

This list is adapted from the Edutopia article, “Young Adult Novels that Teach a Growth Mindset” by Robert Ward and is used by permission from the author. Icons by Flaticon.