I love that there are some downright stellar books out there for this age, books that I want to read as much as my kid. I’m not a huge fan of forced reading, but I do enjoy rewarding a good effort. I also like expanding her horizons.

During the summer, I provide a list of 20 chapter books — if she reads at least 10 of them by the end of summer, we’ll do something special.

Print this off and take it to the library or bookstore, or if you want to buy it online, head to theartofsimple.net/tweenbooks for links.

Summer Reading List for Tweens
(ages 9-12ish)
Ivan is an easygoing gorilla who lives in the mall. He rarely misses his life in the jungle—he thinks about TV shows he’s seen and about his friends. Then he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from her family, and she makes Ivan see their home through new eyes. When Ruby arrives, change comes with her, and it’s up to Ivan to make it a change for the better.

A ten-year-old blind orphan who has been schooled in a life of thievery steals a box from a mysterious traveling haberdasher—a box that contains three pairs of magical eyes. Along with his loyal sidekick—a knight who has been turned into an unfortunate combination of horse and cat—he embarks on an unforgettable, swashbuckling adventure to discover his true destiny.

Willy Wonka's famous chocolate factory is opening at last! But only five lucky children will be allowed inside, including Charlie Bucket, Our Hero, a boy who is honest and kind, brave and true, and good and ready for the wildest time of his life.

New Florida resident Roy Eberhardt isn't aware of these goings-on at the All-American Pancake House, but he has often noticed a barefoot boy running down the street faster than anything. Roy follows the boy one day and winds up in the middle of an ecological mission to save a parliament of burrowing owls from being bulldozed.
Calpurnia Virginia Tate is 11 years old in 1899 when she wonders why the yellow grasshoppers in her Texas backyard are so much bigger than the green ones. With a little help from her cantankerous grandfather, an avid naturalist, Callie explores the natural world around her, she navigates the dangers of living with six brothers, and comes up against just what it means to be a girl.

When Claudia Kincaid decides to run away, she chooses the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Knowing her younger brother Jamie has money and thus can help her with a serious cash-flow problem, she invites him along. Once settled, Claudia and Jamie find themselves caught up in the mystery of an angel statue that the museum purchased.

At birth, Ella is inadvertently cursed by an imprudent young fairy named Lucinda, who bestows on her the "gift" of obedience. Anything anyone tells her to do, Ella must obey. But her intelligence and saucy nature keep her in good stead as she sets out on a quest for freedom and self-discovery as she tries to track down Lucinda to undo the curse.

Shirley Temple Wong sails from China to America with a heart full of dreams. America is indeed a land full of wonders, but Shirley doesn't know any English, so it's hard to make friends. Then a miracle—baseball—happens. It is 1947, and Jackie Robinson, star of the Brooklyn Dodgers, is everyone's hero.
12-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

Jonas' world is perfect. Everything is under control. There is no war or fear or pain. There are no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the Community. When Jonas turns twelve, he is singled out to receive special training from The Giver. The Giver alone holds the memories of the true pain and pleasure of life. Now, it is time for Jonas to receive the truth. There is no turning back.

11-year-old Stella misses her (unreliable) mom, but she loves it at great-aunt Louise's house on Cape Cod. The only problem? Angel, the foster kid Louise has taken in. Then Louise suddenly passes away one morning—and Stella and Angel decide not to tell anyone. Now they have to depend on each other for survival. Now they are forced to trust each other with the biggest secret ever.

Percy Jackson is about to be kicked out of boarding school... again. And that's the least of his troubles. Lately, mythological monsters and the gods of Mount Olympus seem to be walking straight out of the pages of Percy's Greek mythology textbook and into his life.
May B.
by Caroline Starr Rose

May is helping out on a neighbor’s Kansas prairie homestead—just until Christmas, says Pa. Then the unthinkable happens: May is abandoned. Trapped in a tiny snow-covered sod house, isolated from family and neighbors, May must prepare for the oncoming winter.

When You Reach Me
by Rebecca Stead

Miranda and her best friend, Sal, know how to navigate their New York City neighborhood. They know where it's safe to go, and they know who to avoid. But things start to unravel. The apartment key that Miranda's mom keeps hidden is stolen. And then a mysterious note arrives, scrawled on a tiny slip of paper. The notes keep coming - whoever is leaving them knows things no one should know.

The Mysterious Benedict Society
by Trenton Lee Stewart

"Are you a gifted child looking for special opportunities?" ad attracts dozens for mind-bending tests readers may try. Only two boys and two girls succeed for a secret mission, undercover and underground into hidden tunnels. At the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, the only rule is - there are no rules.

The Expeditioners
by S.S. Taylor

Computers have failed, electricity is extinct, and the race to discover new lands is underway. Explorer Alexander West has just died under mysterious circumstances, but not before smuggling half of a strange map to his intrepid children. Why are so many government agents trying to steal the half-map? What powerful secrets does it hold? And where is the other half?
**The Green Book**
by Jill Paton Walsh

Will Patty and her family survive on the planet Shine?

Pattie and her family are among the last refugees to flee a dying Earth in an old spaceship. And when the group finally lands on the distant planet which is to be their new home, it seems that the journey has been a success. But as they begin to settle this shiny new world, they discover that nothing on this planet is edible, and they may not be able to grow food.

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**Pie**
by Sarah Weeks

When Alice's Aunt Polly passes away, she takes with her the secret to her world-famous pie-crust recipe. Or does she? In her will, Polly leaves the recipe to her extraordinarily fat, remarkably disagreeable cat, Lardo . . . and then leaves Lardo in the care of Alice. Suddenly, the whole town is wondering how you leave a recipe to a cat.

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**A Tree Grows in Brooklyn**
by Betty Smith

Francie Nolan, avid reader, penny-candy connoisseur, and adroit observer of human nature, has much to ponder in colorful, turn-of-the-century Brooklyn. She grows up with a sweet, tragic father, a severely realistic mother, and an aunt who gives her love too freely--to men, and to a brother who will always be the favored child. Francie learns early the meaning of hunger and the value of a penny.

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**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**
by Mark Twain

Huckleberry Finn, rebel against school and church, casual inheritor of gold treasure, rafter of the Mississippi, and savior of Jim the runaway slave, flees the respectable society that wants to "sivilize" him. Huck Finn shoves off with Jim on a rhapsodic raft journey down the Mississippi River, and the two bind themselves to one another, becoming intimate friends.