A reading challenge for teens that is not a cartoon

A reading challenge for teens on Peabody: four books over winter break from 11 up, Book Bingo, 100 Books over a year or January, with classics at levels 14 to 18.

A good reading challenge for a teenager counts real books and sets a number they can actually finish: on Peabody that is four books over the sixteen-day winter break for readers 11 and up, or Book Bingo, 100 Books over a year, or twenty reading days in January. All four are free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026, with no account and nothing to buy, and all of them print.

The honest part first

Peabody's Book Club was built for children first. On a screen, the Winter Break tracker draws a snowy mountain whoever is reading, and the reader picks an animal face rather than a name. Some teenagers will find that charming; some will roll their eyes.

So here is what is plain about it. The printed reading log is a table: title, date and a column for a grown-up's signature. The printed chart has a records line, with the number of books and the dates, that a homeschool family or a school can file. The paper sheets, the weekly log, the monthly log, the bingo card and the 100 books chart, need no screen at all. And what goes on the chart is up to the reader.

Four challenges that suit a teen

- Challenge: Winter Break · What finishes it: 4 books for readers 11 and up · When: 19 December 2026 to 3 January 2027
- Challenge: Book Bingo · What finishes it: Five in a row is a Bingo; all 25 squares earns the certificate · When: No end date
- Challenge: 100 Books · What finishes it: 100 books, a chapter book counted once, when finished · When: No end date
- Challenge: January · What finishes it: 20 days out of 31 with a finished book or twenty minutes of reading · When: 1 to 31 January 2027

Four books in sixteen days is one every four days or so, a real novel each at a holiday pace. I set it so a busy teenager with family visits can still get there.

Book Bingo suits the reader who has gone narrow, all fantasy or all one series. Its squares include a myth or a legend, a mystery, a book about long ago, a classic and a book from somewhere else.

100 Books has no end date, and a hundred novels will take a long while. That size is the appeal for some teens.

January suits the teen who reads a little most days but rarely finishes a book in a week. Twenty minutes counts, a missed day just stays empty, and there is no timer: they tap "I read for 20 minutes".

Books past the school grades: levels 14 to 18

Peabody's library has 19 reading levels. Levels 7 to 13 are 2nd grade to 8th grade, and levels 14 to 18 are past the school grades, written for strong teens and grown-ups. There are 71 free stories on those five levels, true books among them. Many are classics retold short, a couple of thousand words rather than the whole novel, so they are a taster or a way in.

- Story: A Christmas Carol · Level: 14 · Words: 1,768
- Story: Anne of Green Gables · Level: 14 · Words: 2,626
- Story: Around the World in Eighty Days · Level: 14 · Words: 1,543
- Story: Little Women · Level: 15 · Words: 2,213
- Story: Journey to the Center of the Earth · Level: 15 · Words: 1,910
- Story: The Blue Carbuncle · Level: 15 · Words: 1,549
- Story: Odysseus and the Cyclops · Level: 15 · Words: 1,770

Each level is measured from the text itself, from sentence length, words a page and word lists, never from the reader. Every level is in the library.

Books for the four

For full-length books from the library or the bookshop, Peabody's kids' lists have shelves for this age: books to read before high school, the top 25 books for an 8th grader, funny books for middle schoolers and survival and adventure books for middle schoolers. The buy links are plain searches with no affiliate tag, so nobody is paid.

To log a book from home, a grown-up presses and holds a button for two seconds and types the title, sixty letters at most. The title stays on the device; Peabody only receives a count that a book was logged.

If school wants something written

The Book Club's report templates go past middle school. The 8th grade template asks for a thesis, motives and consequences, and a comparison with another book. The high school template is a short literary analysis: a claim someone could argue with, close evidence, the context the work was first told in and a counter-reading, with a worked example on Odysseus and the Cyclops. Both print with a shorter review version: a rating, the best thing, one change and who should read it.

A club for older readers

The meeting plans include an hour for readers 10 and up. Club kits exist for older stories too, such as A Christmas Carol, Theseus and the Minotaur and Gilgamesh, each with six questions, three facts and an activity: cast the film for a literary classic, make a new myth for a myth.

Questions parents ask

Is four books enough for a teenager?

For sixteen days with novels, it is a fair finish line. A reader who gets there early can keep going on 100 Books or Book Bingo, which have no end date.

Does my teenager need an account?

No. Nothing needs an account, and everything a reader logs stays in that browser.

Can my teen skip the drawings altogether?

Yes. Print the weekly log, the bingo card or the 100 books chart and use a pencil. The certificate can be filled in by hand at the certificate page.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/reading-challenge-for-teens