Reading challenges for teens (13–18)

Peabody guide · updated 2026-10-30

Reading challenges for teens 13 to 18, honestly: a four-book winter break, Book Bingo for range, 100 books in a year, January reading days, and lists to start from.

A reading challenge for a teenager works when it respects two things: their books are long, and they have a say. On Peabody that means four books over winter break rather than ten, Book Bingo for range, 100 Books spread over a year, a January that counts reading days rather than books, and stories at levels 14 to 18 for when they want something short. I'll be honest up front: Peabody's Book Club is a wing of a children's library, and its challenges have one age box for everyone from 11 up. Some of it will feel young to a 16-year-old. What follows is what fits a teen, what doesn't, and the lists that make a good start. It is free, like the rest of Peabody through the end of 2026.

The honest version first

- One box for 11 and up. When the tracker asks a reader's age, the three boxes are 5 to 7, 8 to 10, and 11 and up. A 13-year-old and an 18-year-old get the same targets.
- The trackers are drawn. Each reader is an animal face, never a name, and Winter Break is a snowy mountain that climbs a step a book. Some teens won't mind; others will prefer paper. The chart prints with a table of the books so far beside the picture, and the weekly reading log is plain rows.
- Peabody's own stories are short. The stories at the top levels, many of them classics retold, are read in a sitting, not over weeks like a novel: Anne of Green Gables is about 2,600 words on Peabody, and Little Women about 2,200. Most of a teen's reading will be books from elsewhere, which count the same.
- Nothing they log leaves the device. No account, no profile, and Peabody never sees a title.

Winter break: four books

Winter Break runs from Saturday 19 December 2026 to Sunday 3 January 2027, sixteen days. The target from 11 up is four books, which is about one every four days. That sounds low until you remember the middle week of the holidays: visitors, travel, late nights. Four novels in sixteen days is a real stretch in a busy fortnight, and a reader who finishes early can start a second challenge.

To log a library book, a book from a shelf at home or one on an e-reader, choose "a book from somewhere else": press and hold for two seconds, type the title (60 letters at most), then tap what kind of book it was. The title stays on the device.

Book Bingo for range

Book Bingo is the challenge that suits teens best, because it asks for variety rather than speed. It is a 5 × 5 card of kinds of books with a free centre: five in a row is a Bingo, and all 25 earns the certificate. The squares that stretch an older reader:

- A myth or a legend
- A true book
- A classic
- A book about long ago
- A science book
- A book read aloud to someone (a younger brother or sister counts)

A teen reading novels can make the card a year's project. The bingo card prints with the 25 squares written out and room for titles.

100 Books over a year

100 Books has no end date, so a year is a fair pace. That is about two books a week, which is a lot for someone reading full-length novels. A chapter book counts once, when it is finished; a book re-read on another day counts again. A teen who mixes novels with graphic novels, short stories and the occasional short classic has a fair chance; one reading only long novels might set themselves fifty on the paper chart instead.

January: days, not books

The January challenge suits a teen in the middle of one long book. A day's square colours in when they finish a book or read for 20 minutes, and twenty coloured days out of 31 is the finish line. There is no timer: they tap "I read for 20 minutes". A missed day stays empty with no message about it, which matters in a month of exams and early alarms.

Series and classics

The Series Challenge is one series read to the end, in order. The series pages lean towards comics, like Bone and Amulet; for many teens the better half of it is the Classics shelves: the fables, fairy tales, myths, legends and world tales in Peabody's library, ten of each, easiest first. A run through the Greek and Norse myths is a fine winter project.

Levels 14 to 18

Peabody's 19 reading levels are measured from each story's text, never from the reader. Levels 11, 12 and 13 match 6th, 7th and 8th grade; levels 14 to 18 are past the school grades, for strong teens and grown-ups. There are 71 free stories at those five levels, among them:

- Around the World in Eighty Days and Don Quixote and the Windmills, level 14
- Journey to the Center of the Earth, Odysseus and the Cyclops, Odin at Mimir's Well and The Blue Carbuncle, level 15

A teen who finds reading hard is better off with a story they enjoy at level 10 or 11 than one they wade through at 14. For a strong reader, level 14 is the place to start browsing, and the level finder on Peabody Teach helps a grown-up choose a starting level.

Lists to start from

Peabody's kids' lists are the easiest place to find the next book. Buy links on them are plain searches with no affiliate tag: nobody is paid.

- Top 25 books for an 8th grader
- Books to read before high school
- Books by reading band, grades 7 to 8
- Funny books for middle schoolers
- Survival and adventure books for middle schoolers

Stuck between books? What should I read next asks three questions (what kind, how long, on your own or together) and picks one.

Writing about it

If school wants something written, the high school book report template is a short literary analysis with a worked example on Odysseus and the Cyclops, and every grade's page has a shorter review version: a rating, the best thing, one change, who should read it. What a book report should look like in each grade walks through the steps.

Questions parents ask

Is Peabody's Book Club too young for my teenager?

Parts of it may be: the trackers are drawn and the age box stops at "11 and up". The challenges themselves, the paper charts, the lists and the high school report template work at any age.

How many books should a teenager read over winter break?

Peabody's target from 11 up is four, about one every four days. A keen reader can set a higher number on paper; a busy one is better off finishing four than stalling at ten.

Do audiobooks count?

That is your family's call. If you say yes, make it the same rule for everyone.

Does Peabody see what my teenager reads?

No. The log stays on the device. Peabody receives only a count that a book was logged in a challenge, never the title or anything about the reader.

Free at peabody.kids/guides/reading-challenges-for-teens