



A New Kind of Wilderness

DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Constance Zack, of the School Library Association of Rhode Island, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *A New Kind of Wilderness*.

On a small farm in Norway, the Paynes strive to be wild and free. They are self-sufficient, practice home-schooling, and foster a close family dynamic in harmony with nature. But when tragedy strikes, they must adapt to the demands of modern society. Filmmaker Silje Evensmo Jacobsen captures an intimate portrait of love, life, and growing up.

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ADULT NON-FICTION

Arlen, Alice. *She Took to the Woods: A Biography of Selected Writings of Louise Dickinson Rich*. Down East Books, 2000.

A thoughtful biography of the life of Louise Rich Dickinson, who raised a family in a remote section of Maine and wrote about her experiences. Includes many of Rich's essays and stories, which were published in magazines but never appeared in book form, as well as excerpts from her journal and letters.

Brende, Eric. *Better Off: Flipping the Switch on Technology*. Harper Perennial, 2004.

What happens when a graduate of MIT, the bastion of technological advancement, and his bride move to a community so primitive in its technology that even Amish groups consider it antiquated? Eric Brende conceives a real-life experiment: to see if, in fact, all our cell phones, wide-screen TVs, and SUVs have made life easier and better—or whether life would be preferable without them. By turns, the query narrows down to a single question: What is the least we need to achieve the most? With this in mind, the Brendes ditch their car, electric stove, refrigerator, running water, and everything else motorized or "hooked to the grid," and begin an eighteen-month trial run—one that dramatically changes the way they live, and proves entertaining and surprising to readers.

Cumming, Quinn. *The Year of Learning Dangerously*. Perigee/Penguin, 2012.

A blogger and former child actor humorously recounts her misadventures in first-time homeschooling, an endeavor marked by her own math aversion, experiments with current trends, and a chaperone venture at a homeschool prom.

Day, Felicia. *You're Never Weird on the Internet*. Touchstone, 2015.

Felicia Day is a violinist, filmmaker, Internet entrepreneur, compulsive gamer, hoagie specialist, and former lonely homeschooled girl who overcame her isolated childhood to become the ruler of a new world—or at least semi-influential in the world of Internet geeks and Goodreads book clubs. After growing up in the South, where she was "homeschooled for hippie reasons," Felicia moved to Hollywood to pursue her dream of becoming an actress and was immediately typecast as a crazy cat-lady secretary. But her misadventures in Hollywood led her to produce her own web series, launch her own production company, and become an Internet star.

Dickinson, Louise Rich. *We Took to the Woods*. Lippincott, 1942.

In her early thirties, Louise Dickinson Rich took to the woods of Maine with her husband. They found their livelihood and raised a family in the remote backcountry settlement of Middle Dam, in the Rangeley area. Rich made time after morning chores to write about their lives.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions, 2020.

The author has spent a career learning how to ask questions of nature using the tools of science. As a Potawatomi woman, she learned from elders, family, and history that the Potawatomi, as well as many other Indigenous cultures, consider plants and animals to be our oldest teachers. Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowing together to reveal what it means to see humans as "the younger brothers of creation." As she explores these themes, she circles toward a central argument: the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgement and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the world.

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods*. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011.

An exploration of why humans, but especially children, should interact with nature. Nature, in all its forms, offers children a separate peace. It offers them healing, creativity, and a place distant from the adult world. It offers them freedom, fantasy, and privacy. We often see ourselves as separate from nature, but humans are also part of that wildness. The issue of nature-deficit disorder is becoming more prevalent. While many still enjoy playing in nature, many others do not, and instead see it as unproductive and off-limits.

Melchior, Ron. *Off the Grid and Free: My Path to the Wilderness*. Moon Willow Press, 2016.

As a young man from the city, Melchior decided to live life off the grid, first homesteading in northern Maine and then living in the bush of northern Saskatchewan. He has lived off-grid since approximately 1980 and speaks candidly about the joys and tribulations of his chosen lifestyle.

Nabhan, Joshua, and Stephen Trimble. *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places*. Beacon Press, 1994.

Naturalists Nabhan and Trimble investigate how children come to care deeply about the natural world. They ask searching questions about what may happen to children denied exposure to wild places—a reality for more children today than at any time in human history. The *Geography of Childhood* draws insights from fields as various as evolutionary biology, child psychology, and education, and urges adults to rethink children's contact with nature. Nabhan suggests that traditional wilderness-oriented rites of passage may help cure the alienation of adolescence: "Those who as adolescents fail to pass through such rites remain in an arrested state of immaturity for the remainder of their lives." Both authors return to their experiences with Indigenous peoples to show how nature is

taught and wilderness understood in cultures historically grounded outside of America's cities and suburbs.

Sampson, Scott D. *How to Raise a Wild Child*. Mariner Books, 2011.

Offers teachers, parents, and other caregivers the necessary tools to engender a meaningful, lasting connection between children and the natural world.

Stevens, Mitchell. *Kingdom of Children: Culture and Controversy in the Homeschooling Movement*. Princeton University Press, 2003.

More than one million American children are schooled by their parents. As their ranks grow, homeschoolers are making headlines by winning national spelling bees and excelling at elite universities. The few studies conducted suggest that homeschooled children are academically successful and remarkably well socialized. Yet we still know little about this alternative to one of society's most fundamental institutions. Sociologist Mitchell Stevens goes behind the scenes of the homeschooling movement and into the homes and meetings of homeschoolers. What he finds are two very different kinds of home education—one rooted in the liberal alternative school movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and one stemming from the Christian day school movement of the same era.

ADULT FICTION

Cunningham, Kimi. *These Silent Woods*. Minotaur, 2022.

No electricity, no family, no connection to the outside world. For eight years, Cooper and his young daughter, Finch, have lived in isolation in a remote cabin in the northern Appalachian woods. And that's exactly the way Cooper wants it, because he's got a lot to hide. Finch has been raised on the books filling the cabin's shelves and the beautiful but brutal code of life in the wilderness. But she's starting to push back against the sheltered life Cooper has created for her, and he's still haunted by the painful truth of what it took to get them there.

Hamsun, Knut. *Growth of the Soil*. CreateSpace, 2015.

Follows the life of a Norwegian farmer and his family as they carve out a living from the land. It explores the deep connection between humanity and nature, the challenges and rewards of agrarian life, and the struggle to balance the demands of civilization with the allure of the wild.

Hannah, Kristin. *The Great Alone*. St. Martin's Press, 2018.

A family moves to the Alaskan wilderness in the 1970s, facing its harsh realities and the challenges of a volatile relationship.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*. Harper, 2001.

Over the course of one humid summer, a reclusive wildlife biologist, a young farmer's wife marooned far from home, and a pair of elderly, feuding neighbors face disparate predicaments but find connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with whom they necessarily share a place. Their discoveries are embedded inside countless intimate lessons of biology, the realities of small farming, and the final, urgent truth that humans are only one piece of life on earth.

YOUNG ADULT NON-FICTION

Llewellyn, Grace. *Real Lives: 11 Teenagers Who Don't Go To School Tell Their Own Stories*. Lowry House, 2005.

A collection of eleven profiles by teens who educate themselves or are educated at home, including information about what these teens are doing today.

Patterson, Sue. *Homeschooled Teens: 75 Young People Speak About Their Lives Without School*. 2nd Tier Publishing, 2015.

This book features seventy-five young people sharing their experiences with homeschooling, offering a wide range of perspectives on the social, academic, and personal aspects of their lives.

Preece, Bronwyn. *Off the Grid Kid*. Eifrig Publishing, 2015.

“I live in a cabin by the sea, on the small and beautiful island of Lasqueti. In the middle of the Georgia Strait, on this off-the-grid isle our home we make.” Welcome to this true account of life on Lasqueti Island, where this “off-the-grid kid,” the author, and the illustrator all make their homes—forming part of a creative and vibrant community, inspiring new ways of living sustainably.

Safran, Joshua. *Free Spirit: Growing Up on the Road and Off the Grid*. Hyperion, 2013.

Tells the humorous story of Safran's childhood chasing the perfect life off the grid and how he and his mother survived the imperfect one they found instead.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Choyce, Lesley. *Off the Grid*. Orca, 2015.

Sixteen-year-old Cody was born and raised "off the grid" deep in the wilderness by idealistic parents. When his father becomes seriously ill, the family is forced to move into the city so he can get treatment. Attending high school for the first time, Cody is an oddity and has a hard time adjusting. He finds unlikely allies in DeMarco, an inner-city kid, and Ernest, a philosophical homeless man, and he begins a tentative friendship with Alexis. When he comes to DeMarco's defense in an altercation at school, Cody finds himself in trouble with the police. A second confrontation puts Cody in more trouble with the cops, and he is convinced he must escape to the family homestead or be arrested. But Cody is torn between fleeing the city or staying with his ailing father and facing whatever consequences come his way.

George, Jean Craighead. *My Side of the Mountain*. Dutton, 1988.

A young boy relates his adventures during the year he spends living alone in the Catskill Mountains, including his struggle for survival, his dependence on nature, his animal friends, and his ultimate realization that he needs human companionship.

Hicks, Faith Erin. *Friends with Boys*. First Second, 2012.

In this graphic novel, Maggie McKay hardly knows what to do with herself. After an idyllic childhood of homeschooling with her mother and roughhousing with her older brothers, it's time for Maggie to face the outside world, all on her own. But that means facing high school first. And it also means solving the mystery of the melancholy ghost who has silently followed Maggie throughout her entire life. Maybe it even means making a new friend—one who isn't one of her brothers.

Kaynor, Serena. *Long Story Short*. Wednesday, 2022.

A homeschooled math genius finds herself out of her element at a theater summer camp and learns that life—and love—can't be lived by the (text)book.

Korman, Gordon. *Schooled*. Hyperion, 2007.

After his hippie grandmother ends up in the hospital, Cap Anderson is forced to leave the commune where he is homeschooled and attend Claverage Middle School, where his odd looks and behavior make him the target of bullies.

Mangels, Andy. *Rapunzel Swings*. Graphic Planet, 2021.

This graphic novel, a fractured fairy tale, weaves the story of Zelina, or “Zel” Flynn. After Zel's mother passes away, the homeschooled teen returns to public school. But her extraordinarily long hair isn't the only thing that draws attention to her. Zel's smarts provoke the jealousy of a cheerleader who competes with her academically. Zel also finds herself drawn to gymnastics despite her clumsy form.

McNulty, Stacy. *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl*. Random House, 2018.

A lightning strike made Lucy, twelve, a math genius, but after years of homeschooling, her grandmother enrolls her in middle school and she learns that life is more than numbers.

Sumner, Jamie. *Schooled*. Atheneum, 2025.

Eleven-year-old Lenny navigates grief while grudgingly attending an experimental middle school located on the college campus where his father teaches.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

Bean, Jonathan. *This is My Home, This is My School*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015.

A young boy takes us through a typically boisterous homeschooling day with his big family.

Bluedorn, Johannah. *My Mommy, My Teacher*. Trivium Pursuit, 2002.

The story of a young girl and her family who learn and work together on their farm. Her mother teaches her at home along with her three brothers and her baby sister.

Hookham, Carol. *My Learning Adventure Begins*. Still Water Books, 2017.

A six-year-old boy tells the story about his first year as a homeschool student. He discovers that school can be an adventure learned from a book while sitting at the kitchen table, and from other people and places as well.

Voetberg, Julie. *I Am a Home Schooler*. Albert Whitman, 1995.

Describes the experiences of an eight-year-old girl who is taught by her mother on their farm in Washington State.