

# Nature, Vitalism & the Living World

## **The Secret Garden — Frances Hodgson Burnett**

Age range: 8–14

“If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden.”

A story of healing, growth, and the restorative power of nature. Through care for a neglected garden, adolescents see how nurturing the environment mirrors personal and emotional development.

## **Hatchet — Gary Paulsen**

Age range: 12–16

“Don’t give up. Don’t ever give up.”

A survival story about a boy alone in the wilderness. It emphasizes resourcefulness, observation, and resilience, showing teens the vitality of connecting deeply with the natural world.

## **My Side of the Mountain — Jean Craighead George**

Age range: 10–14

“I learned to live alone in the woods.”

A tale of self-reliance and immersion in nature, demonstrating the independence, mindfulness, and vitality that come from living in harmony with the environment.

## **Call of the Wild — Jack London**

Age range: 12–16

“He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived.”

Through the perspective of a sled dog, the novel explores instinct, survival, and adaptation. Adolescents learn about the raw power and wisdom inherent in the natural world.

## **White Fang — Jack London**

Age range: 12–16

“Life is a perpetual struggle, and only the strong survive.”

A companion to *Call of the Wild*, this story highlights the interaction between wildness and human influence, teaching lessons about respect, resilience, and the vitality of living beings.

**Island of the Blue Dolphins — Scott O'Dell**

Age range: 10–14

“I am alone, yet I am free.”

Based on a true story, it teaches survival, courage, and respect for the environment. Teens are inspired to value both independence and harmony with nature.

**The Jungle Book — Rudyard Kipling**

Age range: 9–14

“For the strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack.”

Through the adventures of Mowgli, the book explores animal behavior, community, and the natural laws of life, instilling lessons in ecological balance and interconnectedness.

**Where the Red Fern Grows — Wilson Rawls**

Age range: 10–15

“Sometimes the things we love most are the hardest to lose.”

A story about the bond between a boy and his dogs, emphasizing loyalty, respect for animals, and understanding the cycles of life and death in nature.

**Julie of the Wolves — Jean Craighead George**

Age range: 12–16

“Sometimes you have to be wild to be free.”

Blends survival, cultural insight, and connection with animals, teaching adolescents about observation, patience, and respect for ecosystems.

**Black Beauty — Anna Sewell**

Age range: 8–13

“I never knew a better friend than a horse.”

A classic tale told from a horse’s perspective, emphasizing empathy, kindness, and moral treatment of animals, while teaching teens about compassion and stewardship.

**Lassie Come-Home — Eric Knight**

Age range: 8–14

“The call of home is stronger than anything else.”

The story of a loyal dog traveling great distances to return to her family highlights fidelity, courage, and the profound bond between humans and animals.