

Incoming 8th Grade Summer Reading List

Required Books (you must choose and read at least one of these five)

Out of the Dust, Karen Hesse

In a series of simple poems, 14-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Depression. Written as a sort of poetic journal, this book is heart breaking and powerful. Newbery Winner.

Armageddon Summer, Jane Yolen and Bruce Coville

Coauthors Jane Yolen and Bruce Coville artfully sculpt the alternating voices and perspectives of Marina and Jed, the two alternating narrators, both children of religious fanatics, 'Believers' who dedicate themselves to the Reverend Beelson. The Believers have brought their families to the top of a mountain to prepare for the end of the world, only two weeks away. Marina and Jed are instantly attracted to each other, even though Marina believes the world really will end and Jed thinks the whole thing is a hoax. Readers will be swept up in the thoughts and emotions of these complex young people. The skillful writing raises this novel above others--these characters are immensely believable as they struggle with matters of family and faith, while maintaining a smart, convincingly adolescent outlook.

Tangerine, Richard Bloor

Paul Fisher, a stellar soccer player despite being legally blind, finally comes into his own when his family moves to the strange town of Tangerine, Florida. Complex emotional relationships with his older brother and family are gradually revealed in this astonishing novel.

Monster, Walter Dean Myers

While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken. Written as a screenplay, journal, photo diary and courtroom notes and more, this novel's innovative approach intrigues kids and adults alike.

Touching Spirit Bear, Ben Mikaelson

After his anger erupts into violence, fifteen year-old Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the Native American Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life.

Choice Books (choose one or more and read for fun)

Speak, Laurie Halse Anderson

A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda's freshman year in high school. Date rape is an issue covered in this novel.

The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier

A high school freshman discovers the devastating consequences of refusing to join in the school's annual fund raising drive and arousing the wrath of the school bullies.

The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton

The struggle of three brothers to stay together after their parent's death and their quest for identity among the conflicting values of their adolescent society.

Ironman, Chris Crutcher

While training for a triathlon, seventeen-year-old Bo attends an anger management group at school which leads him to examine his relationship with his father.

Bad by Jean Ferris--"*I guess, if you have to, you can get used to anything--even to violence breaking out, like an attack of the hiccups or something, and then going away as suddenly as it started. But, like Shatasia said, you could never get all the way relaxed about it.*" Such is the life of 16-year-old Dallas now that she's been confined for six months to a juvenile detention facility for girls. Dallas used to love "skating" with her

rebellious friends--shoplifting, hot-wiring cars, and purse-snatching--but she never expected to be caught with a gun. In the rehabilitation center she must adjust to shared living quarters, structured schedules, lectures on drugs and sex, and countless volatile personalities. But amid all the chaos and tension and rules, Dallas also finds nurture--perhaps more than she ever received from her cold dad and absent mom.

Weetzie Bat by Francesca Lia Block--Weetzie Bat is an ultramodern L.A. teenager, experiencing life and love as fully as possible. Although the array of characters is offbeat, even eccentric, a look beneath their brashness reveals quirky, yet real, people. Weetzie's slang--"lanky-lizards," "Lanka girls," "ducks,"--makes Block's short novel highly entertaining. Weetzie Bat is a magical book that is the perfect mix of fairy-tale and reality. Something so unique and beautiful doesn't come around often. There are issues of homosexuality in the book.

Coming Evil by Vivian Van de Velde--The author of numerous fantasies tries a more realistic setting in her latest offering. Parisian 13-year-old Lizette is sent to live with her aunt in German-occupied rural France in the fall of 1940. There she meets Gerard, the ghost of a fourteenth-century Templar knight, who was murdered by King Phillip IV in 1314. As she learns more about Gerard and the evils of his time, she comes to understand the true dangers of the Nazi occupation, and the importance of helping her aunt hide several Jewish and Gypsy children. Velde's melding of fantasy with historical fiction is generally successful, and her comments about the similarities between these two historical periods are well taken.

Upon the Head of the Goat : A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944 by Aranka Siegal-- Nine-year-old Piri describes the bewilderment of being a Jewish child during the 1939-1944 German occupation of her hometown (then in Hungary and now in the Ukraine) and relates the ordeal of trying to survive in the ghetto.

Dacey's Song by Cynthia Voight-- A NEWBERY MEDAL WINNER Keeping her family together is what thirteen-year-old Dacey does best. But now that all four Tillerman children have found a new home with their grandmother, Dacey has to learn the hard lesson of letting go. Dacey's got other problems than finding her new role in the family: she's bored with everyone and everything at school and doesn't think anyone can tell her anything she wants to know. But slowly, Dacey discovers that everyone has something to teach, and life is a lesson that doesn't get easier . . .

Pardon Me You're Stepping on my Eyeball by Paul Zindel--Louis "Marsh" Mellow is a 15 year old who is growing up in a really dysfunctional family. His mother is an alcoholic and his father is absent from the home. Marsh's teachers believe he is a good candidate for a group therapy session being set up by the school's psychologist. In the group, Marsh meets Edna, a disturbed loner and six others who comprise the group. Edna and Marsh become friends and Edna tries to help Marsh come to terms with his homelife. Join Edna and Marsh as they journey together in search of self.

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes by Chris Crutcher-- Once again, Crutcher assembles a crew of misfits to tackle the Big Issues. Sarah Byrnes, her face hideously scarred from what she calls a childhood accident, sits silent and withdrawn in the psychiatric ward; her friend Eric, who has admired her since grade school as the toughest person he knows, wonders what could have finally pushed her over the edge. Between trenchant classroom confrontations over abortion and other religious controversies, exhausting swim team workouts, and a sudden relationship with a classmate, Eric loyally finds time to visit Sarah. Powerful, controversial.

The Silver Kiss by Annette Curtis Klause--This could sell as horror, but it's compassionate horror. Zoe's Mom is dying of cancer. Even getting picked up by a handsome vampire seems tolerable in comparison. Can she trust him not to drain all her blood? Can she do something to stop the brutal killings happening in her town? Can she let go of Simon and her Mom?

Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 1/2 by Townsend, Sue -- Set in England, this diary of a 13 year old is full of humorous anecdotes celebrating Adrian Mole's puberty. His diary entries begin with a New Year's resolution and take us into his varied activities which include covering the clown wallpaper in his bedroom with black paint, getting involved in finding a nursing home for a 90 year old man. The man ends up befriending him and asking him to arrange details for his marriage to an 80 year-old fellow nursing home resident. Through it all, his mom leaves home to express her independence and liberation and his dad loses his job and fights or fuels depression with frequent shots of whiskey.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck--The stunning, classic novel of the Dust Bowl and a family's migration to California during the Depression.

Caucasia by Danzy Senna--Throughout the novel, Senna superbly illustrates the emotional toll that politics and race take on one especially gutsy young girl's development as she makes her way through the parallel limbos between black and white and between girl and young woman.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith--The American masterpiece of a young girl's coming of age and beginnings of wisdom in turn-of-the-century New York. A profoundly moving novel.

The Color of Water, by James McBride--A true contemporary story of an African American man in New York who does not realize until at least his teens that his mother who is raising him is white or European American.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck--The painful responsibilities of friendship are explored in this tragic story of two migratory workers: George and Lennie.

Having Our Say by the Delaney Sisters--Warm, feisty, and intelligent, the Delaney sisters speak their minds in a book that is at once a vital historical record and a moving portrait of two sisters who love, laugh, and embrace life after one hundred years of living side-by-side.

The Chosen by Chaim Potok--The author's beloved first novel offers readers the story of two Jewish boys of very different backgrounds growing up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, NY.

My Brother Sam is Dead--Stirring novel (historical fiction) set during the American Revolution.

Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary by Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven--A poignant companion to the Diary this book fills in the details of Anne Frank's life before, during and after her experiences in hiding. A wonderful historical achievement that gives readers a broader context in which to place Anne Frank's life.

Red Sky at Morning by Richard Bradford--The classic coming-of-age story set during World War II about the enduring spirit of youth and the values in life that count. "A sort of *Catcher in the Rye* out West...What makes the book a true delight is the deadpan, irreverent humor with which Josh tells the story...No brief review can do justice to Mr. Bradford's book."

A Bag of Marbles by Joseph Joffo--Set in occupied France during WWII, two Jewish boys are sent by their mother to Free France to escape persecution by the Nazis. A true and gripping account of intense struggle for survival. Translated from the French.