

Language Arts Department – Middle School Summer Reading, 2010

Students entering **Grade Five** in September will read **two** of the following books, **one** from **Group A** and **one** from **Group B**.

Group A The characters in the books below persevere in the face of challenges.

Roald Dahl: *The BFG*. When Sophie hears that certain giants are “flushbunking off to England to swollomp a few nice little chidders,” she decides she must stop them once and for all, and the BFG is going to help her.

Margaret Peterson Haddix: *Among the Hidden*. Luke, a third child forbidden by the Population Police, decides that he must make a difference in the world.

Maric McSwigan: *Snow Treasure*. In 1940, Nazi troops parachute into Peter’s Norwegian village and hold it captive. Peter and his friends risk their lives as they transport gold on their sleds and slip past Nazi guards.

Beverly Naidoo: *Journey to Jo’Burg*. When Naledi’s baby sister suddenly becomes sick, Naledi and her brother set off on a dangerous journey to find their mother, who lives and works in far off Johannesburg.

Kashmira Sheth: *Keeping Corner*. When the fiancé of twelve-year-old Leela dies, she must shave her head in preparation for a life of mourning for a boy she barely knew. When her schoolteacher hears of her student’s fate, she offers to teach her at home.

Group B How do other children spend their summers? Read and find out.

Jeanne Birdsall: *The Penderwicks*. The four Penderwick sisters stay at a beautiful estate for their summer holidays. Jeffrey, the son of the estate owner, will be a perfect companion for their summer adventures.

Betty G. Birney: *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs*. Eben McAllister’s father promises him the trip to Colorado that he has been craving, but first Eben must find seven wonders in Sassafras Springs that rival the real Seven Wonders of the World.

Linda Sue Park: *Keeping Score*. Although Maggie doesn’t play baseball, she cheers when the Brooklyn Dodgers win, suffers when they lose, and learns from her friend and baseball mentor Jim how to score their games. Then Jim is drafted into the army to fight in Korea.

John H. Ritter: *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*. When the Dillontown baseball field is about to be torn down by developers, Tom Gallagher decides to save it.

Deborah Wiles. *The Aurora County All-Stars*. Twelve-year-old House Jackson, star pitcher and team captain of the Aurora County All-stars, doesn’t want anyone to know how he has spent every afternoon for the past year. Now that he is ready to play ball again after having been sidelined with a broken elbow, his team’s game might be canceled because of the very girl who caused his disaster.

Students entering **Grade Six** in September will read Sharon Creech's *Walk Two Moons*. Suggestion: Read *Walk Two Moons* closer to the beginning of the school year.

Additionally, students will read **one** book from **Group A** and **one** book from **Group B**.

GROUP A: Choose one

Jeanne Betancort: *My Name is Brain Brian*. Brian and his friends Dan, Richie, and John form the Jokers Club. They have a hideout in the deserted gardener's shed behind the Colgate mansion. Then, Brian finds out that he is dyslexic and sees things differently than other students. In the end, Brian finds out who he is and who his friends are.

Kate DiCamillo: *Because of Winn-Dixie*. India Opal Buloni has just moved to Naomi, Florida, where her father is the local preacher. When she encounters a stray dog and makes him her own, it is the pathway to finding friends and forgiveness for the Mom who left her.

Mike Lupika: *Heat*. Michael Arroyo can throw some serious heat, and he dreams of pitching in the Little League World Series. But Michael --- newly orphaned after his father led the family's escape from Cuba --- must deal with the reality of his day-to-day life and can only rely on his older brother for support.

Ann M. Martin: *Belle Teal*. Ten-year-old Belle Teal Harper lives with her mother and grandmother on the "wrong side of the tracks" in a small rural community during the early 1960's. They don't have much, but they have each other, and Belle Teal feels rich with love and loyalty to her family and her best friends, Clarice and Little Boss.

Jerry Spinelli. *Crash*. Crash Coogan is a seventh grade "jock" who enjoys teasing his skinny Quaker neighbor. When one day Coogan's grandfather has a stroke and becomes severely disabled, Crash no longer sees the fun in playing brutal pranks and quickly learns about what is important in life.

Jason Lethcoe: *The Mysterious Mr. Spines Wings*. What an odd fourteen-year-old! Edward Macleod stutters, stands over six feet tall, and swears he can move things with his mind. Funny thing, the irritating itch on his back has sprouted *wings*!

GROUP B: Choose one

Barry Denenberg: *The Journal of Ben Uchida, Citizen 13559, Mirror Lake Internment Camp, CA, 1942*. Ben Uchida, An American citizen, spent his twelfth and thirteenth years in a Japanese internment camp. This journal captures his struggles as he learns that compassion and humor can help his family endure the World War II internment camp.

Ann Rinaldi: *My Heart Is on the Ground: The Diary of Nannie Little Rose, a Sioux Girl, Carlisle Indian School, Pennsylvania, 1880*. Nannie Little Rose's diary - "the white man's talking leaves"

- begins on December 1, 1879, shortly after she arrives in Pennsylvania. Through this "self-telling," a twelve-year old Native American, whose identity is firmly rooted in her love for nature and her tribal customs, reveals her transformation into an Americanized Sioux in "citizens' clothing."

Elizabeth Winthrop: *Counting on Grace*. It's 1910, and 12 year-old Grace and her best friend Arthur must quit school to work in the town mill. The work is hard and the two friends can hardly stand the hot, noisy factory. Grace and Arthur write a secret letter to the Child Labor Board to tell them about kids working at the mill. Mr. Lewis Hine comes undercover to photograph the kids and gather evidence. Can you believe kids working in a factory at 12?

Barry Denenberg: *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, The Perkins School for the Blind, 1932*. December 1931. Two sisters sledding down a hill. One boy, also sledding, tries to scare the sisters. To avoid a collision, one girl veers to the right. Young Bess Brennan is blinded for the rest of her life. When Bess's twin sister realizes how much Bess loved writing in her diary, Elin agrees to take dictation and continue Bess's entries. Following those entries Elin adds her own thoughts. These dual points of view give readers interesting perspectives as each sister's thoughts are juxtaposed against one another.

Students entering **Grade Seven** in September will read three books over the summer. They will select one book of fiction chosen from the list below. Also, they will read one work of non-fiction and one book of poetry of their own choosing. (Students are not limited to the books on the poetry and non-fiction lists; the selections in those two sections are given only as suggestions.)

Fiction: Choose one

Betty Smith: *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. This beloved classic tells the story of Francie growing up in a tenement slum in Brooklyn in the early twentieth century.

Julia Alvarez: *Before We Were Free*. Twelve year-old Anita and her family are tied up in the dangerous political events of 1960 in the Dominican Republic.

Laurence Yep: *Dragonwings*. Historical fiction about a Chinese boy who arrives in San Francisco in the early 20th century to be with his father, a man working on a flying machine.

Jackie French Koller: *Nothing to Fear*. A young boy grows up in New York City in the midst of the Depression.

Daphne DuMaurier: *Rebecca*. A young, newly married wife lives in the shadows of her husband's first wife until she discovers the truth.

Lisa See: *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. Two girls in 19th Century China communicate by writing letters written on a fan in a secret code.

Nina Jaffe & Steve Zeitlin: *The Cow of No Color, Riddle Stories and Justice Tales from Around the World*. A multicultural collection that challenges the reader to resolve questions of justice, specifically “What is fair?”

Michael Shaara: *The Killer Angel*. Set in the days just before and during the Civil War, this story is told from the perspective of both Confederate and Union soldiers.

Mildred E. Taylor: *The Land*. Set in the Deep South during and after the Civil War, this is the prequel to the beloved *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

Gary Blackwood: *The Shakespeare Stealer*. The plight of a young orphan who is enlisted to steal Shakespeare’s new play, *Hamlet*, but befriends the troupe he is supposed to betray.

Poetry: Suggested authors. Feel free to choose others. There are many poetry collections to look through, but as you read keep a record of your favorite poems and bring them with you in the fall.

Lucille Clifton: *Quilting: Poems, 1987-1990*

Billy Collins: *Questions About Angels*

Robert Frost: *You Come Too*

Nikki Giovanni: *Quilting the Black-eyed Pea*

Langston Hughes: *The Dream Keeper and other poems*

Mary Oliver: *New and Selected Poems*

Carl Sandburg: *Rainbows are Made*, selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins

Non-Fiction: Suggested authors. Feel free to choose others. There are several non-fiction genres to choose from, including biography, autobiography, memoir, and history.

Aron Ralston: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Aron, an avid rock-climber, is trapped in a mountain canyon in Utah, his right arm pinned by a huge boulder.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James. D. Houston: *Farewell to Manzanar*. This is Jeanne’s memoir of when she and her family are uprooted and sent to live in an internment camp with other Japanese Americans during World War II.

Mark Salzman: *Iron and Silk*. Mark Salzman recounts his adventures moving to China—immediately after graduating from Yale—to teach English and martial arts in a rural town in China.

Natalie Bober: *Thomas Jefferson, Man on a Mountain*. Using Jefferson’s own writing as well as other documents, the author makes Jefferson, the man, and the times he lived in come alive.

Students entering **Grade Eight** should read **two** books from **Group A** and **one** book from **Group B**.

Group A: Choose two

Walter Lord: *A Night to Remember*. The frightening account of the *Titanic* disaster based on interviews with a number of survivors.

George Orwell: *1984*. Written in 1948, this is a vision of a grim future world of repression and constant warfare.

George Orwell: *Animal Farm*. The animals rebel against their masters and try to establish a society where all animals are equal. Unfortunately, they soon learn that some animals are more equal than others.

Ray Bradbury: *Fahrenheit 451*. This story of a future world where books and reading are suppressed is even more believable now than when it was written.

Daniel Keyes: *Flowers for Algernon*. Charley Gordon is retarded but undergoes an experimental operation that makes him bright. Unfortunately, things don't necessarily turn out for the best.

Jon Krakauer: *Into Thin Air*. The suspenseful narrative of the author's attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest, a trek that jeopardizes the lives of ten climbers.

Michael Crichton: *The Andromeda Strain*. A group of scientists try to stop a deadly disease after a satellite from outer space contaminates a whole town.

Douglas Adams: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Seconds before the earth is to be demolished to make room for a galactic highway, Arthur Dent is rescued by a friend and together they hitch a ride to parts unknown, encounter creatures unheard of, and take part in adventures unparalleled.

Ernest Hemingway: *The Old Man and The Sea*. The physical and emotional struggle an aged Cuban fisherman wages against the fish of a lifetime – tremendous, magnificent marlin – that becomes a moral challenge.

Sheila Gordon: *Waiting for the Rain*. The story of two childhood friends, one white, one African, growing up together in South Africa during the days of apartheid.

Michael Pollan: *The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids: The Secrets Behind What You Eat*. An eye-opening nonfiction study of how food is produced and consumed in our society, including a guide to simple actions that will improve the health of our bodies, our society, and our planet.

Group B Please read one of the following collections of poetry, and be sure to keep track of your favorite poems.

The Trouble with Poetry, Sailing Alone Around the Room, Questions About Angels by Billy Collins (or any other collection of his poetry that you can find).

The Best Poems Ever, edited by Edric S. Mesmer

My Black Me, edited by Arnold Adoff.

I Am The Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by African Americans, edited by Arnold Adoff, forward by Nikki Giovanni.

American Sports Poems, edited by R.R. Knudson

Any collection of poems by Mary Oliver.