



Grade 6 Summer Reading

This summer, all sixth graders will read an inspirational book whose characters' stories show the power of perseverance and understanding. One of only a few novels tackling 9/11, a critical day in our history, Nora Raleigh Baskin's *nine, ten: A September 11 Story* carefully and sensitively brings readers into the lives of four young people experiencing the everyday challenges of early adolescence in the two days before that fateful day. It is only after learning about the characters, that we experience 9/11 through their lenses and witness how their very separate lives become intertwined.

As readers, we might bring our personal expectations to the story, only to be surprised by the author's ability to show with grace the enormity of the day. We invite all families to read Baskin's *nine, ten: A September 11 Story*. Its concluding chapter reflects the staggering power of understanding and the triumph of one voice speaking for what is right.

REQUIRED BOOK: *nine, ten: A September 11 Story*

Ask anyone: September 11, 2001, was serene and lovely, a perfect day—until a plane struck the World Trade Center.

But right now it is a few days earlier, and four kids in different parts of the country are going about their lives. Sergio, who lives in Brooklyn, is struggling to come to terms with the absentee father he hates and the grandmother he loves. Will's father is gone, too, killed in a car accident that has left the family reeling. Naheed has never before felt uncomfortable about being Muslim, but at her new school she's getting funny looks because of the headscarf she wears. Aimee is starting a new school in a new city and missing her mom, who has to fly to New York on business.

These four don't know one another, but their lives are about to intersect in ways they never could have imagined. Award-winning author Nora Raleigh Baskin weaves together their stories into an unforgettable novel about that seemingly perfect September day—the day our world changed forever. (Simon and Schuster)

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

GROUP A: Choose one

Blackwood, Gary. *The Shakespeare Stealer*. Widge is an orphan whose fearsome master has just one demand: steal Shakespeare's play "Hamlet"—or else. Widge has no choice but to follow orders, so he works his way into the heart of the Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare's players perform.

Lupika, Mike. *The Only Game*. Can a young baseball star maintain his love of the game after the loss of his brother? Jack Callahan is the star of his baseball team and sixth grade is supposed to be his year. Undefeated season. Records shattered. Little League World Series. The works. That is, until he up and quits. Jack's best friend Gus can't understand how Jack could leave a game that means more to them than anything else. But Jack is done. It's a year of change. Jack's brother has passed away, and though his family and friends and the whole town of Walton thinks baseball is just the thing he needs to move on, Jack feels it's anything but.

Meloy, Maile. *The Apothecary*. It's 1952 and the Scott family has just moved from Los Angeles to London. Here, fourteen-year-old Janie meets a mysterious apothecary and his son, Benjamin Burrows - a fascinating boy who's not afraid to stand up to authority and dreams of becoming a spy. When Benjamin's father is kidnapped, Janie and Benjamin must uncover the secrets of the apothecary's sacred book, the Pharmacopoeia, in order to find him, all while keeping it out of the hands of their enemies - Russian spies in possession of nuclear weapons. Discovering and testing potions they never believed could exist, Janie and Benjamin embark on a dangerous race to save the apothecary and prevent impending disaster.

Myers, Walter Dean. *The Journal of Bidley Owens: the Negro Leagues*. Teenager Bidley Owens' 1948 journal about working for the Birmingham Black Barons includes the games and the players, racism the team faces from New Orleans to Chicago, and his family's resistance to his becoming a professional baseball player. Includes a historical note about the evolution of the Negro Leagues.

GROUP B: Choose one – Meeting Challenges

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Fever 1793*. In 1793 Philadelphia, sixteen-year-old Matilda Cook, separated from her sick mother, learns about perseverance and self-reliance when she is forced to cope with the horrors of a yellow fever epidemic.

Bruchac, Joseph. *A Code Talker: A novel about the Navajo Marines of World War II*. After being taught in a boarding school run by whites that Navajo is a useless language, Ned Begay and other Navajo men are recruited by the Marines to become Code Talkers, sending messages during World War II in their native tongue.

Denenberg, Barry. *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. (Can be found on Amazon.com)

de los Santos, Marisa and Teague, David. *Connect the Stars*. From *Saving Lucas Biggs* by the same authors comes a heartwarming middle grade adventure about two misfits discovering the importance of just being themselves. When thirteen-year-olds Aaron and Audrey meet at a wilderness camp in the desert, they think their quirks are enough to prevent them from ever having friends. But as they trek through the challenging and unforgiving landscape, they learn that they each have what it takes to make the other whole.

Luminous and clever, *Connect the Stars* takes on some hefty topics of the day—bullying, understanding where you fit in, and learning to live with physical and mental challenges—all in a joyous adventure kids will love! (Amazon) Graff, Lisa. *A Clatter of Jars*.

In this magical companion to the National Book Award nominated *A Tangle of Knots*, it's summertime and everyone is heading off to camp. For Talented kids, the place to be is Camp Atropos, where they can sing songs by the campfire, practice for the Talent show, and take some nice long dips in the lake. But what the kids don't know is that they've been gathered for a reason--one that the camp's director wants to keep hidden at all costs. Meanwhile, a Talent jar that has been dropped to the bottom of the lake has sprung a leak, and strange things have begun to happen. Dozens of seemingly empty jars have been washing up on the shoreline, Talents have been swapped, and memories have been ripped from one camper's head and placed into another. And no one knows why.

With a camp full of kids, a lake full of magic, and a grown-up full of secrets, *A Clatter of Jars* is story of summer, family, and the lengths we go to win back the people we love. (*Buffalo and Erie County Public Library*)

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. Based on the author's own childhood and written in free-verse poems,

this unforgettable story captures a fierce girl's struggles to find her place in her family, in her new home, and in the world. Things are changing in Hà's world, as the Vietnam War comes closer and closer to her home in Saigon. Her friends and neighbors are leaving, her oldest brother is speaking out against the North, and the likelihood of being reunited with her father — who has been missing in action for nine years — is growing dimmer. When Saigon falls in 1975, Hà and her family are forced to flee on a navy ship and, after spending months in refugee camps, end up moving to Alabama. There, Hà struggles to deal with everything from learning the language and customs to handling the bullies who make fun of her at school. Will she ever feel at home in this strange new land? And will she ever see her father again?

Mass, Wendy. *The Candymakers*. Four gifted twelve-year-olds, including Logan, the candy maker's son, are set to be contestants in the Confectionary Association's national competition to determine the nation's tastiest sweet, but nobody anticipates that a friendship will form between the children.

Pearsall, Shelley. *Jump into the Sky*. It's May 5, 1945. Carrying nothing but a suitcase and a bag of his aunt's good fried chicken, 13-year-old Levi Battle heads south to a U.S. Army post in search of his father—a lieutenant in an elite unit of all black paratroopers. The fact that his father doesn't even know he's coming turns out to be the least of his problems. As Levi makes his way across the United States, he learns hard lessons about the way a black boy is treated in the Jim Crow South. And when he arrives at his destination, his struggles are far from over. The war may be ending, but his father's secret mission is just beginning—and it's more dangerous than anybody imagined.

Sherry, Maureen, *Walls within Walls*. After their father, a video-game inventor, strikes it rich, the Smithfork kids find they hate their new life. They move from their cozy Brooklyn neighborhood to a swanky apartment on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. They have no friends, a nanny who takes the place of their parents, and a school year looming ahead that promises to be miserable.

And then, one day, Brid, CJ, and Patrick discover an astonishing secret about their apartment: The original owner, the deceased multimillionaire Mr. Post, long ago turned the apartment itself into a giant puzzle containing a mysterious book and hidden panels—a puzzle that, with some luck, courage, and brainpower, will lead to discovering the Post family fortune. Unraveling the mystery causes them to race through today's New York City—and to uncover some long-hidden secrets of the past. (Amazon)

Sloan Goldberg, Holly. *Counting by 7s*. In the tradition of *Out of My Mind*, *Wonder*, and *Mockingbird*, this is an intensely moving middle grade novel about being an outsider, coping with loss, and discovering the true meaning of family. Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now. (Amazon)

Sonnichsen, A. L., *Red Butterfly*. A young orphaned girl in modern-day China discovers the meaning of family in this “heartbreaking, heartwarming, and impressive debut” (Publishers Weekly, starred review) told in verse, in the tradition of *Inside Out and Back Again*. Kara never met her birth mother. Abandoned as an infant, she was taken in by an American woman living in China. Now eleven, Kara spends most of her time in their apartment, wondering why she and Mama cannot leave the city of Tianjin and go live with Daddy in Montana. Mama tells Kara to be content with what she has...but what if Kara secretly wants more?

Told in lyrical, moving verse, *Red Butterfly* is the story of a girl learning to trust her own voice, discovering that love and family are limitless, and finding the wings she needs to reach new heights. (Barnes and Noble)