

MIDDLE SCHOOL RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Great Reads

Avi. *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. Set in 14th-century England, the story of a young serf on the run from his miserable past.

Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck Everlasting*. The Tuck family is confronted with an agonizing situation when they discover that a ten-year-old girl and a malicious stranger now share their secret about a spring whose water prevents one from ever growing older.

Bloor, Edward. *Tangerine*. Twelve-year-old Paul, who lives in the shadow of his football hero brother Eric, fights for the right to play soccer despite his near blindness and slowly begins to remember the incident that damaged his eyesight.

Creech, Sharon. *Walk Two Moons*. Sal hopes that her missing mother will soon return home as she learns more of her Native American heritage.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway.

Cushman, Karen. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. A homeless girl is taken as an apprentice by a midwife in the Middle Ages.

Dahl, Roald. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Five lucky children win golden tickets and get to visit Mr. Willy Wonka's mysterious chocolate factory.

Dahl, Roald. *James and the Giant Peach*. A young boy escapes from two wicked aunts and embarks on a series of adventures with six giant insects he meets inside a giant peach.

DiCamillo, Kate. *Because of Winn-Dixie*. Ten-year-old India Opal Buloni describes her first summer in the town of Naomi, Florida, and all the good things that happen to her because of her big ugly dog Winn-Dixie.

DiCamillo, Kate. *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread*. The adventures of Despereaux Tilling, a small mouse of unusual talents, the princess that he loves, the servant girl who longs to be a princess, and a devious rat determined to bring them all to ruin.

Fox, Helen. *Eager*. Set at the end of the 21st Century, the story of the Bell family and their new robot, Eager, who is programmed to not merely obey but to question, reason, and exercise free will.

Funke, Cornelia. *Dragon Rider*. The story of a team of bravehearts seeking a mysterious lair of ancient dragons.

Green, Bette. *Summer of my German Soldier*. The story of an unlikely friendship between a Jewish girl and a young German soldier during World War II.

- Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust*. In a series of poems, fifteen-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Great Depression.
- Kadohata, Cynthia. *Kira-Kira*. The story of a Japanese American family told from the point of view of the younger sister Katie. Personal challenges and family tragedy are set against the oppressive social climate of the South during the 1950s and early 1960s.
- Konigsburg, E.L. *The View From Saturday*. Four students, with their own individual stories, develop a special bond and attract the attention of their teacher, a paraplegic, who chooses them to represent their sixth-grade class in the Academic Bowl competition.
- L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. Meg Murry and her friends become involved with unearthly strangers to search for Meg's father who has disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Four English schoolchildren find their way through the back of a wardrobe into the magic land of Narnia and assist Aslan, the golden lion, to triumph over the White Witch, who has cursed the land with eternal winter.
- Lowry, Lois. *The Gathering Blue*. Lame and suddenly orphaned, Kira is mysteriously removed from her squalid village to live in the palatial Council Edifice, where she is expected to use her gifts as a weaver to do the bidding of the all-powerful Guardians.
- Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives.
- Lowry, Lois. *Messenger*. Uniting characters from *The Giver* and *Gathering Blue*, this is the story of Matty, a young boy struggling to conceal an emerging healing power that he cannot explain or understand.
- Nimmo, Jenny. *Midnight for Charlie Bone*. Charlie Bone's life with his widowed mother and two grandmothers undergoes a dramatic change when he discovers that he can hear people in photographs talking.
- Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*. A tale about a 12th-century Korean boy named Tree-ear, who must overcome a host of obstacles in order to attain his life's dream.
- Paulson, Gary. *Hatchet*. After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the Canadian wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce.
- Paulson Gary. *The River*. Because of his success surviving alone in the wilderness for 54 days fifteen-year-old Brian, profoundly changed by his time in the wild, is asked to undergo a similar experience to help scientists learn more about the psychology of survival.

- Peck, Richard. *A Long Way to Chicago*. A young boy, Jerry, recounts his annual summer trips to rural Illinois with his sister during the Great Depression to visit their larger-than-life grandmother, Grandma Dowdel.
- Peck, Richard. *A Year Down Yonder*. Sequel to *A Long Way to Chicago*. 15-year-old Mary Alice recounts memories of her Grandma Dowdel.
- Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. *The Yearling*. Jody Baxter, living in the Florida backwoods with his pet fawn, experiences the joys and pains of adolescence.
- Rawls, Winston. *Where the Red Fern Grows*. A boy and his two dogs go through adventure and tragedy in the Ozark Mountain Valley.
- Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Rescued from the outrageous neglect of his aunt and uncle, a young boy with a great destiny proves his worth while attending Hogwarts School for Wizards and Witches.
- Ryan, Pam Munos. *Esperanza Rising*. When Esperanza's wealthy father is brutally murdered in Mexico, she and her mother flee to California and take up residence in a migrant worker camp.
- Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. As further evidence of his family's bad luck, Stanley Yelnats is sent to a correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.
- Spinelli, Jerry. *Stargirl*. The unique and individual Stargirl arrives in a small Arizona town bringing with her the winds of change.
- Voight, Cynthia. *Homecoming*. Abandoned by their mother, four children begin a search for a home and identity.
- White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. Wilbur the pig is desolate when he discovers that he is destined to be the farmer's Christmas dinner until his spider friend, Charlotte decides to help him.
- Wilkinson, Carole. *Dragon Keeper*. In ancient China during the Han Dynasty, a young slave toils away in a castle for a cruel master. The nameless orphan is hopeless and lonely, until, in a moment of startling bravery, she comes to the aid of an aging dragon.
- Williams, Mark. *Danger Boy: Ancient Fire*. When twelve-year-old Eli becomes involved with the time travel experiments that the government pressures his parents to pursue, he travels to fifth-century Alexandria, Egypt, where he meets Thea, a scholar accused of sorcery, and Clyne, an extraterrestrial saurian who is working on a homework assignment.

Challenging Reads

*These books may contain mature subject matter and/or language.

It is recommended that parents preview the books on this list prior to student reading.

Almond, David. *Kit's Wilderness*. Thirteen-year-old Kit goes to live with his grandfather in the decaying coal mining town of Stoneygate, England, and finds both the old man and the town haunted by ghosts of the past.

Brashares, Ann. *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. During their first summer apart, four friends share a pair of second-hand jeans and experience adventure, happiness, and heartbreak.

Chambers, Aidan. *Postcards from No Man's Land*. Seventeen-year-old Jacob visits a daunting Amsterdam at the request of his English grandmother and learns of about her experiences during the German occupation of Holland.

Cisneros, Sandra. *House on Mango Street*. Esperanza Cordero, a girl coming of age in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago, uses poems and stories to express thoughts and emotions about her oppressive environment.

Curtis, Christopher. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham -- 1963*. The story of an African American family living in Flint Michigan whose lives are dramatically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.

Dessan, Sarah. *The Truth About Forever*. The summer following her father's death, Macy plans to work at the library and wait for her brainy boyfriend to return from camp, but instead she goes to work at a catering business where she makes new friends and faces her grief.

DuPrau, Jeanne. *The City of Ember*. In the year 241, twelve-year-old Lina trades jobs on Assignment Day to be a Messenger to run to new places in her decaying but beloved city, perhaps even to glimpse Unknown Regions.

DuPrau, Jeanne. *The People of Sparks*. Sequel to *The City of Ember*. Having escaped to the Unknown Regions, Lina and the others seek help from the village people of Sparks.

Farmer, Nancy. *The House of the Scorpion*. In a future where humans despise clones, Matt enjoys special status as the young clone of El Patron, the 142-year-old leader of a corrupt drug empire nestled between Mexico and the United States.

Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*. Ponyboy, a "greaser", can count on his brother and on his friends, but not on much else. Trouble starts when the "Socs", a gang of rich kids, begin beating up "Greasers".

Holt, Kimberly Willis. *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*. Toby Wilson is having a tough summer -- his mother leaves; his best friend's brother returns from Vietnam in a coffin; and, Zachary Beaver, the fattest boy in the world, arrives in his sleepy Texas town.

Horvath, Polly. *The Canning Season*. Thirteen-year-old Ratchet spends a summer in Maine with her eccentric great-aunts Tilly and Penpen, hearing strange stories from the past and encountering a variety of unusual and colorful characters

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar*. The true story of a Japanese American family's struggle to survive evacuation and internment during World War II.

Johnson, Angela. *Heaven*. Fourteen-year-old Marley's seemingly perfect life in the small town of Heaven is disrupted when she discovers that her father and mother are not her real parents.

Johnson, Angela. *The First Part Last*. Prequel to *Heaven*. A 16-year-old tells the story of how he became a single father.

Koertge, Ron. *Margaux with an X*. Margaux, known as a “tough chick” at her Los Angeles high school, makes a connection with Danny, who, like her, struggles with the emotional impact of family violence and abuse.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and the courtroom in the form of a screenplay.

Na, An. *Step From Heaven*. A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild*. The story of Buck who is a magnificent dog and loyal pet, until he is seized from his pampered surroundings and shipped to Alaska to be a sled dog.

London, Jack. *The Sea Wolf*. Pressed into service aboard the Ghost, Humphrey Van Weyden becomes an unwilling participant in a tense shipboard drama.

Martinez, Victor. *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida*. Mandy Hernandez, a Mexican American teen, endures many hardships during the year that leads up to his initiation into a California gang.

Nolan, Han. *Dancing on the Edge*. A young girl from a dysfunctional family creates an alternative world for herself. This nearly results in her death, but ultimately leads her to reality.

Paolini, Christopher. *Eragon*. In Aagaesia, Eragon, a fifteen-year-old boy of unknown lineage, finds a mysterious stone that weaves his life into an intricate tapestry of destiny, magic, and power, peopled with dragons, elves, and monsters.

Paulson, Gary. *The Time Hackers*. Somebody has decided to make Dorso and his buddy Frank the target of some strange techno-practical jokes. The ultimate gamesters have hacked into the time line, and things from the past are appearing in the present.

Rosoff, Meg. *How I Live Now*. To get away from her pregnant stepmother in New York City, fifteen-year-old Daisy goes to England to stay with her aunt and cousins. War soon breaks out and rips apart the family while devastating the land.

Stahler, David, Jr. *Truesight*. In a distant frontier world, 13-year-old Jacob is uncertain of his future in a community that considers blindness a virtue.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. George Milton and Lennie Small, two migrant laborers in Central California, dream of one day owning a small farm. George acts as a father figure to Lennie, who is a large, simpleminded man.

Steinbeck, John. *The Red Pony*. Raised on a ranch in northern California, Jody is schooled in the demands of a rancher's life and the way of horses, but nothing has prepared him for the special connection he will forge with Gabilan, a pony his father gives him.

Tashjian, Janet. *The Gospel According to Larry*. Seventeen-year-old Josh, a loner-philosopher who wants to make a difference in the world, tries to maintain his secret identity as the author of a website that is receiving national attention.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*. Sequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The year is 1935. The Logan children watch as their friend is charged with murder and tried by an all-white jury.

Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The Logan family, an African-American family living in Mississippi during the Great Depression, faces prejudice and discrimination.

Werlin, Nancy. *Double Helix*. 18-year-old Ellie discovers a shocking secret about his life and family while working for a Nobel prize-winning scientist whose specialty is genetic engineering.

Whelan, Gloria. *Homeless Bird*. When thirteen-year-old Koly enters into an ill-fated arranged marriage, she must either suffer a destiny dictated by India's tradition or find the courage to oppose it.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *Make Lemonade*. Trying to raise money for college, fourteen-year-old LaVaughn babysits for Jolly, a single mother, in her squalid apartment. Seventeen and almost illiterate, Jolly has two children and works nights in a factory.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. *True Believer*. Sequel to *Make Lemonade*. Living in the inner city amidst guns and poverty, fifteen-year-old LaVaughn learns from old and new friends, and inspiring mentors, that life is what you make it.

Yep, Lawrence. *Dragonwings*. Inspired by true events, the story of Moon Shadow and his father, Windrider, a Chinese immigrant, who made a flying machine in 1909.

Zindel, Paul. *The Pigman*. The tragic death of an older friend shake two teenagers out of their self-centered world.

Mature Reads

*These books generally contain mature subject matter and/or language. Parents should preview all books on this list prior to student reading.

Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*. A striking saga of a maverick band of rabbits who set out against all odds on a quest for a new society.

Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. A chronicle of the conversations the author shared with his former college professor during the months prior to the older man's death.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. When Melinda's friends discover she called the police to quiet a party, they ostracize her, turning her into an outcast. Even worse is the secret that Melinda has to hide.

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The author's memoir of growing up black in the 1930s and 1940s in a tiny Arkansas town where her grandmother's store was the heart of the community and white people seemed as strange as aliens from another planet.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. In early nineteenth-century England, a spirited young woman copes with the suit of a snobbish gentleman as well as the romantic entanglements of her four sisters.

Auel, Jean M. *The Clan of the Cave Bear*. Set during a time when Cro-Magnon man and Neanderthal man may have cohabited the Earth, the story of the Clan of the Cave Bear and a young girl, Ayla, that they find and raise, though she does not look like them.

Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Future fantasy about a society in which all books must be burned.

Brown, Dan. *Angels and Demons*. Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon is summoned to a Swiss research facility to analyze a mysterious symbol and discovers evidence of the resurgence of an ancient secret brotherhood, the Illuminati which has surfaced to carry out the final phase of its vendetta against its enemy, the Catholic Church.

Brown, Dan. *Da Vinci Code*. Robert Langdon learns that the elderly curator of the Louvre has been murdered. Near the body, police have found a baffling cipher. While working to solve the riddle, Langdon discovers it leads to clues hidden in the works of Da Vinci.

Bryce, Courtenay. *The Power of One*. A boy growing up in South Africa during World War II learns about freedom, courage, and friendship from two older men, one black and one white.

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*. At the age of six, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin is recruited to attend a space station battle school, where he is groomed to lead an attack on an alien planet.

Christie, Agatha. *Murder on the Orient Express*. Aboard the Orient Express, Hercule Poirot investigates the murder of an American found dead of multiple stab wounds.

- Cromier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*. A powerful story about a young high school student who refuses to be intimidated by the society and people around him.
- Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. A miser learns the true meaning of Christmas when three ghostly visitors review his past and foretell his future.
- Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Hound of Baskervilles*. When a second member of the Baskerville family dies, Sherlock Holmes investigates and finds murderous greed behind the supposed curse.
- Dumas, Alexandre. *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Sent to prison on a false accusation in 1815, Edmond Dantes escapes many years later and finds a treasure which he uses to exact his revenge.
- Evans, Nicholas. *The Horse Whisperer*. Tom Booker's voice can calm wild horses and his touch heal broken spirits. Annie Graves has traveled to Montana with her daughter, Grace, and their wounded horse, Pilgrim, because Tom may be Pilgrim's only hope.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. The harrowing, darkly comic tale of the Bundren family's trek across Mississippi to bury Addie, their wife and mother, in the town of her choice.
- Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. A precocious young girl is obliged by the advancing Nazi regime to live in hiding with her family and friends.
- Golding, William. *The Lord of the Flies*. Shipwrecked English schoolboys set up their own civilization, but savagery finally emerges.
- Gordon, Sheila. *Waiting for the Rain*. The story of a friendship between two South African youths, one black and one white, which end in a violent confrontation between student and soldier.
- Gutterson, David. *Snow Falling on the Cedars*. Passion and prejudices surface when a Japanese man stands trial for a fisherman's murder in Washington state during the 1950s.
- Haugarrd, Erik Christian. *The Samurai's Tale*. In turbulent 16th century, Japan, orphaned Taro is taken by a general serving in the great warlord, Takeda Shingen. Taro trains to be a samurai to avenge his dead family members.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*. A symbolic story in which an aging fisherman struggles to catch a great fish with his bare hands in the ocean.
- Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. An epic tale of fathers and sons, of friendship and betrayal, that takes us from the final days of Afghanistan's monarchy to the atrocities of the present.
- Joravsky, Ben. *Hoop Dreams*. The story of Arthur Agee's and William Gates' remarkable lives as they journey from the playgrounds to high school competition to college recruitment.

- Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees*. Hoping to learn about her deceased mother, Lily Owen and her “stand in mother”, a black woman named Rosaleen, travel to Tiburon, South Carolina where they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters.
- King, Steven. *Pet Sematary*. A multi-layered examination into the nature of untimely death, loss, and desperation, the story explores the connection between the seemingly normal world and the afterlife.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Bean Trees*. The story of a poor, young woman who leaves her confining Kentucky home and heads west to confront the challenges of adopting a Native American child.
- Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The story of the quiet heroism of Atticus Finch and the honesty of his children Jem and Scout as they face prejudice in the American South during the 1930s.
- Malamud, Bernard. *Natural*. Roy Hobbs, a gifted athlete, is robbed of his prime playing years by a youthful indiscretion that nearly costs him his life. Roy reenters the game, lifting the New York Knights from last place into pennant contention.
- Martel, Yann. *Life of Pi*. The story of Pi, a young castaway, who faces immeasurable hardships on the high seas, and a meditation on religion, faith, art and life that is as witty as it is profound.
- Orwel, George. *1984*. Winston Smith is a low-ranking member of the ruling Party in London, in the nation of Oceania. Everywhere Winston goes, the Party watches him and everywhere he looks he sees the face of the Party's seemingly omniscient leader, Big Brother.
- Pelzer, David. *A Child Called It*. The author shares his unforgettable story of the many abuses he suffered at the hands of his alcoholic mother and the averted eyes of his neglectful father.
- Pullman, Phillip. *The Golden Compass*. The story of Lyra Bellaqua as she fights to find her exiled father, only to discover his dark intentions.
- Salinger, J.D. *Catcher in the Rye*. The classic story of Holden Caulfield’s journey away from home and boarding school in search of meaning in the real world.
- Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels*. A detailed account of the Battle of Gettysburg.
- Sparks, Nicholas. *The Notebook*. In 1932, two North Carolina teenagers from opposite sides of the tracks fall in love. Spending one idyllic summer, Noah and Allie do not meet again for 14 years.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Kidnapped!* The story of David, an orphan, whose uncle cheats him out of his inheritance and schemes to have him kidnapped and sold into slavery.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. The story of four Chinese women, their forty-year friendship, and how the death of one allows her daughter into the circle.

Tolkein, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. Prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*. The adventures of the well-to-do hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, who lived happily in his comfortable home until a wandering wizard granted his wish.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. A tale of boyhood adventure that brings to life an array of irresistible characters—the awesomely self-confident Tom, his best buddy Huck Finn, indulgent Aunt Polly, and the lovely, beguiling Becky.

Verne, Jules. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. An adventure to the depths of the sea aboard a submarine, the Nautilus, under the command of Captain Nemo.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Unstuck in time, Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut's shattered survivor of the Dresden bombing, relives his life over and over again under the gaze of aliens.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. The true and terrifying story of the author and his life as a Jew living under the Nazi regime.

Wolfe, Tobias. *This Boy's Life: A Memoir*. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother develop an almost telepathic trust that sees them through their wanderings from Florida to a small town in Washington State.