

West Orange Public Schools

Grades 6-8 Suggested Summer Reading List

*Prepared by Mrs. Denise Depascale, Mrs. Lisa Touzeau and Ms. Sandy Bochese,
Middle School Library Media Specialists*

Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Fantasy**

Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly businessman, learns the true meaning of Christmas after he is visited by the ghosts of Christmases past, present, and future.

A Corner of the Universe by Ann Martin

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Realistic Fiction**

The summer that Hattie turns twelve, she meets the childlike uncle she never knew and becomes friends with a girl who works at the carnival that comes to Hattie's small town.

The Alchemyst by Michael Scott

Grade: 6-9 **Genre: Fantasy**

Fifteen-year-old twins Sophie and Josh Newman continue their magical training in Paris with Nicholas Flamel, Scatty, and the Counte de Sant Germaine, pursued by Doctor Dee and the immortal Niccolo Machiavelli.

Along for the Ride by Sarah Dessen

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Realistic Fiction**

When Auden impulsively goes to stay with her father, stepmother, and new baby sister the summer before she starts college, all the trauma of her parents' divorce is revived, even as she is making new friends and having new experiences such as learning to ride a bike and dating.

Bronx Masquerade by Nikki Grimes

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Poetry; Realistic fiction**

While studying the Harlem Renaissance, students at a Bronx high school read aloud poems they've written, revealing their innermost thoughts and fears to their formerly clueless classmates.

Bone by Jeff Smith

Grade: 3-8 **Genre: Graphic Novel; Fantasy**

The adventure starts when cousins Fone Bone, Phoney Bone, and Smiley Bone are run out of Boneville and later get separated and lost in the wilderness, meeting monsters and making friends as they attempt to return home.

Copper Sun by Sharon Draper

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Historical fiction**

Two fifteen-year-old girls--one a slave and the other an indentured servant--escape their Carolina plantation and try to make their way to Fort Moses, Florida, a Spanish colony that gives sanctuary to slaves.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Diary novels; First person narratives; Humorous stories**

While trying to find a new best friend after feuding with Rowley, middle-school slacker Greg Heffley is warned by older family members that adolescence is a time to act more responsibly and to think seriously about his future.

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Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Biography**

A young girl's journal records her family's struggles during two years of hiding from the Nazis in war-torn Holland.

Dunk by David Lubar

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Realistic fiction**

While hoping to work as the clown in an amusement park dunk tank on the New Jersey shore the summer before his junior year in high school, Chad faces his best friend's serious illness, hassles with police, and the girl that got away.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Historical Fiction**

Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave their life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression.

Fearless Fernie by Gary Soto

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Poetry**

A collection of poetry about the trials and tribulations of two middle school grade boys, who have achieved great success in their studies and school sports while sharing similar comical disasters on the dating scene.

Fever, 1793 by Laurie Halse Anderson

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Historical Fiction**

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.

Flags of Our Fathers by James Bradley, adapted for young people by Michael French

Grade: 7 up **Genre: Collective biographies**

Chronicles one of the bloodiest battles of World War II, focusing on the men who raised the flag at Iwo Jima.

Harlem Summer by Walter Dean Myers

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Historical fiction**

It's the summer of 1925, 16-year-old Mark Purvis has been hired to unload a boat which turns out to contain bootleg whiskey. Before you can say Prohibition, the liquor vanishes, and Mark finds himself in serious trouble with its owner, mobster Dutch Schultz.

Heaven Looks a Lot Like a Mall by Wendy Mass

Grade: 7-8 **Genre: Free verse**

Sixteen-year-old Tessa is hit during a game of dodgeball, and then sees herself on the floor before heading to heaven—or is it the mall? As she goes from store to store, she looks back on her life.

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

Grade: 7 up **Genre: Fantasy**

Bilbo Baggins, a respectable, well-to-do hobbit, lives comfortably in his hobbit-hole until the day the wandering wizard Gandalf chooses him to take part in an adventure from which he may never return.

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The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Grade: 7 Up **Genre: Science fiction**

In a future North America, the rulers of Panem maintain control through an annual televised survival competition pitting young people from each of the twelve districts against one another.

Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Adventure**

Left alone on a beautiful but isolated island off the coast of California, a young Indian girl spends eighteen years, surviving through her enormous courage and self-reliance.

Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life by Wendy Mass

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Self-realization Fiction**

Just before his thirteenth birthday, Jeremy Fink receives a keyless locked box--set aside by his father before his death five years earlier--that purportedly contains the meaning of life.

Life as We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Science fiction**

Through journal entries sixteen-year-old Miranda describes her family's struggle to survive after a meteor hits the moon, causing worldwide tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Adventure/Fantasy fiction**

After learning that the father he never knew is Poseidon, God of the Sea, Percy Jackson is transferred from boarding school to Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for demigods, and becomes involved in a quest to prevent a war between the gods.

Lincoln: A Photobiography by Russell Freedman

Grade: 6-8 **Genre: Biography**

Photographs and text trace the life of the Civil War President.

Mare's War by Tanita A. Davis

Grade: 7-8 **Genre: Historical fiction**

Teens Octavia and Tali learn about strength, independence, and courage when they are forced to take a car trip with their grandmother, who tells about growing up Black in 1940's Alabama and serving in Europe during World War II as a member of the Women's Army Corps.

Max: A Maximum Ride by James Patterson

Grade: 7-9 **Genre: Science fiction**

When millions of fish start dying off the coast of Hawaii and something is destroying hundreds of ships, the government enlists the Flock--a band of genetically modified children who can fly--to help get to the bottom of the disaster before it is too late.

Middle School is Worse Than Meatloaf by Jennifer Holm

Grade: 5-7 **Genre: Diaries**

Ginny starts out with ten items on her to-do list for seventh grade, but notes, cartoons, and other "stuff" reveal what seems like a thousand things that go wrong between September and June, both at school and at home.

Ninth Ward by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Coming-of Age**

In New Orleans' Ninth Ward, twelve-year-old Lanesha, who can see spirits, and her adopted grandmother have no choice but to stay and weather the storm as Hurricane Katrina bears down upon them.

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Princess Diaries by Meg Cabot

Grade: 7 up **Genre: Chick lit**

Fourteen-year-old Mia, who is trying to lead a normal life as a teenage girl in New York City, is shocked to learn that her father is the Prince of Genovia, a small European principality, and that she is a princess and the heir to the throne.

Rules by Cynthia Lord

Grade: 4-7 **Genre: Realistic fiction**

Frustrated at life with an autistic brother, twelve-year-old Catherine longs for a normal existence but her world is further complicated by a friendship with a young paraplegic.

Scat by Carl Hiaasen

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Eco-fiction; Humorous**

Nick and his friend Marta decide to investigate when a mysterious fire starts near a Florida wildlife preserve and an unpopular teacher goes missing.

The Cat Ate My Gynsuit by Paula Danziger

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Realistic fiction**

When the unconventional English teacher who helped her conquer many of her feelings of insecurity is fired, a junior high student uses her new found courage to campaign for the teacher's reinstatement.

The Road to Paris Nikki Grimes

Grade: 5-7 **Genre: Realistic fiction**

Inconsolable at being separated from her older brother, eight-year-old Paris is apprehensive about her new foster family but just as she learns to trust them, she faces a life-changing decision.

The Teacher's Funeral: A Comedy In Three Parts by Richard Peck

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Historical fiction; Humorous**

In rural Indiana in 1904, fifteen-year-old Russell's dream of quitting school and joining a wheat threshing crew is disrupted when his older sister takes over the teaching at his one-room schoolhouse after mean, old Myrt Arbuckle "hauls off and dies."

The Watsons Go to Birmingham by Christopher Paul Curtis

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Historical fiction**

The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.

Who Will Tell My Brother by Marlene Carvell

Grade 5-8 **Genre: Realistic fiction**

During his lonely crusade to remove offensive mascots from his high school, a Native American teenager learns more about his heritage, his ancestors, and his place in the world.

Kane Chronicles by Rick Riordan

Grade 5-8 **Genre: Adventure/Fantasy fiction**

Brilliant Egyptologist Dr. Julius Kane accidentally unleashes the Egyptian god Set, who banishes the doctor to oblivion and forces his two children to embark on a dangerous journey, bringing them closer to the truth about their family and its links to a secret order that has existed since the time of the pharaohs.

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Deadend in Norvelt by Jack Gantos

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Historical Fiction; Humorous**

In the historic town of Norvelt, Pennsylvania, twelve-year-old Jack Gantos spends the summer of 1962 grounded for various offenses until he is assigned to help an elderly neighbor with a most unusual chore involving the newly dead, molten wax, twisted promises, Girl Scout cookies, underage driving, lessons from history, typewriting, and countless bloody noses.

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Realistic Fiction**

Ten-year-old Auggie Pullman, who was born with extreme facial abnormalities and was not expected to survive, goes from being home-schooled to entering fifth grade at a private middle school in Manhattan, which entails enduring the taunting and fear of his classmates as he struggles to be seen as just another student.

The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Fiction; First Person Narrative**

When Ivan, a gorilla who has lived for years in a down-and-out circus-themed mall, meets Ruby, a baby elephant that has been added to the mall, he decides that he must find her a better life.

Charles and Emma: The Darwin's Leap of Faith by Deborah Heiligman

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Biography**

Charles Darwin published 'The origin of species,' his revolutionary treatise on evolution, in 1859. Even today, the theory of evolution creates tension between the scientific and religious communities. This same debate raged within Darwin himself and played an important part in his marriage: Emma's faith gave Charles a lot to think about as he worked on his controversial theory. His wife's religious convictions made him rethink how the world would receive his ideas.

My Life in Dog Years by Gary Paulsen

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Biography**

The author describes some of the dogs that have had special places in his life, including his first dog, Snowball, in the Philippines; Dirk, who protected him from bullies; and Cookie, who saved his life.

Guts: the True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books by Gary Paulsen

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Non-Fiction**

The author relates incidents in his life and how they inspired parts of his books about the character, Brian Robeson.

Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Non-Fiction**

Explores the various factors which led many of Germany's young people to pledge their loyalty and support to the dictator and join the Hitler Youth during his rise to power.

The New Way Things Work by David Macaulay

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Non-Fiction**

Text and numerous detailed illustrations introduce and explain the scientific principles and workings of hundreds of machines. Includes new material about digital technology.

Castle: How it Works by David Macaulay

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Non-Fiction**

Follows the planning, construction, and ultimate testing in battle of a typical fortress with adjoining town built by the English during the Middle Ages.

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Chinese Cinderella: the True Story of an Unwanted Daughter by Adeline Yen Mah

Grade: 7 Up **Genre: Biography**

The daughter of a wealthy Hong Kong businessman describes her very difficult childhood and the psychological abuse she suffered at the hands of her stepmother.

The Great Fire by Jim Murphy

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Historical Fiction**

An account of the Great Chicago Fire combines archival photographs and drawings with personal accounts by its survivors and historical documents.

We Beat the Street: How a Friendship Pact Helped Us Succeed by Sampson Davis

Grade: 7 Up **Genre: Biography**

Three boys, who made a pact to stick together through the rough times in their impoverished Newark neighborhood, found the strength to work through their difficulties and complete high school, college, and medical school together.

Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos

Grade: 7 Up **Genre: Biography**

The author relates how, as a young adult, he became a drug user and smuggler, was arrested, did time in prison, and eventually got out and went to college, all the while hoping to become a writer.

Flora & Ulysses by Kate DiCamillo

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Fantasy fiction**

Rescuing a squirrel after an accident involving a vacuum cleaner, comic-reading cynic Flora Belle Buckman is astonished when the squirrel, Ulysses, demonstrates astonishing powers of strength and flight after being revived. Newbery Award winner 2013

Counting by 7's by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Realistic fiction**

Twelve-year-old genius and outsider Willow Chance must figure out how to connect with other people and find a surrogate family for herself after her parents are killed in a car accident.

The Fault in our Stars by John Greene

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Realistic fiction**

Sixteen-year-old Hazel, a stage IV thyroid cancer patient, has accepted her terminal diagnosis until a chance meeting with a boy at cancer support group forces her to reexamine her perspective on love, loss, and life.

20,000 Leagues under the Sea by Jules Verne

Grade 7 Up **Genre: Classics, Science Fiction**

Retells the adventures of a French professor and his two companions as they sail above and below the world's oceans as prisoners on the fabulous electric submarine of the deranged Captain Nemo.

Treasure Island by Robert Lewis Stevenson

Grade: 5 Up **Genre: Classics, Adventure**

While going through the possessions of a deceased guest who owed them money, the mistress of the inn and her son find a **treasure** map that leads them to a notorious pirate's fortune.

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Historical fiction**

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Trying to make sense of **the** horrors of World War II, Death relates the story of Liesel--a young German girl whose book-stealing and storytelling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors.

City of Bones by Cassandra Clare

Grade: 8 Up **Genre: Fantasy**

Suddenly able to see demons and the Dark hunters who are dedicated to returning them to their own dimension, fifteen-year-old Clary Fray is drawn into this bizarre world when her mother disappears and Clary herself is almost killed by a monster.

The Finest Hours: The True Story of a Heroic Sea Rescue by Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman

Grade: 6-9 **Genre: Non-Fiction**

On the night of February 18, 1952, during one of the worst winter storms that New England has ever seen, two oil tankers just off the shore of Cape Cod were torn in half by the force of the storm. This middle-grade adaptation of an adult nonfiction book tells the story of a harrowing Coast Guard rescue when four men in a tiny lifeboat overcame insurmountable odds and saved more than 30 stranded sailors.

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Grade: 5-9 **Genre: Family Saga**

Chronicles the joys and sorrows of the four March sisters as they grow into young women in nineteenth-century New England.

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander

Grade: 6-10 **Genre: Realistic Fiction; Free Verse**

Twins Josh and Jordan are junior high basketball stars, thanks in large part to the coaching of their dad, a former professional baller who was forced to quit playing for health reasons, and the firm, but loving support of their assistant-principal mom. In this novel in verse, the brothers begin moving apart from each other for the first time. Jordan starts dating the "pulchritudinous" Miss Sweet Tea, and Josh has a tough time keeping his jealousy and feelings of abandonment in control. **Newbery Award Winner*

EI Deafo by Cece Bell

Grade: 3-7 **Genre: Fantasy Fiction**

Cece loses her hearing from spinal meningitis, and takes readers through the arduous journey of learning to lip read and decipher the noise of her hearing aid, with the goal of finding a true friend. This warmly and humorously illustrated full-color graphic novel set in the suburban '70s has all the gripping characters and inflated melodrama of late childhood: a crush on a neighborhood boy, the bossy friend, the too-sensitive-to-her-Deafness friend, and the perfect friend, scared away. **Newbery Honor Book*

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

Grade: 5 and up **Genre: Realistic Fiction; Free Verse**

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. **Newbery Honor Book*

Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library by Chris Grabenstein

Grade: 4-7 **Genre: Fantasy Fiction**

Twelve-year-old Kyle gets to stay overnight in the new town library, designed by his hero (the famous gamemaker Luigi Lemoncello), with other students but finds that come morning he must work with friends to solve puzzles in order to escape.

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Booked by Kwame Alexander

Grade: 6-10 **Genre: Realistic Fiction**

Twelve-year-old Nick loves soccer, and he and his best friend Coby have big plans for winning the Dr. Pepper Dallas Cup, the renowned world youth soccer tournament, even though they will be playing on opposing teams. Besides the big game, Nick has a lot of other things on his mind. For one thing, his mother wants to move away to pursue her dream of training race horses, and his linguistics professor father is pressuring him to improve his vocabulary by reading the dictionary

Circus Mirandus by Cassie Beasley

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Fantasy Fiction**

Micah's parents died when he was just a toddler, and now he happily lives with Grandpa Ephraim, who tells him fantastic stories, the best of which are about Circus Mirandus, a circus kids can only attend if they believe in magic

Pax by Sara Pennypacker

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Fiction**

When his father enlists in the military and makes him return his beloved pet fox to the wild, Peter, who has been sent to live with his grandfather hundreds of miles away, embarks on a journey filled with astonishing discoveries in order to be reunited with his fox.

Raymie Nightingale by Kate DiCamillo

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Fiction; Historical Fiction**

Hoping that if she wins a local beauty pageant her father will come home, Raymie practices twirling a baton and performing good deeds as she is drawn into an unlikely friendship with a drama queen and a saboteur. National Book Award Finalist

The Girl Who Drank the Moon by Kate Barnhill

Grade: 4-8 **Genre: Fantasy**

An epic fantasy about a young girl raised by a witch, a swamp monster, and a Perfectly Tiny Dragon, who must unlock the powerful magic buried deep inside her. **2017 Newbery Award Winner*

Short by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Realistic Fiction**

Very **short** for her age, Julia grows into her sense of self while playing a munchkin in a summer regional theater production of The Wizard of Oz.

Drama by Raina Telgemeier

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Graphic Novel**

Callie rides an emotional roller coaster while serving on the stage crew for a middle school production of Moon over Mississippi as various relationships start and end, and others never quite get going.

George by Alex Gino

Grade: 4-6 **Genre: LGBTQIA fiction; Realistic fiction**

Knowing herself to be a girl despite her outwardly male appearance, **George** is denied a female role in the class play before teaming up with a friend to reveal her true self.

Among the Hidden by Margaret Peterson Haddix

Grade: 5-8 **Genre: Books for reluctant readers; Classics; Science fiction**

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Description: A government decree allows each family only two children. For Luke, a third child, this has meant a lifetime of hiding. But could a stray glimpse of a child hiding in the house across the way lead to freedom?

An Elephant in the Garden by Michael Morpurgo

Grade: 5-8 **Genre:** Historical fiction

Devastated to learn that an orphan elephant in the Dresden zoo where their mother works is to be euthanized in anticipation of an upcoming bombing, Lizzie and Karl persuade the zoo director to let them keep the elephant in their garden.

Excerpts taken from Novelist Plus, EBSCO