

# Summer Reading 2008 (for students entering grade 6)

## Waltham Public Schools Reading and English Department Grade 6

### REALISTIC FICTION

#### **Say Yes**

Audrey Coulombis

In the first chapter, the narrator, 12-year-old Casey, describes her morning exchange with her stepmother, Sylvia; by the second chapter Sylvia is gone and Casey is completely alone, fending for herself in her NYC apartment. This is a modern day survival story with no clear lines between heroes and villains, where morals are tested by fear and desperation. (*Publishers Weekly*)

#### **The Chicken Dance**

Jacques Couvillon

On his birthday, Don Schmidt spends the day waiting patiently for his big surprise—a *cake, presents, maybe a Chinese clown* . . . But instead, his batty parents get into their monthly argument. This time it's because his mother has to feed the chickens. It ends with her shouting the same thing as always about their Louisiana chicken farm: "I hate it here!" What follows is Don's journey from obscurity to fame and back again, when he becomes the youngest kid to ever win the Horse Island Dairy Festival chicken-judging contest. Gradually, his mom notices that something strange is going on—everyone knows her son!—but once she realizes that Don has become the town celebrity, she sees that there may be benefits to living on a chicken farm. What she doesn't seem to see are the benefits of having a son like Don. For Don, the contest is the beginning of a big, big adventure. It involves trips to New Orleans and Baton Rouge, fair weather friends, a missing sister, and one big secret. Readers will cheer for Don, who goes out of his way to see the good in everything. (amazon.com)

#### **Racing the Past**

Sis Deans

Ricky stops taking the school bus in his small town in Maine, first to evade the bullies (who call his family "white trash") and then gradually to improve his running speed and beat the bus home. Sports fans will appreciate the realism of Ricky's grueling training, and the story is just as honest about family struggles.

#### **\* Because of Winn-Dixie**

Kate DiCamillo

Because of Winn Dixie, a big, ugly happy dog, 10-year-old Opal learns 10 things about her long-gone mother from her preacher father. Because of Winn-Dixie, Opal makes new friends among the somewhat unusual residents of her new hometown. Because of Winn Dixie, Opal begins to find her place in the world and to let go some of her sadness. Is the book better than the movie?

#### **The Breadwinner and Parvana's Journey**

Deborah Ellis

Realities of life in war-torn Afghanistan are vividly portrayed, yet this is also a story of courage and hope.

#### **The Reappearance of Sam Webber**

Jonathan Fuqua

When his father disappears without a trace, 11-year-old Sam moves into a new house and school, where he becomes friends with the janitor and learns about racism, loss, and forgiveness.

#### **\*Joey Pigza Loses Control**

Jack Gantos

Joey finally feels a sense of self-control over his hyperactivity now that he receives daily medication patches. Visiting his divorced father for the summer seems like a good idea until his father, a mirror image of the pre-medicated Joey, flushes all of Joey's patches down the toilet. (part of a series including: *I Am Not Joey Pigza*)

**Pictures of Hollis Wood**

Patricia Giff

Having run away from a family that offered her a home, troubled 12-year-old orphan Hollis Wood is not about to let Social Services separate her from the elderly artist she has been living with.

**The Million Dollar Shot**

Dan Gutman

Eleven-year-old Eddie enters a poetry contest hoping to get a chance to win a million dollars by sinking a foul shot at the NBA finals games.

**The Homework Machine**

Dan Gutman

Brenton invents a homework machine that seems too good to be true.

**Hoot**

Carl Hiaasen

This satire features middle schoolers - the new kid, Roy, joining forces with tough Beatrice and the elusive Mullet Fingers to defeat a bully, thwart an avaricious corporation, Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House, and save a coolly of burrowing owls. (ALA) Newbery Honor

**Diary of a Wimpy Kid**

Jeff Kinney

From *Publishers Weekly*: Kinney's popular Web comic, which began in 2004, makes its way to print as a laugh-out-loud "novel in cartoons," adapted from the series. Middle school student Greg Heffley takes readers through an academic year's worth of drama. Greg's mother forces him to keep a diary ("I know what it says on the cover, but when Mom went out to buy this thing I *specifically* told her to get one that didn't say 'diary' on it"), and in it he loosely recounts each day's events, interspersed with his comic illustrations. Kinney has a gift for believable preteen dialogue and narration (e.g., "Don't expect me to be all 'Dear Diary' this and 'Dear Diary' that"), and the illustrations serve as a hilarious counterpoint to Greg's often deadpan voice. The hero's utter obliviousness to his friends and family becomes a running joke. For instance, on Halloween, Greg and his best friend, Rowley, take refuge from some high school boys at Greg's grandmother's house; they taunt the bullies, who then T.P. her house. Greg's journal entry reads, "I do feel a little bad, because it looked like it was gonna take a long time to clean up. But on the bright side, Gramma is retired, so she probably didn't have anything planned for today anyway." Kinney ably skewers familiar aspects of junior high life, from dealing with the mysteries of what makes someone popular to the trauma of a "wrestling unit" in gym class. His print debut should keep readers in stitches, eagerly anticipating Greg's further adventures. (amazon.com)

**Edward's Eyes**

Patricia MacLachlan

From *Booklist*: As always, MacLachlan's simple words speak of big things. This time they talk about the death of a beloved sibling. Was is a word "so small and so big" as Jake, 11, remembers his younger brother from the day eight years ago when their mother brought baby Edward home from the hospital and put him in Jake's lap. Jake reads to Edward, teaches him how to use the bathroom, and in their daily summer baseball games in the yard, Edward learns to throw a perfect knuckleball that no one can hit. Edward can see the speeding ball with his wonderful eyes, and at eight, when he dies, he has never once struck out. The memories are very idyllic; there's not a trace of jealousy or anger or argument among the parents, sisters and brothers, friends, or neighbors in the small town. But the surprise at the end of the story will take readers back to the beginning, and the beautiful words will make rereading a joy. (amazon.com)

**\* Shiloh Season**

Phyllis Naylor

When mean and angry Judd, who has never known kindness, takes to drinking and mistreats his dogs, Marty discovers how deep a hurt can go and how long it takes to heal. (sequel to Newbery Award winner *Shiloh*)

**The Same Stuff as Stars**

Katherine Paterson

Paterson explores the theme of what defines a family in this contemporary novel set in rural Vermont. Eleven-year-old Angel Morgan, despite her youth, is the head of her family. With a father in jail for robbery and murder, and Verna, her mother, too preoccupied to care for anyone else including Angel's seven-year-old brother, Angel's intelligence and abiding trust help her rise above her circumstances. (*Publishers' Weekly*) *Booklist* Editors' Choice

***Buddy Is a Stupid Name for a Girl***

Willo Roberts

When her father mysteriously disappears, motherless, 11-year-old Buddy must move in with relatives she doesn't know, finding herself in a family with secrets in their past.

***Hang Tough, Paul Mather***

Alfred Slote

A baseball pitcher with an incurable blood disease is determined to get in as much time on the mound as possible.

***Way Down Deep***

Ruth White

On the first day of summer in 1944, a red-haired toddler appears on the courtroom steps in Way Down Deep, West Virginia. Nobody knows who she is or how she got there.  
(from the author of *Belle Prater's Boy*)

## FANTASY

***The Book of Three***

Lloyd Alexander

Set in the mythical land of Prydian, this book draws together the elements of the hero's journey from boy to courageous young man. Taran grumbles with frustration at home; he yearns to go into battle like his hero, Prince Gwydion. Before the story is over, he has met his hero and fought the evil leader who threatens the peace of Prydian.

***Artemis Fowl* (series)**

Eoin Colfer

***Arctic Incident , The Eternity Code* (Book 3)**

The adventures of 12-year-old Artemis Fowl who is a boy-genius and a member of a legendary crime family down on its luck. The adventures in each book combine folklore, fantasy, and high-tech.

***Island of the Aunts***

Eva Ibbotson

Three aging aunts who need help for their magical animals resort to an unusual plan which involves kidnapping!

***The Star of Kazan***

Eva Ibbotson

A mix of villains, crumbling aristocratic families, stolen jewels, and a cast of lovable adventures, help a 12-year-old search for her true family (*Booklist* Editors' Choice)

***Ella Enchanted***

Gail Carson Levine

Spunky, stubborn and very clever, this new Cinderella spends a lifetime trying to outwit the curse of a fairy's unwelcome gift of obedience.

***Gossamer***

Lois Lowry

Readers first meet the dream-givers as they creep around a dark house in the middle of the night where an old woman and a dog named Toby are sleeping.

***Simon Bloom, the Gravity Keeper***

Michael Reisman

Sixth grader Simon Bloom finds a book that enables him to control the laws of physics. When two thugs with evil intentions come after Simon, he must use the formulas to save himself and the book from falling into their hands. A first novel by Michael Reisman, this book is both fantasy and action adventure.

***Rapunzel's Revenge***

Hale, Dean

In this graphic novel based on a folktale, Rapunzel is a young woman imprisoned in a tower by a sorceress. Rapunzel rescues herself with her weapon of choice: her hair, which she has braided into a lasso!

## MYSTERY

### ***Something Upstairs\_***

Avi

When the present day family moves into a 1789 house, Kenny meets the ghost of Caleb, a sixteen-year-old slave who denies that he killed himself in the attic years ago.

### ***Chasing Vermeer\_***

Blue Balliett

Outsiders Petra and Calder become friends as they try to find out what happened to a missing Vermeer painting. This story mixes mysteries, puzzles, possibilities, coincidences, and art. Readers of *From the Mixed up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and *The Westing Game* will love this unique book. (*Booklist* Editors' Choice)

### ***The Figure in the Shadow***

John Bellairs

Chubby Lewis, the timid hero of *The House with the Clock in Its Walls*, finds a magic charm that can cause astonishing events to occur.

### ***The Dark Stairs\_***

Betsy Byars

Herculeah Jones didn't get her name because she was "dainty and shy." She's bossy and overly curious and, with her father as a police officer and her mother as a private investigator, there's plenty to attract her attention. With her equally snooty sidekick, Meat, they have quite a story to tell.

### ***The Ghost and Mrs. Hobbs\_***

Cynthia DeFelice

11-year-old Allie's investigation into a fire that happened seventeen years earlier causes a ghost to enter into her life.

### ***Dangling***

Lillian Eige

11-year-old Ben's unusual new friend disappears when he walks into a river and never resurfaces. Did he drown, run away and what was he hiding? Ben is determined to find the answers.

### ***The Mysterious Benedict Society\_***

Carson Ellis

After Reynie Muldoon responds to an advertisement recruiting "gifted children looking for special opportunities," he finds himself in a world of mystery and adventure. The 11-year-old orphan is one of four children to complete a series of challenging and creative tasks, and he, Kate, Constance, and Sticky become the Mysterious Benedict Society.

### ***Danger at the Fair***

Peg Kehret

When Ellen receives a spirit message during a séance at the county fair warning that her younger brother is in danger, she dismisses it until he disappears. Can she find him before it's too late?

### ***Invention of Hugo Cabret***

Brian Selznick

## CALDECOTT WINNER 2008

Orphan, clock keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends on secrets and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the station, Hugo's undercover life, and his most precious secret, are put in jeopardy. A cryptic drawing, a treasured notebook, a stolen key, a mechanical man, and a hidden message from Hugo's dead father form the backbone of this intricate, tender, and spellbinding mystery. (amazon.com)

### ***A Drowned Maiden's Hair\_***

Laura Schlitz

The classic orphan story takes an original turn in this story of Maud, a nineteenth-century orphan adopted by spiritualist sisters who plan to use her to defraud a wealthy client. (Center for Children's Books)

## HISTORICAL FICTION

### ***Crispin: The Cross of Lead***

Avi

Action-filled page-turner set in 14<sup>th</sup> century England. A 13-year-old is suddenly orphaned and stripped of home and possessions. Accused of murder and wanted dead or alive, Crispin flees his village and falls in with a juggler, Bear, who becomes his protector and teacher. Relentlessly pursued by Crispin's enemies, the pair flees to solve the mystery of Crispin's true identity and fight the injustices of feudalism. (ALA) Newbery Winner

### ***Crispin: At the Edge of the World***

Avi

Sequel to the Newbery Award winner, *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. Yet another adventure in the Middle Ages.

### ***Elijah of Buxton***

Christopher Paul Curtis

#### **NEWBERY HONOR BOOK 2008**

\*Starred Review From *Booklist*: After his mother rebukes him for screaming that hoop snakes have invaded Buxton, gullible 11-year-old Elijah confesses to readers that "there ain't nothing in the world she wants more than for me to quit being so doggone fra-gile." Inexperienced and prone to mistakes, yet kind, courageous, and understanding, Elijah has the distinction of being the first child born in the Buxton Settlement, which was founded in Ontario in 1849 as a haven for former slaves. Narrator Elijah tells an episodic story that builds a broad picture of Buxton's residents before plunging into the dramatic events that take him out of Buxton and, quite possibly, out of his depth. In the author's note, Curtis relates the difficulty of tackling the subject of slavery realistically through a child's first-person perspective. Here, readers learn about conditions in slavery at a distance, though the horrors become increasingly apparent. Among the more memorable scenes are those in which Elijah meets escaped slaves—first, those who have made it to Canada and, later, those who have been retaken by slave catchers. Central to the story, these scenes show an emotional range and a subtlety unusual in children's fiction. Many readers drawn to the book by humor will find themselves at times on the edges of their seats in suspense and, at other moments, moved to tears. *Booklist* Editors' Choice 2007 (amazon.com)

### ***Willow Run***

Patricia Reilly Giff

Introduced as Lily's friend in the Newbery Honor Book *Lily's Crossing* (1997), Margaret "Meggie" Dillon now experiences World War II on her own. "For the duration" is how the adults talk about the war's deprivations, whether they are referring to eating Spam or to the Dillons' makeshift housing in Michigan, where Meggie's father has moved the family in order to take a job building planes. Meggie desperately misses her home in Rockaway, and German-born Grandpa, who was left behind.

## NONFICTION

### ***Phineus Gage***

John Fleischman

The amazing story of a man injured in an accident in which a steel rod went through his skull. By working with him, scientists discovered more about how the brain works.

### ***Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon***

Catherine Thimmesh

Chronicles the Apollo 11 mission, the spaceflight that landed the first man on Earth's moon on July 20, 1969. The book emphasizes the contributions of thousands of people who made the mission successful

Variety of titles regarding American History

Jim Murphy

## ABOUT SIXTH GRADERS

### ***Shakespeare's Secret***

Elise Broach

When sixth grader Hero Netherfield moves into the famous Murphy Diamond House, she obsesses over finding the centuries-old diamond said to be inside.

**Stray Voltage**

Eugenie Doyle

An accumulation of telling details and subtle scenes trace the maturation of sixth grader Ian Daley, the second-born son in a family of Vermont dairy farmers, whose mother has recently left them. As Ian tries to make sense of his new life with his gruff, silent father and dismissive brother and no mother as a buffer between them, he begins to discover his own strengths. (*Booklist* Editors' Choice )

**Heads or Tails**

Jack Gantos

Here is a series of short stories about life during Jack's sixth grade year.

**Mysterious Edge of the Heroic World**

E.L. Konigsburg

(mature theme)

From *School Library Journal*: An unlikely friendship develops between two precocious sixth graders as they unite to sort through the belongings of an eccentric, pretentious, and intriguing neighbor. William's mother is a liquidator hired to evaluate Mrs. Zender's possessions as the old woman gets ready to move into a residence for senior citizens, and William is helping her. Amadeo asks to join him in the project. William is a bright, sophisticated youngster; Amadeo, the new kid in St. Malo, FL, dreams of someday making an important discovery. He suspects there are possibilities among Mrs. Zender's belongings, particularly a piece of art by Modigliani. Amadeo's godfather, Peter Vanderwaal, is preparing an exhibit of Degenerate Art for the Sheboygan Art Center. This plotline leads to a discovery about Mr. Zender's past. Through old letters, parts of a memoir written by Peter's father, Peter's introduction to his exhibit, and thumbnail biographies of the artists deemed unfit by the Nazis, readers are educated about this aspect of Nazi repression. Dramatic revelations about the victimization of homosexuals and other figures during the Holocaust also become part of the story. In spite of these necessary intrusions, readers will be eager to discover the truth about the Zenders and the suspicious art treasure. Konigsburg, a master of characterization, has created a cast of idiosyncratic people and skillfully embedded them in an appealing tale of friendship, loyalty, and mystery. (amazon.com)

**How I Became a Writer and Oggie Learned to Drive**

Janet Taylor Lisle

As sixth-grader Archie and his six-year-old brother Oggie shuttle back and forth between the houses of their separated parents, Archie tries desperately to take care of Oggie and pretend that everything is normal.

**A Friendship for Today**

Patricia McKissack

From *Publishers Weekly*: McKissack (*Porch Lies*) reaches into her own childhood to shape this immediate and affecting novel narrated by strong and smart Rosemary. She enters sixth grade in 1954, just after her Missouri town acts upon the Supreme Court school desegregation decision and closes the "colored school" the girl has attended. Since her best friend, J.J., contracts polio just before school starts, Rosemary is the only black child in her class at her new school. Her first day, she wears a pink dress with lace, while the other kids have on pants and tennis shoes ("She looks like one of those dressed-up monkeys they have at the zoo," a classmate says). And her assigned seat is right next to Grace, her neighborhood nemesis, who comes from a racist family ("They hate colored people and don't mind telling us"). The graceful narrative splices together several survival stories, as Rosemary copes with her peers' prejudice and her parents' disintegrating marriage, and J.J. endures grueling polio treatments. One of the tale's most poignant threads is the evolving friendship between Rosemary and Grace; in an especially incisive passage, after Grace confides that her abusive father believes white people are superior, Rosemary asks, "You know better, don't you?" to which Grace answers "Now I do." Rosemary replies, "That's what counts with me." A real, at times raw tale about a winning and insightful young heroine during a bittersweet era. (amazon.com)

**Agnes Parker... Girl In Progress**

Kathleen O'Dell

Eleven-year-old Agnes determines that this year she will become a completely new person – or at least a better version of herself in this novel of the trials and joys of sixth grade.

**Deep Down Popular**

Phoebe Stone

An unlikely friendship, and outlandish plan, develops between tomboy Jessie and the once-popular Conrad.

***Bat 6***

Virginia Wolff

Set in a small Oregon town just after World War II, this is a powerful tale of a community shattered by its reaction to two young newcomers, Aki and Shazam, told from 21 different points of view of sixth grade girls on a softball game.

***The Friends***

Kazumi Yumoto

Outsiders at home and at school, Kiyama and his two sixth grade friends decide to spy on a solitary old man in their small town.

**\* indicates a book that is appropriate for students who receive support in reading instruction**

# Summer Reading 2008 (for students entering grade 7)

## Waltham Public Schools Reading and English Department Grade 7

### REALISTIC FICTION

**Stand Tall**

Joan Bauer

Tree, a six-foot-three-inch seventh grader, copes with his parents' divorce and his failure as an athlete by helping his grandfather, a Vietnam vet and recent amputee, and Sophie, a new girl in school.

**Al Capone Does My Shirts**

Gennifer Choldenko

In this appealing novel set in 1935, 12-year-old Moose Flanagan and his family move from Santa Monica to Alcatraz Island where his father gets a job as an electrician at the prison and his mother hopes to send his autistic older sister to a special school in San Francisco. When Natalie is rejected by the school, Moose is unable to play baseball because he must take care of her, and her behavior sometimes lands him in hot water.. Family dilemmas are at the center of the story, but history and setting--including plenty of references to the prison's most infamous inmate, mob boss Al Capone--play an important part, too. (from *School Library Journal*, 2005 Newbery Honor Book)

**The Castle Corona**

Sharon Creech

From *Booklist*: In a departure for Creech, whose previous novels have all been set in the present day, the Newbery Medal winner offers a good-hearted, gently comic fairy tale set in feudal Italy. Using parallel stories that eventually dovetail, Creech introduces the Castle Corona's sheltered, slightly ridiculous royal family and Pia and Enzo, orphaned peasant children from the nearby village. Brief, cleverly paced episodes reveal that several fixtures of castle life—the king and queen's respective hermit advisors, and the court storyteller—subtly engineer Pia and Enzo's appointment as royal food tasters, for purposes linked to a stolen pouch found by the children early on. (amazon.com)

**Replay**

Sharon Creech

Follow the story of quiet Leo, sandwiched in his noisy family between two outgoing siblings as he tries to untangle a family mystery involving his father's journal as a teenager and an unknown girl in a family photograph!

**The Wanderer**

Sharon Creech

Thirteen year old Sophie, who is passionate about sailing, talks her way onto her uncle's sailboat as he, his two brothers, and a couple of nephews prepare to sail across the Atlantic. Although she is brave and resourceful, Sophie is haunted by fears.

**Chicken Boy**

Frances Dowell

Seventh-grader Tobin, his family falling apart, finds support in an unlikely friendship.

**Just Ask Iris**

Lucy Frank

When seventh grader Iris arrives at her new home in a run-down New York City apartment building, she is determined to earn money and spend as much time outside the stuffy building as possible. But, as she begins her errand running business, she meets her neighbors and helps them solve problems.

**Bluish**

Virginia Hamilton

Bluish is unlike any 10-year-old Dreenie has ever seen. At school she sits in a wheelchair, her skin is so pale, it is almost blue. Dreenie, herself new to the NYC school, is fascinated by her but also cautious. Together with Tuli, a biracial girl who pretends to be Spanish, the three carefully forge a bond of friendship.

**When Zachary Beaver Came to Town**

Kimberly Willis Holt

Zachary Beaver, fattest boy in the world, is abandoned in a small Texas town in 1971. This town was too small and too boring for 13-year-old Toby Wilson's mother, who left to become a country singer. Through knowing Zachary, Toby comes to realize others are worse off than he.

**Kira-Kira**

Cynthia Kadohata

Katie and her older sister Lynn have trouble adjusting when their parents move the family from Iowa to a small town in rural Georgia, where they are among only 31 Japanese-Americans. Then Lynn becomes deathly ill, and Katie is often left to care for her, a difficult and emotionally devastating job. Told from Katie's point of view and set in the 1950s, this beautifully written story tells of a girl struggling to find her own way in a family torn by illness and horrendous work conditions. All of the characters are believable and well developed, especially Katie, who acts as a careful observer of everything that happens in her family, even though there is a lot she doesn't understand. (review from amazon.com)  
2005 Newbery Winner

**Shoeless Joe**

W.P. Kinsella

The power of baseball, dreams, and Joe Jackson combine to create a place where those dreams really do come true.

**The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place**

E. L. Konigsburg

Twelve year old Margaret Rose Kane is incorrigible. Not only does she refuse to bend to the will of her manipulative cabin mates at Camp Talequa, she stands up to and inadvertently insults the camp director and Queen-in-residence, Mrs. Kaplan. The intimidating and cruel confrontations that threaten to break Margaret's spirit only serve to strengthen her resolve, and everyone is happy when Margaret is finally banished/rescued from Camp Talequa. Luckily for her, with her parents in Peru, this means she can spend the rest of the summer with her delightfully eccentric Hungarian great-uncles, Alexander and Morris Rose. Margaret adores her great-uncles, and loves the house at 19 Schuyler Place--especially the three peculiar clock towers (tall painted structures covered in pendants made from broken china, crystal, bottles, jars, and clock parts) that the Rose brothers have been building for as long as she can remember. For Margaret and the Rose brothers, the towers represent beauty for beauty's sake--they sparkle in the sun and sing in the wind--they exist only to spread joy. Not everyone loves the towers however, and forty-five years after the birth of the project, the city council declares the towers "unsafe," and demands that they be dismantled and destroyed. Filled with the same fiery resolve that helped her survive Camp Talequa, Margaret (with the help of a handyman named Jake, a loyal dog named Tartufo, and few other unexpected allies) launches a plan to save the towers in the name of art, history, and beauty. (from amazon.com)

**Rules**

Cynthia Lord

Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. Each chapter title is also a rule, and lots more are interspersed throughout the book. When Kristi moves in next door, Catherine hopes that the girl will become a friend, but is anxious about her reaction to David. Then Catherine meets and befriends Jason, a nonverbal paraplegic who uses a book of pictures to communicate, she begins to understand that normal is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to define. Rules of behavior are less important than acceptance of others. Catherine is an endearing narrator who tells her story with both humor and heartbreak. Her love for her brother is as real as are her frustrations with him. Lord has candidly captured the delicate dynamics in a family that revolves around a child's disability. Set in coastal Maine, this sensitive story is about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance. (*School Library Journal*)

**Travel Team**

Mike Lupica

A baseball story of second chances.

**Gold Dust**

Chris Lynch

Who can resist a story about Boston, Fenway Park, and Red Sox legends? Two seventh graders from very different backgrounds form a friendship in the difficult world of Boston in 1975 when racism is all around them.

**Walkabout**

James Marshall

This is a story of the unification of two cultures that are 10,000 years apart. Peter and Mary, two American kids from Charleston, South Carolina, end up in the ruthless Australian outback where not one person is found in miles, just true desolation, after their plane crashes on a flight to visit their uncle in civilized Adelaide. However they don't encounter what we call civilized. Almost on the point of dying they find an aborigine who saves them from hunger. One of the most important customs performed by the aboriginal people is the "walkabout," which is really the initiation to manhood, just like the bush boy is doing in the story, Mary and Peter however are not on a walkabout to manhood but a walk for survival.

**A Corner of the Universe**

Ann Martin

Hattie's small town world turns upside down the summer she turns twelve and her Uncle Adam, whom she never knew existed, moves back home after his special school closes.

**Project Mulberry**

Linda Sue Park

A engaging story of prejudice, patriotism, conservation and friendship by a Newbery Award winning author.

**The Schernoff Discoveries**

Gary Paulsen

A great story of friendship as Paulsen tells the misadventures of Harold Schernoff, science whiz and social nerd.

**Lawn Boy**

Gary Paulsen

\*Starred Review\* From *Booklist*: This short and hilarious tale pitches an ordinary preteen with an old riding lawn mower into a dizzying ascent up the financial ladder. His sights set no higher than a new inner tube for his bike, the young narrator is thrilled to make \$60 in one day, mowing his neighbors' lawns. Just as demand for his services skyrockets, he meets Arnold, an honest, home-based stockbroker who becomes his business manager, and less than a month later, the lad has a dozen migrant laborers in his employ. The legality of these workers is left vague, but their young employer treats them fairly, and the thousands of dollars he earns goes into some wildly successful investments--including sponsorship of a rising prizefighter whose help comes in handy when the burgeoning enterprise attracts a shakedown artist. Thanks to quick lessons in, to quote some of the chapter heads, "Capital Growth Coupled with the Principles of Product Expansion" and "Force of Arms and Its Application to Business," the young tycoon ends up smarter than when he started out, *and* worth half a million dollars. When it comes to telling funny stories about boys, no one surpasses Paulsen, and here he is in top form. (amazon.com)

**Brian's Hunt**

Gary Paulsen

Once again, Brian, of *Hatchet*, now 16, returns to the remote woods where he encounters a mysteriously injured dog and an unbelievable horror that awaits him on an island.

**Freak**

Marcella Pixley

For Miriam Fisher, a budding poet who reads the Oxford English Dictionary for fun, seventh grade is a year etched in her memory "clear as pain." That's the year her older sister, Deborah, once her best buddy and fellow "alien," bloomed like a beautiful flower and joined the high school in-crowd. That's the year high school senior Artie Rosenberg, the "hottest guy in the drama club" and, Miriam thinks, her soul mate, comes to live with Miriam's family. And that's the year the popular "watermelon girls" turn up the heat in their cruel harassment of Miriam—ripping her life wide open in shocking, unexpected ways. Teased and taunted in school, Miriam is pushed toward breaking, until, in a gripping climax, she finds the inner strength to prove she's a force to be reckoned with. This riveting first novel introduces readers to an unforgettable heroine, an outsider who dares to confront the rigid conformity of junior high, and in the process manages not only to save herself but to inspire and transform others. (amazon.com)

***The Boy Who Saved Baseball***

John Ritter

The fate of his beloved hometown playing field depends upon the outcome of one game and twelve-year-old Tom hopes that uncovering some secrets will lead his team to victory.

***Small Steps***

Louis Sachar

This sequel to *Holes* focuses on Armpit two years after his release from Camp Green Lake. Like *Holes* this is a story of redemption and the triumph of the human spirit!

***Loser***

Jerry Spinelli

Donald Zinkoff is one of the greatest kids you could ever meet. He laughs easily, he likes people, he loves school, he tries to rescue lost girls in blizzards, and he talks to old ladies. The only problem is he's a loser. Another Spinelli story with humor and heart to spare. (amazon.com)

***Stargirl***

Jerry Spinelli

An amazing story about being different in high school.

***Eggs***

Jerry Spinelli

Spinelli pairs up two kids who have been through more than their years would indicate: 9-year-old David, whose mother was killed in an accident and 13-year-old Primrose, who has never met her father.

***Don't Get Caught Driving the School Bus***

Todd Strasser

Seventh graders Kyle, Wilson, and Dusty manage to break every one of the principal's rules and never get caught. That is, until ex-prison guard Sarge is hired to be their new bus driver.

***Emma Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree***

Lauren Tarshis

\* *Starred Review* from *School Library Journal*: Intellectually gifted but socially aloof from her seventh-grade peers, Emma-Jean is nonetheless happy with her life. She has positive relationships with several adults, a number of interests to pursue, and the memory of her late father to inspire her. Her life inexorably changes after a chance encounter with a classmate leads her to become a problem-solver without realizing the ripple effect that her actions will have. Readers will be fascinated by Emma-Jean's emotionless observations and her adult-level vocabulary (e.g., palliative). Tarshis pulls off a balancing act, showing the child's detachment yet making her a sympathetic character. Exceptionally fleshed-out secondary characters add warmth to the story, including the school janitor who unobtrusively resolves all manner of middle school drama.

***Surviving the Applewhites***

Stephanie Tolan

Pierced and spike-haired 13-year-old Jake, has been expelled from every other school until he arrives at Wit's End, N.C. where the school is run by the outrageous Applewhite family.

***So Be It***

Sarah Weeks

This is a lovely story of the life of 13-year-old Heidi and her developmentally disabled mother who speaks only 23 words.

***Act I, Act II, Act Normal***

Martha Weston

A middle school boy deals with being bullied over having the lead as Rumpelstiltskin in the school play, the death of his family pet, his loyalty to his best friend and middle school girls !!

***Pigman***

Paul Zindel

Two lonely high schoolers form a strange and ultimately joyful relationship with a lonely old man.

## FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

### ***The Game of Sunken Places***

M.T. Andersen

When Brian and Gregory accept an invitation from strange Uncle Max (who rather resembles Count Olaf from Lemony Snicket series) they hardly anticipate how bizarre it will be! (summary from *Eight Cousins Newsletter*)

### ***City of Light, City of Dark: A Comic Book Novel***

Avi

Many years in the future two pre-teens and their mother must use their special powers to prevent a villain from destroying Manhattan

### ***King of the Shadows***

Susan Cooper

The young hero, Nat, has been chosen to participate in a national company of American boy actors doing Shakespeare at the newly created Globe Theater in London. A few dizzy spells and his body is isolated with bubonic plague, but his mind is experiencing the Globe in 1599 as he rehearses and performs his role for the Queen.

### ***Victory***

Susan Cooper

How does a present day 12-year-old girl become connected to an 11-year-old English boy living in the early 1800s?

### ***Conch Beare***

Chitra Benerjee Divarkaruni

Anand's compassionate gesture of sharing his tea with an old man in a Calcutta market leads to radical changes in the 12-year-old's life. The stranger is a member of the Brotherhood of Healers and invites the boy to join him on a dangerous journey to return a magical conch shell to its proper home in the far-off Himalayas. Along with Nisha, a sweeper-girl who insists on joining them, Anand and Abhaydatta travel to the mountains pursued by the evil Surabhanu, a power-hungry ex-member of the brotherhood. (*School Library Journal*)

### ***The Land of Silver Apples***

Nancy Farmer

\*Starred Review. *From Booklist*: After Jack learns that his often-bratty little sis is a changeling (and that his real sister likely dwells with hobgoblins), a misguided exorcism results in Lucy's disappearance. Then the young bard must descend into the out-of-time Land of the Silver Apples to retrieve both of his lost siblings. In that richly imagined realm, surprises include a reunion with shield-maiden Thorgil as well as creatures whose appearances deceive—shape-shifting knuckers; hideous yet likable hobgoblins; and lovely, soulless elves, whose inability to grow or age tinges their existence with tragedy.

### ***Inkheart***

Cornelia Funke

Characters literally leap off the page in this fantasy. Meggie, 12, has had her father to herself since her mother went away when she was young. Her father, Mo, taught her to read when she was five and the two share a love of books. Things change after a visit from a scarred man who calls himself Dustfinger and who refers to Mo as Silvertongue. Meggie learns that her father has been keeping secrets.

### ***Fly by Night***

Frances Hardinge

A twelve-year-old outcast, her belligerent goose, and a smooth talking rogue with whom she has been traveling find themselves in the middle of a factional war in a world where the written word is treason. (Center for Children's Books)

### ***Fairest***

Gail Carson Levine

In a sophisticated, richly drawn world of fairy tale music and magic, Asa, an inn-keeper's daughter with a beautiful voice, is blackmailed by a treacherous queen. Family secrets and Asa's artistic growth add to the dramatic politics and thrilling romance. (*Booklist* – Editor's Choice List - Youth Fiction)

**Gathering Blue**

Lois Lowry

In this companion piece to *The Giver*, Lowry has created a mysterious but believable future world. It is society ruled by savagery and deceit and one that shuns and discards the weak. Left orphaned and physically flawed, young Kira faces a frighteningly uncertain future. (Also *Messenger*)

**Voyage of the Arctic Tern**

Hugh Montgomery

A thrilling tale of voyages, treachery, honor, secrecy, and royal courts. Bruno, a promising young man who betrayed his village, is condemned to live on and on and on until he completes three acts of penance: save a life, rescue someone betrayed, and give away some great wealth to help the local people. These tasks take him through the centuries. (summary from *Eight Cousins Newsletter*)

**Wintersmith**

Terry Pratchett

In her third witty and magical adventure, young witch Tiffany Aching is courted by the Wintersmith, the spirit of Winter, and she needs the help of the Wee Free Men to right the misunderstanding. (Blue Ribbon, Center for Children's Books)

**True Meaning of Smekday**

Adam Rex

The book involves a cross-country trip by a 12 year old girl, her cat and a renegade alien Boov, after the invading aliens have relocated all the humans in the U.S. - first to Florida, then to Arizona. They must then go on to save the planet from the second wave of alien invaders, the Gorg. However, the main focus of the story is around how the relationship between the girl and the alien evolves. (amazon.com)

**Percy Jackson and the Olympians** (series)

Rick Riordan

Follow along with the adventures (with the Greek gods) of Percy Jackson

**Ptolemy's Gate**

Jonathan Stroud

This third book in the Bartimaeus trilogy sees the three main characters converging again as insurgent demons threaten to overpower the human world. (Center for Children's Books)

**HISTORICAL FICTION****The Seeing Stone**

Kevin. Crossley-Holland

In language both precise and beautiful, Crossley-Holland takes readers back to medieval England in this lush, intricately layered story of 13-year-old Arthur, whose magical stone allows him to slip back to the time of the legendary Arthur. .

**Francie**

Karen English

Waiting for the day when her Pullman porter father will send for the family, thirteen-year-old Francie bides her time in her small-minded Alabama town. This is a great story of the past filled with courageous characters pursuing a dream.

**Shadow Spinner**

Susan Fletcher

A young girl rescues the famous storyteller, Shahrazad, from the Sultan's wrath.

**Stowaway**

Karen Hesse

Follow the life of 11-year-old Nicholas Young who is on the run from his demanding father and the cruel butcher who employed him, as Nick finds adventure beyond his wildest imaginings when he stows away on the ship of the legendary Captain James Cook.

**Dave at Night**

Gail Carson Levine

By day, Dave is a downtrodden orphan at the Hebrew Home for Boys. At night he mingles with the movers and shakers of the Harlem Renaissance in New York of 1920.

***The Truth about Sparrows***

Marian Hale

Sadie's father is a terrific mechanic and a creative carpenter who can do just about anything except make a living in Dust Bowl Missouri. Resentful about leaving her home, her friend Wilma, and the beautiful table he made that eventually was to have been hers, the 12-year-old is further angered when strangers stare at her dad's polio-withered legs. Relocating to coastal Texas where the fishing industry offers opportunity, the family obtains a one-room tar-paper shack. Promised letters from Wilma fail to arrive, a homeless man living in a cardboard box disappears, and a snobbish town girl constantly humiliates Sadie, causing her to snap when the overly talkative Dollie, with whom she has a budding friendship, tries to console her. The loss of this relationship and a crisis involving the newborn sister Sadie helps deliver cause her to reevaluate what is important. (from *School Library Journal*)

***Worth***

A. LaFaye

As 11-year-old Nathaniel rushes to bring in hay ahead of an approaching thunderstorm, his leg is crushed beneath a wagon when the team of horses, spooked by lightning, lurches out of control. His father brings one more conflict to their late-19th-century Nebraska homestead in the person of John Worth, a boy taken off the orphan train to help. (from *School Library Journal*) Will the boys work out their differences?

***A Boy No More***

Harry Mazer

Adam must deal with the effects of the attack on Pearl Harbor in many different ways.

***Of Nightingales That Weep***

Katherine Paterson

This is a colorful, emotional tale of Takiko, a samurai's daughter in feudal Japan. Since it is wartime, she has to move from place to place to escape the enemy. On her way, she meets a handsome young enemy warrior and they fall in love. Will she choose loyalty to her dead father's cause or forbidden romance?

***Black Storm Comin'***

Diane Lee Wilson

This rip-roaring Wild West adventure begins, "On the morning of September 16, 1860, my pa shot me." That is only the first of many misadventures on an ill-fated wagon trip from Missouri to Sacramento.

**MYSTERY*****Gilda Joyce: Psychic Investigator***

Jennifer Allison

What happens when the distant relative you are visiting sees the ghost of an aunt who supposedly committed suicide?

***Framed***

Frank Boyce

Dylan Hughes is the only boy living in Manod, an uneventful Welsh town of drizzling grayness that he thinks is full of Hidden Beauty. His best buddies are two agoraphobic chickens named Michelangelo and Donatello after the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. His family runs the Snowdonia Oasis Auto Marvel garage. When the business falters, his father takes off, and Dylan, Mam, his older sister, Marie, and his aspiring criminal genius younger sister, Minnie, try to make Oasis more profitable so that he will return. Flooding in London causes the National Gallery to evacuate its paintings to the safety of Manod's mine. (An actual evacuation to the Manod slate quarry occurred during World War II.) Lester, the art expert in charge, takes a shine to Dylan as an art connoisseur on hearing the chickens' names.

***Time for Andrew: A Ghost Story***

Mary Downing Hahn

Drew discovers there is something odd about the house his great-aunt lives in. By removing a bag of marbles from beneath the attic floorboard, he and his aunt open a door to the past in which Drew and a distant relative, Andrew Tyler, change places, causing Drew to travel back to 1910.

***Bird Lake Moon***

Kevin Henkes

Mitch's stay at his grandparents and his meeting with Spencer and his sister has lots of twists and turns.

***The Black Book of Secrets***

F. E. Higgins

***Booklist Editors' Choice 2007***

A boy arrives at a remote village in the dead of night. His name is Ludlow Fitch—and he is running from a most terrible past. What he is about to learn is that in this village is the life he has dreamed of—a safe place to live, and a job, as the assistant to a mysterious pawnbroker who trades people's deepest, darkest secrets for cash. Ludlow's job is to neatly transcribe the confessions in an ancient leather-bound tome: THE BLACK BOOK OF SECRETS. Ludlow yearns to trust his mentor, who refuses to disclose any information on his past experiences or future intentions. What the pawnbroker does not know is, in a town brimming with secrets, the most troubling may be held by his new apprentice. (amazon.com)

***Penny from Heaven***

Jennifer Holm

Penny Falucci, 11, lives with her widowed mother and maternal grandparents, but her father's large, Italian family is tremendously important to her, too. It frustrates her that no one talks about his death, but as the summer of 1953 progresses, several events occur. First, her mother begins dating the milkman, and, when Penny's arm goes through the wringer on the washing machine, things come to a head. Finally, the secrets behind her father's death come out. (*School Library Journal*)

***Crazy Weekend***

Gary Soto

Seventh graders Hector and Mando's visit to Uncle Julio turns unexpectedly exciting when their photograph of a robbery is published in the newspaper and they are pursued by bumbling thugs.

**NONFICTION**

***Guts***

Gary Paulsen

Paulsen tells the real stories behind the Brian books, the stories of adventure that inspired him to write *Hatchet*, *Brian's Return* and *The River*.

# Summer Reading 2008 (for students entering grade 8)

## Waltham Public Schools Reading and English Department Grade 8

### REALISTIC FICTION

***The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants***

Ann Brashares

Four best girlfriends experience one glorious, painful, life-changing summer apart in Brashares' irreverently funny, realistic novel in which a pair of thrift-shop jeans serves to help each girl discover her strengths and weaknesses. (first in the series)

***Hope Was Here***

Joan Bauer

Ever since her mother left, Hope has, with her comfort-food-cooking aunt Addie, been serving up the best in diner food from Pensacola, Florida to NYC. Moving has been tough, so it comes as a surprise to 16-year-old Hope, that rural Wisconsin, where she and her aunt are now settled, offers more excitement, friendship, and even romance (for both Hope and Addie) than the big city. (*Booklist*)

***Rules of the Road***

Joan Bauer

Here is a teenager protagonist who is smart, moral, funny, confident (mostly) and open-minded about grownups. Not that hulking Jenna Boller doesn't have her share of problems. At 5'11", hard-working Jenna is an outsider at school. The fact that she spends most of her time selling shoes at Gladstone's shoe store (and loving it) doesn't help in terms of a social life, and her main problem is her alcoholic father. (*Booklist*)

***Trino's Choice***

Diane Bertrand

Lacking adult supervision, seventh grader Trino must decide whether to join a violent street gang or to allow new people in his life to help him choose a better path. (first in a series)

***Tangerine***

Edward Bloor

Paul Fisher, a legally blind seventh grader, has a passion for soccer and a deep mistrust of his football hero brother, Erik. Why is everyone blind to the truth?

***Ruby Holler***

Sharon Creech

Having suffered through a string of appalling foster homes, 13-year-old orphans and twins, Dallas and Florida, have pretty much given up on ever finding a happy home, until an eccentric older couple enters their lives. (from amazon.com)

***Ironman***

Chris Crutcher

What does it take to compete in a swimming-biking-running triathlon? Is it heart as well as body?

***Keeping the Moon***

Sarah Dessen

Formerly fat Colie cannot shed her poor self-image until she spends the summer with her eccentric aunt and develops a friendship with some interesting waitresses.

***Romiette and Julio***

Sharon Draper

Romiette Cappelle, an African-American girl, and Julio Montague, a Hispanic boy, think testing has brought them together. The two soon realize that it will take more than fate when a local gang attacks their inter-racial relationship. (a modern version of Romeo and Juliet for mature readers)

**La Linea**

Ann Jaramillo

In a heart-wrenching contemporary survival story, a brother and a sister undergo a harrowing journey from Mexico across the border to join their parents in California. Told without romanticism, the harsh facts are gripping and immediate. (*Booklist* Editor's Choice)

**Poison Ivy**

Amy Goldman Koss

What better way to explain government in action than to stage a mock trial, in this case, a trial in which one unpopular girl, Ivy (aka Poison Ivy), seeks to bring three bullies to justice? Alas, the questionable ambitions of a teacher, the fearful power of popularity, and the sad truth of how losers are made combine to make things ugly. The trial unfolds through the alternating viewpoint of several students, each of whom has a distinctive voice. The message is clear: beauty, popularity, and fear are the trinity by which girls rule, and although most teenagers aren't cruel, many are indifferent to the suffering of their peers and are thankful they aren't the ones in the spotlight. (*Booklist*)

**Alabama Moon**

Watt Key

This excellent novel of survival and adventure begins with the death of young Moon's father, an antigovernment radical who has been living off the land in rural Alabama with Moon for years. Moon has never known any truth but his dad's, and so he tries to continue his father's lifestyle. Unfortunately, Moon quickly finds himself in the claws of civilization, as personified by a sadistic cop. After a brief stint in jail (a lifetime of hunting and gathering leaves Moon hilariously pleased with the prison food), Moon again lights out for the territories, only to be recaptured and end up in reform school. Of course, no reform school is going to keep Moon in check. A terrific choice for reluctant readers and also for fans of Gary Paulsen's Brian novels. (*Booklist* Starred Review)

**The Way a Door Closes** and **Keeping the Night Watch**

Hope Anita Smith

13-year-old C.J. struggles with his anger, pain, and sense of betrayal by his father.

**Here Today**

Ann Martin

This family story is unforgettable in this sharp, tender narrative told from the viewpoint of Ellie, 11, who is caught between love, shame, and fury after her self-obsessed mother leaves their small town to search for stardom in New York. (*Booklist* Editor's Choice)

**Dairy Queen**

Catherine Murdock

Girl joins football team!!!

**A Small White Scar**

K.A. Nuzum

Fifteen-year-old Will strikes out across the Colorado plains in an attempt to leave behind his job on the family ranch; looking after his twin brother, who has Downs syndrome. This coming-of-age story offers adventure as well a solid emotional and family dynamics. (*Booklist* – Editor's Choice List - Youth Fiction)

**Dovey Coe**

Frances O'Roark Dowell

When accused of murder in her North Carolina mountain town in 1928, Dovey Coe, a strong-willed twelve-year-old girl, comes to a new understanding of others, including her deaf brother.

**Of Sound Mind**

Jean Ferris

Universal issues of family relationships, coming-of age, and death are packed tightly in this thought-provoking, richly cast novel about teenage Theo, who is the only hearing member in his family of four.

**Tending to Grace**

Kimberly Fusco

Cornelia Thornhill avoids eye contact with others, stutters badly, is presumed to be slow at school, and likens herself to a stone, hard and strong way down inside. Taken out of school during ninth grade by her shiftless mother, she is dropped off at the rural New England home of Great-aunt Agatha while mother and her boyfriend depart for places out west. Cornelia and her aunt argue, stop talking, and Cornelia even packs her bag to run away. What can bring these unlikely companions back together? (from *School Library Journal*)

**Flush**

Carl Hiassen

Noah and his sister try to stop the sabotage of Florida's natural resources. This author of *Hoot* once again has an entertaining story with a serious message about conservation and greed.

**Adventures of the Blue Avenger: A Novel**

Norma Howe

Sixteen-year-old David decides to change his name to Blue Avenger, in an attempt to act and think more heroically.

**Gentlehands**

M.E. Kerr

Buddy's world is turned upside down, first when he falls in love with rich Skye Pennington and then, catastrophically, when he discovers that his refined and cultured grandfather is a notorious Nazi war criminal.

**Visiting Miss Caples**

Elizabeth Kimmel

When your best friend has always provided the thrills and you've eagerly gone along for the ride, where do you draw the line between exciting and dangerous? Jenna has been friends with Liv forever, but when the popular and beautiful Liv shows a mean side in a vicious campaign against a classmate, Jenna must decide if she will still go along.

**California Blue**

David Klass

John Rodgers lives in a northern California logging town, but the redwoods he runs through mean more to him than a livelihood. At 17, he cares about track and butterflies, although neither pursuit is understood by his family. His father's recently diagnosed cancer occupies the family, and John, a loner who is shy around girls, dreams about his biology teacher, Miss Merrill. When the unusual chrysalis John finds turns out to be an unknown species, everything is called into question, from his father's job to his relationship to Miss Merrill. Klass' exploration of the human cost of environmental action suggests that there are alternatives to the simplistic "butterfly vs. logging jobs" model.

**No More Dead Dogs**

Gordon Korman

For his detention, an eighth grade football hero is sentenced to attend rehearsals of the school play, where, in spite of himself, he gets carried away.

**The Cheat**

Amy Koss

Cheating on an eighth grade geography midterm was easy for Sarah and her friends. But the consequences when they are caught get greater and greater.

**Heat**

Mike Lupica

Michael Arroyo is a 12-year-old Cuban American who lives in the shadow of Yankee Stadium and has big baseball dreams himself.

**Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida**

Victor Martinez

For Mexican-American teen Manuel, the main challenge in life, whether he always realizes it or not, is to find a reason to survive amid the negativity and emptiness that pervade his growing up in a city project. His father, unemployed and often drunk, is a source of tension for the whole family, especially Manuel's mother, whose determination to keep them all together is at times superhuman.

**Petey**

Ben Mikaelson

Petey, who has cerebral palsy, is misdiagnosed as an idiot and institutionalized. Sixty years later, still in the institution, he befriends a boy and shares with him the joy of life.

**Big Mouth and Ugly Girl**

Joyce Carol Oates

An unlikely friendship develops between a loner and a student falsely accused of wanting to blow up his school

**Six Innings**

James Preller

If you love baseball, you'll love this book, where most of the action takes place on the field.

**Ruby Electric**

Theresa Nelson

At 12, Ruby Miller's life is on a downward spiral. Her dad has stood her up three times; she unwittingly let the Salvation Army take her little brother Pete's beloved puppet; and she is doing community service with her two arch enemies after being arrested holding a spray paint can. Ruby's only salvation is the screenplay she is writing in her room, in which life always "works out" for the beautiful, courageous heroine. A spirited redhead who sees her life as a screenplay, she is determined to make a difference, whether it's by reuniting her brother with his puppet, or by becoming the world's youngest famous screenplay writer and the savior of the L.A. River. Ruby's voice is electric, and she is an unforgettable character with courage, a cause, and imagination. American Library Association Notable Books (from *Booklist*)

**Cuba 15**

Nancy Osa

As Violet unwillingly prepares for her quinceanera, the traditional Latina fifteenth-birthday celebration, she undertakes a journey of self-discovery that leads her to appreciate and understand her Cuban heritage for the first time in her life. (American Library Association Notable Books)

**On the Wings of Heroes**

Richard Peck

*\*Starred Review\* from School Library Journal:* In Davy Bowman's Illinois neighborhood, life is friendly and happy, with time for boisterous hide-and-seek games and stories on the porch. As he explains, "Nobody was a stranger....Everybody played. Dogs too, yapping at our heels....They ran wild like the rest of us." But that is before World War II, which sends the narrator's older brother into the army, makes his dad somber, brings his troublesome grandparents into town, sends his mother to work, and changes everything. Each episodic chapter about Davy, his family, and his neighbors fits seamlessly into the emerging story. Readers will cheer for these folks, This book is an absolute delight . (amazon.com) author of *Long Way from Chicago*

**Black-eyed Suzie**

Susan Shaw

Twelve-year-old Suzie has completely lost touch with reality. She is unable to eat, talk, sleep, or walk and sits in a cramped fetal position and cries. Her mother is infuriated by this "stage" she is in; her father is concerned but distant. It is only when Suzie's uncle forces the family to acknowledge that something is wrong and she is hospitalized that the child can begin to heal. (*School Library Journal*)

**The Schwa Was Here**

Neil Shusterman

Eighth-grader "Antsy" Bonano recounts how his accidental relationship with three quirky characters winds up being mutually beneficial. The catalyst in this social collision is Calvin Schwa, a classmate who has an almost supernatural knack for going completely unnoticed. When Antsy decides to become an "agent" for the "nearly invisible" Schwa by entertaining wagers on what he can get away with by being able to fly almost entirely beneath the social radar, the boys enjoy temporary success until they accept a dare requiring "The Schwa" to enter the home of a legendary local eccentric and retrieve a dog bowl belonging to any one of his 14 Afghans. Crawley, a powerful restaurateur who also happens to be severely agoraphobic, nabs the unlikely young intruders, and the crusty shut-in orders them to return daily to walk his dogs in exchange for their impunity. Once Antsy has gained Crawley's trust, he is asked to perform another task: to act as a companion for the man's blind granddaughter, Lexie. Antsy is then flanked by two peers—one who cannot see and one who cannot be seen—and, together, they overcome their collective liabilities through friendship, improving their own lives and the lives of those around them. (*School Library Journal* Starred Review)

**Feather Boy**

Nicky Singer

Follow the character-defining sequence of events in the life of a 12-year-old boy. He is often the butt of classroom jokes and pranks. He secretly wants to be somebody. To have a voice. To have friends. His participation in the Elders Project changes his life forever. (amazon.com)

**The Language of Goldfish**

Zibby O'Neal

O'Neal pulls readers into the mind of 13-year-old Carrie Stokes, a sensitive artist and talented mathematician, who is suffering a mental breakdown.

***Make Lemonade and True Believer***

Virginia Wolff

Life for a teenager trying to break free of her inner city neighborhood's problems

***Miracle's Boys***

Jacqueline Woodson

This is the story of three brothers raising themselves after they lost their father in a drowning accident and their mother to diabetes. Each boy deals with grief differently, while struggling against pretty large odds.

***Three Willows: The Sisterhood Grows***

Ann Brashares

Three former best friends from Elementary schools go to middle school where they are no longer friends. Later, some of the group tries to reunite. A great book about mean middle school girls.

## HISTORICAL FICTION

***Shakespeare Stealer or Shakespeare Scribe or Shakespeare's Spy*** Gary Blackwood

These three books tell of amazing adventures in Elizabethan England of the narrator, a 14-year-old orphan who ends up in a colorful troupe of players at Shakespeare's Globe Theater.

***The Ballad of Lucy Whipple***

Karen Cushman

Lucy's widowed mother takes the family away from the comfort of Massachusetts and moves them to a rough mining camp of the California Gold Rush.

***The Sacrifice***

Kathleen Benner Duple

What was it like to be accused during the Salem witch hunts of 1692. History is brought close through the eyes of Abigail who is accused of working with the devil, imprisoned, and tried along with her older sister.

***Beyond the Burning Time***

Kathryn Lasky

Mary Chase tells the story of what is happening in Salem Village in 1661 as accusations of witchcraft change everything she knows.

***Night Journey***

Kathryn Lasky

A young girl ignores her parents' wishes and persuades her great-grandmother to relate the story of her escape from Czarist Russia.

***The Art of Keeping Cool***

Janet Lisle

In 1942, while staying in their grandparents' Rhode Island home, 13-year-old Robert and his cousin Elliott become involved with a German artist who is suspected of being a spy.

***When I Crossed No-Bob***

Margaret McMullan

A gritty, beautifully told story about a girl's adjustment to life after the Civil War. Life as an O'Donnell is all twelve-year-old Addy knows, and life as an O'Donnell means trouble. Tucked away in a gray patch of woods called No-Bob, the O'Donnell clan has nothing but a bad reputation. So when Addy's mama abandons her on the afternoon of Mr. Frank Russell's wedding celebration, nobody is very surprised. A reluctant Mr. Frank and his new wife take Addy in, and Addy does everything she can to prove that at least one O'Donnell has promise. But one day, Addy witnessed a terrible event that brings her old world crashing into the new. As she finds herself being pulled back into No-Bob and the grips of her O'Donnell kin, Addy is faced with the biggest decision of her life. Can she somehow find the courage to do what's right, even if it means betraying one of her own? (amazon.com)

***Jip: His Story***

Katherine Paterson

Orphaned Jip, believing himself to be a gypsy, grows up on a poor farm in Vermont in rural Vermont in 1855. An unusual friendship develops with an aged lunatic who is brought to the farm. Together they struggle to improve their lives through tests of loyalty and courage.

**Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy**

Gary Schmidt

When Turner Buckminster arrives in Phippsburg, ME, it takes him only a few hours to start hating his new home. Friendless and feeling the burden of being the new preacher's son, the 13-year-old is miserable until he meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, the first African American he has ever met and a resident of Malaga Island, an impoverished community settled by freed or possibly escaped slaves. Despite his father's and the town's stern disapproval, Turner spends time with Lizzie, learning the wonders of the Maine coast. For some minor infraction, Turner's father makes the boy visit elderly Mrs. Cobb, reading to her and playing the organ. Lizzie joins him, and this unlikely threesome takes comfort in the music. The racist town elders, trying to attract a lucrative tourist trade, decide to destroy the shacks on Malaga and to remove the community, including 60 graves in their cemetery. The residents are sent to the Home for the Feeble-Minded in Pownal. When Mrs. Cobb dies and leaves her house to Turner, he sets off to bring Lizzie home. (from *School Library Journal*)

**Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village** Laura Amy Schlitz**NEWBERY AWARD WINNER**

\*Starred Review\* from *Booklist*: Using a series of interconnected monologues and dialogues featuring young people living in and around an English manor in 1255, Schultz offers first-person character sketches that build upon each other to create a finer understanding of medieval life. The book was inspired by the necessity of creating a play suitable for a classroom where "no one wanted a small part." Each of the 23 characters (between 10 and 15 years old) has a distinct personality and a societal role revealed not by recitation of facts but by revelation of memories, intentions, and attitudes. Sometimes in prose and more often in one of several verse forms, the writing varies nicely from one entry to the next. Historical notes appear in the vertical margins, and some double-page spreads carry short essays on topics related to individual narratives, such as falconry, the Crusades, and Jews in medieval society. Although often the characters' specific concerns are very much of their time, their outlooks and emotional states will be familiar to young people today (amazon.com)

**Milkweed**

Jerry Spinelli

Newbery Medal-winning author Jerry Spinelli (*Maniac McGee*, *Stargirl*) paints a vivid picture of the streets of the Nazi-occupied Warsaw during World War II, as seen through the eyes of a curious, kind, heartbreakingly naïve orphan with many names. His name is Stopthief when people shout "Stop! Thief!" as he flees with stolen bread. Or it's Jew, "filthy son of Abraham," depending on who's talking to him. Or, maybe he's a Gypsy, because his eyes are black, his skin is dark, and he wears a mysterious yellow stone around his neck. His new friend and protector Uri forces him to take the name Misha Pilsudski and to memorize a made-up story about his Gypsy background so that no one will mistake him for a Jew and kill him. Misha, a very young boy, is slow to understand what's happening around him.

**At the Sign of the Star**

Katherine Sturtevant

In seventeenth century London, 12-year-old Meg dreams of inheriting her father's bookshop until his remarriage has her struggling to adjust to changes in her life and future.

**SCIENCE FICTION-FUTURE/FANTASY****The Diary of Pelly D**

L. J. Adlington

Inspired by wartime journals, this disturbing futuristic story begins when 14-year-old Toni V, part of a postwar Demolition Crew, discovers a diary while drilling up the ruins of City Five. Keeping the diary is against Rules and Regulations, but once Toni V secretly starts reading it, he is caught up in the life of Pelly D, a teenage girl from the past who had it all.

**The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: The Pox Party**

M. T. Anderson

Born a slave in the eighteenth century, Octavian Nothing changes from complacent pet to defiant resistor as he realizes that he's merely an object of scientific experimentation to his owners. (Center for Children's Books) This masterful, archaic narrative, which shifts from diary to letter to journalism, echoes today's vital questions about racism, power, freedom and moral choice. (Top of the List, *Booklist* – Youth Fiction)

**Lost Years of Merlin**

T.A. Barron

This is the first of a series about Merlin's youth, told in the voice of the wizard himself. Readers of Harry Potter will love this. Other books in the series are: *Seven Songs of Merlin* and *Fires of Merlin*.

**The Face in the Frost**

John Bellairs

*The Face in the Frost* is a fantasy classic, defying categorization with its richly imaginative story of two separate kingdoms of wizards, stymied by a power that is beyond their control. A tall, skinny misfit of a wizard named Prospero lives in the Southern Kingdom, a patchwork of feuding duchies and small manors, all loosely loyal to one figurehead king. Both he and an improbable adventurer named Roger Bacon look in mirrors to see different times and places, which greatly affects their personalities and mannerisms and leads them into a myriad of situations that are sometimes frightening and often hilarious.

**The Angel Factory**

Terence Blacker

With the help of a friend, Thomas Wisdom opens a secret file on his father's computer, learning that his too-perfect family is part of an other-worldly organization whose mission is to save humanity from itself.

**The City of Ember**

Jeanne DuPrau

Built as a last refuge for the human race, the city of Ember is slowly dying. When young Lina finds an ancient message, she enlists the help of her friend Doon, certain the message holds the secret to saving the city. (American Library Association Notable Books)

**House of Scorpions**

Nancy Farmer

The topics of cloning, the value of life, illegal immigration and the drug trade are dealt with in this coming-of-age novel set in a desolate futuristic desert. (Newbery Honor)

**Tunnels: Book 1**

Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams

First of a new series about multiple secret societies living beneath the streets of London.

**Among the Hidden (series)**

Margaret Peterson Haddix

This series takes place in a society where the law limits families to two children, but third children live in fear and isolation, yet are not alone.

**The Wizard of Earthsea**

Ursula LeGuin

*Wizard of Earthsea* readers will witness Sparrowhawk's moving rite of passage--when he discovers his true name and becomes a young man. Great challenges await Sparrowhawk, including an almost deadly battle with a sinister creature, a monster that may be his own shadow.

**Only You Can Save Mankind**

Terry Pratchett

What happens when a new video game, provided by a hacker friend named Wobbler, is more than just a game? Johnny Maxwell is about to find out.

**Leepike Ridge**

N.D. Wilson

Eleven-year-old Tom Hammond lives with his widowed mother in a windblown old house chained to the top of a gigantic rock. One night, unable to sleep, he heads down to the stream that borders their property, where he has left a heavy piece of refrigerator packing foam. What starts out as aimless drifting down quiet water turns deadly when Tom's foam slab feeds into the rougher mountain water and he is pulled under a rock, ending up in an underwater cavern. The secrets he discovers while attempting to find his way out of the mountain caves are surprising, yet seamlessly executed. While *Leepike Ridge* is primarily an adventure story involving murder, treachery, and betrayal, Wilson's rich imagination and his quirky characters are a true delight. Tom's feisty mother will not believe that her son has drowned despite the evidence to the contrary, and her run-ins with various townspeople are jewels in themselves. There are enough twists and turns in the plot to keep both seasoned and reluctant readers turning the pages. Think Mark Twain with a contemporary and utterly captivating twist. (amazon.com)

***The Hunger Games***

Suzanne Collins

Sixteen year old Katniss Evergreen accidentally becomes a contender in the annual Hunger Games, a competition hosted by the government where adolescent boys and girls are pitted against one another in a televised fight to the death.

***The Adoration of Jenna Fox***

Mary E. Pearson

Jenna Fox is a seventeen year old girl who wakes from a year-long coma. As her memory begins to return, she has more questions than answers about who she was, and who she is now.

**MYSTERY*****Behind the Curtain***

Peter Abrahams

The second entry in the Echo Falls Mystery series starts with the questions - Why is Ingrid's football mad older brother suddenly so much stronger and why has her father become so tense lately?

***The Man Who Was Poe***

Avi

A terrifying tale of mystery, murder, and suspense, featuring a young boy searching for his missing family and the tale of the author who follows the boy, viewing the boy's troubles as the plot for his new story.

***Murder in the Vicarage***

Agatha Christie

Leave it to elderly detective, Miss Marple, to find out who killed Colonel Protheroe, the most disliked citizen of the village.

***Driver's Ed***

Caroline Cooney

A group of driver's ed students steal some highway signs as a class prank, with some tragic results.

***Code Orange***

Caroline Cooney

As dedicated as Mitty is to avoiding study as he is to getting close to his classmate Olivia, he is not aware of the danger everyone is in due to his exposure to a century-old sample of smallpox scabs.

***Silent to the Bone***

E.L. Konigsburg

Did the British nanny do it? She says it was 13-year-old Branwell who dropped baby sister Nikki and he's the prime suspect. Why has he been struck dumb? What does he know? Is his silence a weapon?

***Never Trust a Dead Man***

Vivian Vande Velde

When a teen is accused of murder, he teams up with the unlikable victim's ghost to find the true killer.

***Black Mirror***

Nancy Werlin

Convinced her brother's death was murder rather than suicide, a lonely 16-year-old girl trying to cope with her guilt and grief begins her own investigations.

**NONFICTION*****It's Not about the Bike* and *Every Second Counts***

Lance Armstrong

Inspirational stories of the life of an amazing athlete.

***Warriors Don't Cry***

Melba Pattillo Beals

An incredible memoir of one of the nine black teenagers who integrated Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957.

***Bad Boy: A Memoir***

Walter Dean Myers

Myers describes his turbulent adolescence in Harlem in the 1940s and 1950s and the influences that led him to become a writer.

***Revenge of the Whale***

Nat Philbrick

This is the story of the Nantucket whaleship Essex, which sank in the Pacific in November 1820, after being deliberately rammed twice by an apparently enraged sperm whale. Three months later, five emaciated men were rescued from two small boats filled with the bones of their unlucky companions. The whale's attack on the Essex gave Herman Melville the idea for the climactic scene in *Moby-Dick*. The story of the Essex crew is a compelling saga of desperation and survival that will appeal to young people (From *School Library Journal*)

***Transformed: How Everyday Things Are Made***

Bill Slavin

A brewer's delight showing how 60 everyday objects are made.

***Hurricane Force: In the Path of America's Deadliest Storm***

Joseph Treaster

Photo-essay and in-depth overview of Hurricane Katrina.

***Gorilla Doctors: Saving Endangered Apes***

Pamela Turner

Teams of veterinarians take to the mountains of Rwanda to safeguard the health of wild gorillas.

***The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq***

Jeanette Winters

Fearing imminent war, Alia Muhammed Baker takes matters into her own hands to save the books in her library. Vibrantly colored pastel acrylic paintings create a sense of distance from the most brutal horrors of war, while celebrating the courage of a brave woman.

***Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnam War Orphan Became an American Boy***

Andrea Warren

This gripping, true-life child-of-war account relays the story of a mixed-race orphan's evacuation from Vietnam on a plane under fire, his international adoption, his success in America, and his pride in his roots. (Booklist Editors' Choice)

## OTHER PLACES

***Colibri***

Ann Cameron

Contemporary Guatemala is the setting for this story of 12-year-old Tzunun Chumil (Mayan for "Hummingbird Star"), called Rosa Garcia by the man who supposedly rescued her from abandonment at age four. Rosa and "Uncle" Baltasar travel from place to place, begging for their livelihood as he pretends to be blind. But, despite her dependence on and devotion to him, Rosa is distressed by the dishonesty of their lifestyle and has memories of loving parents. American Library Association (from [School Library Journal](#))

***Boy: Tales of Childhood***

Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl recounts his days as a child growing up in England. From his years as a prankster at boarding school to his envious position as a chocolate tester for Cadbury's, Roald Dahl's boyhood was as full of excitement and the unexpected as are his world-famous, best-selling books. Packed with anecdotes—some funny, some painful, all interesting— this is a book that's sure to please.

***The Other Side of Truth***

Beverley Naidoo

The issues of family, exile, and freedom are explored in this story of two Nigerian children who are smuggled out of their homeland when their mother is assassinated for their father's political views.

***Homeless Bird***

Gloria Whalen

Like many girls her age in India, 13-year-old Koby is wed to a stranger whom her parents have chosen. Soon her life takes an unexpected turn, and she finds herself alone, a widow, in a strange city. (National Book Award for Young People's Literature)