

# AIM Middle School Summer Reading

While some students read voraciously over the summer, other students are more recalcitrant. With that said, research points to the importance of reading everyday for student success. We have also found that students who read prodigiously over the summer do not show the same regression in their reading skills learned over the course of the school year. Quite simply, summer reading is important.

The summer reading program in the AIM middle school has gone through several iterations. Over the next year, we are focusing on developing resources and supports for summer reading. If you already have a summer reading routine for your child, thank you for supporting that important work. If you are not sure how to support summer reading or have a very resistant reader, we will be creating specific guided reading questions and writing work connected to particular texts.

In the meantime, as we create those resources for parents, we are requiring that over the summer all students read two books of their and your choosing. We have provided a list of recommended books, but you are not limited to books on that list. In addition, you can reach out to our middle school ELA team if you would like more specific book recommendations. As in the past, one of those two texts must include an artifact to be turned in at the start of the school year. That artifact should be a book report that may be in the form of an essay, visual representation, series of poems, recorded film, music score, or presentation.

Thank you for your support with summer reading, and please reach out with any questions.

## Entering 6th Grade

***Crossover*** by Kwame Alexander

2015 Newberry Medal Winner

2015 Coretta Scott King Honor Award Winner

*"With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . . The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I'm delivering,"* announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he's got mad beats, too, that tell his family's story in verse, in this fast and furious middle grade novel of family and brotherhood from Kwame Alexander (*He Said, She Said* 2013). Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story's heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family.

***Coraline*** by Neil Gaiman

Winner of the 2003 Hugo Award and Nebula Award for Best Novella

In Coraline's family's new flat there's a locked door. On the other side is a brick wall — until Coraline unlocks the door and finds a passage to another flat in another house just like her own. Only different. The food is better there. Books have pictures that writhe and crawl and shimmer. And there's another mother and father there who want Coraline to be their little girl. They want to "change" her and keep her with them "forever." *Coraline* is an extraordinary fairy tale/nightmare from the uniquely skewed imagination of #1 "New York Times" bestselling author Neil Gaiman.

***The Phantom Tollbooth*** by Norton Juster

As Milo heads toward Dictionopolis, he meets with the Whether Man ("for after all its more important to know whether there will be weather than what the weather will be"). He passes through the doldrums, populated by the

Lethargarians, and picks up a watch dog named Tock (who has a giant alarm clock for a body). The brilliant satire and double entendre intensifies in the world market where after a brief scuffle with officer Short Shrift, Milo and Tock set off toward the Mountains of Ignorance to rescue the twin Princesses, Rhyme and Reason. Anyone with an appreciation for language, irony, or Alice In Wonderland, will enjoy this book.

***View From a Saturday*** by E.L. Konisburg

Sixth Grade teacher/ Coach, Mrs. Olinski, teaching for the first time since becoming paraplegic, proudly observes her student's victories from the confines of a wheelchair. She is not sure what propelled her to choose the members of her team, nor does she fully comprehend the secret of their success in repeatedly beating older more sophisticated competitors.

***Mogo, The Third Warthog*** by Donna Jo Napoli

A delightful version of the 3 Little Pigs by a local children's author.

***Island of the Blue Dolphins*** by Scott O'dells

The island of the Blue Dolphins is not the story of a foolish young girl who missed the boat when the island was being evacuated. Far from it. Karana was on the boat. Her playful little brother, Ramo, wasn't. He was only six years old and could never survive alone. She jumped off and headed to shore to save him. The boat left.

***Maniac Magee*** by Jerry Spinelli

*Maniac Magee* is a novel written by American author Jerry Spinelli and published in 1990. Exploring themes of racism and homelessness, it follows the story of an orphan boy looking for a home in the fictional Pennsylvania town of Two Mills.

***Wringer*** by Jerry Spinelli

Nine-year-old Palmer dreads his upcoming 10th birthday. In his town, when boys are 10 years old they become "wringers," the boys who wring the necks of wounded pigeons at the annual Pigeon Day shoot. Palmer is sickened by the whole event. To make matters worse, his new buddies--Beans, Mutto, and Henry--have just discovered that Palmer has been hiding a pet pigeon in his room. What will Palmer do? Will he become a wringer to save face, or will he follow his heart? *Wringer* will appeal to preteens and younger teens who love to read suspenseful books on their own, but it would also be a good story to read aloud to spark discussion about the perils and nuances of peer pressure.

## Entering 7th Grade

***Tangerine*** by Edward Bloor

Paul Fisher moves with his family to Tangerine, Florida, where very unusual things occur. Where else can a sinkhole swallow the local school, fire burn underground, and lightning strike at the same time every day? Paul is consistently harassed by his football star brother, which makes his life challenging. Paul joins the Middle School Soccer team and discovers what lies beneath the surface of his new home town. In Tangerine, anything is possible.

***The Birch Bark House*** by Louise Erdrich

Opening in the summer of 1847, the story follows the family, in a third-person narrative, through four seasons; it focuses on young Omakayas, who turns "eight winters old" during the course of the novel. In fascinating, nearly step-by-step details, the author describes how they build a summer home out of birch bark, gather with extended family to harvest rice in the autumn, treat an attack of smallpox during the winter and make maple syrup in the spring to stock their own larder and to sell to others. Against the backdrop of Ojibwa cultural traditions, Omakayas

also conveys the universal experiences of childhood, a love of the outdoors, a reluctance to do chores, devotion to a pets, as well as her ability to cope with the seemingly unbearable losses of the winter. The author hints at Omakayas's unusual background and her calling as a healer, as well as the imminent dangers of the "chimookoman" or white people, setting the stage for future episodes. Into her lyrical narrative, Erdrich weaves numerous Ojibwa words, effectively placing them in context to convey their meanings.

***Auggie and Me*** by R.J. Palacio

Over 2 million people have read the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Wonder* and have fallen in love with Auggie Pullman, an ordinary boy with an extraordinary face. Readers have also been treated to three stories offering a special look at Auggie's world through new points of view. These stories are an extra peek at Auggie before he started at Beecher Prep and during his first year there. Readers get to see him through the eyes of Julian, the bully; Christopher, Auggie's oldest friend; and Charlotte, Auggie's new friend at school. Together, these three stories are a treasure for readers who don't want to leave Auggie behind when they finish *Wonder*.

***How Angel Peterson Got his Name and Other Outrageous Tales*** by Gary Paulsen

Filled with adventure, accidents, and near death experiences, Paulsen captivates the reader's attention as he recalls the most ridiculous experiences.

***Invention of Hugo Cabaret*** by Brian Selznick

Orphan, clock-keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station. He discovers a hidden message from his dead father who dies in a museum fire. This is a spellbinding mystery.

***Stargirl*** by Jerry Spinelli

Stargirl. From the day she arrives at quiet Mica High in a burst of color and sound, the hallways hum with the murmur of "Stargirl, Stargirl." She captures Leo Borlock's heart with just one smile. She sparks a school-spirit revolution with just one cheer. The students of Mica High are enchanted. At first. Then they turn on her. Stargirl is suddenly shunned for everything that makes her different, and Leo, panicked and desperate with love, urges her to become the very thing that can destroy her: normal. In this celebration of nonconformity, Newbery Medalist Jerry Spinelli weaves a tense, emotional tale about the perils of popularity and the thrill and inspiration of first love.

***The Book Thief*** by Markus Zusak

When Death tells a story, you pay attention. Liesel Meminger is a young girl growing up outside of Munich in Nazi Germany, and Death tells her story as "an attempt—a flying jump of an attempt—to prove to me that you, and your human existence, are worth it." When her foster father helps her learn to read and she discovers the power of words, Liesel begins stealing books from Nazi book burnings and the mayor's wife's library. As she becomes a better reader, she becomes a writer, writing a book about her life in such a miserable time. Liesel's experiences move Death to say, "I am haunted by humans." How could the human race be "so ugly and so glorious" at the same time? This big, expansive novel is a leisurely working out of fate, of seemingly chance encounters and events that ultimately touch, like dominoes as they collide. The writing is elegant, philosophical and moving. Even at its length, it's a work to read slowly and savor. Beautiful and important.

## Entering 8th Grade

***I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives*** by Caitlin Alifirenka

*The true story of an all-American girl and a boy from an impoverished city in Zimbabwe and the letter that changed both of their lives forever.* It started as an assignment. Everyone in Caitlin's class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. All the other kids picked countries like France or Germany, but when Caitlin saw Zimbabwe written on the board, it sounded like the most exotic place she had ever heard of--so she chose it. Martin was lucky to even receive a pen pal letter. There were only ten letters, and forty kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives. In this compelling dual memoir, Caitlin and Martin recount how they became best friends --and better people--through letters. Their story will inspire readers to look beyond their own lives and wonder about the world at large and their place in it.

***The Compound*** by S. A. Bodeen

Eli-fifteen year old and son of a billionaire has spent the last six years in an underground compound built by his father. Nuclear war has destroyed the world and killed his grandmother and twin brother. The doors are time locked and will not open for fifteen years. Well with nine years to go and the food running out, Eli's father has some solutions in survival but things aren't as they seem in the compound and Eli soon starts to question the sanity of his father.

***Code Talker*** by Joseph Bruchac

Throughout World War II, in the conflict fought against Japan, Navajo code talkers were a crucial part of the U.S. effort, sending messages back and forth in an unbreakable code that used their native language. They braved some of the heaviest fighting of the war, and with their code, they saved countless American lives. Yet their story remained classified for more than twenty years. Joseph Bruchac brings their stories to life for young adults through the riveting fictional tale of Ned Begay, a sixteen-year-old Navajo boy who becomes a code talker. His grueling journey is eye-opening and inspiring. This deeply affecting novel honors all of those young men, like Ned, who dared to serve, and it honors the culture and language of the Navajo Indians.

***The Graveyard Book*** by Neil Gaiman.

After the grisly murder of his entire family, a toddler wanders into a graveyard where the ghosts and other supernatural residents agree to raise him as one of their own. Nobody Owens, known to his friends as Bod, is a normal boy. He would be completely normal if he didn't live in a sprawling graveyard, being raised and educated by ghosts, with a solitary guardian who belongs to neither the world of the living nor of the dead. There are dangers and adventures in the graveyard for a boy. But if Bod leaves the graveyard, then he will come under attack from the man Jack—who has already killed Bod's family... Beloved master storyteller Neil Gaiman returns with a luminous new novel for the audience that embraced his New York Times bestselling modern classic *Coraline*. Magical, terrifying, and filled with breathtaking adventures, *The Graveyard Book* is sure to enthrall readers of all ages

***Anne of Green Gables*** by Lucy Maud Montgomery

When Marilla Cuthbert's brother, Matthew, returns home to Green Gables with a chatty red headed orphan girl, Marilla exclaims, "But we asked for a boy, we have no use for a girl!" It is not long though before the Cuthberts can't imagine how they could every do without young Anne of Green Gables- but not for the original reasons they sought an orphan. Somewhere between the time where Anne confesses to losing Marilla's Amethyst pin and when Anne accidentally dyes her hated carrot red hair, green, Marilla says to Matthew, "One thing's for certain, no house that Anne is in will ever be dull." And no book that she is in will be either.

***Monster*** by Walter Dean Myers

Newberry Award Winner

National Book Award Winner

Coretta Scott King Award Winner

This New York Times bestselling novel and National Book Award nominee from acclaimed author Walter Dean Myers tells the story of Steve Harmon, a teenage boy in juvenile detention and on trial. Presented as a screenplay of Steve's own imagination, and peppered with journal entries, the book shows how one single decision can change our whole lives. Fade In: Interior: Early Morning In Cell Block D, Manhattan Detention Center. Steve (Voice-Over) Sometimes I feel like I have walked into the middle of a movie. Maybe I can make my own movie. The film will be the story of my life. No, not my life, but of this experience. I'll call it what the lady prosecutor called me ... Monster.

***Dacey's Song*** by Cynthia Voight

The four Tillerman children finally have a home at their grandmother's rundown farm on the Maryland shore. It's what Dacey has dreamed of for her three younger siblings, but after watching over the others for so long, it's hard to let go. Who is Dacey, if she is no longer the caretaker for her family? Dacey finds herself in new friends, in a growing relationship with her grandmother, and in the satisfaction of refinishing the old boat she found in the barn. Then, as Dacey experiences the trials and pleasures of developing a new life, the past comes back with devastating force and Dacey learns just how necessary and painful letting go can be.

***Finding Hollis*** by Pauline Knaeble Williams

...the sway of the trolley, the unusual passenger, the truck's raspy muffler, the woman's torn dress, and her own inability to help. Frances is determined to let the details of the disturbing incident go. She's certain that by Monday her life will return to normal and the wrung-out feeling inside will be gone. Yet she soon finds that neither the sound of her typewriter nor the lunchroom chatter will erase the dying woman's final request: "Find Hollis." FINDING HOLLIS, a novel set in 1944 in North Minneapolis, is a journey in search of more than just a name. Within it the threads of three separate worlds become interwoven—first by circumstance, then by understanding.