

Public Schools of Edison Township

Division of Curriculum and Instruction
Department of English

June 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

As we approach the end of our school year, it is time to start thinking about the pleasures of summer reading. The purpose of the summer reading program is to encourage the enjoyment of reading and the development of our students' independent reading skills.

All students entering sixth, seventh, and eighth grades will select and read **ONE fiction or nonfiction book** over the summer from the list provided. All lists and assignments are accessible on the district and/or your child's respective school's website. **Please note:** English 8 Accelerated students receive a separate book list and assignment.

The reading and corresponding assignment must be completed prior to the first day of school in September. Please refer to the attached sample and instructions for further clarification.

We encourage students to visit local bookstores, online resources, and public libraries in order to find their selections. Embedded links to book summaries and reviews as well as resources to access the texts or audiobooks are provided for your convenience.

A reading program is a joint responsibility between school and family. Parents might very reasonably disagree about what material constitutes suitable reading for children. The titles suggested are **not** Board of Education approved texts. They are works that are recommended by such organizations as the American Library Association, the **New York Times**, and the National Council for Teachers of English. They appear on many reading lists across the nation. Nevertheless, certain titles may contain subject matter that some parents may not want their children to read (whether **Grimm's Fairy Tales** for young children or books with mature themes and graphic language for older students). Only parents can determine appropriate choices for their children. Check with teachers, local librarians, and book websites (provided) for reading levels and information about the various titles.

If you have any questions, please contact the Middle School English supervisor, Lisa Dunn, via e-mail at lisa.dunn@edison.k12.nj.us.

Happy Reading!

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF EDISON TOWNSHIP
6th GRADE SUMMER READING 2020

For students entering Grade 6: Belonging, Inner Strength, Friendship, Change, Overcoming Obstacles

Consider the following essential questions while you read:

- In overcoming an obstacle, does one need more physical strength or more mental strength?
- How do our relationships with others affect or change us?
- What does it mean to “belong”?

Book Selections : Choose **ONE** book (either fiction OR non-fiction) from the list below. You will submit one [Double-Entry Journal](#) for the full-length text you read. Please choose quotations from the beginning, middle, and end of the text that support **one** of the essential questions above. These quotations will be used to construct a short, written piece when you return in September.

Fiction:

[It Ain't So Awful Falafel](#) by Firoozeh Dumas: *It Ain't So Awful, Falafel* is about an immigrant family from Iran that faces both kindness and cruel harassment amid the drama of the Iran hostage crisis that began in 1979. Author Firoozeh Dumas (*Funny in Farsi*) draws on her experience growing up in California during that time, outlining some of the pivotal moments of the Iranian revolution and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and describing how it all affected American politics and culture. She describes some of the violence in Iran, poignantly showing how distressing it was for people living in the United States who were worried about friends and family back in Iran. Not only are the bullies outnumbered by upstanders in this story, but characters who engage in mean or petty behavior are presented with some complexity and insight.

[Ghost](#) by Jason Reynolds: Ghost is Castle Cranshaw's new nickname -- he gave it to himself and it sticks when he challenges a track team's best sprinter to a race. Running is as easy for him as breathing, probably because he's been doing it all his life. An emerging track star with a past, Ghost has to figure out why he runs -- is it toward what his life could be or away from his past? Luckily, he has new friends on the team, his coach, and even his mom to help him figure it all out.

[Merci Suarez Changes Gears](#) by Meg Medina: "Do a good job, so they know we're serious people," advises Merci's dad in *Merci Suarez Changes Gears*. Merci has big shoes to fill: Her brother Roli is a star high school student who's almost too old to care about Merci's sixth grade challenges. And thanks to the popular crowd at Seaward Pines Academy, Merci has plenty of challenges. How can she keep from being the butt of Edna Santos' zinger comments when her Papi drives a beat-up painting van, her bike seat is losing its stuffing, and her darned eye won't stop wandering? On top of that, a new cute boy from Minnesota has been assigned to Merci as her "Sunshine Buddy" -- a duty of the school's welcoming committee -- which means Merci's every move is being scrutinized by the popular girls. At home, her grandfather is behaving strangely, which turns Merci's world upside down.

Found by Margaret Peterson Haddix: Neighbors Jonah and Chip, both 13 and both adopted, both receive anonymous letters telling each that he is "one of the missing," and warning them of unspecified danger. After some investigation, they find that they were two of 36 babies found on a mysterious airplane that appeared, and then disappeared, at the airport 13 years earlier. Now they are being stalked by threatening men who can vanish at will, and who may be able to travel through time.

Becoming Naomi Leon by Pam Munoz Ryan: This book is about a custody battle: Naomi's mother is a mean, abusive alcoholic who abandons her children for years. The children are recovering from traumas: Naomi had selective mutism and even now has trouble speaking; Owen, born with birth defects that have left him a FLK (Funny Looking Kid), wears pieces of tape on his chest so that he can feel more secure. When their mother returns, she drives drunk and even slaps and threatens Naomi. Even so, the book is filled with positive role models and Naomi eventually learns to be brave enough to speak for what she wants. The message here is to "carve what your imagination dictates so that what is inside can become what is meant to be."

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda by Tom Angleberger: In a group of friends on the edges of middle school society, the most unusual character is Dwight, a boy who's been known to sit in holes and mop up spills with the clothes he's wearing. One day, Dwight shows his friends an origami Yoda finger puppet he made and proceeds to channel the ***Star Wars*** prophet, telling classmates' fortunes in a Yoda-like voice. This book includes anecdotes related by the main narrator, Tommy, and several of their friends, as they debate whether origami Yoda is "real," meaning whether he can really predict the future and advise lovelorn and stressed out tweens.

The Big Field by Mike Lupica: When shortstop Hutch is moved to second base on his team to make room for more talented, but arrogant, new player Darryl, he rolls with the punches for the good of the team. But when he sees his own father, who never seems to have any time for or interest in him, coaching Darryl, he can't handle it, and endangers both what's left of his relationship with his dad, and his team's chances in the championship.

The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl by Stacy McAnulty: In ***The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl***, Lucy survived a lightning strike that left her with genius-level math talent -- and obsessive compulsive disorder. She's only 12 and capable of starting college, but her grandmother enrolls her in middle school to spend time with kids her age. Though Lucy downplays her math skills to try to fit in, she can't hide her OCD routines from snickering classmates. She falls into friendship with kind Windy, who wants to save the world, and cynical Levi, who regards everyone through his camera lens. As they work together on a service project at a local shelter, Lucy struggles to unlock the right formula to manage the everyday ups and downs of middle school.

The Book of Boy by Catherine Gilbert Murdock: ***The Book of Boy*** was named a 2019 Newbery Honor Book. It's a historical fantasy set in medieval France that deals with religious themes and prejudices of that time. Relics -- body parts and effects of saints -- and their whereabouts drive the plot of the story. The tween protagonist called Boy undergoes a mystical transformation that surprises him and puts him at risk. As a hunchback, he faces daily humiliation and bullying. Threats of violence such as being burned, beaten, and shunned are everyday occurrences in Boy's world. Redemption, heaven and hell, greed and sacrifice are themes.

Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly: ***Hello, Universe***, which won the 2018 Newbery Medal, is told from the perspective of four kids -- Virgil Salinas, Valencia Somerset, Kaori Tanaka, and Chet Bullens -- whose lives become connected over the course of a day. Virgil's family calls him "Turtle" because he never comes out of his shell. He's too shy to befriend Valencia Somerset, his smart, deaf, and secretly lonely classmate. Both Virgil and Valencia know what it's like to feel different and hope that Kaori can use her self-proclaimed psychic powers to help them overcome their fears. When neighborhood bully Chet Bullens plays an awful prank on Virgil, it's up to Valencia, Kaori, and Kaori's little sister, Gen, to find Virgil. Through teamwork and a little help from the universe, these neighborhood kids become friends, battle a bully, and find their inner heroes.

The War that Saved My Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley: ***The War That Saved My Life***, which was named a 2016 Newbery Honor book, is a standout coming-of-age story set in the English countryside during World War II. Wartime brings new, scary things into the characters' lives, from bomb shelters and destroyed homes to the plane crashes that kill the pilots at the nearby air base. Far more troubling, especially to sensitive readers, is the character of Ada and Jamie's abusive mother, who regularly smacks the kids around and has kept Ada, born with a clubfoot, locked up in one room her whole life -- and who hangs ominously in the background when the kids land in the country, where they experience care and kindness for the first time in their lives. Kids and adults will cheer for Ada as she discovers she has value and learns to stand up for herself -- but will her mother take the kids back and destroy it all? There's lots of historical detail about World War II in England, from the evacuation of kids to the countryside to details about British military planes.

The Truth About Twinkle Pie by Kat Yeh: Take two sisters making it on their own: brainy twelve-year-old GiGi and junior-high-dropout-turned-hairstylist DiDi. Add a million dollars in prize money from a national cooking contest and a move from the trailer parks of South Carolina to the North Shore of Long Island. Mix in a fancy new school, new friends and enemies, a first crush, and a generous sprinkling of family secrets. That's the recipe for ***The Truth About Twinkle Pie***, a voice-driven middle-grade debut about the true meaning of family and friendship.

Echo by Pam Muñoz Ryan: Pam Muñoz Ryan's 2016 Newbery Honor book ***Echo*** is a historical novel with a fantasy element. It includes information about the beginning of the Holocaust, the Great Depression, and what life was like in America after Pearl Harbor, including how Japanese people were sent to internment camps. Readers also will learn that in some California school districts in the 1940s, kids with Mexican ancestry were sent to separate and inferior schools. The three main protagonists -- Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy -- all face injustice: Nazi soldiers call Friedrich "the ugly son of a Jew-lover" after taking his father to a labor camp; Mike and Frank are at the mercy of a cruel and calculating orphanage director and later get thrown out of a store, suspected of being thieves; Ivy must go to a school for Mexican students. They learn about other injustices, too (for example, the family that owns the farm Ivy lives on is sent to a Japanese internment camp). There's some violence, from fistfights to war injuries, and one soldier dies. But the protagonists speak up in their own way for what's right and continue to think of ways to help others who also are suffering. They eventually learn "to hope for the best and that no matter how much sadness there is in life, there are equal amounts of maybe-things'll-get-better-someday-soon."

Ana Maria Reyes Does Not Live in a Castle by Hilda Eunice Burgos: ***Ana María Reyes Does Not Live in a Castle*** is the story of Ana Maria -- called Anamay -- a bright 11-year-old Dominican American girl from the Washington Heights neighborhood near the Bronx who, with her family, takes her first trip to the Dominican Republic, meets many relatives for the first time, and gains a deeper appreciation for family and her cultural roots. An adult family member has a drinking problem, drives drunk, and hits a young relative, who goes to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Squirm by Carl Hiaasen: Billy Dickens, the middle school main character in ***Squirm***, loves snakes and can't stand bullies. When Billy was only 4 years old, his father disappeared. Every month since his dad split town, he has sent money to Billy's mother, who cashes the check and then destroys the envelope. One day, Bill pieces together his father's address in Montana and sets out to find him. Instead, he meets his father's new family: Lis, his new stepmom, and Summer, his new stepsister, both of whom belong to the Crow Nation. Together they embark on an adventure that involves grizzly bears, spy drones, and an endangered panther.

The Playbook: 52 Rules To Aim, Shoot, and Score in This Game Called Life by Kwame Alexander: This book intersperses stories of athletes he admires and his experiences as a budding tennis player with 52 rules to live by based on lessons learned by playing sports. Each rule is accompanied by a complementary quote from a famous athlete or public figure, such as Mia Hamm, Derek Jeter, Simone Biles, or Kobe Bryant, to name but a few. The quotes are mostly truisms such as "Champions behave like champions before they are champions" (Hall of Fame football coach Bill Walsh) and "A surplus of effort could overcome a deficit of confidence" (U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor). Divided into four "quarters" of 13 rules each, the book uses the structure of an extended basketball metaphor to offer advice and wisdom to young people.

Non-Fiction:

[Knots in My Yo-Yo String](#) by Jerry Spinelli: Newbery medalist Jerry Spinelli has penned his early autobiography with all the warmth, humor, and drama of his best-selling fiction. From first memories through high school, including first kiss, first punch, first trip to the principal's office, and first humiliating sports experience, this is not merely an account of a highly unusual childhood. Rather, like Spinelli's fiction, its appeal lies in the accessibility and universality of his life. Entertaining and fast-paced, this is a highly readable memoir-- a must-have for Spinelli fans of all ages.

[Guts](#) by Gary Paulsen: In "Guts", Gary tells the real stories behind the Brian books, the stories of the adventures that inspired him to write Brian Robeson's story: working as an emergency volunteer; the death that inspired the pilot's death in ***Hatchet***, plane crashes he has seen and near-misses of his own. He describes how he made his own bows and arrows, and takes readers on his first hunting trips, showing the wonder and solace of nature along with his hilarious mishaps and mistakes. He shares special memories, such as the night he attracted every mosquito in the county, or how he met the moose with a sense of humor, and the moose who made it personal.

[How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous](#) by Georgia Bragg: Over the course of history, men and women have lived and died. In fact, getting sick and dying can be a big, ugly mess--especially before the modern medical care that we all enjoy today. From King Tut's ancient autopsy to Albert Einstein's great brain escape, ***How They Croaked*** contains **all** the gory details of the awful ends of nineteen awfully famous people.

[Gabe and Izzy: Standing Up for America's Bullied](#) by Gabrielle Ford: In middle school, Gabrielle "Gabe" Ford developed a degenerative muscle disease, and was harassed by bullies as a result. She did her best to keep her head high, but it wasn't easy. Then Gabe got a dog, Izzy, who developed an uncannily similar disorder. They were invited to appear on Animal Planet to talk about their bond, which in turn led to an invitation to speak at a school. And so began Gabe's career as an anti-bullying advocate. Dubbed "The Voice of America's Bullied" by the Huffington Post, Gabe now makes a career of public speaking and has received numerous honors for her hard work. Here is her amazing story—from her lowest days dealing with various challenges, to the unbelievable and immediate bond with Izzy, to her ongoing mission to put an end to bullying, one school at a time.

[The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor](#) by Sonia Sotomayor: This book is an adaptation of her memoir for adults, ***My Beloved World*** (2013). Justice Sotomayor recounts her life story, how from the age of 10 she knew she wanted to be a lawyer and eventually a federal judge in order to help people. She opens up about very personal circumstances that caused hardships, including dealing with juvenile diabetes and growing up in rough housing projects in New York's South Bronx neighborhood. But regardless of her tribulations, Sotomayor was determined to succeed, focusing on her academics -- which paid off, opening doors to an Ivy League education. She eloquently chronicles her academic and professional achievements, and what it took to become the first Latina Associate Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States.

GRAPHIC

[Smile](#) by Raina Telgemeier: Like many 12-year-olds, Raina is apprehensive about getting braces. But when she trips and knocks out her two front teeth, the fate of her teeth becomes even more traumatic. For the next four years, we follow Raina through many trips to the orthodontist, mouth surgeries, and a variety of dental contraptions. Meanwhile, Raina starts middle school, gets a crush on a boy who barely notices her, experiences the Loma Prieta Earthquake in San Francisco, and deals with friends who are not always supportive and are sometimes downright mean. As Raina's teeth go through extensive changes, Raina learns to stand up for herself and discovers that following her own interests, especially art, will lead to healthy friendships with people who like her for who she is.

[Pashmina](#) by Nidhi Chanani: At the start of ***Pashmina***, Priyanka Das is at odds with her overprotective mother, who refuses to tell her daughter why and how she left India years ago. One night, Pri finds a mysterious chest that contains a magical scarf, one that carries her away to a colorful fantasy version of her mother's birthplace. When Pri wins a cartooning contest, she uses the prize money to buy plane tickets to India, where she meets her aunt and begins to understand more about herself and what it means to be Indian American.

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Please find embedded links to resources for books and audiobooks [Amazon.Com](#) [Audiobooks.com](#) [Barnes and Noble Booksellers](#) [Audible.com](#) [The Edison Public Library](#)

See the graphic organizer below.

Grade 6: Name: _____ **Book:** _____ **Author:** _____

Directions: Using ONE of the essential questions to focus your reading, identify key quotations from the beginning, middle, and end of your selected book that respond to the question:

- In overcoming an obstacle, does one need more physical strength or more mental strength?
- How do our relationships with others affect or change us?
- What does it mean to “belong”?

<u>Meaningful Quotations</u> (Write the quotation and the page number)	<u>Commentary and Analysis</u> (Explain the importance of the quote and its connection to the essential question.)

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