

Approved reading selections for rising 9th -12th grade students

Non-Fiction: (Descriptions from Amazon.com)

Beah, Ishmael. *A Long Way Gone*. Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered the African land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts.

Brown, Don. *The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees*. In the tradition of two-time Sibert honor winner Don Brown's critically acclaimed, full-color nonfiction graphic novels *The Great American Dust Bowl* and *Drowned City*, *The Unwanted* is an important, timely, and eye-opening exploration of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, exposing the harsh realities of living in, and trying to escape, a war zone.

Bryson, Bill. *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*. The Appalachian Trail--if you're going to take a hike, it's probably the place to go. And Bill Bryson is surely the most entertaining guide you'll find. He introduces us to the history and ecology of the trail and to some of the other hardy (or just foolhardy) folks he meets along the way--and a couple of bears. Already a classic, *A Walk in the Woods* will make you long for the great outdoors (or at least a comfortable chair to sit and read in).

Myron, Vicki. *Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World*. This true story and *NYTimes* bestseller relates the tale of an abandoned kitten who transforms the environment of an older town library into a warm place where different people find the love of a cat to be true therapy. A book that again promotes (through passive acts) the value of animals as therapy for humans.

Hillenbrand, Laura. *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*. Laura Hillenbrand brilliantly re-creates a universal underdog story in this #1 *NYTimes* bestseller. Seabiscuit was one of the most electrifying and popular attractions in sports history and the single biggest newsmaker in the world in 1938, receiving more coverage than FDR, Hitler, or Mussolini. His success was a surprise to the racing establishment, which had written off the crooked-legged racehorse.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *Farewell to Manzanar*. During World War II a community called Manzanar was created in the high mountain desert country of California. Its purpose was to house thousands of Japanese Americans. Among them was the Wakatsuki family, who were ordered to leave their fishing business in Long Beach and take with them only the belongings they could carry. Houston, who was seven years old when she arrived at Manzanar in 1942, recalls life in the camp through the eyes of the child she was.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air*. A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which

claimed five lives and left countless more—including Krakauer's—in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.

Krosoczka, Jarrett. *Hey Kiddo*. A National Book Award Finalist! In kindergarten, Jarrett's teacher asks him to draw his family, with a mommy and a daddy. But his family is much more complicated than that. His mom is an addict, in and out of rehab, and in and out of Jarrett's life. His father is a mystery -- Jarrett doesn't know where to find him, or even what his name is. Jarrett lives with his grandparents -- two very loud, very loving, very opinionated people who had thought they were through with raising children until Jarrett came along.

Lazenby, Roland. *Michael Jordan: The Life*. The definitive biography of one of the most legendary basketball players of all time. Drawing on personal relationships with Jordan's coaches; countless interviews with friends, teammates, family members, and Jordan himself; and decades in the trenches covering Jordan in college and the pros, Roland Lazenby provides the first truly definitive study of Jordan: the player, the icon, and the man.

McCullough, David. *The Wright Brothers*. The #1 *NYTimes* bestseller from McCullough, two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize—the dramatic story-behind-the-story about the courageous brothers who taught the world how to fly—Wilbur and Orville Wright.

Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy*. Mark Mathabane was weaned on devastating poverty and schooled in the cruel streets of South Africa's most desperate ghetto. He learned to measure his life in days, not years. Yet Mathabane, armed only with the courage of his family and a hard-won education, raised himself up from the squalor and humiliation to cross the line between black and white and win a scholarship to an American university.

Rinella, Steve. *Meat Eater*. This book chronicles Rinella's lifelong relationship with nature and hunting through the lens of ten hunts, beginning when he was an aspiring mountain man at age ten. Through each story, Rinella grapples with themes such as the role of the hunter in shaping America, the vanishing frontier, the ethics of killing, the allure of hunting trophies, the responsibilities that human predators have to their prey, and the disappearance of the hunter himself as Americans lose their connection with the way their food finds its way to their tables.

Yousafzai, Malala. *I am Malala*. The remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

Kamkwamba, William. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*. A remarkable true story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity. It will inspire anyone who doubts the power of one individual's ability to change his community and better the lives of those around him.

Fiction:

Ahmed, Samira. *Internment*. In this dystopian vision, set in a horrifying near-future United States, seventeen-year-old Layla Amin and her parents are forced into an internment camp for Muslim American citizens. With the help of newly made friends also trapped within the internment camp, her boyfriend on the outside, and an unexpected alliance, Layla begins a journey to fight for freedom, leading a revolution against the camp's Director and his guards.

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *With the Fire on High*. From the *NYTimes* bestselling author of the National Book Award-winning title *The Poet X* comes a dazzling novel in prose about a girl with talent, pride, and a drive to feed the soul that keeps her fire burning bright. Ever since she got pregnant freshman year, Emoni Santiago's life has been about making the tough decisions—doing what has to be done for her daughter and her abuela. The one place she can let all that go is in the kitchen, where she adds a little something magical to everything she cooks.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. The first of three novels in Chinua Achebe's critically acclaimed African Trilogy is a classic narrative about Africa's cataclysmic encounter with Europe as it establishes a colonial presence on the continent. Told through the fictional experiences of Okonkwo, a wealthy and fearless Igbo warrior of Umuofia in the late 1800s, *Things Fall Apart* explores one man's futile resistance to the devaluing of his Igbo traditions by British political and religious forces and his despair as his community capitulates to the new order.

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Bestselling author Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, the book chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

Anderson, Laurie. *Speak: The Graphic Novel*. From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. A timeless novel about consent and finding the courage to speak up for yourself.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Amazon Classics Edition)*. What made Sherlock Holmes a household name and cultural icon? This very first collection of stories featuring the astute sleuth and his loyal assistant, Dr. Watson. In these twelve ingenious mysteries, Holmes is embroiled in betrayal, abduction, thievery, deception, and murder. Relying

on logic, driven by instinct, and employing his uncanny powers of observation, Holmes cracks the cases that elude Scotland Yard. For him, it's rather elementary.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Set in London in the year AD 2540 (632 A.F.—"After Ford"—in the book), the novel anticipates developments in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation, and classical conditioning that combine profoundly to change society. In 1999, the Modern Library ranked *Brave New World* fifth on its list of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century.

Mafi, Tahereh. *A Very Large Expanse of Sea*. It's 2002, a year after 9/11. It's an extremely turbulent time politically, but especially so for someone like Shirin, a 16-year-old Muslim girl who's tired of being stereotyped. Shirin is never surprised by how horrible people can be. She's tired of the rude stares, the degrading comments-- even the physical violence --she endures as a result of her race, her religion, and the hijab she wears every day. So she's built up protective walls and refuses to let anyone close enough to hurt her. Instead, she drowns her frustrations in music and spends her afternoons break-dancing with her brother.

Owens, Delia. *Where the Crawdads Sing*. The wildlife scientist Delia Owens has found her voice in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, a painfully beautiful first novel that is at once a murder mystery, a coming-of-age narrative and a celebration of nature... Owens here surveys the desolate marshlands of the North Carolina coast through the eyes of an abandoned child.

Reynolds, Jason. *Look Both Ways*. Jason Reynolds conjures ten tales (one per block) about what happens after the dismissal bell rings, and brilliantly weaves them into one wickedly funny, piercingly poignant look at the detours we face on the walk home, and in life. (Other Jason Reynolds books also approved)

Sepetys, Ruta. *Between Shades of Gray*. Fifteen-year-old Lina is a Lithuanian girl living an ordinary life -- until Soviet officers invade her home and tear her family apart. Separated from her father and forced onto a crowded train, Lina, her mother, and her young brother make their way to a Siberian work camp, where they are forced to fight for their lives. Lina finds solace in her art, documenting these events by drawing. Risking everything, she imbeds clues in her drawings of their location and secretly passes them along, hoping her drawings will make their way to her father's prison camp.

Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. With wit and sensitivity, Amy Tan examines the sometimes painful, often tender, and always deep connection between mothers and daughters. As each woman reveals her secrets, trying to unravel the truth about her life, the strings become more tangled, more entwined. Mothers boast or despair over daughters, and daughters roll their eyes even as they feel the inextricable tightening of their matriarchal ties. Tan is an astute storyteller, enticing readers to immerse themselves into these lives of complexity and mystery.