

## **Sixth Grade Summer Reading – 2022**

### **REQUIRED BOOK:**

This summer, all sixth graders will read an inspirational book whose characters' stories show the power of perseverance and understanding. One of only a few novels tackling 9/11, a critical day in our history, Nora Raleigh Baskin's *nine, ten: A September 11 Story* carefully and sensitively brings readers into the lives of four young people experiencing the everyday challenges of early adolescence in the two days before that fateful day. It is only after learning about the characters, that we experience 9/11 through their lenses and witness how their very separate lives become intertwined.

As readers, we might bring our personal expectations to the story, only to be surprised by the author's ability to show with grace the enormity of the day. We invite all families to read Baskin's *nine, ten: A September 11 Story*. Its concluding chapter reflects the staggering power of understanding and the triumph of one voice speaking for what is right.

### **REQUIRED BOOK:** *nine, ten: A September 11 Story*

Ask anyone: September 11, 2001, was serene and lovely, a perfect day—until a plane struck the World Trade Center.

But right now, it is a few days earlier, and four kids in different parts of the country are going about their lives. Sergio, who lives in Brooklyn, is struggling to come to terms with the absentee father he hates and the grandmother he loves. Will's father is gone, too, killed in a car accident that has left the family reeling. Naheed has never before felt uncomfortable about being Muslim, but at her new school she's getting funny looks because of the headscarf she wears. Aimee is starting a new school in a new city and missing her mom, who has to fly to New York on business.

These four don't know one another, but their lives are about to intersect in ways they never could have imagined. Award-winning author Nora Raleigh Baskin weaves together their stories into an unforgettable novel about that seemingly perfect September day—the day our world changed forever. (Simon and Schuster)

**Additionally, students will read one book from Group A and one book from Group B.**

### **GROUP A: *Choose one***

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Chains*. As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. (Amazon) Try the entire series!

Applegate, Karen. *Wishtree*. Newbury Award—winning author Applegate meets high expectations in this tale told by a tree named Red, a red oak who is "two hundred and sixteen rings old." Touching on religious bigotry and the environment, Applegate keeps the emphasis on her characters, the many animals and birds who find shelter in the tree's branches all year round. (All the birds and animals have names and the power to talk, just like Red.) Around the first of May, people write down their wishes on pieces of cloth and hang them from the tree's branches, giving Red a special place in the community. The pacing starts out slowly, with early chapters focused almost entirely on the natural world, but eventually readers meet the human at the novel's center. Samar, a recent Muslim refugee, is lonely and in need of a friend. A nameless boy uses the tree to convey hateful messages to Samar and her family. The owner of the tree is tired of roots in the plumbing and hopes all the nastiness will disappear if the tree is cut down, having forgotten the story of her ancestors and the beginning of all the wishes. Red decides to intervene and ask for help from the animals and birds. Even those who shy away from books with talking animals will find this

believable fantasy elegant and poignant. Widening the appeal is a sparse word count, making this a great choice for a family or classroom read-aloud and an inviting option for reluctant readers. This thoughtful read is a top choice for middle graders. —Carol A. Edwards, formerly at Denver Public Library *School Library Journal*

Lupika, Mike. *The Only Game*. Can a young baseball star maintain his love of the game after the loss of his brother? Jack Callahan is the star of his baseball team, and sixth grade is supposed to be his year. Undefeated season. Records shattered. Little League World Series. The works. That is, until he up and quits. Jack's best friend Gus can't understand how Jack could leave a game that means more to them than anything else. But Jack is done. It's a year of change. Jack's brother has passed away, and though his family and friends and the whole town of Walton thinks baseball is just the thing he needs to move on, Jack feels it's anything but.

Medina, Meg. *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*. **Winner of the 2019 Newbery Medal**. Thoughtful, strong-willed sixth grader Merci Suárez navigates difficult changes with friends, family, and everyone in between in a resonant new novel from Meg Medina.

Merci Suárez knew that sixth grade would be different, but she had no idea just *how* different. For starters, Merci has never been like the other kids at her private school in Florida, because she and her older brother, Roli, are scholarship students. They don't have a big house or a fancy boat, and they have to do extra community service to make up for their free tuition. So, when bossy Edna Santos sets her sights on the new boy who happens to be Merci's school-assigned Sunshine Buddy, Merci becomes the target of Edna's jealousy. Things aren't going well at home, either: Merci's grandfather and most trusted ally, Lolo, has been acting strangely lately. (Amazon)

Meloy, Maile. *The Apothecary*. It's 1952 and the Scott family has just moved from Los Angeles to London. Here, fourteen-year-old Janie meets a mysterious apothecary and his son, Benjamin Burrows - a fascinating boy who's not afraid to stand up to authority and dreams of becoming a spy. When Benjamin's father is kidnapped, Janie and Benjamin must uncover the secrets of the apothecary's sacred book, the Pharmacopoeia, in order to find him, all while keeping it out of the hands of their enemies - Russian spies in possession of nuclear weapons. Discovering and testing potions they never believed could exist, Janie and Benjamin embark on a dangerous race to save the apothecary and prevent impending disaster.

Myers, Walter Dean. *The Journal of Bidly Owens: The Negro Leagues*. Teenager Bidly Owens' 1948 journal about working for the Birmingham Black Barons includes the games and the players, racism the team faces from New Orleans to Chicago, and his family's resistance to his becoming a professional baseball player. Includes a historical note about the evolution of the Negro Leagues.

### **GROUP B: Choose one – Meeting Challenges**

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Fever 1793*. In 1793 Philadelphia, sixteen-year-old Matilda Cook, separated from her sick mother, learns about perseverance and self-reliance when she is forced to cope with the horrors of a yellow fever epidemic.

Denenberg, Barry. *The Journal of Ben Uchida, Citizen 13559, Mirror Lake Internment Camp, CA, 1942*. Ben Uchida, An American citizen, spent his twelfth and thirteenth years in a Japanese internment camp. This journal captures his struggles as he learns that compassion and humor can help his family endure the World War II internment camp. (Can be found on Amazon. Com)

de los Santos, Marisa and Teague, David. *Connect the Stars*. From *Saving Lucas Biggs* by the same authors comes a heartwarming middle grade adventure about two misfits discovering the importance of just being themselves. When thirteen-year-olds Aaron and Audrey meet at a wilderness camp in the desert, they think their quirks are enough to prevent them from ever having friends. But as they trek through the challenging and unforgiving

landscape, they learn that they each have what it takes to make the other whole. Luminous and clever, *Connect the Stars* takes on some hefty topics of the day—bullying, understanding where you fit in, and learning to live with physical and mental challenges—all in a joyous adventure kids will love! (Amazon)

Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. Based on the author's own childhood and written in free-verse poems, this unforgettable story captures a fierce girl's struggles to find her place in her family, in her new home, and in the world. Things are changing in Hà's world, as the Vietnam War comes closer and closer to her home in Saigon. Her friends and neighbors are leaving, her oldest brother is speaking out against the North, and the likelihood of being reunited with her father — who has been missing in action for nine years — is growing dimmer. When Saigon falls in 1975, Hà and her family are forced to flee on a navy ship and, after spending months in refugee camps, end up moving to Alabama. There, Hà struggles to deal with everything from learning the language and customs to handling the bullies who make fun of her at school. Will she ever feel at home in this strange new land? And will she ever see her father again?

Pearsall, Shelley. *Jump into the Sky*. It's May 5, 1945. Carrying nothing but a suitcase and a bag of his aunt's good fried chicken, 13-year-old Levi Battle heads south to a U.S. Army post in search of his father—a lieutenant in an elite unit of all black paratroopers. The fact that his father doesn't even know he's coming turns out to be the least of his problems. As Levi makes his way across the United States, he learns hard lessons about the way a black boy is treated in the Jim Crow South. And when he arrives at his destination, his struggles are far from over. The war may be ending, but his father's secret mission is just beginning—and it's more dangerous than anybody imagined. . . .

Sherry, Maureen, *Walls within Walls*. After their father, a video-game inventor, strikes it rich, the Smithfork kids find they hate their new life. They move from their cozy Brooklyn neighborhood to a swanky apartment on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. They have no friends, a nanny who takes the place of their parents, and a school year looming ahead that promises to be miserable. And then, one day, Brid, CJ, and Patrick discover an astonishing secret about their apartment: The original owner, the deceased multimillionaire Mr. Post, long ago turned the apartment itself into a giant puzzle containing a mysterious book and hidden panels—a puzzle that, with some luck, courage, and brainpower, will lead to discovering the Post family fortune. Unraveling the mystery causes them to race through today's New York City—and to uncover some long-hidden secrets of the past. (Amazon)

Sonnichsen, A. L., *Red Butterfly*. A young, orphaned girl in modern-day China discovers the meaning of family in this “heartbreaking, heartwarming, and impressive debut” (Publishers Weekly, starred review) told in verse, in the tradition of *Inside Out and Back Again*. Kara never met her birth mother. Abandoned as an infant, she was taken in by an American woman living in China. Now eleven, Kara spends most of her time in their apartment, wondering why she and Mama cannot leave the city of Tianjin and go live with Daddy in Montana. Mama tells Kara to be content with what she has...but what if Kara secretly wants more?

Told in lyrical, moving verse, *Red Butterfly* is the story of a girl learning to trust her own voice, discovering that love and family are limitless, and finding the wings she needs to reach new heights. (Barnes and Noble)

Vawter, Vince., *Paperboy*. *Paperboy* is a coming-of-age story about a boy who stutters. It takes place during the time of segregation in the South. Little Man takes over his best friend's paper route after he (the friend) gets hurt while playing baseball. He's not really planning on doing much interacting with the customers, as he can barely get his own name out. Unfortunately, the neighborhood bully (and thief) makes it necessary for Little Man to speak up...even if the prospect of that terrifies him.