



## 8th grade Core Summer Reading 2020-2021

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Middle School Core Program! Based upon the theories of John Dewey, Howard Gardner and 21<sup>st</sup> century educational research, Core is an interdisciplinary study, using primary and secondary historical sources, as well as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. The Core curriculum fosters skills that prepare students for a college prep upper school curriculum by encouraging students to think, question, learn, and make decisions based on Jewish and American values.

In aligning our curriculum with our school's mission and philosophy, as well as the middle school's mission statement, Core students participate in independent reading and writing and dynamic small group activities and projects that affirm and support the successes and challenges students face at the Saligman Middle School. Creative projects, cooperative learning and independence as a learner are encouraged. Emphasis is on the development and improvement of skills that include but are not limited to, research, study skills, independent reading, vocabulary, grammar, note-making and organization, writing and critical thinking.

Please find instructions below for the two summer reading assignments. We hope you and your family have a wonderful summer. We look forward to seeing our middle schoolers after summer break!

Sincerely,

The Core Department

### Summer Reading Instructions for 8th grade

#### Book #1 One Book One Barrack: *Blended* by Sharon Draper

1. Please write a paragraph of at least eight sentences responding to the following statement:
  - a. Explain the title of the novel, giving two possible interpretations based on the events, characters or conflicts.
    - i. Be sure to include a strong topic sentence and a clear and concise concluding sentence.

- ii. Be prepared to turn this in to your Core teacher during the first week of school.
  - iii. This paragraph must be typed, proofread and spell-checked.
  - iv. Your paragraph should have a proper heading.
2. Additionally create a bullet point list of how each family achieves the American Dream and share your thoughts about whether each family was equally successful in achieving that dream based on this definition:
  - a. *The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.*

### **Book #2 American Dream: Novel Choice**

The phrase “The American Dream” can be defined as follows:

*The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.*

[www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp](http://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp)

As you read your chosen book, please do the following:

1. Use yellow sticky notes for character traits.
2. Use blue sticky notes for elements of setting.
3. Use red sticky notes to mark passages that have to do with the American Dream.

After you read the book, answer the following questions by creating bullet point lists:

1. Who are the main characters in your book? (List and describe)
2. How would your book’s protagonist define the American Dream? (List and describe)
3. Does the main character of your book achieve the American Dream? What obstacles stood in his or her way? (List and describe)

**Please make a selection of one novel from the list below. Be sure to take a few moments to read the summary of each novel before making your selection. In addition, remember that each middle school student is expected to read the novel *Blended* by Sharon Draper.**

KEY To Symbols: \* Sophisticated themes    # Mature themes

### **Native American**

**Hitchcock, Bonnie-Sue: *The Smell of Other People's Houses* #**

This deeply moving and authentic debut set in 1970s Alaska is for fans of Rainbow Rowell, Louise Erdrich, Sherman Alexie, and Benjamin Alire Saenz. Intertwining stories of love,

tragedy, wild luck, and salvation on the edge of America's Last Frontier introduce a writer of rare talent.

Ruth has a secret that she can't hide forever. Dora wonders if she can ever truly escape where she comes from, even when good luck strikes. Alyce is trying to reconcile her desire to dance, with the life she's always known on her family's fishing boat. Hank and his brothers decide it's safer to run away than to stay home—until one of them ends up in terrible danger. Four very different lives are about to become entangled. This unforgettable William C. Morris Award finalist is about people who try to save each other—and how sometimes, when they least expect it, they succeed.

**Borland, Hal: *When the Legends Die***

A young Native American raised in the forest is suddenly thrust into the modern world, in this novel by the author of *The Dog Who Came to Stay*. Thomas Black Bull's parents forsook the life of a modern reservation and took to ancient paths in the woods, teaching their young son the stories and customs of his ancestors. But Tom's life changes forever when he loses his father in a tragic accident and his mother dies shortly afterward. When Tom is discovered alone in the forest with only a bear cub as a companion, life becomes difficult. Soon, well-meaning teachers endeavor to reform him, a rodeo attempts to turn him into an act, and nearly everyone he meets tries to take control of his life. Powerful and timeless, *When the Legends Die* is a captivating story of one boy learning to live in harmony with both civilization and wilderness.

**Tingle, Tim: *How I Became A Ghost***

Told in the words of Isaac, a Choctaw boy who does not survive the Trail of Tears, *How I Became A Ghost* is a tale of innocence and resilience in the face of tragedy. From the book's opening line, "Maybe you have never read a book written by a ghost before," the reader is put on notice that this is no normal book. Isaac leads a remarkable foursome of Choctaw comrades: a tough minded teenage girl, a shape-shifting panther boy, a lovable five year old ghost who only wants her mom and dad to be happy and Isaac's talking dog, Jumper. The first in a trilogy *How I Became A Ghost* examines an important and oft overlooked piece of history.

**Immigration**

**Marquardt, Marie: *The Radius of Us***

What happens when you fall in love with someone everyone seems determined to fear? Ninety seconds can change a life – not just daily routine, but who you are as a person. Gretchen Asher knows this, because that's how long a stranger held her body to the ground. When a car sped toward them and Gretchen's attacker told her to run, she recognized a surprising terror in his eyes. And now she doesn't even recognize herself. Ninety seconds can change a life – not just the place you live, but the person others think you are. Phoenix Flores Flores knows this, because months after setting off toward the U.S. / Mexico border in search of safety for his brother, he finally walked out of detention. But Phoenix didn't just trade a perilous barrio in El Salvador for a leafy suburb in Atlanta. He became that person – the one his new neighbors crossed the street to avoid.

Ninety seconds can change a life – so how will the ninety seconds of Gretchen and Phoenix’s first encounter change theirs?

Told in alternating first person points of view, *The Radius of Us* is a story of love, sacrifice, and the journey from victim to survivor. It offers an intimate glimpse into the causes and devastating impact of Latino gang violence, both in the U.S. and in Central America, and explores the risks that victims take when they try to start over. Most importantly, Marie Marquardt's *The Radius of Us* shows how people struggling to overcome trauma can find healing in love.

**De la Cruz, Melissa: *Something In Between***

*She had her whole life planned. She knew who she was and where she was going. Until the truth changed everything.*

Jasmine de los Santos has always done what’s expected of her. She’s studied hard, made her Filipino immigrant parents proud and is ready to reap the rewards in the form of a full college scholarship to the school of her dreams. And then everything shatters. Her parents are forced to reveal the truth: their visas expired years ago. Her entire family is illegal. That means no scholarships, maybe no college at all and the very real threat of deportation.

As she’s trying to make sense of this new reality, her world is turned upside down again by Royce Blakely. He’s funny, caring and spontaneous—basically everything she’s been looking for at the worst possible time—and now he’s something else she may lose. Jasmine will stop at nothing to protect her relationships, family and future, all while fighting the hard truths of being undocumented.

**Yoon, Nicola: *The Sun is Also a Star***

Natasha: I’m a girl who believes in science and facts. Not fate. Not destiny. Or dreams that will never come true. I’m definitely not the kind of girl who meets a cute boy on a crowded New York City street and falls in love with him. Not when my family is twelve hours away from being deported to Jamaica. Falling in love with him won’t be my story.

Daniel: I’ve always been the good son, the good student, living up to my parents’ high expectations. Never the poet. Or the dreamer. But when I see her, I forget about all that. Something about Natasha makes me think that fate has something much more extraordinary in store—for both of us.

The Universe: Every moment in our lives has brought us to this single moment. A million futures lie before us. Which one will come true?

**Hamill, Pete: *Snow in August* #**

Brooklyn, 1947. The war veterans have come home. Jackie Robinson is about to become a Dodger. And in one close-knit working-class neighborhood, an eleven-year-old Irish Catholic boy named Michael Devlin has just made friends with a lonely rabbi from Prague.

*Snow in August* is the story of that unlikely friendship – and of how the neighborhood reacts to it. For Michael, the rabbi opens a window to ancient learning and lore that rival anything in

Captain Marvel. For the rabbi, Michael illuminates the everyday mysteries of America, including the strange language of baseball. But like their hero Jackie Robinson, neither can entirely escape from the swirling prejudices of the time. Terrorized by a local gang of anti-Semitic Irish toughs, Michael and the rabbi are caught in an escalating spiral of hate for which there's only one way out – a miracle...

Deeply affecting and wonderfully evocative of old New York, *Snow in August* is a brilliant fable for our time and all time – and another triumph for Pete Hamill.

**Lee, Stacey: *Under a Painted Sky***

All Samantha wanted was to move back to New York and pursue her music, which was difficult enough being a Chinese girl in Missouri, 1849. Then her fate takes a turn for the worse after a tragic accident leaves her with nothing and she breaks the law in self-defense. With help from Annamae, a runaway slave she met at the scene of her crime, the two flee town for the unknown frontier.

But life on the Oregon Trail is unsafe for two girls. Disguised as Sammy and Andy, two boys heading for the California gold rush, each search for a link to their past and struggle to avoid any unwanted attention. Until they merge paths with a band of cowboys turned allies, and Samantha can't stop herself from falling for one. But the law is closing in on them and new setbacks come each day, and the girls will quickly learn there are not many places one can hide on the open trail.

**Burford, Michelle and Guerrero, Diane: *In the Country We Love* (Memoir)**

Diane Guerrero, the television actress from the megahit *Orange Is the New Black* and Jane the Virgin, was just fourteen years old on the day her parents were detained and deported while she was at school. Born in the U.S., Guerrero was able to remain in the country and continue her education, depending on the kindness of family friends who took her in and helped her build a life and a successful acting career for herself, without the support system of her family.

*In the Country We Love* is a moving, heartbreaking story of one woman's extraordinary resilience in the face of the nightmarish struggles of undocumented residents in this country. There are over 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the US, many of whom have citizen children, whose lives here are just as precarious, and whose stories haven't been told. Written with bestselling author Michelle Burford, this memoir is a tale of personal triumph that also casts a much-needed light on the fears that haunt the daily existence of families like the author's and on a system that fails them over and over.

**Crew, Linda: *Children of the River***

Sundara fled Cambodia with her aunt's family to escape the Khmer Rouge army when she was thirteen, leaving behind her parents, her brother and sister, and the boy she had loved since she was a child.

Now, four years later, she struggles to fit in at her Oregon high school and to be "a good Cambodian girl" at home. A good Cambodian girl never dates; she waits for her family to arrange her marriage to a Cambodian boy. Yet Sundara and Jonathan, an extraordinary American boy, are powerfully drawn to each other. Haunted by grief for her lost family and for the life left behind, Sundara longs to be with him. At the same time she wonders, Are her hopes for happiness and new life in America disloyal to her past and her people?

**Kline, Christina Baker: *Orphan Train***

Penobscot Indian Molly Ayer is close to "aging out" out of the foster care system. A community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping Molly out of juvie and worse...

As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren't as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance.

Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life—answers that will ultimately free them both.

Rich in detail and epic in scope, *Orphan Train* is a powerful novel of upheaval and resilience, of unexpected friendship, and of the secrets we carry that keep us from finding out who we are.

**Lai, Thanhha: *Inside Out and Back Again***

Inspired by the author's childhood experience as a refugee—fleeing Vietnam after the Fall of Saigon and immigrating to Alabama—this coming-of-age debut novel told in verse has been celebrated for its touching child's-eye view of family and immigration.

Hà has only ever known Saigon: the thrills of its markets, the joy of its traditions, and the warmth of her friends close by. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee as Saigon falls, and they board a ship headed toward hope—toward America.

This moving story of one girl's year of change, dreams, grief, and healing received four starred reviews, including one from Kirkus which proclaimed it "enlightening, poignant, and unexpectedly funny."

**Kadahota, Cynthia: *Kira Kira***

**Kira-kira (kee ra kee ra): glittering; shining** Glittering. That's how Katie Takeshima's sister, Lynn, makes everything seem. The sky is *kira-kira* because its color is deep but see-through at the same time. The sea is *kira-kira* for the same reason. And so are people's eyes. When Katie and her family move from a Japanese community in Iowa to the Deep South of Georgia, it's Lynn who explains to her why people stop on the street to stare. And it's Lynn who, with her special way of viewing the world, teaches Katie to look beyond tomorrow. But when Lynn becomes desperately ill, and the whole family begins to fall apart, it is up to Katie to find a way to remind them all that there is always something glittering – *kira-kira* – in the future.

### **African American**

**Thomas, Angie: *The Hate U Give* \* #**

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

**Watson, Renee: *Piecing Me Together***

Acclaimed author Renee Watson offers a powerful story about a girl striving for success in a world that too often seems like it's trying to break her.

Jade believes she must get out of her poor neighborhood if she's ever going to succeed. Her mother tells her to take advantage of every opportunity that comes her way. And Jade has: every day she rides the bus away from her friends and to the private school where she feels like an outsider, but where she has plenty of opportunities. But some opportunities she doesn't really welcome, like an invitation to join Women to Women, a mentorship program for "at-risk" girls. Just because her mentor is black and graduated from the same high school doesn't mean she understands where Jade is coming from. She's tired of being singled out as someone who needs help, someone people want to fix. Jade wants to speak, to create, to express her joys and sorrows, her pain and her hope. Maybe there are some things she could show other women about understanding the world and finding ways to be real, to make a difference.

**Woodson, Jacqueline: *Brown Girl Dreaming***

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become.

**Magoon, Kekla: *How It Went Down* \* #**

When sixteen-year-old Tariq Johnson dies from two gunshot wounds, his community is thrown into an uproar. Tariq was black. The shooter, Jack Franklin, is white.

In the aftermath of Tariq's death, everyone has something to say, but no two accounts of the events line up. Day by day, new twists further obscure the truth. Tariq's friends, family, and community struggle to make sense of the tragedy, and to cope with the hole left behind when a life is cut short. In their own words, they grapple for a way to say with certainty: This is how it went down.

**Walker, Brian F.: *Black Boy White School***

In a hard-hitting novel about fitting in—or not—Anthony “Ant” Jones gets transported from his East Cleveland hood to an almost all-white prep school and has to figure out where he belongs...before he loses himself entirely. *Black Boy White School* is a memorable debut that will appeal to fans of Walter Dean Myers and Sherman Alexie.

Anthony has never been outside his rough neighborhood when he receives a scholarship to Belton Academy, an elite prep school in Maine. But at Belton things are far from perfect. Everyone calls him “Tony,” assumes he's from Brooklyn, expects him to play basketball, and yet acts shocked when he fights back.

As Anthony tries to adapt to a world that will never fully accept him, he's in for a rude awakening: Home is becoming a place where he no longer belongs.

**Draper, Sharon: *Copper Sun***

This action-packed, multifaceted, character-rich story describes the shocking realities of the slave trade and plantation life while portraying the perseverance, resourcefulness, and triumph of the human spirit. Amari is a 15-year-old Ashanti girl who is happily anticipating her marriage to Besa. Then, slavers arrive in her village, slaughter her family, and shatter her world. Shackled, frightened, and despondent, she is led to the Cape Coast where she is branded and forced onto a “boat of death” for the infamous Middle Passage to the Carolinas.

There, Percival Derby buys her as a gift for his son's 16th birthday. Trust and friendship develop between Amari and Polly, a white indentured servant, and when their mistress gives birth to a black baby, the teens try to cover up Mrs. Derby's transgression. However, Mr. Derby's brutal fury spurs them to escape toward the rumored freedom of Fort Mose, a Spanish colony in Florida. Although the narrative focuses alternately on Amari and Polly, the story is primarily Amari's, and her pain, hope, and determination are acute. Cruel white stereotypes abound except for the plantation's mistress, whose love is colorblind; the doctor who provides the ruse for the girls' escape; and the Irish woman who gives the fugitives a horse and wagon. As readers embrace Amari and Polly, they will better understand the impact of human exploitation and suffering throughout history. In addition, they will gain a deeper knowledge of slavery, indentured servitude, and 18th-century sanctuaries for runaway slaves.