2026 SUMMER READING LIST – HIGH SCHOOL

Donut Prince of New York

By Allen Zandoff

Publisher's Summary: Between his father abandoning his family, his non-existent love life, and his mother constantly badgering him about his weight, aspiring playwright Eugene Gutterman's junior year of high school isn't going great. But his world is turned upside down when he accidentally tackles the star of the high school football team in gym class and is recruited to play as an offensive lineman for the team. Eugene suddenly finds himself a part of the popular crowd, and the new girl Daisy begins to show an interest in him. As he strays farther from his old life and friends and the pressure to perform on the field begins to grow, Eugene wonders if this is really the role he is meant to be playing.

Death in the Jungle: Murder, Betrayal, and the Lost Dream of Jonestown

By Candace Fleming

Publisher's Summary: Provides a nonfiction account of the cult known as the Peoples Temple, led by charismatic leader, Jim Jones, who later convinced hundreds of followers to commit mass suicide and ordered the murder of at least five others. The book follows Jones' early life, his ministry as a preacher, and the establishment of his church, the Peoples Temple, which was eventually moved to a settlement in Guyana known as Jonestown. It draws from survivors' accounts, transcripts, and interviews to explore his beliefs, how his views became twisted over time, and why so many people blindly followed him to their death.

Few Blue Skies

By Carolina Ixta

Publisher's Summary: Paloma Vistamontes is heartbroken. A year ago, her ex-boyfriend, Julio Ramos, broke up with her after his father's death, a tragedy that drove Paloma and him apart. Ever since then, the mountains have felt flatter, the sky farther away.

Now, her hometown of San Fermín, a place where honest people work on farms and in factories, is in danger. Selva, a massive e-commerce conglomerate, threatens to open one of their warehouses beside her high school.
This isn't the first time they've done this. Since Selva arrived, they've opened warehouses everywhere where there used to be green spaces. Because of them, the air pollution is so bad that school is often canceled. Many people, including Paloma's ever-practical Ma, want to leave.

But Paloma wants nothing more than to stay. Because when the smog clears, there is still hope. That hope drives Paloma to reconnect with Julio to expose and challenge the dangers that Selva introduces to communities like their own. Can they stop Selva from destroying everything they know? Is there still a chance for their budding romance?

Into the Sunken City

By Dinesh Thiru

Publisher's Summary: Living in the slowly sinking city of Coconino, Arizona in the year 2532, eighteen-year-old Jin Haldar runs a struggling inn and has been caring for her younger sister Thara since their father's death in a diving accident. When drifter Bhili comes to stay, she learns of the girls' backgrounds and offers them a lucrative deal to dive for gold in the underwater Treasure Island Hotel and Casino in the drowned city of Las Vegas. Enticed by the payoff, Thara agrees and Jin follows to protect her. Teaming up with Jin's ex-boyfriend Taim and other crew members, Thara and Jin must face off against pirates, sea monsters, and Jin's own fears of submersing and never returning.

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Ground Zero

By Alan Gratz

September 11, 2001, New York City: Brandon is visiting his dad at work, on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center. Out of nowhere, an airplane slams into the tower, creating a fiery nightmare of terror and confusion. And Brandon is in the middle of it all. Can he survive -- and escape?

September 11, 2019, Afghanistan: Reshmina has grown up in the shadow of war, but she dreams of peace and progress. When a battle erupts in her village, Reshmina stumbles upon a wounded American soldier named Taz. Should she help Taz -- and put herself and her family in mortal danger?

Two kids. One devastating day. Nothing will ever be the same.

Song of a Blackbird

By Maria van Lieshout

Publisher's Summary: A dual-timeline graphic novel that follows the lives of Emma Bergsma who becomes a member of the Dutch resistance movement in 1943 Amsterdam, and teenager Annick, who learns her ailing Oma was adopted while searching for a bone marrow donor in 2011. As Annick searches for Oma's origins using a clue on a set of paintings, she gets drawn into the past and uncovers a harrowing tale of bravery, deception, and brutality.

Salt To The Sea

By Ruta Sepetys

Winter 1945. WWII. Four refugees. Four stories.

Each one born of a different homeland; each one hunted, and haunted, by tragedy, lies, war. As thousands desperately flock to the coast in the midst of a Soviet advance, four paths converge, vying for passage aboard the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, a ship that promises safety and freedom. But not all promises can be kept . . .

Ash's Cabin

By Jen Wang

Publisher's Summary: After the death of their grandfather, fifteen-year-old Ash feels more alone than ever. Their parents haven't fully accepted their name change, their peers don't care about the climate crisis like they do, and their parents are selling their grandfather's northern California ranch. Rather than go to Disneyland with the rest of the family for their summer vacation, Ash heads to the ranch for one last visit and secretly plots to find Grandpa's secret cabin in the woods, where they plan to stay, forever. Ash soon learns that life alone is difficult, and not at all as they imagined it, forcing them to open up to community as a way to confront their fears and anxieties about the future.

The Scammer

By Tiffany D. Jackson

Publisher's Summary: After enrolling in Frazier University, a historically Black university, Jordyn Monroe befriends her three Black roommates and begins living out her dream. She thinks nothing of agreeing to allow a roommate's brother, recently released from prison, to sleep on their couch. Handsome and charming, Devonte quickly makes friends with her and her friends, but his friendly life advice and gestures quickly turn to increasingly controlling behavior. By the time Jordyn realizes something is wrong, she's in too deep, and desperately reaches out to a fellow student to help her find a way out.

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Needy Little Things

By Channelle Desamours

Publisher's Summary: Sariyah Lee Bryant can hear what people need—tangible things, like a pencil, a hair tie, a phone charger—an ability only her family and her best friend, Malcolm, know the truth about. But when she fulfills a need for her friend Deja who vanishes shortly after, Sariyah is left wondering if her ability is more curse than gift. This isn't the first time one of her friends has landed on the missing persons list, and she's determined not to let her become yet another forgotten Black girl.

Not trusting the police and media to do enough on their own, Sariyah and her friends work together to figure out what led to Deja's disappearance. When Sariyah's mother loses her job and her little brother faces complications with his sickle cell disease, managing her time, money, and emotions seems impossible. Desperate, Sariyah decides to hustle her need-sensing ability for cash—a choice that may not only lead her to Deja, but put her in the same danger Deja found herself in.

The Floating World

By Axie Oh

Publisher's Summary: Living in the Under World that lies beneath the radiant Floating World, ex-soldier Sunho remembers nothing of his life before two years ago and sets out in search of a girl who wields silver light after hearing about a large reward for the mercenary who can find her. While traveling as an acrobat with her adoptive family, Ren's world is turned upside down when their performance is interrupted by a demon attack and Ren kills the monster by releasing a blast of silver light, a power she has kept hidden since childhood. When Sunho and Ren cross paths, Sunho offers to help Ren in her quest to find a cure for her dying uncle, not knowing that she's the girl he's looking for. As their journey brings them closer together, the truth about their shared pasts will have grave consequences.

Where You See Yourself

By Claire Forrest

Description: Like most of her senior peers, Euphemia "Effie" Galanos is thinking about college applications, scholarships, and her future plans after high school. Unlike her peers, however, she has to think about how she'll get around campus in a wheelchair. To that end, her mother has compiled a list of wheelchair-friendly colleges, but for Effie, none of them compare to the college of her dreams: Prospect University in New York City, which has a strong media and journalism program. It also doesn't hurt that her crush Wilder is applying there too. As the months pass by, Effie faces challenges, including learning that the Prospect campus will be difficult to navigate and how to express to Wilder how she really feels about him. Effie must decide which dreams are worth fighting for and how to be brave enough to advocate for them.