

Entering 6th Grade Summer Reading Assignment

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.” Christopher Reeve

Bravery can take many forms in literature and in life. We witness it in everyday heroes who stand up to the local bully, secret spies that save innocent lives, and those who fight for causes bigger than themselves. Reading stories with characters that persevere through adversity with bravery and determination can inspire us to embody these traits in our own lives. With this Summer Reading, as well as with reading and work throughout the upcoming school year, students entering **6th Grade** are to consider this essential question:

EQ: What characteristics does a hero have and how do heroes make a difference to those around them?

I. All Students will read:

When You Reach Me, by Rebecca Stead (fiction, 240p)

Shortly after a fall-out with her best friend, sixth grader Miranda starts receiving mysterious notes, and she doesn't know what to do. The notes tell her that she must write a letter—a true story, and that she can't share her mission with anyone. It would be easy to ignore the strange messages, except that whoever is leaving them has an uncanny ability to predict the future. If that is the case, then Miranda has a big problem—because the notes tell her that someone is going to die, and she might be too late to stop it.

We will be working with and writing about *When You Reach Me* for our first unit in the fall. You must have a copy of this book in school.

II. Students will then choose one additional book from the list below:

Fiction:

Harbor Me by Jacqueline Woodson (fiction, 176p)

It all starts when six kids have to meet for a weekly chat--by themselves, with no adults to listen in. There, in the room they soon dub the ARTT Room (short for "A Room to Talk"), they discover it's safe to talk about what's bothering them--everything from Esteban's father's deportation and Haley's father's incarceration to Amari's fears of racial profiling and Ashton's adjustment to his changing family fortunes. When the six are together, they can express the feelings and fears they have to hide from the rest of the world. And together, they can grow braver and more ready for the rest of their lives.

Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish, by Pablo Cartaya (fiction, 249p)

Marcus Vega is six feet tall, 180 pounds, and the owner of a premature mustache. When you look like this and you're only in the eighth grade, you're both a threat and a target. After a fight at school leaves Marcus facing suspension, Marcus's mom decides it's time for a change of environment. She takes Marcus and his younger brother to Puerto Rico to spend a week with relatives they don't remember or have never met. But Marcus can't focus, knowing that his father – who walked out of their lives ten years ago – is somewhere on the island. A series of misadventures takes Marcus all over Puerto Rico in search of his elusive namesake. Marcus doesn't know if he'll ever find his father, but what he ultimately discovers changes his life. And he even learns a bit of Spanish along the way.

The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor (fiction, 326p)

Mason Buttle is the biggest, sweatiest kid in his grade, and everyone knows he can barely read or write. But those troubles don't compare with grief. Fifteen months ago, Mason's best friend, Benny Kilmartin, turned up dead in the Buttle family's orchard. An investigation drags on, and Mason, honest as the day is long, can't understand why Lieutenant Baird won't believe the story Mason has told about that day. Mason's new friend, tiny Calvin Chumsky, is the funny and philosophical partner who brings out the best in Mason. To escape relentless bullying by other neighborhood kids, the boys create a secret underground haven for themselves. When Calvin goes missing, Mason finds himself in deeper trouble. He's desperate to figure out what happened to Calvin, and eventually, Benny. But will anyone believe him?

A Single Shard by Linda Sue Park (fiction, 160p)

Tree-ear, an orphan, lives under a bridge in Ch'ulp'o, a potters' village famed for delicate celadon ware. He has become fascinated with the potter's craft; he wants nothing more than to watch master potter Min at work, and he dreams of making a pot of his own someday. When Min takes Tree-ear on as his helper, Tree-ear is elated—until he finds obstacles in his path: the backbreaking labor of digging and hauling clay, Min's irascible temper, and his own ignorance. But Tree-ear is determined to prove himself—even if it means taking a long, solitary journey on foot to present Min's work in the hope of a royal commission . . . even if it means arriving at the royal court with nothing to show but a single celadon shard.

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams Garcia (fiction, 218p)

In *One Crazy Summer*, eleven-year-old Delphine is like a mother to her two younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern. She's had to be, ever since their mother, Cecile, left them seven years ago for a radical new life in California. But when the sisters arrive from Brooklyn to spend the summer with their mother, Cecile is nothing like they imagined.

While the girls hope to go to Disneyland and meet Tinker Bell, their mother sends them to a day camp run by the Black Panthers. Unexpectedly, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern learn much about their family, their country, and themselves during one truly crazy summer.

Thirst, by Varsha Bajaj (fiction, 179p)

Minni lives in the poorest part of Mumbai, where access to water is limited, and she often has to wait for hours to use the communal tap. Lately, though, even that access is threatened by water shortages and thieves who are stealing this precious commodity – an act that Minni accidentally witnesses one night. Meanwhile, in the high-rise building where she’s begun working as a maid, she discovers that water streams out of every faucet and there’s even a rooftop swimming pool. There, she also finds herself serving a girl her own age – a girl who has the luxury to focus on her studies, something Minni is finding harder to do with all her responsibilities. Then one day, Minni encounters the water mafia boss and faces her biggest dilemma yet – should she expose him, even if it means risking her job and her safety? How did her future get so complicated?

Amal Unbound, by Aisha Saeed (fiction, 226p)

Twelve-year-old Amal’s dream of becoming a teacher one day is dashed in an instant when she accidentally insults a member of her Pakistani village’s ruling family. As punishment for her behavior, she is forced to leave her heartbroken family behind and go work at their estate. Amal is distraught but has faced setbacks before. So she summons her courage and begins navigating the complex rules of life as a servant, with all its attendant jealousies and pecking-order woes. Most troubling, though, is Amal’s increasing awareness of the deadly measures the Khan family will go to in order to stay in control. It’s clear that their hold over her village will never loosen as long as everyone is too afraid to challenge them – so if Amal is to have any chance of ensuring her loved ones’ safety and winning back her freedom, she must find a way to work with the other servants to make it happen.

Merci Suarez Changes Gears, by Meg Medina (fiction, 355p)

Sixth-grader Merci Suarez doesn’t have a big house or take fancy vacations like the other kids at Seaward Pines Academy. She’s a scholarship student who lives with her extended family in three little houses they call Las Casitas. But everything feels different this year – and not just at school, where queen bee Edna Santos has set her sights on Merci’s school-assigned Sunshine Buddy, Michael Clark. At home, Merci’s beloved grandfather, Lolo, has been acting strangely: falling from his bike, calling people by the wrong names, and getting angry over nothing. Merci is worried about Lolo, but no one in her family will tell her what’s going on. Just when it seems things couldn’t get any worse, something happens that puts everything into perspective and forces Merci’s family to finally face the issue they’ve been avoiding.

Amina’s Voice, by Hena Khan (fiction, 197p)

Amina has never been comfortable in the spotlight. She is happy just hanging out with her best friend, Soojin. Except now that she’s in middle school everything feels different. Soojin is suddenly hanging out with Emily, one of the “cool” girls in the class, and even talking about changing her name to something more “American.” Does Amina need to start changing too? Or hiding who she is to fit in? While Amina grapples with these questions, her local mosque is

vandalized, and she is devastated. In *Amina's Voice*, readers will witness the power of a young girl using her voice to bring people together.

Counting by 7s, by Holly Goldberg Sloan (fiction, 378p)

Seven things to know about Willow Chance: 1. She's different (as in strange). And a genius. 2. Almost everything interests her. But some things – like plants and medical conditions – interest her more than others. 3. She has learned – the hard way – that life can be extremely unfair. 4. She understands that family is what you make it, and that the people who understand you and choose to have you in their lives are the most important people. 5. She doesn't have a lot of friends, but she would do anything for the ones she does have. 6. She knows that the most wonderful thing in the world is feeling like you belong. 7. Her story will make you laugh, cry, and appreciate your friends, family, and the things around you in a whole new way.

Non-Fiction:

Bee Fearless: Dream Like a Kid by Mikaila Ulmer (non-fiction, 240p)

In this memoir, Mikaila Ulmer shares her real-life experiences as a lemonade entrepreneur. After being stung by a bee, she literally made lemonade out of the lemon that life threw her by raising awareness and money for bee conservation. Named one of Time magazine's 30 Most Influential Teens, Mikaila is an inspiring role model and proves that anyone — no matter their age — can be a force for good in the world.

Graphic Novel:

All's Faire in Middle School by Victoria Jamieson (graphic, 248p)

Growing up, Imogene (aka. Impy) always loved her family's part in the Renaissance Faire . . . that is, until middle school. Even though she gets her dream to work in the faire as a squire, she also just wants to be like the other girls at her school, too. Her journey is painful and honest as she figures out who she wants to be. It's narrated as a hero's journey which, with the faire background and middle school drama, feels perfect. Beyond being a terrific coming of age story, I'm sure this book will interest tween readers in Renaissance festivals themselves.

When Stars are Scattered, by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (256p)

Omar and Hassan are Somalian brothers living in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Separated from the rest of their family, Omar must care for his nonverbal brother while also trying to pursue an education, all in the hope that he can eventually get to America. Omar is loyal, patient, and hopeful even in the darkest of times...a true hero.