

**Laguna Blanca School
Summer Reading List 2026
For Students Entering Grade 5**

All Laguna Blanca students entering Grades 5-12 this fall are expected to read at least two books this summer.

REQUIRED READING: It is highly recommended that students read these books closer to the start of school so they remember the reading for in-class work.

WONDER by R.J. Palacio (Realistic Fiction) **Maine Student Book Award, Vermont's Dorothy Canfield Fisher**

Children's Book Award, Mark Twain Award, Hawaii's Nene Award, Junior Young Reader's Choice Award

Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, Auggie wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past his extraordinary face. *Wonder* begins from Auggie's point of view, but soon switches to include the perspectives of his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These voices converge to portray a community as it struggles with differences and challenges readers, both young and old, to wonder about the true nature of empathy, compassion, acceptance, friendship, and—ultimately—kindness. Auggie is a hero for the ages, one who proves that you can't blend in when you were born to stand out.

IN ADDITION, STUDENTS MUST READ ONE BOOK FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST:

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia (Historical Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal**

In *One Crazy Summer*, eleven-year-old Delphine is like a mother to her two younger sisters, Vonetta and Fern. Ever since their mother, Cecile, left them seven years ago for a radical new life in California, she's had to be. 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.

Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli (Realistic Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal**

Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee might have lived a normal life if a freak accident hadn't made him an orphan. After living with his unhappy and uptight aunt and uncle for eight years, he decides to run--and not just run away, but run. This is where the myth of Maniac Magee begins, as he changes the lives of a racially divided small town with his amazing and legendary feats.

From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks (Realistic Fiction) **Number-one Kids Indie Next List ***

Parents Magazine Best Book of the Year * Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Book of the Year * SLJ Best Book of the Year * Kirkus Best Book of the Year * Junior Library Guild Selection * Edgar Award Nominee * Four-Starred Reviews

Zoe Washington isn't sure what to write. What does a girl say to the father she's never met, hadn't heard from until his letter arrived on her twelfth birthday, and who's been in prison for a terrible crime? A crime he says he never committed. Could Marcus really be innocent? Zoe is determined to uncover the truth. Even if it means hiding his letters and her investigation from the rest of her family. Everyone else thinks Zoe's worrying about doing a good job at her bakery internship and proving to her parents that she's worthy of auditioning for Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge. But with bakery confections on one part of her mind, and Marcus's conviction weighing heavily on the other, this is one recipe Zoe doesn't know how to balance. The only thing she knows to be true: Everyone lies.

Pilar Ramirez and the Escape From Zafa by Julian Randall (Fantasy/Mystery)

Twelve-year-old Pilar Violeta “Purp” Ramirez’s world is changing, and she doesn’t care for it one bit. Her Chicago neighborhood is gentrifying and her chores have doubled since her sister, Lorena, left for college. The only constant is Abuela and Mami’s code of silence around her cousin Natasha—who vanished in the Dominican Republic fifty years ago during the Trujillo dictatorship. When Pilar hears that Lorena’s professor studies such disappearances, she hops on the next train to dig deeper into her family’s mystery. After snooping around the professor’s empty office, she discovers a folder with her cousin’s name on it . . . and gets sucked into the blank page within.

Smile by Raina Telgemeier (Graphic Novel, Realistic Fiction) **Will Eisner Comic Industry Award Winner, Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book.**

Raina just wants to be a normal sixth grader. But one night after Girl Scouts she trips and falls, severely injuring her two front teeth. What follows is a long and frustrating journey with on-again, off-again braces, surgery, embarrassing headgear, and even a retainer with fake teeth attached. And on top of all that, there’s still more to deal with: a major earthquake, boy confusion, and friends who turn out to be not so friendly.

Atlas Obscura Explorer’s Guide for the World’s Most Adventurous Kid by Dylan Thurus and Rosemary Mosco (Non-Fiction)

***The Atlas Obscura Explorer’s Guide for the World’s Most Adventurous Kid* is a thrilling expedition to 100 of the most surprising, mysterious, and weird-but-true places on earth.**

For curious kids, this is the chance to embark on the journey of a lifetime—and see how faraway countries have more in common than you might expect! Hopscotch from country to country in a chain of connecting attractions: Explore Mexico’s glittering cave of crystals, then visit the world’s largest cave in Vietnam. Peer over a 355-foot waterfall in Zambia, then learn how Antarctica’s Blood Falls got their mysterious color. Or see mysterious mummies in Japan and France, then majestic ice caves in both Argentina and Austria.

New Kid by Jerry Craft (Graphic Novel, Realistic Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Author Award, and Kirkus Prize for Young Readers’ Literature.**

Seventh-grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade. As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds—and not really fitting into either one. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech (Historical Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal**

Thirteen-year-old Salamanca Tree Hiddle, proud of her country roots and the "Indian-ness in her blood," travels from Ohio to Idaho with her eccentric grandparents. Along the way, she tells them the story of Phoebe Winterbottom, who received mysterious messages, who met a "potential lunatic," and whose mother disappeared. As Sal entertains her grandparents with Phoebe’s outrageous story, her own story begins to unfold—the story of a thirteen-year-old girl whose only wish is to be reunited with her missing mother.

The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Speare (Historical Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal.** In this Newbery Medal–winning novel, a girl faces prejudice and accusations of witchcraft in seventeenth-century Connecticut. A classic of historical fiction that continues to resonate across the generations.

Sixteen-year-old Kit Tyler is marked by suspicion and disapproval from the moment she arrives on the unfamiliar shores of colonial Connecticut in 1687. Alone and desperate, she has been forced to leave her beloved home on the island of Barbados and join a family she has never met

Inside Out and Back Again by Thanh Hà Lai (Historical Fiction, Free Verse) **Winner of the Newbery Medal and National Book Award**

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.

CITY OF EMBER by Jeanne DuPrau. (Fantasy/Mystery) **Nominated to 28 State Award Lists! An American Library Association Notable Children's Book, A New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing Selection, A Kirkus Reviews Editors' Choice, A Child Magazine Best Children's Book, A Mark Twain Award Winner, A William Allen White Children's Book Award Winner**

Many hundreds of years ago, the city of Ember was created by the Builders to contain everything needed for human survival. It worked...but now the storerooms are almost out of food, crops are blighted, corruption is spreading through the city and worst of all—the lights are failing. Soon, Ember could be engulfed by darkness...But when two children, Lina and Doon, discover fragments of an ancient parchment, they begin to wonder if there could be a way out of Ember. Can they decipher the words from long ago and find a new future for everyone? Will the people of Ember listen to them?

THE MONA LISA VANISHES: A LEGENDARY PAINTER, A SHOCKING HEIST, AND THE BIRTH OF A GLOBAL CELEBRITY by Nicholas Day (Non-Fiction) **SIBERT MEDAL WINNER • BOSTON GLOBE—HORN BOOK AWARD WINNER • ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR: PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, BOOKLIST, KIRKUS REVIEWS, NPR, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS** A “WITTY THRILLER” (*THE NEW YORK TIMES*) FOR MIDDLE-GRADE READERS ABOUT HOW THE *MONA LISA* WAS STOLEN FROM THE LOUVRE, HOW THE ROBBERY MADE THE PORTRAIT THE MOST FAMOUS ARTWORK IN THE WORLD, AND HOW THE PAINTING BY LEONARDO DA VINCI SHOULD NEVER HAVE EXISTED AT ALL.

HATCHET by Gary Paulsen (Adventure) **Winner of the Newbery Medal**

When the plane crashes, killing the pilot, the sole survivor is Brian. He is alone in the Canadian wilderness with nothing but his clothing, a tattered windbreaker, and the hatchet his mother had given him as a present.

At first, consumed by despair and self-pity, Brian slowly learns survival skills—how to make a shelter for himself, how to hunt and fish and forage for food, how to make a fire—and even finds the courage to start over from scratch when a tornado ravages his campsite. When Brian is finally rescued after fifty-four days in the wild, he emerges from his ordeal with new patience and maturity, and a greater understanding of himself and his parents.

Lost in the Pacific-1942 by Tod Olson (Adventure) On October 21, 1942, a B-17 bomber drones high over the Pacific Ocean, sending a desperate SOS into the air. The crew is carrying America's greatest living war hero on a secret mission deep into the battle zone, but the plane is lost, burning through its final gallons of fuel. At 1:30 p.m., there is only one choice left: an emergency landing at sea. If the crew survives the impact, they will be left stranded without food or water hundreds of miles from civilization. Eight men. Three inflatable rafts. Sixty-eight million square miles of ocean. What will it take to make it back alive? *Lost in the Pacific* vividly retells this incredible true story for a young audience and launches an exciting narrative nonfiction series: *Lost*. Featuring black and white photographs, maps, and diagrams that bring each story to life, *Lost* is the perfect nonfiction companion series for older fans of *I Survived* and other adventure stories.

Step Up To the Plate, Maria Singh by Uma Krishnaswami (Historical Fiction) **The Amelia Bloomer Book List Award**

Nine-year-old Maria Singh longs to play softball in the first-ever girls' team forming in Yuba City, California. It's the spring of 1945, and World War II is dragging on. Miss Newman, Maria's teacher, is inspired by Babe Ruth and the All-American Girls' League to start a girls' softball team at their school. Meanwhile, Maria's parents--Papi from India and Mama from Mexico--can no longer protect their children from prejudice and from the discriminatory laws of the land. When the family is on the brink of losing their farm, Maria must decide if she has what it takes to step up and find her voice in an unfair world. In this fascinating middle-grade novel, award-winning author Uma Krishnaswami sheds light on a little-known chapter of American history set in a community whose families made multicultural choices before the word had been invented.

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L'Engle (Science Fiction) **Winner of the Newbery Medal. Time Magazine's 100 Best Fantasy Books of All Time.**

Late one night, three otherworldly creatures appear and sweep Meg Murry, her brother Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin O'Keefe away on a mission to save Mr. Murray, who has gone missing while doing top-secret work for the government. They travel via tesseract--a wrinkle that transports one across space and time--to the planet Camazotz, where Mr. Murray is being held captive. There they discover a dark force that threatens not only Mr. Murray but the safety of the whole universe.