8th Grade Summer Reading 2017

Directions for summer reading:

You must read the required core novel. In addition to the required core novel, you must read one other book (from any category) from the Additional Reading Requirement list as part of your summer reading requirement. Therefore, you will read two books for your required summer reading assignment—House on Mango Street and one of the other books listed below. Please choose a book that you have not yet read. You must complete both the required core novel and the additional reading requirement novel by the first day of school.

Required Core Novel

**House on Mango Street** by Sandra Cisneros
Told in a series of vignettes stunning for their eloquence, the *House on Mango Street* is Sandra Cisneros's greatly admired novel of a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Acclaimed by critics, beloved by children, their parents and grandparents, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, it has entered the canon of coming-of-age classics. Sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous, it tells the story of Esperanza Cordero, whose neighborhood is one of harsh realities and harsh beauty. Esperanza doesn't want to belong—not to her rundown neighborhood, and not to the low expectations the world has for her. Esperanza's story is that of a young girl coming into her power, and inventing for herself what she will become.

Additional Reading Requirement Book List by Category

**Issues of Identity**

**Skinny** by Donna Cooner
Cooner fictionalizes her experiences with extreme-weight-loss surgery. Ever Davies, 15, thinks she would be perfect for the part of Cinderella in her high school musical. She can sing, she knows what it's like to have a stepmother and stepsisters at home, and most people tend to ignore her since she weighs more than 300 pounds. Even Jackson, a childhood friend and now a hunk, looks right through her. Food has been a comfort since her mother died; however, her weight is becoming a serious health issue. And Skinny, the little voice in her head, keeps up a running commentary about Ever's weight and total incompetence. Despite her concerns about the risks of surgery, Ever finally undergoes gastric bypass. Her geeky friend, Rat, stands by her throughout the process, helping her chart her progress with pounds lost and pertinent songs. As she loses weight, Ever learns about the people around her—her stepsister Briella, who uses shopping to soothe herself when her dad ignores her; her new friend, Whitney; and even Rat, who might be Prince Charming in disguise. She forces herself to enroll in drama class to qualify for the musical and finds that she enjoys it. And as she becomes more confident, she realizes that Skinny's voice isn't as loud as it once was. (blurb from Amazon)

**Ready Player One** by Ernest Cline
In the year 2044, reality is an ugly place. The only time teenage Wade Watts really feels alive is when he's jacked into the virtual utopia known as the OASIS. Wade's devoted his life to studying the puzzles hidden within this world's digital confines—puzzles that are based on their creator's
obsession with the pop culture of decades past and that promise massive power and fortune to whoever can unlock them. But when Wade stumbles upon the first clue, he finds himself beset by players willing to kill to take this ultimate prize. The race is on, and if Wade's going to survive, he'll have to win—and confront the real world he's always been so desperate to escape. (blurb from Amazon)

_Born Confused_ by Tanuja Desai Hidier
Cross-cultural comedy about finding your place in America . . . and finding your heart wherever, from an amazing new young author. Dimple Lala doesn't know what to think. She's spent her whole life resisting her parents' traditions. But now she's turning seventeen and things are more complicated than ever. She's still recovering from a year-old break-up and her best friend isn't around the way she used to be. Then, to make matters worse, her parents arrange for her to meet a "suitable boy." Of course, it doesn't go well . . . until Dimple goes to a club and finds him spinning a magical web of words and music. Suddenly the suitable boy is suitable because of his sheer unsuitability. Complications ensue. This is a story about finding yourself, finding your friends, finding love, and finding your culture -- sometimes where you least expect it. Also acceptable as a book choice only if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: _Bombay Blues_. (blurb from Amazon)

_The Berlin Boxing Club_ by Robert Sharenow
Fourteen-year-old Karl Stern has never thought of himself as a Jew. But to the bullies at his school in Nazi-era Berlin, it doesn't matter that Karl has never set foot in a synagogue or that his family doesn't practice religion. Demoralized by relentless attacks on a heritage he doesn't accept as his own, Karl longs to prove his worth to everyone around him. So when Max Schmeling, champion boxer and German national hero, makes a deal with Karl's father to give Karl boxing lessons, Karl sees it as the perfect chance to reinvent himself. A skilled cartoonist, Karl has never had an interest in boxing, but as Max becomes the mentor Karl never had, Karl soon finds both his boxing skills and his art flourishing. But when Nazi violence against Jews escalates, Karl must take on a new role: protector of his family. Karl longs to ask his new mentor for help, but with Max's fame growing, he is forced to associate with Hitler and other Nazi elites, leaving Karl to wonder where his hero's sympathies truly lie. Can Karl balance his dream of boxing greatness with his obligation to keep his family out of harm's way? (blurb from Scholastic)

_The Paladin Prophecy_ by Mark Frost
Will West is careful to live life under the radar. At his parents' insistence, he's made sure to get mediocre grades and to stay in the middle of the pack on his cross-country team. Then Will slips up, accidentally scoring off the charts on a nationwide exam. Now Will is being courted by an exclusive prep school . . . and followed by men driving black sedans. When Will suddenly loses his parents, he must flee to the school. There he begins to explore all that he's capable of—physical and mental feats that should be impossible—and learns that his abilities are connected to a struggle between titanic forces that has lasted for millennia. Also acceptable as a book choice only if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: _Alliance_ and _Rogue_. (blurb from Barnes and Noble)

Differences

_Bitter Melon_ by Cara Chow
Frances has one job in life: to get into Berkeley and become a doctor so that her mother's
ambitions will be realized. And Frances doesn't think there's anything wrong with that, until the day she accidentally steps into a speech class and begins to discover a talent her mother wouldn't approve of. Frances turns out to be a natural at debate and public speaking. But to win in competition, she needs to say things she really believes—and to hide what she's doing from her mother. And once Frances steps out beyond her narrowly prescribed life, she begins to question many things about the way she is raised. Why can't she go to a dance with a boy who likes her? Why can't she get a job, or have any money of her own? And most of all, why is her mother never happy with her? (blurb from Barnes and Noble)

Wolf Hollow by Lauren Wolk
Growing up in the shadows cast by two world wars, Annabelle has lived a mostly quiet, steady life in her small Pennsylvania town. Until the day new student Betty Glengarry walks into her class. Betty quickly reveals herself to be cruel and manipulative, and while her bullying seems isolated at first, things quickly escalate, and reclusive World War I veteran Toby becomes a target of her attacks. While others have always seen Toby’s strangeness, Annabelle knows only kindness. She will soon need to find the courage to stand as a lone voice of justice as tensions mount. (blurb from Amazon)

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander
"With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . . The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I’m delivering," announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he’s got mad beats, too, that tell his family's story in verse. Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story’s heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family. (blurb from Amazon)

Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell
Eleanor lives in a tiny house packed with younger siblings, a mother who is a shell of her former self, and a toxic stepfather. She wears thrift-store clothing embellished with her own style, is overweight, and has wild red hair. Her first day on the bus no one budges to make room for her to sit. Except Park. Park is half Korean, which is rare for the flats of Omaha, Nebraska. He loves comic books, wears a black trench coat, and practices martial arts. Slowly but powerfully, Eleanor and Park fall in love through mix tapes, comic books, and what seems like an impossibility: the recognition of another unique soul dropped perfectly into an empty space that didn't realize it was waiting to be filled. But when circumstances test their relationship, can love survive? (blurb from Scholastic)

Egg & Spoon: A Novel by Gregory Maguire
Elena Rudina lives in the impoverished Russian countryside, and there is no food. But then a train arrives in the village, a train carrying a cornucopia of food, untold wealth, and a noble family destined to visit the Tsar in Saint Petersburg—a family that includes Ekaterina, a girl of Elena’s age. When the two girls' lives collide, an adventure is set in motion, an escapade that includes mistaken identity, a monk locked in a tower, a prince traveling incognito, and—in a starring role only Gregory Maguire could have conjured—Baba Yaga, witch of Russian folklore, in her ambulatory house perched on chicken legs. (blurb from Barnes and Noble)
Facing Obstacles

*Sacred* by Elana K. Arnold
Growing up on Catalina Island, off the California coast, Scarlett Wenderoth has led a fairly isolated life. After her brother dies, her isolation deepens as she withdraws into herself, shutting out her friends and boyfriend. Her parents, shattered by their own sorrow, fail to notice Scarlett's pain and sudden alarming thinness. Scarlett finds pleasure only on her horse, escaping to the heart of the island on long, solitary rides. One day, as she races around a bend, Scarlett is startled by a boy who raises his hand in warning and says one word: "Stop." The boy—intense, beautiful—is Will Cohen, a newcomer to the island. For reasons he cant or won't explain, he's drawn to Scarlett and feels compelled to keep her safe. To keep her from wasting away. His meddling infuriates Scarlett, though she can't deny her attraction to him. As their relationship blossoms into love, Scarlett's body slowly awakens at Will's touch. But just when her grief begins to ebb, she makes a startling discovery about Will, a discovery he's been grappling with himself. A discovery that threatens to force them apart. And if it does, Scarlett fears she will unravel all over again. Also acceptable as a book choice *only* if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: *Splendor.* (blurb from elanaarnold.com)

*The Girl Who Threw Butterflies* by Mick Cochrane
In this sensitive sports novel, a thoughtful eighth grader works through the grief she feels over her father's death. In the months following his car accident, Molly's comfortable life has been turned upside down and her mother has become a stranger. Molly and her father had always been close; as they played catch together, he passed along his love of baseball and much of his philosophy of life as well. A loyal fan of lovable losers like the Chicago Cubs, he taught Molly to throw a knuckleball, a pitch that flutters like a butterfly. He told her: "You don't aim a butterfly. You release it." Molly finds comfort in her memories and decides to try out for the boys' baseball team. She meets some resistance from her teammates, but with the help of a sympathetic coach and friends, she earns a spot on the team. (blurb from School Library Journal)

*Whirligig* by Paul Fleischman
With a family always on the move, popularity and the ability to fit in quickly are vital to Brent Bishop's high school survival. When he blows his chances with the girl of his dreams in front of everyone, he's devastated. Brent tries to end it all in a fatal car crash, but instead he finds an unlikely beginning. He's sent on a journey of repentance—a cross-country trip building whirligigs. His wind toys are found by people in need: a Maine schoolgirl yearning for her first love, a Miami street-sweeper desperate for peace and quiet, a kid in Washington who just wants to play baseball, and a San Diego teenager dealing with loss. Brent's whirligigs bring hope to others, but will they be able to heal the wounds deep inside himself? (blurb from Barnes and Noble)

*Hitch* by Jeanette Ingold
Teenager Moss Trawnley is in desperate need of work, and so he decides to head out west as a member of Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps to help protect Montana's wildlife from devastating erosion and wildfires. Despite the grueling work, Moss has time to play baseball, make lifelong friends, and rediscover what he almost lost in the Great Depression: himself. Bringing an important era of U.S. history to life, this riveting coming-of-age story will appeal to any teen who has dreamed of adventure and survival in the great outdoors. (blurb from Amazon)
El Deafo by Cece Bell
Going to school and making new friends can be tough. But going to school and making new friends while wearing a bulky hearing aid strapped to your chest? That requires superpowers! In this funny, poignant graphic novel memoir, author/illustrator Cece Bell chronicles her hearing loss at a young age and her subsequent experiences with the Phonic Ear, a very powerful—and very awkward—hearing aid. The Phonic Ear gives Cece the ability to hear—sometimes things she shouldn’t—but also isolates her from her classmates. She really just wants to fit in and find a true friend, someone who appreciates her as she is. After some trouble, she is finally able to harness the power of the Phonic Ear and become “El Deafo, Listener for All.” And more importantly, declare a place for herself in the world and find the friend she’s longed for. (blurb from Amazon)

Sci-Fi-Ish

The Assault by Brian Falkner
It's 2030, and humanity is losing the war against alien invaders. A Band of Brothers meets Ender's Game in this sci-fi military thriller. A team of six has been chosen to infiltrate the enemy's headquarters in the heart of the Australian Outback. The six teens have been modified to look like aliens. They have spent years mastering alien culture so that they can talk, act—even think—like their enemies. But from the start, the recon mission goes terribly wrong. It's only when they are close to discovering the shocking truth of the aliens' plans that the team is forced to ask: Who among them is a traitor? Also acceptable as a book choice only if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: Task Force and Ice War. (blurb from Amazon)

The Limit by Kristen Landon
With the first sentence of this eerie futuristic novel, readers are thrust into a fast-paced thriller that doesn't let up for a moment. In a world not too far removed from our own, kids are being taken away to special workhouses if their families exceed the monthly debt limit imposed by the government. Thirteen-year-old Matt briefly wonders if he might be next, but quickly dismisses the thought. After all, his parents are financially responsible, unlike the parents of those other kids. As long as his parents remain within their limit, the government will be satisfied and leave them alone. But all it takes is one fatal visit to the store to push Matt's family over their limit, and to change his life forever. (blurb from Scholastic)

Crewel: A Novel by Gennifer Albin
Incapable. Awkward. Artless. That's what the other girls whisper behind her back. But sixteen-year-old Adelice Lewys has a secret: She wants to fail. Gifted with the ability to weave time with matter, she's exactly what the Guild is looking for, and in the world of Arras, being chosen to work the looms is everything a girl could want. It means privilege, eternal beauty, and being something other than a secretary. It also means the power to manipulate the very fabric of reality. But if controlling what people eat, where they live, and how many children they have is the price of having it all, Adelice isn't interested. Not that her feelings matter, because she slipped and used her hidden talent for a moment. Now she has one hour to eat her mom's overcooked pot roast. One hour to listen to her sister's academy gossip and laugh at her dad's jokes. One hour to pretend everything's okay. And one hour to escape. Because tonight, they'll come for her. Also acceptable as a book choice only if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: Altered and Unraveled. (blurb from Barnes and Noble)
**Variant** by Robison E. Wells

Benson Fisher thought that a scholarship to Maxfield Academy would be the ticket out of his dead-end life. He was wrong. Now he's trapped in a school that's surrounded by a razor-wire fence, where video cameras monitor his every move—and where breaking the rules equals death. All Benson wants is to find a way out. But when he stumbles upon the real secret the school has been hiding, he realizes that escape may be impossible. Also acceptable as a book choice **only** if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: *Feedback.* (blurb from Barnes and Noble)

**The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf** by Ambelin Kwaymullina

They’re known as Firestarters. Boomers. Skychangers. The government calls them Illegals — children with inexplicable abilities — and detains them in menacing facilities so that society is kept out of harm’s way. Ashala Wolf and her Tribe of fellow Illegals have taken refuge in the Firstwood, a forest eerily conscious of its inhabitants, where they do their best to survive and where they are free to practice their abilities. But when Ashala is compelled to venture outside her territory, she is betrayed by a friend and captured by an enemy. Injured and vulnerable, with her own Sleepwalker ability blocked, Ashala is forced to succumb to a machine that will pull secrets from her mind. It’s only a matter of time before the machine ferrets out the location of the Tribe. Her betrayer, Justin Connor, is ever-present, saving her life when she wishes to die and watching her every move. Will the Tribe survive the interrogation of Ashala Wolf? Also acceptable as a book choice **only** if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: *The Disappearance of Ember Crow* and *The Foretelling of Georgie Spider.* (blurb from Amazon)

**Real Life or something like it** (includes historical fiction)

*Brown girl dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson

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. (blurb from Amazon)

**Chains** by Laurie Halse Anderson

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. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom. Also acceptable as a book choice **only** if you have already read the first book is the next book in the series: *Forge* and *Ashes.* (blurb from Amazon)
Flags of our Fathers: Heroes of Iwo Jima by James Bradley
Now abridged for young people. The unforgettable chronicle of perhaps the most famous moment in American military history: the raising of the U. S. flag at Iwo Jima. Here is the true story behind the immortal photograph that has come to symbolize the courage and indomitable will of America. In February 1945, American Marines plunged into the surf at Iwo Jima-and into history. The son of one of the flag raisers has written a powerful account of six very different men who came together in the heroic battle for the Pacific's most crucial island. (blurb from Scholastic)

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park
The New York Times bestseller A Long Walk to Water begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about two eleven-year-olds in Sudan, a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours’ walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the “lost boys” of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya’s in an astonishing and moving way. Based on a true story. (blurb from Amazon)

Witches! The Absolutely True Tale of Disaster in Salem by Rosalyn Schanzer
In the little colonial town of Salem Village, Massachusetts, two girls began to twitch, mumble, and contort their bodies into strange shapes. The doctor tried every remedy, but nothing cured the young Puritans. He grimly announced the dire diagnosis: the girls were bewitched! And then the accusations began. The riveting, true story of the victims, accused witches, crooked officials, and mass hysteria that turned a mysterious illness affecting two children into a witch hunt that took over a dozen people’s lives and ruined hundreds more unfolds in chilling detail in this young adult book by award-winning author and illustrator Rosalyn Schanzer. With a powerful narrative, chilling primary source accounts, a design evoking the period, and stylized black-white-and-red scratchboard illustrations of young girls having wild fits in the courtroom, witches flying overhead, and the Devil and his servants terrorizing the Puritans, this book will rivet young readers with novelistic power. The 17th-century saga remains hauntingly resonant as people struggle even today with the urgent need to find someone to blame for their misfortunes. (blurb from Barnes and Noble)