

Summer 2023 Junior High Reading List

Each junior high student is expected to read at least two books over the summer. One is assigned to every member of the class and is listed below. Students should read, study, and take notes, so they are ready for activities, assignments, and quizzes when the school year begins. Students need to bring a copy of the assigned book to school along with notes and have both available for that first day of class in the 2023-2024 school year.

6th Graders

The Giver by Lois Lowry

7th Graders

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate Di Camillo

(Students were given a copy of this book at the end of their 6th grade year. It should be returned in good condition when requested during the first trimester of the upcoming year.)

8th Graders

The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch

The second book is the student's choice, but it must come from the following list or be approved in advance. Students are required to prepare an original PowerPoint or similar slide presentation of the book. Your presentation must include at least six slides in addition to the title slide. Presentations should exhibit original thought and effort. They should include information about the theme or life lesson and the personal and educational value of the book. Presentations should also include the student's opinion of the book and whether he or she would recommend it to others and why.

Most of the following books can be found on the Scholastic website. All of the books can be found on Amazon or at Barnes and Noble. Choices on the first part of the list include a short summary and suggested grade levels. All junior high students may choose any book from the list, regardless of suggested grade level, so long as they have never read the book prior to this assignment.

This is Your Time by Ruby Bridges. Delacorte (Gr. 4–7)

In this short but moving book, Ruby Bridges, who integrated the New Orleans public schools in 1960 as a six-year-old, describes her pivotal role in civil rights history and encourages others to continue on the path toward social justice.

Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli (5-6)

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 difficult aunt and uncle for eight years, he decides to run--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.

Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans by Kadir Nelson (6-12)

This book is a story of hope, inspiration, and courage. It is also the story of injustice; of a country divided by law, education, and wealth. It is the story of a people whose struggles and achievements helped define their country. This is the story of the men, women, and children who toiled in the hot sun picking cotton for their masters; it's about the America ripped in two by Jim Crow laws; it's about the brothers and sisters of all colors who rallied against those who would bar a child from an education. It's a story of discrimination and broken promises, determination and triumphs. (2012 Winner of the Coretta Scott King Author Book Award)

Ungifted, by Gordon Korman

This story is about a middle school boy, a bit of a troublemaker, who accidentally ends up in a gifted program.

Genesis Begins Again by Alicia D. Williams (6-8)

This novel tells the story of a thirteen-year-old who must overcome internalized racism and a verbally abusive family to finally learn to love herself.

These Unlucky Stars by Gillian McDunn (The brightest friendships are unexpected.)

One of the many life lessons learned from this book is that real friendship can enrich life and bring happiness. Readers learn how important it is to open their hearts and minds.

Crow by Barbara Wright (6-10)

The summer of 1898 is filled with difficulties for 11-year-old Moses. He's growing apart from his best friend; his superstitious Boo-Nanny butts heads constantly with his father, and his mother is reeling from the discovery of a family secret. There are good times too. He's teaching his grandmother how to read. For the first time she's sharing stories about her life as a slave. And his father and his friends are finally getting the respect and positions of power they've earned in their community. But not everyone is happy with the political changes at play, and some will do anything, even participate in a violent plot.

A Single Shard, by Linda Sue Park(5-8)

This award-winning book tells the story of an orphan boy with the dream of becoming a master potter and his adventure in ancient Korea

The Glory Field by Walter Dean Meyers (8-12)

This novel follows five generations of one African American family from Africa to a South Carolina plantation through the Civil War, to the end of segregation, and beyond, to a moving and redemptive finale, when a young drug-addicted cousin is brought home to the glory field for a day of reunion and renewal. It is a story of pride, determination, struggle, and love. It connects the people to the piece of land that holds them together throughout it all.

Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom by Elspeth Leacock, Lynda Blackmon Lowery, Susan Washburn Buckley (6 -10)

This book is a memoir of the Civil Rights Movement from one of its youngest heroes. As the youngest marcher in the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, Lynda Blackmon Lowery proved that young adults can be heroes. Jailed eleven times before her fifteenth birthday, Lowery fought alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. for the rights of African Americans. In this book, she shows what it means to fight nonviolently and to be part of changing American history.

Now or Never by Ray Anthony Shephard (6-8)

This book includes dual biographies of the war correspondents who served in the well-respected black regiment that fought to end slavery.

The View from Saturday, by E.L. Konigsburg

After a car accident leaves her a paraplegic, Mrs. Olinski returns to teaching and chooses four students from her 6th grade class to compete in an academic competition. Each student has a unique story and brings something important to the team.

Fort Mose by Glinnett Tilley Turner (6-10)

This book tells the story of the first free African settlement to exist legally in colonial America, established in St. Augustine, Florida in 1738. It includes over forty images, as well as notes on the uncovering of the fort.”

We Are Not Yet Equal by Carol Anderson (7-10)

A history of racism and oppression in America

Elijah of Buxton by Christopher Paul Curtis (6-8) Coretta Scott King Award and a Newbery Honor Book for 2008)

This is the tale of eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman. The first child born into freedom in Buxton, Canada, a settlement of runaway slaves. Elijah is best known in his hometown as the boy who threw up on Frederick Douglass. (He was just a baby then!) Things change when a former slave calling himself the Right Reverend Zephariah W. Connerly the Third steals money from Elijah's friend Mr. Leroy, who has been saving to buy his family out of captivity in the South. Elijah joins Mr. Leroy on a dangerous journey to America in pursuit of the disreputable preacher, and he discovers firsthand the unimaginable horrors of the life his parents fled -if he can find the courage to go back home.

Courage Has No Color by Tanya Lee Stone (5-8)

“During World War II as thousands of American soldiers are fighting overseas against the injustices brought on by Hitler, the Triple Nickles, America's first black paratroopers, train to fight against discrimination at home and abroad.”

Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule by Harriette Gillem Robinet and Wendell Minor (5-7)

“Like other ex-slaves, Paschal and his brother, Gideon, have been promised 40 acres and maybe a mule. But the notorious night riders have plans to take it away, threatening to tear the beautiful freedom that the two boys are enjoying for the first time in their young lives.”

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor (6-8)

“The land is all-important to the Logan family. But it takes a while for Cassie and her three brothers to understand just how lucky they are to have it. They must learn the hard way that having a place they can call their own in rural Mississippi permits the Logans the luxuries of pride and courage that their poor black sharecropper neighbors can't afford.”
(Winner of the 1977 Newbery Medal and nominated for the National Book Award)

Anne of Green Gables, by L.M. Montgomery (4-8)

Considered a classic, this book is set in Canada and tells the story of an orphan girl who finds a home when sent by mistake to two middle-aged siblings who were hoping to find a boy to work on their farm.

Circle of Gold by Candy Dawson Boyd (4-7)

“This Coretta Scott King Award Honor Book and Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies tells the story of one fatherless young girl who tries her best to improve her family's situation.

After the death of her father, Mattie attempts to bring her family closer together and bring back the happiness they seem to have lost.”

Zora and Me by T. R. Simon (6-12)

“Racial violence threatens a peaceful African-American town in 1900's Florida in a novel inspired by the childhood of Zora Neale Hurston. The story involves a shape-shifting gator man who lurks in the marshes, waiting to steal human souls. But when boastful Sonny Wrapped loses a wrestling match with an elusive alligator named Ghost, and a man is found murdered by the railroad tracks soon after, young Zora's tales of a mythical evil creature take on an ominous and far more complicated complexion, jeopardizing the peace and security of an entire town and forcing three children to come to terms with the dual-edged power of pretending. Zora's best friend, Carrie, narrates this coming-of-age story set in the Eden-like town of Eatonville, Florida, where justice isn't merely an exercise in retribution but a testimony to the power of community, love, and pride.”

Stealing Home by Barry Denenberg 5-7

“*Stealing Home* is the account of a man who was determined to play baseball regardless of the color of his skin. This biography tells the story of Jackie Robinson, the first black man to play in baseball's major leagues in the United States. In his willingness to fight for his rights and the rights of others both on and off the baseball field, Jackie Robinson was not only a great ball player, but also a true American hero. He once said, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." Robinson truly lived an important life, which still influences people today.

The Skin I'm In by Sharon G. Flake 8-12

“Maleeka Madison is a strong student who has had enough of being teased about her “too black” skin and handmade clothes. So, when she starts seventh grade, she decides to adopt a sassier attitude and a tougher circle of friends. The last thing she expects is to get “messed up” with another “freak,” but that's exactly what happens. After a new teacher, whose face is disfigured from a skin disease, enters her life, will Maleeka be able to learn to love the skin she's in.”

(Winner of the 1999 Coretta Scott King John Steptoe Award for new authors)

Gifted Hands, the Revised Kids' Edition: The Ben Carson Story by Gregg Lewis (6-12)

When Ben Carson was in school, his classmates called him the class dummy. Many—including Ben himself—doubted that he would ever amount to anything. But his mother never let him quit. She encouraged Ben to do better and reach higher for his dreams, and eventually he discovered a deep love of learning. He became one of the world's greatest pediatric neurosurgeons. Through determination and a lot of hard work, Ben overcame his many obstacles.(This book was recommended by Miss Mitchell).

Lions of Little Rock by Barbara Schultz (5-7)

“*The Lions of Little Rock* is a fictional story about a meaningful friendship between two girls during the late 1950s in Little Rock, Arkansas. The novel is set against the backdrop of high school closings by local and state governments opposed to integrating Little Rock schools. Children and adults in the novel struggle to form their own opinions on the issue, and they grapple with how much to speak up in the face of real threats of being ostracized, losing a job, or being violently attacked.”

Frank Einstein and the Antimatter Motor: Book One, by John Scieszcza

This book combines a great story with science, technology, and art.

Witness by Karen Hesse (6-12)

“The Ku Klux Klan had its beginning in the South immediately following the Civil War; its original purpose was to prevent freed slaves from gaining full rights of citizenship. Revived in the early years of the 20th century, the Klan expanded its campaign of hate and violence to include newer immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe, and especially Jews and Catholics. Spreading into all parts of America, the Klan attempted to infiltrate small towns and enlist members by creating fear of those who are “different” and professing to embrace truly “American” values. *Witness* tells the story of the Klan’s attempt to recruit members in a small town in Vermont in 1924. Leanora Sutter, a young Black girl, feels isolated by racial prejudice and her mother’s recent death. She is befriended by Esther Hirsh, a younger Jewish girl, whose innocence and natural optimism provide a sharp contrast to the other characters. Readers hear the voices of 11 residents of the town and experience events from many different points of view, in the form of a poetic play in five acts. As the characters speak directly to the reader and relate the acts of hate and love, violence and peace, terror and kindness, they illuminate the full range of human strengths and weaknesses in one small town.”

Hoot, by Carl Hiaasen

The story of an underdog who finds his way as the new kid in school.

March: Book One by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell (7+)

“*March* is a look back at the early days of the Civil Rights Movement in the American South. Both a history and a memoir of Congressman John Lewis’ early life, the book emphasizes the power of nonviolent protest and shows how people can band together to affect social change. It contains some violence, including beatings by police and the murder of a 14-year-old boy, but these scenes are not graphic or lingered upon. Bigoted characters use the

"N" word throughout the book. (If you choose this book, please discuss these issues with a parent and prepare yourself for the violence and language.)

Wonder, by R.J. Palacio

Wonder is the story of Auggie, a boy with severe facial deformities, who heads to public school in fifth grade after years of being homeschooled. His story is told from the perspective of different people who encounter him. It is a story of growth, acceptance, truth and courage.

Make Your Bed by William H. McRaven (7-12)

“Former Navy SEAL William H. McRaven teaches you how this menial task leads to big rewards. Using advice he gave graduating college students during a commencement address, McRaven develops 10 lessons for life learned during his time as a SEAL. Follow these lessons to lead a more meaningful life, and you just might change the world in the process.”

Eight Keys, by Suzanne LaFleu

Elise, who has been facing family issues and bullying in middle school, receives a key as a 12th birthday gift. The story is filled with suspense as she realizes the key fits one of eight doors in the barn.

Refugee, by Alan Gratz

This book tells the story of refugees from three different perspectives. Themes of courage and family and home are woven throughout the story.

The Magician's Nephew by C.S. Lewis

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis

The Diary of Anne Frank