



## Sixth Grade English Summer Reading 2022

### The Rationale

Summer reading has a large impact on students and their achievement. It can improve reading comprehension and stamina, vocabulary, and written expression. It can build empathy and awareness about cultures, historical time periods, and life experiences different from our own. Summer reading reinforces the Middle School English Department's three enduring understandings:

- Literature expands our understanding of the world, humanity, and ourselves.
- Used strategically and with purpose, language empowers.
- Language sparks joy, inspiration, beauty, and meaning.

In her writing on best practices, Kyleene Beers, literacy expert and former president of the National Council of Teachers of English, references studies showing that children who do not read during summer vacation lose two to three months of reading achievement. However, middle school students who read as few as five to six books over the summer do not suffer from that summer achievement loss.

Because we understand that choice in book selection motivates students to read, we have curated a list of titles. Students are to read at least two works from the lists below, in addition to a third book of their choosing. We encourage students, of course, to read more than three books over the summer, either from the grade-level list or of their own choosing. We just want students to read as much as possible!

### The Assignment

The assignment is **to read at least three books** this summer. One book should come from **Group A** and another from **Group B**. The third book can be from either list, or it can be one of your own choosing, so long as you have not already read the book. All three books must be first-time reads. Of course, we encourage you to read even more books over the summer. Students, you may read the paper, digital, or audio version of the books or any combination of formats.

As you are reading **each** of the three books, use two sticky notes to mark **two** different short passages in each book that you find to be particularly significant, well written, exciting, thematic, or powerful. That would be a total of **six marked passages** among three different books. If you read a digital version of the text, then highlight the passages. If you read a

library book that must be returned, then copy the passages exactly or photograph them, making sure to include the page number. Bring the books or copied passages or photos to the very first English class of the year, and be ready for an assignment using these passages.

## **Group A - World Literature:** *Choose at least one*

### ***I Lived on Butterfly Hill* by Marjorie Agosin**

Celeste Marconi is a dreamer. She lives peacefully among friends and neighbors and family in the idyllic town of Valparaiso, Chile—until one day when warships are spotted in the harbor and schoolmates start disappearing from class without a word. Celeste doesn't quite know what is happening, but one thing is clear: no one is safe, not anymore. The country has been taken over by a government that declares artists, protestors, and anyone who helps the needy to be considered "subversive" and dangerous to Chile's future. So Celeste's parents—her educated, generous, kind parents—must go into hiding before they, too, "disappear." Before they do, however, they send Celeste to America to protect her. As Celeste adapts to her new life in Maine, she never stops dreaming of Chile. But even after democracy is restored to her home country, questions remain: Will her parents reemerge from hiding? Will she ever be truly safe again?

### ***Orange for the Sunsets* by Tina Athaide**

Asha and her best friend, Yesofu, never cared about the differences between them: Indian. African. Girl. Boy. Short. Tall. But when Idi Amin announces that Indians have ninety days to leave the country, suddenly those differences are the only things that people in Entebbe can see—not the shared after-school samosas or Asha cheering for Yesofu at every cricket game. Determined for her life to stay the same, Asha clings to her world tighter than ever before. But Yesofu is torn, pulled between his friends, his family, and a promise of a better future. Now as neighbors leave and soldiers line the streets, the two friends find that nothing seems sure—not even their friendship. Tensions between Indians and Africans intensify and the deadline to leave is fast approaching. Could the bravest thing of all be to let each other go?

### ***The Only Road* by Alexandra Diaz**

Twelve-year-old Jaime makes the treacherous and life-changing journey from his home in Guatemala to live with his older brother in the United States in this gripping and realistic middle-grade novel. Jaime is sitting on his bed drawing when he hears a scream. Instantly, he knows: Miguel, his cousin and best friend, is dead. Everyone in Jaime's small town in Guatemala knows someone who has been killed by the Alphas, a powerful gang that's known for violence and drug trafficking. Anyone who refuses to work for them is hurt or killed - like Miguel. With Miguel gone, Jaime fears that he is next. There's only one choice: accompanied by his cousin Ángela, Jaime must flee his home to live with his older brother in New Mexico. Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy's treacherous and life-changing journey.

***We are Power: How Nonviolent Activism Changes the World* by Todd Hasak-Lowy**

*We Are Power* brings to light the incredible individuals who have used nonviolent activism to change the world. The book explores questions such as what is nonviolent resistance and how does it work? In an age when armies are stronger than ever before, when guns seem to be everywhere, how can people confront their adversaries without resorting to violence themselves? Through key international movements as well as people such as Gandhi, Alice Paul, Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, and Václav Havel, this book discusses the components of nonviolent resistance. It answers the question “Why nonviolence?” by showing how nonviolent movements have succeeded again and again in a variety of ways, in all sorts of places, and always in the face of overwhelming odds.

***The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani**

It's 1947, and India, newly independent of British rule, has been separated into two countries: Pakistan and India. The divide has created much tension between Hindus and Muslims, and hundreds of thousands are killed crossing borders. Half-Muslim, half-Hindu twelve-year-old Nisha doesn't know where she belongs, or what her country is anymore. When Papa decides it's too dangerous to stay in what is now Pakistan, Nisha and her family become refugees and embark first by train but later on foot to reach her new home. The journey is long, difficult, and dangerous, and after losing her mother as a baby, Nisha can't imagine losing her homeland, too. But even if her country has been ripped apart, Nisha still believes in the possibility of putting herself back together. Told through Nisha's letters to her mother, *The Night Diary* is a heartfelt story of one girl's search for home, for her own identity...and for a hopeful future.

***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Young Readers Edition* by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer**

When a terrible drought struck William Kamkwamba's tiny village in Malawi, his family lost all of the season's crops, leaving them with nothing to eat and nothing to sell. William began to explore science books in his village library, looking for a solution. There, he came up with the idea that would change his family's life forever: he could build a windmill. Made out of scrap metal and old bicycle parts, William's windmill brought electricity to his home and helped his family pump the water they needed to farm the land. Retold for a younger audience, this exciting memoir shows how, even in a desperate situation, one boy's brilliant idea can light up the world.

***Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai**

Vietnam-born author Thanhha Lai bursts onto the literary scene with *Inside Out & Back Again*—her National Book Award-winning debut. Written in rich, free-verse poems, this moving tale follows a young Vietnamese girl as she leaves her war-torn homeland for America in 1975. With Saigon about to fall to the communists, ten-year-old Hà, her mother, and brothers are forced to flee their beloved city and head to the United States. But living in a new country isn't easy for Hà, and she finds adapting to its strange customs ever challenging.

***Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin**

In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, a young girl named Minli spends her days working hard in the fields and her nights listening to her father spin fantastic tales about the Jade Dragon and the Old Man of the Moon. Minli's mother, tired of their poor life, chides him for filling her

head with nonsense. But Minli believes these enchanting stories and embarks on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man of the Moon and ask him how her family can change their fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest.

***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.

***The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman**

Four determined homeless children make a life for themselves in Padma Venkatraman's stirring middle-grade debut. Life is harsh in Chennai's teeming streets, so when runaway sisters Viji and Rukku arrive, their prospects look grim. Very quickly, eleven-year-old Viji discovers how vulnerable they are in this uncaring, dangerous world. Fortunately, the girls find shelter--and friendship--on an abandoned bridge. With two homeless boys, Muthi and Arul, the group forms a family of sorts. And while making a living scavenging the city's trash heaps is the pits, the kids find plenty to laugh about and take pride in too. After all, they are now the bosses of themselves and no longer dependent on untrustworthy adults. But when illness strikes, Viji must decide whether to risk seeking help from strangers or to keep holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.

***Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga**

Jude never thought she'd be leaving her beloved older brother and father behind, all the way across the ocean in Syria. But when things in her hometown start becoming volatile, Jude and her mother are sent to live in Cincinnati with relatives. At first, everything in America seems too fast and too loud. The American movies that Jude has always loved haven't quite prepared her for starting school in the US—and her new label of “Middle Eastern,” an identity she's never known before. But this life also brings unexpected surprises—there are new friends, a whole new family, and a school musical that Jude might just try out for. Maybe America, too, is a place where Jude can be seen as she really is.

***I am Malala (Young Readers' Edition)* by Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick**

*I Am Malala* is the memoir of a remarkable teenage girl who risked her life for the right to go to school. Raised in a changing Pakistan by an enlightened father from a poor background and a beautiful, illiterate mother from a political family, Malala was taught to stand up for what she believes. *I Am Malala* tells her story of bravery and determination in the face of extremism, detailing the daily challenges of growing up in a world transformed by terror. Written for her peers with critically-acclaimed author Patricia McCormick, this important book is about the value of speaking out against intolerance and hate. It's a message of hope from one girl who dreams of education for every girl in every country.

**Group B - Literature on the U.S. Experience:**  
*Choose at least one*

***The Benefits of Being an Octopus* by Ann Braden**

Some people can do their homework. Some people get to have crushes on boys. Some people have other things they've got to do. Seventh-grader Zoey has her hands full as she takes care of her much younger siblings after school every day while her mom works her shift at the pizza parlor. Not that her mom seems to appreciate it. At least there's Lenny, her mom's boyfriend—they all get to live in his nice, clean trailer. At school, Zoey tries to stay under the radar. Her only friend Fuchsia has her own issues, and since they're in an entirely different world than the rich kids, it's best if no one notices them. Zoey thinks how much easier everything would be if she were an octopus: eight arms to do eight things at once. Incredible camouflage ability and steady, unblinking vision. Powerful protective defenses. Unfortunately, she's not totally invisible, and one of her teachers forces her to join the debate club. Even though Zoey resists participating, debate ultimately leads her to see things in a new way: her mom's relationship with Lenny, Fuchsia's situation, and her own place in this town of people who think they're better than her. Can Zoey find the courage to speak up, even if it means risking the most stable home she's ever had?

***Zenobia July* by Lisa Bunker**

Zenobia July is starting a new life. She used to live in Arizona with her father; now she's in Maine with her aunts. She used to spend most of her time behind a computer screen, improving her impressive coding and hacking skills; now she's coming out of her shell and discovering a community of friends at Monarch Middle School. People used to tell her she was a boy; now she's able to live openly as the girl she always knew she was. When someone anonymously posts hateful memes on her school's website, Zenobia knows she's the one with the abilities to solve the mystery, all while wrestling with the challenges of a new school, a new family, and coming to grips with presenting her true gender for the first time. Timely and touching, *Zenobia July* is, at its heart, a story about finding home.

***Efrén Divided* by Ernesto Cisneros**

Efrén Nava's Amá is his Superwoman—or Soperwoman, named after the delicious Mexican sopes his mother often prepares. Both Amá and Apá work hard all day to provide for the family, making sure Efrén and his younger siblings Max and Mía feel safe and loved. But Efrén worries about his parents; although he's American-born, his parents are undocumented. His worst nightmare comes true one day when Amá doesn't return from work and is deported across the border to Tijuana, México. Now more than ever, Efrén must channel his inner Soperboy to help take care of and try to reunite his family.

***Maybe He Just Likes You* by Barbara Dee**

For seventh-grader Mila, it starts with some boys giving her an unwanted hug on the school blacktop. A few days later, at recess, one of the boys (and fellow trumpet player) Callum tells Mila it's his birthday, and asks her for a "birthday hug." He's just being friendly, isn't he? And how can she say no? But Callum's hug lasts a few seconds too long, and feels... weird. According to her friend, Zara, Mila is being immature and overreacting. Doesn't she know what flirting looks like? But the boys don't leave Mila alone. On the bus. In the halls. During band practice—the one place Mila could always escape. It doesn't feel like flirting—so what is it? Thanks to a chance meeting, Mila begins to find solace in a new place: karate class. Slowly,

with the help of a fellow classmate, Mila learns how to stand her ground and how to respect others—and herself.

***Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart**

For readers who enjoyed *Wonder* and *Counting by 7's*, award-winning author Donna Gephart crafts a compelling dual narrative about two remarkable young people: Lily, a transgender girl, and Dunkin, a boy dealing with bipolar disorder. Their powerful story will shred your heart, then stitch it back together with kindness, humor, bravery, and love. Lily Jo McGrother, born Timothy McGrother, is a girl. But being a girl is not so easy when you look like a boy. Especially when you're in the eighth grade. Dunkin Dorfman, birth name Norbert Dorfman, is dealing with bipolar disorder and has just moved from the New Jersey town he's called home for the past thirteen years. This would be hard enough, but the fact that he is also hiding from a painful secret makes it even worse. One summer morning, Lily Jo McGrother meets Dunkin Dorfman, and their lives forever change.

***Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen**

Unfortunately, Roy's first acquaintance in Florida is Dana Matherson, a well-known bully. Then again, if Dana hadn't been sinking his thumbs into Roy's temples and mashing his face against the school-bus window, Roy might never have spotted the running boy. And the running boy is intriguing: he was running away from the school bus, carried no books, and here's the odd part—wore no shoes. Sensing a mystery, Roy sets himself on the boy's trail. The chase introduces him to potty-trained alligators, a fake-fart champion, some burrowing owls, a renegade eco-avenger, and several extremely poisonous snakes with unnaturally sparkling tails. Roy has most definitely arrived in Carl Hiaasen's Florida.

***Same Sun Here* by Silas House and Neela Vaswani**

Meena and River have a lot in common: fathers forced to work away from home to make ends meet, grandmothers who mean the world to them, and faithful dogs. But Meena is an Indian immigrant girl living in New York City's Chinatown, while River is a Kentucky coal miner's son. As Meena's family studies for citizenship exams and River's town faces devastating mountaintop removal, this unlikely pair become pen pals, sharing thoughts and, as their camaraderie deepens, discovering common ground in their disparate experiences. With honesty and humor, Meena and River bridge the miles between them, creating a friendship that inspires bravery and defeats cultural misconceptions. Narrated in two voices, each voice distinctly articulated by a separate gifted author, this chronicle of two lives powerfully conveys the great value of being and having a friend and the joys of opening our lives to others who live beneath the same sun.

***Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt**

Ally has been smart enough to fool a lot of smart people. Every time she lands in a new school, she is able to hide her inability to read by creating clever yet disruptive distractions. She is afraid to ask for help; after all, how can you cure dumb? However, her newest teacher Mr. Daniels sees the bright, creative kid underneath the trouble maker. With his help, Ally learns not to be so hard on herself and that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of. As her confidence grows, Ally feels free to be herself and the world starts opening up with possibilities. She discovers that there's a lot more to her—and to everyone—than a label, and that great minds don't always think alike.

### ***Kira-Kira* by Cynthia Kadohata**

kira-kira (kee' ra kee' ra): glittering; shining

Glittering. That's how Katie Takeshima's sister, Lynn, makes everything seem. The sky is kira-kira because its color is deep but see-through at the same time. The sea is kira-kira for the same reason. And so are people's eyes. When Katie and her family move from a Japanese community in Iowa to the Deep South of Georgia, it's Lynn who explains to her why people stop them on the street to stare. And it's Lynn who, with her special way of viewing the world, teaches Katie to look beyond tomorrow. But when Lynn becomes desperately ill, and the whole family begins to fall apart, it is up to Katie to find a way to remind them all that there is always something glittering, kira-kira, in the future.

### ***American as Paneer Pie* by Supriya Kelkar**

As the only Indian American kid in her small town, Lekha Divekar feels like she has two versions of herself: Home Lekha, who loves watching Bollywood movies and eating Indian food, and School Lekha, who pins her hair over her bindi birthmark and avoids confrontation at all costs, especially when someone teases her for being Indian. When a girl Lekha's age moves in across the street, Lekha is excited to hear that her name is Avantika and she's Desi, too! Finally, there will be someone else around who *gets* it. But as soon as Avantika speaks, Lekha realizes she has an accent. She's new to this country, and not at all like Lekha. To Lekha's surprise, Avantika does not feel the same way as Lekha about having two separate lives or about the bullying at school. Avantika doesn't take the bullying quietly. And she proudly displays her culture no matter where she is: at home or at school. When a racist incident rocks Lekha's community, Lekha realizes she must make a choice: continue to remain silent or find her voice before it's too late.

### ***When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller**

*Some stories refuse to stay bottled up...* When Lily and her family move in with her sick grandmother, a magical tiger straight out of her halmoni's Korean folktales arrives, prompting Lily to unravel a secret family history. Long, long ago, Halmoni stole something from the tigers. Now they want it back. And when one of the tigers approaches Lily with a deal--return what her grandmother stole in exchange for Halmoni's health--Lily is tempted to agree. But deals with tigers are never what they seem! With the help of her sister and her new friend Ricky, Lily must find her voice...and the courage to face a tiger. Tae Keller, the award-winning author of *The Science of Breakable Things*, shares a sparkling tale about the power of stories and the magic of family. Think *Walk Two Moons* meets *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*!

### ***Hello, Universe* by Erin Entrada Kelly**

In one day, four lives weave together in unexpected ways. Virgil Salinas is shy and kindhearted and feels out of place in his crazy-about-sports family. Valencia Somerset, who is deaf, is smart, brave, and secretly lonely, and she loves everything about nature. Kaori Tanaka is a self-proclaimed psychic, whose little sister, Gen, is always following her around. And Chet Bullens wishes the weird kids would just stop being so different so he can concentrate on basketball. They aren't friends, at least not until Chet pulls a prank that traps Virgil and his pet guinea pig at the bottom of a well. This disaster leads Kaori, Gen, and Valencia on an epic quest to find missing Virgil. Through luck, smarts, bravery, and a little help from the universe, a rescue is performed, a bully is put in his place, and friendship blooms.

***Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani LaRocca**

Reha feels torn between two worlds: school, where she's the only Indian American student, and home, with her family's traditions and holidays. But Reha's parents don't understand why she's conflicted—they only notice when Reha doesn't meet their strict expectations. Reha feels disconnected from her mother, or Amma, although their names are linked—Reha means “star” and Punam means “moon”—but they are a universe apart. Then Reha finds out that her Amma is sick. Really sick. Reha, who dreams of becoming a doctor even though she can't stomach the sight of blood, is determined to make her Amma well again. She'll be the perfect daughter, if it means saving her Amma's life.

***Hurricane Season* by Nicole Melleby**

For Fig's dad, hurricane season brings the music. For Fig, hurricane season brings the possibility of disaster. Fig, a sixth grader, loves her dad and the home they share in a beachside town. She does not love the long months of hurricane season. Her father, a once-renowned piano player, sometimes goes looking for the music in the middle of a storm. Hurricane months bring unpredictable good and bad days. More than anything, Fig wants to see the world through her father's eyes, so she takes an art class to experience life as an artist does. Then Fig's dad shows up at school, confused and looking for her. Not only does the class *not* bring Fig closer to understanding him, it brings social services to their door. As the walls start to fall around her, Fig is sure it's up to her alone to solve her father's problems and protect her family's privacy. But with the help of her best friend, a cute girl at the library, and a surprisingly kind new neighbor, Fig learns she isn't as alone as she once thought . . . and begins to compose her own definition of family.

***Strange Birds: A Field Guide to Ruffling Feathers* by Celia C. Pérez**

The story of four kids who form an alternative Scout troop that shakes up their sleepy Florida town. When three *very* different girls find a mysterious invitation to a lavish mansion, the promise of adventure and mischief is too intriguing to pass up. Ofelia Castillo (a budding journalist), Aster Douglas (a bookish foodie), and Cat Garcia (a rule-abiding birdwatcher) meet the kid behind the invite, Lane DiSanti, and it isn't love at first sight. But they soon bond over a shared mission to get the Floras, their local Scouts, to ditch an outdated tradition. In their quest for justice, independence, and an unforgettable summer, the girls form their own troop and find something they didn't know they needed: sisterhood.

***A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée**

Twelve-year-old Shayla is allergic to trouble. All she wants to do is to follow the rules. (Oh, and she'd also like to make it through seventh grade with her best friendships intact, learn to run track, and have a cute boy see past her giant forehead.) But in junior high, it's like all the rules have changed. Now she's suddenly questioning who her best friends are and some people at school are saying she's not black enough. Wait, *what*? Shay's sister, Hana, is involved in Black Lives Matter, but Shay doesn't think that's for her. After experiencing a powerful protest, though, Shay decides some rules are worth breaking. She starts wearing an armband to school in support of the Black Lives movement. Soon everyone is taking sides. And she is given an ultimatum. Shay is scared to do the wrong thing (and even more scared to do the right thing), but if she doesn't face her fear, she'll be forever tripping over the next hurdle. Now that's trouble, for real.

***Ghost* by Jason Reynolds**

Running. That's all Ghost (real name Castle Cranshaw) has ever known. But Ghost has been running for the wrong reasons—it all started with running away from his father, who, when Ghost was a very little boy, chased him and his mother through their apartment, then down the street, with a loaded gun, aiming to kill. Since then, Ghost has been the one causing problems—and running away from them—until he meets Coach, an ex-Olympic Medalist who sees something in Ghost: crazy natural talent. If Ghost can stay on track, literally and figuratively, he could be the best sprinter in the city. Can Ghost harness his raw talent for speed, or will his past finally catch up to him?

***Eleven* by Tom Rogers**

Alex Douglas always wanted to be a hero. But nothing heroic ever happened to Alex. Nothing, that is, until his eleventh birthday. When Alex rescues a stray dog as a birthday gift to himself, he doesn't think his life can get much better. Radar, his new dog, pretty much feels the same way. But this day has bigger things in store for both of them. This is a story about bullies and heroes. About tragedy and hope. About enemies with two legs and friends with four, and pesky little sisters and cranky old men, and an unexpected lesson in kindness delivered with a slice of pizza. This is Eleven: the journey of a boy turning eleven on 9/11.

***Holes* by Louis Sachar**

Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnatses. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the boys build character by spending all day, every day digging holes exactly five feet wide and five feet deep. There is no lake at Camp Green Lake. But there are an awful lot of holes. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. But what could be buried under a dried-up lake? Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.

If you have any questions, email the 6th Grade English teacher, Ms. Sumi at [ksumi@menloschool.org](mailto:ksumi@menloschool.org) or department chair Ms. Smith at [msmith@menloschool.org](mailto:msmith@menloschool.org)

\*Reviews courtesy of Amazon.