

Maryvale Preparatory School

Middle School

Summer Reading – 2018

6th Grade

Please read the following book over the summer. When you return in the fall, you will have the opportunity to discuss the book with other students and a faculty member. Happy reading!

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

Kirkus Reviews starred (December 15, 2011)

After being homeschooled for years, Auggie Pullman is about to start fifth grade, but he's worried: How will he fit into middle-school life when he looks so different from everyone else? Auggie has had 27 surgeries to correct facial anomalies he was born with, but he still has a face that has earned him such cruel nicknames as Freak, Freddy Krueger, Gross-out and Lizard face. Though "his features look like they've been melted, like the drippings on a candle" and he's used to people averting their eyes when they see him, he's an engaging boy who feels pretty ordinary inside. He's smart, funny, kind and brave, but his father says that having Auggie attend Beecher Prep would be like sending "a lamb to the slaughter." Palacio divides the novel into eight parts, interspersing Auggie's first-person narrative with the voices

7th and 8th Grade

Please choose a book from the list below. Pick a book you are interested in and want to discuss with other students. When you return in the fall, you will have the opportunity to discuss the book with other students and a faculty member. Happy reading!

Turtles All the Way Down by John Greene (8th grade only)

Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2018)

Five years after *The Fault in Our Stars* (rev. 3/12), Green returns to chart a different kind of debilitating illness. When we meet sixteen-year-old Aza Holmes in the cafeteria, her thoughts are laser-focused on her body's microbiome: "Admittedly, I have some anxiety problems, but I would argue it isn't irrational to be concerned about the fact that you are a skin-encased bacterial colony." Aza's obsessive compulsions, anxiety, and "invasive" thought-spirals only grow from there. Note-perfect narration--which seamlessly switches from first- to second-person during panic attacks--makes what should be objectively irrational seem relatable, even logical; readers' empathy with Aza continues to grow throughout the story. But *Turtles* is also a mystery and a romance. Aza and her vivacious best

friend, Daisy Ramirez, investigate the whereabouts of local billionaire Russell Pickett, who's running from criminal charges. Their sleuthing leads to Pickett's son Davis, Aza's childhood friend from "Sad Camp" (his mother had died, as had Aza's father). The stars don't seem aligned as Aza begins a tentative romance with kind, introspective Davis: her mental health deteriorates, and he struggles with being a guardian to his grief-stricken younger brother. These plot lines give the story momentum and shape, but its epicenter is a clear-eyed exploration of mental illness and of the deep existential revelations that suffering can engender. Green has proven himself a master manipulator of readers' feelings, but he is, as ever, benevolent in that role. What readers may shed in tears is repaid in hope, spiritual curiosity, and a deeper connection to the human experience. Katrina Hedeon

5 to 1 by Holly Bodger

School Library Journal (February 1, 2015)

Gr 7 Up-In this debut novel told in alternating points of view, one in poetry and one in prose, Bodger explores a future in which gender selection in India has led to there being five boys for every girl. The prose is captivating in its authenticity, portraying Kiran's point of view very well. The poetry is appropriately jarring and nuanced, showing many aspects of Sudasa's culture and lifestyle. Sudasa is about to come of age, meaning that she, along with many other girls just like her, will watch eight boys compete for her hand in marriage. Kiran is one of those boys, but he has a plan to escape the tests, his inevitable military assignment, and the oppression of his country. Sudasa struggles against her grandmother's strong and repressive influence, while Kiran battles pressures from the other boys in his testing group. Over days of trials and judging, Sudasa comes to realize that Kiran may have another agenda besides winning her hand in marriage. Meanwhile, Kiran comes to see that Sudasa is not just a power-hungry woman looking for a male companion to obey her every wish. What these two discover puts them on the cusp of changing their worlds forever. In a not-so-distant future, readers see the possibilities of giving too much power to one gender or the other, and the negative impact that inequality can have on young people and an entire country. VERDICT An engaging dystopian novel set in India that poignantly explores gender politics. - Eden Grey, Kenton County Public Library, KY (c) Copyright 2015. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

See No Color by Shannon Gibney

Publishers Weekly (September 7, 2015)

Debut novelist Gibney offers an unflinching look at the complexities of racial identity in the story of a black teenager trying to understand her place in the white family who adopted her. Gibney, herself a transracial adoptee, creates a visceral sense of isolation for 16-year-old Alex. Despite the love of baseball that unites her family (Alex and her brother are excellent players, and their father is their coach), she has almost no one to confide in: friends are nearly absent, and she doesn't know any adoptees who share her situation. When Alex finds hidden letters from

her birth father, her questions mount. Should she contact him? Alex's uneasiness with the body beneath her skin is just as powerfully felt as she wonders whether she can continue to keep up with the boys on the diamond, gets unexpected romantic attention from a fellow player, and visits a black hairdresser for the first time. While not all of Alex's questions are answered by book's end, readers will finish this engaging, layered novel confident that she's ready to face whatever comes next, and with plenty to think about themselves. Ages 12-up. (Nov.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

Speed of Life by Carol Weston

Booklist starred (April 15, 2017 (Vol. 113, No. 16))

Grades 6-9. Fourteen-year-old Sofia Wolfe moves through life smiling with friends and hiding the sorrow of having lost her Spanish mother almost a year earlier. The only people she has to talk to are her abuelo in Spain, and—regarding girl things—“Dear Kate,” a teen-advice columnist with whom she can anonymously discuss personal matters. When Sofia’s father reveals he’s dating Kate, Sofia initially feels betrayed that he’s moving on with his life when she can’t. But just as things start to gel between Kate and Sofia, Kate’s daughter Alexa and her ex-boyfriend complicate Sofia’s life further. This novel is jam-packed with important, dramatic, and inevitable aspects of adolescence, from pimples to periods to popularity. On top of these concerns are potential developments that could “destroy” Sofia’s life: having to move and attend a new school, becoming part of a blended family, navigating new friendship dynamics, and learning that people you look up to aren’t always who you think they are. The narrative effectively contrasts the diversity of a city environment with that of suburban life, and any opportunity for over-the-top melodrama is tempered by the book’s strong and likable narrator. Weston draws heavily on her years as “Dear Carol” at Girls’ Life magazine, creating a solid, affecting tale of maturing and coming to grips with one’s reality.

A Long Walk to Water by Lind Sue Park

Kirkus Reviews (October 15, 2010)

Salva Dut is 11 years old when war raging in the Sudan separates him from his family. To avoid the conflict, he walks for years with other refugees, seeking sanctuary and scarce food and water. Park simply yet convincingly depicts the chaos of war and an unforgiving landscape as they expose Salva to cruelties both natural and man-made. The lessons Salva remembers from his family keep him from despair during harsh times in refugee camps and enable him, as a young man, to begin a new life in America. As Salva's story unfolds, readers also learn about another Sudanese youth, Nya, and how these two stories connect contributes to the satisfying conclusion. This story is told as fiction, but it is based on real-life experiences of one of the "Lost Boys" of the Sudan. Salva and Nya's compelling voices lift their narrative out of the "issue" of the Sudanese War, and only occasionally does the explanation of necessary context intrude in the storytelling.

Salva's heroism and the truth that water is a source of both conflict and reconciliation receive equal, crystal-clear emphasis in this heartfelt account. (Fiction. 10-14)

The Apple Tart of Hope by Sarah Fitzgerald

School Library Journal (March 1, 2016)

Gr 6-8-The story begins with the disappearance of Oscar, whose bicycle was found at the edge of a pier. He is presumed drowned. His best friend, Meg, knows he can't be dead, but only Oscar's younger brother shares that belief. Meg begins to investigate, trying to uncover the boy's whereabouts. The work is told in two voices, Meg's and Oscar's, and teens will slowly piece together the events that led up to the disappearance. In flashbacks, readers learn about the relationship of these close friends and next-door neighbors. Oscar is gentle and perceptive, a boy whose ability to create happiness and contentment with his special apple tarts make him a well-liked person. When Meg's parents relocate the family to New Zealand for a year, she is devastated and doesn't want to leave. Meanwhile, things begin to fall apart for Oscar when a new girl, Paloma, moves in next door. When she is gently rejected by Oscar, she manipulates his feelings, and the kids at school make Oscar pay for his rejection. On one hand, this is a very sweet story about first love. Readers will delight in watching Meg and Oscar transition from friendship to love while they become enraged at Paloma's bullying behavior. In addition to the romance, there is also plenty of intrigue and mystery to engage readers not typically drawn to love stories. VERDICT Sweet romance encased in a compelling mystery. -Patricia Feriano, Montgomery County Public Schools, MD © Copyright 2016. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

The Librarian of Auschwitz by Antonio Iturbe

School Library Journal (August 1, 2017)

Gr 8 Up-Based on the true story of Holocaust survivor Dita Kraus, this novel features a protagonist who exemplifies courage in the face of death. Fourteen-year-old Dita is imprisoned at Auschwitz along with her mother and father in the "family camp." Her work assignment is to assist the Jewish leader in charge of Block 31, a section created to entertain the children so that their family can work. This block has many secrets, but the most important is that eight books were smuggled in by Jewish prisoners. Dita has been entrusted with their care, making her "the Librarian of Auschwitz." As time passes on, she becomes aware that Dr. Mengele has taken an interest in her, and while she is terrified that "Doctor Death" is paying attention to her, she finds the courage to protect her books, family, and friends at all costs. Throughout, well-known Nazi leaders and lesser-known Jewish heroes play pivotal roles, making the connection with the historical elements of the horrors of Auschwitz, and later Bergen-Belsen more credible and relatable. Despite being a fictional retelling of a true story, this novel is one that could easily be recommended

or taught alongside Elie Wiesel's *Night* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* and a text that, once read, will never be forgotten. VERDICT A hauntingly authentic Holocaust retelling; a must for YA collections.-Stephanie Wilkes, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe, LA © Copyright 2017. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

My Shot: Balancing It All and Standing Tall Hardcover by *Elena Delle Donne*

School Library Journal (April 1, 2018)

Gr 7 Up-Elena Delle Donne is a six-foot, five WNBA star, and she's got a great back story and tells it with gusto. Born with natural talent, she learned at an early age to accept the fact that she was different. Basketball was a natural fit for the remarkably tall young girl. Always the perfectionist, she drove herself hard, and as a result, she started to suffer from burnout in her teens. She warily accepted a scholarship at the University of Connecticut, but she abruptly left, and in the course of many soul-searching walks in the woods, came down with Lyme disease, and the symptoms intermittently forcing her to sit out. Yet she made a decision to trust her instincts and listen to her heart. This mind-set leads her to come back to the sport--this time, very much on her own terms. This upbeat autobiography follows Delle Donne through her many accomplishments. She stresses her personal motto, "Demand Excellence," that led her to put in the hard work to achieve her goals. Additionally, she offers advice in a direct, accessible manner ("Being an adult is still hard when the going gets tough! Luckily, you can develop skills that will get you through your problems or setbacks."). VERDICT Sports-minded teens will devour this fast-paced narrative. Recommended for all school libraries.-Denise Kim, Bronx High School of Science, NY © Copyright 2018. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeline L'Engle

Combining theology, fantasy, and science, it is the story of travel through space and time to battle a cosmic evil. With their neighbor Calvin O'Keefe, young Meg Murry and her brother Charles Wallace embark on a cosmic journey to find their lost father, a scientist studying time travel. Assisted by three eccentric women--Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which--the children travel to the planet Camazotz where they encounter a repressed society controlled by IT, a disembodied brain that represents evil. Among the themes of the work are the dangers of unthinking conformity and scientific irresponsibility and the saving power of love. [The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature](#) (Grades 5-8)