

MISS WALCZYK'S 8TH GRADE SUMMER READING LIST

*NOTE: (YA) = YOUNG ADULT TITLE FOR MORE MATURE READERS

As a guide for choosing, keep in mind that the 8th grade Lexile band is 1010L-1185L. A Lexile measure helps to ensure students stay within their comfort zones while still challenging themselves when it comes to reading comprehension.

- Students are to pick **one** book from the following list to read over the summer *and* complete a project over the book.

Project:

Students should pick a scene or quote from the book that was meaningful to them and create a visual representation of it. They can get as creative as they want, but it needs to be clear that time and thought were put into the project. Additionally, students should write an explanation of why they chose what they did, and how their visual representation fits into the scene/quote.

Balliet, Blue

Hold Fast

(F): 780L (288 pages)

Where is Early's father? He's not the kind of father who would disappear. But he's gone...and he's left a whole lot of trouble behind. As danger closes in, Early, her mom, and her brother have to flee their apartment. With nowhere else to go, they are forced to move into a city shelter. Once there, Early starts asking questions and looking for answers because her father hasn't disappeared without a trace. There are patterns and rhythms to what's happened, and Early might be the only one who can use them to track him down and make her way out of a very tough place.

Boom, Corrie Ten

The Hiding Place

(NF): 900L (241pages)

Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie get sent to a concentration camp for helping Jews hide from Nazi persecution. This is her extraordinary story of becoming a heroine of the anti-Nazi underground.

Bruchac, Joseph

Code Talker

(F): 910L (224 pages)

Throughout World War II, in the conflict fought against Japan, Navajo code talkers were a crucial part of the U.S. effort, sending messages back and forth in an unbreakable code that used their native language. They braved some of the heaviest fighting of the war, and with their code, they saved countless American lives. Yet their story remained classified for more than twenty years. Joseph Bruchac brings their stories to life for young adults through the riveting fictional tale of Ned Begay, a sixteen-year-old Navajo boy who becomes a code talker. His grueling journey is eye-opening and inspiring. This deeply affecting novel honors all of those young men, like Ned, who dared to serve, and it honors the culture and language of the Navajo Indians.

Cameron, W. Bruce

Emory's Gift

(F): ~760L (359 pages)

After 13-year-old Charlie Hall's mother dies and his father retreats into the silence of grief, Charlie finds himself drifting lost and alone through the brutal halls of junior high school. But Charlie Hall is not entirely friendless. In the woods behind his house, Charlie is saved from a mountain lion by a grizzly bear, thought to be extinct in northern Idaho. And this very unusual bear will change Charlie's life forever. Deeply moving, and interwoven with hope and joy, *Emory's Gift* is not only heartwarming and charming coming of age story,

but also a page-turning insightful look at how faith, trust, and unconditional love can heal a broken family and bridge the gaps that divide us.

Curtis, Christopher Paul *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (F): 1000L (224 pages)

A wonderful middle-grade novel narrated by Kenny, 9, about his middle-class black family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. When Kenny's 13-year-old brother, Byron, gets to be too much trouble, they head South to Birmingham to visit Grandma, the one person who can shape him up. And they happen to be in Birmingham when Grandma's church is blown up.

DeFelice, Cynthia *Under the Same Sky* (F): 750L (215 pages)

It was all about a motorbike. To Joe Pedersen, it meant freedom and being cool. He was sure that he could convince his father to buy it for his fourteenth birthday. When his father refuses to purchase the bike for Joe, he offers an alternative: Joe can earn the money by joining the summer migrant workers on his family farm.

Duncan, Lois *Locked in Time* (F): 990L (210 pages)

It doesn't occur to Nore to take the dream-warning seriously. Her new stepmother and stepbrother seem nice. But why does Nore feel so uneasy around them? Maybe she should have listened . . .

Green, John *An Abundance of Katherines* (F): 890L (215 pages)

When it comes to relationships, Colin Singleton's type happens to be girls named Katherine. And when it comes to girls named Katherine, Colin is always getting dumped. Nineteen times, to be exact. He's also a washed-up child prodigy with ten thousand dollars in his pocket, a passion for anagrams, and an overweight, Judge Judy-obsessed best friend. Colin's on a mission to prove The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability, which will predict the future of all relationships, transform him from a fading prodigy into a true genius, and finally win him the girl. Letting expectations go and allowing love in are at the heart of Colin's hilarious quest to find his missing piece and avenge dumpees everywhere.

Hobbs, Will *Never Say Die* (F): 770L (224 pages)

When the motto of your village is "never say die," you have a lot to live up to. . . .

At home in Canada's Arctic, Nick Thrasher is an accomplished Inuit hunter at fifteen. About to bring home a caribou for his ailing grandfather, Nick loses the meat to a fearsome creature never before seen in the wild. It's half grizzly, half polar bear. Experts will soon be calling it a "grolar bear." Returning to his village, Nick receives a letter from the half brother he's never met. A former Grand Canyon river guide, Ryan Powers is now a famous wildlife photographer. He'll soon be coming to Nick's part of the world to raft the remote Firth River in search of huge herds of migrating caribou. Ryan also wants to learn what Inuit hunters are saying about climate change in the Arctic. He invites Nick to come along and help him find the caribou. Barely down the river, disaster strikes. Nick and Ryan are both thrown into the freezing river and find themselves under a ceiling of solid ice. With nothing but the clothes on his back and the knife on his hip, Nick is up against it in a world of wolves, caribou, and grizzlies. All the while, the monstrous grolar bear stalks the land.

Hoge, Robert *Ugly* (NF): 890L (208 pages)

Robert Hoge was born with a giant tumour on his forehead, severely distorted facial features and legs that were twisted and useless. His mother refused to look at her son, let alone bring him home. But home he went, to a life that, against the odds, was filled with joy, optimism and boyhood naughtiness. Home for the Hoges was a bayside suburb of Brisbane. Robert's parents, Mary and Vince, knew that his life would be difficult, but they were determined to give him a typical Australian childhood. So along with the regular, gruelling and often dangerous operations that made medical history and gradually improved Robert's life, there were bad haircuts, visits to the local pool, school camps and dreams of summer sports. *Ugly* is Robert's account of his

life, from the time of his birth to the arrival of his own daughter. It is a story of how the love and support of his family helped him to overcome incredible hardships. It is also the story of an extraordinary person living an ordinary life, which is perhaps his greatest achievement of all.

Kadohata, Cynthia

Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam

(F) 730L (308 pages)

CRACKER IS ONE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY'S MOST VALUABLE WEAPONS: a German shepherd trained to sniff out bombs, traps, and the enemy. The fate of entire platoons rests on her keen sense of smell. She's a Big Deal, and she likes it that way. Sometimes Cracker remembers when she was younger, and her previous owner would feed her hot dogs and let her sleep in his bed. That was nice, too. Rick Hanski is headed to Vietnam. There, he's going to whip the world and prove to his family and his sergeant -- and everyone else who didn't think he was cut out for war -- wrong. But sometimes Rick can't help but wonder that maybe everyone else *is* right. Maybe he should have just stayed at home and worked in his dad's hardware store. When Cracker is paired with Rick, she isn't so sure about this new owner. He's going to have to prove himself to *her* before *she's* going to prove herself to him. They need to be friends before they can be a team, and they *have* to be a team if they want to get home alive.

Key, Watt

Terror at Bottle Creek

(F): 650L (208 pages)

When his dad disappears, thirteen-year-old Cort is caught in the battle against a Gulf Coast hurricane. Cort's father is a local expert on hunting and swamp lore in lower Alabama and has been teaching his son everything he knows. But when a deadly Category 3 storm makes landfall, Cort must unexpectedly put all his skills—and bravery—to the test. One catastrophe seems to lead to another, leaving Cort and two neighbor girls to face the storm as best they can. Amid miles of storm-thrashed wetlands filled with dangerous, desperate wild animals, it's up to Cort to win—or lose—the fight for their lives.

Lupica, Mike

Travel Team

(F): 930L (274 pages)

Danny Walker may be the smallest kid on the basketball court, but no one has a bigger love of the game. Or a better sense of how to hit the open player with the perfect pass. Then the local travel team—the same travel team Danny's dad, Richie Walker, led to the national championship on ESPN when he was a kid—cuts Danny because of his size. But Danny isn't about to give up on basketball. It turns out that he's not the only kid who was cut for the wrong reasons. Now Danny and his dad are about to give all the castoffs a second chance and prove that you can't measure heart.

Murdock, Catherine Gilbert ***Dairy Queen***

(F): 930L (275 pages)

When you don't talk, there's a lot of stuff that ends up not getting said.

Harsh words indeed, from Brian Nelson of all people. But, D. J. can't help admitting, maybe he's right.

When you don't talk, there's a lot of stuff that ends up not getting said.

Stuff like why her best friend, Amber, isn't so friendly anymore. Or why her little brother, Curtis, never opens his mouth. Why her mom has two jobs and a big secret. Why her college-football-star brothers won't even call home. Why her dad would go ballistic if she tried out for the high school football team herself. And why Brian is so, so out of her league.

When you don't talk, there's a lot of stuff that ends up not getting said. Welcome to the summer that fifteen-year-old D. J. Schwenk of Red Bend, Wisconsin, learns to talk, and ends up having an awful lot of stuff to say.

Norris, Shana

Troy High

(F): 720L (263 pages)

Narrated by Cassie, a shy outsider who fears that an epic high school rivalry is about to go up in flames, the story follows the Trojans and Spartans as they declare war on the football field. After the beautiful Elena—who

used to be the captain of the Spartan cheerleaders—transfers to Troy High and falls madly in love with Cassie's brother Perry, the Spartans vow that the annual homecoming game will never be forgotten.

Northrop, Michael *Plunked* (F): 640L (247 pages)

When a young slugger gets hit by a pitch, he needs more than practice to get back his game. Sixth grader Jack Mogens has it all figured out: He's got his batting routine down, and his outfielding earns him a starting spot alongside his best friend Andy on their Little League team, the Tall Pines Braves. He even manages to have a not-totally-embarrassing conversation with Katie, the team's killer shortstop. But in the first game of the season, a powerful stray pitch brings everything Jack's worked so hard for crashing down around his ears. How can he explain to his parents and friends why he WON'T be playing? Readers will root for Jack as he finds the courage to step back up to the plate.

Patterson, James *Witch & Wizard* (F): 710L (314 pages)

This is the astonishing testimonial of Wisty and Whit Allgood, a sister and brother who were torn from their family in the middle of the night, slammed into prison, and accused of being a witch and a wizard. Thousands of young people have been kidnapped; some have been accused; many others remain missing. Their fate is unknown, and the worst is feared—for the ruling regime will stop at nothing to suppress life and liberty, music and books, art and magic...and the pursuit of being a normal teenager. (Book 1 of the Witch & Wizard series)

Perera, Anna *Guantanamo Boy* (F): 900L (288 pages)

Innocent until proven guilty? Not here you're not. Robbed of his childhood, this is one boy's fictional experience of the supposed war on terror. Khalid, a fifteen-year-old Muslim boy from England, is abducted from Pakistan while on holiday with his family. He is taken to Guantanamo Bay and held without charge, where his hopes and dreams are crushed under the cruelest of circumstances. An innocent denied his freedom at a time when most boys are finding theirs, Khalid tries and fails to understand what's happening to him.

Ryan, Carrie *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* (F): 900L (308 pages)

In Mary's world there are simple truths. The Sisterhood always knows best. The Guardians will protect and serve. The Unconsecrated will never relent. And you must always mind the fence that surrounds the village; the fence that protects the village from the Forest of Hands and Teeth. But, slowly, Mary's truths are failing her. She's learning things she never wanted to know about the Sisterhood and its secrets, and the Guardians and their power, and about the Unconsecrated and their relentlessness. When the fence is breached and her world is thrown into chaos, she must choose between her village and her future—between the one she loves and the one who loves her. And she must face the truth about the Forest of Hands and Teeth. Could there be life outside a world surrounded in so much death?

Shulman, Polly *The Grimm Legacy* (F): 600L (325 pages)

Elizabeth has a new job at an unusual library—a lending library of objects, not books. In a secret room in the basement lies the Grimm Collection. That's where the librarians lock away powerful items straight out of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales: seven-league boots, a table that produces a feast at the blink of an eye, Snow White's stepmother's sinister mirror that talks in riddles. When the magical objects start to disappear, Elizabeth embarks on a dangerous quest to catch the thief before she can be accused of the crime—or captured by the thief.

