

6th Grade Summer Reading List:

Please read at least two titles from this list and come to school in the fall prepared to complete reflections of the books.

A Mango Shaped Space – Wendy Mass

For 13-year-old Mia Winchell, the world has always been filled with a wonderful, if sometimes dizzying, sensory onslaught-- numbers, letters, words, and sounds all cause her to see a distinct array of colors. She keeps her unusual condition a secret until eighth grade, but then her color visions make math and Spanish impossibly confusing, and she must go to her parents and a doctor for help. However, this is more than a docu-novel. Mass beautifully integrates information about synesthesia with Mia's coming-of-age story, which includes her break with her best friend and her grief over her grandfather's death.

A Single Shard – Linda Sue Park

Tree-ear, a thirteen-year-old orphan in medieval Korea, lives under a bridge in a potters' village, and longs to learn how to throw the delicate celadon ceramics himself.

Airborn (series) – Kenneth Oppel

Once in a long while, an adventure story captures the mind and the heart of listeners/readers, creating a miniature world that makes a deep impression on them. Such is the case with Kenneth Oppel's Printz Honor Book (Eos, 2004) which weaves a magical tale of adventure, treachery, friendship, and courage. Taking place in a future where airships and blimps travel across the Atlanticus and the Pacificus Oceans, cabin boy Matt Cruse, on board the *Aurora*, battles pirates and prehistoric cloudcats, accompanied by spirited heiress Kate DeVries. A cast of 32 actors, including high school sophomore David Kelly (as the voice of Matt Cruse), delivers riveting narration and excellent vocal special effects (such as the ship's captain speaking through his radio). Full of fun, adventure, and heart, *Airborn* makes for a one-of-kind listening experience. Fans of period history, science fiction, and adventure will cheer Matt along.

Al Capone Does My Shirts – Gennifer Choldenko

A twelve-year-old boy named Moose moves to Alcatraz Island in 1935 when guards' families were housed there, and has to contend with his extraordinary new environment in addition to life with his autistic sister.

Artemis Fowl: The Lost Colony – Eoin Colfer

Once again, Artemis will have to pair up with his old comrade, captain Holly Short, to track down the missing demon and rescue him before the time spell dissolves and the lost demon colony returns violently to Earth.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place – Aron Ralston

From midday Saturday, April 26, 2003, until midday Thursday, May 1, Ralston was pinned between a boulder and a canyon wall in a remote area of Canyonlands National Park in Utah. He had little food and water. No one would even wonder where he was until he didn't show up for work on Tuesday. Unable to sit, lie down, use his right arm (that was the part between the rock and the wall), or sleep, he knew right away that he was in for an excruciatingly difficult time. Those 120 hours of what he calls "uninterrupted experience" tested to the fullest his physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being. His eventual rescue led to international headlines, partially due to his dramatic means of escape: he severed his arm with a cheap, dull, dirty knife. This is a searing and amazingly detailed rendition of his ordeal, along with accounts of several of Ralston's previous wilderness adventures.

Between Mom and Jo – Julie Anne Peters

Fourteen-year-old Nick has a three-legged dog named Lucky 2, some pet fish, and two mothers, whose relationship complicates his entire life as they face prejudice, work problems, alcoholism, cancer, and finally separation.

Boy in the Striped Pajamas – John Boyne

Bored and lonely after his family moves from Berlin to a place called "Out-With" in 1942, Bruno, the son of a Nazi officer, befriends a boy in striped pajamas who lives behind a wire fence.

Chicks With Sticks – Elizabeth Lenhard

Four teenage girls from very different social cliques at their progressive Chicago high school become friends after forming a knitting club.

(The) Cloud Chamber – Joyce Maynard

In 1966, when his father's attempted suicide causes the ostracism of the family in their small Montana community, fourteen-year-old Nate copes with his sadness and anger by trying to win the school science fair.

Cobwebs - Karen Romano Young

Sixteen-year-old Nancy enjoys the colorful ethnic mix of her heritage in several different Brooklyn households, not suspecting how very strange that heritage is.

Criss Cross - Lynne Rae Perkins

Teenagers in a small town in the 1960s experience new thoughts and feelings, question their identities, connect, and disconnect as they search for the meaning of life and love.

Cuba 15 – Nancy Osa

Violet Paz, a Chicago high school student, reluctantly prepares for her upcoming "quince," a Spanish nickname for the celebration of an Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday.

Dairy Queen - Catherine Gilbert Murdock

After spending her summer running the family farm and training the quarterback for her school's rival football team, sixteen-year-old D.J. decides to go out for the sport herself, not anticipating the reactions of those around her.

Elsewhere - Gabrielle Zevin

After fifteen-year-old Liz Hall is hit by a taxi and killed, she finds herself in a place that is both like and unlike Earth, where she must adjust to her new status and figure out how to "live."

Ender's Game – Orson Scott Card

Ender Wiggin is a very bright young boy with a powerful skill. One of a group of children bred to be military geniuses and save Earth from an inevitable attack by aliens, known here as "buggers," Ender becomes unbeatable in war games and seems poised to lead Earth to triumph over the buggers. Meanwhile, his brother and sister plot to wrest power from Ender. Twists, surprises and interesting characters elevate this novel into status as a bona fide page turner. It captured the Nebula and Hugo Awards.

Eragon (The Inheritance Trilogy) - Christopher Paolini

In Aagaesia, a fifteen-year-old boy of unknown lineage called Eragon finds a mysterious stone that weaves his life into an intricate tapestry of destiny, magic, and power, peopled with dragons, elves, and monsters.

(The) Eye, the Ear and the Arm – Nancy Farmer

In 2194 in Zimbabwe, General Matsika's three children are kidnapped and put to work in a plastic mine while three mutant detectives use their special powers to search for them.

Firebirds Rising: Anthology of Original Science Fiction and Fantasy.

Imagine that Archeoptrix, the prehistoric link between birds and dinosaurs, had evolved into the dominant life-form on a planet. In Carol Emshwiller's *Quill*, representatives of that planet have secretly crashed on Earth and begun interbreeding with humans. In Kelly Link's *The Wizards of Perfil*, an orphan boy and his caustic cousin, both dirt poor and gifted with unusual psychic powers, are bought by a strange man to serve the awesome and forbidding wizards of Perfil, only to learn after difficult trials and life-changing tragedies that they are the wizards. In Kara Dalkey's near-future *Hives*, cell phones can beam and receive messages without external sound. The phones are highly addictive and used by high school girls to connect ultra-exclusive cliques. A former-addict-turned-girl-detective gets involved when the rejects of one such hive begin committing suicide one after another. These are just 3 of the 16 stories in this collection. The selections range in length from 9 pages (Francesca Lia Block's chilling *Blood Roses*, in which two sisters confront a serial killer) to 50 pages. Fantasy stories outnumber sci-fi two to one, and the great majority of the tales feature female protagonists. Even those with male protagonists deal with themes of friendship, family, love, and loss more than action and adventure. Compelling stories for thoughtful readers.

(The) Frog Princess – E.D. Baker

An amusing fairy-tale adventure that takes the frog-turned-prince story a little further. Princess Emeralda is incredibly clumsy, she brays like a donkey when she laughs, and she would rather spend time outdoors or learning magic from her witch-aunt Grassina than marry self-centered Prince Jorge. When she runs off to the nearby swamp, she meets "Frog" who, naturally, claims to be an enchanted prince and begs her for a spell-breaking kiss. But when she finally complies, something goes terribly wrong, and suddenly Emma is a green-skinned, pond-hopping frog. She and Eadric spend the rest of the book trying to undo the spells that have bewitched them, struggling to avoid a dragon, a frog-eating dog, and an inept angry witch along the way. When they are finally released from their enchantments, it's clear they will live a happy-if rather unconventional-life together.

(The) Fruit Bowl Project – Sarah Durkee

A new teacher who is an admitted dork reveals to her eighth-grade Writers' Workshop students that she is related to rock superstar Nick Thompson. Not much impresses these savvy New York City kids, but they are suitably wowed. Nick, a

songwriter, is invited to teach the class. He contends that a song is like a bowl of fruit, and that he needs to figure out how to paint it, using words as colors. There are infinite ways to create the canvas, using style, voice, genre, and much more. He challenges the students to each write a piece based on only seven simple elements: school, sixth grade, a reading test, a dropped pencil, an angry girl, lunch, and milk out the nose. The balance of the novel consists of the students' 50 projects, ranging from rap to haiku, monologue, fairy tales, a screenplay, etc.

(The) Golden Compass (series) – Philip Pullman

The Golden Compass, a story ostensibly for children but one perhaps even better appreciated by adults. The protagonist of this complex fantasy is young Lyra Belacqua, a precocious orphan growing up within the precincts of Oxford University. But it quickly becomes clear that Lyra's Oxford is not precisely like our own--nor is her world. For one thing, people there each have a personal *daemon*, the manifestation of their souls in animal form. For another, hers is a universe in which science, theology, and magic are closely allied. In *The Golden Compass*, Philip Pullman has written a masterpiece that transcends genre. It is a children's book that will appeal to adults, a fantasy novel that will charm even the most hardened realist. Best of all, the author doesn't speak down to his audience, nor does he pull his punches; there is genuine terror in this book, and heartbreak, betrayal, and loss. There is also love, loyalty, and an abiding morality that infuses the story but never overwhelms it. This is one of those rare novels that one wishes would never end.

Guts: The True Story Behind Hatchet – Gary Paulsen

What do you do when you're being charged by a red-eyed furious wall of brown fur that is an insane moose? How do you make a weapon with your bare hands? How do you sneak up on a grouse or a rabbit, kill it with a well-aimed arrow, and cook it over a fire--without a pot? All this and lots more is essential learning for Brian Robeson, the young wilderness survivor in Gary Paulsen's classic novel *Hatchet*. In writing that book, Paulsen was determined that everything that happened to Brian--the survival techniques and the physical and emotional traumas--would be drawn closely from reality and his own experiences. In *Guts* he reveals the stories behind *Hatchet*, as he lived them. Linked to specific incidents from Brian's ordeal are the skills and insights Paulsen learned as a teenager passionately in love with hunting in the north woods of Minnesota, the extremes of exhaustion and cold he knew in running the Iditarod dog races in Alaska, the chilling close-up knowledge of heart attacks from his experiences as a volunteer ambulance driver, the silence and majesty of the wilderness. Some great stories are told here: the child killed by two kicks from the razor-sharp hooves of a small deer, the difficulties of sharing a rescue helicopter ride with a terrified dog team, and some spectacular gross-outs about the nutritional need to eat every part of an animal.

(The) Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy – Douglas Adams

Join Douglas Adams's hapless hero Arthur Dent as he travels the galaxy with his intrepid pal Ford Prefect, getting into horrible messes and generally wreaking hilarious havoc. Dent is grabbed from Earth moments before a cosmic construction team obliterates the planet to build a freeway. You'll never read funnier science fiction; Adams is a master of intelligent satire, barbed wit, and comedic dialogue. *The Hitchhiker's Guide* is rich in comedic detail and thought-provoking situations and stands up to multiple reads. Required reading for science fiction fans, this book (and its follow-ups) is also sure to please fans of Monty Python, Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, and British sitcoms.

Hoops – Walter Dean Myers

All eyes are on seventeen-year-old Lonnie Jackson while he practices with his team for a city-wide basketball Tournament of Champions. His coach, Cal, knows Lonnie has what it takes to be a pro-basketball player, but warns him about giving in to the pressure. Cal knows because he, too, once had the chance--but sold out. As the Tournament nears, Lonnie learns that some heavy bettors want Cal to keep him on the bench so that the team will lose the championship. As the last seconds of the game tick away Lonnie and Cal must make a decision. Are they willing to blow the chance of a lifetime?

Hope Was Here – Joan Bauer

When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor.

Hush – Jacqueline Woodson

Toswiah Green. Evie Thomas. One girl. Two names. Two lives. When her police officer father witnesses two white cops killing a black boy, he makes the heart-wrenching decision to testify against his former friends. Overnight, thanks to the witness protection program, Toswiah becomes Evie, and she and her family leave their idyllic Denver, Colorado, life far behind. Toswiah's previously happy, lighthearted mother abruptly turns to religion, her big sister makes secret plans to escape the family, and her proud father collapses inward to a depressed, almost catatonic state. Adolescent Toswiah--now Evie--copes as best she can, taking up track and field in school, and trying to fathom who she is, and who she is becoming.

Ida B : --and her plans to maximize fun, avoid disaster, and (possibly) save the world - Katherine Hannigan.

In Wisconsin, fourth-grader Ida B spends happy hours being home-schooled and playing in her family's apple orchard, until her mother begins treatment for breast cancer and her parents must sell part of the orchard and send her to public school.

Life As We Knew It – Susan Beth Pfeffer

It's almost the end of Miranda's sophomore year in high school, and her journal reflects the busy life of a typical teenager: conversations with friends, fights with mom, and fervent hopes for a driver's license. When Miranda first begins hearing the reports of a meteor on a collision course with the moon, it hardly seems worth a mention in her diary. But after the meteor hits, pushing the moon off its axis and causing worldwide earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes, all the things Miranda used to take for granted begin to disappear. Food and gas shortages, along with extreme weather changes, come to her small Pennsylvania town; and Miranda's voice is by turns petulant, angry, and finally resigned, as her family is forced to make tough choices while they consider their increasingly limited options. Yet even as suspicious neighbors stockpile food in anticipation of a looming winter without heat or electricity, Miranda knows that that her future is still hers to decide even if life as she knew it is over.

(The) Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson and the Olympians series) – Rick Riordan

Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson learns he is a demigod, the son of a mortal woman and Poseidon, god of the sea. His mother sends him to a summer camp for demigods where he and his new friends set out on a quest to prevent a war between the gods.

Maximum Ride –James Patterson

A group of genetically enhanced kids who can fly and have other unique talents are on the run from part-human, part-wolf predators called Erasers in this exciting SF thriller that's not wholly original but is still a compelling read. Max, 14, and her adopted family—Fang and Iggy, both 13, Nudge, 11, Gazzy, 8, and Angel, 6—were all created as experiments in a lab called the School. Jeb, a sympathetic scientist, helped them escape and, since then, they've been living on their own. The Erasers have orders to kill them so the world will never find out they exist. Max's old childhood friend, Ari, now an Eraser leader, tracks them down, kidnaps Angel, and transports her back to the School to live like a lab rat again. The youngsters are forced to use their special talents to rescue her as they attempt to learn about their pasts and their destinies.

Messenger – Lois Lowry

In this novel that unites characters from "The Giver" and "Gathering Blue," Matty, a young member of a utopian community that values honesty, conceals an emerging healing power that he cannot explain or understand.

(The) Miner's Daughter – Gretchen Moran Laskas

Willa Laura Lowell is a 16-year-old miner's daughter ushering in the Depression in a West Virginia coal miner's camp. The days are long and hard, but worse when the mine shuts down. There is no money, forcing Willa's father and older brother to look for work elsewhere. Left alone with her mother and three younger siblings, Willa helps as she can and dreams of a better life. Life changes dramatically for her and her family when they are offered a place in a new town. The teen never loses sight of where she came from and is determined to help others as she was helped. Richly drawn characters and plot make this an excellent novel that explores the struggles endured by many in America in the 1930s. The integrity of the characters and their resourcefulness show readers how, with hard work and determination, adversity can be overcome.

Money Hungry – Sharon Flake

All thirteen-year-old Raspberry can think of is making money so that she and her mother never have to worry about living on the streets again. All thirteen-year-old Raspberry can think of is making money so that she and her mother never have to worry about living on the streets again.

Mortal Engines – (The Hungry City Chronicles) – Philip Reeve

Tom, a third class apprentice in a distant future in which technology has been lost and tiered cities move about the Earth on caterpillar tracks, often absorbing smaller locales, has many dangerous adventures after being pushed off London by Thaddeus Valentine, a historian who is trying to resurrect an ancient atomic weapon.

Olive's Ocean – Kevin Henkes

As Martha and her family prepare for their annual summer visit to New England, the mother of her deceased classmate comes to their door. Olive Barstow was killed by a car a month earlier, and the woman wants to give Martha a page from her daughter's journal. In this single entry, the 12-year-old learns more about her shy classmate than she ever knew: Olive also wanted to be a writer; she wanted to see the ocean, just as Martha soon will; and she hoped to get to know Martha Boyle as "she is the nicest person in my whole entire class." Martha cannot recall anything specific she ever did to make Olive think this, but she's both touched and awed by their commonalities. She also recognizes that if Olive can die, so can she, so can anybody, a realization later intensified when Martha herself nearly drowns. At the Cape, Martha is again reminded that things in her life are changing. She experiences her first kiss, her first betrayal, and the glimmer of a first real boyfriend, and her

relationship with Godbee, her elderly grandmother, allows her to examine her intense feelings, aspirations, concerns, and growing awareness of self and others.

(The) Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place – E.L. Konigsburg

Upon leaving an oppressive summer camp, twelve-year-old Margaret Rose Kane spearheads a campaign to preserve three unique towers her grand uncles have been building in their back yard for over forty years.

Penny From Heaven – Jennifer Holm

As she turns twelve during the summer of 1953, Penny gains new insights into herself and her family while also learning a secret about her father's death. It's 1953 and 11-year-old Penny dreams of a summer of butter pecan ice cream, swimming, and baseball. But nothing's that easy in Penny's family. For starters, she can't go swimming because her mother's afraid she'll catch polio at the pool. To make matters worse, her favorite uncle is living in a car. Her Nonny cries every time her father's name is mentioned. And the two sides of her family aren't speaking to each other! Inspired by Newbery Honor winner Jennifer Holm's own Italian American family, Penny from Heaven is a shining story about the everyday and the extraordinary, about a time in America's history, not all that long ago, when being Italian meant that you were the enemy. But most of all, it's a story about families--about the things that tear them apart and bring them together.

Princess Academy – Shannon Hale

While attending a strict academy for potential princesses with the other girls from her mountain village, fourteen-year-old Miri discovers unexpected talents and connections to her homeland.

(The) Road to Paris – Nikki Grimes

For eight-year-old Paris Richmond, home was such a funny word. Because she and her older brother had moved from one foster home to another so often, it had come to mean not a place but a person. Malcolm was the one constant in her life. When they run away from an abusive home, they seek refuge with their grandmother, who returns them to the foster-care system. It is then that the siblings are placed in separate homes. Though Paris desperately misses Malcolm during her year with the Lincoln family, she gradually comes to trust them and even her own instincts. She gains coping skills through a newfound religious faith and the talent to share it through music.

Roald Dahl's Book of Ghost Series – Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a prickly, colorful character who wrote maliciously funny short stories for adults (*The Best of Roald Dahl*) as well as better-known works for children (James and the Giant Peach). As he relates in the introduction, he started the research for this book by making a call to the celebrated ghost-story anthologist/writer, Lady Cynthia Asquith. He then went to the British Museum Library, and read a total of 749 tales before selecting 14 for this anthology. His criterion: "Spookiness is, after all, the real purpose of the ghost story. It should give you the creeps and disturb your thoughts." Included here are not only acknowledged classics by Robert Aickman, Edith Wharton, J. S. Le Fanu, and F. Marion Crawford, but also tales by lesser-known writers such as L. P. Hartley, Rosemary Timperley, Jonas Lie, Mary Treadgold, and A. M. Burrage. The Washington Post writes, "Dahl's taste, it will surprise no one, is impeccable."

Seedfolks – Paul Fleischman

One by one, a number of people of varying ages and backgrounds transform a trash-filled inner-city lot into a productive and beautiful garden, and, in doing so, the gardeners are themselves transformed.

Slam! – Walter Dean Myers

"Basketball is my thing. I can hoop. Case closed." So begins Walter Dean Myers' novel (Scholastic, 1996) which lends itself perfectly to an audio presentation for young adults. Male reluctant readers as well as basketball fans will be captivated with this realistic story in which 17-year-old Greg Harris tells of the year in which he transfers to a magnet school for the arts, a more academically challenging, mostly white school. After being the hot shot star of his Harlem high school team, he has to learn to fit in and be a team player at his new school. He may not be able to do anything about the rest of his life--his relationships with his family and friends, his grandmother's illness, his scholastic difficulties, or what goes on in his Harlem neighborhood--but when he gets onto the basketball court, "Slam" feels in control. Listeners will enjoy this fast-paced, energetic story following Slam's progress as he tries to deal with basketball and life.

Small Steps – Louis Sachar

Three years after being released from Camp Green Lake, Armpit is trying hard to keep his life on track, but when his old pal X-Ray shows up with a tempting plan to make some easy money scalping concert tickets, Armpit reluctantly goes along.

Stormbreaker (the Alex Rider series) – Anthony Horowitz

After the death of the uncle who had been his guardian, fourteen-year-old Alex Rider is coerced to continue his uncle's dangerous work for Britain's intelligence agency, MI6.

(The) Tequila Worm – Viola Canales

Sofia, 14, lives in McAllen, TX. What she lacks in material possessions, she makes up for in personality and intelligence. When she is called a taco head by a student at her school, she decides to kick that girl by getting better grades and being a better soccer player than her tormentor. As a result of this determination, Sofia is offered a scholarship to the elite Saint Lukes school in Austin. Now she must convince her family and herself that she is up to the challenge. Canales includes vivid descriptions of life in a Mexican-American community.

(The) Tiger Rising – Kate DiCamillo

After Rob's mother dies, he and his father move to a new town to get a fresh start, he discovers a caged tiger in the woods. An emotionally rich story about a boy caught in the powerful grip of grief.

Walk Two Moons – Sharon Creech

After her mother leaves home suddenly, thirteen-year-old Sal and her grandparents take a car trip retracing her mother's route. Along the way, Sal recounts the story of her friend Phoebe, whose mother also left.

What I Call Life – Jill Wolfson

Placed in a group foster home, eleven-year-old Cal Lavender learns how to cope with life from the four other girls who live there and from their storytelling guardian, the Knitting Lady.

- All summaries excerpted from the San Francisco Public Library or Amazon.com