

7th 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.

Airborn – 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.

An Abundance of Katherines – John Green

Having been recently dumped for the nineteenth time by a girl named Katherine, recent high school graduate and former child prodigy Colin sets off on a road trip with his best friend to try to find some new direction in life while also trying to create a mathematical formula to explain his relationships.

Ask Me No Questions - Marina Budhos

Fourteen-year-old Nadira, her sister, and their parents leave Bangladesh for New York City, but the expiration of their visas and the events of September 11, 2001, bring frustration, sorrow, and terror for the whole family.

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.

Breaking Through and/or The Circuit – Francisco Jimenez

Sequel to The Circuit. Having come from Mexico to California ten years ago, fourteen-year-old Francisco is still working in the fields but fighting to improve his life and complete his education.

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.

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.

(The) Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things – Carolyn Mackler

Feeling like she does not fit in with the other members of her family, who are all thin, brilliant, and good-looking, fifteen-year-old Virginia tries to deal with her self-image, her first physical relationship, and her disillusionment with some of the people closest to her.

Fat Kid Rules the World – K.L. Going

Seventeen-year-old Troy, depressed, suicidal, and weighing nearly three hundred pounds, gets a new perspective on life when Curt, a semi-homeless teen who is a genius on guitar, asks Troy to be the drummer in a rock band.

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.

Flush – Carl Hiaasen

With their father jailed for sinking a river boat, Noah Underwood and his younger sister, Abbey, must gather evidence that the owner of this floating casino is emptying his bilge tanks into the protected waters around their Florida Keys home.

Girl 15, Charming But Insane – Sue Limb

Fifteen-year-old Jess, living with her mum, separated from her father in Cornwall, and with a best friend who seems to do everything perfectly, finds her own assets through humor.

Ghost in the Tokaido Inn - Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler

While attempting to solve the mystery of a stolen jewel, Seikei, a merchant's son who longs to be a samurai, joins a group of kabuki actors in eighteenth-century Japan.

(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.

(The) Hitchhikers 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?

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.

Last Shot – John Feinstein

After winning a basketball reporting contest, eighth graders Stevie and Susan Carol are sent to cover the Final Four tournament, where they discover that a talented player is being blackmailed into throwing the final game.

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.

Looking for Alaska – John Green

Sixteen-year-old Miles' first year at Culver Creek Preparatory School in Alabama includes good friends and great pranks, but is defined by the search for answers about life and death after a fatal car crash.

Make Lemonade – Virginia Euwer Wolff

Narrator Heather Simms brings to life 14-year-old LaVaughn, a powerful character in the novel by Virginia Euwer Wolff (Holt, 1993). Living in the projects but determined to be the first person in her family to go on to college, LaVaughn takes a job babysitting for Jolly, the teenage mother of two-year-old Jeremy and baby Jilly, whose life is the epitome of disorganization. With warmth, humor, and a voice blending street smarts and innocent naivete, Simms' melodious words draw listeners into the world of unwed parenthood, the struggle for a better life, and the deepening friendship between LaVaughn and Jolly. Written in the first person, the 66 short chapters of this powerful coming-of-age story portray life in all its gritty and sometimes heartbreaking reality, while at the same time conveying a message of inspiration and hope captured in the saying "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Wolff's writing leaves listeners with no option but to root enthusiastically for both LaVaughn and Jolly, and to rush to the shelves for the sequel, True Believer.

Maus: A Survivor's Tale – Art Spiegelman

Told with chilling realism in an unusual comic-book format, this is more than a tale of surviving the Holocaust. Spiegelman relates the effect of those events on the survivors' later years and upon the lives of the following generation. Each scene opens at the elder Spiegelman's home in Rego Park, N.Y. Art, who was born after the war, is visiting his father, Vladek, to record his experiences in Nazi-occupied Poland. The Nazis, portrayed as cats, gradually introduce increasingly repressive measures, until the Jews, drawn as mice, are systematically hunted and herded toward the Final Solution. Vladek saves himself and his wife by a combination of luck and wits, all the time enduring the torment of hunted outcast. The other theme of this book is Art's troubled adjustment to life as he, too, bears the burden of his parents' experiences. This is a complex book. It relates events

which young adults, as the future architects of society, must confront, and their interest is sure to be caught by the skillful graphics and suspenseful unfolding of the story.

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.

Mortal Engines – 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.

Runt: Story of a Boy – V.M. Caldwell

Rejected by his aunts who take in three of his sisters following their mother's death, 13-year-old Robert Remick, nicknamed Runt, is offered a home by his estranged older sister, Helen, who lives in a trailer with her sinister boyfriend, Cole. His family's poverty and despair had kept Runt an outsider and now he refuses to attend school in the new place, instead spending his days exploring the town and collecting empty cans for pocket money. Drawn to the serenity of a nearby cemetery, he meets wheelchair-bound Mitch Curran, a spirited, intelligent boy who is determined to befriend him despite his resistance. It is quickly apparent that Mitch is in the final stages of cancer, refusing further treatment, and the boys open up to one another's pain.

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.

Stargirl – Jerry Spinelli

"She was homeschooling gone amok." "She was an alien." "Her parents were circus acrobats." These are only a few of the theories concocted to explain Stargirl Caraway, a new 10th grader at Arizona's Mica Area High School who wears pioneer dresses and kimonos to school, strums a ukulele in the cafeteria, laughs when there are no jokes, and dances when there is no music. The whole school, not exactly a "hotbed of nonconformity," is stunned by her, including our 16-year-old narrator Leo Borlock: "She was elusive. She was today. She was tomorrow. She was the faintest scent of a cactus flower, the flitting shadow of an elf owl."

Popularity, of course, is a fragile and fleeting state, and bit by bit, Mica sours on their new idol. Jerry Spinelli, author of Newbery Medalist *Maniac Magee*, Newbery Honor Book *Wringer*, and many other excellent books for teens, elegantly and accurately captures the collective, not-always-pretty emotions of a high school microcosm in which individuality is pitted against conformity. Spinelli's Stargirl is a supernatural teen character—absolutely egoless, altruistic, in touch with life's primitive rhythms, meditative, untouched by popular culture, and supremely self-confident. It is the sensitive Leo whom readers will relate to as he grapples with who she is, who he is, who they are together as Stargirl and Starboy, and indeed, what it means to be a human being on a planet that is rich with wonders.

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.

Tangerine – Edward Bloor

So what if he's legally blind? Even with his bottle-thick, bug-eyed glasses, Paul Fisher can see better than most people. He can see the lies his parents and brother live out, day after day. No one ever listens to Paul, though—until the family moves to Tangerine. In Tangerine, even a blind, geeky, alien freak can become cool. Who knows? Paul might even become a hero! Edward Bloor's debut novel sparkles with wit, authenticity, unexpected plot twists, and heart. The writing is so fine, the story

so triumphant, that you just might stand up and shout when you get to the end.

(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.

Wait for Me – An Na

The pack of lies about her academic achievement that Mina has told to satisfy her mother's high expectations (she has her heart set on her daughter going to Harvard) is unraveling as her senior year approaches. Jonathon Kim, a Stanford-bound teen and the son of her mother's best friend, has helped with the deception by forging Mina's report cards and backing up her many fictions. He asks too much of her, though, while Ysrael, the attractive new employee in the family cleaning business, encourages her to follow her own dreams—and him—to San Francisco. The tension in this Korean-American family is as uncomfortable as the heat and Santa Ana winds of the southern California setting. Mina's mother's bitterness over her lot in life and her neglect of Mina's hearing-impaired younger sister, Suna, have left the teen responsible. The story is told in two voices: first-person past tense for Mina and a distancing third-person present for Suna, just entering middle school and just beginning to find her own voice.

*All summaries are from the San Francisco Public Library or Amazon.com.