

8th 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.

Airborn – Kenneth Oppel

Matt, a young cabin boy aboard an airship, and Kate, a wealthy young girl traveling with her chaperone, team up to search for the existence of mysterious winged creatures reportedly living hundreds of feet above the Earth's surface.

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.

Annie on My Mind - Nancy Garden

Liza puts aside her feelings for Annie after the disaster at school, but eventually she allows love to triumph over the ignorance of people.

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.

Beast – Donna Jo Napoli

In a narrative as glittering and richly detailed as a Persian miniature, Donna Jo Napoli interprets and amplifies the tale of Beauty and the Beast with startling originality. We've seen her keen psychological insights, surprising viewpoints, and clever twists on traditional fairy tales in previous novels: Hansel and Gretel in The Magic Circle, Rapunzel in Zel, Jack and the Beanstalk in Crazy Jack, and Rumpelstiltskin in Spinners. Here she uses the intriguing setting of ancient Persia in a glorious retelling.

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.

Bucking the Sarge – Christopher Paul Curtis

Deeply involved in his cold and manipulative mother's shady business dealings in Flint, Michigan, fourteen-year-old Luther keeps a sense of humor while running the Happy Neighbor Group Home For Men, all the while dreaming of going to college and becoming a philosopher.

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.

(The) Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time – Mark Haddon

Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically-gifted, autistic fifteen-year-old boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret information about his mother.

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.

(The) First Part Last – Angela Johnson

Bobby's carefree teenage life changes forever when he becomes a father and must care for his adored baby daughter.

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) 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.

Hoopster – Alan Lawrence Sitomer

Andre Anderson has a bright future as a basketball star until he is viciously attacked in a hate crime, causing him to question everything he once believed in.

How I Live Now – Meg Rosoff

To get away from her pregnant stepmother in New York City, fifteen-year-old Daisy goes to England to stay with her aunt and cousins, with whom she instantly bonds, but soon war breaks out and rips apart the family while devastating the land.

Jimi & Me – Jaime Adoff

This verse novel carries Keith, a 13-year-old biracial boy, through the tumultuous first six months after his father's death. His dad, a music producer who called him "Little Cool" and shared his love for Jimi Hendrix's music, is shot to death in Brooklyn. Their money seems to be gone, so he and his mom move to Ohio to live with his aunt. Keith copes with a small town, a racist bully, and panic attacks, but he also meets a shy, beautiful blonde and plays his guitar fiercely. He uncovers the truth of his father's money losses, and he finds another Jimi who was in his father's life, so the title has a double meaning.

Just in Case – Meg Rosoff

Fifteen-year-old David Case, scared out of his acceptance of dullness by his baby brothers near calamity at an open window, changes his name to Justin and allows several new people into his life. He is befriended by a somewhat older—and definitely more worldly—girl when he enters a thrift shop to remake his sartorial presentation. Angela is easy to fall in love with, but frustrating for Justin and suspicious for readers. Peter Prince, on the other hand, a new friend who urges Justin to discover how very good he is as a distance runner, lives up to his surname. Justin's baby brother, Charlie, knowing and telepathic since birth, worries that Justin won't ever recover from the shock of having to haul him back from his experiment with flight.

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.

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.

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.

My Sister's Keeper – Jodi Picoult

Anna was genetically engineered to be a perfect match for her cancer-ridden older sister. Since birth, the 13-year-old has donated platelets, blood, her umbilical cord, and bone marrow as part of her family's struggle to lengthen Kate's life. Anna is now being considered as a kidney donor in a last-ditch attempt to save her 16-year-old sister. As this compelling story opens, Anna has hired a lawyer to represent her in a medical emancipation suit to allow her to have control over her own body.

Parrot in the Oven - Victor Martinez

Manny relates his coming of age experiences as a member of a poor Mexican American family in which the alcoholic father only adds to everyone's struggle.

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.

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.

(The) Secret Life of Bees – Sue Monk Kidd

14-year-old Lily Owen, neglected by her father and isolated on their Georgia peach farm, spends hours imagining a blissful infancy when she was loved and nurtured by her mother, Deborah, whom she barely remembers. These consoling fantasies are her heart's answer to the family story that as a child, in unclear circumstances, Lily accidentally shot and killed her mother. All Lily has left of Deborah is a strange image of a Black Madonna, with the words "Tiburon, South Carolina" scrawled on the back. The search for a mother, and the need to mother oneself, are crucial elements in this well-written coming-of-age story set in the early 1960s against a background of racial violence and unrest. When Lily's beloved nanny, Rosaleen, manages to insult a group of angry white men on her way to register to vote and has to skip town, Lily takes the opportunity to go with her, fleeing to the only place she can think of--Tiburon, South Carolina--determined to find out more about her dead mother.

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.

Speak – Laurie Halse Anderson

In a stunning first novel, Anderson uses keen observations and vivid imagery to pull readers into the head of an isolated teenager. Divided into the four marking periods of an academic year, the novel, narrated by Melinda Sordino, begins on her first day as a high school freshman. No one will sit with Melinda on the bus. At school, students call her names and harass her; her best friends from junior high scatter to different cliques and abandon her. Yet Anderson infuses the narrative with a wit that sustains the heroine through her pain and holds readers' empathy. A girl at a school pep rally offers an explanation of the heroine's pariah status when she confronts Melinda about calling the police at a summer party, resulting in several arrests. But readers do not learn why Melinda made the call until much later. Only through her work in art class, and with the support of a compassionate teacher there, does she begin to reach out to others and eventually find her voice.

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. Her prose is engaging and easy to read, making this novel a good choice for reluctant readers.

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.

Who Am I Without Him? – Sharon Flake

Written in the vernacular of urban African-American teens, which Flake captures flawlessly, these 10 stories have universal themes and situations. Some are funny and uplifting; others, disturbing and sad. In "So I Ain't No Good Girl," a teen wants to be with a good-looking popular boy, so much so that she tolerates his disrespect and abuse. In "Wanted: A Thug," Melody writes to a columnist for advice on how to steal a friend's boyfriend, unaware that the friend is the columnist's younger sister. Two of the stories are told from a boy's point of view. The concluding story, "A Letter to My Daughter," in which an absent father gives his daughter his advice about boys and men is sad, poignant, and loving. Flake has a way of teaching a lesson without seeming to do so. Addressing issues and situations that many girls face in today's often complex society, this book is provocative and thought-provoking.

47 – Walter Mosley

The intense, personal slave narrative of 14-year-old Forty-seven becomes allegorical when a mysterious runaway slave shows up at the Corinthian Plantation. Tall John, who believes there are no masters and no slaves, and who carries a yellow carpet bag of magical healing potions and futuristic devices, is both an inspiration and an enigma. He claims he has crossed galaxies and centuries and arrived by Sun Ship on Earth in 1832 to find the one chosen to continue the fight against the evil Calash. The brutal white overseer and the cruel slave owner are disguised Calash who must be defeated. Tall John inserts himself into Forty-seven's daily life and gradually cedes to him immortality and the power, confidence, and courage to confront the Calash to break the chains of slavery. With confidence, determination, and craft, Tall John becomes Forty-seven's alter ego, challenging him and inspiring him to see beyond slavery and fight for freedom. Time travel, shape-shifting, and intergalactic conflict add unusual, provocative elements to this story.

19 Minutes – Jodi Picoult

Bestseller Picoult (*My Sister's Keeper*) takes on another contemporary hot-button issue in her brilliantly told new thriller, about a high school shooting. Peter Houghton, an alienated teen who has been bullied for years by the popular crowd, brings weapons to his high school in Sterling, N.H., one day and opens fire, killing 10 people. Flashbacks reveal how bullying caused Peter to retreat into a world of violent computer games. Alex Cormier, the judge assigned to Peter's case, tries to maintain her objectivity as she struggles to understand her daughter, Josie, one of the surviving witnesses of the shooting. The author's insights into her characters' deep-seated emotions brings this ripped-from-the-headlines read chillingly alive.

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