

## Middle School Summer Reading 2015

### 6th Grade

**Part 1:** Required reading for students in the 6th grade:

(Note: Be sure to read the study guide for helpful information before beginning the book.)

Sonnenblick, Jordan. *Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie*.

Steven has a totally normal life (well, almost). He plays drums in the All-City Jazz Band (whose members call him the Peasant), has a crush on the hottest girl in school (who doesn't even know he's alive), and is constantly annoyed by his younger brother, Jeffrey (who is cuter than cute - which is also pretty annoying). But when Jeffrey gets sick, Steven's world is turned upside down, and he is forced to deal with his brother's illness, his parents' attempts to keep the family in one piece, his homework, the band, girls, and Dangerous Pie (yes, you'll have to read the book to find out what that is!). (Amazon.com)

**Part 2:** Students in the 6th grade will choose two books (that they have not read previously) from this section:

Ibbotson, Eva. *Dragonfly Pool*.

Eleven-year-old Tally doesn't want to leave London for boarding school in the country, but with Hitler amassing power and war on the horizon, her father insists. When the school is invited to participate in an international folk-dancing festival in Ibbotson-imagined Bergania, where the king has gained notoriety for refusing Hitler's demands, Tally overcomes all odds to put together a troupe. In Bergania, Tally and Karil, the lonely crown prince, become fast friends, and after the king is assassinated, she and her friends smuggle Karil out of Bergania, intending to hide him at their school. (*Booklist*)

Johnson, Jaleigh. *Mark of the Dragonfly*.

Piper has never seen the Mark of the Dragonfly until she finds the girl amid the wreckage of a caravan in the Meteor Fields. The girl doesn't remember a thing about her life, but the tattoo on her arm is proof that she's from the Dragonfly Territories and that she's protected by the king. Which means a reward for Piper if she can get the girl home. The one sure way to the Territories is the 401, a great old beauty of a train. But a ticket costs more coin than Piper could make in a year. And stowing away is a difficult prospect--everyone knows that getting past the peculiar green-eyed boy who stands guard is nearly impossible. Life for Piper just turned dangerous. A little bit magical. And very exciting, if she can manage to survive the journey. (Amazon.com)

Kadohata, Cynthia. *Half a World Away*.

Romanian-born Jaden knows fear and anger but has trouble feeling love and trust. He was abandoned by his biological mother at age four, then shuttled to several foster homes before being adopted by an American couple. Now 12, Jaden thinks his adoptive parents must not be "satisfied" with him because they want another child, and they expect Jaden to go with them to Kazakhstan to meet and bond with his new adoptive baby brother. In this candid novel about three individuals struggling to become a family, National Book Award-winner Kadohata (*The Thing About Luck*) offers a rare insider's view of a boy with attachment difficulties searching to find security and purpose. While visiting the orphanage in Kazakhstan, Jaden is drawn to a special-needs toddler, even as he has trouble feeling anything for the baby his parents plan to adopt. Jaden also forms an unexpected and eye-opening friendship with the family's outspoken hired driver. Without sugarcoating the complexities and mishaps that can accompany overseas adoption, Kadohata creates an inspiring story that celebrates hope and second chances.

Law, Ingrid. *Savvy*.

Upon turning 13, each member of the Beaumont family develops a supernatural ability, or "savvy," which must then be tamed. Well aware of the problems savvys can bring (the family had to relocate when one child had difficulty controlling his storm-producing savvy), 12-year-old Mississippi (Mibs) awaits her birthday eagerly but with a bit of trepidation. Then Poppa is seriously injured in an accident far away, and Momma goes to his side, leaving Mibs and the rest of the family to cope with Mibs' 13th birthday on their own. (*Booklist*)

Lupica, Mike. *Game Changers*.

Ben McBain is every football team's dream player. He's a jack-of-all-trades guy that can handle almost any position. When the game is on the line, Ben's number is the one being called for the final play. But Ben wants to be the starting quarterback and the one thing standing in his way is the coach's son. Shawn O'Brien looks the part. He has been groomed by his father, a former professional quarterback. But despite his size and arm strength, Shawn is struggling. Ben is torn between being a good teammate and going after his own dream. As Ben finds out, Shawn isn't the easiest person to help. And when Ben gets an unexpected opportunity, the entire game will change for the both of them. (Amazon.com)

Segel, Jason and Kirsten Miller. *Nightmares!*

Eleven-year-old Charlie Laird is absolutely convinced that his stepmother Charlotte is a witch. She dresses funny, serves seriously strange food (kale pancakes), and runs a store called Hazel's Herbarium. Charlie's dad, little brother, and friends all like Charlotte and think Charlie's still grieving for his mom. He's also suffering from terrible nightmares, and living in Charlotte's crazy purple mansion isn't helping. The evil witch who stars in those nightmares threatens to follow the protagonist into the real world and kidnap his brother. Instead, he is tricked into the Nightmare World, peopled with monsters and madness: gorgons, goblins, crazy clowns, scary bunnies, tests filled with gibberish, and the monomaniacal President Fear (who also inhabits the real world as

the truly terrifying Principal Stearns). But all is not what it seems, and some of the scariest creatures turn out to be sympathetic—or even allies. (*School Library Journal*)

Smith, Roland. *Cryptid Hunters*.

When twins Marty and Grace O'Hara discover that their adventurous parents have gone missing, they leave their Swiss boarding school and join their mysterious uncle, Travis Wolfe, on his island in Washington State. They soon learn that their uncle is one of the world's foremost authorities on cryptids (think Bigfoot and the Loch Ness Monster). Wolfe is scheduled to look for dinosaurs in the African jungle, and he plans to leave Marty and Grace in Europe before the expedition starts. Things go awry, however, when an accident plunges Marty and Grace into the middle of the Congolese jungle. Soon the henchmen of the evil Noah Blackwood are pursuing the twins. The action is nonstop in this well-paced jungle adventure, and Smith adds a deeper layer in scenes of Marty and Grace discovering truths about their complicated family relationships. (*Booklist*)

Timberlake, Amy. *One Came Home*.

In the town of Placid, Wisconsin, in 1871, Georgie Burkhardt is known for two things: her uncanny aim with a rifle and her habit of speaking her mind plainly. But when Georgie blurts out something she shouldn't, her older sister Agatha flees, running off with a pack of "pigeoners" trailing the passenger pigeon migration. And when the sheriff returns to town with an unidentifiable body—wearing Agatha's blue-green ball gown—everyone assumes the worst. Except Georgie. Refusing to believe the facts that are laid down (and confined) before her, Georgie sets out on a journey to find her sister. She will track every last clue and shred of evidence to bring Agatha home. Yet even with resolute determination and her trusty Springfield single-shot, Georgie is not prepared for what she faces on the western frontier. (Amazon.com)

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *The Running Dream*.

Sixteen-year-old Jessica is the track team's star sprinter until tragedy strikes: the team van is struck, killing one runner and demolishing Jessica's right leg. The book begins with Jessica refusing to acknowledge the result. But she is slowly reintroduced to life, which involves being fitted for prosthesis, returning to school, and dealing with the usual—tough teachers, mean girls, and one sensitive, supportive boy. It's a classic problem novel in a lot of ways; accordingly, Van Draanen inserts setbacks with narrative precision, the most affecting of which (surprisingly) is the insurance battle that Jessica's parents face. Overall, this is a tremendously upbeat book, with Jessica's family, friends, and community coming together (the track team raises funds to buy Jessica a \$20,000 running leg). Readers will truly feel what it's like to walk (or run) a mile (or 10) in Jessica's shoes. (*Booklist*)

Watson, Jude. *Loot*.

On a foggy night in Amsterdam, a man falls from a rooftop to the wet pavement below. It's Alfie McQuinn, the notorious cat burglar, and he's dying. As sirens wail in the distance, Alfie manages to get out two last words to his young son, March: "Find jewels." But March learns that his father is not talking about a stash of loot. He's talking about Jules, the twin sister March never knew he had. No sooner than the two find each other, they're picked up by the police and sent to the world's worst orphanage. It's not prison, but it feels like it. March and Jules have no intention of staying put. They know their father's business inside and out, and they're tired of being pushed around. Just one good heist, and they'll live the life of riches and freedom most kids only dream about. (Amazon.com)

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Brown Girl Dreaming*.

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become. (Amazon.com)