

8th Grade Summer Reading 2015

Part 1: Required reading for students in the 8th grade:

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

Sepetys, Ruta. *Between Shades of Gray*.

Fifteen-year-old Lina is a Lithuanian girl living an ordinary life--until Soviet officers invade her home and tear her family apart. Separated from her father and forced onto a crowded train, Lina, her mother, and her young brother make their way to a Siberian work camp, where they are forced to fight for their lives. Lina finds solace in her art, documenting these events by drawing. Risking everything, she imbeds clues in her drawings of their location and secretly passes them along, hoping her drawings will make their way to her father's prison camp. But will strength, love, and hope be enough for Lina and her family to survive? (Amazon.com)

Part 2: Students in the 8th grade will choose two books (that they have not read previously) from this section:

[Books with a double asterisk beside the author's name (**) are suitable for mature readers.]

**Bacigalupi, Paolo. *Ship Breaker*.

Nailer works light crew; his dirty, dangerous job is to crawl deep into the wrecks of the ancient oil tankers that line the beach, scavenging copper wire and turning it over to his crew boss. After a brutal hurricane passes over, Nailer and his friend Pima stumble upon the wreck of a luxurious clipper ship. It's filled with valuable goods—a "Lucky Strike" that could make them rich, if only they can find a safe way to cash it in. Amid the wreckage, a girl barely clings to life. If they help her, she tells them, she can show them a world of privilege that they have never known. But can they trust her? And if so, can they keep the girl safe from Nailer's drug-addicted father? (*School Library Journal*)

Greitens, Eric. *The Warrior's Heart: Becoming a Man of Compassion and Courage*.

A former Navy SEAL describes his journey from aiding victims of violence to protecting people and, now, living a life of service. Modeling parts of his engaging memoir on the "Choose Your Own Adventure" stories he loved as a child, Greitens describes events along his path, preceding each with a short "You" segment presenting a moral dilemma taken from his own life. As a college student he began seeing the results of violence in the world with summers in China, Bosnia, and Rwanda. At home, he trained as a boxer to build his strength. After graduation he worked with Bolivian street children. At this point, halfway through the narrative, there is a series of black-and-white photographs. After a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, realizing that "courage and compassion are two sides of the same coin," and determined to become someone who protected those in need, he joined the Navy SEALs. That difficult training takes up most of the second half of the book, which concludes with a few scenes from his service in Iraq; a description of The Mission Continues, his nonprofit organization; and an exhortation to readers to live lives of service as well. (*School Library Journal*)

**E. Lockhart. *We Were Liars*.

Cadence Sinclair Easton comes from an old-money family, headed by a patriarch who owns a private island off of Cape Cod. Each summer, the extended family gathers at the various houses

on the island, and Cadence, her cousins Johnny and Mirren, and friend Gat (the four "Liars"), have been inseparable since age eight. During their fifteenth summer however, Cadence suffers a mysterious accident. She spends the next two years—and the course of the book—in a haze of amnesia, debilitating migraines, and painkillers, trying to piece together just what happened. Lockhart writes in a somewhat sparse style filled with metaphor and jumps from past to present and back again—rather fitting for a main character struggling with a sudden and unexplainable life change. The story, while lightly touching on issues of class and race, more fully focuses on dysfunctional family drama, a heart-wrenching romance between Cadence and Gat, and, ultimately, the suspense of what happened during that fateful summer. The ending is a stunner that will haunt readers for a long time to come. (*School Library Journal*)

****Mackall, Dandi Daley. *The Silence of Murder*.**

Seventeen-year-old Hope Long's life revolves around her brother Jeremy. So when Jeremy is accused of killing the town's beloved baseball coach, Hope's world begins to unravel. Everyone is convinced Jeremy did it, and since he hasn't spoken a word in 9 years, he's unable to defend himself. Their lawyer instructs Hope to convince the jury that Jeremy is insane, but all her life Hope has known that Jeremy's just different than other people—better, even. As she works to prove his innocence—joined by her best friend T.J. and the sheriff's son, Chase—Hope uncovers secrets about the murder, the townspeople, her family, and herself. She knows her brother isn't the murderer. But as she comes closer to the truth, she's terrified to find out who is. (Goodreads.com)

Schmatz, Pat. *Bluefish*.

Travis is missing his old home in the country, and he's missing his old hound, Rosco. Now there's just the cramped place he shares with his well-meaning but alcoholic grandpa, a new school, and the dreaded routine of passing when he's called on to read out loud. But that's before Travis meets Mr. McQueen, who doesn't take "pass" for an answer--a rare teacher whose savvy persistence has Travis slowly unlocking a book on the natural world. And it's before Travis is noticed by Velveeta, a girl whose wry banter and colorful scarves belie some hard secrets of her own. With sympathy, humor, and disarming honesty, Pat Schmatz brings to life a cast of utterly believable characters--and captures the moments of trust and connection that make all the difference. (Amazon.com)

Schusterman, Neal. *Bruiser*.

Tennyson is not surprised, really, when his family begins to fall apart, or when his twin sister, Brontë, starts dating the misunderstood bully, Brewster (or The Bruiser, as the entire high school calls him). Tennyson is determined to get to the bottom of The Bruiser's reputation, even if it means gearing up for a fight. Brontë, on the other hand, thinks there's something special underneath that tough exterior. And she's right...but neither she nor Tennyson is prepared for the truth of what lies below the surface. Told through Tennyson, Brontë, and Bruiser's points of view, this dark, twisting novel explores friendship, family, and the sacrifices we make for the people we love. (Amazon.com)

Smith, Jennifer E. *The Statistical Probability of Love at First Sight*.

Who would have guessed that four minutes could change everything?

Today should be one of the worst days of seventeen-year-old Hadley Sullivan's life. Having missed her flight, she's stuck at JFK airport and late to her father's second wedding, which is taking place in London and involves a soon-to-be stepmother Hadley's never even met. Then she meets the perfect boy in the airport's cramped waiting area. His name is Oliver, he's British, and he's sitting in her row. A long night on the plane passes in the blink of an eye, and Hadley and Oliver lose track of each other in the airport chaos upon arrival. Can fate intervene to bring them together once more? Quirks of timing play out in this romantic and cinematic novel about family connections, second chances, and first loves. Set over a twenty-four-hour-period, Hadley and Oliver's story will make you believe that true love finds you when you're least expecting it. (Amazon.com)

Volponi, Paul. *Final Four*.

March Madness is in full swing, and there are only four teams left in the NCAA basketball championship. The heavily favored Michigan Spartans and the underdog Troy Trojans meet in the first game in the semifinals, and it's there that the fates of Malcolm, Roko, Crispin, and M.J. intertwine. As the last moments tick down on the game clock, you'll learn how each player went from being a kid who loves to shoot hoops to a powerful force in one of the most important games of the year. Which team will leave the Superdome victorious? In the end it will come down to who has the most skill, the most drive, and the most heart. (Amazon.com)

**Zevin, Gabrielle. *Elsewhere*.

Welcome to Elsewhere. It is warm, with a breeze, and the beaches are marvelous. It's quiet and peaceful. You can't get sick or any older. Elsewhere is where fifteen-year-old Liz Hall ends up, after she has died. It is a place so like Earth, yet completely different. Here Liz will age backward from the day of her death until she becomes a baby again and returns to Earth. But Liz wants to turn sixteen, not fourteen again. She wants to get her driver's license. She wants to graduate from high school and go to college. And now that she's dead, Liz is being forced to live a life she doesn't want with a grandmother she has only just met. And it is not going well. How can Liz let go of the only life she has ever known and embrace a new one? Is it possible that a life lived in reverse is no different from a life lived forward? This moving, often funny book about grief, death, and loss will stay with the reader long after the last page is turned. (Amazon.com)

**Zusak, Marcus. *The Book Thief*.

Set during World War II in Germany, [this is] the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau. This is an unforgettable story about the ability of books to feed the soul. (Amazon.com)