

Summer Reading Book List for students entering grade 7

Annotations from Amazon.com (*challenging title)

Brian's Return by Gary Paulsen As millions of readers of Hatchet, The River, and Brian's Winter know, Brian Robeson survived alone in the wilderness by finding solutions to extraordinary challenges. But now that he's back in civilization, he can't find a way to make sense of high school life. He feels disconnected, more isolated than he did alone in the North. The only answer is to return-to "go back in"-for only in the wilderness can Brian discover his true path in life, and where he belongs.

Counting by 7s by Holly Goldberg Sloan Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now. Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is *not* a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and fully believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read.

Everlost by Neil Shusterman Nick and Allie don't survive the car accident, but their souls don't exactly get where they're supposed to go either. Instead, they're caught halfway between life and death, in a sort of limbo known as Everlost: a shadow of the living world, filled with all the things and places that no longer exist. It's a magical, yet dangerous place where bands of lost kids run wild and anyone who stands in the same place too long sinks to the center of the Earth. When they find Mary, the self-proclaimed queen of lost souls, Nick feels like he's found a home, but Allie isn't satisfied spending eternity between worlds.

P.S. Be Eleven by Rita Williams-Garcia After spending the summer in Oakland, California, with their mother and the Black Panthers, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern arrive home with a newfound streak of independence. The sisters aren't the only ones who have changed. Now Pa has a girlfriend. Uncle Darnell returns from Vietnam a different man. But Big Ma still expects Delphine to keep her sisters in line. That's much harder now that Vonetta and Fern refuse to be bossed around. Besides her sisters, Delphine's got plenty of other things to worry about—like starting sixth grade, being the tallest girl in her class, and dreading the upcoming school dance. The one person she confides in is her mother, Cecile. Through letters, Delphine pours her heart out and receives some constant advice: to be eleven while she can.

Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science by John Fleischman

Phineas Gage was truly a man with a hole in his head. Phineas, a railroad construction foreman, was blasting rock near Cavendish, Vermont, in 1848 when a thirteen-pound iron rod was shot through his brain. Miraculously, he survived to live another eleven years and become a textbook case in brain science. At the time, Phineas Gage seemed to completely recover from his accident. He could walk, talk, work, and travel, but he was changed. Gage "was no longer Gage," said his Vermont doctor, meaning that the old Phineas was dependable and well liked, and the new Phineas was crude and unpredictable.

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls Billy, Old Dan and Little Ann -- a Boy and His Two Dogs...

A loving threesome, they ranged the dark hills and river bottoms of Cherokee country. Old Dan had the brawn, Little Ann had the brains -- and Billy had the will to train them to be the finest hunting team in the valley. Glory and victory were coming to them, but sadness waited too. And close by was the strange and wonderful power that's only found...An exciting tale of love and adventure you'll never forget.

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann Brashares They were just a soft, ordinary pair of thrift-shop jeans until the four girls took turns trying them on--four girls, that is, who are close friends, about to be parted for the summer, with very different sizes and builds, not to mention backgrounds and personalities. Yet the pants settle on each girl's hips perfectly, making her look sexy and long-legged and feel confident as a teenager can feel. "These are magical Pants!" they realize, and so they make a pact to share them equally, to mail them back and forth over the summer from wherever they are.

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The Dark is Rising by Susan Cooper On the Midwinter Day that is his eleventh birthday, Will Stanton discovers a special gift -- that he is the last of the Old Ones, immortals dedicated to keeping the world from domination by the forces of evil, the Dark. At once, he is plunged into a quest for the six magical Signs that will one day aid the Old Ones in the final battle between the Dark and the Light. And for the twelve days of Christmas, while the Dark is rising, life for Will is full of wonder, terror, and delight.

*Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card In order to develop a secure defense against a hostile alien race's next attack, government agencies breed child geniuses and train them as soldiers. A brilliant young boy, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin lives with his kind but distant parents, his sadistic brother Peter, and the person he loves more than anyone else, his sister Valentine. Peter and Valentine were candidates for the soldier-training program but didn't make the cut--young Ender is the Wiggin drafted to the orbiting Battle School for rigorous military training.

Gilda Joyce, Psychic Investigator by Jennifer Allison Ever since her father died, quirky Gilda Joyce has been working hard to sharpen her psychic skills. She's determined to communicate with spirits from the Other Side and become a crack investigator of spooky, twisted mysteries. After wrangling an invitation to visit relatives in San Francisco, Gilda discovers that her dreary, tight-lipped uncle and his strange, delicate daughter need her help to uncover the terrible family secret.

Navigating Early by Clare Vanderpool When Jack Baker's father sends him from his home in Kansas to attend a boys' boarding school in Maine, Jack doesn't know what to expect. Certainly not Early Auden, the strangest of boys. Early keeps to himself, reads the number pi as a story, and refuses to accept truths others take for granted. Jack, feeling lonely and out of place, connects with Early, and the two become friends. During a break from school, the boys set out for the Appalachian Trail on a quest for a great black bear. Can the boys make it home alive?

Schooled by Gordon Korman Capricorn Cap Anderson has been homeschooled by his hippie grandmother, Rain. When Rain is injured in a fall, Cap is forced to attend the local middle school. Although he knows a lot about Zen Buddhism, nothing has prepared him for the politics of public school.

The Angel Experiment, Maximum Ride by Jamer Patterson In James Patterson's blockbuster series, fourteen-year-old Maximum Ride, better known as Max, knows what it's like to soar above the world. She and all the members of the "flock"--Fang, Iggy, Nudge, Gasman and Angel--are just like ordinary kids--only they have wings and can fly.. Along the way Max discovers from her old friend and father-figure Jeb--now her betrayed and greatest enemy--that her purpose is save the world--but can she?

The Big Field by Mike Lupica Playing shortstop is a way of life for Hutch. Not only is his hero, Derek Jeter, a shortstop, but so was his father, a former local legend turned pro. Which is why having to play second base feels like demotion to second team. Yet that's where Hutch ends up after Darryl, D-Will, Williams, the best shortstop prospect since A-Rod, joins the team. With the league championship on the line, just how far is Hutch willing to bend to be a good teammate?

The Boy in the Burning House by Time Wynne-Jones Two years after his father's mysterious disappearance, Jim Hawkins is coping -- barely. Underneath, he's frozen in uncertainty and grief. What did happen to his father? Is he dead or just gone? And what really happened thirty years ago when a boy died in a burning house?

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander *"With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . . The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I'm delivering,"* announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he's got mad beats, too, that tell his family's story in verse, in this fast and furious middle grade novel of family and brotherhood from Kwame Alexander. Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story's heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family.