



ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Summer Reading List
For Students Entering Grade 9



Essential Questions:

1. What is the nature of the hero?
2. What is the nature of a journey? How and what do people learn from these experiences?
3. What is that nature of conflict, and what makes up the forces of good and evil?
4. How do stories reflect human culture and human morals?

Selections		
Author	Title	Synopsis
Alexie	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>	Alexie's novel is a chronicle of Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, a Spokane Indian from Wellpinit, WA. The bright 14-year-old was born with water on the brain, is regularly the target of bullies, and loves to draw. He expects disaster when he transfers from the reservation school a school in Reardan, but soon finds himself making friends. The teen's determination to both improve himself and overcome poverty, despite the handicaps of birth, circumstances, and race, delivers a positive message in a low-key manner. From School Library Journal
Card	<i>Ender's Game</i>	Aliens have attacked Earth twice and almost destroyed the human species. To make sure humans win the next encounter, the world government has taken to breeding military geniuses -- and then training them in the arts of war... The early training, not surprisingly, takes the form of 'games'... Ender Wiggin is a genius among geniuses; he wins all the games... He is smart enough to know that time is running out. But is he smart enough to save the planet? Amazon.com Review
Collins	<i>Catching Fire</i>	In this sequel to <i>The Hunger Games</i> , Katniss returns home to find herself more the center of attention than ever. <i>Catching Fire</i> is divided into three parts: Katniss and Peeta's mandatory Victory Tour through the districts, preparations for the 75th Annual Hunger Games, and a truncated version of the Games themselves. Though initially bewildered by the attention paid to her, she comes almost to embrace her status as the rebels' symbolic leader. From School Library Journal
Coman	<i>Many Stones</i>	On a two-week pilgrimage to South Africa 16-year-old Berry and her estranged father attempt to come to terms with the murder, a year earlier, of Berry's sister Laura when she was volunteering at a Capetown school. Berry struggles with the concept of "truth and reconciliation," both for South Africa and in her personal life. Amazon.com Review
Geras	<i>Troy</i>	In retelling the siege of Troy as a young adult novel, Adele Geras manages to carry it off without trivializing the original -- Homer's <i>The Iliad</i> . The great battles of the bronze-clad warriors and the clashes between Achilles and Hector and Odysseus are seen at a distance from the walls of the city, where the Trojan townsfolk gather to sit each day and cheer the action like spectators at some archaic football game. Amazon.com Review

Gibbons	<i>Ellen Foster</i>	In <i>Ellen Foster</i> , the title character, an 11-year-old orphan refers to herself as "old Ellen." An old woman in a child's body, Ellen is shuttled from one uncaring relative's home to another before she finally takes it upon herself to find a place to belong. Like <i>Oliver Twist</i> and <i>David Copperfield</i> , Ellen is at the mercy of predatory adults, surviving with only her own wit and courage--and the occasional kindness of others. Amazon.com Review
Haddon	<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> Required for all students entering grade 9	Christopher Boone is the autistic 15-year-old narrator of this novel. When his neighbor's poodle is killed and Christopher is falsely accused of the crime, he decides that he will take a page from Sherlock Holmes and track down the killer. As the mystery leads him to the secrets of his parents' broken marriage and then into an odyssey to find his place in the world, he must fall back on deductive logic to navigate the emotional complexities of a social world that remains a closed book to him. From Publishers Weekly
Hidier	<i>Born Confused</i>	Dimple Lala has spent her entire life trying to fit in. In India, she is too American, while in America she feels the pressure of her parents' efforts to educate and involve her in Indian culture. By her 17th birthday, she is hopelessly confused as to where she belongs. In this story the family background and richness in cultural information add a new level to the familiar girl-meets-boy story as Dimple embarks on a quest to find her own place in her family and country. From School Library Journal
Kass	<i>Real Time</i>	In <i>Real Time</i> , Kass creates a diverse cast of characters, including a naive, conflicted Palestinian youth, a guilt-ridden German teenager, a young Israeli kibbutznik, and an old, embittered Holocaust survivor. After a climactic explosion on a bus that is bombed en route to a kibbutz near Jerusalem., survivors and their loved ones attempt to put back together their shattered lives, which they find to be unexpectedly connected to one another. From School Library Journal
Kidd	<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i>	Fourteen year old Lily Owen, who is neglected and isolated on her father's North Carolina peach farm, becomes a runaway who finds the true meaning of family in the home of three black sisters who raise bees. The story is set in the early 1960's against the background of racial violence and unrest. Amazon.com Review
Larsen	<i>The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet</i>	When twelve-year-old genius cartographer T. S. Spivet receives a phone call from the Smithsonian announcing he has won the prestigious Baird Award, life as normal is interrupted and a wild cross-country adventure begins. On the road from Montana to Washington, D.C. there are some answers and some new questions, too. How does one map the delicate lessons learned about family, or communicate the ebbs and flows of heartbreak, loneliness, and love? Amazon.com Review
Malamud	<i>The Natural</i>	Roy Hobbs, the protagonist of <i>The Natural</i> , makes the mistake of pronouncing aloud his dream: to be the best there ever was. Such hubris, of course, invites divine intervention, but the brilliance of Bernard Malamud's novel is the second chance it offers its hero, elevating him--and his story--into the realm of myth. Amazon.com Review
Martel	<i>Life of Pi</i>	The son of a zookeeper, 16-year-old Pi Patel is raised in India, where he tries on various faiths for size. His father packs up the family and their menagerie and hitches a ride on an enormous freighter bound for Canada. After a shipwreck, Pi finds himself adrift on a 26-foot lifeboat with a number of animals, including a 450-pound Bengal tiger named Richard Parker. Pi recounts the harrowing journey, elegantly cataloging the endless passage of time and his struggles to survive Amazon.com Review