



June 1, 2018

Dear Middle School Students and Parents,

Summer is almost here! It's time for sunshine, beaches, fireflies...and summer reading! As we have done for many years, the middle school English and Humanities teachers have selected summer reading books required for students entering grades 5-8. These books will form the foundations of our English discussions in the first few days of school and will introduce themes that will be addressed throughout the year. While students are not required to annotate their texts or write any sort of book review, they should read the required summer reading book attentively and be ready to discuss it in the fall.

We will be providing copies of the required summer reading books to all students. We are also including some guiding questions that students can consider as they read (see below). We hope the students enjoy their summer reading books, and we encourage grown ups to read along with their children, too!

In Friendship,

The MS English Teachers

Guiding Questions for Middle School Summer Reading

Rising 5th Grade Students and Parents

You will read R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*, a novel that explores kindness and friendship from multiple points of view. August Pullman was born with Treacher-Collins Syndrome, which has resulted in a facial deformity he has experienced all his life. Entering middle school for the first time, he learns about accepting himself and teaches others what it means to be a true friend. Friendship and community are major themes throughout the book.

We encourage you to read this book with your parents and discuss: How do the characters in the book learn about equality? What does this book have to say about friendship, kindness, and courage? How does the story of Augie and his friends reflect the Quaker concept of seeing the Light in everyone?

Rising 6th Grade Students and Parents

You will read Paul Fleischman's short story collection, *Seedfolks*, which tells the story of the many different people whose lives are touched by a community garden. In addition, rising sixth graders are asked to select one independent reading book from the BFS library's list of recommended books for sixth graders; this list will be available on the BFS website starting on June 1st.

As you read *Seedfolks*, ask yourself: How do people's histories, identities, and personalities affect the way they see themselves and their environment? How does nature change people's lives? How do these stories relate to the Quaker testimonies of stewardship and community?

Rising 7th Grade Students and Parents

You will read S. E. Hinton's classic coming-of-age novel, *The Outsiders*. Ponyboy and Johnny are two "greasers" who never seem to get a break. When they get caught up in a gang-related killing they didn't see coming, they run away and learn that their lives will never be the same again...

As you read *The Outsiders*, ask yourself: Who are the outsiders in this story and who are the insiders? Who determines what "in" or "out" even means? How does this story connect to Quaker testimonies of peace and equality?

Rising 8th Grade Students and Parents

You will read *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. This novel follows the narrative of two teens - one black, one white - and a single violent act that creates extreme racial tensions in their community. Rashad, who visits a corner bodega for a simple bag of chips faces an aggressive police officer who mistakes him for a shoplifter. The consequences that follow signal to larger themes about the justice system and the impact of racial prejudice.

You will also read Julia Alvarez's *How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. The events in the novel happen in reverse order—moving backwards in time from 1989 all the way to 1956. These years span the lives of the four García girls, and are divided into three sections. The first, from 1989-1972, portrays the García sisters as adults. The second, from 1970-1960, covers their adolescence. And the third section, from 1960-1956, explores their childhood in the Dominican Republic, right up to the point where they must flee the country and seek exile in the United States. Each section is divided into five chapters, which are like short stories that focus on different members of the family.

As you read *All American Boys*, ask yourself: How does the dual first-person narrative of Rashad and Quinn offer perspective, and what do they teach us about courage? How does this novel connect to the Quaker testimonies of peace and equity?

As you read *How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, ask yourself: How do political changes affect the Garcias? How do cultural and language barriers impact people's lives? How does gender-bias affect adolescent girls? How does this novel connect to the Quaker testimonies of community and equality?