

WEST SPRINGFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Presents:



Great books selected by kids, for kids!

Dear Parents:

As the school year draws to a close, the Reading Department would like to wish you and your children a relaxing and enjoyable vacation. We hope that as families, you will build into your precious time together the pleasures and adventures that reading good books offer. It is our hope that all students entering grades 6, 7 and 8 will read during the summer.

We acknowledge that middle school is a time of choice and being held responsible for those choices. Therefore, with your assistance, students should make thoughtful decisions about what is a “just right” book for them to read, both in interest and difficulty level. Especially during the summer, it is important for your children to be reading books of *high interest to them*. It is our belief that all students are capable of reading at least three “just right” books. To help guide those decisions, we have provided you with some helpful information including book reviews by students and staff, lists of the most popular young adult novels as well as links to reliable websites that can offer more in depth information about the books.

As you know, it can be challenging to motivate middle school-aged students to read during the summer, but research shows that:

- in the elementary grades, "a summer loss of 3 months accumulates to become a gap of 18 months by the end of 6th grade. By **middle school**, summer reading loss...produces a **cumulative lag of two or more years in reading achievement**, even when effective instruction during the school year is available."

(McGill-Franzen, Anne and Richard Allington. "Lost Summers: For Some Children, Few Books and Few Opportunities to Read." *Classroom Leadership* August 2001. The Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University.)

Here are some *sizzling* suggestions:

Everything is Fine by Ann Dee Ellis

This novel is kind of a “girl book”. The main character is a girl named Mazzy who is living a very difficult life. Her dad went on a business trip and never returned and her mom is depressed and won’t get out of bed. What has caused this family to be so troubled? Read this realistic fiction book written in verse to find out the family secret.

By Angelanne, Grade 8

Soldier X by Don Wulffson

You won’t want to put this book down! A 16 year old boy – half Russian, half German – is drafted into the German military. He is forced to fight against his own kind. All of the German soldiers have been overrun, all except “X”. He is forced to either die or change into a Russian uniform to survive. This book will change the way you think about war.

Inkheart by Cornelia Funke

This fantasy is filled with magic, adventure, mystery and more! A girl named Meggie and her dad accidentally unleash an evil ruler from the pages of a book which turns life into a nightmare. Each chapter contains a piece to an unsolved puzzle. Read this book...you never know what to expect next! *By Alena, Grade 7*

Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers WOW! This has to be one of the best historical fiction books I have ever read! In this suspenseful story, the main character, Troy, is a lieutenant in serving in the Vietnam War. He gets caught in some trouble and is held by the enemy against his will. Will he survive? Read this novel and find out. *By Matt, Grade 7*

The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom

This book tells the story of an old man who dies and what happens to him after his death. The reader learns so much about his topsy-turvy life that you feel like you really know him. I recommend this book because it will make you laugh, cry, and you will never want it to end! *By Emily, Grade 7*

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

This fantasy book is the start of it all...the “Percy Jackson and the Olympians” series. It’s about a boy named Percy who likes to get into trouble, but his whole life changes when he finds out he’s a semi god. Read as Percy battles to save the ones he loves and as he journeys through danger and peril! *By Matt, Grade 7*

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

She killed her own mother when she was four years old; she ran away from home and changed her whole life in one summer. This is the life of Lily Owens, a 14 year old girl. Read this book if you like a mix of mystery and happiness all in one, and to find the true meaning of, “it’s a small world after all.” *By Sydney, Grade 7*

Tears of a Tiger by Sharon M. Draper

Nail biting, entertaining and realistic are three words to describe this book about a high school boy who plays on a basketball team and is influenced by all the wrong things and

all the wrong people. After winning a very important game, the team celebrates, but something sad, tragic and unforgettable happens leaving everyone stunned and heartbroken. *By Kareem, Grade 8*

Saving Zoe by Alyson Noel

This is the best realistic fiction book I have ever read! It's about the complicated relationship between two sisters and how the bond they share can endure long after one of them is gone. I recommend this highly addictive tale because it will make you laugh your heart out *and* cry your eyes out. *By Stephanie, Grade 8*

Marley and Me by John Grogan

Marley is a rambunctious ninety-seven pound labrador retriever **and** the world's worst dog. He crashes through screen doors, drools on guests and eats everything he can get his mouth around including fine jewelry. This realistic fiction novel is hilarious at times, but I must warn you, it has a very sad ending. Read this book if you like dogs and sad, gushy stories. *By Julia, Grade 7*

Time Bandit by Jonathan and Andy Hillstrand

This unique nonfiction book is told from two separate views: Jonathan's and Andy's. From the dangers to the humor, these men tell the story of fishing on the Bering Sea. Time Bandit is the name of a ship on the television show, Deadliest Catch. I recommend this book if you like life on the sea and want a look inside one of the most dangerous jobs in the world; king crab fishing! *By Zachary, Grade 7*

Librarian LaFlamme's Five Fiery Favorites

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Imagine a "Survivor" type show set in a futuristic North America. Katniss and Peeta represent the poorest, hungriest region and must use their wits and skills to survive in the Hunger Games or be killed. You won't be able to put down this ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults selection.

Fablehaven by Brandon Mull

Kendra and her brother Seth are sent to visit their Grandfather's country home in Connecticut called Fablehaven. They suspect Grandpa has a secret as they discover a mysterious land of fairies and magic---and a demon waiting to be released from prison. Harry Potter fans take note!

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-Garcia

Three sisters are sent by their father to Oakland, California to get reacquainted with the mother that abandoned them when they were toddlers. As they get to know their mother and the reasons why she left them, they are swept up into the adventures and the activism of the 1960's. Texas Library Association Best Book for 2010.

Escaping Into the Night by D. Dina Friedman

Halina escapes from the Polish ghetto into the woods and joins a forest encampment of Jews working for the Underground. She spends the war trying to locate her family and helping other Jews escape from the Nazis. A little known aspect of the Holocaust based on a true incident, written by a local author. VOYA Top Shelf Pick for Middle Grade Fiction

Miracle's Boys by Jacqueline Woodson

Three boys are being raised by their mother on the mean streets of New York City and just scraping by. When she dies suddenly leaving them orphaned, these three young men have to rely on each other to stay together as a family through tough and difficult circumstances. A powerful story and winner of the Coretta Scott King Award.

Other "Tried and True" Titles

Percy Jackson and the Olympians series by Rick Riordan

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

The Cay by Theodore Taylor

Lyddie by Katherine Paterson

The following links will provide you with reliable additional selections for all grade levels and genres. Of course, it is ultimately the parents' responsibility to approve their children's choices.

- <http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices.html>
- <http://www.haisln.org/recommendedreadinglists.html>
- http://www.phschool.com/curriculum_support/reading_list/middle_school.html

In case you misplace this notice, it can be found online at wsp.org as well as the town library and Barnes & Noble in Holyoke.

We look forward to beginning the new school year by having the students present "book talks" about their summer selections. A form outlining the information included in a "book talk" is in this packet. We strongly encourage you to read along with your children and enjoy the rewarding conversations that always follow the reading of a great book! Thank you for your support.

Thomas J. McNulty
Principal

Gala McInerny
Vice Principal

Lori A. O'Neil
Literacy Coach

Agnes Robarge
Reading Dept. Chair

My Book Talk

Fill in the blanks with the information about the book you will be sharing with the class.
Have this paper ready to read at your next book talk.

I'd like to introduce you to _____
(title of book)

by the author _____ .

The genre of this book is _____ . I know it is _____
because _____
_____ .

This book is about _____

_____ .

(must be three sentences)

I really enjoyed the part of the book where

1. _____
_____ and where

2. _____
_____ .

This reminds me of

1. _____
_____ because

(How does it connect?)

I hope you like reading _____ as much as I did.
(title)