Dear Middle School students,

We hope this summer brings plenty of chances to relax, explore, and learn new things about yourself and the world around you. Reading for fun is a great way to explore the world, experience new adventures, discover characters facing familiar challenges, and learn about the wonderful differences and similarities people share (without ever leaving the air conditioning). It is also a great way to maintain or enhance your reading skills during the summer break and keep your brain in gear for next school year.

Over the summer, all rising Grades 6, 7, & 8 students are expected to read *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park. In September, we will have a Zoom visit with a representative from Water for South Sudan, the organization highlighted in the book, so start thinking about and writing down questions you may want to ask.

In addition to *A Long Walk to Water*, please read one other book from this list, or by an author on this list. When we come back to school, you will have an assignment based on the book you chose.

*A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park

*A Long Walk to Water* tells the stories of two eleven-year-olds in Sudan, a girl in 2008 and a boy in 1985. The girl, Nya, makes two trips a day to fetch water from a pond that is two hours’ walk from her home. The boy, Salva, is one of the “lost boys” of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay.

Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya’s in an astonishing way. Includes an afterword by author Linda Sue Park and the real-life Salva Dut, on whom the novel is based, and who went on to found Water for South Sudan.
**Door of No Return** (and others) by Kwame Alexander

In his village in Upper Kwanta, 11-year-old Kofi loves his family, playing oware with his grandfather and swimming in the river Offin. He's warned though, to never go to the river at night. His brother tells him "There are things about the water you do not know." Like what? Kofi asks. "The beasts." His brother answers.

One fateful night, the unthinkable happens and in a flash, Kofi's world turns upside down. Kofi soon ends up in a fight for his life and what happens next will send him on a harrowing journey across land and sea, and away from everything he loves.

**This Was Our Pact** (graphic novel) by Ryan Andrews

On the night of the annual Autumn Equinox Festival, when townsfolk float paper lanterns down the river, Ben and his classmates make a pact to find out where the lanterns end up. Soon the pact is broken by all except for Ben and Nathaniel, who travel down a winding road full of magic, wonder, and unexpected friendship.

**Shadow and Bone** and others by Leigh Bardugo

*Soldier. Summoner. Saint.* Orphaned and expendable, Alina Starkov is a soldier who knows she may not survive her first trek across the Shadow Fold—a swath of unnatural darkness crawling with monsters. But when her regiment is attacked, Alina unleashes dormant magic not even she knew she possessed. The *Shadow and Bone* world has been adapted as a television series on Netflix.

**The Inheritance Games** (trilogy) and others by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

When a Connecticut teenager inherits vast wealth and an eccentric estate from the richest man in Texas, she must also live with his surviving family and solve a series of puzzles to discover how she earned her inheritance.

**The Bootlace Magician** by Cassie Beasley (sequel to *Circus Mirandus*)

Return to the dazzling Circus Mirandus where Micah now trains as the Lightbender’s apprentice. Unfortunately, Micah’s magical training is interrupted by his evil grandmother, The Bird Woman, who wants to destroy the entire Circus. It's up to Micah, the Lightbender, and their friends to stop her from wiping out everything they love.

**The Cruel Prince** (Folk of the Air, Book One) and others by Holly Black

Jude was seven years old when her parents were murdered and she and her two sisters were stolen away to live in the treacherous High Court of Faerie. Ten years later, Jude wants nothing more than to belong there, despite her mortality. But many of the fey despise humans. Especially Prince Cardan, the youngest and wickedest son of the High King...
Super Human (series) by Michael Carroll

Four thousand years ago the world's first super human walked the earth. Possessing the strength of one hundred men, skin impervious to attack, and the ability to read minds, this immortal being used his power to conquer and enslave nations. Now plans are in motion that will transport this super human to the present, where he'll usher in a new age of tyranny unlike anything the world has ever seen.

Determined to stand against them, using powers they've only just begun to master, is a ragtag group of young heroes. For them this first test may be their greatest . . . and last.

Like Vanessa by Tami Charles

It is 1983 and Vanessa Martin, a thirteen-year-old African American girl in Newark's public housing, dreams of following in the footsteps of the first black Miss America, Vanessa Williams; but the odds are against her until a new teacher at school organizes a beauty pageant and encourages Vanessa to enter.

Efrén Divided by Ernesto Cisneros

While his father works two jobs, seventh-grader Efrén Nava must take care of his twin siblings, kindergartners Max and Mia, after their mother is deported to Mexico.

Ready Player One by Ernest Cline

In the year 2045, reality is an ugly place. The only time Wade Watts really feels alive is when he's jacked into the virtual utopia known as the OASIS. Wade has devoted his life to studying the puzzles hidden within this world's digital confines—puzzles that promise massive power and fortune to whoever can unlock them. But when Wade stumbles upon the first clue, he finds himself beset by players willing to kill to take this ultimate prize.

The Truth As Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor

Mason Buttle is the biggest, sweatiest kid in his grade, and everyone knows he can barely read or write. A year after Mason's best friend turned up dead in the Buttle family's orchard, an investigation drags on, and Mason doesn't understand that the neighbors suspect he was responsible. When another boy goes missing, Mason falls under suspicion again...

Starfish by Lisa Fipps (book in verse)

Starfish is a book in verse, a story told through poems.

Bullied and shamed her whole life for being fat, twelve-year-old Ellie finally gains the confidence to stand up for herself, with the help of some wonderful new allies.
Brandon is visiting his dad on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 when the attack comes; Reshmina is a girl in Afghanistan who has grown up in the aftermath of that attack but dreams of peace, becoming a teacher and escaping her village--both are struggling to survive, both changed forever by the events of 9/11.

**Torpedoed: The True Story of the World War II Sinking of "The Children's Ship"** by Deborah Helligman.

Non-fiction

In this gripping account, Helligman relates the September 1940 attack on the British passenger ship SS City of Benares by a German submarine, which killed 258 people, including 77 children. In unflinching detail, the book depicts the often fatal struggles of enduring a torpedo strike at sea, as well as the selfless acts of those striving to keep other passengers alive.

Read *Torpedoed* with *Lifeboat 12* by Susan Hood, a book in verse based on the same event.

**The Last Cuentista** by Donna Barba Higuera, Winner of the 2022 Newbery Award

Petra Pena wants nothing more than to be a storyteller, like her abuelita. But Earth has been destroyed by a comet, and only a few hundred scientists and their children - including Petra and her family - have been chosen to journey to a new planet. Hundreds of years into their trip, Petra wakes to find that a sinister Collective took over during their journey and systematically purged the memories of all aboard. Petra alone carries the stories of humanity’s past, and with them, any hope for our future.

**Displacement** by Kiku Hughes (graphic novel)

Kiku is on vacation in San Francisco when she finds herself “displaced” to the Japanese-American internment camp that her late grandmother, Ernestina, was forcibly relocated to during World War II. Living alongside her young grandmother and other Japanese-American citizens in internment camps, Kiku witnesses the lives of Japanese-Americans who were denied their civil liberties and suffered greatly, but managed to cultivate community and commit acts of resistance in order to survive.

**When Stars are Scattered** by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (graphic novel)

Omar and his younger brother Hassan live in a refugee camp, and when an opportunity for Omar to get an education comes along, he must decide between going to school every day or caring for his nonverbal brother.

**Unplugged** and others by Gordon Korman

Relates, in multiple voices, the adventures of a group of youngsters at an electronics-free wellness camp where wealthy, spoiled Jett, leads other campers in trying to stop a criminal.

Korman has written over 90 books, so there's something for everyone from mysteries to sci-fi to realistic fiction.
Elatsoe by Darcie Little Badger

Imagine an America very similar to our own. An America that has been shaped dramatically by the magic, monsters, knowledge, and legends of its peoples. Elatsoe can raise the ghosts of dead animals, a skill passed down through generations of her Lipan Apache family. Her beloved cousin has just been murdered, in a town that wants no prying eyes. But she is going to do more than pry. The picture-perfect facade of Willowbee masks gruesome secrets, and she will rely on her wits, skills, and friends to tear off the mask and protect her family.

Year of the Reaper by Makiia Lucier

Three years ago, young Lord Cassia disappeared in the midst of war. Since then, a devastating illness has swept the land, leaving countless dead and a kingdom forever altered. Having survived war and plague, Cas, now eighteen, wants only to return to his home in the mountains and forget past horrors. But home is not what he remembers. His castle has become a refuge for the royal court, and they have brought their enemies with them...

Renegades (trilogy), The Lunar Chronicles (series), and others by Melissa Meyer

The Renegades are a syndicate of prodigies—humans with extraordinary abilities—who emerged from the ruins of a crumbled society and established peace and order where chaos reigned. As champions of justice, they remain a symbol of hope and courage to everyone...except the villains they once overthrew.

Lines of Courage and others by Jennifer Nielsen

Lines of Courage presents a history of WWI from the perspectives of five young people—each representing an empire of that era—whose stories slowly converge. Ms. Nielsen has written numerous other historical fictions as well as the fantasy series Ascendance.

The Knife of Never Letting Go (series) and others by Patrick Ness

The Knife of Never Letting Go is Book One of The Chaos Walking series, set in a dystopian world where all living creatures hear each other’s thoughts in a constant stream called Noise. When Todd Hewett finds a patch of forest with no Noise, he knows he’s found something important and finds himself forced to flee everything he’s ever known, and question everything he’s been told.

Ikenga by Nnedi Okorafori

Nnamdi’s father was a good chief of police, determined to root out the criminals that had invaded Klaria. But then he was murdered, and most people believed the Chief of Chiefs, most powerful of the criminals, was responsible. Nnamdi has vowed to avenge his father, but he wonders what a twelve-year-old boy can do. Until a mysterious nighttime meeting, the gift of a magical object that enables super powers, and a charge to use those powers for good changes his life forever. How can he fulfill his mission? How will he learn to control his newfound powers?
Pony by R.J. Palacio

Twelve-year-old Silas is awoken in the dead of night by three menacing horsemen who take his father away. Silas is left shaken, scared, and alone, except for the presence of his companion, Mittenwool... who happens to be a ghost. When a pony shows up at his door, Silas makes the courageous decision to leave his home and embark on a perilous journey to find his father. Along the way, he will face his fears to unlock the secrets of his past and explore the unfathomable mysteries of the world around him.

Sunny, Patina, or Lu from the Track series by Jason Reynolds

Lu knows he can lead Ghost, Patina, Sunny, and the team to victory at the championships, but it might not be as easy as it seems. Suddenly there are hurdles in Lu's way--literally and not-so-literally--and Lu needs to figure out, fast, what winning the gold really means.

Black Brother, Black Brother and others by Jewell Parker Rhodes

When an incident with "King" Alan leads to Donte's arrest and suspension, he knows the only way to get even is to beat the king of the school at his own game: fencing. With the help of a former Olympic fencer, Donte embarks on a journey to carve out a spot on Middlefield Prep's fencing team and maybe learn something about himself along the way.

Daughter of the Deep and others by Rick Riordan

In this story inspired by Jules Verne's '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea,' Ana Dakkar, a freshman at Harding-Pencroft Academy--a five-year high school that graduates the best marine scientists, naval warriors, navigators, and underwater explorers in the world--makes astounding discoveries about her heritage and puts her leadership skills to the test against deadly enemies from a rival school.

Steelheart and others by Brandon Sanderson

In the country of Carthya, a devious nobleman engages four orphans in a brutal competition to be selected to impersonate the king's long-missing son in an effort to avoid a civil war.

I Must Betray You and others by Ruta Sepetys

Ruta Sepetys writes historical fiction based on less well-known aspects of major world events. I Must Betray You is the story of a seventeen-year-old boy rebelling against Nicolae Ceaușescu's brutal regime in Romania in 1989, the year the Communist regime was toppled after 25 years of misery.
**Most Dangerous** and others by Steve Sheinkin (non-fiction)

In the 1960s, Daniel Ellsberg, a U.S. government analyst, was helping to plan a war in Vietnam. As the fighting in Vietnam escalated, Ellsberg turned against the war. He knew he could blow the lid off of years of government lies. But did he have the right to expose decades of presidential secrets? And what would happen to him if he did it? Steve Sheinkin has written several other GREAT non-fiction books, including *Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian Football Team* and *Bomb: The Race to Steal the World’s Deadliest Weapon*.

**Scythe** (Arc of a Scythe #1) by Neal Shusterman

Highly recommended for fans of Patrick Ness’s *Chaos Walking* trilogy

A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery: humanity has conquered all those things, and has even conquered death. Now Scythes are the only ones who can end life--and they are commanded to do so, in order to keep the size of the population under control. Citra and Rowan are chosen to apprentice to a scythe--a role that neither wants. These teens must master the "art" of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own.

**They Called Us Enemy** by George Takai

Non-fiction

A stunning graphic memoir recounting actor/author/activist Takei’s childhood imprisoned within American concentration camps during World War II. Experience the forces that shaped an icon in this gripping tale of courage, country, loyalty, and love.

**Born Behind Bars** by Padma Venkatraman

In Chennai, India, after spending his whole life in jail with his mother, who is serving time for a crime she did not commit, nine-year-old Kabir is suddenly released and has to figure out how to survive on his own in the outside world. If you enjoy this story, check out *The Bridge Home* by the same author.

**Zeroes** (series) by Scott Westerfeld, Margo Lanagan, and Deborah Biancotti

Don’t call them heroes. But these six California teens have powers that set them apart.

Take Ethan, a.k.a. Scam. He’s got a voice inside him that'll say whatever you want to hear, whether it's true or not. Which is handy, except when it isn’t—like when the voice starts gabbing in the middle of a bank robbery.

Enter Nate, a.k.a. Bellwether, the group’s “glorious leader.” After Scam's SOS, he pulls the scattered Zeroes back together. But when the rescue blows up in their faces, the Zeroes find themselves propelled into whirlwind encounters with ever more dangerous criminals.

**Dragon Hoops** by Gene Luen Yang (graphic novel)

Gene understands stories - comic book stories, in particular, but not sports. As a kid, he played basketball (terribly) but he lost interest long ago. Now, Gene is a high school teacher and basketball is all anyone can talk about. The Dragons are having a phenomenal season; each victory brings them closer to the California State Championships. When Gene realizes that his students’ story is as thrilling as anything he's seen on a comic book page, he has to follow this epic to its end. What he doesn't know yet is that this season is not only going to change their lives, but his own life as well.