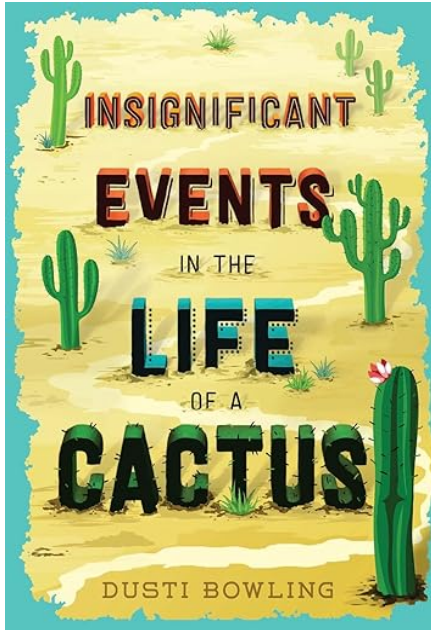


Middle School Summer Reading 2025

Over the summer, rising middle school students are expected to read: ***Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus* by Dusti Bowling.**

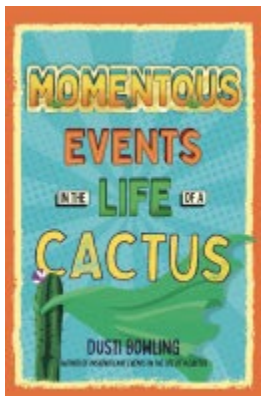


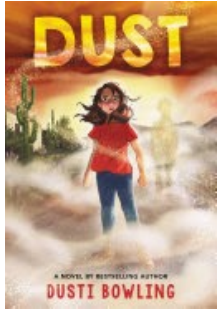
Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she'll have to answer the question over and over again. Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It's hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven's about to discover she can do it all... even without arms.

Dusti Bowling grew up in Scottsdale, Arizona, where, as her family will tell you, she always had her nose in a book. She released her first middle grade novel in 2017 and hasn't stopped writing since. Dusti's books have won the Reading the West Award, the Sakura Medal, a Golden Kite Honor, the William Allen White Children's Book Award, and have been nominated for over fifty state awards. Her books are Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selections and have been named best books of the year by the Chicago Public Library, Kirkus, Bank Street College of Education, A Mighty Girl, Shelf Awareness, and many more. Dusti currently lives in Eagar, Arizona with her husband, three daughters, and a bunch of farm animals.

Other works by Dusti Bowling include:

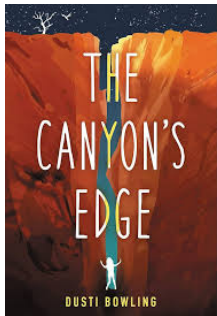
Momentous Events in the Life of a Cactus- Just as Aven starts to feel comfortable in Stagecoach Pass, with her friends and schoolmates accustomed to her lack of "armage," everything changes once again. She's about to begin high school . . . with 3,000 new kids to stare at her. And no matter how much Aven tries to play it cool, nothing prepares her for the reality. In a year filled with confusion, humiliation, and just maybe love, can Aven manage to stay true to herself?



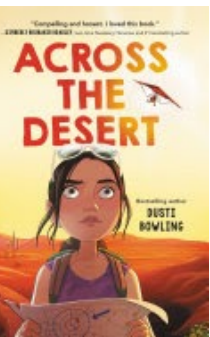


Dust- A girl who struggles to breathe befriends a boy who seems shrouded in dust, in this compelling, poignant tour de force from bestselling and award-winning author Dusti Bowling.

After Avalyn nearly died from an asthma attack, her parents moved her to the clear, dry air of Clear Canyon City, Arizona. And for the last ten years, she's been able to breathe. That is, until Adam shows up



The Canyon's Edge- One year after a random shooting changed their family forever, Nora and her father are exploring a slot canyon deep in the Arizona desert, hoping it will help them find peace. Nora longs for things to go back to normal, like they were when her mother was still alive, while her father keeps them isolated in fear of other people. But when they reach the bottom of the canyon, the unthinkable happens: A flash flood rips across their path, sweeping away Nora's father and all of their supplies.



Across the Desert- Twelve-year-old Jolene spends every day she can at the library watching her favorite livestream: The Desert Aviator, where twelve-year-old “Addie Earhart” shares her adventures flying an ultralight plane over the desert. While watching this daring girl fly through the sky, Jolene can dream of what it would be like to fly with her, far away from her own troubled home life where her mother struggles with a narcotic addiction. And Addie, who is grieving the loss of her father, finds solace in her online conversations with Jolene, her biggest—and only—fan. Then, one day, it all goes wrong: Addie's engine abruptly stops, and Jolene watches in helpless horror as the ultralight plummets to the ground and the video goes dark. Jolene knows that Addie won't survive long in the extreme summer desert heat. With no one to turn to for help and armed with only a hand-drawn map and a stolen cell phone, it's up to Jolene to find a way to save the Desert Aviator.

Each student should read one additional book from the following list:



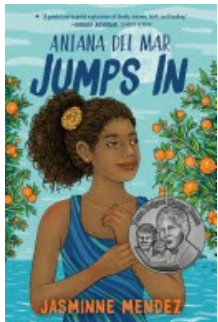
Front Desk by Kelly Yang (realistic fiction)

Recent immigrants from China and desperate for work and money, Mia Tang's parents take a job managing a rundown motel. While her mother (who was an engineer in China) does the cleaning, Mia works the front desk and tries to cope with demanding customers and other recent immigrants--not to mention being only one of two Chinese people in her class, the other being Mr. Yao's son, Jason. Followed by *Three Keys* and *Room to Dream*.



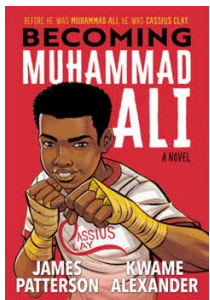
***Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline (science fiction)**

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.



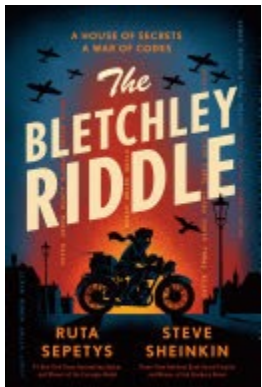
***Aniana Del Mar Jumps In* by Jasminne Mendez (realistic fiction)**

Aniana del Mar belongs in the water like a dolphin belongs to the sea. But she and Papi keep her swim practices and meets hidden from Mami, who has never recovered from losing someone she loves to the water years ago. That is, until the day Ani's stiffness and swollen joints mean she can no longer get out of bed, and Ani is forced to reveal just how important swimming is to her. Mami forbids her from returning to the water, but Ani and her doctor believe that swimming, along with medication, will help Ani manage her disease. What follows is the journey of a girl who must grieve who she once was in order to rise like the tide and become the young woman she is meant to be.



***Becoming Muhammad Ali* by James Patterson and Kwame Alexander (sports fiction)**

A biographical novel tells the story of Cassius Clay, the determined boy who would one day become Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all time.



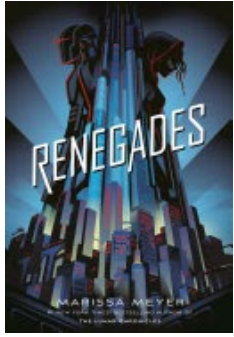
***Bletchley Riddle* by Ruta Sepetys (historical fiction) Summer, 1940.**

Nineteen-year-old Jakob Novis and his quirky younger sister Lizzie share a love of riddles and puzzles. And now they're living inside of one. The quarrelsome siblings find themselves amidst one of the greatest secrets of World War II—Britain's eccentric codebreaking factory at Bletchley Park. As Jakob joins Bletchley's top minds to crack the Nazi's Enigma cipher, fourteen-year-old Lizzie embarks on a mission to solve the mysterious disappearance of their mother.



***Black Brother Black Brother* by Jewell Parker Rhodes (written in verse)**

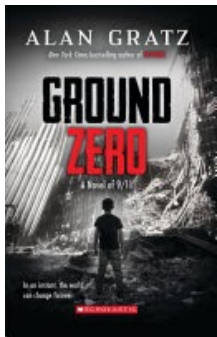
When an incident with "King" Alan leads to Donte's arrest and suspension, he knows the only way to get even is to beat the king of the school at his own game: fencing. With the help of a former Olympic fencer, Donte embarks on a journey to carve out a spot on Middlefield Prep's fencing team and maybe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



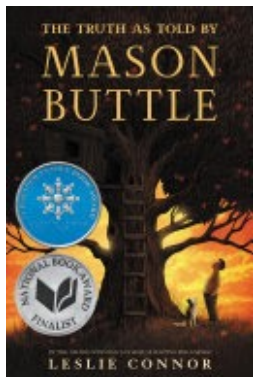
Renegades by Marissa Meyer (dystopian) The Renegades are a syndicate of prodigies—humans with extraordinary abilities—who emerged from the ruins of a crumbled society and established peace and order where chaos reigned. As champions of justice, they remain a symbol of hope and courage to everyone...except the villains they once overthrew. Nova has a reason to hate the Renegades, and she is on a mission for vengeance. As she gets closer to her target, she meets Adrian, a Renegade boy who believes in justice—and in Nova. But Nova's allegiance is to a villain who has the power to end them both.



Legend by Marie Lu (dystopian) What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem.

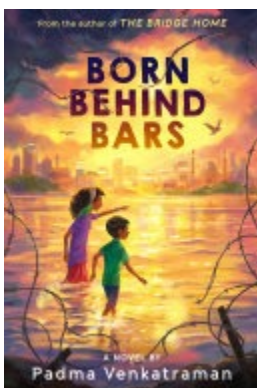


Ground Zero by Alan Gratz (historical fiction) Brandon is visiting his dad on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 when the attack comes; Reshmina is a girl in Afghanistan who has grown up in the aftermath of that attack but dreams of peace, becoming a teacher and escaping her village--both are struggling to survive, both changed forever by the events of 9/11. Alan Gratz has written several other historical fiction books, including Refugee, Code of Honor, Grenade, Prisoner B-3087, Projekt 1065, and Samurai Shortstop.



The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor (realistic fiction)

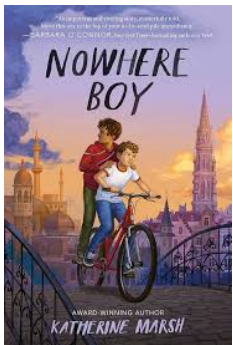
Mason Buttle is the biggest, sweatiest kid in his grade, and everyone knows he can barely read or write. A year after Mason's best friend turned up dead in the Buttle family's orchard, an investigation drags on, and Mason doesn't understand that the neighbors suspect he was responsible. When another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



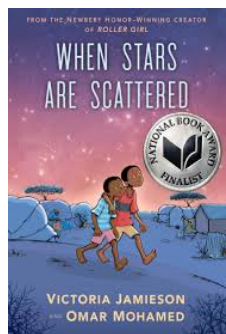
Born Behind Bars by T. V. Padma (historical fiction) In Chennai, India, after spending his whole life in jail with his mother, who is serving time for a crime she did not commit, nine-year-old Kabir is suddenly released and has to figure out how to survive on his own in the outside world.



***Displacement* by Kiku Hughes (historical fiction)** Kiku is on vacation in San Francisco when suddenly she finds herself “displaced” to the 1940s 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.



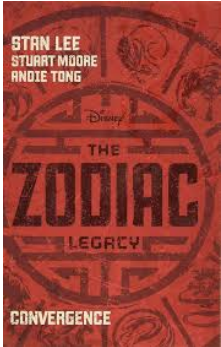
***Nowhere Boy* by Katherine Marsh (realistic fiction)** Fourteen-year-old Ahmed is stuck in a city that wants nothing to do with him. Newly arrived in Brussels, Belgium, Ahmed fled a life of uncertainty and suffering in Aleppo, Syria, only to lose his father on the perilous journey to the shores of Europe. Now Ahmed’s struggling to get by on his own, but with no one left to trust and nowhere to go, he’s starting to lose hope. Then he meets Max, a thirteen-year-old American boy from Washington, D.C. Lonely and homesick, Max is struggling at his new school and just can’t seem to do anything right. But with one startling discovery, Max and Ahmed’s lives collide and a friendship begins to grow. Together, Max and Ahmed will defy the odds, learning from each other what it means to be brave and how hope can change your destiny



***When Stars are Scattered* by 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.



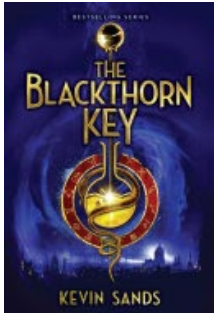
***The First State of Being* by Entrada Kelly (realistic fiction)** It's August 1999. For twelve-year-old Michael Rosario, life at Fox Run Apartments in Red Knot, Delaware, is as ordinary as ever—except for the looming Y2K crisis and his overwhelming crush on his sixteen-year-old babysitter, Gibby. But when a disoriented teenage boy named Ridge appears out of nowhere, Michael discovers there is more to life than stockpiling supplies and pining over Gibby.



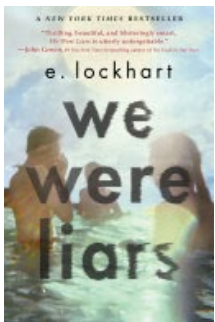
***The Zodiac Legacy* by Stan Lee (fantasy)** When twelve magical superpowers are unleashed on the world, a Chinese-America teenager named Steven will be thrown into the middle of an epic global chase. He'll have to master strange powers, outrun super-powered mercenaries, and unlock the mysterious powers of the Zodiac.



***Checked* by Cynthia Kadohata (sports fiction)** Hockey is Conor's life. His whole life. He'll say it himself, he's a hockey beast. It's his dad's whole life too—and Conor is sure that's why his stepmom, Jenny, left. There are very few things Conor and his dad love more than the game, and one of those things is their Doberman, Sinbad. When Sinbad is diagnosed with cancer, Conor chooses to put his hockey lessons and practices on hold so they can pay for Sinbad's chemotherapy.



***Blackthorn Key* by Kevin Sands (mystery)** Following a series of murders, an apothecary's apprentice must solve puzzles and decipher codes in pursuit of a secret that could destroy the world in this suspenseful debut novel. Christopher Rowe, apprentice to Master Apothecary Benedict Blackthorn, is learning all his master's secrets—like how to decipher complex codes and puzzles, and how to transform simple ingredients into powerful medicines, potions, and weapons.



***We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart (mystery)**

A beautiful and distinguished family.

A private island.

A brilliant, damaged girl; a passionate, political boy.

A group of four friends—the Liars—whose friendship turns destructive.

A revolution. An accident. A secret.

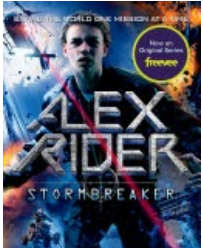
Lies upon lies.

True love.

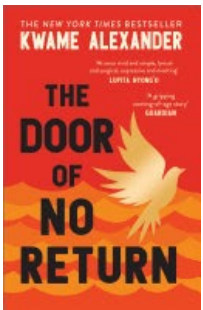
The truth.

Read it.

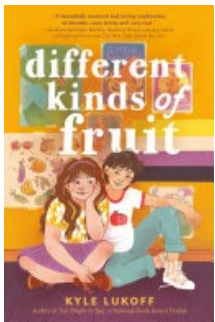
And if anyone asks you how it ends, just LIE.



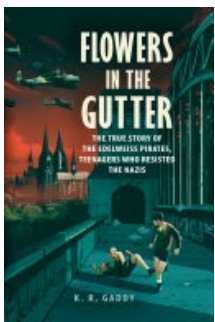
***Stormbreaker* by Anthony Horowitz (science fiction)** They said his uncle Ian died in a car accident. But Alex Rider knows that's a lie, and the bullet holes in the windshield prove it. Yet he never suspected the truth: his uncle was really a spy for Britain's top secret intelligence agency. And now Alex has been recruited to find his uncle's killers



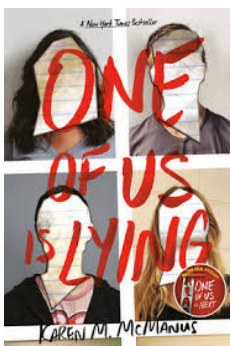
***The Door of No Return* by Kwame Alexander (historical fiction)** In his village in Upper Kwanta, 11-year-old Kofi loves his family, playing oware with his grandfather and swimming in the river Offin. He's warned though, to never go to the river at night. His brother tells him "There are things about 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.



***Different Kinds of Fruit* by Kyle Lukoff (realistic fiction)** Annabelle Blake fully expects this school year to be the same as every other: same teachers, same classmates, same, same, same. So she's elated to discover there's a new kid in town. To Annabelle, Bailey is a breath of fresh air. She loves hearing about their life in Seattle, meeting their loquacious (and kinda corny) parents, and hanging out at their massive house. And it doesn't hurt that Bailey has a cute smile, nice hands (how can someone even have nice hands?) and smells really good.



***Flowers in the Gutter* by Kristina Gaddy (nonfiction)** Fritz, Gertrud, and Jean were classic outsiders: their clothes were different, their music was rebellious, and they weren't afraid to fight. But they were also Germans living under Hitler, and any nonconformity could get them arrested or worse. As children in 1933, they saw their world change. Their earliest memories were of the Nazi rise to power and of their parents fighting Brownshirts in the streets, being sent to prison, or just disappearing.



***One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus (mystery)**

Pay close attention and you might solve this.

On Monday afternoon, five students at Bayview High walk into detention.

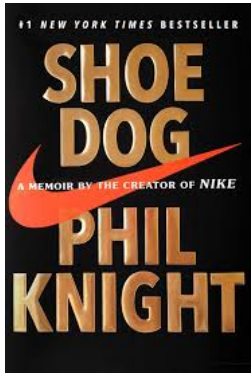
Bronwyn, the brain, is Yale-bound and never breaks a rule.

Addy, the beauty, is the picture-perfect homecoming princess.

Nate, the criminal, is already on probation for dealing.

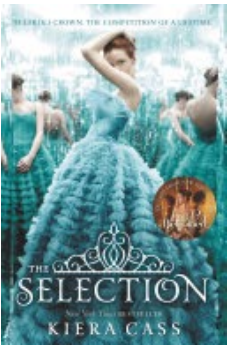
Cooper, the athlete, is the all-star baseball pitcher.

And Simon, the outcast, is the creator of Bayview High's notorious gossip app. Only, Simon never makes it out of that classroom.



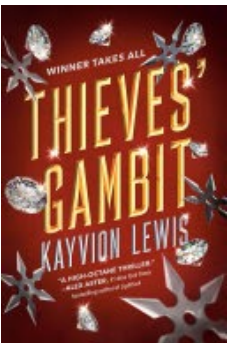
***Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight (biography)**

Fresh out of business school, Phil Knight borrowed fifty dollars from his father and launched a company with one simple mission: import high-quality, low-cost running shoes from Japan. Selling the shoes from the trunk of his car in 1963, Knight grossed eight thousand dollars that first year. Today, Nike's annual sales top \$30 billion. In this age of start-ups, Knight's Nike is the gold standard, and its swoosh is one of the few icons instantly recognized in every corner of the world.



***The Selection* by Kiera Cass (dystopian)**

For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape a rigid caste system, live in a palace, and compete for the heart of gorgeous Prince Maxon. But for America Singer, being Selected is a nightmare. It means turning her back on her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her, and competing for a crown she doesn't want. Then America meets Prince Maxon—and realizes that the life she's always dreamed of may not compare to a future she never imagined.



***Thieves' Gambit* by Kayvion Lewis (mystery)**

At only seventeen years old, Ross Quest is already a master thief, especially adept at escape plans. Until her plan to run away from her legendary family of thieves takes an unexpected turn, leaving her mother's life hanging in the balance. In a desperate bid, she enters the Thieves' Gambit, a series of dangerous, international heists where killing the competition isn't exactly off limits, but the grand prize is a wish for anything in the world—a wish that could save her mom. When she learns two of her competitors include her childhood nemesis and a handsome, smooth-talking guy who might also want to steal her heart, winning the Gambit becomes trickier than she imagined. Ross tries her best to stick to the family creed: trust no one whose last name isn't Quest. But with the stakes this high, Ross will have to decide who to con and who to trust before time runs out. After all, only one of them can win.