

Middle School Summer Reading 2026

Dear Middle School families,

We hope that your students will enjoy their selections from this list this summer.

Rising 7th graders are required to choose one book between *The Experiment* by Rebecca Stead or *The Blackbird Girls* by Anne Blankman. Rising 8th graders are required to choose one book among *Blood in the Water* by Tiffany D. Jackson, *The Incredibly Human Henson Blayze* by Derrick Barnes, or *The Bletchley Riddle* by Steve Sheinkin and Ruta Sepetys. **Please wait to read this book in August so that the material is fresh. Annotation and active reading is expected for these books. A challenging assessment will be given the first week of school on their choice book.**

In addition, each rising 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade student will read *A Duet for Home* by **Karina Yan Glaser**. This book will help remind our students about the importance of empathy and teach them about homelessness and food insecurity. We look forward to welcoming Karina Yan Glaser virtually in the fall to discuss her writing and experience creating *A Duet for Home*.

The remainder of the list has extra recommendations for you to consider.

Enjoy the summer break! See you in the fall!



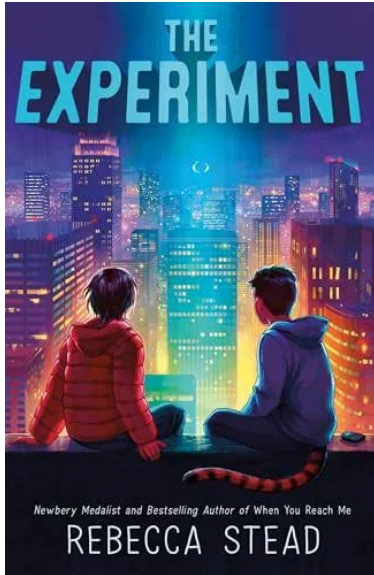
***A Duet for Home* by Karina Yan Glaser**

It's June's first day at Huey House, and as if losing her home weren't enough, she also can't bring her cherished viola inside. Before the accident last year, her dad saved tip money for a year to buy her viola, and she's not about to give it up now. Tyrell has been at Huey House for three years and gives June a glimpse of the good things about living there: friendship, hot meals, and a classical musician next door.

Can he and June work together to oppose the government, or will families be forced out of Huey House before they are ready?

About the author: Karina Yan Glaser grew up in Illinois and California, and when she was young, her favorite place in the whole entire world was New York City. She ended up going to college in New York City and never moved away. She now lives in Harlem with her husband, two daughters, and an assortment of rescue animals.

Rising 7th-grade students must choose one of the following to read in addition to *A Duet for Home*:



***The Experiment* by Rebecca Stead**

Nathan never understood what was "fun" about secrets, probably because he's always had to keep a very big one.

Although he appears to be a typical sixth-grader (with parents, homework and a best friend, Victor), Nathan learned at an early age that his family is from another planet. Now, their time on Earth may be coming to an end.

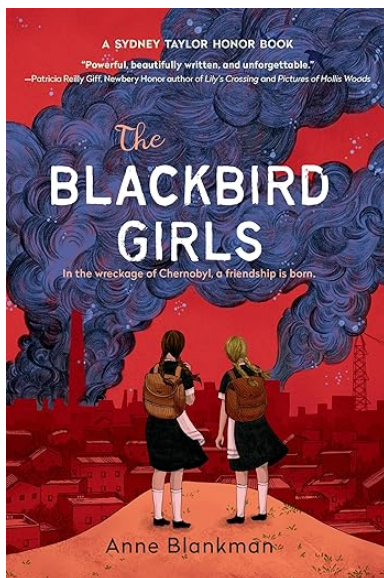
Nathan, his parents and nine other families are part of an experiment that suddenly seems to be going wrong. Some of the experimenters, including Nathan's first crush, Izzy, are disappearing without a word. After his family is called back to the mothership, Nathan begins to question everything he's been taught to believe about who he is and why he's on Earth.

The Experiment is a fast-paced coming-of-age novel that asks universal questions about how we figure out who we want to be, and whether it's ever too late to change.

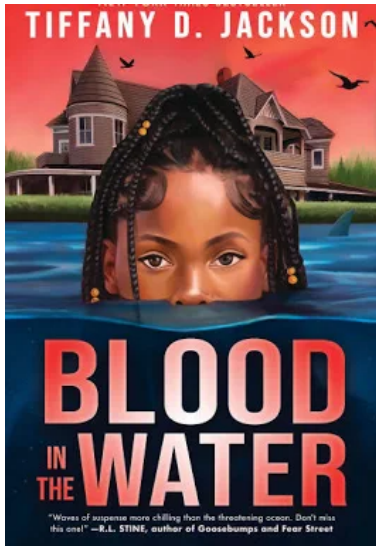
***The Blackbird Girls* by Anne Blankman**

On a spring morning, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work--Chernobyl--has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In their new lives in Leningrad, they begin to learn what it means to trust another person. Oksana must face the lies her parents told her all her life. Valentina must keep her grandmother's secret, one that could put all their lives in danger. And both of them discover something they've wished for: a best friend. But how far would you go to save your best friend's life? Would you risk your own?

Told in alternating perspectives among three girls--Valentina and Oksana in 1986 and Rifka in 1941--this story shows that hatred, intolerance, and oppression are no match for the power of true friendship.



Rising 8th-grade students must choose one of the following to read in addition to *A Duet for Home*



***Blood in the Water* by Tiffany D. Jackson**

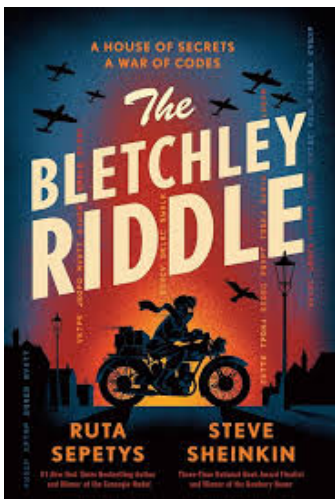
This summer, beware of sharks...

Brooklyn girl Kaylani McKinnon feels like a fish out of water. She's spending the summer with family friends in their huge house on Martha's Vineyard, and the vibe is definitely snooty. Still, there are beautiful beaches, lots of ice cream, and a town full of fascinating Black history. Plus a few kids her age who seem friendly. Until the shocking death of a popular teenage boy rocks the community to its core. Was it a drowning? A shark attack? Or the unthinkable--murder? Kaylani is determined to solve the mystery. But her investigation leads her to uncover shocking secrets that could change her *own* life as she knows it... if she survives.



***The Incredibly Human Henson Blayze* by Derrick Barnes**

In the small town of Great Mountain, Mississippi, all eyes are on Henson Blayze, a thirteen-year-old football phenom whose talents seem almost superhuman. The predominantly white townsfolk have been waiting for Henson to play high school ball, and now they're overjoyed to finally possess an elite Black athlete of their own. Until a horrifying incident forces Henson to speak out about injustice. Until he says that he might not play football anymore. Until he quickly learns he isn't as loved by the people as he thought.

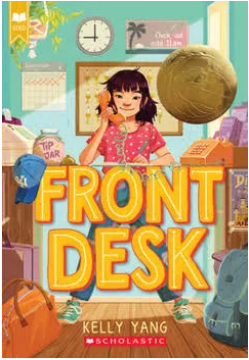


The Bletchley Riddle

Remember, you are bound by the Official Secrets Act...

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 amid 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.

Additional recommendations:



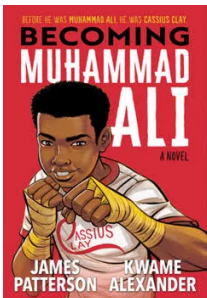
Front Desk by Kelly Yang (realistic fiction)

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.

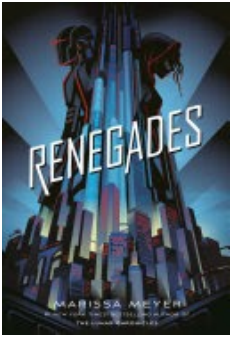


Becoming Muhammad Ali by James Patterson and Kwame Alexander (sports fiction)

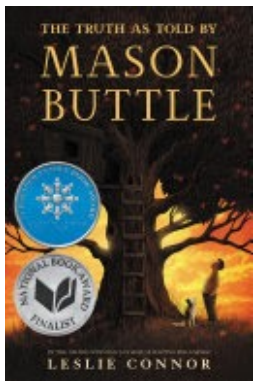
A biographical novel tells the story of Cassius Clay, the determined boy who would one day become Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all time.



Black Brother Black Brother by Jewell Parker Rhodes (realistic fiction-novel 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.



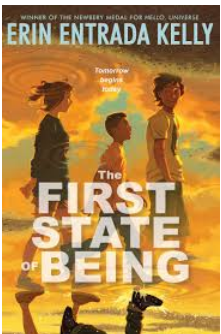
***Renegades* by Marissa Meyer (dystopian)** The Renegades are a syndicate of prodigies—humans with extraordinary abilities—who emerged from the ruins of a crumbled society and established peace and order where chaos reigned. As champions of justice, they remain a symbol of hope and courage to everyone...except 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.



***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...



***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.



***The First State of Being* by Erin Entrada Kelly (science 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.



***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.

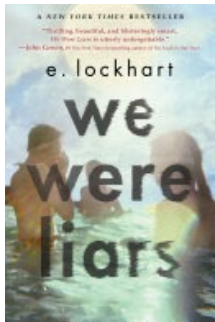
A group of four friends—the Liars—whose friendship turns destructive.

A revolution. An accident. A secret.

Lies upon lies.

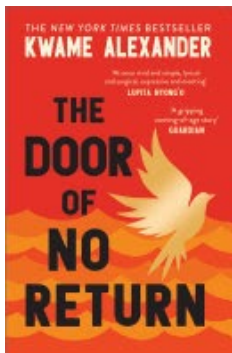
True love.

The truth.

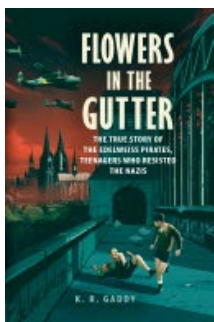


Read it.

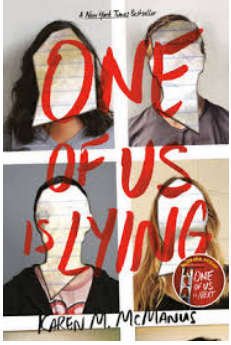
And if anyone asks you how it ends, just LIE.



***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.



***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.

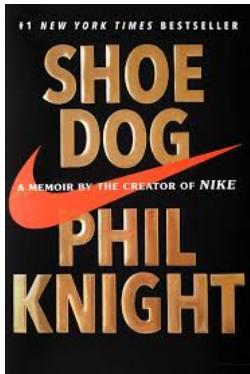
Nate, the criminal, is already on probation for dealing.

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.

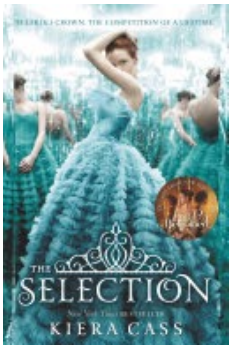
***Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight (biography)**

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.



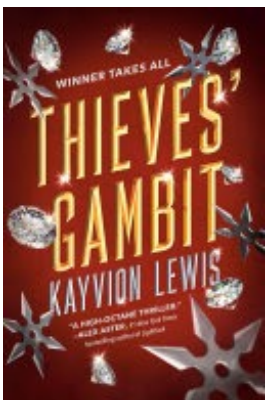
***The Selection* by Kiera Cass (dystopian)**

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.



The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes (mystery)

Avery Grambs has a plan for a better future: survive high school, win a scholarship, and get out. But her fortunes change in an instant when billionaire Tobias Hawthorne dies and leaves Avery virtually his entire fortune. The catch? Avery has no idea why—or even who Tobias Hawthorne is.

To receive her inheritance, Avery must move into sprawling, secret passage-filled Hawthorne House, where every room bears the old man's touch—and his love of puzzles, riddles, and codes. Unfortunately for Avery, Hawthorne House is also occupied by the family that Tobias Hawthorne just dispossessed. This includes the four Hawthorne grandsons: dangerous, magnetic, brilliant boys who grew up with every expectation that one day, they would inherit billions. Their apparent Grayson Hawthorne is convinced that Avery must be a

conwoman, and he's determined to take her down. His brother, Jameson, views her as their grandfather's last hurrah: a twisted riddle, a puzzle to be solved. Caught in a world of wealth and privilege with danger around every turn, Avery will have to play the game herself just to survive.

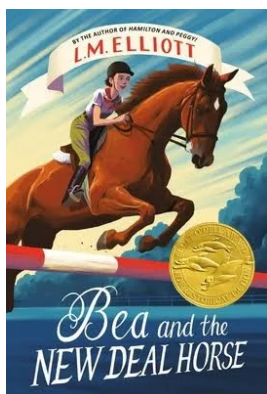


War Games by Alan Gratz (historical fiction)

In 1936 Berlin, nothing is what it seems...

Evie Harris can't believe her luck: She's competing in the Olympics, along with fellow American athletes like Jesse Owens. True, there's something creepy about Germany's leader, Adolf Hitler, who watches over the games with his Nazi henchmen. But Evie's just here to win a gold medal in gymnastics. Until she discovers a horrible secret. Behind all the Olympic fanfare, the Nazis have Berlin in an iron grip of terror and violence--and war is brewing. When Evie becomes embroiled in a mysterious plot to help steal Nazi gold, she must navigate the city's darkest corners and hidden passageways, never knowing who she can trust. With lives on the line and her family's future at stake, Evie has to choose between

following her Olympic dreams and standing up to evil... before it's too late.

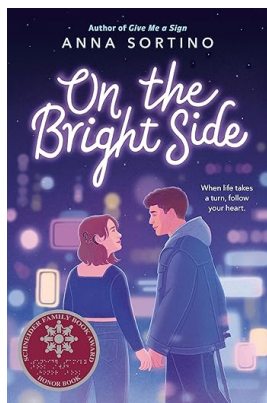


Bea and the New Deal Horse by L. M. Elliott (historical fiction)

Bea wakes to Daddy's note in a hayloft, where he abandoned her with her little sister after the stock market crash took everything: Daddy's job at the bank, their home, Mama's health and life.

How is Bea supposed to convince the imposing Mrs. Scott to take in two stray children? Mrs. Scott's money and Virginia farm are drying up in a drought and the Great Depression, too. She might have to sell her beautiful horses, starting with a dangerous chestnut that has caused tragedy in the past and injures her stableman shortly after Bea arrives.

But wrestling with her own hurts and fears, Bea understands the chestnut's skittish distrust. She sees hope in the powerful jumper—if he can compete at horse shows, they might save the farm, and maybe Bea can even win a place in Mrs. Scott's heart.

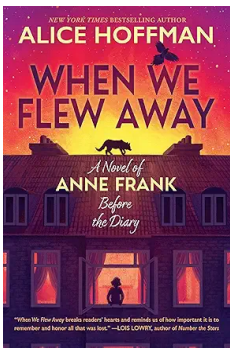


***On the Bright Side* by Anna Sortino (romantic fiction)**

Ellie's Deaf boarding school just shut down, forcing her to leave the place she considered home and return to her hearing family. But being mainstreamed into public school isn't exactly easy. So her guidance counselor pairs her with Jackson, a student who's supposed to help her adjust. Can the boy who tries to say the right things, and gets it all wrong, be the lifeline Ellie needs?

Jackson has been avoiding his teammates ever since some numbness in his legs cost them an important soccer match. With his senior year off to a lonely start, he's intrigued when he's asked to help the new girl, initially thinking it will be a commendable move on his part. Little does he know Ellie will soon be the person he wants most by his side when the strange symptoms he's experiencing amount to a life-changing diagnosis.

Exploring what it means to build community, Anna Sortino pens a story about the fear of the unknown and the beauty of the unexpected, all wrapped up in a poignant romance that will break your heart and put it back together again.



***When We Flew Away* by Alice Hoffman (historical fiction)**

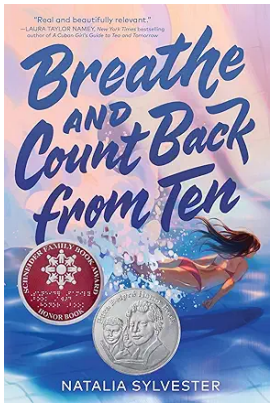
Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* has captivated and inspired readers for decades. Published posthumously by her bereaved father, Anne's journal, written while she and her family were in hiding during World War II, has become one of the central texts of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, as well as a work of literary genius. With the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the Frank family's life is turned inside out, blow by blow, restriction by restriction. Prejudice, loss, and terror run rampant, and Anne is forced to bear witness as ordinary people become monsters, and children and families are caught up in the inescapable tide of violence. In the midst of impossible danger, Anne, audacious and creative and fearless, discovers who she truly is. With a wisdom far beyond her years, she will become a writer who will go on to change the world as we know it. Based on extensive

research and published in cooperation with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, *When We Flew Away* is an extraordinary and moving tour de force.



***Magic Steeped in Poison* by Judy I. Lin (fantasy)**

For Ning, the only thing worse than losing her mother is knowing that it's her own fault. She was the one who unknowingly brewed the poison tea that killed her—the poison tea that now threatens to also take her sister, Shu. When Ning hears of a competition to find the kingdom's greatest shennong-shi—masters of the ancient and magical art of tea-making—she travels to the imperial city to compete. The winner will receive a favor from the princess, which may be Ning's only chance to save her sister's life. But between the backstabbing competitors, bloody court politics, and a mysterious (and handsome) boy with a shocking secret, Ning might actually be the one in more danger.

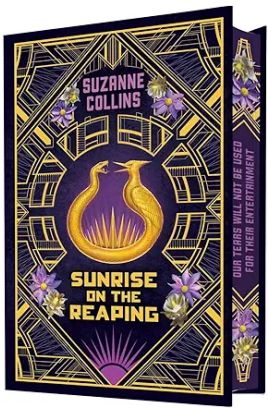


***Breathe and Count Back from Ten* by Natalia Sylvester**

Verónica has had many surgeries to manage her disability. The best form of rehabilitation is swimming, so she spends hours in the pool, but not just to strengthen her body.

Her Florida town is home to Mermaid Cove, a kitschy underwater attraction where professional mermaids perform in giant tanks . . . and Verónica wants to audition. But her conservative Peruvian parents would never go for it. And they *definitely* would never let her be with Alex, her cute new neighbor.

She decides it's time to seize control of her life, but her plans come crashing down when she learns her parents have been hiding the truth from her—the truth about her own body.



***Sunrise on the Reaping* by Suzanne Collins (dystopian- Hunger Games prequel)**

As the day dawns on the fiftieth annual Hunger Games, fear grips the districts of Panem. This year, in honor of the Quarter Quell, twice as many tributes will be taken from their homes.

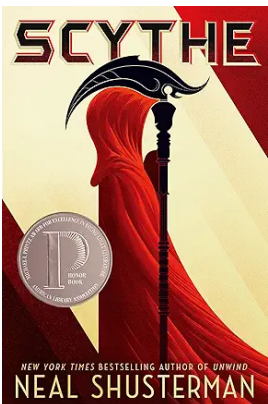
Back in District 12, Haymitch Abernathy is trying not to think too hard about his chances. All he cares about is making it through the day and being with the girl he loves.

When Haymitch's name is called, he can feel all his dreams break. He's torn from his family and his love, shuttled to the Capitol with the three other District 12 tributes: a young friend who's nearly a sister to him, a compulsive oddsmaker, and the most stuck-up girl in town.

***Scythe* by Neal Shusterman (dystopian)**

A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery: humanity has conquered them all...even 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 failure could mean losing their own. The more they train, the more Citra and Rowan learn that a perfect world comes with a heavy price.



***Small Spaces* by Katherine Arden (thriller)**

After suffering a tragic loss, eleven-year-old Ollie who only finds solace in books discovers a chilling ghost story about a girl named Beth, the two brothers who loved her, and a peculiar deal made with "the smiling man"—a sinister specter who grants your most tightly held wish, but only for the ultimate price.

Captivated by the tale, Ollie begins to wonder if the smiling man might be real when she stumbles upon the graves of the very people she's been reading about on a school trip to a nearby farm. Then, later, when her school bus breaks down on the ride home, the strange bus driver tells Ollie and her classmates: "Best get moving. At nightfall they'll come for the rest of you." Nightfall is, indeed, fast descending when Ollie's previously broken digital wristwatch begins a startling countdown and delivers a terrifying message: RUN.

Only Ollie and two of her classmates heed these warnings. As the trio head out into the woods—bordered by a field of scarecrows that seem to be watching them—the bus driver has just one final piece of advice for Ollie and her friends: "Avoid large places. Keep to small."

***Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan (fantasy)**

Percy Jackson is about to be kicked out of boarding school again—he can't seem to stay out of trouble. Is he supposed to stand by while a bully picks on his scrawny best friend? Or not defend himself when his teacher turns into a monster and tries to kill him?

Mythical creatures seem to be walking straight out of the pages of Percy's Greek mythology textbook and into his life. What's worse, he's angered a few of them: Zeus's master lightning bolt has been stolen, and Percy is the prime suspect.

Percy and his friends Grover the satyr, and Annabeth, the demigod daughter of Athena, must find and return Zeus's stolen property and bring peace to a warring Mount Olympus. They travel cross country to the gates of the Underworld in Los Angeles, facing a host of enemies determined to stop them.

