

NCSA 6th Grade Summer Reading List

Required Books (choose one of these five)

1. The Midwife's Apprentice, Karen Cushman

Newbery Medal, 1996 In medieval England, a nameless, homeless girl is taken in by a sharp-tempered midwife, and in spite of obstacles and hardship, eventually gains the three things she most wants: a full belly, a contented heart, and a place in this world.

2. Phantom Tollbooth, Jules Pfeiffer

Bored with school and with life, Milo awakes from a nap to find a mysterious package in his room. Inside is a tollbooth; Milo's journey through the booth into another world brings him to warring kingdoms: one of numbers and the other of letters. Only Milo can bring peace.

3. Golden Compass, Philip Pullman

In the first of a trilogy, Pullman has created a wholly developed universe, which is, as he states, much like our own but different in many ways--a world in which humans are paired with animal "daemons" that seem like alter egos, only with personalities of their own. Filled with fast-paced action, the plot involves a secret scientific facility, where children are being severed from their daemons; warring factions; witch clans; an outcast armored bear, who bonds with Lyra; and more. It becomes evident that the future of the world and its inhabitants is in the hands of the ever-more-resilient and dedicated Lyra.

4. A Long Way From Chicago, Richard Peck

A boy recounts his annual summer trips to rural Illinois with his sister during the Great Depression to visit their larger-than-life grandmother.

5. 21 Balloons, William Pené DuBois

Professor William Waterman Sherman intends to fly across the Pacific Ocean. But through a twist of fate, he lands on Krakatoa, and discovers a world of unimaginable wealth, eccentric inhabitants, and incredible balloon inventions. Winner of the 1948 Newbery Medal, this classic fantasy-adventure is now available in a handsome new edition. William Pené du Bois combines his rich imagination, scientific tastes, and brilliant artistry to tell a story that has no age limit.

Choice Books (choose one or more and read for fun)

Wringer, Jerry Spinelli

As Palmer comes of age, he must either accept the violence of being a wringer at his town's annual Pigeon Day or find the courage to oppose it.

Out of the Dust, Karen Hesse

In a series of poems, fifteen-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Depression.

The Giver, Lois Lowry

Newbery Medal, 1994 Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives.

Fever 1793, Laurie Anderson

In 1793 Philadelphia, sixteen-year-old Matilda Cook, separated from her sick mother, learns about perseverance and self-reliance when she is forced to cope with the horrors of a yellow fever epidemic.

The Wanderer, Sharon Creech

Thirteen-year-old Sophie and her cousin Cody record their transatlantic crossing aboard the Wanderer, a forty-five foot sailboat, which, along with uncles and another cousin, is en route to visit their grandfather in England.

The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn, Dorothy Hoobler

While attempting to solve the mystery of a stolen jewel, Seikei, a merchant's son who longs to be a samurai, joins a group of kabuki actors in eighteenth-century Japan.

The Bomb, Theodore Taylor

In 1944, when the Americans liberate Bikini Atoll from the Japanese, fourteen-year-old Sorry Rinamu does not realize that in two years he will lead a desperate effort to save his island home from a much more deadly threat.

A Single Shard, Linda Sue Park:

Tree-ear, a thirteen-year-old orphan in medieval Korea, lives under a bridge in a potters' village, and longs to learn how to throw the delicate celadon ceramics himself.

Julie of the Wolves, Jean George:

Newbery Medal, 1973 While running away from home and an unwanted marriage, a thirteen-year-old Eskimo girl becomes lost on the North Slope of Alaska and is befriended by a wolf pack

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis

Four English school children enter the magic land of Narnia through the back of a wardrobe and assist Aslan, the golden lion, in defeating the White Witch who has cursed the land with eternal winter.

The View from Saturday, E.L. Konigsburg

Four students, with their own individual stories, develop a special bond and attract the attention of their teacher, a paraplegic, who chooses them to represent their sixth-grade class in the Academic Bowl competition.

Maniac Magee, Jerry Spinelli

After his parents die, Jeffrey Lionel Magee's life becomes legendary, as he accomplishes athletic and other feats which awe his contemporaries.

The Pigman by Paul Zindel

For sophomores John and Lorraine, the world feels meaningless; nothing is important. They certainly can never please their parents, and school is a chore. To pass the time, they play pranks on unsuspecting people. It's during one of these pranks that they meet the "Pigman"--a fat, balding old man with a zany smile plastered on his face. In spite of themselves, John and Lorraine soon find that they're caught up in Mr. Pignati's zest for life. In fact, they become so involved that they begin to destroy the only corner of the world that's ever mattered to them. Originally published in 1968, this novel by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Paul Zindel still sings with sharp emotion as John and Lorraine come to realize that "Our life would be what we made of it--nothing more, nothing less."

Number the Stars Lois Lowry

The evacuation of Jews from Nazi-held Denmark is one of the great untold stories of World War II. On September 29, 1943, word got out in Denmark that Jews were to be detained and then sent to the death camps. Within hours the Danish resistance, population and police arranged a small flotilla to herd 7,000 Jews to Sweden. Lois Lowry fictionalizes a true-story account to bring this courageous tale to life. She brings the experience to life through the eyes of 10-year-old Annemarie Johanssen, whose family harbors her best friend, Ellen Rosen, on the eve of the round-up and helps smuggles Ellen's family out of the country. Newbery winner.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

Brian Robeson is flying to visit his dad. The pilot has a heart attack and Brian crash lands the plane in the middle of the Canadian wilderness. For 54 days in the wild, armed only with a hatchet, we watch Brian fight for his survival. Compelling read. Newbery Honor.

Souder by William Armstrong

Moving story of a close-knit black family in the rural South and the injustices they suffer.

Enjoy, and have a wonderful summer!

NCSA 7th Grade Summer Reading List

Required Books (choose one of these five)

1. Freak the Mighty, Rodman Philbrick

At the beginning of eighth grade, Max, who has a learning disability, and his new friend Freak, whose birth defect has affected his body but not his brilliant mind, find that when they combine forces they make a powerful team.

2. Catherine Called Birdy, Karen Cushman

The daughter of an English country knight keeps a journal in which she records the events of her life, particularly her longing for adventures beyond the usual role of women and her efforts to avoid being married off.

3. The Girls, Amy Koss

Each of the girls in a middle-school clique reveals the strong, manipulative hold one of the group exerts on the others, causing hurt and self-doubt among the girls.

4. Holes, Lois Sachar

As further evidence of his family's bad fortune which they attribute to a curse on a distant relative, Stanley Yelnats is sent to a hellish correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.

5. The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams

In a hilarious science-fiction comedy, the first of a trilogy, Englishman Arthur Dent wakes up to find he's hitchhiking through space with an intergalactic crew.

Choice Books (choose one or more and read for fun)

What Hearts, Bruce Brooks

After his mother divorces his father and remarries, Asa's sharp intellect and capacity for forgiveness help him deal with the instabilities of his new world.

Hope Was Here, Joan Bauer

When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor.

The Girls, Amy Koss

Each of the girls in a middle-school clique reveals the strong, manipulative hold one of the group exerts on the others, causing hurt and self-doubt among the girls.

Holes, Lois Sachar

As further evidence of his family's bad fortune which they attribute to a curse on a distant relative, Stanley Yelnats is sent to a hellish correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.

Crash, Jerry Spinelli

Seventh-grader John "Crash" Coogan has always been comfortable with his tough, aggressive behavior, until his relationship with an unusual Quaker boy and his grandfather's stroke make him consider the meaning of friendship and the importance of family.

Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt

Young Jethro Creighton watches the beginnings of the Civil War. He has older brothers on each side of the dispute. His idol, the school teacher, engaged to his sister also joins the fight. Jethro is left to do the work formerly shared by all the brothers. We witness the boy's innocent faith in the Presidency and his brave defense of a cousin who deserted.

The Islander by Cynthia Rylant-- Numbed by grief after the death of his parents, a young boy is sent to live with his grandfather on a remote island in British Columbia. A loner who spends his time head down searching for shells, one day finds a comb he is sure belongs to a mermaid. He receives a key that points the way to his own hidden powers as a healer of animals and, ultimately, a healer of a young girl and himself. This slim volume shines with carefully chosen words and phrases. It is a rare gem about belief and hope and the importance of families.

Fantastic Voyage by Isaac Asimov--A combination SCI-FI and political intrigue book which tells the story of a trip through the circulatory system of a scientist. A medical team is miniaturized in order to enter his body, reverse his coma, and save the world.

The Andromeda Strain by Michael Crichton--An unmanned space satellite lands on the edge of a small town in Arizona and quickly decimates the population. There is a frantic race against time to find the contaminate agent.

Cry, the Beloved Country by Alan Paton--A beautifully told and profoundly compassionate story of the Zulu pastor Stephen Kumalo and his son Absalom, set in the troubled and changing South Africa of the 1940s.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan--Moving from a Mexican ranch to the company labor camps of California, this is a story of migration and movement deeply rooted in the earth. When 14-year-old Esperanza's father is killed, she and her mother must emigrate to the U.S., where a family of former ranch workers has helped them find jobs in the agricultural labor camps. Coming from such privilege, Esperanza is ill prepared for the hard work and difficult conditions she now faces. She quickly learns household chores, though, and when her mother falls ill, she works packing produce until she makes enough money to bring her beloved abuelita to the U.S.. Set during the Great Depression.

The Midwife's Apprentice by Karen Cushman-- This story takes place in medieval England. We meet a 12 year girl who is trying to keep herself warm on a dung heap. She has no family, no friends, no home and not even a name. She meets the local midwife and talks her into taking her in. She names herself Alyce and becomes an apprentice to the ill tempered midwife. There is so much detail in this small book that you begin to understand what life must have been like during this time period. Newbery Medal.

Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle-- Madeleine L'Engle writes science fiction so realistically, you begin to believe it. Charles Wallace is a super bright first grader and Meg is his older sister whose thoughts Charlie Wallace can read. This story is Meg's quest to explore the unknown dimensions of her mind in order to save her brother from death. Can there really be a dragon going through the three tests laid out by the teacher? This book will take you beyond the bounds of time and space as we know it. Galaxies become instantly penetrable and human cells infinitesimally large.

Enjoy, and have a wonderful summer! **Victor, Kate, Lori and Scott**

NCSA 8th Grade Summer Reading List

Required Books (choose one of these five)

1. Rules of the Road, Joan Bauer

Sixteen-year-old Jenna gets a job driving the elderly owner of a chain of successful shoe stores from Chicago to Texas to confront the son who is trying to force her to retire, and along the way Jenna hones her talents as a saleswoman and finds the strength to face her alcoholic father.

2. The Raging Quiet, Sherryl Jordan

Suspicious of sixteen-year-old Marnie, a newcomer to their village, the residents accuse her of witchcraft when she discovers that the village madman is not crazy but deaf and she begins to communicate with him through hand gestures.

3. Tangerine, Richard Bloor

Paul Fisher, a stellar soccer player despite being legally blind, finally comes into his own when his family moves to the strange town of Tangerine, Florida.

4. Monster, Walter Dean Myers

While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken.

5. Touching Spirit Bear, Ben Mikaelson

After his anger erupts into violence, fifteen year-old Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the Native American Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life.

Choice Books (choose one or more and read for fun)

Speak, Laurie Halse Anderson

A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda's freshman year in high school. Date rape is an issue covered in this novel.

The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier

A high school freshman discovers the devastating consequences of refusing to join in the school's annual fund raising drive and arousing the wrath of the school bullies.

The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton

The struggle of three brothers to stay together after their parent's death and their quest for identity among the conflicting values of their adolescent society.

Ironman, Chris Crutcher

While training for a triathlon, seventeen-year-old Bo attends an anger management group at school which leads him to examine his relationship with his father.

Bad by Jean Ferris--*"I guess, if you have to, you can get used to anything--even to violence breaking out, like an attack of the hiccups or something, and then going away as suddenly as it started. But, like Shatasia said, you could never get all the way relaxed about it."* Such is the life of 16-year-old Dallas now that she's been confined for six months to a juvenile detention facility for girls. Dallas used to love "skating" with her rebellious friends--shoplifting, hot-wiring cars, and purse-snatching--but she never expected to be caught with a

gun. In the rehabilitation center she must adjust to shared living quarters, structured schedules, lectures on drugs and sex, and countless volatile personalities. But amid all the chaos and tension and rules, Dallas also finds nurture--perhaps more than she ever received from her cold dad and absent mom.

Weetzie Bat by Francesca Lia Block--Weetzie Bat is an ultramodern L.A. teenager, experiencing life and love as fully as possible. Although the array of characters is offbeat, even eccentric, a look beneath their brashness reveals quirky, yet real, people. Weetzie's slang--"lanky-lizards," "Lanka girls," "ducks,"--makes Block's short novel highly entertaining. Weetzie Bat is a magical book that is the perfect mix of fairy-tale and reality. Something so unique and beautiful doesn't come around often. There are issues of homosexuality in the book.

Coming Evil by Vivian Van de Velde--The author of numerous fantasies tries a more realistic setting in her latest offering. Parisian 13-year-old Lizette is sent to live with her aunt in German-occupied rural France in the fall of 1940. There she meets Gerard, the ghost of a fourteenth-century Templar knight, who was murdered by King Phillip IV in 1314. As she learns more about Gerard and the evils of his time, she comes to understand the true dangers of the Nazi occupation, and the importance of helping her aunt hide several Jewish and Gypsy children. Velde's melding of fantasy with historical fiction is generally successful, and her comments about the similarities between these two historical periods are well taken.

Upon the Head of the Goat : A Childhood in Hungary, 1939-1944 by Aranka Siegal-- Nine-year-old Piri describes the bewilderment of being a Jewish child during the 1939-1944 German occupation of her hometown (then in Hungary and now in the Ukraine) and relates the ordeal of trying to survive in the ghetto.

Dacey's Song by Cynthia Voigt-- A NEWBERY MEDAL WINNER Keeping her family together is what thirteen-year-old Dacey does best. But now that all four Tillerman children have found a new home with their grandmother, Dacey has to learn the hard lesson of letting go. Dacey's got other problems than finding her new role in the family: she's bored with everyone and everything at school and doesn't think anyone can tell her anything she wants to know. But slowly, Dacey discovers that everyone has something to teach, and life is a lesson that doesn't get easier . . .

Pardon Me You're Stepping on my Eyeball by Paul Zindel--Louis "Marsh" Mellow is a 15 year old who is growing up in a really dysfunctional family. His mother is an alcoholic and his father is absent from the home. Marsh's teachers believe he is a good candidate for a group therapy session being set up by the school's psychologist. In the group, Marsh meets Edna, a disturbed loner and six others who comprise the group. Edna and Marsh become friends and Edna tries to help Marsh come to terms with his homelife. Join Edna and Marsh as they journey together in search of self.

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes by Chris Crutcher-- Once again, Crutcher assembles a crew of misfits to tackle the Big Issues. Sarah Byrnes, her face hideously scarred from what she calls a childhood accident, sits silent and withdrawn in the psychiatric ward; her friend Eric, who has admired her since grade school as the toughest person he knows, wonders what could have finally pushed her over the edge. Between trenchant classroom confrontations over abortion and other religious controversies, exhausting swim team workouts, and a sudden relationship with a classmate, Eric loyally finds time to visit Sarah. Powerful, controversial.

The Silver Kiss by Annette Curtis Klause--This could sell as horror, but it's compassionate horror. Zoe's Mom is dying of cancer. Even getting picked up by a handsome vampire seems tolerable in comparison. Can she trust him not to drain all her blood? Can she do something to stop the brutal killings happening in her town? Can she let go of Simon and her Mom?

Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 1/2 by Townsend, Sue -- Set in England, this diary of a 13 year old is full of humorous anecdotes celebrating Adrian Mole's puberty. His diary entries begin with a New Year's resolution and take us into his varied activities which include covering the clown wallpaper in his bedroom with black paint, getting involved in finding a nursing home for a 90 year old man. The man ends up befriending him and

asking him to arrange details for his marriage to an 80 year-old fellow nursing home resident. Through it all, his mom leaves home to express her independence and liberation and his dad loses his job and fights or fuels depression with frequent shots of whiskey.

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck--The stunning, classic novel of the Dust Bowl and a family's migration to California during the Depression.

Caucasia by Danzy Senna--Throughout the novel, Senna superbly illustrates the emotional toll that politics and race take on one especially gutsy young girl's development as she makes her way through the parallel limbos between black and white and between girl and young woman.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith--The American masterpiece of a young girl's coming of age and beginnings of wisdom in turn-of-the-century New York. A profoundly moving novel.

The Color of Water, by James McBride--A true contemporary story of an African American man in New York who does not realize until at least his teens that his mother who is raising him is white or European American.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck--The painful responsibilities of friendship are explored in this tragic story of two migratory workers: George and Lennie.

Having Our Say by the Delaney Sisters--Warm, feisty, and intelligent, the Delaney sisters speak their minds in a book that is at once a vital historical record and a moving portrait of two sisters who love, laugh, and embrace life after one hundred years of living side-by-side.

The Chosen by Chaim Potok--The author's beloved first novel offers readers the story of two Jewish boys of very different backgrounds growing up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, NY.

My Brother Sam is Dead--Stirring novel (historical fiction) set during the American Revolution.

Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary by Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven--A poignant companion to the Diary this book fills in the details of Anne Frank's Life before, during and after her experiences in hiding. A wonderful historical achievement that gives readers a broader context in which to place Anne Frank's life.

Red Sky at Morning by Richard Bradford--The classic coming-of-age story set during World War II about the enduring spirit of youth and the values in life that count. "A sort of Catcher in the Rye out West...What makes the book a true delight is the deadpan, irreverent humor with which Josh tells the story...No brief review can do justice to Mr. Bradford's book."

Jubilee Journey by Carolyn Meyer--Emily has always felt comfortable growing up in Connecticut with her African-American mother and her French-American father, but when they spend some time with her Great Grandmother in Texas, Emily learns about her black heritage and uncovers some new and exciting parts of her own identity.

A Bag of Marbles by Joseph Joffo--Set in occupied France during WWII, two Jewish boys are sent by their mother to Free France to escape persecution by the Nazis. A true and gripping account of intense struggle for survival. Translated from the French.

Enjoy, and have a wonderful summer! **Victor, Kate, Lori and Scott**