

Springfield Public Schools

9th Grade Summer Reading List

2021

Everybody Looking by Candice Iloh

A heavily autobiographical novel of a young woman's struggle to carve a place for herself--for her black female body--in a world of deeply conflicting messages. Told entirely in verse, Ada's story encompasses her earliest memories as a child, including her abuse at the hands of a young cousin, her mother's rejection and descent into addiction, and her father's attempts to create a home for his American daughter more like the one he knew in Nigeria.

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what *really* went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

Simon vs The Homosapien Agenda by Albertalli

Sixteen-year-old and not-so-openly gay Simon Spier prefers to save his drama for the school musical. But when an email falls into the wrong hands, his secret is at risk of being thrust into the spotlight. Now change-averse Simon has to find a way to step out of his comfort zone before he's pushed out—without alienating his friends, compromising himself, or fumbling a shot at happiness with the most confusing, adorable guy he's never met. Incredibly funny and poignant, this twenty-first-century coming-of-age, coming out story—wrapped in a geek romance.

Please Stop Laughing at Me: One Woman's Inspirational True Story by Jodee Blanco

This shocking memoir details Jodee's school years which were dominated by bullying. In her work, Jodee Blanco tells how school became a frightening and painful place, where threats, humiliation, and assault were as much a part of her daily experience as homework and sports practice were for others. It is a brutally honest look at what it means to be ostracized, how even the most seemingly helpful parents don't understand, why schools sometimes fail, and how the impacts of bullying are sometimes underestimated, ignored and mishandled.

Bronx Masquerade by Nikki Grimes

Open Mike Friday is everyone's favorite day in Mr. Ward's English class. On Fridays, his 18 high-school students dare to relax long enough to let slip the poets, painters, readers, and dreamers that exist within each of them. Raul Ramirez longs "to show the beauty of our people, that we are not all *banditos* like they show on TV, munching *cuchfritos* and sipping beer through chipped teeth." Angry Tyrone Bittings finds dubious comfort in denying hope: "Life is cold. Future?...wish there was some future to talk about. I could use me some future." Overweight Janelle Battle hopes to be seen for what she really is: "for I am coconut / and the heart of me / is sweeter / than you know" They are all here: the tall girl, the tough-talking rapper, the jock, the beauty queen, the teenage mom, the artist, and many more.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically-gifted, autistic, fifteen-year-old boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secret and shocking information about his family.

Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario In this astonishing true story, award-winning journalist Sonia Nazario recounts the unforgettable odyssey of a Honduran boy who braves unimaginable hardship and peril to reach his mother in the United States.

Just Listen by Sarah Dessen Sixteen-year-old Annabel has not been truthful with her friends and is now socially isolated. Only Owen, her classmate with a passion for music, helps her face the truth about what really happened at the party that changed her life.

Leviathan by Scott Westerfeld

Author Westerfeld re-imagines World War I in a fast-paced sci-fi text, where the Clankers battle the Darwinists. This "Steampunk" adventure that follows the protagonists around the world aboard the *Leviathan* blurs the line between what it means to be an enemy or an ally, and comes complete with black and white illustrations.

The Sweet Life of Stella Madison by Lara M. Zeises

Stella Madison's parents are in love with food. Her father is a famous French chef and her mother is a successful restaurant owner. However, Stella is not at all interested in becoming a "foodie," and is much more interested in hanging out with Max, her dependable and loyal boyfriend. In a twist of irony, Stella is offered a too-good-to-pass-up opportunity writing a food column for a local newspaper, and there she meets Jeremy, a dreamy, hunky intern who causes Stella to all but forget that she is in a relationship with Max. Who will Stella choose?

Timeline by Michael Crichton A group of present-day historians enter, literally, life in 14th Century feudal France. This novel combines a science of the future – the emerging field of quantum technology – with the complex realities of the medieval past. Imagine the risks of such a journey.

What I Saw and How I Lied by Judy Blundell

The war is over, Evie's stepfather is back home, and everything is back to normal—until a family vacation to Palm Beach unearths secrets that force Evie to question the people she's trusted the most. She learns that adults, even those closest to her, are not always what they seem. Evie becomes the adult in the group, motivated by truth and justice rather than greed or superficial appearances.

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10th Grade Summer Reading List

2021

Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

Amal Shahid has always been an artist and a poet. But even in a diverse art school, because of a biased system he's seen as disruptive and unmotivated. Then, one fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighborhood escalates into tragedy. "Boys just being boys" turns out to be true only when those boys are white. Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it? With spellbinding lyricism, award-winning author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam tell a moving and deeply profound story about how one boy is able to maintain his humanity and fight for the truth in a system designed to strip him of both.

Juliet Takes a Breath by Gabbie Rivera

Juliet Milagros Palante is a self-proclaimed closeted Puerto Rican baby dyke from the Bronx. Only, she's not so closeted anymore. Not after coming out to her family the night before flying to Portland, Oregon, to intern with her favorite feminist writer--what's sure to be a life-changing experience. And when Juliet's coming out crashes and burns, she's not sure her mom will ever speak to her again. But Juliet has a plan--sort of. Her internship with legendary author Harlowe Brisbane, the ultimate authority on feminism, women's bodies, and other gay-sounding stuff, is sure to help her figure out this whole "Puerto Rican lesbian" thing. Except Harlowe's white. And not from the Bronx. And she definitely doesn't have all the answer. In a summer bursting with queer brown dance parties, a sexy fling with a motorcycling librarian, and intense explorations of race and identity, Juliet learns what it means to come out--to the world, to her family, to herself.

Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson

Set in New York City during the beginning of the American Revolution, Chains is an historical novel that addresses the real price of freedom. Isabel tells the story of her life as a slave girl sold to a cruel Loyalist family and then recruited to spy for the Patriots. She is forced to question whether a new nation's freedom will include her and the many more like her bound in chains.

Early Autumn by Robert Parker

Stuck in the middle of a bitter divorce, a 15 year-old boy is kidnapped by people his parents hired. Taking pity on him, Spenser goes from a hired kidnapper to a teacher deep in the Maine woods. He is determined to help the boy and beat his opponents in a dangerous game of kidnapping.

Big Mouth and Ugly Girl by Joyce Carol Oates

While horsing around in the cafeteria, Matt Donaghy makes some remarks and he's suspected of plotting to bomb the school. Only Ursula Riggs, a girl he barely knows, is willing to speak up on Matt's behalf--and that's just the beginning of Oates's novel. The next three-quarters of the book become even more interesting, as the author explores the subsequent social pressures placed on the teenagers.

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

In this memoir, the author recalls her turbulent childhood with an eccentric mother and alcoholic father. The story, told without self-pity or blame, is an inspiring testament to the strength of family bonds.

Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos

Jack Gantos was living by himself as a high school senior because his parents left him to his own devices. An aspiring writer looking for adventure, cash for college tuition, and a way out of a dead-end job, he naively agreed to help sail a sixty-foot yacht loaded with drugs from the Virgin Islands to New York City where he and his partners sold them until federal agents caught up. For his part in the conspiracy, Gantos was sentenced to serve up to six years in prison. This autobiography charts his path before, during and after prison.

Jerk, California by Jonathan Friesen

In this novel, high school senior Sam Carrier searches for the truth about his life. Rejected by his stepfather after being diagnosed with Tourette's as a child, Sam has endured poor treatment at home, and school has been even worse. His best – and only – release from his body's constant twitching, jerking movement is in running. This semi-autobiographical novel follows Sam through struggles for understanding and self-acceptance.

Paper Towns by John Green

When his next-door neighbor and crush Margo shows up at Quentin's window dressed as a ninja, "good kid" Quentin is not prepared for their night of chaos. The next morning, Margo has disappeared. She leaves Quentin clues that lead him on a hilarious chase across the country.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Do opposites attract? This novel follows the courtship of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy through a relationship that begins with hatred for the other but gradually turns into attraction, respect, and love. This family drama includes unexpected plot twists and unforgettable romance.

Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom

Most of us, at some point in our education, have a teacher who impacts the way we think and live our lives. In this memoir, Mitch Albom spends several months visiting his college professor, Morrie Schwartz, during Morrie's final year of life and learning from him some of life's most important lessons. (Other recent titles by Mitch Albom are *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and *Have a Little Faith*)

The White Darkness by Geraldine McCaughrean

Accompanied by Titus Oates, an explorer who's been dead for ninety-years, Sym travels with her Uncle Victor to Antarctica in a search for truth that leaves her struggling for survival.

Springfield Public Schools

11th Grade Summer Reading List

2021

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship—and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

The story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

Love In The Time of Global Warming by Block

After the Earth Shaker, which all but destroyed Los Angeles, seventeen-year-old Penelope (Pen) sets out into the wasteland in search of her family, her journey guided by a tattered copy of Homer's *Odyssey*. Soon she begins to realize her own abilities and strength as she faces false promises of safety, the cloned giants who feast on humans, and a madman who wishes her dead. On her voyage, Pen learns to tell stories that reflect her strange visions, while she and her fellow survivors navigate the dangers that lie in wait.

An American Childhood by Annie Dillard This memoir from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Dillard recounts the experiences of her childhood growing up in Pittsburgh during the 1950s. Dillard effortlessly takes on the persona of her five-, ten-, and fifteen-year-old selves while describing through vivid detail the events and lessons that influenced her decision to become a writer.

Sailing Alone Around the Room by Billy Collins

This collection of new and older poems shows Collins at his best, performing the kinds of distinctive poetic maneuvers that have delighted and fascinated so many readers. They may begin in curiosity and end in grief; they may start with irony and end with lyric transformation; they may, and often do, begin with the everyday and end in the infinite. Possessed of a unique voice that is at once plain and melodic, Billy Collins has managed to enrich American poetry while greatly widening the circle of its audience.

Lucky by Alice Sebold (*Be advised that this book contains mature content and language.*)

Raped while walking home through a park near her university, Alice Sebold narrates her painful and heroic attempt to readjust to college and family life. Her path of healing is disrupted when she spots her attacker on the street and begins the long, arduous task of prosecuting him.

The Maze Runner by James Dashner Thomas senses that he holds the knowledge to lead his fellow Gladers out of a maze that surrounds their safe haven. But with no memory of their past lives, escape might lead Thomas and the other Gladers into worse situations.

A Secret Edge by Robin Reardon Reardon's third novel is a coming-of-age story about athletic and popular Jason Peele, a high school track star who begins to explore and confront his homosexuality. This is a compelling story about stereotypes, interracial relationships, love, betrayal, and friendship.

Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers by Mary Roach This is a non-fiction account of what happens to dead bodies. Despite the morbid subject matter, this book is guaranteed to make you laugh. Roach uses sharp wit, sensitivity and respect to demonstrate the remarkable and not-so-remarkable, sometimes questionable, uses of cadavers. For those who are interested in the fields of medicine or forensics, this book makes excellent reading.

A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson In order to rediscover his country by "going out into an America that most people scarcely know is there," the unprepared and out-of-shape author sets out to walk the length of the Appalachian Trail. He is armed with nothing but Snickers Bars and Ramen Noodles, and accompanied by a college roommate he has not seen in years. His account of that adventure is at once hilarious, inspiring, and educational.

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12th Grade Summer Reading List

2021

Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir by Natasha Threthewey

At age nineteen, Natasha Threthewey had her world turned upside down when her former stepfather shot and killed her mother. Grieving and still new to adulthood, she confronted the twin pulls of life and death in the aftermath of unimaginable trauma and now explores the way this experience lastingly shaped the artist she became.

I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika Sanchez

Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never *abandon* their family. But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role. Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out *every possible way* Julia has failed. But it's not long before Julia discovers that Olga might not have been as perfect as everyone thought. With the help of her best friend, Lorena, and her first love (first everything), Connor, Julia is determined to find out. Was Olga really what she seemed? Or was there more to her sister's story? And either way, how can Julia even attempt to live up to a seemingly impossible ideal?

The Tempest by William Shakespeare

This comedy takes place on an island that is controlled by a magician who was banished there. While in exile, he has raised a daughter who has never seen other people until a shipwreck caused by a tempest nearby. This story involves a funny monster, a magic sprite, drunken sailors, and love-at-first-sight, all while dealing with the complicated theme of power.

Everything is Illuminated by Jonathan Safran Foer

The first standout novel from author Jonathan Safran Foer follows a young man on a journey to the Ukraine in search of answers about his grandfather who perished in WWII. In his hilarious and heartfelt journey he encounters an absurd tour guide who makes this emotional quest both entertaining and meaningful.

What is the What by David Eggers

This epic novel follows Valentino Achak Deng, a Sudanese refugee, as he travels hundreds of miles across the Sudan fleeing from militia, government attackers, and the dangers of the land. When he finally reaches the U.S., he finds a land of opportunity but also of struggle. This profoundly heartfelt and surprisingly funny novel deals with issues of displacement, identity, and the challenges of trying to build a new life from the tragedy of genocide.

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

This is a must-read for anyone interested in life sciences, social work, or social justice. Henrietta's cancerous tissue, taken without her knowledge or consent, turned out to provide the foundation for countless medical breakthroughs and vaccines. Meanwhile, Henrietta's family continued to live in poverty and frequently poor health, begging the questions, Who owns our bodies? And who carries our memories?

First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Luong Ung

Told from the perspective of a five-year old girl, this memoir follows a family's courageous survival through the 1970s genocide in Cambodia.

The Body of Christopher Creed by Carol Plum-Ucci

This novel gives a realistic and haunting exploration of bullying's worst-case scenario. No one knows what happened to Christopher Creed, the boy known as the class freak, the bullies' punching bag. He simply vanished. Determined to discover the truth, Torey Adams, one of Creed's former tormenters, implicates himself and discovers the importance of tolerance.

The Road by Cormac McCarthy

This novel follows the difficult journey of a father and son through an annihilated, post-apocalyptic America. Both father and son must face the dangers of a lawless time in which morality is forgotten and during which the best and the worst of human nature are revealed.

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini

By the author of the best-seller *The Kite Runner*, this moving novel is told from the perspective of two women struggling to come to terms with the repressive rule in Taliban-run Afghanistan.

The Tiger Ladies: A Memoir of Kashmir by Sudah Kohl

For Kohl, Kashmir was paradise, a place of supreme beauty and harmony cradled by the divine Himalayas. This all vanished with the militant Islamic movement and the violent struggle between Pakistan and India over her homeland.

Bossypants by Tina Fey

The mastermind of the Emmy winning show "30 Rock," Tina Fey, offers more than witticisms in *Bossypants*. She grants access to her days as a nerdy child all the way up to being a mother. Tina Fey delivers plenty of laughs while still providing moments of introspection and honesty about her roles as an actress, writer, and producer.

The Odessa File by Frederick Forsyth

The suicide of an elderly Jewish holocaust survivor sparks the interest of a young German journalist. After reading the diary, the journalist learns that many former Nazis are alive and still living and working in Germany. Set in the early 1960s, this fast-paced novel explores the possibility of many war criminals living under aliases and the potential of a secret organization protecting them.