

Middle School Recommended Reading for 7th and 8th Grade Students in Fall 2010

Absolutely True Story of a Part-time Indian by Alexie, Sherman

Arnold Spirit, aka Junior, is a Spokane Indian from Wellpinit, WA living on the rez. He is a goofy looking kid and the target of bullies. He is dirt poor and has little hope of ever changing anything. That's the way it is on the rez. When Arnold's teacher suggests that he go to school in the nearby town instead of the rez school, everything changes. Arnold now travels 20 miles each way, sometimes on foot, to get to the school. At first, the kids just see the goofy looking Indian boy. His only friend is a geeky kid who is also an outcast. And back on the rez, Arnold is seen as a traitor to the rez. When Arnold makes the basketball team, things change -- but not necessarily for the better. But with Arnold's sense of humor and his comics, I just know he'll be OK.

Among the Hidden (Shadow Children Series) by Haddix, Margaret Peterson

Are you a first born child? How about a second born child or are you a shadow child, which is a third born child? If you are a shadow child you wouldn't be here today. In fact, if the government caught you, you wouldn't even be alive at this moment. In Among the Hidden, the US government has a population law that states a family can only have two children maximum due to a population explosion. Any other children will be taken away and disposed of by the government. Luke is a third child, but he has never really worried about it since his family lives in the country. He knows he can't go to school or into town like his two older brothers, but that doesn't bother him. Then the land next to their house is sold and a housing development is built. Now Luke is confined to the attic. He can't even eat dinner at the table with his family. He has to eat on the stairs where no one from the outside might be able to see him. One day while staring out the window in the attic Luke sees a figure in one of the houses in the new development. He knows the family has two boys and that they already left for school. That can only mean one thing; there is another third child. How many more shadow children are out there? Should Luke try to contact this person? Is it too risky to go outside? What if he gets caught?

Artemis Fowl (Series) by Colfer, Eoin

A 12 year old who is so ingenious, it's criminal. The world's youngest, brightest, and most dangerous criminal mastermind -- story of what happens when a criminal genius infiltrates the world of goblins and leprechauns. His name is Artemis --- Artemis Fowl...and you will not soon forget him. Artemis is a know-it-all, brash adolescent bad boy. Artemis is heir to the Fowl family empire of international underworld figures and con artists. He is the most cunning Fowl of all --- he is also 12 years old.

Bounce (Other choices: Lush or Perfect) by Friend, Natasha

When Evyn's dad remarries and morphs into someone else, Evyn's life falls apart. What do an art history college professor who looks like Betty Boop and a shaggy-bearded carpenter with grungy overalls have in common? Who knows! But the carpenter is my dad Birdie, and he asked Eleni to marry him only two months after they met. He didn't even check with me and my brother Mackey to see what we thought about it! He just announced that he's getting married, and we're moving to Boston to live with this person we hardly know and her six kids! Six kids, from six to nineteen-what's up with that? And just to make matters worse, I have to share a room with two of them. They're twins so alike I'll never tell them apart, they're 15, two years older than I am, and look like Betty Boop, just like their mother. You never see them apart, but they never quit fighting. I called them the sweater twins because the first time I saw them, they were arguing about whether one had stolen the other one's sweater. All I want is to go back to the way it used to be. I know I'm supposed to bounce back from all the changes and bounce my way into some changes of my own. But how can I do that when I've got about as much bounce as an empty soccer ball, a broken nose, and two black eyes?

Boy at War (also sequels to this book Heroes Don't Run and A Boy No More) by Mazar, Harry

Adam Pelko has lived for only two weeks in Honolulu, where his father is an officer assigned to the USS Arizona in nearby Pearl Harbor. When he befriends Davi Mori, a high school classmate whose parents are Japanese, Adam's rigid father forbids him to associate with Davi, fearing that the anti-Japanese sentiment so rampant on the island will tarnish the Pelko family and Lieutenant Pelko's navy career. When his father is called back to the ship unexpectedly, Adam slips away from his house the following morning-December 7, 1941-to go fishing with Davi and another classmate. Rowing close to the fleet in Pearl Harbor, they witness the horrific Japanese air attack and are nearly killed themselves, their boat shot from beneath them by a low-flying fighter plane. Desperate to reach home and find out if his father is alive, Adam is spotted by an officer who mistakes him for a young enlisted man and orders him into action to help rescue survivors and restore order. Before the day is out, Adam proves himself a hero, bravely confronting death and destruction as he struggles to learn his father's fate. Mazar's final chapters leave a few issues unresolved, but his story's quick pace, graphic detail, and nonstop action will keep readers involved.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by Boyne, John

Set during the Holocaust, Bruno is only nine-years-old when his father, a commandant in Hitler's army, is transferred from Berlin to Auschwitz. The house at "Out-With," as Bruno calls it, is small, dark, and strange. He spends long days gazing out the window of his new bedroom, where he notices people dressed in striped pajamas and rows of barracks surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Bored and lonely, and not really understanding the circumstance of his new existence, Bruno sets out to explore the area and discovers Shmuel, a very thin Jewish boy who lives on the other side of the fence. An unlikely friendship develops between the two boys, but when Bruno learns that his mother plans to take her children back to Berlin, he makes a last effort to explore the forbidden territory where the boy in the striped pajamas lives.

City of Bones (Mortal Instruments Series: City of Bones, City of Ashes, City of Glass) by Clare, Cassandra

When Clary Fray witnesses three tattoo-covered teenagers murder another teen, she is unable to prove the crime because the victim disappears right in front of her eyes, and no one else can see the killers. She learns that the teens are Shadowhunters (humans who hunt and kill demons), and Clary, a mundie (i.e., mundane human), should not be able to see them either. Shortly after this discovery, her mother, Jocelyn, an erstwhile Shadowhunter, is kidnapped. Jocelyn is the only person who knows the whereabouts of The Mortal Cup, a dangerous magical item that turns humans into Shadowhunters. Clary must find the cup and keep it from a renegade sector of Shadowhunters bent on eliminating all nonhumans, including benevolent werewolves and friendly vampires. Amid motorcycles powered by demon energies, a telepathic brotherhood of archivists, and other moments of great urban fantasy, the story gets sidetracked by cutesy touches, like the toasted bat sandwich on the menu of an otherworldly restaurant. The characters are sporadically characterized and tend toward behavior that is both predictable and slightly repellent—Clary finds out who her real father is about 200 pages after readers will have it figured out. Despite the narrative flaws, this version of New York, full of Buffyesque teens who are trying to save the world, is entertaining and will have fantasy readers anxiously awaiting the next book in the series.

City of Ember (Series) by DuPrau, Jeanne

Imagine living in a city where there is no sun or stars. Of course, you wouldn't know about the sun or stars if you lived in the city of Ember. The only light the city has comes from large floodlights that are mounted on tall poles and on top of buildings. Everything in the City of Ember is old. Sometimes the lights go out in the middle of the day and the people of Ember experience darkness so total that it is suffocating. There have been more power outages lately and everyone is beginning to worry. Twelve-year-old Doon Harrow and Lina Mayfleet will be having their Assignment Day where all 12-year-olds receive their working assignments. Doon wants to be assigned the job of pipe works laborer. It's a very dangerous job working in the deep tunnels under the city but Doon wants to help save the city. Lina wants to be a messenger and run throughout the city in a red jacket delivering messages. But on Assignment Day, they do not get the job they want. Later, Doon and Lina trade jobs and everything seems to be OK. But is it really? What about the message that was found in a secret box in Lina's closet and what about the secret door that Doon found in the tunnels. Are the message and the door connected? Lina and Doon vow to find out so that they can save their city.

Code Orange by Cooney, Caroline B.

As dedicated to avoiding study as he is to getting closer to classmate Olivia, Mitty is oblivious to the danger he, she, and everyone else in the crowded city is in from his possible exposure to this hyper-contagious, utterly devastating disease--until he starts looking into smallpox for a school project. A horrified Mitty writhes on the horns of a dilemma: Is the virus still active? Can he find a way to prevent an epidemic if it is? Should he tell the authorities, and look like a total dork if it isn't?

Compound by Bodeen, S.A.

Ever since their world was destroyed by a nuclear attack, 15-year-old Eli and his family have lived in the Compound, a state-of-the-art bomb shelter built by his billionaire father. Despite having every comfort, Eli is haunted by the fact that his twin and his grandmother were left behind. He also begins to question his father's sanity after an inventory miscalculation threatens their survival, and his dad hatches a morally corrupt plan to "enhance their food supply." Eli's worst suspicions are confirmed when he discovers a live Internet signal using an old laptop. Did the world really end six years ago? Why else would Eli's father want to keep his family underground? Debut novelist Bodeen effectively builds the claustrophobic suspense with each chapter as readers slowly discover the Compound is not the refuge it seems.

A Cool Moonlight by Johnson, Angela

What would life be like if you were allergic to the sun? For eight-year-old Lila, life takes place under the safe cover of darkness. Her nights are filled with midnight shopping trips, car rides with her sister, smoothies, brownies, and two unlikely friends who are helping her find a bit of light in the darkness. Lila's quest for light is larger than a simple desire to play in the sun as she is truly trying to brighten a life otherwise limited by darkness. An amazing novel that speaks to the struggles we are faced with as we become the person we are meant to be.

Corner of the Universe by Martin, Ann

Hattie Owen had been anticipating a summer as comfortably uneventful as all the others ("I just want things all safe and familiar," she admits), helping her mother run their boarding house, painting alongside her artist father and reading "piles" of books. Then Uncle Adam (whom Hattie never knew existed) makes a surprise entrance, turning everything upside-down. Hattie's mother says that Uncle Adam has "mental problems." Hattie's grandparents act embarrassed whenever he is around, and her peers laugh at him.

Dovey Coe by Dowell, Frances O'Roark

"My name is Dovey Coe, and I reckon it don't matter if you like me or not. I'm here to lay the record straight, to let you know them folks saying I done a terrible thing are liars.... I hated Parnell Caraway as much as the next person, but I didn't kill him." Twelve-year-old Dovey has never had the slightest problem speaking her mind. But now, faced with a murder trial, she may just have to keep her mouth shut while the slick city lawyer takes care of things. It all started when the wealthy, vain, greedy Parnell takes a notion to win Dovey's older sister, trying to convince her she's too pretty to go off to college. But behind her back, he treats Dovey and her deaf brother Amos like dirt all summer long. Dovey gets in her jabs whenever she can--until the day she finds herself

trapped in a back room with an irate, vengeful Parnell. Things don't look too good for Dovey when she comes to and finds her enemy dead on the floor next to her.

Eragon (Series) by Paolini, Christopher

Eragon, a young farm boy, finds a marvelous blue stone in a mystical mountain place. Before he can trade it for food to get his family through the hard winter, it hatches a beautiful sapphire-blue dragon, a race thought to be extinct. Eragon bonds with the dragon, and when his family is killed by the marauding Ra'zac, he discovers that he is the last of the Dragon Riders, fated to play a decisive part in the coming war between the human but hidden Varden, dwarves, elves, the diabolical Shades and their neanderthal Urgalls, all pitted against and allied with each other and the evil King Galbatorix. Eragon and his dragon Saphira set out to find their role, growing in magic power and understanding of the complex political situation as they endure perilous travels and sudden battles, dire wounds, capture and escape.

Everything Is Fine by Ellis, Ann Dee

Mazzy is fine. Her severely depressed, almost catatonic mother is fine—as long as Mazzy takes care of her and keeps neighbors and family-services investigators away. Her absent ESPN-host father is fine, though he's been gone a while and Mazzy doesn't feel like returning his calls. And the summer will be fine, as long as she can keep hanging out with Colby, her neighbor, and pursue her art. In spare prose verging on free verse, Mazzy tells her story, of her daily routines without parents, of her occasional interactions with neighbors—and of the tragic accident that recently killed her young sister and led to her family's breakdown. Ellis impressively captures the voice of a sardonic, damaged, but surviving adolescent girl. Secondary characters are fleshed out well through Mazzy's pointed descriptions and snappy dialogue, and Colby shines with humor and a personality that rings true. Readers are given glimpses into the family Mazzy used to have, and the girl she once was. Although the ending seems hasty and perhaps unrealistically optimistic, Ellis has created a unique snapshot of family tragedy that's refreshingly devoid of melodrama.—

Evil Genius by Jinks, Catherine

At age seven, child prodigy Cadel Piggott lands in a shrink's office for illegal computer hacking, where psychologist Thaddeus Roth delivers startling counsel: "Next time, don't get caught." Thaddeus is an agent of Cadel's real father, a brilliant crook who, from behind bars, manages to place Cadel at the secretive Axis Institute for World Domination. By 13, Cadel is earnestly studying "Infiltration, Misinformation, and Embezzlement," but as he increasingly relies on an outside friendship, he privately plots to extricate himself from the paterfamilias. Comic- fans will enjoy the school's aspiring villains (including one who floors foes with deadly B.O.), Cadel's turnabout is convincingly hampered by his difficulty recognizing appropriate outlets for rage, and Jinks' whiplash-inducing suspense writing will gratify fans of Anthony Horowitz's high-tech spy scenarios.

Fever 1793 by Anderson, Laurie Halse

Fever 1793 is based on an actual epidemic of yellow fever in Philadelphia that wiped out 5,000 people--or 10 percent of the city's population--in three months. At the close of the 18th century, Philadelphia was the bustling capital of the United States, with Washington and Jefferson in residence. During the hot mosquito-infested summer of 1793, the dreaded yellow fever spread like wildfire, killing people overnight. Like specters from the Middle Ages, gravediggers drew carts through the streets crying "Bring out your dead!" The rich fled to the country, abandoning the city to looters, forsaken corpses, and frightened survivors.

Gathering Blue by Lowry, Lois

Having suffered numerous unnamed disasters (aka, the Ruin), civilization has regressed to a primitive, technology-free state; an opening author's note describes a society in which "disorder, savagery, and self-interest" rule. Kira, a crippled young weaver, has been raised and taught her craft by her mother, after her father was allegedly killed by "beasts." When her mother dies, Kira fears that she will be cast out of the village. Instead, the society's Council of Guardians installs her as caretaker of the Singer's robe, a precious ceremonial garment depicting the history of the world and used at the annual Gathering.

Goblins: An Under Earth Adventure by Buckingham, Royce

In a small town near the Canadian border, 12-year-old Sam has to make his own entertainment, often leading to encounters with Sumas's lone police officer. After the latest incident, he meets PJ, Officer Myrmidon's 17-year-old son. When they disobey PJ's father and steal a police car to investigate something suspicious at the border, the boys find something much more dangerous than they imagined: goblins. PJ, with the help of the guardians—a secret society dedicated to keeping the goblins from discovering the upper world and humans from discovering UnderEarth—must rescue Sam from the clutches of the great General Goblin, Eww-yuk. Set mostly underground in the creatures' lair, the book has lots of adventure, fights, and spilled blood that will attract middle-grade readers. Keep this on hand for those who want lots of action with some mild gross-out scenes.

Grey Griffins Series (Revenge of the Shadow King, Rise of Black Wolf, Fall of the Templar, The Immortals)

By Benz, Derek & Lewis, J. S.

The epic battle between the Grey Griffins and forces of evil continues, as Max, Harley, and Natalia face off against Morgan La Fey and Lord Sumner. The friends also struggle to find a way to save Ernie, who remains trapped in an enchanted coma, and Max must come to terms with his father's most wicked betrayal. The Grey Griffins and the Templar knights stage the last stand-off to save the world and the Land of Faerie. Max Sumner might only be twelve years old, but how many other people can say that they have defeated a dragon, turned a Tundra Troll into a pile of ice crystals, met the rumored father of all vampires, and fought an army of werewolves? It all started the night Max found an enchanted book in his grandmother's attic. He didn't know the monsters painted on those ancient pages were actually alive, or that it was going to be his job as the Guardian of the *Codex Spiritus* to keep them in the book. Nobody bothered to tell him that until it was too late. So before he knew any better, Max and his friends let all of

those monsters out of the book. It was a treacherous mistake. Ever since that day, it's been up to Max and his friends, who call themselves the Grey Griffins, to save the world from the evils they set free.

Heartbeat by Creech, Sharon

Annie loves to run. Barefoot and free. There is nothing better. Her friend Max has joined the track team and wants Annie to join as well. Annie has no interest in joining but just can't make people understand. At home, Annie is dealing with her mother's pregnancy and her grandfather's failing memory. But she takes it all in stride and good humor. Things come into perspective when she hears the thump thump thump of her feet running. Heartbeat shows us Annie's changing life as if we are running with her. Running with her friend Max is not always what it used to be. Through poetry, we see the rhythm of her daily existence: going to school, drawing apples for art class and adjusting to these shifts in her life.

Hidden Talents by Lubar, David

After being expelled from any number of schools, 13-year-old Martin winds up at Edgeview, a publicly funded boarding school and a last-chance alternative. Martin, who narrates, doesn't seem like a delinquent, but he just can't stop himself from taunting his teachers. By the end of his first day he has infuriated the whole staff. Of the kids, Bloodbath is a terror, as are his cronies, but Martin's roommate, "Torchie," is nice enough, although he constantly denies starting the fires that flare up wherever he goes. The other boys Martin gets to know similarly refuse to own up to the particular behavior that landed them at Edgeview. Readers expecting a typical resolution, wherein the boys accept responsibility for their misdeeds, are in for a surprise. Martin's buddies aren't liars and troublemakers at all; unbeknownst even to themselves, they're endowed with paranormal powers: Cheater is telepathic, Trash is telekinetic, Flinch is clairvoyant, etc. Led by Martin, who finally discovers his own hidden talent, the six use their abilities to save Edgeview from Bloodbath and his gang's attempts to sabotage a state inspection. Lubar serves up great fun, along with an insight or two for those whose powers are only too human.

Hunger Games by Collins, Suzanne

In the far off future, the United States is divided into districts and ruled by a dictatorship that keeps everyone poor and powerless. Katniss is good at supporting her family by hunting and scavenging illegally, but she knows she is not good enough for the annual "Hunger Games," a real-time gladiator competition between young people selected from each district. Think reality TV except the it's to the death - and only one person will win. So Katniss knows she probably won't live through it. In a futuristic America, a boy and a girl from each of twelve provinces are chosen lottery style each year to participate in the Hunger Games, a televised reality show where only one will emerge alive to earn wealth and extra food for their province. When 17-year-old Katniss Everdeen's little sister is selected, Katniss volunteers to go in her place. Will she survive?

Mango-Colored Space by Mass, Wendy

For 13-year-old Mia Winchell, the world has always been filled with a wonderful, if sometimes dizzying, sensory onslaught--numbers, letters, words, and sounds all cause her to see a distinct array of colors. She keeps her unusual condition a secret until eighth grade, but then her color visions make math and Spanish impossibly confusing, and she must go to her parents and a doctor for help.

Out of the Dust by Hesse, Karen

Billie Jo is a thirteen-year-old girl living in Oklahoma during the dust bowl era. She lives with Ma and Daddy, and, so far, she is their only child. She has red hair like Daddy and long legs and freckles. She loves the piano. In this touching coming of age story, Billie Jo deals with hard times. First, there's the dust. In 1934 and 1935, the time frame of this novel, dust storms cover Oklahoma in a great cloud of despair. Drought, overgrazing and erosion make life here unbearable for Billie Jo. Then there's the fact that her best friend's family moves away to California.

Peak by Smith, Roland

Marcello hones his climbing skills by scaling skyscrapers. After Peak is caught climbing the Woolworth Building, an angry judge gives him probation, with an understanding that Peak will leave New York and live with his famous mountaineer father in Thailand. Peak soon learns, however, that his father has other plans for him; he hopes that Peak will become the youngest person to climb Mt. Everest. Peak is whisked off to Tibet and finds himself in the complex world of an Everest base camp, where large amounts of money are at stake and climbing operations offer people an often-deadly shot at the summit.

Pearl by Steinbeck, John

Kino, a young pearl diver in La Paz, enjoys his simple life until the day his son, Coyotito, is stung by a scorpion. The wealthy town doctor will not treat the baby because Kino cannot pay the doctor's fee, so Kino and his wife, Juana, are left only to hope their child is saved. That day Kino goes diving, and finds a great pearl, the Pearl of the World, and knows he is suddenly a wealthy man. The word travels quickly about the pearl and many in the town begin to plot ways to steal it.

Percy Jackson & the Olympians Series by Percy Jackson

The Lightning Thief Percy Jackson is a good kid, but he can't seem to focus on his schoolwork or control his temper. When his mom tells him the truth about where he came from, she takes him to the one place he'll be safe--Camp Half-Blood, a summer camp for demigods (on Long Island). There, Percy learns that the father he never knew is actually Poseidon, God of the Sea. Soon Percy finds himself caught up in a mystery that could lead to disastrous consequences. Together with his friends--a satyr and other the demigod daughter of Athena--Percy sets out on a quest to reach the gates of the Underworld (located in a recording studio in Hollywood) and prevent a catastrophic war between the gods.