

# Public Schools of Edison Township

Division of Curriculum and Instruction  
Department of English

June 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

As we approach the end of our school year, it is time to start thinking about the pleasures of summer reading. The purpose of the summer reading program is to encourage the enjoyment of reading and the development of our students' independent reading skills.

All students entering sixth, seventh, and eighth grades will select and read **ONE fiction or nonfiction book** over the summer from the list provided. All lists and assignments are accessible on the district and/or your child's respective school's website. **Please note:** English 8 Accelerated students receive a separate book list and assignment.

The reading and corresponding assignment must be completed prior to the first day of school in September. Please refer to the attached sample and instructions for further clarification.

We encourage students to visit local bookstores, online resources, and public libraries in order to find their selections. Embedded links to book summaries and reviews as well as resources to access the texts or audiobooks are provided for your convenience.

A reading program is a joint responsibility between school and family. Parents might very reasonably disagree about what material constitutes suitable reading for children. The titles suggested are **not** Board of Education approved texts. They are works that are recommended by such organizations as the American Library Association, the **New York Times**, and the National Council for Teachers of English. They appear on many reading lists across the nation. Nevertheless, certain titles may contain subject matter that some parents may not want their children to read (whether **Grimm's Fairy Tales** for young children or books with mature themes and graphic language for older students). Only parents can determine appropriate choices for their children. Check with teachers, local librarians, and book websites (provided) for reading levels and information about the various titles.

If you have any questions, please contact the Middle School English supervisor, Lisa Dunn, via e-mail at [lisa.dunn@edison.k12.nj.us](mailto:lisa.dunn@edison.k12.nj.us).

Happy Reading!

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF EDISON TOWNSHIP**  
**8th GRADE SUMMER READING 2020**

**For students entering Grade 8 (\*\*): Thematic Topics: Conformity, Perseverance, Self-Discovery:**

**Consider the following essential questions while you read:**

- What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
- How does conflict lead to change?
- What factors shape our values and beliefs?

**Book Selections:** Choose **ONE book** (either fiction OR non-fiction) from the list below. You will submit one [Double-Entry Journal](#) for the full-length text you read. Please choose quotations that support **one** of the essential questions above. These quotations will be used to construct a short, written piece when you return in September.

**Fiction**

[\*Between Shades of Grey\*](#) by Ruta Sepetys: In the summer of 1941, 15-year-old Lina, her younger brother, and their mother are abruptly forced from their Lithuanian home by the Soviets and deported to a Siberian labor camp. Their father has already been arrested and sent to prison. The long train journey is horrifying, and there's little comfort upon arrival: Violence and death stalk the prisoners. Lina begins to build a friendship, and then a romance, with Andrius, a fellow prisoner. A talented artist, Lina records her experience in drawings, kept hidden from cruel guards, as she struggles to keep her faith in humanity and her hope for any future.

[\*Piecing Me Together\*](#) by Renee Watson: In *Piecing Me Together*, Jade is a high-achieving student and artist (in collage and photography) at an exclusive private school. She's the person other students turn to when they need help in school, but for some reason, all anyone else can see is that **she** needs help. Just because she doesn't have a lot of money, is African American, and comes from a poor neighborhood, everyone is always trying to fix what's "wrong" with her. The truth is there's nothing wrong with her. She has a lot she can give to the world if they'd only wake up and realize that in trying to fix her, they shatter her whole self every time she steps foot out the door. When she's nominated to take part in a mentorship program with an African American mentor, Jade balks, but the promise of a full college scholarship at the end makes it too good to pass up. Can she accept this extra help and still keep the pieces of herself together? Can she affect change in her world, or will she be shattered beyond repair?

[\*The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place\*](#) by E.L. Konigsburg: Margaret Rose Kane comes by her individualism naturally -- her uncles cling to old-fashioned, old-world values, and have spent forty-five years building towers in their backyard. At summer camp, the more they try to get Margaret to conform, the more she resists. When she is rescued by her uncles, she finds that they too are under siege by the forces of conformity -- and about to give up. The new neighbors in their newly gentrified neighborhood have convinced the town to order the demolition of the towers. Margaret gathers what allies she can and goes to war with the town. But her greatest allies will come from the most unexpected source.

***Blended*** by Sharon Draper: In ***Blended***, Isabella's mom is white and her dad is black, and when they divorce she feels like there will always be two sides of her pulled in different directions. Two houses, two families, two backpacks, two different sets of rules, two different kids: Izzy and Isabella. Just when it looks like things couldn't get any crazier, Isabella's friend is targeted at school, and a routine trip ends in horror.

***Genesis Begins Again*** by Alicia D. Williams: In the opening chapter of ***Genesis Begins Again***, 13-year-old Genesis has finally gotten the cool girls to come to her house in Detroit. When they arrive, her family's furniture is outside and there's a lock on the door. They've been evicted -- again. Her father gambled away the rent money. Her mother takes them to stay at her grandmother's. Her father shows up, saying he has a new job, and his boss will rent them his nice home in the suburbs. In her new school, Genesis discovers different kinds of people: kids who don't tease her about being "too black" and teachers who help her discover her smarts and talents. Her new surroundings and eccentric group of friends help Genesis begin to love herself and gain some understanding of her parents, too.

***Grenade*** by Alan Gratz: ***Grenade*** opens on the eve of young Hideki's graduation on Okinawa, just as the Americans launch their invasion. As his school is destroyed by a bomb from a battleship, the boys are enlisted in the Japanese army and each given two grenades. Ray, a young American private on the battleship, is storming the beach. When he and his fellow Marines land, they set out to take the island, encountering civilian Okinawans and Japanese soldiers. Both Hideki and Ray witness bloody battles and deaths. What will Hideki do with his two grenades? Will he and Ray stay alive? Will the Americans take the island? What will happen to the civilian Okinawans fleeing their homes? And can the young soldiers hold on to their humanity in the midst of all the killing?

***The Green Bicycle*** by Haifaa al Mansour: In present-day Riyadh, the fast-growing capital of Saudi Arabia, 11-year-old Wajda stands out from her classmates, especially for her much-loved Chuck Taylors that serve her well running around town with her BFF Abdullah. When he gets a bike, she wants one, too, so they can race, and she quickly sets her heart on a beautiful green bike that just turned up in a local shop. She soon learns that Good Muslim Girls aren't allowed to ride bikes, whatever girls do in those Western magazines. She refuses to take no for an answer, setting to work to earn the money to buy her dream bike. When she's busted at school for selling bracelets and mixtapes of forbidden Western music, she's determined to win the prize money in the school's Quran contest.

***The Apothecary*** by Maile Meloy: It's 1952, and 14-year-old Janie Scott is abruptly uprooted from her freshman year in high school in sunny Los Angeles when her parents, blacklisted Hollywood writers, flee to cold, gray postwar London. The kindly local apothecary gives her a free prescription for homesickness; his son Benjamin, who has no interest in the family business and wants to be a spy, is the most interesting thing about her horrible new school. The two are suddenly thrown together when Benjamin's father is apparently kidnapped by German-speaking thugs, but not before he has locked the two teens in the basement with a 700-year-old book and instructions to protect it. The book contains centuries of secrets of how to manipulate matter. Many adventures, transformations, and strange developments ensue, in which Janie, Benjamin and their friends are called upon not only to save Benjamin's father but also to prevent the Soviets from exploding their first atomic bomb.

***Addie on the Inside*** by James Howe: Tall 13-year-old Addie Carle has always been a strong, smart, and sensitive girl who has felt sure of herself and her place in the world ... until now. Her seventh-grade year is a kind of "purgatory," and through narrative verse, she reveals her inner thoughts and feelings -- as well as the familiar markings of a very tough year: She's the first one to raise her hand in class and always has an opinion, but that's not going over well with the other kids. She worries about human rights and other world issues while most of the other kids seem like they couldn't care less. She hates the mean girls but feels their power. She endures teasing about her boyish looks, her independent spirit -- and even gossip about why a popular older boy would choose her to be his girlfriend. And, hardest of all, she begins to question herself and who she is.

**One Crazy Summer** by Rita Williams-Garcia: Delphine and her sisters are put on a plane from Brooklyn to Oakland, where they are to stay with their estranged mother, Cecile, for a month. Their dreams of a warm reception are quickly shattered when Cecile says, "I didn't send for you. Didn't want you in the first place. Should have gone to Mexico to get rid of you when I had the chance." It's 1968 when society is changing and men in berets carrying guns are shouting about black power. But it's also a personal time when the girls desperately want to know who their mother is and why she abandoned them. For meals, Cecile sends the girls for Chinese food, and to keep them out of her way, she sends them to the local Black Panther day camp. Over the course of the next four weeks, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern spend time learning about revolution even though what they want is a home-cooked meal and a real mother. Slowly, they become part of a larger community and the mysterious story of their mom's flight is untangled.

**Beneath My Mother's Feet** by Amjed Qamar: Living in Pakistan, 14-year-old Nazia is an obedient daughter, helping her mother with her two younger siblings. In this culture, girls defer to their mothers and then their mother-in-laws "in all matters, from clothing to decorating." After her father is injured, her mother pulls Nazia out of school to work as a maid. This lowly job and the theft of her dowry jeopardize Nazia's impending arranged marriage to her much-older cousin. Nazia struggles to support her family, facing life as a servant or as an unwilling wife. Against her mother's advice, Nazia befriends and assists another servant trying to escape his situation. As she discovers her own inner resolve, can she find a way to help her family without sacrificing herself?

## **Non-Fiction**

**Good Brother, Bad Brother** by James Cross Giblin: Award-winning author James Cross Giblin draws on first-hand accounts of family members, friends, and colleagues to create vivid images of Edwin Booth and his brother John Wilkes, best known today as the man who shot Abraham Lincoln. He traces the events leading up to the assassination and describes the effects of John Wilkes's infamous deed on himself, his family, and his country. Comprehensive and compelling, this dual portrait illuminates a dark and tragic moment in the nation's history and explores the complex legacy of two leading men—one revered, the other abhorred.

**Bomb: The Race to Build and Steal the World's Most Dangerous Weapon** by Steve Sheinkin: This book offers a detailed, suspenseful story of developing the first atom bombs. The author reveals the complex events and ideas not only behind the invention and deployment of the first bombs, but also behind the Cold War and arms race. Included are accounts of research by Robert Oppenheimer and his team of scientists, the political climate during World War II, and spying by U.S., German and Russian operatives. Sheinkin also provides suitably horrific descriptions of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the bombing of Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**Odd Girl Speaks Out** by Rachel Simmons: The national bestseller Odd Girl Out exposed a hidden culture of cruelty that had always been quietly endured by American girls. As Rachel Simmons toured the country, these girls found their voices and spoke to her about their pain. They wanted to talk-and they weren't the only ones. Mothers, teachers, counselors, young professional women, even fathers, came to Rachel with heart-wrenching personal stories that could no longer be kept secret. Here, Rachel creates a safe place for girls to talk, rant, sound off, and find each other. The result is a collection of wonderful accounts of the inner lives of adolescent girls. Candid and disarming, creative and expressive, and always exceptionally self-aware, these poems, songs, confessions, and essays form a journal of American girlhood. They show us how deeply cruelty flows and how strongly these girls want to change. Odd Girl Out helped girls find their voices; Odd Girl Speaks Out helps them tell their stories.

**The Keeper: The Unguarded Story of Tim Howard (Young Reader' Edition)** by Tim Howard: In this heartwarming and candid account, Tim Howard opens up about how a hyperactive kid from New Jersey with Tourette Syndrome defied the odds to become one of the world's premier goalkeepers. Tim shares his remarkable journey in an accessible way that will speak to soccer fans, kids struggling with issues that make them feel "different," and any young person looking for a compelling autobiography to read for a report or just for fun.

**Outcasts United** by Warren St. John: Based on the adult bestseller, ***Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference***, this young people's edition is a complex and inspirational story about the Fugees, a youth soccer team made up of diverse refugees from around the world, and their formidable female coach, Luma Mufleh. ***Outcasts United*** explores how the community changed with the influx of refugees and how the dedication of Lumah Mufleh and the entire Fugees soccer team inspired an entire community.

**The Boy on the Wooden Box** by Leon Leyson: Leon Leyson is like any other young boy in 1930s Poland -- he plays with his friends, attends both public school and Jewish school, and spends lots of time with his four brothers, sister, and parents. When Leon is 8, his family moves to Krakow and, as 1938 wears on, news of the Germans expelling Jews from their country reaches them. Within a year, Leon's no longer allowed to attend school, all Jewish people must wear Star of David armbands, and thousands of them are forced to leave Krakow. Leon's family members stay in the city and are moved to the ghetto, where the Nazis lock them inside every night. As the Nazis get more brutal and all human rights are taken away from Jewish people, the Leyson family has one piece of luck: Leon's father is hired to work in the factory of Oskar Schindler, and eventually so are his mother, brother, and Leon himself. Being so small, Leon must stand on a box to reach the machine he works.

**Rad Women Worldwide: Artists and Athletes, Pirates and Punks, and other Revolutionaries Who Shaped History** by Kate Schatz: Parents need to know that ***Rad Women Worldwide*** is the follow-up to ***Rad American Women A–Z***, by the same team of author Kate Schatz and illustrator Miriam Klein Stahl. This one features short profiles of 40 women in 31 countries in all sorts of time periods, from a priestess-poet in Mesopotamia who lived 4,300 years ago to current American tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams. The book is not structured chronologically, so readers can hop in and out at will. Topics that may require further parental discussion include Kasha Jacqueline Nagabasera, a gay rights activist in Uganda fighting for "the freedom to love" and Emma Goldman smuggling contraceptives into the United States for poor women in 1890s New York. An index at the back lists 250 "More Rad Women Worldwide" for readers to research on their own.

**Grover Cleveland, Again! A Treasury of American Presidents** by Ken Burns: In ***Grover Cleveland, Again!***, historian and parent Ken Burns teams up with illustrator Gerald Kelley to bring young readers interesting facts about U.S. presidents and help them understand some of the issues and debates that shaped our development as a nation. From George Washington to Barack Obama, every page presents an occupant of the White House -- all men, so far -- with his own story to tell, his own successes and failures, and his own way of looking at things.

#### Graphic:

**The Complete Maus** by Art Spiegelman: At the start of ***The Complete Maus***, cartoonist Art Spiegelman wants to interview his aging father, Vladek, about his experiences in World War II Europe. The older man is reluctant at first, but gradually he talks about his days as an enterprising young man in Poland. When the Nazis arrive and steal the Jewish-owned businesses and factories, Vladek is drafted and quickly becomes a prisoner of war. He escapes, only to be rounded up with his family and sent to the dreaded concentration camp, Auschwitz.

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***Please find embedded links to resources for books and audiobooks*** [Amazon.Com](#) [Audiobooks.com](#) [Barnes and Noble Booksellers](#) [Audible.com](#) [The Edison Public Library](#)

See Graphic Organizer Below

**Grade 8 (Academic) Name:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Book:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Author** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Using ONE of the essential questions to focus your reading, identify key quotations from the beginning, middle, and end of your selected book that respond to the question:

- What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider?
- How does conflict lead to change?
- What factors shape our values and beliefs?

<u>Meaningful Quotations</u> (Write the quotation and the page number)	<u>Commentary and Analysis</u> (Explain the importance of the quote and its connection to the essential question.)

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