

Summer Reading 2026 (for all incoming 8th graders)

Required reading for all incoming 8th graders: The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom (4.7) Students should be prepared for in-depth discussion and a short writing assignment that reflects strong understanding of the text. If the work is read at the beginning of the summer, students should read it again before returning to school.

Also, please choose **two** other books (one should be informational/nonfiction) from the following list. **NOTE: You can choose one book that is not listed here but only if it is an AR book AND falls within your current ZPD level.**

1. Uglies by Scott Westerfield (5.2) 2005, Simon Pulse

In Tally's world, reaching 16 brings an operation that turns you from ugly to pretty and Tally's almost there, but when her friend runs away, Tally learns about a new side of the pretty world and must choose between betrayal and never turning pretty.

2. Taking Sides by Gary Soto (4.4) 1991, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Fourteen-year-old Lincoln Mendoza, an aspiring basketball player, must come to terms with his divided loyalties when he moves from the Hispanic inner city to a white, suburban neighborhood.

3. Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes (5.9) 1998, Houghton Mifflin

This book follows a young apprentice from a tragic accident in a silversmith's shop to his dramatic involvement as a patriot in the days just before the American Revolution.

4. The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity by William Paul Young (6.6) 2007, Windblown Media.

After his young daughter is abducted and evidence of her murder shows up at a shack in the forests of Oregon, Mack receives a note from God inviting him to return to the scene of the tragedy, where he wrestles with his spirituality.

5. The Seer of Shadows by AVI (5.2) 2008, Harper Collins

In New York City in 1872, fourteen-year-old Horace, a photographer's apprentice, becomes entangled in a plot to create fake spirit photographs, but when Horace accidentally frees the real ghost of a dead girl bent on revenge, his life takes a scary turn.

6. Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson (5.2) 2008, Simon and Schuster

After being sold to a cruel couple in New York City, a slave named Isabel spies for the rebels during the Revolutionary War.

7. Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card (5.5) 1994, TOR Books

Andrew "Ender" Wiggin thinks he is playing computer games, but in reality he is being trained to be the military genius the planet needs in its all-out war with an alien enemy.

Informational

8. Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific by Raft by Thor Heyerdahl (8.0) Simon & Schuster

This is the story of how Thor Heyerdahl and five other men crossed the Pacific Ocean on a balsawood raft in an extraordinary bid to prove Heyerdahl's theory that the Polynesians undertook the same feat on such a craft over 1,000 years earlier.

9. Written In Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland by Sally M. Walker (9.0) 2009, Carolrhoda/Lerner

This book reports on the work of forensic scientists who are excavating grave sites in James Fort, in Jamestown, Virginia, to understand the people who lived in the Chesapeake Bay area in the 1600's and 1700's

10. Up from Slavery by Booker T. Washington (8.2) 1986, Viking Penguin

This autobiography is of the founder of the Tuskegee Institute and his rise from Slavery to become a very influential educator.

11. Navajo Code Talkers by Nathan Aaseng (9.5) 1992, Walker & Co.

The story of the Navajo Indians who served in World War II by using their ancient tribal language as a means of secret military communication.

12. At Her Majesty's Request: An African Princess in Victorian England Walter Dean Myers (7.1)

This is a biography of the African princess saved from execution and taken to England, where Queen Victoria oversaw her upbringing and where she lived for a time before marrying an African missionary.