



June 2023

Dear Classes of 2024, 2025, and 2026:

In preparation for next year, please read at least two books over the summer. They are both free-choice, and I will send some ideas to you by June 20 (in case you need suggestions). These must be of your reading level or higher, and you cannot have read them before, and no more than one can be a graphic novel. Write a CYOB-style book review just like you did at the end of the school year following the same format and expectations.

For your second book, write a letter as a shared document with me that includes the title and author of the book, a brief summary, and your opinion of the book (2 paragraphs of 5-7 sentences each).

These are due by September 1, 2023. You can earn extra credit if you read more than two books (just use one of the formats above).

Happy Reading!

Have a great summer!

Morah Rosen

Summer Read Suggestions:

Realistic Fiction

Before the Ever After by Jacqueline Woodson - This novel in verse is told from the perspective of a boy whose father, viewed as a local hero by everyone in town for his NFL career and outgoing personality, starts to exhibit disturbing behavior that turns out to be a result of all the hard hits he's taken on the field.

A Kind of Spark by Elle McNicoll - Autistic main character Addie explains that she often hears and feels things more deeply than many others. When her teacher (who, together with some bully classmates, treats her cruelly) talks about their (Scottish) community's history of accusing women unfairly of witchcraft, Addie dives deep to understand what really happened and find a way to honor the legacy of these misunderstood women.

Ana on the Edge by A.J. Sass - Ice skating champion Ana-Marie Jin, 12, has a new choreographer to help her catapult to the next level. Unfortunately, the choreographer insists on skirts for practice and designs a super-girly routine, neither of which is comfortable for Ana-Marie. When a new kid at the rink mistakes Ana for a boy, she doesn't correct him. As the important competition approaches, Ana struggles with how to reconcile her ambition with staying true to herself.

Historical Fiction

The Magical Imperfect by Chris Baron - In this verse novel set in 1989, Etan and his father are big baseball fans, eagerly anticipating the World Series match-up between the San Francisco and Oakland teams. When Etan begins delivering groceries to Malia's home, he hears her singing and learns why she stays at home rather than going to school. As they open up to each other about their challenges, they discover new perspectives on family, friendship, and community.

Fever 1793 by Laurie Halse Anderson - In the summer of 1793, a fever afflicts many people of Philadelphia, especially near the mosquito-infested river. 14-year-old Mattie Cook's shop, far away from the river, becomes popular with many new customers, offering exciting growth opportunities. Will the fever stay away?

Fantasy/Science Fiction

Amari and the Night Brothers by BB Alston - This action-packed, multi-layered science fiction/fantasy book features 13-year-old Amari who is trying to figure out why her older brother disappeared. When she finds a ticking briefcase in his closet and receives an invitation to the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs tryouts, she realizes there's a lot more going on than she ever imagined. Bureau of Supernatural Affairs? Weredragon roommate? How will she pass tryouts and find Quinton? Sequel due out at the end of August!

The Silver Arrow by Lev Grossman - Kate and her younger brother Tom are super bored...until Herbert, their "super-rich" uncle presents Kate with a huge steam engine called the Silver Arrow for her 11th birthday. Kate and Tom jump on for an adventure, picking up animals (who talk!) at various stops as they learn how to manage the train and stay alive.

Anya and the Dragon by Sofiya Pasternack - As she nears her bat mitzvah (even though it is the 10th century in Eastern Europe), Anya impatiently waits for her magic to manifest. When her family is threatened, she seeks to raise money by helping capture the land's last dragon. When

Anya learns that the dragon is young and friendly - and at risk from other dragon-hunters - she needs to decide whether to save the dragon or her family. Can she do both?

Horror/Supernatural

Healer of the Water Monster by Brian Young - In this quest/adventure book, 11-year-old Diné/Navajo Nathan befriends an ailing water monster while spending the summer with his grandmother on ancestral land in the New Mexican desert. As he works with the Holy Beings to heal the water monster, Nathan also worries about his Uncle Jet, a military veteran struggling with alcoholism.

Hide and Seeker by Daka Hermon - When 12-year-old Zee returns after being mysteriously gone for 404 days, he is distracted and talking wildly about an approaching danger. Soon, his friends start disappearing into a parallel universe where the Seeker feeds on their worst nightmares. Can they work together to find their way home?

Non-Fiction

Enchanted Air by Margarita Engle - This memoir-in-verse covers the time when the author, living in Los Angeles and dreaming of the summers when she visits her mother's family in Cuba, begins to realize she may never go back when the Bay of Pigs Invasion happens in 1961.

When Stars are Scattered by Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson - This graphic-format memoir describes Omar Mohamed's experience with his brother as Somalis in a refugee camp in Kenya. Heartbreaking and hopeful, this book includes photographs, an afterword, and authors' notes.

Bomb: The Race to Build - and Steal - the World's Most Dangerous Weapon by Steve Sheinkin - This narrative non-fiction book interweaves three stories: Americans working on building an atomic bomb, Soviets trying to steal the American design, and Norwegians helping to foil the German efforts to gain the technology. Throughout the book, spies and intrigue keep things interesting, and photographs and primary-source documents keep things real.

Other Resources

You can also look at the following links for lists of award winning books. Keep in mind that awards for "children's" books cover a wide range, so not all award-winning books are suitable for all ages.

The Association of Jewish Libraries Awards

Sydney Taylor Book Awards for outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience. https://jewishlibraries.org/sydney_taylor_book_award/

Awards through the American Library Association (Click “Winner List - All Years” for previous winners.)

- John Newbery Medal for distinguished contribution to literature for children.
<https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/john-newbery-medal-2>
- Schneider Family Book Award for artistic expression of the disability experience.
<https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>
- Stonewall Book Awards for books that have exceptional merit relating to the LGBTQIA+ experience.
<https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/stonewall-book-awards-mike-morgan-larry-romans-children%E2%80%99s-young-adult-literature-award>
- Coretta Scott King Book Awards for outstanding books for young adults and children by African American authors and illustrators reflecting the African American experience.
<https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/coretta-scott-king-book-awards>
- Pura Belpré Award for best portrayal, affirmation, and celebration of Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth by a Latino/Latina author. <https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/pura-belpr%C3%A9-award>
- Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal for distinguished informational (non-fiction) book contributing significantly to children’s literature.
<https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/robert-f-sibert-informational-book-medal>

American Indians in Children’s Literature Best Books

Dr. Debbie Reese (Nambé Pueblo) compiles a Best Books list every year, listed here:

<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/p/best-books.html>

American Indian Library Association Youth Literature Awards

These awards are presented every other year to the best writing and illustrations by Native Americans and Indigenous peoples of North America. Awards are presented every other year.

<https://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>

Bank Street College of Education Best Children’s Books of the Year

The Children’s Book Committee publishes lists for a variety of age groups, including 9-12.

Access the current list or the archived lists here:

<https://www.bankstreet.edu/library/center-for-childrens-literature/childrens-book-committee/best-childrens-books-of-the-year/>