

**Braintree Middle Schools  
Required Summer Reading  
June 2010**

**Information for Parents of Students Entering Grade 8**

Readers turn to literature for a variety of reasons, perhaps to satisfy their curiosity about the world around them or maybe to find their own fantasies, fears and aspirations imaginatively set before them. They are eager, moreover, to read stories that can help them explore some of the larger issues of life --- past, present and future. Reading is an activity that enriches our lives in many ways.

Equally important, reading has been and will continue to be a significant factor in a child's academic success. Research shows that a child who excels in reading will excel in almost all academic areas while a child who is threatened or bored by reading will underachieve throughout his or her academic life. Acquiring the habit of reading for enjoyment may well separate tomorrow's leaders from their followers.

Reading, like any other skill, can best be improved through participation and practice. We hope parents will become active partners this summer in helping their children become better readers. Together children and parents should consider a reading plan that will allow each child to discover the joy of learning through reading for pleasure. We offer the following suggestions:

1. Parents and children should go to the library or a bookstore several times throughout the summer and browse together. Parents are encouraged to assist their children in making appropriate selections.
2. Regular reading time needs to be set aside on a daily or weekly schedule.
3. Parents should encourage their children to keep up with the written assignments while reading each book. These assignments should not be thought of as "homework" but as an opportunity to help children reflect on what they've read.
4. Parents and children should discuss books together.

All eighth graders are required to read a minimum of **two** books during the summer. (Of course, we hope that students will read many more books than the minimum.)

***One book must be from the attached list, which has been compiled by eighth grade teachers.***

***The second book could be another selection from this list or a book approved by the student's parents.***

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Students must complete a written assignment for each book. They have a choice of two types of assignments - writing a response to one of a selection of prompts or taking notes by answering questions. These assignments are described in detail on the Summer Reading Assignment sheet. In September, an objective (multiple choice) test will be given on the first book. Students will be allowed to use their written assignments during the test and any other class activities relating to summer reading. The assignments will then be collected and kept by the teacher.

## Summer 2010 – Incoming eighth graders should select at least one book from this list

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### 2010 REQUIRED READING LIST

*An objective (multiple choice) test will be given on the first book when the students return to school in September. Students will be allowed to use their handwritten assignment during the test. A written assignment must also be completed for the second book. Teachers will collect both written assignments for review. The grade for summer reading will be part of the first term grade (5%).*

#### YOU MUST READ AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SEVEN BOOKS:

***The Revealers*** by Doug Wilhelm Three middle school outsiders who are targeted by bullies unite and find a unique way to respond to bullying, using the school's intranet system. Secrets are revealed and the school culture undergoes a cultural shock. The victims won't be bullied any longer.

***Twilight*** by Stephanie Meyer As Shakespeare knew, love burns high when thwarted by obstacles. In *Twilight*, an exquisite fantasy by Stephenie Meyer, readers discover a pair of lovers who are supremely star-crossed. Bella adores beautiful Edward, and he returns her love. But Edward is having a hard time controlling the blood lust she arouses in him, because--he's a vampire. At any moment, the intensity of their passion could drive him to kill her, and he agonizes over the danger. But, Bella would rather be dead than part from Edward, so she risks her life to stay near him, and the novel burns with the erotic tension of their dangerous and necessarily chaste relationship. (Amazon description)

***Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*** by J.K. Rowling In the February 1 announcement from the book's publisher, Lisa Holton, President of Scholastic Children's Books, said, "We are thrilled to announce the publication date of the seventh installment in this remarkable series. We join J.K. Rowling's millions of readers--young and old, veterans and newcomers--in anticipating what lies ahead." Save the date, and let the countdown begin! (Amazon.com description)

***Let the Circle Be Unbroken*** by Mildred D. Taylor (contemporary/real life fiction) This sequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* begins with T.J.'s trial for murder, the result of events detailed in the earlier book. Quickly, however, the focus of the story changes as new characters and situations bring dangerous and even life-threatening conflicts and problems into the lives of the Logans and others in their community.

***Rules of the Road*** by Joan Bauer tells the story of newly-licensed teenage driver Jenna Boller. Jenna is hired by Madeline Gladstone, the elderly president of Gladstone Shoe Stores, to drive her in her Cadillac from Chicago to Dallas. This cross-country adventure is filled with funny and flamboyant characters, clever dialogue and a number of unforgettable scenes, some hilarious and some quite sad.

***I Have Lived a Thousand Years*** by Livia Bitton-Jackson (non-fiction) This frank and moving memoir of a Holocaust survivor, who was just thirteen when she was sent to a concentration camp, is a story of cruelty and suffering, but at the same time a story of hope, faith, perseverance, and love.

***Gathering Blue*** by Lois Lowry (fantasy/science fiction) Set in the future, this book tells of a world devastated by a series of conflicts and wars. In this harsh and difficult environment, the weak are cast aside. Kira, an orphan with a twisted leg, fears for her future, but she is spared by the all-powerful Council of Guardians because she is a gifted weaver. While her talent keeps her alive and brings certain privileges, Kira soon realizes that she is surrounded by mysteries and secrets. She is determined to uncover the truth.

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#### Suggestions for Additional Summer Reading

*Note: Any of the following books would be appropriate for additional summer reading. However, remember that your first book must be either *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, *Rules of the Road*, *Left for Dead*, *I Have Lived a Thousand Year*, *Twilight*, *The Revealers* or *Gathering Blue*. You will be tested on one of those seven books.*

#### (Contemporary/Real Life Fiction)

*Hope Was Here*, also by Joan Bauer, tells of another young girl who is strong and resourceful. Like Jenna Boller, she is helped along the road to adulthood by several loving and encouraging adults.

S.E. Hinton's *Rumble Fish* is a book which comes close in theme and mood to *That Was Then, This Is Now*.

If you read and enjoy *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* from the Required Reading List, you might want to read *The Road to Memphis*, which continues the story of Cassie and the Logan family into 1941, the year the United States entered World War II.

#### **(Non-Fiction)**

*My Bridges of Hope* continues Livia Bitton-Jackson's story. (See *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* from the Required Reading List.) There are also many other interesting Holocaust memoirs. Several excellent titles that are appropriate for eighth graders are *Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps* by Andrea Warren, *The Cage* by Ruth Minsky Sender, and *Parallel Journeys* by Eleanor H. Ayer, Helen Waterford, and Alfons Heck. The last book tells the story of two German children who grew up just a few miles from each other; one became a member of Hitler Youth and the other a victim of the Holocaust.

*Of Beetles & Angels* by Mawi Asgedom is an unforgettable true story of a young boy's remarkable journey from civil war in east Africa to a refugee camp in Sudan, then to a childhood on welfare in an affluent American suburb, and eventually to a full-tuition scholarship at Harvard University. By turns, Mawi's story of his life is humorous, heartwarming, tragic, triumphant and inspiring.

*Revenge of the Whale* Nathaniel Philbrick is the true story of the whaleship Essex, which was attacked and destroyed by an enraged whale. The book begins with the story of the Essex's journey from Nantucket to the Pacific and its fateful encounter with the huge whale. Most of the book, however, details the dramatic struggle for survival of the 20 men who were stranded in three small whaleboats thousands of miles from the coast of South America after they abandoned the sinking ship Essex. The book includes many photographs, drawings and maps to help the reader understand and follow the story of those 20 individuals.

#### **(Fantasy/Science Fiction)**

*Sabriel* by Garth Nix tells of an 18-year-old girl, Sabriel, who travels from our rational world, which is governed by the laws of science, into the Old Kingdom, where magic rules. There she must undergo a desperate quest through the Gates of Death to free her father from the strengthening powers of the spirits of the dead. *Lirael*, the second book in the series, introduces a new, powerful character who will unexpectedly find herself allied with Sabriel in a fight for the triumph of good over evil. *Abhorsen*, the third book, continues the story as Lirael, Sabriel, and others try to stop the Destroyer, the enemy of all Life.

Philip Pullman's trilogy, *The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*, mirrors the story of the Temptation, Fall and Redemption of humankind. The first book introduces the reader to a world parallel to our own but with a mysterious twist. In this book, with the aid of friends, witches, armored polar bears, and her daemon Pantalaimon, 12-year-old Lyra fights the evil that is stealing children and conducting horrible experiments on them. The next two books continue Lyra's adventures and also introduce other characters and increasingly intriguing situations. The allegorical elements become more obvious in these sequels. High adventure combined with complicated issues, philosophical questions, and complex relationships make this series a vivid and memorable experience for the ambitious reader.

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams is for those who prefer science fiction with a decidedly offbeat sense of humor. Two minutes before the Earth is demolished by a cosmic construction crew to make way for an intergalactic freeway, the clueless Arthur Dent is whisked away to a spaceship by his alien friend Ford Prefect. Soon the two are off on a hilarious interstellar adventure in which satire, inventive dialogue and totally original characters combine for a work filled with inspired lunacy. In order, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, *Life the Universe and Everything*, *So Long and Thanks for All the Fish*, and *Mostly Harmless* are four books which continue the off-the-wall adventures of the two friends.