

2019 High School Summer Reading

According to a 2004 study (McGill-Franzen and Allington), summer vacations “create an annual reading achievement gap of about three months” on average, which means that by the end of high school, a student could see a performance gap of up to 24 months compared to students who read during the summer. To help maintain the gains students make over the school year and avoid a drop in reading comprehension, we are asking students to participate in summer reading.

This year is all about choice! The list below outlines your options, including books and podcasts. You should choose at least one option off the list, but are encouraged to choose more than that or read/listen to additional titles not on the list.

There is a wide range of topics and themes represented in this summer reading list. As always, parents play a critical role in helping their child to choose books that are best suited for them. Common Sense Media is an excellent resource for families to help them understand the nature of the content in the novels that their children are reading: commonsensemedia.org.

Books

***The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater**
(true crime, LGBT)

One teenager in a skirt.

One teenager with a lighter.

One moment that changes both of their lives forever.

If it weren't for the 57 bus, Sasha and Richard never would have met. Both were high school students from Oakland, California, one of the most diverse cities in the country, but they inhabited different worlds. Sasha, a white teen, lived in the middle-class foothills and attended a small private school. Richard, a black teen, lived in the crime-plagued flatlands and attended a large public one. Each day, their paths overlapped for a mere eight minutes. But one afternoon on the bus ride home from school, a single reckless act left Sasha severely burned, and Richard charged with two hate crimes and facing life imprisonment. The case garnered international attention, thrusting both teenagers into the spotlight.

***Ball Don't Lie* by Matt de la Peña** (sports, coming of age)

Sticky is a beat-around-the-head foster kid with nowhere to call home but the street, and an outer shell so tough that no one will take him in. He started out life so far behind the pack that the finish line seems nearly unreachable. He's a white boy living and playing in a world where he doesn't seem to belong. But Sticky can ball. And basketball might just be his ticket out... if he can only realize that he doesn't have to be the person everyone else expects him to be.

***Burn Baby Burn* by Meg Medina** (historical fiction, mystery)

Nora Lopez is seventeen during the infamous New York summer of 1977, when the city is besieged by arson, a massive blackout, and a serial killer named Son of Sam who shoots young women on the streets. Nora's family life isn't going so well either: her bullying brother, Hector, is growing more threatening by the day, her mother is helpless and falling behind on the rent, and her father calls only on holidays. All Nora wants is to turn eighteen and be on her own. And while there is a cute new guy who started working with her at the deli, is dating even worth the risk when the killer likes picking off couples who stay out too late?

****Carry On* by Rainbow Rowell** (fantasy, LGBT)

Simon Snow is the worst Chosen One who's ever been chosen. That's what his roommate, Baz, says. And Baz might be evil and a vampire and a complete git, but he's probably right. Half the time, Simon can't even make his wand work, and the other half, he starts something on fire. His mentor's avoiding him, his girlfriend broke up with him, and there's a magic-eating monster running around, wearing Simon's face. Baz would be having a field day with all this, if he were here — it's their last year at the Watford School of Magicks, and Simon's infuriating nemesis didn't even bother to show up.

***Dear Martin* by Nic Stone** (realistic fiction, racial prejudice/relations)

Justyce McAllister is a good kid, an honor student, and always there to help a friend—but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs. Despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, he can't escape the scorn of his former peers or the ridicule of his new classmates. Justyce looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. But do they hold up anymore? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out. Then comes the day Justyce goes driving with his best friend, Manny, windows rolled down, music turned up—way up, sparking the fury of a white off-duty cop beside them. Words fly. Shots are fired. Justyce and Manny are caught in the crosshairs. In the media fallout, it's Justyce who is under attack.

***The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas** (realistic fiction, racial prejudice/relations)

*back by popular demand! If you've read it already, try *On the Come Up* (listed a couple titles down)

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

***Hey, Kiddo* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka** (graphic novel, autobiography)

In kindergarten, Jarrett Krosoczka's teacher asks him to draw his family, with a mommy and a daddy. But Jarrett's family is much more complicated than that. His mom is an addict, in and out of rehab, and in and out of Jarrett's life. His father is a mystery -- Jarrett doesn't know where to find him, or even what his name is. Jarrett lives with his grandparents -- two very loud, very loving, very opinionated people who had thought they were through with raising children until Jarrett came along. Jarrett goes through his childhood trying to make his non-normal life as normal as possible, finding a way to express himself through drawing even as so little is

being said to him about what's going on. Only as a teenager can Jarrett begin to piece together the truth of his family, reckoning with his mother and tracking down his father.

***Looking for Alaska* by John Green** (realistic fiction, coming of age, mental illness)

Before: Miles “Pudge” Halter is done with his safe life at home. His whole life has been one big non-event, and his obsession with famous last words has only made him crave “the Great Perhaps” even more (Francois Rabelais, poet). He heads off to the sometimes crazy and anything-but-boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young. She is an event unto herself. She pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into the Great Perhaps, and steals his heart. Then...

After: Nothing is ever the same.

****On the Come Up* by Angie Thomas** (realistic fiction, performing arts and music)

Sixteen-year-old Bri wants to be one of the greatest rappers of all time. Or at least win her first battle. As the daughter of an underground hip hop legend who died right before he hit big, Bri’s got massive shoes to fill. But it’s hard to get your come up when you’re labeled a hoodlum at school, and your fridge at home is empty after your mom loses her job. So Bri pours her anger and frustration into her first song, which goes viral...for all the wrong reasons. Bri soon finds herself at the center of a controversy, portrayed by the media as more menace than MC. But with an eviction notice staring her family down, Bri doesn’t just want to make it—she has to. Even if it means becoming the very thing the public has made her out to be.

***One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus** (mystery and suspense)

Pay close attention and you might solve this.

On Monday afternoon, five students at Bayview High walk into detention.

Bronwyn, the brain, is Yale-bound and never breaks a rule.

Addy, the beauty, is the picture-perfect homecoming princess.

Nate, the criminal, is already on probation for dealing.

Cooper, the athlete, is the all-star baseball pitcher.

And Simon, the outcast, is the creator of Bayview High’s notorious gossip app.

Except Simon never makes it out of that classroom. Before the end of detention Simon's dead. And according to investigators, his death wasn't an accident. On Monday, he died. But on Tuesday, he'd planned to post juicy reveals about all four of his high-profile classmates, which makes all four of them suspects in his murder. Or are they the perfect patsies for a killer who's still on the loose? Everyone has secrets, right? What really matters is how far you would go to protect them.

***Swing* by Kwame Alexander** (free-verse poetry, racial prejudice/relations)

When America is not so beautiful, or right, or just, it can be hard to know what to do. Best friends Walt and Noah decide to use their voices to grow more good in the world, but first they've got to find cool. Walt is convinced junior year is their year, and he has a plan to help them woo the girls of their dreams and become amazing athletes. Never mind that he and Noah failed to make the high school baseball team yet again, and Noah's love interest since third grade, Sam, has him firmly in the friend zone. Noah soon finds himself navigating the worlds of jazz, batting cages, the strange advice of Walt's Dairy Queen-employed cousin, as well as Walt's "Hug Life" mentality. Status quo seems inevitable until Noah stumbles on a stash of old love

letters. Each page contains the words he's always wanted to say to Sam, and he begins secretly creating artwork using the lines that speak his heart. But when his private artwork becomes public, Noah has a decision to make: continue his life in the dugout and possibly lose the girl forever, or take a swing and finally speak out? At the same time, numerous American flags are being left around town. While some think it's a harmless prank and others see it as a form of peaceful protest, Noah can't shake the feeling something bigger is happening to his community. Especially after he witnesses events that hint divides and prejudices run deeper than he realized.

****They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera** (LGBT, death and dying)

On September 5, a little after midnight, Death-Cast calls Mateo Torrez and Rufus Emeterio to give them some bad news: They're going to die today. Mateo and Rufus are total strangers, but, for different reasons, they're both looking to make a new friend on their End Day. The good news: There's an app for that. It's called the Last Friend, and through it, Rufus and Mateo are about to meet up for one last great adventure—to live a lifetime in a single day.

***Truly Devious* by Maureen Johnson** (mystery and suspense, cold cases)

Ellingham Academy is a famous private school in Vermont for the brightest thinkers, inventors, and artists. It was founded by Albert Ellingham, an early twentieth century tycoon, who wanted to make a wonderful place full of riddles, twisting pathways, and gardens. "A place," he said, "where learning is a game." Shortly after the school opened, his wife and daughter were kidnapped. The only real clue was a mocking riddle listing methods of murder, signed with the frightening pseudonym "Truly, Devious." It became one of the great unsolved crimes of American history. True-crime aficionado Stevie Bell is set to begin her first year at Ellingham Academy, and she has an ambitious plan: She will solve this cold case. That is, she will solve the case when she gets a grip on her demanding new school life and her housemates: the inventor, the novelist, the actor, the artist, and the jokester. But something strange is happening. Truly Devious makes a surprise return, and death revisits Ellingham Academy. The past has crawled out of its grave. Someone has gotten away with murder.

***A Very Large Expanse of Sea* by Tahereh Mafi** (realistic fiction, romance, prejudice and racism)

It's 2002, a year after 9/11. It's an extremely turbulent time politically, but especially so for someone like Shirin, a sixteen-year-old Muslim girl who's tired of being stereotyped. Shirin is never surprised by how horrible people can be. She's tired of the rude stares, the degrading comments—even the physical violence—she endures as a result of her race, her religion, and the hijab she wears every day. So she's built up protective walls and refuses to let anyone close enough to hurt her. Instead, she drowns her frustrations in music and spends her afternoons break-dancing with her brother. But then she meets Ocean James. He's the first person in forever who really seems to want to get to know Shirin. It terrifies her—they seem to come from two irreconcilable worlds—and Shirin has had her guard up for so long that she's not sure she'll ever be able to let it down.

Podcasts (listen to the whole season or at least SIX episodes from those series not divided into seasons)

[Stuff You Should Know](#)

Join Josh Clark and Chuck Bryant as they get to the bottom of odd questions, like how Twinkies work and if zombies exist. A unique dose of education and entertainment.

[Welcome to Night Vale](#)

Twice-monthly community updates for the small desert town of Night Vale, where every conspiracy theory is true. Turn on your radio and hide. Never listened before? It's an ongoing radio show. Start with the current episode, and you'll catch on in no time. Or, go right to Episode 1 if you wanna binge-listen.

[This American Life](#)

From WBEZ Chicago Public Radio and hosted by Ira Glass, This American Life podcast gives listeners touching, humorous, and often unexpected vignettes of life in America.

[Radiolab](#)

Inspiring curiosity, each episode of the Radiolab podcast is hosted by Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich and is a patchwork of people, sounds, stories, society and experiences.

[The Moth](#)

The Moth is an acclaimed not-for-profit organization dedicated to the art and craft of storytelling. Moth shows are renowned for the great range of human & social experiences they showcase. Each week, The Moth podcast features the best of the stories told live from Moth stages across the country and delivers them in this beautiful radio program.

[In the Dark](#) (season 2: Curtis Flowers)

Reporter Madeleine Baran examines the case of Curtis Flowers, who has been tried six times for the same crime. For 21 years, Flowers has maintained his innocence. He's won appeal after appeal, but every time, the prosecutor just tries the case again.

[Up and Vanished](#) (either season)

Up and Vanished is an investigative true crime podcast hosted by Atlanta filmmaker Payne Lindsey. In Season 1, Payne tackles his first cold case story, the unsolved disappearance of Georgia high school teacher and former pageant queen, Tara Grinstead. The 11-year-old case remains the largest case file in Georgia history and is still unfolding. Season 2 focuses on the disappearance of young mother Kristal Reisinger from a remote mountain town in Colorado. Up and Vanished aims to tell compelling, true stories and give these cases the exposure they deserve.