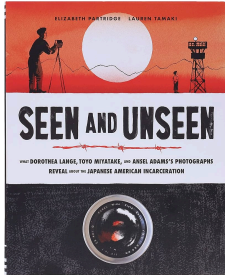




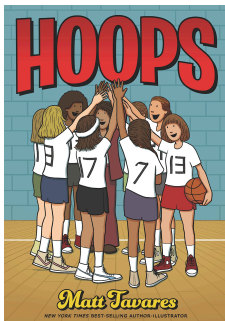
Martin Middle School & Riverside Middle School Suggested Summer Reading 2025

Browse the list below. Choose your title and READ it.



***Seen and Unseen* by Elizabeth Partridge, Lauren Tamaki**

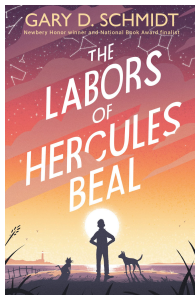
Plot Summary (courtesy of Kirkus): The incarceration of Japanese Americans through a different lens. Partridge and Tamaki spotlight three photographers who documented the experiences of those of Japanese descent who were imprisoned at Manzanar, California, during World War II. Though Dorothea Lange was commissioned by the government to show that the imprisonment was humane, she was adamantly opposed to the incarceration and instead captured images that showed that “what the government was doing was unfair and undemocratic.” Many of her images were impounded only to be released years later. Toyo Miyatake, who was imprisoned with his family, took great personal risk to build his own camera and documented things Lange had been forbidden from photographing. He eventually became the official photographer and captured more intimate and celebratory events. Finally, Partridge and Tamaki examine Ansel Adams, who “had not been against the incarceration” and “wanted to photograph mostly loyal Nisei” (those of Japanese descent born in the United States). He largely took portraits and posed photos. Aside from the work of the photographers, the book also touches on the Manzanar Riot and the loyalty questionnaire. Powerful visuals blend photographs, reproduced primary source documents, and smudgy, paint-lined illustrations and make dynamic use of color. Accompanied by clear, straightforward text, this arresting work brings history to vivid life. A bold combination of art, media, and records create a compelling read. (map, further information on the period and on civil liberties, biographies of the photographers, discussion of the model minority myth) (**Nonfiction. 9-12**)



***Hoops* by Katherine Marsh**

Plot Summary (Courtesy of Kirkus): Girls’ basketball gets off to a rocky start at an Indiana high school in the wake of Title IX. Basing his debut graphic novel on a true story, Tavares follows a small group of enthusiasts and their resourceful art teacher who moonlights as the girls’ basketball coach, from tryouts that are shuffled off to the elementary school’s gym through dogged practices and hard-fought games all the way to the 1976 state championship. Both the art and the plot are spare and cleanly drawn—the former featuring spacious compositions and easy-to-follow action both on and off the boards. The latter focuses on the friendship that develops between Judi and her teammate Lisa as the Lady Bears (“Why is it always Lady Bears?” a teammate complains, “nobody ever calls the boys’

team the Gentleman Bears”), lacking even jerseys until late in the season and riding to away games in their coach’s uncle’s RV because no bus has been authorized, gradually build a following. They ultimately earn a public apology from the dismissive athletic director and, reuniting during a college break three years later, have the satisfaction of seeing the bleachers in their old high school well filled for a girls’ game. Like the overtly sexist attitudes, which get light but firmly visible exposure, the artist suggests his cast’s racial diversity rather than highlighting it through differences in skin tone and hair texture. A winning tale, all the more exhilarating for its links to history. (author’s note)
(Graphic fiction. 8-12)

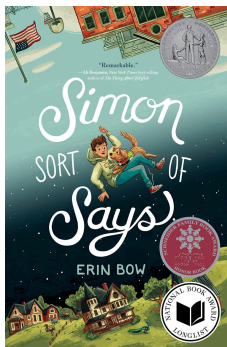


***The Labors of Hercules Beal* by Gary D. Schmidt**

An ancient hero’s feats and foibles echo through a modern middle schooler’s life...as they do, for those who can see.

Actually, 12-year-old Hercules can see better than most as he walks each morning through his Cape Cod neighborhood to a dune to watch the glorious sunrise and bid hello to his parents—killed a year and a half before in a traffic collision. What he doesn’t see, at least at the outset, is how he’s going to manage a school assignment that requires him to find personal parallels to each of the labors of (as he puts it) “Hercules the

Myth.” Schmidt assembles a strong, perceptive supporting cast, including a girlfriend; older brother Achilles’ fiancée, probably, no, definitely a vampire; a “wicked cool dog”; and a legion of teachers led by the hard-nosed ex-Marine who dishes out that seemingly impossible assignment. The book covers an eventful year marked by the endless chores required to keep the family’s garden nursery going and an equally relentless tide of emergencies, rescues, and terrifying encounters with feral cats and coyotes. Hercules’ eye-rolling “Oh boy oh boy” becomes as much a running punchline as a caustic comment. It’s all punctuated by moments of laugh-out-loud hilarity, emotionally enriched by quiet, incisive bonding, and chock-full of insights about how old stories continue to speak to human nature and character, showing that Schmidt remains at the top of his game. Main characters read White. At once an epic journey toward self-discovery and a wonderfully entertaining yarn. **(Fiction. 9-13)**



***Simon Sort of Says* by Laurie Morrison**

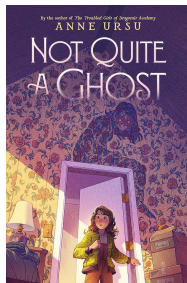
Attempting to start over, a traumatized tween and his parents move to a town where electronic devices are banned.

In a tale that will put readers through an emotional wringer, Bow crafts an uproarious small-town comedy with a devastating tragedy at its core played out by a cast as memorable for its animals as its people.

Having gone through a year of therapy and home schooling after witnessing the deaths of the rest of his fifth grade class in a school shooting that happens before the events of the book, Simon O’Keeffe hopes the move to Grin And Bear It, Nebraska, will let him escape the relentless notoriety and start seventh grade as an ordinary new kid. As

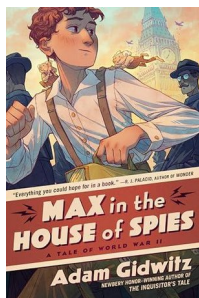
no one in town is allowed to have a computer, cellphone, or even unshielded microwave because of the supersensitive radio telescopes nearby, things go well...for a while. He

even makes friends with Agate, a classmate who cheerfully announces that she's autistic and challenges him to a gross-out contest. (Which he easily wins, what with his mother's being an undertaker.) Though developments—ranging from a roundup of escaped emus to being tasked with socializing a winsome puppy in service-dog training—provide plenty of warm and comical moments, the secret comes out eventually, spiraling into a crisis exacerbated by chance events and Simon's still uncontrollable reactions to sirens and other triggers. Readers will be relieved and cheered by the way he ultimately finds both the inner stuff and outer support to weather it. The cast largely presents as White. Adroit, sensitive, horrifying, yet hilarious. (resources) (**Fiction. 9-13**)



***Not Quite a Ghost* by Candace Fleming**

This novel set in Minneapolis combines the stress of changes with a haunting. Eleven-year-old Violet is about to enter middle school. If that wasn't anxiety-inducing enough, her mom and stepdad announce that they will be moving. To Violet's relief, she'll still be in the same school district with her two best friends. The move to a larger if decrepit Victorian means that Violet and Mia, her older sister, won't be sharing a room anymore, something Violet has mixed feelings about. Her new attic room is private, but the ugly wallpaper in a mustard-and-green vine-filled pattern is decidedly creepy. Soon after starting school, Violet begins to have nightmares about the wallpaper coming to life, and she starts to feel weak and tired. Doctors can find nothing wrong, and her best friends become skeptical, implying it's all in her head. Meanwhile, Violet tries to navigate the strains of middle school—fitting in and changing friendships—with the ever-increasing menace of the haunted attic and its link, presented possibly as a metaphor, to her chronic illness. This storyline works pretty well, addressing the experience of invisible disabilities, which are too rarely represented in middle-grade fiction, but some readers may wish for the connection between Violet's illness and the ghost to feature a clearer resolution. Violet and her mom are white; Violet's stepfather is Black, and other characters bring diversity in race and sexual orientation. An ambitious presentation exploring resonant themes. (author's note) (**Paranormal. 8-12**)



***Max in the House of Spies* by Adam Gidwitz**

A determined refugee will do whatever it takes to get back to his parents—even becoming a British spy in Nazi Germany. When 11-year-old Max Bretzfeld, a Jewish boy from Berlin, is sent to England on the Kindertransport in 1939, he's accompanied by two tiny men on his shoulders whom only he can see. The German kobold and Jewish dybbuk rarely interact with Max, but they comically comment on his circumstances. And such circumstances! After a working-class upbringing, he's fostered in England by Jewish baron Lord Montagu. Most of the white non-Jewish people Max encounters are shudderingly classist, racist, and antisemitic, but after a childhood in Nazi Germany, this is hardly new. Nonetheless, he'll do anything

to get back to his parents, and thus, Max sets out to become a spy. While it may be hard to convince British intelligence to send him back to Germany, Max will do whatever it takes. Despite the compelling premise and likable characters, readers will have to wait for the sequel for a payoff. After a strong start, the kobold and dybbuk are relegated to the roles of Greek chorus, and the story's fascination with the real-life people who inspired the secondary characters is such that various questions concerning them are intriguing but remain unresolved in this volume. Nonetheless, this book—packed with sideways thinking, sociopolitical insights, and a Marmite-eating kangaroo named Kathy—delights. A duology opener with a truly likable hero and clever puzzling. (historical note, annotated bibliography) (*Historical fiction. 8-11*)



Vivian Lantz's Second Chances

It's the first day of eighth grade...over and over again. Vivian Lantz has a bad first day every new school year, but she's determined to have a fresh start for eighth grade even though she'll be without her best friend, who recently moved away. She sets out to accomplish the tasks on her Master Plan, but right from the start, nothing goes as anticipated, and it ends up being the worst of her very bad first days. When she wakes up in the morning, though, it's Monday all over again. Vivian wants to use her second chance to have the perfect day, but with each time loop reset, she makes different choices that lead to her changing her mind about what her goals should be and what a perfect day would look like. This story set in Austin, Texas, successfully uses the repeating-day trope to explore the emotions and conflicts common in middle school, from friendship drama to new crushes to getting one's period for the first time. Just as Vivian, an aspiring author, relates to the characters and themes from her favorite fantasy book series, readers of this book will connect and empathize with bighearted Vivian even when she makes frustrating decisions. Vivian is cued White, is attracted to both guys and girls, and has queer dads; there is ethnic diversity among secondary characters. A warm, engaging coming-of-age tale with a sprinkle of magic. (*Speculative fiction. 9-13*)



***Saving Sunshine* by Saadia Faruqi**

When their parents take away their phones, twins are forced to figure out how to be friends. Pakistani American tweens Zara and Zeeshan Aziz are traveling from New York to Key West with their parents, Amma and Abba, for the conference where their mother will become the first Muslim woman honored with a pediatrician of the year award. The kids have different interests—nature lover Zara is a member of an animal rescue society, and Zeesh is into space exploration and NASA videos. Told to stick together, they go kayaking and walk on the beach, where Zara finds a sick loggerhead turtle she names Sunshine. They also meet a kindly veterinarian who's checking on the turtle. The siblings later work together to help Sunshine return to the sea. While exploring without technology, they overcome their differences, learn more about one another's interests, and start appreciating and supporting each other. Faruqi

seamlessly weaves in flashbacks showing the history of their relationship as well as their parents' memories and experiences of immigration and Islamophobia. Powerful scenes reveal Zara's choice to start wearing hijab in sixth grade and how she was treated at school and Zeesh's racist treatment by classmates that led to his quitting the after-school space club. Facts about animals and outer space appear in text boxes. Khan's rich, detailed, watercolor like illustrations enhance the story, capturing the siblings' passions, emotions, and love for one another. A beautiful, realistic, and important story focusing on family and sibling bonds. (***Graphic fiction. 8-12***)