

William Davies Career & Technical High School

Summer Reading List



Grade 9

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Does Jerry Renault dare to disturb the universe? You wouldn't think that his refusal to sell chocolates during his school's fundraiser would create such a stir, but it does; it's as if the whole school comes apart at the seams. To some, Jerry is a hero, but to others, he becomes a scapegoat--a target for their pent-up hatred. And Jerry? He's just trying to stand up for what he believes, but perhaps there is no way for him to escape becoming a pawn in this game of control; students are pitted against other students, fighting for honor--or are they fighting for their lives?

Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt

The events of the Civil War unfold Across Five Aprils (Berkley Pub., 1986) in this moving story by Newbery Award winner, Irene Hunt. It is set in southern Illinois where Jethro Creighton, an intelligent, hardworking boy, is growing into manhood as his brothers and a beloved teacher leave to fight in the Union and Confederate armies.

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

According to Ponyboy, there are two kinds of people in the world: greasers and socs. A soc (short for "social") has money, can get away with just about anything, and has an attitude longer than a limousine. A greaser, on the other hand, always lives on the outside and needs to watch his back. Ponyboy is a greaser, and he's always been proud of it, even willing to rumble against a gang of socs for the sake of his fellow greasers--until one terrible night . . .

The Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Peck

In the daily round of his thirteenth year, as the seasons turn and the farm is tended, the boy -- whose time is the only-yesterday of Calvin Coolidge, whose people are the Plain People living without "frills" in the Shaker Way -- becomes a man. That is all, and it is everything. The boy is mauled by Apron, the neighbor's ailing cow whom he helps, alone, to give birth. The grateful farmer brings him a gift -- a newborn pig.

Emako Blue by Brenda Woods

In Los Angeles, Monterey, Jamal, Eddie, and Emako follow the rules, avoid trouble, and plan to make something of themselves, despite the odds. Eddie and Emako are keenly aware of how difficult that can be; both live in South Central L.A. and have older brothers in prison. With her confident attitude, endearing nature, incredible singing voice, and exceptional beauty both inside and out, Emako makes a lasting impression on everyone. Then tragedy strikes as the lives of the friends are changed by a tragic loss

Nothing to Lose by Alex Fi nn

Michael Daye, aka Robert Frost, is on the run, and he knows he never should have returned to Miami, but in order to keep his job with the carnival, he has to go where it takes him. He hopes that he won't be recognized as the son of Lisa Monroe, who is on trial for the murder of her millionaire husband, Michael's tyrannical, abusive stepfather.

Bucking the Sarge by Christopher Paul Curtis

Fifteen-year-old wannabe philosopher Luther T. Farrell knows a few things about life. He knows the Sarge (his rich, shrewd, slumlord mom) is tougher than nails and that he better not cross her. He knows his chances of using Chauncey, the ancient condom in his wallet, are slim to none. And, he knows that despite his goal to attend Harvard, he may end up stuck in Flint, Michigan, cleaning toilets in his mom's loathsome empire. Luther spends much of his time helping the Sarge run "Happy Neighbor Group Homes" around the city, including shaving and bathing elderly men and driving residents around with an illegal license. In spare moments he tries to win first place in the science fair at school and hang out with his best friend Sparky, all the while fantasizing mightily about his one true love, the beautiful Shayla.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Intense is the word for Ender's Game. Aliens have attacked Earth twice and almost destroyed the human species. To make sure humans win the next encounter, the world government has taken to breeding military geniuses -- and then training them in the arts of war... The early training, not surprisingly, takes the form of 'games'... Ender Wiggin is a genius among geniuses; he wins all the games... He is smart enough to know that time is running out. But is he smart enough to save the planet?

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Grade 10

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

Kino, a poor Mexican pearl fisher, finds a valuable pearl. Yet instead of bringing blessings, the pearl acts as a harbinger of misfortune to Kino and his wife, Juana. Ultimately, it is returned from whence it came. Steinbeck's parable, originally published in 1947, is a well-written retelling of an old Mexican folktale.

That Was Then, This is Now by S. E. Hinton

Ever since Mark's parents died, he has been living with Bryon. The boys are more like brothers than mere friends. They've been inseparable--until recently. Something seems to be changing between them, and Bryon can't figure it out. Is it Cathy, Bryon's new girlfriend? Is Mark jealous? Bryon is also tired of the street fighting, but Mark seems unable to quit. And where is Mark getting all of that money?

The Color Purple by Alice Walker

Celie is a poor black woman whose letters tell the story of 20 years of her life, beginning at age 14 when she is being abused and raped by her father and attempting to protect her sister from the same fate, and continuing over the course of her marriage to "Mister," a brutal man who terrorizes her. Celie eventually learns that her abusive husband has been keeping her sister's letters from her and the rage she feels, combined with an example of love and independence provided by her close friend Shug, pushes her finally toward an awakening of her creative and loving self.

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes

Following his doctor's instructions, engaging simpleton Charlie Gordon tells his own story in semi-literate "progris riports." He dimly wants to better himself, but with an IQ of 68 can't even beat the laboratory mouse Algernon at maze-solving. Algernon is extra-clever thanks to an experimental brain operation so far tried only on animals. Charlie eagerly volunteers as the first human subject. But getting smarter brings cruel shocks. The IQ rise continues, taking him steadily past the human average to genius level and beyond, until he's as intellectually alone as the old, foolish Charlie ever was--and now painfully aware of it. Then, ominously, the smart mouse Algernon begins to deteriorate...

Ironman by Chris Crutcher

Although slow to accept his placement in an anger-management class, triathlete Bo Brewster learns to control and develop his emotional strength. Powerful, perceptive, and wickedly funny.

Sweet Fifteen by Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Navarro wants to help Stefanie Bonillo, who obviously needs a friend, but since she is only the young woman's seamstress, she feels she can't do much. Stefanie's quinceanera (coming-out party) is fast approaching, and the teen is grieving over the death of her father. Rita's opportunity to help comes when Stefanie spends a week with her Uncle Brian over the winter holidays. Rita offers her a job in her shop; soon their friendship blossoms, and Brian becomes interested in Rita. Ethnic values are honestly portrayed in this sincere novel.

The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things by Carolyn Mackler

Fifteen-year-old Virginia Shreves is the blond, round, average daughter in a family of dark-haired, thin superstars. Her best friend has moved away, and she's on the fringes at her private Manhattan school. She wants a boyfriend, but she settles for Froggy Welsh, who comes over on Mondays to grope her. The story follows Virginia as she tries to lose weight, struggles with her "imperfections," and deals with the knowledge that her idealized older brother has committed date rape.

Full Tilt by Neil Shusterman

The myriad bits in 16-year-old Blake's brain become the stuff of an alternate universe, a nightmare amusement park in which he must experience seven wild rides before dawn in order to escape. Blake would certainly never accept the invitation to a midnight ride offered by the icily attractive Cassandra, a mysterious figure he encounters at Six Flags. However, when his brother steals the invitation and disappears, Blake has to follow. As he makes his way from one terrifying ride to another, Cassandra appears and disappears, challenging him, leading him on, and, finally, desperately attempting to keep him where he is, in the world she has created. His brother appears and disappears as well, and in one ride they discover that they need to work together. But at the end, Blake is on his own to face his deepest fears and survivor guilt. As the pace picks up in his surreal fantasy, readers are sucked into the nightmare, tumbling full tilt from one bizarre occurrence to another. Set in the vibrant, vivid atmosphere of theme parks and computer games, this is an unusual quest adventure.

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Frankenstein by Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*: Rescued by the sea captain, Frankenstein relays events that begin as he pieces together a man using old body parts. Once he manages to create the horrible life, however, Frankenstein regrets his action immediately and flees his home. When he returns, he finds the monster is gone. Shortly after, Frankenstein hears that his brother has been murdered. A series of tragic events follow, as the monster searches for love and Frankenstein suffers the consequences of his immoral act.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

This engrossing novel which spans almost fifty years traces the unlikely friendship of a wealthy, Afghan youth and a servant's son. *The Kite Runner* begins in the final days of Afghanistan's monarchy and ends with atrocities of the present day. The author is from Afghanistan and now lives in the United States.

Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer

Krakauer, an avid mountaineer, provides an exciting eyewitness account of the ill-fated 1996 Mount Everest expedition. Despite the presence of experienced leaders, eight climbers died. Find out what happened and how the tragic events could have been prevented.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Set in London of the distant future, people around the world live in a controlling state free from war, hatred, disease, pain, and poverty. People enjoy free time, wealth, and physical pleasure. The ten Controllers who rule the world, however, have had to eliminate most forms of freedom and corrupt many human values. When a "savage" named John leaves an uncontrolled area and goes to London, he questions the society he has entered and the things that it values and must choose whether he wishes to fit in or remain independent in the only way available to him.

Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

Tally Youngblood lives in a futuristic society that acculturates its citizens to believe that they are ugly until age 16 when they'll undergo an operation that will change them into pleasure-seeking "pretties." Anticipating this happy transformation, Tally meets Shay, another female ugly, who shares her enjoyment of hoverboarding and risky pranks. But Shay also disdains the false values and programmed conformity of the society and urges Tally to defect with her to the Smoke, a distant settlement of simple-living conscientious objectors. Tally declines, yet when Shay is found missing by the authorities, Tally is coerced by the cruel Dr. Cable to find her and her compatriots—or remain forever "ugly."

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime by Mark Haddon

Christopher Boone is an autistic teenager with a gift for math, but who is unable to connect emotionally with other people as a result of his disorder. He is living with his father outside of London when he discovers the neighbor's dog Wellington dead on the lawn next door. In the confusion that follows, he is arrested for the killing and then released, vowing to solve the mystery of the dead animal. His investigation takes him to London and tests his limits as he faces many obstacles that are made more difficult by his condition.

Amaryllis by Craig Crist-Evans

Jeremy knows that his beloved 18-year-old brother, Frank, joined up to fight in Vietnam only to get away from the war with Dad at home. Now Frank's letters reveal that he doesn't know what he's fighting for, and in his guilt and despair, he is struggling with a heroin addiction. Frank's deepest longing is to be back surfing the waves with Jeremy near their Florida home.

Looking for Alaska by John Green

Sixteen-year-old Miles Halter's adolescence has been a long non-event. No challenge, no girls, no mischief, and no real friends. When he meets Alaska Young his life changes forever.

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Grade 12

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou is a 1969 autobiography about the early years of author Maya Angelou's life. Written at the end of American Civil Rights movement, the autobiography explores the isolation and loneliness faced by Angelou, and the attributes of her character that helped her cope with the prejudices of society. Quite graphic in nature, the text deals with issues including childhood rape, racism, and sexism, some of which have generated controversy. The book was inspired by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was killed on Angelou's birthday (April 4) in 1968.

Native Son by Richard Wright

Bigger Thomas is doomed, trapped in a downward spiral that will lead to arrest, prison, or death, driven by despair, frustration, poverty, and incomprehension. As a young black man in the Chicago of the '30s, he has no way out of the walls of poverty and racism that surround him, and after he murders a young white woman in a moment of panic, these walls begin to close in. There is no help for him--not from his hapless family; not from liberal do-gooders or from his well-meaning yet naive friend Jan; certainly not from the police, prosecutors, or judges. Bigger is debased, aggressive, dangerous, and a violent criminal. As such, he has no claim upon our compassion or sympathy. And yet...

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize winning novel about the Joad family has come to symbolize every Oklahoma family destroyed by the Depression and the Dust Bowl. The story follows the Joads as they lose their farm, family members and hope, but never their dignity.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath

This is the story of a gifted young woman's mental breakdown beginning during a summer internship as a junior editor at a magazine in New York City in the early 1950s. The real Plath committed suicide in 1963 and left behind this scathingly sad, honest and perfectly-written book, which remains one of the best-told tales of a woman's descent into insanity.

Harry Potter(Choose one of books 4 through 7) by J.K. Rowling

Harry Potter is a heptalogy of fantasy novels written by British author J. K. Rowling. The books chronicle the adventures of the adolescent wizard Harry Potter, together with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, his best friends. The central story arc concerns Harry's struggle against the evil wizard Lord Voldemort, who killed Harry's parents in his quest to conquer the wizarding world, after which he seeks to subjugate the Muggle (non-magical) world to his rule. There are seven books total in the series.

Inexcusable by Chris Lynch

Keir is a senior who fancies himself a lovable rogue. When he tackles and cripples a member of an opposing football team, it's determined to be an accident—one that earns him the good-humored nickname, Killer. When he and his buddies destroy a town statue, they consider it a high-spirited, funny prank. When he gets drunk, the alcohol abuse is dismissed as silly, harmless drinks, and drugs at parties are strictly recreational. And when he date rapes the girl he thinks he loves, at first he convinces himself that the way it looks is not the way it is. . .

The Gospel According to Larry by Janet Tashjian

Josh Swensen is not your average 17-year-old. At the age of two, he was figuring out algebraic equations with colored magnetic numbers. He is a prodigy who only wants to make the world a better place. Josh's wish comes true when his virtual alter ego, Larry, becomes a huge media sensation. Larry has his own Web site where he posts sermons on anti-consumerism and has a large following of adults and teens. Meanwhile, Larry's identity is a mystery to everyone. While it seems as if the whole world is trying to figure out Larry's true identity, Josh feels trapped inside his own creation. What will happen to the world, and to Larry, if he is exposed?

Double Helix by Nancy Werlin

Eighteen-year-old Eli Samuels, whose once-vibrant mother is losing her long battle with the ravages of Huntington's disease, is hired at the Wyatt Transgenics Lab. Eli's father is dead set against the job because of a secret he harbors concerning the lab's owner, Dr. Quincy Wyatt, and Eli's mother. Shortly after starting work, the teen meets Kayla Matheson, a beautiful girl who eerily reminds him of a photo of his mother when she was young. Slowly, Eli uncovers one layer after another of the shocking truth about Dr. Wyatt's genetic-engineering experiments and their connection to his parents, Kayla, and himself.