

Summer Reading Assignment

8th Grade Summer Reading Recommendations

Is it OK to read more than one book on this list? YES!!!!

A = indicates the book has won major awards and honors

S= indicates the book has sophisticated style and/or content. Although all books on this list are appropriate for eighth grade readers, books marked with an S may be best suited for readers seeking a challenge.

The Bar Code Tattoo, Suzanne Weyn

It's 2025, and the thing to do on your 17th birthday is to get a bar code tattoo, which is used for everything from driver's licenses to shopping. Kayla, almost 17, resists because she hates the idea of being labeled. Then the tattoos begin to drive people to commit suicide, Kayla's father among them, and she soon finds out that the markings contain detailed information about their bearers, including their genetic code. When the government, controlled by a corporation called Global-1, makes the tattoo mandatory, Kayla joins a teen resistance movement and falls for a gorgeous guy, unaware that he's a double agent. She discovers she has some psychic ability and has confusing visions of future events. Forced to run away after being implicated in her mother's accidental death, she eventually joins other resisters hiding in the Adirondack Mountains, finds romance with an old friend, and learns to harness her psychic powers to fight Global-1 and fulfill her visions.

Breathe: A Ghost Story, Cliff McNish

Jack is not a normal boy. He can talk to ghosts. In his new home, an aging farmhouse, he meets the Ghost Mother, a grief-stricken spirit who becomes very attached to him...too attached. He learns that the Ghost Mother is preying in the cruelest imaginable way on four child ghosts who are trapped in the house, stealing their energy to sustain her own. Before Jack can figure out how to help them, the Ghost Mother takes possession of his real mother's body. Jack wants to fight back, but he has severe asthma and risks fatal attacks with any physical exertion. It will take all his resources, and his mother's as well, to fight off the Ghost Mother and save the ghost children from a horrible fate.

Heir Apparent, Vivian Vande Velde

In *Heir Apparent* there are as many ways to win as there are to get killed. Fourteen-year-old video game-lover Giannine enters the Middle Ages in a full-emersion virtual reality game. When outside agitators storm the video arcade and harm the sensitive equipment, Giannine becomes trapped. Giannine can testify to how many ways there are to die--it's about all she's been able to do since she started playing. Now all she has to do is get the magic ring, find the stolen treasure, answer the dwarf's dumb riddles, come up with a poem for the head-chopping statue, cope with the army of ghosts, outmaneuver her half brothers, and defeat the man-eating dragon. If she can do all of *that*, why, she just might save her own life!

***The Help*, Kathryn Stockett A, S**

Aibileen is a black maid in 1962 Jackson, Mississippi, who's always taken orders quietly, but lately she's unable to hold her bitterness back. Her friend Minny has never held her tongue but now must somehow keep secrets about her employer that leave her speechless. White socialite Skeeter just graduated college. She's full of ambition, but without a husband, she's considered a failure. Together, these seemingly different women join together to write a tell-all book about work as a black maid in the South, a book that could forever alter their destinies and the life of a small town.

***The Last Book in the Universe*, Rodman Philbrick**

This is the story of an epileptic teenager nicknamed Spaz, who begins the heroic fight to bring human intelligence back to the planet. In a world where most people are plugged into brain-drain entertainment systems, Spaz is the rare human being who can see life as it really is. When he meets an old man called Ryter, he begins to learn about Earth and its past. With Ryter as his companion, Spaz sets off an unlikely quest to save his dying sister -- and in the process, perhaps the world.

***The Last Silk Dress*, Ann Rinaldi**

High-spirited, beautiful Susan Chilmark, fourteen, vows to do something meaningful to support the Confederacy during the Civil War. Despite the wishes of her mother, Susan and her best friend, Connie, collect silk dresses from all the ladies of Richmond to make a balloon that will be used to spy on the Yankees. But the issues behind the war aren't as obvious as Susan thinks. When she meets her dashing, scandalous older brother and discovers why he was banished from the family, Susan unlocks a Pandora's box of secrets that forces her to rethink and challenge the very system she was born into. Does she have the courage to do what is right even though it may hurt the ones she loves?

***A Midsummer Night's Dream*, William Shakespeare S**

Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius because she loves Lysander, and her friend Helena loves Demetrius. The romantic confusion thickens when Puck, a troublesome sprite, interferes. Shakespeare's beloved comedy ends happily after a string of mishaps and mistaken identities have been resolved.

***The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway S**

It is the story of an epic struggle between an old, seasoned fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. For eighty-four days, Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, has set out to sea and returned empty-handed. So conspicuously unlucky is he that the parents of his young devoted apprentice and friend, Manolin, have forced the boy to leave the old man in order to fish in a more prosperous boat. Nevertheless, the boy continues to care for the old man upon his return each night. He helps the old man tote his gear to his ramshackle hut, secures food for him, and discusses the latest developments in American baseball, especially the trials of the old man's hero, Joe DiMaggio. Santiago is confident that his unproductive streak will soon come to an end, and he resolves to sail out farther than usual the following day.

***The Secret Life of Bees*, Sue Monk Kidd A, S**

Set in the American South in 1964, the year of the Civil Rights Act and intensifying racial unrest, *The Secret Life of Bees* is a story of coming-of-age, of the ability of love to transform our lives, and the often unacknowledged longing for the universal feminine divine. Addressing the wounds of loss, betrayal, and the scarcity of love, Kidd demonstrates the power of women coming together to heal those wounds, to mother each other and themselves, and to create a sanctuary of true family and home.

Slam, Walter Dean Myers

Seventeen-year-old Greg "Slam" Harris can do it all on the basketball court. He's seen ballplayers come and go, and he knows he could be one of the lucky ones. Maybe he'll make it to the top. Or maybe he'll stumble along the way. Slam's grades aren't that hot. And when his teachers jam his troubles in his face, he blows up. Slam never doubted himself on the court until he found himself going one-on-one with his own future, and he didn't have the ball.

Sunrise Over Fallujah, Walter Dean Myers

Robin "Birdy" Perry, a new army recruit from Harlem, isn't quite sure why he joined the army, but he's sure where he's headed: Iraq. Birdy and the others in the Civilian Affairs Battalion are supposed to help secure and stabilize the country and successfully interact with the Iraqi people. Officially, the code name for their maneuvers is Operation Iraqi Freedom. But the young men and women in the CA unit have a simpler name for it: WAR

Touching Spirit Bear, Ben Mikaelson

Cole Matthews is angry. Angry, defiant, and smug--in short, a bully. His anger has taken him too far this time, though. After beating up a ninth-grade classmate to the point of brain damage, Cole is facing a prison sentence. But then a Tlingit Indian parole officer named Garvey enters his life, offering an alternative called Circle Justice, based on Native American traditions, in which victim, offender, and community all work together to find a healing solution. Privately, Cole sneers at the concept, but he's no fool--if it gets him out of prison, he'll do anything. Ultimately, Cole ends up banished for one year to a remote Alaskan island, where his arrogance sets him directly in the path of a mysterious, legendary white bear. Mauled almost to death, Cole awaits his fate and begins the transition from anger to humility.