

## Headwaters Academy 2020-21 Eighth Grade Summer Reading List

Summer is a good time for exploring new books or for reading those that you never had time for during the busy school year. We hope that you find time to read a book or two from the list below ☺, as well as the required reading:

**You are required to read the book *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickman this summer. *Rocket Boys* can be read at any point during the summer, however, please use post-it notes to support your reading comprehension.**

You will need to bring *Rocket Boys* with you to school during the first couple weeks of school, and we will use it for the basis of writing and discussion. Creative non-fiction is a significant portion of the first term of eighth grade English. This book provides a good starting point for exploring themes we will be working with this year. As you read the memoir, keep in mind the following points:

- \*Author's writing style,
- \*Challenges the author experienced,
- \*How the author responded to the challenges,
- \*What you learned about the author,
- \*Connections you could make to the author's life.

### ***Required Reading:***

#### ***Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickman**

“With the grace of a natural storyteller, NASA engineer Homer Hickam paints a warm, vivid portrait of the harsh West Virginia mining town of his youth, evoking a time of innocence and promise, when anything was possible, even in a company town that swallowed its men alive. A story of romance and loss, of growing up and getting out, Homer Hickam's lush, lyrical memoir is a chronicle of triumph—at once exquisitely written and marvelously entertaining. One of the most beloved bestsellers in recent years, *Rocket Boys* is a uniquely American memoir. A powerful, luminous story of coming of age at the end of the 1950s, it is the story of a mother's love and a father's fears, of growing up and getting out. With the grace of a natural storyteller, Homer Hickam looks back after a distinguished NASA career to tell his own true story of growing up in a dying coal town and of how, against the odds, he made his dreams of launching rockets into outer space come true.”

### ***Suggested Reading:***

#### ***Night* by Elie Wiesel, Marion Wiesel (translator)**

*Night* is Elie Wiesel's masterpiece, a candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps. This new translation by Marion Wiesel, Elie's wife and frequent translator, presents this seminal memoir in the language and spirit truest to the author's original intent. And in a substantive new preface, Elie reflects on the enduring importance of *Night* and his lifelong, passionate dedication to ensuring that the world never forgets man's capacity for inhumanity to man.

#### ***Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* by Adeline Yen Mah**

An international bestseller, a heart-wrenching but ultimately inspiring memoir recounts the author's painful childhood as the unwanted daughter of a wealthy yet abusive Chinese family, from which she escaped to the West.

#### ***Knots in My Yo-Yo String* by Jerry Spinelli**

"A master of those embarrassing, gloppy, painful, and suddenly wonderful things that happen on the razor's edge between childhood and full-fledged adolescence" (The Washington Post), Newbery medalist Jerry Spinelli has penned his early autobiography with all the warmth, humor, and drama of his best-selling fiction. From first memories through high school, including first kiss, first punch, first trip to the principal's office, and first humiliating sports experience, this is not merely an account of a highly unusual childhood. Rather, like Spinelli's fiction, its appeal lies in the accessibility and universality of his life. Entertaining and fast-paced, this is a highly readable memoir-- a must-have for Spinelli fans of all ages.”

#### ***My Life in Dog Years* by Gary Paulsen**

“Gary Paulsen has owned dozens of unforgettable and amazing dogs. In each chapter he tells of one special dog, among them Cookie, the sled dog who saved his life; Snowball, the puppy he owned as a boy in the Philippines; Ike, his mysterious hunting companion; Dirk, the grim protector; and his true friend Josh, a brilliant border collie.”

Looking Back by Lois Lowry

“People are constantly asking two-time Newbery Medalist Lois Lowry where she gets her ideas. In this fascinating memoir, Lowry answers this question, through recollections of childhood friends and pictures and memories that explore her rich family history. She recounts the pivotal moments that inspired her writing, describing how they magically turned into fiction along the complicated passageway called life. Lowry fans, as well as anyone interested in understanding the process of writing fiction, will benefit from this poignant trip through the past and the present of a remarkable writer.”

The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls

“Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an "excitement addict." Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever. Later, when the money ran out, or the romance of the wandering life faded, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town -- and the family -- Rex Walls had done everything he could to escape. He drank. He stole the grocery money and disappeared for days. As the dysfunction of the family escalated, Jeannette and her brother and sisters had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resources and will to leave home.”

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

“This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them. What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists who have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this hell and survived.

No Pretty Pictures by Anita Lobel

“Anita Lobel was barely five years old when World War II began and the Nazis burst into her home in Kraków, Poland. Her life changed forever. She spent her childhood in hiding with her brother and their nanny, moving from countryside to ghetto to convent—where the Nazis finally caught up with them. Since coming to the United States as a teenager, Anita has spent her life making pictures. She has never gone back. She has never looked back. Until now.”

House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

“*The House on Mango Street* is the remarkable story of Esperanza Cordero. Told in a series of vignettes – sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous – it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become. Few other books in our time have touched so many readers.”

Bad Boy by Walter Dean Myers

“In a memoir that is gripping, funny, and ultimately unforgettable, New York Times bestselling author Walter Dean Myers travels back to his roots in the magical world of Harlem during the 1940s and 1950s. Here is the story of one of the most distinguished writers of young people's literature today. As a boy, Myers was quick-tempered and physically strong, always ready for a fight. He also read voraciously—he would check out books from the library and carry them home, hidden in brown paper bags in order to avoid other boys' teasing. He aspired to be a writer.”

Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race

by Margot Lee Shetterly

*The phenomenal true story of the black female mathematicians at NASA whose calculations helped fuel some of America's greatest achievements in space.*

The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

by Daniel James Brown (

Daniel James Brown's robust book tells the story of the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar crew and their epic quest for an Olympic gold medal, a team that transformed the sport and grabbed the attention of millions of Americans. The sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the boys defeated elite rivals first from eastern and British universities and finally the German crew rowing for Adolf Hitler in the Olympic games in Berlin, 1936.

*The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*

by Timothy Egan

The dust storms that terrorized the High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since. Timothy Egan's critically acclaimed account rescues this iconic chapter of American history from the shadows in a tour de force of historical reportage. Following a dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, Egan tells of their desperate attempts to carry on through blinding black dust blizzards, crop failure, and the death of loved ones. Brilliantly capturing the terrifying drama of catastrophe, Egan does equal justice to the human characters who become his heroes, "the stoic, long-suffering men and women whose lives he opens up with urgency and respect" (New York Times).

*Phineas Gage: A Gruesome But True Story About Brain Science* by John Fleischman

The story of a railroad construction foreman who survived a rock blasting accident in which a 13 pound iron rod was shot through his brain. Although he lived for 11 years afterward, his personality was changed. The case astonished and fascinated doctors then, and continues to today, explaining a lot about how the brain works.

*Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott

Scott McCloud, a twelve-time Harvey and Eisner Award nominee, uses a comic book to explain and analyze the medium of comic books themselves, showing how words, lines, colors, symbols, panels and pictures all come together to create a unique and one-of-a-kind storytelling experience.

*Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster*

by Jon Krakauer (

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist-mountaineer Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more--including Krakauer's--in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.

*In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*

by Nathaniel Philbrick (

*In the Heart of the Sea* brings to new life the incredible story of the wreck of the whaleship *Essex*—an event as mythic in its own century as the *Titanic* disaster in ours, and the inspiration for the climax of *Moby-Dick*. In a harrowing page-turner, Nathaniel Philbrick restores this epic story to its rightful place in American history.

*In a Sunburned Country*

by Bill Bryson

Every time Bill Bryson walks out the door, memorable travel literature threatens to break out. His previous excursion along the Appalachian Trail resulted in the sublime national bestseller *A Walk in the Woods*. *In a Sunburned Country* is his report on what he found in an entirely different place: Australia, the country that doubles as a continent, and a place with the friendliest inhabitants, the hottest, driest weather, and the most peculiar and lethal wildlife to be found on the planet. The result is a deliciously funny, fact-filled, and adventurous performance by a writer who combines humor, wonder, and unflagging curiosity

*Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli

A sixteen-year-old eccentric high school girl and her boyfriend discover the ill effects of her unconventional behavior.

*Time and Again and From Time to Time* by Jack Finney

This is full of mystery and romance, science fiction and nostalgia. One night, Si Morley steps out of his twentieth-century Upper West Side apartment -- right into the winter of 1882.

*A Step from Heaven* by An Na

This story traces the life of Korean-born Young Ju from the age of four through her teenage years, from Korea to the States. Young Ju's steady growth in language and understanding of the new culture presents a sharp contrast of her father's inability to adapt to the new environment. The not-all-happy ending is convincing and promises an uplifting path for the main character. A 2002 Printz Award winner for Young Adult Literature.

*Gone with the Wind* by Margaret **Mitchell** (classic)

This epic saga of the years before, during and after the Civil War in Georgia continues to fascinate all ages. The many characters include the unforgettable Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler.

*Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (classic)

The poignant story of George Milton and mentally retarded Lennie searching for a better life is a classic.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (classic)

Scout Finch lives with her brother, Jem, and their widowed father, Atticus, in the sleepy Alabama town of Maycomb, which is suffering through the Great Depression. To the consternation of Maycomb's racist white community, Atticus agrees to defend a black man named Tom Robinson, who has been accused of a crime against a white woman. His decision puts his entire family in danger.

*The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas

Young sailor Edmond Dantes, unjustly accused of aiding the exiled Napoleon, is sentenced to life imprisonment. After 14 years, Dantes makes a daring escape and uncovers a vast treasure on the island of Monte-Cristo. Adopting the persona of the Count of Monte Cristo, Dantes comes back home to seek revenge.

*Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* by Douglas Adams

An ageless absent-minded professor tries to outwit a billion-year-old ghost in this zany murder mystery.

*House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer

In a future world, young Matt is a perfect clone of the elderly (140 years old) Matteo Alacran, the de facto King of a country called Opium. In this fascinating tale of survival, readers will see the strength of friendship and loyalty. This book won the 2002 National Book Award for Young Readers.

*Heir Apparent* by Vivian Vande Velde

Giannine, trapped in the malfunctioning virtual reality game of Heir Apparent, has to win the game before her body deteriorates and she dies. The game, set in a magical, medieval time, demands that she makes alliances with the right people, slays a dragon, solves riddles, and many other tasks. This page-turner is filled with true danger and humor on the side.

*Ultimate Game* by Christian Lehmann (Translated from French by William Rodarmor)

Lehmann's novel relates moments in the lives of three teenagers who purchase a computer game that recreates a virtual reality of a time machine of history's evils: war after war. Eric and Charles are pitted against Andreas, the oldest, whose need for power propels him to play the game as judge, jury, and finally, prey.

*Perfect* by Natasha Friend

Developing bulimia after the death of her father, 13-year-old Isabelle is forced to attend a therapy group. There she discovers that one of the school's most popular girls is also battling the same disease.

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

Death himself narrates the World War II-era story of Liesel Meminger from the time she is taken, at age nine, to live in Molching, Germany, with a foster family in a working-class neighborhood of tough kids, acid-tongued mothers, and loving fathers who earn their living by the work of their hands. The child arrives having just stolen her first book—although she has not yet learned how to read—and her foster father uses it, *The Gravediggers Handbook*, to lull her to sleep when she is roused by regular nightmares about her younger brother's death. (School Library Journal). Recipient of the Book Sense of the Year Children's Literature Award.

*Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

This non-fiction story is placed against the backdrop of Hitler's world. Readers follow German young people through the many different organizations that formed them into soldiers faithful to the fatherland.