

Summer Reading 2026

Incoming 12th Grade

Parents,

Our summer reading program opts to give York Catholic students more choice in what they read, hoping that students can find a book that is a true page turner. Our goal has always been to keep students reading through the summer months, but getting students to put down the phone and pick up a book is even more challenging. In expanding our recommended list, we hope to ensure there is something for everyone, and that the summer read is a positive experience and a fun adventure. Our English Department invested time developing reading lists per grade level, to include a few classics, nonfiction, realistic and historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and dystopia.

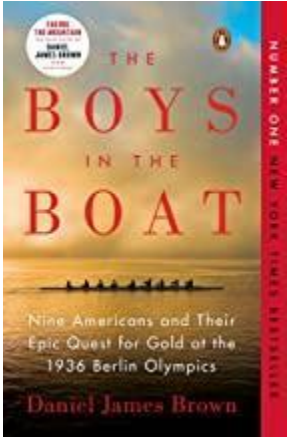
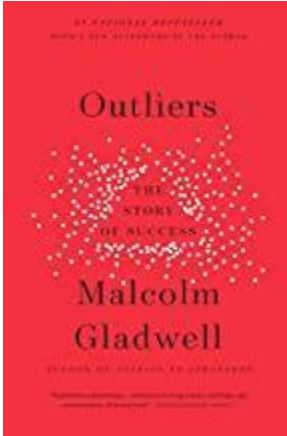
Take time with your student(s) to peruse the list, making sure their book choice meets with your parental approval. A synopsis is included with each title to assist with selection. If you are not sure where to look for more information regarding the content of the text for your child, you can consult [Common Sense Media \(www.commonsensemedia.org\)](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) or look at the publisher's recommendations.

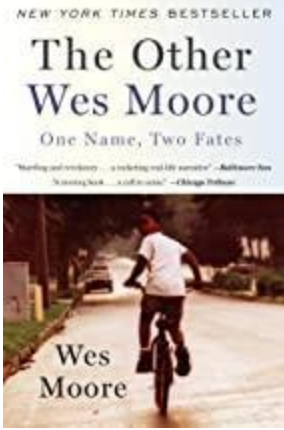
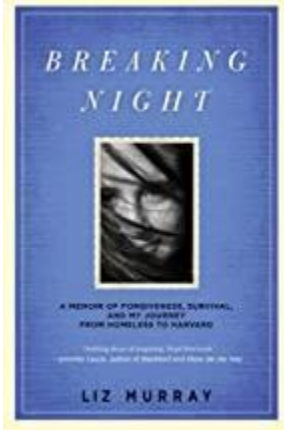
We will ask students to respond to a written prompt referencing their title once they are back in the classroom in late August.

We wish your family a safe and fun-filled summer, and invite all of you to pick up one of the titles listed to enjoy on the beach, by the pool, on a long car ride, or in a shady chair in the backyard. Happy reading, everyone!

Mrs. Kathy Hand
Principal

Choose one of the following books to read during the summer. When you return to school in August, your chosen book will be the topic of your first writing.

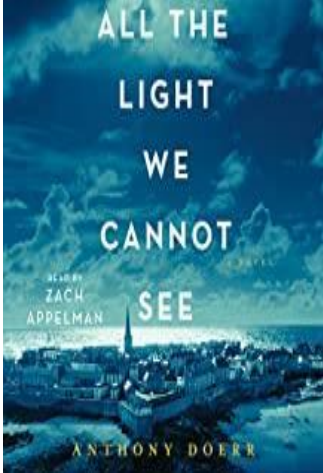
Genre	Title/Author	Summary
<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>The Boys in the Boat</i></p> <p>Daniel James Brown</p>		<p>It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington’s eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys’ own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an unforgettable portrait of an era, a celebration of a remarkable achievement, and a chronicle of one extraordinary young man’s personal quest.</p>
<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>Outliers</i></p> <p>Malcolm Gladwell</p>		<p>In this stunning book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"—the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band.</p>

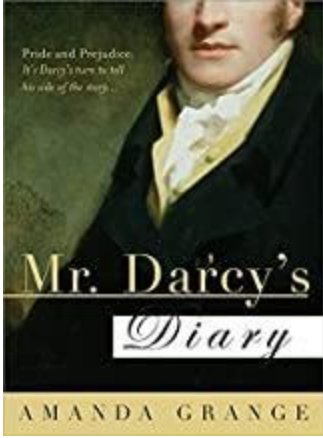
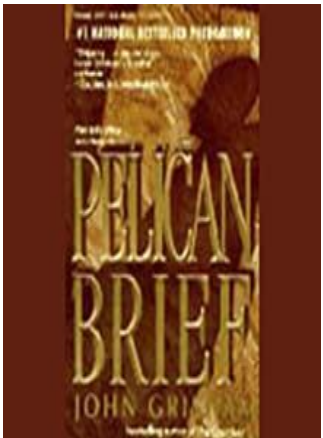
<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates</i></p> <p>Wes Moore</p>		<p>The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his. In December 2000, the <i>Baltimore Sun</i> ran a small piece about Wes Moore, a local student who had just received a Rhodes Scholarship. The same paper also ran a series of articles about four young men who had allegedly killed a police officer in a spectacularly botched armed robbery. The police were still hunting for two of the suspects who had gone on the lam, a pair of brothers. One was named Wes Moore. Wes just couldn't shake off the unsettling coincidence, or the inkling that the two shared much more than space in the same newspaper. After following the story of the robbery, the manhunt, and the trial to its conclusion, he wrote a letter to the other Wes, now a convicted murderer serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole. His letter tentatively asked the questions that had been haunting him: Who are you? How did this happen?</p>
<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>Breaking Night</i></p> <p>Liz Murray</p>		<p>Liz Murray was born to loving but drug-addicted parents in the Bronx. In school she was taunted for her dirty clothing and lice-infested hair, eventually skipping so many classes that she was put into a girls' home. At age fifteen, Liz found herself on the streets. She learned to scrape by, foraging for food and riding subways all night to have a warm place to sleep. When Liz's mother died of AIDS, she decided to take control of her own destiny and go back to high school, often completing her assignments in the hallways and subway stations where she slept. Liz squeezed four years of high school into two while homeless, won a <i>New York Times</i> scholarship, and made it into the Ivy League. <i>Breaking Night</i> is an unforgettable and beautifully written story of one young woman's indomitable spirit to survive and prevail against all odds.</p>

<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>Code Talker: The First and Only Memoir By One of the Original Navajo Code Talkers of WWII</i></p> <p>Chester Nez</p>		<p>His name wasn't Chester Nez. That was the English name he was assigned in kindergarten, and in boarding school at Fort Defiance, he was punished for speaking his native language as the teachers sought to rid him of his culture and traditions. Discrimination didn't stop Chester from answering the call to defend his country after Pearl Harbor, for the Navajo have always been warriors, and his upbringing on a New Mexico reservation gave him the strength—both physical and mental—to excel as a Marine. During World War II, the Japanese had managed to crack every code the United States used. But when the Marines turned to its Navajo recruits to develop and implement a secret military language, they created the only unbroken code in modern warfare—and helped assure victory for the United States over Japan in the South Pacific.</p>
<p>Nonfiction/ Memoir</p> <p><i>Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers</i></p> <p>Mary Roach</p>		<p>For two thousand years, cadavers—some willingly, some unwittingly—have been involved in science's boldest strides and weirdest undertakings. They've tested France's first guillotines, ridden the NASA Space Shuttle, been crucified in a Parisian laboratory to test the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, and helped solve the mystery of TWA Flight 800. For every new surgical procedure, from heart transplants to gender confirmation surgery, cadavers have helped make history in their quiet way.</p> <p>"Delightful—though never disrespectful" (Les Simpson, <i>Time Out New York</i>), <i>Stiff</i> investigates the strange lives of our bodies postmortem and answers the question: What should we do after we die?</p>

<p>Classics</p> <p><i>Sense and Sensibility</i></p> <p>Jane Austen</p>		<p><i>Sense and Sensibility</i> is the classic coming of age story of two sisters, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, who have contrasting temperaments. On the surface Elinor, the older sister represents sense, or reason, while Marianne represents sensibility, or emotion; however, upon closer examination we find that they both exhibit varying aspects of each characteristic. Set in southwest England, in the towns of London and Kent, the novel follows the lives of the two sisters as they struggle to find love, romance, and ultimately deal with the heartbreaks along the way. The novel ponders the question of which is the best characteristic, sense or sensibility.</p>
<p>Classics</p> <p><i>Les Miserables</i></p> <p>Victor Hugo</p>		<p><i>Les Miserables</i> is widely considered one of the greatest novels of the 19th century. First published in France in 1862, it is Victor Hugo's greatest achievement—the ultimate tale of redemption. Former prisoner Jean Valjean struggles to live virtuously after an unexpected act of forgiveness by a kindly bishop changes his life. His righteous actions change people's lives in surprising ways and culminate in romance between two young people.</p>
<p>Classics</p> <p><i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i></p> <p>Erich Maria Remarque</p>		<p>"I am young, I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, and fatuous superficiality cast over an abyss of sorrow." This is the testament of Paul Bäumer, who enlists with his classmates in the German army during World War I. They become soldiers with youthful enthusiasm. But the world of duty, culture, and progress they had been taught breaks in pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. Through years of vivid horror, Paul holds fast to a single vow: to fight against the principle of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against one another... if only he can come out of the war alive.</p>

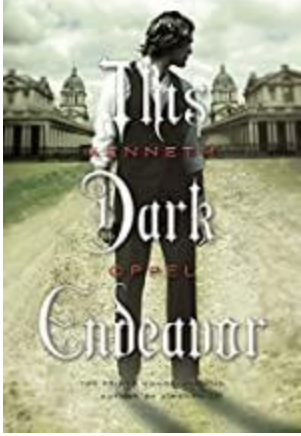
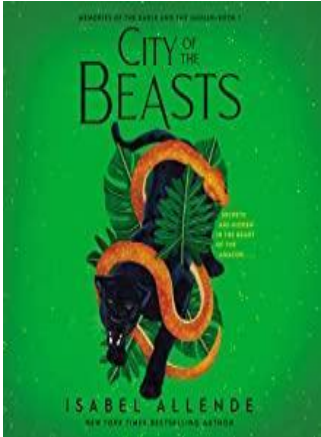
<p>Modern Classic</p> <p><i>The Alchemist</i></p> <p>Paul Coelho</p>		<p>This story, dazzling in its powerful simplicity and soul-stirring wisdom, is about an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried near the Pyramids. Along the way he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself a king, and an alchemist, all of whom point Santiago in the direction of his quest. No one knows what the treasure is, or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles in his path. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a profound journey of spiritual self-discovery.</p>
<p>Realistic/ Historical Fiction</p> <p><i>The City of Saints and Thieves</i></p> <p>Natalie Anderson</p>		<p>In the shadows of Sangui City, there lives a girl who doesn't exist. After fleeing the Congo as refugees, Tina and her mother arrived in Kenya looking for the chance to build a new life and home. Her mother quickly found work as a maid for a prominent family, headed by Roland Greyhill, one of the city's most respected business leaders. But Tina soon learns that the Greyhill fortune was made from a life of corruption and crime. So when her mother is found shot to death in Mr. Greyhill's personal study, she knows exactly who's behind it. With revenge always on her mind, Tina spends the next four years surviving on the streets alone, working as a master thief for the Goondas, Sangui City's local gang. It's a job for the Goondas that finally brings Tina back to the Greyhill estate, giving her the chance for vengeance she's been waiting for, but as soon as she steps inside the lavish home, she's overtaken by the pain of old wounds and the pull of past friendships, setting into motion a dangerous cascade of events that could, at any moment, cost Tina her life. Finally uncovering the incredible truth about who killed her mother—and why—keeps her holding on in this fast-paced nail-biting thriller.</p>

<p>Realistic/ Historical Fiction</p> <p><i>All the Light We Cannot See</i></p> <p>Anthony Doerr</p>		<p>Marie-Laure lives with her father in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where he works as the master of its thousands of locks. When she is six, Marie-Laure goes blind and her father builds a perfect miniature of their neighborhood so she can memorize it by touch and navigate her way home. When she is 12, the Nazis occupy Paris and father and daughter flee to the walled citadel of Saint-Malo, where Marie-Laure’s reclusive great-uncle lives in a tall house by the sea. With them they carry what might be the museum’s most valuable and dangerous jewel.</p> <p>In a mining town in Germany, the orphan Werner grows up with his younger sister, enchanted by a crude radio they find. Werner becomes an expert at building and fixing these crucial new instruments, a talent that wins him a place at a brutal academy for Hitler Youth, then a special assignment to track the resistance. More and more aware of the human cost of his intelligence, Werner travels through the heart of the war and, finally, into Saint-Malo, where his story and Marie-Laure’s converge.</p>
<p>Realistic/ Historical Fiction</p> <p><i>The Running Dream</i></p> <p>Wendelin Van Draanen</p>		<p>Jessica thinks her life is over when she loses a leg in a car accident. She’s not comforted by the news that she’ll be able to walk with the help of a prosthetic leg. Who cares about walking when you live to run? As she struggles to cope, Jessica feels that she’s both in the spotlight and invisible. People who don’t know what to say act like she’s not there. Jessica’s embarrassed to realize that she’s done the same to a girl with CP named Rosa, a girl who is going to tutor her through all the math she’s missed. A girl who sees right into the heart of her. With the support of family, friends, a coach, and her track teammates, Jessica may actually be able to run again. But that’s not enough for her now. She doesn’t just want to cross finish lines herself—she wants to take Rosa with her.</p>

<p>Realistic/ Historical Fiction</p> <p><i>Mr. Darcy's Diary</i></p> <p>Amanda Grange</p>		<p>Torn between his sense of duty to his family name and his growing passion for Elizabeth Bennet, all he can do is struggle not to fall in love. <i>Mr. Darcy's Diary</i> presents the story of the unlikely courtship of Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy from Darcy's point of view. This graceful imagining and sequel to <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> explains Darcy's moodiness and the difficulties of his reluctant relationship as he struggles to avoid falling in love with Miss Bennet. Though seemingly stiff and stubborn at times, Darcy's words prove him also to be quite devoted and endearing—qualities that eventually win over Miss Bennet's heart. This continuation of a classic romantic novel is charming and elegant, much like Darcy himself.</p>
<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>The Pelican Brief</i></p> <p>John Grisham</p>		<p>In suburban Georgetown a killer's Reeboks whisper on the front floor of a posh home... In a seedy D.C. porno house, a patron is swiftly garroted to death...The next day America learns that two of its Supreme Court justices have been assassinated, and in New Orleans, a young law student prepares a legal brief... To Darby Shaw it was no more than a legal shot in the dark, a brilliant guess. To the Washington establishment it was political dynamite. Suddenly, Darby is witness to a murder—a murder intended for her. Going underground, she finds there is only one person she can trust—an ambitious reporter after a news-break hotter than Watergate—to help her piece together the deadly puzzle. Somewhere between the bayous of Louisiana and the White House's inner sanctums, a violent cover-up is being engineered. For someone has read Darby's brief. Someone who will stop at nothing to destroy the evidence of an unthinkable crime.</p>

<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i></p> <p>Mark Haddon</p>		<p>Fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone has Asperger's Syndrome, a condition similar to autism. He doesn't like to be touched or meet new people, he cannot make small talk, and he hates the colors brown and yellow. He is a math whiz with a very logical brain who loves solving puzzles that have definite answers. One night, he observes that the neighbor's dog has been killed, since it is not moving and has a large garden fork stuck in its body. Christopher knows this is wrong. He has never left his street on his own before, but now he'll have to in order to find out who killed the dog. What he discovers will shake the very foundation of his perfectly ordered life.</p>
<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>Brooklyn Bridge</i></p> <p>Karen Hesse</p>		<p>On that day in 1903, 14-year-old Joseph Michtom's life changed irrevocably when his parents—Russian immigrants—created the first teddy bear. No longer did the Michtom's gather family and friends around the kitchen table to talk. No longer was Joseph at leisure to play stickball with the guys. No longer were Joseph and his book-loving sister free from watching their pesky two-year-old brother. Now—when it was summer vacation and more than anything Joseph wanted to experience the thrill, the grandeur, the electricity of Coney Island—Joseph worked, and complained, and fell in and out of love, and argued, and hoped that everything would go back to how it used to be. All the while no one let him forget that he was lucky. Because "There are other children. The unwanted, the forgotten, the lost ones. They gather under the bridge each night to sit, to talk, to sleep. They know, they know, they know that to everyone beyond the bridge they are invisible...." These are the children who live under the bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge.</p>

<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>Behold the Dreamers</i></p> <p>Imbolo Mbue</p>		<p>Jende Jonga, a Cameroonian immigrant living in Harlem, has come to the United States to provide a better life for himself; his wife, Neni; and their six-year-old son. In the fall of 2007, Jende can hardly believe his luck when he lands a job as a chauffeur for Clark Edwards, a senior executive at Lehman Brothers. Clark demands punctuality, discretion, and loyalty—and Jende is eager to please. Clark's wife, Cindy, even offers Neni temporary work at the Edwards' summer home in the Hamptons. With these opportunities, Jende and Neni can at last gain a foothold in America and imagine a brighter future; however, the world of great power and privilege conceals troubling secrets, and soon Jende and Neni notice cracks in their employers' façades. When the financial world is rocked by the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the Jongas are desperate to keep Jende's job—even as their marriage threatens to fall apart. As all four lives are dramatically upended, Jende and Neni are forced to make an impossible choice.</p>
<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>Sunrise Over Fallujah</i></p> <p>Walter Dean Myers</p>		<p>Acclaimed author Walter Dean Myers presents a compelling novel that looks at America's occupation of Iraq through the eyes of those who live it first-hand. Charged with building up relations between the U.S. military and the Iraqi people, a team of soldiers strives to make real connections and bridge the divide between two very different cultures. On constant guard from frequent suicide bomb attacks and deadly skirmishes, their situation reveals a tragic human toll.</p>

<p>Realistic/ Historic Fiction</p> <p><i>The Dark Endeavor: The Apprenticeship of Victor Frankenstein</i></p> <p>Kenneth Oppel</p>		<p>Victor Frankenstein leads a charmed life. He and his twin brother, Konrad, and their beautiful cousin Elizabeth take lessons at home and spend their spare time fencing and horseback riding. Along with their friend Henry, they have explored all the hidden passageways and secret rooms of the palatial Frankenstein chateau. Except one. The Dark Library contains ancient tomes written in strange languages, and filled with forbidden knowledge. Their father makes them promise never to visit the library again, but when Konrad becomes deathly ill, Victor knows he must find the book that contains the recipe for the legendary Elixir of Life. The elixir needs only three ingredients. But impossible odds, dangerous alchemy and a bitter love triangle threaten their quest at every turn. Victor knows he must not fail. But his success depends on how far he is willing to push the boundaries of nature, science and love—and how much he is willing to sacrifice.</p>
<p>Science Fiction/ Fantasy/ Dystopia</p> <p><i>City of the Beasts</i></p> <p>Isabel Allende</p>		<p>Fifteen-year-old Alexander Cold has the chance to take the trip of a lifetime. Parting from his family and ill mother, Alexander joins his fearless grandmother, a magazine reporter for <i>International Geographic</i>, on an expedition to the dangerous, remote world of the Amazon. Their mission, along with the others on their team—including a celebrated anthropologist, a local guide and his young daughter Nadia, and a doctor—is to document the legendary Yeti of the Amazon known as the Beast. Under the dense canopy of the jungle, Alexander is amazed to discover much more than he could have imagined about the hidden worlds of the rain forest. Drawing on the strength of the jaguar, the totemic animal Alexander finds within himself, and the eagle, Nadia's spirit guide, both young people are led by the invisible People of the Mist on a thrilling and unforgettable journey to the ultimate discovery.</p>

Science Fiction/
Fantasy/
Dystopia

Dune

Frank Herbert

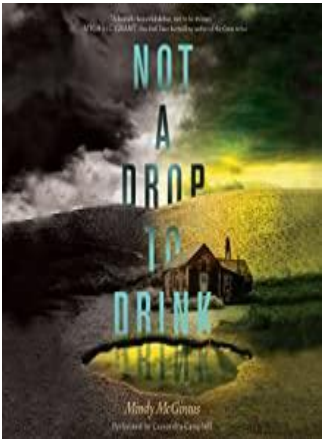


Set on the desert planet Arrakis, *Dune* is the story of the boy Paul Atreides, who would become the mysterious man known as Maud'dib. He would avenge the traitorous plot against his noble family—and would bring to fruition humankind's most ancient and unattainable dream.

Science Fiction/
Fantasy/
Dystopia

Not a Drop to Drink

Mindy McGinnis



Regret was for people with nothing to defend, people who had no water. Lynn knows every threat to her pond: drought, a snowless winter, coyotes, and, most important, people looking for a drink. She makes sure anyone who comes near the pond leaves thirsty or doesn't leave at all. Confident in her own abilities, Lynn has no use for the world beyond the nearby fields and forest. Having a life means dedicating it to survival and the constant work of gathering wood and water, and having a pond requires the fortitude to protect it, something Mother taught her well during their quiet hours on the rooftop, rifles in hand, but wisps of smoke on the horizon mean one thing: strangers. The mysterious footprints by the pond, the nighttime threats, and the gunshots make it all too clear that Lynn has exactly what they want, and they won't stop until they get it.

Science Fiction/
Fantasy/
Dystopia

Scythe

Neal Shusterman



A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery: Humanity has conquered all those things and has even conquered death. Now Scythes are the only ones who can end life—and they are commanded to do so in order to keep the size of the population under control. Citra and Rowan are chosen to apprentice to a scythe—a role that neither wants. These teens must master the "art" of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own.

