



MONROE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Monroe Township Middle School
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As this unprecedented school year draws to a close, some of our traditions remain, and our robust summer reading program is one of them. The Middle School summer reading program focuses upon building a reading life. To promote reading, we invite students to read books of their choice by authors they love. Research tells us that students who regularly spend time reading independently have higher levels of academic success. We also know that in order to engage in sustained independent reading, students should be able to choose what they read. To help narrow the search, the attached recommendations have been prepared by Middle School Language Arts teachers, Ms. Erica Coonelly (Media Specialist), and the youth librarians at Monroe Township Public Library. We strongly encourage parents to take an active role in helping their children select literature, as well as discussing the topics and themes in the books they choose. In order to do this effectively, we recommend Good Reads (www.goodreads.com), Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org), and School Library Journal (www.slj.com). These sites contain synopses, reviews, and recommended discussion points for thousands of titles. The librarians at the Monroe Township Public Library are also valuable resources to help find engaging titles.

Both quantity and quality of books are important. Students should read a volume of text, and also engage actively with their reading. This means exercising the habits of a good reader: discussing what they've read, asking questions, marking the text, keeping post-it notes, maintaining a reading log or reader's notebook, reading and writing reviews of books, having favorite books and authors, reading books in a series, and having reading routines. Listening to books and podcasts is also a form of reading. Students should come to class in September ready to engage in learning activities that will utilize the various books read over the summer.

Books are available at the Monroe Township Library, local bookstores, or internet booksellers. Many titles are also available through Learning Ally for those students who qualify for accounts (noted with *). To promote our summer reading program, an in-store and online bookfair will be held in partnership with Barnes & Noble Princeton beginning June 10th. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you, and have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Kelly Roselle, Ed.D.
Supervisor of Language Arts, World Language and
Media Literacy

Chari Chanley
Principal
Monroe Township Middle School

SUCCESS IS ALWAYS A TEAM EFFORT!!

Suggested Reading

The titles on these pages are organized by genre and feature both middle grade and young adult titles. These are suggestions based upon student interest, recommendations, and award winning books. Students may read any books of their choice. Please review the synopsis provided, and for further details read reviews online or consult with one of our public librarians.

Realistic Fiction

Wink: Surviving Middle School With One Eye Open

Rob Harrell

After being diagnosed with a rare eye cancer, twelve-year-old Ross discovers how music, art, and true friends can help him survive both treatment and middle school.

From the Desk of Zoe Washington

Janae Marks

After receiving a letter from her incarcerated father, whom she's never met, 12-year-old Zoe sets out to prove his innocence. It's the summer before seventh grade, and aspiring pastry chef Zoe sets her sights on perfecting her baking skills to audition as a contestant on Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge. But with bakery confections on one part of her mind, and her father's conviction weighing heavily on the other, this is one recipe Zoe doesn't know how to balance. The only thing she knows to be true: Everyone lies.

*A Good Kind of Trouble**

Lisa Moore Ramée

Twelve-year-old Shayla is just starting middle school. She and her friends, Isabella and Julia, aka "The United Nations" because of their diverse backgrounds, want to stick together just like they did in elementary school. They soon discover that middle school is different and conflicts with friends and crushes ensue. In the midst of the typical middle school angst, a not guilty VERDICT in a legal case concerning a police officer shooting an African American man is announced and Shayla begins to relate to the Black Lives Matter movement in a way she never has before. Shayla, always trouble-averse, ends up challenging her school's administration when black armbands are banned. She grows through the experience and becomes more comfortable in her own skin.

*The Seventh Most Important Thing**

Shelley Pearsall

It was a bitterly cold day when Arthur T. Owens grabbed a brick and hurled it at the trash picker. Arthur had his reasons, and the brick hit the Junk Man in the arm, not the head. But none of that matters to the judge—he is ready to send Arthur to juvie for the foreseeable future. Amazingly, it's the Junk Man himself who offers an alternative: 120 hours of community service . . . working for him. Arthur is given a rickety shopping cart and a list of the Seven Most Important Things: glass bottles, foil, cardboard, pieces of wood, lightbulbs, coffee cans, and mirrors. He can't believe it—is he really supposed to rummage through people's trash? But it isn't long before Arthur realizes there's more to the Junk Man than meets the eye, and the "trash" he's collecting is being transformed into something more precious than anyone could imagine.

Rick

Alex Gino

Rick and his best friend Jeff start middle school together, but Rick is increasingly troubled by Jeff's bullying and homophobia. Rick finds refuge in his school's Rainbow Spectrum club, a group supporting LGBTQ students and their allies, but struggles in his desire to stand up to Jeff. Readers will become familiar with a number of gender and sexuality identity terms alongside Rick. Positive messages affirm characters' various and diverse identities, emphasize the importance of doing the right thing, and encourage kids to find friends and supporters who they can be authentic with.

*Same Sun Here**

Silas House and Neela Vaswani

A twelve-year-old Indian immigrant in New York City and a Kentucky coal miner's son become pen pals, and eventually best friends, through a series of revealing letters exploring such topics as environmental activism, immigration, and racism.

Science Fiction & Fantasy

*The Oddmire: Book One, Changeling**

William Ritter

Tinn and Cole Burton have been raised as twins their entire lives, living with their mom, Annie, in the town of Endsborough at the edge of the Wild Wood, dark woods the townsfolk avoid for fear of the creatures that live there. What Tinn and Cole don't know is which one of them is actually a goblin mimicking the other. As babies, a goblin, Kull, tried and failed to swap a changeling for a human baby, leaving both Tinn and Cole in the human world. Now, almost 13 years later, Kull is attempting to return the changeling to the Wild Wood before all goblinkind and the Wild Wood itself perishes completely. As Tinn and Cole enter the woods in an attempt to cross the murky Oddmire and find out the truth once and for all, they encounter other creatures and must keep an eye out for the Witch of the Wood, all while unaware of a much darker, sinister force that has already sensed their presence. Set in a magical world filled with incredible creatures from folklore, this fast-paced fantasy will keep readers turning the pages as they follow the twins through the dark and mysterious woods.

*Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky**

Kwame Mbalia

Seventh grader Tristan Strong feels anything but strong ever since he failed to save his best friend when they were in a bus accident together. All he has left of Eddie is the journal his friend wrote stories in. Tristan is dreading the month he's going to spend on his grandparents' farm in Alabama, where he's being sent to heal from the tragedy. But on his first night there, a sticky creature shows up in his bedroom and steals Eddie's notebook. Tristan chases after it--is that a doll?--and a tug-of-war ensues between them underneath a Bottle Tree. In a last attempt to wrestle the journal out of the creature's hands, Tristan punches the tree, accidentally ripping open a chasm into the MidPass, a volatile place with a burning sea, haunted bone ships, and iron monsters that are hunting the inhabitants of this world.

The Serpent's Secret

Sayantani DasGupta

On the morning of her twelfth birthday, Kiranmala is just a regular sixth grader living in Parsippany, New Jersey... until her parents mysteriously vanish and a drooling rakkhosh demon slams through her kitchen, determined to eat her alive. Turns out there might be some truth to her parents' fantastical stories--like how Kiranmala is a real Indian princess and how she comes from a secret place not of this world. To complicate matters, two crush-worthy princes ring her doorbell, insisting they've come to rescue her. Suddenly, Kiran is swept into another dimension full of magic, winged horses, moving maps, and annoying, talking birds. There she must solve riddles and battle demons all while avoiding the Serpent King of the underworld and the Rakkhoshi Queen in order to find her parents and basically save New Jersey, her entire world, and everything beyond it...

*Lalani of the Distant Sea**

Erin Entrada Kelly

There are stories of extraordinary children who are chosen from birth to complete great quests and conquer evil villains. This is no such story. Sometimes, you are an ordinary child. Sometimes, you have to choose yourself. This is the story of Lalani Sarita, a twelve-year-old girl who lives on the island of Sanlagita in the shadow of a vengeful mountain. When she makes a fateful wish that endangers her already-vulnerable village, she sets out across the distant sea in search of life's good fortunes. Grown men have died making the same journey. What hope does an ordinary girl have? Inspired by Filipino folklore, *Lalani of the Distant Sea* introduces readers to a landscape of magical creatures, such as Bai-Vinca, the enormous birdwoman; Ditasa Ulod, part woman, part eel; the mindoren, a race of creatures modeled after the water buffalo; and the whenbo -- trees that eat the souls of the dead.

*The Hidden Oracle (The Trials of Apollo #1)**

Rick Riordan

After angering his father Zeus, the god Apollo is cast down from Olympus. Weak and disoriented, he lands in New York City as a regular teenage boy. Now, without his godly powers, the four-thousand-year-old deity must learn to survive in the modern world until he can somehow find a way to regain Zeus's favour.

Graphic Novels

Dragon Hoops

Gene Luen Yang

An introverted reader starts understanding local enthusiasm about sports in his school when he gets to know some of his talented athletic peers and discovers that their stories are just as thrilling as the comics he loves.

The Faithful Spy : Dietrich Bonhoeffer And The Plot To Kill Hitler

John Hendrix

Presents the life of the German theologian and hero, who formed a breakaway church in opposition to the Nazi regime, participated in an assassination plot that targeted Adolf Hitler, and was captured and executed by the Nazis.

Class Act

Jerry Craft

Eighth grader Drew Ellis recognizes that he isn't afforded the same opportunities, no matter how hard he works, that his privileged classmates at the Riverdale Academy Day School take for granted, and to make matters worse, Drew begins to feel as if his good friend Liam might be one of those privileged kids and is finding it hard not to withdraw, even as their mutual friend Jordan tries to keep their group of friends together.

*Speak (Graphic Novel Edition)**

Laurie Halse Anderson

The summer between 8th grade and her freshman year, Melinda is a typical teen. After a sexual assault ends up in her busting the end of a summer party, Melinda is ostracized by her peers because she will not say why she called the police.

*Pashmina**

Nidhi Chanani

A teen travels to India thanks to the help of a magical pashmina! There she seizes the opportunity to learn more about her heritage.

Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina & New Orleans

Don Brown

Presents a graphic account of the events of Hurricane Katrina and its effects on the city of New Orleans and its people, detailing the selflessness, heroism, and courage, while also noting the incompetence, racism, and criminality.

Biography & Memoir

Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers

Deborah Heiligman

The deep and enduring friendship between Vincent and Theo Van Gogh shaped both brothers' lives. Confidant, champion, sympathizer, friend--Theo supported Vincent as he struggled to find his path in life. They shared everything, swapping stories of lovers and friends, successes and disappointments, dreams and ambitions. Meticulously researched, drawing on the 658 letters Vincent wrote to Theo during his lifetime, Deborah Heiligman weaves a tale of two lives intertwined and the extraordinary love of the Van Gogh brothers.

It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood (Adapted for Young Readers)

Trevor Noah

Trevor Noah shares his story of growing up in South Africa, with a black South African mother and a white European father at a time when it was against the law for a mixed-race child like him to exist. But he did exist--and from the beginning, the often-misbehaved Trevor used his smarts and humor to navigate a harsh life under a racist government.

Becoming Muhammed Ali

James Paterson and Kwame Alexander

A biographical novel tells the story of Cassius Clay, the determined boy who would one day become Muhammad Ali, one of the greatest boxers of all time.

Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen

Jazz Jennings

The author recounts how her public experiences have influenced her attitude towards the transgender community, as she works to educate others about transgenderism while navigating the challenges of being a teenager.

*Free Lunch**

Rex Ogle

Free Lunch is the story of Rex Ogle's first semester in sixth grade. Rex and his baby brother often went hungry, wore secondhand clothes, and were short of school supplies, and Rex was on his school's free lunch program. Grounded in the immediacy of physical hunger and the humiliation of having to announce it every day in the school lunch line, Rex's is a compelling story of a more profound hunger -- that of a child for his parents' love and care.

*Ten Days a Madwoman**

Deborah Noyes

An introduction to the life and times of pioneering female journalist and adventurer Nellie Bly recounts how she convinced doctors that she was insane in order to expose the horrific treatment of patients confined in the late 19th-century Blackwell's Island Asylum.

Dystopian Fiction

*The Ballad of Songbird and Snakes**

Suzanne Collins

The prequel to the Hunger Games series - It is the morning of the reaping that will kick off the tenth annual Hunger Games. In the Capitol, eighteen-year-old Coriolanus Snow is preparing for his one shot at glory as a mentor in the Games. The once-mighty house of Snow has fallen on hard times, its fate hanging on the slender chance that Coriolanus will be able to outcharm, outwit, and outmaneuver his fellow students to mentor the winning tribute.

*The Selection Series**

Kiera Cass

For thirty-five girls, the Selection is the chance of a lifetime. The opportunity to escape the life laid out for them since birth. To be swept up in a world of glittering gowns and priceless jewels. To live in the palace and compete for the heart of the gorgeous Prince Maxon. But for America Singer, being Selected is a nightmare. It means turning her back on her secret love with Aspen, who is a caste below her. Then America meets Prince Maxon. Gradually, she starts to question all the plans she's made for herself—and realizes that the life she's always dreamed of may not compare to a future she never imagined.

*The Giver**

Lois Lowry

At the age of twelve, Jonas, a young boy from a seemingly utopian, futuristic world, is singled out to receive special training from The Giver, who alone holds the memories of the true joys and pain of life.

*Among the Hidden**

Margaret Peterson Haddix

In a future where the Population Police enforce the law limiting a family to only two children, Luke has lived all his twelve years in isolation and fear on his family's farm, until another "third" convinces him that the government is wrong.

*Legend**

Marie Lu

In a dark future, when North America has split into two warring nations, fifteen-year-old Day, a famous criminal, and prodigy June, the brilliant soldier hired to capture him, discover that they have a common enemy.

Cinderella Is Dead

Kalynn Baron

Love dystopian stories and fairytale retellings? I've got the perfect new novel for you. Author Kalynn Bayron sets her dystopian story 200 years after the original Cinderella found her prince. Teen girls must attend a ball in order to find a husband, and if none of the eligible bachelors choose them, the girls are never heard from again. For 16-year-old Sophia, the ball seems like a raw deal. She's much more interested in being with her best friend Erin. But since same-sex relationships are not allowed in this world, she makes a desperate decision to run away before her fate can be decided for her.

Historical Fiction

Ground Zero

Alan Gratz

Brandon is visiting his dad on the 107th floor of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 when the attack comes; Reshmina is a girl in Afghanistan who has grown up in the aftermath of that attack but dreams of peace, becoming a teacher and escaping her village and the narrow role that the Taliban believes is appropriate for women--both are struggling to survive, both changed forever by the events of 9/11.

*Flygirl**

Sherri L. Smith

All Ida Mae Jones wants to do is fly. Her daddy was a pilot, and years after his death she feels closest to him when she's in the air. But as a young black woman in 1940s Louisiana, she knows the sky is off limits to her, until America enters World War II, and the Army forms the WASP-Women Airforce Service Pilots. Ida has a chance to fulfill her dream if she's willing to use her light skin to pass as a white girl. She wants to fly more than anything, but Ida soon learns that denying one's self and family is a heavy burden, and ultimately it's not what you do but who you are that's most important.

*Finding Langston**

Lesia Cline-Ransome

Discovering a book of Langston Hughes' poetry in the library helps Langston cope with the loss of his mother, relocating from Alabama to Chicago as part of the Great Migration, and being bullied.

*Echo**

Pam Muñoz Ryan

Lost in the Black Forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and finds himself entwined in a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica--and decades later three children, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California find themselves caught up in the same thread of destiny in the darkest days of the twentieth century, struggling to keep their families intact, and tied together by the music of the same harmonica.

*Code Name Verity**

Elizabeth Wein

In 1943, a British fighter plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France and the survivor tells a tale of friendship, war, espionage, and great courage as she relates what she must do to survive while keeping secret all that she can.

*The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing; Traitor to the Nation (Pox Party Volume 1)**

Matthew Tobin Anderson

Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, from birth to age sixteen, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War.

Mystery and Horror

*Small Spaces**

Katherine Arden

A mysterious book, a watch displaying messages from the beyond, and a bus broken down on the outskirts of a historic farm kickoff this creepy adventure.

Hide and Seeker

Daka Hermon

An innocent game of hide-and-seek goes awry, landing a group of friends in the spooky world of the monstrous Seeker.

*Bunnacula**

Deborah and James Howe

Harold the dog and Chester the cat must get to the bottom of what's going on with the newest pet in the Monroe household. It's a bunny with fangs and unusual eating habits. Could this seemingly adorable but strange bunny actually be a vampire?

*Spirit Hunters**

Ellen Oh

Harper Raine is a 7th grader who's just moved into a new home with her family. From the moment she steps foot in this house, she knows something strange is going on. The place gives Harper a strange sense of déjà vu that she can't explain, and her brother is acting very much unlike himself. It doesn't help that there are rumors that the family's new home is haunted. Harper feels like there's something she should remember that would help her uncover the secrets of the house, but for some reason she's having trouble unlocking those memories. Will Harper be able to put together the mysteries of the house in time to save her brother?

The Forgotten Girl

India Hill Brown

Iris and her best friend Daniel are playing in the freshly fallen snow when they come across something unexpected: the crumbling gravestone of a young girl named Avery Moore. From that moment forward, strange things start happening to Iris. She has vivid nightmares, and she's certain she's seeing the shadow of Avery lurking in the woods. When Iris and Daniel start a school project researching the area, they discover that Avery's grave is part of a forgotten Black cemetery, from a time when cemeteries were segregated. And they become determined to restore Avery's grave to pay proper respect to the young girl and others buried there.

The Absence of Sparrows

Kurt Kirchmeier

In the small town of Griever's Mill, eleven-year-old Ben Cameron is expecting to finish off his summer of relaxing and bird-watching without a hitch. But everything goes wrong when dark clouds roll in. Old Man Crandall is the first to change--human one minute and a glass statue the next. Soon it's happening across the world. Dark clouds fill the sky and, at random, people are turned into frozen versions of themselves. There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, and no one knows how to stop it. Ben must hold out hope that his town's missing sparrows will return with everyone's souls before the glass plague takes them away forever.

Novel in Verse/Poetry

Redwood and Ponytail

K.A. Holt

Told in verse in two voices, with a chorus of fellow students, this is a story of two girls, opposites in many ways, who are drawn to each other; Kate appears to be a stereotypical cheerleader with a sleek ponytail and a perfectly polished persona, Tam is tall, athletic and frequently mistaken for a boy, but their deepening friendship inevitably changes and reveals them in ways they did not anticipate.

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup

Ronald Koertge

When a fourteen-year-old baseball player catches mononucleosis, he discovers that keeping a journal and experimenting with poetry not only helps fill the time, it also helps him deal with life, love, and loss.

*Garvey's Choice**

Nikki Grimes

Preferring science and reading to the sports his father wants him to play, Garvey comforts himself with food and endures bullying before joining the school chorus, where he learns how to accept himself and bond with his father.

Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems

Kristine O'Connell George

Award-winning poet Kristine O'Connell George, author of several successful picture books, now turns her attention to the middle school experience. The first year brings an array of challenges: making new friends, moving from class to class, tests and homework, changing for PE, gossip, school dances, and, of course, budding romance. Short, accessible poems in a variety of forms, but all in a single voice—that of a new middle schooler—evoke the memorable moments of the school year, exploring situations and emotions that will resonate with preteens. Lively illustrations complement this perceptive, humorous, poignant record of an important transitional year.

*Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings**

Margarita Engle

Offers an account of the first fourteen years of the author's life in poems, telling of her time spent between Cuba and her home in Los Angeles, until the revolution in Cuba dramatically alters relations between the two countries she loves.

*Booked**

Kwame Alexander

In this follow-up to the Newbery-winning novel *THE CROSSOVER*, soccer, family, love, and friendship, take center stage as twelve-year-old Nick learns the power of words as he wrestles with problems at home, stands up to a bully, and tries to impress the girl of his dreams. Helping him along are his best friend and sometimes teammate Coby, and The Mac, a rapping librarian who gives Nick inspiring books to read.

Nonfiction

All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team

Christina Soontornvat

In 2018, 12 young soccer players and their coach were hiking through the caverns of Tham Luang Nang Non, the Cave of the Sleeping Lady, when the cave flooded and they were trapped inside for two weeks. People from all over the world worked hard to rescue them. This captivating narrative includes numerous photographs and firsthand accounts.

*The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind**

William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer

Presents a story of how an African teenager built a windmill from scraps to create electricity for his home and his village, improving life for himself and his neighbors.

*On the Horizon**

Lois Lowry and Kenard Pak

From the author of *The Giver* comes this account, written in verse, of World War II and the tragic events of Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor. Drawing on her own time in Hawaii and Japan as well as extensive research, Lowry retells the horrors of war and their effects on soldiers and civilians. Artist Kenard Pak adds illustrations of real life people, places, and events.

The Sea Ringed World: Sacred Stories of the Americas

María García Esperón, Amanda Mijangos, and David Bowles

Originally published in Mexico, this beautiful illustrated collection gathers stories from Argentina up to Alaska, retelling the stories from indigenous and Native cultures.

*An American plague : The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793**

Jim Murphy

Accompanied by black-and-white archival photos and drawn from first-hand accounts, a compelling true story vividly recreates the devastation rendered to the city of Philadelphia in 1793 by an incurable disease known as yellow fever, detailing the major social and political events as well as 18th-century medical beliefs and practices.

Abracadabra : The Story of Magic Through the Ages

H. P. Newquist

An illustrated history of magic and famous illusionists shares step-by-step explanations for eight classic tricks and includes profiles of notables ranging from the oracles of ancient Egypt and the wizards of medieval Europe through the great Houdini and modern practitioner Criss Angel