



Middle School
Summer Reading
2010

*When the last living thing
has died on account of us,
how poetical it would be
if Earth could say,
in a voice floating up
perhaps
from the floor
of the Grand Canyon,
"It is done.
People did not like it here."
-Requiem by Kurt Vonnegut*

The Middle School English department enthusiastically announces this summer's required novels. This year's required novels all center around our efforts to be more aware of the impact human beings have on the earth and its flora and fauna.

*All middle school students will read with their parent(s) The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids by Michael Pollan **and** the following grade level required novel.

Required Reading

(see School Library Journal and Publishers Weekly Reviews on back)

Rising 8 th Grade	Rising 7 th Grade	Rising 6 th Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids</u> by Michael Pollan • <u>Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit</u> by Daniel Quinn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids</u> by Michael Pollan • <u>Scat</u> by Carl Hiassen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids</u> by Michael Pollan • <u>Shark Beneath the Reef</u> by Jean Craighead George

The books can be purchased new or used from Amazon.com (or your favorite online bookstore) and don't forget our public library system.

These books will be used as a catalyst for discussion in all English classes and students will be assessed on their required novels upon returning from summer break. Each student will

need to finish reading their required novels before the first day of the 2010-`11 school year and bring their required novels to class.

Required Reading Novel Reviews From School Library Journal:

(All) The Omnivore's Dilemma for Kids by Michael Pollan: Based on Pollan's best-selling adult book of the same title, this (slightly) shortened version will appeal to thoughtful, socially responsible teens. The book is divided into four sections: "The Industrial Meal" (exemplified by the fact that only two companies, Cargill and ADM, buy nearly a third of all the corn grown in the U.S.); "The Industrial Organic Meal" (covering most of what's found in stores like Whole Foods); "Local Sustainable" (small farms typically based on grass, not corn); and what he calls the "Do-It-Yourself Meal" (where he hunts a wild pig and gathers wild mushrooms). Pollan has done an amazing amount of research, both of the typical kind (there are 16 pages of footnotes) and the more personal kind. His own research includes slaughtering a chicken himself and eating a fast-food meal in a moving car with his family. He explains complicated issues clearly, offers compelling evidence of the environmental damage done by what he calls the industrial meal, and urges readers not to look away from animal-welfare issues: "We can only decide if we know the truth."

Required Reading Novel Reviews From Publishers Weekly:

(Rising 8th) Ishmael: An Adventure in the Mind and Spirit by Daniel Quinn: Quinn (Dreamer) won the Turner Tomorrow Award's half-million-dollar first prize for this fascinating and odd book--not a novel by any conventional definition--which was written 13 years ago but could not find a publisher. The unnamed narrator is a disillusioned modern writer who answers a personal ad ("Teacher seeks pupil. . . . Apply in person.") and thereby meets a wise, learned gorilla named Ishmael that can communicate telepathically. The bulk of the book consists entirely of philosophical dialogues between gorilla and man, on the model of Plato's Republic. Through Ishmael, Quinn offers a wide-ranging if highly general examination of the history of our civilization, illuminating the assumptions and philosophies at the heart of many global problems. Despite some gross oversimplifications, Quinn's ideas are fairly convincing; it's hard not to agree that unrestrained population growth and an obsession with conquest and control of the environment are among the key issues of our times. Quinn also traces these problems back to the agricultural revolution and offers a provocative rereading of the biblical stories of Genesis. Though hardly any plot to speak of lies behind this long dialogue, Quinn's smooth style and his intriguing proposals should hold the attention of readers interested in the daunting dilemmas that beset our planet. 50,000 first printing; major ad/promo.

Required Reading Novel Reviews From School Library Journal:

(Rising 7th) Scat by Carl Hiaasen: Once again, Hiaasen has written an edge-of-the-seat eco-thriller. When their unpopular biology teacher goes missing in a suspicious fire during a field trip to the Black Vine Swamp, Nick and Marta don't buy the headmaster's excuse for her absence and decide to do some investigating of their own. Eco-avengers; an endangered, hunted panther; illegal pipelines in the Everglades; and an underachieving student with the nickname "Smoke" all play a part in this gripping novel. From the first sentence, readers will be hooked. The teens' dangerous detective work, with help from some unlikely sources, and the ethics of environmental awareness are well balanced. The emotion and personal changes that Nick goes through due to his father's injury in Iraq are on their own a worthy study of the struggles that military families are facing today. This well-written and smoothly plotted story, with fully realized characters, will certainly appeal to mystery lovers.

Required Reading Novel Reviews From Kirkus Review:

(Rising 6) Shark Beneath the Reef by Jean Craighead George: The true protagonist here is not 14-year-old Tomas—a Mexican boy who must decide whether to follow the family trade of fisherman or to stay in school, perhaps becoming a marine biologist—but his Baja California home, to which George brings her contagious enthusiasm as a naturalist. Like George, Tomas is a curious, gifted observer, constantly applying his intelligence to new data he acquires as he goes about his tasks. Though the story is told from Tomas' point of view, the third-person narrative allows George to depict him as a part of his environment. Scores make the attempt, but only such rare authors as Wilder, White, and George successfully incorporate such a quantity of "educational" detail, making it truly intrinsic to their stories; here, George appeals to all the senses in her fascinating portrayal of a region undergoing social and environmental changes that challenge humans as well as other living things alike. About Tomas: tension is maintained not only by his impending decision but by the shark he hopes to capture, not--as he supposes--the placid whale shark, but--as the reader knows from the beginning--a deadly hammerhead. In an exciting finale, the shark is caught, and Tomas--coping with a neat twist of logic that engages both his intelligence and his reverence for the old ways--comes to the right decision. Excellent writing; a fine portrait of a unique region; an involving, well-crafted story.



In addition to the two required novels for each grade level, we have listed recommended supplemental reading (by grade level) for *pure enjoyment*.

Supplemental Reading

8 th Grade	7 th Grade	6 th Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Keeper</u> by Mal Peet • <u>The Outsiders</u> by S. E. Hinton • <u>A Mango Shaped Place</u> by Wendy Mass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Night of the Howling Dogs</u> by Graham Salisbury • <u>The Ancient One</u> by T. A. Barron • <u>Stargirl</u> by Jerry Spinelli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>First Light</u> by Rebecca Stead • <u>The Talking Earth</u> by Jean Craighead George • <u>Every Soul a Star</u> by Wendy Mass

