Saint Ann’s Library
Suggested Summer Reading List
for Students Entering 9th Grade, 2020

Ahmed, Samira. **Internment.** Layla lives in an internment camp for Muslim-American citizens. In this dystopian near-future world, book burnings, Nazis marching on Washington, curfews, and Muslims banned from public-sector jobs are just the beginning.

Alderman, Naomi. **The Power.** Teenage girls around the world discover that they can shoot out an electrical current from their fingertips. They soon learn how to harness this power and then they teach older women to access their own abilities. With the advent of this skill, everything changes. Power dynamics between men and women shift and history is rewritten.

Ballard, Chris. **One Shot at Forever.** (nonfiction) The ultimate underdog sports tale. It’s 1971 and the Macon Ironmen, a ragtag high school baseball team from small-town Illinois, make it all the way to the state finals—with hand-me-down uniforms and a hippie-loving English teacher as a coach. This heartwarming—and true—story is so good!

Collins, Suzanne. **The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes.** Yes—there is another book in the Hunger Games series! This is a prequel featuring an 18-year-old Coriolanus Snow. This is all about the early days of the games; it was very different.

Czapnik, Dana. **The Falconer.** It’s 1993 and Lucy Adler is a high school senior in New York City. She is fiercely passionate about basketball and equally passionate about Percy, her best friend and ball-playing companion. In general, growing up is hard to do and growing up in 1993 is no exception.

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Deaver, Mason. *I Wish You all the Best*. Ben De Backer identifies as nonbinary. When they tell their parents, they're thrown out of their house and move in with their older sister and her husband. Ben is doing a pretty good job not attracting any attention at their new school, but then Nathan Allan steps in. Things are not all bad.

Duffy, Damian and Octavia E. Butler. *Kindred*. (graphic novel) This is an adaptation of Octavia Butler’s now classic sci-fi novel that tells the story of Dana, a young Black woman who lives in 1970s California and is mysteriously transported to the pre-Civil War South. In one world she is a free woman while in the other she is entrenched in her familial history on a southern plantation. If you like the adaptation, read the original, also called *Kindred*.

Easton, T.S. *Boys Don’t Knit*. Ben gets in some trouble with a crossing guard and is forced to take a knitting class (better than an auto mechanics class in his opinion). Turns out he’s good at it. But it’s not exactly something he wants to make public. Totally hilarious.

Flowers, Ebony. *Hot Comb*. (graphic novel) Black women’s hair is the common thread in this collection of coming-of-age stories that grapple with issues of race, class, and identity.

Gansworth, Eric L. *Give Me Some Truth*. It’s 1980. Carson, who lives on the Tuscarora reservation in upstate New York, wants to win Battle of the Bands. Only problem is he doesn’t have a band. Maggie wants to be a conceptual artist and has no interest in the traditional beading art her family sells to tourists. Love, politics, growing up, it’s all here.

Grann, David. *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. (nonfiction) The treatment of the Osage Indians by white Americans was cruel, inhumane, and simply mind-boggling. In the 1800s the Osage were relegated to land in Oklahoma that no white people wanted—well, not until oil was discovered. By the 1920s the Osage were incredibly wealthy. They drove fancy cars, built mansions, and traveled. Soon, however, Osage men and women started dying mysteriously. The bodies piled up before any proper investigation was carried out. (Read this before Martin Scorsese’s film version comes out next year.)

Gregorio, I.M. *This is My Brain in Love*. Jocelyn Wu has a plan to save her family’s soon-to-go-out-of-business Chinese restaurant. With her father’s reluctant approval, she decides to hire a summer intern to help out at the restaurant and increase its online presence. Enter William Domenici, the son of a Nigerian doctor and an Italian lawyer. This is a heartwarming foodie rom-com that grapples with issues of race, mental health, and the challenges American teens born to immigrant families face.

Grey, Melissa. *Rated*. Everyone is given a rating between 1 and 100; futures are determined by how high one’s rating is. At Maplethorpe Academy, ratings are public and constantly updated for everyone to see. But then the doors of the academy are vandalized, and the whole system is upended.
Gyasi, Yaa. **Homegoing.** Effia and Esi are two half-sisters—born to the same Asante woman in the mid-1800s in what is now known as Ghana—who never actually meet. Effia marries an Englishman who participates in the Gold Coast slave trade. Esi is sold into slavery and sent to America. Every chapter focuses on a descendant of the original sisters, both in Ghana and in America. Masterful.

Johnson, Lana Wood. **Technically You Started It.** Hayley thinks she’s texting with the nice Martin Nathenial Munroe II, but, in fact, it’s his not-so-nice cousin with the same name. Will they figure it out before disaster strikes? BTW, this light-hearted charmer is written all in text messages.

June, Christina. **It Started with Goodbye.** After being accused of a crime, it looks like Tatum is going to have to spend the summer essentially under house arrest—living under the watchful eye of her stepmother. She can only go outside for community service—where she ends up making a friend who encourages her to work on a new graphic design business. Things start to look up for Tatum in this modern-day Cinderella tale.

Kemmerer, Brigid. **A Curse so Dark and Lonely.** Every season Prince Rhen turns into a monster and terrorizes his people. The curse can be broken if someone falls in love with him. Rhen sends Commander Grey to search for a candidate and Harper finds herself transported to their parallel universe. Cerebral palsy held Harper back in her world, but not in Emberfall. This is a twist on the classic beauty and the beast story. If you like it, read the sequel: *A Heart so Fierce and Broken.*

Konigsberg, Bill. **The Music of What Happens.** Max and Jordan are complete opposites as far as personality is concerned. But they are both gay and they are both spending their summer working at a janky food-truck. Expect friendship and romance with a few larger issues around masculinity and consent added to the mix.

Kuhn, Sarah. **I Love You So Mochi.** Kimi is fighting with her mom. She’s going to art school next year, but much to her mother’s dismay, she wants to focus on her unique fashion creations and not painting. When Kimi gets invited by her estranged grandparents to spend spring break in Kyoto, she jumps on the opportunity. Romance and self-discovery ensue.

LaFevers, Robin. **Courting Darkness.** Fans of Game of Thrones will appreciate this fantasy featuring two female undercover trained assassins from St. Mortain’s convent deep undercover in the French court. Lots of adventure, romance, and medieval intrigue. If you like it, read the sequel: *Igniting Darkness.*

Medina, Tony. Illustrated by Stacey Robinson & John Jennings. **I Am Alfonso Jones.** (graphic novel) Fifteen-year-old Hamlet-loving actor Alfonso Jones is shopping with his crush when a white off-duty police officer mistakes a coat hanger for a gun and shoots him. We meet Alfonso in the afterlife, where he is guided by other victims of police brutality. The pain is palpable as we watch both Alfonso and his surviving family members grieve and fight for justice.
Menon, Sandhya. *There's Something about Sweetie.* Ashish Patel got dumped. His mother decides to set him up with Sweetie Nair, a fellow Indian American. He’s got nothing to lose so he agrees. Sweetie is a track star, a great singer, and too fat to date Ash, according to her own mother. The two decide to meet in secret. Can you guess what happens? Don’t miss Menon’s earlier novel, *When Dimple Met Rishi,* featuring a different Patel brother.

Morris, Britney. *Slay.* Seventeen-year-old Kiera is a gamer who develops a game called Slay. The game is meant to be a safe space for Black gamers—but then someone gets killed in a related incident and things fall apart.

Reid-Benta, Zelika. *Frying Plantain.* The child of immigrants, Kara Davis is both Canadian and Jamaican. Twelve interconnected stories depict Kara’s life from elementary school through high school as she navigates her two worlds. Compelling.


Sheinkin, Steve. *Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team.* (nonfiction) The odds were stacked against Jim Thorpe. Sent to a school designed to erase his Native American culture, Thorpe joined a football team that challenged—and often defeated—some of the best schools of the day. He went on to win two Olympic gold medals and has often been called “the world’s greatest athlete.”

Shusterman, Neil and Jarrod Shusterman. *Dry.* A dystopian thriller that rings true. Due to climate change, poor planning, and corrupt politics, California has run out of water. The situation is dangerous. When Alyssa’s parents leave to hunt for water and don’t return, it is up to her to figure out how she and her brother are going to survive. Warning: This book will make you thirsty.

Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Hearts Unbroken.* Louise Wolfe, who is Muscogee, dumps her boyfriend after he insults Native people. She turns her attention to the school newspaper. The story she is asked to cover is about the backlash provoked by the director of the school musical’s inclusive casting of *The Wizard of Oz.* It seems that dating while Native is not the only challenge—add acting while Native to the list.

Thomas, Leah. *Wild and Crooked.* Kalyn Spence prides herself on her toughness, but when she returns to her dad’s hometown and starts school, she uses a pseudonym: Rose Poplawski. Kalyn’s dad, after all, is in jail for murdering the town’s golden boy 17 years earlier. Gus is known for two things, his cerebral palsy and the fact that his dad was murdered before he was born. Worlds collide in this delightfully offbeat, poignant novel.
Walden, Tillie. *On a Sunbeam.* (graphic novel) Mia is part of a team of restorers tasked with traveling throughout space to repair old relics. All the restorers on board have a past, but Mia’s includes Grace. A compelling combination of space travel and romance.

Westover, Tara. *Educated.* (memoir) At age seventeen, Tara walked into a classroom for the first time. She grew up in the mountains of Idaho with her survivalist Mormon family, largely isolated from society. When an older brother made it out and went to college, Tara decided to break free and try living in the outside world herself. This is her story.

Zoboi, Ibi (editor). *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America.* Zoboi invited sixteen Black authors, “to write about teens examining, rebelling against, embracing, or simply existing within their own idea of Blackness.” Don’t miss Jason Reynolds’ story about three boys walking home from the community pool or Renée Watson’s story about two girls at camp.

**Books to Movies (or TV Series)**

Baldwin, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk.* Tish and Fonny are planning to get married (they have a child together). But then Fonny gets accused of a crime and goes to jail. Justice? Yeah, right. (Watch the 2018 movie directed by Barry Jenkins.)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Never Let Me Go.* Kathy and friends attended Hailsham, an elite boarding school, where they were constantly told they were special. It is only as an adult, reflecting on her youth, that Kathy begins to understand just how special she and the other residents of Hailsham really are. (Watch the 2010 movie starring Keira Knightley and Carey Mulligan.)

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild.* (nonfiction) In 1992 Christopher Johnson McCandless, a privileged young man, gave up all his worldly possessions and went off to live in the wilderness of Alaska. His journey didn’t end well. Krakauer brilliantly tells his story. (Watch the 2007 movie.)

Lee Shetterly, Margot. *Hidden Figures.* (nonfiction) We know about the white men who first orbited the earth and walked on the moon, but do we know about the Black women who helped them get there? This book chronicles the lives and work of four African American women who worked as human computers during the height of the space race. Read the original or the young reader’s edition. (Watch the 2016 movie starring Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, and Janelle Monáe.)

Ng, Celeste. *Little Fires Everywhere.* The seemingly perfect Richardson family (mother, father, and four children in grades 9-12) live in suburban Shaker Heights. Enter Mia, a single mother, and her daughter, Pearl. Mia and Pearl are renting an apartment owned by the Richardsons. The lives of the two families soon become intertwined with sometimes positive and ultimately catastrophic results. Issues of race, class, and motherhood are explored along the way. (Watch the 2020 series starring Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington.)
Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy: A True Story of the Fight for Justice*. (nonfiction) At age 23, Stevenson joined a pro bono legal defense team fighting a death penalty case in Georgia. Since then, he has fought dozens of similar cases, and today runs the Equal Justice Initiative, which opened a museum and memorial honoring the legacy of Black people from slavery to lynching to segregation to mass incarceration. Stevenson illuminates a national crisis and calls on us all to work for justice. This is the YA adaptation of Stevenson’s *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. (Watch the 2019 movie starring Michael B. Jordan, Jaime Foxx, and Brie Larson and the HBO documentary called *True Justice*. )

**Series**

Bradley, Alan. *Flavia de Luce*. Flavia is an eleven-year-old eccentric science prodigy with a penchant for poison, who lives in an ancient English country house. Fearless and unflappable, she pursues clues and solves crimes. Totally fun. Series: *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie, The Weed that Strings the Hangman’s Bag, A Red Herring Without Mustard, I am Half Sick of Shadows, Speaking from Among the Bones, The Dead in Their Vaulted Arches, The Curious Case of the Copper Corpse, and As Chimney Sweepers Come to Dust.*

Chupeco, Rin. *The Bone Witch*. It turns out that Tea is a different kind of witch than other members of her family—she can raise the dead (something she finds out at her brother’s funeral). She and her brother travel to faraway lands to teach her to harness her new powers, but dark forces are rising. For fantasy fans. Series: *The Bone Witch, The Heart Forger, The Shadow Glass.*

Faizal, Hafsah. *Sands of Arawiya*. In an ancient Arabian setting, Zafira hunts to feed her people, hiding the fact that she is a woman. Magic is long gone, and misogyny is rampant. When she is offered a chance to bring back the magic of the ancients, she jumps at the chance. Nasir, the son of the Sultan, is tasked with stopping her at all costs. Series: *We Hunt the Flame, We Free the Stars.*

Hanover, Rebecca. *The Similars*. Emma goes to a boarding school in Vermont. Six human clones show up—one of them has the face of her best friend, Oliver, who just died over the summer. What is happening? The Series: *The Similars, The Pretenders.*

Lewis, John, Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell. *March*. (graphic memoir) Beginning with his childhood as the son of Alabama sharecroppers, John Lewis tells the extraordinary story of his life and the work he did during the civil rights era. Learn about sit-ins, freedom rides, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, the Freedom Summer murders, and the Selma to Montgomery marches. It’s all here. (Volumes 1-3)

Maas, Sarah Jay. *Throne of Glass*. Jumping on a chance to get out of the slave camp, Celaena Sardothien accepts an offer from the Crown Prince Dorian to compete with a bunch of assassins (of which she is one!) for a chance to serve the King, Prince Dorian’s father. If she succeeds, she will gain her freedom in four years. Series: *Throne of Glass, Crown of Midnight, Heir of Fire, Queen of Shadows, Empire of Storms, Tower of Dawn, Kingdom of Ash.*
Shusterman, Neal. *Arc of a Scythe*. Citra and Rowan have been assigned a job they don’t want. They are to be apprenticed to a scythe. In Citra and Rowan’s world, a scythe is the only person who can take life (hunger, disease, and war have been eliminated). Scythes are tasked with population control—a grim responsibility. Series: *Scythe, Thunderhead, The Toll*.

**Feeling Creative? Want to do some Birding?**

*A New Way to Cake* by Benjamina Ebuehi. Were you one of those kids who ogled over the baked confections in the cookbook *Hello, Cupcake* by Karen Tack? Well, take it up a notch with these delicious cake recipes. Ebuehi was a contestant on *The Great British Bake Off* and she knows her cakes! (How about a fig, blackberry and tahini cake? Or a double ginger and grapefruit cake? Yum.)


*Mending Matters: Stitch, Patch, and Repair Your Favorite Denim & More* by Katrina Rodabaugh. Visible mending is fun, practical, and cool. Learn the techniques!

*National Geographic Backyard Guide to the Birds of North America, 2nd edition* by Jonathan Alderfer and Noah Strycker. With this guide you can identify the birds outside your window and down the street.

**Read a Classic this Summer!**

All titles are available in the digital library.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou  
*Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen  
*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë  
*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
*The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas  
*Rebecca* by Daphne Du Maurier  
*The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston  
*Dracula* by Bram Stoker  
*The Lord of the Rings* series by J.R.R. Tolkien  
*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne  
*The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells  
*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X
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**Happy Reading, Love Ragan, Denise, and Hannah**