

## 2008 Summer Reading for Middle School

Dear Students and Parents,

The Fulton County School System strongly believes in developing readers who read both for information and for pleasure. Books on the *Summer Reading List* vary in subject matter and level of difficulty. Our intent is to provide students and their parents with a wide range of authors and styles of writing in both fiction and non-fiction, and to allow students to select reading materials that match their interests.

Lexile levels are indicated for most books, and they address vocabulary and sentence structure. When vocabulary is repeated often and sentences are more simply written, a text has a lower Lexile score. Texts with less frequently-used vocabulary and with complex sentence structures have higher Lexile scores.

However, Lexile levels do not address subject matter. While a text may have a lower Lexile number, the contents could be more mature. The short descriptions with each book title should assist you in your selections.

Enjoy your summer reading.

Fulton County Schools English/Language Arts Department  
Fulton County Schools Media Services Department

## 2008 Summer Reading for Middle School

When available, Lexile Reading Level is indicated

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. **Does My Head Look Big In This?** Year eleven at an exclusive prep school in the suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, would be tough enough, but it is further complicated for Amal when she decides to wear the hijab, the Muslim head scarf, full-time as a badge of her faith--without losing her identity or sense of style. Lexile 850

Abeel, Samantha. **My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir.** In painstaking detail, Abeel recounts her life with a learning disability that made learning difficult especially in math, spelling, and grammar. She writes frankly about her mental and emotional struggles to cope; while she looked like a "normal" child, she was unable to tell time, count change, or remember her locker combination. Aching over missed social opportunities and suffering from panic attacks, she turned to writing, which became her life preserver. (Non-fiction) Lexile 1050.

Alexander, Lloyd. **The Golden Dream of Carlo Chuchio.** Naive and bumbling Carlo, his shady camel-puller Baksheesh, and Shira, a girl determined to return home, follow a treasure map through the deserts and cities of the infamous Golden Road, as mysterious strangers try in vain to point them toward real treasures. Lexile 650

Alexie, Sherman. **Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian.** 14-year-old Arnold "Junior" Spirit, a Spokane Indian, is regularly the target of bullies, and loves to draw. He expects disaster when he transfers from the reservation school to the rich, white school in Reardan, but soon finds himself making friends with both geeky and popular students and starting on the basketball team. Meeting his old classmates on the court, Junior grapples with questions about what constitutes one's community, identity, and tribe. Lexile 600

Barakat, Ibtisam. **Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood.** This moving memoir of a Palestinian woman's childhood experiences during the Six-Day War and its aftermath is presented in beautifully crafted vignettes. Detained by soldiers during an ordinary bus trip, she was prompted to try to recall her shattered childhood and share her experiences with others around the world. (Non-Fiction) Lexile 870.

Bell, Hilari. **Shield of Stars.** In this exciting adventure, Weasel, a former pickpocket, has been given a home and a position as a clerk by Justice Holis. When Holis is arrested for plotting against the regent for Prince E Moran, the 14-year-old sets out to save him, becoming involved in politics at the highest levels. Weasel's schemes to rescue Holis lead him to pretend that he has found a legendary shield that gives legitimacy to kings but has been lost for centuries. When Weasel's deception may be reality, he has to decide what to do with the shield, whom to trust, and what he can do to right past wrongs. Lexile 830

Boniface, William. **The Hero Revealed - The Extraordinary Adventures of Ordinary Boy, Book 1.** Ordinary Boy is the only resident of Superopolis who doesn't have superpowers. His personal hero is the Amazing Indestructo, the self-proclaimed greatest hero of Superopolis. When the Junior Leaguers get the opportunity to help the Amazing Indestructo foil the sinister plans of villainous Professor Brain-Drain, Ordinary Boy realizes that even without superpowers, he can still do extraordinary things. Lexile 890.

Bruchac, Joseph. **Jim Thorpe: Original All-American**. A biographical novel in which Native American athlete and Olympic gold medalist Jim Thorpe discusses his life, focusing on the years he spent at Pennsylvania's Carlisle School where coach Pop Warner first recognized Thorpe's abilities. (Non-fiction)

Buchanan, Andrea. **Daring Book for Girls**. *The Daring Book for Girls* is the manual for everything that girls need to know—and that doesn't necessarily mean sewing buttonholes! Whether it's female heroes in history, science projects, friendship bracelets, double dutch, cats cradle, the perfect cartwheel or the eternal mystery of what boys are thinking, this book has it all. But it's not just a guide to giggling at sleepovers—although that's included, of course! Whether readers consider themselves tomboys, girly-girls, or a little bit of both, this book is every girl's invitation to adventure. (Non-fiction).

Cabot, Meg. **Shadowland (#1 in The Mediator Series)**. Sixteen-year-old Susannah Simon, a liaison between the living and the dead, hopes to be able to live as a normal teenager after moving from New York to California with her mom and new stepfather, but on the very first day at her new school, Suze realizes it's not that easy. There's a ghost with revenge on her mind ... and Suze happens to be in the way.

Carbone, Elisa. **Blood on the River: James Town 1607**. Twelve-year-old Samuel Collier is a lowly commoner on the streets of London. So when he becomes the page of Captain John Smith for a journey to the New World, he can't believe his good fortune. The lush Virginia shore where they establish the colony of James Town is both beautiful and forbidding and it's hard to know who's a friend or foe. As he learns the language of the Algonquian Indians and observes Captain Smith's wise diplomacy, Samuel begins to see that he can be whoever he wants to be in this new land. Level 820

Carey, Janet. **Dragon's Keep**. In 1145 A.D., as foretold by Merlin, fourteen-year-old Rosalind, who will be the twenty-first Pendragon Queen of Wilde Island, has much to accomplish to fulfill her destiny. Prophesied to restore the family name and "end war with the wave of her hand," Princess Rosalind hides a terrible secret: her left ring finger is a dragon talon.

Carman, Patrick. **The House of Power**. The world of Atherton consists of three distinct, interconnected lands stacked atop each other like a layer cake. At the top are the Highlands, home to Atherton's rich and oppressive ruling class; the middle layer is the Flatlands, populated by Atherton's subservient working class; the bottom layer is The Wastelands where none dare venture, for the few that have done so have never been heard from again. When the three worlds inexplicably begin to collapse into each other, and the Highlands and Flatlands prepare for war, it may well be young, insatiably curious Edgar who holds the key to Atherton's survival. Lexile 950

Compestine, Ying Chang. **Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party**. It's 1972 China, and nine-year-old Ling is the child of two doctors. Life isn't perfect, but, Ling is happy, excels at school and loves studying English with her father. Everything changes with the advent of Chairman Mao's regime. Luxurious items like flowered fabrics and pastries disappear.

Anything associated with the West becomes suspect. Then a political watchdog moves into the family's apartment. It is a gripping account of life under Chairman Mao. (Non-fiction.)

Cooney, Caroline. **Enter Three Witches**. After her father is killed for being a traitor, fourteen-year-old Lady Mary, who is a ward of Lord and Lady Macbeth, is sent to the scullery where she works as a maid and uncovers the couple's secret plans. How she grows into a young woman of strength and courage who must face her fate and try to prevent more lives from being crushed by her power-hungry guardians is the crux of this engaging tale. Lexile 720

Couvillon, Jacques. **The Chicken Dance**. When eleven-year-old Don Schmidt wins a chicken-judging contest in his small town of Horse Island, Louisiana, and goes from outcast to instant celebrity, even his neglectful mother occasionally takes notice of him and eventually he discovers some shocking family secrets.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **Elijah of Buxton**. Eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman, the first free-born child in Buxton, Canada, which is a haven for slaves fleeing the American South in 1859, uses his wits and skills to try to bring to justice the lying preacher who has stolen money that was to be used to buy a family's freedom. Lexile 1070

Dahlberg, Maureen. **The Story of Jonas**. A slave on the Hooper's farm, 13-year-old Jonas aspires to become his master's manservant when he grows big enough. Instead, he is sent to accompany the Hooper's ne'er-do-well son to the goldfields in the Kansas Territory. Jonas proves his worth to their companions in the wagon train and, seeing new possibilities for his life, begins to dream of freedom and sets a new course for his future. Lexile 820

Dower, Laura. **Only the Lonely: From the Files of Madison Finn**. Madison Finn isn't sure that she can survive the end of the summer, let alone the beginning of a new school year. Middle school is a whole new world, and with her parents' divorce and new classmates at school, life is all about changes. Madison uses her laptop and the Internet to help her through the trials and tribulations of seventh grade.

Duble, Kathleen Benner. **The Sacrifice**. Ten-year-old Abigail is accustomed to the rigors of life in 1692 Andover, Massachusetts, but the viciousness that arises with the rumors of witchcraft in nearby Salem terrifies her. Soon both she and her sister have been accused and jailed. The inhumanity of these events as well as the deep compassion that probably helped end them is well portrayed. Lexile 720

Flanagan, John. **The Ruins of Gorlan (Ranger's Apprentice)**. Will hopes to become a knight; instead, he winds up as a Ranger's apprentice, joining the secretive corps that uses stealth, woodcraft, and courage to protect the kingdom. His aptitude and bravery gradually earn the respect of his gruff but good-hearted master. When the kingdom is attacked by evil magic forces, Will helps track down and defeat a couple of particularly nasty beasts. The closing episode sets the stage for a good-versus-evil war that will likely be at the heart of future volumes. Lexile 920

Gauthier, Gail. **Happy Kid**. All he wants is to get through seventh grade unnoticed. On the night before school starts, his mother gives him a book to help him counteract his negativity, claiming that *Happy Kid: A Young Person's Guide to Satisfying Relationships and a Happy and Meaning-filled Life* just screamed his name when she saw it. But the book seems to have a plan of its own, falling open to the parts that are pertinent to the zany situations that Kyle finds himself in, although sometimes offering advice that makes his life more complicated.

Graff, Lisa. **The Thing About Georgie**. Georgie is a dwarf, and Andy, his best friend, doesn't seem to care. The two are practically inseparable and even have a dog-walking business together. Overall, life is good. Then Georgie finds out his parents are going to have a baby who may quickly outgrow him. Instead of being depressing, the author employs a light touch, turning in a poignant, often funny exploration of what it means to celebrate one's skills rather than lamenting one's limitations. Lexile 770

Grimes, Nikki. **Bronx Masquerade**. Open Mike Friday is everyone's favorite day in Mr. Ward's English class. On Fridays, his 18 high-school students dare to relax long enough to let slip the poets, painters, readers, and dreamers that exist within each of them. By book's end, all the voices have blended seamlessly into a multicultural chorus laden with a message that is probably summed up best by one student's comment, "I am not a skin color or a hank of wavy hair. I am a person, and if they don't get that, it's their problem, not mine." Lexile 670

Hart, James V. **Capt. Hook: The Adventures of a Notorious Youth**. With his long black curls, a shadowy family tree, and an affinity for pet spiders, James Matthew bears little resemblance to his starched-collar, blue-blooded peers at Eton. For James, sword fighting, falling in love with an Ottoman Sultana, and challenging the Queen of England are all in a day's skullduggery. But when he sets sail on a ship with a mysterious mission, James' dream of discovering a magical island quickly turns into an unimaginable nightmare. Lexile 1020

Hinton, Nigel. **Time Bomb**. The summer of 1949 changes everything for Andy and his three best friends when they find an unexploded bomb buried in the hill where they ride their bikes. Faced with the choice of whether or not to reveal their discovery, the boys take a blood oath that will change their lives forever. Set against a crisply realized backdrop of post-war Britain, this explosive story of boyhood camaraderie follows the four friends as they confront the issues that have set their country, their community, and their lives ablaze.

Hobbs, Valerie. **Defiance**. Toby Steiner, age 11, doesn't want to go back to the cancer hospital so he's not going to tell anyone about the hard marble-sized lump that just reappeared in his side. Instead, while on a country vacation, he's going to ride a bike, view the heavens through his telescope and enjoy being a regular kid. When Toby meets a cow named Blossom and her owner, a cranky, half-blind poet, he falls into a perfect friendship of young and old. From Pearl he discovers the beauty of poetry, and from Blossom he just might uncover the meaning of life. Lexile 640

Hobbs, Will. **Crossing the Wire**. When falling crop prices threaten his family with starvation, fifteen-year-old Victor Flores heads north in an attempt to "cross the wire" from

Mexico into the U.S. so he can find work and send money home. But with no money to pay the smugglers who sneak illegal workers across the border, Victor must struggle to survive as he jumps trains, stows away on trucks, and hikes through the Arizona desert. His journey is fraught with danger. Through Victor's often desperate struggle, Will Hobbs brings to life one of the great human dramas of our time. Lexile 670

Hoffman, Alice. **Incantation**. During the Spanish Inquisition, sixteen-year-old Estrella, brought up a Catholic, discovers her family's true Jewish identity. When their secret is betrayed by Estrella's best friend, the consequences are tragic.

Howe, James. **The Misfits**. Bobby Goodspeed is not your typical 12-year-old. He's probably the world's youngest tie salesman. He also meets his friends at the local Candy Kitchen for regular "forums." When his pals decide they need to create a third political party for the school election, Bobby gets an idea that could really change Paintbrush Falls Middle School. It is an upbeat, reassuring novel that encourages preteens and teens to celebrate their individuality. Lexile 960

Hughes, Mark Peter. **I am the Wallpaper**. 13-year-old Floey Packer confesses that she identifies with wallpaper, "there but barely noticed." She is jealous of her attractive and popular older sister, shares her home with two younger cousins and experiences a summer vacation filled with embarrassing events, with herself as the star. Lexile 680

Iggulden, Conn. **Dangerous Book for Boys**. Intentionally old-fashioned, this eclectic collection addresses the undeniable boy-appeal of certain facts and activities. Dozens of short chapters cover a wide range of topics. Simple instructions for coin tricks and paper airplanes alternate with excerpts from history such as Famous Battles and facts about ancient wonders of the world and astronomy. The dangerous aspect is more apparent in such chapters as Making Cloth Fireproof, and Hunting and Cooking a Rabbit, but also applies to the overall premise that action is fun and can be worth the risks. (Non-fiction)

Lowery, Linda. **Truth and Salsa**. Twelve-year-old Hayley Flynn is spending six months with her eccentric grandmother in a rural Mexican town. Her father recently deserted the family and Hayley's mom needs time to, as she puts it, "work things through." Down in Mexico, everyone calls Hayley by her new, more glamorous chosen name, Margarita, and life is surprisingly exciting - but there are also difficult lessons to be learned such as poverty, unemployment, and the struggles of migrant workers.

McDaniel, Lurlene. **I Want to Live**. Dawn Rochelle has just turned fourteen, and her cancer has been in remission for almost a year. This summer, as she goes to camp, her life seems almost normal again. But when Dawn returns home, she's suddenly tired all the time. Her latest test results show that the worst has happened: her leukemia is no longer in remission. Dawn must receive a bone marrow transplant from her brother. Even with the transplant, she only has a fifty- percent chance of survival. Will Dawn live to celebrate her fifteenth birthday? Lexile 650

McKissack, Patricia. **A Friendship for Today**. The year is 1954, the place is Missouri, and twelve-year-old Rosemary Patterson is about to make history. She is one of the first African American students to enter the white school in her town. Headstrong, smart Rosemary welcomes the challenge, but starting this new school gets more daunting when her best friend is hospitalized for polio. Suddenly, Rosemary must face all the stares and whispers alone. But when the girl who has shown her the most cruelty becomes an unlikely confidante, Rosemary learns important truths about the power of friendship to overcome prejudice. Lexile 670

Moriarty, Jaclyn. **The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie**. Well-meaning and sincere, Bindy is hopelessly clueless about how pompous she sounds and how many enemies she's made. Eventually it becomes clear that Bindy is in deep trouble: her habit of listening in on and transcribing people's conversations has apparently angered someone, enough to make her an attempted murder victim. While completely over-the-top, the murder mystery will have readers going back to hunt for clues they missed. Lexile 780

Muchamore, Robert. **The Recruit (#1 in the CHERUB Series)**. CHERUB agents are all seventeen and under. They look like regular kids, but they're not. They are trained professionals who are sent out on missions to spy on terrorists and international drug dealers. CHERUB agents hack into computers, bug entire houses, and download crucial documents. James is the latest CHERUB recruit. He and his sister were recently orphaned, and James has been in a lot of trouble – but he is brilliant in math - and CHERUB needs him. After one hundred days, the grueling training period is over, but the adventure has just begun.

Nelson, Scott Reynolds. **Ain't Nothing But a Man: My Quest to find the Real John Henry**. Who was the real John Henry? The story of this legendary African-American figure has come down to us in so many songs, stories, and plays, that the facts are often lost. Historian Scott Nelson brings John Henry alive for young readers in his personal quest for the *true story* of the man behind the myth.

Pratchett, Terry. **Bromeliad Trilogy**. In a world whose seasons are defined by Christmas sales and Spring Fashions, hundreds of tiny gnomes happily live in the corners and crannies of a human-run department store until the day a small band of gnomes arrives at the Store from the Outside. The Outsiders deliver devastating news: In twenty-one days, the Store will be destroyed. Now all the gnomes must learn to work together, and they must learn to think -- and to think BIG.

Rinaldi, Ann. **The Ever-After Bird**. In 1851, thirteen-year-old Cecilia has her eyes opened to the horrors of slavery when she accompanies her ornithologist uncle on an expedition in search of the rare "Scarlet Ibis," and watches as he shows slaves the way to the Underground Railroad.

Ruby, Laura. **The Wall and the Wing**. In a future New York where most people can fly and cats are a rarity, a nondescript resident of Hope House for the Homeless and Hopeless discovers that although she is shunned as a non-flying "leadfoot," she has the surprising ability to become invisible. Lexile 770

Schlitz, Robert. **Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village** (2008 Newbery Award). The author helps students step directly into the shoes-and lives-of medieval children in this outstanding collection of interrelated monologues. The book offers students an incredibly approachable format for learning about the Middle Ages that makes the period both realistic and relevant. The text, varying from dramatic to poetic, depending on the point of view, is accompanied by historical notes that shed light on societal roles, religion, and town life.

Schmidt, Gary D. **The Wednesday Wars**. During the 1967 school year, on Wednesday afternoons when all his classmates go to either Catechism or Hebrew school, seventh-grader Holling stays in Mrs. Baker's classroom where they read the plays of William Shakespeare and where Holling learns much of value about the world in which he lives. Lexile 990

Selznick, Brian. **The Invention of Hugo Cabret** (2008 Caldecott Award). Orphan, clock keeper, and thief, Hugo lives in the walls of a busy Paris train station, where his survival depends on secrets and anonymity. But when his world suddenly interlocks with an eccentric, bookish girl and a bitter old man who runs a toy booth in the station, Hugo's undercover life, and his most precious secret, are put in jeopardy. Lexile 820

Smelcer, John E. **The Trap**. In alternating chapters, seventeen-year-old Johnny Least-Weasel, who is better known for brains than brawn, worries about his missing grandfather, and the grandfather, Albert Least-Weasel, struggles to survive, caught in his own steel animal trap in the Alaskan wilderness. Lexile 1100

Smith, Roland. **Peak**. Peak is a natural-born climber. After being apprehended atop the Woolworth Building, he's rescued from juvenile detention by his estranged father, who pushes Peak to be the youngest to climb Mt. Everest. Peak is whisked off to Tibet and finds himself in the complex world of an Everest base camp, where large amounts of money are at stake and climbing operations offer people an often-deadly shot at the summit. Lexile 780

Stewart, Trenton Lee. **The Mysterious Benedict Society**. After passing a series of mind-bending tests, four children are selected for a secret mission that requires them to go undercover at the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, where the only rule is that there are no rules. Lexile 840

Tan, Shaun. **The Arrival**. In a heartbreaking parting, a man gives his wife and daughter a last kiss and boards a steamship to cross the ocean. He's embarking on the most painful yet important journey of his life - he's leaving home to build a better future for his family. Shaun Tan evokes universal aspects of an immigrant's experience through a singular work of the imagination. He does so using brilliantly clear and mesmerizing images. Because the main character can't communicate in words, the book forgoes them too. But while the reader experiences the main character's isolation, he also shares his ultimate joy. (Wordless book)

Van Draanen, Wendelin. **Sammy Keyes and the Wild Things**. Sammy joins forces with some eco-nutty Girl Scouts and heads to the hills for an outing where they find more than they had bargained for, including scorpions, poison oak, and biting flies. Add to the mix an

injured condor and Sammy sets her sight on solving a mystery laced with facts about the near-extinction of this very large, and very ugly, bird. Lexile 800

Vaupel, Robin. **Rules of the Universe by Austin W. Hale.** Thirteen-year-old Austin Hale, an aspiring scientist and disciple of his grandfather, a Nobel Prize-winning molecular physicist, finds himself in control of a powerful energy force that can turn back time and turn his orbit upside down. Austin is sure the sphere of pure light is the key to saving his ailing grandfather. But when he begins to experiment on the people around him, Austin is launched into an orbit where none of the rules of the ordinary world apply. Lexile 920

Winston, Sherrie. **Kayla Chronicles.** Kayla Dean auditions for her school's elite dance team, the Lady Lions, hoping to expose the team's unfair selection process, but when she actually makes the team, Kayla finds herself drawn to the other girls and questions what it means to be a powerful woman.

Wooding, Chris. **The Haunting of Alaizabel Cray.** Thaniel is a wuch-hunter. Together, he and Cathaline--his friend and mentor--track down the fearful creatures that lurk in the Old Quarter of London. It is on one of these hunts that he first encounters half-crazed, lovely, and possessed Alaizabel Cray. Whatever dreadful entity has entered her soul has turned her into a strange and unearthly evil. Thaniel, Cathaline, Alaizabel, and a complement of unlikely heroes join together to save the world. Lexile 970

Woods, Brenda. **My Name is Sally Little Song.** Sally Harrison and her family are slaves on a plantation in Georgia. But when Master decides to sell Sally and her brother, the family escapes to seek shelter with a tribe of Seminoles who are rumored to adopt runaway slaves. After a perilous journey, Sally's family finds and joins the tribe. But while her father and brother easily adjust to Indian ways, Sally can't seem to find her place. Combining the poetry of Sally's songs with the heart-racing tension of the family's escape, author Brenda Woods delivers a breathtaking story of a girl caught between worlds. Lexile 780

Woodson, Jacqueline. **After Tupac and D Foster.** In the New York City borough of Queens in 1996, three girls bond over their shared love of Tupac Shakur's music, as together they try to make sense of the unpredictable world in which they live.

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Feathers.** "Stepped through that door white and softly as the snow," notes sixth-grader Frannie, on the arrival of a pale, long-haired boy to her predominantly black middle school on a winter day. He is dubbed the Jesus Boy by the class rowdy, and the name seems to suit the newcomer's appearance and calm demeanor. Frannie's growing friendship with him makes her start to see some things in a new light. Newbery Honor Book. Lexile 760

Wynne-Jones, Tim. **Rex Zero and the End of the World.** The shadow of the cold war is ever present. Some neighbors and government agencies build bomb shelters, and Rex's angry sister is obsessed with the nuclear threat. But for Rex, the big problem is making new friends as he starts sixth grade in a new place. Lexile 680.

Yep, Laurence. **The Earth Dragon Awakes**. On April 17, 1906, neither eight-year-old Henry nor his friend Ching is aware that the earth beneath their San Francisco homes is shifting. When the earthquake shakes the city and a firestorm breaks out, Henry and his parents scramble in the chaos and battle the fire. Ching and his father survive the collapse of their Chinatown tenement and flee to the ferry through the debris and turmoil. In the midst of catastrophe, the boys realize that their fathers are real-life heroes. Lexile 510