

June 15, 2021

Dear Willow Hill Middle School Student,

Thank you for making last year's summer reading raffle such a success! We had such great responses that we will continue the summer reading raffle again this summer. As with last year, students who choose to complete the assignment will be entered into a raffle for a gift card.

The requirements are simple. We will provide you lists of recommended reading books to choose from. You choose a book from the list and read it. When you are finished reading the book, you will write a personal response. After you turn in your response, your name will be entered into a raffle to win a free gift card!

### **Requirements for personal response**

Middle school students should write a **one-paragraph minimum personal response**. The response must include:

- 1) Your name
- 2) Title and author of the book
- 3) Briefly summarize key problems and events of the book (2-3 sentences)
- 4) Which character was most likeable for you? Why? (fiction) (3-4 sentences)
- 5) Which fact was most surprising or interesting for you? Why? (non-fiction) (3-4 sentences)

When your response is complete, it should be submitted to Mark Hall:  
mhall@willowhillschool.org

Feel free to email if you have any questions, but check the **Frequently Asked Questions** section on the backside first.

Have a great summer and we can't wait to see you in the Fall!

Andrew Petzold-Eley  
ELA Department Chair  
[apetzold-eley@willowhillschool.org](mailto:apetzold-eley@willowhillschool.org)

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **Q: Can I read a book that I have read before?**

A: Expand into new books that you have not read before. If you did enjoy a particular book, look for other titles by the same author, or other books in a similar series or genre. You can also try something completely new!

### **Q: I don't know what book to read. Where should I start?**

A: Think about topics you're interested in. Is there a topic you'd like to learn more about? Consider different genres and styles: Would you like to read a realistic novel about someone like you? Would you like to try a nonfiction book about someone from a different country or time period?

### **Q: Can I listen to the audio book instead of reading?**

A: Listening is not the same as reading. It uses a different part of your brain and uses different skills than reading does. You may pair a "read-aloud" by listening to the audio book while you read along in the text, but you may not only listen to the book.

### **Q: I love reading! If I read fifteen books this summer, can I enter fifteen different times?**

A: Great question, love your enthusiasm. Read and write as many responses as you like, and your name will be entered **up to three times**. This will give you an advantage to win, but also gives others a chance to win, too.

### **Q: What should I write about in my response?**

A: Another great question. See "Requirements" above.

### **Q: Do I have to read it on my own? Can I read it with my mom or dad?**

A: You are welcome to read along with someone at home. Take the opportunity at the end of each section or chapter to talk with them about what you're reading. Try to summarize what happened or make a prediction about what you think will happen next.

### **Q: If my library is still closed due to COVID, how can I get one of these books?**

A: Excellent question! This is a good time to problem-solve. You can purchase books online through sellers like Amazon, or safely purchase from a brick-and-mortar store, such as Barnes & Noble. There are many great digital options as well. Check your local library website to see what digital options might be available for you. Also read the next page for options from the Willow Hill School library...

**School is closed, but the Willow Hill School library is open virtually.**

**OverDrive - The Willow Hill School Digital Library**

**<https://willowhillma.libraryreserve.com/10/45/en/SignIn.htm?url=Default.htm>**

Email Nilima ([njamsandekar@willowhillschool.org](mailto:njamsandekar@willowhillschool.org)) if you need your library card number and pin.

**Sora**

**Sora** is an app that provides thousands of e- and audiobooks on your phone, your tablet, or your computer. You can access overdrive books through the Sora app.

**SYNC**

SYNC offers free audiobooks. Each week, from now through the end of August, two free books will be available for download from the Sora app. No waiting - there's a copy for everyone who wants one. You do NOT need to already have Sora to participate in SYNC. If interested, sign up here:

**<https://www.audiobooksync.com/>**

## **Middle School Summer Reading List**

### **Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson**

In vivid poems, Jacqueline Woodson shares what it was like to grow up as an African-American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, her poems are accessible and emotionally charged glimpses into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Winner of the National Book Award, Newbery Honor Medal, and Coretta Scott King Award Received Seven starred reviews New York Times Bestseller.

### **Listen, Slowly by Thanhha Lai**

A trip to Vietnam did not figure in Laguna, California, girl Mai Le's summer plans! Twelve-year-old Mai (Mia at school) was looking forward to a summer at the beach with her bestie, Montana, trying to catch the eye of HIM (a boy from school), but she's forced on to a plane to keep her grandmother, Ba, company on a trip of indeterminate length. Ong, Ba's husband, went missing during the Vietnam War, and a detective claims to have found a man who knows something about Ong. Mai and Ba stay in Ba's home village, while Mai's doctor father heads into the mountains to run a clinic. Mai's Vietnamese is rusty, and only teenage boy Minh speaks English (but with a Texas accent). The heat, the mosquitoes...even the maybe-relatives are torture. Out of touch with all things American, Mai worries that Montana may put the moves on HIM; and the only girl in the village her age, Ut, is obsessed with frogs. For her sophomore effort, Newbery Honor author Lai delivers a funny, realistic tale of family and friendship and culture clashes. The subtle humor of clunky translations of Vietnamese into English and vice versa are a great contrast to Mai's sharp and sometimes-snarky observations that offer a window into Vietnamese village life and language. A touching tale of preteen angst and translation troubles. (Fiction. 9-12)

### **Legend by Marie Lu**

In this futuristic tale told in alternating voices, the United States has devolved into factions and California is a part of the Republic. The people are oppressed, except for the privileged few, and Day is carrying out a raid on a hospital for plague medicine for his family. Readers learn that he has been fighting against the Republic for some time, with phenomenal success. Unfortunately, his raid ends with a Republic soldier wounded, and Day is also injured while making his escape. The other narrator is June, who is Republic-trained, privileged, and also in possession of remarkable abilities. She vows vengeance on her brother's killer-he is the wounded soldier. June knows about Day, and she also knows that he doesn't kill, so why did he kill her brother? It's a good question, since he didn't. There is plenty of intrigue and underhanded dealing going on, mostly by Republic officials. The mystery surrounding June's brother and the constant recurrence of various strains of plague are solved by the end, with June and Day joining forces to fight injustice. The door is left open for a sequel since June and Day make their escape and head toward the Colonies (the western part of the former United States not including California) to seek aid in their fight against tyranny. The characters are likable, the plot moves at a good pace, and the adventure is solid.

### **White Bird by R.J. Palacio**

Palacio adds another layer to the Wonder universe with this graphic novel debut. Julian calls his grandmother, Sara, to interview her for a class project. What follows is a story of resistance, bravery, and survival, beginning in unoccupied France, during Hitler's rise. While her non-observant, affluent Jewish family is safe for some time, it isn't long before Sara's mother disappears and Jewish students are taken from the school. She escapes the roundup by hiding in the school and is discovered by Julian, an ostracized classmate badly disabled by a childhood bout of polio. Julian hides Sara in a barn near his house, where his family keeps her safe until the end of the war. It is this friend whom her grandson Julian is named for. This compelling story is served well by the graphic novel format; muted background colors and an emphasis on facial expressions center the emotional intensity of the story. The author effectively ties atrocities of WWII to current political issues, ending with a declaration of "Never Again." (Grades 6-9)

### **The Lie Tree by Frances Hardinge**

"On an island off the south coast of Victorian England, fourteen-year-old Faith investigates the mysterious death of her father, who was involved in a scandal, and discovers a tree that feeds upon lies and gives those who eat its fruit visions of truth"

### **Okay for Now by Gary D. Schmidt**

Bad-boy Doug Swieteck from *The Wednesday Wars* (rev. 7/07) -- grudgingly respected for his bravado (he knew 410 ways to get a teacher to hate you) but feared because of his bullying older brother -- is back in a stand-alone story. Readers meet Doug's mean-spirited father, a man Doug dislikes but unconsciously emulates. When the family moves upstate after Mr. Swieteck's temper gets him fired, Doug's discontent mirrors his father's. They live in a "stupid" town, in a house Doug christens "The Dump," and people sit on stoops because there isn't "any boring thing else to do in boring Marysville." But what "boring" Marysville, New York, offers Doug is something unexpected: kindness and a future. He gets a part-time job; meets Lil, a sweet love interest; has teachers willing to teach him (as Schmidt gradually reveals, his need is dire); and, above all, is captivated by a book of Audubon bird prints when a caring librarian helps Doug discover a talent for composition and art appreciation. Schmidt incorporates a myriad of historical events from the 1968 setting (the moon landing, a broken brother returning from Vietnam, the My Lai massacre) that make some of the improbable plot turns (the father's sudden redemption, for example) all the more unconvincing. Still, Doug's story emerges through a distinctive voice that reflects how one beat-up kid can become a young man who knows that the future holds "so much for him to find."

### **Schooled by Gordon Korman**

Capricorn, 13, lives with his hippie grandmother on a farm commune. He's never been to school, never watched TV, and doesn't even own a phone. When Rain falls out of a tree while picking plums and is sent to rehab for several weeks, Cap stays with a social worker and is sent to the local junior high school. There he is introduced to iPods, cell phones, spit balls, and harassment. Cap, with his long frizzy hair, hemp shoes, and serene ignorance of everything most of the kids care about, is the dweebiest of the dweebs, and it's the custom at this school to elect such a kid to be eighth-grade class president (which offers extra humiliation opportunities). The story is told from multiple points of view, adding depth to even the most unsympathetic characters. Korman's humor is a mix of edgy and silly, the plot moves along at a steady pace, and the accessible and

smooth writing style brings all the elements together to make a satisfying whole. The plot is not long on plausibility, but maybe that's not important in this case. Will Cap's ingrained peacefulness and sense of self win out in the end? Will it matter that he's entrusted with writing checks to help pay for the eighth-grade dance, even though he's not clear on the concept of what a check is? Readers will stay tuned to the last page, and Korman's many fans won't be disappointed. (Grades 6-9)

### **When Stars are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed.**

Omar Mohamed was a child when soldiers attacked his village in Somalia. Separated from his parents, he and his younger brother, Hassan, eventually made their way to Dadaab, a crowded refugee camp in Kenya where he now spends his days scrambling for food and taking care of Hassan, who is nonverbal and suffers from debilitating seizures. A chance to attend school is a dream come true, but the opportunity weighs heavily on Omar; school is a selfish choice when you have no parents and a brother who needs constant looking after. Debut author Mohamed shares his absorbing story with absolute honesty, laying bare every aspect of his life's many challenges; even after surviving unimaginable circumstances, he remains compassionate—to others as well as himself. While Mohamed's story is riveting in its own right, the illustrations bring warmth and depth to the tale. Drawing with evident empathy and deep respect, Jamieson captures the many significant moments in Mohamed's life with charming detail. Wonderfully expressive figures convey complex and conflicted emotions, and the rich colors imbue the story with life. Mohamed's experience is unfortunately not unique, but it is told with grace, humility, and forgiveness. This beautiful memoir is not to be missed. (Grades 6-8)

### **Wonderstruck by Brian Selznick**

Ben and Rose secretly wish their lives were different. Ben longs for the father he has never known. Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing heading in the newspaper, both children set out alone on desperate quests to find what they are missing. Set fifty years apart, these independent stories—Ben's told in words, Rose's in picture—weave back and forth with mesmerizing symmetry. How they unfold and ultimately intertwine will surprise you, challenge you, and leave you breathless with wonder.

### **Ghost by Jason Reynolds**

Four kids from wildly different backgrounds with personalities that are explosive when they clash. But they are also four kids chosen for an elite middle school track team -- a team that could qualify them for the Junior Olympics if they can get their acts together. They all have a lot to lose, but they also have a lot to prove, not only to each other, but to themselves. A National Book Award Finalist, a Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award Winning Author. (Grades 5-6 Ages 10 and Up)

### **The Lie Tree by Frances Hardinge**

"On an island off the south coast of Victorian England, fourteen-year-old Faith investigates the mysterious death of her father, who was involved in a scandal, and discovers a tree that feeds upon lies and gives those who eat its fruit visions of truth"--Provided by publisher.

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### **Bone, by Jeff Smith (graphic novel series)**

In this hilarious but action-packed graphic novel, three brothers (Fone, Phoney, and Smiley Bone) find themselves lost in the desert. They stumble into a strange new world filled with locusts, fire-breathing dragons, loyal warriors, and a strange prophecy!

### **Endurance: A Year in Space, a Lifetime of Discovery by Scott Kelly**

Inspired by Tom Wolfe's book *The Right Stuff* (1979), Kelly became a navy pilot and astronaut. Before retiring from NASA, he earned the record for the most total time spent in space, including 340 consecutive days at the International Space Station. This memoir is filled with stories of the daring, patience, and humanity necessary to be an effective leader in space, along with the stress of being away from family. His brother Mark Kelly is also a retired astronaut; Scott tells of hearing about the 2011 shooting of his sister-in-law U.S. congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, from afar and subsequently leading a moment of silence in honor of the victims. While Kelly's story is personal, it's also a cautionary tale about the future of space exploration, especially if deeper investment is not made. VERDICT Kelly's down-to-earth personality, humor, and blog -- SteveKelly.com have earned him a devoted following. Highly recommended to anyone who has an interest in memoirs or space travel.-Beth Dalton, Littleton, CO © Copyright 2017.

### **Wings of Fire by Tui T. Sutherland (Series)**

Five young dragons have been raised under guard by a group of rebel adults; the dragonets are destined to fulfill a prophecy to end the war among dragon tribes. Immediately upon escaping their captivity they are pursued by a wicked dragon queen. Thrilling battles, exciting plot twists, and complex characters will have young fantasy fans eagerly awaiting further volumes in the series.

### **Flipped By Wendelin Van Draanen**

Van Draanen has another winner in this eighth-grade "he-said, she-said" romance told in alternating chapters by two teens who describe how their feelings change about themselves and each other. The first time Juli Baker saw Bryce Loski, she flipped. The first time he saw her, he

ran. That was in second grade. Not much changes until eighth grade, when Juli's enthusiastic infatuation wanes just as Bryce's begins to kick in. Like the author's intelligent, gutsy, quirky heroine Sammy Keyes, Juli is fresh, distinctive, and different. After raising chickens for a science-fair experiment, she can't bear to part with "her girls," and begins an egg business. When she learns that Bryce, fearful because her yard is so unclean, has been throwing out the free eggs she has been giving his family for two years, she is devastated and begins to see him in a new light. At the same time, Bryce learns that Juli's family's devoted care of her mentally challenged uncle is what makes them seem poor. Right from the upside-down chick on the book's cover, there's lots of laugh-out-loud egg puns and humor in this novel. There's also, however, a substantial amount of serious social commentary woven in, as well as an exploration of the importance of perspective in relationships. Well-rounded secondary characters keep subplots rolling in this funny, fast-paced, egg-cellent winner. (Grades 6-9)

### **The Crossover by Kwame Alexander**

Twins Josh and Jordan are junior high basketball stars, thanks in large part to the coaching of their dad, a former professional baller who was forced to quit playing for health reasons, and the firm, but loving support of their assistant-principal mom. Josh, better known as Filthy McNasty, earned his nickname for his enviable skills on the court: ".when Filthy gets hot/He has a SLAMMERIFIC SHOT." In this novel in verse, the brothers begin moving apart from each other for the first time. Jordan starts dating the "pulchritudinous" Miss Sweet Tea, and Josh has a tough time keeping his jealousy and feelings of abandonment in control. Alexander's poems vary from the pulsing, aggressive beats of a basketball game ("My shot is F L O W I N G, Flying, fluttering.. ringaling and SWINGALING/Swish. Game/over") to the more introspective musings of a child struggling into adolescence ("Sit beside JB at dinner. He moves./Tell him a joke. He doesn't even smile..Say I'm sorry/but he won't listen"). Despite his immaturity, Josh is a likable, funny, and authentic character. Underscoring the sports and the fraternal tension is a portrait of a family that truly loves and supports one another. Alexander has crafted a story that vibrates with energy and heart and begs to be read aloud. A slam dunk. (Gr 6-10)

### **King and the Dragonflies by Kacen Callender**

This incredible middle-grade follow-up to Callender's debut novel Hurricane Child (2018) delves into one boy's journey to self-acceptance while wading through the profound grief that has engulfed his family. King, a Black child living by the bayous of Louisiana, is dealt the double blow of losing his beloved older brother while trying to contain an identity he is sure will cause his father to stop loving him. When his former best friend, the gay son of the local sheriff, runs away, the weight of expectations and secrets leads King to examine everything he thinks he knows about being brave, being a man, and being himself. Callender handles these threads with a dexterity that deftly weaves them all together into a cohesive whole and a dynamic tale that will resonate with children struggling to reconcile who they are with what they think society wants them to be. While the adults in this story struggle to adapt to their new reality, their ability to embrace love and assuage King's doubts about his place in his family is wonderfully affirming for children of all identities. (Grades 4-7)

### **Dress Coded by Carrie Firestone**

When eighth grader Molly Fisher becomes fed up with her school's unfair enforcement of the dress code policy, she starts a podcast in protest. Through interviews she conducts with her classmates, Molly educates her listeners (and readers) on how the dress code is enforced almost exclusively through young women, and disproportionately affects those who have developed sooner or more than their classmates. Outside of school, her family is in crisis after they discover that Molly's brother has been selling tobacco vape pods to younger kids on the bus. The issues are timely without seeming trendy, and Firestone's crackling writing makes every day in Molly's life interesting to read about—even one of the most boring events on Earth, a school board meeting. By painting such a full picture of Molly's life, Firestone shows how difficult it can be to simply exist in the world of middle school. VERDICT Hand this first purchase to blossoming activists of every cause; this is a deeply, often scathingly honest work of modern fiction. (Grades 6-8)

### **Sara and the Search for Normal by Wesley King**

King has done it again with this in-depth look into life-altering mental health issues. Sara, who was a supporting character in King's book *OCDaniel*, gets to tell her own story. Sara is 12 years old and has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and schizophrenia. She also is selectively mute; she only speaks to four people in her life when the story begins. Sara's goal in life is to become normal, and she has 154 rules for achieving it. Rule number one is, "Stop taking your pills." We follow Sara as she goes to therapy, faces horrible bullying, finally makes a friend, and faces both setbacks and success. Mental health stigma is still so strong and easy to internalize. The stigma against schizophrenia is especially strong, and this book portrays Sara's symptoms from her own point of view. They are frightening to her, but her symptoms don't make her dangerous to anyone else. There is a teachable moment about the use of the "R word," and child abuse and alcoholism are also discussed. The story is not didactic in addressing these issues, so conversations with students reading the book may be necessary. The one aspect of the book that pushes suspension of disbelief is that it is very rare for someone of Sara's age to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia; the narrative implies that Sara was diagnosed quickly at the age of five or six. (Grades 4-8)

### **12 Before 13 by Lisa Greenwald**

Inspired by the success of their first birthday bucket list, Ari and Kaylan set goals for the new school year but both face challenges that may threaten their friendship.

### **Dragon Pearl by Yoon Ha Lee**

Min is a supernatural creature, a fox spirit, with the ability to use fox-magic, called the Charm, to change her appearance and persuade others to do things. All her life, her mother has told her to avoid using the Charm, as foxes are mistrusted and looked down upon by the rest of society. When an investigator comes to their home inquiring after her brother Jun, who he claims has deserted from his place in the Space Forces, Min takes matters into her own hands and goes in search of him. Her travels take her from a gambling house run by a disowned relative to the ship where her brother was last stationed, the Pale Lightning. The more Min learns about her brother's disappearance, the more she suspects foul play and all signs seem to be leading to the discovery of the Dragon Pearl, an ancient relic with great powers and value. The story's climax features multiple surprises and betrayals, in a quick but unhurried pace. Lee skillfully weaves Korean

folklore into this space opera narrative, creating dynamic and relatable characters. The ending is satisfying, tying up loose ends, but leaving room for a sequel. (Grade 4-6)

### ***The Storm Runner by Jennifer Cervantes***

Fans of Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series, or stories based on mythology in general, will be raving over Cervantes' series starter. Zane Obispo is content exploring the volcano in his backyard with his dog, Rosie, and doing what he can to please his mother, who works hard for little. He's got one foot smaller than the other, and one leg shorter than the other, which complicates things a bit. But then he meets Brooks, a girl who appears after a mysterious plane crash, and she warns him, first, that he's in danger, and, second, that he's destined to release the lord of death, darkness, and despair from imprisonment, and his whole world goes topsy-turvy. Zane is an instantly relatable character: he's frustrated by his circumstances and wants to do the right thing, though he often gets into trouble for fighting bullies or wandering off alone. Cervantes wastes no time getting right into the action, and her conversational tone and suspenseful pacing will keep the pages turning as the tension escalates and the characters face deepening stakes. Plentiful references to Maya mythology and culture are bound to send readers searching for more background info, even with the glossary in the back matter. Don't miss this rip-roaring adventure. (Grades 4-7)

### ***Finding Audrey by Sophie Kinsella***

The author of the wildly popular "Shopaholic" series (Dial) for adults, has a surefire winner in her YA debut. Audrey doesn't go to school, wears dark glasses all the time, and rarely leaves her house. Mum and Dad are gently encouraging and helpful and try to assist Audrey in recovering from her debilitating anxiety disorder, for which she has recently been released from hospital care. Brother Frank is a computer gaming fanatic, and four-year-old brother Felix is a cute foil for the drama going on in the rest of the household. Readers are left pondering why is Audrey so anxious-what happened? Kinsella never explicitly reveals what triggered the protagonist's anxiety. The expert and sympathetic depiction of the teen's symptoms and emotions is the strongest part of the novel. Unfortunately, Audrey's rapid recovery once she meets a cute guy rings a bit false, or at least, too conveniently clichéd, but tweens and teens may enjoy the portrayal of the hasty romance. Sparkling dialogue, carefully developed characters, great parent-child interaction, and a bit of rom-com all join to demonstrate the author's expertise in developing a compelling story. (Grade 7 Up)

### ***We are displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World by Malala Yousafzai***

While Yousafzai's autobiography, *I Am Malala*, describes her life in Pakistan culminating in her dramatic altercation with the Taliban, this book highlights some of the work Yousafzai has done since she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The first part provides additional information on Yousafzai's life in Pakistan with an emphasis on her experience as an internally displaced person and the later challenges of acclimating to life as a refugee in Great Britain. In the second part of the book, readers are provided with narratives from other refugee girls who met with Yousafzai in different stages of her work. These stories depict the lives of girls from all over the world, pushed from their homes for different reasons and yet, Yousafzai highlights consistent themes found in each one. From the Middle East to South America, Africa to Asia, these girls and their families faced the same challenge: leaving their homes and the communities they love. Yousafzai

writes with gut-wrenching detail, showing readers the many complex layers of life as a refugee including the struggle of escape, the frustrations of bureaucracy in the face of mortal danger, and the painful goodbyes along the way. She shines a light on the personal side of this international crisis and pushes every individual to find a way to contribute to the solution. (Grade 7 Up)

### **The Fountains of Silence by Ruta Sepetys**

In her latest historical novel, Sepetys illuminates dark secrets about Francisco Franco's fascist rule of Spain. In 1957 Madrid, 18-year-old aspiring photojournalist Daniel Matheson is staying at the luxurious Castellana Hilton Hotel with his Texas oil tycoon father and Spanish mother. Daniel befriends Ana, a hotel employee, whose attraction to Daniel is constrained by fear about losing her job and by silence about her family tragedies. When Daniel turns his camera lens on local people and places, he captures provocative images of nuns and orphans, infant burials, an impassioned, struggling bullfighter, the intimidating Guardia Civil military police, Ana's impoverished homelife, and his father shaking hands with Franco. Gradually, Daniel discovers that beneath the bustling tourist and business vibe of Madrid lurks the dark realities of Franco's regime: stolen children, sinister church and government collusion, murder of Franco's political adversaries, and the abuse and re-education of surviving children-like Ana and her siblings. Troubled by unanswered questions, Daniel returns to the U.S. with his parents and a newly adopted sister. He revisits Spain with his sister 18 years later, after Franco's death. As he introduces his sister to her original culture, he fondly reconnects with Ana and learns the truth of his sister's parentage. This multidimensional story contains a rich cast of characters with different perspectives, vivid descriptions, romance, and cultural insights. Multiple narrative threads are skillfully woven together. Official quotations from academic and foreign service archives are interspersed among the chapters and document the conflicted relationship between the U.S. and Franco. (Grade 7 Up)

### **American Road Trip by Patrick Flores-Scott**

The past few years have brought many hardships to Teodoro Avila, known as T, and his family. But during his junior year, T develops high hopes for the future. He is enjoying a budding romance, his grades are improving, and his brother, Manny, is finally coming home from deployment in Iraq. But when Manny returns suffering from PTSD, his violent outbursts and bouts of depression are messing up T's plans to get himself and his family back on the right track. As tensions mount and the school year draws to a close, T's older sister, Xochitl, decides it's time for her and her brothers to hit the road. Unbeknownst to T and Manny, she has a plan—but if it doesn't work, there could be devastating consequences. In a story about mending broken ties, making sacrifices, and visiting landscapes and loved ones from the past, Flores-Scott (*Jumped In*) invites readers to follow T on a road trip that brings to life the Avilas' Latino heritage and Manny's disorder. In addition to the book's serious subject matter, it celebrates many things: family love, realized dreams, and the taste of a green chile cheeseburger. (Ages 12 up)

### **We are not Free by Traci Chee**

Fourteen teens form a bond growing up together in California. They go to school, work hard to be good kids in their community, and try their best to find happiness in various hobbies. American-born, they are of Japanese descent, and surrounded by people who do not trust their right to be in the U.S. World War II turns their already strained lives upside down. Taken and

forced into desolate internment camps, these young kids must rally together as racism threatens to tear them apart. This novel evokes powerful emotions by using a variety of well-researched elements to tell the teens' stories, creating a thorough picture of their thoughts and feelings through poetry, diary-style entries, and drawings. As Chee mentions in the author's note, her family experienced the impact of being marked as "other" and therefore "dangerous," and were forcibly uprooted from their homes and incarcerated in internment camps. The novel may be fiction, but it will be hard for readers not to fall deep into the harsh realities these teens face. The writing is engaging and emotionally charged, allowing the readers to connect with each character. (Grade 7 Up)

### **The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo**

Magnificently crafted, Acevedo's bildungsroman in verse is a stunning account of a teen girl's path to poetry. Sophomore Xiomara Batista is simultaneously invisible and hyper visible at home, school, and in her largely Dominican community in Harlem—her body is "unhide-able" she tells readers early on, yet she bristles at how others project their desires, insecurities, failures, patriarchal attitudes toward her. Though she is quick to battle and defend herself and her twin brother Xavier, Xiomara's inner life sensitively grapples with these projections and the expectations of her strict, religious mother. Acevedo's depiction of a faith in crisis is exceedingly relatable and teens, especially those going through the sacrament of Confirmation, will deeply appreciate Xiomara's thoughtful questioning of the Church and how it treats women. Forbidden kisses with a crush and an impromptu performance at an open mic prove to be euphoric, affirming moments for Xiomara: "it's beautiful and real and what I wanted." Acevedo's poetry is skillfully and gorgeously crafted, each verse can be savored on its own, but together they create a portrait of a young poet sure to resonate with readers long after the book's end. (Grade 7 Up)

### **Almost American Girl by Robin Ha**

Ha's touching graphic memoir depicts her lonely first year as a teenage immigrant to America. When her single mother brought her from Seoul, South Korea, to Huntsville, AL, in 1995, 14-year-old Chuna (the author's Korean name) thought it was just another vacation, but she quickly discovered that her mother intended to marry a fellow Korean immigrant, Mr. Kim. Chuna and her mother moved in with Mr. Kim's extended family, and Chuna joined her new step cousins at school. Stranded in a sea of indecipherable English and racist bullies, she realized that the glossy America she saw on television was far from reality. But Chuna began to take a clear-eyed look at her home country, particularly the prejudice she faced because her mother was unmarried, and came to understand her mother's choice to leave Seoul. Eventually, Chuna joined a comic book course and bonded with her classmates. Illustrations include dynamic sound effects and convey overwrought emotion. The sepia-toned flashbacks to life in Seoul at first seem nostalgic, but as the teen reflects on how conservative Korean culture was, the monochromatic scenes feel far more bleak. Ha's all too infrequent fantasy sequences are gloriously colorful, especially the scene when Chuna takes solace in her favorite fantasy universe. (Grade 7 Up)

### **Beverly, Right Here by Kate DiCamillo**

Beverly Tapinski has run away from home plenty of times, but that was when she was just a kid. By now, she figures, it's not running away. It's leaving. Determined to make it on her own, Beverly finds a job and a place to live and tries to forget about her dog, Buddy, now buried underneath the orange trees back home; her friend Raymie, whom she left without a word; and

her mom, Rhonda, who has never cared about anyone but herself. Beverly doesn't want to depend on anyone, and she definitely doesn't want anyone to depend on her. But despite her best efforts, she can't help forming connections with the people around her -- and gradually, she learns to see herself through their eyes. In a touching, funny, and fearless conclusion to her sequence of novels about the beloved Three Rancheros, #1 New York Times best-selling author Kate DiCamillo tells the story of a character who will break your heart and put it back together again.

### ***I am Malala by Malala Yousafzai***

Malala Yousafzai describes her fight for education for girls under Taliban rule, the support she received from her parents to pursue an education, and how the Taliban retaliated against her by trying to kill her.

### ***The Boy Who Challenged Hitler by Phillip M. Hoose***

Hoose (*Moonbird*) vividly recounts the true story of the courageous and brazen teens who inspired the Danish resistance movement in WWII. Angered and embarrassed by his nation's lack of opposition to the German invasion, 15-year-old Knud Pedersen, his older brother, and a few classmates formed the secret Churchill Club (named for the British prime minister they admired). For five months in 1942, club members committed daring acts of sabotage, often from their bikes and mostly in broad daylight ("Arson became our game. We took to carrying a small quantity of petrol with us... stuffing the canister in a school bag "). Hoose's narrative alternates with Pedersen's verbatim recollections (taken from a weeklong interview with him in 2012). Though readers initially may have trouble knowing when Pedersen's quotations end and the author's segues begin, this gripping story quickly gathers momentum, and the shifts between narrators flow smoothly. Archival photos break up the text, while an epilogue details what happened to each young resister after his imprisonment and the war's end. A bibliography and source notes conclude this inspiring account. Ages 12-18.

### ***All's Faire in Middle School by Victoria Jamieson (Graphic novel)***

Eleven-year-old Imogene (Impy) has grown up with two parents working at the Renaissance Faire, and she's eager to begin her own training as a squire. First, though, she'll need to prove her bravery. Luckily Impy has just the quest in mind--she'll go to public school after a life of being homeschooled! But it's not easy to act like a noble knight-in-training in middle school. Impy falls in with a group of girls who seem really nice (until they don't) and starts to be embarrassed of her thrift shop apparel, her family's unusual lifestyle, and their small, messy apartment. Impy has always thought of herself as a heroic knight, but when she does something really mean in order to fit in, she begins to wonder whether she might be more of a dragon after all. As she did in *Roller Girl*, Victoria Jamieson perfectly--and authentically--captures the bittersweetness of middle school life with humor, warmth, and understanding.