

## INCOMING GRADE SEVEN SUMMER READING DESCRIPTIONS

### REALISTIC FICTION

#### **Crossover**~Alexander, Kwame

*“With a bolt of lightning on my kicks . . . The court is SIZZLING. My sweat is DRIZZLING. Stop all that quivering. Cuz tonight I’m delivering,” announces dread-locked, 12-year old Josh Bell. He and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he’s got mad beats, too, that tell his family’s story in verse, in this fast and furious middle grade novel of family and brotherhood from Kwame Alexander. Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price, as their story’s heart-stopping climax proves a game-changer for the entire family.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

#### **The Benefits of Being an Octopus** ~Braden, Ann

*“Some people can do their homework. Some people get to have crushes on boys. Some people have other things they’ve got to do. Seventh-grader Zoey has her hands full as she takes care of her much younger siblings after school every day while her mom works her shift at the pizza parlor. Not that her mom seems to appreciate it. At least there’s Lenny, her mom’s boyfriend—they all get to live in his nice, clean trailer. At school, Zoey tries to stay under the radar. Her only friend Fuchsia has her own issues, and since they’re in an entirely different world than the rich kids, it’s best if no one notices them. Zoey thinks how much easier everything would be if she were an octopus: eight arms to do eight things at once. Incredible camouflage ability and steady, unblinking vision. Powerful protective defenses. Unfortunately, she’s not totally invisible, and one of her teachers forces her to join the debate club. Even though Zoey resists participating, debate ultimately leads her to see things in a new way: her mom’s relationship with Lenny, Fuchsia’s situation, and her own place in this town of people who think they’re better than her. Can Zoey find the courage to speak up, even if it means risking the most stable home she’s ever had?” ~Publisher’s Summary*

#### **I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives** ~Ganada, Martin

*“It started as an assignment. Everyone in Caitlin’s class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. Martin was lucky to even receive a pen-pal letter. There were only ten letters, and fifty kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives. In this compelling dual memoir, Caitlin and Martin recount how they became best friends -- and better people -- through their long-distance exchange. Their story will inspire you to look beyond your own life and wonder about the world at large and your place in it.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

#### **George** ~Gino, Alex

*“George joins the Scholastic Gold line, which features award-winning and beloved novels. Includes exclusive bonus content! When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she’s not a boy. She knows she’s a girl. George thinks she’ll have to keep this a secret forever. Then her teacher announces that their class play is going to be Charlotte’s Web. George really, really, REALLY wants to play Charlotte. But the teacher says she can’t even try out for the part . . . because she’s a boy. With the help of her best friend, Kelly, George comes up with a plan. Not just so she can be Charlotte -- but so everyone can know who she is, once and for all.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

#### **Wait Till Helen Comes** ~Hahn, Mary Downing

*“Since its publication in 1986, the deliciously frightening novel Wait Till Helen Comes: A Ghost Story has not only haunted countless readers, but has also won eleven state book awards. The spine-chilling tale begins when twelve-year-old Molly and her ten-year-old brother, Michael, learn that they’ll be moving to a refurbished old church in rural Maryland with their mother’s new husband, Dave, and their younger stepsister, Heather. Heather is an insufferable brat, but that turns out to be the least of the family’s worries. When she strikes up a friendship with Helen, the malevolent ghost of a seven-year-old girl who died in a mysterious fire more than a hundred years ago, things really heat up . . . and Heather’s unsettling threat, “Wait till Helen comes,” becomes a grim reality.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

#### **The Misfits** ~Howe, James

*“Kids who get called the worst names often times find each other. That’s how it was with us, Skeeze Tookis, Addie Carle, Joe Bunch, and me. Bobby is the quiet one, the chubby one, the kid who just wants to get through seventh grade unseen and unscathed. He hates the names he’s called, but he figures there’s nothing he can do about it—until Addie comes up with a plan. Will her campaign to end name-calling at Paintbrush Falls Middle School change anything? One thing is for sure: it will change Bobby forever.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

### **Finding Aubrey** ~Kinsella, Sophie

*“An anxiety disorder disrupts 14-year-old Audrey's daily life. She has been making slow but steady progress with Dr. Sarah, but when Audrey meets Linus, her brother's gaming teammate, she is energized. She connects with him. Audrey can talk through her fears with Linus in a way she's never been able to do with anyone before. As their friendship deepens and her recovery gains momentum, a sweet romantic connection develops, one that helps not just Audrey but also her entire family.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **I'll Give You The Sun** ~Nelson, Jandy

*“Brilliant, luminous story of first love, family, loss, and betrayal for fans of John Green, David Levithan, and Rainbow Rowell. Jude and her brother, Noah, are incredibly close twins. At thirteen, isolated Noah draws constantly and is falling in love with the charismatic boy next door, while daredevil Jude surfs and cliff-dives and wears red-red lipstick and does the talking for both of them. But three years later, Jude and Noah are barely speaking. Something has happened to wreck the twins in different and divisive ways...until Jude meets a cocky, broken, beautiful boy, as well as an unpredictable new mentor. The early years are Noah's story to tell. The later years are Jude's. What the twins don't realize is that they each have only half the story, and if they could just find their way back to one another, they'd have a chance to remake their world. This radiant, fully alive novel from the critically acclaimed author of *The Sky Is Everywhere* will leave you breathless and teary and laughing - often all at once.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **Hatchet** ~Paulsen, Gary

*“On his way to visit his recently divorced father in the Canadian mountains, thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson is the only survivor when the single-engine plane crashes. His body battered, his clothes in shreds, Brian must now stay alive in the boundless Canadian wilderness. More than a survival story, *Hatchet* is a tale of tough decisions. When all is stripped down to the barest essentials, Brian discovers some stark and simple truths. Self-pity doesn't work. Despair doesn't work. And if Brian is to survive physically as well as mentally, he must discover courage.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **Ghost Boys** ~Rhodes, Jewell Parker

*“Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing. Soon Jerome meets another ghost: Emmett Till, a boy from a very different time but similar circumstances. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey toward recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father's actions. Jewell Parker Rhodes deftly weaves historical and sociopolitical layers into a gripping and poignant story about.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **Orbiting Jupiter** ~Schmidt, Gary (Realistic)

*“The two-time Newbery Honor winner Gary D. Schmidt delivers the shattering story of Joseph, a father at 13, who has never seen his daughter, Jupiter. After spending time in a juvenile facility, he's placed with a foster family on a farm in rural Maine. Here Joseph, damaged and withdrawn, meets 12-year-old Jack, who narrates the account of the troubled, passionate teen who wants to find his baby at any cost. In this riveting novel, two boys discover the true meaning of family and the sacrifices it requires.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **The Wednesday Wars** ~Schmidt, Gary (Realistic)

*“The *Wednesday Wars* is a wonderfully witty and compelling story about a teenage boy's mishaps and adventures over the course of the 1967-68 school year in Long Island, New York. Meet Holling Hoodhood, a seventh-grader at Camillo Junior High who must spend Wednesday afternoons with his teacher, Mrs. Baker, while the rest of the class has religious instruction. Mrs. Baker doesn't like Holling - he's sure of it. Why else would she make him read the plays of William Shakespeare outside class? But everyone has bigger things to worry about, like Vietnam. His father wants Holling and his sister to be on their best behavior: The success of his business depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has so much with which to contend? A bully demanding cream puffs; angry rats; and a baseball hero signing autographs the very same night Holling has to appear in a play in yellow tights!”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **Paperboy** ~Vauter, Vance (Realistic)

*“An 11-year-old boy living in Memphis in 1959 throws the meanest fastball in town, but talking is a whole different ball game. He can barely say a word without stuttering, not even his own name. So when he takes over his best friend's paper route for the month of July, he knows he'll be forced to communicate with the different customers, including a housewife who drinks too much and a retired merchant marine who seems to know just about everything. The paper route poses challenges, but it's a run-in with the neighborhood junkman, a bully and thief, that stirs up real trouble - and puts the boy's life, as well as that of his family's devoted housekeeper, in danger.”*  
~Publisher's Summary

### **A Tree grows in Brooklyn** ~Smith, Betty (Realistic)

*“A moving coming-of-age story set in the 1900s, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn follows the lives of 11-year-old Francie Nolan, her younger brother Neely, and their parents, Irish immigrants who have settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. Johnny Nolan is as loving and fanciful as they come, but he is also often drunk and out of work, unable to find his place in the land of opportunity. His wife Katie scrubs floors to put food on the table and clothes on her children's backs, instilling in them the values of being practical and planning ahead. When Johnny dies, leaving Katie pregnant, Francie, smart, pensive and hoping for something better, cannot believe that life can carry on as before. But with her own determination, and that of her mother behind her, Francie is able to move toward the future of her dreams, completing her education and heading off to college, always carrying the beloved Brooklyn of her childhood in her heart.”* ~Publisher's Summary

### **Freak the Mighty** ~Philbrick, Rodman (Realistic)

*“Meet Maxwell Kane, narrator of Freak the Mighty. He's a timid soul stuck in the body of a teenage giant with size 14 shoes. Haunted by a dark secret in his past, he hides out in his basement room, avoiding the world. But when a new kid moves in next door, Max's life changes forever. The two outcasts form the "normal" world team up to become "Freak the Mighty". Like knights of old, they defend the weak, right every wrong - and solve the mystery of Max's past - proving once and for all that courage comes in all sizes.”* ~Publisher's Summary

### **Peak** ~Smith, Roland (Realistic/Suspense)

*“The only thing you'll find on the summit of Mount Everest is a divine view. The things that really matter lie far below.” (Peak Marcello) After 14-year-old Peak Marcello is arrested for scaling a New York City skyscraper, he's left with two choices: wither away in juvenile detention or go live with his long-lost father, who runs a climbing company in Thailand. But Peak quickly learns that his father's renewed interest in him has strings attached. Big strings. As owner of Peak Expeditions, he wants his son to be the youngest person to reach the Everest summit - and his motives are selfish at best. Even so, for a climbing addict like Peak, tackling Everest is the challenge of a lifetime. But it's also one that could cost him his life. Roland Smith has created an action-packed adventure about friendship, sacrifice, family, and the drive to take on Everest, despite the incredible risk. The story of Peak's dangerous ascent - told in his own words - is suspenseful, immediate, and impossible to put down.”* ~Publisher's Summary

### **Wringer** ~Spinelli, Jerry (YA Fiction)

*“In Palmer LaRue's hometown of Waymer, turning ten is the biggest event of a boy's life. But for Palmer, his tenth birthday is not something to look forward to but something to dread. Then one day, a visitor appears on his windowsill, and Palmer knows that this, more than anything else, is a sign that his time is up. Somehow, he must learn how to stop being afraid and stand up for what he believes in. Wringer is an unforgettable tour de force from Newbery Medal winner Jerry Spinelli.”* ~Publisher's Summary

### **Murder is Bad Manners** ~Stevens, Robin (Realistic/Mystery)

*“Two friends form a detective agency—and must solve their first murder case—in this “sharp-witted debut” (Publishers Weekly, starred review) that is the first adventure in a brand-new middle grade mystery series set at a 1930s boarding school. Daisy Wells and Hazel Wong are best friends at Deepdean School for Girls, and they both have a penchant for solving mysteries. In fact, outspoken Daisy is a self-described Sherlock Holmes, and she appoints wallflower Hazel as her own personal Watson when they form their own (secret!) detective agency. The only problem? They have nothing to investigate. But that changes once Hazel discovers the body of their science teacher, Miss Bell—and the body subsequently disappears. She and Daisy are certain a murder must have taken place, and they can think of more than one person with a motive.”* ~Publisher's Summary

### **Island of the Blue Dolphins** ~O'Dell Scott (Fiction)

*“Newbery Medal winner Island of the Blue Dolphins is considered one of the greatest children's books ever written. This story of survival is as haunting and beautiful today as it was when it first appeared in print. And now, just in time to celebrate the book's fiftieth anniversary, Sandpiper is honored to bring a new paperback edition of this masterpiece to the next generation. With gorgeous packaging and an introduction by Newbery Medal winner Lois Lowry, this version will guarantee Karana's story inspires readers for decades to come.”* ~Publisher's Summary

## **HISTORICAL FICTION**

### **A Night Divided** ~Nielsen, Jennifer A. (Historical)

*“A Night Divided joins the Scholastic Gold line, which features award-winning and beloved novels. Includes exclusive bonus content! With the rise of the Berlin Wall, Gerta finds her family suddenly divided. She, her mother, and her brother Fritz live on the eastern side, controlled by the Soviets. Her father and middle brother, who had gone west in search of work, cannot return home. Gerta knows it is dangerous to watch the wall, yet she can't help herself. She sees the East*

German soldiers with their guns trained on their own citizens; she, her family, her neighbors and friends are prisoners in their own city. But one day on her way to school, Gerta spots her father on a viewing platform on the western side, pantomiming a peculiar dance. Gerta concludes that her father wants her and Fritz to tunnel beneath the wall, out of East Berlin. However, if they are caught, the consequences will be deadly. No one can be trusted. Will Gerta and her family find their way to freedom?" ~Publisher's Summary

## FANTASY

### **Shadow Children** ~Haddix, Margaret Petersen (Fantasy)

"In a future where the Population Police enforce the law limiting a family to only two children, Luke, an illegal third child, has lived all his twelve years in isolation and fear on his family's farm in this start to the Shadow Children series from Margaret Peterson Haddix. Luke has never been to school. He's never had a birthday party, or gone to a friend's house for an overnight. In fact, Luke has never had a friend. Luke is one of the shadow children, a third child forbidden by the Population Police. He's lived his entire life in hiding, and now, with a new housing development replacing the woods next to his family's farm, he is no longer even allowed to go outside. Then, one day Luke sees a girl's face in the window of a house where he knows two other children already live. Finally, he's met a shadow child like himself. Jen is willing to risk everything to come out of the shadows -- does Luke dare to become involved in her dangerous plan? Can he afford not to?" ~Publisher's Summary

## DYSTOPIAN

### **Undertow** ~Buckley, Michael (Dystopian Series)

"Sixteen-year-old Lyric Walker's life is forever changed when she witnesses the arrival of 30,000 Alpha, a five-nation race of ocean-dwelling warriors, on her beach in Coney Island. The world's initial wonder and awe over the Alpha quickly turns ugly and paranoid and violent, and Lyric's small town transforms into a military zone with humans on one side and Alpha on the other. When Lyric is recruited to help the crown prince, a boy named Fathom, assimilate, she begins to fall for him. But their love is a dangerous one, and there are forces on both sides working to keep them apart. Only, what if the Alpha are not actually the enemy? What if they are in fact humanity's best chance for survival? Because the real enemy is coming. And it's more terrifying than anything the world has ever seen." ~Publisher's Summary

## GRAPHIC NOVELS

### **The New Kid** ~Craft, Jerry (Graphic Novel)

"Seventh grader Jordan Banks loves nothing more than drawing cartoons about his life. But instead of sending him to the art school of his dreams, his parents enroll him in a prestigious private school known for its academics, where Jordan is one of the few kids of color in his entire grade. As he makes the daily trip from his Washington Heights apartment to the upscale Riverdale Academy Day School, Jordan soon finds himself torn between two worlds—and not really fitting into either one. Can Jordan learn to navigate his new school culture while keeping his neighborhood friends and staying true to himself?" This middle grade graphic novel is an excellent choice for tween readers, including for summer reading. ~Publisher's Summary

### **When Stars are Scattered** ~Jamieson, Victoria (Graphic Novel/Memoir)

"Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent most of their lives in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is hard there: never enough food, achingly dull, and without access to the medical care Omar knows his nonverbal brother needs. So when Omar has the opportunity to go to school, he knows it might be a chance to change their future . . . but it would also mean leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day. It's an intimate, important, unforgettable look at the day-to-day life of a refugee, as told to New York Times Bestselling author/artist Victoria Jamieson by Omar Mohamed, the Somali man who lived the story." ~Publisher's Summary

### **Ghosts** ~Telgemeier, Rene (Graphic)

"Catrina and her family are moving to the coast of Northern California because her little sister, Maya, is sick. Cat isn't happy about leaving her friends for Bahía de la Luna, but Maya has cystic fibrosis and will benefit from the cool, salty air that blows in from the sea. As the girls explore their new home, a neighbor lets them in on a secret: There are ghosts in Bahía de la Luna. Maya is determined to meet one, but Cat wants nothing to do with them. As the time of year when ghosts reunite with their loved ones approaches, Cat must figure out how to put aside her fears for her sister's sake - and her own." ~Publisher's Summary

### **An Ember in the Ashes** ~Tahir, Sabana (Dystopian)

*“Under the Martial Empire, defiance is met with death. Those who do not vow their blood and bodies to the Emperor risk the execution of their loved ones and the destruction of all they hold dear. It is in this brutal world, inspired by ancient Rome, that Laia lives with her grandparents and older brother. The family ekes out an existence in the Empire’s impoverished backstreets. They do not challenge the Empire. They’ve seen what happens to those who do. But when Laia’s brother is arrested for treason, Laia is forced to make a decision. In exchange for help from rebels who promise to rescue her brother, she will risk her life to spy for them from within the Empire’s greatest military academy.”*

~Publisher’s Summary

## **BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS**

### **Brown Girl Dreaming** ~Woodson, Jacqueline (Memoir)

*“Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she 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, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child’s soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson’s eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become.”* ~Publisher’s Summary

### **The Boys Who Challenged Hitler** ~Hoose, Philip M. (Biography)

*“At the outset of World War II, Denmark did not resist German occupation. Deeply ashamed of his nation’s leaders, fifteen-year-old Knud Pedersen resolved with his brother and a handful of schoolmates to take action against the Nazis if the adults would not. Naming their secret club after the fiery British leader, the young patriots in the Churchill Club committed countless acts of sabotage, infuriating the Germans, who eventually had the boys tracked down and arrested. But their efforts were not in vain: the boys’ exploits and eventual imprisonment helped spark a full-blown Danish resistance. Interweaving his own narrative with the recollections of Knud himself, *The Boys Who Challenged Hitler* is National Book Award winner Phillip Hoose’s inspiring story of these young war heroes.”* ~Publisher’s Summary