



# SUMMER READING

MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

Grades 5 and 6

2021-2022

## NOVEL SELECTION

All students are required to read one of the following novels and should be prepared to discuss it with their teachers and peers when they return to school in the fall.

### ***Blended*** by Sharon Draper

From Publishers Weekly: Timely and genuine, this novel chronicles a biracial girl's struggle to define her identity and find her voice amid personal and societal expectations. After her parents' divorce, competitive pianist Isabella, 11, divides her time between her white diner-waitress mother and her wealthy black father. The constant back and forth and her family's tense weekly exchanges cause her intense stress, as do the microaggressions Isabella experiences regularly. When a history class discussion about student protests and the history of lynching ends with a noose being placed in a black classmate's locker, Isabella's awareness of racist behavior skyrockets, as does her need to define who she is for herself. Draper (*Out of My Mind*) doesn't shy away from challenging or uncomfortable topics; police aggression, gun violence, the complicated nature of divorce, and socioeconomic imbalances are all candidly addressed as real and important parts of Isabella's experience.

### ***Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky (or another book in this series)*** by Kwame Mbalia

From Amazon: Best-selling author Rick Riordan presents Kwame Mbalia's epic fantasy, a middle grade *American Gods* set in a richly-imagined world populated with African American folk heroes and West African gods.

Seventh grader Tristan Strong feels anything but strong ever since he failed to save his best friend when they were in a bus accident together. All he has left of Eddie is the journal his friend wrote stories in. Tristan is dreading the month he's going to spend on his grandparents' farm in Alabama, where he's being sent to heal from the tragedy. But on his first night there, a sticky creature shows up in his bedroom and steals Eddie's notebook. Tristan chases after it--is that a *doll?*--and a tug-of-war ensues between them underneath a Bottle Tree. In a last attempt to wrestle the journal out of the creature's hands, Tristan punches the tree, accidentally ripping open a chasm into the MidPass, a volatile place with a burning sea, haunted bone ships, and iron monsters that are hunting the inhabitants of this world. Tristan finds himself in the middle of a battle that has left black American folk heroes John Henry and Brer Rabbit exhausted. In order to get back home, Tristan and these new allies will need to entice the god Anansi, the Weaver, to come out of hiding and seal the hole in the sky. But bartering with the trickster Anansi always comes at a price.

Can Tristan save this world before he loses more of the things he loves?

**Front Desk (or its sequel Three Keys) by Kelly Yang**

From Amazon: **Winner of the Asian / Pacific American Award for Children's Literature!** Mia Tang has a lot of secrets. Number 1: She lives in a motel, not a big house. Every day, while her immigrant parents clean the rooms, ten-year-old Mia manages the front desk of the Calivista Motel and tends to its guests. Number 2: Her parents hide immigrants. And if the mean motel owner, Mr. Yao, finds out they've been letting them stay in the empty rooms for free, the Tangs will be doomed. Number 3: She wants to be a writer. But how can she when her mom thinks she should stick to math because English is not her first language? It will take all of Mia's courage, kindness, and hard work to get through this year. Will she be able to hold on to her job, help the immigrants and guests, escape Mr. Yao, and go for her dreams?

**READING ACTIVITY**

To help focus their reading and to provide a jumping off point for discussion and other activities at the start of the school year, students also need to complete the "Reading A to Z" activity that is attached to this assignment.

- Write the alphabet on a piece of paper.
- To think more deeply about your text, write a word or a phrase associated with the text that represents each letter of the alphabet.
- **If** you'd like to do more, feel free to illustrate each letter/word as well.

# Reading A to Z

A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	
I	

J	
K	
L	
M	
N	
O	
P	
Q	
R	
S	

T	
U	
V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	