



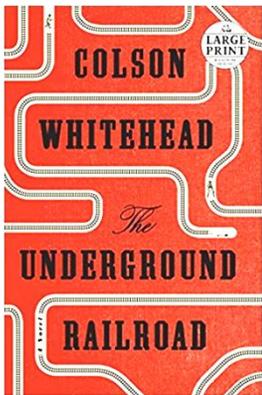
Dear students and parents:

June 2017

Although summer vacation is a time of leisure and recreation, we ask that students read throughout the months of July and August. Whether in fiction or nonfiction, students are asked by the ELA Standards to “analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.” Summertime allows us to choose books we are interested in and enjoy reading them at our leisure while keeping our analytical minds active. Although I have provided suggestions here to help students choose books to read this summer, feel free to choose a book that interests you. In September, all students will participate in classroom assignments related to their summer reading experiences.

## 2017 RECOMMENDED SUMMER READING

### *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead



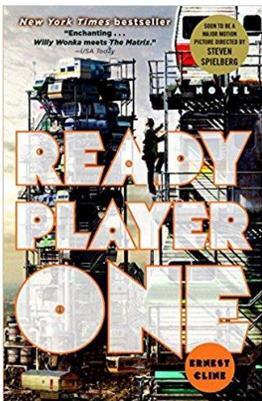
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.  
New York Times #1 bestseller

From Amazon: Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted.

In Whitehead’s ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar’s first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city’s placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom.

Like the protagonist of *Gulliver’s Travels*, Cora encounters different worlds at each stage of her journey—hers is an odyssey through time as well as space. As Whitehead brilliantly re-creates the unique terrors for black people in the pre-Civil War era, his narrative seamlessly weaves the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans to the unfulfilled promises of the present day. *The Underground Railroad* is at once a kinetic adventure tale of one woman’s ferocious will to escape the horrors of bondage and a shattering, powerful meditation on the history we all share

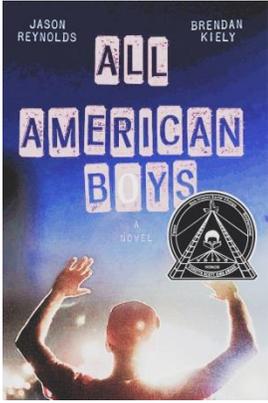
### *Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline



From Amazon: In the year 2044, reality is an ugly place. The only time teenage Wade Watts really feels alive is when he’s jacked into the virtual utopia known as the OASIS. Wade’s devoted his life to studying the puzzles hidden within this world’s digital confines—puzzles that are based on their creator’s obsession with the pop culture of decades past and that promise massive power and fortune to whoever can unlock them.

But when Wade stumbles upon the first clue, he finds himself beset by players willing to kill to take this ultimate prize. The race is on, and if Wade’s going to survive, he’ll have to win—and confront the real world he’s always been so desperate to escape.

## **All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely**



A 2016 Coretta Scott King Author Honor book.

Recipient of the Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children's Literature.

From Amazon: In this Coretta Scott King Honor Award–winning novel, two teens—one black, one white—grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

A bag of chips. That's all sixteen-year-old Rashad is looking for at the corner bodega. What he finds instead is a fist-happy cop, Paul Galluzzo, who mistakes Rashad for a shoplifter, mistakes Rashad's pleadings that he's stolen nothing for belligerence, mistakes Rashad's resistance to leave the bodega as resisting arrest, mistakes Rashad's every flinch at every punch the cop throws as further resistance and refusal to STAY STILL as ordered. But how can you stay still when someone is pounding your face into the concrete pavement?

There were witnesses: Quinn Collins—a varsity basketball player and Rashad's classmate who has been raised by Paul since his own father died in Afghanistan—and a video camera. Soon the beating is all over the news and Paul is getting threatened with accusations of prejudice and racial brutality. Quinn refuses to believe that the man who has basically been his savior could possibly be guilty. But then Rashad is absent. And absent again. And again. And the basketball team—half of whom are Rashad's best friends—start to take sides. As does the school. And the town. Simmering tensions threaten to explode as Rashad and Quinn are forced to face decisions and consequences they had never considered before.

Written in tandem by two award-winning authors, this four-starred reviews tour de force shares the alternating perspectives of Rashad and Quinn as the complications from that single violent moment, the type taken from the headlines, unfold and reverberate to highlight an unwelcome truth.

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For additional assistance selecting books, talk with your friends, parents, teachers, and librarians. Go to our library's website (<https://sites.google.com/a/niskyschools.org/niskymedia/>) for more suggestions. Continue to consult your local libraries and bookstores. Very often you will find featured books, discussion groups, volunteer openings, author signings and recommended reading titles. Go online or stop in and see what books are new and find ways to get involved in the reading community.

Remember that to grow as academic readers, it is important to read on a daily basis. I encourage you to delve into topics that interest you, take up some nonfiction text, read for pleasure. Take time to read this summer. We look forward to hearing about your reading choices when you meet your new teachers this fall.

Sincerely,

Jean Winkler, Director

English Language Arts & Library Media, K-12

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