



Dear Northwest Pre-AP and GT Parents/ Guardians,

In an effort to keep our NISD Pre-AP students in a “thinking mode” throughout the summer and begin the year with the rigor and challenges of a Pre-AP curriculum, students are expected to read one novel from the following district approved grade level list.

The novel should be read in its entirety before school starts so that the student will be prepared to participate in classroom discussions.

Your child will choose ~~one~~ novel from the following approved district selections:

Sixth Grade

*Belly Up* by Stuart Gibbs  
*The Boy on the Wooden Box* by Leon Leyson  
*Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan  
*The False Prince* by Jennifer Nielsen  
*How Lamar’s Bad Prank Won a Bubba-Sized Trophy*  
by Crystal Allen  
*The Lions of Little Rock* by Kristin Levine

Seventh Grade:

*Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson  
*Chinese Cinderella* by Adeline Yen Mah  
*Death Cloud* by Andy Lane  
*For Darkness Shows the Stars* by Diana Peterfreund  
*The Roar* by Emma Clayton  
*The Warriors Heart* by Eric Greitens

Eighth Grade:

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusac  
*Bruiser* by Neal Shusterman  
*Entwined* by Heather Dixon  
*The House of Scorpions* by Nancy Farmer  
*October Sky* by Homer Hickam  
*Shadow and Bone* by Leigh Bardugo  
*Wednesday Wars* by Gary D. Schmidt

Any questions regarding the summer book reading requirements should be directed to the PreAP / GT teacher at the campus.

Sincerely,

Northwest ISD Pre-AP Middle School Teachers

## Story Summaries

### 6th

#### ***Belly Up*, Stuart Gibbs (Mystery and Adventure)**

12 year old Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt Fitzroy has got a murder on his hands and trouble on his tail. Henry, the hippopotamus at the brand-new nationally known Fun Jungle, has gone belly up. Even though it is claimed, he died of natural causes, Teddy smells something fishy and it sure isn't the polar bear's lunch. Dealing with the zoo's top brass proves to be nothing but a waste of time. They want to see any trace of Henry's death disappear like yesterday's paper. So Teddy sets out to find the truth. With the help of Summer McCracken, a feisty girl with secrets of her own, the two narrow down their prime suspects. Was it Martin Del Gato, Fun Jungle's head of operations who hates kids and hates animals even more? Or, was it J.J. McCracken, the owner of Fun Jungle and hates animals even more? Or J.J. McCracken, the owner of Fun Jungle and Summer's father, who has more concern for the dough he's raking in than the animals in the zoo? As their investigation goes on, Teddy gets squeezed on all sides to quit asking questions or Henry won't be the only animal in the zoo to turn up dead.

#### ***The Boy on the Wooden Box*, Leon Leyson (Memoir)**

Leon Leyson (born Leib Lezjon) was only ten years old when the Nazis invaded Poland and his family was forced to relocate to the Krakow ghetto. With incredible luck, perseverance, and grit, Leyson was able to survive the sadism of the Nazis, including that of the demonic Amon Goeth, commandant of Plaszow, the concentration camp outside Krakow. Ultimately, it was the generosity and cunning of one man, a man named Oskar Schindler, who saved Leon Leyson's life, and the lives of his mother, his father, and two of his four siblings, by adding their names to his list of workers in his factory—a list that became world renowned: Schindler's List.

#### ***Counting by 7's*, Holly Goldberg Sloan (Realistic Fiction)**

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now.

Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is *not* a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read.

#### ***The False Prince*, Jennifer Nielsen (Action/Adventure)**

In this first book in a remarkable trilogy, an orphan is forced into a twisted game with deadly stakes. Choose to lie...or choose to die.

In a discontent kingdom, civil war is brewing. To unify the divided people, Conner, a nobleman of the court, devises a cunning plan to find an impersonator of the king's long-lost son and install him as a puppet prince. Four orphans are recruited to compete for the role, including a defiant boy named Sage. Sage knows that Conner's motives are more than questionable, yet his life balances on a sword's point -- he must be chosen to play the prince or he will certainly be killed. But Sage's rivals have their own agendas as well. As Sage moves from a rundown orphanage to Conner's sumptuous palace, layer upon layer of treachery and deceit unfold, until finally, a truth is revealed that, in the end, may very well prove more dangerous than all of the lies taken together. An extraordinary adventure filled with danger and action, lies and deadly truths that will have readers clinging to the edge of their seats.

#### ***How Lamar's Bad Prank Won a Bubba-Sized Trophy*, Crystal Allen (Realistic Fiction)**

Thirteen-year-old Lamar Washington is the maddest, baddest, most spectacular bowler at Striker's Bowling Paradise. But while Lamar's a whiz at rolling strikes, he always strikes out with girls. And Lamar's brother is no help—Xavier earns trophy after trophy on the basketball court and soaks up Dad's attention, leaving no room for Lamar's problem. Then bad boy Billy Jenks convinces Lamar that hustling at the alley will help him win his dream girl, plus earn him enough money to buy an expensive pro ball and impress celebrity bowler Bubba Sanders. But when Billy's scheme goes awry, Lamar ends up ruining his brother's shot at college and damaging every relationship in his life. Can Lamar figure out how to mend his broken ties, no matter what the cost?

#### ***The Lions of Little Rock*, Kristen Levine (Historical Fiction)**

As twelve-year-old Marlee starts middle school in 1958 Little Rock, it feels like her whole world is falling apart. Until she meets Liz, the new girl at school. Liz is everything Marlee wishes she could be: she's brave, brash and always knows the right thing to say. But when Liz leaves school without even a good-bye, the rumor is that Liz was caught passing for white. Marlee decides that doesn't matter. She just wants her friend back. And to stay friends, Marlee and Liz are even willing to take on segregation and the dangers their friendship could bring to both their families.

### 7th

#### ***Chains*, Laurie Halse Anderson (Historical Fiction)**

As the Revolutionary War begins, thirteen-year-old Isabel wages her own fight...for freedom. Promised freedom upon the death of their owner, she and her sister, Ruth, in a cruel twist of fate become the property of a malicious New York City couple, the Locktons, who have no sympathy for the American Revolution and even less for Ruth and Isabel. When Isabel meets Curzon, a slave with ties to the Patriots, he encourages her to spy on her owners, who know details of British plans for invasion. She is reluctant at first, but when the unthinkable happens to Ruth, Isabel realizes her loyalty is available to the bidder who can provide her with freedom.

#### ***Chinese Cinderella*, Adeline Yen Mah (Autobiography)**

A Chinese proverb says, "Falling leaves return to their roots." In *Chinese Cinderella*, Adeline Yen Mah returns to her roots to tell the story of her painful childhood and her ultimate triumph and courage in the face of despair. Adeline's affluent, powerful family considers her bad luck after her mother dies giving birth to her. Life does not get any easier when her father remarries. She and her siblings are subjected to the disdain of her stepmother, while her stepbrother and stepsister are spoiled. Although Adeline wins prizes at school, they are not enough to compensate for what she really yearns for -- the love and understanding of her family.

***Death Cloud*, Andrew Lane (Historical Fiction)**

In 1868, with his army officer father suddenly posted to India, and his mother mysteriously “unwell,” fourteen-year-old Sherlock Holmes is sent to stay with his eccentric uncle and aunt in their vast house in Farnham, where he uncovers his first murder and a diabolical villain set to destroy everything he holds dear.

***For Darkness Shows the Stars*, Diana Peterfreund (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

In the dystopian setting of *For Darkness Shows the Stars*, a genetic experiment has devastated humanity. In the aftermath, a new class system placed anti-technology Luddites in absolute power over vast estates—and any survivors living there. Elliot North is a dutiful Luddite and a dutiful daughter who runs her father’s estate. When the boy she loved, Kai, a servant, asked her to run away with him four years ago, she refused, although it broke her heart. Now Kai is back. And while Elliot longs for a second chance with her first love, she knows it could mean betraying everything she’s been raised to believe is right.

***The Roar*, Emma Clayton (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

In an overpopulated futuristic world where all signs of nature are gone and a wall keeps out plague-ridden animals, 12-year-old Mika refuses to believe his twin sister was killed after being abducted, and continues to search for her in spite of the dangers. His search reveals some unexpected secrets.

***The Warrior’s Heart*, Eric Greitens (Non- Fiction/ Memoir)**

In this adaptation of his best-selling book, *The Heart and the Fist*, Eric speaks directly to teen readers, interweaving memoir and intimate second-person narratives that ask the reader to put themselves in the shoes of him and others. Readers will share in Eric’s evolution from average kid to globe-traveling humanitarian to warrior, training and serving with the most elite military outfit in the world: the Navy SEALs. Along the way, they’ll be asked to consider the power of choices, of making the decision each and every day to act with courage and compassion so that they grow to be tomorrow’s heroes. Sure to inspire and motivate.

## 8th

***The Book Thief*, Markus Zusac (Historical Fiction)**

It is 1939. Nazi Germany. The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can’t resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

***Bruiser*, Neal Shusterman (Realistic Fiction)**

Tennyson: Don’t get me started on the Bruiser. He was voted “Most Likely to Get the Death Penalty” by the entire school. He’s the kid no one knows, no one talks to, and everyone hears disturbing rumors about. So why is my sister, Brontë, dating him? One of these days she’s going to take in the wrong stray dog, and it’s not going to end well.

Brontë: My brother has no right to talk about Brewster that way—no right to threaten him. There’s a reason why Brewster can’t have friends—why he can’t care about too many people. Because when he cares about you, things start to happen. Impossible things that can’t be explained. I know, because they’re happening to me.

***Entwined*, Heather Dixon (Fantasy)**

Azalea is trapped. Just when she should feel that everything is before her . . . beautiful gowns, dashing suitors, balls filled with dancing. . . it’s taken away. All of it. She is confined to a dreary castle while mourning her mother’s death. The Keeper understands. He’s trapped, too, held for centuries within the walls of the palace. And so he extends an invitation. Every night, Azalea and her eleven sisters may step through the enchanted passage in their room to dance in his silver forest. But there is a cost. The Keeper likes to keep things. Azalea may not realize how tangled she is in his web until it is too late. The thrilling escape of the nightly dance soon becomes nightmarish.

***The House of the Scorpion*, Nancy Farmer (Science Fiction/ Dystopian)**

Matteo Alacran was not born; he was harvested. His DNA came from El Patron, lord of a country called Opium — a strip of poppy fields lying between the United States and what was once called Mexico. Matt’s first cell split and divided inside a petri dish. Then he was placed in the womb of a cow, where he continued the miraculous journey from embryo to fetus to baby. He is a boy now, but most consider him a monster — except for El Patron.

***October Sky*, Homer Hickam (Memoir/ Non-Fiction)**

It was 1957, the year Sputnik raced across the Appalachian sky, and the small town of Coalwood, West Virginia, was slowly dying. Faced with an uncertain future, Homer Hickam nurtured a dream: to send rockets into outer space. The introspective son of the mine’s superintendent and a mother determined to get him out of Coalwood forever, Homer fell in with a group of misfits who learned not only how to turn scraps of metal into sophisticated rockets but how to sustain their hope in a town that swallowed its men alive. As the boys began to light up the tarry skies with their flaming projectiles and dreams of glory, Coalwood, and the Hickams, would never be the same. Looking back after a distinguished NASA career, Hickam shares the story of his youth in a coal mining town.

***Shadow and Bone*, Leigh Bardugo (Fantasy)**

Surrounded by enemies, the once-great nation of Ravka has been torn in two by the Shadow Fold, a swath of near impenetrable darkness crawling with monsters. Now its fate may rest on the shoulders of one lonely refugee. Alina Starkov has never been good at anything. But when her regiment is attacked on the Fold and her best friend is brutally injured, Alina reveals a dormant power that saves his life—a power that could be the key to setting her war-ravaged country free. Wrenched from everything she knows, Alina is whisked away to the royal court to be trained as a member of the Grisha, the magical elite led by the mysterious Darkling. Yet nothing in this lavish world is what it seems. With darkness looming and an entire kingdom depending on her untamed power, Alina will have to confront the secrets of the Grisha . . . and the secrets of her heart.

***The Wednesday Wars*, Gary D. Schmidt (Historical Fiction)**

Holling Hoodhood is really in for it. He's just started seventh grade with Mrs. Baker, a teacher he knows is out to get him. Why else would she make him read Shakespeare . . . outside of class? The year is 1967, and everyone has bigger things than homework to worry about. There's Vietnam for one thing, and then there's the family business. As far as Holling's father is concerned, nothing is more important than the family business. In fact, all of the Hoodhoods must be on their best behavior at all times. The success of Hoodhood and Associates depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has Mrs. Baker to contend with?