

Summer Reading List – Incoming 9th Graders (Class of 2026)

Theme: New Journeys Bishop Hendricken High School

Directions: All students are expected to read during the summer in preparation for their English class. All CP and CP1 students are to read one book from the list of 6 choices below, and all honors students are to read two books from the list. Students can expect a summer reading test during the first week of classes.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Ms. Melissa Andrews, English department chairperson, at MAAndrews@Hendricken.com

1) **Fallout by Steve Sheinkin (Nonfiction)**

“As World War II comes to a close, the United States and the Soviet Union emerge as the two greatest world powers on extreme opposites of the political spectrum. After the United States showed its hand with the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, the Soviets refuse to be left behind. With communism sweeping the globe, the two nations begin a neck-and-neck competition to build even more destructive bombs and conquer the Space Race. In their battle for dominance, spy planes fly above, armed submarines swim deep below, and undercover agents meet in the dead of night.”

2) **The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom (Fiction)**

“Eddie is a grizzled war veteran who feels trapped in a meaningless life of fixing rides at a seaside amusement park. As the park has changed over the years — from the Loop-the-Loop to the Pipeline Plunge — so, too, has Eddie changed, from optimistic youth to embittered old age. His days are a dull routine of work, loneliness, and regret. Then, on his 83rd birthday, Eddie dies in a tragic accident, trying to save a little girl from a falling cart. With his final breath, he feels two small hands in his — and then nothing. He awakens in the afterlife, where he learns that heaven is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a place where your earthly life is explained to you by five people who were in it. These people may have been loved ones or distant strangers. Yet each of them changed your path forever. One by one, Eddie’s five people illuminate the unseen connections of his earthly life. As the story builds to its stunning conclusion, Eddie desperately seeks redemption in the still-unknown last act of his life: Was it a heroic success or a devastating failure? The answer, which comes from the most unlikely of sources, is as inspirational as a glimpse of heaven itself.”

3) **Scythe by Neal Shusterman (Fiction)**

“A dark, gripping and witty thriller in which the only thing humanity has control over is death. In a world where disease, war and crime have been eliminated, the only way to die is to be randomly killed (“gleaned”) by professional scythes. Citra and Rowan are teenagers who have been selected to be scythes’ apprentices, and despite wanting nothing to do with the vocation, they must learn the art of killing and understand the necessity of what they do. Only one of them will be chosen as a scythe’s apprentice and as Citra and Rowan come up against a terrifyingly corrupt Scythedom, it becomes clear that the winning apprentice’s first task will be to glean the loser.”

4) The Last Cuentista by Donna Barba Higuera (Fiction)

“Había una vez . . .

There lived a girl named Petra Peña, who wanted nothing more than to be a storyteller, like her abuelita. But Petra's world is ending. Earth has been destroyed by a comet, and only a few hundred scientists and their children – among them Petra and her family – have been chosen to journey to a new planet. They are the ones who must carry on the human race. Hundreds of years later, Petra wakes to this new planet – and the discovery that she is the only person who remembers Earth. A sinister Collective has taken over the ship during its journey, bent on erasing the sins of humanity's past. They have systematically purged the memories of all aboard – or purged them altogether. Petra alone now carries the stories of our past, and with them, any hope for our future. Can she make them live again?”

5) Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos (Nonfiction)

“In the summer of 1971, Jack Gantos was an aspiring writer looking for adventure, cash for college tuition, and a way out of a dead-end job. For ten thousand dollars, he recklessly agreed to help sail a sixty-foot yacht loaded with a ton of hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City, where he and his partners sold the drug until federal agents caught up with them. For his part in the conspiracy, Gantos was sentenced to serve up to six years in prison. In *Hole in My Life*, this prizewinning author of over thirty books for young people confronts the period of struggle and confinement that marked the end of his own youth. On the surface, the narrative tumbles from one crazed moment to the next as Gantos pieces together the story of his restless final year of high school, his short-lived career as a criminal, and his time in prison. But running just beneath the action is the story of how Gantos – once he was locked up in a small, yellow-walled cell – moved from wanting to be a writer to writing, and how dedicating himself more fully to the thing he most wanted to do helped him endure and ultimately overcome the worst experience of his life.”

6) Caminar by Skila Brown (Fiction in Verse)

“Set in 1981 Guatemala, a lyrical debut novel tells the powerful tale of a boy who must decide what it means to be a man during a time of war. Carlos knows that when the soldiers arrive with warnings about the Communist rebels, it is time to be a man and defend the village, keep everyone safe. But Mama tells him not yet—he’s still her quiet moonfaced boy. The soldiers laugh at the villagers, and before they move on, a neighbor is found dangling from a tree, a sign on his neck: *Communist*. Mama tells Carlos to run and hide, then try to find her...Numb and alone, he must join a band of guerillas as they trek to the top of the mountain where Carlos’s *abuela* lives. Will he be in time, and brave enough, to warn them about the soldiers? What will he do then? A novel in verse inspired by actual events during Guatemala’s civil war, *Caminar* is the moving story of a boy who loses nearly everything before discovering who he really is.”