



# The Park School

## Brookline, Massachusetts

June 2016

Dear Parents of Rising Grade VIII Students,

As we prepare for a Grade VIII curriculum that explores themes of social issues and human rights, these book selections deepen our understanding of culture and time period. Because of these themes, the books we have selected do include some language that is considered racially or culturally charged (including slurs and swear words). These books are all appropriate for this age group, and our teachers will structure class discussions about these topics in September. To strengthen this home-and-school connection, you are invited, but by no means required, to read these selections alongside your child. Most of all, please join us in our effort to promote reading as a wonderful way to unplug, relax, and enjoy the summer.

**Students entering eighth grade in the fall are required to read at least FOUR books over the summer:**

1. ***The Outsiders*** by SE Hinton

*Ponyboy, his brothers and his friends see the world as divided into two distinct, inescapable groups of people (the greasers and the socs). Yet, through this compelling and gritty narrative, which focuses on peer pressure, rebellion, and—most of all—identity, Ponyboy begins to understand the world (and people) are much more complex and interconnected than he previously imagined.*

2. ***Yacqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*** by Meg Medina

*Winner of the 2014 Pura Belpré Author Award, this book tells the story of Piedad “Piddy” Sanchez and her battle with a school bully. This novel openly tackles issues of ethnic identity, class conflict, body image, and domestic violence in an engaging, powerful narrative. Piddy ultimately teaches readers heartfelt lessons about self-worth, identity, and the power of friendship and community.*

3. A choice from the four Community Reading Books *\*Students select their book and are given a paper copy before summer.*

4. For Social Studies class: ***Warriors Don’t Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock’s Central High School*** by Melba Patillo Beals *\*Students will be given a paper copy of this text before summer.*

*Beals tells the true story of the year she spent as one of the “Little Rock Nine,” integrating the previously all-white Central High in the wake of the Supreme Court’s famous Brown v. Board of Education decision. Melba’s story is one of bravery and endurance in the face of unimaginable obstacles. Students should 1) keep track (by noting the page #s) of instances of particular bravery and/or cowardice and 2) keep notes about of historical figures or events they’d like to learn more about.*

5. OPTIONAL (encouraged for strong readers): ***The Help*** by Katherine Stockett

*This novel, set in Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1960s tells the story of the unlikely alliance between “Skeeter” (an aspiring white writer), Aibileen, and Minny (two long-time black maids). Together, they publish a book chronicling the the racial complexities of their town, which rocks Jackson’s world in previously unimaginable ways.*

Unless noted, families must obtain their own copies of these books (local library, Kindle, e-reader, or paper copy are all acceptable formats). Audio book accompaniment is also acceptable for readers who need or benefit from it. An [E] on the online Summer Reading list means it is available from Park’s ebook collection. Recreational ebooks and audiobooks are available all summer from the Park School Digital Library. Upper Division students can log in with a Park School email address and read or listen to books on the device of their choice.

If you have any questions about reading or purchasing these texts, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

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