

Dear Parents of incoming 6th, 7th and 8th grade students,

While we want students to experience a summer filled with all kinds of different activities, we strongly feel that it is important for students to read over the summer in order to continue to grow as thinkers and learners. Maple students will be required to read a book from the list of books below before returning to school in the fall. All of the books on the list center on the theme of diversity and we anticipate interesting discussions as students share their book with their English Language Arts class sometime during the first few weeks of school. Students will find out more about the ways these books will be shared from their ELA teacher in the fall. The books are available at either the Northbrook or Glenview public libraries or the Book Bin in Northbrook. They may also be purchased at any Barnes & Noble or online at Amazon.

Wishing all of the Maple School family a wonderful summer filled with fun of all kinds -- including the fun of reading! If questions, please contact Robyn Kogan at Maple School.

The Maple English Language Arts Department

Fiction titles - appropriate for students entering grades 6-8

[Star Girl](#) by Jerry Spinelli

- “This is a gently mystical, thought-provoking, and enchanting rumination on conformity. It is, in some ways, a YA version of *The Little Prince*, or a female version of Spinelli’s own award-winning *Maniac Magee*. A bittersweet paean to eccentricity and nonconformity, it is also a scathing commentary on teenagers, which makes its popularity with them all the more interesting.”

[Refugee](#) by Alan Gratz

- This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.
JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . .
ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . .
MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . .
All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of *tomorrow*. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end.

Fiction - appropriate for students entering grades 7 and 8

[The Running Dream](#) by Wendelin Van Draanen

- Jessica thinks her life is over when she loses a leg in a car accident. She's not comforted by the news that she'll be able to walk with the help of a prosthetic leg. Who cares about walking when you live to run. As she struggles to cope with crutches and a first cyborg-like prosthetic, Jessica feels oddly both in the spotlight and invisible. People who don't know what to say, act like she's not there. Which she could handle better if she weren't now keenly aware that she'd done the same thing herself to a girl with CP named Rosa. A girl who is going to tutor her through all the math she's missed. A girl who sees right into the heart of her. With the support of family, friends, a coach, and her track teammates, Jessica may actually be able to run again. But that's not enough for her now. She doesn't just want to cross finish lines herself—she wants to take Rosa with her.

Non-Fiction titles - appropriate for students entering grades 6-8

[I Am Malala](#) by Malala Yousafzai, Christina Lamb (Young Reader's Edition)

- When the Taliban took control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl spoke out. Malala Yousafzai refused to be silenced and fought for her right to an education. I Am Malala is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

[I Will Always Write Back](#) by Caitlin Alifrenka, Martin Ganda, Liz Welch

- *The true story of an all-American girl and a boy from an impoverished city in Zimbabwe and the letter that changed both of their lives forever.*

It started as an assignment. Everyone in Caitlin's class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. All the other kids picked countries like France or Germany, but when Caitlin saw *Zimbabwe* written on the board, it sounded like the most exotic place she had ever heard of--so she chose it. Martin was lucky to even receive a pen pal letter. There were only ten letters, and forty kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives.

If you have any questions please contact Robyn Kogan, ELA Dept Chair - rkogan@district30.org