



MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. John R. Gordon III, *Superintendent*

FROM: Dr. Okema S. Branch, *Chief Academic Officer* *OSB*
Dr. Maria Lawson-Davenport, *Director of Curriculum & Instruction* *M*

DATE: May 2, 2022

RE: Submitted for review of Texts for New Middle School Literature Course

The attached document, *Contemporary Literature (Literature for a Period) Suggested Texts List*, is submitted for review by the School Board for the new middle school contemporary literature course approved by the School Board at its April 7, 2022 meeting.

This document includes a description of each text, awards received, and suggested age level.

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Attachment

Copy to: Dr. Ronald Leigh, *Director of Secondary Leadership*
Lakeesha McCoy, *Supervisor of English K-12*

Contemporary Literature (Literature for a Period) Suggested Texts List

Course Number: 01061G0808

Contemporary Literature (Literature for a Period)

Grade Level: 8

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide a survey of 20th century literature to present. The course provides opportunities to explore the various genres of literature such as science fiction, drama, poetry, autobiography, historical fiction, comedy and others. Students will read various texts and explore literary elements such as a theme, mood, tone, imagery, and author's style. This course is designed to assist students in exploring various types of literature.

Book summaries adapted from GoodReads and CommonSenseMedia.

Novels

***The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (Suggested Age Level-13+)**

- **Summary:** By her brother's graveside, Liesel's life is changed when she picks up a single object, partially hidden in the snow. So begins a love affair with books and words, as Liesel, with the help of her accordion-playing foster father, learns to read. Soon she is stealing books from Nazi book-burnings, the mayor's wife's library, wherever there are books to be found.
- **Awards:** National Jewish Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature (2006), Book Sense Book of the Year Award for Children's Literature (2007), Buxtehuder Bulle (2008), Sydney Taylor Book Award for Teen Readers (2007), Prijs van de Kinder- en Jeugdjury Vlaanderen (2009), Michael L. Printz Award Nominee (2007), Exclusive Books Boeke Prize (2007), Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee (2008), The Quill Award Nominee for Young Adult/Teen (2006), Zilveren Zoen (2008), Teen Read Award Nominee for Best All-Time-Fave (2010), Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis for Preis der Jugendjury (2009), Association of Jewish Libraries for Teen Book Award (2006), Lincoln Award Nominee (2010), Australian Book Industry Award (ABIA) Nominee for Literary Fiction (2008), Kathleen Mitchell Award, Ena Noel Award (2008), Literaturpreis der Jury der jungen Leser for Jugendbuch (2009), LovelyBooks Leserpreis for Allgemeine Literatur (2009), Margaret A. Edwards Award (2014)

***A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park (Suggested Age Level-11+)**

- **Summary:** *A Long Walk to Water* begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a girl in Sudan in 2008 and a boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way.
- **Awards:** Jane Addams Children's Book Award for Older Children (2011), Flicker Tale Children's Book Award Nominee for Juvenile (2012), Pennsylvania Young Readers'

Choice Award Nominee for Grades 6-8 (2013), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Nominee (2015)

***Return to Sender* by Julia Alvarez (Suggested Age Level-10+)**

- **Summary:** After Tyler's father is injured in a tractor accident, his family is forced to hire migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure. Tyler isn't sure what to make of these workers. And what about the three daughters, particularly Mari, the oldest, who is proud of her Mexican heritage but also increasingly connected with her American life? Can Tyler and Mari find a way to be friends despite their differences?
- **Awards:** Américas Award (2010), Pura Belpré Award for Narrative (2010)

***Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper (Suggested Age Level-10+)**

- **Summary:** Melody is not like most people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she can remember every detail of everything she has ever experienced. She is smarter than most of the adults who try to diagnose her and smarter than her classmates in her integrated classroom - the very same classmates who dismiss her as mentally challenged because she cannot tell them otherwise. But Melody refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. And she's determined to let everyone know it - somehow.
- **Awards:** Josette Frank Award (2011), Buckeye Children's Book Award for 6-8 (2011), Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award for Grades 6-8 (2013), Vermont Golden Dome Book Award Nominee (2012), New Mexico Land of Enchantment Award for Young Adult (2013), California Young Readers Medal for Middle School/Junior High (2013), Washington State Sasquatch Award (2013), Bluestem Book Award (2013), Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Middle Grade & Children's Books (2010), Intermediate Nutmeg Book Award (2014), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Nominee (2013), Premi Protagonista Jove for Categoria 13-14 anys (2015)

***Wonder* by R.J. Palacio (Suggested Age Level-8+)**

- **Summary:** August Pullman was born with a facial difference that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face.
- **Awards:** Josette Frank Award (2013), Texas Bluebonnet Award Nominee (2013), West Australian Young Readers' Book Award (WAYRBA) for Younger Readers (2013), South Carolina Book Award for Children's Book (2014), Vermont Golden Dome Book Award (2014), Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award (2015), Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis for Preis der Jugendjury (2014), New Mexico Land of Enchantment Award for Children (2014), California Young Readers Medal for Intermediate (2015), James Cook Book Award Nominee (2013), Judy Lopez Memorial Award for Children's Literature (2013), Louisiana Young Readers' Choice for Grades 3-5 (2015), NAIBA Book of the Year for Middle Readers (2012), Waterstones Children's Book Prize for 5-12 years (2013), Washington State Sasquatch Award Nominee (2015), Bluestem Book Award (2014), Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Middle Grade & Children's

(2012), Carnegie Medal Nominee (2013), North Carolina Children's Book Award (2014), Premio El Templo de las Mil Puertas Nominee for Mejor novela extranjera independiente (2012), Rhode Island Children's Book Award (2014), FAB Award Nominee (2014), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (2014), Hea Lasteraamat (2014)

In the Footsteps of Crazy Horse by Joseph Marshall III (Suggested Age Level-9+)

- **Summary:** Jimmy, a young Lakota boy, struggles with fitting in on his reservation because he does not look like the other Lakota boys; he has light hair, blue eyes, and his father is of Scottish descent. Grandpa Nyles sees an opportunity to introduce Jimmy to another Lakota who had fair hair and light skin—the famous Crazy Horse. Over the course of their trip, Grandpa Nyles recounts history and stories about the life of the Lakota hero and the events that shaped him into a powerful leader, including famous battles and standoffs against the white settlers.
- **Awards:** American Indian Youth Literature Award (2016), Notable Books for Global Society (2016), School Library Journal Best Books of the Year (2015)

***Revolution is Not a Dinner Party* by Ying Chang Compestine (Suggested Age Level-10+)**

- **Summary:** Nine-year-old Ling is very comfortable in her life; her parents are both dedicated surgeons in the best hospital in Wuhan. But when Comrade Li, one of Mao's political officers, moves into a room in their apartment, Ling begins to witness the gradual disintegration of her world. In an atmosphere of increasing mistrust, Ling fears for the safety of her neighbors and, soon, for herself and family. Over the course of four years, Ling manages to grow and blossom.
- **Awards:** California Book Award for Young Adult (Silver) (2007), California Young Readers Medal Nominee for Middle School/Junior High (2012), Judy Lopez Memorial Award for Children's Literature Nominee (2008)

***The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan (Suggested Age Level-9+)**

- **Summary:** Percy Jackson is a good kid, but he can't seem to focus on his schoolwork or control his temper. And lately, being away at boarding school is only getting worse - Percy could have sworn his pre-algebra teacher turned into a monster and tried to kill him. When Percy's mom finds out, she knows it's time that he knew the truth about where he came from, and she sends Percy to Camp Half Blood, a summer camp for demigods (on Long Island), where he learns that the father he never knew is Poseidon, God of the Sea. Soon a mystery unfolds and together with his friends—one a satyr and the other the demigod daughter of Athena - Percy sets out on a quest across the United States to reach the gates of the Underworld (located in a recording studio in Hollywood) and prevent a catastrophic war between the gods.
- **Awards:** Young Readers' Choice Award (2008), Books I Loved Best Yearly (BILBY) Awards for Older Readers (2011), South Carolina Book Award for Junior Book Award (2008), Grand Canyon Reader Award for Tween Book (2008), Nene Award (2008), Massachusetts Children's Book Award (2008), Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award for Grades 6-8 (2008), Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee (2007), Sunshine State Young Readers Award for Grades 6-8 (2007), Pacific Northwest Library

Association Young Reader's Choice Award for Intermediate (2008), Iowa Teen Award (2009), Lincoln Award Nominee (2009), Oklahoma Sequoyah Award for YA (2008), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (2009)

***The Pearl* by John Steinbeck (Suggested Age Level-12+)**

- **Summary:** Like his father and grandfather before him, Kino is a poor diver, gathering pearls from the gulf beds that once brought great wealth to the kings of Spain and now provide Kino, Juana, and their infant son with meager subsistence. Then, on a day like any other, Kino emerges from the sea with a pearl as large as a sea gull's egg, as "perfect as the moon." With the pearl comes hope, the promise of comfort and of security.

***The First Rule of Punk* by Celia C. Perez (Suggested Age Level-7+)**

- **Summary:** On Day One, twelve-year-old Malú (Maria Luisa, if you want to annoy her) inadvertently upsets Posada Middle School's queen bee, violates the school's dress code with her punk rock look, and disappoints her college-professor mom in the process. Her dad, who now lives a thousand miles away, says things will get better as long as she remembers the first rule of punk: be yourself. And when she assembles a group of like-minded misfits at school and starts a band, Malú finally begins to feel at home.
- **Awards:** South Carolina Book Award Nominee for Junior Book (2020), Judy Lopez Memorial Award for Children's Literature Nominee (2018), Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award (2018), Pura Belpré Award Nominee for Author (2018), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Nominee (2020), Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for Fiction & Poetry Nominee (2018)

Biographies

***Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl (Suggested Age Level-9+)**

- **Summary:** Roald Dahl recounts his days as a child growing up in England. From his years as a prankster at boarding school to his envious position as a chocolate tester for Cadbury's, Roald Dahl's boyhood was as full of excitement and the unexpected as are his world-famous, best-selling books.

***No Summit out of Sight: The True Story of the Youngest Person to Climb the Seven Summits* by Jordan Romero (Suggested Age Level-12+)**

- **Summary:** Jordan Romero climbed Mount Everest at age thirteen—and he didn't stop there. In this inspiring young adult memoir, he tells how he achieved such great heights. On May 22, 2010, at the age of thirteen, American teenager Jordan Romero became the youngest person to climb to the summit of Mount Everest. At fifteen, he became the youngest person to reach the summits of the tallest mountains on each of the seven continents. In this energizing memoir for young adults, Jordan, now seventeen, recounts his experience, which started as a spark of an idea at the age of nine and, many years of training and hard work later, turned into a dream come true.
- **Awards:** Vermont Golden Dome Book Award Nominee (2016), Colorado Book Award Nominee for Young Adult Literature (Finalist) (2015)

Reaching for the Moon: The Autobiography of NASA Mathematician by Katherine Johnson
(Suggested Age Level-10+)

- **Summary:** As a young girl, Katherine Johnson showed an exceptional aptitude for math. In school she quickly skipped ahead several grades and was soon studying complex equations with the support of a professor who saw great promise in her. But ability and opportunity did not always go hand in hand. In the early 1950s, Katherine was thrilled to join the organization that would become NASA. She worked on many of NASA's biggest projects including the Apollo 11 mission that landed the first men on the moon.

Poetry

Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga (Suggested Age Level-10+)

- **Summary:** Jude never thought she'd be leaving her beloved older brother and father behind, all the way across the ocean in Syria. But when things in her hometown start becoming volatile, Jude and her mother are sent to live in Cincinnati with relatives. At first, everything in America seems too fast and too loud. But this life also brings unexpected surprises—there are new friends, a whole new family, and a school musical that Jude might just try out for.
- **Awards:** Newbery Medal Nominee (2020), Ohioana Book Award for Middle Grade and Young Adult Literature (2020), Goodreads Choice Award Nominee for Middle Grade & Children's (2019), NCTE Charlotte Huck Honor Book (2020), Walter Dean Myers Award Nominee for Younger Readers Category (2020), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Nominee (2022), Arab American Book Award for Children's/Young Adult Nominee (2020), Ignyte Award Nominee for Best in MG (2020)

Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat by Nikki Giovanni
(Suggested Age Level-7+)

- **Summary:** Hip Hop Speaks to Children is a celebration of poetry with a beat. Poetry can have both a rhyme and a rhythm. This book is a compilation of hip hop rap songs and poetry that speaks to the rhythm of a multicultural music and poetry.
- **Awards:** NAACP Image Award (2016), The Booklist top 10 Art Books for Youth (2016)

The Crossover by Kwame Alexander (Suggested Age Level-11+)

- **Summary:** Josh Bell and his twin brother Jordan are awesome on the court. But Josh has more than basketball in his blood, he's got mad beats, too, that tell his family's story in verse, in this fast and furious middle grade novel of family and brotherhood. Josh and Jordan must come to grips with growing up on and off the court to realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price.
- **Awards:** Newbery Medal (2015), Massachusetts Children's Book Award (2020), Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee for Grades 6-8 (2016), Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee (2017), Vermont Golden Dome Book Award Nominee (2016), Evergreen Teen Book Award (2017), Coretta Scott King Book Award for Author Honor (2015), Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award (2017), North Carolina Young Adult Book Award for Middle School (2016), Goodreads Choice Award

Nominee for Middle Grade & Children's (2014), NCTE Charlotte Huck Honor Book (2015), Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (2017)

***The Weight of Water* by Sarah Crossan (Suggested Age Level-10+)**

- **Summary:** Armed with a suitcase and an old laundry bag filled with clothes, Kasienka and her mother head for England. Life is lonely for Kasienka. At home her mother's heart is breaking and at school friends are scarce. But when someone special swims into her life, Kasienka learns that there might be more than one way for her to stay afloat.
- **Awards:** Rhode Island Teen Book Award Nominee (2015), Carnegie Medal Nominee (2013), CBI Book of the Year for Eilís Dillon Award (2013)

Drama/Plays

***Inherit the Wind* by Jerome Lawrence (Suggested Age Level-12+)**

- **Summary:** A meaningful play based on the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, in which a Tennessee teacher was tried for teaching evolution. The accused was a slight, frightened man who'd deliberately broken the law. His trial was a media circus among the two great legal giants of the century.

***Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett (Suggested Age Level-13+)**

- **Summary:** Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's acclaimed stage adaptation of Anne Frank's World War II diary about the story of Anne Frank a young girl hidden by community members during the holocaust.
- **Awards:** Pulitzer Prize for Drama (1956), New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play (1956)