

Georgetown Middle High School

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To Students Entering Grades 9-12:

Summer Reading is changing...2019 marks the beginning of BookSmart: a book club-style one-day discussion of modern literature.

Students will choose and read ONE of the books on this list and participate in a book discussion about it in September (students taking honors or AP English may have other books to read in addition). All students will also take a brief assessment on the book the same day. While there is great value in the classics, we have chosen books for BookSmart that are more modern, diverse, and speak to different perspectives on the human condition.

Read the descriptions below carefully before choosing a book. Feel free to ask any English teacher questions about the books--we can help you choose.

- **Sign up on the wall across from 2220/2240 between June 6- June 10.**
- Those who do not choose a book will have one assigned to them by June 14.
- Every student needs to read at least one book.
- Please choose a book you have not previously read.
- The public library and our library media center have been notified of this list as well, and they plan to order additional copies so everyone can participate easily.

On September 13*, 2019, students will report to a specific classroom in which their chosen book will be assessed and discussed. A member of the GMHS faculty/staff who has passion for that book (not just English teachers!) will facilitate discussion and activities. We hope that this day will bring students together, build new connections, and get everyone thinking about how stories can play a role in the decisions we make and the lives we lead.

Sincerely,

The English Department

*If a student misses the BookSmart day, he/she will need to participate in an alternate writing assessment.

The Books

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time: Mark Haddon

The Stranger In the Woods: Michael Finkel

The Hate U Give: Angie Thomas

American Born Chinese: Gene Luen Yang

Grit: Angela Duckworth

Becoming: Michelle Obama

I Am Malala: Malala Yousafzai

You Are Not So Smart: David McRaney

The Martian: Andy Weir

After the Shot Drops: Randy Ribay

The Help: Kathryn Stockett

Becoming Odyssea: Jennifer Pharr Davis

Between the World and Me: Ta-Nehisi Coates

Book Descriptions (descriptions are from Amazon.com)

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time: Mark Haddon

A bestselling modern classic—both poignant and funny—about a boy with autism who sets out to solve the murder of a neighbor's dog and discovers unexpected truths about himself and the world.

Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow.

This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.

The Stranger in the Woods: Michael Finkel

“The extraordinary story of the last true hermit.”

Many people dream of escaping modern life, but most will never act on it. This is the remarkable true story of a man who lived alone in the woods of Maine for twenty-seven years, making this dream a reality — not out of anger at the world, but simply because he preferred to live on his own.

In 1986, a shy and intelligent twenty-year-old named Christopher Knight left his home in Massachusetts, drove to Maine, and disappeared into the forest. He would not have a conversation with another human being until nearly three decades later, when he was arrested for stealing food.

Living in a tent even through brutal winters, he had survived by his wits and courage, developing ingenious ways to store edibles and water, and to avoid freezing to death. He broke into nearby cottages for food, clothing, reading material, and other provisions, taking only what he needed but terrifying a community never able to solve the mysterious burglaries.

Based on extensive interviews with Knight himself, this is a vividly detailed account of his secluded life, as well as the challenges he has faced since returning to the world. It is a gripping story of survival that asks fundamental questions about solitude, community, and what makes a good life, and a deeply moving portrait of a man who was determined to live his own way, and succeeded.

The Hate U Give: Angie Thomas

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.

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American Born Chinese: Gene Luen Yang

American Born Chinese is a graphic novel that tells the story of three apparently unrelated characters: Jin Wang, who moves to a new neighborhood with his family only to discover that he's the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the powerful Monkey King, subject of one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables; and Chin-Kee, a personification of the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, who is ruining his cousin Danny's life with his yearly visits. Their lives and stories come together with an unexpected twist in this action-packed modern fable. *American Born Chinese* is an amazing ride, all the way up to the astonishing climax.

American Born Chinese is a 2006 National Book Award Finalist, the winner of the 2007 Eisner Award for Best New Graphic Album.

Grit: Angela Duckworth

For anyone striving to succeed, pioneering psychologist Angela Duckworth shows parents, students, athletes, and businesspeople - both seasoned and new - that the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of passion and persistence she calls "grit". In *Grit* she

takes readers into the field to visit cadets struggling through their first days at West Point, teachers working in some of the toughest schools, and young finalists in the National Spelling Bee. She also shares what she's learned from interviewing dozens of high achievers.

Becoming: Michelle Obama

In a life filled with meaning and accomplishment, Michelle Obama has emerged as one of the most iconic and compelling women of our era. As First Lady of the United States of America—the first African American to serve in that role—she helped create the most welcoming and inclusive White House in history, while also establishing herself as a powerful advocate for women and girls in the U.S. and around the world, dramatically changing the ways that families pursue healthier and more active lives, and standing with her husband as he led America through some of its most harrowing moments.

In her memoir, a work of deep reflection and mesmerizing storytelling, Michelle Obama invites readers into her world, chronicling the experiences that have shaped her—from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her time spent at the world's most famous address. With unerring honesty and lively wit, she describes her triumphs and her disappointments, both public and private, telling her full story as she has lived it—in her own words and on her own terms. Warm, wise, and revelatory, *Becoming* is the deeply personal reckoning of a woman of soul and substance who has steadily defied expectations—and whose story inspires us to do the same.

I Am Malala: Malala Yousafzai

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.

On October 9, 2012, when she was fifteen, she almost paid the ultimate price. She was shot in the head at point-blank range while riding the bus home from school, and few expected her to survive. Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she became a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest nominee ever for the Nobel Peace Prize.

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.

You Are Not So Smart: David McRaney

Whether you're deciding which smartphone to purchase or which politician to believe, you think you are a rational being whose every decision is based on cool, detached logic. But here's the truth: You are not so smart. You're just as deluded as the rest of us—but that's okay, because being deluded is part of being human.

Growing out of David McRaney's popular blog, *You Are Not So Smart* reveals that every decision we make, every thought we contemplate, and every emotion we feel comes with a story we tell ourselves to explain them. But often these stories aren't true. Each short chapter—covering topics such as Learned Helplessness, Selling Out, and the Illusion of Transparency—is like a psychology course with all the boring parts taken out.

The Martian: Andy Weir

Six days ago, astronaut Mark Watney became one of the first people to walk on Mars. Now, he's sure he'll be the first person to die there. After a dust storm nearly kills him and forces his crew to evacuate while thinking him dead, Mark finds himself stranded and completely alone with no way to even signal Earth that he's alive—and even if he could get word out, his supplies would be gone long before a rescue could arrive.

Chances are, though, he won't have time to starve to death. The damaged machinery, unforgiving environment, or plain-old "human error" are much more likely to kill him first. But Mark isn't ready to give up yet. Drawing on his ingenuity, his engineering skills—and a relentless, dogged refusal to quit—he steadfastly confronts one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after the next. Will his resourcefulness be enough to overcome the impossible odds against him?

After the Shot Drops: Randy Ribay

Bunny and Nasir have been best friends forever, but when Bunny accepts an athletic scholarship across town, Nasir feels betrayed. While Bunny tries to fit in with his new, privileged peers, Nasir spends more time with his cousin, Wallace, who is being evicted. Nasir can't help but wonder why the neighborhood is falling over itself to help Bunny when *Wallace* is in trouble.

When Wallace makes a bet against Bunny, Nasir is faced with an impossible decision—maybe a dangerous one. Told from alternating perspectives, *After the Shot Drops* is a heart-pounding story about the responsibilities of great talent and the importance of compassion.

The Help: Kathryn Stockett

Aibileen is a black maid in 1962 Jackson, Mississippi, who's always taken orders quietly, but lately she's unable to hold her bitterness back. Her friend Minny has never held her tongue but now must somehow keep secrets about her employer that leave her speechless. White socialite Skeeter just graduated college. She's full of ambition, but without a husband, she's considered a failure.

Together, these seemingly different women join together to write a tell-all book about work as a black maid in the South, that could forever alter their destinies and the life of a small town...

Becoming Odysa: Jennifer Pharr Davis

After graduating from college, Jennifer isn't sure what she wants to do with her life. She is drawn to the Appalachian Trail, a 2175-mile footpath that stretches from Georgia to Maine. Though her friends and family think she's crazy, she sets out alone to hike the trail, hoping it will give her time to think about what she wants to do next. The next four months are the most physically and emotionally challenging of her life. She quickly discovers that thru-hiking is harder than she had imagined: coping with blisters and aching shoulders from the 30-pound pack she carries; sleeping on the hard wooden floors of trail shelters; hiking through endless torrents of rain and even a blizzard. With every step she takes, Jennifer transitions from an over-confident college graduate to a student of the trail, braving situations she never imagined before her thru-hike. The trail is full of unexpected kindness, generosity, and humor. And when tragedy strikes, she learns that she can depend on other people to help her in times of need.

Between the World and Me: Ta-Nehisi Coates

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. How can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer this question in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bravely confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.