

## Summer Reading 2009: English Classes

### Fifth Grade Summer Reading

Rising fifth graders are required to read *Rules*, by Cynthia Lord. In addition to this novel, **choose one other selection** from the list below. We encourage you to read more than one choice book if multiple titles pique your interest. Selections were chosen to complement the major units of study in fifth-grade history: Egypt, Greece, India, and China.

*The Egyptian Box*, by Jane Curry (2002) — It's a classic kid's fantasy: discovering a magical servant willing to complete chores and homework. But when it happens to middle-schooler Leticia ("Tee") Woodie, she finds the experience unnerving. Tee's "servant" is a Shabti — an ancient Egyptian statue thought to magically serve the dead in the Afterlife. She inherited the wooden figurine from Great-Uncle Sebastian, who sold antiques in a small desert town where Tee's family has recently moved to take over the business. Tee and her brother, Charles, inadvertently bring the statue to life, and at first, Tee loves having someone else do the dishes and finish her math homework. But when the Shabti starts impersonating Tee at school, gradually becoming more lifelike, Tee discovers that her helper has hidden dimensions and motives. Curry tells an intriguing story that works on several levels. There's plenty of suspense and mystery for action fans, as well as facts for budding Egyptologists. Most interesting, though, are questions raised by the complex relationship between Tee and the magical Shabti; a good choice for ethics discussions.

*The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan (2005) — The escapades of the Greek gods and heroes get a fresh spin in the first book in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, about a contemporary 12-year-old New Yorker who learns he's a demigod. Perseus, aka Percy Jackson, thinks he has big problems. His father left before he was born, he's been kicked out of six schools in six years, he's dyslexic, and he has ADHD. What a surprise when he finds out that's only the tip of the iceberg: he vaporizes his pre-algebra teacher, learns his best friend is a satyr, and is almost killed by a minotaur before his mother manages to get him to the safety of Camp Half-Blood--where he discovers that Poseidon is his father. But that's a problem, too. Poseidon has been accused of stealing Zeus' lightning bolt, and unless Percy can return the bolt, humankind is doomed. Riordan's fast-paced adventure is fresh, dangerous, and funny. Percy is an appealing, but reluctant hero, the modernized gods are hilarious, and the parallels to Harry Potter are frequent and obvious. Because Riordan is faithful to the original myths, librarians should be prepared for a rush of readers wanting the classic stories.

*Shiva's Fire*, by Suzanne Staples (2000) — Staples offers a story set in India and brushed with mysticism. The heroine is Parvati, born during a devastating monsoon, who is destined to transcend her poor village beginnings to follow the extraordinary life of a classical dancer. The girl, who remembers everything from her birth on, is born the day her father, the maharaja's elephant keeper, dies. From almost her first moments, she is aware of the dance of life, and as she grows older, her dancing sets her apart from others in her village. Parvati's life is saved when a guru, a great master of Indian classical dance, recognizes her talent and takes her to his school in Madras. Then life begins anew for Parvati, who must dedicate herself to the religious and societal responsibilities that come with carrying on the lineage of dancers. The story's mystical underpinnings are infused with romance when Parvati meets the maharaja's son, and they learn how closely their destinies are intertwined. The injection of a romance in the final quarter of the book might not have worked in less-capable hands, but Staples makes this element seem like a

natural evolution. One of the book's strengths is its vivid depiction of Indian life . . . a unique offering.

*Tiger (The Five Ancestors: Book 1)*, by Jeff Stone (2005) — This first installment of The Ancestors series features Fu, or Tiger, one of five orphan monks, each named for an animal he most resembles. As the book begins, the boys are hidden in a water barrel during a raid on their temple. The emperor's army, under the command of their former brother, Ying, the Eagle, is out to destroy the Cangzhen Monastery, kill the grandmaster, and steal the sacred scrolls. Impetuous Fu rescues the scrolls, but his own rash act leads to imprisonment in a remote village. Although set in 1650 China, this is a kung fu novel, not historical fiction, and despite the grandmaster's peace-seeking Buddhist philosophy, Tiger is not for the squeamish. . . . Characters are virtuous or evil, but the slam-bang, pedal-to-the-metal adventure stands a good chance of luring kids away from video games; they will definitely line up for the forthcoming sequel.

(Summaries were taken from Booklist.)

### **Sixth Grade Summer Reading**

Rising sixth graders are required to read *Danny, the Champion of the World*, by Roald Dahl. You must choose one other selection to read from the following list:

*Dave at Night*, by Gail Carson Levine — During the 1920's, Dave is sent to live in the Jewish boys' home when his father dies. Escaping one night, he discovers a world of music and all-night parties in Harlem. Dave returns to the orphanage, only to escape again and again to be with the friends he's made, seeking new adventures and maybe a permanent escape from the home.

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis — Enter the hilarious world of ten year old Kenny and his family, the "Weird Watsons" of Flint, Michigan. They decide it's time to visit Grandma in Birmingham, Alabama, and set out on a trip like no other. The year is 1963, and the events turn comic, tragic and touching.

*Touching Spirit Bear*, by Ben Mikaelson — Fifteen-year-old Cole Matthews has been in trouble before, but his most recent crime could send him to prison. He must choose between jail or Native American Circle Justice. Choosing Circle Justice, Cole is banished to a remote Alaskan island where he is mauled by a mysterious white bear and nearly dies. Will the attack of the spirit bear destroy Cole's life or save his soul?

*My Brother Sam Is Dead*, by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier — All his life, Tim Meeker has looked up to his brother Sam. Sam's smart and brave -- and is now a part of the American Revolution. Not everyone in town wants to be a part of the rebellion. Most are supporters of the British — including Tim and Sam's father. With the war soon raging, Tim know he'll have to make a choice — between the Revolutionaries and the Redcoats . . . and between his brother and his father.

*Fever 1793*, by Laurie Halse Anderson — Sixteen-year-old Mattie Cook yearns for some greater excitement than the dubious thrill of washing countless mugs in her family's Philadelphia coffee shop. But she learns the hard way to be careful what you wish for when the whole city falls victim to yellow fever in the summer of 1793. Left all alone when members of her family are torn from her by illness or death, Mattie has to fend for herself in a city gone crazy, as

opportunistic looters break into homes that have been abandoned and yellow-eyed corpses pile up in the streets. It's only when Mattie meets up with Eliza, her mother's free black friend, that she is able to deal with what has happened to her family and decide to take charge of her fate by helping others worse off than herself. Full of adrenaline charged action and lots of gruesome disease detail (blood vomiting and gravediggers hauling dead bodies through the streets) *Fever* is a fascinating medical thriller that reads like a historical Hot Zone! By the way, this book is based on a REAL epidemic that wiped out 10% of Philadelphia's population in just three months.

*Sixth Grade Secrets*, by Louis Sachar — This story of secret clubs, unfounded rumors, daring antics and humorous revenge will leave you anxious to begin sixth grade yourselves. Once again, Louis Sachar proves he knows what will capture our attention and make us laugh.

(Some of the summaries were taken from amazon.com editorial reviews.)

### **Seventh Grade Summer Reading**

*Chinese Cinderella, Story of an Unwanted Daughter*, by Adeline Yen Mah (copies in bookstore)

*Wednesday Wars*, by Gary D. Schmidt

### **Eighth Grade Summer Reading**

*The Silenced*, by James DeVita

*Three Cups of Tea, Young Readers Edition*, by Greg Mortenson (copies in bookstore)

These selections are varied in style, content, and difficulty. Hopefully there is something for everyone. The goal is to read for enjoyment. Each of these titles should be available in your local library or most bookstores. You may want to read these later in the summer or review them before you return to school. We will have a test on *Danny, the Champion of the World* and do a small group project on the other book you read. We also want to suggest that these may be read together with a parent. You aren't too old to be read to, are you? Enjoy!

Ninth Grade Required Reading

*Until They Bring the Streetcars Back*, by Stanley Gordon West

### **Tenth Grade Required Reading**

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, by Mark Haddon

### **Eleventh Grade Required Reading**

*Old School*, by Tobias Wolff

### **Twelfth Grade Required Reading**

*Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley

Additional required book for AP Literature:

*Crime and Punishment*, by Feodor Dostoevsky (Norton Critical Edition)

Additional required book for AP Lang/Comp:

*1984*, by George Orwell