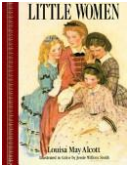
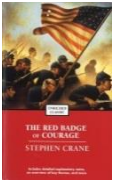


## VCS Summer Reading Recommendations Especially for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders



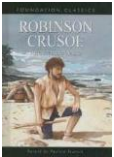
### ***Little Women*** by Louisa May Alcott.

Lovely Meg, talented Jo, frail Beth, and spoiled Amy, realize the hard lessons of poverty and of growing up in New England during the Civil War. Based on Louise May Alcott's childhood, this lively portrait of nineteenth-century family life possesses a lasting vitality that has endeared it to generations of readers.



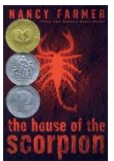
### ***The Red Badge of Courage*** by Stephen Crane

During his service in the Civil War a young Union soldier matures to manhood and finds peace of mind as he comes to grips with his conflicting emotions about war.



### ***Robinson Crusoe*** by Daniel Defoe

Robinson Crusoe flees Britain on a ship after killing his friend over the love of Mary. A fierce ocean storm wrecks his ship and leaves him stranded by himself on an uncharted island.



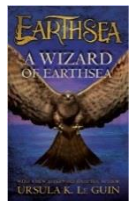
### ***House of the Scorpion*** by Nancy Farmer

This is a science fiction novel that features Matteo Alacrán, a young clone raised by a drug lord of the same name, usually called "El Patrón." It is a story about the struggle to survive as a free individual.



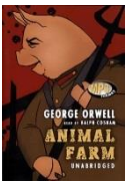
### ***Summer of My German Soldier*** by Bette Greene

The story is told in first person narrative by a twelve-year-old Jewish girl named Patty Bergen living in Jenkinsville, Arkansas during World War II.



### ***The Wizard of Earthsea*** by Ursula LeGuin

Ged, the greatest sorcerer in all Earthsea, was called Sparrowhawk in his reckless youth. Hungry for power and knowledge, Sparrowhawk tampered with long-held secrets and loosed a terrible shadow upon the world. This is the tale of his testing, how he mastered the mighty words of power, tamed an ancient dragon, and crossed death's threshold to restore the balance.



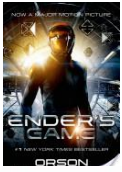
### ***Animal Farm*** by George Orwell

This is an allegorical and dystopian novel published in England in 1945. According to Orwell, the book reflects events leading up to the Russian Revolution (even though the characters are all farm animals).



### ***Black Beauty*** by Anna Sewell

This is an memoir told by the titular horse named Black Beauty—beginning with his carefree days as a colt on an English farm with his mother, to his difficult life pulling cabs in London, to his happy retirement in the country.



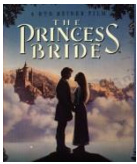
***Ender's Game*** by Orsen Scott Card

This is a military science fiction novel set in Earth's future; the novel presents an imperiled mankind after two conflicts with the "Buggers," an insectoid alien species.



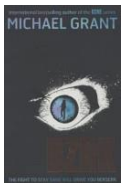
***Momo*** by Michael Ende

Momo, also known as *The Grey Gentlemen* or *The Men in Grey*, is a fantasy novel published in 1973. It is about the concept of time and how it is used by humans in modern societies.



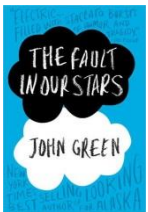
***The Princess Bride*** by William Goldman

A delightfully postmodern fairy tale, *The Princess Bride* is a deft, intelligent mix of swashbuckling, romance, and comedy that takes an age-old damsel-in-distress story and makes it fresh.



***BZRK*** by Michael Grant

These are no ordinary soldiers. This is no ordinary war. Noah and Sadie: newly initiated to an underground cell so covert that they don't even know each other's names. Soon they will become the deadliest warriors the world has ever seen.



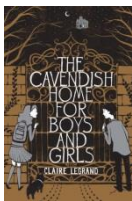
***The Fault in our Stars*** by John Green

Hazel and Gus are two teenagers who share an acerbic wit, a disdain for the conventional, and a love that sweeps them on a journey. Their relationship is all the more miraculous given that Hazel's other constant companion is an oxygen tank, Gus jokes about his prosthetic leg, and they met and fell in love at a cancer support group.



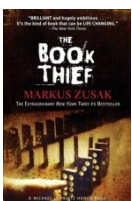
***Silent to the Bone*** by E.L. Konigsburg

Connor is sure his best friend, Branwell, couldn't have hurt Branwell's baby half sister, Nikki. But Nikki lies in a coma, and Branwell is in a juvenile behavioral center, suspected of a horrible crime and unable to utter the words to tell what really happened. Connor is the only one who might be able to break through Branwell's wall of silence.



***The Cavendish Home for Boys and Girls*** by Claire Legrand

Victoria hates nonsense. There is no need for it when your life is perfect. The only smudge on her pristine life is her best friend Lawrence. He is a disaster—lazy and dreamy, shirt always untucked, obsessed with his silly piano. Victoria often wonders why she ever bothered being his friend.



***The Book Thief*** by Markus Zusak

While subjected to the horrors of World War II Germany, young Liesel finds solace by stealing books and sharing them with others. In the basement of her home, a Jewish refugee is being sheltered by her adoptive parents.

Continued...

## Summer Reading Recommendations for High School Students

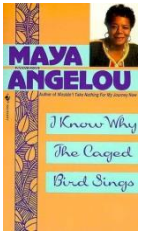
7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are welcome to choose from this list too.

Nonfiction is at the end.



### ***The House of Spirits*** by Isabel Allende

The story details the life of the Trueba family, spanning four generations, and tracing the post-colonial social and political upheavals of Chile – though the country's name, and the names of figures closely paralleling historical ones, such as "the President" or "the Poet," are never explicitly given. The story is told mainly from the perspective of two protagonists (Esteban and Alba) and incorporates elements of magical realism.



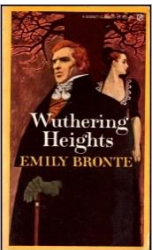
### ***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*** by Maya Angelou

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age-and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime.



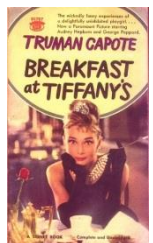
### ***Emma*** by Jane Austen

This is a novel about youthful hubris and the perils of misconstrued romance. The novel was first published in December 1815. As in her other novels, Austen explores the concerns and difficulties of genteel women living in England; she also creates a lively comedy of manners characters.



### ***Wuthering Heights*** by Emily Bronte

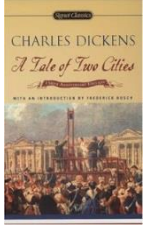
Wuthering Heights is the name of the farmhouse on the North York Moors where the story unfolds. The book's core theme is the destructive effect that jealousy and vengefulness have, both on the jealous or vengeful individuals and on their communities. It was considered controversial because its depiction of mental and physical cruelty was unusually stark, and it challenged strict Victorian ideals of the day, including religious hypocrisy, morality, social classes and gender inequality.



### ***Breakfast at Tiffany's*** by Truman Capote

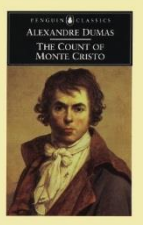
The unnamed narrator becomes friends with Holly Golightly, who calls him "Fred." The two are both tenants in an apartment in Manhattan. Holly is a country girl turned New York girl. As such, she has no job and lives by socializing with wealthy men, who take her to clubs and restaurants, and give her money and expensive presents; she hopes to marry one of them.

Continued...



***A Tale of Two Cities*** by Charles Dickens

The novel depicts the plight of the French peasantry demoralized by the French aristocracy in the years leading up to the revolution, the corresponding brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats, and many unflattering social parallels with life in London during the same time period. With well over 200 million copies sold, it ranks among the most famous works in the history of literary fiction.



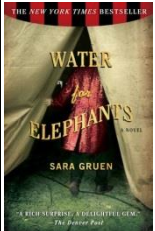
***The Count of Monte Cristo*** by Alexandre Dumas

This novel takes place in France, Italy, and islands in the Mediterranean, during the historical events of 1815–1838. The historical setting is a fundamental element of the adventure story, primarily concerned with themes of hope, justice, vengeance, mercy and forgiveness, it focuses on a man who is wrongfully imprisoned, escapes from jail, acquires a fortune and sets about getting revenge on those responsible for his imprisonment.



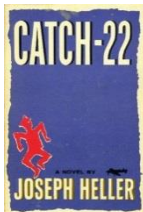
***What Is the What*** by Dave Eggers

This epic novel is based on the life of Valentino Achak Deng who, along with thousands of other children —the so-called Lost Boys—was forced to leave his village in Sudan at the age of seven and trek hundreds of miles by foot, pursued by militias, government bombers, and wild animals, crossing the deserts of three countries to find freedom. When he finally is resettled in the United States, he finds a life full of promise, but also heartache and myriad new challenges. Moving, suspenseful, and unexpectedly funny, *What Is the What* is an astonishing novel that illuminates the lives of millions through one extraordinary man.



***Water for Elephants*** by Sara Gruen

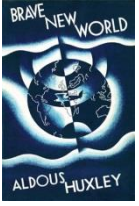
Though he may not speak of them, the memories still dwell inside Jacob Jankowski's ninety-something-year-old mind. Memories of himself as a young man, tossed by fate onto a rickety train that was home to the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. Memories of a world filled with freaks and clowns, with wonder and pain and anger and passion; a world with its own narrow, irrational rules, its own way of life, and its own way of death. The world of the circus: to Jacob it was both salvation and a living hell.



***Catch -22*** by Joseph Heller

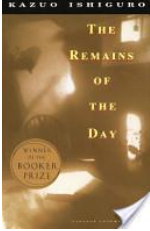
Set during WWII from 1942 to 1944, the novel looks into the experiences of Captain John Yossarian, a B-25 bombardier, and the other airmen in the camp. It focuses on their attempts to keep their sanity in order to fulfill their service requirements so that they may return home. It is frequently cited as one of the greatest literary works of the twentieth century.

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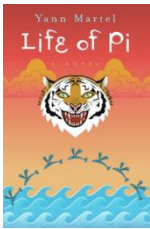
***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

Set in London of AD 2540, the novel anticipates developments in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation, and classical conditioning that combine to profoundly change society. Huxley answered this book with a reassessment in an essay, *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), and with *Island* (1962), his final novel.



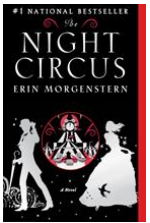
***The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

This is a profoundly compelling portrait of the perfect English butler and of his fading, insular world postwar England. At the end of his three decades of service at Darlington Hall, Stevens embarks on a country drive, during which he looks back over his career to reassure himself that he has served humanity by serving “a great gentleman.” But lurking in his memory are doubts about the true nature of Lord Darlington’s “greatness” and graver doubts about his own faith in the man he served.



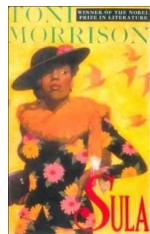
***The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel**

This is a Canadian Fantasy adventure novel published in 2001. The protagonist, Piscine Molitor "Pi" Patel, an Indian boy from Pondicherry, explores issues of spirituality and practicality from an early age. He survives 227 days after a shipwreck while stranded on a lifeboat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.



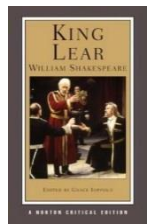
***The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern**

The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not. Within the black-and-white striped canvas tents is an utterly unique experience full of breathtaking amazements. Behind the scenes, a fierce competition is underway: a duel between two magicians, Celia and Marco, who have been trained since childhood expressly for this purpose by their mercurial instructors. Unbeknownst to them both, this is a game in which only one can be left standing.



***Sula* by Toni Morrison**

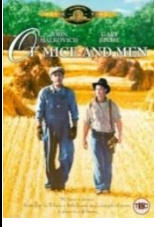
Two girls grow up to become women. Two friends become something worse than enemies. In this brilliantly imagined novel, Toni Morrison tells the story of Nel Wright and Sula Peace, who meet as children in the small town of Medallion, Ohio. Their devotion is fierce enough to withstand bullies and the burden of a dreadful secret. It endures even after Nel has grown up to be a pillar of the black community and Sula has become a pariah. But their friendship ends in an unforgivable betrayal—or does it end?



***King Lear* by William Shakespeare**

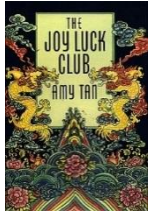
The titular character descends into madness after disposing of his estate between two of his three daughters based on their flattery, bringing tragic consequences for all. The play is based on the legend of Leir of Britain, a mythological pre-Roman, Celtic king.

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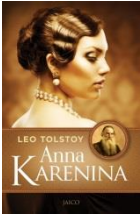
***Of Mice and Men*** by John Steinbeck

This novel follows two migrant field workers in California on their plantation during the Great Depression—George Milton, an intelligent but uneducated man, and Lennie Small, a man of large stature and great strength but limited mental abilities—are on their way to another part of California in Soledad. They hope to one day attain their shared dream of settling down on their own piece of land.



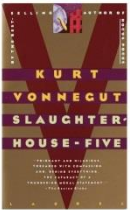
***The Joy Luck Club*** by Amy Tan

This novel focuses on four Chinese American immigrant families in San Francisco who start a club known as The Joy Luck Club, playing the Chinese game of mahjong for money while feasting on a variety of foods. The book is structured somewhat like a mahjong game, with four parts divided into four sections to create sixteen chapters. The three mothers and four daughters share stories about their lives in the form of vignettes. Each part is preceded by a parable relating to the game.



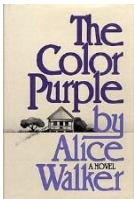
***Anna Karenina*** by Leo Tolstoy

This is the tragic story of a married aristocrat/socialite and her affair with the affluent Count Vronsky. The story starts when she arrives in the midst of a family broken up by her brother's unbridled womanizing — something that prefigures her own later situation, though she would experience less tolerance by others.



***Slaughterhouse Five*** by Kurt Vonnegut

This is a satirical novel about World War II experiences and journeys through time of a soldier named Billy Pilgrim. It is one of the world's great anti-war books. Centering on the infamous fire-bombing of Dresden, Billy Pilgrim's odyssey through time reflects the mythic journey of our own fractured lives as we search for meaning in what we are afraid to know.



***The Color Purple*** by Alice Walker

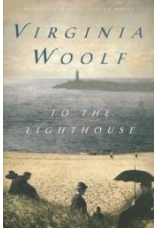
Taking place in rural Georgia, the story focuses on the life of women of color in the southern United States in the 1930s, addressing numerous issues including their exceedingly low position in American social culture. The novel has been the frequent target of censors and appears on the American Library Association list of the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 2000-2009 at number seventeen because of the sometimes explicit content, particularly in terms of violence.



***Ethan Frome*** by Edith Wharton

This novel is set in a fictional New England town named Starkfield, where an unnamed narrator tells the story of his encounter with Ethan Frome, a man with dreams and desires that end in an ironic turn of events. The narrator tells the story based on an account from observations at Frome's house when he had to stay there during a winter storm.

Continued...



**To the Lighthouse** by Virginia Woolf

Following and extending the tradition of modernist novelists like Marcel Proust and James Joyce, the plot of *To the Lighthouse* is secondary to its philosophical introspection. The novel includes little dialogue and almost no action; most of it is written as thoughts and observations. The novel recalls childhood emotions and highlights adult relationships. Among the book's many tropes and themes are those of loss, subjectivity, and the problem of perception.



**Native Son** by Richard Wright

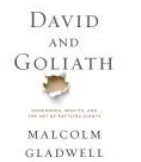
The novel tells the story of 20-year-old Bigger Thomas, a black American youth living in utter poverty. Bigger lived in a poor area on Chicago's South Side in the 1930s. While not apologizing for Bigger's crimes, Wright portrays a systemic inevitability behind them. Bigger's lawyer makes the case that there is no escape from this destiny for his client or any other black American, since they are the necessary product of the society that formed them and told them since birth who exactly they were supposed to be.

The following books are non-fiction



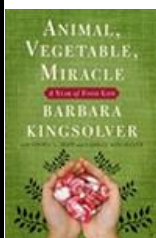
**Reading the Mountains of Home** by John Elder

Small farms once occupied the heights that John Elder calls home, but now only a few cellar holes and tumbled stone walls remain among the dense stands of maple, beech, and hemlocks on these Vermont hills. *Reading the Mountains of Home* is a journey into these verdant reaches. As John Elder is our guide, so Robert Frost is Elder's companion, his great poem "Directive" seeing us through a landscape in which nature and literature, loss and recovery, are inextricably joined.



**David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants** by Malcolm Gladwell

Three thousand years ago on a battlefield in Palestine, a shepherd boy felled a mighty warrior with nothing more than a stone and a sling, and ever since then the names of David and Goliath have stood for battles between underdogs and giants. David's victory was improbable and miraculous. He *shouldn't* have won. Gladwell makes you think differently about what it takes to be innovative and successful.



**Animal, Vegetable, Miracle** by Barbara Kingsolver

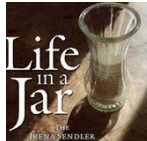
With characteristic poetry and pluck, Barbara Kingsolver and her family sweep readers along on their journey away from the industrial-food pipeline to a rural life in which they vow to buy only food raised in their own neighborhood, grow it themselves, or learn to live without it. Their good-humored search yields surprising discoveries about turkey sex life and overly zealous zucchini plants, en route to a food culture that's better for the neighborhood and also better on the table.

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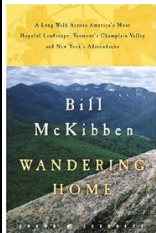
***Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott**

This is an inspiring and humorous look at the spirituality and sometimes dull reality of writing and the writing life. Lamott offers practical and honest suggestions on how to beat writer's block, find inspiration, or tackle a project that seems overwhelming, all of it wrapped in her warm and often hilarious viewpoint. With lessons in craft, art, and even life, having *Bird by Bird* on the shelf is like having a fellow writer and friend on hand for whenever you need motivation, inspiration, or even just a chuckle or two.



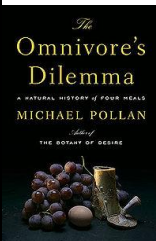
***Life in a Jar: The Irena Sendler Project* by Jack Mayer**

During World War II, Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker, organized a rescue network of fellow social workers to save 2,500 Jewish children from certain death in the Warsaw ghetto. Incredibly, after the war her heroism was suppressed by communist Poland and remained virtually unknown for 60 years, until three high school girls from a rural school in southeast Kansas stumbled upon a tantalizing reference to Sendler's rescues, which they fashioned into a history project, a play they called Life in a Jar.



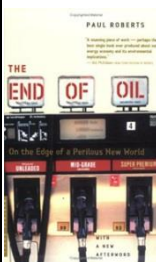
***Wandering Home* by Bill McKibben**

The acclaimed author of *The End of Nature* takes a three-week walk from his current home in Vermont to his former home in the Adirondacks and reflects on the deep hope he finds in the two landscapes.



***Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan**

Pollan asks the straightforward question of what we should have for dinner. The relationship between food and society, once moderated by culture, now finds itself confused. To learn more about those choices, Pollan follows each of the food chains that sustain us; industrial food, organic food, and food we forage ourselves; from the source to a final meal, and in the process writes a critique of the American way of eating.

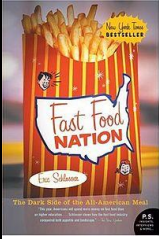


***The End of Oil* by Paul Roberts**

Within thirty years, we will have burned our way through most of the oil that is readily available to us. The costly effects of dependence on fossil fuel are taking their toll. Even as oil-related conflict threatens entire nations, individual consumers are suffering from higher prices at the gas pump, rising health problems, and the grim prospect of long-term environmental damage. In *The End of Oil*, Paul Roberts offers a brisk and timely wake-up call and considers the promises and pitfalls of alternatives such as wind power, hybrid cars, and hydrogen, making this essential reading for anyone looking to understand and react to the energy crisis at hand.

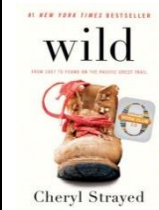
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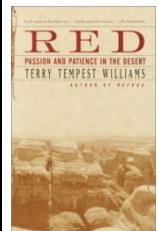
***Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser**

The book is divided into two sections: "The American Way," which interrogates the beginnings of the Fast Food Nation within the context of post-World War II America; and "Meat and Potatoes," which examines the specific mechanizations of the fast-food industry, including the chemical flavoring of the food, the production of cattle and chickens, the working conditions of beef industry, the dangers of eating meat, and the global context of fast food as an American cultural export.



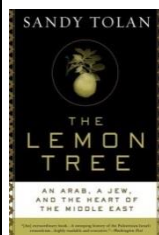
***Wild* by Cheryl Strayed**

At twenty-two, she had lost everything. In the wake of her mother's death, her family scattered and her own marriage was soon destroyed. Four years later, with nothing more to lose, she made the most impulsive decision of her life. With no experience or training, driven only by blind will, she would hike more than a thousand miles of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Mojave Desert through California and Oregon to Washington State—and she would do it alone.



***Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* by Terry Tempest Williams**

The beloved author of *Refuge*, Terry Tempest Williams is one of the country's most eloquent and imaginative writers. The desert is her blood. In this potent collage of stories, essays, and testimony, *Red* makes a stirring case for the preservation of America's Redrock Wilderness in the canyon country of southern Utah.



***Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* by Sandy Tolan**

In 1967, a Palestinian journeyed to Israel, with the goal of seeing the beloved old stone house, with the lemon tree behind it, that he and his family had fled nineteen years earlier. To his surprise, he was greeted by an Israeli college student, whose family fled Europe for Israel following the Holocaust. On the stoop of their shared home, Dalia and Bashir began a rare friendship, forged in the aftermath of war and tested over the next thirty-five years in ways that neither could imagine on that summer day in 1967.