

WHS RECOMMENDED SUMMER READING

Grades 7-9 Fiction

2022

Balcarcel, Rebecca. **The Other Half of Happy** Quijana is a girl in pieces. One-half Guatemalan, one-half American: When Quijana's Guatemalan cousins move to town, her dad seems ashamed that she doesn't know more about her family's heritage. One-half crush, one-half buddy: When Quijana meets Zuri and Jayden, she knows she's found true friends. But she can't help the growing feelings she has for Jayden. One-half kid, one-half grown-up: Quijana spends her nights Skyping with her ailing grandma and trying to figure out what's going on with her increasingly hard-to-reach brother. In the course of this immersive and beautifully written novel, Quijana must figure out which parts of herself are most important, and which pieces come together to make her whole. This lyrical debut from Rebecca Balcarcel is a heartfelt poetic portrayal of a girl growing up, fitting in, and learning what it means to belong.

Bergin, Virginia. **H2O**. Only 27% of the population has survived the killer rain. Ruby has survived against all odds but the drinkable water is running out. Ruby is left with 2 options - persevere on her own or embark on a treacherous journey across the country to find her father - if he is even alive.

Brouwer, Sigmund. **Clan**. Part survival story, part animal-human friendship story and part redemption story, Clan follows the journey of Atlatl and the saber tooth cub he rescued from a dire wolf attack. When Atlatl brings Cub back to his Clan, it begins a series of events that end with Atlatl being banished--the worst possible punishment for any Clan member. Without the protection of the group, a single person is all but helpless in the face of predators like the short-nosed bear, dire wolves and cheetahs. And Atlatl is even more vulnerable because of a childhood injury to his leg. But before the Clan can leave him behind, disaster strikes, and Atlatl has to rely on his wits, his ingenuity and his bravery to face the biggest foe yet and try to save what remains of his Clan.

Brown, Waka T. **Dream Annie, Dream**. As the daughter of immigrants who came to America for a better life, Annie Inoue was raised to dream big. And at the start of seventh grade, she's channeling that irrepressible hope into becoming the lead in her school play. So when Annie lands an impressive role in the production of The King and I, she's thrilled...until she starts to hear grumbles from her mostly white classmates that she only got the part because it's an Asian play with Asian characters. Is this all people see when they see her? Is this the only kind of success they'll let her have--one that they can tear down or use race to belittle? Disheartened but determined, Annie channels her hurt into a new dream: showing everyone what she's made of.

Burt, Jake. **The Ghoul of Windydown Vale**. Fourteen-year-old Copper is happy to secretly dress in a creepy costume and lurk along the lonely road into the Vale--partly because it's fun but also because, by helping to perpetuate the legend of a murderous local swamp monster, he's both discouraging banditry and encouraging travelers to hurry along to the inn his loving parents keep. Or so he's always been told. But then the arrival of a pair of obvious con artists posing as monster hunters exposes hints of a dark and horrifying reality beneath the town's friendly surface.

Carey, Anna. **This is Not the Jess Show**. It's March 1998. Jess Flynn is thinking of college and longing to leave the confines of her small town. Her mother is overprotective; her sister, Sara, is receiving palliative care for an incurable disease; and Jess is falling for her best friend, Tyler. Every year the month of March brings Jess anxiety that something major is going to happen: Three years earlier, Sara received her diagnosis; the next year there was a tornado; and one year ago, Jess' family's home was burglarized. Now Jess is hyperaware of her surroundings, and she notices many things too strange to be ignored: far-off voices chanting outside, a mysterious flu spreading around town, and her closest friends keeping secrets. Jess decides to investigate, but she must tread cautiously because someone is watching her every move.

Chan, Marty. **Willpower**. A teen must learn to control her special powers in order to save her imperiled father. Jennifer Mah, an Asian American girl, was born with telekinetic abilities. Tricked by unethical scientists who promised her a cure but really seek to conduct experiments on her, she and her father are on the run. Jennifer feels stifled by her dad's extreme protectiveness and constant worrying and wants nothing more than to lead a normal teenage existence. When Noah, the top jock at her school and a jerk-to-nice-guy, is about to get hit by a car, Jennifer cannot help but use her powers to avert the accident, which leads to an unlikely friendship between the pair. Then, Jennifer's dad is kidnapped by the evil Dr. Lansing and her agents, and it falls upon Jennifer and Noah to save him.

Charles, Tami. **Like Vanessa**. It is 1983 and Vanessa Martin, a thirteen-year-old African American girl in Newark's public housing, dreams of following in the footsteps of the first black Miss America, Vanessa Williams; but with a dysfunctional family (mother in jail, father withdrawn, drunken grandfather, gay cousin) the odds are against her--until a new teacher at school organizes a beauty pageant and encourages Vanessa to enter.

Chase, Paula. **Keeping It Real**. Fourteen-year-old Marigold's family owns Flexx Unlimited, a hip-hop lifestyle company, and she attends the elite school Flowered Arms Academy, but she has never felt entirely comfortable in the mostly White school, and she prefers to hang out with Justice, relatively new to the school, but a star basketball player; so enrolling in Style High with him, a trainee program funded by Mari's family, seems like a good way to spend the summer--until she meets Kara, who obviously hates Mari and seems determined to turn Justice against her.

Courage, Nick. **Snow Struck**. Ashley can't wait to show her cousins how magical Manhattan is at Christmastime. But instead of a week of fun, what they get is an arctic blast that knocks out the power and plunges the skyscrapers into darkness. It is unreal: the blizzard covers the Statue of Liberty in ice and topples the famous Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center.

De Leon, Jennifer. **Don't Ask Me Where I'm From**. When half-Guatemalan, half-Salvadoran Liliana, discovers that she's been accepted into a very "white," academic program she never applied to, she must decide whether or not to let this new school determine who she is and who she wants to be. Adding to her angst is the mystery of her dad's absence, about which no one in her family seems to have answers.

Ducie, Joe. **The Rig**. When 15-year-old Will gets sent to the Rig, he thinks finding a way out will be easy until he realizes the rig is in the middle of the Arctic Ocean, and no one has ever been able to escape before.

Englund, Jennie. **Taylor Before and After**. In this heartfelt middle-grade novel, an eighth-grade girl faces the aftermath of a tragic family accident—and struggles to move on. *Taylor Before and After* tells the story of middle schooler Taylor Harper through journal entries alternating between two timelines: before and after a drunk driving accident, in which Taylor Harper was a passenger—and her brother was the driver.

Fagan, Cary. **The Collected Works of Gretchen Oyster**. Hartley Staples, near-graduate of middle school, is grappling with the fact that his older brother has run away from home, when he finds a handmade postcard that fascinates him. And soon he spots another. Despite his losing interest in pretty much everything since Jackson ran away, Hartley finds himself searching for cards in his small town at every opportunity, ignoring other responsibilities, namely choosing a topic for his final project. Who is G.O. and why are they scattering cards about the town?

Firestone, Carrie. **Dress Coded**. A spirited eighth grader and her friends leverage the power of social networking to fight their school's oppressive dress code. Students are furious when the class campout is canceled because fellow student Olivia contravened the dress code. That changes after Molly persuades Olivia to tell the embarrassing story on her new podcast. Going public at first worsens her mortification; both girls are targeted by bullies. Then, as Molly's podcast followers mount, others post photos of dress-code shaming on Instagram, revealing the harm caused by policing girls' appearances while ignoring social, cultural, and economic realities that govern their lives and clothing choices. Talia's hair (she's Trinidadian) triggers the dress code. While Molly's pre-pubertal figure is ridiculed by an obnoxious classmate (Megan, with cerebral palsy, knows how that feels), her violations of the dress code are ignored, but girls with curvier bodies are repeatedly sanctioned. When district administrators ignore their petition to end dress coding, students strategize next steps.

Greci, Paul. **Follow the River**. When Billy and his dad are injured, Tom summons the courage to get back on the water. This time, he must travel in a rickety old homemade canoe through the Alaska wilderness to get help. But it's not just the canoe and the terrain he has to worry about--he's surrounded by dangerous adversaries. Are his skills enough to fight them off or will his journey be cut short and Billy and his father left stranded?

Hiaasen, Carl. **Squirm**. Billy Dickens' father has been out of the picture for as long as he can remember, but when Billy gets a hold of his address in Montana, not far from Yellowstone, the savvy, brave oddball flies out there solo to track him down. What he finds instead is his stepsister, Summer Chasing-Hawks, and his dad's new wife, Little Thunder Sky, aka Lil, both Crow Indians. Unfortunately, his dad's not so easy to track down. As the story spans from Montana to Florida and back, Billy continues to find and lose his father, who's in a bit of a wild goose chase himself, hunting down rich-boy poacher Lincoln Chumley Baxter.

Hobbs, Will. **City of Gold**. After Owen's father passes away and Owen moves from Kansas to Colorado with his mother and brother, Owen knows that selling crops is the only way his family will survive. When he spots a thief stealing the family's beloved mules, Owen sets out in pursuit, a journey on foot through rough terrain and weather that ultimately brings him to the mining town of Telluride. With help from kind miners and a young girl, Owen tracks down the mules and learns more about this City of Gold and the difficulties faced by its people, and along the way, he rubs shoulders with some of the most famous outlaws.

Johnson, Leah. **You Should See Me In A Crown**. Liz Lighty has always done her best to avoid the spotlight in her small, wealthy, and prom-obsessed midwestern high school, after all, her family is black and rather poor, especially since her mother died; instead she has concentrated on her grades and her musical ability in the hopes that it will win her a scholarship to elite Pennington College and their famous orchestra where she plans to study medicine--but when that scholarship falls through she is forced to turn to her school's scholarship for prom king and queen, which plunges her into the gauntlet of social media which she hates and leads her to discoveries about her own identity and the value of true friendships.

King, Wesley. **A World Below**. When Mr. Baker shares with his eighth grade AP class that they will visit Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico instead of the two-night stay in Albuquerque that last year's class experienced, his students are not pleased. They reluctantly show up the day of the trip with snacks in tow and sensible shoes for all the walking they will be doing. What they did not prepare for is the earthquake that strikes suddenly and swallows the class deep into the earth. After their teacher disappears through a crack, the teens are forced to fight for their lives.

Korman, Gordon. **Linked**. Link, Michael, and Dana live in a quiet town. But it's woken up very quickly when someone sneaks into school and vandalizes it with a swastika. Nobody can believe it. How could such a symbol of hate end up in the middle of their school? Who would do such a thing? Because Michael was the first person to see it, he's the first suspect. Because Link is one of the most popular guys in school, everyone's looking to him to figure it out. And because Dana's the only Jewish girl in the whole town, everyone's treating her more like an outsider than ever. The mystery deepens as more swastikas begin to appear. Some students decide to fight back and start a project to bring people together instead of dividing them further. The closer Link, Michael, and Dana get to the truth, the more there is to face--not just the crimes of the present, but the crimes of the past.

Lang, Heidi. **Whispering Pines**. After her dad's mysterious disappearance, Rae moves to Whispering Pines, Connecticut, with her sister and mom, who have seemingly forgotten about him. Rae, unable to forget, is certain something unusual led to his disappearance. She quickly learns that Whispering Pines is filled with strange happenings--disappearing children, random sinkholes, weird school rules. Some of the missing kids are eventually found in an even more frightful way: with their eyes missing. Rae befriends neighbor Caden, whose loneliness stems from his family's supernatural business, and the pair investigate the occurrences in town and in the Watchful Woods nearby. As Caden and Rae uncover strange truths, they realize the bizarre events may be linked to a local energy company and the disappearance of Caden's brother.

Lainoff, Lillie. **One for All**. In 1655 sixteen-year-old Tania is the daughter of a retired musketeer, but she is afflicted with extreme vertigo and subject to frequent falls; when her father is murdered she finds that he has arranged for her to attend Madame de Treville's newly formed Académie des Mariées in Paris, which, it turns out, is less a school for would-be wives, than a fencing academy for girls--and so Tania begins her training to be a new kind of musketeer, and to get revenge for her father.

Lee, Lori, M. **Forest of Souls**. Orphan Sirscha Ashwyn is determined to make a place for herself as the queen's next royal spy. She is well prepared, with impressive sword skills; special training from her mentor, Kendara; and the support of her best friend, fellow military student Saengo Phang. Then Sirscha is ambushed in a teahouse by shamans who kill Saengo--and somehow Sirscha brings her back to life. Thus begins Sirscha's fast-paced adventure through the mysterious and dangerous Dead Wood, seeking out Ronin the Spider King. Here she learns her true nature as a soul guide, and what she actually did when she saved Saengo.

Levy, Dana Alison. **Above All Else**. Eighteen-year-olds Rose and Tate are best friends and climbing buddies, and now they are embarking on the greatest climb of all--Mount Everest; but as the climbers encounter physical and emotional challenges the higher they go, the expedition starts to slide toward disaster, testing the teens' courage, determination, and their feelings for each other.

Lim, Elizabeth. **Six Crimson Cranes**. The exiled Princess Shiori must unravel the curse that turned her six brothers into cranes, and she is assisted by her spurned betrothed, a capricious dragon, and a paper bird brought to life by her own magic.

Lucas, Chad. **Thanks a Lot, Universe**. Brian has always been anxious, whether at home, or in class, or on the basketball court. His dad tries to get him to stand up for himself and his mom helps as much as she can, but after he and his brother are placed in foster care, Brian starts having panic attacks. And he doesn't know if things will ever be 'normal' again... Ezra's always been popular. He's friends with most of the kids on his basketball team--even Brian, who usually keeps to himself. But now, some of his friends have been acting differently, and Brian seems to be pulling away. Ezra wants to help, but he worries if he's too nice to Brian, his friends will realize that he has a crush on him... But when Brian and his brother run away, Ezra has no choice but to take the leap and reach out. Both boys have to decide if they're willing to risk sharing parts of themselves they'd rather hide. But if they can be brave, they might just find the best in themselves--and each other

Lupica, Mike. **Last Man Out**. Twelve-year-old Tommy Gallagher, the bravest and toughest football player on the field, faces his biggest battle ever when his father, a Boston firefighter, is fatally injured while rescuing a child. Other sports-related books by this author include **Heat**; **Fast Break**; **The Extra Yard**.

Mendoza, Paola. **Sanctuary**. In 2032, the violent death of a young girl at the Great American Wall near San Diego gives the authoritarian, xenophobic president the right moment to enact a media shutdown and launch the Deportation Force (DF), a brutal extension of ICE that operates outside the law. Eleventh-grader Vali has lived safely with her mami and eight-year-old brother, Ernie, in Vermont since her father was deported back to Colombia. But now the DF is closing in. When Mami's counterfeit wrist identification chip malfunctions, Vali and Ernie must leave her behind to survive. Vali trusts a coyote to drive them to California, which has declared itself a sanctuary. At the halfway mark they are on foot, hunted by drones, and barely escape an attempt to force Vali into prostitution. Death edges closer every hour as hunger, thirst, and injury sap their energy. This intense, realistic novel never lets up, even as Vali flashes back to the love and sacrifices that sustain her.

Mullin, Mike. **Ashfall**. Alex, 15, is alone at home in Cedar Falls, Iowa, when his house collapses, as thick black ash falls from the sky. A supervolcano in Yellowstone National Park has erupted 900 miles away, all power is out, and the horrendous noise of the aftermath does not stop. Alex takes off through the never-ending darkness, stench, corpses, and tumult to try to find his family.

Ochieng, Patrick. **Playing a Dangerous Game**. In the 1970s, 10-year-old Lumush lives with his family in Railway Estates in Kenya. A recent transfer to the snobbish English-language-only Hill School, Lumush much prefers spending time with his old friends from the local school. When the boys venture into a nearby "haunted house" on a dare, they overhear known locals talking about murder and a coffee-smuggling operation. The next time the boys return, they find more danger than they bargained for.

Oppel, Kenneth. **Bloom**. The invasion begins—but not as you'd expect. It begins with rain. Rain that carries seeds. Seeds that sprout—overnight, everywhere. These new plants take over crop fields, twine up houses, and burrow below streets. They bloom—and release toxic pollen. They bloom—and form Venus flytrap-like pods that swallow animals and people. They bloom—everywhere, unstoppable.

Ormsbee, Kathryn. **Candidly Cline**. Cline Alden's grandmother says that music is in the family's blood, but Cline's mother is dead-set against her daughter's dreams of becoming a country music singer; Cline is determined to find the money to attend a Young Singer-Songwriter Workshop in Lexington (not too far from her Paris, Kentucky home), so now she has a lot on her mind--she is hiding things from her mother, she is losing her beloved grandmother to Alzheimer's, and she has begun to acknowledge, to herself at least, that she is more attracted to girls than boys.

Pancholy, Maulik. **The Best At It**. Rahul Kapoor is heading into seventh grade in a small town in Indiana. The start of middle school is making him feel increasingly anxious, so his favorite person in the whole world, his grandfather Bhai, gives him some well-meaning advice: Find one thing you're really good at. And become the BEST at it. Those four little words sear themselves into Rahul's brain. While he's not quite sure what that special thing is, he is convinced that once he finds it, bullies like Brent Miller will stop torturing him at school. And he won't be worried about staring too long at his classmate Justin Emery. With his best friend, Chelsea, by his side, Rahul is ready to crush this challenge... But what if he discovers he isn't the best at anything.

Park, Linda Sue. **A Long Walk to Water**. Salva Dut is 11 years old when war raging in the Sudan separates him from his family. To avoid the conflict, he walks for years with other refugees, seeking sanctuary and scarce food and water. Park simply yet convincingly depicts the chaos of war and an unforgiving landscape as they expose Salva to cruelties both natural and man-made. The lessons Salva remembers from his family keep him from despair during harsh times in refugee camps and enable him, as a young man, to begin a new life in America.

Perkins, Stephanie. **There's Someone Inside Your House**. In a small town in Nebraska, a series of grisly murders starts with the high school musical's star, who is found with a smiley face carved into her throat. The next one targeted is the football running back, whose head is sliced open and brain slashed. Only high school students are targeted, and recent transfer Makani Young and her friends wonder who will be next while trying to find a pattern in the victims. When Makani is attacked, she and Ollie fight off and identify the attacker. The race is on for the town to catch him, and fear is everywhere.

Preller, James. **Upstander**. Mary O'Malley is tired of keeping secrets. Secrets like her older brother, Jonny's drug use. Starting seventh grade is tough enough without the upheaval her brother is bringing to their family. It seems the only person who might understand is Griffen Connolly, whose older sister runs with Jonny in the wrong crowd. Mary thought Griff was too cool, too popular for her. But now he wants to hang out with her, and listen. When two girls Mary thought were her friends decide to slam another girl online, Mary tries to look the other way. Then the girls turn on Mary, and suddenly, she doesn't have a safety zone. Her brother is out of control, her family's energies are all spent on him. There is only one person she can turn to. But can she trust Griff? Or is he one of the bullies?

Prendergast, Gabrielle. **The Wherewood**. Fourteen-year-old Blue (a human) should be upset that his new friends Salix (a Nixie) and Finola (a Faerie) have tricked him into going on another adventure into the Faerieland. But he's actually quite excited. Especially since their quest to find the way back to Salix's homeland takes them through the Wherewood, a magical region where lost things go. They encounter confused pets, misplaced homework assignments and mountains of odd socks. But when a misstep leads Blue into the forsaken Witherwood, he comes face to face with an old enemy. And Olea, the cursed former queen of Nearwood, will not let Blue go so easily this time

Reynolds, Jason. **Patina**. When Patina Patty Jones, the fastest girl on the Defenders track team, comes in second place in a race- a fact she finds unacceptable- her rage is so intense that she mentally checks out. In an effort to make her into a team player, Coach assigns her to the 4x800 relay race and makes the relay team do hokey things like waltz in practice to learn each others' rhythms. Meanwhile, Patty feels completely out of place at her rich-girl academy. And then there's the really hard stuff. Like how her father died, how her mother got the sugar (diabetes) and it took her legs, and now Patty and her little sister live with their aunt Emily and uncle Tony.

Smith, Ronald L. **The Owls Have Come to Take Us Away.** Twelve-year-old Simon has a wild imagination: he loves playing video games and reading fantasy novels. When he isn't occupied with those things, he obsesses over aliens. On a camping trip with his parents, Simon loses consciousness; upon waking, he is convinced he has been abducted. Simon is afraid, but determined to find out if the aliens are real.

Swiedler, Christopher. **The Orpheus Plot.** Lucas Adebayo grew up on a small mining ship in the asteroid belt, but wants to join the Navy and become the best pilot in the galaxy. The Navy has never accepted a Belter cadet before, but Lucas's skills secure him a place on the training ship, the **Orpheus**. Life in the Navy couldn't be more different than life in the Belt, and Lucas struggles to find his place. As a Belter, he's an outsider among his peers; as a Navy cadet, he doesn't quite fit in at home anymore, either. Lucas is caught between the worlds of his past and his future when a Belter rebellion puts everyone's lives at risk. Only he can lead the way to peace.

Tang, Andrea. **Rebelwing.** On the brink of dystopia, a girl and a mechanical dragon help defend democracy in an alternate future Washington, D.C. Sassy prep schooler Prudence Wu smuggles banned media into Incorporated territory in order to supplement her meager scholarship. Though there are warnings of wyverns, war machines used during the Partition Wars, Pru cons her way past Barricade walls during a job and ends up on the run. A chance encounter with a frightening beast leads to her waking in her dorm with a blacked-out memory and a dragon mech imprinted on her mind. In anime-like fashion, with the help of her well-connected best friend and highly placed allies, Pru reluctantly agrees to pilot the dragon Rebelwing.

Tomp, Sarah. **The Easy Part of Impossible.** Diving has been Ria's life for a long time. She was a champion on her way to the Olympics until an accident sidelined her at the meet that was supposed to make her career. Now, going into her senior year of high school, Ria is adrift; her ADHD has kept her from succeeding at school outside of diving, but diving isn't something she can go back to. Her coach, Benny, made her a strong athlete but was also exacting and punishing, and though she desperately misses the sport, Ria is unable to return to the abuse she kept secret. In her newfound free time, Ria reconnects with her childhood friend Cotton. As he teaches her to cave, Ria begins to fully face the truth of what Benny did to her.

Volponi, Paul. **The Final Four.** A much-anticipated Final Four basketball game is played by the underdog Troy University Trojans and the Michigan State Spartans. As the nerve-racking game unfolds, flashbacks, newspaper articles, interviews, and journal entries introduce readers to four players and their previous struggles and successes. This is a well-structured story that conveys each player's passion for the game and desire to win.

Wein, Elizabeth. **The Enigma Game.** Jamaican-born Londoner Louisa wants to contribute to the 1940 British cause, and she'd be a flyer if she could. Instead, after the war-related deaths of both her parents, she is caretaker for an aging opera singer in a small Scottish town next to an air base. When a German enigma machine comes into her possession, she finally gets her chance to pitch in with the war effort, as long as she can elude the attention of the German-and British-authorities.

Williams, Alicia D. **Genesis Begins Again.** Genesis comes home from school to find her family's belongings on the lawn; they've been evicted again. They have to move and at the new school Genesis makes friends for the first time and is mentored by Mrs. Hill, the choir teacher. Genesis tries lightening her skin, begs to be able to use relaxer in her hair, and keeps a list of things she hates about herself, believing that if she only looked like her light-skinned mother and not her dark-skinned father, the situation at home would improve. Genesis escapes by singing; she is inspired by greats like Billie Holiday and Etta James. When she has the opportunity to sing in the school talent show, Genesis must find the power in using her voice to speak her truth.

Withers, Pam. **Mountain Runaways**. First a Canadian Rockies avalanche kills their parents. Then Children's Services threatens to separate them. That's when the three Gunnarsson kids decide to run away into the mountains and fend for themselves until the oldest turns eighteen and becomes their legal guardian. Not many would dare. But Jon, Korka, and Aron's parents ran a survival school. Turns out their plan is full of holes. When food and equipment go missing and illness and injury strike, things get scary. They're even less prepared for encounters with dangerous animals and a sketchy woods dweller. On top of that, grief, cold, hunger, and sibling infighting threaten to tear them apart, while the search parties are closing in on them. Do Jon, Korka, and Aron really have what it takes to survive?

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Harbor Me**. When six students are chosen to participate in a weekly talk with no adults allowed, they discover that when they're together, it's safe to share the hopes and fears they have to hide from the rest of the world"