

The Center School Committee on Racial Justice and Equity

Recommended Book List

Fiction Books for Students

- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely (7/8 grade) - Two teenagers - one Black, one white, are forced to reckon with police brutality when a cop, who is the older brother of the white protagonist, brutalizes the Black teen. Told in alternating narratives. Reynolds (Black) & Kiely(White) have also traveled the country talking about race. Their videos can be found by googling their names.
- *One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams Garcia (All grades can read this) - This is a book that is often very funny while at the same time dealing with some important themes about race, family, motherhood. Three girls travel to LA to live with the mother who left them as toddlers. They find out she is part of the Black Panther movement and eventually discover what it means to be a part of something greater and the many ways we have family.
- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes - When Jerome gets murdered by cops, he returns as a ghost and meets another Ghost Boy - Emmett Till. A thoughtful and thought-provoking novel that is both current and historical.
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor (Historical fiction) - This classic about the Logan family - a well-to-do Black family trying to hold on to their land in the early part of the 20th Century is told from the point of view of eleven year old Cassie Logan who is the only girl in a family of five children. Timely and timeless and beautifully rendered.

Nonfiction Books for Students

- *Stamped* by Jason Reynolds / Ibram X. Kendi - This young peoples version of Kendi's National Book Award Winner, *Stamped* is a very readable, sometimes funny, always thoughtful book about how racism came to be and what young people can do to become anti-racist.
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson - A memoir about a young Black girl's coming of age during the civil rights movement, BGD is also a book about becoming a reader and a writer. Told in verse with family photographs at the end, this National Book Award winning memoir is written by a Center School parent and Committee on Racial Justice and Equity member Jacqueline Woodson.
- *This Book Is Antiracist: 20 Lessons on how to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do The Work* by Tiffany Jewell. Illustrated by Aurélia Durand - This book is exactly what it says it is. Perfect for Middle Schoolers with fabulous illustrations.
- *It's Trevor Noah: Born A Crime (Kids' version)* by Trevor Noah - Trevor Noah story rewritten for young people. Born in South African under Apartheid to a Black mother and white father, Noah takes us through his lifetime of negotiating race and class.

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- *Just Mercy (YA Version)* by Bryan Stevenson - This is the young people's version of Bryan Stevenson's work as a lawyer in the south working to exonerate people on Death Row who have been wrongly accused. He is the founder of EJI (Equal Justice Initiative and the National Museum for Peace and Justice)
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo - A stunning novel in verse about a fierce young girl with dreams of becoming a spoken word poet. Set in Harlem. Winner of the National Book Award (among MANY others)
- *A Wreath for Emmett Till* by Marilyn Nelson - A collection of connecting poems (Crown of Sonnets) telling the story of Emmett Till's life and death. Beautifully rendered.
- *March*, by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrations by Nate Powell—Congressman John Lewis's three-volume graphic autobiography recounts his early life, from childhood to his experiences as a Freedom Rider, to "Bloody Sunday" in 1965. *March* tells the story of the Civil Rights Movement through Lewis's life, and with vivid illustrations, so it's a great choice for middle schoolers who love graphic novels and comics.
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Fiction Books for Parents

- *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates - a vivid story that draws on historical incidents. Very insightful.
- *Sing Unburied Sing* by Jesmyn Ward - Ward's narrative so beautifully taut and heartbreakingly eloquent that it stops the breath. Through fully imagined characters both living and dead, this road novel moves beyond the road into the bigger story of what it means to be an American in the rural South both now and decades before this moment. From the elderly, loving Pops, to the clairvoyant toddler, Michaela, the living and the dead confront racism, hope, and the everlasting handprint of history.

Nonfiction Books for Parents

- *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* by Wes Moore - A fascinating look at how environment can shape Black lives and perception. This book challenges the reader to consider the impact (direct and indirect) society has on the success and failure of our youth.
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates - A letter from the author to his son and the reader about Blackness in America. If the reader pays close attention they will discover an unfortunately all too common fear and trauma that is with many BIPOC every second of every day.
- *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad - This New York Times Bestseller is structured as a 28 Day guide/journey to help readers identify the impact of white privilege and white supremacy over their lives. It includes daily journal prompts. Can be used in groups or individually.

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- *The Warmth Of Other Suns* by Isabel Wilkerson - This stunningly written Pulitzer Prize-winning book chronicles the journey of four people who were part of the Great Migration (The period of time between the early 1900s to the mid 1970s when almost 6 million Black people left the oppressive conditions of rural areas (mainly the south) for better opportunities in the north. This is both a beautifully rendered audiobook and an epic read.
- *PUSHOUT - The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Monique W. Morris - This is also a documentary on PBS. “Chronicles the experiences of Black girls across the country whose intricate lives are misunderstood, highly judged -- by teachers, administrators, and the justice system - and degraded by the very institutions charged with helping them flourish.” - Booklist. A book “for everyone who cares about children.” - Washington Post
- *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria and Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum - “An unusually sensitive work about the racial barriers that still divide us in so many areas of life.” - Jonathan Kozol
- *When They Call You A Terrorist* by Patrisse Kahn-Cullors - Part memoir, part history book, Khan-Cullors chronicles the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement (she is a co-founder), that was only until recently considered ‘a terrorist’ organization.

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