

Manhattan Beach Unified School District

2008 Summer Pleasure Reading

Pleasure reading recommended by MBUSD Library Media Specialists

For Students Entering Grades 4 and 5

Surprises According to Humphrey, by Betty G. Birney (2008)

In the latest adventure of Humphrey, classroom hamster at Longfellow School, a new janitor and the possible retirement of Mrs. Brisbane stir up Humphrey's world, but he still finds time to help solve the students' problems. Also *The World According to Humphrey* (2004), *Friendship According to Humphrey* (2005), and *Trouble According to Humphrey* (2007).

The Wicked, Wicked Ladies in the Haunted House, by Mary Chase (c 1968, 2003)

Nine-year-old Maureen is the terror of the neighborhood until she meets up with seven strange sisters in an old house.

Gregor the Overlander, by Suzanne Collins (2003)

When eleven-year-old Gregor and his two-year-old sister are pulled into a strange underground world, they trigger an epic battle involving humans, bats, rats, cockroaches, and spiders while on a quest foretold by ancient prophecy. The story continues in four more volumes.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid, by Jeff Kinney (2007)

This comic book style novel is a big hit, especially with boys. This very contemporary diary gives a fresh look at the lonely life of a middle schooler. Also *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008).

How to Steal a Dog, by Barbara O'Connor (2007)

After her father leaves the family virtually penniless, Georgina, her mother, and her younger brother are forced to live temporarily in their car, while they try to rebuild their lives. Desperate to improve her circumstances, Georgina comes up with an elaborate plan to steal a dog in order to claim the reward money. The book calls into question assumptions based on the appearance of wealth or poverty.

Lawn Boy, by Gary Paulsen (2007)

In this hilarious "quick-read" summer story (88 pages), the twelve-year-old narrator receives an old riding lawn mower from his grandmother for his birthday. Needing money to replace a bike tire, the boy begins mowing lawns. His business booms: by the end of one month, he has fifteen employees, is investing money through a stockbroker, and is sponsoring a heavyweight fighter. This story serves as a painless tutorial for young readers on financial management, and it shows capitalism at its best! It's hard not to dream big when you read this story.

The Wednesday Wars, by Gary D. Schmidt (2007)

On Wednesday afternoons, when all his classmates go to either Catechism or Hebrew school, seventh-grader Holling Hoodhood stays in Mrs. Baker's classroom, where they read the plays of William Shakespeare. Set in 1967, this 2008 Newbery Honor Book successfully blends the cultural uproar of the '60s, the internal uproar of early adolescence, and the timeless wisdom of Shakespeare's words. Also by Gary D. Schmidt: *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* (2004) and *First Boy* (2005).

The Mysterious Benedict Society, by Trenton Lee Stewart (2007)

After passing a series of mind-bending tests, four children are selected for a secret mission that requires them to go undercover at the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, where the only rule is that there are no rules. Although lengthy (485 pages), this thrilling book flies past; it also touches on serious issues, such as abandonment, family, loyalty, and facing one's fears. Fans may also enjoy *The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Perilous Journey* (2008).

Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H. L. Hunley, by Sally M. Walker (2005)

The *H. L. Hunley* was a Confederate submarine that, in 1864, became the first ever to sink an enemy ship; but after its destruction, it lay missing on the ocean floor for more than a century. This extensively illustrated book describes the *Hunley's* creation, the discovery of its wreckage, artifacts found onboard, and even includes facial reconstructions by forensic anthropologists of several crew members.

The Aurora County All-Stars, by Deborah Wiles (2007)

What a choice: Aurora County's two-hundredth-anniversary pageant is scheduled for the same day as the biggest game of the baseball season for the Aurora County All-Stars. To resolve this conflict, House Jackson, the team's twelve-year-old star pitcher, will need to put aside his differences with the very dramatic Frances "Finesse" Schotz as well as deal with the death of the mysterious Mr. Norwood "Mean-Man" Boyd.

The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain, by Peter Sís (2007)

Author and artist Peter Sís describes growing up in Communist Czechoslovakia and discusses how Western culture influenced his life. In Sís's formative years as an artist, ideas from the West began slipping through the Iron Curtain: news of the Beatles, Elvis, Allen Ginsberg, and the Harlem Globetrotters, drawn in full color to contrast with his grey depictions of the Eastern Bloc. The recurring themes of music and art as important vehicles of self-expression, and the relationship between a government's inclination to embrace or suppress that creativity, will resonate with pre-teens who find themselves outside the box.