

June 2011

Dear Parents of rising Sixth Graders:

Enclosed is the summer reading list for your child. This year each incoming sixth grader is required to read either *Shiva's Fire* by Suzanne Fisher Staples or *The Conch Bearer* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. (Or both, naturally, if your child is so inclined!) These novels take place in India, and will set the stage for our first history unit. I recommend that the required book be saved to the latter half of the summer for better retention. Aside from that, have your son or daughter use the attached list as a source of excellent suggestions about books that have been tested and proven among the 6<sup>th</sup> grade set. Included in this list are titles of books specifically recommended by past 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Here are the books your child is *not to read*, as they are some that I know we will be reading next year! *The Secret Garden*, *The Giver*, *A Day No Pigs Would Die* and *Old Man and the Sea*.

Throughout the summer, your child should always have a book "in progress." Books should go to camp, on vacation, and on visits to family, to be read at quiet times or in a spare moment. Reading can happen under the covers with a flashlight, in a sleeping bag, on a porch swing, in a hammock and in the back seat of a car. I've even seen kids read while up a tree, though reading while riding a horse or bicycle is not recommended.

Though I hesitate to set a specific number of books, because I want the children to feel comfortable reaching for long or challenging books without feeling a lot of time pressure, I will suggest a minimum of four books (including the required book). More is certainly fine, and, in fact, encouraged if feasible.

I will collect a list of books and authors on the first day of school, so have your child keep a log. There is no need to write a summary or report, just a list will suffice. Encourage your child to keep this log along the way as titles, and especially authors' names, tend to slip one's mind as time passes.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Park

P.S. Don't forget about sending postcards to me and Mrs. Yates before school begins, as well as one to Mrs. Hathaway. I create a display of post cards in the classroom to greet everyone in September. Use my home address please, not the school address. 1657 Rt. 7A, Copake, NY 12516

**Sixth grade reading list:**

**Required book:**

**The Conch Bearer** by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

In India, a healer invites twelve-year-old Anand to join him on a quest to return a magical conch to its safe and rightful home, high in the Himalayan mountains. The present and the past intertwine in this tale of adventure and fantasy.

***OR***

**Shiva's Fire** by Suzanne Fisher Staples

In this powerful novel rich with mysticism, Suzanne Fisher Staples tells the poignant story of a strong girl who refuses to squander her magical gifts in the face of life's ordinary but perplexing mysteries.

**FICTION**

Alcott, Louisa May *Little Women*

The Marsh girls, Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy and how they grew in Massachusetts during the Civil War.

Alexander, Lloyd *The Book of Three*

Taran, the Assistant Pig-keeper longs to be a hero. He begins a journey to save his land, Prydain. Sequels are *The Black Cauldron*, *The Castle of Lyr*, *Taran Wanderer* and *The High King*.

Anderson Janet *The Last Treasure*

Locked somewhere in the house of Ellsworth's long-lost family are dangerous secrets...and a treasure that only Ellsworth can find.

Anderson, Laurie *Fever 1793*

An epidemic is sweeping the city! First Mattie's friend dies. Then her mother is sick. Will Mattie be next?

Avi *Crispin*

The chase is on! Bounty hunters are following Crispin across medieval England!

Avi *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*

In 1832 Charlotte is caught on board a ship with a mutinous crew.

Baker, E.D. *Fairy Tales Pack: Dragon's Breath and the Frog Princess*.

A princess who turns into a frog? Two thoroughly mixed up fairy tales to make you laugh out loud.

Balliett, Blue *Chasing Vermeer*

A masterpiece painting is stolen and even the FBI is baffled. Can Pedra and Calder break the code and solve this crime of the century? (Hidden clues in the illustrations.)

Barron, T.A. *Heartlight*

Kate Gordon learns about an astonishing power we all possess. Sequels are *The Ancient One* and *The Merlin Effect*.

Blumberg, Rhoda *Commodore Perry in the Land of the Shogun*

The story of the American expedition to Japan led by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853.

Bruchac, Joseph *Skeleton Man*

Molly's parents are missing, so she's staying with her creepy uncle. Can she discover his mysterious secret and save her life?

Burnett, Frances Hodgson *The Little Princess*

A child born in India is sent back to England for her education. Her life changes dramatically when her father dies.

Byars, Betsy *The Summer of the Swans*

Sara's mentally challenged brother, Charlie, loves to watch the swans at the lake. One day, Charlie disappears...can Sara find him before it's too late?

Byars, Betsy *The Dark Stairs*

For mystery lovers, this is a great read. Herculeah Jones pokes around in an unsolved murder and gets herself into quite an adventurous tangle.

Cabot, Meg *All America Girl*

One day Samantha just happens to foil an attempt to assassinate the President. Now she's a celebrity. Can she handle fame?

Carman, Patrick *The Dark Hills Divide-The Land of Elyon Book 1*

What lies beyond the walls of Bridewell? Legend says there's a terrible evil in the Dark Hills. Alexa dares to risk her life to find out.

Chabon, Michael *Summerland*

Summerland is a magical place where it's always a perfect day for baseball. But Coyote the Changer wants to destroy it. Can Ethan and his friends save the world?

Choldenko, Jennifer *Al Capone Does My Shirts*

Moose's family must move to Alcatraz for his dad's new job! What's it like living next door to the world's worst criminals?

Clements, Andrew *A Week in the Woods*

Mark doesn't like his new town or his new school. How is he going to survive the week-long class camping trip?

Clements, Andrew *The Jacket*

Phil accuses a black schoolmate of stealing. He's not prejudiced...is he?

Coifer, Eoin *The Supernaturalist*

Cosmo escapes a bizarre orphanage and is rescued by kids with special powers! Could he be one of them?

Coifer, Eoin *The Wish List*

After being killed during a botched robbery, trouble-making Meg can't get into heaven until she helps the elderly man she tried to rob right the wrongs in his life.

Collier, James Lincoln and Christopher *My Brother Sam is Dead*

His brother is a Patriot. His father is a British Loyalist. Which side of the American Revolution will Tim choose?

Creech, Sharon *Heartbeat*

Annie's best friend, Max, is mad at her for not joining the track team. Now Annie must decide: Should she run for fun...or run to win?

Creech, Sharon *Walk Two Moons*

In this Newbery Award winner thirteen year old Sal searches for her missing mother.

Crichton, Michael *Timeline*

Find out what happens when a group of scientists go back to the perilous Middle Ages.

Curtis, Christopher Paul *Bud, Not Buddy*

Since Mama died, Bud has been in one foster home after another. Now he's run away to find his dad. (Newbery Medal winner!)

Cushman, Karen *Catherine, Called Birdy*

Catherine's diary of the year 1290 details her life as her father "conspires to sell me like cheese to some lack-wit seeking a wife."

Dahl, Roald *The BFG*

Can the Big Friendly Giant help Sophie stop the other giants from eating kids?

Daneshvari, Gitty *School of Fear*

At a secret, yet elite, school for eradicating children's fears four 12-year-olds meet. When they arrive, they discover that they are the only students in a school run by a seemingly crazy ex-beauty queen. The school isn't what it seems, and the villains aren't who they appear to be. Great for Lemony Snicket fans and people who like a good laugh.

De Felice, Cynthia *Weasel*

Weasel, an Indian fighter the government sent to drive out the Indians, has succeeded and the Shawnees are dead and gone. Now Weasel has turned on the settlers.

Denenberg, Barry *Shadow Life: A Portrait of Anne Frank and Her Family*

This new book explores the Holocaust with a groundbreaking mix of fiction and non-fiction including oral history from primary sources and a fictional diary created from Margot Frank's perspective.

Dorris, Michael *Sees Behind Trees*

Walnut is a Native American boy who fears he cannot find a place in his tribe because he cannot see well enough to hunt.

Edmonds, Walter *Matchlock Gun*

New York State during the French and Indian War is the setting for this story of a boy's courage and resourcefulness.

Funke, Cornelia *Dragon Rider*

A curious boy, a clever girl and a young dragon team up to find a mythical land!. Join them on their incredible journey.

Flanagan, John *The Ranger's Apprentice* series

These books are about a boy who is an apprentice to a cloaked spy/warrior and is a truly epic fantasy thriller

George, Jean Craighead *Julie of the Wolves*

Julie is lost in the Alaskan wilderness. Can a pack of Arctic wolves help her survive?

Gipson, Fred *Old Yeller*

Can Old Yeller the stray dog help Travis fight a bear?

Gregory, Kristiana *Cleopatra VII, Daughter of the Nile, Egypt 57 B.C.*

Read what was in Cleopatra's diary before she became Queen!

Henkes, Kevin *Olive's Ocean*

From her classmate's death to her crush on a neighbor, Martha is dealing with the most confusing summer of her life!

Helquist, Brett *The Wright 3*

Ghosts, hidden treasure and a secret message in code. Read this follow-up to *Chasing Vermeer* that is full of hidden surprises!

Hiassen, Carl *Hoot*

How can a new kid, a girl bully and a runaway help save a group of endangered owls? Find out in this funny adventure with a hilarious ending!

Hiassen, Carl *Scat*

A mysterious adventure set in Florida about a boy whose dad is away at war. The boy's teacher disappears on an odd field trip and the class bully is gone too. Where are these people? The boy wants to find out!

Hobbs, Will *Bearstone*

Cloyd is sent to a home for boys when all he wants is to live in the wilds of remote Utah canyons. A sequel to *Beardance*.

Hoffman, Alice *Indigo*

When Martha, Trevor and Eli run away, they uncover an amazing secret about their town and themselves!

Jacques, Brian *The Angel's Command*

It's ghost ships, shark attacks and non-stop action for Ben and his dog, Ned...the sole survivors of the *Flying Dutchman*!

Kelly, Eric P. *The Trumpeter of Krakow*

In 1461 Joseph Charnetski and his family arrive in Krakow to deliver a mysterious crystal to the king for safekeeping.

Konigsburg, E.L. *The View From Saturday*

A story about members of a sixth grade "Academic Bowl" team. It won the Newbery medal four years ago.

Langdon, Jane *The Time Bike*

Eddie is embarrassed by his funny-looking bike until he discovers it can travel through time.

Lasky, Kathryn *Mary, Queen of Scots, France 1553*

Separated from her mother and her country, young Mary is sent to France to live under the care of the ruthless Queen, Catherine de Medici.

Lowry, Lois *The Silent Boy*

When tragedy strikes his family, only Katy can unravel the secrets locked in Jacob's mind!

Lupica, Mike *The Batboy*

This book is about a boy whose father, a former major league pitcher, and mother get a divorce. He becomes a batboy for the Tigers. On his days off, he plays ball for a travel team. A finely crafted novel with engaging characters and a good read for baseball fans and non-fans alike.

Martin, Ann *A Corner of the Universe*

After Uncle Adam arrives, Hattie's summer is anything but normal!

Montgomery, Lucy *Anne of Green Gables*

Anne Shirley, the heroine of this perennially popular series, lives on Canada's Prince Edward Island at the turn of the century. As the series begins, she is eleven and full of troubles until she sorts out her relationship with her foster mother.

McGuire, Gregory *Wicked*

The back story of the Wicked Witch of the West from the Land of Oz. Entertaining from start to finish.

Namioka, Lensey *Yang the Youngest and his Terrible Ear*

Yingtao is an immigrant from China to the United States. Unlike the rest of his family, he does not have musical talent.

Nix, Garth *Mister Monday* and the rest of the Keys to the Kingdom series

No-holds-barred fantasy about Arthur Penhaligon who dreams that a mysterious figure hands him a key. When he wakes up, he still has the key. That's when strange things begin to happen. This 7 part series is a favorite and apparently cannot be put down once it is picked up.

Paolini, Christopher *Eragon, Eldest and Brisingr* (The Inheritance Cycle)

This popular series involves the discovery by a farm boy of a dragon egg that hatches. This event initiates many adventures. A must read for fans of Tolkein.

Paterson, Katherine *The Same Stuff as Stars*

Angel's only a kid but she takes care of her little brother and frail great-grandmother! Can a mysterious stranger help?

Paulsen, Gary *Cook Camp*

During WWII, a little boy is sent to live with his grandmother, a cook in a camp for workers building a road through the wilderness.

Paulsen, Gary *Hatchet*

After a plane crash, thirteen year old Brian spends fifty-four days in the wilderness and learns how to survive.

Paulsen, Gary *The River*

Two years earlier, Brian was stranded in the wilderness for fifty-four days with nothing but a hatchet. Now the government wants him to do it again so that scientists can study his survival techniques.

Paulsen, Gary *Dogsong*

Russell seeks to find his "song" of himself in the traditional way of his Eskimo people.

Paulsen, Gary *The Time Hackers*

Dorso Clayman opens his locker to find a dead body inside. Thirty seconds later...it disappears!

Pierce, Tamora *The Will of the Empress*

Sandry has been summoned by her cousin, the Empress of Namorn, and she is shocked to discover what awaits her at the palace. Can she rely on unique powers to escape the brutal empire?

Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan *The Yearling*

A young boy grows up to learn the hardship and pain of making an adult decision. This wonderful tale is set in the central Florida "scrub pine" country in the nineteenth century.

Rawls, Wilson *Where the Red Fern Grows*

A young boy in the Ozark Mountains during the Depression earns the money to buy and then train a fine pair of coon hounds. A fine coming of age novel with dreams and values tested and justified.

Rinaldi, Ann *A Stitch in Time*

The Chelmsford family of Salem, Massachusetts is separating in 1788 and Hannah decides to make a memory quilt to share with her sisters. The sequels are *Broken Days* and *The Blue Door*.

Rinaldi, Ann *Taking Liberty*

Oney Judge is Martha Washington's personal servant and practically a member of the family. But she's also a slave and she finally decides to take what is rightfully hers...her freedom!

*Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan

Percy finds out that he is actually the son of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea. What does this mean for him and how does he proceed? First he attends a camp for demi-gods, called Camp Half-Blood, and the adventures start there.

Rylant, Cynthia *Missing May*

A twelve year old girl named Summer undertakes a journey to contact her Aunt May who has died.

Sperry, Armstrong *Call It Courage*

Mafatu is a Polynesian boy nearly drowned at sea as a young child. Now he must prove his courage as he comes of age.

Spinelli, Jerry *Loser*

Donald Zinkoff is one of the greatest kids you could ever hope to meet. He laughs easily, he likes people, he loves school, he tries to rescue lost girls in blizzards, he talks to old ladies. The only problem is, he's a loser. Find out why.

Spinelli, Jerry *Stargirl*

A delightful story that resonates among the pre-teen and teen set. A quirky girl who marches to the beat of her own drum copes with exclusion that turns to wild popularity and then flips back again. Meanwhile, she experiences first love and continues to be true to herself.

Stanton, Mary *Unicorns of Balinor #1*

Princess Arianna and her unicorn have lost their magic! How can they save their kingdom?

Stevenson, Robert Louis *Treasure Island*

In this story of piracy and concealed treasure, Jim Hawkins discovers a treasure map, becomes involved with pirates and other sinister characters and has many mysterious and terrifying adventures.

Stewart, Trenton Lee *The Mysterious Benedict Society*

After 11 year old orphan, Reynie Muldoon, responds to an advertisement recruiting "gifted children looking for special opportunities," he finds himself in a world of mystery and adventure. Fans of Roald Dahl or Blue Balliett will find a familiar blend of kid power, clues, and adventure in *Society*.

Stolz, Mary *Bartholomew Fair*

On an August day in 1597 six people, including Queen Elizabeth, a wealthy cloth merchant, a scullery maid, two schoolboys and an overworked apprentice, attend London's Bartholomew Fair and come away with unforgettable experiences. This book reads a bit like a movie script and there is lots of cutting back and forth from one set of characters to another.

Stroud, Jonathan *The Bartimaeus Trilogy*

In the first book Nathaniel is a young magician with one thing on his mind...revenge!

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley *The Egypt Game*

A shared love of ancient Egypt leads to the development of the Egypt Game.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*

This tale of a hobbit and his adventures is a recent classic and leads to *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*...another good read!

Verne, Jules *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

This is a story of desperate men at sea who cling to a giant hulk in the water. They become drawn into Captain Nemo's incredible underwater ship and begin a fantastic journey.

Williams, Stephen *How to Be President*

You just woke up...as President! How do you find the bathroom? When do you use Air Force One?

Wells, H.G. *The War of the Worlds*

The classic invasion story about Martians landing on Earth.

Woodson, Jacqueline *Locomotion*

All Lonnie wants is to be reunited with his sister. How can poetry help make his dreams come true? Told in verse!

Wyss, Johann *Swiss Family Robinson*

This story of a shipwrecked family tells about the adventures they encounter while surviving on a tropical island.

Yolen, Jane *Dragon's Blood*

Fifteen year old Jakkin Stewart steals and trains a dragon. Sequels are *Heart's Blood* and *A Sending of Dragons*.

## **NONFICTION**

Adamson, Joy *Born Free*

This story of a lioness raised in a Kenya home bridges the gulf between the worlds of the jungle and that of humans. Sequels are *Living Free* and *Forever Free*.

Adler, David B. *Franklin, Printer*

Statesman, writer, scientist, inventor—meet America's most versatile founding father. Filled with historic illustrations from Franklin's life!

Davidson, Margaret *Helen Keller*

This short biography of a woman who was blind, deaf and dumb focuses on how much was still possible for her.

Davidson, Margaret *Louis Braille: The Boy Who Invented Books for the Blind*

Though blind, Louis was determined to invent a way to help himself and other blind people to get a thorough education.

Fritz, Jean *China Homecoming*

A historian who writes for children, Jean Fritz was born and raised in China. Here she remembers that world and what it was like in the mid 1920's to be "homesick" for the United States, giving a vivid picture of the life in China.

Gormley, Beatrice *First Ladies: Women Who Called the White House Home*

An interesting look at life with the women "behind the scenes" of several presidencies. The women were sometimes funny, sometimes shocking but always interesting.

Gutman, Bill *Lance Armstrong*

He won seven consecutive Tour de France cycling championships....and beat cancer. Read his story to find out how he did it.

Hamilton, Bethany *Soul Surfer*

Thirteen year old Bethany Hamilton lost her arm in a shark attack! Find out how her courage and her belief in God helped her survive and go on to compete in the National Surfing Championships!

Hampton, Wilburn *Kennedy Assassinated! The World Mourns*

This is an individual reporter's recollection of President Kennedy's assassination.

Hurwitz, Jane and Sue *Sally Ride: Shooting for the Stars*

This book follows Sally Ride's training as an astronaut.

Jerome, Leah *Dian Fossey*

Dian Fossey studied and defended African mountain gorillas and was probably killed trying to defend them.

Kerby, Mona *Amelia Earhart: Courage in the Sky*

This short biography of Amelia Earhart explores her dream of flight and the unexplained mystery of her death.

Lipsyte, Robert *Arnold Schwarzenegger: Hercules in America*

Arnold Schwarzenegger began as an immigrant to America and ended up in the movies and married to a member of a major political family.

Neyland, James *George Washington Carver: Scientist and Educator*

"The Peanut Man" is probably America's most famous African American scientist.