

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We're excited to share our Summer Reading list for the 2025-2026 school year. We continue to adjust the list to give students the best experience while upholding the desire to turn them into life-long readers. We know that people who read are more successful in all spheres of life, and we want to give your child her/his best opportunity to be successful both here at OSS and beyond. On the other side of this sheet, you'll find the summer reading lists. Note that you do not need to purchase copies of these books, and the only summertime requirement is their selected book is read before the first day of school. It is **highly recommended** that students complete the project attached to this letter upon completion of reading, as information will be fresh in their minds, but the project will be due 8/29/25. Students will **not** be given time in their ELA class to complete the project.

A note on the books assigned for Summer Reading: We know that there are some difficult ideas in the books we've assigned. We know that there are events and language that you may question, albeit very minimal. We want you to know that we don't assign these texts lightly or without serious consideration about what is best for your student and their educational future. It is our job and our privilege to prepare your student for what lies ahead, both in their education and in their future. We have carefully selected each text we'll encounter this year based on age-appropriateness, complexity, thematic content, and an awareness of what we know higher educational institutions will expect they've been exposed to.¹ There is a certain canon of literature that students *must* be familiar with upon graduating from middle school, and we work very hard to balance that with the literary appropriateness of each piece selected.

More than that, we also believe in the power of literature to encompass the human experience in a way that not only enlightens us but that connects us to the great, wide world around us. We believe that literature faces the human experience without flinching and that some of that experience is difficult. That being said, we don't intend to let your student float through these texts without guidance and help, and we *know* that they will have the opportunity to emerge on the other side with deeper insight, more compassion, and a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.

We hope that, at the end of their time at OSS, all our students leave with a deep love of the English language and for the stories that connect us. We hope that they are more compassionate, thoughtful, and intelligent people. We hope that they will develop wisdom and the ability to look beyond the surface of a thing to see its deeper truths, whether that "thing" is a book, a political situation, or another person. We hope that they are wise and just and true in their dealings with the world, and we *know* that great literature can help them to become all those things. We thank you for entrusting them to us, and we thank you for your support as we guide them through these literary encounters, even those that may not make immediate sense to you. We also welcome your feedback and conversation.

Sincerely,

The OSS ELA Department

¹ The books listed in addition to the Sunshine State list are provided as sample text by benchmark in the FLDOE B.E.S.T. Standards for each grade level. "Ela B.E.S.T. Standards: English Language Arts." [https://www.fldoe.org](https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7539/urlt/elabeststandardsfinal.pdf), www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7539/urlt/elabeststandardsfinal.pdf. Accessed 16 May 2025.

It's important to note that students are expected to complete the reading of one book from the list and the project ***prior to the first day of school***. Please make arrangements to complete the reading even if you will be traveling during the summer as only those students who register *after* the 2025-2026 school year has begun will be exempt from this expectation. We will ask that they complete the project based on any book read this summer, as opposed to what is listed at the end of this letter, but **students who enroll late will still be expected to complete this project**. Project grading will take place during the first marking period, at the teacher's discretion, and it will not be completed during class. Every student must complete the project on time and participate in the literacy event(s) held during the first semester. This is part of their ELA grade. Information about the literacy event(s) will be given to students after school has begun. **Please note that AI cannot be used for any part of this project. Usage of AI for any of the written or art components will result in a 0 and a referral.**

INCOMING 7th Graders:

1. A book from the current Sunshine State list
2. *Freedom Walkers* by Russell Freedman
3. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass
4. *The Red Umbrella* by Christina Diaz Gonzalez
5. *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain

INCOMING 8th Graders:

1. A book from the current Sunshine State list
2. *I Will Always Write Back* by Caitlin Alifirenka, Liz Welch, and Martin Ganda
3. *Trapped: How the World Rescued 33 Miners from 2,000 Feet Below the Chilean Desert* by Marc Aronson
4. *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien
5. *Call of the Wild* by Jack London
6. *Call of the Wild: The Graphic Novel* by Jack London
7. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Steveson

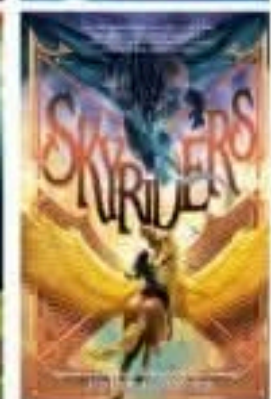
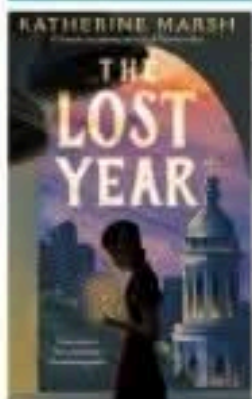
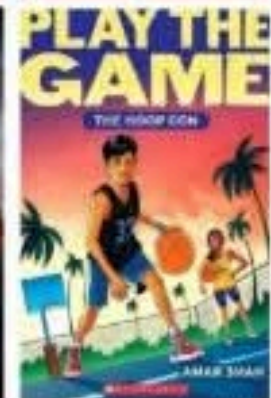
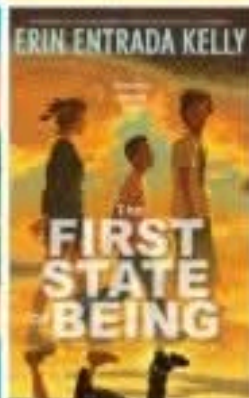
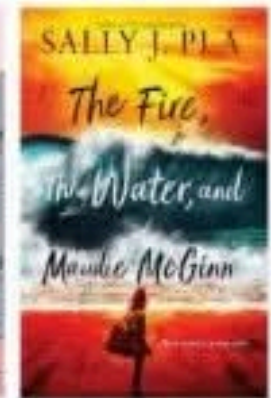
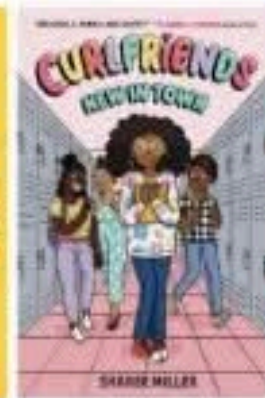
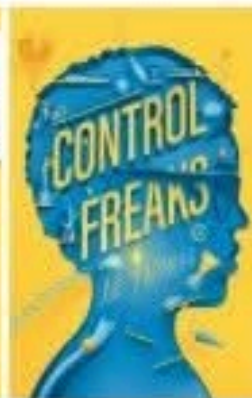
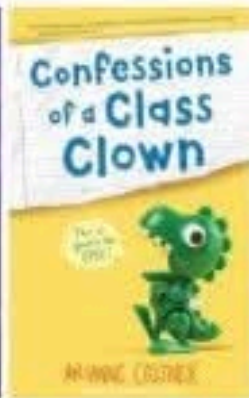
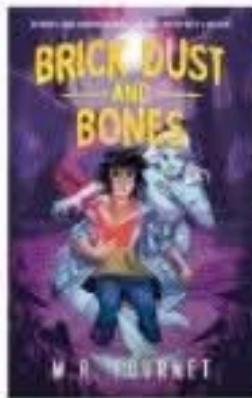
Sunshine State Young Readers Award Books

SSYRA



2025 – 2026
Grades 6 – 8

SSYRA



The Story of a Hero Summer Reading Project

This project is due on Friday, August 29, 2025, in ELA class. Students will **not** have time in class to work on this project. It is **highly recommended** that students complete this project as soon as they finish reading, so that the story is fresh in their minds.

You must create a visual representation of the journey the hero of your story took. All stories have a protagonist (main character) whether it is a fiction or nonfiction book. Please see the Hero's Journey description (one for fiction and one for nonfiction) and the project rubric to help guide you in what is required for this project.

Presentation Options:

- **Poster:** If you select the poster option, please ensure that it is comprehensive and creatively – you should consider the organization and presentation of the information with the utmost importance. How you organize the parts of the hero's journey is up to you but be sure that all necessary components are included and can be easily read. Any images included must have proper MLA citations- this includes original artwork (give yourself credit but also give credit to any tools that helped you: original artwork you traced or got strong inspiration from/digital programs that helped in your design)!
- **PowerPoint:** Create a PPT/Slides/Canva presentation that encompasses all aspects of the hero's journey. Ensure your PPT features images and designs related to or help to highlight the information you are presenting. The parts of the hero's journey must be clearly organized. If you are importing themes or slide designs from an outside source, be sure to include proper citation information. Any images included must also have proper MLA citations- this includes original artwork (give yourself credit but also give credit to any tools that helped you: original artwork you traced or got strong inspiration from/digital programs that helped in your design)!