

2011 Summer Reading Book List For Incoming Freshmen and Sophomore Students

The Great Wide Sea—Herlong

Horn Book starred (April, 2009)

Gr 7-10. Ben's grieving widower father sells their home, buys a boat, and takes Ben and his brothers sailing for a year. Halfway through the narrative, Dad goes missing. Did he fall overboard or commit suicide? Either way, the boys must face a fierce storm on their own. With precise, adrenaline-raising descriptive prose, Herlong recounts their seemingly superhuman struggle against wind and wave.

School Library Journal (March, 2009) Gr 7-10-Ben Byron, 15, is angry. Just two months after the death of his mother in a car accident, his dad, crushed by the loss of his wife, sells their house and small boat and uses the money to buy the Chrysalis, a 30-foot sailboat. He uproots Ben and two younger sons for a yearlong tour of the Bahamas. Life goes as smoothly as it can for a while, despite the tension, chores, and close quarters. But one morning everything changes-their father disappears. When the boat heads into a terrible storm, Ben must act. Throughout the novel, the protagonist's emotions ring true. Although the sailing details are a bit technical at times, Herlong spins an engrossing, suspenseful tale of survival.-Melyssa Malinowski, Kenwood High School, Baltimore, MD Copyright 2009 Reed Business Information.

Ship Breaker-- Bacigalupi

Booklist starred (May 15, 2010 (Vol. 106, No. 18))

Grades 8-12. This YA debut by Bacigalupi, a rising star in adult science fiction, presents a dystopian future like so many YA sf novels. What is uncommon, though, is that although Bacigalupi's future earth is brilliantly imagined and its genesis anchored in contemporary issues, it is secondary to the memorable characters. In a world in which society has stratified, fossil fuels have been consumed, and the seas have risen and drowned coastal cities, Nailer, 17, scavenges beached tankers for scrap metals on the Gulf Coast. Every day, he tries to "make quota" and avoid his violent, drug-addicted father. After he discovers a modern clipper ship washed up on the beach, Nailer thinks his fortune is made, but then he discovers a survivor trapped in the wreckage—the "swank" daughter of a shipping-company owner. Should he slit the girl's throat and sell her for parts or take a chance and help her? Clearly respecting his audience, Bacigalupi skillfully integrates his world building into the compelling narrative, threading the backstory into the pulsing action. The characters are layered and complex, and their almost unthinkable actions and choices seem totally credible. Vivid, brutal, and thematically rich, this captivating title is sure to win teen fans for the award-winning Bacigalupi.

Marcelo in the Real World--Stork

Horn Book (March/April, 2009)

Gr 8 up. Seventeen-year-old Marcelo Sandoval marches to the beat of a different drummer -- literally. He perceives internal music in his head; he is obsessed with religion; he has difficulty interacting with others -- behaviors that place him at the high-functioning end of the autism spectrum. He is happy at Paterson, the special-education school he's attended since first grade, and life is comfortable. Then his father proposes an unwelcome deal: if Marcelo proves successful in "the real world" by working in the mailroom at his law firm over the summer, he will be allowed to choose between returning to his beloved Paterson or attending -- as his father prefers -- a regular high school. But as Marcelo begins his summer job, he finds his moral compass tested just as much as his coping and social skills. His loyalty is divided on multiple levels: between his father and the law firm, between a plaintiff and the law firm, between the privileged son of his father's law partner who befriends him with dubious motives and the beautiful co-worker who gradually comes to care deeply for him. While the voice is reminiscent of the narrator of Haddon's *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* -- both have an appealing blend of naivete and wisdom -- Marcelo has the superior character development. His inspiring, brave journey into the real world will likely engender a fierce protective instinct in readers, ratcheting up the tension as the plot winds to its sweet, satisfying denouement. It is the rare novel that reaffirms a belief in goodness; rarer still is one that does so this emphatically.

Revolver—Sedgwick

School Library Journal (April 1, 2010)

Gr 7 Up. In 1910, in a lonely cabin 100 miles north of the Arctic circle, Sig Andersson sits alone with his father's body while his sister and stepmother go for help. A sled crossing on thin ice had proved foolhardy for Einar, an otherwise prudent man, and his son found him half-submerged in icy water, frozen to death. When a menacing stranger bangs on the door, claiming to be Einar Andersson's ex-business partner, Sig wrestles with the possibility that his father had cheated prospectors out of gold in his position as Assay Clerk. As Sig is held captive by the pistol-toting Gunther Wolff, the story flashes back, in short glimpses, to events leading up to this day. Sig relives the mystery surrounding the death of his beloved mother when he was very young and his father's lessons about God and respecting the power of a gun. The tension escalates as the teen calculates his chances of retrieving his father's hidden revolver or escaping from the bearlike intruder, all the while worrying about the return of his unsuspecting sister. The bleak setting and ominous circumstances will draw immediate comparisons to a Jack London tale, but in a more accessible, spare style. Reluctant readers will be riveted by the suspense and the short chapters. Scenes dealing with brutality or the harsh realities of death may not be for sensitive readers but the satisfying ending will dispel some of the gloomy tone. A great addition to survival/adventure collections.-Vicki Reutter, Cazenovia High School, NY Copyright 2010 Reed Business Information.

The Orange Houses—Griffin (might be too edgy)

School Library Journal (June 1, 2009)

Gr 8 Up. Consumed with fitting in, 15-year-old Tamika tries to cover her hearing aids with her hair. She wants to be pretty and secretly dreams of being liked by her friend Jimmi, an 18-year-old war veteran who's been severely damaged by his experiences, turned to drugs, and cast out by society. But things don't seem to be going her way and Tamika copes by turning off her aids and shutting out the world. This angers her mother who is working two jobs to earn enough to pay for her daughter's auditory surgery. Tamika isn't sure she wants to hear again, until she meets and befriends Fatima, a vibrant illegal immigrant from Africa who comes to her Bronx neighborhood. Filled with uncertainty, identity confusion, and fear, the three teens form a friendship. Still, they are continually socially and physically abused by gangs and one day the threats go too far, Jimmi is almost killed, and immigration deports Fatima. Tamika survives to move on, with her mother's help. Griffin serves up hard-hitting descriptions of urban life and reflective street dialogue. This poetic, yet sometimes cryptic read is about being smart, resilient, and humane in an often-unforgiving world.-Kimberly Monaghan, formerly at Vernon Area Public Library, IL Copyright 2009 Reed Business Information.