

**Summer Reading**  
**Grade 9 – Class of 2021**  
**Downers Grove South High School**

Dear Class of 2021 (Grade 9) students,

Below you will find a list of books that you can choose from to fulfill your required summer reading. You must choose one of the books from the Class of 2021 list. When you get back to school in August you will be required to complete a graded assignment in your English class related to your reading. In order to help you prepare for that assignment, we would like to give you a reading focus. No matter which level or which teacher you have in the fall, your summer reading assignment will be based on the reading focus below. Though not required, you may choose to annotate and/or take notes in regards to the reading focus to help you with the assignment you will do in class.

**Class of 2021 (Grade 9) Reading Focus:**

**As you read your selected book from the list, focus on how one of the main characters develops throughout the book and what influences that development. You may want to consider some of the following influences: relationships, adults, peers, events, environments, experiences, moments, obstacles, etc.**

**Class of 2021 (Grade 9) Book List**

***Deadline* by Chris Crutcher**

Ben Wolf is a senior when he is diagnosed with leukemia and learns that he has less than a year to live. He decides not to undergo treatment and to keep his illness a secret. Ben also decides that he is going to live his last year to the fullest: asking out the girl of his dreams, playing for the football team, challenging his teachers, and helping others overcome their hardships. While one might expect the story to be sad, Ben relates his story in a way that makes the reader laugh, even when he is talking about depressing subjects. Several twists in the story and the many interesting challenges make the book difficult to put down.

***The Final Four* by Paul Volponi**

College basketball teams work all season for a chance to get into the national tournament. The novel's focus is on the tension of the game, but the real connection comes from four players who are all playing in the game. The different motivations of each player—the NBA, the pride of their country, their family—and the different attitudes—arrogant, proud, hard-working—give us a look into the game and the young men who play it like never before. This fictional story deals with very real issues in our world today—the nature of heroes, ethics in college athletics, and trust of teammates. The Final Four is not just about one game; it's about the journey of four young men who all have a passion to be successful.

***Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli**

Simon is gay, and nobody knows except his secret email pen pal. When class-clown Martin finds Simon's emails on a public computer, he threatens to share Simon's sexual identity with the entire school. Will Simon give Martin what he wants: help securing a date with Simon's best friend? Or will Martin out Simon against his will?

***We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart**

Cadence returns to her family's island two years after the accident that caused her several injuries including loss of her memory. Even though she still suffers from horrible migraines, she is looking forward to seeing the Liars – her cousins Johnny and Mirren and their friend Gat. She hopes that seeing them will help her remember what happened the summer she was fifteen. As the summer progresses and tensions on the island grow, nothing prepares her for the truth about her family and what happened that fateful summer.

### ***The Nest* by Kenneth Oppel**

Steve's baby brother is sick, and the chances of his health improving seem slim. Angels visit Steve in his dreams to inform him that they will fix his baby brother. Then the Angels start to ask Steve to do some things for them, things that don't really seem helpful. Steve begins to wonder if the Angels are really there to help his baby brother.

### ***Jackaby* by William Ritter**

Abigail Rook arrives in New Fiddleham, New England in 1892, with no money in her pocket, only the clothes on her back and no prospects in sight. Looking for a place to live and work, she meets R. F. Jackaby, a private detective who can see the supernatural. With a serial killer on the loose, Abigail is thrown headfirst into Jackaby's magical world and the two must solve the case before the body count gets any higher.

### ***Labyrinth Lost* by Zoraida Cordova**

*"Nothing says happy birthday like summoning the spirits of your dead relatives."* Alejandra Mortiz comes from a long line of powerful brujas (witches), but she would rather not embrace that destiny. Everyone in Alex's family is ready to celebrate her *Deathday*, also known as her coming-of-age-as-a-bruja day. As the day approaches, Alex decides to rebel and casts a forbidden Canto (spell) that will strip her of her magical abilities. Instead of reversing her magic though, Alex banishes her entire family to Los Lagos, a land in between worlds. With the help of her friends, Alex embarks on a dangerous journey to save her family and make things right.

### ***The Boy in the Black Suit* by Jason Reynolds**

After experiencing the loss of his mother, Matt finds himself having to at times be the adult of the house as his father struggles to cope with losing his wife. As Matt has to grow up perhaps too soon, he gets a job working at a funeral home, which actually helps him through the grieving process. Here he also is mentored by the funeral home owner and develops a relationship with a girl with whom he finds he has more in common than he thought. With humor and a range of emotion, the story showcases how relationships with others help in time of crisis to find normal again...whatever that is.

### ***Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina**

When Piddy Sanchez and her mom move, Piddy is forced to go to a new high school. Being the new kid is not always fun. Right away, Piddy hears that some girl she doesn't even know, Yaqui Delgado, wants to fight her. Piddy has no idea why she has become a target of one of the roughest girls in her new school. Piddy attempts to ignore the rumor and stay away from this girl, but Yaqui begins to bully Piddy. The bullying escalates from threats to physical attacks, and Piddy finds herself living in fear. Piddy has always been a good student, but because of the bullying, she starts skipping school, and her grades nosedive. With help from others, Piddy finally realizes that she must confront her fears, as well as Jaqui, in order to fix her future.

### ***Leviathan* by Scott Westerfeld**

The year is 1914, and the world is on the brink of war. On one side of the war are the British Darwinists, who grow their weapons of war from genetically modified animals. On the other side are the German Clankers, who build their giant walking war machines from steel and whose engines run on gas. The two nations are preparing for war, and when Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated, the Germans finally find a reason to start one. Caught in between are Deryn and Aleksander. Deryn is a girl who wants to serve her country and fly. She joins the British Air Service disguised as a boy and is assigned to the Leviathan, a giant hydrogen filled flying whale. Aleksander is the son of Archduke Ferdinand. The night his father is killed, he escapes only to find himself living his life on the run. Fate brings these two together for a Steampunk adventure that unites two enemies in a common cause.