

Elkton High School
9th Grade Summer Reading List

(F) = Fiction

(NF) = Nonfiction

Italics = Reviews

Andromeda Strain, The. Crichton, Michael. Five day history of a major American scientific crisis. *This was the first Michael Crichton book I ever read. I discovered it when I was in junior high school, and from there I went on to become an avid reader of science and medical fiction. Although this book was written almost 20 years ago, it's still scary today. (Perhaps even more so after the events of September 11th.) Crichton has a way of keeping up the suspense while still making the characters believable. It remains one of my "must read" books.*

(F) Reading Level-6.5; Lexile Level-840

Animal Dreams. Kingsolver, Barbara. Blending flashbacks, dreams, and Native American legends, this is a suspenseful love story and a moving exploration of life's largest commitments. *Barbara Kingsolver's books are not merely to be read, but should be absorbed, digested, and pondered. Her characters in this book, as always, are sad and their glasses are half-empty instead of half-full.*

(F) Reading Level-8.0; Lexile Level-790

Call of the Wild, The. London, Jack. Rugged outdoor story of the sled dog, Buck, who was mistreated by his master and broke free to roam the Alaskan wilderness. *I liked this book because you get to see what it would be like in the wilderness of the north. Another reason is because I am a huge animal lover and this book showed me what the sled dogs have to go through. I loved this book and I think that if you like animal stories, so will you.*

(F) Reading Level-7.0; Lexile Level-1170 ***

December Stillness. Downing-Hahn, Mary. Thirteen-year-old Kelly tries to befriend Mr. Weems, a disturbed, homeless Vietnam veteran who spends his days in the library though he makes it clear he wants to be left alone. *This is a great, easy-to-read story of a girl who wants to get to know a veteran for a school paper. The book is great!!! You can get inside of Kelly's head and feel what she feels. When with her friends I could totally understand what was going on in her mind.*

(F) Reading Level-6.0; Lexile Level-860 ***

Having Our Say: The Delaney's Sisters First 100 Years. Delany, Sarah and Elizabeth. In a memoir that's as much a historical record as a testimony to two extraordinary women, the Delany sisters recall their remarkable lives, spanning more than a century of the African-American experience. *The book describes the lives of two women, Sadie and Bessie, who we can consider heroes. They are two sisters with different personalities. Their lives develop during more than one hundred years among many changes in the society, those changes affect their lives. This book is well written, with plentiful anecdotes, varied and interesting; it is really fascinating; it is historic and dynamic. For these reasons it is recommended for all people. This oral history is beautiful history.*

(NF) Reading Level-6.5; Lexile Level-890

Hobbit, The. Tolkien, J.R.R. The delightful tale which first creates the fantasy called Middle Earth and its charming dwarf-like creatures, the Hobbits. *Dear Mr Tolkien, I have just finished reading your book for the 11th time and I want to tell you what I think of it. I think it is the most wonderful book I have ever read. It is beyond description... Gee Whiz, I am surprised that it's not more popular...If you have written any other books, would you please send me their names?*
(F) Reading Level-7.5; Lexile Level-1000

Hot Zone, The. Preston, Richard. A book that argues that dangerous viruses like HIV have emerged with the destruction of jungles and rain forests in Africa. *I found the book interesting. It is scary to think that something that lethal comes from nature. I liked the book, because it kept your interest to see what was going to happen next. I think this book would be good for other students to read. Makes you think how lucky we are not to have these viruses in our country. The scary thing is the virus seems to change. I really enjoyed the book.*
(NF) Reading Level-7.5; Lexile Level-1030

Ironman. Crutcher, Chris. While training for a triathlon, seventeen-year-old Bo attends an anger management group at school which leads him to examine his relationship with his father. *This was an excellent book written for all ages, male and female. It was clever and witty, keeping me entertained the entire time. Its odd set of character and plot make it a book completely unlike any other. I highly suggest that you give this book a try; you might be surprised, like I was.*
(F) Reading Level-7.5; Lexile Level-980

Martian Chronicles. Bradbury, Ray. Leaving behind a world on the brink of destruction, man came to Mars and found Martians waiting. While seeking a new beginning, man nevertheless brought with him his oldest fears and deepest desires. Man conquered Mars, but in that instant, Mars conquered him. *I have just finished reading this book for my outside reading assignment. When I first saw the book, I had no idea it was going to be what it was. I was expecting some typical sci-fi book with aliens crashing to earth, or maybe vice versa. But the way Bradbury presented the whole essence of the book was so thought provoking. He really made you think about if what he wrote could really happen.*
(F) Reading Level-7.0; Lexile Level-740 ***

October Sky (also titled **Rocket Boys**). Hickam, Homer. A memoir of the author's bumpy ride toward a gold medal at the National Science Fair in 1960 after he becomes fascinated with rockets when he sees Spunik over his West Virginia coal mining town. *Trust me on this one... this is one book you DO NOT want to miss... From the day Sonny (Homer's nickname) first sight of the Sputnik, to the very much crowd-pleasing happy ending, October Sky/Rocket Boys is one book that you'll remember for a long, long time. Trust me on this one, go check this book out.*
(NF) Reading Level-6.0; Lexile Level-900 ***

Pigman, The. Zindel, Paul. John Conlan and Lorraine Jensen have to tell about something that just happened to them, about an experience too overwhelming to keep private. The two high-school sophomores come from constricting, unhappy homes, and although life seems tolerable since they have found each other, there is still much to be desired. Unusual circumstances introduce them to a lonely old man with an awful secret. An intense friendship results, and together the three create a strange, unreal world out of their zaniness and laughter. *This book is one of the best contemporary classics I have read in years. Zindel is able to develop the main characters, John and Lorraine, extremely well.*

(F) Reading Level-6.0; Lexile Level-950

Red Scarf Girl. Jiang, Ji-Li. Ji-Li has written a compelling memoir which reveals her gradual disillusionment with what she had been taught to believe about the Chinese communist government. A highly successful student, Ji-Li's life begins to unravel during the Cultural Revolution when her family wants her to turn down a chance to be trained by the government as a gymnast. Self-centered at first, the effects that propaganda have upon the lives of people she respects - including her own family - expand her concerns beyond her own. *This is an excellent book, whether you know a lot about the Cultural Revolution or not. Ji-Li Jiang is really skilled in explaining what she sees and will allow you to know what really went on with the Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution from the 1950s to the 1970s.*

(NF) Reading Level-6.0; Lexile Level-780

Shakespeare Stealer, The. Blackwood, Gary. A young orphan boy is ordered by his master to infiltrate Shakespeare's acting troupe in order to steal the script of Hamlet, but he discovers instead the meaning of friendship and loyalty. *The book is a fast paced novel for kids and teens. There is some historical information about Elizabethan England that I enjoyed. The title includes Shakespeare, but not much is said of the playwright in the novel. The reason I would give this book 4 stars instead of 5 is that a little twist in it is quite predictable. The major ending isn't. If you want something that will take you two nights to read, try this book.*

(F) Reading Level-5.0; Lexile Level-840 ***

Through a Window. Goodall, Jane. The dramatic saga of thirty years in the life of a community, of birth and death, love, power and war. It reads like a novel, but it is one of the most important scientific works ever published. The community is Gombe, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, where the principal residents are chimpanzees and one extraordinary woman (Jane Goodall) who is their student, protector, and historian. *Goodall gives an educational yet entertaining look into the world of chimpanzees. I was utterly absorbed in the book by the first chapter. If you are even remotely interested in chimpanzees or their close relationship to humans, you will thoroughly enjoy this book.* (NF)

Tree Grows in Brooklyn, A. Smith, Betty. Story of sensitive, intelligent young Francie Nolan as she and her family struggle to survive in a slum. *When I was thirteen I read this book and loved it. I was Francie in my mind. We lived not far from Brooklyn and while not as poor, shared many of the same problems. The book has always been a fond memory for me. This month it was chosen as a group read for my reading group. Although I rarely read, I decided to see if the book was as good as my memory said it was. To my delight it was still as wonderful as I remembered.*

(F) Reading Level-7.5; Lexile Level-810

*** These books are available at your high school to be borrowed on a first-come, first-served basis.