

**Summer Reading**  
**Grades 11 & 12 – Class of 2020 & 2021**  
**Downers Grove South High School**

Dear Class of 2020 (Grade 12) and Class of 2021 (Grade 11) students,

This year we are combining our reading list for grades 11 and 12. We also would like to offer you more voice and choice by providing you with two different options for selecting a book to read for your required summer reading.

- Option 1: Choose a book from the suggested list for Grades 11 & 12
  
- Option 2: Choose your own book (fiction or nonfiction), but the book must meet all of the following criteria in order to be used to complete your summer reading assignment for class:
  - Criteria 1: Book must be a minimum of 250 pages in length
  - Criteria 2: Book must be categorized as either “young adult” or “adult” (in other words, no children’s books)
  - Criteria 3: Book must not have been made into a movie or TV show
  - Criteria 4: Book must not have been on any past or current summer reading lists
  - Criteria 5: Book must not be a required read for any school related curriculum here at DGS in English or any other content area

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, which class, or which teacher you have in the fall, your summer reading assignment will be based on the reading focus listed 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.

If you would like to find more information on the books, we have listed below some sources that you can reference. Not every book will be on every website.

- Barnes & Noble ([www.barnesandnoble.com/](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/)): offers free access to editorial (professional) reviews for many books.
- Amazon website ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com/)): includes editorial reviews when available and a variety of reader reviews.
- Goodread website ([www.goodreads.com/](http://www.goodreads.com/)): offers reviews and information about content.
- Common Sense Media website ([www.common Sense Media.org/](http://www.common Sense Media.org/)). They do not have every book included, but the ones that are included have a lot of details, including reviews, ratings, and even a section titled, “The parent’s guide to what’s in the book.”

**Class of 2020 (Grade 12) & 2021 (Grade 11) Reading Purpose/Focus Question:**

**As you read, note what choices the author makes to engage the reader and make the book enjoyable. You may wish to consider some of the following: character development, conflicts, themes or issues addressed, imagery, setting, plot structure, point of view, style, word choice, etc.**

**Class of 2020 (Grade 12) & Class of 2021 (Grade 11) Book List**

***Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi**

Zélie remembers her mother’s strength, magical abilities, and love. But she also remembers when her mother was dragged from their house because, in order for all magic to be destroyed, all people with magic also had to be destroyed. With magic destroyed, Zélie, her family, and their community struggle to survive against the rules of the king and the treatment by his guards. When she discovers that magic could return, she sets out on a journey to restore the magic she hopes will change everything. But what she discovers on this journey might bring changes that could hurt the people she loves the most.

### ***Born A Crime* by Trevor Noah**

Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of *The Daily Show* began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother began living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle. The eighteen personal essays collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting.

### ***A Heart in a Body in the World* by Deb Caletti**

Annabelle doesn't seem to be able to outrun the tragedy that hunts her memories, no matter how far she tries to run. What starts as a need to have a moment to think, to be, to feel again turns Annabelle into a reluctant activist running from Seattle to Washington, DC. Her Grandpa, her brother, and friends will all become her support group and along the way strangers will show Annabelle that there is kindness and hope for a better tomorrow. This journey will become her way to connect the trauma from her past to the healing that can take place when you face your demons.

### ***The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo**

Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. X, like her friends call her, will use slam poetry as a way to understand her mother's religion and her own relationship to the world. She pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of her notebook from her mom's obsession with the church and religion or her feelings for a boy. Xiomara understands that her thoughts are best kept to herself. So when she is invited to join her school's slam poetry club, she doesn't know how she could ever attend without her mami finding out, much less speak her words out loud. But still, she can't stop thinking about performing her poems. Because in the face of a world that may not want to hear her, Xiomara refuses to be silent.

### ***I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sanchez**

Julia Reyes is a high school student who dreams of leaving Chicago to study writing; however, after her sister dies, Julia inherits a title she never wanted: The Perfect Mexican Daughter. She is expected to adhere to her parents' expectations, embody her Mexican culture, and stay close to home to take care of her family. Trapped beneath disappointment and unanswered questions, Julia strives to uncover the unexpected truth about her family. She must find a way to navigate loss, mend her broken family, and decide who she really wants to be.

### ***Dear Martin* by Nic Stone**

Justyce McAllister is top of his class at Braselton Prep, captain of the debate team, and set for an Ivy League school next year - but none of that matters to the police officer who just put him in handcuffs. He's eventually released without charges (or an apology), but the incident rattles him. Despite leaving his rough neighborhood, he can't seem to escape the scorn of his former peers or the attitude of his new classmates. The only exception: Sarah Jane, Justyce's gorgeous - and white - debate partner he wishes he didn't have a thing for. Justyce has studied the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But do they hold up now? He starts a journal to Dr. King to find out.

### ***Far From the Tree* by Robin Benway**

Grace, Maya, and Joaquin are related, but they don't know it yet. It is only after teenage Grace, who grew up the only child in an adoptive family, finds herself pregnant and makes the difficult decision to put her own baby up for adoption that she decides to search for her biological mother. Though frustrated in her search for her biological mother, Grace is surprised to discover that she has two biological siblings. Can a relationship be forged with Joaquin, who has spent seventeen years in the foster care system and for some reason must attend mandatory counseling, and Maya, whose adoptive family is not as perfect as it at first seems? What if they don't like her? And what if they reject her when they learn that she has made the same decision as their biological mother, to give a child up for adoption? As Joaquin and Maya begin to reveal their secrets, Grace must gather up the courage to share her own.

### ***Dark Matter* by Blake Crouch**

Can you imagine making a decision that sets the course of your entire life? What if you had chosen differently? How would that have changed your life? Jason Dessen made that life-altering decision 15 years before when he gave up a promising career as a theoretical physicist. Now **Our** Jason is married with a teenage son and they are happy. **Our** Jason might not be “successful” and he might not have a lot of money but they are a happy family and they are content with their life. But what if Jason made a different decision? What if Jason had NOT given up his promising career as a theoretical physicist? **That** Jason did become rich and famous (You don’t believe a theoretical physicist can be rich and famous? Have you ever heard of Stephen Hawking?) but he always regretted not marrying his girlfriend. **That** Jason always wondered what would have happened if he had married and had a family. **That** Jason invents a way to travel to alternate universes, universes in which Jason had made other choices. **That** Jason travels to **Our** Jason’s universe, knocks him out and takes his place, sending **Our** Jason back to **That** Jason’s universe. When **Our** Jason wakes up he finds himself in a world very similar to his own except for that one choice made 15 years earlier. Now all **Our** Jason wants is to get back to his family. *Dark Matter* is a dramatic, fast-paced, mind-bending, universe hopping adventure. The story bends your mind without breaking it and creates a compelling story that will keep you turning pages.

### ***Lexicon* by Max Barry**

Emily Ruff is studying to become a “Poet,” someone who can manipulate the actions of others by uttering a few well-chosen words. Wil Jamieson is one of the few people who cannot be controlled by the “Poets,” and this resistance places him in the middle of a clash between rival “Poets.” Their stories converge around an ancient artifact that could ultimately expand the “Poets’” control over the entire planet, or destroy them completely.

### ***Lock In* by John Scalzi**

FBI agent Chris Shane isn’t the average rookie. When he is on the job, *he* really isn’t on the job. Or at least, his body isn’t. Shane is just one of millions of Americans suffering from Haden’s Syndrome, a virus that ultimately incapacitates victims’ bodies if it doesn’t kill them first. Physical limitations haven’t stopped Hadens from living; Hadens can download their mind into an android, or they can integrate for limited amounts of time with a host body (an Integrator). On his first day of work, Shane and veteran agent Leslie Vann are assigned to investigate a murder at the Watergate Hotel. But the prime suspect is an Integrator, which means that ultimately it is a Haden responsible for the murder. Or is it? And why? Maybe a rookie doesn’t know what to expect on the job, but Shane could never have predicted where the leads on this case might take him and how truly dangerous unmasking this killer might be.

### ***City of Saints and Thieves* by Natalie C. Anderson**

“If you’re going to be a thief, the first thing you need to know is that you don’t exist.” Tina is willing to follow this rule; since the night her mother died on the Greyhill estate four years ago she hasn’t really been living anyway. Or rather, all she has been living for is revenge. If being a thief can help her exact said revenge, then she’ll be the best thief the Goondas, Sanguis City’s ruling street gang, has ever known. Especially if the Goondas can help her take down prominent businessman Roland Greyhill, the man she believes is responsible for her mother’s death. The plan Tina has concocted seems foolproof. What she couldn’t predict, however, is that Michael would be home the night she breaks into the Greyhill home. What will the son of her sworn enemy do? He’s the one holding the gun. But maybe if she plays her cards right...

### ***Highly Illogical Behavior* by John Corey Whaley**

In a panic during middle school, Solomon Reed stripped down to his boxers and sat down in the water fountain outside the school. In front of everyone. In the three years since then, he has not left his house. It’s easier this way for him. Enter Lisa Praytor, a high powered, goal-driven junior in high school. She remembers Solomon and thinks she can help. She also thinks if she does, she will have the perfect experience for a college application essay that will earn her a spot in a prestigious university’s psychology program.

***We Are Okay* by Nina LaCour**

Marin has just finished her first semester of college in New York and decides to stay alone in the dorms over break rather than return to San Francisco to face the bad memories that haunt her. Her estranged best friend Mabel comes to stay with her, and over the next few days, she forces Marin to confront the past and deal with the events of last summer. Mabel also forces her to discuss their complicated relationship. Slowly, readers find out more about Marin's life and why she left, learning about the surfer mother who drowned when Marin, the father she never knew, the loving grandfather who raised her but kept secrets, and the painful events that nobody knew about until now.

***Joyland* by Stephen King**

Devon is a college student learning the ropes as a carnival worker over the summer, and in this suspenseful thriller, he learns that years ago a girl was murdered in the Funhouse; her ghost supposedly still haunts the park. This coming-of-age tale of Devon's summer captures his experiences in overcoming lost love and turning the corner into adulthood to face head-on the beauty and complexities of relationships and ideas that challenge his reality, stretching what and who he believes in...even ghosts. Beneath the story of Devon's relationships unfolds a mystery that is different from most of King's horrors.

***The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern**

"The circus arrives without warning." No bright colors, no advertisements and it is only open at night. This circus is like no other, and that is because it is the setting for a battle between two magicians – Celia and Marco. Celia was chosen by her father, Prospero the Entertainer, to take part in this battle because he believes that, with his training, she can defeat anyone. Marco was chosen by Prospero's archrival to defeat Celia. Neither Celia nor Marco knows that the battle will end in the death of the magician who loses, which is made all the more tragic when they fall in love. A haunting and magical romance where the circus is as much of a character as Celia and Marco.