



Summer Reading 2020

This summer, in deference to the collective raised awareness of and questions about systemic racism, we offer the following titles as the Summer Reading list for high school students. **Students should read one or more books on the list** in preparation for a discussion and debrief activity during Orientation Days at the start of school in August.

This formula holds a lot of the ideas raised in discussions about how to facilitate Summer Reading—choice, themes, connectedness—and also shifts away from student-suggested titles. Supporting the work outlined in our letter of solidarity with the current movement, the staff has compiled a list of books. Some analyze aspects of structural racism and others share personal/narrative accounts of the impact that this racist structure has had on individuals. The books are sorted into “Then” and “Now” categories. This topic is constantly evolving, and knowing *when* a book was published is essential to comprehending the message. Titles are also listed in increasing levels of complexity, *within* those categories. Please consider that when choosing a title or titles to dig in to!

Local librarians and bookstores are aware of our list and committed to helping folks find the titles they seek. Some of the more recent books might be harder to find, so please reach out if you are looking for a title! Use [Summer Reading 2020—Books to Loan](#) to both register a book you are willing to loan *and* to look for a title you’d like to read. If you have an alternative title you would like to read, please reach out to Christa Wurm at cwurm@sharonacademy.net. There are some books that are linked to free online reading. Please consider supporting local bookstores, or online Black-owned bookstores (<https://keybookstore.com/> <https://olivetreebooksonline.com/> <https://bookshop.org/shop/thelitbar>) if you are purchasing titles.

As staff we have been thinking a lot about ways to build and rebuild community after such a long break. We believe that reading and discussing these titles will support us in this goal, as we can reflect on relevant works together. The reflection/debrief part of this will be in double advisories during Orientation Days. We recognize that this is a difficult topic and the staff will be working together during in-service days to ensure that the conversations are safe for all involved. If you have specific concerns about the debrief activities, please reach out to Christa or another trusted TSA staff member to share your thoughts with them.

NOW (2005–2020)

1. **March Trilogy—John Lewis & Nate Powell (2013–16) *Graphic Novel***

Congressman John Lewis (GA-5) is an American icon, one of the key figures of the civil rights movement. His commitment to justice and nonviolence has taken him from an Alabama sharecropper's farm to the halls of Congress, from a segregated schoolroom to the 1963 March on Washington, and from receiving beatings from state troopers to receiving the Medal of Freedom from the first African-American president.

Now, to share his remarkable story with new generations, Lewis presents March, a ***graphic novel trilogy***, in collaboration with co-writer Andrew Aydin and New York Times best-selling artist Nate Powell (winner of the Eisner Award and LA Times Book Prize finalist for *Swallow Me Whole*).

March is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis's lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis's personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement.

Book One spans John Lewis's youth in rural Alabama, his life-changing meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., the birth of the Nashville Student Movement, and their battle to tear down segregation through nonviolent lunch counter sit-ins that built to a stunning climax on the steps of City Hall. After the success of the Nashville sit-in campaign, John Lewis is more committed than ever to changing the world through nonviolence—but as he and his fellow Freedom Riders board a bus into the vicious heart of the deep south, they will be tested like never before. Faced with beatings, police brutality, imprisonment, arson, and even murder, the movement's young activists place their lives on the line while internal conflicts threaten to tear them apart.

Their courage will attract the notice of powerful allies, from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Soon Lewis is elected chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and this 23-year-old will be thrust into the national spotlight, becoming one of the “Big Six” leaders of the civil rights movement, a central figure in the landmark 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and a key figure in the historic showdown high above the Alabama river, in a town called Selma. (Amazon)

2. **The Poet X—Elizabeth Acevedo (2018)**

Xiomara Batista feels unheard and unable to hide in her Harlem neighborhood. Ever since her body grew into curves, she has learned to let her fists and her fierceness do the talking. But Xiomara has plenty she wants to say, and she pours all her frustration and passion onto the pages of a leather notebook, reciting the words to herself like prayers—especially after she catches feelings for a boy in her bio class named Aman, whom her family can never know about. With Mami's determination to force her daughter to obey the laws of the church, 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. But she still 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. (Amazon)

**3. Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and you—Ibram X. Kendi/Jason Reynolds (2020)
*streaming for free on Spotify**

This is NOT a history book. This is a book about the here and now. A book to help us better understand why we are where we are. A book about race.

The construct of race has always been used to gain and keep power, to create dynamics that separate and silence. This remarkable reimagining of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's National Book Award-winning *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America, and inspires hope for an antiracist future. It takes you on a race journey from then to now, shows you why we feel how we feel, and why the poison of racism lingers. It also proves that while racist ideas have always been easy to fabricate and distribute, they can also be discredited. (Amazon)

4. Between the World and Me— Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015)

Americans have built an empire on the idea of “race,” a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward. (Amazon)

5. So You Want to Talk About Race? —Ijeoma Oluo (2019)

Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy—from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans—has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair—and how do you make it right? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend?

In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to "model minorities" in an attempt to make

the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life. (Amazon)

6. Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race—Renni Eddo-Lodge (2019)

Award-winning journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge was frustrated with the way that discussions of race and racism are so often led by those blind to it, by those willfully ignorant of its legacy. Her response, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, has transformed the conversation both in Britain and around the world.

Examining everything from eradicated black history to the political purpose of white dominance, from whitewashed feminism to the inextricable link between class and race, Eddo-Lodge offers a timely and essential new framework for how to see, acknowledge, and counter racism. Including a new afterword by the author, this is a searing, illuminating, absolutely necessary exploration of what it is to be a person of color in Britain today, and an essential handbook for anyone looking to understand how structural racism works. (Amazon)

7. White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism—Robin DiAngelo (2018) (the link is to an essay with the same name)

“...[A]ntiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’ (Claudia Rankine).

Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.” (Amazon)

8. Blood Done Signed My Name—Timothy Tyson (2005)

On May 11, 1970, Henry Marrow, a twenty-three-year-old black veteran, walked into a crossroads store owned by Robert Teel and came out running. Teel and two of his sons chased and beat Marrow, then killed him in public as he pleaded for his life.

Like many small Southern towns, Oxford had barely been touched by the civil rights movement. But in the wake of the killing, young African Americans took to the streets. While lawyers battled in the courthouse, the Klan raged in the shadows and black Vietnam veterans torched the town's tobacco warehouses. Tyson's father, the pastor of Oxford's all-white Methodist church, urged the town to come to terms with its bloody racial history. In the end, however, the Tyson family was forced to

move away. Tim Tyson's gripping narrative brings gritty blues truth and soaring gospel vision to a shocking episode of our history. (Amazon)

9. Red at the Bone—Jacqueline Woodson (2019)

Moving forward and backward in time, Jacqueline Woodson's taut and powerful new novel uncovers the role that history and community have played in the experiences, decisions, and relationships of these families, and in the life of the new child.

As the book opens in 2001, it is the evening of sixteen-year-old Melody's coming of age ceremony in her grandparents' Brooklyn brownstone. Watched lovingly by her relatives and friends, making her entrance to the music of Prince, she wears a special custom-made dress. But the event is not without poignancy. Sixteen years earlier, that very dress was measured and sewn for a different wearer: Melody's mother, for her own ceremony—a celebration that ultimately never took place.

Unfurling the history of Melody's parents and grandparents to show how they all arrived at this moment, Woodson considers not just their ambitions and successes but also the costs, the tolls they've paid for striving to overcome expectations and escape the pull of history. As it explores sexual desire and identity, ambition, gentrification, education, class and status, and the life-altering facts of parenthood, *Red at the Bone* most strikingly looks at the ways in which young people must so often make long-lasting decisions about their lives—even before they have begun to figure out who they are and what they want to be. (Amazon)

10. The New Jim Crow—Michelle Alexander (2010)

As the United States celebrates the nation's "triumph over race" with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities are locked behind bars or have been labeled felons for life. Although Jim Crow laws have been wiped off the books, an astounding percentage of the African American community remains trapped in a subordinate status—much like their grandparents before them.

In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principle of color blindness. *The New Jim Crow* challenges the civil rights community—and all of us—to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America. (Goodreads)

THEN (1937-2003)

11. [Warriors Don't Cry](#)—Melba Patillo Beals (1994)

The landmark 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*, brought the promise of integration to Little Rock, Arkansas, but it was hard-won for the nine black teenagers chosen to integrate Central High School in 1957. They ran a gauntlet flanked by a rampaging mob and a heavily armed Arkansas National Guard—opposition so intense that soldiers from the elite 101st Airborne Division were called in to restore order. For Melba Beals and her eight friends those steps marked their transformation into reluctant warriors—on a battlefield that helped shape the civil rights movement.

Warriors Don't Cry, drawn from Melba Beals's personal diaries, is a riveting true account of her junior year at Central High—one filled with telephone threats, brigades of attacking mothers, rogue police, fireball and acid-throwing attacks, economic blackmail, and, finally, a price upon Melba's head.

12. [Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?](#)—Beverly Tatum (2003)

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, White, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy?

Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This fully revised edition is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of race in America.(Amazon)

13. [Their Eyes Were Watching God](#)—Zora Neale Hurston (1937)

Their Eyes Were Watching God focuses on the experiences of Janie Crawford, a beautiful and determined fair-skinned black woman living in the American South.

The novel begins when Janie returns to Eatonville, Florida, after having left for a significant amount of time. She is met by the judgmental gossiping of Eatonville's townspeople, whose conversations focus on the fact that Janie had left town with a young man named Tea Cake. Amidst their gossiping, Janie's friend Pheoby Watson stands up for Janie and goes to greet her friend. Janie tells Pheoby her life story, including what happened in the time since she initially left Eatonville, which is the story of the rest of the novel.

14. [Autobiography of Malcolm X](#)—Malcolm X with Alex Haley (1964) *link to free pdf

In the searing pages of this classic autobiography, originally published in 1964, Malcolm X, the Muslim leader, firebrand, and anti-integrationist, tells the extraordinary story of his life and the growth of the Black Muslim movement.

His fascinating perspective on the lies and limitations of the American Dream, and the inherent racism in a society that denies its nonwhite citizens the opportunity to dream, gives extraordinary insight into the most urgent issues of our own time. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* stands as the definitive statement of a movement and a man whose work was never completed but whose message is timeless. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand America. (Amazon)

15. [Sister Outsider](#)—Audre Lord (1984) *[link to text compilation](#)

In this charged collection of fifteen essays and speeches, Lorde takes on sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, and class, and propounds social difference as a vehicle for action and change. Her prose is incisive, unflinching, and lyrical, reflecting struggle but ultimately offering messages of hope.

This commemorative edition includes a new foreword by Lorde-scholar and poet Cheryl Clarke, who celebrates the ways in which Lorde's philosophies resonate more than twenty years after they were first published. These landmark writings are, in Lorde's own words, a call to “never close our eyes to the terror, to the chaos which is Black which is creative which is female which is dark which is rejected which is messy which is...” (Amazon)