BENJAMIN 20 PROGRAM 26

Incoming 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th Graders

Students May Wonder... Why Is Summer Reading So Important?

Summer reading is critical for students to retain knowledge and skills learned in the previous school year.

Students who do not read are at risk of falling behind their classmates.

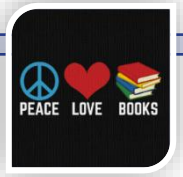
Parents and teachers can avoid this by making sure kids take time to read.



Exercise the Brain over Summer

Just as exercising keeps muscles in shape, reading keeps the brain in shape.
If you do not exercise, you lose muscle, and if you do not read, you will lose literacy skills.



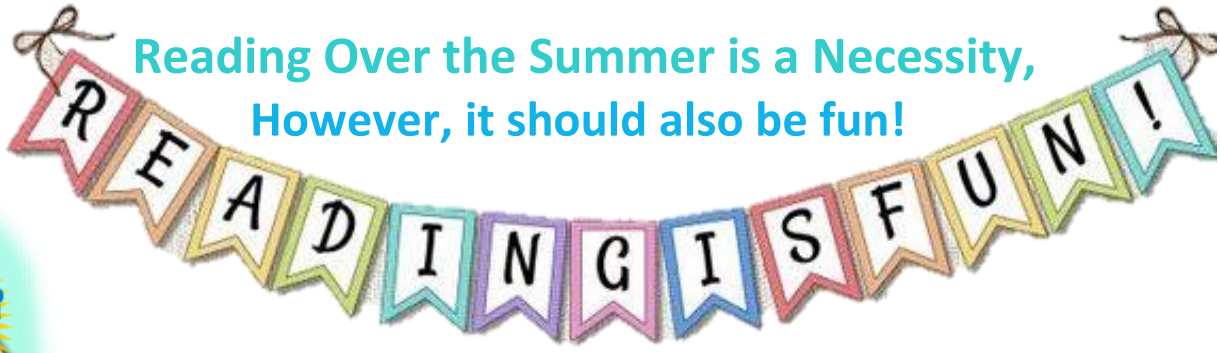


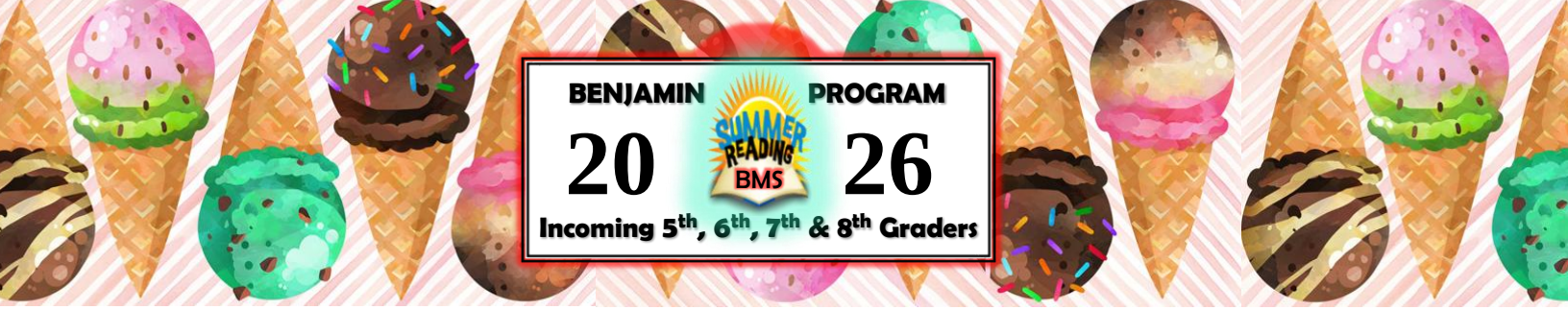
Do Not Forget to Read for FUN!

If you are not sure what to read, there is a link to the

****Summer Reading 2026 packet** on our **School Website** & the on the **LMC Canvas page**

Reading Over the Summer is a Necessity,
However, it should also be fun!





Students are required to:

1. Choose a book to **READ** this summer.
2. **Record** the minutes you read on the **Benjamin Summer Reading Record** *(Copies available online).*
3. Have a parent/guardian initial each time you read.

Remember:

- ✓ Read the required amount of minutes. Your required reading counts toward your grade to start next school year in ELA.



Required minutes are as follows:

- Incoming 5th Grade – 500 minutes
- Incoming 6th Grade – 600 minutes
- Incoming 7th Grade – 700 minutes
- Incoming 8th Grade – 800 minutes



- ✓ Your parent/guardian and you need to initial each time you read
- ✓ Turn in your reading record log to your ELA teacher when you start school for the 2026-27 School year

Helpful Information:

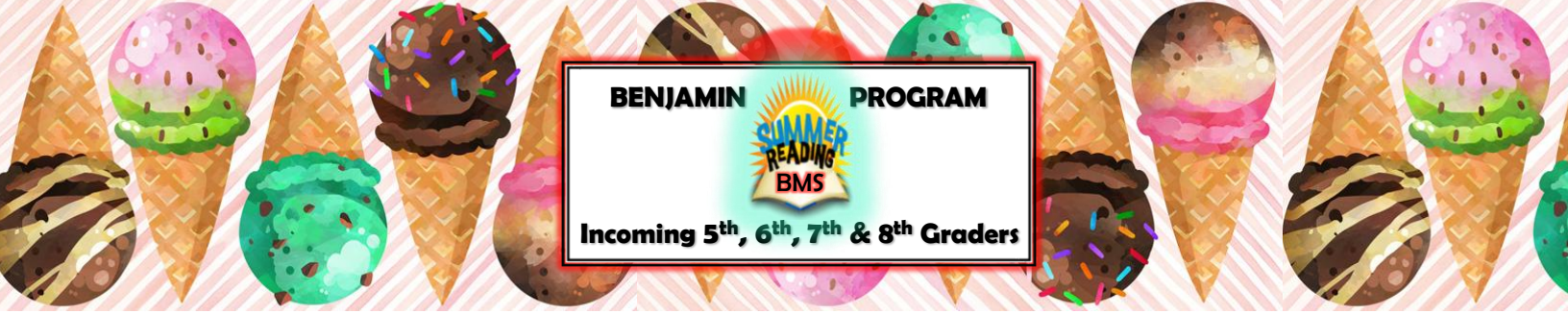


Summer Checkout begins Tuesday, May 26!



Students may checkout **1** book over the summer

Explore our Library Canvas page for helpful links to RECOMMENDED READING LISTS and much more! If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Fiorini at mfiorini@benjamin25.org or Dr. Fitzgerald at mfitzgerald@benjamin25.org



Date	Title	Author	Minutes	Student Initials	Parent / Guardian Initials
		*Reading Minutes **Total** on this Page*			

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FICTION FAVORITES



- LITTLE WOMEN – LOUISE MAY ALCOTT
- THE GLORY FIELD – WALTER DEAN MYERS
- YEAR OF IMPOSSIBLE GOODBYES – SOOK NYUI CHOI
- THE LITTLE PRINCE – ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY
- THE CAT ATE MY GYMSUIT – PAULA DANZIGER
- NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH – AVI
- THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF CHARLOTTE DOYLE – AVI
- THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES – ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
- A SINGLE SHARD – LINDA SUE PARK
- THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS – ANN BRASHARES
- AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS – GENNIFER CHOLDENKO
- JOEY PIGZA SWALLOWED THE KEY – JACK GANTOS
- THE CHOCOLATE WAR – ROBERT CORMIER
- ANPAO: AN AMERICAN INDIAN ODYSSEY – JAMAKE HIGHWATER
- MY ANGELICA – CAROL LYNCH WILLIAMS
- MANIAC MAGEE – JERRY SPINELLI
- A CHRISTMAS CAROL – CHARLES DICKENS
- A WRINKLE IN TIME – MADELEINE L. ENGLE
- DEAR MR. HENSHAW – BEVERLY CLEARY
- THE SNOW GOOSE – PAUL GALLICO
- THE MAZE – WILL HOBBS
- THE PRINCESS BRIDE – WILLIAM GOLDMAN
- REPLAY – SHARON CREECH
- TREASURE ISLAND – ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
- THE WESTING GAME – ELLEN RASKIN
- HOLES – LOUIS SACHAR
- HATCHET – GARY PAULSEN
- TANGERINE – EDWARD BLOOR
- BASEBALL IN APRIL – GARY SOTO
- BLOOMABILITY – SHARON CREECH
- BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA – KATHERINE PATERSON
- RULES – CYNTHIA LORD



Fantasy & Adventure:

- *Amari and the Night Brothers* (Alston)
- *Artemis Fowl* Series (Colfer)
- *Gregor the Overlander Series* (Collins)
- *The Maze Runner* Series *(Dashner)*
- *Spy School Series, The FunJungle Series* (Gibbs)
- *Keeper of the Lost Cities* (Messenger)
- *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* Series (Riordan)
- *Harry Potter Series* (Rowling)
- *The Wings of Fire Series* (Sutherland)

Realistic & Emotional:

- *Booked* (Alexander)
- *Ghosted* (Fry)
- *Restart* (Korman)
- *Fish in a Tree* (Hunt)
- *One for the Murphys* (Hunt)
- *Wonder* (Palacio)
- *Bridge to Terabithia* (Paterson)
- *Hatchet* (Paulsen)
- *Dork Diaries Series* (Russell)
- *Drums, Girls and Dangerous* Pie (Sonnenblick)
- *Squished* (Wagner)

Dystopian & Sci-Fi:

- *The Hunger Games* (Collins)
- *Divergent Series* (Roth)
- *Legend Series* (Lu)
- *The City of Embers Series* (DuPrau)
- *Ender's Game Series* (Card)

Historical & Mystery:

- *Origami Yoda* Series *(Angleberger)*
- *The War That Saved My Life (Bradley)*
- *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library (Grabenstein)*
- *Space Case (Gibbs)*
- *City of Spies (Ponti)*
- *Refugee (Gratz)*
- *Holes (Sachar)*

Graphic Novels:

- *New Kid* (Craft)
- *Spy School Series* (Gibbs)
- *Amulet* Series (Kibuishi)
- *Smile* (Telgemeier)
- *Miles Morales. Spider-Man* Books (Bendis)

Funny:

- *The Last Kids on Earth* (Brallier)

New Kid (Craft)

- *Better Nate than Ever (Federle)*
- *The 13-Story Treehouse (Griffiths)*
- *Wink (Harrell)*
- *Ungifted & Schooled (Korman)*
- *Emmie & Friends (Libenson)*
- *Timmy Failure* Series *(Pastis)*
- *I Funny* Series *(Patterson)*
- *Running in Flip-Flops from the End of the World (Reynolds)*

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Updated by Ms. Fiorini 5/20/26

50 Must Read Books for Middle School

- Shiloh (Shiloh, #1) – Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- Nothing But the Truth – Avi
- The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle – Avi
- The Book Thief – Markus Zusak
- The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson and the Olympians, #1) – Rick Riordan
- The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants – Ann Brashares
- Al Capone Does My Shirts – Gennifer Choldenko
- Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key – Jack Gantos
- The Chocolate War – Robert Cormier
- Maniac Magee – Jerry Spinelli
- The Graveyard Book – Neil Gaiman
- A Wrinkle in Time – Madeleine L. Engle
- Dear Mr. Henshaw – Beverly Cleary
- Number the Stars – Lois Lowry
- The Princess Bride – William Goldman
- Replay – Sharon Creech
- Treasure Island – Robert Louis Stevenson
- The Westing Game – Ellen Raskin
- Holes – Louis Sachar
- Hatchet – Gary Paulsen
- Tangerine – Edward Bloor
- Baseball in April – Gary Soto
- Bloomability – Sharon Creech
- Bridge to Terabithia – Katherine Paterson
- Rules – Cynthia Lord
- Redwall (series) – Brian Jacques
- A Series of Unfortunate Events (series) – Lemony Snicket
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass – Lewis Carroll
- Eragon – Christopher Paolini
- The Hobbit – J.R.R. Tolkien
- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – C.S. Lewis
- Tuck Everlasting – Natalie Babbitt
- The Secret of NIMH – Robert C. O'Brien
- The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales – Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm
- Ella Enchanted – Gail Carson Levine
- A Monster Calls - Patrick Ness Historical Fiction
- Across Five Aprils – Irene Hunt of the Owl – Laurence Yep
- Crispin: The Cross of Lead – Avi
- Out of the Dust – Karen Hesse
- Wonder – R.J. Palacio
- To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
- Harry Potter Series – J.K. Rowling
- I Must Betray You – Ruta Sepetys
- Speak – Laurie Halse Anderson
- Guts – Gary Paulsen Drama
- Coraline – Neil Gaiman
- Houdini: The Handcuff King- Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi
- Stargirl (Stargirl, #1) – Jerry Spinelli
- Smile – Raina Telgemeier
- The Uglies Trilogy – Scott Westerfeld

FAVORITE NOVELS in VERSE



1. Before the Ever After by Jacqueline Woodson

This short but stunning novel in verse tells the story of young ZJ and his pro football player dad, whose mental health begins to deteriorate as CTE takes over his body. As ZJ watches life change from "before" to "after," he clings to his memories and the precious moments he can still share with his dad. The book is heartbreaking but full of hope as it explores the cost of professional football and the effects of CTE on sons, families, and communities. At just 161 pages, it's the perfect book to pass off to sports fans, the "I don't like to read" crowd, and any other type of reader. The book will hook them before they even have time to think about putting it down!

2. Starfish by Lisa Fipps

Starfish is about Ellie, a young girl who lives her life according to "Fat Girl Rules." These are the unspoken rules she's learned the hard way, bullied by her peers and even her own family. This novel in verse follows Ellie's personal journey of taking up space in a world that shames her, finding confidence and self-love, and living life according to her own set of rules.

3. House Arrest by K.A. Holt

Written as journal entries, this is the story of Timothy, a young boy who is sentenced to house arrest after stealing a wallet to help his sick, medically fragile brother. As part of his probation, Timothy is ordered to write in a weekly journal and meet with a counselor, which he does with all the reluctance you'd expect out of a 12-year-old-boy. But that's what makes the book so great: Timothy's character is as real as it gets. Funny, emotional, and thought-provoking.

4. The Canyon's Edge by Dusti Bowling

Written in both prose and verse, this is a unique desert survival story. When a flash flood tears through the canyon they're hiking in, Nora and her dad are separated. In the midst of her raw grief from losing her mom a year earlier, Nora now has to survive without her only other parent. Battling both her PTSD and the elements of the desert, Nora learns to face her fears in this gripping, fast-paced story. A thrilling survival story!

5. Alone by Megan E. Freeman



Great for fans of survival stories, Alone is a unique blend of realistic, survival, and dystopian fiction. The book follows Maddie, who is accidentally left behind when her entire town is evacuated due to an unknown "imminent threat." With no way to contact her family or anyone else in the outside world, Maddie must survive for 4 years, entirely alone. With little world-building, the premise of the book sounds a lot more dystopian than it actually is, and the story focuses on Maddie's survival. Because of this, the book has wide appeal for middle school readers, both dystopian fans and lovers of realistic fiction.

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FAVORITE NOVELS in VERSE

6. What About Will by Ellen Hopkins

Similar to Before the Ever After, this book explores how a traumatic brain injury changes the relationship between two brothers and their entire family. What About Will addresses tough topics like mental health, addiction, divorce, – in a direct, engaging, and accessible way. It's real, raw, and heartbreaking, but it ends with important messages that all adolescents need to hear.

7. Becoming Muhammad Ali by James Patterson & Kwame Alexander

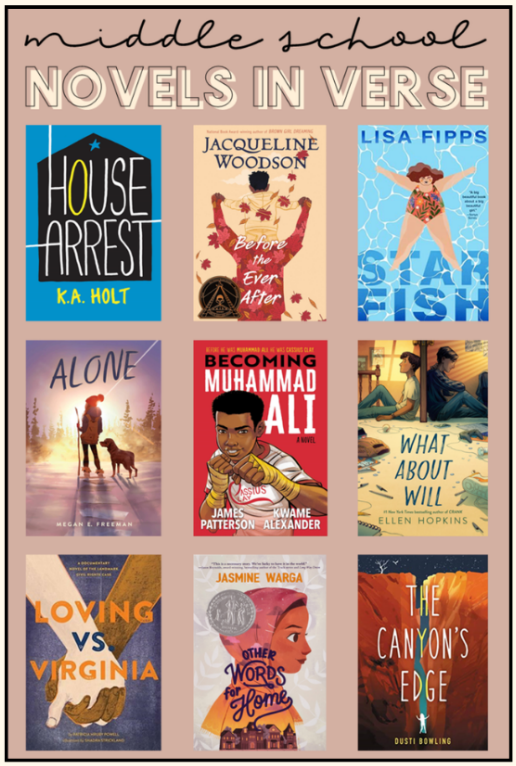
Perfect for sports fans, this biographical novel in verse takes readers back to boxing legend Muhammad Ali's days of growing up as Cassius Clay in Louisville, Kentucky. Thanks to the dual perspectives, action-packed boxing scenes, illustrations, and accessible, entertaining language, Becoming Muhammad Ali is a perfect book for students who say or are thinking they "don't like to read."

8. Loving vs. Virginia: A Documentary Novel of the Landmark Civil Rights Case by Patricia Hruby Powell

Written from alternating points of view, this book tells the true story of Mildred and Richard Loving and their fight to legally marry and live together as an interracial couple. Loving vs. Virginia is structured "documentary style," with illustrations, photographs, quotes, excerpts from speeches and Supreme Court decisions, and more. This brilliant, rich context, combined with engaging narrative, brings history alive in an accessible, powerful way that's perfect for young readers.

9. Lifeboat 12 by Susan Hood

Fans of Alan Gratz books, the I Survived series, and other action-packed survival stories, will love Lifeboat 12. Written by Susan Hood, Lifeboat 12 is suspenseful historical fiction based on the sinking of the SS City of Benares during WWII. The story follows 13-year-old Ken Sparks, one of the child evacuees aboard the ship when it is torpedoed by a German U-boat. Whether readers are looking for some history or suspense, Lifeboat 12 will keep them curious and engaged.



10. Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga

Leaving a possible war behind is easy, but leaving Baba, Issa, and everything she knows is hard. Adjusting to life in Cincinnati alongside her less-than-welcoming cousin, Sarah, is almost as difficult, especially with school play tryouts looming and Jude feeling that a girl like her would never get, or even merit, the spotlight. With the help of her fellow immigrant classmates and new Arabic-speaking American friend, Layla, Jude adjusts to her new home and family while never forgetting what she left behind. Told in verse and divided into five sections chronicling Jude's flight from Syria and adjustment to America, this powerful middle grade novel explores the complicated concepts of war and corruption, home, family and belonging.







Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award

- 2027 Rebecca Caudill Award Nominees
- Past Winners List & Voting Results (2005-2025)



Illinois Reads (Illinois authors)

- Grades 3-5
- Grades 6-8



American Library Association (ALA)

- Summer Reading List 3-5
- Summer Reading List 6-8



Publisher Weekly

- Best Summer Reads 2026- Middle Grade
- Best Summer Reads 2026- Young Adult



School Library Journal

- Best Books from 2024



Common Sense Media

- Best Books of the Year: 2025



Carol Stream Public Library Summer Reading 2026