Rev:5/09

Summer 2009 Reading
For PCMS students

For Rising 6th Graders:

(Read at least two of the following. Each student will be tested on two books)

Where the Red Fern Grows: Billy and his precious coonhound pups romp relentlessly through the Ozarks, trying to "tree" the elusive raccoon. In time, the inseparable trio wins the coveted gold cup in the annual coon-hunt contest, captures the wily ghost coon, and bravely fights with a mountain lion. When the victory over the mountain lion turns to tragedy, Billy grieves, but learns the beautiful old Native American legend of the sacred red fern that grows over the graves of his dogs.

Esperanza Rising: Esperanza's expectation that her 13th birthday will be celebrated with all the material pleasures and folk elements of her previous years is shattered when her father is murdered by bandits. His powerful stepbrothers then hold her mother as a social and economic hostage, wanting to force her remarriage to one of them, and go so far as to burn down the family home. Esperanza's mother then decides to join the cook and gardener and their son as they move to the United States and work in California's agricultural industry. They embark on a new way of life, away from the uncles, and Esperanza unwillingly enters a world where she is no longer a princess but a worker. Set against the multiethnic, labor-organizing era of the Depression, the story of Esperanza remaking herself is satisfyingly complete, including dire illness and a difficult romance.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963: The year is 1963, and self-important Byron Watson is the bane of his younger brother Kenny's existence. Constantly in trouble for one thing or another, from straightening his hair into a "conk" to lighting fires to freezing his lips to the mirror of the new family car, Byron finally pushes his family too far. Before this "official juvenile delinquent" can cut school or steal change one more time, Momma and Dad finally make good on their threat to send him to the deep south to spend the summer with his tiny, strict grandmother. Soon the whole family is packed up, ready to make the drive from Flint, Michigan, straight into one of the most chilling moments in America's history: the burning of the Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church with four little girls inside.

Freak the Mighty : Maxwell Kane, a lumbering eighth grader who describes himself as a "butthead goon," has lived with grandparents Grim and Gram ever since his father was imprisoned for murdering his mother. Mean-spirited schoolmates and special ed (for an undetermined learning disability) haven't improved his self-image, so he is totally unprepared for a friendship with Kevin, aka Freak, a veritable genius with a serious birth defect that's left him in braces and using crutches. Max is uplifted by Freak's imagination and booming confidence, while Freak gets a literal boost--hoisted onto Max's shoulders, he shares Max's mobility. Together they become Freak the Mighty, an invincible duo.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: Is about six very unruly children who teach a whole church about the true meaning of the birth of Christ is brought to life by the narrator, C. J. Critt. By using only her voice, she gives each character its own personality.

Matilda: The heroine of this little book also carries its name. Matilda is incredibly intelligent, even as a small child. Living with her boorish parents and oblivious brother, she teaches herself to read from the various magazine and newspapers lying about the house. Her parents are completely indifferent to their only daughter and it is only by playing small tricks on them when they've been particularly nasty that little Matilda is able to keep a hold on her sanity. By age five and a half Matilda has read all the children's books in the library and quite a few of the adult ones as well. On entering school for the first time, our protagonist comes face to face with a very worthy enemy. The Head Teacher, Miss Trunchbull, is the worst kind of dangerous violent adult. It is only through Matilda's cleverness that she is able to come to the aid of her teacher, Miss Honey, and save the school from the Trunchbull's insanity.

Tales of the Fourth Grade Nothing: Peter, because he's the oldest, must deal with Fudgie's disgusting cuteness, his constant meddling with Peter's stuff, and other grave offenses, one of which is almost too much to bear.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School: The Wayside School was supposed to be one story high, with 30 classrooms side by side; instead, it was built sideways, with 30 one-classroom stories. As befits such a strange school, these tales are a bit strange too. In one, Jason is stuck to his seat by a large wad of chewing gum. His teacher tries throwing ice water on him (to chill the gum to brittleness) and turning him upside down. She even contemplates cutting his pants off. Finally, though, he falls from his upside-down position when kissed (ugh!) by one of the girls in the class. Other tales include a bit of a moral, such as the story of Kathy, whose assumption that no one will ever like her is proved right, or the story of Bebe, who draws quickly but without artistic merit.

Ramona Quimby, Age 8 : From the first day of third grade, when Ramona Quimby meets her eventual nemesis Yard Ape, life moves on at its usual wild pace--usual for the boisterous Ramona, that is. Soon she is accidentally squashing a raw egg into her hair at the school cafeteria, being forced to play Uncle Rat with her annoying young neighbor, and, worst of all, throwing up in her classroom. The responsibilities of an 8-year-old are sometimes daunting, especially in a family that is trying to squeak by while the father goes back to school. But Ramona is full of too much vim and vigor to ever be down for long.

The Phantom Tollbooth: "It seems to me that almost everything is a waste of time," Milo laments. "[T]here's nothing for me to do, nowhere I'd care to go, and hardly anything worth seeing." This bored, *bored* young protagonist who can't see the point to anything is knocked out of his glum humdrum by the sudden and curious appearance of a tollbooth in his bedroom. Since Milo has absolutely nothing better to do, he dusts off his toy car, pays the toll, and drives through. What ensues is a journey of mythic proportions, during which Milo encounters countless odd characters who are anything but dull.

Little House books: Any boy or girl who has fantasized about running off to live in the woods will find ample information in these pages to manage a Wisconsin snowstorm, a panther attack, or a wild sled ride with a pig as an uninvited guest. Every chapter divulges fascinatingly intricate, yet easy-to-read, details about pioneer life in the Midwest in the late 1800s, from bear-meat curing to maple-tree sapping to homemade bullet making.

For Rising 7th Graders :

(Read at least two of the following. A book report form will be given out at the beginning of the school year).

TYLER ON PRIME TIME: Shuffled off to Los Angeles to his Uncle Pete's for two weeks in August when scheduling conflicts beset his divorced parents, 12-year-old Tyler is secretly delighted. After all, his uncle writes for TV's top family sitcom, and surely Tyler will be able to snag an audition for a part. No path to fame and fortune unfolds without obstacles, however, and Atinsky keeps them coming, from an asthma attack to Tyler's blooper about the male lead's hair transplant.

Runt:Runt is the smallest in a litter of wolves born in the forests of northern Minnesota. The pups join their father, mother, and two yearlings in a pack that is completed by Bider, an adult male accepted into the group after he was forced out of another one. Each littermate seems to have a destined role, but for Runt the future is an unknown. He tries mightily to keep up with his siblings, but much of the time he tries too hard, doesn't think ahead, or makes mistakes. An encounter with a porcupine lands him among humans and proves fatal to one of his brothers. Sensing the pack's disappointment, Runt withdraws, looking for a chance to earn his father's approval.

The Goblin Wood: Fantasy and intrigue blend in a mythical medieval land where good and evil are not always clearly distinguishable. When the story opens, 12-year-old Makenna has just witnessed the murder of her mother, the local hedgewitch, by decree of a priest of the Hierarch, aided by the villagers whom Makenna's mother had always helped. Angry and bitter, the grieving girl seeks revenge on the village and runs away into the woods, where she encounters and befriends the goblins-a small, magical race of people who are being systematically exterminated by the Hierarch.

Attack of the Mutant Underwear: Cody Lee Carson is resolved to become a "changed man." Starting fifth grade at a new school in a new town means that nobody knows about his Old Cody "doofus, bozo-brained" mess-up tendencies, including the infamous Tweety Bird-underwear-in-the-spotlight episode.

The New Me Journal of the boy's bumpy transformation from hapless fourth grader to confident fifth-grade graduate comes complete with stories of sibling strife, classmate clashes, student council elections, and his first big crush.

Al Capone Does My Shirts: 12-year-old Moose Flanagan and his family move to Alcatraz Island in 1935, where his father gets a job in the prison which housed such noted criminals as Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly. Moose's older sister, Natalie, is severely autistic and his mother has been obsessed with getting her "cured." She has been sent to a variety of schools and bizarre hospitals, none of which have helped, and their last hope is getting her into a school in San Francisco. Moose is given almost complete responsibility for his sister. Meanwhile, Moose is coping with his new school, living in an isolated and strange place, and the warden's daughter, Piper, who always has a new money-making scheme. Juggling Natalie's daily moods, school work, yearning for Piper, and worry over his folks, Moose tries to please everyone. His greatest fear is that somehow he has caused Natalie's problem

Double Dutch: Delia has managed to hide her inability to read from her parents and teachers, but she doubts she can pass the proficiency test that will enable her to graduate to ninth grade and continue competing in Double Dutch jump rope. Randy, whose mother walked out several years ago, hasn't told anyone that his father, a long-distance truck driver, has been missing for weeks. And when twin tornadoes hit the school, it becomes apparent that the Tolliver twins, who dress entirely in black and terrorize their classmates, are actually sensitive fellows behind their intimidating facades.

WHO IS STEALING THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS?: Every Christmas since Alex can remember, his family and neighbors have filled their front yards with decorations from each of the twelve days mentioned in the song ""The Twelve Days of Chirstmas."" But this year someone is stealing them one by one. Alex is determined to solve this caper, but will he be able to do it in time to save the twelve days of Christmas?

The Gorillas of Gill Park: Willy Wilson's whole life changes when his recently widowed Aunt Bridget, a somewhat unconventional costume designer, invites her timid, sheltered nephew to spend his summer vacation with her. Everything in Gloria is different, and, most surprisingly, Willy finds that he is different, too. His aunt thinks he's funny, he makes friends easily, and he even plays a decent game of baseball. While Aunt Bridget sews 30 gorilla suits, Willy plays ball in Gill Park and gets to know the colorful characters who live in and around it. When Otto Pettingill, its eccentric owner, unwittingly agrees to sell the park to a mall developer and allows his orphaned charge, Willy's new friend Liesl, to be adopted by an unsuitable couple, the two children save the park and her future.

A View From Saturday: This contemporary novel explores the ties that bind the four members of a championship academic quiz-bowl team. Sixth-grade teacher/coach Mrs. Olinski, teaching for the first time since becoming paraplegic, proudly observes her students' victories from the confines of a wheelchair. She is not sure what propelled her to choose the members of her team, nor does she fully comprehend the secret of their success in repeatedly beating older, more sophisticated competitors. Readers will be equally mystified until the backgrounds of the foursome (who call themselves The Souls) unfold during a series of first-person narratives that reveal the links between the students' private lives.

Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia: Not the most popular kid in sixth grade, Bird feels a kinship with Harlem, a new boy in her class who is shunned because he "looks mean and acts dumb." With the help of her kindly neighbor, Miss Delphine, Bird starts a campaign to befriend Harlem. The process begins haltingly, but Bird is triumphant when he agrees to be her partner in the school spelling bee. Bird soon learns that becoming Harlem's friend requires work and courage, but it also brings surprising revelations and unexpected payoffs.

Yankee Girl: Alice Ann Moxley's father works for the FBI and has been transferred from Chicago to Jackson, MS, in 1964 to protect civil rights workers and individuals registering to vote. Taken aback by everything from Southern accents to the way black people are treated,

Alice finds it very hard to adjust and nearly impossible to make friends. She's quickly branded "Yankee Girl," and the one friend she finds, the boy next door, abandons her when school starts-late this year, due to fear of integration. Alice's school is indeed being integrated, by two daughters of an important ally of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Valerie Taylor is in Alice's sixth-grade class, and although they are both outsiders, Alice is torn between trying to befriend her and trying to fit in with the popular girls.

Brainboy and the Deathmaster: Darryl recently lost his entire family in a horrible fire, and now resides at an orphanage funded by Keith Masterly, founder of the world's largest computer empire. After Darryl plays exceptionally well on the version of "Stargate" found on the laptop in his room, he's unexpectedly adopted and whisked away by Masterly himself. At first, the boy is thrilled to be a part of Paradise Lab, where there are lots of other smart kids like him, all helping Masterly conduct science experiments aimed at "conquering time." But Darryl and his friend Nina come to realize that Masterly's ultimate goals are deadly, and it's up to them to rescue everyone from a madman's evil grip.

Ninjas, Piranhas, and Galileo: Three seventh grade pals are from privileged backgrounds and attend a private school with exacting standards. The looming science fair sets in motion a number of events. Overachieving and sometimes judgmental Honoria finds herself developing feelings for longtime friend Shohei. He is a bit of a slacker, frustrated by his adopted parents' rather extreme predilection for forcing Japanese culture upon him at all times. The last major player is Elias, who has developed feelings for Honoria. Humor ensues with Shohei believing Honoria likes Elias, who knows otherwise.

The Revealers: Seventh-grader Russell, who is being physically terrorized, reaches out to a geek named Elliot and to Catalina, who has incurred the wrath of seventh-grade queen Bethany and her minions. The kids first become friends and then devise a way to use the school's pilot project e-mail system to tell their stories--and the stories of other kids who are subject to regular bullying.

The Red Rose Box: Leah Hopper and her younger sister, Ruth, live in segregated rural Louisiana in the early 1950s. For her 10th birthday, the older girl receives a traveling case-a "red rose box"-from her mother's wealthy sister. Among other treasures, it contains train tickets for a family visit in Los Angeles. In L.A. there is no sign of the racial prejudice that the Hoppers are so accustomed to as a black family in the South, and the girls reluctantly return home. Later, during a trip to New York City with Aunt Olivia and Uncle Bill, they feel the same way, and then a hurricane strikes their hometown, killing their parents. With this devastating loss, the sisters realize that riches and comforts cannot substitute for the kind of family life they had.

Millicent Min, Girl Genius: In a summer of change, girl genius Millicent hides the fact that she's in high school in order to pass as a regular 11-year-old. She's convinced this is the only way she'll ever have a real friend. At her mother's insistence, she's on a volleyball team, but her ineptness is humiliating. Her best buddy, eccentric Grandma Maddy, is leaving for England. Worst of all, Millicent suspects her mother has a terminal disease.

The Tiger's Apprentice: Seventh-grader Tom Lee leads an ordinary life with his grandmother in San Francisco until she is killed by a monster and he finds himself apprenticed to Mr. Hu, a shape-changing tiger who is Guardian of a precious phoenix egg. Villainous creatures want to steal the egg to wreak havoc on the world, so when it disappears, Tom, Mr. Hu, an ostracized dragon, and a roguish monkey battle evil monsters to retrieve it.

For Rising 8th Graders:

A short quiz will be given on each book read over the summer. The grade will be counted in the homework category.

The Giver : In a world with no poverty, no crime, no sickness and no unemployment, and where every family is happy, 12-year-old Jonas is chosen to be the community's Receiver of Memories. Under the tutelage of the Elders and an old man known as the Giver, he discovers the disturbing truth about his utopian world and struggles against the weight of its hypocrisy.

The Clay Marble: Dara's is one of the thousands of Cambodian families separated or destroyed by war, but there is hope as she and her brother and mother head for a refugee camp on the Thailand border. Once safely there, Dara makes friends with Jantu, who has an almost magical touch in creating toys from mud and scraps of fabric. When the camp is bombed, Jantu makes a magic marble out of clay that helps Dara track down her family and then return to the hospital for Jantu and her brother.

The Miracle Worker: The Story of Helen Keller (1880-1968), the woman who was struck deaf and blind by illness at the age of 19 months. "The Miracle Worker" tells how a young Helen was led out of her prison of silence and darkness by the remarkable Anne Sullivan, who set out to teach the girl sign language.

The Contender: Alfred's life is going nowhere fast. He's a high-school dropout working at a grocery store. His best friend is drifting behind a haze of drugs and violence, and now some street punks are harassing him for something he didn't do. Feeling powerless and afraid, Alfred gathers up the courage to visit Donatelli's Gym, the neighborhood's boxing club. He wants to be a champion--on the streets and in his own life.

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Trouble with Lemons: Things are tough enough for eighth-grader Tyler McAllister before he bumps into a dead body while swimming in the quarry. Tyler is trying to understand why he is allergic to almost everything in the world, how he could have saved his parents' marriage and why his father had to die in a plane crash. Trying to cope with a move from L.A. to upstate New York, the boy sorely misses his mother and brother who are away filming movies. Tyler is suddenly thrust into the midst of a murder case, the resolution of which seems to depend upon him. As the investigation grows increasingly confusing and overwhelming, Tyler's previous dilemmas gradually become lucid and surmountable