

COMMODORE CHRONICLE



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Staff - High School

Staff-Middle School

Featured Articles by Frazier Students about Frazier Students

An Athlete's Journey through Injury Struggles

Starting from rock bottom, Tyler Monack struggles to recover from a knee injury. After playing football in his sophomore year of high school, Tyler tears his ACL unknowingly. About eight months later, he tore his meniscus while playing in a baseball game.

Tyler dominated baseball over football. Tyler says, “ It was definitely discouraging knowing that hurting my knee during football season would impact my baseball season.” Going into his sophomore year baseball season, Tyler knew his knee was at risk. So why did he play anyway? Tyler says, “ I love baseball, so it wasn't really a question when it came to playing at risk.”

About halfway through the season, Tyler tore his meniscus and could not play the rest of the season. He had to get surgery about a month later. “ I was really scared and nervous to get surgery, the anesthesia was intimidating,” Tyler says.

Now, recovering from surgery, Tyler is preparing for his junior baseball season. Tyler says,“ To prepare for next season, I have been going to physical therapy and have been lifting weights.” He also says, “ I feel that I have a lot of pressure on myself, especially because I lead the team in batting average.”



Big Lots Biggest Pride

Big Lots' favorite associate quits after a year.

Ethan Hoffman age 17 joined his Big Lots journey on September 30th, 2022. Formally working at Becks Pizza, he went on to bigger and better things. When asked to share his story he had quite a lot to say. During his application process he requested to be a furniture sales associate, but once hired was ultimately put on front end as a cashier. While that was his main position he also stocked and eventually did some furniture orders with customers. "I enjoyed being a cashier, getting to talk to lots of regulars and new customers and helping them with anything they needed." No wonder he was a fan favorite with the customers! And it wasn't only the customers that loved him, but also his managers and coworkers. Ethan and the store manager Marc have a very tight and great relationship. Anytime he had any problems, Marc was always there to lend a hand.

When Ethan unfortunately put in his two week notice Marc was heartbroken upon hearing the news. Ethan described it as "he nearly cried". After confirming being available to stay another month, Marc threw his hands up and yelled "Yes I love you Ethan!" Ethan claimed that Marc would always brag to the Hoffman family that they are lucky to have a kid like Ethan and say that he was "our top cashier!". Ethan and the assistant manager Amber were very close as well. "After about four months of working there, me and Amber realized we were related. We'd often share stories." Ethan stated that Amber is typically very gloomy, but their time shared together really brightens her day. As Ethan's favorite holiday is Christmas he feels it's his duty to go all out and brighten the store's mood. He loves to decorate the trees and get anything Christmas related set up. Even after being done working there, he still offered to come in and

decorate the building. His coworkers all loved his Christmas spirit and said he makes the ruthless days more bearable during the season.

When asked about his working condition Ethan had nothing negative to say! There were at least 3 people working in the store at a time, however oftentimes we only had 2 which was extremely stressful. He said most of the time during his shifts he would stand in a mostly temperature controlled building. His managers were always happy to help with anything their employees needed. “Only once was there drama, which the corporation almost had to deal with but was resolved. So I would say there's definitely no place for misconduct.” You can find Ethan today at your local Belle Vernon Walmart with his signature big grin. Disappointed that his time at Big Lots was short, Ethan stated he had to find a job that paid more, offered flexible hours that can work around school and his unavailable days. Though his time at Big Lots was short he's a frequent visitor and still brightens up his former coworkers days with his cheery and positive presence!

The Incident

At some point in your life, you have probably been to a baseball game, or maybe even played in one. The day was April 22nd 2017 and 7-year-old Logan Solomon had just finished playing in his baseball game. “We had just finished the game and after I got a hot dog I decided to throw a baseball with one of my friends.” The two friends were enjoying themselves throwing until Logan accidentally overthrew the ball into the woods. His friend proceeded to get the ball, while Logan stood there waiting for his return. Then, “A girl on a baseball team threw it over the fence, and it hit me in the

temple.” He recalled the pain being very extreme and immediately bursting into tears. In the following hours he helped the pain by using an icepack on the area he was hit. Flashforward to two days later when Logan threw up in the middle of the night. That morning, he took a trip to the doctor because “something wasn’t right.” After receiving an opinion from the first doctor that nothing was wrong, Logan’s mom asked for a second opinion. The doctors eventually found out that Logan had internal bleeding in his head, and that he would need surgery to resolve it. “I wasn’t too nervous until I got into the operating room because I didn't know exactly what was going on. My mom was crying a lot, my dad was crying, we didn’t know what was gonna happen.” After a successful surgery, Logan was discharged from the hospital on the 27th where he would return home and continue his recovery process. “I was feeling a lot better, and receiving gifts like Pokemon cards made the time go by a lot faster. I also got a card from Andrew McCutchen which was pretty cool.” Logan wants anyone else dealing with a medical emergency such as his to, “relax a little bit and not to get stressed, they know what they are doing in the hospital; they helped me a lot.” He is always happy to share his story with anyone who asks; “I think of the event as like who I am now.”

18-Year-Old Alexander Mashburn is Actually a Pro Sandwich Artist.

Alexander Mashburn more known as Xander has started his senior year of high school. Xander may be known for playing the baritone in the high school concert and marching band. But what you may not know is that Xander is actually a Subway “Junior Sandwich Artist”.

Upon asking Xander how it feels to work at Subway he replied, “Fine.”

Xander has been a proud Subway employee for about 10 months, when he started working there in early December 2022. Xander has tried every type of meat at Subway, when asking what his favorite was he said, “I don’t know, probably the sweet onion chicken teriyaki.”

Xander works at the Subway in Perryopolis, PA. He claims that it is a safe place and safe environment to work in. He states, “Yes, it’s a safe environment, though sometimes I almost cut my finger on the knives when cutting bread.”

Subway has many different sandwiches and when asking Xander about them, he started to tell me his favorite sandwich to make, which is “The Beast”.

Upon asking him what his favorite sandwich to make was, he said, “Mmm hold on, I guess my favorite one to make is probably the beast.”

He then continued to give a rundown on how to make it, “6 pepperoni, 6 salami, 6 ham, 6 turkey, and 2 portions of roast beef aka 4 slices, american cheese, and even though I don't like tomatoes I like adding tomatoes when they are perfectly sliced and fresh, and a little firm rather than soft and juicy.”

Xander also added, “I also like when the sandwich is perfect and I can shut it amazingly.”

Xander states that Subway was a good decision he made, "Yeah I guess so, and I made some friends." When asking what advice he would give anyone interested in working at Subway, he said, "Umm I guess it's fun, you don't really have to do a lot of work. Try to memorize things the best you can."

Students' Feelings on the New School Year at Frazier High School

With the school year just beginning, it is good to get the thoughts of what a student at the school is feeling so far in the school year.

It has been 3 weeks since the first day of the school year. The best person to ask about this school year is someone who has been here for a few years. That's why Xander Mashburn is a good fit for this interview about the new school year.

When asked about how he feels about the school year thus far, he said, "I'm feeling alright about the school year. It's not too hard." It is good to feel good about school, especially since it's high school and being senior year you want to enjoy it and take it all in.

He also said, "My favorite is Advanced Chemistry with Mrs. Marr. I like learning about chemistry and with it being an advanced class I felt it could challenge me a little. It's a small class with only 9 students. I also really like it because my best friend is in that class."

He explained his love for chemistry and he loves having a class that he feels could challenge him a little more in that subject.

He explained that he didn't like his psychology class as much because he didn't have friends to talk to in that class but it's not too bad.

When asked his least favorite thing about this school year he said it would probably be his 5th period class. He doesn't really like the people in that class but other than that he enjoys the class as a whole.

The one thing he would change about his school experience is where he sits in first period so he can talk more with his friends and socialize with them more.

When asked how he felt about there being a bomb threat made to the school so early in the school year he said, "I feel it's a big issue that the school should fix. But what do they expect when they put the office phone number on a big paper on the field house doors. I feel they should start being more cautious about serious stuff like this. Even though it ended up only being a threat it could've caused lots of trauma to everyone in the schools, especially younger children."

A British Connection

"I took a step off the plane into a new world, where everything felt unfamiliar and different," said senior Ram Ten. When Ram moved to America in the Summer of 2020 from England, his life became a cultural shock. Ram moved to Perryopolis with his older brother, Sai, and his mom. The family of three moved here to be with other family, including Ram's cousins, aunts, and uncles. Him and his brother, mom, aunts, uncles, and cousins, live in a built-in house at the Perryopolis Inn & Suites, managing and owning the motel. This being completely different from the life they lived in England.

Once the first Summer of living in Perry ended, school was beginning to start. This was the first time he would get to experience the people he would be stuck in school with for the next four years of his life. Ram stated, "When I arrived at school, at first glance, I felt judged and like everyone was racist. I didn't think I belonged." Ram had a hard time adjusting to this new world with new people. He had never moved anywhere so adjusting was definitely one of the most difficult things he's had to deal with. Despite being nervous about his new life, Ram said, "I ended up adjusting a lot quicker than I thought I would. I made a lot of friends, and everyone was fascinated with my accent." Ram was suddenly included in everything, and learning things everyday from the people around him. He finally felt like he belonged.

Ram knew this would be a completely different life, but he never realized just how crazy it would be. "When I started talking to people, I couldn't stand anyone's accent. Nobody understood the terms I was using and I was confused when people would refer to things that I didn't understand. The food was strange at first which I grew to love more than anything. Everything really was just nothing I have ever experienced," Ram said. Ram had to learn the way America functions and all of the things we do and say on the daily. He ate new foods, learned new terms, met new people. Ram started American football and continued with his love and passion for

soccer. It was hard leaving his life behind in England but he found peace in knowing this was now home.



Ram gained an understanding of the way things here worked, and acquired so much information about Frazier and how it is in the school. Ram said, "For anyone coming here from other parts of the world, just be yourself. You'll always find people just like you. Be nice to others because you never know when you may need someone's help. The first impression you give off to the students at Frazier is what makes you who you are here." Ram got to experience so many new and exciting American things. He joined Frazier Nation and we all welcomed him with open arms.

Although Perryopolis has now become Ram's home, he is not sure if he wants to stay here in the future. He lived most of his life in England and says, "As for the future, I want to live away from Perry, but still in Pennsylvania and the United States. I want to stay close to my family and where my new home is." Ram has been through so much with the big change and culture and how he lives his life but has overcome any obstacle that has come his way. The United States is now Ram's place and there's no denying that he is finally happy here.

OUR FRAZIER COMMUNITY /family and friends

Day In A Life

A typical day starts off with knocking at the front door of someone that might be suspected of a drug deal. Officer Yauch walks up the steps and knocks on the door looking for the person he has been looking for, for months now. He opens the door and a woman of the name Lucy says "how can I help you", to officer Yauch. He then states "is George available to talk to." Officer Yauch saw behind the door George run toward a bedroom. At that point he had permission to entire the house knowing George was inside. George locks himself in the room while another officer is yelling at "George open the door or I'm knocking the door down." George refuses to open the door, the door is knocked down and proof of drugs sitting in front of their face. They place George in handcuffs. Escort him out of his house. Another officer goes back into the

house to grab the evidence. George's daughter catches the other police officer with the drugs and screams to the officer, “my dad puts those up his butt.” The other officer immediately drops them. Yauch states “ officer why don't you have gloves on.” The other officer said I completely forgot. They take George to jail and he will go to court in a few days.

Molly Yauch

The Inner City School District

Laurie Krall, A fourth grade teacher, walks into the school doors of McKeesport every weekday not knowing what to expect. An inner city school district involves much more than teaching here at Mckeesport. Most of Laurie’s work is centered around building relationships with students.

Many students here at McKeesport you may not know are struggling and need the help. Laurie says, “they will often wear the same clothes to school day after day.” Most of the students have a lot of emotional and behavioral problems, which causes them to act out the way they do. This is why teaching at an inner school district is different.... And here is why.

It was a normal day, just like any other, and police showed up round the school. Laurie didn’t realize things were going to change soon after. I had asked her what had happened that was very tragic and she explained that “one day a police officer showed

up at our school in search of 3 male students.” Apparently on the way to school, the 3 boys were breaking into cars. Car after car, they found a car that had carried a knife. When the boys found it, they proceeded to grab the knife and later on found a stray cat. They took turns stabbing the cat until dead. Laurie says, “I broke down in tears later on after being told of what just happened.”

Laurie doesn't ever know what to expect on a daily basis after I had asked. She explains that “many students come from broken homes and every year half of her class has had at least one tragedy in their life.” She surrounds herself with students of parents who have died of gun violence or drugs, some are in jail and others have left them. Laurie says, “the stories they share with me are some of the saddest stories I've ever heard, that is why I focus on building relationships with them, so that they can have someone to confide in.” She's had plenty of behavioral problems and I asked if anything physical has happened. She said, “a student was upset and picked up a desk to throw towards me. It hurt.” Just one of many problems like this spark why building relationships with the students and getting a good depth of knowledge about them is very important, so things like that don't happen.

Laurie's thoughts are always spread walking through the doors of the school. I asked her what day she'd never forget, and she explained that one of her fourth grade students died of cancer. She said “It was so sad. He wanted to come to school everyday, just like any other student.” When she explains this story to me you can tell that this

has changed her way of thinking in her education career. “He would be so tired that my teacher partner and I would put down a blanket and pillow so he could just sleep.” I asked how it had affected her, and she explained to me that it was very hard, not only for her, but for all of his classmates as well. “Students would just come in and cry all day. One of the guidance counselors had even stayed in my classroom with me for over a week.” She was sure to put every student first, and let everyone know they weren’t alone.

I asked if she could change anything, what would it be? She said, “it would be to have all the students start their day with a hot breakfast. They often get a cereal bar with an apple.”

Many of these stories show that Laurie takes her job seriously, minus the stress that goes along with it. Never take any job for granted; you may never know what to expect from it. Her work environment is a key factor in her life and she plays an important role being involved in the school. She is proud to be a teacher at McKeesport and will continue to be saving lives day by day.

Tradition in an Untraditional Century

To be or not to be, that is the question of moms everywhere. Becoming a mother is one of the greatest joys in life. The responsibility of it, however, differs in today's culture. Should you be a stay at home mom or should you be a working mom? Every mother everywhere has to decide this answer. For some it comes down to survival, for others, it is a matter of what is best for the children, especially if it is a two parent household.

As a child of a stay at home mother, I decided to interview my mom, Linda Gibson. Linda has been a stay at home mom for my entire life. So she has been through different decades and parent age groups as she has children ranging from 23 to 3 years old at her age of 44. Linda stated, "I have been a stay at home mom for 23 years. I have held a part time job for about 5 years that was from Jan through April but I could only work when their dad was home from school so as not to pay for daycare." Even though she does not have an "actual" paying job, she does have things that need to be done on a daily basis, just like a paid position. She was quoted as saying, "I do dishes, vacuuming, picking up toys and putting them in their rightful places 3 or 4 times a day. I do errands before kids get home from school." She also has to wash, dry, and fold

laundry about everyday before it piles up. One big thing she has to do everyday is referee the younger children as they are always fighting over something or another.

Some moms miss being at home so I asked mine what she misses about the working world instead. Her response was surprising to me as well as insightful. “I do not miss having a job on top of being a mother. However, what I do miss the most is having adult conversations and just getting away from the kids for a bit to decompress.” “I love being paid in hugs and kisses”, says Linda. One of the things she likes the most



about having been able to stay at home is the fact that “she got to witness all of the firsts.” From the moment I was going to be a big sister again at the age of 15, I can personally say that I have to agree with my mother. That is a first in itself! I have loved watching my youngest brother do his “firsts” because his eyes light up when he accomplishes something new.

The biggest question I had for Linda was if it was difficult to be a stay at home mom, especially in this day and age. “It is not always easy to be a stay at home mom.” That response shocked me to be honest. I had never seen it being a hard thing. “There are a lot of times you feel overwhelmed, or burned out but I would never give up the chance to spend time with the kids.” Linda is quoted as saying. Her

biggest threat is her own thinking process because even though she is a stay at home mom by choice, she “feels like a failure” in helping to support the family financially.

My final question posed to her was if she would ever go back into the workforce either full time or part time. “One day I will reenter the workforce but for now I will continue to raise my children the way I feel will best benefit them and their future.” To be or not to be a stay at home mom? That will always be a question every mother will have to ask themselves. Sometimes the answers will be surprising, sometimes the choice will not be an easy one to come to. But one thing will always remain the same, the love of a mother for her child will always be as big and important to them no matter if they are a stay at home mom or a working mom.

Partners in P.E.

Mandy Lutska, age 47, is a Health and P.E. (physical education) teacher at Ringgold High School. She’s been a teacher for 25 years, and she’s been a teacher at Ringgold for 19 years. All throughout her 19 years of teaching at Ringgold, she’s had the privilege of teaching her life-skills students.



She loves getting to work with these students who are special needs, and started a program at Ringgold called “Partner’s in P.E.”. This program involves a P.E. class that has both special ed students, and regular ed students. The point of the

class is for the life skills students to pair up with regular ed students so that they can help the life skills kids with the activities. Mandy proposed this program to all three of her principals, and also showed them the success of this program at other schools who participate in it. Mandy said she had read about this program at the other schools, which is where she got the idea to do it at her school. Starting this program at Ringgold has impacted the students in a lot of positive ways. Mandy said, “it makes the life skills kids feel included in P.E. class and also learn social skills, and the regular ed kids learn about empathy, kindness, and appreciation. I’ve had several students pursue a degree in special education because of their experience in the class.” There are many activities that students in this program are able to participate in, Mandy described a few including a partners volleyball tournament at Baldwin High School, a softball tournament at miracle league field, and they were also invited to Belle Vernon High School to watch a play that their partners program were participating in. They also have holiday parties and participate in fun activities during the class.



Mandy has been teaching the partners class for the last 6 years. She hopes that this program will continue at her school for many years to come, and hopes that it will continue to leave a positive impact on the lives of her students. Mandy says she has one big goal for her program to achieve, and that is for her students in the program to go to the “Night to Shine” prom, a special needs prom hosted by former NFL player, Tim Tebow.

Questions from the interview:

“Why did you want to bring this program to Ringgold?”

“I had read about the partners in P.E. program at other schools and thought it would be a good idea for our school.”

“Who did you have to talk to to get it started”

“Proposed class to all three principals. Gave them a copy of the success of the program at other schools.”

“How does it benefit the kids?”

“It makes the life skills kids feel included in P.E. class and also learn social skills, and the regular ed kids learn about empathy, kindness, and appreciation. I’ve had several students pursue a degree in special education because of their experience in the class.”

“How long have you been teaching life skills kids.”

“Partners class for 6 years, life skills kids all 19 years. I’ve been teaching for 25 years.”

“What activities do you guys do in this program?”

“Gone to Baldwin high school to compete against their partners program in volleyball, went to miracle league field and played against other schools in softball, invited to Belle Vernon to watch a play that their partners program were participating in.”

“Any goals to achieve within this program/goals for this program?”

“My big goal is to go to a Tim Tebow prom”

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Feature Story; Ryan Gerney



High school music teacher and band director, Ryan Gerney, is the biggest nerd in Frazier School District! Most people would take offense to being considered a “nerd” however, Ryan Gerney takes pride in that title. Ryan Gerney started at Frazier School District 5 years ago. He shares his love for music by not only teaching a “music appreciation” class to highschoolers, but also teaches an

“intro to music class” for seventh graders. In school, he additionally takes on the role to lead the concert band for middle schoolers and high schoolers, and lead jazz band for both middle and high schoolers as well. On top of teaching, he continues to pursue his love for music by directing the Frazier High School Marching Band. The marching band is the best it has ever looked and it is the highlight of the Friday night football games. He also enjoys a number of other activities including tennis, pickleball, taking bike rides, reading, and video games; specifically Nintendo. He also competes in the chess tournament each year, and does pretty good to say the least. These interests and hobbies, let’s be honest, are the definition of “nerdy,” but is being nerdy bad? Most people have a stereotypical, movie based idea of a nerd, but nerds are passionate about their interests, whether it's music, sports, or gaming. They're smart, always curious, and love to dive deep into their hobbies. Nerds are often misunderstood, but their unique perspectives and knowledge make them valuable contributors to society. Maybe we should all embrace our inner nerd, just like Ryan Gerney does.

Prepare for Your Senior Year

Think about what you can do to prepare for each high school year.

Freshman

How To Prepare For College — College Readiness Guide

What does it mean to be ready for college? There are some important steps to take during high school. Here are 11 tips to help you to be prepared academically and personally for your college education.

1. Start Planning for College Now!
2. Take the Right High School Classes to Prepare for College
3. Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities
4. Keep an Extracurricular Record
5. Get to Know your High School Guidance Counselor
6. Build Relationships with Mentors
7. Work on College Readiness Life Skills
8. College Visits - Schedule a College Campus Tour
9. College Entrance Exams - Make a Plan
10. Create an Organization System

11. Apply for College Admission, Financial Aid and Scholarships

High School is a great time to learn, explore, develop, and dream. When you start your freshman year, you may not know where you want to go to college or what you want to study. But there are things you can do that will move you towards being ready to select, apply, and be accepted to a great college. You need to be prepared for the challenges you will face once you arrive and start your college education. The following tips and details can help you prepare for academic success in college.

1. Start Planning for College Now!

If you are a high school student, or will soon be a high school student, now is the time to start preparing for your post-secondary education. College may seem like it's far away, but in some ways, it will be here before you know it! Preparing for a college education takes time, effort, and dedication.

When should I start preparing for college?

High school provides many opportunities, but it is up to you to take advantage of them. You can make the most of your high school years by thinking ahead and learning how to prepare for the future. Take the first step and make up your mind that you will make the most of the coming years, knowing your diligence will pay off later!

2. Take the Right High School Classes to Prepare for College

Plan to work hard in high school. Taking the most challenging classes available (AP, IB, Dual Enrollment and Honors classes) will benefit you in multiple ways. In addition to learning the course content, such as Algebra, Chemistry, or a foreign language, college preparatory classes will also develop your skills in note-taking, studying, writing, test-taking, time management, critical thinking, and more. These important skills will prepare you for the rigor of college classes.

How do I prepare for college academically?

Many high schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) classes, and some offer International Baccalaureate (IB) courses or Dual Enrollment opportunities, which have the added benefit of allowing you to earn college credit. Dual credit for IB and AP courses is based on taking the corresponding IB Higher Level test or AP exam at the end of the course. The required score to earn dual credit will vary from college to college. Depending on your score and your intended major, the awarded college credit may allow you to waive a class, start in the next course level, or fulfill elective credits.

Some high schools will add "weight" to your Grade Point Average (GPA) for advanced classes such as AP or Honors, so taking these classes can boost your GPA. Another advantage to taking AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, or Honors level courses is that the class is listed as such on your high school transcript and colleges will know that you chose to

challenge yourself academically. This motivation shows a college board that you are better prepared for the college classroom.

One word of caution: These kinds of classes are difficult. Know yourself! Don't take a class if you are not prepared to do reasonably well with hard work and effort. It is especially important to take Dual Enrollment classes seriously, as these college credits and good grades will be a part of your college transcript.

There are so many choices of classes. How do I choose between them?

Develop your academic interest. Especially during your junior and senior years of high school, you can often choose courses that will prepare you for the college degree program of your choice. For example, if you are considering **nursing school**, it can be helpful (or even required for acceptance) to take classes such as Anatomy, Physiology or Statistics in high school.

Thinking about an **engineering degree**? Load up on math and science courses. You don't have to know exactly what major you will choose but taking classes in your main area of academic interest will best prepare you to build upon that knowledge in college.

3. Get Involved in Extracurricular Activities

Involvement in activities outside of schoolwork makes high school a lot more interesting and fun. These extracurricular activities also provide opportunities to gain proficiencies you couldn't learn through textbooks and tests alone. Through extracurricular activities, you can develop important skills, such as teamwork, public speaking, creativity, leadership, and self-awareness.

What extracurricular activities should I do in high school?

The first step is to explore. As you start high school, you will find you have many new opportunities—sports, theater, music, art, debate, and computer science, just to name a few. While you can't do everything, try to get involved in as many clubs, teams, and activities that you find interesting. There is not a required one-size-fits-all list of activities—what matters is that you find clubs and programs that interest you!

You won't know if you like something if you don't try it. Keep an eye out for clubs that may specifically help you prepare for a particular college major. For example, if you think you might be interested in earning a **business degree**, find out if your high school has a DECA chapter or similar association. If you think you'd like a career in politics, check to see if your high school has a Young Democrats or Young Republicans organization.

While you want to appear "well rounded," it is important that you don't take on too much. Allow yourself enough time to excel at the activities you care about most. It can be helpful to see freshman year as the time to try a lot of things. In your sophomore year, you can begin limiting your involvement to your most important activities. This will allow you to spend more time on fewer things.

Ask yourself these important questions: What is most important to you? How can you develop that area into a true passion? How can you take your involvement to the next

level? How do you become an expert, a leader, or develop community awareness in that area? This is what makes you unique and allows you to shine on a college application or qualify for a scholarship. Developing an interest into a passion may also direct you towards an area of study and choice of career.

4. Keep an Extracurricular Record

Keep a record of your extracurricular activities. You can be asked about them in a few different ways on college applications. Your high school will keep track of your classes, grades, and credits. It is up to you to keep track of everything else.

In order to be prepared for college applications, create a document that records your involvement in sports, clubs, volunteer work, community service, and part-time employment, etc. and keep it in one place. Begin with the summer after eighth grade (you were a high school student at that point) and continue through your senior year. Keep track of the time you spent on each activity and look for trends that highlight your involvement in meaningful activities. Don't forget to document all awards, honors, and leadership positions. This list will be extremely helpful—not only when you are applying to colleges, but also for scholarship applications or building a resume. If you wait until your senior year, it is really difficult to remember everything you accomplished. As the Chinese proverb states, “Your memory is only as good as the paper you write it on.”



5. Get to Know your High School Guidance Counselor

You likely have a high school guidance counselor assigned to you. Make an appointment with him or her! You don't need to wait until they reach out to you. It is important to connect with your guidance counselor regularly, starting with your freshman year.

Who can help me be prepared for college?

Your guidance counselor knows your school offerings and opportunities, including visits from college admissions counselors, college fairs, test prep classes, scholarships, and much more. Your guidance counselor is also a great resource for social and emotional support as well as career and college readiness.

Unfortunately, most guidance counselors are extremely busy and overworked. Make their job as easy as possible. Come to your appointment with your questions ready and don't expect to take too much time at each appointment. Thank your guidance counselor for information, help, and advice. Remember that you may need a letter of recommendation from your guidance counselor. To write a good letter, your guidance counselor needs to know your best characteristics and as what stands out about you.

It can be helpful to think of your guidance counselor as you might think about your doctor. They are busy, they care about you, they know a lot, and they give you advice. It is important to follow their advice—though when in doubt, it's always good to get a second opinion.

6. Build Relationships with Mentors

Coaches, teachers, employers, and religious leaders are all potential mentors who can provide valuable support. Look for people that make you say, "I want to be like that when I grow up!" or "I want to do that job when I graduate." Get to know them and find out about their lives. Learn from their mistakes and their successes. Share your dreams and concerns with them and ask for advice about choosing a college and career.

Mentors can open up opportunities for you, and can help you identify your strengths (and weaknesses!). A mentor will suggest ways to improve and provide wisdom when making decisions. You can also ask your mentor to write a letter of recommendation. Building relationships with mentors is a skill you will develop throughout your life. Start now. And hopefully, you can be a mentor for someone else someday!

7. Work on College Readiness Life Skills

How can I get ready for college life?

Make a list of the life skills you would like to learn, then keep adding to it. Think through the best way for you to learn about each skill. Can your dad teach you to cook your favorite meal? Can your neighbor teach you how to check your oil or change a tire? Can your mom teach you the basics of doing laundry? Can your teacher or mentor help you set short term goals and make a plan to achieve them? What about grocery shopping, money management, and personal safety? Some things you can teach yourself, like remembering to set your alarm clock so you wake up on time. Many skills you can learn by watching a tutorial online. Depending on the number of life skills you want to learn, make a plan and set a goal— such as learning and practicing one new skill every month.

8. College Visits - Schedule a College Campus Tour

Try to visit as many college campuses as possible early on during your high school years. Don't wait to do every visit during your senior year. While it is best to visit during the

school year when campus life is active, a visit in the summer is better than no visit at all, and a campus visit can be easily added to most summer vacation trips. Campus visits can range from a few hours to a whole day, but typically plan to spend an afternoon.

How do you get the most out of college visits?

To make the most of your visit, spend a little time preparing. If you are vacationing in Portland, OR and want to visit the University of Portland, contact [UP Admissions](#) to register for a campus tour. You can also attend an information session. These official offerings give potential students a lot of important information about what the school has to offer and what makes it unique.

You can also make an appointment with the [Office of Financial Aid](#). This is a great chance to ask about scholarships and learn how to apply for financial aid. You may want to learn more about a particular degree or program. For example, if you want to become a teacher, it is helpful to meet with someone in that department and possibly sit in on an education class. Keep in mind that while campus tours are a great way to gain a lot of information, be sure to walk around the college campus on your own as well. To get a true feel for the school, take some time to talk to college students and explore, using a [campus map](#) as your guide.

9. College Entrance Exams - Make a Plan

Make no mistake, colleges and universities consider college entrance exams to be one of the most important new student benchmarks. Familiarize yourself with standard college entrance exams and what is required or recommended by the colleges that interest you. U.S. schools will generally accept the ACT or the SAT, but some may prefer one over the other. Some colleges also recommend or require the optional writing portion of the exams. You will need to decide which test you will take, and some students take both standardized tests. It is best to take college entrance exams during your junior year, although some motivated high school sophomores will take the tests just see how they do and as part of their preparation.

How do I prepare to take the SAT or ACT test?

There are no easy shortcuts. The best way to prepare for college entrance exams like the SAT or ACT is to take challenging coursework while in high school and to learn the material well. For example, the best way to prepare for the math section in the ACT or SAT is to study math! Beyond that, it is helpful to practice and learn tips to help you do your best. Ask your guidance counselor for suggestions that are specific to you and how you test. He or she may be able to recommend specific test prep classes or tutors helpful for the SAT and ACT exams.

Many students need to learn strategies for pacing themselves since the tests are timed. If the first test doesn't go as well as you hoped, don't give up. Many students choose to take the entrance exams more than once. You can use your prior results to focus your preparation for the future test. For example, if math was your lowest score, spend time reviewing for that portion of the test.

Set a goal to complete your last SAT or ACT test by the summer after your junior year. That will allow you to send your test scores to the colleges at the beginning of your senior year.

10. Create an Organization System

How to stay organized researching colleges?

As soon as you start meeting with college reps and visiting colleges, you will gather important information you'll need to keep organized. If you can't visit a campus in person, you can learn a lot by "visiting" a college online and reviewing their website. Information aggregation websites like U.S. News, Niche, Chegg and others can also be used to learn about different colleges and universities. Create a document where you can record important information, so you don't forget. If you learn about a school that offers a particular major, write it down. If you hear about a Study Abroad program that sounds amazing, add this to your notes. If you had a great campus tour, be sure to record your experiences. Make a note of everything that excites you and is important to you so you don't forget. Include notes about scholarships, internship programs, professors, research programs, outdoor opportunities, campus clubs, and more.

As you move towards your senior year, you will narrow your list of colleges that you think are the best fit for you. All the information you have gathered—as well as all the self-discovery you have gained during high school—will help you make the best decision.

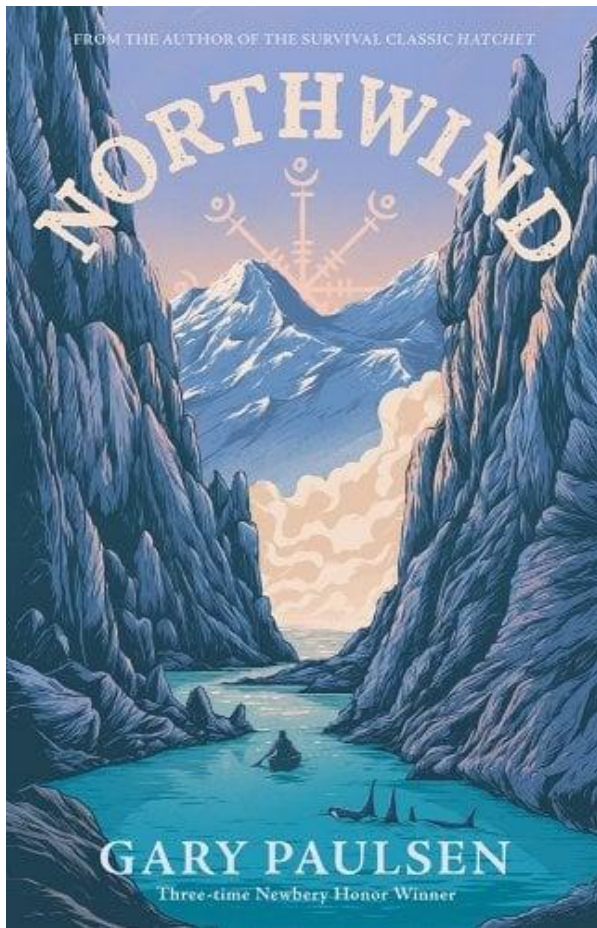
11. Apply for College Admission, Financial Aid and Scholarships

Once you've made a list of your favorite colleges, create a new document (or re-organize the document you used to record important college information) to help you during the application and admissions process. Make notes of all application deadlines, guidelines, and any other requirements. If you asked teachers and mentors for letters of recommendation, create reminders to follow up and confirm the college has received them.

Plan time into your schedule during the start of your senior year so you can properly focus on your college applications, as well as pursue financial aid and scholarships. Remember that financial aid can include not only scholarships and grants (money you don't have to repay) but also loans (that you do have to repay). If you'll need a part-time job, you can browse [university jobs](#) to find many opportunities. This vital research will help you develop a plan to pay for college.

Check out these new books!

Books for Grade 8



Northwind by Gary Paulsen

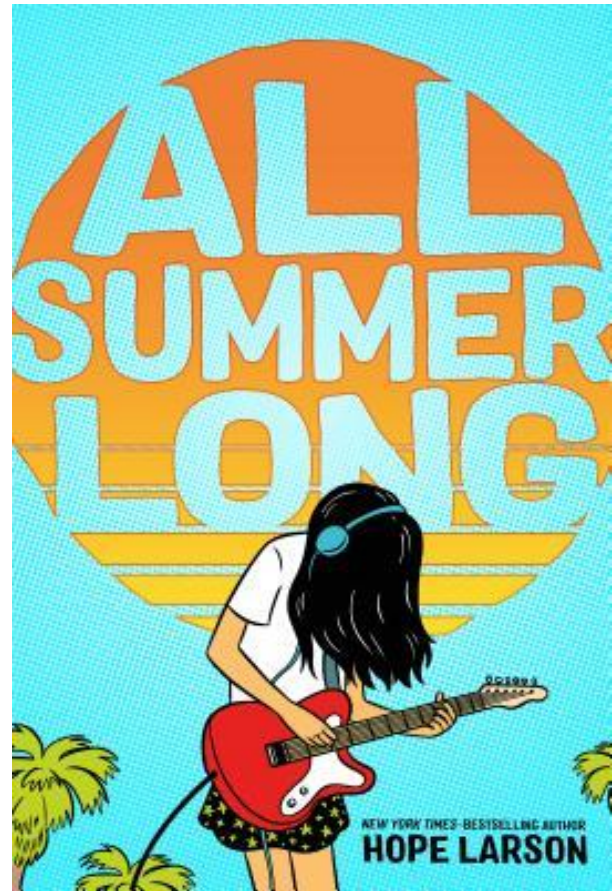
When a plague forces Leif, an orphan, to flee for his life in a canoe with barely any food, he embraces his newfound freedom and grows to love the wide open seas and the Norwegian coast. Learning to forage, and live off the land and sea, he feels at home amongst the wildlife. It's a gripping story of resilience, determination and survival. Highly recommended.

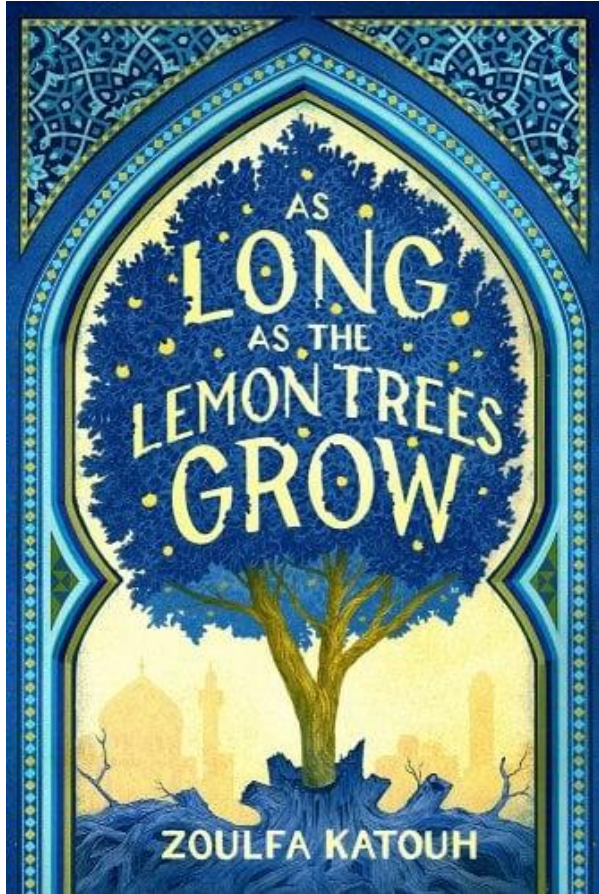
Adventure | Survival

All Summer Long by Hope Larson

When Austin returns from summer soccer camp everything is different. 13-year-old Bina cannot understand it – they used to do everything together. Will they be able to work things out, or will Bina’s new friendship with Austin’s sister change their relationship? A thought-provoking insight into the complex teen mind, growing up, and how people change. The graphic novel format and relatable characters will appeal to less confident readers.

Graphic novel





As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow by Zoulfa Katouh

Salama's normal teenage life seems long ago as she finds herself helping in a hospital in wartorn Syria. Will she stay to help those in need, or will she flee to ensure her survival? Dealing with unimaginable fear Salama is an inspirational character and As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow is a brilliantly written, life-affirming, and heartbreaking story that is perfect for book club discussion.

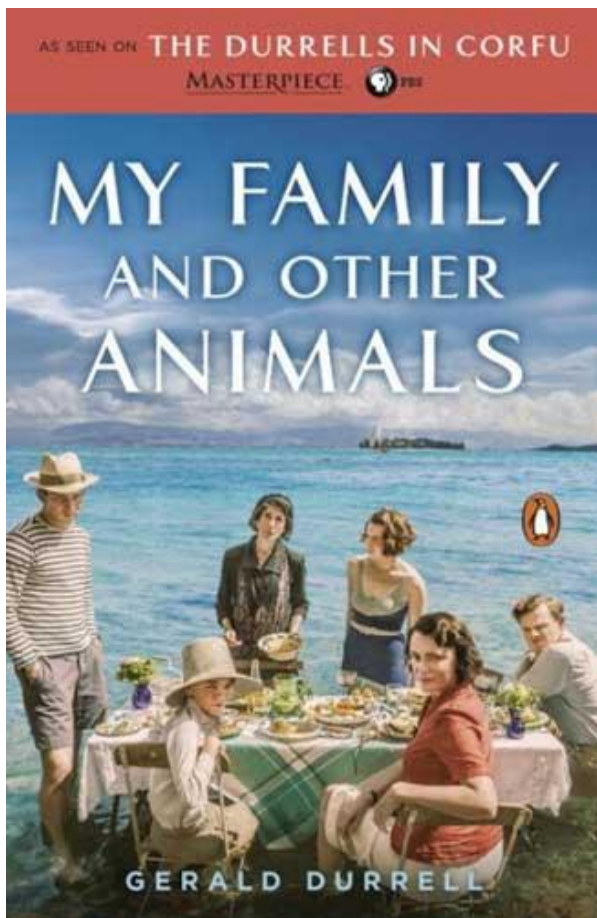
War

Hope Was Here by Joan Bauer

Ideal for middle-grade readers, this book has won numerous awards. Hope finds herself helping her aunt to run a diner in rural Wisconsin – a long way from lively New York. Her friendship with G.T. Stoop, the diner’s owner, develops into a coming of age story of trust and truth.

Friendship





My Family and Other Animals by **Gerald Durrell**

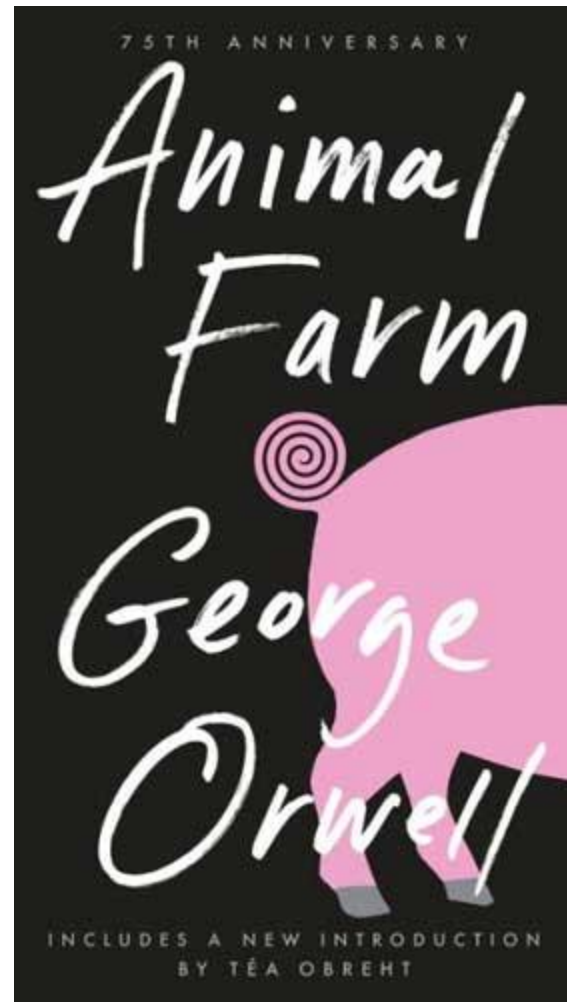
The first in the ‘Corfu Trilogy’, this book tells the story of Gerald Durrell’s childhood experiences for five years on the island of Corfu and the wildlife and animals he keeps. His larger than life relatives and the colorful characters encountered make this a funny novel bound to appeal to middle graders interested in nature and unconventional family life.

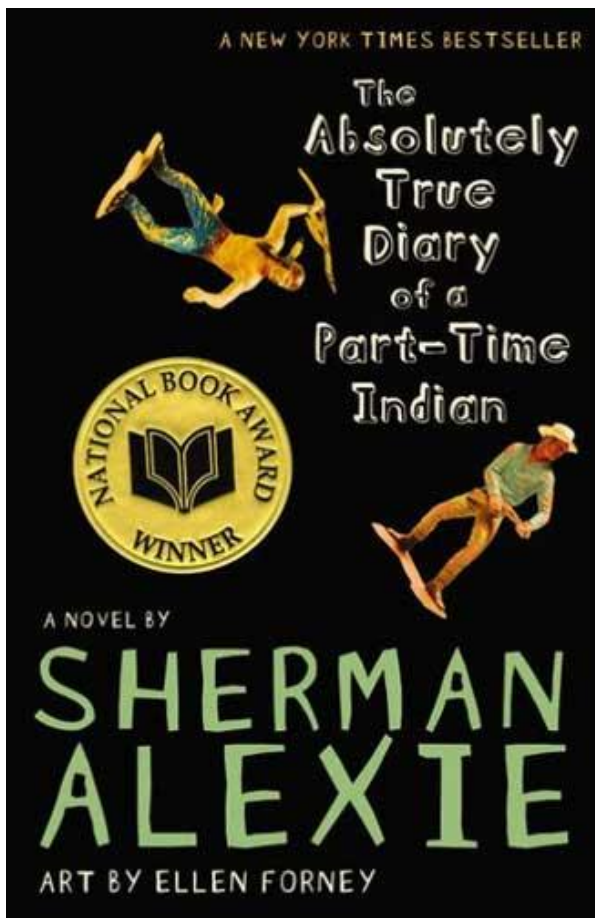
Classic

Animal Farm by George Orwell

In this classic allegory, the animals take over the farm. They tried to create a perfect world where everybody is valued and treated equally however things don't go entirely to plan. Written as an antithesis to controlling totalitarianism this is a book every teenager should read.

Classic





The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

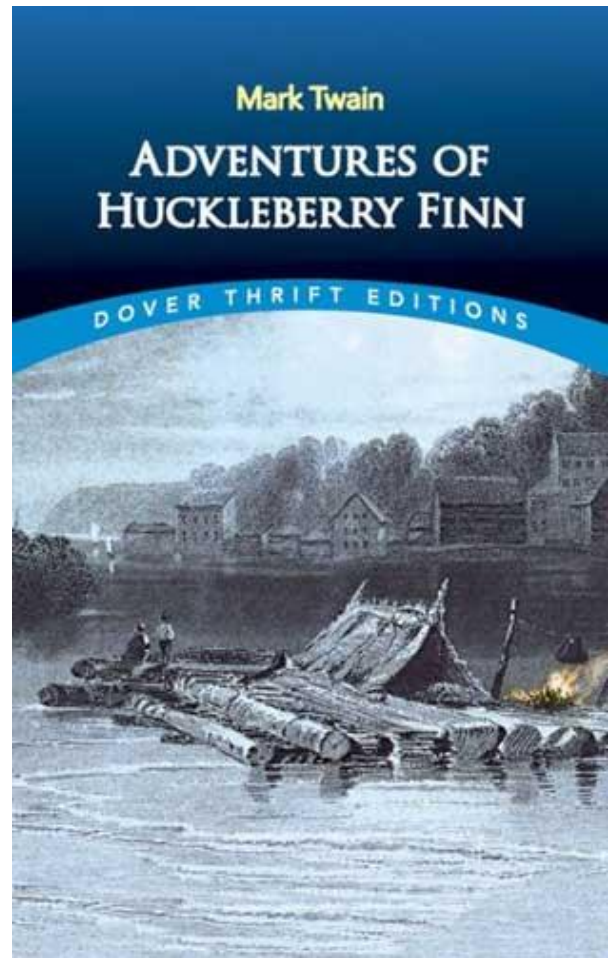
An evocative and humorous story based on the author's own life. When Junior, a talented artist, realizes that he wants to follow his dream, his life changes completely when he joins a new high school where he is the only Indian on the campus. A modern classic. A good book for 8th grade reading group discussion.

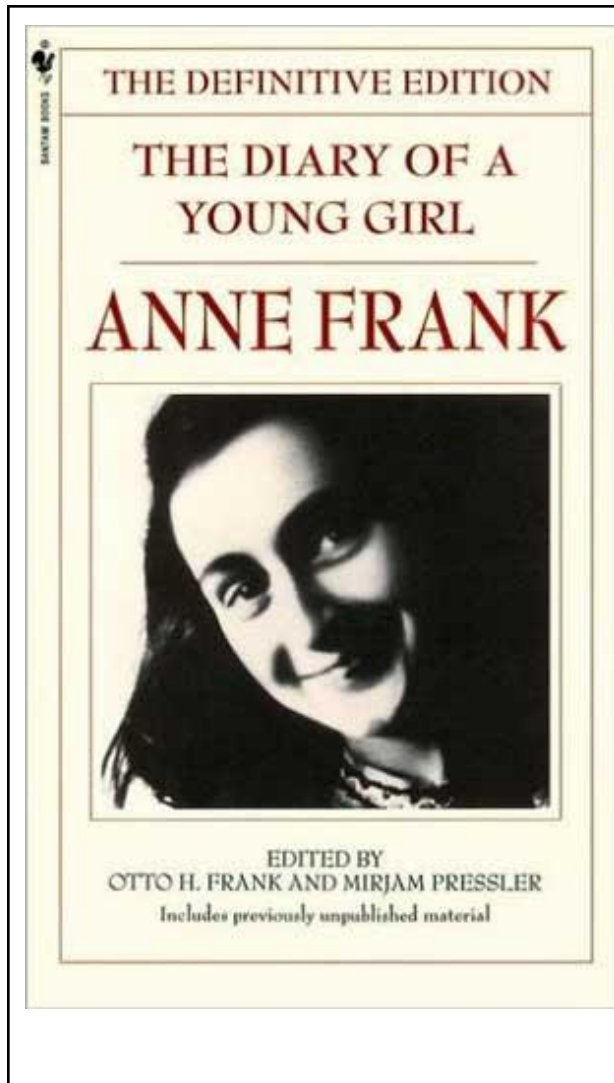
School story | Diverse

**Adventures of
Huckleberry Finn by
Mark Twain**

A rollercoaster of a story about the life of young Huckleberry Finn and his friend Tom Sawyer and the shenanigans they get up to on the banks of the Mississippi River. This book features some controversial themes including his father's alcoholism and the treatment of Miss Watson slave, Jim. A story, that once read, will never be forgotten.

Classic





Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

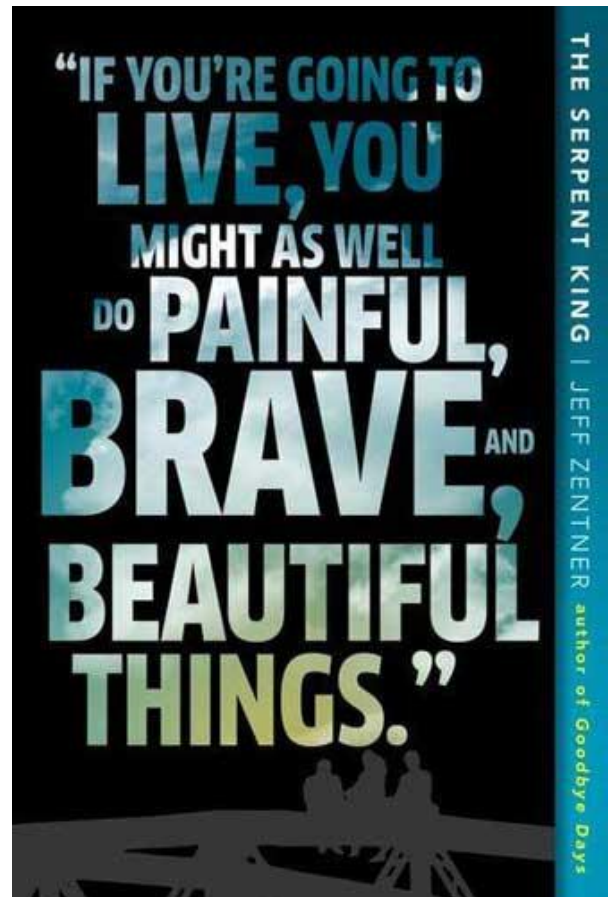
Collated by her father Otto, after the second world war, this is the diary of Anne Frank who, aged between 13 and 16 wrote about being in hiding from the Nazis and Amsterdam. Poignant and moving, this is a book that should be on every high school curriculum. Arguably one of the most important books written in the 20th century.

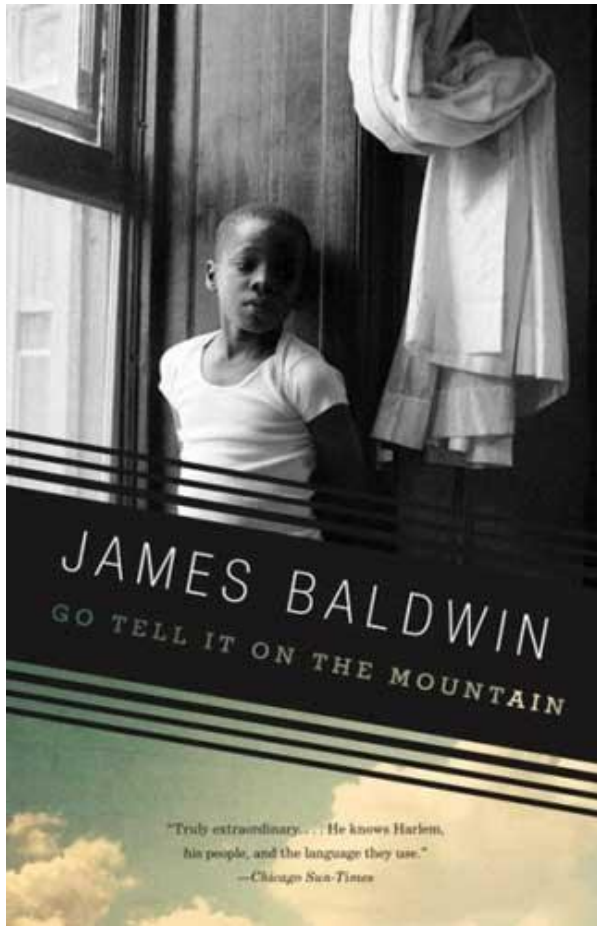
Autobiography | Classic

The Serpent King by Jeff Zentner

A gripping and moving story about a misfit and awkward teen, Dill, who lives in a small community Bible belt Tennessee. When his father becomes a hated figure, Dill cannot cope and relies on the support of his two best friends. A heart-rending and powerful story about forgiveness and redemption.

Friendship





Go Tell It on the Mountain by James Baldwin

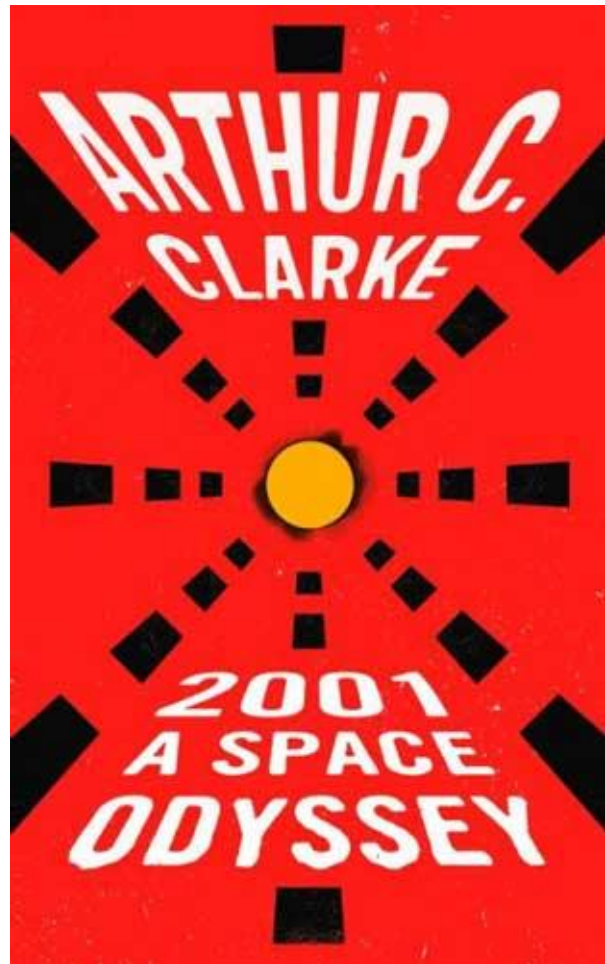
A powerful psychological and unrelenting study of growing up in an abusive environment. When the protagonist, a 14-year-old boy, realizes that his family is not all that it seems, he starts to rebel against his self-righteous preacher stepfather in this gritty landmark first novel set in Harlem.

Family | Contemporary

2001 by Arthur C Clarke

When a scientist discovers a mysterious object on the Moon, mankind embarks on an expedition to the furthest reaches of space in search of an alien civilization. However, the voyage is a slowly building battle between man and computer, heading towards an inevitable catastrophe.

Science fiction | Classic





PENGUIN CLASSICS

JOSEPH CONRAD

Lord Jim

Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad

A disgraced naval officer redeems himself by protecting villagers from a local bandit. Written as a series of manuscripts told by a third party, using time shifts, this is a great book for eighth-graders to study.

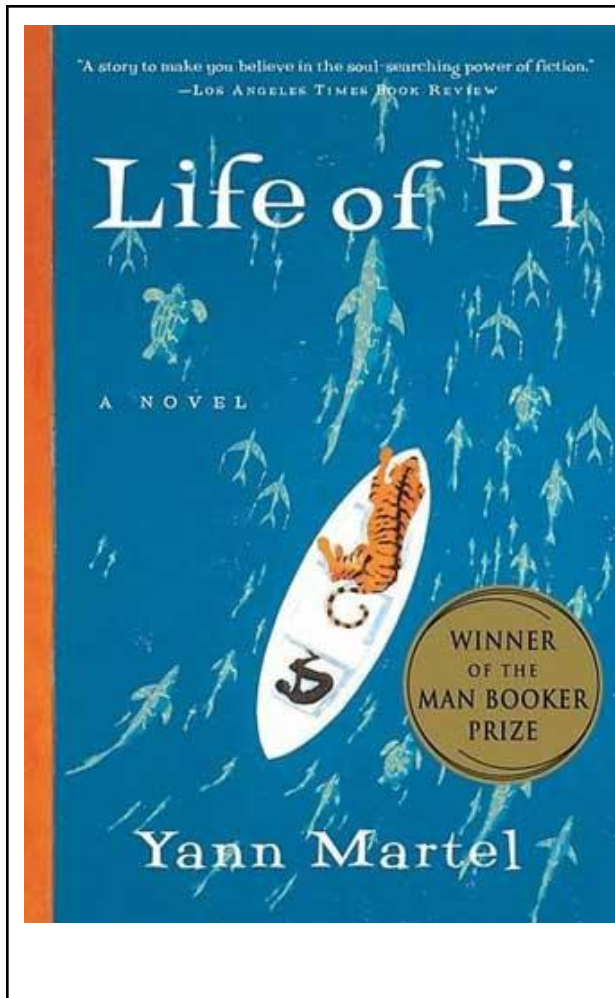
Adventure | Classic

Daughter of Smoke and Bone by Laini Taylor

A unique and genre-defying young adult novel that is perfectly suited to grade 8 book clubs. Set in the “Elsewhere”, a world where angels battle mythical creatures, Karou and Akiva are drawn, as if by magic, from the opposite sides of the conflict into a love story – and perhaps the only hope for peace.

Fantasy





Life of Pi by Yann Martel

A more challenging read for grade 8 students, *Life of Pi* chronicles 16-year-old Pi, the only survivor of a shipwreck. His only companions in the lifeboat are a hyena, an orangutan, and a huge tiger. Memorable, and beautifully written.

Adventure | Survival

Twilight by Stephanie Meyer

Isabella's new life in Forks, Washington takes an unexpected turn when a boy she is attracted to turns out to be a vampire. Extremely readable and popular, this five volume set is a great way to reignite the fire of reading in disenchanted teenagers.

Fantasy | Romance

