

Character Based Literacy Middle School Reading List: Cycle I

Title Author Possible ISBN	Annotations from the California Department of Education <i>Recommended Readings in Literature</i> with Genre, Curriculum and Grade Level; see CDE website for further information on their ratings [all of the books are on the list]	
Quarter 1: Responsibility Requires Action		
<i>Tuck Everlasting</i> Natalie Babbitt 0374480095	The Tuck family have become ageless by drinking from a magic spring. When ten-year-old Winnie Foster and a greedy evil stranger discover their secret, the Tucks are determined to prevent a disaster. This selection is excellent for use in literature circles and theme study.	
<i>The Breadwinner</i> Deborah Ellis 0888994168	Since the Taliban took over Afghanistan, 11-year-old Parvana has rarely been outdoors. Barred from attending school, shopping at the market, or even playing in the streets of Kabul, the heroine of <i>The Breadwinner</i> is trapped inside her family's one-room home. That is, until the Taliban hauls away her father and Parvana realizes that it's up to her to become the "breadwinner" and disguise herself as a boy to support her mother, two sisters, and baby brother.	
<i>Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key</i> Jack Gantos 0064408337	Joey Pigza is out of control because he has attention deficit disorder (ADD). After injuring another student, Joey finally gets the right professional help and starts to regain control of his actions. The story is told from Joey's point of view and is useful to introduce a discussion about ADD or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).	
Quarter 2: Change Requires Effort		
<i>Miracle's Boys</i> Jacqueline Woodson 0698119169	Set in contemporary Harlem, this novel tells of three African American brothers who are left alone after their mother's death. They struggle to make a better life for themselves despite overwhelming odds and the threat of gang violence. Their dreams, hopes, and love for one another ultimately pull them together.	
<i>Taste of Salt</i> Frances Temple 0064471365	Seventeen-year-old Djo (a victim in the real-life 1991 firebombing of a boys' shelter) is remembered by Jeremie, a girl who cares for him in the hospital after he has been beaten in an unprovoked attack. A coming of age for these two characters occurs in the midst of the cruel injustices that wracked the poverty-stricken nation of Haiti before Jean-Bertrand Aristide's rise to power in 1991. Human rights violations are depicted.	
<i>Popcorn Days and Buttermilk Nights</i> Gary Paulsen 0140342044	Carley recalls the extraordinary summer when, as a troubled fourteen-year-old, he first came to northern Minnesota to stay with his blacksmith Uncle David and gained not only new skills but also a new sense of himself.	

Quarter 3: Justice Requires Restraint		
<i>Shadow Spinner</i> Susan Fletcher 0689830513	Marjan, thirteen years old, tells how she gets enmeshed in the dangerous intrigue of the Sultan's harem while she serves Queen Shaharazad. Marjan is called upon to secure information outside the palace walls to please the master, husband of the queen. Danger, however, awaits her inside the palace walls as well.	
<i>HUSH</i> Jacqueline Woodson 0142500496	This intriguing story tells of a devastating situation. A middle-class African American family is forced to enter the federal witness protection program after the father decides to testify against two policemen who killed an innocent boy. The family must leave a comfortable and familiar life. Just as Evie learns to cope with her new name and all new names and biographical details, she must also learn that her parents aren't as capable of readjusting as circumstances require. Useful in units on family life, social problems, and moral responsibility.	
<i>Framed in Fire</i> David Patneau 0807590967	Peter Larson has an increasingly hostile relationship with his verbally abusive stepfather, Buck, and some scuffles at school, but is basically a good kid. While he deals with his ambivalent feelings toward his parents, his younger half-brother, Lincoln, reports having visions of events in their lives. The youngster's ability to "see" a fire at a neighbor's house helps to avert a disaster, but in the commotion, Lincoln falls down the stairs and Buck accuses Peter of deliberately trying to harm the toddler. The next stop for Peter is the Resthaven Psychiatric Facility.	
Quarter 4: Courage Requires Moderation		
<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> Katherine Paterson 0064401847	Jess and Leslie become special friends as they create a magical secret world that they call Terabithia. But when a tragic accident causes Leslie's death, Jess is forced to face life alone. This junior novel confronts many of the issues teens face and is great for literature circles. This selection depicts emotional intensity.	
<i>Parvana's Journey</i> Deborah Ellis 0888995199	This sequel to <i>The Breadwinner</i> easily stands alone. After her father's death, 13-year-old Parvana, disguised as a boy, wanders alone through war-torn Afghanistan looking for her mother and siblings who had disappeared in the tumult of the Taliban takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif. Early in her journey, Parvana comes across a baby, the only survivor in a bombed village. She takes him along, as both a burden and comforting company.	
<i>Beardance</i> Will Hobbs 0689870728	In the sequel to Hobbs's <i>Bearstone</i> , Cloyd Atcitty returns to the high country with his rancher friend Walter. But whereas the elderly man is searching for a lost cache of Spanish gold, Cloyd is hoping to find a family of grizzly bears that has been sighted. The previous novel ended with Cloyd believing that he had failed to save what could have been the last of the Colorado grizzlies, and he clings to the belief that its mate and cubs may be alive. Eventually, his search for the bears and his commitment to their survival becomes a journey of self-discovery.	
Quarter 5: Integrity Requires Wholeness		
<i>Stuck in Neutral</i> Terry Truman 0064472132	A fourteen-year-old boy with cerebral palsy is unable to communicate and longs to make contact with others. Through his words, the reader learns that Shawn is bright, funny, occasionally sarcastic, and astonishingly optimistic. Shawn begins to believe that his self-absorbed father is planning to kill him to end his pain. Told in first-person narrative	
<i>If you Come Softly</i> Jacqueline Woodson 9780142406014	This novel presents a gently told story of an interracial romance between Jeremiah, a fifteen-year-old African American, whose parents have just separated, and Ellie, an upper-middle-class Jewish girl. The story is told in alternating chapters by Ellie and Jeremiah. The comments about race and racism will strike a chord with black readers and open the eyes of white readers.	
<i>The Skin I'm In</i> Sharon G. Flake 0786813075	Thirteen-year-old Maleeka, uncomfortable because her skin is extremely dark, meets a new teacher with a birthmark on her face. She learns how to value who she is and to accept what she looks like.	

Character Based Literacy Middle School Reading List: Cycle II

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Quarter 1: Responsibility Requires Action		
<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> Scott O'Dell 0440940001	This novel tells the tale of Karana, an Indian girl living on an island off the coast of California. As her tribe evacuates, she suddenly jumps off the ship when she realizes that her brother has been left behind. The story is a survival tale with a female Robinson Crusoe for its heroine. Karana's solitude and bitterness at the loss of her brother is tempered by the restorative power of nature as she struggles to survive.	
<i>Esperanza Rising</i> Pam Munoz Ryan 043912042X	This novel tells of a Mexican girl's fall from riches and her immigration to California in the 1930s. The story highlights her awareness of Mexico's post-revolution tensions, the rivalry with Oklahoma Dust Bowl victims, and struggles of Mexican workers trying to organize themselves to ask the U.S. government for better living conditions. California author and setting.	
<i>It's Not About the Bike</i> Lance Armstrong 0425179613	In this memoir, Lance Armstrong, winner of the Tour de France, describes his battle with and triumph over cancer. Includes fascinating behind-the-scenes information on bicycle racing.	
Quarter 2: Change Requires Effort		
<i>Riding Freedom</i> Pam Munoz Ryan 0439087961	Charley (Charlotte) Parkhurst ran away from an orphanage in the mid-nineteenth century, posed as a boy, moved to California as a stagecoach driver, and fooled everyone by her appearance. Based on a true story, this book about Charley's life has interesting connections to California history. California author and setting.	
<i>Where the Red Fern Grows</i> Wilson Rawles 0440412676	This story of a young boy's childhood in the Ozarks features his intense relationship with two coon hounds and the many adventures they have while hunting. The story follows Billy from the time he only dreams of having dogs to the moment one of them is killed while saving its master.	
<i>Jesse</i> Gary Soto 015205425-1	To escape a home dominated by his alcoholic stepfather, 17-year-old Jesse abruptly leaves high school, moves into an apartment with his older brother, and takes classes at Fresno City College. It is 1968, and the brothers face both the threat of being drafted and the daily grind of their poverty. Racial and class prejudice limit their employment opportunities to field labor, and they pick melons, oranges, or cotton, depending on the season.	
Quarter 3: Justice Requires Restraint		
<i>Maniac Magee</i> Jerry Spinelli 0316809063	Maniac is an "on-his-own" kid searching for a place that he can call home. When he sees no difference between the people of the East Side and the West Side, others begin to realize that Jeffrey "Maniac" Magee is truly the "stuff" from which legends are made.	

<p><i>Nothing but the Truth</i> Avi 038071907X</p>	<p>Ninth-grader Philip hums in his homeroom during the playing of the National Anthem, bringing him a suspension that gains national media attention. The story, told in the form of school memos, news clips, interviews, and diary entries, exposes how media misinformation can change lives.</p>	
<p><i>My Brother Sam is Dead</i> James Lincoln Collier & Christopher Collier 059042792X</p>	<p>The Meeker family is torn apart during the American Revolutionary War when one son joins the rebel forces and the rest of the family try to remain neutral in a divided town.</p>	
<p>Quarter 4: Courage Requires Moderation</p>		
<p><i>Nightjohn</i> Gary Paulsen 0440219361</p>	<p>Nightjohn, an enslaved African American, risks severe punishments by teaching a young slave girl to read. This short novel is an excellent book to read aloud, provides an introduction to slavery, and depicts human rights violations. The book has a sequel titled SARNY.</p>	
<p><i>Sarny</i> Gary Paulsen 0440219736</p>	<p>The Civil War is over, and Sarny has been released from the shackles of slavery. This sequel to Gary Paulsen's acclaimed novel, <i>Nightjohn</i>, follows Sarny as she searches for her children after the war. Hope comes from surprising places, and soon Sarny finds herself in New Orleans, working, teaching, and building her life anew.</p>	
<p><i>Joey Pigza Loses Control</i> Jack Gantos 0064410226</p>	<p>When Joey Pigza meets his dad, Carter, for the first time in years, he meets a grown-up version of his old hyperactive self. When his dad wants to teach him how to be a winner and how to take control of his own life, Joey is willing to do whatever his dad says, even though he fears it will do him more harm than good. The book is a sequel to <i>Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key</i>.</p>	
<p>Quarter 5: Integrity Requires Wholeness</p>		
<p><i>Bronx Masquerade</i> Nikki Grimes 0142501891</p>	<p>Grimes features the voices of 18 urban youths who share their innermost feelings in their open mike poetry presentations. Set in a Bronx high school, the book features characters developed through short monologues paired with self-revealing poetry.</p>	
<p><i>Seedfolks</i> Paul Fleischman 0064472078</p>	<p>When a young Vietnamese girl plants some bean seeds in a vacant lot because she misses her family, the beginnings of a community project emerge. Other people from the neighboring buildings add their contributions. Short vignettes about lonely lives that become meaningful are woven together in this unique story. California author.</p>	
<p><i>Surviving the Applewhites</i> Stephanie S. Tolan 0064410447</p>	<p>A troubled teen is sent to live with an eccentric family in this funny, contemporary story. Humorous style and characterization make this an excellent read-aloud novel</p>	

Character Based Literacy Middle School Reading List: Cycle III

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Quarter 1: Responsibility Requires Action		
Lupita Manana Patricia Beatty 0380732470	To help her poverty-stricken family, thirteen-year-old Lupita enters California as an illegal alien to work. She is constantly on the watch for la migra (immigration officials).	
Freak the Mighty Roman Philbrick 0439286060	A very unusual and special friendship exists between oversized, learning-disabled Max and his new friend, Freak, a classmate whose birth defects have limited the growth of his body but not the power of his brain or his capacity to care about others. Together they become an unbeatable team, fighting time and the narrow attitudes of others.	
Bearstone Will Hobbs 9780689870712	Cloyd, a Native American teen, is angry at life and the people who expect him to conform. During the summer he is sent to work with an elderly rancher. Although Cloyd tests Walter constantly, the rancher never gives up on him. Eventually Cloyd and Walter develop a unique bond. Both discover an answer to their loneliness and alienation. The story depicts emotional intensity.	
Quarter 2: Change Requires Effort		
The Maze Will Hobbs 0380729135	Troubled teen Rick Walker breaks out of Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center and becomes a stowaway in a pickup headed into Utah's canyons. The pickup driver, Lon, oversees a condor-release project and soon has Rick caring as much about the freedom of the birds as he does about his own. Connections may be made to science, ecology, and environmental issues.	
Frindle Andrew Clements 0689818769	When he decides to turn his fifth-grade teacher's love of the dictionary around on her, clever Nick Allen invents a new word and begins a chain of events that quickly move beyond his control.	
Dave at Night Gail Carson Levine 9780064407472	This story is set in New York in 1926. Dave, a Jewish orphan, is sent to the Hebrew Home for Boys, where he is treated cruelly. He sneaks out at night and finds the world of the Harlem Renaissance filled with music and culture. This selection depicts abusive situations.	
Quarter 3: Justice Requires Restraint		
Number the Stars Lois Lowry 0440403272	In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, ten-year-old Annemarie learns how to be courageous when she helps to shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis. Readers will feel the tension and danger as the Danes help their Jewish friends escape to safety.	
The Cay Theodore Taylor 0440416630	In 1942 an elderly black man and a young white boy are victims of a shipwreck and are stranded on a Caribbean island. In the day-to-day struggle to survive, the differences between age and youth, black and white, and innocence and experience become secondary to the characters' need to understand each other and transcend their differences. This story uses the dialectic language of the setting and of the day. California author.	

<p>Nelson Mandela Barry Denenberg 9780590441544</p>	<p>South Africa has become known as the home of the world's most famous former political prisoner. A prisoner who emerged to become an internationally respected statesman. This is his story and the story of his country.</p>	
<p>Quarter 4: Courage Requires Moderation</p>		
<p>The Phantom Tollbooth Norton Juster 0394820378</p>	<p>Milo, a very bored boy, drives his toy car through a tollbooth that mysteriously appears in his bedroom and arrives in the Kingdom of Wisdom. There he learns the importance of words and numbers, patience and responsibility.</p>	
<p>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry Mildred Taylor 9780140384512</p>	<p>Set in Mississippi during the 1930s, this modern classic portrays the struggles of the Logan family, determined to retain the land they own in the face of threats, harassment, and prejudice. It is told from young Cassie's point of view. Language and violent actions reflect the time. This selection contains connections to eighth-grade history/social science.</p>	
<p>Wringer Jerry Spinelli 0064405782</p>	<p>The annual pigeon shoot provides the young boys of the community the opportunity to prove their fortitude and manhood by serving as "wringers." Palmer La Rue isn't sure he wants the opportunity or if he believes in the long-held tradition. However, not participating can have consequences, too.</p>	
<p>Quarter 5: Integrity Requires Wholeness</p>		
<p>The Giver Lois Lowry 0440237686</p>	<p>Jonas lives in a seemingly utopian society. He is about to experience the Ceremony of Twelve to determine his role in life. Little does he know that he will discover the secret memories of his dystopian society. The story depicts human rights violations with mature themes and emotional intensity and is a good selection for literature circles.</p>	
<p>Ishi, Last of His Tribe Theodora Kroeber 0553248982</p>	<p>This is a story of Ishi, the single survivor of his tribe. The book provides insights into the American Indian culture and the indigenous tribes of California. California author and setting.</p>	
<p>Goodbye, Vietnam Gloria Whelan 9780679823766</p>	<p>Since the grandmother faces arrest in present-day Vietnam for following the old religion and practicing healing, the Vinh family decides to flee their small rice-growing village in the Mekong Delta and escape by sea to Hong Kong. With his skills as a mechanic, the father has secured their passage on a small boat. In a first-person narrative, 13-year-old Mai relates their odyssey.</p>	