

**Towson High School**  
**A National Blue Ribbon School**  
**69 Cedar Avenue Towson, Maryland 21286**  
**410-887-3608**

<http://towsonhs.bcps.org>

**Summer Reading Initiative 2013**

**“To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer profound insights into the human condition and serve as models for students’ own thinking and writing...Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references and images...”** Common Core State Standards

Representing 40 countries and as many languages and dialects (including the United States and English), Towson High School’s student body and staff stretch across demographics, cultures, and ages. Towson High School, by its very nature, is representative of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States in all of its shades and sounds and images- described in its Belief Statement as “a diverse suburban high school that prepares students to become life-long learners and productive global citizens.” Towson High School reminds us, as does Carlos Fuentes, Mexican novelist and essayist, to “Recognize yourself in he and she who are not like you and me.” With this in mind, Towson High School’s summer reading initiative reflects its diversity and unique nature. And thus the imperative to gain a deeper understanding of the human condition, cultural knowledge, historic events, and literary references.

Students are asked to choose **ONE** work from the grade level lists below in preparation for two assignments that will be completed during the first quarter of school:

1. The purpose of the first assignment is to gain new knowledge and insights into a culture or a historic event...a short research paper with an attached bibliography, assigned by each English teacher in his/her own class.
2. The purpose of the second assignment is to explore Essential Questions raised by the reading and their relevancy to students...an in-class essay, in which students will be asked to examine and explore the “Big Questions” raised by the work, what they have learned from their reading, its relevance to their lives.

**The List of Works:**

**Grade 9...Coming of Age**

- *The Red Scarf Girl* (non-fiction) by Ji Li Jang (China)
- *Bless Me, Ultima* (fiction) by Rudolfo Anaya (Hispanic/Latino)...a Big Read selection by the National Endowment for the Humanities
- *Persepolis* (fiction) by Marjane Satrapi (Iran)
- *Keeping Corner* (fiction) by Kashmira Seth (India)...Parents Choice Gold Winner
- *Before We Were Free* (fiction) by Julia Alvarez (Dominican Republic)...Pura Belpre’ Award (5-7)\*
- *The Year of the Dog* (fiction) by Grace Lin (China)... (3-5)\*

### Grade 10... World Literature

- *Between Shades of Gray* (fiction) by Ruta Sepetys (Russia/Lithuania)
- *Lost Boy, Lost Girl* (non-fiction) by John Bul Dau (The Sudan)
- *Incantation* (fiction) by Alice Hoffman (Marrano/Spanish Jews)
- *Black Radishes* (fiction) by Susan Lynn Meyer (WWII/Holocaust/France)...Sydney Taylor Honor Award Winner (5-8)\*
- *Shooting Kabul* (fiction) by N.H. Senzai (Afghanistan)... Youth Literature Award Winner (4-7)\*
- *A Long Walk to Water* (fiction) by Linda S. Park (Sudan)...Newbery Medal Award (5-8)\*
- *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (fiction) by John Boyne (Jewish)...(9)\*
- *The Upstairs Room* (fiction) by Johanna Reiss (Jewish)...Newberry Honor Book (6-8)\*

### Grade 11... American Literature

- *Under the Feet of Jesus* (fiction) by Jelena Maria Viramontes (Hispanic/American)
- *Code Talker* A Novel about the Navaho Marines of World War Two (fiction) by Joseph Baruchac (Native American)...Booklist starred review
- *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High* (nonfiction) by Melba Battillo Beals (African American)
- *Weedflower* (fiction) by Cynthia Kadohata (Japanese/American)...Newberry Award
- *Custer Died for Your Sins* (non-fiction) by Vine Deloria Junior (Native American)
- *Acts of Faith: the Story of an American Muslim in the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (nonfiction) by Eboo Patel
- *The Story of Harriet Tubman* (non-fiction) by Dorothy Sterling (African American)...Scholastic Biography (6-9)\*
- *Blue Jasmin* (fiction) by Kashmira Seth (Indian/American)...Paul Zindel First Novel Award (4-7)\*

### Grade 12... College Reading

- *The Buddha in the Attic* (fiction) by Julie Otsuka (Japan)...National Book Award Finalist
- *Little Princes: One Man's promise to bring home the Lost Children of Nepal* (non-fiction) by Conor Grennan (Nepal)...Publisher's Weekly starred review
- *Brick Lane* (fiction) by Monica Ali (Bangladesh)
- *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Under-city* (non-fiction) by Katherine Boo (India)...Pulitzer Prize Winner
- *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (fiction) by Mohsin Hamid (Pakistan)...Short-listed for the Man Booker Prize
- *The Yellow Birds* (fiction) by Kevin Powers (American/Iraq War)...National Book Award Finalist

These titles are available in paperback, hard copy, and Kindle versions at local bookstores, Baltimore County Libraries, UKazoo used bookstore, and on-line (Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.). Some are available in DVD/movie version. (\*Please feel free to contact Greg Collins, Special Education Chair, [gcollins2@bcps.org](mailto:gcollins2@bcps.org), regarding pre-approved, grade level works.)

We look forward to exploring the ideas in these books and encourage you to read along with your student(s). If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact Patricia Brown, Towson High School English Department Chair, at 410-887-3608 or by email [pbrown@bcps.org](mailto:pbrown@bcps.org).