**PJA MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER READING 2014**

*Finding One’s Voice ~ Books about Personal Identity*

*Descriptions are a compilation of information taken from various book review sites and personal recommendations.*

*An asterisk indicates the title is recommended for advanced readers due to mature content and/or challenging reading level.*

**FICTION**

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

Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation, is determined to take his future into his own hands. He leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. This book chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he thought he was destined to live.

***Divergent*** by Veronica Roth

The novel follows Beatrice "Tris" Prior as she explores her identity within a dystopian Chicago society that defines its citizens by their social and personality-related affiliation with five different factions. On an appointed day of every year, all sixteen-year-olds must select the faction to which they will devote the rest of their lives. For Beatrice, the decision is between staying with her family and being who she really is—she can’t have both. So she makes a choice that surprises everyone, including herself.

***Heaven*** by Angela Johnson

At fourteen, Marley knows she has Momma's hands and Pops’s love for ice cream, that her brother doesn't get on her nerves too much, and that Uncle Jack is a big mystery. But Marley doesn't know all she thinks she does. When the truth is revealed, Marley must struggle with what it means to be adopted, turning to the family she no longer trusts to help her through the dark period of deception and, ultimately, self-discovery.

***The Outsiders*** by S. E. Hinton

Ponyboy is pretty sure that he's got things figured out. He knows that he can count on his brothers and he can count on his friends. And when it comes to the Socs—a vicious gang of rich kids who enjoy beating up on "greasers" like him and his friends—he knows that he can count on them for trouble. But one night Ponyboy's world is turned upside down. S. E. Hinton's classic story of a boy who finds himself on the outskirts of regular society remains as powerful today as it was the day it was first published nearly 50 years ago.

***Pudd'nhead Wilson*** by Mark Twain

Switched at birth by a young slave woman attempting to protect her son from the horrors of slavery, a light- skinned infant changes places with the master's white son. This simple premise is the basis of a compelling drama first published in 1894. Mysterious and suspenseful, witty and absorbing, Mark Twain's classic offers a fierce condemnation of racial prejudice and a society that condoned slavery.

***Slam!*** by Walter Dean Myers

Gregory “Slam” Harris is a talented basketball player with big dreams, but he has lots of obstacles to overcome. Slam lives in Harlem and attends the prestigious (and predominantly white) magnet school Latimer in the South Bronx. He needs more than points on the court to help him fit in. Slam does stumble, but as he makes choices about who he is and what kind of future he wants, he benefits from the help of his girlfriend, his teachers, and his family.

***The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*** by Robert Louis Stevenson

This intriguing combination of fantasy thriller and moral allegory depicts the gripping struggle of two opposing personalities — one essentially good, the other evil — for the soul of one man. Its tingling suspense and intelligent and sensitive portrayal of man's dual nature reveal Stevenson as a novelist of great skill and originality whose power to terrify and move us remains, over a century later, undiminished.

**FICTION continued**

***The Thing About Luck*** by Cynthia Kadohata  
 Summer knows that *kouun* means “good luck” in Japanese, and this year her family has none of it. Just when she thinks nothing else can possibly go wrong, an emergency whisks her parents away to Japan—right before harvest season. Summer and her little brother, Jaz, are left in the care of their grandparents, who come out of retirement in order to harvest wheat and help pay the bills. As things go from bad to worse, Summer has to figure out how to change luck herself, even if it means further displeasing her grandparents because it might be the only way to save her family.

***Touching Spirit Bear***  by Ben Mikaelson  
 After severely injuring Peter Driscal in an empty parking lot, troublemaker Cole Matthews is in major trouble. But instead of jail time, Cole is given an alternative: a one-year banishment to a remote Alaskan island. This program—called Circle Justice—is based on Native American traditions that provide healing for the criminal mind. On the island Cole examines the root of his troubled ways and journeys toward change.

***\*Whale Talk*** by Chris Crutcher  
 T. J. Jones is black, Japanese, and white; his given name is The Tao. As a child he was full of rage, but now as a senior in high school he's pretty much overcome all that. Injustice, however, still fills him with fury. That's why

T. J. is determined to have the school's swim team get the respect they deserve. It won't be easy. For one thing, they don't even have a pool. For T. J. and his crew of misfits, the quest for dignity may be far more valuable than the reward.

**NON-FICTION**

***Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*** by Anne Frank

Discovered in the attic in which she spent the last years of her life, Anne Frank's remarkable diary has since become a world classic—a powerful reminder of the horrors of war and an eloquent testament to the human spirit. In 1942, with Nazis occupying Holland, a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl and her family fled their home in Amsterdam and went into hiding. In her diary, Anne Frank recorded vivid impressions of her experiences during this period.

**\**The Autobiography of Malcolm X*** by Malcolm X and Alex Haley

Malcolm X's memoir describes with blistering honesty his transformation from a bitter, self-destructive petty criminal into an articulate (and very controversial) political activist. At the core of this challenging and lengthy book is Malcolm X's emphasis on self-respect and self-help for African Americans.

***Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Child*** by Adeline Yen Mah

Yen Mah is only an infant when her father remarries after her mother's death. As the youngest of her five siblings, she suffers the worst at the hands of her stepmother Niang. In her loneliness, Yen Mah turns to books for company. Despite her parent's heartbreaking neglect, she eventually becomes a doctor and realizes her dream of being a writer.

***The Circuit AND Breaking Through*** by Francisco Jimenez

These two books are collections of easy-to-read autobiographical short stories by Francisco Jimenez, now an established professor at Santa Clara University. Born in Mexico, Jimenez entered California illegally as a very young child and spent his boyhood alternating between migrant farm work and the classroom. *Circuit* focuses on Jimenez's early years while *Breaking Through* is about his teen experiences; best if read together.

**NON-FICTION continued**

***Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*** by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Hitler's plans for the future of Germany relied significantly on its young people, and this excellent history shows how he attempted to carry out his mission with the establishment of the Hitler Youth, or *Hitlerjugend*, in 1926. Bartoletti explains the roles that millions of boys and girls unwittingly played in the horrors of the Third Reich, focusing on twelve young individuals and their experiences. Their stories clearly demonstrate how these young people were victims of leaders who took advantage of their innocence and enthusiasm for evil means.

***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*** by Maya Angelou

In this first of five volumes of autobiography, poet Maya Angelou recounts a youth filled with disappointment, frustration, tragedy, and finally hard-won independence. Sent at a young age to live with her grandmother in Arkansas, Angelou learned a great deal from this exceptional woman and the tightly knit black community there. These very lessons carried her throughout the hardships she endured later in life. Marvelously told with honesty and Angelou's gift for language and observation.

***Kaffir Boy***  by Mark Mathanbane

Mark Mathabane was weaned on devastating poverty and schooled in the cruel streets of South Africa's most desperate ghetto. Like every other child born in the hopelessness of apartheid, he learned to measure his life in days, not years. Armed only with the courage of his family and a hard-won education, Mark Mathabane, now a Portland resident, raised himself up from the squalor and humiliation as revealed in this extraordinary memoir.

***Maus I: A Surivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History***  by Art Spiegelman

Told with chilling realism in an unusual comic-book format, Spiegelman relates the effect of the events of the Holocaust on the survivors' later years and upon the lives of the following generation. In addition to revealing his father's painful experiences, Art tries to come to terms with his own life and the burden he bears as a child of a Holocaust survivor.

***Smile*** by Raina Telgemeier

Raina just wants to be a normal sixth grader. But one night after Girl Scouts she trips and falls, severely injuring her two front teeth. What follows is a long and frustrating journey with on-again, off-again braces, surgery, embarrassing headgear, and more. Using a graphic memoir format, Raina reveals her own strength as she deals with the pain of her injury and the challenging peer relationships that followed.

***Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism*** by Temple Grandin

Temple Grandin is a gifted animal scientist who has designed one-third of all the livestock-handling facilities in the United States. She also lectures widely on autism--because Temple Grandin is autistic, a woman who thinks, feels, and experiences the world in ways that are incomprehensible to the rest of us. Writing from the dual perspectives of a scientist and an autistic person, she tells about her experiences and how she has managed to breach boundaries to function in the outside world.

**FILMS**

***Akeelah and the Bee*** (PG)

Akeelah Anderson, a precocious and courageous eleven-year-old girl from south Los Angeles with a gift for words, enters various spelling contests despite the objections of her mother, eventually earning an opportunity to compete for a spot in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. (2006)

***Bend it Like Beckham*** (PG-13)

Jesse, a young Indian girl living in London, must choose between adhering to family traditions and attaining super-stardom on the soccer field. (2002)

***Can't Buy Me Love*** (PG-13)

Ronald Miller is tired of being a nerd and makes a deal with one of the most popular girls in school to help him break into the "cool" clique. He offers her a thousand dollars to pretend to be his girlfriend for a month. It succeeds, but he soon learns that the price of popularity may be higher than he expected. (1987)

***\*Dead Poets' Society*** (PG)

Shy Todd is sent to boarding school where he meets his room-mate, Neil, who suffers under the thumb of his overbearing father. The two, along with their other friends, meet Professor Keating who inspires in his students a love for poetry and encourages them to seize the day. Each, in their own way, does this, and are changed for life. (1989)

***The Goonies*** (PG)

A group of kids set out on an adventure in search of pirate treasure that could save their homes from foreclosure. (1985)

***Mad Hot Ballroom*** (PG)

In this entertaining documentary, eleven-year-old New York City public school kids journey into the world of ballroom dancing and reveal pieces of themselves and their world along the way. (2005)

***Rabbit Proof Fence*** (PG)

In 1931, three aboriginal girls escape after being plucked from their homes to be trained as domestic staff and set off on a trek across the Australian Outback. (2002)

***Real Women Have Curves*** (PG-13)

Ana, a first generation Mexican-American teenager on the verge of becoming a woman, realizes that leaving home to continue her education is essential to finding her place proudly in the world as an American and Chicana. (2002)

***The Secret of Roan Inish*** (PG)

Ten-year-old Fiona is sent to live with her grandparents in a small fishing village in Donegal, Ireland. There she learns the local legend that an ancestor of hers married a Selkie -- a seal who can turn into a human. Years earlier, her baby brother washed out to sea in a cradle, and some think that he is being raised by the seals. When Fiona catches sight of a little boy on the abandoned isle of Roan Inish, she takes a more active role in uncovering the mysteries which abound. (1994)

***Whale Rider*** (PG-13)

A contemporary story of love, rejection and triumph as a young Maori girl fights to fulfill a destiny her grandfather refuses to recognize. (2002)