

Mrs. Alvarez's Best Picks for 5th & 6th Grade Summer Reading 2008

***Percy Jackson and the Olympians* by Rick Riordan**

The Lightning Thief (#1)

Twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is about to be kicked out of boarding school . . . again. No matter how hard he tries, he can't seem to stay out of trouble. But can he really be expected to stand by and watch while a bully picks on his scrawny best friend? Or not defend himself against his pre-algebra teacher when she turns into a monster and tries to kill him? Of course, no one believes Percy about the monster incident; he's not even sure he believes himself. Until the Minotaur chases him to summer camp.

The Sea of Monsters (#2)

Percy Jackson's seventh-grade year has been surprisingly quiet. Not a single monster has set foot on his New York prep-school campus. But when an innocent game of dodgeball among Percy and his classmates turns into a death match against an ugly gang of cannibal giants, things get . . . well, ugly. And the unexpected arrival of Percy's friend Annabeth brings more bad news: the magical borders that protect Camp Half-Blood have been poisoned by a mysterious enemy, and unless a cure is found, the only safe haven for demigods will be destroyed.

The Titan's Curse (#3)

When the goddess Artemis goes missing, she is believed to have been kidnapped. And now it's up to Percy and his friends to find out what happened. Who is powerful enough to kidnap a goddess? They must find Artemis before the winter solstice, when her influence on the Olympian Council could swing an important vote on the war with the titans. Not only that, but first Percy will have to solve the mystery of a rare monster that Artemis was hunting when she disappeared -- a monster rumored to be so powerful it could destroy Olympus forever.

The Battle of the Labyrinth (#4)

Percy Jackson isn't expecting freshman orientation to be any fun. But when a mysterious mortal acquaintance appears on campus, followed by demon cheerleaders, things quickly move from bad to worse. In this latest installment of the blockbuster series, time is running out as war between the Olympians and the evil Titan lord Kronos draws near. Even the safe haven of Camp Half-Blood grows more vulnerable by the minute as Kronos's army prepares to invade its once impenetrable borders. To stop the invasion, Percy and his demigod friends must set out on a quest through the Labyrinth—a sprawling underground world with stunning surprises at every turn.

***Warriors* by Erin Hunter**

Into the Wild (#1)

Fire alone can save our Clan...

For generations, four Clans of wild cats have shared the forest according to the laws laid down by the powerful ancestors. But the warrior code is threatened, and the ThunderClan cats are in grave danger. The sinister ShadowClan grows stronger every day. Noble warriors are dying -- and some deaths are more mysterious than others.

In the midst of this turmoil appears an ordinary housecat named Rusty . . . Who may yet turn out to be the bravest warrior of them all.

Fire and Ice (#2)

Deep in the heart of the forest, four clans of warrior cats coexist in uneasy harmony -- but uncertain times are upon them, and dangers threaten the precarious balance of the forest.

Fireheart is a ThunderClan warrior cat now, but his troubles are far from over. As the chill of winter sets in, the cats of rival RiverClan grow restless, while WindClan is weak and facing threats from all sides.

As tensions build to an explosive climax, Fireheart faces not only imminent battle, but betrayal from within his own Clan.

Forest of Secrets (#3)

Allegiances are shifting among the Clans of warrior cats that roam the forest. With tensions so delicately balanced, former friends can become enemies overnight, and some cats are willing to kill to get what they want.

Fireheart is determined to find out the truth about the mysterious death of brave ThunderClan warrior Redtail. But as he searches for answers, he uncovers secrets that some believe would be better left hidden.

The Rising Storm (#4)

Fireheart's traitorous enemy Tigerclaw has been vanquished and exiled from ThunderClan—but Fireheart can't shake the feeling that he's lurking out there in the forest, waiting for the chance to strike.

That's not the only problem facing the young ThunderClan deputy in these blazing summer months, as he struggles to handle ominous omens, a disrespectful apprentice with a shocking secret, and a devastated Clan leader who is a shell of her former self.

Meanwhile the forest gets hotter and hotter . . . and everyone braces for the coming storm. . . .

A Dangerous Path (#5)

ShadowClan has a dark new leader, but will he be satisfied with his power now -- or does his desire for revenge burn even more strongly? Fireheart fears that there is a connection between the rise of Tigerstar and the terrible dreams that haunt his nights, murmuring of danger and death.

Meanwhile, a mysterious and vicious threat unlike any other has invaded the forest, placing every cat's life in peril. Fireheart's beloved leader has turned her back on their warrior ancestors, and Fireheart can't help but wonder if she's right. Has StarClan abandoned them forever?

The Darkest Hour (#6)

ThunderClan's darkest hour is upon them, as Tigerstar's quest for power plunges all the Clans into the most terrible danger any cat has ever faced. In order to save his Clan and his friends, Fireheart must uncover the meaning of an ominous proclamation from StarClan:

"Four will become two. Lion and tiger will meet in battle, and blood will rule the forest."

The time has come for prophecies to unfold, and for heroes to rise ...

Warriors: The New Prophecy by Erin Hunter

Midnight (#1)

In the launch volume of the *Warriors New Prophecy* series, a new generation of heroic cats stalk into the forest, not knowing what doom could await them

Moonrise (#2)

Moons have passed since six cats set out on a journey to save their Clans. Now they are traveling home again, but on their way through the mountains, they meet a tribe of wild cats with a secret . . . and their own mysterious prophecy to fulfill. Stormfur can't understand their strange fascination with him, but he knows the danger they face is real.

Meanwhile, back in the forest, Firestar and Leafpaw watch ThunderClan's world crumbling around them. Will the questing cats make it back in time to save the Clans, or will they be too late?

Dawn (#3)

The young cats who set off on a quest many moons ago have returned with a chilling message: The Clans must move to a new home, or risk extermination.

But the dangers waiting for them beyond their borders are impossible to predict, and the cats have no idea where to go. What they need is a sign from StarClan. . . .

Starlight (#4)

Before there is peace, blood will spill blood...

The Clans have finally arrived in their new home, following the prophecies of their warrior ancestors. The journey was difficult enough, but now they must struggle to establish territories and learn the hidden dangers of this unfamiliar world. Most importantly, Leafpaw knows they must find a replacement for the Moonstone -- a place to communicate with StarClan. Otherwise there will be no way to choose new leaders, no way to share medicine cat secrets, and no way to know whether the Clans are on the right path.

The future seems uncertain, and more than one cat is harboring sinister plans that could lead to violence and darkness. As all the warriors wait for a sign, some of them begin to realize that the threats they face in the forest may not be as perilous as the threats they face from within.

Twilight (#5)

New territory brings new troubles for the fierce cats of the warrior Clans, who are still uncovering the secrets of their new home around the lake. Dangers they have never faced before are lurking in the twilight shadows, and former allies are acting strangely hostile.

As divisions between the Clans grow deeper, Firestar's daughters face troubling decisions. One is torn between loyalty to her calling and a forbidden love, while the other struggles with her best friend's betrayal and the surprising perils of the forest. The choices they make now could affect ThunderClan for generations to come...and with an unexpected enemy preparing to attack, their courage and strength will be needed more than ever if the Clan is to survive.

Sunset (#6)

Soon after the cats reached their new home by the lake, ThunderClan's medicine cat Leafpool received an ominous warning from StarClan: *Before there is peace, blood will spill blood, and the lake will run red.* As the Clan slowly recovers from a devastating badger attack, Leafpool can't help but wonder . . . do her prophetic dreams mean there are even worse dangers still in store for the warrior cats?

At the same time, shadows of the past continue to haunt the forest as some old friends struggle to find their place, others appear to be lost forever, and an old enemy finds a new way to resurface in a quest for dark revenge. A sinister path is unfolding, and the time is coming for certain warriors to make the choices that will determine their destiny . . . and the destiny of all the Clans.

Warriors: The Power of Three by Erin Hunter

The Sight (#1)

The time has come for three kits of ThunderClan—Hollypaw, Jaypaw, and Lionpaw—to become apprentices. Grandchildren of the great leader Firestar, all three possess unusual power and talent. But dark secrets surround them, and a mysterious prophecy hints at trouble to come. The warrior code is in danger of being washed away by a river of blood, and all the young cats' strength will be needed if the Clans are to survive.

Dark River (#2)

The three children of Squirrelflight and Brambleclaw, grandchildren of the great leader Firestar, have thrived in their apprenticeships: Lionpaw's strength and energy serve him well as a warrior in training, Hollypaw hones her understanding of the warrior code, and Jaypaw explores his mysterious powers and connection to StarClan as the medicine cat apprentice.

With more experience comes both power and danger: Lionpaw makes a friendship—and a discovery—that must be kept hidden; Jaypaw learns a secret that could benefit ThunderClan by damaging others; and Hollypaw knows something that could avert a battle, if she could convince the rest of her Clan.

The three are torn apart as each discovers darkness: in themselves, in the Clans, and in the past. And, as conflict begins over what it means to be a warrior, rising tensions threaten to overflow, washing away the peace that has existed for many moons.

Outcast (#3)

There will be three, Kin of your kin....

Who hold the Power of the stars in their paws.

A secret prophecy shapes the lives of Firestar's grandchildren, but only one of the three knows about it. Jaypaw is captivated by the power it promises, and he believes the key to that power may lie buried in the distant past -- with the ancient cats who once walked these woods and now prowl through his dreams. His search for answers leads him toward the mountains -- the home of the Tribe of Rushing Water. Lionpaw and Hollypaw feel drawn to the mountains too, for different reasons.

But the mountains hide secrets as well as answers, and if the three cats find a way to get there, they may discover more than they ever expected.

Septimus Heap by Angie Sage

Magyk (#1)

The seventh son of the seventh son, aptly named Septimus Heap, is stolen the night he is born by a midwife who pronounces him dead. That same night, the baby's father, Silas Heap, comes across a bundle in the snow containing a new born girl with violet eyes. The Heaps take this helpless newborn into their home, name her Jenna, and raise her as their own. But who is this mysterious baby girl, and what really happened to their beloved son Septimus? The first book in this enthralling new series by Angie Sage leads readers on a fantastic journey filled with quirky characters and magykal charms, potions, and spells. *Magyk* is an original story of lost and rediscovered identities, rich with humor and heart.

Flyte (#2)

It's been a year since Septimus Heap discovered his real family and true calling to be a wizard. As Apprentice to Extra Ordinary Wizard Marcia Overstrand, he is learning the fine arts of Conjurations, Charms, and other Magyk, while Jenna is adapting to life as the Princess and enjoying the freedom of the Castle.

But there is something sinister at work. Marcia is constantly trailed by a menacing Darke Shadow, and Septimus's brother Simon seems bent on a revenge no one understands. Why is the Darke Magyk still lingering?

Physik (#3)

When Silas Heap unSeals a forgotten room in the Palace, he releases the ghost of a Queen who lived five hundred years earlier. Queen Etheldredda is as awful in death as she was in life, and she's still up to no good. Her diabolical plan to give herself everlasting life requires Jenna's compliance, Septimus's disappearance, and the talents of her son, Marcellus Pye, a famous Alchemist and Physician. And if Queen Etheldredda's plot involves Jenna and Septimus, then it will surely involve Nicko, Alther Mella, Marcia Overstrand, Beetle, Stanley, Sarah, Silas, Spit Fyre, Aunt Zelda, and all of the other wacky, wonderful characters that made magyk and flyte so memorable.

Queste (#4)

There's trouble at the Castle, and it's all because Merrin Meredith has returned with Darke plans for Septimus. More trouble awaits Septimus and Jenna in the form of Tertius Fume, the ghost of the very first Chief Hermetic Scribe, who is determined to send Septimus on a deadly Queste. But Septimus and Jenna have other plans—they are headed for the mysterious House of Foryx, a place where all Time meets and the place where they fervently hope they will be able to find Nicko and Snorri, who were trapped back in time in physik. But how will Septimus escape the Queste?

A Wrinkle in Time Quintet by Madeleine L'Engle

A Wrinkle in Time (#1)

It was a dark and stormy night; Meg Murry, her small brother Charles Wallace, and her mother had come down to the kitchen for a midnight snack when they were upset by the arrival of a most disturbing stranger. "Wild nights are my glory," the unearthly stranger told them. "I just got caught in a downdraft and blown off course. Let me sit down for a moment, and then I'll be on my way. Speaking of ways, by the way, there is such a thing as a tesseract." A tesseract is a wrinkle in time.. *A Wrinkle in Time*, winner of the Newbery Medal in 1963, is the story of the adventures in space and time of Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin O'Keefe (athlete, student, and one of the most popular boys in high school). They are in search of Meg's father, a scientist who disappeared while engaged in secret work for the government on the tesseract problem

A Wind in the Door (#2)

"There are dragons in the twins' vegetable garden," announces six-year-old Charles Wallace Murry. His older sister, Meg, doubts it. She figures he's seen *something* strange, but dragons seem highly unlikely. As it turns out, Charles Wallace is right about the dragons--though the sea of eyes (merry eyes, wise eyes, ferocious eyes, kitten eyes, dragon eyes, opening and closing) and wings (in constant motion) is actually a benevolent cherubim named Proginoskes who has come to help save Charles Wallace from a serious illness.

A Swiftly Tilting Planet (#3)

Now 15 years old, Charles Wallace Murry has a little task he must accomplish. In 24 hours, a mad dictator will destroy the universe by declaring nuclear war--unless Charles Wallace can go back in time to change one of the many Might-Have-Beens in history. In an intricately layered and suspenseful journey through time, this extraordinary young man psychically enters four different people from other eras. As he perceives through their eyes "what might have been," he begins to comprehend the cosmic significance and consequences of every living creature's actions. As he witnesses first-hand the transformation of civilization from peaceful to warring times, his very existence is threatened, but the alternative is far worse.

Many Waters (#4)

When their parents begin working on a scientific experiment with time travel, Sandy and Dennys Murry, the "normal" boys in a family of geniuses, suddenly find themselves trudging through a blazing-hot desert, seeking a far-off oasis for shade. Their desperate wandering brings them face-to-face with biblical history. Soon they're feeling right at home with Noah and his family. Even so, the urgent question is, how will Sandy and Dennys get back to their own place and time before the floods--the many waters--come? As they begin to cross the invisible border into adulthood, the twins must confront their ability to resist temptation and embrace integrity.

An Acceptable Time (#5)

Polly O'Keefe (granddaughter of Meg Murry and Calvin O'Keefe) arrives at her grandparents' farm in Connecticut. A flash of lightning, quivering ground, and, instead of her grandparents' farm, Polly sees mist and jagged mountains -- and coming toward her, a group of young men carrying spears. Why has a time gate opened and dropped Polly into a world that existed 3,000 years ago? She meets Anaral, a Native American girl; Karralys, a druid banished from Britain for his progressive thinking; and Tav, a handsome warrior who accompanied the druid to their new land. Polly travels back and forth between the two worlds, and eventually her purpose becomes clear: with the aid of her new friends she forges peace between two clashing tribes, and helps Zachary Gray, a self-centered but very ill young man. But will she be able to get back to the present before the time gate closes -- and leaves her to face a group of people who believe in human sacrifice?

The Penderwicks by Jeanne Birdsall

The Penderwicks: The Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits and a Very Interesting Boy

This summer the Penderwick sisters have a wonderful surprise: a holiday on the grounds of a beautiful estate called Arundel. Soon they are busy discovering the summertime magic of Arundel's sprawling gardens, treasure-filled attic, tame rabbits, and the cook who makes the best gingerbread in Massachusetts. But the best discovery of all is Jeffrey Tifton, son of Arundel's owner, who quickly proves to be the perfect companion for their adventures. The icy-hearted Mrs. Tifton is not as pleased with the Penderwicks as Jeffrey is, though, and warns the new friends to stay out of trouble. Which, of course, they will--won't they? One thing's for sure: it will be a summer the Penderwicks will never forget.

The Penderwicks on Gardam Street

The Penderwick sisters are home on Gardam Street and ready for an adventure! But the adventure they get isn't quite what they had in mind. Mr. Penderwick's sister has decided that enough time has passed since his wife died and it's time for him to start dating. After all, four girls need a mother. The girls know that can only mean one thing: disaster. Enter the Save-Daddy Plan—a plot so brilliant, so bold, so funny, that only the Penderwick girls could have come up with it. Its high jinks, big laughs, and loads of family warmth as the Penderwicks triumphantly return.

***The Chronicles of Prydain* by Lloyd Alexander**

***The Book of Three* (#1)**

Taran, an Assistant Pig-Keeper begins his quest to become a hero. Taran is joined by an engaging cast of characters that includes Eilonwy, the strong-willed and sharp-tongued princess; Fflewddur Fflam, the exaggeration-prone bard; the ever-faithful Gurgi (a creature of indistinguishable origin); and the curmudgeonly Doli—all of whom have become involved in an epic struggle between good and evil that shapes the fate of the legendary land of Prydain.

***The Black Cauldron* (#2)**

Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper of Prydain, faces even more dangers as he seeks the magical Black Cauldron, the chief implement of the evil powers of Arawn, lord of the Land of Death.

***The Castle of Llyr* (#3)**

Princess Eilonwy is sent to stay with the king and queen of Dinas Rhydant to learn how to be a lady. The sinister chief steward, Magg, kidnaps Eilonwy and delivers her to Achren. Taran and the other companions follow them to a castle by the sea. There they must do battle with Achren and her minions to keep Eilonwy from becoming an evil enchantress. Although she drives him crazy with her babbling, Taran begins to think tenderly of Eilonwy.

***Taran Wanderer* (#4)**

When Taran sets out to discover his parentage, he leaves the familiar behind and ventures to the far corners of Prydain. When three enchantresses tell him of the Mirror of Llunet and what it might offer, Taran is fixed on his destination. On his quest, he tangles with despicable folk, meets the honest people of the Free Commons, and comes to understand much about himself. The earnestness of Taran in both joy and anguish, as well the liveliness of his friends, is memorable.

***The High King* (#5)**

When the most powerful weapon in the land of Prydain falls into the hands of Arawn, Lord of the Land of Death, Taran and Prince Gwydion rally an army to stand up to the dark forces. The companions' last and greatest quest is also their most perilous. The biting cold of winter is upon them, adding to the danger they already face. Their journey, fraught with battle and bloodshed, ends at the very portal of Arawn's stronghold. There, Taran is faced with the most crucial decision of his life. In this breathtaking Newbery Medal-winning conclusion to *The Chronicles of Prydain*, the faithful friends face the ultimate war between good and evil.

2009 Young Readers' Choice Award Nominees

***Room One: A Mystery or Two* by Andrew Clements**

Ted Hammond is the only sixth grader at a one-room school in a small Nebraska town facing a financial crisis and hence a shrinking population. When Ted sees a girl's face in the window of one of the abandoned houses on his paper route, he can't resist investigating this mystery as he is an avid reader of detective novels and tries to solve each crime halfway through the book. This real-life mystery proves a little more difficult as Ted struggles with keeping a family's secret and knowing when to ask for help from adults. Ted is both compassionate and confused as he grapples with his secret and his town's (and thus his own) unstable future.

***Gossamer* by Lois Lowry**

Readers first meet the dream-givers as they creep around a dark house in the middle of the night where an old woman and a dog named Toby are sleeping. They are benevolent beings who visit humans (and pets, too) at night. They handle objects, gather memories, and give them back in the form of happy dreams that comfort and help those they're assigned to. The dream-givers' counterparts are the strong and wicked Sinisteeds, who inflict nightmares and sometimes travel in frightening Hordes. And the humans that the dream-givers care for do need help and protection from bad dreams. The old woman is lonely and has taken in a deeply troubled foster child named John, who's living apart from an abusive father and the fragile mother who desperately wants him back.

***Rules* by Cynthia Lord**

Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. In an effort to keep life on an even keel, Catherine creates rules for him (It's okay to hug Mom but not the clerk at the video store). When Kristi moves in next door, Catherine hopes that the girl will become a friend, but is anxious about her reaction to David. Then Catherine meets and befriends Jason, a nonverbal paraplegic who uses a book of pictures to communicate, she begins to understand that normal is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to define. Rules of behavior are less important than acceptance of others. Catherine's love for her brother is as real as are her frustrations with him. Set in coastal Maine, this sensitive story is about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance.

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

Edward Tulane is an exceedingly vain, cold-hearted china rabbit owned by 10-year-old Abilene Tulane, who dearly loves him. Her grandmother relates a fairy tale about a princess who never felt love; she then whispers to Edward that he disappoints her. His path to redemption begins when he falls overboard during the family's ocean journey. Sinking to the bottom of the sea where he will spend 297 days, Edward feels his first emotion—fear. Caught in a fisherman's net, he lives with the old man and his wife and begins to care about his humans. Then their adult daughter takes him to the dump, where a dog and a hobo find him. They ride the rails together until Edward is cruelly separated from them. His heart is truly broken when next owner, four-year-old Sarah Ruth, dies. He recalls Abilene's grandmother with a new sense of humility, wishing she knew that he has learned to love. When his head is shattered by an angry man, Edward wants to join Sarah Ruth but those he has loved convince him to live. Repaired by a doll store owner, he closes his heart to love, as it is too painful, until a wise doll tells him that he that he must open his heart for someone to love him.

The Higher Power of Lucky by Susan Paton

When Lucky's mother is electrocuted and dies after a storm, Lucky's absentee father calls his ex-wife, Brigitte, to fly over from France to take care of the child. Two years later, the 10-year-old worries that Brigitte is tired of being her guardian and of their life in Hard Pan (pop. 42) in the middle of the California desert. While Lucky's best friend ties intricate knots and the little boy down the road cries for attention, she tries to get some control over her life by restocking her survival kit backpack and searching for her Higher Power.

The Homework Machine by Dan Gutman

Fifth-grader Brenton is a computer genius, but the other three members of his work group think he's a nerd. So, when he tells them that he has invented a machine that does homework, they taunt him until he agrees to demonstrate. The machine actually works, and Kelsey, Sam, and Judy convince him to let them use it. At first, they are delighted with their freedom, but things quickly get out of hand. Their teacher is suspicious of the suddenly errorless work, and other friends resent the time that they spend together. The dynamics within the group are stressful as well. Judy, a talented student, feels guilty about cheating, but is pressured to excel. Kelsey is concerned that her friends will shun her for associating with nerds, but her improved grades earn privileges at home. Wisecracking Sam makes fun of Brenton but needs his help in playing chess by mail with his dad, who is serving in Iraq. Eventually, their secret causes conflict with the law. The story is told entirely through short excerpts from police interviews. Ominous hints about the legal trouble maintain tension throughout the story, but its exact nature isn't revealed until near the end.

To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel by Siena Cherson Siegel

Siena Siegel was born to dance. At age six, she began to take lessons in Puerto Rico. When her family moved to Boston, she continued to study ballet. When she was accepted at the American School of Ballet, her family moved to New York. While she was a student, she performed in numerous ballets of George Ballanchine. Her promising future came to an end at the age of 18 when she suffered a serious ankle injury. However, rather than focusing on this disappointment, she went on to college and later began dancing again because, "Dancing fills a space in me." Through one dancer's experiences during the 1970s and '80s, readers are introduced to an important period in the world of ballet and are given an inspiring message about the dedication required to become a ballerina

The Year of the Dog by Grace Lin

Readers follow Grace, an American girl of Taiwanese heritage, through the course of one year—The Year of the Dog—as she struggles to integrate her two cultures. Throughout the story, her parents share their own experiences that parallel events in her life. These stories serve a dual purpose; they draw attention to Grace's cultural background and allow her to make informed decisions. She and her two sisters are the only Taiwanese-American children at school until Melody arrives. The girls become friends and their common backgrounds illuminate further differences between the American and Taiwanese cultures. At the end of the year, Grace has learned much about herself and her heritage.