

## 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading

### Required:

[\*This Boy's Life\*](#), Tobias Wolff - This unforgettable memoir, by one of our most gifted writers, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. His various schemes - running away to Alaska, forging checks, and stealing cars - lead eventually to an act of outrageous self-invention that releases him into a new world of possibility.

### Choose ONE of the following:

[\*Things Fall Apart\*](#), Chinua Achebe - *Things Fall Apart* tells two intertwining stories, both centering on Okonkwo, a “strong man” of an Ibo village in Nigeria. The first, a powerful fable of the immemorial conflict between the individual and society, traces Okonkwo’s fall from grace with the tribal world. The second, as modern as the first is ancient, concerns the clash of cultures and the destruction of Okonkwo's world with the arrival of aggressive European missionaries. These perfectly harmonized twin dramas are informed by an awareness capable of encompassing at once the life of nature, human history, and the mysterious compulsions of the soul.” ([Google Books](#))

[\*Lord of the Flies\*](#), William Golding - “William Golding's compelling story about a group of very ordinary small boys marooned on a coral island has become a modern classic. At first it seems as though it is all going to be great fun; but the fun before long becomes furious and life on the island turns into a nightmare of panic and death. As ordinary standards of behaviour collapse, the whole world the boys know collapses with them—the world of cricket and homework and adventure stories—and another world is revealed beneath, primitive and terrible.

*Lord of the Flies* remains as provocative today as when it was first published in 1954, igniting passionate debate with its startling, brutal portrait of human nature. Though critically acclaimed, it was largely ignored upon its initial publication. Yet soon it became a cult favorite among both students and literary critics who compared it to J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* in its influence on modern thought and literature.” ([Amazon](#))

[\*Brown Girl Dreaming\*](#), Jacqueline Woodson - “Using words that sing with both the complexity and simplicity of a symphony, and memories that both sting and inspire, Jacqueline Woodson’s *Brown Girl Dreaming* is an intimate journey of victory, sorrow, and discovery. Sharp social commentary of a country’s struggle to live up to its ideals, an honest portrayal of the strength of family, and the delicate blossoming of a young writer make this memoir in verse a gift to all who read it. Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally

charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become." ([National Book Foundation](#))

[To Kill a Mockingbird](#), Harper Lee - "The unforgettable novel of a childhood in a sleepy Southern town and the crisis of conscience that rocked it, *To Kill A Mockingbird* became both an instant bestseller and a critical success when it was first published in 1960. It went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. Compassionate, dramatic, and deeply moving, *To Kill A Mockingbird* takes readers to the roots of human behavior - to innocence and experience, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred, humor and pathos. Now with over 18 million copies in print and translated into forty languages, this regional story by a young Alabama woman claims universal appeal. Harper Lee always considered her book to be a simple love story. Today it is regarded as a masterpiece of American literature." ([Amazon](#))

[The Natural](#), Bernard Malamud - "*The Natural*, Bernard Malamud's first novel, published in 1952, is also the first—and some would say still the best—novel ever written about baseball. In it Malamud...took on very different material—the story of a superbly gifted “natural” at play in the fields of the old daylight baseball era—and invested it with the hardscrabble poetry, at once grand and altogether believable, that runs through all his best work. Four decades later, Alfred Kazin's comment still holds true: “Malamud has done something which—now that he has done it!—looks as if we have been waiting for it all our lives. He has really raised the whole passion and craziness and fanaticism of baseball as a popular spectacle to its ordained place in mythology.” ([Google Books](#))

[The Book Thief](#), Markus Zusak - It's just a small story really, about among other things: a girl, some words, an accordionist, some fanatical Germans, a Jewish fist-fighter, and quite a lot of thievery. . . . Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking new novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau. This is an unforgettable story about the ability of books to feed the soul. ([Google Books](#))

[The Catcher in the Rye](#), J.D. Salinger - "It is just before Christmas and 16-year-old Holden Caulfield has been kicked out of exclusive Pencey Prep, a boys' school in Pennsylvania. Considering everything, this reflects more credit on Holden than on Pencey. Life at Pencey is dreary, regimented, artificial and, of course, expensive. This happens, however, to be only the latest of a series of schools from which Holden has been expelled. Understandably he is in no hurry to encounter his parents, but he is also reluctant to linger a moment longer than necessary at Pencey. He therefore takes what money he has and departs for New York, where he passes several days in a weird jumble of adventures and experiences, is involved with a variety of persons including taxi drivers, two nuns, an elevator man, three girls from Seattle, a prostitute,

and a former teacher from whom Holden thinks it best to flee in the middle of the night and most of all from himself.” ([New York Times Book Review](#))

[1984](#), George Orwell - “Published in 1949 as a warning about the menaces of totalitarianism, the novel is set in an imaginary future world that is dominated by three perpetually warring totalitarian police states. The book's hero, Winston Smith, is a minor party functionary in one of these states. His longing for truth and decency leads him to secretly rebel against the government. Smith has a love affair with a like-minded woman, but they are both arrested by the Thought Police. The ensuing imprisonment, torture, and reeducation of Smith are intended not merely to break him physically or make him submit but to root out his independent mental existence and his spiritual dignity.” ([Google Books](#))

### **Assignment for Both *This Boy's Life: A Memoir* and Your One Choice Book**

To be graded. Please proofread and hand in your best work.

In a typed document with your name and date, please include the following:

1. In **200 words**, write a brief summary of the plot, including the beginning, middle and end. In your opening sentence, include title (italicized) author, and genre (realistic fiction, dystopian, fantasy, nonfiction, historical fiction, etc.).
2. In a **paragraph**, write about the significance of title. Authors rarely choose a random title. Dig for symbolic meaning. The title may be a metaphor or it may relate to one specific incident in the book. In any case, consider carefully the significance of the title and explain your thinking.
3. Write a **brief description in 3-4 sentences** for two of the main characters. For each one include at least two adjectives and cite (quote word for word using quotation marks and include the page number) two text examples that support your impressions for each.
4. Write **3-4 sentences** about a certain passage from the book that you think is important or worth rereading (please include page number for reference). Maybe it explains something about the character, or it describes a very special event, or perhaps, it holds a certain resonance or connection with you, the reader. You must explain why you chose this passage. Dig deep for a connection.
5. To highlight the significance of this book, write a **5-8 sentence response** to each of the following:
  - What life lessons have you learned or have been reinforced from reading this book?
  - What did you like and dislike the most from this book? Explain using details and examples from the book.