

Ms. Two-Axe's 2008 Summer Reading List

* **Christopher Killer - Alane Ferguson**

The sleepy Rocky Mountain town of Silverton, Colorado hasn't seen a murder in years-according to Pat Mahoney, the county coroner. So when his teenage daughter, Cameryn, asks if she can be his assistant-as preparation for a career in forensic pathology-he figures it's a safe bet. But neither of them imagines that their first case will involve someone Cameryn knows . . . the fourth victim of a serial killer.

Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life - Wendy Mass

Jeremy's summer takes an unexpected turn when a mysterious box arrives. According to the writing on the box, it holds the meaning of life! Jeremy is supposed to open it on his birthday, but the keys are missing, and only the keys can open the box without destroying what's inside. Jeremy and Lizzy set off to find the keys, but when one of their efforts goes very wrong, Jeremy starts to think he'll never be able to open the box. But what he doesn't know is that there just might be other ways to find out the meaning of life.

Eggs - Jerry Spinelli

Nine-year-old David has recently lost his mother to a freak accident, his salesman father is constantly on the road, and he is letting his anger out on his grandmother. Sarcastic and bossy 13-year-old Primrose lives with her childlike, fortuneteller mother, and a framed picture is the only evidence of the father she never knew. Despite their differences, David and Primrose forge a tight yet tumultuous friendship, eventually helping each other deal with what is missing in their lives. This powerful, quirky novel about two very complicated, damaged children has much to say about friendship, loss, and recovery.

Leonardo's Shadow - Christopher Grey

Milan, 1497. The height of the Renaissance. And for Giacomo, servant of the famous painter Leonardo da Vinci, it's the most difficult time of all. His Master has been working on the Last Supper, his greatest painting ever, for nearly two years. But has he finished it? He's barely started! The all-powerful Duke of Milan is demanding that it be completed by the time the Pope visits at Easter. And Giacomo knows that if Leonardo doesn't pick up his pace, the Duke may invite a young genius -- Michelangelo -- to finish the painting instead. Which means that Leonardo won't be paid, which means that Milan's shopkeepers (to whom he owes massive amounts) will take drastic measures against him.

It's all down to Giacomo, and whether he can come up with a brilliant solution. With the secret arrival of a powerful stranger, Giacomo is about to discover much more than the answers he has been looking for. And he will also receive an invitation to help arrange a meeting that could change his life. . . and the future course of history.

Last Dragon - De Mari

In a post-apocalyptic world, shrouded in darkness and continually lashed by rain, a young elf named Yorsh struggles to survive. When his village is destroyed by the torrential waters, Yorsh finds himself suddenly orphaned and alone -- the earth's last elf.

But soon Yorsh discovers he is part of a powerful prophecy: when the last dragon and the last elf break the circle, the past and the future will meet, and the sun of a new summer will shine in the sky. Now Yorsh must decipher the prophecy and find the last dragon - it is the only way to end the rains and to save the world from the Dark Age that has begun. Full of great tenderness and humor, this magical journey tells the story of a world now plagued by intolerance and wickedness, and the elf and the dragon who will fight for its redemption.

Lawn Boy - Gary Paulsen

One day I was 12 years old and broke. Then Grandma gave me Grandpa's old riding lawnmower. I set out to mow some lawns. More people wanted me to mow their lawns. And more and more. . . One client was Arnold the stockbroker, who offered to teach me about "the beauty of capitalism. Supply and Demand. Diversify labor. Distribute the wealth." "Wealth?" I said. "It's groovy, man," said Arnold.

If I'd known what was coming, I might have climbed on my mower and putted all the way home to hide in my room. But the lawn business grew and grew. So did my profits, which Arnold invested in many things. And one of them was Joey Pow the prizefighter. That's when my 12th summer got really interesting.

* **Jinx – Meg Cabot**

The only thing Jean Honeychurch hates more than her boring name (not Jean Marie, or Jeanette, just . . . Jean) is her all-too-appropriate nickname, Jinx. Misfor-tune seems to follow her everywhere she goes—which is why she's thrilled to be moving in with her aunt and uncle in New York City. Maybe when she's halfway across the country, Jinx can finally outrun her bad luck. Or at least escape the havoc she's caused back in her small hometown.

But trouble has definitely followed Jinx to New York. And it's causing big problems for her cousin Tory, who is not happy to have the family black sheep around. Beautiful, glamorous Tory is hiding a dangerous secret—one that she's sure Jinx is going to reveal. Jinx is beginning to realize it isn't just bad luck she's been running from. It's something far more sinister . . . and the curse Jinx has lived under since the day she was born might just be the only thing that can save her life.

Black Duck – Janet Taylor Lisle

It is spring 1929, and Prohibition is in full swing. So when Ruben and Jeddy find a dead body washed up on the shore of their small coastal Rhode Island town, they are sure it has something to do with smuggling liquor. Soon the boys, along with Jeddy's strongwilled sister, Marina, are drawn in, suspected by rival bootlegging gangs of taking something crucial off the dead man. Then Ruben meets the daring captain of the Black Duck, the most elusive smuggling craft of them all, and it isn't long before he's caught in a war between two of the most dangerous prohibition gangs.

The Mysterious Edge of the heroic World – E.L. Konigsburg

Amedeo Kaplan seems just like any other new kid who has moved into the town of St. Malo, Florida, a navy town where new faces are the norm. But Amedeo has a secret, a dream: More than anything in the world, he wants to discover something -- a place, a process, even a fossil -- some treasure that no one realizes is there until he finds it. And he would also like to discover a true friend to share these things with.

William Wilcox seems like an unlikely candidate for friendship: an aloof boy who is all edges and who owns silence the way other people own words. When Amedeo and William find themselves working together on a house sale for Amedeo's eccentric neighbor, Mrs. Zender, Amedeo has an inkling that both his wishes may come true. For Mrs. Zender's mansion is crammed with memorabilia of her long life, and there is a story to go with every piece. Soon the boys find themselves caught up in one particular story -- a story that links a sketch, a young boy's life, an old man's reminiscence, and a painful secret dating back to the outrages of Nazi Germany. It's a story that will take them to the edge of what they know about heroism and the mystery of the human heart.

Games – Gorman

Mick Sullivan likes reading thrillers, daydreaming about Tabitha Slater, and teasing his archenemy, Boot Quinn. Boot Quinn likes playing his guitar, daydreaming about Tabitha Slater, and punching his adversary, Mick Sullivan. The two eighth graders are rivals in every way, and with two fights in the first week of school, they've set the stage for a yearlong showdown. That is, until a new principal arrives on the scene and forces Mick and Boot to spend an hour and a half each day playing games together. Two enemies, one small room, and no adult supervision—battle lines are bound to be crossed. As the wins and losses are tallied, the boys find themselves fighting for their classmates' attention, a cute girl's affection, and their own fathers' respect. But how far are they willing to go to win? And who are they really fighting? There's only one way to find out. Game on.

Uprising - Haddix

Around her the workers were screaming out prayers and curses.... She herself was sobbing tearlessly.... Her only prayer was still, "I don't want to die." Oh, please, God, don't let me die, she thought. I've never even had a chance to live.

Bella, newly arrived in New York from Italy, gets a job at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. There, along with hundreds of other immigrants, she works long hours at a grueling job under terrible conditions. Yetta, a coworker from Russia, has been crusading for a union, and when factory conditions worsen, she helps workers rise up in a strike. Wealthy Jane learns of the plight of the workers and becomes involved with their cause.

Bella and Yetta are at work -- and Jane is visiting the factory -- on March 25, 1911, when a spark ignites some cloth and the building is engulfed in fire, leading to one of the worst workplace disasters ever.

Margaret Peterson Haddix draws on extensive historical research to bring the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire to tangible life through her thrilling story of Bella, Yetta, and Jane.

The Mysterious Benedict Society – Stewart

"Are you a gifted child looking for special opportunities?"

When this peculiar ad appears in the newspaper, dozens of children enroll to take a series of mysterious, mind-bending tests. (And you, dear reader, can test your wits right alongside them.) But in the end just four very special children will succeed. Their challenge: to go on a secret mission that only the most intelligent and resourceful children could complete. To accomplish it they will have to go undercover at the Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened, where the only rule is that there are no rules.

As our heroes face physical and mental trials beyond their wildest imaginations, they have no choice but to turn to each other for support. But with their newfound friendship at stake, will they be able to pass the most important test of all?

The Man with the red Bag – Bunting

Six months after 9/11, everyone wanted life to return to normal. But when Charles Stavros boards the Star Tours bus, twelve-year-old Kevin Saunders is sure this exotic-looking stranger is up to no good:

He sits alone.

He has a bushy black mustache and sinister eyebrows.

He carries a red bag with him wherever he goes—and even *talks* to it!

Kevin confides his suspicions to Geneva, a girl he meets on the tour bus. Together they watch the man's every move. Kevin is convinced Stavros isn't a typical tourist, interested in the Great Salt Lake, the Grand Tetons, or even Yellowstone National Park. Kevin knows Stavros, red bag in hand, has something much bigger in mind, and it's up to Kevin to save the day, and maybe even the world.

* **Red Glass – Resau**

ONE NIGHT SOPHIE and her parents are called to a hospital where Pedro, 6-year-old Mexican boy, is recovering from dehydration. Crossing the border into Arizona with a group of Mexicans and a coyote, or guide, Pedro and his parents faced such harsh conditions that the boy is the only survivor. Pedro comes to live with Sophie, her parents, and Sophie's Aunt Dika, a refugee of the war in Bosnia. Sophie loves Pedro - her Principito, or Little Prince. But after a year, Pedro's surviving family in Mexico makes contact, and Sophie, Dika, Dika's new boyfriend, and his son must travel with Pedro to his hometown so that he can make a heartwrenching decision.

The Garden of Eve – Going

Evie reluctantly moves with her widowed father to Beaumont, New York, where he has bought an apple orchard, dismissing rumors that the town is cursed and the trees haven't borne fruit in decades. Evie doesn't believe in things like curses and fairy tales anymore--if fairy tales were real, her mom would still be alive. But odd things happen in Beaumont. Evie meets a boy who claims to be dead and receives a mysterious seed as an eleventh-birthday gift. Once planted, the seed grows into a tree overnight, but only Evie and the dead boy can see it--or go where it leads.

The Garden of Eve mixes spine-tingling chills with a deeply resonating story that beautifully explores grief, healing, and growth.

Finn's Going – Kelly

Take Finn. He may be the burping champion of the universe. He may be the demon farter of the planet—capable of mind-boggling impressions (a hissing cat, a creaking door in a haunted house, a boiling egg). Or not.

Take Danny. *He* may be the burping champion of the universe. *He* may be the demon farter of the planet—capable of mind-boggling impressions (a hissing cat, a creaking door in a haunted house, a boiling egg). Or not.

Danny and Finn. Identical twins. Best friends. Big brothers to Angela. Playing with Donut the dog. Sons of Mum and Dad. Living together in a house on Holt Street. Happy.

All of that is about to change.

* **Feathers – Woodson**

“Hope is the thing with feathers” starts the poem Frannie is reading in school. Frannie hasn't thought much about hope. There are so many other things to think about. Each day, her friend Samantha seems a bit more “holy.” There is a new boy in class everyone is calling the Jesus Boy. And although the new boy looks like a white kid, he says he's not white. Who is he?

During a winter full of surprises, good and bad, Frannie starts seeing a lot of things in a new light—her brother Sean's deafness, her mother's fear, the class bully's anger, her best friend's faith and her own desire for “the thing with feathers.”

Jacqueline Woodson once again takes readers on a journey into a young girl's heart and reveals the pain and the joy of learning to look beneath the surface.

***Emma-Jean Lazarus feel out of a Tree – Tarshis**

Emma-Jean Lazarus is a lovable oddball who thinks she can use logic to solve the “messy” everyday problems of her seventh-grade peers. It's easy—she just follows the example of her late father, a brilliant mathematician. Of course, the more Emma-Jean gets involved, the messier her own life gets. Suddenly she's no longer the person standing on the outside of all social interactions. But perhaps that's a good thing?

If you took *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and *Ida B . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World* and put them in a middle-grade blender, you would have the book *Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree*. Quirky, honest, and written by first-time author Lauren Tarshis, this is a tender story about what happens when a girl who has long stood in the social shadows gets a taste of what it's like to connect with kids her own age.

Standing Against the Wind – Jones

Patrice Williams was happy living in Georgia with her grandmother, who called her “cocoa grandbaby.” Then her mother lured her to Chicago and ended up in jail. Now Patrice lives with her Auntie Mae, and her new nickname is “Puffy” – thanks to her giant poof of hair. But Patrice's hair isn't the only reason she sticks out: she cares about her grades and strives for the best. That's why Monty Freeman, another eighth grader who lives in the building, asks Patrice to tutor his little brother. Even though Monty's friends make Patrice uneasy, Monty himself is friendly, confident, and surprisingly smart. When he becomes her guardian angel, Patrice begins to think something stronger than friendship might be growing between them. Still, nothing will stop her from applying for a scholarship at prestigious Dogwood Academy – her ticket out of the project and a school populated by gangs and drug runners.

In her debut novel, Traci L. Jones presents a girl with grit she never knew she had, and a boy so inspired by her that he begins to take pride in his own abilities.

Jumping the Scratch – Weeks

Jamie Reardon has always heard that bad things come in threes. So after his cat, Mister, dies, his father leaves, and his aunt Sapphy has an accident that causes her memory to develop a skip, Jamie hopes his life will go back to being as normal as cornflakes. But unfortunately there's one more bad thing in store for Jamie—something he'd give anything to be able to forget—and this one leaves him feeling like a stranger to himself. Jamie tries in vain to find the magic trigger that will help Sapphy's memory jump the scratch, but in the end it's Aunt Sapphy who, along with a curious girl named Audrey Krouch, helps Jamie unravel the mysteries of memory and jump the scratch in his own life.

The Virtual Life of Lexie Diamond – Foyt

Lexie Diamond loves her computer. She loves to surf the Web more than anything else—and to the exclusion of a social life. Beyond being just a computer geek, Lexie has developed a unique philosophy that the essential truth about life is found on the Internet, which she navigates with the expertise and finesse of a true believer.

Then a tragic accident rocks Lexie's cyber-driven world and forces her to navigate the real world after all. With the aid of an unexpected ally—her first actual friend—not only is Lexie drawn into a mystery surrounding the accident, but she discovers more magic in the Web than she ever dreamed possible.

Along the way Lexie's beliefs are challenged, her family is turned upside down, and her future is threatened. In this visionary tour de force by a promising new novelist, Lexie must decide what is real and what is virtual: Her life depends on it.

Theodosia - Lafavers

Theodosia Throckmorton has her hands full at the Museum of Legends and Antiquities in London. Her father may be head curator, but it is Theo—and only Theo—who is able to see all the black magic and ancient curses that still cling to the artifacts in the museum. Sneaking behind her father's back, Theo uses old, nearly forgotten Egyptian magic to remove the curses and protect her father and the rest of the museum employees from the ancient, sinister forces that lurk in the museum's dark hallways.

Check out these series:

ALEX RIDER by Anthony Horowitz – action/adventure

ARTEMIS FOWL by Eoin Colfer – action/adventure/fantasy

*CIRQUE DU FREAK by Darren Shan - science fiction/fantasy/ mystery/horror

INHERITANCE by Christopher Paolini – science fiction/fantasy

THE LADY GRACE MYSTERIES by Lady Grace Cavendish – historical mystery

*THE LAST APPRENTICE by Joseph Delaney - science fiction/fantasy/mystery/horror

MATT CHRISTOPHER SPORTS by Matt Christopher

*PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS by Rick Riordan – action/adventure/mythology

RANGER'S APPRENTICE by John Flanagan – fantasy/action/adventure

THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black – action/adventure/fantasy

WARRIORS: THE NEW PROPHECY by Erin Hunter – fantasy/adventure/animals

* = some of Ms.Two-Axe's favorite reads