

# SOPHOMORES BOOK TALK

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please RANK your top 3 choices (3-2-1) and hand this packet back to your mentor.

→ Next week during third block you will be called down to the Cafeteria to get their book, assignment and to sign a contract.

## The Blind Side by Michael Lewis

Explanation: Based on the true story of Leigh Anne and Sean Tuohy, who take in a homeless teenage African-American, Michael "Big Mike" Oher. Michael has no idea who his father is and his mother is a drug addict. The Tuohy's not only provide him with a loving home, but hire a tutor to help him improve his grades to the point where he would qualify for an NCAA Division I athletic scholarship for football. Michael Oher's story is one of determination and human kindness.

## The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother by James McBride

Explanation: This book was written as a tribute to his mother. The chapters alternate between James McBride's descriptions of his early life and first-person accounts of his mother Ruth's life, mostly taking place before her son was born. McBride depicts the conflicting emotions that he endured as he struggled to discover who he truly was, as his mother narrates the hardships that she had to overcome as a white, Jewish woman who chose to marry a black man in 1942.

## Divergent by Veronica Roth

Explanation: First in a Trilogy. It is a young-adult dystopian novel set in the so-called Divergent Universe, that features a post-apocalyptic version of Chicago. The novel follows Beatrice "Tris" Prior as she explores her identity within a society that defines its citizens by their social and personality-related affiliation with five different factions. Also driving the novel is a romantic subplot between Tris and one of her trainers in the Dauntless faction, nicknamed Four.

## Papertowns by John Green

Explanation: When Margo Roth Spiegelman beckons Quentin Jacobsen ("Q") in the middle of the night—dressed like a ninja and plotting an ingenious campaign of revenge—he follows her. Margo's always planned extravagantly, and, until now, she's always planned solo. After a lifetime of loving Margo from afar, things are finally looking up for Q . . . until day breaks and she has vanished. Always an enigma, Margo has now become a mystery. But there are clues. And they're for Q.

## Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmitt Till Case by Chris Crowe

Explanation: Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old Black teenager from Chicago, was visiting family in a small town in Mississippi during the summer of 1955. Likely showing off to friends, Emmett allegedly whistled at a white woman. Three days later, his brutally beaten body was found floating in the Tallahatchie River. The extreme violence of the crime put a national spotlight on the Jim Crow ways of the South, and many Americans—Black and white—were further outraged at the speedy trial of the white murderers. With lively narrative and abundantly illustrated with forty fascinating contemporaneous photographs, this impressive work of nonfiction brings fresh insight to the case in a manner that is eye-opening for teenagers and adults alike.

## Incidents in a Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Jacobs

Explanation: The true story of an individual's struggle for self-identity, self-preservation, and freedom, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* remains among the few extant slave narratives written by a woman. This autobiographical account chronicles the remarkable odyssey of Harriet Jacobs (1813–1897). Written and published in 1861 after Jacobs' escape, this memoir writes frankly of the horrors she suffered as a slave, her eventual escape after several unsuccessful attempts, and her seven years in self-imposed exile, hiding in a coffin-like "garret" attached to her grandmother's porch. A rare firsthand account of a courageous woman's determination and endurance, this inspirational story also represents a valuable historical record of the continuing battle for freedom and the preservation of family.

## The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by R.L. Stevenson

Explanation: It is about a London lawyer named Gabriel John Utterson who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr. Henry Jekyll, and the evil Edward Hyde. The work is commonly associated with the rare mental condition often spuriously called "split personality", referred to in psychiatry as dissociative identity disorder, where within the same body there exists more than one distinct personality. In this case, there are two personalities within Dr. Jekyll, one apparently good and the other evil; completely opposite levels of morality. The novella's impact is such that it has become a part of the language, with the very phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" coming to mean a person who is vastly different in moral character from one situation to the next.

### **The Testing** by Joelle Charbonneau

Explanation: It's graduation day for sixteen-year-old Malencia Vale, and the entire Five Lakes Colony (the former Great Lakes) is celebrating. All Cia can think about—hope for—is whether she'll be chosen for The Testing, a United Commonwealth program that selects the best and brightest new graduates to become possible leaders of the slowly revitalizing post-war civilization. When Cia is chosen, her father finally tells her about his own nightmarish half-memories of The Testing. Armed with his dire warnings ("Cia, trust no one"), she bravely heads off to Tosu City, far away from friends and family, perhaps forever. Danger, romance—and sheer terror—await.

### **Unwind** by Neil Shusterman

Explanation: This a science fiction novel that takes place in the United States, after a civil war somewhere in the near future. After a civil war—known as the Second Civil War or the Heartland War—is fought over abortion, a compromise was reached, allowing parents to sign an order for their children between the ages of 13 and 18 years old to be unwound—taken to "harvest camps" and having their body parts harvested for later use. The reasoning was that, since 100% (actually 99.44% taking into account the appendix and "useless" organs) was required to be used, unwinds did not technically "die", because their individual body parts lived on. In addition to unwinding, parents who are unable to raise their children to age thirteen for retroactive abortion have the option to "stork" their child by leaving it on another family's porch. If they don't get caught, the "storked" baby then becomes the other family's responsibility.

### **Killing Mr. Griffin** by Louis Duncan

Explanation: Mr. Griffin is the strictest teacher at Del Norte High, with a penchant for endless projects and humiliating his students. Even straight-A student Susan can't believe how mean he is to the charismatic Mark Kinney. So when her crush asks Susan to help a group of students teach a lesson of their own, she goes along. After all, it's a harmless prank, right? But things don't go according to plan. When one "accident" leads to another, people begin to die. Susan and her friends must face the awful truth: one of them is a killer.

### **If I Stay** by Gayle Foreman

EXPLANATION: In the blink of an eye everything changes. Seventeen year-old Mia has no memory of the accident; she can only recall what happened afterwards, watching her own damaged body being taken from the wreck. Little by little she struggles to put together the pieces- to figure out what she has lost, what she has left, and the very difficult choice she must make. Heart Wrenchingly beautiful, this will change the way you look at life, love, and family. Now a major motion picture starring Chloe Grace Moretz, Mia's story will stay with you for a long, long time.

### **Fences** by August Wilson

EXPLANATION: *Fences* is the story of a responsible yet otherwise flawed black garbage collector in pre-Civil Rights America who, in August Wilson's hands, rises to the level of an epic hero. Deemed a generational play, it mirrors the classic struggle of status quo, tradition, and age, versus change, innovation, and youth.

### **The Other Wes Moore** by Wes Moore

EXPLANATION: Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.

### **The Absolutely True Story of A Part Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie

EXPLANATION: Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

### **Unfriended** by Rachel Vail

EXPLANATION: In middle school, nothing is more important than friendship. When Truly is invited to sit at the Popular Table with the group she has dreamed of joining, she can hardly believe her luck. Everyone seems so nice, so kind to one another. But all is not as it seems with her new friends, and soon she's caught in a maelstrom of lies, misunderstandings, accusations and counter-accusations, all happening very publicly in the relentless, hyperconnected social media world from which there is no escape. Six eighth-graders, four girls and two boys, struggle to understand and process their fractured glimpses into one another's lives as they find new ways to disconnect, but also to connect, in Rachel Vail's richest and most searching book.