

Literacy and Community Initiative Offers Book Recommendations for Teen Readers



The **Literacy and Community Initiative (LCI)**, a collaboration between the NC State College of Education's Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, the **Friday Institute for Educational Innovation** and community-based organizations, is committed to serving marginalized students through text, including student publications, as well as advocacy and leadership.

To encourage reading among youth involved with CORRAL Riding Academy — an LCI partner nonprofit organization that pairs rescued horses with girls in high-risk situations while providing physical and emotional support — LCI has created a book club with a list of recommended reads, which they are resharing more broadly to encourage reading among all youth.

Under the supervision of Assistant Professor **Crystal Chen Lee, Ed.D.**, students and CORRAL undergraduate resident advisors Desiree McClamon and Angelique Marrero curated the list, which consists of books that either one or both of the students have read.

Many books were chosen because they incorporate themes and lessons that teen readers can relate to. Although most selections on this list can be read independently, some should be centered around discussion, as they deal with sensitive topics.

High School Recommendations

- ***The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas:** Addressing topics like confronting racism and the desire to live a normal teenage life, this book tells the story of 16-year-old Starr Carter as she navigates the differences between the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends.
- ***Internment* by Samira Ahmed:** This book tackles issues surrounding Islamophobia and the desire to advocate against wrongdoing through the story of a 17-year old who leads a revolution against the internment camp she has been placed in.
- ***Legend* by Marie Lu:** This dystopian novel follows the story of June, a smart and strong 15-year-old who must face the truth and carve her own direction in life as she crosses paths with the teenage girl accused in her brother's murder.

- > **On the Come Up by Angie Thomas:** This book confronts the topic of class struggle through the story of 16-year-old Bri, who dreams of making it big as a rapper as her family faces financial hardship and potential homelessness.
- > **Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult:** This book explores race relations in the United States through multiple perspectives with the story of a white family who requests that a black nurse not care for their son, only to sue her when she hesitates to save him in an emergency.
- > **Americanah by Chimamanda Adichie:** Combining romance, politics and social justice, this story focuses on a young couple who leave their home in Nigeria and must grapple with their race for the first time as they live separately for 15 years in America and England.
- > **The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood:** This dystopian novel depicts a world where women are only used for reproduction, exploring women's rights issues and the consequences of devaluing women in society.
- > **Becoming by Michelle Obama:** In this memoir, former First Lady Michelle Obama shares the experiences that shaped her life and chronicles her personal journey of self-discovery.
- > **Hunger by Roxane Gay:** This non-fiction selection, developed from popular essays and a long-running Tumblr blog, talks candidly about author Roxane Gay's struggle with self-image due to being overweight and her discovery of what it means to take care of yourself.
- > **Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls:** This memoir chronicles the author's difficult upbringing in a nomadic family and tackles sensitive issues including childhood trauma, alcoholism and sexual abuse.
- > **Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates:** Formatted as a letter to the author's son, this book explores issues of racism in society and what it means to be a black person in America.
- > **Educated by Tara Westover:** This coming-of-age story offers a look at the value of education, a privilege the author was denied throughout her childhood in the mountains of Idaho, where she was raised by survivalists who focused on preparing for the end of the world.
- > **Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson:** This true story shares the story of the young lawyer who founded the Equal Justice Initiative and his first case; freeing a young man who was sentenced to death for a murder he insisted he didn't commit.
- > **Tuesdays with Morrie by Mitch Albom:** In this memoir, the author shares the story of the opportunity he had to reconnect with his mentor, Morrie, in the last months of his battle with ALS, and how their weekly meetings became a final lesson on how to live life.
- > **Beatrice and Virgil by Yann Martel:** This story about a donkey, a monkey and the journey undertaken by a man named Henry explores how narratives about groups of people can be shared in order to oppress them.
- > **Slay by Britteny Morris:** This book follows the story of 17-year-old Kiera Johnson, one of few black students at her school, and the way she struggles to reconcile her identities as an honors student as well as a developer in a secret multiplayer online role-playing card game.
- > **Looking for Alaska by John Green:** This book explores the ups and downs of being a teenager and the journey to find your place in life through the story of Miles Halter, who leaves his safe life at home and meets an interesting young girl, Alaska Young, at his new boarding school.
- > **Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson:** A novel that should be centered around discussion, as it deals with heavy themes including rape, this book shares the story of a high school student who learns to find her voice, advocate for herself, and stop letting past events define her.

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