

Dear 6th Grade Families,

Our ELA class is ready to begin reading *StudySync, Unit 1*. The overarching theme of this unit is **Testing our Limits**. Students will be asked to engage in thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing about the following: *What do we do when life gets hard? How do we respond in a difficult situation? What do we do when our limits are tested? How do we face a challenge? What actions can we take to solve a problem? How can we overcome feelings of sadness, stress, or fear?* We are providing you with the summaries of the unit selections and encourage you to read them using the digital platform by logging into your child's student account to access the texts. If you have any concerns or questions regarding the unit texts, please contact the classroom teacher or school administrator.

Eleven- In Sandra Cisneros's short story "Eleven," Rachel is confronted with an unexpected challenge. Her teacher insists that Rachel is the owner of an old, ugly sweater that has been hanging in the student cloak room for months. But the sweater doesn't belong to Rachel, and to her surprise, she is only able to reply with the most feeble of responses. Finally, she bursts into tears. Rachel's reaction upsets her until she makes the discovery that even though you've just turned eleven, sometimes you can still act as if you were four or five.

The Mighty Miss Malone - In Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Mighty Miss Malone*, twelve-year-old Deza Malone is a bright student with a promising future. But when the Great Depression hits Gary, Indiana, her family is confronted with many new challenges. Deza's father leaves town to find work, and when he doesn't return, Deza, her mother, and her brother go looking for him. They journey across the state by boxcar until they wind up in a "Hooverville" outside of Flint, Michigan.

Red Scarf Girl - In her memoir, *Red Scarf Girl*, Ji-Li Jiang recounts how hard it is to grow up dedicated to the Communist Party.

Hatchet - In Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* 13-year-old Brian Robeson discovers just how hard life can be when he is stranded in the Canadian wilderness after his pilot has a heart attack and their plane crashes into a lake.

In the play, **The Magic Marker Mystery** by René Saldaña, Jr. - As a budding private investigator, Mickey Rangel is asked to solve a difficult case at the middle school he attends, and find out who is marking up the school grounds with graffiti in René Saldaña Jr.'s "The Magic Marker Mystery."

Scout's Honor by Avi, three friends from Brooklyn, all Boy Scouts, go camping by themselves in the Palisades of New Jersey in order to earn merit badges and prove they are "tough." But their trip turns out to be more of a challenge than they thought it would.

From René Saldaña, Jr.'s 2003 collection of short stories, **The Good Samaritan** is told through the eyes of a teenage boy named Rey. When his relationship with a neighborhood family turns sour, Rey soon finds himself faced with an age-old moral dilemma.

The first of three selections, Lewis Carroll's whimsical poem ***Jabberwocky*** combines fantastical characters, invented language and formal structure to tell a heroic tale.

Gathering Blue, a crippled young girl named Kira fears she will be forced to leave because of her disability—but her talent for embroidery may earn her a role in society.

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time* follows Meg Murry, her younger brother Charles Wallace, and their neighbor Calvin as they embark on a dangerous journey to find Meg and Charles' missing father.

Teachers may also *choose* to have students read the full text of the **following titles**:

- **Hatchet** by Gary Paulsen - *Hatchet* is the story of Brian Robeson, a thirteen-year-old boy from suburban New York City. His parents have recently split, and Brian is spending the summer with his father in northern Canada. When the pilot of the single-engine plane that flies Brian over the Canadian wilderness has a fatal heart attack, Brian manages to crash-land the plane in a small lake. Thrown into a wild and harsh environment, he must learn to survive by trial and error as he constructs a shelter, finds food, creates fire, skirmishes with wildlife and weather, and steadily develops confidence and resilience. Throughout his ordeal, Brian's only tool is the hatchet his mother gave him just before his ill-fated flight. It proves invaluable as Brian learns how best to use it. As students read *Hatchet*, we will ask them to pay attention to how Brian changes over the course of the novel. How does he overcome his fears and learn from his mistakes? What does it take to survive in the wild?
- **A Wrinkle in Time** by Madeleine L'Engle - Meg Murry, a high-school-aged girl who is transported on an adventure through time and space with her younger brother Charles Wallace and her friend Calvin O'Keefe to rescue her father, a gifted scientist, from the evil forces that hold him prisoner on another planet. At the beginning of the book, Meg is a homely, awkward, but loving girl, troubled by personal insecurities and her concern for her father, who has been missing for over a year. The plot begins with the arrival of Mrs. Whatsit at the Murry house on a dark and stormy evening. Although she looks like an eccentric tramp, she is actually a celestial creature with the ability to read Meg's thoughts. She startles Meg's mother by reassuring her of the existence of a tesseract--a sort of "wrinkle" in space and time. It is through this wrinkle that Meg and her companions will travel through the fifth dimension in search of Mr. Murry. As students read *A Wrinkle in Time*, we will ask them to consider the significance of key issues such as free will versus fate, conformity versus individuality, and the complex relationship between good and evil. How does protagonist Meg Murry rise from zero to hero?