

June 2023

Hello Rising 6th Grade!

Your 6th grade teaching team is very excited for next year! We've picked out a few learning experiences for you to explore during your summer days! These should help you keep your skills fresh and also help us to get to know each other better at the beginning of the school year.

REQUIRED READING & PROJECT, Part 1:

1) Read *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan.

This novel describes the journey of a young girl and her family from their beautiful ranch in Mexico to a challenging new life in California. The plot and themes are captivating, and the details will lead nicely into our opening social studies units on the Caribbean and Latin America. The Spanish phrases scattered throughout should also keep you sharp for Spanish class. Please note: If you have already read this book and it feels very fresh in your mind, we encourage you to read *Becoming Naomi León*, which is written by the same author (it is also at a higher reading level). If you do opt to read this instead, you should still do the project on *Esperanza Rising*.

Early in the story, Esperanza's grandmother (Abuelita) says to her: "No hay rosa sin espinas. There is no *rose without thorns*." Esperanza smiles when she hears this, knowing that Abuelita isn't really talking about roses, but instead she is reminding her that a person can't experience true happiness in life without also experiencing difficulties. As you read, take note of the thorns (difficulties) Esperanza encounters, as well as the roses (joys) she eventually finds. *Think of the thorns as challenges, setbacks, obstacles, tragedies, problems or difficulties. Think of the roses as growth, happiness, triumphs, successes, new understandings or joys.*

2) Create a project that shows and tells us about at least five thorns and five roses for Esperanza in the book. Choose the format below that you think will best show your understanding of these ideas. If you would like to use a format that isn't listed, please feel welcome to do so, as long as it communicates your ideas about the thorns and roses clearly. A viewer needs to be able to look at your project and clearly understand what thorns and roses you are including.

To recap: **In your project show at least five thorns and five roses that**

Esperanza experiences.

Choose one way to show this:

- An illustration with captions (poster, painting, drawing, collage, cartoon, etc.)
- A written description (essay, poem, journal, letter, etc.)
- A three-dimensional representation with captions (model, sculpture, mobile, etc.)
- A graphic organizer (chart, table, web, etc.)
- A presentation of ideas through technology (glog, prezi, iMovie, PowerPoint, etc.)
- A quilt square or squares, either sewn or glued, with a written explanation

REQUIRED READING & PROJECT Part II:

1. Choose one book from the list below and read it. (Read more if you like!)

(Note: Please choose a book from this list that you have not read before.)

Applegate, Katherine: *The One and Only Ivan* (fiction/animals) Ivan is an easygoing gorilla. Living at the Exit 8 Big Top Mall and Video Arcade, he has grown accustomed to humans watching him through the glass walls of his domain. He rarely misses his life in the jungle. In fact, he hardly ever thinks about it at all. Instead, Ivan thinks about TV shows he's seen and about his friends Stella, an elderly elephant, and Bob, a stray dog. But mostly Ivan thinks about art and how to capture the taste of a mango or the sound of leaves with color and a well-placed line. Then he meets Ruby, a baby elephant taken from her family, and she makes Ivan see their home—and his own art—through new eyes. When Ruby arrives, change comes with her, and it's up to Ivan to make it a change for the better.

Blake, Ashley Herring: *Ivy Aberdeens Letter to the Universe* (realistic fiction) When a tornado rips through town, twelve-year-old Ivy Aberdeen's house is destroyed and her family of five is displaced. Ivy feels invisible and ignored in the aftermath of the storm—and what's worse, her notebook filled with secret drawings of girls holding hands has gone missing. Mysteriously, Ivy's drawings begin to reappear in her locker with notes from someone telling her to open up about her identity. Ivy thinks—and hopes—that this someone might be her classmate, another girl for whom Ivy has begun to develop a crush. Will Ivy find the strength and courage to follow her true feelings?

Bowling, Dusty: *Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus* (realistic fiction, inclusion) Aven Green loves to tell people that she lost her arms in an alligator wrestling match, or a wildfire in Tanzania, but the truth is she was born without them. And when her parents

take a job running Stagecoach Pass, a rundown western theme park in Arizona, Aven moves with them across the country knowing that she'll have to answer the question over and

over again. Her new life takes an unexpected turn when she bonds with Connor, a classmate who also feels isolated because of his own disability, and they discover a room at Stagecoach Pass that holds bigger secrets than Aven ever could have imagined. It's hard to solve a mystery, help a friend, and face your worst fears. But Aven's about to discover she can do it all . . . even without arms.

Cheng, Jack: *See You in the Cosmos* (realistic fiction, scifi) Follow science-loving Filipino American Alex Petroski and his dog on an adventure of recording what life on Earth is really like (and rocketing their recording out to space for alien life forms to hear). As Alex journeys across Colorado, New Mexico, and California, he meets remarkable people that lead him to uncover the secrets of his own life. A bittersweet story of love, hope, determination, and understanding.

Gino, Alex: *George* (realistic fiction, lgbtq) George is a transgender fourth grader who wants to try out for the lead role in the school production of *Charlotte's Web* so that her mother will see her as a girl. Alex Gino presents George's struggles with both bullying and the painful reassurance that she will "turn into a fine young man." George won a Stonewall Book Award—and made the American Library Association's 10 Most Challenged Books list in 2016 and 2017.

Gratz, Allen: *Refugee* (historical fiction/holocaust tie-in/mature themes) JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of *tomorrow*. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

Hiassen, Carl: *Hoot* (mystery/realistic fiction) Roy, who is new to his small Florida community, becomes involved in another boy's attempt to save a colony of burrowing owls

from a proposed construction site in this Newbery Honor book and the first children's book by *New York Times* bestselling author Hiassen. Or, substitute a different Carl Hiassen book.

Khan, Henna: *Amina's Voice* (fiction/diversity) The story of an 11-year-old girl navigating friendship, family, religion, and dreams of becoming a soul-singing sensation.

In

a quiet Milwaukee suburb, Amina and her best friend Soojin grapple with their own ethnic identities and the pressure to Americanize. Soojin is Korean American and on the pathway to citizenship. She's contemplating changing her name to solidify her American identity, while Amina, who is Pakistani American, must reconcile her love of singing Motown with her Muslim faith. Popular Emily, a white girl, who has a history of bullying, creates a wedge when she tries to befriend the pair, drawing skepticism from Amina. Things begin to unravel when Amina's uncle comes to visit from Pakistan and her deficiencies in Urdu and Arabic are exposed—along with the fact that Amina and her older brother, Mustafa, aren't necessarily the perfect children her father would like them to be. When the neighborhood mosque is vandalized, the greater community comes together. Amina's struggles to balance her faith, friendship, and aspirations are all resolved—albeit a bit too neatly

Korman, Gordon: *Restart*. (realistic fiction) Chase doesn't remember falling off the roof. He doesn't remember hitting his head. He doesn't, in fact, remember *anything*. He wakes up in a hospital room and suddenly has to learn his whole life all over again . . . starting with his own name. He knows he's Chase. But who *is* Chase? When he gets back to school, he sees that different kids have very different reactions to his return. Some kids treat him like a hero. Some kids are clearly afraid of him. One girl in particular is so angry with him that she pours her frozen yogurt on his head the first chance she gets. Pretty soon, it's not only a question of who Chase is--it's a question of who he *was* . . . and who he's going to be.

Lord, Cynthia: *Rules* (fiction/inclusion) Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules—from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"—in order to stop his embarrassing behaviors. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a paraplegic boy, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

Lupica, Mike: *Heat* (realistic fiction/sports) Michael Arroyo has a pitching arm that throws serious heat. But his firepower is nothing compared to the heat Michael faces in his day-to-day life. Newly orphaned after his father led the family's escape from Cuba, Michael's only family is his seventeen-year old brother Carlos. If Social Services hears of their situation, they will be separated in the foster-care system-or worse, sent back to Cuba. Together, the boys carry on alone, dodging bills and anyone who asks too many questions. But then someone wonders how a twelve-year-old boy could possibly throw with as much power as Michael Arroyo throws. With no way to prove his age, no birth certificate, and no parent to fight for his cause, Michael's secret world is blown wide open, and he discovers that family can come from the most unexpected sources.

Perez, Celia C: *The First Rule of Punk* (realistic fiction, music) The First Rule of Punk seriously rocks (pun intended)! Twelve-year-old punk-rocker Malú has to navigate her identity at a new school and in a new home in this fun story with themes of friendship, finding your place, and learning to rock out like no one's watching.

Respicio, Mae: *The House that Lou Built* (realistic fiction) Lou Bulosan-Nelson shares a room with her mom in her grandmother's house, but longs for a place of her own where she can escape her crazy but lovable extended Filipino family. So she plans to spend her summer building a 100-square-foot tiny house. In the end, Lou finds herself constructing a deeper meaning of home and family.

Reynolds, Jason: *Ghost* (realistic fiction/sports) Ghost. Lu. Patina. Sunny. Four kids from wildly different backgrounds with personalities that are explosive when they clash. But they are also four kids chosen for an elite middle school track team—a team that could qualify them for the Junior Olympics if they can get their acts together. They all have a lot to lose, but they also have a lot to prove, not only to each other, but to themselves. Running. That's all Ghost (real name Castle Cranshaw) has ever known. But Ghost has been running for the wrong reasons—it all started with running away from his father, who, when Ghost was a very little boy, chased him and his mother through their apartment, then down the street, with a loaded gun, aiming to kill. Since then, Ghost has been the one causing problems—and running away from them—until he meets Coach, an ex-Olympic Medalist who sees something in Ghost: crazy natural talent. If Ghost can stay on track, literally and figuratively, he could be the best sprinter in the city. Can Ghost harness his raw talent for speed, or will his past finally catch up to him?

Rhodes, Jules Parker: *Ghost Boys* (diversity/social justice/gun violence) *Only the living can make the world better. Live and make it better.* Twelve-year-old Jerome is shot by a police officer who mistakes his toy gun for a real threat. As a ghost, he observes the devastation that's been unleashed on his family and community in the wake of what they see as an unjust and brutal killing. Soon Jerome meets another ghost: Emmett Till, a boy from a very different time but similar circumstances. Emmett helps Jerome process what has happened, on a journey towards recognizing how historical racism may have led to the events that ended his life. Jerome also meets Sarah, the daughter of the police officer, who grapples with her father's actions. Once again Jewell Parker Rhodes deftly weaves historical and socio-political layers into a gripping and poignant story about how children and families face the complexities of today's world, and how one boy grows to understand American blackness in the aftermath of his own death.

Sachar, Louis: *Holes* (mystery) Stanley Yelnats is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes: five feet wide and five feet deep. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake. The boys are digging holes because the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment — and redemption.

Sieple, Samantha: *Death on the River of Doubt* (nonfiction) Death on the River of Doubt takes listeners inside the thrilling journey that unfolds as Theodore Roosevelt and his companions navigate the Amazonian River of Doubt through an unforgiving and unpredictable jungle. With new threats at every turn, from blood-thirsty piranhas and raging rapids to starvation, disease, and a traitor in their own ranks, it seems that not everyone will make it out alive. Through it all, the indomitable Teddy Roosevelt remained determined to complete their mission and rewrite the map of the world. Or die trying. This narrative is told through diary entries, maps, photos, and more.

2. Choose one of the following projects to complete.

(Note: We'll be sharing our projects, so bring it proudly on the first day of school, clearly labeled with your name!)

1) Rewrite an important part of the story as a news article. You might include images,

quotes, facts, interviews, charts or any features that help to tell the “news” about what happened.

2) Write a new ending for the book, or the first few pages of a sequel. Try to give your piece the same style and tone that the author uses.

3) Create a timeline of the most important moments in the story with illustrations and brief descriptions of each of them.

4) Build a three-dimensional object that shows something very important about the book you read. Include a caption that explains what you have shown.

5) Write a letter to the author explaining what you liked and disliked about the book and why. Give praise and suggestions for specific parts.

WRITING

Write a letter to your 6th grade teachers! Tell us about something you love to do, something that gets you interested in learning, and some things you hope and wonder for this coming year. Make your letter between one and two pages long and bring it on the first day of school. (*Note: you may mail it or e-mail it to your teacher prior to the 1st day of school if you'd like!*)

MATH

Complete all problems in the Everyday Math “End-of-Year-Assessment” packet. This will help to keep your skills sharp! It is not an actual graded test, but it will help us to see how you are doing with the skills. Bring this packet in (with questions if you had any) on the first day of school!

SPANISH

ALL students: [Duolingo](#)

A designated assignment (200xp) was created for your class on Duolingo.

1. Create a Duolingo account by clicking the above link.

2. Use your GSFS email account, and use gsfs2025 for your password.
3. If you are asked to create a username, make it: first name, last initial 2025 (for example, "NicoleN2025" for Nicole)
4. Take a placement test to test out of the skills you already know!
5. And have fun practicing! This work IS OPTIONAL and is encouraged for those who love to learn language and/or believe it will help them get on solid footing for the academic year.
6. If you can't figure out how to make an account and get in the class, just do 200XP of practice and we'll figure it out in the fall!

CHECKLIST

- ___ 1. I read *Esperanza Rising*.
- ___ 2. I did my "thorns and roses" project.
- ___ 3. I read a second book from the list of choices.
- ___ 4. I did a project for that book.
- ___ 5. I wrote a letter to my 6th grade teachers.
- ___ 6. I completed my math packet.
- ___ 7. I completed my Spanish work.

We hope that you enjoy your summer and are looking forward to September!

Warmest regards,
Chris (she/her) and Basha (she/her)