Summer Reading for Incoming Freshmen

Dear Students:

Welcome to John Carroll! As an incoming freshman English student, you’ll be asked to read one of the books from the list below. Please note that this is in addition to your choice for the school-wide summer reading program.

Note to Parents:

The Freshman English teachers have selected the books on this list from popular and well-regarded contemporary young adult fiction titles. An assignment for the English book will be available online over the summer. **Students should own, and bring to school, a copy of the book they select.**

Many of the books listed below have won awards from literary organizations, libraries, and other groups and have been selected by other high schools as required reading. As with nearly all contemporary novels, even those written for teenagers, some content may be considered objectionable by some parents. Though each of the titles listed below has a central message that is valuable for young people, some of the authors have also included adult themes. For this reason, we have provided a wide array of options. Parents concerned about the content of any of the titles are urged to visit [http://www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) and search by author or title for a detailed breakdown each book’s content.

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<th>Freshman English List (Young Adult Fiction – choose ONE)</th>
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<td>1. <em>When the Emperor was Divine</em> by Julie Otsuka</td>
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<td>2. <em>Whale Talk</em> by Chris Crutcher</td>
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<td>7. <em>Can't Get There from Here</em> by Todd Strasser</td>
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<td>8. <em>Borderline</em> by Allan Stratton</td>
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<td>9. <em>Going for The Record</em> by Julie A. Swanson</td>
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**Freshman English Book Choice Descriptions:**

1. *When the Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka. On a sunny day in Berkley, California, in 1942, a woman sees a sign in a post office window, returns to her home and begins to pack her family’s possessions. Like thousands of other Japanese Americans, they have been reclassified, virtually overnight, as enemy aliens and are about to be uprooted from their home and sent to a dusty internment camp in the Utah desert. This story is told from five different points of view from one family trying to survive its fate. Julie Otsuka is a PEN/Faulkner award winning author.

2. *Eleanor and Park* by Rainbow Rowell. Two misfits from Omaha, Nebraska, fall in love for the first time when they meet on the school bus. In this debut young adult fiction novel, Rainbow
Rowell creates two central characters who “explore the challenges of being ‘different’ (in Park's case, because he's half-Korean, in Eleanor's because of her looks and family), but also the joy of falling in love for the first time. Popular culture from the '80s is part of the setting, and mature themes about emotional and financial instability, poverty, and domestic conflict are woven into the story (commonsensemedia.org).

3. *Whale Talk* by Chris Crutcher: Intellectually and athletically gifted, TJ, a multiracial, adopted teenager, shuns organized sports and the gung-ho athletes at his high school until he agrees to form a swimming team and recruits some of the school's less popular students. Winner of the 2002 Washington State Book Award.

4. *The Beckoners* by Carrie Mac: After moving to a new town, Zoe tries to fit in at her new school by joining the Beckoners, a group of girls who use intimidation and violence to rule the school. A nominee for the International Reading Association’s 2006 Book Award.

5. *Monster* by Walter Dean Meyers: Steve Harmon, a 16-year-old from Harlem, is on trial for murder. Through diary entries and a screenplay-like format, Steve comes to grips with who he is and the choices he’s made. A winner of the Prinz Award and a Coretta Scott King Award.

6. *Jude* by Kate Morgenroth: Still reeling from his drug-dealing father’s murder, moving in with the wealthy mother he never knew, and transferring to a private school, fifteen-year-old Jude is tricked into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit. A selection of the New York and Texas public libraries and an Edgar Award nominee.

7. *Can’t Get There from Here* by Todd Strasser: Tired of being hungry, cold, and dirty from living on the streets of New York City with a tribe of other homeless teenagers who are dying, one by one, a girl named Maybe ponders her future and longs for someone to care about her. Named a Best Book for Teens by the American Library Association.

8. *Borderline* by Allan Stratton: Sami sets out to prove his father’s innocence after Homeland Security breaks into their house and hauls his father away as a person of interest in a possible terrorist attack. A selection of the American and Canadian Library Associations.

9. *Going for The Record* by Julie A. Swanson: Seventeen-year-old Leah's chance to make the national soccer team does not seem so important when she learns that her father has cancer and may only have months to live. Named as one of 2005’s Top Ten Sports Books for Youth by Booklist.

10. *The Rules of Survival* by Nancy Werlin: Seventeen-year-old Matthew recounts his attempts, starting at a young age, to free himself and his sisters from the grip of their emotionally and physically abusive mother. Selected as a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association.