

# 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE FAIR HOUSING BOOK CLUB LIST:

*THEME: Native American Culture*

**War Dances** by Sherman Alexie

War Dances blends short stories, poems, call-and-response, and more into something that only Sherman Alexie could have written. Ordinary men stand at the threshold of profound change, from a story about a famous writer caring for a dying but still willful father, to the tale of a young Indian boy who learns to value his own life by appreciating the deaths of others. Perceptions change, too, as “Another Proclamation” casts a shadow over Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, and “Invisible Dog on a Leash” limns the heartbreak of shattered childhood illusions. And nostalgia for antiquated technology is tenderly rendered in “Ode to Mix Tapes” and “Ode for Pay Phones.”

With his versatile voice, Alexie explores love, betrayal, fatherhood, alcoholism, and art in this spirited, soulful, and endlessly entertaining collection, transcending genre boundaries to create something truly unique.

Discussion Questions:

<http://www.newpaltz.edu/english/composition/wardancesstudyguide.pdf> (Page 13)

**The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie

Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

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.

Discussion Questions: <https://oneminutebookreviews.wordpress.com/2008/01/16/a-totally-unauthorized-reading-group-guide-to-sherman-alexie%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98the-absolutely-true-diary-of-a-part-time-indian%E2%80%99/>

*THEME: Civil Rights Historical Perspective*

**A Tugging String: A Novel about Growing Up During the Civil Rights Era**

by David T. Greenberg

Duvy Greenberg is an ordinary twelve-year-old trying to fit in. He knows that his father, Jack, is a civil rights lawyer, but Duvy lives worlds away from Dorothy Milton, a black woman struggling to become a registered voter in Selma, Alabama. When Dorothy reaches out to Martin Luther King Jr. for help, she sets in motion a series of events that—



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with Jack Greenberg’s help—will open Duvy’s eyes to the reality of racial inequality and forever change the course of history. Blending facts, speeches, memories, and conjecture, this novel portrays the emotions and events surrounding the Selma-Montgomery Voting Rights March.

**Iggie’s House** by Judy Blume

When it comes to friendship, who cares about skin color? This classic middle grade novel from Judy Blume carries an important message—with a fresh new look. Iggie’s House just wasn’t the same. Iggie was gone, moved to Tokyo. And there was Winnie, cracking her gum on Grove Street, where she’d always lived, with no more best friend and two weeks left of summer.

Then the Garber family moved into Iggie’s house—two boys, Glenn and Herbie, and Tina, their little sister. The Garbers were black and Grove Street was white and always had been. Winnie, a welcoming committee of one, set out to make a good impression and be a good neighbor. That’s why the trouble started. Because Glenn and Herbie and Tina didn’t want a “good neighbor.” They wanted a friend.

**Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy** by Gary D. Schmidt

It only takes a few hours for Turner Buckminster to start hating Phippsburg, Maine. No one in town will let him forget that he's a minister's son, even if he doesn't act like one. But then he meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, a smart and sassy girl from a poor nearby island community founded by former slaves. Despite his father's-and the town's-disapproval of their friendship, Turner spends time with Lizzie, and it opens up a whole new world to him, filled with the mystery and wonder of Maine's rocky coast. The two soon discover that the town elders, along with Turner's father, want to force the people to leave Lizzie's island so that Phippsburg can start a lucrative tourist trade there. Turner gets caught up in a spiral of disasters that alter his life-but also lead him to new levels of acceptance and maturity. This sensitively written historical novel, based on the true story of a community's destruction, highlights a unique friendship during a time of change.

Discussion Questions:

[http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers\\_guides/9780553494952.pdf](http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/teachers_guides/9780553494952.pdf) (Page 8)

**Okay for Now** by Gary D. Schmidt

As a fourteen-year-old who just moved to a new town, with no friends and a louse for an older brother, Doug Swieteck has all the stats stacked against him. So begins a coming-of-age masterwork full of equal parts comedy and tragedy from Newbery Honor winner Gary D. Schmidt. As Doug struggles to be more than the “skinny thug” that his teachers and the police think him to be, he finds an unlikely ally in Lil Spicer—a fiery young lady who “smelled like daisies would smell if they were growing in a big field under a clearing sky after a rain.” In Lil, Doug finds the strength to endure an abusive father, the suspicions of a whole town, and the return of his oldest brother, forever scarred, from Vietnam. Together, they find a safe haven in the local library, inspiration in learning about the plates of John James Audubon’s birds, and a hilarious adventure on a Broadway stage.

**The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963** by Christopher Paul Curtis

A wonderful middle-grade novel narrated by Kenny, 9, about his middle-class black family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. When Kenny's 13-year-old brother, Byron, gets to be too much trouble, they head South to Birmingham to visit Grandma, the one person who can shape him up. And they happen to be in Birmingham when Grandma's church is blown up.

Discussion Questions: <http://www.brighthubeducation.com/middle-school-english-lessons/94269-the-watsonsgo-to-birmingham-classroom-review-questions/>

**To Kill a Mockingbird** by Harper Lee

In To Kill a Mockingbird, author Harper Lee uses memorable characters to explore civil rights and racism in the segregated Southern United States of the 1930s. Told through the eyes of Scout Finch, you learn about her father Atticus Finch, an attorney who hopelessly strives to prove the innocence of a black man unjustly accused of rape; and about Boo Radley, a mysterious neighbor who saves Scout and her brother Jem from being killed.

Discussion Questions: <http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/13-fiction/1063-to-kill-a-mockingbird-lee?start=3>

***THEME/PERSPECTIVE: Persons with Disabilities***

**Wonder** by R.J. Palacio

I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse.

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face. Wonder, now a #1 New York Times bestseller and included on the Texas Bluebonnet Award master list, begins from Auggie's point of view, but soon switches to include his classmates, his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives converge in a portrait of one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance.

Discussion Questions: <http://rjpalacio.com/for-teachers.html>

**365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book Precepts** by R.J. Palacio

In the #1 *New York Times* bestselling novel *Wonder*, readers were introduced to memorable English teacher Mr. Browne and his love of precepts. This companion book features conversations between Mr. Browne and Auggie, Julian, Summer, Jack Will, and others, giving readers a special peek at their lives after *Wonder* ends. Mr. Browne's essays and correspondence are rounded out by a precept for each day of the year—drawn from popular songs to children's books to inscriptions on Egyptian tombstones to fortune cookies. His selections celebrate the goodness of human beings, the strength of people's hearts, and the power of people's wills.

There's something for everyone here, with words of wisdom from such noteworthy people as Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Confucius, Goethe, Sappho—and over 100 readers of *Wonder* who sent R. J. Palacio their own precepts.

### **Out of My Mind** by Sharon Draper

From award-winning author Sharon Draper comes *Out of My Mind*, the story of a brilliant girl who cannot speak or write. Melody is not like most people. She cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory; she can remember every detail of everything she has ever experienced. She is smarter than most of the adults who try to diagnose her and smarter than her classmates in her integrated classroom—the very same classmates who dismiss her as mentally challenged, because she cannot tell them otherwise. But Melody refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. And she's determined to let everyone know it...somehow.

In this breakthrough story—reminiscent of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*—from multiple Coretta Scott King Award-winner Sharon Draper, readers will come to know a brilliant mind and a brave spirit who will change forever how they look at anyone with a disability.

<http://sharondraper.com/core/oomm.pdf>

### **What is fair housing?**

Fair housing is the right to choose housing free from unlawful discrimination. Federal, state and local fair housing laws protect people from discrimination in housing transactions such as rentals, sales, lending, and insurance. Specifically, the federal Fair Housing Act and Michigan's Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act protect against housing discrimination based on the following "protected classes":

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex
- National origin
- Familial status
- Disability
- Marital status
- Age

*The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan prevents and eliminates housing discrimination and ensures equal housing opportunity through education, advocacy and enforcement.*

