

Independent Reading titles 2018 (Summaries are from commonsensemedia.org; I recommend that website for students & parents who want to know more about these titles before selecting one. *Titles with an asterisk are available at the WHS library.)

Salt to the Sea (Ruta Sepetys)

Ruta Sepetys' historical novel SALT TO THE SEA follows four young adults harboring deep secrets. Their fates intertwine the winter of 1945 on the German ship the Wilhelm Gustloff, filled five times over capacity with mostly civilians as it attempts to flee the advancing Red Army on the Baltic Sea. Aryan-looking Lithuanian nurse Joana is around 21 and leads a motley group of refugees on foot; Polish 15-year-old Emilia only wants to stay away from the prying eyes of predatory soldiers; Prussian 19-year-old Florian is an art student and forger with a dangerous mission; and Alfred is the outlier, a young German soldier working on the Wilhelm Gustloff. After Florian saves Emilia's life, the two encounter Joana's group, and through a series of close calls and desperate situations they end up traveling together, protecting one another, and hoping the Wilhelm Gustloff will save them from the evils of the Russian Army, whose cruelty rivaled that of the Nazis.

Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley)

Rescued from an ice floe near the North Pole, a dying Victor Frankenstein tells a British explorer a remarkable tale of his blighted life: After an idyllic childhood as the eldest son of a wealthy Swiss family, he's sent to Ingolstadt to pursue his university studies, where his brilliance and thirst for knowledge soon become apparent. All his skill and energy are soon devoted to his obsessive quest to create life and bestow it on an inanimate being, which he constructs from multiple corpses after many experiments that horrify even him. When he succeeds in animating his creature, he is appalled by what he's done and hides from him; the creature disappears, and only gradually does it become apparent that in creating this being and then rejecting him, Frankenstein has brought about the doom of all those who are dear to him.

Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)

Marooned on a tropical island, a group of British schoolboys are left to fend for themselves, unsupervised by any adults. At first, the boys enjoy their freedom, playing and exploring the island, but soon the group splits into two factions -- those who attempt to preserve the discipline and order they had learned from society, and those who choose to give in to every instinct and impulse, no matter how barbaric.

The Hate U Give (Angie Thomas)

In THE HATE U GIVE, Starr Carter is a teen between two worlds: her school, which is rich, fancy, and white; and her neighborhood, which is poor and black. She navigates this differing terrain every day of her life until her worlds collide when she witnesses the fatal police shooting of her best

friend, Khalil, an unarmed black teen. Khalil's death goes viral, and Starr is caught in the middle between the protesters in the street and her friends at school. With the eyes of the world on her, Starr has to decide: Will she say what happened that night? Will it matter?

The Graveyard Book (Neil Gaiman)

On the night Jack murders a family in their beds, their toddler runs out into the night, pursued by the murderer, and finds his way into a cemetery. The ghosts there chase away the murderer and, after much argument, decide to raise the boy. They name him Nobody, Bod for short. As long as Bod stays in the cemetery they can protect him from Jack, who is still searching for him. But a growing boy, even one who is granted the Freedom of the Graveyard, eventually needs contact with the living world -- and it is the world of the living that holds the most danger for Bod. **NOTE: this is not the graphic novel version.**

Will Grayson, Will Grayson (John Green & David Levithan)

WILL GRAYSON, WILL GRAYSON has a fun premise: Two narrators, each named Will Grayson, tell their stories in alternating chapters. Will Grayson No. 1 is a straight, moody teen who's best friends with a large -- and larger than life -- out-and-proud teen named Tiny Cooper. Will Grayson No. 2 is an even moodier, lonely gay teen who first crosses paths with Will No. 1 in a porn store. From there, both Wills orbit around Planet Tiny. Meanwhile, heartbroken Tiny uses his pain to write, direct, and star in a fabulous high school musical titled *Tiny Dancer*, which wows everyone. But he's not the only one who makes a successful journey: Both Wills also find themselves, with a whole lot of help from their friends.