



2020-21 All-Middle School Summer Reading Assignment:

***Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes**

"We're united by our humanity, we're united by our stories" Jewell Parker Rhodes

As a school, we believe that creating healing, connection, and friendship across lines of difference makes a stronger community. In order to support these efforts, this summer the entire Middle School community will be reading *Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes.

"*Towers Falling* is a welcome gift to the classroom, opening discussions in an area of our history that few have ventured to go. It not only helps facilitate conversation about 9/11 but also about socioeconomic disparities, families, diversity and community. This book is a unique example of life in post 9/11 America and is an inspiring look at what brings our country together through diversity and unity. It is a novel about the strength of words and the strength in a single voice." ~Mary Boehmer, librarian

Before reading *Towers Falling* please complete the Pre-Reading Activity. You may print if you have access to a printer. If not, you may create a Google Document where you can jot down your thoughts. We invite you to be honest with yourself and lean into any discomfort you may experience during the activity. This document will remain private.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XVyTIJsootn9PMAswHtUJGTuQxbG7eOX/view?usp=sharing>

After reading *Towers Falling* please complete the I Am Poem. Directions listed below. We look forward to you bringing these poems on the first day of school.

Towers Falling After Reading Project: "I AM" POEM

In 2015, author Jewell Parker Rhodes gave a speech entitled "Diversity and Character-Driven Stories" for the Children's Institute of the American Booksellers Association. In this speech, Rhodes said, "'I am.' Being able to say 'I am' is the greatest civil right for all of us. Standing on our own two feet, comfortable and free to be 'I am,' will lessen, I truly believe, any urge to oppress, to make someone else 'other.'"

Students can begin to explore their own narrative by writing an "I am" poem* by using the following frame:

I am:
I wonder:
I hear:
I see:
I lost:
I want:
I believe:
I am:
I pretend:
I whisper:
I feel:
I wish:
I touch:
I worry:
I cry:
I am:
I understand:
I found:
I shout:
I need:
I dream:
I try:
I hope:
I am:

Upon completion of I am poems, students can share them by posting their poem or posting a reading performance of their poems to our *Towers Falling* Poetry Padlet here: <https://fords.padlet.org/jhallman4/la6tugt8btnbno3i>

*adaptation based on poem from ReadWriteThink.org