

# Eighth Grade Summer Reading

Last updated 5/22/18

There is no one mandatory book that all incoming eighth graders must read. Instead each student must read a total of three books, choosing one book each from the three genre categories below:

## Category 1: Classics / Historical Fiction

*The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*  
*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*  
*Lord of the Flies*  
*The Mists of Avalon*  
*O Pioneers!*  
*Out of the Dust*  
*Shoeless Joe*  
*The Tenth Man*  
*20,000 Leagues under the Sea*

John Boyne  
Robert Louis Stevenson  
William Golding  
Marion Zimmer  
Willa Cather  
Karen Hesse  
W. P. Kinsella  
Graham Greene  
Jules Verne

## Category 2: Contemporary / Miscellaneous

*Cinder*  
*The House on Mango Street*  
*Lavinia*  
*The Lord of Opium*  
*Mycroft Holmes*  
*A Northern Light*  
*The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*  
*Red Kayak*  
*Ship Breaker*  
*Steelheart*  
*Whirligig*

Marissa Meyer  
Sandra Cisneros  
Ursula Le Guin  
Nancy Farmer  
Kareem Abdul-Jabaar  
Jennifer Donnelly  
Alexander McCall Smith  
Priscilla Cummings  
Paolo Bacigalupi  
Brandon Sanderson  
Paul Fleischman

## Category 3: Nonfiction

*Brown Girl Dreaming*  
*Farewell to Manzanar*  
*Flags of Our Fathers: Heroes of Iwo Jima*  
*Hiroshima*  
*The Long Shadow of Little Rock*  
*Never Cry Wolf*  
*A Perfect Storm*  
*Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team*  
*A Walk in the Woods*

Jacqueline Woodson  
Jeanne Houston and James D. Houston  
James Bradley, adapted by Michael French  
John Hersey  
Daisy Bates  
Farley Mowat  
Sebastian Junger  
Steve Sheinkin  
  
Bill Bryson

**St. Michael's Summer Book Report Requirements for 7th and 8th Grades**  
*Please include this form when you turn in your book report at the start of school.*

June 2018

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Book One (Title and Author): \_\_\_\_\_

Book Two (Title and Author): \_\_\_\_\_

Book Three (Title and Author): \_\_\_\_\_

Students entering Seventh and Eighth Grade must read a total of three books over the summer. There is no single book that all students must read though. Instead, students must choose and read one book from each of the three categories provided on the reading list. Students must then complete a single project: an illustrated book jacket that incorporates information and reflections on all three books read. This book report is due in class on **Friday, August 17**, the first full day of school. Guidelines for the report are as follows:

Students must create a book jacket with a front cover, interior two-page spread, and back cover. The front and back cover pages are based on ONE of the three selected books they read. The text written in the interior two-page spread compares and contrasts the OTHER two books read by the student. The entire book jacket should be created from a single sheet of folded, white 8 1/2 x 11" paper (but elements may be pasted to this paper).

- The front cover must include title, author, and student's name, as well as one original color drawing of a significant scene in the book **and** one significant quote.
- The back cover must include a **10-15 sentence personal response** to the book: how does this book compare to other books you've read in the same genre? how did the characters appeal to you? did you relate personally to any of the characters or events? why did or didn't you enjoy the book? This **MUST** be hand-written in ink and, of course, original!

The interior portion of the book jacket is designed as a three-paragraph essay and must be a total of **300-600 words**. Students should use complete sentences, indent all paragraphs, and be sure to proofread their work before they turn it in. The report must be typed and printed in landscape orientation so it can be folded and attached into the interior of the book jacket. The purpose of this interior text is to allow the student to compare and contrast the two books that the student read that were NOT featured on the front and back cover pages. The specific requirements for each paragraph are as follows:

**Paragraph One:** Compare and contrast the key events of the two books, focusing on how the authors built suspense and tension, and how they designed creative resolutions (endings) to their respective novels.

**Paragraph Two:** Compare and contrast one or more protagonists (main characters) in each book. How do their personalities shape the way the plots unfold?

**Paragraph Three:** Discuss a theme (such as courage, friendship, prejudice, or compassion) that both books have in common, and how specific moments in each book helped develop that theme.

See the back page of this handout out for a sample project layout. Still confused? Please don't hesitate to contact Mr. Hawes ([ahawes@stmichael.net](mailto:ahawes@stmichael.net)) at any time!

**PARENT VERIFICATION**

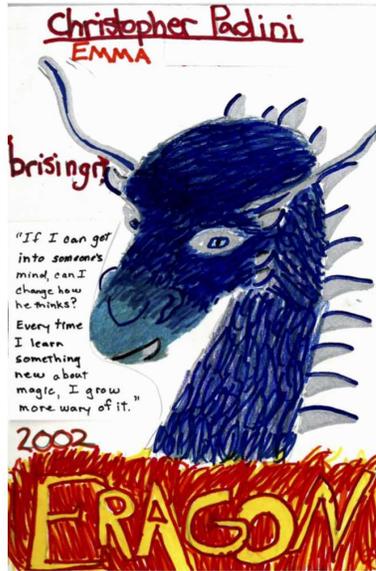
I verify that my child has read all three of these books and that this report represents the original work of my child. (Evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero on the report.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## BOOK JACKET SAMPLE: Middle School Summer Report

### FRONT COVER:



### BACK COVER:

*Eragon finds a beautiful blue stone in the Spine that soon hatches into a dragon. From the very beginning he is puzzled by Saphira's (the dragon) appearance and by the stories that are spreading. It takes time, but Eragon comes to trust Saphira and his own abilities. This developing friendship that requires a great deal of trust, communication, and willingness to believe in one's ability is the main reason I liked the book. Evil creatures constantly harass them, but their friendship and the support of good people (or creatures) never waiver in their dedication to stopping evil. I will always want to believe that goodness will prevail.*

*I also enjoyed the book because of the description of the landscape and places. Paolini obviously loves the big open spaces of his home, and I could easily envision the mountains and valleys Eragon had to traverse while being chased by Urghals. Any book that includes a map in the opening pages is intriguing.*

### INTERIOR TWO-PAGE SPREAD:

*Holes* by Louis Sachar and *McElligot's Pool* by Dr. Seuss appear on the surface to discuss very different sorts of events. In *Holes*, the main character, Stanley Yelnats, has been sent to a juvenile-detention facility, Camp Green Lake, as punishment for supposedly stealing a pair of sneakers. In Dr. Seuss's picture book, a young boy is warned by a passing farmer that his attempts at hooking a fish from a small pond are foolhardy. Nonetheless, both authors develop a sense of mystery by offering readers hidden treasures: in the case of *Holes*, a literal treasure box buried by Kissin' Kate Barlow, and in the case of *McElligot's Pool*, the promise of an exotic, aquatic prize, such as a kangaroo fish, a checkerboard fish, or even a Thing-a-Ma-Jigger...

The unnamed hero of *McElligot's Pool* and young Stanley Yelnats both demonstrate fearlessness at times, although the young fisherman approaches life with far more optimism than Stanley, who begins the book despairing over a decades-old curse that, his family believes, dooms their dreams and clouds their consciences. Dr. Seuss's perky hero exudes sunny optimism when he proclaims, "And that's why I think / That I'm

not such a fool / When I sit here and fish / In McElligot's Pool!" Meanwhile, Stanley wallows in self-doubt, especially when he first arrives at Camp Green Lake and discovers it is not the idyllic destination he has been promised: "This isn't a Girl Scout camp," said Mr. Sir...

Perseverance, the personal quality of grit and determination, stands at the core of each book. Stanley and Zero face desperate odds when fleeing camp and climbing up God's Thumb. The protagonist of *McElligot's Pool* is teased for even considering that he might catch a fish. Yet he perseveres, allowing his hook the opportunity to follow an underground channel under State Highway Two-Hundred-and-Three and Sneed's Hotel on its journey to the ocean. The symbolism of holes permeates both works. A hole can represent failure or emptiness—the opposite of success and fulfillment. The campers continue to dig holes despite the likelihood they will never discover the hidden treasure, and the boy continues to sit patiently by the fishing hole...

**Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.**

—Groucho Marx

The love, habit, and ease of reading can be actively nurtured both at home and at school. During summer -- a time when many students regress in their academic abilities -- families can encourage reading in many creative ways. Consider the ratio of "screen time" to "page time," perhaps making one contingent on the other. The public library runs summer reading programs and carries a near-endless supply of great selections. If you're looking for recommendations online, one place to start is here: <https://www.commonensemedia.org/lists/50-books-all-kids-should-read-before-theyre-12>

Sadly, only one in five 17-year-olds reads for pleasure. There are countless reasons to make reading a daily habit, especially for children. Here are the St. Michael's Language Arts Team's Top Ten:

- 1) **SKILL:** Reading volume (whether measured in pages or minutes) has been shown to be the single best predictor of reading proficiency and fluency, particularly through independent reading done outside school. Reading just about *anything* has value: novels, picture books, newspaper articles, cookbooks, instruction manuals, atlases, reference books. Just read!
- 2) **EMPATHY:** Reading rich literary fiction (rather than pop fiction or nonfiction) increases empathy, or the ability to "read" the feelings of others, according to an article in *Science*.
- 3) **FOCUS:** Literature trains brains -- including those of young children listening to bedtime books -- to attend patiently to the beginning, middle, and end of stories. One's patience and focus can be exercised and improved through practice and repetition, much like weight training. It's vital these days, with declining attention spans seen in people of all ages.
- 4) **IMAGINATION:** Not surprisingly, many of the most inspiring and successful writers are also voracious readers. As Stephen King has said, "Books are a uniquely portable magic."
- 5) **VOCABULARY:** Children's books introduce kids to 50 percent more words than television. A child who reads 10 minutes per day reads about 650,000 words per year; a child who reads 60 minutes a day encounters about 4 million words, according to *Reading Research Quarterly*. The novel *Little Women* alone has more vocabulary than three years' worth of basal readers!
- 6) **KNOWLEDGE:** Even the most breezy of summer books can teach kids about history, science, geography, sports, the arts, and more, while igniting readers' curiosity about the world. Stock your shelves, for children with access to large numbers of books at home receive the equivalent of three extra years of schooling by the time they graduate, according to reading expert Richard Allington.
- 7) **ACHIEVEMENT:** Starting at a very early age, routine reading leads to academic success across the curriculum, even in areas not associated with reading comprehension.
- 8) **RELAXATION:** According to the University of Sussex, reading relieves stress even better than music, taking a walk, or sipping tea or coffee. Screen time at night has the opposite effect.
- 9) **MEMORY:** Brainy hobbies like reading can stave off memory loss or even Alzheimer's. Subjects in a study published in *Brain Connectivity* displayed heightened neural connectivity in two regions of the brain even five days after completing a novel.
- 10) **JOY:** No studies need be cited. A love of reading is not just a means but an end unto itself!

-St. Michael's Language Arts Department