

8th Grade Summer Reading List

Choose and Read ONE book from the list below.

I Will Always Write Back by Caitlin Alifirenka, Liz Welch, and Martin Ganda	The true story of two pen pals: Caitlin, a typical American teenager, and Martin, a poor but incredibly bright and hard-working boy in the African country of Zimbabwe who's struggling to get enough money to stay in school.
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson	The book tells the story of an impulsive and adventurous young boy named Jim Hawkins who comes across a treasure map. He goes on a journey to try to recover the treasure, which once belonged to the famous Captain Flint. On his journey, he meets Long John Silver, a one-legged cook who ends up leading a pirate mutiny.
The Giver by Lois Lowry	Morally driven and interesting story about a 12-year-old Jonas who lives in a society free of crime and sadness, or emotions at all. One person is given the gift to become society's historian, a blessing and a curse.
Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson	Jesse's life changes when he befriends Leslie, an outsider. Together, they create a world full of magical creatures. Soon, one of the friends must draw on the strength of their "kingdom" to cope with a tragedy.
The City of Ember by Jeanne Du Prau	A post-apocalyptic underground city threatened by aging infrastructure and corruption. Lina Mayfleet and Doon Harrow follow clues left by the original builders to safety in the outside world.
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne	During World War II, 8-yr-old Bruno and his family leave Berlin to take up residence near the concentration camp where his father has just become commandant. Unhappy and lonely, he finds Shmuel, a Jewish boy of his age. Separated by a barbed-wire fence, the boys begin a forbidden friendship, oblivious to the real nature of their surroundings.
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls	Billy Coleman lives in the Ozark Mountains. His dream is to purchase redbone coonhound dogs and train them to hunt. Follow their adventures and challenges.
The Red Badge of Courage by Steven Crane	During the American Civil War, the story is about a young private of the Union Army, Henry Fleming, who struggles with wanting to be a war hero while trying not to succumb to cowardice.
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak	About a girl during World War II in Germany. Her foster parents hide a Jewish man, but that only brings attention to the family.
The Endless Steppe: Growing up in Siberia by Esther Hautzig	The story of a girl and her family being forced from Poland by Russia for being "political enemies," they are then shipped to Siberia, and she and her family are forced to stay there for 5 years, trying to survive and make a living for themselves.
The Dreamer by Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sis	This story follows the early experiences of Neftali Reyes, a boy who is spellbound by the wonders of the natural world and grows into the man that we know.
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley	The story of a gifted scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who succeeds in giving life to a being of his own creation. However, this is not the perfect specimen he imagines that it will be, but rather a hideous creature who is rejected by Victor and mankind in general.
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee	A young girl's coming of age and a darker drama about the roots and consequences of racism and prejudice, probing how good and evil can coexist in a single community or individual.
The Hound of the Baskervilles by Arthur Conan Doyle	Sherlock Holmes investigates a mysterious curse tied to a wealthy family. The novel blends suspense, mystery, and logic.

Saturday Night Dirt: A MOTOR Novel by Will Weaver	Headwaters Speedway is the place to be. Thanks to rainouts across the state, this dirt track is drawing big-time stock cars and local drivers. Trace Bonham in his Street Stock Chevy that's sure to be a winner if he can figure out why it's acting up. Beau Kim: His modification is patched together from whatever parts he scraped up. Amber Jenkins has what it takes to run rings around them all. Can Melody Walters keep the speedway afloat?
Refugee by Alan Gratz	Three refugee children from different countries and time periods flee danger in search of safety and hope. The novel explores sacrifice, courage, and compassion.
My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George	A boy who learns courage, independence, and the need for companionship while attempting to live in the Catskill Mountains of New York State.
The Stars Beneath Our Feet by David Barclay Moore	A boy tries to steer a safe path through the projects in Harlem in the wake of his brother's death.
Watership Down by Richard Adams	In a world where rabbits rule, a brave band of bunnies embarks on a wild quest for a better home. Led by the courageous Hazel and the visionary Fiver, they face treacherous dangers, cunning enemies, and make unexpected alliances along the way. "Watership Down" is a rabbit tale of adventure, resilience, and the enduring spirit of fluffy heroes.
Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence by Doris Pilkington	Based on a true story, the book is a personal account of an Indigenous Australian family's experiences as members of the Stolen Generation—the forced removal of mixed-race children from their families during the early 20th century.
The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton	A teenage boy becomes caught between rival groups while struggling to understand identity, loyalty, and growing up. The novel explores friendship, belonging, and the choices that shape a person's future.
Any book of your choice by J.R.R. Tolkien	
Any book of your choice by C.S. Lewis	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW:

8th Grade Summer Reading Guidelines

Option #1

Instructions

Choose **one** book from the provided reading list. The book may be borrowed from a library or purchased online, locally, or electronically.

After reading the book, write a short essay answering the questions below about your chosen novel. Your essay should:

- Be **1–2 pages**
- Be **typed**
- Be **double-spaced**

Do **not** copy the questions or use bullet points. Your response should be written in paragraph form.

Your essay must include:

- At least **3 paragraphs**
- Each paragraph should contain approximately **5–7 sentences**

Use your own words. Do not copy information from websites, AI programs, books, or other outside sources. Copying someone else's work is called **plagiarism** and will result in a failing grade and disciplinary consequences.

This assignment is due on the FIRST day of class.

Questions

Include the following:

- Title of the book
- Year of publication
- Author's name

Choose:

- **1 question** from Personal and Textual Connections
- **1 question** from Setting
- **1 question** from Characters
- **2 questions** from Plot

Personal and Textual Connections

- *How does the story make you feel?*
- *Have you ever had a similar experience?*
- *Do any of the characters remind you of someone in your life?*

Setting

- *When and where does the story take place?*
- *Is the setting important to the story? How?*
- *Does the season or time period affect the characters or plot?*

Characters

- *Who is the main character?*
- *What important choices does the character make?*
- *Who is another character who either helps or hurts the main character?*

Plot

- *What is the main problem in the story? How is it solved?*
- *What is the most exciting part (the climax) of the story?*
- *How does the story end? Did you enjoy the ending?*
- *Do you still have any unanswered questions about the story?*

See next page for Option #2

Option #2

Instructions

Creative Project

Instead of completing the full essay, students may choose to create a physical project based on their book, such as:

- a Book Nook,
- Diorama,
- Shadow Box,
- or detailed scene model.

Students who choose this option will complete a shortened written reflection instead of the full essay.

Creative Project Reflection

Students must submit:

- The physical project
- A 1-page typed reflection

The reflection should explain:

1. Why they chose that specific scene or setting
2. Why it is important to the story
3. What details they included and why
4. What the scene reveals about a character or theme
5. What they learned from the book

The project must:

- Represent an important scene, setting, or moment from the story,
- Include accurate details from the book,
- Show creativity, effort, and understanding of the novel.

The written reflection should be approximately 1 page, typed, and answer:

- One question about setting, character, plot, and personal connection,
OR explain the significance of the chosen scene and how it connects to the story's themes and characters.
- Still include the title, the author, and the date of publication