

Summer 2009 Middle School Reading List

This summer, you will read a total of **three books**: two common books and one choice book. All of the books on the list below relate to the middle school themes for each grade. All middle school Language Arts classes will begin the next school year doing activities related to the summer reading books, so it is imperative that you read them carefully.

For each of the three books you read this summer, you will be asked to do two things:

1. Find three important passages; see below for guidelines
2. Explain how the story relates to your grade's themes

This assignment is not designed to be cumbersome, but rather to help you understand the main elements of each story and to prepare you for the activities we will do at the beginning of the school year. Below, you will find a description of the assignment and a rubric for how your assignments will be assessed. Please complete the assignments thoughtfully, type them up, and bring them to school with you on the first day.

Picking Passages

“To be or not to be, that is the question.”

- Hamlet; *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare

“Call me Ishmael.”

- Narrator; *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville

“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.”

- Albus Dumbledore; *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, J.K. Rowling

“Why should I have to WORK for everything?! It's like saying I don't deserve it!”

- Calvin; *The Indispensable Calvin and Hobbes*, Bill Watterson

Identifying important passages (quotes and excerpts) is a crucial part of reading and interpreting a story. You will be asked to pick out meaningful quotes and excerpts as you read books in middle school, high school, college... even beyond! Being able to identify important passages in a story helps you discuss the book in more depth and understand its message. It might be one sentence, as you see in the famous quotes above, or it may be a longer excerpt to give some context. Direct quotes and excerpts also strengthen arguments you make about a story in an activity or debate or essay, just like statistics help in Math and data helps in Science.

How do you spot an important passage? Some things to look for:

- The passage shares something that is key to one of the main character's personalities.
- The passage relates to the book's overarching theme.
- The passage gives you a clue into what the author's message is.
- The passage includes or speaks to a symbol within the story.
- The passage discusses a key event in the story.

For each book you read this summer, you will pick out an important passage from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story, and you will explain why each is important. Use the worksheet attached (or type on your own, using a similar format) to organize your thoughts.

Connecting books to class theme

Each grade has themes that are woven between all classes. The themes serve as a connector between your classes, providing consistency and allowing you to see how one idea can be expressed in many ways. For example, it's easy to see how heroism can relate to Social Studies by learning about heroes throughout history, but how does heroism relate to Science? to Music? to Math? By thinking about these themes over the summer, you will be ready to explore them in a variety of ways by the time school starts.

The themes for each grade are listed below. After you finish each book, write a paragraph or two about how the story incorporates the themes for your grade. Does the book cover all of the themes, or does it focus on one or two? Write persuasively, using specific events and ideas from the book.

Reading List: 6th grade

Themes: Heroism, Adaptation, Movement

Common Books (you must read BOTH of these books):

Island of the Blue Dolphins, by Scott O'Dell
Mara, Daughter of the Nile, by Eloise Jarvis McGraw

Free Choice Books (choose ONE of these books):

The Miracle Worker, by William Gibson
The Trojan War, by Olivia E. Cooper
Redwall, by Brian Jacques
Old Yeller, by Fred Gipson
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, by Mildred D. Taylor
Casting the Gods Adrift, by Geraldine McCraughrean
My Side of the Mountain, by Jean Craighead George
Johnny Tremain, by Esther Forbes
Iron Thunder, by Avi
Summer Ball, by Mike Lupica

You may also choose any Newbery Award winning book that relates to Grade 6 themes.

Reading List: 7th grade

Themes: Justice, Diversity, Power, Conflict, Political Systems

Common (you must read BOTH of these books):

Nothing but the Truth, by Avi

The Cay, by Theodore Taylor

Free Choice (choose ONE of these books):

The Wizard of Oz, by L. Frank Baum
Long Way from Chicago, by Richard Peck
Kira-Kira, by Cynthia Kadohata
Lyddie, by Katherine Paterson
Treasure Island, by Robert Louis Stevenson
Over Sea, Under Stone, by Susan Cooper
The Dark is Rising, by Susan Cooper
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, by Jules Verne
White Fang, by Jack London
Kidnapped, by Robert Louis Stevenson

You may also choose any Newbery Award winning book that relates to Grade 7 themes.

Reading List: 8th grade

Theme: Freedom

Common (you must read BOTH of these books):

Catherine, Called Birdy, by Karen Cushman
Three Cups of Tea, by Greg Mortenson (The Young Reader's Edition)

Free Choice (choose ONE of these books):

Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser
The Catcher in the Rye, by J. D. Salinger
Persepolis, by Marjane Satrapi
Pride and Prejudice, by Jane Austen
The Chosen, by Chaim Potok
Flowers for Algernon, by Daniel Keyes
The Once and Future King, by Terence Hanbury White
A Separate Peace, by John Knowles
A Connecticut Kid in King Arthur's Court, by Mark Twain
The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

You may also choose any Newbery Award winning book that relates to the Grade 8 theme.

Middle School Summer Reading Rubric

Name:

Book title:

	Points Earned	Points Possible
The three passages chosen represent important events or ideas from the story.		6
The written explanation of each passage clearly shows why the quote is valuable to the story.		12
Your writing uses proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.		4
The written paragraph explains clearly how the story relates to at least one them for your grade.		5
Writing follows the conventional standards for a paragraph: four complete sentences, using proper grammar and spelling.		3

Total points: / 30

Summer Reading 2009 Worksheet

Name:

Book title:

Author:

Passage 1: page _____

Explanation:

Passage 2: page _____

Explanation:

Passage 3: page _____

Explanation:

Themes paragraph:

Example Submission

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The Giver
by Lois Lowry

Passage 1: page 4

He had waited a long time for this special December. Now that it was almost upon him, he wasn't frightened, but he was . . . eager, he decided. He was eager for it to come. And he was excited, certainly. All of the Elevens were excited about the event that would be coming to soon.

But there was a little shudder of nervousness when he thought about it, about what might happen.

Apprehensive, Jonas decided. That's what I am.

I picked this excerpt because it speaks about the approaching Ceremony of Twelve, which is at the center of what everyone is talking about. Jonas is the main character of the story, and he knows something big will happen at the Ceremony, but he doesn't know what yet. It's the most important Ceremony for kids in this community because that's when your job is chosen for you. This excerpt also alludes to choosing words carefully, which is really important in Jonas' community.

Passage 2: page 95

Jonas wasn't interested, just then, in wisdom. It was the colors that fascinated him. "Why can't everyone see them? Why did colors disappear?"

The Giver shrugged. "Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences." He thought for a moment. "We gained control of many things. But we had to let go of others."

This passage shows the changes that are happening to Jonas now that the Giver is sharing memories with him. The first big change that happens to him is that he can see the color red, and it symbolizes the change in thought he has as he learns more about choice and the way things used to be before Sameness. It also talks about the choice that the community made to do away with choice and differences, trying to make life simpler.

Passage 3: page 172

All of it was new to him. After a life of Sameness and predictability, he was awed by the surprises that lay beyond each curve of the road. He slowed the bike again and again to look with wonder at wildflowers, to enjoy the throaty warble of a new bird nearby, or merely to watch the way wind shifted the leaves in the trees. During his twelve years in the community, he had never felt such simple moments of exquisite happiness.

This passage is important because it comes after Jonas has risked everything to escape with Gabriel, to save himself from a life of Sameness and to save Gabriel from being released. It illustrates the freedom Jonas feels now that he is on his own. At the same time, though, he is afraid of everything he doesn't know. The unknown is a risk, but the rewards are the "exquisite happiness" of experiencing new and different things.

Themes paragraph:

The Giver, by Lois Lowry, speaks really well to the themes of Adaptation, Movement, and Heroism. First of all, there is a clear connection to Adaptation because Jonas' community has adapted everything to Sameness so that no one has to be afraid or experience anything unknown. They have adapted their lifestyle to fit into a neat little box. Jonas and the Giver represent movement in the story because they are the only independent thinkers. The Giver brings movement to Jonas' thought, and Jonas puts that movement into action by escaping from the prison that is the community. By doing this, he expresses heroism. He acts on what he thinks is right, and he saves another life (Gabriel's) by doing this. These three themes are all important to Lowry's message in *The Giver*, which I think is to hold to what you believe and stand up for individuality, even if everyone around you is unwilling to take the risk.