



Charleston Day School

Summer Reading 2026 Rising 8th Grade

The reading should be done throughout the summer and not the last week of August. The main purpose of summer reading is to keep the verbal skills sharp. An added benefit is that summer provides the time to find joy in reading.

REQUIRED READING *Alas, Babylon* by Pat Frank

CHOICE: Read two additional books that follow the criteria outlined on the pages that follow. Do not choose graphic novels or books that you have already read.

Students should write two book reports about the books they select on their own. The appropriate length is 2 pages double-spaced. Please also include the following information in the upper right-hand corner of each report.

1. Your name
2. Title, author, and number of pages
3. Date completed
4. Parent signature

The reports should be expressed in paragraph form, typed, and fastened in a folder. The reports are due the **first day** of school. Your grade will be penalized by a deduction of 10% every day that the entire assignment is late. **Guidelines for writing the book reports are at the end of the book list (pp. 4-5).**

In addition, students will also be tested on the required summer reading book during the first week of school. Again, a report is not required for this selection.

CHOICE BOOKS

Choose only **TWO (2) books** that fit any of the following themes or topics: Survival/Civil Rights/American Voices/Journeys of Transformation.

If you have trouble picking your own book that fits one of those themes, then choose from the list provided.

Books that relate to the **Survival** theme explore the question of what type of strength is most valuable in a survival situation or what does it take to survive.

Civil Rights works are writings that relate to the civil rights movement with characters who inspire social change on a small or grand scale.

American Voices relates to any book that reveals an aspect of our American culture or relates to American identity and the several different cultures that form that identity.

Journeys of Transformation have to do with a character's significant growth internally as he/she navigates through a series of challenging events that test his/her character.

Recommended Reads for the themes Survival/Civil Rights/American Voices/Journeys of Transformation:

Red Umbrella by Chistina Diaz Gonzalez
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
The Last of the Mohicans by James Fenimore Cooper
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arther's Court by Mark Twain
All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque
The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara
Hiroshima by John Hersey
Into thin Air by Jon Krakauer
Season of Life by Jeffrey Marx
The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
Educated by Tara Westover
Never Cry Wolf by Farley Mowat
A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park
The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane
The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway
The Call of the Wild by Jack London
The Help by Kathryn Stockett
Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café by Fannie Flagg
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith
Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand
A Lesson Before Dying by Earnest Gaines
Power of One by Bryce Courtenay
I Heard an Owl Call My Name by Margaret Craven
Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya
The Good Earth by Peal S. Buck
The Color Purple by Alice Walker
Go Tell It On the Mountain by James Baldwin
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho
The Old Man and the Boy by Robert Ruark
A River Runs Through It by Norman Maclean
1984 by George Orwell
The Sword in the Stone by T.H. White
Elfstones of Shannara by Terry Brooks
The Crystal Cave by Mary Stewart
The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien
The Age of Miracles by Karen Thompson Walker
The Martian by Andy Weir
Gates of Fire by Steven Pressfield
The Yearling by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
Watership Down by Richard Adams
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd
Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes
The Road Cormac McCarthy
The Hundred Foot Journey by Richard C. Morais
The Running Dream by Wendelin Van Draanen
A Separate Peace by John Knowles
Everyday by David Levithan
Life of Pi by Yann Martel
Kindred by Octavia Butler
Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Writing a Book Review

HOW CAN I BEGIN MY REVIEW?

If you begin your report with a detailed summary, you may lose readers. Here are some tips for grabbing readers' attention with your first sentence:

Make a general statement about one of the subjects in the book

Many people have been members of basketball teams, but few have been so dedicated to a team as Alan Williams.

State what the book is about, and give readers a reason for becoming involved in it.

In *Happily May I Walk*, Arlene Hirschfelder investigates the lives of Native Americans and takes readers on a journey through a world that few Americans see.

Make a personal statement about your reaction to the book.

I've never wept while reading a book-but *Picture Bride* by Yoshiko Uchida moved me to tears.

Compare and contrast the book with other books.

Of all the poetry books by African-American women that I've read, *Blacks* by Gwendolyn Brooks made the deepest impression on me.

Introduce the reader to a main character.

If you keep a journal, you'll identify with Julia, whose "Book of Strangenesses" helps her to figure out the world around her in *A Room Made of Windows* by Eleanor Cameron.

HOW CAN I DEVELOP MY REPORT?

After introducing the book and capturing your readers' interest, you'll want to answer the questions they might naturally ask:

- Who are the main characters?
- What subject is it about?
- What happens to the main characters?
- What is the setting?
- What is the book's theme or central message?

WHEN ORGANIZING YOUR REPORT, FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

A. Introduction

- 1) Attract your readers' attention.
- 2) Introduce your book.
 - a) Identify the title and the author.
 - b) Provide a 1-2 sentence summary.
- 3) Include a thesis statement that tells the reader what the theme (overall meaning) of the book is and why.

B. Body

- 1) **Briefly** discuss the book in 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences each.
 - a) Describe the setting, identify the main characters, and explain what happens. Only give the important details of the story.
 - b) Discuss the protagonist, and the central conflict.
- 2) Evaluate (criticize or praise) the book in 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences.
 - a) Explain to your audience if you thought the book was entertaining or boring, has good characters or unrealistic characters, has thorough information or inadequate information.
 - b) Use quotes or paraphrases from the book to prove your points and provide examples.
- 3) Discuss 1-2 main reasons why you think the theme is the overall meaning of the book.
 - a) This should also be 1-2 paragraphs of 5-8 sentences.
 - b) Use quotes or paraphrases from the book to prove your points and provide examples

C. Conclusion

- 1) Reword your thesis statement.
- 2) Review the main points of your argument.
- 3) Recommend or reject the book and give reasons why.

Checkpoints for revising:

- 1) Is the introduction attention-grabbing?
- 2) Are the title and author identified early in the book review?
- 3) Is my presentation of the plot or main idea **brief**?
- 4) Do I support my opinions with examples (quotes and paraphrases)?
- 5) Do I conclude with a recommendation and a summary of my reasons for making it?