

# 8th grade—Required Summer Reading Assignment

Students must read *Of Mice and Men* and at least four other books from the list of suggested summer readings. **Students will write an essay on the books that they read, addressing the following questions.**

## **Questions to guide the development of your essay:**

- What are your impressions of the main characters?
- What is the primary conflict in the story?
- Do you agree or disagree with how the conflict was resolved?
- What did find challenging about the book?
- How did you feel about reading this book?
- What surprised you about the book?
- Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?
- Can you relate to the main characters?

The Suggested Summer Readings begin on the next page.

<b>BOOK TITLE</b>	<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>SYNOPSIS</b>
<b>Required Reading</b>		
Of Mice and Men	John Steinbeck	Steinbeck writes of such a trip in OF MICE AND MEN: the desperate longing of men for some kind of home-roots that they can believe in, land that they can care for-and the painful search for self. This beautiful, timeless novel speaks of the love that men can feel for each other-one inarticulate, dumb, sometimes violent in his need; the other clever, hopeful, and tied to a responsibility he doesn't want.
<b>Fiction Novel</b>		
The Little Giant of Aberdeen County	Tiffany Baker	Truly is born into a life of suffering and tragedy. Her mother dies in childbirth, and her father is ill equipped to deal with either of his two daughters. Truly's sister, Serena Jane, is the acknowledged town beauty, while Truly suffers from an illness that causes her to grow way beyond normal size. When their father also dies, the girls are split up, and their lives diverge and reconnect in ways neither could imagine. Woven into the story of the sisters is a larger story of women and the ways they are forced to navigate the world. Although primarily a straightforward story, the novel is infused with moments of magic realism. At times the town of Aberdeen, with its stereotypical small-town prejudices and quirks, seems a little too familiar. Overall, though, the novel charms and will find a devoted audience
Blood on the River: James Town 1607	Elisa Carbone	Rescued from London slums and then apprenticed to Capt. John Smith, young Samuel Collier narrates the story of the James Town settlement, 1607. Historical details help recreate the people and places of the New World.
Number the Stars	Lois Lowry	How far would you go to save a friend's life? Annemarie and Ellen, best friends living in peaceful Copenhagen, don't concern themselves with questions like that – until the Nazis come for Ellen.
Bread and Roses, Too.	Katherine Paterson	Two young children, Rosa and Jake, become embroiled in the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike in the mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Together, they tell the story of the hardships and injustices endured by immigrant mill workers.
Sacajawea	Joseph Bruchac	It's possible that Lewis and Clark never would have completed their journey from the Mississippi to the Pacific had it not been for a young Native American woman. Relive the danger and excitement of the journey through Sacajawea's eyes.
Norman Tuttle on the Last Frontier	Tom Bodett	Norman is at that awkward age when his body is growing too fast for his brain to keep up. He's grounded so much he feels like a prisoner in a work-release program. He unwittingly finds it easier to offend Leonard Kopinski, class bully, than to impress Laura Magruder, girl of his dreams. Tom Bodett's 15 separate but related stories weave a tale of humor, adventure, and coming-of-age into a tapestry of one boy's journey to manhood. Bodett's laid-back narration gives the reader the feeling of a storyteller telling tales of an adolescence that was hard to live but is pleasantly warm to remember.
Stealing South	Katherine Ayers	Sixteen-year-old Will Spencer leaves home to become a peddler but he gets more than he bargained for when he agrees to go to Kentucky, steal two slaves, and take them to their brother in Canada

Girl With a Pearl Earring	Tracey Chevalier	This blend of fact and fiction suggests the story behind artist Johannes Vermeer's famous painting as it depicts life in seventeenth century Delft, a small Dutch city.
Breaking Point	Alex Finn	Paul Richmond is new to the exclusive Gate School in Florida and is shunned for being a "scholarship kid"; to be accepted, Paul agrees to do something against his standards. This is a good book about peer pressure and decision-making.
Slot Machine	Chris Lynch	Elvin and his two best fiends discover that the orientation retreat for freshman entering the Christian Academy is really pre-season athletic training. There is plenty of sports action and this book takes a realistic look at growing up male in a society that values athleticism at all costs.
Monster	William Dean Myers	This thought-provoking book chronicles a sixteen-year-old boy's thoughts as he is tried for murder. It raises interesting questions about the path to crime that some young people take and how the criminal justice system deals with them.
Habibi	Naomi Shihab Nye	Fourteen-year-old Lianne Abboud and her family move from St. Louis to a new home between Jerusalem and the Palestinian village where her father grew up. Her new life is filled with restrictions and prejudice. When she falls in love with a Jewish boy, she must deal with the tensions between Jews and Palestinians.
Ribbons	Laurence Yep	Ballet means everything to Robin Lee. But when her grandmother comes from China to live with them, her parents can no longer afford the lessons. But Robin refuses to give up her dream
The Bloody Country	James Lincoln Collier & Christopher Collier	Ben Buck and his eighteenth-century Pennsylvania family may lose their home because of the threat of war. They also may lose Joe, a half-black, half-American Indian boy whom they hold as a slave. Ben considers Joe his best friend.
Don't Look Behind You	Lois Duncan	The witness protection program is featured in this book with April and his family on the run from a hit man. This is just one of many mysteries by this author that continue to be popular with teens. Jacqueline Woodson also addressed the shattering impact of the witness protection program in <u>Hush</u> .
Journey Home (Historic)	Yoshiko Uchida	As World War II comes to a close, Yuki Sakane and her family are finally released from an internment camp and allowed to return home to Berkeley, California. However, The Sakanes quickly find that Berkeley has changed because of the war; former friends and other residents have become suspicious of returning Japanese Americans and Yuki and her family try to overcome this hostility.
The Clay Marble (Historic)	Minfong Ho	Twelve-year-old Dara and her family flee war torn Cambodia and find a haven at the refugee camp of Nong Chan. Dara finds a new friend, Jantu, and for a short while their lives are peaceful. When the war brings chaos to the camp, however, Dara is separated from her family and Jantu. Now she must find the courage to reunite the people she loves.
The Friends	Rosa Guy	You know her: the new kid in class no one wants for a friend. The new girl is Phyllisia Cathy and she is from the West Indies. The only person who will befriend her is Edith, a Harlem-born girl trying to keep her family together despite the hardships of poverty.

Mr. Revere and I	Robert Lawson'	Robert Lawson presents a different perspective on Paul Revere's ride. Lawson writes about Revere's famous ride from the point of view of the horse! The book contains humor as well as useful historical information about the beginning of the American Revolution.
Ties That Bind, Ties That Break	Lensey Namioka	Ailin's family resists breaking with ancient Chinese traditions in a time of social change. On the other hand, Ailin does not wish to have her feet bound and does not wish to be married to someone who has been selected for her. Ailin must choose between pleasing her family and pleasing herself.
Shades of Simon Gray (Historic)	Joyce McDonald	Simon crashed his car into the Liberty Tree and as he hovers near death, the question is whether it was an accident or suicide. The story flashes back to recent events. While his friends worried about a possible high school cheating scandal, Simon became caught up with the ghost of a man accused of murder and hanged from the Liberty Tree in 1798.
Code Talker	Joseph Bruchac	Ned Begay was taught in the mission school that the Navajo way and language were bad. Then he grew up, World War II came along, and the US Government came calling. The Navajos were asked to play an important role in the war effort by creating a code for wartime communication that was unbreakable.
Child of the Owl	Laurence Yep	Casey must live with her grandmother in Chinatown. She misses her old life but learns to understand and love the life in Chinatown.
Second Daughter	Mildred Pitts Waller	This is the story of slave sisters Lissa and Bett as they fight for their freedom.
Walk Two Moons	Sharon Creech	After her mother leaves home and dies in a bus accident, thirteen-year-old Salamanca and her grandparents take a car trip retracing her mother's route. Along the way, Sal recounts the story of her friend Phoebe, whose mother also left.
Words By Heart	Quida Sebestyen	Set in the early 1900's, this story concerns a black family that has moved from a southern town "where no one was." Lena, one of the main characters is proud of being bright, but also a little ashamed of her pride. She also has a temper she cannot always control.
A Bone From a Dry Sea	Peter Dickinson	Twelve-year-old Lavinia is happy living with her mother, her stepfather and her half-brothers in England. However, she misses her father, Sam, an archaeologist; she asks permission to join her father in one of his expeditions. He is part of a team searching for humid fossils. One day, Vinny goes to explore a site with the team leader, Dr. Joe Hamiska. And then Vinny makes her own discovery.
No Dragons to Slay	Jan Greenberg	Thomas Newman is brought into a whole new world when the doctors explain that he has cancer. Thomas goes from being on the soccer field to sitting in waiting rooms waiting for chemotherapy treatments. Becoming involved in an archaeological dig takes Thomas out of his own world and introduces him to people who accept him just the way he is: bald from chemotherapy, thin, depressed and generally self-centered. With acceptance comes hope for the future.

Deenie	Judy Blume	Deenie's mother has her daughters' lives all figured out. Deenie will be a beautiful model and Helen will go to college. But everything changes when Deenie is diagnosed as having a curvature of the spine and is required to wear a back brace for four years. Deenie and her family have to adjust to the new physical and social constraints necessitated by the brace.
The House On Mango Street	Sandra Cisneros	Experanza Cordero does not think that she fits in, and she longs to move away from her Chicago neighborhood. However, she still learns a lot about life from her neighbor who lives on Mango Street. She discovers that there are many different kinds of people in the world and each has something to give.
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer	Mark Twain	Follow Tom Sawyer as he plays pranks and gets caught up in one adventure after another. Tom is full of energy and mischief is a natural leader among his friends. His life seems charmed, until he witnesses a murder one night.
<b>Nonfiction</b>		
The Adventurous Life of Myles Standish and the Amazing-but-True Survival Story of Plymouth Colony	Cheryl Harness	From Booklist - Instead of a standard biography, Harness chronicles the history of the Plymouth Pilgrims from their troubles in England to their first years in North America, with the focus on Standish. Separating documented history from speculation, the narrative explains religious movements, introduces key figures, and gives a balanced account of Pilgrim-Indian relationships. In contrast to many Pilgrim histories, the tone is casual (e.g., "Without Squanto the translator, these English wouldn't be able to go around getting cozy with everybody, messing up the balance of power.") Harness' familiar detailed pictures appear here as prints. An illustrated time line of world events runs along the bottom of pages, but it is not synchronized with events in the narrative, and the murky maps are not helpful. There are no notes or citations, but a bibliography of resources is appended, along with lists of Mayflower passengers, recommended Web sites and places to visit. A reader-friendly approach to history.
Rockets	Ron Miller	Rockets from ancient Chinese history to modern-day applications in space exploration are the topic of this book. Containing content with which many readers are not familiar, this book explores the invention and use of rockets throughout history with many little-known applications. There are good descriptions of physical science and technological applications.
Ladies First: 40 Daring American Women Who Were Second to None	Elizabeth Cody Kimmel	Past and present success stories of a variety of women who went beyond traditional barriers to achieve their goals and make a difference in the world. Their stories are accentuated with photographs and quotes.
The Tragic Tale of Narcissa Whitman and a Faithful	Cheryl Harness	A riveting history of the Oregon Trail woven around the story of Narcissa Whitman and her husband, early missionaries to the Cayuse Indians. An excellent timeline runs along the bottom of the pages.

History of the Oregon Trail		
Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland.	Sally Walker	This book offers an incredible look at how ancient bones can reveal the details about the daily lives of colonial Americans.
Rosie the Riveter	Penny Colman	This is an award-winning account about how eighteen million women, many of whom had never before held a job, entered the work force in 1942-45 to help the U.S. fight World War II. That participation changed the course of history for women and America, forever
The Ultimate Weapon: The Race to Develop the Atomic Bomb.	Edward T. Sullivan	This book traces the development of the atomic bomb from its theoretical inception in the minds of scientists to the dropping of “Little Man” and “Fat Boy” in Japan. Supported by many photographs, the text highlights the political, scientific, and cultural aspects of the development of the ultimate weapon.
Weedflower	Cynthia Kadohata	After Pearl Harbor, Sumiko and her family are sent to a Japanese internment camp on an Indian reservation. Her new life is characterized by hardship, heat, and dust, but along the way she befriends a Mohave boy and learns lessons about friendship and prejudice.
Parallel Journeys (Biography)	Eleanor Ayer	This is true story of Helen, a Jewish girl in Frankfurt, Germany and Alfons, a boy born on a farm a few miles away. Helen was shipped to the Auschwitz extermination camp and Alfons embraced the Nazi Youth. This book tells both their stories side by side. Over forty years later, Alfons and Helen met and found that they shared a common purpose.
We Shall Not Be Moved	Dash Joan	In 1909, young women throughout The United States worked in factories under unhealthy conditions for low pay. Joan Dash tells how a group of women in the shirtwaist industry in New York City battled for fair treatment by going on strike and struggling to form a union.
North Star To Freedom	Gena K Gorrell	In this comprehensive history of the Underground Railroad: you will learn about the importance of figures such as William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass in the battle against slavery. Newspapers and photographs of the time depict acts of heroism during a tragic period in American history.
Pioneer Girl (Historic)	Andrea Warren	Although living on the prairie could be physically and mentally grueling, Grace McCance loved it. Andrea Warren documents McCance's life on the Nebraska prairie in Pioneer Girl: Growing Up on the Prairie. Even when blizzards or thunderstorms damaged their land, Grace and her family found a way to survive and even triumph.
The Upstairs Room (Biography)	Johanna Reiss	In the Netherlands during World War II, Anne and Margot Frank went into hiding with their parents. At the same time another pair of sisters escaped to the country to live through the war with a Dutch family in their farmhouse. The Upstairs Room and its sequel, The Journey Back, tell the true story of Johanna Reiss and her sister Sini.

The Great and Glorious Game	A. Bartlett Giamatti	Baseball was more than a game to A. Bartlett Giamatti; each game was a drama that gave insight into the American character. This book collects some of Giamatti writings about the game he loved from the time he was a literature professor at Yale University through the period that he served as Commissioner of baseball.
A Frontier Fort On The Oregon Trail	Scott Steedman & Mark Bergm	This book looks at the way people lived In the Old West Bergin's detailed illustrations present a typical day in the life of a soldier, a homemaker, and a trapper. Steedman fleshes out the illustrations with helpful text, including an explanation of how a cabin and a fort were built in the "New World."
Never Trust a Dead Man	Vivian Vande Velde	Selwyn, falsely accused of murder, is buried alive in his tomb. But a witch agrees to bring Farold's spirit to him so that Selwyn can find out who really killed him. Unfortunately, she isn't a very good witch and things do not go as planned.
The Second Bend in the River	Ann Rinaldi	Rebecca Galloway meets the Shawnee Chief Tecumseh. She teaches him English and he teaches her the ways of his people.
How I Came to be a Writer	Phyllis Reynolds	This book explains the process by which one author became a writer.
<b>Poetry/ Short Stories</b>		
The Tree is Older Than You Are	Naomi Shihab Nye	These coming of age poems are complemented by art from Mexican painters.
Pierced by a Ray of Sun	Ruth Gordon	This anthology explores the core of teenage feelings. Gordon shares the voices of poets from ancient to modern and from different cultures that have often been excluded from the world and times in which they lived.
Been to Yesterdays	Lee Bennett Hopkins	The award-winning author captures a thirteen-year-old boy's dreams, experiences, and feelings over the course of a single year of his life in 24 autobiographical poems.
You Hear Me?: Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys	Betsy Franco	Through these mostly free-verse lines, the hopes, dreams, fears, and desires of young men from different cultures and backgrounds shine through. They pull no punches with their words in these openly honest, raw, and sometimes tender selections. They talk about what you'd expect-drugs, girls, AIDS, sex, parents-sometimes in unexpected ways. For example, 12-year-old Quantedius Hall's first stanza-"Time Somebody Told Me/That I am lovely, good and real/That I am beautiful inside/If they only knew/How that would make me feel." What do these boys want? "I want to live my life/through peace and knowledge./-I want to wake up/to clean, fresh air/blowing in my face," says 14-year-old John Merrell. Others speak of the fear of alternately being abandoned and loved, of being shunned or ridiculed. Obviously, there's some harsh language and tough situations but they add to the believability and timeliness of the words. You Hear Me? is a fresh approach to hearing what today's youths have to say, and it's refreshing that the words came straight from them.
I Feel a Little Jumpy	Paul Janeczko	The editors group poems by men and women in a way that demonstrates the different ways in which male and female poets see the same topics.

Around You		
Out of Bounds: Seven Stories of Conflict and Hope	Beverly Naidoo	Seven stories, spanning the time period from 1948 to 2000, chronicle the experiences of young people from different races and ethnic groups as they try to cope with the restrictions placed on their lives by South Africa's apartheid laws.
American Eyes: New Asian-American Short Stories	Lori Carlson, ed.	These ten stories reflect the conflict Asian Americans face in balancing an ancient heritage and an unknown future.
<b>The Classics</b>		
Little Women	Louisa May Alcott	Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy March are four sisters growing up in Massachusetts during the Civil War. This rich American classic of family love, a favorite of readers for more than a century, has been made into a movie four times
To Kill a Mockingbird	Harper Lee	A Southern girl recalls her childhood and how she learned lessons justice, friendship, and family.
The Scarlet Letter	Nathaniel Hawthorne	A stark and allegorical tale of adultery, guilt, and social repression in Puritan New England, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> is a foundational work of American literature. Nathaniel Hawthorne's exploration of the dichotomy between the public and private self, internal passion and external convention, gives us the unforgettable Hester Prynne, who discovers strength in the face of ostracism and emerges as a heroine ahead of her time. As Kathryn Harrison points out in her Introduction, Hester is "the herald of the modern American heroine, a mother of such strength and stature that she towers over her progeny much as she does the citizens of Salem.
Alice in Wonderland	Lewis Carroll	A little girl falls down a rabbit hole and discovers a world of nonsensical and amusing characters.
David Copperfield	Charles Dickens	A young boy is sent to a harsh school and then to the workhouse by his cruel stepfather.
Catcher in the Rye	J. D. Salinger	Holden Caulfield narrates the story of a couple of days in his sixteen-year-old life, just after he's been expelled from prep school. His constant wry observations about what he encounters, from teachers to phonies (the two of course are not mutually exclusive) capture the essence of the eternal teenage experience of alienation.