



2026-2027

Rising 8th Grade Summer Reading

The goal of summer reading for all students is to maintain some of the skills that have been taught in the past years and to allow students and teachers to begin the next school year with a common book to discuss.

All middle school grades will be assigned one common book for English Class and one book of student choice from the provided list for History Class. Students will be held accountable for reading both books through writing, projects, discussions, and activities.

For both English and History class, students will bring their book and their required book assignments on the second day of school, Thursday, September 3.

English Class Grade Level Required Book:

Rising 8th Grade:

Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie, Jordan Sonnenblick

1. Assignment for the required reading: After completing the novel, students will complete eight activities from the attached choice board and bring them on the first day of school.
2. Reading Choice: Students will keep a list of any books they read for pleasure over the summer and bring the list with them on the first day of school.

History Class Grade Level Required Book:

Students should select **one book from their rising grade-level list** to read over the summer. They are encouraged to choose a book that sounds interesting, readable, and manageable for them.

While all of the books are appropriate for middle school readers, some include historical events or themes that may lead to thoughtful questions or conversations at home. Parents may wish to preview or research a book before their student begins reading.

1. Assignment for the required reading:
 - **Student Reflection**
 - Students will write a one-paragraph reflection on the book they chose. It will contain the title, the author, and the historical time period. In the body of the paragraph students will write about the following:
 - Three things I learned about the time period
 - One character or person I found interesting
 - One question I still have
 - Would I recommend this book? Why or why not?



Focus: U.S. History from Jamestown through Reconstruction

The goal of this list is to spread reading across the major themes students will study during the school year instead of concentrating too heavily on one period. The books below cover Jamestown, Colonial America, the American Revolution, the Constitution and early government, Jacksonian America, Westward Expansion, Native American removal, the Industrial Revolution, Sectionalism, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

***Blood on the River: James Town 1607* by Elisa Carbone**

Topic: Jamestown / Early Settlement

Summary: Samuel Collier travels to Jamestown as a servant and witnesses the struggles of the first permanent English settlement. Students see the dangers of starvation, disease, leadership problems, and relationships with Native Americans.

***The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Speare**

Topic: Colonial New England

Summary: Kit Tyler moves from Barbados to Puritan Connecticut and struggles to fit into a strict colonial society. This book helps students understand religion, social rules, family life, and fear in Colonial America.

***Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes**

Topic: American Revolution

Summary: Johnny, an apprentice silversmith in Boston, becomes involved in the events leading up to the American Revolution. Students experience the growing tensions between the colonies and Britain through the eyes of a teenager.

***Woods Runner* by Gary Paulsen**

Topic: American Revolution / Frontier Life

Summary: A frontier boy travels through the dangers of Revolutionary America to rescue his parents after a British attack. This fast-paced story shows the violence and uncertainty of war on the American frontier.

***Shh! We're Writing the Constitution* by Jean Fritz**

Topic: Constitution / Early Government

Summary: This nonfiction book explains how the Constitution was created after the Revolutionary War. Students meet the Founding Fathers, learn about compromise, and discover why the Constitution still matters today.

***George vs. George* by Rosalyn Schanzer**

Topic: Early Presidents / Washington Era

Summary: This illustrated nonfiction book compares King George III and George Washington during the Revolutionary period and the early years of the United States. It helps students understand leadership, government, and how America became independent.



***Streams to the River, River to the Sea* by Scott O'Dell**

Topic: Native American History / Westward Expansion

Summary: This story follows Sacagawea and the Lewis and Clark expedition. It introduces students to westward exploration, Native American perspectives, and the growing pressure of American expansion.

***Soft Rain: A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears* by Cornelia Cornelissen**

Topic: Trail of Tears / Jacksonian America

Summary: Soft Rain, a Cherokee girl, experiences the forced relocation of her people during the Trail of Tears. Students gain a personal understanding of Native American removal and the human cost of Jacksonian policies.

***Lyddie* by Katherine Paterson**

Topic: Industrial Revolution

Summary: Lyddie leaves farm life to work in a textile mill in Massachusetts. This book gives students a strong introduction to factories, child labor, industrial growth, women workers, and changing American society.

***Across Five Aprils* by Irene Hunt**

Topic: Sectionalism / Civil War

Summary: A young boy watches his family and country become divided during the Civil War. The story explores sectional tensions, divided loyalties, military service, and the emotional toll of the war.

***Rifles for Watie* by Harold Keith**

Topic: Civil War

Summary: Jeff Bussey joins the Union Army and serves in dangerous missions in the western theater of the Civil War. Students see battles, espionage, and the difficult choices soldiers faced during the war.

***Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule* by Harriette Gillem Robinet**

Topic: Reconstruction

Summary: After the Civil War, formerly enslaved people search for freedom, land, and safety during Reconstruction. This book helps students understand the promises and challenges African Americans faced after slavery ended.

Please contact Associate Head of School, K-8 Heather Bosanko (hbosanko@stmartinsmd.org) with any questions.

Have a great summer!