

Summer 2026 Summer Reading List for Returning Rising 7th & 8th Graders

Please select one book from each of the lists below (one classic novel and one modern novel) to read over the summer. Choose books you have not read before, and be sure they are the unabridged versions. You will write a book review about one of the novels you have selected, and you will complete a creative project on the other novel. I highly suggest that you annotate as you read your books to help you later when you write your book review and design your creative project.

All summer reading assignments will be graded and checked for plagiarism/AI. If any assignments are found to be plagiarized or created using AI, you will receive a ZERO, and disciplinary action will be taken according to the AHS Family Handbook. If you are in NJHS, the faculty council will meet to decide your status.

1) The Written Book Review (3 paragraphs)

The book review should be typed (double-spaced; Arial 12-point font), using one-inch margins. The review should be well written with proper mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar) and at least 2 pages long. There are two parts to your written book review. Use the guidelines below to write this assignment. **Bring both your rough draft and your final draft to class on the first day of school, Monday, August 31.**

Part I: The Synopsis (two paragraphs)

First, you need to write one paragraph in which you describe the setting (time and place) of the novel, introduce the main character(s), and provide a brief synopsis of the overall conflict/s and plot. Did the main character learn anything from this conflict? Try to stir others' interest, but don't give away the ending. **NO SPOILERS!**

In a second paragraph, describe one significant symbol of the novel and what you think it represents. For example, in *The Hobbit*, Bilbo's handkerchief is not merely a handkerchief, but a symbol of the civilized and proper Baggins side of himself. Finally, describe two themes of the book. What are the messages the author is trying to communicate to the reader? Greed is evil? Small is mighty? Anyone can be a hero? What events of the plot/story make you think the author is trying to convey these messages?

Part II: The Critique (one paragraph)

In the second part of the book review, you will write a critique of the novel. Did the story engage you as a reader? Did the author's style and language help you enjoy the book? Did you notice the author using interesting choices of language or literary devices to try to get your attention and point it in a particular direction? Did you connect with the main character? Why or why not? Do you think the author fully developed the character? Were you able to understand the story in the context of real-world events? If the book was of the fantasy genre, did the author use good "world-building"? (i.e., is the world believable?) Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not? Be sure to write a meaningful paragraph, not just a list of answers to these questions.

2) The Creative Project

Along with the book review on one of your books, you must also complete a creative project on the second book. **Make sure your project is neatly done and presented in a polished manner. Bring your project to class on the first day of school, Monday, August 31.**

Your project should include:

1. Your name
2. Title of the book in the correct format (*italics* if typed, underlined if handwritten)
3. Author's name
4. Proper writing mechanics (spelling, punctuation, grammar)

Choose one of the following projects:

- Write a children's version of the book and illustrate it.
- Write a series of letters (1 or 2 paragraphs each) between a main character and another character (~5 letters).
- Write a series of dated journal entries from the point of view of one of the characters (~3 pages typed).
- Build a detailed model based on a setting or scene in the book. Include a short written explanation (no more than 1 paragraph) of the purpose or importance of that setting or scene in the book.
- Write a screenplay for a book or movie trailer based on the book, and then film and edit it.
- Write a song based on the book set to original music.
- Create a short, illustrated poetry anthology (~5 poems with artistic illustrations for each).

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for Rising 7th & 8th Graders**

Classic Novel Selections

Little Women by Louisa May Alcott

Middlemarch by George Eliot

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

The Scarlet Pimpernel by Baroness Emmuska von Orczy

The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain

The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas

Emma by Jane Austen

Dracula by Bram Stoker

The Call of the Wild by Jack London

The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins

Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Kim by Rudyard Kipling

Modern Novel Selections

The Wizard of Earthsea (first 3 books) by Ursula K. Leguin

The Sword in the Stone by T. H. White

1984 by George Orwell

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray by Ann M. Martin

The Fellowship of the Ring by J.R.R. Tolkien

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

Life of Pi by Yann Martel

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

Refugee by Alan Gratz

The Mysterious Benedict Society (or its sequels) by Trenton Lee Stewart

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Girl with a Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier

The Giver by Lois Lowry

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

2026 Forum Summer Assignment
Grades 6-8 Returning Students Only

Greetings, Scholars!

I hope you're getting outside to enjoy the beautiful weather! While you're out and about, you can begin thinking about your first Forum for next year. Keep reading for the highlights...

Umbrella theme: **cycles**

Task	Due Date	Details
Topic Choice ☐ Done	By July 15	Email Ms. Desjarlais at sdesjarlais@academyhill.org to get your topic approved. Please include a detailed description of your proposed topic, including what aspects of the cycle you will research. Remember, you should be digging deep into your topic.
Create an Outline ☐ Done	Submitted by July 30	Create an outline for your topic. It should have at least three main parts that will be the focus of your research. Type and share your outline with Ms. Desjarlais for approval.
Research	Ongoing	Once your outline is approved, it's time to begin the research! Remember, there are sources other than the Internet: ☐ Book ☐ Interview ☐ Magazine Please use at least one source type other than the Internet.
Write your script. ☐ Done Include time on script ☐ Done	Due by August 31	Grades 5 and 6: 4 to 6 minute time limit Grades 7 and 8: 6 to 8 minute time limit Remember to read your script aloud and time it. Include your time on your typed script. Please type your script and share it with Ms. Desjarlais at sdesjarlais@academyhill.org .
Create your slideshow. ☐ Done	Due by August 31	Review and follow the guidelines I've attached for how to create a good slideshow. Remember to share your slideshow with Ms. Desjarlais at sdesjarlais@academyhill.org .

Please follow the following guidelines when preparing your Forum slideshow:

The slides should enhance the learning, not distract from it.

Follow the 5 by 5 rule (as closely as you can)

- No more than 5 lines on a slide
- No more than 5 words in a line
- Use keywords and not complete sentences!
- Keep it simple.
- You should present/say many more words than what is on the slide.

Large pictures on each slide

- Primary sources/real photographs are best.
- Consider adding a background to your slides.

Simple font

- Don't get too fancy with color, animation, and style.
- Times New Roman, Comic Sans, Lexend, or Arial
- Lighter font colors wash out when on the big screen.
- Be sure to contrast the font color with the background color.

Capitalize slide titles

- Capitalize the first letter of all important words in the title.

Sources

- REMEMBER THAT ALL PICTURES HAVE A SOURCE TOO!
- GOOGLE IMAGES IS NOT A SOURCE
- Search engines (Google, etc) are NOT sources!

Discussion Questions

- Make a slide for each discussion question.
- Consider including an image on each slide.

Here are some possible ideas for the cycle umbrella theme. These are just to get you started. Feel free to find your own ideas!

- Olympic cycles and traditions
- Injury and rehabilitation cycles
- Cycles of popular music styles
- Trends in movies and television
- The cycle of invention, improvement, and replacement
- Recycling and electronic waste
- Renewable energy cycles
- Drought and flood cycles
- Climate patterns such as El Niño and La Niña
- Forest regeneration after wildfires

Questions to consider as you research:

- What is a cycle?
- Why do cycles occur?
- What happens when a cycle is disrupted?
- How do cycles affect people and the environment?
- Can cycles be predicted?
- How have cycles changed over time?