

8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment

Hello, students! This is Mrs. Rogers here with your first official assignment for 8th grade English. I hope you will find it enjoyable as you will have a bit of say in what you do. I cannot in good conscience allow you to go all summer without reading—I know some of you will read regardless, but for those of you who need encouragement, **HERE YOU GO!**

Please read each of the synopses below and select **ONE** of the four titles; you may certainly read all four of them, but you will complete the written work for only one. After you have selected your title, please get a copy for yourself. You may order it from Amazon or other online source or purchase it at Barnes and Noble or another reputable book store. You might check your library at home or the public library if you prefer not to purchase. It is absolutely acceptable to use an audio version of your selection while following along with the text.

I. Classic Selection: ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*** by Mark Twain

In this sequel to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, readers meet Huckleberry Finn after he's been taken in by Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, who intend to teach him religion and proper manners. Huck soon sets off on an adventure to help the widow's slave, Jim, escape up the Mississippi to the free states. By allowing Huck to tell his own story, Mark Twain addresses America's painful contradiction of racism and segregation in a "free" and "equal" society.

II. Non-Fiction Selection: ***Grand Theft Horse*** by G. Neri

Gail Ruffu was a rookie trainer known for her unconventional methods and ability to handle dangerous horses. When she became part owner of an untamed thoroughbred named Urgent Envoy, everything changed. After Urgent Envoy showed real promise, her co-owners forced Gail to speed up training and race him too early, causing the horse to develop a hairline shin fracture. Refusing to drug the horse to keep it running, Gail lost Urgent Envoy to her partners, who pushed the horse even harder. One more race would kill him. When nobody heeded her warnings, Gail had to act.

So on Christmas Eve, she rescued her own horse. A modern-day outlaw, Gail evaded private investigators and refused to give the horse up. Blacklisted by the racing world, she learned the law at night to take on a powerful L.A. attorney determined to crush her in court. As she stood up for the humane treatment of racehorses, she also faced down the system that caused their demise.

In this gorgeous graphic biography, G. Neri retells the life of his cousin Gail, a pioneer who challenged the horse racing world for the sake of one extraordinary horse.

OVER!!!

III. Historical Fiction: *The War that Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

This #1 *New York Times* bestseller is an exceptionally moving story of triumph against all odds set during World War II.

Ten-year-old Ada has never left her one-room apartment. Her mother is too humiliated by Ada's twisted foot to let her outside. So when her little brother Jamie is shipped out of London to escape the war, Ada doesn't waste a minute—she sneaks out to join him.

So begins a new adventure for Ada, and for Susan Smith, the woman who is forced to take the two kids in. As Ada teaches herself to ride a pony, learns to read, and watches for German spies, she begins to trust Susan—and Susan begins to love Ada and Jamie. But in the end, will their bond be enough to hold them together through wartime? Or will Ada and her brother fall back into the cruel hands of their mother?

IV. Companion book: *Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry

Gathering Blue the book that followed *The Giver* was published in 2000 and offers a disturbing yet hopeful view of the future that challenges readers to reflect critically on the social values and political directions of the present. It is the story of Kira, an extraordinarily talented young girl who finds herself suddenly orphaned and taken to live in a mysterious government compound near the center of her village. There she meets other equally talented and creative children, and together they discover the truth about themselves, their parents, and their society. In the end, Kira learns that in order for her village to survive and to prosper, she must overcome her own fears and break down age-old patterns of superstition and isolation so that she may "gather the blue."

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT—Please type your responses to numbers 1 & 2 using an MLA heading for your identifying information as well as MLA style for font, margins, etc.

1. Select a character (in some of the titles, that character may very well be an animal) and record 10 notable things about the character. You be the judge of what is notable, but remember this is a written assignment and will be graded. Please use complete sentences for these items.
2. Write down three questions that you had when YOU FINISHED THE NOVEL. These should be "discussion" questions, not merely a question that you could answer with a yes or a no. Focus on the elements of fiction for your questions, particularly plot, character, setting, and theme.
3. Read carefully and thoroughly because you will write a brief paper during the first week of school after we have enjoyed "book clubs" to discuss your selection with others who chose the same piece.

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