



8th Grade Summer Reading



Dear Future Eighth Graders (and Parents),

All of the students at Sutton Middle School will be reading two (2) novels over summer vacation. All incoming eighth-graders must read 2 novels from the list of books found on the following pages and complete the attached worksheets, one for each novel. Students' comprehension will be assessed during the first week of school.

Happy Reading!

The Sutton Middle School English Department ☺

If there are any questions about the Sutton Middle School summer reading program, please contact the Sutton Middle School at (508) 581-1630.

Remember all students are required to read TWO selections and complete the worksheet for each book.

8th Grade Summer Reading List

Choose one (2) books from the list below to be your second Summer Reading novel.

- The following synopses are adopted from www.amazon.com.

Bomb: The Race to Build-and Steal-the World's Most Dangerous Weapon by Steve Sheinkin **Nonfiction**
This fascinating tale, packed with a wide cast of characters, focuses mainly on three individuals: spy for the Soviets Harry Gold, leader of the Manhattan Project J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Knut Haukelid, who sabotaged German bomb efforts while working for the Norwegian resistance. Sheinkin skillfully combines conversational snapshots of the science behind the atomic bomb with a fast-paced narrative of the remarkable people who made it possible and attempted to steal it. Loaded with archival photos and primary-source documents, the accessible volume lays out how the bomb was envisioned and brought to fruition. This nonfiction selection reads like an international spy thriller, and that's the beauty of it.

The Misfits by James Howe **Realistic Fiction**
The Misfits focuses on a seemingly average group of middle school students in a small town in America. The four unusual characters are outcasts for innocuous reasons, and together they form the Gang of Five (yes, there are only 4 of them). Knowing full well that the middle school student council elections are essentially a popularity contest, the Gang of Five decides to run for office in hopes of creating meaningful change. Their campaign forces the school, students and teachers alike, to look at themselves and each other in a new light.

Scorpions by Walter Dean Myers

Realistic Fiction

Lately everybody's messing with Jamal. His teachers, the kids at school, even his dad. And now that Jamal's brother Randy's in the slammer, Crazy Mack has a crazy idea. He wants Jamal to take control of the Scorpions. Jamal has no use for all the gang jive, unless, like some say, it's the only way to cop the bread for Randy's appeal... This is the story of twelve-year-old Jamal, whose life changes drastically when he acquires a gun. Though he survives the experience, it's not without sacrificing his innocence and possibly his relationship with his best friend.

My Thirteenth Winter by Samantha Abeel

Memoir

Samantha Abeel tells her own story of living with and overcoming dyscalculia. She describes in painstaking detail how her life was affected by her learning disability before and after she was diagnosed and the way her peers, her family, and her teachers treated her. In seventh grade, Samantha suffered anxiety attacks as she struggled to keep up in her classes, to remember two locker combinations, and to deal with new teachers. Samantha was eventually placed in Special Education classes in eighth grade, but she continued to feel anxious about her future. Despite these struggles, Samantha's story is heartwarming and uplifting.

Elsewhere by Gabrielle Zevin

Fiction

Although 15-year-old Liz is maturing, coping with disappointments, and learning to control her anger, she is getting younger. Having been killed by a hit and run driver, she now lives in Elsewhere with the grandmother who died before she was born. Initially, Liz misses her family and feels sullen and depressed. She is mad at the driver who hit her and distressed that she will never have a boyfriend and attend the prom. Gradually, Liz begins to realize that life in Elsewhere is not all it seems to be and is, in fact, more that it appears to be.

Rash by Pete Hautman

Futuristic Fiction

In 2076 in the United Safer States of America, verbal abuse, obesity, and dangerous activities are against the law. Helmets and health food are de rigueur, and sports are either outlawed or radically changed (runners' track times have slowed appreciably because of the bulky safety equipment required). The penalty for breaking any rule is a lengthy prison term, and 24 percent of the population is incarcerated and responsible for doing much of the country's manual labor—without pay. For Bo Marsten, 16, the punishment for allegedly spreading a rash through school is a prison sentence, which is suspended, but he then goes to jail for lack of self-control after he hits a classmate. Bo has the opportunity to reduce his sentence when he's chosen for the prison's (illegal) football team, but the sadistic coach is determined that his players win at any cost. **This book contains some mature language.**

Does My Head Look Big In This by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Fiction

Amal is an Australian-born, Muslim Palestinian "whacked with some seriously confusing identity hypkens." At 16, she loves shopping, watches *Sex and the City*, and IMs her friends about her crush on a classmate. She also wants be strong enough to wear the hijab, a badge of her deeply held faith, even if it means receiving insults from kids at her snotty prep school and being refused a part-time job in the food court. Her parents support her and so do her friends whether they are Muslim, Jewish, Christian, or secular. The first-person present-tense narrative is hilarious and sometimes heartbreaking.

Endangered by Eliot Schrefer

Realistic Fiction

Fourteen-year-old Sophie rescues Otto, a young chimp, while spending the summer at her mother's bonobo sanctuary in the Democratic Republic of Congo. When the president is assassinated and war breaks out, Sophie has a chance to return home to the United States but cannot bear to leave Otto. Their journey to safety takes them into the bonobo enclosure, but the real danger begins when they venture out and risk encountering rebel soldiers.

Stop Pretending by Sonya Sones

Memoir/Poetry

The subtitle of *Stop Pretending* says it all: "What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy." In a sequence of short, intense poems based on the author's own experiences, a 13-year-old girl suffers through her shifting feelings about her sibling's mental illness. She recalls the terror of the Christmas Eve when Sister was suddenly transformed into a stranger; the horror of visiting Sister in the hospital and finding her rocking on all fours; the fear that her friends will find out; her own worry that she, too, may lose her mind; and her wistful memories of Sister as she was before. More complex emotions are also explored, such as her irrational suspicion that Sister may be deliberately acting crazy, as poignantly expressed in the title poem: "Stop pretending./ Right this minute./ Don't you tell me/ you don't know me./ Stop this crazy act/ and show me/ that you haven't changed./ Stop pretending/ you're deranged." Gradually, as Sister begins to recover, the main character is able to find hope and again take pleasure in her own life.

Define Normal by Julie Anne Peters

Fiction

Antonia Dillon, a driven honor student at Oberon Middle School, is not surprised when she is asked to become a peer counselor. It's just another honor to add to her resume. But her first counseling session is pure culture shock--Antonia has been paired with the notorious Jasmine "Jazz" Luther, a punk with an incredible attitude who uses black lipstick and is into body piercing and tattoos. As the two girls reluctantly engaging in their sessions, a strange, tentative friendship develops, with each girl gradually revealing more and more about her troubled life. Antonia admits that her divorced mother is deeply depressed and unable to work or care for her family; Jazz talks about her controlling, materialistic yuppie parents and their expectations. As secret after secret is exchanged, it becomes obvious that the "priss" and the punk are made to be best friends. The only question that remains is will the world accept their friendship?

Sledding Hill by Chris Crutcher

Fiction

Eddie Proffit loses his Dad and best friend to violent accidents in the opening pages of this novel. Eddie's story is narrated by the dead friend, Billy, who, if not in Heaven, is in a very good place—free of pain and full of neat tricks to employ during his ghostly mission to help Eddie overcome sadness so deep he has stopped speaking. The exploration of death and of being silenced by grief takes a hairpin turn when book banning—a very different type of silencing— and this becomes the focus of the novel's second half. Eddie's elective silence has his mother's minister, Sanford Tarter, convinced he needs to be baptized. Tarter also teaches English at the high school. Eddie, however is not in Tarter's ELA class; he is instead enrolled in a class called Really Modern Literature, run by a librarian who prefers "books by authors who are still alive." She requires everyone read *Warren Peece* by the "relatively obscure" author Chris Crutcher. Naturally, this "good book with bad words" is condemned by Tarter, who incites a crusade to rid the library of all Crutcher's "irrelevant and only marginally well written" books. As the book winds to its climax, Eddie resolves his problems both with censored books and the death of his friend and father in a triumphant and satisfying conclusion.

White Fang by Jack London

Fiction – Adventure

Even as a pup, he is different from his brothers: A large gray cub among a litter of red-haired puppies, with a quicker bite and heavier paw. When he leaves the protection of his snug cave, he and his mother are captured by the fire-making gods -- man-animals who live in teepees, determine that the pup is half-dog, half-wolf, and name him White Fang. White Fang finds himself relentlessly tormented by the tribe's domestic dogs and quickly learns to surpass them in cunning and viciousness. His brutality is encouraged even further when he is sold to a sadistic man who takes advantage of the dog's massive size and tremendous strength to pit him in to-the-death dogfights. White Fang is driven near mad, until a young man comes along who offers him kindness and friendship. But friendship is something White Fang doesn't understand...yet.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Science Fiction

In order to develop a secure defense against a hostile alien race's next attack, government agencies breed child geniuses and train them as soldiers. A brilliant young boy, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin lives with his kind but distant parents, his sadistic brother Peter, and the person he loves more than anyone else, his sister Valentine. Young Ender Wiggin is drafted to the orbiting Battle School for rigorous military training. Ender's skills make him a leader in school and respected in the Battle Room, where children play at mock battles in zero gravity. Ender suffers greatly from isolation, rivalry from his peers, pressure from the adult teachers, and an unsettling fear of the alien invaders. The war with the Buggers has been raging for a hundred years, and the quest for the perfect general has been underway for almost as long. Is Ender the general Earth needs?

