



GRADE 8 REQUIRED READING

Of Mice and Men John Steinbeck

One of the themes found in *Of Mice and Men* is the ability to overcome trials and hardships by believing in a better future. Almost all of the characters in Steinbeck's novels face difficult times but are ultimately sustained by an individual or collective dream. While reading *Of Mice and Men*, please highlight and annotate for this theme. Pay close attention to character development and perhaps what joins each of these characters. I look forward to discussing this book in the fall! *Of Mice and Men* will lend itself to our first five-paragraph essay once the school year begins.

Please purchase the following edition so that our pagination is all the same. [Purchase Of Mice and Men here.](#)

Writing Assignment:

Please choose **one** of the following characters: (George, Lennie, Curley's wife, or Crooks). In a page response, explain what trials that character faces and how that character is able to endure difficult times. Make sure your paragraph is built around three examples and that you use two quotes from the book to support your argument. Your response should be typed, double-spaced, font 12, Times New Roman.

ADDITIONAL READING

You will also read two (2) additional books as part of your summer reading. You should choose one of the books from the following list. For your second book, you are free to choose any other book, although you may choose another book from the list below.

FICTION

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn Betty Smith

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is a poignant literary classic that tells the story of Francie Nolan as she grows up in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, from 1902 to 1919. The novel is filled with compassion and cruelty, laughter and heartache. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie and her bittersweet formative years in the slums of Williamsburg has enchanted and inspired millions of readers for more than sixty years. The daily experiences of the unforgettable Nolans are raw with honesty and tenderly threaded with family connectedness.

House on Mango Street Sandra Cisneros (Memoir)

Acclaimed by critics, beloved by readers of all ages, taught everywhere from inner-city grade



schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, *The House on Mango Street* is the remarkable story of Esperanza Cordero. Told in a series of vignettes – sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous—it is the story of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago, inventing for herself who and what she will become. Few other books in our time have touched so many readers.

Inside Out and Back Again Thanhha Lai (Historical Fiction)

For all the ten years of her life, Hà has only known Saigon: the thrills of its markets, the joy of its traditions, and the warmth of her friends close by. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee as Saigon falls, and they board a ship headed toward hope. In America, Hà discovers the foreign world of Alabama: the coldness of its strangers, the dullness of its food...and the strength of her very own family.

The Secret Life of Bee Sue Monk Kidd

When Lily's fierce-hearted black "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the town's most vicious racists, Lily decides they should both escape to Tiburon, South Carolina—a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters who introduce Lily to a mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna who presides over their household. This is a remarkable story about divine female power and the transforming power of love—a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.

When I was Puerto Rican Esmeralda Santiago (Historical Fiction)

Growing up in rural Puerto Rico, Esmeralda learned the proper way to eat a guava, the sound of tree frogs in the mango groves at night, the taste of the delectable sausage called morcilla, and the formula for ushering a dead baby's soul to heaven. When her mother takes off to New York with her seven, soon to be eleven children, Esmeralda must learn new rules, a new language, and eventually take on a new identity. Santiago brilliantly recreates the idyllic landscape and tumultuous family life of her earliest years and her tremendous journey from the barrio to Brooklyn, translating for her mother at the welfare office, to high honors at Harvard.

A Separate Peace John Knowles

Set at a boys boarding school in New England during the early years of World War II, *A Separate Peace* is a harrowing and luminous parable of the dark side of adolescence. Gene is a lonely, introverted intellectual. Phineas is a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. What happens between the two friends one summer, like the war itself, banishes the innocence of these boys and their world.

NONFICTION

Into Thin Air John Krakauer

A bank of clouds was assembling on the not-so-distant horizon, but journalist and mountaineer



Jon Krakauer, standing on the summit of Mt. Everest, saw nothing that "suggested that a murderous storm was bearing down." He was wrong. The storm, which claimed five lives and left countless more--including Krakauer's--in guilt-ridden disarray, would also provide the impetus for *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's epic account of the May 1996 disaster.

Endurance Alfred Lansing

The astonishing saga of polar explorer Ernest Shackleton's survival for over a year on the ice-bound Antarctic seas, as Time magazine put it, "defined heroism." Alfred Lansing's scrupulously researched and brilliantly narrated book has long been acknowledged as the definitive account of the Endurance's fateful trip. Lansing consulted with ten of the surviving members and gained access to diaries and personal accounts by eight others. *Endurance* teaches respect for survival and is an unforgettable story.

Friday Night Lights H.G. Bissinger

Return once again to the enduring account of life in the Mojo lane, to the Permian Panthers of Odessa -- the winningest high school football team in Texas history. Odessa is not known to be a town big on dreams, but the Panthers help keep the hopes and dreams of this small, dusty town going. Socially and racially divided, its fragile economy follows the treacherous boom-bust path of the oil business. In bad times, the unemployment rate barrels out of control; in good times, its murder rate skyrockets. But every Friday night from September to December, when the Permian High School Panthers play football, this West Texas town becomes a place where dreams can come true. With frankness and compassion, Bissinger chronicles one of the Panthers' dramatic seasons and shows how single-minded devotion to the team shapes the community and inspires--and sometimes shatters--the teenagers who wear the Panthers' uniforms. Now a major motion picture starring Billy Bob Thornton.

I Have Lived a Thousand Years Livia Bitton-Jackson

It wasn't long ago that Elli led a normal life--a life rich and full that included family, friends, school, and thoughts about boys. But these adolescent daydreams quickly darken in March 1944, when the Nazis invade Hungary. First, Elli can no longer attend school, have possessions, or talk to her neighbors. Then she and her family are forced to leave their house behind to move into a crowded ghetto, where privacy becomes a luxury of the past and food becomes a scarcity. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* is a story of cruelty and suffering, but at the same time a story of hope, faith, perseverance, and love.

A Long Walk to Water Linda Sue Park

A Long Walk to Water begins as two stories, told in alternating sections, about a girl in Sudan in 2008 and a boy in Sudan in 1985. The girl, Nya, is fetching water from a pond that is two hours' walk from her home: she makes two trips to the pond every day. The boy, Salva, becomes one of the "lost boys" of Sudan, refugees who cover the African continent on foot as they search for their families and for a safe place to stay. Enduring every hardship from loneliness to attack by armed rebels to contact with killer lions and crocodiles, Salva is a survivor, and his story goes on



to intersect with Nya's in an astonishing and moving way.

Rocket Boys Homer Hickam

"Until I began to build and launch rockets, I didn't know my home town was at war with itself over its children, and that my parents were locked in a kind of bloodless combat over how my brother and I would live our lives. I didn't know that if a girl broke your heart, another girl, virtuous at least in spirit, could mend it on the same night. And I didn't know that the enthalpy decrease in a converging passage could be transformed into jet kinetic energy if a divergent passage was added. The other boys discovered their own truths when we built our rockets, but those were mine." So begins Homer "Sonny" Hickam Jr.'s extraordinary memoir of life in Coalwood, West Virginia--a hard-scrabble little mining company town where the only things that mattered were coal mining and high school football, and where the future was regarded with more fear than hope. Looking back after a distinguished NASA career, Hickam shares the story of his youth, taking readers into the life of the little mining town of Coalwood and the boys who would come to embody its dreams.