



8th grade Core Summer Reading 2023-2024

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Middle School Core Program! Core is an interdisciplinary study, using primary and secondary historical sources, as well as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. The Core curriculum fosters skills that prepare students for a college prep upper school curriculum by encouraging students to think, question, learn, and make decisions based on Jewish and American values.

In aligning our curriculum with our school's mission and philosophy, Core students participate in independent reading and writing and dynamic small group activities and projects that affirm and support the successes and challenges students face at the Saligman Middle School. Creative projects, cooperative learning and independence as a learner are encouraged. Emphasis is on the development and improvement of skills that include but are not limited to, research, study skills, independent reading, vocabulary, grammar, note-making and organization, writing and critical thinking.

Please find instructions below for the two summer reading assignments. We hope you and your family have a wonderful summer. We look forward to seeing our middle schoolers after summer break!

Sincerely,

The Core Department

Summer Reading Instructions for 8th grade

The phrase "The American Dream" can be defined as follows:

The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance.

www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp

Book #1: American Dream Novel Choice

For this assignment you can choose a non-fiction book (memoir, autobiography, or biography) or a work of fiction.

As you read your chosen book, annotate by highlighting on using sticky note for:

1. Character traits (yellow).
2. Elements of setting (blue).
3. Passages about the American Dream (pink).

After you read the book, answer the following questions by creating bullet point lists:

1. Describe the protagonist using the following questions:
 - a. Who are they? (name, title, etc)
 - b. What did they accomplish?
 - c. Important dates or events in the person's life
 - d. Important places in the person's life
2. How would your book's protagonist define the American Dream?
3. Does the main character of your book achieve the American Dream? What obstacles stood in his or her way?
4. Why did you choose to read this book?

[Here are some options for your Novel Choice](#)

Book #2 One Book, One Barrack

Read our Barrack Middle School One Book, One Barrack selection *Turtle Boy* by M. Evan Wolkenstein. Please be sure to bring your book and responses to class on the first day of school.

When you complete the reading, please respond to THREE of the following SIX questions:

1. Our Barrack middle school is guided by four Derech Eretz values- kindness, honor, courage and kehillah. Choose one of our values and write about how it is demonstrated by one of the main characters. Be sure to include specific examples from the novel.
2. RJ writes a bucket list of adventures he wants to have, like owning a pet, going on a roller coaster, and swimming in the ocean. What would be on your list?
3. Why do you think Rabbi Harris thought that Will and RJ would benefit from spending time together? Do you think he was right?
4. Will invents several new Jewish rituals for himself, including the "Drummer's Kaddish." Are there ways you or your family have invented or innovated special traditions (Jewish or general)?
5. Memory is an important theme of *Turtle Boy*, as at the beginning of the novel, Will can't remember anything about his father, but as he gets closer to RJ some of his childhood memories come back to him. Discuss the idea of memory, and think about what sorts of things trigger Will to remember events he thought he'd forgotten.
6. Is there a character in *Turtle Boy* you felt especially fond of? Why? What did they do or say that struck you?

Guidelines for Question Responses

1. Both assignments must be word processed, 12 point font, 1.5 spaced and include

2. quotations and page references from the book to support your responses.
3. These responses are due the first week of Core class in September.
4. Please bring your marked up copy of your novels to class on the first day of school.
5. In the upper left hand corner of the page please include your name, grade and date.

Happy reading! We are looking forward to discussing your thoughtful responses in September.
Enjoy your summer vacation!