



May 2025

Dear rising 8th grade students and parents,

I am so excited to work with you this 2025-26 school year. I hope that you have a fun, restful summer and that you get to spend your vacation with a few good books.

Your required assignment for summer reading is to choose 2 books, read them, and complete a project comparing and contrasting them (see pages 2-3). One of the books must be from the [2025 Lone Star book list](#), and the other book must be from the [classics list on pages 4-6 of this document](#). On the next page, you will find your choice assignments for your summer reading books, and on page 3, a rubric to guide your work. The purpose of these activities is to think critically about what you are reading, make connections between the 2 texts, and share your understanding in unique and creative ways.

We will discuss these books and present our projects during the first week of school. Your summer reading project will be due the first full week of school on **Monday, August 25, 2025**.

Please don't hesitate to email me over the summer if you have any questions. I can't wait to share these summer book projects and celebrate your hard work in the fall. I look forward to seeing you next year. Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Key
8th Grade Language Arts Teacher
kkey@stmes.org

8th Grade Summer Reading Assignments

Choose 1 of the following projects to complete after you have read both books.

Option #1: Photographic Representation

Retell the books' stories using at least 10 photos and a detailed (3-5 sentences) caption for each one. Place the 5 main parts of the plot of each story side-by-side: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution. Include comparisons of the 2 stories in your captions. Pictures must be taken by you, not found online. Be creative—think of using friends, siblings, dolls, action figures, etc., as the characters. The photos can be added to a poster or a digital slideshow. Make sure to include the titles and authors.

Option #2: Book Bag

Choose 3 items that represent people, places, events, and other parts of the book. Place them in a brown paper bag or other container. Do this for each book, and then choose 3 items that could represent both books. (Your bag should contain a total of 9 items.) These can be found around the house, created from items on hand, or drawn. Create a label for your bag that includes the titles and authors. Write a key describing each of the items, and explain their importance to the books.

Option #3: Board Game

Create a board or card game that merges elements from both books. The game should include details about the settings, characters, and plots to show knowledge of the books. Include instructions about how to play; and a blurb that introduces the premise of the game, explains how it merges your 2 books, and includes the titles and authors. You may use an online board game template or create one from scratch.

Option #4: Crossover Video Trailer

Use iMovie or Canva to create a video trailer in which you present a hypothetical crossover book or movie that combines the stories, characters, settings, etc., from both of your books. Use music and text with images you create, draw, or find to set the tone. Make sure to include the following:

- (1) Introduction: Hook Your Audience (quote from the book, ask the audience a question, introduce the main character vividly, set the scene, etc.) *Give the titles and authors of both books.
- (2) Summarize: Summarize the plot, making sure to combine elements from both books. Include a main character(s), identify the problem, and lead the audience toward the solution. Don't spoil the ending!
- (3) Closing: Entice the audience with a strong closing statement. Remember, your trailer should flow nicely, like a commercial. Write with voice and emotion!

Summer Reading Project Rubric

Name: _____

	4	3	2	1
Understanding of the Books & Information	Project includes many aspects of the books. It tells about the books in depth and with many details. It is clear that the student read and understood the books.	Project includes most aspects of the books. It tells important details of the books. The student shows understanding of the books.	Project includes some main events that took place. It includes limited details of the books. The student shows some lack of clarity of the books.	Project is missing a lot of important information. It lacks important details from the books. The student appears to lack understanding of the books.
Use of Time and Following Directions	Project meets all requirements listed under the project description and was turned in on time.	Project meets most requirements listed under the project description and was completed on time.	Project meets some requirements listed under the project description and/or was not completed on time.	Project meets few or no requirements listed under the project description and was not turned in on time.
Evidence of Thought, Creativity, & Effort	Project shows much thought, creativity, and effort. It is clear the student put a lot of work into the project.	Project shows a good deal of thought, creativity, and effort. The student put a good deal of work into the project.	Project shows some thought, creativity, and effort. The student put some work into the project.	Project shows little thought, creativity, or effort. The student put little or no work into the project.
Organization	The complete work, ideas, and details are presented in a neat and organized manner so that the thoughts are easy to follow.	The complete work, ideas, and details are presented in a fairly neat and organized manner. Thoughts and direction are fairly easy to recognize.	The complete work, ideas, and details need more focus in order to be considered neat and organized. Some details seem out of place or too much extra, unneeded information has been added.	The complete work, ideas, and details seem tossed together, and the project theme is hard to follow.
Writing Conventions: - Grammar - Capitalization - Punctuation - Spelling	Punctuation is correct, spelling is accurate, and there are no major errors in grammar.	There are a few/some errors in writing conventions but not enough to cause difficulty in reading and understanding the text.	Several punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors stand out in the writing.	Punctuation, spelling, and grammar errors are very common and make understanding the project difficult.

Total: _____ /20 x 5 = _____

8th Grade Classic Novels

<p><i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1892)</p> <p>Written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle between the years 1867 and 1927, the legendary Sherlock Holmes employed his mastery of deductive reasoning and expert sleuthing to solve an array of complex and harrowing cases. From his home—221B Baker Street in London—the legendary Sherlock Holmes (accompanied by his loyal companion, Dr. Watson) baffled policemen and became famous worldwide for his remarkable observations and even more eccentric habits.</p>	<p><i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> Madeleine L'Engle (1962)</p> <p>It was a dark and stormy night; Meg Murry, her small brother Charles Wallace, and her mother had come down to the kitchen for a midnight snack when they were upset by the arrival of a most disturbing stranger. “Wild nights are my glory,” the unearthly stranger told them. “I just got caught in a downdraft and blown off course. Let me sit down for a moment, and then I’ll be on my way. Speaking of ways, by the way, there is such a thing as a tesseract.” A tesseract is a wrinkle in time.</p>
<p><i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Harper Lee (1960)</p> <p>Set in the small Southern town of Maycomb, Alabama, during the Depression, <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> follows 3 years in the life of 8-year-old Scout Finch, her brother, Jem, and their father, Atticus—punctuated by the arrest and eventual trial of a young Black man accused of raping a white woman. Though her novel explores big themes, Harper Lee chooses to tell it through the eyes of a child. The result is a tough and tender novel of race, class, justice, and the pain of growing up.</p>	<p><i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> Jules Verne (1873)</p> <p><i>Around the World in Eighty Days</i> is a classic adventure novel by the French writer Jules Verne, published in 1873. In the story, Phileas Fogg of London and his newly employed French valet Passepartout attempt to circumnavigate the world in 80 days on a £20,000 wager set by his friends at the Reform Club.</p>
<p><i>White Fang</i> Jack London (1906)</p> <p><i>White Fang</i> is a novel by American author Jack London (1876–1916)—and the name of the book’s eponymous character, a wild wolfdog. The story takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the 1890s Klondike Gold Rush and details White Fang’s journey to domestication. It is a companion novel (and a thematic mirror) to London’s best-known work, <i>The Call of the Wild</i>, which is about a kidnapped, domesticated dog embracing his wild ancestry to survive and thrive in the wild.</p>	<p><i>The Hobbit</i> J.R.R. Tolkien (1937)</p> <p>Bilbo Baggins is a hobbit who enjoys a comfortable, unambitious life, rarely traveling any farther than his pantry or cellar, but his contentment is disturbed when the wizard Gandalf and a company of dwarves arrive on his doorstep to whisk him away on an adventure. They have launched a plot to raid the treasure hoard guarded by Smaug the Magnificent, a large and dangerous dragon. Bilbo reluctantly joins their quest, unaware that on his journey he will encounter both a magic ring and a frightening creature known as Gollum.</p>

<p><i>Gulliver's Travels</i> Jonathan Swift (1726)</p> <p>This witty satire on European behavior was written as a series of tongue-in-cheek traveler narratives. Gulliver is shipwrecked on an island of tiny people, the Lilliputians, then he travels to a land of giants (Brobdingnag), a country populated by talking horses (the Houyhnhnms), and other fanciful locations. Thematically, Swift explores the idea of utopia through family planning, education, and communalism versus individualism.</p>	<p><i>Animal Farm</i> George Orwell (1945)</p> <p>In this classic allegory, the animals take over the farm. They try to create a perfect world where all creatures are valued and treated equally; however, things don't go entirely according to plan. Written as an antithesis to controlling totalitarianism, <i>Animal Farm</i> is a book every teenager should read.</p>
<p><i>The Time Machine</i> H.G. Wells (1895)</p> <p>English novelist, historian, and science writer H.G. Wells abandoned teaching and launched his literary career with a series of highly successful science fiction novels. First published in 1895, the novel follows the adventures of a hypothetical Time Traveller who journeys into the future to find that humanity has evolved into two races: the peaceful Eloi—vegetarians who tire easily—and the carnivorous, predatory Morlocks.</p>	<p><i>The Call of the Wild</i> Jack London (1903)</p> <p>First published in 1903, <i>The Call of the Wild</i> is regarded as Jack London's masterpiece. Based on London's experiences as a gold prospector in the Canadian wilderness and his ideas about nature and the struggle for existence, <i>The Call of the Wild</i> is a tale about unbreakable spirit and the fight for survival in the frozen Alaskan Klondike.</p>
<p><i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1901)</p> <p>At Baskerville Hall, a legendary curse has apparently claimed one more victim. Sir Charles Baskerville has been found dead. There are no signs of violence, but his face is hideously distorted with terror. Years earlier, a hound-like beast with blazing eyes and dripping jaws was reported to have torn out the throat of Hugo Baskerville. Has the destroyer struck again? More importantly, is Sir Henry Baskerville, younger heir to the estate, now in danger?</p>	<p><i>War of the Worlds</i> H.G. Wells (1897)</p> <p>When an army of Martians lands in England, panic and terror seize the population. As they traverse the country in machines, incinerating all in their path with a heat ray and spreading toxic gasses, the people of Earth must come to terms with the prospect of the end of human civilization and the beginning of Martian rule. Inspiring films, comic books, and TV series, <i>The War of the Worlds</i> has influenced every alien story that has come since.</p>
<p><i>Night</i> Elie Wiesel (1960)</p> <p>It is 1944, and the Jews of Hungary are rounded up and driven into Nazi concentration camps. For the next year, young Elie experiences the loss of everything he loves—home, friends, family—in an agonizing journey. <i>Night</i> is the greatest tragedy of our time, told through the eyes of a 15-year old boy.</p>	<p><i>The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)</p> <p>The respected Dr. Jekyll appears to have fallen under the spell of a disreputable character named Edward Hyde, who has access to Jekyll's bank account, and Jekyll has named Hyde as his sole heir in a recently drafted will. And there is something even more disturbing about the close relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.</p>