



May 2026

Dear Rising 8th Grade Students and Parents,

I hope you have a restful summer and also get to spend your time with a few good books. Your required assignment for summer reading is to choose **2** books. One book should be from the list selected from the Texas Lone Star reading list, and the other should be from the list of historical fiction books set during the Revolutionary time period. Each book has a corresponding project you will complete. **You can find the selected books and their corresponding project on the following pages. Regardless of the 2 books and projects you choose, they must be presented in a visually appealing way.** Remember, this is the first impression Mrs. Kilbourn is going to get of your work ethic and writing skills, so show off what you've got!

We will discuss these books and share our projects during the first two weeks of school. The purpose of these activities is to:

1. encourage you to think critically about what you are reading,
2. allow you to share your understanding in creative ways, and
3. foster robust discussion when the school year begins in August.

Your **2** summer reading projects will be due the first Friday of the school year, on **Friday, August 21, 2026**. We will spend the first two weeks of school using these books and projects. Use the included Summer Reading Project Rubric to further guide your work. Remember, students who complete the Lone Star Reading Challenge by reading 5 Lone Star books get invited to an ice cream social!

Please don't hesitate to email over the summer if you have any questions. Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Leslie Kilbourn
8th Grade Language Arts
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8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment Options

LIST 1: Choose 1 of the following books to read and its corresponding project to complete.

T E X T B O O K S	Book	Project Description
L O N E S T A R R E A D I N G L I S T	Cartaya, Pablo. <i>A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation.</i>	Research Joseph Campbell's concept of The Hero's Journey. Create a visual map showing how Gonzalo goes through at least six stages of the hero's journey. For each stage, include 3-5 sentences, a quote from the text, and a picture. BONUS! Combine this character map with a physical map of his roadtrip.
	Messner, Kate. <i>The Trouble with Heroes.</i>	Select six of the peaks that Finn climbs. Create a map of the physical peaks and valleys that also shows the figurative peaks and valleys of his emotional journal as well. For each, create a "trailmarker" with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEOGRAPHY: the name of the peak/location and a brief description of the setting based on the novel ● CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: the "lesson learned" or "hero myth" that was shattered at this specific spot ● TEXT EVIDENCE: a direct quote from the book that illustrates Finn's mindset at this altitude. BONUS! Bake 2-3 of the cookie recipes and take selfies with your final creation!
	Colman, Alyssa. <i>Where Only Storms Grow.</i>	Write two letters from each of the twins to their father in California. Include specific struggles, family tension, and emotional truth. BONUS! Write a short response from the dad to each of the letters.
	Baron, Chris. <i>Spark.</i>	Create a playlist of 10 songs that you think Finn would listen to. For each song, write a short paragraph explaining your choice; include a significant song lyric and quote a line from the novel. BONUS! Write your own song inspired by the novel!
	Graudin, Ryan. <i>The Girl Who Kept the Castle.</i>	Make some text-to-world connections. Even though this story is fantasy, find some real-world examples of classism or allowing only certain groups access to certain rights or roles. Then, write an essay to connect at least three situations from the book to real-world situations. Use text evidence from the novel, and cite your sources for your research. BONUS! Make up a recipe for 2-3 "magic spells" and explain your choices.
	Morrison, Laurie. <i>Keeping Pace.</i>	Write a friendship advice column from Grace's perspective. Create 3 fictional notes asking for advice on made-up friendship troubles. Respond to the note as Grace, giving advice that references 2-3 specific events from the book sharing what the protagonist learned. BONUS! Write a list poem about anything of your choosing. Play and take risks, like Emily Dickinson.

LIST 2: Choose 1 of the following books to read and its corresponding project to complete.

	Title & Author of Book	Project Description
R E V O L U T I O N A R Y N O V E L	Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. <i>Jefferson's Sons.</i>	<p>Each of these books is historical fiction, meaning the story is based on real events from history, and some of the characters were real people. You have the opportunity to do some research to find what is historical fact and what is the author's fiction. Choose one of the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OPTION 1 Find two primary sources that are connected to your novel. Write a paragraph for each one explaining the connection, and include a quote from the novel as text support. ● OPTION 2 Dig deeper into a biographical article about a character from the novel who is actually a real person. Present 3 similarities (novel portrayal that is consistent with facts) and 3 differences (creative liberty that the author took to embellish the character) in a well-written essay. Please cite your source(s). ● OPTION 3 Collect or create 5 symbolic objects that represent the character's journey through the Revolutionary era. Each object must be accompanied by a "museum placard" explaining its significance to the plot and the historical period.
	Anderson, Laurie Halse. <i>Fever 1793.</i>	
	Elliot, L. M. <i>Hamilton & Peggy! A Revolutionary Friendship.</i>	
	Anderson, Laurie Halse. <i>Chains.</i>	

Reading Project Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Understanding of the Novel	The project shows evidence of an understanding of the novel. Through your work, you have captured major themes, or ideas, in the novel.	The project shows some evidence of an understanding of the novel.	It is unclear that you understand the bigger themes asked of the project.	Your project does not demonstrate understanding of the novel.
Creativity, Individuality, Neatness	Your project demonstrates creativity and individual thought in presentation. You have taken time to present your work in a visually appealing way. (Examples of ways to do this include using a straight-edge to draw lines, tracing over pencil in a fine-tipped marker, backing any printed and cut paper to give it a border and “finished” look, centering titles/words, etc.)	The project meets most of the expectations set out.	The project doesn’t meet several of the expectations set.	The project meets few of the expectations set.
Evidence of Information and Organization	You followed the specific instructions in the novel project assignment and have included all aspects.	The project includes some aspects of the project instructions, but not all.	The project includes a few of the required elements, but not most.	You completed a different project or did not follow the project instructions.
Writing Conventions: - Capitalization - Punctuation - Spelling - Grammar	Punctuation is correct, spelling is accurate, and there are no major errors in grammar.	The project includes some errors in writing conventions—a few punctuation, spelling, and/or grammatical issues—but not enough to cause difficulty in reading and understanding the text.	Several punctuation, spelling, and grammatical errors distract from the content.	Punctuation, spelling, and grammatical errors create difficulty in understanding the project.

BONUS! 1-2 points will be awarded based on effort and creativity.

Total: ____/16