St. Michael's
EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

Dear Parents of Incoming Eighth Grade Students,

At St. Michael's, we believe that learning is a year-round journey, and we want to ensure our students are well prepared for the exciting challenges of the coming year. To support that goal, **all students entering first through eighth grade are required to complete a summer math and reading program.** The following information outlines the expectations for students entering eighth grade:

Math
Each student will complete a summer math workbook designed to reinforce concepts learned in seventh grade. This workbook will be sent home with your child on the last day of school.

- Please **remove the answer key** from the back of the book and use it to check your child's work throughout the summer.
- **Calculators should not be used**; we encourage students to practice their mental math skills.
- Once completed, the workbook should be **signed by a parent** and returned to your child's homeroom teacher on the **first day of school: Tuesday, September 1**.
- **Important Note for Incoming Eighth-Grade Geometry Students**: In addition to the summer math workbook, students entering eighth-grade Geometry will be required to complete an additional review packet that will be given to them along with their summer math workbook.

Reading
Students are also expected to:

- **Read at least three books over the summer - two books of their choosing as well as the required book, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, assigned by Mr. Buccola.**
- *Animal Farm* should be read last, as the class will begin the school year discussing this book.
- Prepare a written response on *Animal Farm* due to Mr. Buccola by **August 24** by emailing him at nickbuccola@smeds.com.
- Students who would like to earn extra credit may also read ***Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut**.

A suggested reading list and all necessary directions for the written response are attached to this letter and can also be found on our website on the **Summer Homework** page.

Grading and Support
Students who do not submit their completed summer work will receive an **Incomplete** in math and/or literature on their first report card.

We encourage families to establish a regular routine that balances summer fun with time for learning. Starting early and spreading the work out over the summer will make the experience more enjoyable and effective for your child. Waiting until the final weeks of summer can make it harder for students to retain and apply their skills.

If you have any questions about the summer homework requirements, please feel free to contact Mr. Buccola at nickbuccola@smeds.com for questions about the reading homework and Ms. Arnould at isabelarnould@smeds.com for questions about the math homework.

Thank you for your partnership in your child's education. We look forward to welcoming your child to eighth grade in the fall!

Sincerely,

Olivia Keffer
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
St. Michael's Episcopal Day School
a California Independent School
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916-485-3418

St. Michael's
EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

Summer Reading 2026
Incoming Eighth Grade

Dear Parents:
Students entering eighth grade will read at least three books over the course of the summer, including a whole-class read of ***Animal Farm*** **by George Orwell.** See pages three and four for specific details on the required written response for this title. Students who would like to earn extra credit can also read ***Cat's Cradle*** **by Kurt Vonnegut.**

Below are suggested titles for incoming eighth graders. They may select other titles that are not included on this list. Please note that audiobooks are acceptable and count toward summer reading goals.

Fiction Suggestions
The A.B.C Murders by Agatha Christie
Across So Many Seas by Ruth Behar
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain
Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne
The Rebound by Kwame Alexander
The Danger Box by Blue Balliett
Dark Lord: The Early Years by Jamie Thomson
Daughter of Smoke and Bone (series) by Laini Taylor
Drums, Girls, & Dangerous Pie by Jordan Sonneblick
An Elephant in the Garden by Michael Morpurgo
Ender's Game (series) by Orson Scott Card
Eragon (series) by Christopher Paolini
The Eyes and the Impossible by Dave Eggers
The First State of Being by Erin Entrada
Found (series) by Margaret Peterson Haddix
The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman
The Greatest Treasure Hunt in History: The Story of the Monuments Men by Robert M. Edsel
Hounds of the Baskerville by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Life of Pi by Yann Martel
Little Women by Louisa May Alcott
Lord of the Rings (series) by J.R.R. Tolkien
Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All by Chanel Miller
A Mango-Shaped Space by Wendy Mass
Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury
Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs
Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine
One Big Open Sky by Lesa Cline-Ransome
Prydain Chronicles by Lloyd Alexander
Ranger's Apprentice (series) by John Flanagan
Refugee by Alan Gratz
Scythe (series) by Neal Shusterman

Skulduggery Pleasant by Derek Landy
So B. It by Sarah Weeks
When You Trap a Tiger by Tae Keller
The Wrong Way Home by Kate O'Shaughnessy

Nonfiction Suggestions
BOMB by Steve Sheinkin
Chasing Lincoln's Killer by James L. Swanson
The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston
March: Book One by John Lewis
When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

MIDDLE SCHOOL READING RESPONSE, SUMMER 2026

Incoming Eighth Grade:
Please respond to each of the following comprehension and critical thinking questions about *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. The responses for each of the first three questions should be properly formatted and formally written paragraphs (at least 1 paragraph per prompt, no more than 1 page per prompt). The response for the fourth question should be a thoroughly filled-in table. Some blanks in the table may be filled in with bullet points, while others will require full sentences as long as your entries are clear and complete. Use textual evidence to support your answers and ideas whenever possible. Your answers will be graded based on depth of analysis and comprehension, as well as mechanics, spelling, and grammar. You must type your responses in double-spaced Times New Roman 12-point font. Do not turn in multiple documents, but rather, make sure all four responses are numbered and part of the same document.

#1) Leadership
In *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, the pigs became the leaders and the other animals accepted them because the pigs are the cleverest and smartest. Based on the events and lessons in the novel, is intelligence the most important quality needed for leadership? What other qualities are important for a leader to have? You must use specific examples from the novel to support your ideas.

#2) The Windmill
In the novel *Animal Farm,* by George Orwell, the windmill is an important symbol. What does it represent to the Animals of "Animal Farm?" What does it represent to the humans in the story? Name two other symbols in the novel and analyze what they represent to the animals and humans. You must use specific examples from the novel to support your ideas.

#3) The Ending
Explain the significance of the ending of Animal Farm by George Orwell. What does this ending mean? What might Orwell have been trying to communicate about society, humanity, etc by ending the novel this way? In light of the ending, what is your overall interpretation of the book? In other words, what was "the point" of this story and why end it this way?

#4) Character Table
Copy the table on the next page onto your own document and fill in the fields accordingly and thoroughly. *Notes: General Bio should just be a short description of who/what (including type of animal) the character is. Ex. Human, owner of Manor Farm. Appearance + Traits should be a short description of what the character looks like and <u>three to five</u> traits based on the character's personality, actions, words, ideas, etc. Key Quotes should be <u>at least two</u> important direct quotes from the book related to this character. These may be quotes spoken by this character or about this character by the narrator or other characters, as long as they are important to understanding the character. Lessons should be <u>at least one</u> important real-life lesson/idea you feel can be learned/understood from this character, i.e., what this character does, what happens to this character, this character's role in the story, etc.

Name	**General Bio**	**Appearance + Traits**	**Key Quotes**	**Lessons**
Old Major				
Napoleon				
Snowball				
Squealer				
Boxer				
Mr. Jones				

Due Date for Responses: Monday, August 24 Please electronically share the final draft of your responses with Mr. Buccola by August 24 by emailing him at nickbuccola@smeds.com.