

## Summer Reading Assignment 2026

This summer, you will be reading **one book** and completing **a bento box project**. For your assignment, you need to select a book that has been nominated for the 2026-2027 South Carolina Book Awards. Please choose from the junior or young adult list. Books that are on the young adult list are going to have more mature content and have a higher Lexile. Books nominated for the junior list are going to have “General Audience” or “Young Adult” content and have a lower Lexile. **This assignment is due Friday, August 14, 2026.**

The SC Book Award Books are listed below. These books are readily available at Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and at any CCPL library.

<u>SC Junior Book Award Nominees</u>	<u>SC Young Adult Book Award Nominees</u>
<p><b><i>And Then, Boom!</i></b> — Lisa Fipps  <b><i>Art Club</i></b> — Rashad Doucet  <b><i>Between Two Brothers</i></b> — Crystal Allen  <b><i>Boy 2.0</i></b> — Tracey Baptiste  <b><i>Breaking Into Sunlight</i></b> — John Cochran  <b><i>Bye Forever, I Guess</i></b> — Jodi Meadows  <b><i>Exit Nowhere</i></b> — Juliana Brandt  <b><i>A Game of Noctis</i></b> — Deva Fagan  <b><i>The Girl Who Kept the Castle</i></b> — Ryan Graudin  <b><i>Gut Reaction</i></b> — Kirby Lawson &amp; Quinn Wyatt  <b><i>It Came From the Trees</i></b> — Ally Russell  <b><i>Mid-Air</i></b> — Alicia D. Williams  <b><i>Not If You Break Up With Me First</i></b> — G.F. Miller  <b><i>Not Nothing</i></b> — Gayle Forman  <b><i>The Other Side of Tomorrow</i></b> — Tina Cho  <b><i>Popcorn</i></b> — Rob Harrell  <b><i>Shark Teeth</i></b> — Sherri Winston  <b><i>The Sherlock Society</i></b> — James Ponti  <b><i>The Tenth Mistake of Hank Hooperman</i></b> — Gennifer Choldenko  <b><i>The Wrong Way Home</i></b> — Kate O’Shaughnessy</p>	<p><b><i>A Deathly Compendium of Poisonous Plants: Wicked Weeds &amp; Sinister Seeds</i></b> — Rebecca E. Hirsch  <b><i>After Life</i></b> — Gayle Forman  <b><i>Better Must Come</i></b> — Desmond Hall  <b><i>The Black Girl Survives in This One</i></b> — Desiree S. Evans &amp; Saraciea J. Fennell  <b><i>Blood at the Root</i></b> — LaDarrion Williams  <b><i>Break to You</i></b> — Neal Shusterman  <b><i>The Brightwood Code</i></b> — Monica Hesse  <b><i>Brownstone</i></b> — Samuel Teer &amp; Mar Julia  <b><i>Cancelled</i></b> — Farrah Penn  <b><i>Dead Things Are Closer Than They Appear</i></b> — Robin Wasley  <b><i>Dungeons and Drama</i></b> — Kristy Boyce  <b><i>Fortune’s Kiss</i></b> — Amber Clement  <b><i>The Glass Girl</i></b> — Kathleen Glasgow  <b><i>Looking for Smoke</i></b> — K.A. Cobell  <b><i>Now, Conjurers</i></b> — Freddie Kölsch  <b><i>Two Sides to Every Murder</i></b> — Danielle Valentine  <b><i>Unbecoming</i></b> — Seema Yasmin  <b><i>The Unboxing of a Black Girl</i></b> — Angela Shanté  <b><i>Under the Surface</i></b> — Diana Urban  <b><i>The Wilderness of Girls</i></b> — Madeline Claire Franklin</p>

Key: G = General Audience  
 YA = Young Adult\*

\*Novels for young adults (YA) often include books intended for an adult audience, and the criteria for selection are still the same. Often, these books are classics, best sellers, and award winners that have been chosen for their broad appeal and literary content. The content of these books is intended for mature readers and is selected for those middle school readers who have reached the stage where most of their reading choices are geared towards adult fare. Because some books may contain mature subject matter and language and/or contain themes that are sensitive, we urge you to choose a book with a parent’s or guardian’s guidance. **Content in these books may contain sexual themes or strong language.** Parents should preview the student’s selection(s) and read/discuss the literature. Additional information and detailed book reviews can be found with the following links: [School Library Journal](#), [Common Sense Media](#), [BookList](#), and [YASLA](#).

# Bento Box Project

Once you have finished your summer reading book, you are going to put together your final project.

This is called the Bento Box Project. It's a way for students to physically organize and decorate stories and themes that relate to the book they read over the summer!

Bento ( 弁当 ) is a Japanese term meaning single portion. This is usually reserved for food. Bento boxes are a way for people to package awesome flavor and style all in a little decorated box. It's a single-serving meal that gives people a rich and carefully homemade bite of food made with a lot of love.

Your task with this assignment is to build a bento box for a book that you have read over the summer. Make sure you read the requirements below, and take your time considering how you want to frame your shot.



心をこめてつくりました

## Overview:

This project involves you having to design a creative space and representation for your book. When it's all finished, you'll take a picture of the finished project!

### What do I do?

You need to find objects in the real world that relate to the book in some way. This could include colors, clothing items, food, toys, random objects, or natural elements. When you've assembled a fair number of things related to your story, you will take a picture of everything together. Center the book on a decorative surface with objects surrounding the cover, and take a picture!

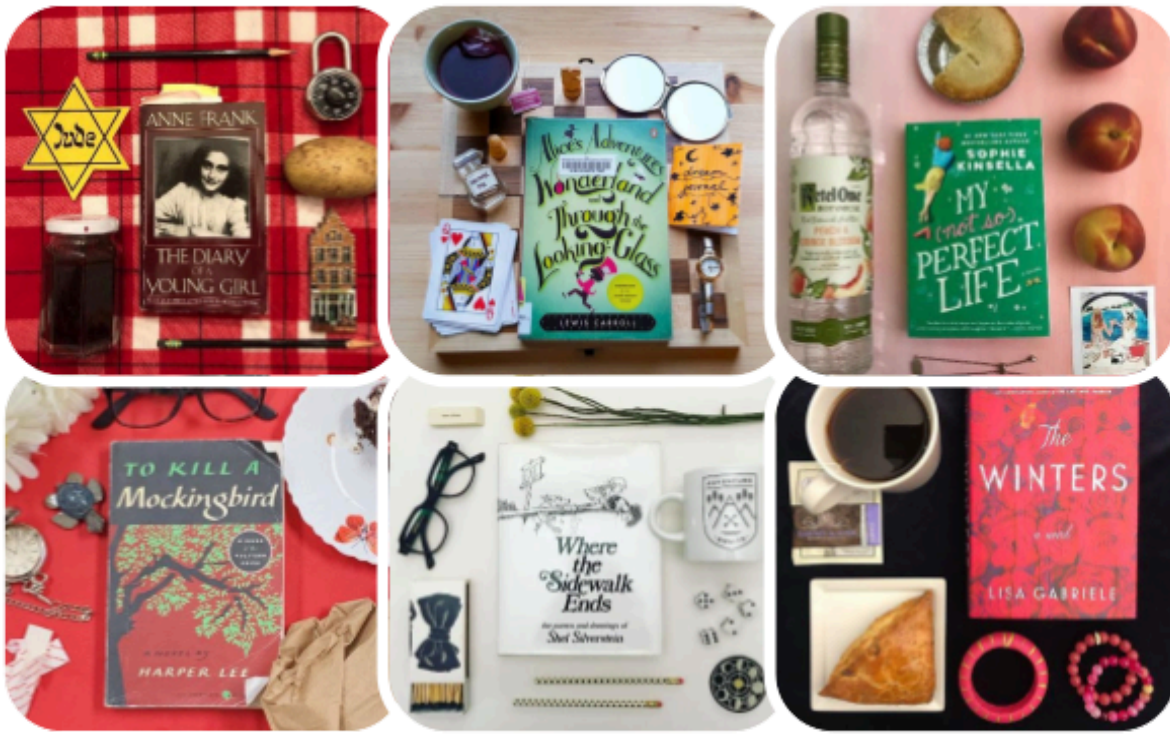
Try to have 5-10 objects/decorations around your book!

### What do I need?

- Find objects that relate to the book as a whole, your characters, themes, conflicts, symbolism, or other major elements of the story.
- Arrange them in a way so that everything is on display surrounding the cover of your book. Have a unique background!
- Take a high-quality picture of your book, and follow the directions on the back of this paper to complete the project!

# Bento Box Project – Examples

Take a look at some of the examples below to get an idea of how to frame your shot!



## Other Tips & Tricks:

- Take your picture in bright lighting, with a top-down perspective so you can have the book centered in the frame, and everything else surrounding it should be clearly in sight.
- Don't be shy about re-taking the photo or re-arranging the objects you've selected for the book! Try multiple shots!
- Editing the photo is encouraged, but don't go crazy on contrast, filters, or other special effects. Keep it as clear as possible!
- Try using a placemat, wallpaper, or other type of background that fits the style of your book! Decorate as much as possible!
- Remember, objects that fit your book can be found anywhere. Look for candles, food, clothing, bizarre decorative objects, random items around the house, etc.
- Be creative! Take risks and try to create something artistic!
- Color coordination is also a neat idea! Try to stylize everything in your picture around the primary colors found on the cover of the book!
- The book cover itself can give hints to what you should keep an eye out for! Analyze the cover and use it as inspiration!
- Remember, you need 5-10 objects to capture the ideas, themes, setting,

- Make sure you put effort into making it look clear and decorative; you want to sell this book as best you can!

conflicts, symbolism, and style of the original novel.

# Bento Box Project — Directions

Step 1: Download your picture onto a Google Doc. Make sure your picture takes up the entire page.

Step 2: Write a one-paragraph summary of the story. End the summary by telling us whether or not you recommend the book.

Step 3: Describe each item and why it was included. Remember that the items you have chosen should represent characters, theme, setting, conflict, symbolism, etc. **Bold or underline each story element in the description.** Each description should be 3-5 sentences long and should clearly explain the story element that the item represents. Include at least 1-2 quotes from the story.

**Step 4: Turn in your assignment using Canvas or submit on paper DUE Friday, August 14, 2026.**

Sample of written summary:

This summer, I read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. This is a true story of a Jewish girl and her family who lived in Amsterdam during the Holocaust, told through diary entries. The diary entries span over two years and describe Anne's life before she and her family were forced to go into hiding to avoid persecution from the Nazis. They were hidden in a secret annex in the attic of Mr. Frank's office and were kept alive with supplies from other employees who worked at the firm. The diary entries tell what it was like living in constant fear and boredom. Anne tells of the difficulty of sharing the small space with another family, especially under such stressful circumstances. Through her entries, we learn about the horrors of war through a radio that the family has hidden in the annex. Anne grows and matures over her two years in the annex before her family is discovered and sent to a concentration camp. I highly recommend this book. It was riveting from start to finish.

Here are the items I included in my Bento Box:

1. **Pencil**- This represents the main **character**, Anne Frank. The story was told through handwritten diary entries. Through the diary entries, we see Anne developing and growing more mature in her understanding of the war and her relationship with her family.
2. **Star of David**- At the beginning of the Holocaust, Jewish people were forced to identify themselves by wearing the Star of David pinned on their clothing. This was one of the **conflicts** in the story because Jews were discriminated against. Because it was known that Anne and her family were Jewish, they eventually had to go into hiding to protect themselves.
3. **Lock**- Anne's father tells her, "There are no walls, there are no bolts, no locks that anyone can put on your mind." (page 227) The lock **symbolizes** that even though Anne was locked away in the annex, her father wanted her to know that no one could limit her imagination. Anne must use her imagination as a way to escape the loneliness, boredom, and stress of her situation.
4. **Potato**- Anne and the others frequently had to eat potatoes. It was very difficult for food to be brought to them. Potatoes could be stored and would last a long time. There were many **conflicts** that happened over food and the stress caused by not having enough to feed everyone at times.
5. **Strawberry Jam**- There were moments when the office staff was able to bring Frank's special treats. One of those times was when they brought strawberries. Everyone was able to enjoy fresh strawberries as well as make jam to have for later.

6. **Building-** The building represents Mr. Frank's office, with the annex where Anne and her family hid. This was the primary **setting** of the story. The office building was located in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Even though this was a safe location at the beginning of the Holocaust, it wasn't long before the Nazis entered Amsterdam and forced the family into hiding.