



2026 SUMMER ASSIGNMENT

8th Grade English

Ms. Smith

The Only Road (ISBN: 978-1-4814-5751-4)



Welcome to English 8! Over the summer, you will read *The Only Road* by Alexandra Diaz and complete the assignments below. This work is designed to help you think about the novel's central ideas and prepare for our discussions at the start of the school year. Please **print the pages that follow and write directly on the printed pages**. All work should be in the student's own handwriting, unless the student's Learning Profile accommodations include typing. This assignment should take between 3 and 5 hours total over the course of the summer. **All work is due on the first day of school (8/17/26).**

Part 1: Character Survival Profile - 15 points

Complete the Character Survival Profile graphic organizer to illustrate the survival characteristics of one of the main characters (Jaime, Angela, or Xavi). Please hand-write this information neatly on the printed page.

Part 2: Key Quotes and Analysis - 30 points

Choose 10 meaningful quotes from the novel to complete the Quote Analysis Chart. Choose quotes that you found surprising, powerful, or meaningful. Write the quote with page number in MLA format, give the context (say what is happening at this point in the novel), and explain what the quote reveals about survival.

Example of MLA formatted quote, with author/page number in parentheses: "If gang members beat someone to death for not joining them, what would they do to two who ran away to avoid joining them?" (Diaz 52).

Part 3: Thematic Reflection Writing Organizer - 55 points

Complete the Writing Organizer on the following pages to respond to the prompt: What does *The Only Road* suggest about what it takes to survive when home is no longer safe? Be sure to refer to events from the novel, include specific examples from the text, and explain your thinking clearly. Write directly on the organizer handout. (You do NOT need to type your paragraphs separately. You will turn in ONLY the Writing Organizer.)

Overall Expectations

- Your responses should be written in **complete sentences**
- Use your own words and ideas; do not work in groups/pairs or use AI to assist you
- Be specific and thoughtful in your answers

You will use this assignment during our first week of class for discussion, so be sure you understand what you wrote and can talk about your ideas. Your answers, quotes, and paragraphs must be your own and should not be exactly the same as another student's.

I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts and beginning the year together!

— Ms. Smith





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Part I: *The Only Road* - Character Survival Profile (15 points)

Name: _____

Age: _____ Country of Birth: _____

Character's Strengths: _____

Fears or Challenges: _____



Illustration of the Character

Three important decisions the character has to make:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The biggest obstacle this character faces is _____

Describe how the character changes or grows over the course of the novel:

Give one powerful quote, including the page number, that shows this growth:





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Part II: *The Only Road* - Key Quote Analysis Chart (30 points)

Quote (with page number)	Context (What is happening in the novel at this moment?)	What does the quote reveal about survival? How does it show what it takes to survive?
"If gang members beat someone to death for not joining them, what would they do to two who ran away to avoid joining them?" (Diaz 52).	As Jaime and Angela look across to Volcan Tacana (half in Guatemala and half in Mexico), Jaime wonders if he will ever see his home again.	Jaime realizes he will have to have the emotional courage to leave his home permanently and build a new one. He accepts that he cannot return.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		



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Key Quote Analysis Chart (continued)

<i>Quote (with page number)</i>	<i>Context (What is happening in the novel at this moment?)</i>	<i>What does the quote reveal about survival? How does it show what it takes to survive?</i>
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		



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Part III: *The Only Road* - Thematic Reflection Writing Organizer (55 points)

Prompt: What does *The Only Road* suggest about what it takes to survive when home is no longer safe? Write at least one complete sentence for each section below.

Paragraph 1: Main Idea #1

Main Idea One thing *The Only Road* suggests people need in order to survive is:



_____.

Evidence / Example from the Novel (What happens? Where in the story? Who is involved?)

Analysis (What does this show about survival?)

Analysis (Add one more sentence to deepen your thinking; interpret or explain how or why.)

Link (Transition to next paragraph.) _____





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Paragraph 2: Main Idea #2

Main Idea Another important idea in *The Only Road* is that survival requires:

Evidence / Example from the Novel (What happens? Where in the story? Who is involved?)

Analysis (What does this show about survival?)

Analysis (Add one more sentence to deepen your thinking; interpret or explain how or why.)

Link (Transition to next paragraph.)





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Paragraph 3: Bigger Message / Overall Theme

Main Idea Ultimately, *The Only Road* suggests that survival depends on:

Evidence / Example from the Novel (What happens? Where in the story? Who is involved?)

Analysis (What does this show about survival?)

Analysis (Add one more sentence to deepen your thinking; interpret or explain how or why.)

Link (Connect back to the prompt.) _____

Final Checklist

Did you...

- ☐ complete all sections of the Writing Organizer?
- ☐ answer each question clearly?
- ☐ include specific examples from the novel?
- ☐ explain your thinking (not just summarize)?
- ☐ write in complete sentences? (Minimum 15 sentences total)
- ☐ use your own words and ideas?
- ☐ check for proper grammar and spelling?

