

2026 OLA Middle School Rising 7th Grade Summer Reading List and Assignments

Inspiring and Educating: How Literature Teaches Catholic Virtues

“Reading great literature well has the power to cultivate virtue. Great literature increases knowledge of and desire for the good life by showing readers what virtue looks like and where vice leads. It is not just what one reads but how one reads that cultivates virtue. Reading good literature well requires one to practice numerous virtues, such as patience, diligence, and prudence. And learning to judge wisely a character in a book, in turn, forms the reader’s own character.” – Karen Swallow Prior, author

This summer, OLA Middle School students will complete a summer reading project, helping them recognize how literature impacts the way we learn about and develop our shared Catholic virtues.

Students will read two (2) books: ***Wonder* by R.J. Palacio** and a choice from the lists provided. These novels can be accessed via physical books, ebooks, or audiobooks. Check with your local library!

Wonder by R.J. Palacio should be read at the end of summer, closer to the beginning of the school year. Please answer the questions on a separate piece of lined paper. This will be used to complete an assignment in class during the first week of school.

For their “free-choice” from the lists, students must use the list of virtues they were given to identify which virtue was prominent throughout their novel. Cite text evidence (with the page number) to explain. Complete the attached assignment. **This is due on the first day of school and should be turned in to the MS ELA teacher.** The recommendation is to do this towards the beginning of the summer. Students may NOT double-dip– use *Wonder* as their free-choice book.

Use this **Glossary** to help you answer the questions from the assignment for the free-choice novel. Virtue definitions are taken from Education in Virtue materials.

Theme is the universal idea or message explored in a work of literature. Examples of themes include war, love, revenge, friendship, redemption, forgiveness, etc.
Characterization is the way an author introduces, describes, and develops a character in a work of fiction.
Imagery is the way an author “paints a picture” in the reader’s mind. Using descriptive language and triggering the senses allows the author to put the reader in the scene or mind of a character.
Personification is using human traits to describe non-human things. Authors use this literary device to help illustrate human behavior and emotions.

Wonder by R. J. Palacio

Reading Questions

Complete the following questions after your reading. The first section of questions (Understanding Questions) is to show that you have read and understood the text. The second section (Making Connections Questions) helps you make a connection between your reading and yourself/your world.

Part 1: First Half of Part 1 August (Chapter 1 – 14 / Pages 3 - 40)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. What made Auggie's birth story so funny?
2. What information do Auggie's parents keep from him? Do you think they should have lied? Why/why not?
3. Describe Julian's personality with examples for support
4. How do Auggie's classmates react to him on the first day?

Making Connections Questions

5. Auggie describes how different people react to his face (looking away quickly, not making eye contact etc). Have you ever seen someone who looked different? How did you react? Would you react differently now after hearing how Auggie feels?
6. In these chapters, Auggie has his first day of school. Have you ever had a first day at a new school? How did you feel? If you haven't, how do you think you would feel?
7. What qualities does Auggie's family have that help support him? How is your family similar or different from Auggie's?
8. Which of the three students who took Auggie on the school tour would you most like to be friends with? Which would you least like to be friends with? Why?

Part 1: Second Half of Part 1 August (Chapter 15 – 31 / Pages 41 - 80)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. Why does August hate the way he eats?
2. What rules do August and Summer make about their lunch table?
3. What two instances give Auggie the impression that people do not want to touch him?
4. Why does Auggie call home sick?

Making Connections Questions

5. Do you agree with the precept: When given the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind"? Why or why not?
6. Auggie's mother says "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" meaning that Julian and his mother are very similar (Julian is rude to Auggie. His mother is rude for not sending an RSVP to the party). In your family, does the apple fall far from the tree? In other words, are you really similar to your parents, or are you very different? Explain.
7. If you were August, could you forgive Jack for what he said? Why or why not?

Part 2: Via (Chapter 32 – 47 / Pages 82 - 117)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. How is the Pulley family like a galaxy according to Via?
2. How does Via's relationship change with Miranda and Ella in high school?
3. Why was Mom standing outside of Auggie's door?
4. How does Via convince Auggie to return to school?

Making Connections Questions

5. If your family was described as a galaxy, who do you think would be the sun that everyone orbits around? Explain your answer.
6. How is your relationship with your sibling(s) similar or different from Auggie and Via's? If you don't have siblings, would you like to have Via and Auggie as siblings? Why or why not?

Part 3: Summer (Chapter 48 – 53 / Pages 119 - 132)**Basic Comprehension Questions**

1. Why does Summer leave Savanna's Halloween party?
2. Why does Summer get so mad at Auggie at lunch?
3. Describe Summer's view on the after life.

Making Connections Questions

4. Do you think kids who are popular are happier than kids who are not? In your opinion, what is the difference between friendship and popularity?
5. Since Summer turns out to be a much better friend than with Jack, Charlotte, or Julian do you think Mr. Tushman's efforts to secure friends for Auggie was a waste of time? If you were new to a school, would you want the principal to find friends for you? Why or why not?

Part 4: Jack (Chapter 54 – 73 / Pages 134 - 185)**Basic Comprehension Questions**

1. Why was Veronica so upset?
2. How is Jack's family different than a lot of the other students' families at Beecher Prep?
3. Why exactly does Jack punch Julian in the mouth?
4. After reading the emails, what do you think is Mr. Tushman's opinion on the Jack/Julian situation? What is his opinion on Julian's mother?

Making Connections Questions

5. Have you ever had a fight with a friend? How did you resolve the problem? If you have never fought with a friend, how would you go about resolving it if you did?
6. Are their popular/unpopular kids in your school? What makes someone popular? Would it be better if these groups didn't exist?
7. Julian and his mother are both cruel to August in their own way. Do you think parents' opinions have an effect on their children and their opinions? Explain

Part 5: Justin (Chapter 74 – 81 / Pages 187 - 204)**Basic Comprehension Questions**

1. Why was Via worried that Justin would be freaked out by Auggie's appearance?
2. How does Justin react to the boys making fun of Jack at the store?
3. Why does Olivia not tell her parents about the play?

Making Connections Questions

4. In the last chapter, Via reveals that she doesn't want August to come to her play because she want everyone to know about him. Have you ever felt embarrassed by a family member? Explain.
5. Why do you think Palacio decided to not use proper grammar and punctuation in Justin's section? Do you always use proper writing rules? What about when you are texting? What about on social media?

Part 6: August (Chapter 82 – 92 / Pages 206 - 234)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. How does August react to his mother telling him not to go to the play?
2. Why was Daisy so important to Auggie in particular?

Making Connections Questions

3. Summer thinks that they should report the cruel notes Julian is sending to Mr. Tushman, but August and Jack think that is snitching. Who do you think is right? Why?
4. August says, “Funny how sometimes you worry a lot about something and it turns out to be nothing.” Do you think this is true? Explain with examples from your own life.

Part 7: Miranda (Chapter 93 – 98 / Pages 236 - 248)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. Why does Miranda lie about having a brother who is deformed?
2. Why does Miranda not go on opening night of *Our Town*?

Making Connections Questions

3. Miranda says that Ella is an easier friend to have compared to Via because “Ella never really asked me about things”, while Via “would have asked me about my parents, about camp” (238). Who do you think is a better friend? Why? Which character would you rather be friends with?

Part 8: August (Chapter 99 – 123 / Pages 250 - 310)

Basic Comprehension Questions

1. Why is August so nervous about going on the nature retreat?
2. How does the relationship between August and the rest of the boys change immediately after the incident in the woods?
3. Why does August’s father throw out the astronaut mask? Why doesn’t he want August’s mother to know?

Making Connections Questions

4. August’s mother says that “there are more good people on this earth than bad people, and the good people watch out of each other and take care of each other” (279). Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

Middle School Summer Reading List

Free-Choice Novel Options

Genre Key

-  Realistic Fiction / Sports / Humor
-  Fantasy / Dystopian / Science Fiction
-  Historical Fiction
-  Mystery / Adventure / Suspense
-  Nonfiction / Biography
-  Poetry / Verse / Graphic Novel

Genre	Title & Author	Brief Synopsis
	Rebound — Kwame Alexander	A fast-moving novel in verse about basketball, family, and grief as young Chuck Bell spends the summer with his grandparents after his father's death.
	The Hunger Games — Suzanne Collins	Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place in a deadly televised competition where only one tribute can survive.
	Love That Dog — Sharon Creech	Through poetry assignments, Jack slowly discovers his voice while writing about his beloved dog and coping with loss.
	Million-Dollar Throw — Mike Lupica	Nate gets the chance to win a million dollars with one football throw while dealing with family struggles and helping his best friend.
	War Games — Alan Gratz	During the 1936 Berlin Olympics, a young gymnast uncovers a Nazi plot and must decide between winning medals or doing what is right.
	Rules — Cynthia Lord	Catherine learns about friendship, empathy, and acceptance while helping her younger brother navigate life with autism.
	Belly Up — Stuart Gibbs	Teddy investigates the suspicious death of a zoo's famous hippo in this funny and suspenseful mystery.
	El Deafo — Cece Bell	A funny and heartfelt graphic memoir about growing up with hearing loss and learning to embrace differences.

	Hiroshima — John Hersey	The true stories of six survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and how their lives changed forever.
	Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish — Pablo Cartaya	Marcus travels to Puerto Rico to reconnect with his roots, search for his father, and better understand himself.
	Sir Gawain and the Green Knight — Burton Raffel	A brave knight accepts a dangerous challenge that tests his courage, honesty, and honor.
	When We Flew Away — Alice Hoffman	A moving story imagining Anne Frank's life before her famous diary and before her family went into hiding.
	The Last Cuentista — Donna Barba Higuera	After Earth is destroyed, Petra becomes the only person who remembers humanity's stories and history.
	Unplugged — Gordon Korman	A tech-obsessed teen is sent to a no-technology camp where he uncovers a bizarre mystery.
	Ella Enchanted — Gail Carson Levine	Ella is cursed with obedience and sets out on an adventure to break the spell controlling her life.
	The Nine Moons of Han Yu and Luli — Karina Yan Glaser	Two girls from different centuries face dangerous journeys while connected by family, courage, and culture.
	Watership Down — Richard Adams	A group of rabbits leaves their home behind and journeys through danger to find safety and freedom.
	The Graveyard Book — Neil Gaiman	A boy raised by ghosts in a graveyard must eventually face the man who killed his family.
	Fallout — Steve Sheinkin	A gripping look at the Cold War, spies, nuclear weapons, and the race for global power.
	Code Talker — Joseph Bruchac	Based on true events, Navajo Marines use their language to create an unbreakable military code during WWII.
	Hidden Figures — Margot Lee Shetterly	The inspiring true story of the Black women mathematicians who helped launch America into space.
	All Thirteen — Christina Soontornvat	The dramatic true story of the Thai soccer team trapped in a flooded cave and the global rescue effort.

	1919: The Year that Changed America — Martin W. Sandler	An exploration of the major events and social changes that shaped America after World War I.
	The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind — William Kamkwamba	A teenager in Malawi uses creativity and science to build a windmill and help save his village from famine.
	Hidden Powers — Jeanne Atkins	A biography-in-verse about scientist Lise Meitner and her groundbreaking work during WWII.
	Amelia Lost — Candace Fleming	The exciting story of Amelia Earhart's life and the mystery surrounding her final flight.
	The Watch That Ends the Night — Allan Wolf	The sinking of the Titanic is retold through poems from the perspectives of passengers, crew members, and more.
	The Bletchley Riddle — Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin	During WWII, two siblings work at Bletchley Park cracking codes while searching for their missing mother.
	The Labors of Hercules Beal — Gary D. Schmidt	A grieving boy must complete modern versions of Hercules's twelve labors for a school assignment.
	Other Words for Home — Jasmine Warga	Told in verse, Jude leaves war-torn Syria and starts a new life in America while discovering her own courage.
	Island of Spies — Sheila Turnage	During WWII on the North Carolina coast, a group of kids uncovers a dangerous spy ring connected to German submarines.
	Greenglass House — Kate Milford	During a snowy winter at his family's mysterious inn, Milo uncovers smuggling secrets, hidden identities, and clues tied to a dangerous mystery.

2026–2027 St. Jerome Battle of the Books List

Genre Key

-  Realistic Fiction / Literary Fiction
-  Fantasy / Science Fiction / Mythology
-  Historical Fiction / Classic
-  Mystery / Adventure
-  Nonfiction / Biography
-  Poetry / Epistolary / Special Format

Genre	Title & Author	Brief Synopsis
	Little Women — Louisa May Alcott	Follow the March sisters as they grow up during the Civil War, learning about family, sacrifice, love, and finding their own paths in life.
	Alice's Adventures in Wonderland — Lewis Carroll	Alice tumbles into a strange world filled with talking animals, riddles, and unforgettable characters like the Mad Hatter and Queen of Hearts.
	Pinocchio — Carlo Collodi	A wooden puppet comes to life and learns difficult lessons about honesty, choices, and becoming a real boy.
	The Man Who Founded California — Archbishop M. N. L. Couve de Murville	A biography of Saint Junípero Serra and his missionary work establishing California's historic missions.
	Ella Minnow Pea — Mark Dunn	In a town where letters of the alphabet are banned one by one, Ella and her family fight to protect language and freedom of expression.
	Galahad and the Grail — Malcolm Guite	Sir Galahad and the Knights of the Round Table set out on a legendary quest to find the Holy Grail and heal the land.
	Carry On, Mr. Bowditch — Jean Lee Latham	Based on a true story, this novel follows Nathaniel Bowditch, a determined boy who becomes a brilliant navigator and mathematician.

	Wonder — R. J. Palacio	Auggie Pullman enters middle school for the first time and teaches those around him about kindness, courage, and acceptance.
	Holes — Louis Sachar	Stanley Yelnats is sent to a strange camp where boys dig holes every day, uncovering secrets tied to family history and hidden treasure.
	Champions of the Rosary — Laurie J. Schmitt	Set around the miracle of Our Lady of Good Help and the Peshtigo Fire, this story explores faith, courage, and the power of prayer.
	The Bronze Bow — Elizabeth George Speare	A young Jewish rebel living during Roman rule struggles between revenge and the message of love taught by Jesus.
	A Wish in the Dark — Christina Soontornvat	In a city controlled by fear and darkness, a runaway boy and the daughter of a powerful official uncover dangerous truths about justice and power.
	The Hobbit — J. R. R. Tolkien	Bilbo Baggins joins dwarves and a wizard on an epic adventure involving dragons, treasure, and a mysterious magic ring.
	Broken Strings — Eric Walters and Kathy Kacer	A girl discovers her grandfather's hidden Holocaust past through an old violin and a school production of <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> .
	The Incurable Children of Ashton Place: The Mysterious Howling — Maryrose Wood	A young governess attempts to civilize three children raised by wolves while uncovering strange secrets surrounding Ashton Place.

List of Virtues

Justice (Fairness)- Enables one to give to each, beginning with God, what is due to him. Will; Empathy; Relational Skills; Social Awareness; Gift of the Holy Spirit: Piety

- 1) Affability- Being easy to approach and easy to talk to—friendly.
- 2) Courtesy- Treating other people with respect, recognizing that all are made in God's image and likeness.
- 3) Generosity- Giving of oneself in a willing and cheerful manner for the good of others.
- 4) Gratitude- Thankful disposition of mind and heart.
- 5) Kindness- Expressing genuine concern about the well-being of others; anticipating their needs.
- 6) Loyalty- Accepting the bonds implicit in relationships and defending the virtues upheld by Church, family, and country.
- 7) Obedience- Assenting to rightful authority without hesitation or resistance.
- 8) Patriotism- Paying due honor and respect to one's country, with a willingness to serve.

- 9) Prayerfulness- Being still, listening, and being willing to talk to God as a friend.
- 10) Respect- Speaking and acting according to one's own and others' rights, status, and circumstances.
- 11) Responsibility- Fulfilling one's just duties; accepting the consequences of one's words and actions, intentional and unintentional.
- 12) Sincerity- Trustfulness in words and actions; honesty and enthusiasm towards others.
- 13) Trustworthiness- Acting in a way that inspires confidence and trust; being reliable.

Prudence (Sound Judgment)- Enables one to reason and to act rightly in any given situation— “right reason in action.” Intellect; Insight; Self Awareness; Responsible Decision Making; Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Understanding, Counsel, and Knowledge

- 1) Circumspection- Careful consideration of circumstances and consequences.
- 2) Docility- Willingness to be taught.

- 3) Foresight- Consideration of the consequences of one's actions; thinking ahead.

Fortitude (Courage)- Enables one to endure difficulties and pain for the sake of what is good. Emotions of Struggle; Resilience; Self-Management; Responsible Decision Making; Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom and Fortitude

- 1) Industriousness- Diligence, especially in work that leads to natural and supernatural maturity.
- 2) Magnanimity- Seeking with confidence to do great things in God; literally "having a large soul."
- 3) Magnificence- Doing great things for God.
- 4) Patience- Bearing present difficulties calmly.
- 5) Perseverance- Taking the steps necessary to carry out objectives in spite of difficulties.

Temperance (Self-Control)- Enables one to be moderate in the pleasure and use of created goods. Emotions of Desire; Balance; Self-Management; Gift of the Holy Spirit: Fear of the Lord

- 1) Honesty- Sincerity, openness, and truthfulness in one's words and actions.
- 2) Humility- Awareness that all one's gifts come from God and appreciation for the gift of others.

- 3) Meekness- Serenity of spirit while focusing on the needs of others.
- 4) Moderation- Attention to balance in one's life.
- 5) Modesty- Purity of heart in action, especially in regard to dress and speech.
- 6) Orderliness- keeping oneself physically clean and neat and one's belongings in good order.
- 7) Self-Control- Joyful mastery over one's passions and desires.

**2026 OLA Middle School Rising 7th Grade
Summer Reading List and Assignments**

Complete the following for your “free-choice” book. This is due on the first day of school. Please write neatly and in complete sentences with correct spelling and grammar.

Title: _____

Author: _____

This novel portrayed the virtue of _____

Using evidence from the text, explain how this book presents this virtue. Please write the page number you’re referencing.

Choose one literary device (theme, characterization, imagery, personification) and describe how the author uses it to illustrate the virtue for the reader.

