

Winthrop Middle School - 8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment (2025)

Mrs. Dunn (Ravens Team)

Ms. Brierley (Eagles Team)

Dear Future Eighth Graders:

Happy end of the year! You will soon be on summer break! Everyone at Winthrop Middle School hopes that you have a safe and happy vacation. We do, however, expect that you keep working on your literacy skills and return in August/September, ready to go to work.

Every year, each student is **required** to read **two (2) books** over the summer. One book is a required book that is chosen for you, and the second book you choose from a provided list. There are 2 assignments you are expected to complete for your summer reading work, one assignment for each book you read.

***These two assignments will be among the very first assignments you complete for the first term.** Reading these two books and completing the two assignments is an enjoyable and relatively easy way to start off the academic year strongly, so be sure to take the time to do the reading well before school begins. Don't wait until the last minute, or it will quickly become a stressful, rushed activity that will ultimately not be enjoyable.

BOOK 1 ASSIGNMENT: (Everyone will read this book. Feel free to create a book club with your friends to read together.)

It is **required** that every child read the novel, **A Very Large Expanse of Sea by Tahereh Mafi**. Students may borrow a copy from Winthrop Middle School (after July 11th), borrow a copy from the Winthrop Public Library, or purchase the book from Book Depot, or any book seller. In addition, here is a link to an on-line version.

<https://www.cardozohigh.com/ourpages/auto/2022/6/1/58173121/Title%20-%20A%20Very%20Large%20Expanse%20of%20Sea.pdf>

Also, an audio version of the novel is available here: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/title/12195268> - however you need to use your library card to sign up for the service.

- a. **Assignment:** During the first week of school, you will have an in-class assessment test on the book. This will consist of *2 open-ended questions*. These are the *4 possible questions* you will see on the test. Complete the provided guided notes sheet as you read that you *will* be allowed to use during the test; your notes will be collected at the end of the test. You will also be allowed to have the book with you. Your book can include post-its and annotations. Annotations (also known as active reading) are notes you take in the novel or on post-its as you read the novel. This includes noting questions you have, reactions to the text, and defining vocabulary.
- b. Here are the potential test questions; **you should be prepared to answer any of these questions. You will need to be specific, detailed, and include at least one correctly cited quote in each answer.**
 - i. Using this novel, answer the following: This story helps me understand the problem of _____ better because.... (fill in the blank and then explain.)

- ii. Define the conflict of the novel. Is it internal or external? If it is external, be more specific (man v. man, man v. society, man v. nature). How does the author develop this conflict? How does this conflict impact the story and its theme?
 - iii. If this novel were adapted for the screen (made into a movie), tell me 5 scenes that **MUST** be included and why they are important to the story.
 - iv. What connections can you make between this novel and real life, this novel and your own life, this novel and movies and TV, and this novel and other books?
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BOOK 2 ASSIGNMENT:

All students must then choose **one** of the titles listed below to read. For this book, select one of the listed projects to complete. This project will be due 1 week into the start of the school year.

BOOK 2 OPTIONS (Choose one book from this list to read and complete one of the project options using this book.)

Hoot by Carl Hiaasen

Carl Hiaasen (Basket Case, etc.) plunges readers right into the middle of an ecological mystery, made up of endangered miniature owls, the Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House scheduled to be built over their burrows, and the owls' unlikely allies--three middle school kids determined to beat the screwed-up adult system

The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien

Bilbo Baggins was a hobbit who wanted to be left alone in quiet comfort. But the wizard Gandalf came along with a band of homeless dwarves. Soon Bilbo was drawn into their quest, facing evil orcs, savage wolves, giant spiders, and worse unknown dangers.

Slam! by Walter Dean Myers

For 16-year-old Sam, life is about to get extremely complicated. He and his girlfriend—make that ex-girlfriend— Alicia have gotten themselves into a bit of trouble. Sam is suddenly forced to grow up and struggle with the familiar fears and inclinations that haunt us all.

Whirligig by Paul Fleischman

Sixteen-year-old Brent Bishop is sent on an unusual journey of repentance--building wind toys across the land--after he inadvertently causes the death of a young woman.

The Wednesday Wars by Gary D. Schmidt (990L) - Realistic Fiction

Meet Holling Hoodhood, a seventh-grader at Camillo Junior High, who must spend Wednesday afternoons with his teacher, Mrs. Baker, while the rest of the class has religious instruction. Mrs. Baker doesn't like Holling—he's sure of it. Why else would she make him read the plays of William Shakespeare outside class? But everyone has bigger things to worry about, like Vietnam. His father wants Holling and his sister to be on their best behavior: the success of his business depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has so much to contend with? A bully demanding cream puffs; angry rats; and a baseball hero signing autographs the very same night Holling has to appear in a play in yellow tights! As fate sneaks up on him again and again, Holling finds Motivation—the Big M—in the most unexpected places and musters up the courage to embrace his destiny, in spite of himself.

Refugee by Alan Gratz (Lexile 800L) - Historical Fiction (with multiple settings and protagonists)

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . . ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . . MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . . All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of tomorrow . And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo

Once, in a house on Egypt Street, there lived a china rabbit named Edward Tulane. The rabbit was very pleased with himself, and for good reason: he was owned by a girl named Abilene, who adored him completely. And then, one day, he was lost. . . . Kate DiCamillo takes us on an extraordinary journey, from the depths of the ocean to the net of a fisherman, from the bedside of an ailing child to the bustling streets of Memphis. Along the way, we are shown a miracle — that even a heart of the most breakable kind can learn to love, to lose, and to love again. Featuring black-and-white illustrations and a refreshed cover by Bagram Ibatoulline.

Booked by Kwame Alexander

Soccer, family, love, and friendship take the field as twelve-year-old Nick learns the power of words as he wrestles with problems at home, stands up to a bully, and tries to impress the girl of his dreams.

From the Desk of Zoe Washington by Janae Marks

Zoe Washington isn't sure what to write. What does a girl say to the father she's never met, hadn't heard from until his letter arrived on her twelfth birthday, and who's been in prison for a terrible crime? A crime he says he never committed. Could Marcus really be innocent? Zoe is determined to uncover the truth. Even if it means hiding his letters and her investigation from the rest of her family. Everyone else thinks Zoe's worrying about doing a good job at her bakery internship and proving to her parents that she's worthy of auditioning for Food Network's Kids Bake Challenge. But with bakery confections on one part of her mind, and Marcus's conviction weighing heavily on the other, this is one recipe Zoe doesn't know how to balance. The only thing she knows to be true: Everyone lies.

Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero by Kelly J. Baptist

Isaiah is now the big man of the house. But it's a lot harder than his dad made it look. His little sister, Charlie, asks too many questions, and Mama's gone totally silent. Good thing Isaiah can count on his best friend, Sneaky, who always has a scheme for getting around the rules. Plus, his classmate Angel has a few good ideas of her own--once she stops hassling Isaiah. And when things get really tough, there's Daddy's journal, filled with stories about the amazing Isaiah Dunn, a superhero who gets his powers from beans and rice. Isaiah wishes his dad's tales were real. He could use those powers right about now!

Summer Reading



BOOK 2 PROJECT OPTIONS: (Choose one project from the list below, and complete the project using your second, *chosen* book.)

1. Write a letter to the author explaining your thoughts about the novel (both negative and positive). Include what you liked, what you did not like, and how you connected to the characters in the novel. Ask the author at least 2 questions (these can be about their writing process or the book specifically). Tell the author your favorite quote from the novel (cite it correctly) and explain why you like it. Be specific and detailed.
2. Create a collage using a variety of pictures and words that describe your novel and its themes. You may complete this on posterboard or electronically. Include a brief explanation with each word and image to explain how it connects to the novel. Also include one correctly cited quote from the novel and explain why you chose that quote.
3. Create a soundtrack for your book. All major events including the beginning and the end should get their own song. For each track, list the name of the song and the artist. You must also describe the scene in which the song would play AND explain why the song fits the scene. For at least one track, connect the song to a correctly cited quote from the novel.
4. Pretend the book is being made into a movie. The studio has hired you to be the casting director. Tell me who would play each character from the novel, and why you would cast that person for that part. Be specific with your reasons and include details from the novel to support your thinking. For at least one character, include a correctly cited quote that the actors would have to say as part of their audition. If the book is already a movie, create your own cast, not the current movie's cast. Create a slideshow for this project.
5. Create a 6-10 panel comic strip or illustrated scene for your novel. You may draw it by hand or use an online tool such as Pixton or Storyboard That. Choose an important or emotional scene. Include dialogue and captions clearly depicting what is happening. Include at least one correctly cited quote.
6. Design a character scrapbook for the main character of the novel. This can be on paper or done digitally. Include the following elements in your scrapbook:
 - a. Diary entries about key events from the novel
 - b. Photos with captions explaining their significance
 - c. Letters, tickets, maps, or other "artifacts" that connect to the story and explain how they connect
 - d. A playlist of songs that represent the main character's journey



See you on August 27, 2025