



Dear Eighth Graders,

June 2025

Welcome to eighth grade! Congratulations on making it to your last year of Middle School! I'm excited to be your English teacher next year, and I wanted to kick things off by explaining your summer reading assignments. This assignment aims to encourage the continued development of independent reading habits and the appreciation of good books.

**The first book you may select from the list provided.** It can be any text on the provided list... there should be something for everyone! I want you to have FUN reading, so look at the descriptions and see what sounds interesting! If you have a book not on the list, email me and I will let you know if I find it appropriately challenging. You will need to **write a 500-word review** of this book, outlined in more detail on the assignment page below. Remember - this is a **graded assignment**; using AI or any other inappropriate sources for help is prohibited and against our honor code. [Here is my list of books!](#)

For the **second** book, you will read **PART ONE** of *The Distance Between Us: Young Reader's Edition*, by Reyna Grande. Although you may of course listen as you read, you must have a hard copy of the novel **and annotate as you read**. Annotating is something you should be familiar with after seventh grade; if not, I have attached an annotation guide. We will go over and learn this skill as a class, so annotating the first part of the novel is a "trial run"

[Amazon Link to The Distance Between us: Young Readers Edition](#)


The reading and the book review will be due by midnight on the first day of school and will count as a class participation grade. These assignments will also help me to get to know you better!

*As a note to parents/guardians*, we encourage you to review the list with your daughter(s) to determine which book is most appropriate to read.

Have a fun and book-filled summer!


Sincerely,  
Juliette Firla  
8th Grade English


# WHEN SHOULD I ANNOTATE?


 When I am confused.

 When I find strong text evidence.


 When I don't know what a word means.


 When I make a connection to another piece of writing.


 When I notice a key detail.


 When something is important to remember.

 When I am surprised by something I read.


 When I want to remember something.


 When I see patterns or repetition in the text.

 When I want to jot down an idea that the text gave me.

 When I want to question something.

 When I want to summarize.

 When I want to rephrase something in my own words.

 When I notice that a prediction I made came true.

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## Book Review

Write a book review about any book you have read this summer off of the provided list. A book review is a description and an evaluation of a book that you have read. Book reviews are extremely helpful because they inform readers about books they may be interested in reading.

Writing a review is much more than simply retelling the story of the novel. A good book review should explain why a book is worth reading—it should explain what the author liked about the story: the plot, the characters, the setting, or the style of writing.

The most important thing to remember is that book reviews DO NOT give away the ending! Would you want to spend time reading a book if you already knew how the story would end?

Your book review should be at least **500 words** and is **due at midnight on the first day of school**. Follow the directions below to help you with your review!

# How to Write a Book Review

## Step One: The Hook

Your review should begin with a clear hook that immediately engages the reader. You can begin with an exciting or interesting quote from the book, a “What would you do if..?” question for the reader, or a statement of the main conflict of the story. Just make it so interesting that the reader feels like they have to read on. Be original!

## Step Two: The Summary

While it is important to discuss the storyline, do so briefly. Choose the main events that take place and avoid unnecessary details. Your summary of the storyline should include the following pieces of information:

- a. What was the story about?
- b. Who were the main characters?
- c. What did the main characters do in the story?
- d. What problems did the main characters run into?

This section should sound like a short story, not like a list. And remember, don’t give away the ending!

## Step Three: Analysis

Use words to describe the book (check out the list of adjectives attached). Above all, these words must be descriptive. Avoid using bland terms like good, bad, or interesting. Use words that really mean something.

Explain what it was about the novel that made you describe it in this way. Reference specific characters, events, or themes of the text to defend your descriptions. (What made the book suspenseful or hilarious? Was it things that a character said or an event(s) that took place? Were you able to relate to the characters for particular reasons such as the situations they faced, how they were treated, or what they believed in? Did the author’s writing style thrill you or make tears well up in your eyes? Give an example of this great writing...)

## Step Four: Your Opinion

Different books appeal to different people—in this section, discuss your own opinion of the novel. Did you like it? Whatever your opinion, make sure you back it up with specifics from the text. You might answer questions such as the following:

- a. What was your favorite part of the book?
- b. Did you like the characters? Why?
- c. How do you feel about the author’s craft and the way the book was written?

## Step Five: Recommendation

Who would like this book and why? You may wish to recommend the novel to a particular age group, gender, or people with a particular interest. You must explain why (e.g. “I would recommend this novel to people who enjoy reading thrilling science fiction stories because the main characters are on a perilous journey to deep space,” or, “I would recommend this novel to girls between the ages of 12 and 20 because the main character is an adolescent girl who they could relate to.”)

Mentioning the 'level of language' used might be relevant, because this can determine who the novel would appeal to and who would be able to read and understand it. You might answer questions like the following:

- a. Does it use complex language or terms that not many people would understand or everyday language that most people would understand and recognize?
- b. Does it contain terms that only members of certain backgrounds would recognize and understand? (For example, Carnival employees, scientists, or skateboarders all create their 'own' language.)

However, it is only necessary to address the language used if it will affect who will enjoy the book.

### Note: Repetition and Combining Sections

Take care in writing and revising your book review to make sure you rarely repeat words and phrases. To avoid repetition, some book review authors have had success combining some of the five sections. For example, your analysis and your opinion might be easily integrated into one paragraph. If this works for you, just make sure you incorporate all of the elements outlined above.

### Note: Book Title and Author

Somewhere in your book review, make sure to include the title of the book you are reviewing and the author's full name. Don't forget to capitalize and italicize the book title (underline the title if you are writing by hand). When you're typing, it will look like this: *Flush* by Carl Hiaasen. (If you are writing by hand it would look like this: Flush by Carl Hiaasen.)