

Summer 2009 Reading/Current Events Assignment - Cooper Middle School

Dear Incoming Eighth Graders,

Below is a list of books, separated into several categories: historical fiction, diversity, and science-fiction and non-fiction. It is mandatory for you to choose a book to read over the summer that you have never read before. Secondly, you will need to find a current event from a newspaper. Once you have selected a book, please do the following:

1. Read it.
2. Write a one-page summary. Make sure to discuss the theme, the main character's traits, and the symbolism within your selected book.

1.) **Diversity:**

- a. *Cuba 15* by Nancy Osa-Violet Paz - A Chicago high school student reluctantly prepares for her upcoming "quince," a Spanish nickname for the celebration of a Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday.
- b. *Two Suns in the Sky* by Miriam Bat-Ami - When a war refugee shelter opens in Oswego, New York, in 1944, a 15-year-old local girl and a Yugoslavian refugee boy develop a relationship of sorts across the fence surrounding the shelter.
- c. *Under the Same Sky* by Cynthia DeFelice - While trying to earn money for a motorbike, fourteen-year-old Joe Pedersen becomes involved with the Mexicans who work on his family's farm and develops a better relationship with his father.

2.) **Historical Fiction:**

- a. *The Art of Keeping Cool* by Janet Taylor Lisle - In 1942, Robert and his cousin Elliot uncover long-hidden family secrets while staying in their grandparents' Rhode Island town, where they also become involved with a German artist who is suspected of being a spy.
- b. *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez - In the early 1960s in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Anita learns that her family is involved in the underground movement to end the bloody rule of the dictator, General Trujillo.
- c. *Belle Teal* by Ann Martin - Belle Teal Harper's entrance into fifth-grade in the early 1960's brings many changes and challenges as her Gran's money begins to slip, her mom spends long hours away at work and her class gets two new students, including an African-American boy.
- d. *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo - When Thomas Peaceful's older brother is forced to join the British Army, Thomas decides to sign up as well, although he is only fourteen years old, to prove himself to his country, his family, his childhood love, Molly, and himself.

3.) Science Fiction:

- a. *Ender's Game* or *Ender's Shadow* by Orson Scott Card - End, who is the result of genetic experimentation, may be the military genius Earth needs in its war against an alien enemy. OR Bean must overcome his past and prove to the recruiters at the Battle School that he can help save the planet from an alien invasion.
- b. *Heir Apparent* by Vivian Vande-Velde – While playing a total immersion virtual reality game of kings and intrigue, fourteen-year-old Giannine learns that demonstrators have damaged the equipment to which she is connected, and she must win the game quickly or be damaged herself.
- c. *House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer - In a future where humans despise clones, Matt enjoys special status as the young clone of El Patron, the 14 year-old leaser of a corrupt drug empire nestled between Mexico and the United States.
- d. *A Matter of Profit* by Hilari Bell - Sick of the horrors of conquering beings on other planets, Ahvrem will end his service as a soldier and save his sister from an unhappy marriage if he can discover who is behind a rumored plot to assassinate the Emperor.
- e. *Turnabout* by Margaret Peterson Haddix - Melly and Anny Beth both lived normal lives throughout the twentieth century. But in 2000, when they are old and ready to die, they are selected to participate in Project Turnabout, and each are given an injection to grow younger.

4.) Science (Non- Fiction):

- a. *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* by Jim Murphy - Provides an account of the yellow fever epidemic that swept through Philadelphia in 1793, discussing the chaos that erupted when people began evacuating in droves, leaving the city without government, goods, or services and examining efforts by physicians, the Free African Society and others to cure and care for the sick.
- b. *The Kid who Invented the Trampoline: More Surprising Stories about Inventions* by Don Wulffson – Brief, factual stories about how various familiar things were invented, many by accident, from animated cartoons to the zamboni.
- c. *Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story about Brain Science* by John Fleishman - The true story of Phineas Gage, whose brain had been pierced by an iron rod in 1848, and who survived and became a case study in how brains function.
- d. *When Objects Talk: Solving Crime with Science* by Mark Friedlander - Many scientific techniques of crime are covered in this informative book. Topics such as fingerprinting, DNA, autopsy, and facial reconstruction are just a few of the crime solving methods discussed.

Why stop at one book? Why not more this summer? Remember that the more you read, the better reader you become! After you have read at least one book, you need to also read at least one newspaper article. Read on for those directions.

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You need to write neatly and legibly or word process this assignment, staple the entire article on top of the write-up, and write in complete sentences.

___1. Choose an article to read from the news section of a newspaper (usually Section 1) about a topic of interest to you. Sports results, advertisements, or lists are *not* acceptable. (Skim through the article before it is cut out to be sure it is one you'll want to share.)

___2. Copy from the newspaper the following information for your documentation **before you cut out the entire article**. You need to copy **six** pieces of information: ***banner (title of newspaper,)*** ***date of publication,*** ***section (number, not name!,)*** ***page number,*** ***title of article,*** ***author of article***

___3. Read the article.

___4. Cut out the entire article. (Be sure you completed number two above before you cut it out!)

___5. Write in complete sentences: Setting (When? Where? Who? What happened? Why?)

___6. Why did you **choose** this article?

___7. What did you **learn**?

___8. What is your **opinion** (about the event, not the article)?

___9. Provide **documentation in correct MLA format**.

MLA format for newspapers:

Author last name, first name. "Title of Article." Title of Newspaper (City, State of publication) Day Month Year: section and page(s).

*Example (Notice that **if** you need a second line for an entry, you should indent.):*

Behre, Robert. "Presidential hopefuls get final crack at core of S.C. Democrats."
Daily Herald (Buffalo Grove, IL) 13 September 2007: A3.