

Social Studies Summer Assignment – Incoming 8th Grade Students

For social studies, students will read one nonfiction OR historical fiction book OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING on the time period they will be studying in the upcoming school year, according to the following breakdown:

Grade 8 = Second Half of U.S. History, including historical figures, time periods, or events from the time of the 1870 Reconstruction period to present day American issues or figures.

Students will then complete either **one (1) Menu “A” task OR two (2) Menu “B” options**, as follows:

Menu “A” Options: Choose only one.

Create a childhood for a character. If your main character is an adult, try to figure out what he or she would have been like as a child. Write the story of his or her childhood in such a way that shows why he or she is the way he or she is in the novel.

Talk show invitation. Select a character, think about his or her involvements and experiences, and then figure out which talk show would most want your character on as a guest. What would they want the character to talk about? Who else would they invite on the show to address the issues the character is involved in? Write up the correspondence between the talk show host and the character in which the host explains what the character should focus on while on the show. After the show, have them exchange one more letter mentioning how they felt about what happened.

Create a home page. Select several characters and design a home page for each of them, picking out appropriate backgrounds and pictures and then creating information that would tell a viewer about your character. Also, create links to at least five different sites that you think your character would be interested in. Then write up and post on the page an explanation of how you made the decisions you did and what you believe this tells us about the character.

Music. After reading a novel, figure out how you would divide up the book into sections. Then select a piece of music that you think captures the feel or tone of each section. Record the pieces and if possible do voice-overs explaining what is happening in the novel during the piece of music and why you felt this piece of music fit the section of the novel.

A character’s fears. One way we get to know characters is to think deeply about them and make inferences based on their actions and on what they and others say about them. Through a person’s actions we can learn what they fear and what they want to avoid the most. Select two characters from your novel and write 2 short essays (2-3 paragraphs per character) on what you believe they fear the most and what evidence you used to come to this conclusion.

Current events. Select five current news or feature stories from television or news magazines that you think your character would be interested in. Then explain how your character would likely respond to each of the stories and the opinions your character would probably have about what was happening in the story. (Try this website: www.newsela.com, or this one www.tweentribune.com).

Draw a scene. If you are artistic, think of an important scene and draw it the way you see it. Place the characters in the scene too, and then figure out where you would put yourself in relation to the characters as the scene unfolds. Then, write or tape your explanations of why you drew the scene the way you did and why you think you were where you were in the scene. What does it tell you about who you related to in the novel?

You need only choose one task if you are choosing from Menu “A.”

Menu “B” Options: Choose two.

Movie recommendations. From all the movies you’ve seen in the last couple of years, pick five you would recommend that your character see. Give a brief summary of each movie and explain why you think the character should see it.

Heroes and superheroes. Select two or three people your character would think of as a hero or superhero. Describe the characteristics of the hero and why those characteristics would be important to your character. Also describe which characteristics your character would most want for himself/herself that the hero or superhero possesses.

Word collage. Write the title of the book in the center of a sheet of paper. Then look through magazines for words, phrases, and sentences that illustrate or tell something about your book. As you look, think in terms of the theme, setting, plot line, as well as characters. Work to get fifty such words, phrases, or sentences so the whole sheet of paper will be covered. The visual impact of the collage should tell a potential reader a lot about the book.

Photos or magazine pictures. Find two or three photos or magazine pictures that would have special significance to your character. Mount them on a sheet of paper and write an explanation of why they would be important to your character.

Title acrostic. Take a sheet of construction paper and write the title of the book down the side of the paper. For each letter in the title, construct a sentence that begins with that letter and that tells something significant about the story.

Cartoon squares. Create a series of six drawings in six squares that shows a significant event in the novel. Under each picture or cartoon, write a few lines of explanation. (Draw your own or try this website: <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com>.)

Book choices for character. Select a character and then choose five books for him or her, thinking about what he or she might like and also what you think they need to know more about. Aim for a mix of both fiction and nonfiction. Scan school or public library shelves, the Internet, or use the library’s online search options. Why did you select the nonfiction books you did? What do you hope your character will like about or get out of the fiction?

Dream vacation. Where do you think your character would most like to go on a vacation? Pick a spot, describe it (download information from the Internet on the place), and explain why he or she would want to go there. Then write a day-by-day itinerary of what the character would do each day and why you think the character would enjoy this activity.

Poetry. Write three poems in response to the novel. The poems can be about the characters, where the book took place, or the themes in the book. The poems can be rhymed or free-verse.

If you are choosing from Menu “B,” you must choose two tasks from the menu above to represent your understanding of the book you read.

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Social Studies Incoming GRADE 8 BOOK EXAMPLES**

Incoming Grade 8 non-scholars students may choose ANY non-fiction or historical fiction book from the list below OR one book of their own choosing about the second half of U.S History, including historical figures, time periods, or events from the time of the 1870 Reconstruction period to present-day American issues or figures.

Here are some SAMPLE books (NOT a required list!) to give you a general idea of what to look for:

- Into the West: From Reconstruction to the Final Days of the American Frontier* by James M. McPherson
- Hear That Train Whistle Blow! How the Railroad Changed the World* by Milton Meltzer
- Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy* by Albert Marrin
- The Nineteenth Amendment* by Michael Burgan
- Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition* by Karen Blumenthal
- The Wednesday Wars* by Gary D. Schmidt
- Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* by Zlata Filipovic
- Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- The Boy in the Wooden Box* by Leon Leyson
- The Boy In the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne
- Witnesses to Freedom: Young People Who Fought For Civil Rights* by Belinda Rochelle
- The Rock and the River* by Kekla Magoon
- Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories* by Ellen Levine