

Incoming Junior High Summer Reading & Writing

Why?

- ✍ Numerous research studies indicate that summer reading helps students maintain or even increase reading skills developed during the school year. Students that do not read over the summer often show a decrease in their reading comprehension and fall behind as soon as the school year begins.
- ✍ Summer reading is optional, but encouraged.
- ✍ Our goal is to encourage students to enjoy reading and discover new authors/genres over their summer break, so that students return to school prepared for the new year.

What?

- ✍ First, students write (and send) a summer reading goal. This should be emailed to jcooper@shlutheran.org as soon as students decide to participate.
- ✍ Students are **encouraged to read and write a "letter essay" for:**
 - 1 book-student choice (6th grade)
 - 2 books-student choice (7th and 8th grades)

How Do I Submit My Written Responses?

- ✍ Type your response in a Google doc or an email. Share it with me at jcooper@shlutheran.org. When I receive your response I will reply that I've received it. If after two days, you do not get a reply saying it was received, an error occurred and you should re-send your response.
- ✍ Look at the instructions included on this sheet to understand how to complete a letter essay.
- ✍ **Be sure to include the title and author of the books you read.**
- ✍ Email Mr. Cooper at jcooper@shlutheran.org if you have any questions.

What is a letter essay?

- ✍ A letter-essay is an informal kind of essay, written in paragraphs, where you talk to me about a novel you have read (or are almost done reading). It should be at least 500 words long, which is about 2 typed and double-spaced pages.

What do I write in a letter-essay?

- ✍ Once you've chosen a book to write about, return to the book and skim through it. Select at least one passage you think is significant, in terms of the book's theme, problem, character development, or plot, or the author's writing style. The passage should show something essential.
- ✍ In your letter-essay, once you have given the title of the novel and the author, and perhaps explained why you chose it (or abandoned it), quote (copy) the passage you chose into the letter-essay, and write about what you think it shows about the book, the author, or your own reading.
- ✍ Other things you can write about in your letter-essay include:
 - What you noticed about how the author wrote
 - What you think the themes or big ideas might be
 - What surprised you about the book
 - Questions you had about the author, characters, plot, or voice
 - Things you noticed or questions you had about yourself as a reader
 - Connections you made between the book and your own life, or another book you read

Below are some sentence prompts that might help you with your letter-essay. The important thing to remember is that you are **not** re-telling the story of the novel; instead, your letter-essay should tell something you didn't realize about your book, or about yourself as a reader, before you read it.

Remember that this is a **letter**-essay, so it should begin with a greeting, and a closing (*Sincerely*, or *Yours truly*), followed by your signature and printed/typed name. Put the date at the top.

Sentence Prompts for Letter-Essays

I was surprised when/angry about/satisfied with/moved by/incredulous at...

I liked the way the author...

I don't get why the author...

I'd compare this author to...

The main character...

The narrative voice...

The climax of the plot...

The resolution of the main character's problem...

I noticed how the author...

If I were the author I would have...

This book reminded me of...

The character development...

The structure of this book...

I wish that...

The genre of this book...

I'd say a theme of this book is...

I understood why...

Why did...

I rated this one ___ because...

I was struck by/interested in/convinced by this passage: "...." It shows ___ about this author's writing.

I didn't agree with...

I couldn't understand why...

This is how I read this book:

Here is an example of the beginning of a letter essay:

Dear Teacher,

I am in the process of reading *Inkheart*. I absolutely love this book! I am currently reading the part of the book where Fengolio and Maggie read the tin soldier back into the re-written, happy-ending. They are now trying to figure out a way to change Inkheart into making the shadow destroy Capricorn. I am so eager to see how it ends. There are so many questions swirling around in my head. Will shadow actual destroy Capricorn? Will the happy-ending stay? Are the characters making the right decisions? This book really makes me think. I know there is a sequel called *Inkspell*. Is it worth my time to read?

I thought the *Thief Lord* was a little slow in the beginning, but I liked the middle a lot. I thought it was cool how at first they were in the abandoned movie theater and then the setting changed when they moved to the Lady's house. I also liked how the detective was so kind to the kids. I think it's cool when adults are on the kids' side I liked the way the author wrote the part when Bo was taken by their Aunt. It really showed the love connection between Bo and Propser!

Sincerely,

Molly

Book Selection Suggestions

Pick a book that fits your reading level. Books like *Captain Underpants* or *Magic Tree House* aren't appropriate for middle school because they are too easy.

Pick a book you haven't read before.

Read a book in a genre (type) of literature that you haven't read much--for example, novels in verse, science fiction, graphic novels, historical fiction, or nonfiction books such as biographies or books that focus on historical events.

If you really liked a book you've read in the past year, research the author to see if he or she has another book that interests you.

Does one of your friends share similar interests as you? If so, maybe there's a book they enjoyed that you haven't read yet that you might like too. Ask your friends!

Try to find a book that includes subjects or hobbies you enjoy. For instance, if you like baseball, type the keywords baseball, novel, and middle school into a search engine to get a list of results for books that match your interests.