



Eight Grade Summer Reading and Writing Opportunity

Dear Viper Families,

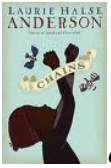
This summer our upcoming eighth grade students have a wonderful opportunity to expand their reading and writing skills. In the eighth grade, we will focus on United States history standards. Students will get to choose one book from this list for summer reading that has to do with some aspect of American history. **Students are to read the book entirely and be prepared to discuss it on the first day of school August 24, 2010.** In addition, students get to WOW their new eighth grade teachers with their writing as they create a dialectical journal and a historical poster in keeping with their novel selection that is also due on the first day of school. The summer reading and writing are great ways to prepare students for success in the rigorous high school honors, AP and IB programs.

Please review and discuss the summer reading and writing description and book lists with your students. We look forward to the exciting discussions these books will inspire and the amazing essays the eighth grade team will get to read. We thank you for your continued support in your child's academic success.

Sincerely,

Vista Magnet Middle School Language A and Humanities Teachers and Staff

8th Grade Summer Reading Choices



Chains – by Laurie Halse Anderson

TOPIC: American Revolution and Slavery

Set in New York City at the beginning of the American Revolution, *Chains* addresses the price of freedom both for a nation and for individuals. Isabel tells the story of her life as a slave. She was sold with her five-year-old sister to a cruel Loyalist family even though the girls were to be free upon the death of their former owner. She has hopes of finding a way to freedom and becomes a spy for the rebels, but soon realizes that it is difficult to trust anyone. She chooses to find someone to help her no matter which side he or she is on.



My Brother Sam is Dead by Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier

TOPIC: American Revolution

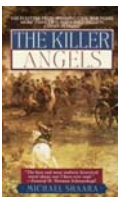
Sam Meeker returns home from college in the spring of 1775 and announces that he has decided to enlist in the Rebel army, his parents are appalled, but his younger brother, Tim, is wide-eyed with admiration.



Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe

TOPIC: Slavery/Abolition

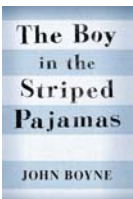
Having run up large debts, a Kentucky farmer named Arthur Shelby faces the prospect of losing everything he owns. Though he and his wife, Emily Shelby, have a kindhearted and affectionate relationship with their slaves, Shelby decides to raise money by selling two of his slaves to Mr. Haley, a coarse slave trader. The slaves in question are Uncle Tom, a middle-aged man with a wife and children on the farm, and Harry, the young son of Mrs. Shelby's maid Eliza. When Shelby tells his wife about his agreement with Haley, she is appalled because she has promised Eliza that Shelby would not sell her son.



The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara

TOPIC: Civil War

In Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*, the story of the Battle of Gettysburg is told not only from a factual perspective, but also from the emotional viewpoints of the historical figures who lived it — specifically, Civil War Generals Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, and John Buford, as well as Colonel Joshua Chamberlain. Author Michael Shaara uses vivid details to make *The Killer Angels* a painstakingly accurate portrayal of one of the bloodiest battles in American history.



***The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne**

TOPIC: Holocaust

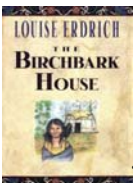
When Bruno returns home from school one day, he discovers that his belongings are being packed in crates. His father has received a promotion and the family must move from their home to a new house far far away, where there is no one to play with and nothing to do. A tall fence running alongside stretches as far as the eye can see and cuts him off from the strange people he can see in the distance. But Bruno longs to be an explorer and decides that there must be more to this desolate new place than meets the eye. While exploring his new environment, he meets another boy whose life and circumstances are very different to his own, and their meeting results in a friendship that has devastating consequences.



***The Slave Dancer* by Paula Fox**

TOPIC: Slavery

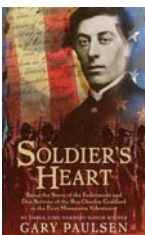
Thirteen-year-old Jessie, a white boy, is kidnapped because of his ability to play the fife. On board ship he becomes an unwilling participant in the slave trade. Since the slaves must be exercised, Jessie is to play music and they must dance. The ship is wrecked and the only two survivors are Jessie and a young slave.



***The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich**

TOPIC: Westward Expansion/Native Americans

This book is what many of us have been seeking for many years: a good story through which the Native American culture during the Westward Expansion of the United States is realistically and sympathetically portrayed. This band of Ojibwa (old name: Anishinabe) live on an island in Lake Superior and we are witness to much of the custom and ritual, successes and tragedies of these people who lived so closely bound to the earth. The book has been nominated for the National Book Award for Young People's Literature.



***Soldier's Heart* by Gary Paulsen**

TOPIC: Civil War

(Bantam, 1998 ISBN 0385324987. [Hardcover](#).) The violence in the book is hard to take but Paulsen handles it well and has constructed a compelling story of a fifteen year old boy who enlists in the Minnesota Volunteers not as a flag bearer or drummer, as many young boys did; Charley lied about his age and took on the combat role that he coveted after hearing the songs and the rhetoric. Charley wasn't a bit concerned with freeing the slaves; he was going to teach those Rebs a lesson for daring to break up the Union. Neither Charley nor the reader are spared as the battle is joined.

Dialectical	1	2	3	4	PEER GRADE	SELF GRADE	TEACHER GRADE
Criterion A: Content	The journal shows a very limited understanding of your novel. There is a very limited analysis of the literary devices (theme, foreshadowing, symbolism or irony) with a very little variety of questions, connections, illustrations, clarifications, lines, thoughts and feelings.	The journal shows a limited understanding of your novel. There is some analysis of the literary devices (theme, foreshadowing, symbolism or irony) with a little variety of questions, connections, illustrations, clarifications, lines, thoughts and feelings.	The journal shows a sufficient understanding of your novel. There is an adequate analysis of the literary devices (theme, foreshadowing, symbolism or irony) with a variety of questions, connections, illustrations, clarifications, lines, thoughts and feelings.	The journal shows a perceptive understanding of your novel. There is a sophisticated analysis of the literary devices (theme, foreshadowing, symbolism or irony) with a variety of thoughtful questions, connections, illustrations, clarifications, lines, thoughts and feelings.			
Criterion B: Organization	The journal is minimally organized, clear and coherent and develops the ideas being expressed in a very limited manner.	The journal is somewhat organized, somewhat clear and coherent and develops the ideas being expressed in a limited manner.	The journal is organized, clear and coherent and develops the ideas being expressed in an appropriate manner.	The journal is well organized, very clear and coherent and effectively develops the ideas being expressed in a sophisticated manner.			
Criterion C: Style and Language Usage	The journal demonstrates appropriate and varied use of vocabulary with very frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax that distract the reader.	The journal demonstrates appropriate and varied use of vocabulary with frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax that may distract the reader.	The journal appropriate and varied use of vocabulary with infrequent errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax.	The journal demonstrates appropriate and varied use of vocabulary with very infrequent errors in spelling, punctuation and syntax.			

Historical Topic Poster

History Topic
Novel Title
Author's Name
Student Name

- Two paragraphs about topic

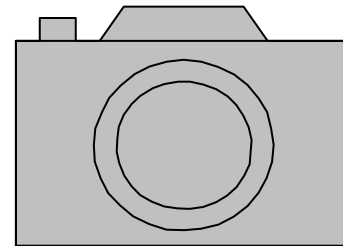
This topic is about . . .

It's important because . . .

- One paragraph reflection on topic

I think that this topic . . .

If I lived then, I would . . .



Five or more pictures on topic



Eighth Grade Summer Reading Project Description

Assignment: To read a novel of your choice on the selected reading list, to create a dialectical journal and to create a historical poster.

Area of Interaction: Health and Social Education (How do I think and act? Am I changing? How can I look after myself and others?)

Subject: Language Arts and Social Studies

Essential Question(s):

- How can I make a difference in the world?
- How do I think critically about a piece of writing?
- How can I explain my thoughts, feelings and ideas about a social issue?
- What are the solutions to social problems from the past, present and future?

Standard(s):

- **Literary Response and Analysis 8.3.2** I can evaluate structural elements of the plot, the plot's development and the way in which conflicts are resolved.
- **Literary Response and Analysis 8.3.6** I can identify significant literary devices (e.g. metaphor, **symbolism**, dialect, **irony**) and use those elements to interpret the work.
- **Social Studies 8.4** I can analyze the aspirations and ideals of the people of the new nation.
- **Social Studies 8.6** I can analyze the divergent paths of the American people.
- **Social Studies 8.9** I can analyze the early attempts to abolish slavery.

Project Deadline: Monday, August 24, 2010 (First day of school)

Project Description:

Eighth grade is the year of critical reading and writing. It is also the year that we will study United States history. Over the summer, your job will be to:

1. **Select a book** of realistic fiction on the Eighth Grade Summer Reading List.
2. Read the book and **keep a dialectical journal** (four entries per chapter, minimum).
3. **Create a historical poster** about your topic.
4. **Be prepared to discuss your book** by the first day of school when you return.

*** Attached is the rubric for your dialectical journal and the history poster. ***