

Required Jr. High School Summer Assignment (8th & 9th Grade)

Summer Reading: (1) Read two books from this list, or one book from this list and one biography, memoir, or autobiography or other book of your own choosing. Any edition or translation is fine. These recommendations include many traditional “classics” of western culture, as well as suggestions for discovering other world masterworks.

(2) Create a carefully designed and well executed product that will persuade others to read the books you chose. Refer to this website that highlights **91 Ways to Respond to Literature for product ideas:** <http://www.angelfire.com/ok/freshenglish/bookreportideas.html>

Due the first day of school!

Homer, *The Iliad* Homer, *The Odyssey*

Dante, *The Inferno*

Amar Shah, *The Hoop Con* (Play the Game)

Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology*

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, etc.

Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

Poetry by Blake, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Christina Rossetti

Any work by Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens,

Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, or Virginia Woolf

Earnest Hemingway, *A Farewell To Arms*, his Africa stories, etc.

John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charlie*, etc.

Patrick O'Brian, *Master and Commander*, *The Far Side of the World*

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* or other works by Alvarez

Any book by Isabel Allende, especially her books for youth

Poetry by Pablo Neruda

Julia Butterfly Hill, *The Legacy of Luna*

Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

Carl Hiassen, *Hoot*, etc.

Patrick Smith, *A Land Remembered*

Lucy and Steven Hawking, *George's Cosmic Treasure Hunt*

Helene Cooper, *The House at Sugar Beach*

Any work by Edgar Allen Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, H.G. Ballard, or Ray Bradbury

Top Recommended Books for 8th–9th Grade Students

Classics

1. **Of Mice and Men** by *John Steinbeck*
 - a. **Themes:** Friendship, dreams, human dignity
 - b. **Why:** Simple prose with complex ideas; introduces students to literary symbolism and American history.
2. **Fahrenheit 451** by *Ray Bradbury*
 - a. **Themes:** Censorship, knowledge, conformity
 - b. **Why:** A must-read for teaching media literacy, critical thinking, and dystopian fiction.
3. **The Outsiders** by *S.E. Hinton*
 - a. **Themes:** Class conflict, identity, belonging
 - b. **Why:** Written by a teenager for teenagers; deeply relatable and opens discussion on loyalty and societal roles.
4. **Animal Farm** by *George Orwell*
 - a. **Themes:** Power, control, propaganda
 - b. **Why:** Great introduction to allegory and political commentary; short but rich in meaning.
5. **The Diary of a Young Girl** by *Anne Frank*
 - a. **Themes:** Resilience, history, identity
 - b. **Why:** A deeply humanizing account of WWII, excellent for cross-curricular learning (history + literature).

Contemporary Favorites

1. **The Hate U Give** by *Angie Thomas*
 - a. **Themes:** Racism, justice, voice, activism

- b. **Why:** Powerful modern story that gets students thinking and speaking about current events and identity.
2. **Long Way Down** by *Jason Reynolds*
 - a. **Themes:** Violence, revenge, choices
 - b. **Why:** Written in verse, it's accessible yet incredibly deep; a favorite for reluctant readers and poetic analysis.
3. **The Book Thief** by *Markus Zusak*
 - a. **Themes:** War, words, mortality, love
 - b. **Why:** Historical fiction told by Death as the narrator—sophisticated and emotionally powerful.
4. **Refugee** by *Alan Gratz*
 - **Themes:** Survival, hope, global perspective
 - **Why:** Tells three interwoven stories of young refugees from different time periods. Excellent for empathy-building and historical thinking.
5. **All American Boys** by *Brendan Kiely & Jason Reynolds*
 - **Themes:** Police brutality, race, perspective
 - **Why:** Alternating perspectives invite students to understand different sides of a single event.
6. **El Deafo** by *Cece Bell* (graphic memoir)
 - **Themes:** Disability, identity, belonging
 - **Why:** Great for middle schoolers to explore voice and self-acceptance in a fun, visual format.
7. **Scythe** by *Neal Shusterman*
 - **Themes:** Mortality, ethics, power
 - **Why:** Introduces big philosophical questions through fast-paced sci-fi. Strong for critical thinking and dystopian comparison with classics.

For more book ideas, see the website: “100 fiction books all children should read before leaving secondary school – according to teachers” <https://www.tes.com/news/100-fiction-books-all-children-should-read-leaving-secondary-school-according-teachers>

Additional reading material suggestions, sources, and ideas

[Thriller Books for Teens \(commonsensemedia.org\)](https://commonsensemedia.org)

[The 30 Best Biographies of All Time | Reedsy Discovery](https://reedsy.com/discovery)

[Best Biographies \(1235 books\) \(goodreads.com\)](https://www.goodreads.com)

[The Best Science Fiction Books of All Time \(forbes.com\)](https://forbes.com)

[Best Books of All Time | List of Greatest Fiction Novels Ever Written \(ranker.com\)](https://ranker.com)

[Best Nonfiction 2020 — Goodreads Choice Awards](https://www.goodreads.com/choiceawards)

Fiction books = made up or loosely based on fact

Nonfiction = based on true facts

Most liked Authors of All-time

[Best Writers of All Time | List of the Greatest Writer in History \(ranker.com\)](#)

[Which Books Do Famous Authors Read and Recommend Most? < Literary Hub \(lithub.com\)](#)