THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL

Dear Middle School Community,

Reading is crucial for middle school students, and we will be increasing the amount of required reading in the months and years ahead. To get a head start on our increased expectations, please start with having your child read at least 30 minutes a night. They can read novels, newspapers, magazines, or anything else that interests them.

Why is reading so important?

- **Expands Vocabulary** – Strengthens language skills and comprehension.
- **Boosts Critical Thinking** – Creates opportunities to analyze, interpret, and evaluate different perspectives.
- **Increases Attention Span** – Helps develop focus in an age of digital distractions.
- **Prepares for High School & College** – Strengthens foundational knowledge and skills needed for advanced subjects and standardized tests (ACT and SAT).

Here are some helpful strategies to support a family culture of reading.

Make Reading Relevant & Engaging

- **Offer Choice** – Let students pick texts and topics of interest, whether books or articles, fiction or nonfiction, histories or science fiction, true crime or biographies.
- **Read Aloud Together** – Reading together models crucial lifelong habits of heart and mind.
- **Use Audiobooks to Read Along** – Audiobooks help readers build confidence and fluency.
- **Encourage Book Series** – One book leads to another!

Create a Positive Reading Environment

- **Provide Comfortable Spaces** – A cozy nook and snack make reading more inviting.
- **Celebrate Progress** – Acknowledge achievements like finishing a book or trying a new genre.
- **Model Reading** – Remove distractions and let your child see you reading. You'll be amazed by what can happen when the whole family is together reading nightly.

If you have any questions or would like our help, please reach out via email.

Sincerely,

Ms. Tameka Tate *Mrs. Jenny Cobb* *Mrs. Ali Gasser* *Mrs. Kathy Boero*

Tameka Tate Jenny Cobb Ali Gasser Kathy Boero

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2026 SRC Summer Reading Resources

Need to find summer reading books?

SRC Website

https://www.prairieschoolsrc.com/
*Use this link to access the library catalog and Sora ebooks.

Destiny Discover Library Catalog (print)

**You must be logged in to request holds on books and view your account information.

For Grades 6-12	**Example**
Username: school email address	agasser@prairieschool.com
Password: 1234	*1234*

* Passwords can be changed and reset by Mrs. Gasser. Please email Mrs. Gasser at agasser@prairieschool.com to make any password changes.

WI Schools Digital Library Catalog (WSDLC) + app (ebooks and digital audiobooks)

*Use your school Google account as login on a phone, iPad, or Chromebook.

You can also link your digital public library catalog with your public library card number and pin to your Sora app.

Please see local public libraries and independent bookstores for additional title copies.

4/27/2026

THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL

8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment 2026

Be Ready to Think, Speak, and Connect! This summer, you will analyze the development and growth of a main character from your chosen summer reading book. Next, you will gather and organize text evidence to prepare for a thoughtful and meaningful Socratic seminar discussion upon returning to school.

Requirements:

1. Choose **one** book from the approved summer reading English list.
2. Complete the **Character Development Graphic Organizer**.
3. Include at least **two pieces of text evidence** with page numbers.
4. Write **brief explanations** of how each piece of evidence shows character growth.
5. Prepare at least **four open-ended** questions related to the character's development for the Socratic seminar.
6. Bring the completed graphic organizer to class on the **first day of school**.

When you return, you will participate in a **Socratic Seminar discussion** with your classmates.

➔ You will NOT be graded on being "right." You will be graded on your thinking, participation, and preparation.
➔ This is NOT just about finishing a book. It's about:
- ✔ Thinking critically
- ✔ Making connections
- ✔ Sharing your voice

How to Prepare:

Bring the following on the first day of school:

- ☐ **Your book**
- ☐ **Completed Graphic Organizer**
- ☐ **Completed Questions**

During the Seminar, You Should:

- Speak at least **2–3 times**
- Use **evidence from your book**
- Listen and respond to others
- Build on ideas (agree, disagree, or add on respectfully)

Part 1: Character Development Graphic Organizer

Identity
Who is the main character?
What aspects of their identity (race, culture, religion, social class, disability, etc.) impact their life?

Text Evidence 1	Page Number

Text Evidence 2	Page Number

Perspective
How does the character view the world?
How do others treat them? Why?

Text Evidence 1	Page Number

Text Evidence 2	Page Number

Conflict

What challenges does the character face?

How do these challenges impact the character?

Text Evidence 1	Page Number

Text Evidence 2	Page Number

Message

What lessons does the character learn by the end of the book? How do these lessons shape who they become?

What message does the author try to teach the reader? Are there lessons about society, fairness, or adversity that you learned?

Text Evidence 1	Page Number

Text Evidence 2	Page Number

Part 2: Questions for Socratic Seminar

Create 4 Thoughtful Questions:

Your questions should make your classmates THINK (not just recall facts). I can't wait to hear your ideas when school starts!

✔ Good example:

- "Why do people accept unfair treatment in society?"

❌ Not-so-good example:

- "What is the main character's name?"

Identity **Example: How might the story be different if the character had a different social status?**

Perspective **Example: What event shapes the character's view of the world at the beginning of your novel?**

Conflict **Example: How could the character have handled their conflicts differently?**

Message **Example: What message about overcoming adversity does the story reveal, and how is it relevant to us today?**

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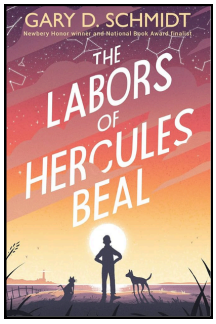
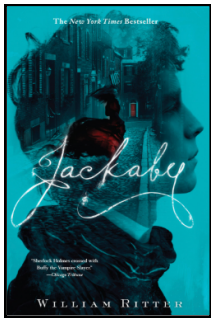
English 8 Summer Reading

To get ready for class this Fall, you will need to select **one text** from the list provided below. Please complete the graphic organizer to help you prepare for the Socratic seminar discussion upon your return.

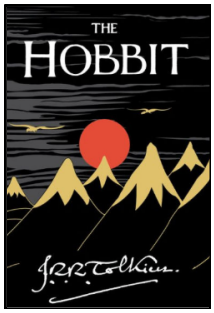


The Labors of Hercules Beal- Herc Beal is aware of his namesake—a legendary hero—but he doesn't possess any superhuman abilities. When his homeroom teacher at his new middle school assigns him the daunting task of emulating the incredible feats of Hercules in real life, he feels doubtful. Soon, he finds new friends, both human and animal, lending their support. Although Hercules completed his twelve labors solo, Herc begins to realize that he might not have to face his challenges alone.

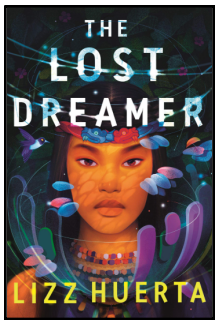


Jackaby- In the captivating town of New Fiddleham, Abigail Rook encounters the quirky investigator R.F. Jackaby. Combining her keen attention to detail with Jackaby's supernatural talents, they form an unbeatable duo. As they investigate the mystery surrounding a serial killer, they confront doubt from the police while revealing a realm of extraordinary creatures hidden in the darkness. Prepare for an exhilarating adventure packed with unexpected twists that will keep you enthralled!

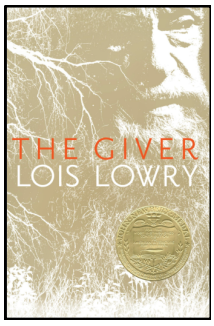
The Boy Who Steals Houses- At just fifteen, Sam, along with his autistic older brother Avery, has been forsaken by every relative he ever had. He manages to survive by sneaking into vacant homes while their owners are away, until he unexpectedly gets caught when a family returns. To his surprise, this lively and chaotic family takes him in. However, Sam harbors a secret, and his past is beginning to catch up with him.



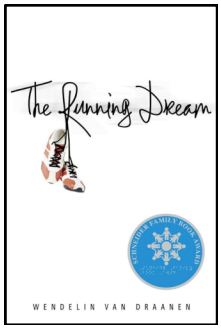
The Hobbit- Bilbo Baggins lives a cozy and predictable life. However, everything changes when a band of dwarves and the enigmatic wizard Gandalf show up unexpectedly, pulling Bilbo into an exhilarating adventure. Little does he know, this journey will lead him to encounter a fearsome dragon and a mysterious ring with unknown origins. Join Bilbo on this captivating quest, filled with peril, enchantment, and unexpected discoveries!



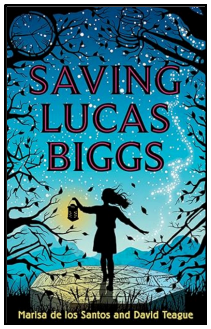
The Lost Dreamer- Indir, a Dreamer from a lineage of seers, can see truths beyond reality. After the beloved king's death, his son, King Alcan, dismisses this tradition and aims to eliminate the Dreamers. Indir agrees to help, but only if he uncovers her two guarded secrets. Saya, a seer without formal training, faces her own struggle. Her mother exploits her abilities as they move from village to village. As her trust in her mother falters, Saya decides to embark on a risky journey in search of the truth.



The Giver- This captivating tale revolves around twelve-year-old Jonas, who resides in a seemingly perfect yet colorless society marked by conformity and satisfaction. It is only when he receives his life assignment as the Receiver of Memory that he starts to uncover the dark and intricate secrets lurking beneath the surface of his fragile community.



The Running Dream- Jessica thinks her life is over after losing a leg in a car accident. The promise of walking with a prosthetic offers little comfort; running is her true passion. As she adapts to her new reality, Jessica feels both seen and invisible. Strangers often ignore her, a realization that strikes her when she meets Rosa, a girl with cerebral palsy who will tutor her in math. Rosa sees right through to Jessica's core. With support from her family, friends, coach, and track team, Jessica might run again.



Saving Lucas Biggs- Thirteen-year-old Margaret believes in her father's innocence, but Judge Biggs still sentences him to death. Determined to save her dad, Margaret is ready to use her family's secret time-travel ability. With help from her best friend Charlie and his grandpa Josh, Margaret travels back to when Judge Biggs was young to change the events that made him corrupt. Can she alter the past, or will history force her back to a present where her father is still doomed?

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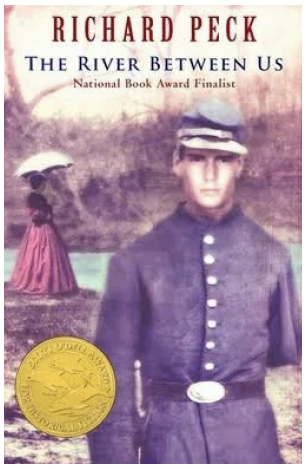
8th Grade Summer Reading: Social Studies The River Between Us by Richard Peck

ISBN-10 : 0142403105

ISBN-13 : 978-0142403105



Essential Question

How did the Civil War impact individuals, families, and the nation—and how can historical fiction help us understand that impact?

Reading Journal (Required)

Complete **5** entries while reading (one entry every 3 chapters is a good way to divide this).

- Each entry should include:
  - **Summary** (3–5 sentences)
  - **Historical Connection** (link to Civil War events, issues, or ideas)
  - **Reflection** (reaction, question, or insight)
- Some things to consider:
  - How is the Pruitt family affected by the war?
  - What differences do you see between North and South perspectives?
  - How does the setting (the Mississippi River town) influence the story?
  - What role does identity play in the novel?

What "Strong Work" Looks Like: A strong journal entry:

- Clearly explains what happened in the chapters read
- Connects the story to **real Civil War events or ideas**
- Shows **your thinking** (questions, reactions, insights)

Sample Journal Entry using a different book:

"Chapters Read: Chapters 3–5 from Across Five Summers

Summary:
In these chapters of Across Five Aprils, the Civil War begins to directly affect Jethro Creighton and his family. Several of Jethro's brothers leave home to fight, but they join different sides—some for the Union and one for the Confederacy. This creates tension and sadness within the family. Jethro also begins to take on more responsibilities at home, helping his parents with farm work. Meanwhile, news of early battles reaches the community, shaping people's understanding of the war.

Historical Connection:
The Creighton family's division reflects how the Civil War split not just the country, but also individual families. This was especially common in border states like Illinois, where people had mixed loyalties. The early battles mentioned in the novel connect to real events, such as the First Battle of Bull Run, which many people expected to be a quick Union victory, but that instead showed the war would be long and difficult.

Reflection:
I found it interesting and sad that Jethro's family is divided, with brothers fighting on opposite sides. It makes the war feel more personal, rather than just something happening far away. I also noticed that Jethro is growing up faster because of the war, taking on more responsibility at home. It makes me wonder how many young people had to mature quickly during this time. I'm also curious about how the family will handle their disagreements and whether they can stay united despite the war."

Reading Journal Rubric

	Exceeding Expectations	Secure Skills	Developing Skills	Beginning Skills
Summary (0-10 pts)	Clear, accurate, and detailed summary of key events; shows strong understanding of the reading	Accurate summary of main events; mostly clear and complete	Basic summary, but missing key details, or contains minor confusion	Incomplete, unclear, or inaccurate summary
Historical Connection (0-10 pts)	Strong and specific connection to Civil War history; clearly explained and accurate	General connection to history; explanation may be somewhat vague or limited	Weak, unclear, or inaccurate connection to history	No historical connection included
Reflection (0-10 pts)	Thoughtful and insightful reflection. Shows deep thinking, questions, or personal connection	Clear reflection. Shows some thinking, but may be superficial	Limited or unclear reflection	No reflection included
Spelling, grammar, and neatness (0-5 pts)	Writing is neat and easy to read; correct spelling and grammar with few or no errors	Some errors in spelling/grammar or neatness, but the meaning is still clear	Many errors in spelling/grammar or neatness. The meaning is still mostly clear.	Frequent errors or difficult to read, meaning is unclear

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Have you finished your two summer reading novels? Awesome! Check out this exciting list of extra books to keep your summer reading adventure going!

7th/8th Grade

Fantasy – Magic, mythical creatures, and epic adventures
Thickety by J.A White
Inkheart by Cornelia Funke
Life of Pi by Yann Martel
The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman
Fablehaven by Brandon Mull
Endling by Katherine Applegate

Science Fiction – Space travel, futuristic technology, or dystopian worlds
The Giver by Lois Lowry
The House of Scorpion by Nancy Farmer
Scythe by Neal Schusterman
Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card
Maze Runner by James Dashner
Cinder by Marissa Meyer
Miss Peregrine's House for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs

Adventure – Fast-paced stories with daring quests
The Raft by S.A Bodeen
City Spies by James Ponti
The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart

Mystery – Puzzles, secrets, and detective work
Spy School by Stuart Gibbs
Blackthorn Key by Kevin Sands
The Inheritance Games by Jennifer Lynn Barnes
One of Us is Lying by Karen McManus

Realistic Fiction – Everyday life challenges and friendships
Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli
Jerremy Fink and the Meaning of Life by Wendy Mass
Stars Beneath Our Feet by David Barclay Moore
The Only Road by Alexandra Diaz

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Historical Fiction – Stories set in different periods
Milkweed by Kevin Henkes
Between Shades of Grey by Ruta Sepetys
Prisoner B-3087 by Alan Gratz
Allies by Alan Gratz
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak
Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson
A Night Divided by Jennifer A Nielsen

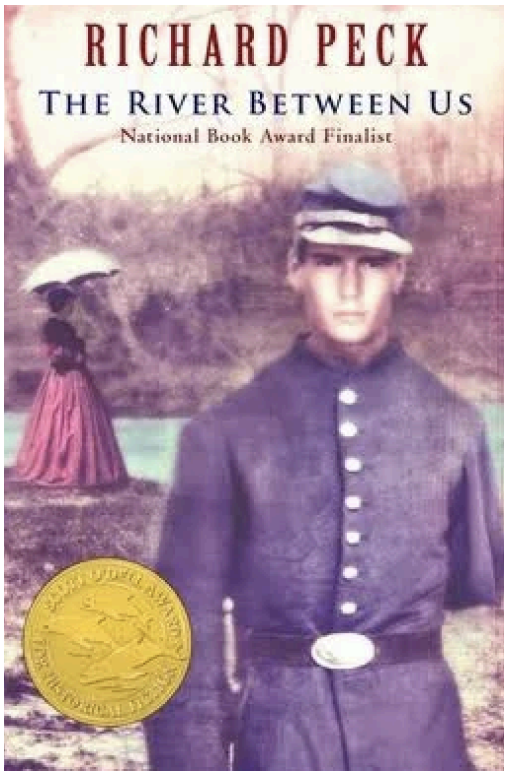
Graphic Novels – Stories told through comic-style art
Wonderstruck by Bryan Selznik
Artemis Fowl: The Graphic Novel by Eoin Colfer
Illegal by Eoin Colfer

Poetry/Novels in Verse – Expressive storytelling through poems
The Crossover by Kwame Alexander
Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai
Brown Girl, Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson
Garvey's Choice by Nikki Grimes
House Arrest by K.A. Holt

Classics
Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls
The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell
Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Spear
Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson
The Princess Bride by William Goldman
Watership Down by Richard Adams
The Yearling by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

Summer Journal

The River Between Us



Name: _____

Chapters Read: _____

Chapters Read: _____

Chapters Read: _____

Chapters Read: _____

Chapters Read: _____