

## 8th Grade Summer Work List - 2018

Your summer reading will include **two books** and **an independent writing project**. All the assignments are due the first day you return in September.

### **First: Social Studies Reading Assignment**

All rising 8<sup>th</sup> graders are to read *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane. Here is some information from amazon.com about the novel:

*“First published in 1895, this small masterpiece set the pattern for the treatment of war in modern fiction. The novel is told through the eyes of Henry Fleming, a young soldier caught up in an unnamed Civil War battle who is motivated not by the unselfish heroism of conventional war stories, but by fear, cowardice, and finally, egotism. However, in his struggle to find reality amid the nightmarish chaos of war, the young soldier also discovers courage, humility, and perhaps, wisdom.”*

*The Red Badge of Courage* is a classic historical novel. It tells the story of the Civil War through the eyes of a complex and not entirely likable young man. After enlisting, his romantic visions of war and purpose meet grim realities. The author, Stephen Crane, was never a soldier and wrote the book while in his early 20's, before dying in 1900 at the age of 28.

In a paragraph (4-6 sentences) each, please address two of the following questions about the novel:

1. Consider the advice Henry's mother gives him in the first chapter. Do you think Henry's opinion of her advice changed as the book progressed?
2. The title of the book refers to the injury Henry receives in Chapter 12. Discuss the irony of his wound, how he got it, and the impact it had on him.
3. This book shows a clear divide between the *army* and its *soldiers*. Describe the complaints the soldiers have about their leaders and the army in general.
4. Henry changes significantly over the course of the battle. Is he more or less admirable as a person by the end of the book? Explain your thinking.

These paragraphs should be typed (double-spaced) or written neatly with skipped lines. They may be emailed at any time during the summer to [mfoley@greenestreetfriends.org](mailto:mfoley@greenestreetfriends.org). Otherwise they are due the first day back in September.

### **Second: Language Arts Reading Assignment**

- You will choose **one novel or work of non-fiction** to read this summer. This book should be appropriate to your age, interest and reading ability. You should also choose a book that you have not read yet.
- To provide evidence of your completion of the book, you will make a **brief verbal presentation** to the class that demonstrates your understanding of it.
- Presentation Specifics:
  - Select **one of the elements of the book** (plot, character, setting, or theme).
  - Explain **how** the story element is represented in the book.
  - Your presentation should be **1-3 minutes** in length.
  - You should practice your presentation **over the summer**.
  - Presentations will occur **during the first week of school**.
  - *You do not need to have any physical presentation or slideshow, but you should send this to me before the start of school if you would like to project it.*
- You will be graded on your presentation skills, knowledge of the book, ability to explain specific details about a story element, and the length of your presentation.

### **Third: Language Arts Writing Assignment**

- You will write a “**This I Believe**” **essay** about a topic about which you feel passionate *and* to which you have a personal connection.
- Your essay should **balance telling a personal story while making a statement that is applicable to your audience**.
- **Steps:**
  - Before you write your own, you will read/watch at least 10 “This I Believe” essays to serve as a model. I will give you a handout of 5, and you should find 5 more on [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org). On the website, **listen to the audio version** so that you can hear pacing, emphasis, and passion.
  - Then, you will **write** an edited draft of your own “This I Believe” speech.
    - Use the following pages to help you write your speech.
  - You should **share** a Google document with your speech with me at [ekirchner@greenestreetfriends.org](mailto:ekirchner@greenestreetfriends.org) by **September 5, 2018**.
  - At the start of the school year, I will leave comments, you will make edits, and we will practice your presentation skills.
  - After you have made all necessary edits/changes, you will **present** your speech at a MS assembly.
  - You will be graded on the **completion of each of these tasks**.

### **Guidelines to Help You Write Your Speech:**

### Possible topics:

1. Most of us have been in a situation where we made a *promise* that for one reason or another we were unable to keep. When were you disappointed because someone made you a promise that they failed to keep? Or when did you break a promise that you made to someone else?
2. All of us are *works in progress* with a long way to go before we reach our full potential. What skill or area are you working on to make progress?
3. Our society uses the word *hero* in many different ways. How do you define *hero*, and who is a hero in your life?
4. We all tend to *judge* people by their appearance, even though looks can be deceiving. Have you ever prejudged someone incorrectly, based on their appearance, or has someone ever prejudged you unfairly based on how you look?
5. Everyone has problems or challenges to *overcome*. What obstacles are you proud to have faced and conquered?

### Ways to Start:

- You will need a *powerful hook* to get any reader's attention. The lead is the *doorway* through which a writer welcomes and orients readers to the idea.
- Avoid beginning an essay with the statement "This I Believe." Try instead to use at least two of the following strategies as more effective *leads*.
- Here are some strategies to begin your essay:
  - **Question:** "When was the last time you went without a meal?"
  - **Quotation** (from someone famous or from someone significant in your life): "'Be careful,' were the last words my father said to me each time I left the house."
  - **Strong Statement** (that your essay will either support or dispute): "If you eat enough cabbage, you'll never get cancer."
  - **Metaphor:** "The starlings in my back garden are the small boys in the playground, impressing each other with their new-found swear words. The crows all belong to the same biker gang. You need to know their secret sign to join their club."
  - **Description** (of a person or setting): "Michael once mowed the lawns around Municipal Hall wearing a frilly apron, high heels, and nylons, with a pillow stuffed under his sweater so he looked pregnant. And it wasn't even Halloween."

### Ways to Add Audience Appeal to Personal Essays:

- Be sure your essay is about something *you care strongly* enough about to fully elaborate. Readers want to know what you know, feel what you feel, and understand exactly where you're coming from.
- While the idea for the essay must be *personal*, make the frame big enough to allow your reader to *find parallels* between your experience and theirs. Give readers the opportunity to say, "Ah! Yes, I've never been there or done that, but I can relate to what the author is talking about." The effective writer must *draw in an audience* to show a more *universal implication* of a very personal experience or belief.
- If you are writing about a small personal occurrence, put your idea in a context that gives the reader insight to both the *small moment and the wider perspective*. Think of your essay as a *camera lens*. You might start by describing a fine detail (a specific moment in the narrative), then zoom out to take in the wide view (the general/global backdrop), then close the piece by narrowing back to the fine detail.
- Use *details* to draw the reader in. Be *specific* and avoid using abstract expressions and phrases such as "the best day of my life" or "I'd never known greater grief" to describe emotions of love or loss. Make the *emotions real and immediate* by noting specifics and details that draw the reader into your experience.
- Employ all the *senses* to convey your ideas to the reader: sight, sound, taste, touch, and hearing.
- Make sure your audience can *summarize the main idea that you believe*. You should not have to use a summary statement such as, "What I am trying to say..." or "What I really mean is..." You must aim to leave the readers *clear* and *satisfied*—whether they agree with what you believe or not.
- You can provide a *brief echo* of the opening at the end of your piece for a clincher to bring your personal essay *full circle*.