

Summer Reading 2010
MS Language Arts
Trinity School of Texas

Summer reading is a requirement at Trinity School of Texas. The books assigned have been carefully chosen to supplement our language arts program. Middle school students should read a book at least every two weeks during both the school year and summer to help build reading speed and fluency.

Students will be tested over the required novel for their grade level during the first two weeks of school. We will review these books in class prior to the test, so they will need to have a copy of the book to bring to school.

Assignment #1 (Required novel)

Write a child's short story based upon the novel. It should center on an event in the novel that you feel is the most important. The book should be illustrated and written in a manner that a young child would understand it. The story should flow from beginning to end and remain true to the spirit of the novel. Grammar and punctuation count, as do creativity and neatness. The book should be at least ten pages long with at least a paragraph (6-8 sentences) on each page.

Assignment #2 (Additional novel)

Write an approach paper over your novel. It should be 12 pt font and approximately 1 page in length. It should consist of the following sections:

- Proper heading with your name, date, grade level, and novel title
- Summary paragraph: A three or four sentence paragraph which explains the entire novel using as much description and detail as you can manage. To encourage your writing style, you must begin each sentence in a different way. Sentences may begin with prepositional phrases, adverbs, participial phrases, etc.
- Character description: Choose three or four main characters in your novel. Next to each name, list five words which describe the character. Descriptive words may not be used more than once.
- Discussion/essay questions: Write five essay questions that a teacher might ask about the novel.
- Key Passage: Choose the most important passage in the novel (in your opinion). Type it up word-for-word in the approach paper. Make sure to identify the speakers.
- Key Passage Explanation: In a fully-developed paragraph, explain why your chosen passage is important to understanding the novel. Make sure you integrate quotes (actual words or phrases) from the key passages to strengthen your explanation. Often this passage will offer clues to the novel's theme. Explain any mentioned or inferred themes connected to the key passage.

Sample Approach Paper

To Kill a Mockingbird Approach Paper

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the story of three years in the childhood of Scout and her older brother Jem. As an adult narrator, Scout recalls a series of loosely connected episodes which occur in Maycomb, Alabama, in the 1930s, a time of racial segregation and extreme prejudice. Weaving two strands of narrative, Lee presents Boo Radley, the mysterious and reclusive neighbor whom the children find both intriguing and frightening, with the trial of Tom Robinson, a hardworking, innocent black man who is being defended by Scout and Jem's just and courageous father, Atticus Finch. The two strands of narrative tie together in the end when Boo Radley emerges from his seclusion to save Scout and Jem from a cowardly attack on them by Bob Ewell, who vowed vengeance on Atticus after the trial.

Scout Finch: strong-willed, intelligent, tomboyish, loyal, quick-tempered

Jem Finch: thoughtful, steadfast, imaginative, maturing

Atticus Finch: just, courageous, insightful, determined

Boo Radley: reclusive, lonely, simple, protective

1. What do Jem and Scout finally understand about their father: what he stands for in their own lives and in the lives of many of the townspeople?
2. Discuss the three different views of Tom Robinson's trial and its outcome as seen by Atticus, Jem and Scout, and the townspeople.
3. *To Kill a Mockingbird* deals with the issue of racial equality, but Harper Lee also includes the strong story line of Boo Radley. How does the Tom Robinson trial combine with the Boo Radley story thread to make a novel that speaks powerfully of more than just racial equality?

From Chapter 3, page 30:

Atticus: "First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Atticus' entire philosophy of life seems to be summed up in his words to Scout. To be an objective and just community member, one must be able to "climb into" another person's "skin" and "walk around in it" or be able to see issues from another person's perspective. Atticus offers these words to Scout after her first day of formal schooling in the first grade when she is upset that the teacher doesn't understand her efforts to explain Walter Cunningham's financial situation. These words from Atticus begin her first lessons in life. Through the course of the novel, Atticus will show the children his compassion for people different from their family, his attempts to "climb into someone's skin and walk around in it" when he defends an innocent black man, Tom Robinson, against a town's wishes, and when he instructs the children to be respectful and compassionate toward Boo Radley, a neighborhood recluse. One of the main themes of the novel is understanding and accepting people different from oneself.

Assignment #3 (non-fiction book)

Design a poster or diorama illustrating an event or person featured in your book. Attach an index card with the title of the book, author's name, and your name. Be prepared to give an oral presentation to the class about the book. Creativity, neatness, spelling, and grammar count. Be prepared to answer questions about the book. (I will prepare a list of questions for each of the books on the list.)