

Summer Reading 2024

Students Entering Grade 8

Please read the instructions carefully.

As salaamu aleikum, students:

We're going to do things a little differently this summer. I'm assigning one book you *must* read, accompanied by an assignment, and then letting you choose one of two other books to read (also followed by an assignment).

You can find these books in local libraries, on Amazon, and on PDFs online.

Dragon Hoops, by Gene Yang

This is the one you must do. *Dragon Hoops* is a novel-length comic book about a high school basketball team's special season. We have copies at school, if you can't find one. You'll find it deals with topics of race, gender, sports, identity, and friendship, among others. As a comic, it tells its story not just through narration, but largely with its illustrations.

After reading this one, I'd like you to try the same thing. Write and draw a comic book of your own, consisting of at least eight pages. Base it on any theme you recognize in *Dragon Hoops*, but make it your own, with an original setting, characters, and plot. Think carefully how your illustrations and style of art complement the story-telling. Include dialogue and narration, as well as pictures in frames, as you'd find in a comic book.

The Hobbit, by J.R.R. Tolkien

This is a classic of fantasy and world-building. Notice how Tolkien fills his story with places, history, mythology, conflicts, and characters who make Middle Earth feel complete and distinct from our world.

After reading you can choose one of these two assignments:

1. Pick a character from the book, and write a 1-2 page analysis of him (Odd that there seem to be almost no female characters in Tolkien, huh?) Include a description of the character's appearance and personality. Then most importantly, discuss his role in the novel. Why include this character? How does he help complete the story?
2. Or, you can attempt to create a self-contained world of your own. Write a short story (4 pages or so) that uses geography, surroundings, characters, and dialogue to immerse us in a fantasy world of your own creation.

Animal Farm, by George Orwell

This is a not-so-subtle allegorical novella that uses the inhabitants of a barnyard to discuss mid-20th-century European politics. You can choose one of two assignments in response to this story:

1. Write a short essay (1-2 pages) laying out which characters you think are standing in for which political groups or ideas. You might have to do a *little* reading about WWII and its aftermath to come to some defensible conclusions. Then spend a paragraph or two offering your interpretation of Orwell's point. Which philosophies or political ideas was he warning us about?
2. Or, you can write a short allegory of your own, two to four pages. It could represent the political climate of today in the U.S. or elsewhere. It could represent your family, our school; really anything. Just think what kind of characters would best stand in for the real ones in order to make a point about them. What that point is, is up to you. You could have some fun with this one.

And that's it! Feel free to e-mail if you need any clarification. Have a fun and blessed summer, in sha Allah. I can't wait to work with you this fall!

Salaams:

Phil