

Summer Reading 2010  
G/T 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading  
Johnston Middle School

Dear Students,

Below you will find information about your summer reading assignment. My expectation is that you will read all summer long and that you will be able to discuss intelligently and enthusiastically about what you read when we meet in August. I am assigning you two books to read and one project to complete by September 9 or 10 (depending on which day you are in my class). You may turn your project in anytime before September 9 beginning the second week of school. If you have any questions at all or just want to e-mail to introduce yourself, please contact me at [sbrown12@houstonisd.org](mailto:sbrown12@houstonisd.org) . Have a terrific summer!

Choose one book from each column to read. You may not choose a book that you have either already read in elementary school or seen the movie. If for some reason, none of these books will work for you, e-mail me, and we will discuss your options.

**Realistic Fiction**

\* *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen

\* *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell

\* *Escape Under the Forever Sky* by Eve Yahalem

\* *When Zachary Beaver Comes to Town* by Kimberly Willis Holt

**Fantasy**

\* *Elsewhere* by Gabrielle Zevin

\* *The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau

\* *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins

\* *Gregor the Overlander*, by Suzanne Collins

**Summer Project**

What all these novels have in common is that they all have a wonderful sense of place. The setting plays a key role in the action and the characterization. In other words, what happens happens because of where the story is set, and who the characters are stems from where they live (or end up or visit). There are two options for this project. I recommend Option One, but you are free to do Option Two if Option One is not possible.

Option One – Recreate and photograph four scenes from different parts of one of the novels. You may recreate the scenes with people, Legos, toilet paper tubes, sticks and stones, stuffed animals, etc. You are only limited by your creativity. The only rule is that aside from supplies you will need to print the pictures (costs of developing film, paper, ink, etc.) you may not buy anything for this project.

A finished project will include four pictures displayed nicely (in a book, on a small poster board, glued to the four sides of a box, “framed” individually on paper, etc. Again, you are only limited by your creativity.) Below each picture will be the sentence or sentences from the book that describe the scene in your picture (written exactly as it appears in the book) and the page number of the quote. Your project does not have to be fancy, but it should be neat, creative, and reflect effort. Do not forget to put your name, the date, the title of the book, and the author somewhere on it!

Option Two – Draw or paint different scenes from the novel. Each page should have a sentence or sentences from the book copied exactly that describe the scene, plus the page number. Each page should have a drawing/painting that reflects the description. I am not at all concerned with your artistic ability. I am looking for work that is neat, creative, and displays effort.

A finished project will be in a bound booklet with a front and back cover. The front cover should show the name of the book, the author, and your name and the date.

Tips:

- 1.) Stick a small supply of Post-it Notes on the inside covers of your books. As you read, mark any scene that you might want to use for your project. Mark as many as you find interesting. You can edit down later.
- 2.) Read both books before choosing on which book you want to base your project.
- 3.) The sentence that you use as your textual evidence for a picture need not be a paragraph of description. It could be dialogue between characters or a character’s thoughts.

Edited summaries of the books in the realistic fiction category from reviews on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and my personal opinions:

*Hatchet* - ...As for the story, it's about a teen boy, Brian, who suddenly finds himself stranded after the Cessna he was in crashes in a lake-- the pilot dying beforehand of cardiac arrest. It becomes a coming of age story not only because Brian has to overcome his own weakness, but because he also has to come to grips with his parents' recent divorce and his mother's infidelity.

Mrs. Brown says, “This was one of my favorite books as a kid. It’s a great survival story and makes you believe that you could survive too if your plane crashed in the Canadian wilderness with no tools but a hatchet. Just watch out for moose...”

*Island of the Blue Dolphins* - The Newberry Medal-winning story of a 12-year old girl who lives alone on a Pacific island after she leaps from a rescue ship. Isolated on the island for eighteen years, Karana forages for food, builds weapons to fight

predators, clothes herself in a cormorant feathered skirt, and finds strength and peace in her seclusion.

Mrs. Brown says, "This is based on a true story which makes it all the more intriguing. What would you do if you were left on a deserted island for 18 years? Your parents might remember reading this one."

*Escape Under the Forever Sky* - Teens itching to read about life on another continent will relish Yohalem's exciting debut novel set in Africa. Lucy Hoffman's mom is the U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia, so Lucy lives and attends high school in the capital city of Addis Ababa. ...Lucy and a friend sneak out of the house and head into the city. The plot quickens when Lucy is kidnapped and held for ransom. Isolated and without shoes, Lucy plans an escape using her knowledge of the African wilderness. Loosely based on a true story, Yohalem's tale weaves together the beauty of the African wildlife with the harsh realities of a poor and unstable region. Scenes depicting Lucy's resourcefulness are riveting, and the author's descriptions of Ethiopian culture will pique young readers' curiosity about life abroad.

Mrs. Brown says, "I resisted getting started on this book and then ended up really liking it. I was intrigued by Lucy's ingenuity and knowledge of her adopted home."

*When Zachary Beaver Came to Town* - Summer in the tiny Texas town of Antler is traditionally a time for enjoying Wylie Womack's Bahama Mama snow cones and racking up the pins at Kelly's Bowl-a-Rama, but this year it's not going well for Toby Wilson. His 13-year-old heart has been broken twice: once by his mother, who left him and his father to become a country singer in Nashville, and then again by his crush Scarlett Stalling, the town beauty who barely acknowledges Toby's existence. But when Zachary Beaver, "The World's Fattest Boy," comes to Antler as part of a traveling sideshow, Toby begins to realize that there might just be people who have it worse than him.

Mrs. Brown says, "I read this one in May of this year and laughed out loud. It has sad parts too but overall is very amusing and hopeful."

Edited summaries of the books in the fantasy/futuristic category from reviews on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) and my personal opinions:

*Elsewhere* - This coming-of-age novel by Gabrielle Zevin (Farrar, 2005) has a unique twist. Although Liz is maturing, coping with disappointments, and controlling her anger, she is getting younger. Having been killed by a hit and run driver, she now lives in Elsewhere with the grandmother who died before she was born. After death, the residents get younger until they become babies and are reborn onto Earth again. Initially mad at the driver and sad that she will not have a boyfriend and attend the prom, Liz misses her family and is sullen and depressed. Gradually, she begins to realize that life is not so bad in the hereafter.

Mrs. Brown says, "I loved this book, but it's not for everybody. It's a pretty sophisticated story because of its unusual depiction of what happens to us after we die. I recommend it for the reader who is already reading about above-grade-level topics. I laughed and cried. It's very bittersweet which means it's both happy and sad."

*The City of Ember* - It is always night in the city of Ember. But there is no moon, no stars. The only light during the regular twelve hours of "day" comes from flood lamps that cast a yellowish glow over the streets of the city. Beyond are the pitch-black Unknown Regions, which no one has ever explored because an understanding of fire and electricity has been lost, and with it the idea of a Moveable Light. "Besides," they tell each other, "there is nowhere but here" Among the many other things the people of Ember have forgotten is their past and a direction for their future. For 250 years they have lived pleasantly, because there has been plenty of everything in the vast storerooms. But now there are more and more empty shelves--and more and more times when the lights flicker and go out, leaving them in terrifying blackness for long minutes. What will happen when the generator finally fails?

Mrs. Brown says, "I loved this book too and it's a completely different type of book from *Elsewhere*. *The City of Ember* has no blood and guts and very little death so it's the best choice from the fantasy category if you are squeamish. It's an interesting lesson in the necessity of recycling. Do not choose this book if you have seen the movie which varied from the novel significantly."

*The Hunger Games* – ...a gripping story set in a post-apocalyptic world where a replacement for the United States demands a tribute from each of its territories: two children to be used as gladiators in a televised fight to the death. Katniss, from what was once Appalachia, offers to take the place of her sister in the Hunger Games, but after this ultimate sacrifice, she is entirely focused on survival at any cost. It is her teammate, Peeta, who recognizes the importance of holding on to one's humanity in such inhuman circumstances. It's a credit to Collins's skill at characterization that Katniss, like a new Theseus, is cold, calculating and still likable. She has the attributes to be a winner, where Peeta has the grace to be a good loser. It's no accident that these games are presented as pop culture.

Mrs. Brown says, "I loved this book too! *The Hunger Games* is somewhat dark and violent so beware! It is a wonderfully intriguing story though about what happens when a brave and resourceful girl stands up for herself and people she loves and refuses to accept a path chosen for her. When you finish, you will want to rush out and read book two of the trilogy.

*Gregor the Overlander* - It's the beginning of summer and everyone is going off to camp except Gregor, an 11-year-old boy from New York City. Since his father's disappearance from their New York City home, he has been helping out with taking care of his little sisters, especially two-year-old Boots. While doing laundry in the basement of his apartment building, Boots disappears down an air chute and Gregor goes after her. At the bottom of this inner-city rabbit hole, the two find themselves in the Underland surrounded immediately by giant cockroaches, or crawlers. The story moves quickly as the two Overlanders are taken to the Queen of the Underlander humans, where Gregor learns of a prophecy which focuses on him and a quest to find his missing father.

Mrs. Brown says, "I just finished this book and really enjoyed it. It has a great mix of action and fantasy. My favorite characters were Boots, Gregor's two-year-old sister, and the cockroaches who protect her. Intrigued, yet?"