2018 Summer Reading Guides

Rising Eighth Grade

The following study guide and questions offer suggestions which should help you in your understanding of the Summer Reading selections. Plan to take some notes as you read so that, even if you read the books early in the summer, you will have some material to review before the test or essay on each book. These study questions are not meant to be comprehensive; they simply provide you with some direction as you read. Using ONLY online Spark Notes will NOT serve you well; they are merely a superficial approach to a book.

Tips for reading all Summer Reading selections:

1. Read the study guide questions before you begin reading the book so you will know what to think about and look for while you are reading.
2. Have a pen or pencil ready to jot down notes.
3. Using a highlighter is good for marking the important passages and ideas in the book.
4. Write notes and questions to yourself in the margins of the book.
5. Use a dictionary to look up meanings of words you do not know.
6. Use an encyclopedia or atlas to help you think about the setting and context of the book.
7. Read the front and back covers of the book and read the preface or introduction.
8. Reread a passage or chapter if you need to.
9. Discuss the book with others who are also reading it; discuss the study guide questions as well.
10. Keep a list of the questions that you have as you read the book; write down the page numbers about which you have questions. These questions may be asked the first day of the class in the fall.
11. Think especially carefully about the ending of the book; it usually has enormous clues about the major themes or ideas of the book.

World Geography - Required

*Material World: A Global Family Portrait* by Peter Mensel

[Material World: A Global Family Portrait study guide/questions](link)
The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen

Hannah dreads going to her family’s Passover Seder, for she is tired of hearing her relatives’ same stories about the past, but when she opens the front door, she is transported to a Polish village—and the year 1942. Why is she there, and who is this “Chaya” that everyone seems to think she is? Just as she begins to unravel the mystery, Nazi soldiers come to take everyone in the village away, and only Hannah knows the unspeakable horrors that await.

1. Dates to know: 1939-1945 World War II in Europe and 1941-1945 U. S. involvement in WWII.
2. Info to know: Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, Japan and Allies—Russia, U. S., England, France
3. What are the different settings in the novel? (cities, state, country)
4. Why did Hannah open her grandparents’ front door during the Seder?
5. How do Hannah’s feelings about remembering the past change after her experience of going into the past?
6. Who do Shmuel and Gitl think Hannah is?
7. Explain what the days were like in the concentration camp. How is Hannah able to survive?
8. Who is Rivka?
9. Remember to read pp. 167-170. What is “the devil’s arithmetic”?

Upon the Head of the Goat by Aranka Siegal

This fictionalized biography is a vivid recollection of the author’s survival from the time she hears of Hitler to the day her family leaves Auschwitz.

1. Define "Holocaust" and anti-Semitism.
2. Dates to know: 1939-1945 World War II in Europe and 1941-1945 U. S. involvement in WWII.
3. Info to know: Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, Japan and Allies—Russia, U. S., England, France
4. Setting: Komjaty, Ukrainian village where Babi lives; Beregszasz, Hungarian village where nine-year-old Piri Davidowitz lived before visiting Babi. Does the setting change or remain the same?
5. Characters: List the members of Piri’s family. What was their religion? List other major and minor characters. Who is the protagonist? What relationships exist among the characters?
Eighth Grade English (Honors) — Choose 1

Alas, Babylon by Pat Frank

Survivors of a nuclear attack try to hold onto life after the disaster.

1. What is the setting? (e.g. year, city, state, season) Does the setting change or remain the same?

2. List the major characters (characters with well-developed, complex personalities) and minor characters (less well-developed, simpler characters). Describe their traits (e.g. adjectives that describe their personality). How do the events that happen affect their personalities? Who is the protagonist? What is the relationship among the characters?

3. Character motivation (a feeling, an idea, or a goal that causes a character to act in a certain way) What motivates the main characters to act the way they do? Do any characters change? How? Why?

4. Find the different types of conflict that take place. Which characters are involved in these conflicts? Explain how they are involved. (e.g. internal--a struggle that takes place within a character’s own mind; external--a character’s struggle with an outside force, such as nature, society, fate, or another person.)

5. List the major events in the plot in the order that they happen. What is civilization like before the nuclear catastrophe? After the catastrophe?

6. What is the climax (the point of our highest interest and greatest emotional involvement) in this book? After the climax we know how the story’s problems will be solved.

7. What is the novel’s denouement (the final outcome)?

8. From where does the title Alas, Babylon come? Why do you think Pat Frank entitled this novel that?

9. What is the theme (main idea, statement about human experience the author is trying to make)?
10. Does the author use the first person point of view, making a character the storyteller, or does an outside narrator tell the story, third person point of view?

11. Could the book have an impact on society at all? Why? Why not?

**Murder on the Orient Express** by Agatha Christie

*Agatha Christie’s genius for detective fiction is unparalleled in this story of the famed Belgian detective Hercule Poirot who solves the murder case of a notorious gangster found dead on the crowded Orient Express.*

1. Identify the setting in the novel. Does the setting change?

2. Who is M. Hercule Poirot?

3. On the *Taurus Express*, which two people does Poirot notice, and why does their behavior intrigue him?

4. At the Tokatlian Hotel’s restaurant, which character fascinated Poirot? Why?

5. List and describe the passengers on the *Simplon Orient Express*.

6. What is Dr. Constantine’s first theory about when and how the crime was committed?

7. What is strange about the letter Ratchett received?

8. Study the plan of the Istanbul-Calais Coach. (p. 72)

9. Explain the clues Poirot found at the crime scene.

10. According to the Wagon Lit Conductor, Pierre Michel, what events occurred the night of the crime?

11. Be able to explain all of the passengers’ alibis.

12. According to Poirot, what clues disclaimed these alibis?

13. What is M. Hercule Poirot’s final theory of what happened that night on the train?

14. Define irony. What is ironic about this novel’s ending?