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CHRISTIAN BROTHERS
A C A D E M Y

READ, WRITE, & REFLECT CHALLENGE
Summer 2022
(For Incoming Grade 6 Students)

Greetings Summer Readers!

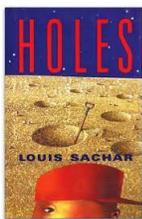
I hope you and your families are enjoying the summer break. I also hope that part of your summer plans include setting aside some time to read. Like athletes who spend the off-season training and refining skills, setting aside time to read every day is one of the most effective ways that students can stay sharp and prepare for the upcoming school year. So, to prepare for Grade 6, I am asking you to set aside some time to read and write about a couple of my favorite books.

For Parents & Students:

Overview for Summer Reading Program for Grade 6: *Read, Write, & Reflect*

Read

As incoming 6th grade students, you are expected to read two books in preparation for the 2022-23 school year at CBA. Please read the following books:



Holes by Louis Sachar



Flush, by Carl Hiaasen.

Of course, you may read as many books as you like. If you are looking for additional book ideas, check out the CBA website at www.cbaalbany.org and click the *Summer Information* tab on the home page. For additional ideas, the list of Newbery Award winners is a good place to start.

<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newberyhonors/newberymedal>

A quick Google search for the “best books for boys” or “best books for middle school students” will provide access to dozens of options to consider, as well.

When it comes to summer reading recommendations, I tend to gravitate toward the sweeping, multi-volume epics. During the summer, there is time to immerse in the drama and setting of a story, fall in love with (or fear or despise) the characters, explore timeless themes, and embark on heroic journeys with the cast of characters. A few classic series come to mind. *Harry Potter*, by J.K Rowling. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. C.S. Lewis’s *Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe* series. *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins.

For adventure fantasy, Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* books or his *Kane Chronicles* book series have been reliable hits. Many boys with an interest in history have enjoyed working through Laura Tashis’s *I Survived* series of historical fiction. Coming of age, survival classics like Jane Criag George’s *My Side of the Mountain* trilogy and Gary Paulsen’s *Hatchet* series still rank highly for many young readers. If you’re a Paulsen fan (I am), you might like *The Tucket Adventure Series*, a western coming of age saga set in the mid-1800s. I read the *Tucket* books with my son during the summer before he entered fifth grade. I remember the satisfaction and let down we felt when we finished the fifth and final book and realized that our fellowship with Francis Tucket’s character had come to an end. Reading that series remains a very sweet memory for me.

If the old west is not your thing, try tackling the 13 volumes in Lemony Snicket’s *The Unfortunate Series of Events* mystery series. Fantasy, physics, theology, and parallel universes? Try Philip Pullman’s *Dark Materials* books. Sports? Check out Mike Lupica’s series of sports themed books, including *Heat*, *Summer Ball*, or *The Legend*, among others.

As you consider other reading options for the summer, feel free to pursue interests and hobbies by venturing into the realm of non-fiction too! I know readers who have spent hours at a time reading the sports pages of the local newspaper, leafing through monthly installments of *History Magazine* (produced by National Geographic) and *The Conservationist* (produced by NY Department of Environmental Conservation). Though it might not seem so at first glance, biographies about sports and war heroes and books about U.S. or ancient history can capture the imagination of middle school readers. So I encourage you to explore this summer.

The challenge, and the fun, is finding the genre, author, or subject matter that catches your eye, or your ear, or your imagination. Aside from the assigned readings, I am looking forward to hearing all about the great books you read when we get back to class in September.

Write

Author, Joan Didion, once commented on the inextricable link between thinking and writing. She famously said, “I don’t know what I think until I write it down.” In a 2011 interview, Didion expanded her thoughts about the writing process. “Writing forces you to think. It forces you to work things through. Nothing comes to us out of the blue, very easily, you know. So if you want to understand what you’re thinking, you kind of have to work it through and write it. And the only way to work it through, for me, is to write it.” The slowness of the writing process stems, Didion added, “from the sheer difficulty of thinking clearly.”

How do Didion’s observations apply to our summer reading challenge? Learning how to think and write about stories and books is one of the best ways to develop and deepen one’s reading comprehension skills. Yes, learning to fluently decode symbols and sentences is a core and necessary literacy skill to be mastered by all young and adolescent readers. But when you write about what you read, you are trying to figure out what the author is really trying to say to you, why he is saying it, and why he said it the way he did. As Didion explained, “writing forces you to think.” For our purposes, learning how to think and write about what you read is a central aim of our program at CBA.

Reflect

As Mark Twain once quipped, “A person who won’t read has no advantage over a person who can’t read.” I suspect Twain would agree that becoming a proficient reader involves more than simply curling up at night in a comfy chair with a good book. (Although there is nothing wrong with that!) Becoming a careful and critical reader, however, takes time and lots of practice.

Reading to understand new ideas and topics requires effective mental management. Good readers pay close attention to what their minds are doing while they read. Of course, reading can be an enriching and worthwhile leisure activity. It is for me, and I hope it is for you too! But there are two qualities that separate leisure readers from the critical readers: Critical readers learn to think deeply about *what* they are reading...but they also learn to think about *how* they are reading.

Critical readers learn how to take advantage of the mind’s natural wanderings and wonderings as part of the reading process. For instance, a passage from a Jack London novel set in the Alaskan wilderness might remind a reader about an afternoon at summer camp learning to use a flint and steel. An avid reader of true crime and mystery novels realizes, seemingly from nowhere, that she can predict “who done it” even though she’s only half way through the book. Each example illustrates the mind doing things that require management that may or may not be relevant to the reading task at hand.

So, What Do I Have To Do This Summer?

1. In preparation for the Grade 6 ELA & Reading Courses, read two books: *Holes* by Louis Sachar and *Flush* by Carl Hiaasen.
2. Complete Part I, II, and III of this document *for each book*. Simply print a copy of the document and write your responses on the lines provided for each question. Bring the completed document with you to ELA during the first week of school.

A Final Note

The *Summer Reading Writing & Reflection Challenge* will be the first writing sample submitted to your *Grade 6 Writing Portfolios*. (We will create the portfolios together in class during the first week of school.) So put your best effort into the Challenge. Also, I encourage you to avoid waiting until the last week of summer to read the books. Be strategic. Make a plan to complete the books in a deliberate and reasonable fashion. You’ll get more out of the stories; you’ll effectively manage the process; and the document will reflect your best writing.

If you have any questions of clarification about how to prepare and submit your responses, you may email me at andrade@cbaalbany.org. I am looking forward to exploring the themes and

ideas introduced and discussed by the authors with you. Enjoy the books and the rest of the summer. See you in September!

Best regards,

Albert G. Andrade, Ph.D. (Dr. A)

ARR2: That was good writing! Identify a sequence or passage in the book where you thought the author demonstrated really effective writing skills. Explain in detail why you liked the passage. What did the author do (with the dialogue, describing the scenes or characters, using fun and colorful word choices, using a surprising plot twist, maybe the author's style was likable or you liked the use of humor) to make the passage so engaging, vivid, real, or emotional.

***RR2: Reflect on Habits:** What did you discover about your reading habits this summer? What kinds of habits did you rely on or develop as you read the book? Think about where and when you tended to read. Who do you read with? Or, do you tend to read alone? Do you tend to read a lot in one sitting or do you spread out your reading time throughout the day?*

***RR3: Reflect on Quality:** What did you notice about the quality of your reading time? Which habits supported effective reading? Which ones did not? Under what conditions were you at your sharpest and most productive? For example, were you at your best first thing in the morning in a quiet space by yourself? In contrast, think about the conditions when your reading was not especially focused or productive. Were you distracted, unfocused, or unmotivated. How come?*
