



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS
A C A D E M Y

Brothers Read!
3 x 3 Independent Reading Challenge
Summer 2023

Dear Grade 5 & 6 Students (and Parents),

Congratulations! You've completed the 2022-23 school year. We hope you made some new friends and learned lots of new things about yourself and the world around you. Now it's time for a well deserved break. In addition to getting a little rest and relaxation, summer is the perfect time for you to reset goals and refine skills for the upcoming school year.

No matter where you went to school last year or what grade level you will enter in September, one of the most effective and enjoyable ways to set yourself up for a successful start to the new school year is to *read*. The relationship between academic success and reading proficiency is pretty close. Students who read regularly and widely year round, including summertime, tend to do well in *all* of the subjects they study in school. That's one reason why development of fundamental literacy, thinking, and writing skills plays such a big part in our mission as middle school educators at CBA. It's also why we encourage and challenge our students to read during the summer.

Easier said than done. The statistics on the number of students who qualify as habitual, if not avid readers, are discouraging. A review of survey data on long term reading trends collected by the U.S. Department of Education conducted by researchers at the Pew Research Center found that the numbers of 9 and 13 year old students who say they read for fun almost daily has dropped to its lowest levels since at least the middle 1980's.¹

According to the study, 16% of 9 year old students said that they *never* or *hardly ever* read every day for fun. In 2012, the percentage was 11%, and in 1984, it was only 9%. Data from the study showed even steeper declines among older middle school students. Among the group of 13 year olds surveyed, almost one third (29%) reported that they *never* or *hardly ever* read for fun. Back in 1984, only 8% of 13 year olds said they were non-readers. In other words, during the past four decades or so, the number of 9 year olds who aren't reading consistently on their own has almost doubled, and the percentage of 13 year olds who don't or hardly ever read has almost tripled.

What about middle school students who *do* read for fun almost daily? Has there been a decline in the number of avid 9 and 13 year old readers, as well? Unfortunately, yes. Researchers found that the number of girls and boys who qualify as habitual, independent readers has fallen dramatically. Citing US Department of

¹ Shaeffer, K. (2021). *Among many U.S. children, reading for fun has become less common*, Pew Research Center, Retrieved June 10, 2023 at <https://www.pewresearch.org>.

Education data collected in 2020, the percentage of girls who said they read for fun almost daily has declined from about 40% down to 20% during the past four decades. During the same period, the number of middle school boys who report as habitual readers has dropped from 30% to 14%. That's a precipitous drop in the number of middle schoolers who read regularly. Within the span of less than two generations, the number of middle school boys and girls read everyday has been cut in half. Additional analysis of reading trends across the survey group showed that only 1 out of 5 upper middle school girls are reading consistently for fun, and 1 out of every 6 or 7 boys of the same age group are reading on their own on a regular basis.

We aim to reverse those trends with our fifth and sixth grade students at CBA. Our core team of teachers does not buy into the idea that boys somehow by nature just won't or don't like to read. With almost seventy years of teaching experience among us, we can attest that upper elementary and middle school boys love a good story. Funny stories. War stories. Stories about adventure, overcoming the odds, self-reliance, heroism, history, survival, and courage. And yes, middle school boys are attracted to stories about kindness, family, fairness, forgiveness, and friendship too.

More often than not, when boys have ample time and opportunity to explore topics they are interested in, and when they have someone to guide them and talk to about those topics, they will inevitably open a book that catches their eye or piques their imagination. We believe that if our students begin to see reading as a worthwhile and rewarding endeavor, they will develop the habit. Seeing the value of reading is what we want our fifth and sixth grade students to learn in our program at CBA. Making a habit of it is what we want them to do this summer.

So, Brothers, here is your reading challenge for the Summer of 2023. We call it the 3 x 3 Summer Reading Challenge.

1. Rather than requiring you to read a preselected book or two before the first day of school in September, we challenge you to ***select and read THREE BOOKS in THREE MONTHS. That's one book a month. One for June. One for July. One for August.***
2. You may select any book or topic you think you'd like to take on. We ask that the book is about at grade level or higher. When selecting a book, Follow the Goldilocks Rule. Try to select a book that is not too easy for you or that you've read several times already. Likewise, avoid selecting a book that is so dense or complicated that you don't understand any of it.
3. For each book you read from cover to cover, *or attempt to read and don't quite finish*, we ask that you complete an *A Summer Reading Challenge Book Review Worksheet*. (Worksheets are available as a pdf file on the CBA website. Go to the CBA Homepage at <https://cbaalbany.org/> and click the Summer Reading pull down menu.
4. Once you complete a *Summer Book Review Worksheet*, we ask that you review the worksheet with a parent or a designated critical reader. A critical reader might be an uncle or grandparent or perhaps a tutor, who is keen on talking with you about the cool books you're reading and reviewing your responses to the questions with you. Sign and date each worksheet. Parents will sign it too.
5. At the end of the summer, collect all of the *Summer Book Review Worksheets* that you filled out and bring them to school with you. Your homeroom teacher will collect them from you during the first week of school. Put them all in a folder with your name on it, if you can. One

of the first things you'll do for ELA class in September will be to complete a Summer Reading Inventory to reflect on and write about how you did on the *3 x 3 Summer Reading Challenge*. The *Summer Book Review Worksheets* will become part of a writing and reading portfolio you will create and maintain for ELA in Grade 5 and 6.

Frequently Asked Questions about the 3 x 3 Summer Reading Challenge

Q: May I read more than 3 books this summer?

A: Absolutely! The more the better. Fill out a *Summer Book Review Worksheet* for each book you read. Write complete sentences in response to each question on the worksheet. Don't forget to sign and date the worksheet with a parent.

Q: What if I only read 1 book?

A: Well, that's a good start. However, we ask that you push yourself to read three. The number of pages read matters. However, if one book is all you can manage, no problem. Fill out a *Summer Book Review Sheet* for it. Starting and finishing a book always feels like an achievement.

Q: May I read 3 or more books by the same author?

A: Yes! Many students have loved reading the entire series of *Harry Potter* or *Percy Jackson*.

Q: What if I start a book, but I don't finish it?

A: Not to worry. You're reading! Sampling all kinds of books is part of the process of finding a book or an author you really like. We recommend giving a story a chance to be great, before you abandon it. Sometimes it takes an author a few chapters to introduce the main characters and get the action rolling. Fill out a *Summer Reading Challenge Worksheet* for the books you selected, but did not finish. Don't forget to track how many pages you read in the space provided on the Worksheet. The pages really add up even if you don't finish the book.

Q: What if I read only 1 book, but it's really long, like Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince?

A: Think number of books, but also track the number of pages read. As we mentioned above, volume matters when becoming proficient middle school readers. For the *3 x 3 Summer Challenge*, think of a typical book for Grade 5 ranging between 150-200 pages. For grade 6, a typical book length might run between 225-275 pages or so. For example, if you read a book that is 500 pages long, you may count that as 2 books read. By the way, you only need to complete ONE *Summer Book Review Worksheet* for super long books. One worksheet per book, no matter how many pages it is.

Q: May I use audio books for the 3x3 Challenge?

A: Yes. We love audio books. If you do listen to an audio book, however, we strongly recommend that you follow along with the print version. Avoid just plugging in an audiobook while playing video games, surfing your phone, or dozing off to sleep at night. If you use an audiobook, put the book in your hands too, and read or follow along.

With

Q: May I read the book, or sections of it, with my Mom or Dad? Or, do I have to read the whole book independently?

A: Please do! Reading a book with a parent can be a wonderful experience. Reading with a partner enables you to practice and provides you with an audience and support. Plus, listening to someone read a story can be riveting. However, the best part of reading a book with a parent is that it creates opportunities for all kinds of spontaneous connections and rich conversations to develop about the books and characters and ideas.

Q: May I use an e-reader like Kindle or Kobo Libra?

A: Certainly. Today's e-readers have some nifty markup and support tools. Some e-readers have audio support features, as well. E-readers are super portable, and perhaps the best feature of all is that you can store lots of books on one device. There are lots of online retailers where you can buy e-books. Amazon Books, Apple Books, e-Books.com, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, to name a few. Still, I prefer having a printed book in hand when I read. It's what I grew up with and what I am used to. A hardcover book doesn't run low on power. It is portable. It's private. And it doesn't break when I drop it. But, yes, you may experiment with an e-reader, if you like. Let us know how it goes.

Q: Does non-fiction count, or do I have to read a fiction novel?

A: Of course. Biographies, books about history, a favorite hobby, or topic of interest may be read for the *Challenge*.

Q: How do I get started? How do I select a book, if I don't know what I want to read?

A: Well, feel free to explore some of the suggestions provided on the Suggested Reading List below. Ask Mom, Dad, a friend, or maybe an older sibling. They might have some ideas for you. Visit your local library and ask the librarian for some ideas. Most libraries have browsable sections of books set aside for young readers. Many libraries will compile their own list of suggestions for good reads to. Also, take some time to browse the shelves at a local bookstore. Book lovers and readers tend to work in bookstores. A local bookseller might have some great ideas for books for you to explore.

Q: Do I have to select a book from the Grade 5 & 6 Suggested Reading List at the end of this document?

A: No. There are dozens of books on the list to choose from. Some classics. Some that previous students have enjoyed. Others that teachers and parents really like too. The book you choose is up to you. So pick one you think you'll like from the Suggested List or one you discovered on your own. If it's a dud, find and start reading another one. Have fun!

A Few Strategic Tips to Consider to Make Reading a Habit this Summer

1. Try to set a specific time to read every day. Setting aside a block of time each day, even if it's a brief amount of time to start, will help signal that it's time to read.
2. Try to read when you are mentally sharp. Most middle schoolers and adults tend to do their best reading earlier in the day, rather than late afternoon or at night. Reading can be enjoyable, but it's hard work and requires focus. Curling up in bed at night with a good book can be pleasant, but most

people begin to lose their ability to focus at the end of the day. On the other hand, you just might happen to find a book that you just can't put down and stay up half the night reading to finish it!

3. Eliminate distractions when you read. Turn off all of your devices. No screens. No notifications. No beeps or buzzers. Preferably no people, unless you're reading with Mom or Dad. Again, becoming a competent and habitual reader requires building up your capacity to focus on the page for increasingly extended periods of time.
4. Try to find or create a regular, comfortable place where you read. Setting up a quiet, well lit environment for reading can become a place you want to be.
5. Make your books handy and easy to find. I keep my books on the desk next to my computer. They are super easy to reach when I sit down to work each day. I don't have to search my backpack or go upstairs or out to the car to get my books. I put my books within easy reach, so when it's time, I just sit in my chair and grab the book I want.

Well, Brothers, there it is. Read THREE (or more) books this summer, and then come to school in September with your signed *Summer Book Review Worksheets* in hand. We can't wait to hear about all the books and authors you decided to explore when we see you in September. We hope you have fun and learn a lot as you take on the *Challenge*. If you have any questions about the *3 x 3 Challenge* or book selections (see the rest of the document), please email Dr. Andrade (Dr. A) at andrade@cbaalbany.org.

Good luck and keep reading,

Dr. A and the Grade 5 / 6 Team

Suggested Reading List

Summer 2023

Grades 5 & 6

In order to help students prepare for the upcoming year, the team of Grade 5 and 6 teachers have compiled a starter list of summer reading ideas that we hope you'll explore and enjoy as much as we do. The list includes suggestions from teachers, students, and a few parents who wanted to share some ideas about their favorite books and authors with you. The Summer Reading List also includes a few resources that can also spur some reading options and ideas. This is an evolving list, so if you have a favorite book you love and think might be appropriate for middle school readers, let us know. Suggestions provided below are not sorted by grade level. Some of the books might be better for upper middle school, while others are comparatively appropriate for younger middle school readers.

Parent Favorites

- *Bob*, Wendy Mass / Rebecca Stead
- *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl*, Stacy McAnulty
- *The Penderwicks* (Series), Jeanne Birdsall
- *The Willoughbys*, Lois Lowry
- *Ruby Holler*, Sharon Creech
- *The Dangerous Book for Boys*, Conn Iggulden and Hal Iggulden
- *Journey to Nowhere*, Mary Jane Auch
- *A Wolf Called Wander*, Rosanne Parry
- *Whale of the Wild*, Rosanne Parry

Teacher Favorites

- *Blood on the River*, Elisa Carbone
- *Esperanza Rising*, Pam Muñoz Ryan
- *Down River or City of Gold*, Will Hobbs
- *War Horse*, Michael Morpurgo
- *The Lemonade Wars*, Jacqueline Davies
- Books by Jerry Spinelli
 - *Milkweed*
 - *Loser*
 - *Smiles to Go*
 - *Crash*
 - *Stargirl*
- *Counting By 7s*, Sloan Holly Goldberg
- *Fish in a Tree*, Lynda Mullaly Hunt
- *Alone*, Megan Freeman (check it out if you liked the *Hatchet* or the *I Survived* series)
- *Because of Mr. Terupt*, Rob Buyea
- *Wonder*, R. J. Palacio

- *Holes*, Louis Sachar
- *Bystander*, James Preller
- *Short Stories*, Ray Bradbury
- *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*, Alfred Lansing
- *The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise*, Dan Gemeinhart
- Carl Hiaasen books
 - *Flush*
 - *Scat*
 - *Squirm*
 - *Chomp*
 - *Hoot*

Student Favorites

- *The Amulet series (books 1-8)*, Kazu Kibuishi (graphic novels for upper elementary level students)
- Gary Paulsen books
 - *Hatchet*, (book 1 of the Hatchet series)
 - *Tucket's Ride* (book 1 of the Tucket series)
 - *Woodson*
 - *Woods Runner*
- *The Ranger's Apprentice series*, John Flanagan
- *Smartest Kid in the Universe*, Chris Grabenstein
- *The Wayside School series*, Louis Sachar
- *Refugee*, Alan Gratz (also see *Prisoner B-3087* and *Code of Honor*)
- *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, C. Collodi
- *Way of the Warrior Kid*, Jocko Willink
- *The Education of Little Tree*, Forrest Carter
- *Key to the Treasure*, Peggy Parish
- *Mystery of the Silver Spider*, Robert Arthur
- *Diary of a Wimpy Kid series*, Jeff Kinney
- *The Hunger Games* (book 1 of series), Suzanne Collins, (This one ages upper middle school)
- *Heat or Last Man Out*, Mike Lupica (Lupica has several sports related books. Check them out.)
- *A Dog's Purpose: A Novel for Humans*, W. Bruce Cameron
- *Wings of Fire series*, Tui T. Sutherland
- *The Way of Kings* (Book 1 of the *Stormlight Archive* series), Brandon Sanderson
- *Treasure Hunters series* (books 1-9), James Patterson
- *Who Was? / Who Were?* series of biographies by various authors; upper elementary kids love these
- *War Horse*, Michael Morpurgo
- *The One and Only Ivan*, Katherine Applegate
- *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankenweiler*, E.L. Konigsburg
- *The Unwanteds Quests*, Lisa McMann

Classics

- *Where the Red Fern Grows*, Wilson Rawls
- *Canoeing with the Cree*, Eric Sevareid
- *Chronicles of Narnia* (Series), C.S. Lewis
- *My Side of the Mountain* (Series), Jean Craighead George
- *Bridge to Terabithia*, Katherine Patterson
- *Julie of the Wolves*, Jean Craighead George
- *The Sign of the Beaver*, Elizabeth George Speare
- *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Elizabeth George Speare
- *The Borrowers*, (Series) Mary Norton
- *Hardy Boys* (Series), Franklin W. Dixon
- *Phantom Tollbooth*, Norton Juster
- *The Westing Game*, Ellen Raskin
- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Roald Dahl
- *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*, Roald Dahl
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Classic Starts Series-abridged), Retold from Mark Twain original by Oliver Ho
- *The Wanderer*, Sharon Creech
- *Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Outsiders*, SE Hinton
- *The Giver* (books 1-4), Lois Lowry
- *The Yearling*, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
- *Charlotte's Web* or *The Trumpet of the Swan* by E.B. White
- *Cricket in Times Square*, George Seldon
- *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, Florence Atwater

Favorite Science Fiction

- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams
- *Ender's Game*, Orson Scott Card
- *City of Ember* (Series), Jeanne DuPrau
- *The Story of Doctor Dolittle*, Hugh Lofting
- *The Giver*, (book 1 of 4), Lois Lowry
- *The Maze Runner* (series), James Dashner

History / Historical Fiction / Non-fiction

- *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*, Alfred Lansing
- *Unbroken* (young reader's edition), Laura Hillenbrand
- *Great Battles for Boys: Bunker Hill to WWI*, Joe Giorello
- *I Survived Series*, Lauren Tarshis
- *Bound* (ancient China, Donna Jo Napoli
- *Chinese Cinderella* (ancient China), Adeline Yen Mah
- *Pony*, R.J. Palacio

- *Toliver's Secret*, Esther Wood Brady
- *No Better Friend: A Man, A Dog, and their incredible Journey of Friendship and Survival in WWII*, Robert Weintraub
- *Al Capone Does My Shirts* (Tales from Alcatraz), Gennifer Choldenko
- *The Boys in the Boat* (Young Readers Edition), Daniel James Brown
- *Code Talker*, Joseph Bruchac

Adventure / Fantasy /Mystery

- Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling
- *Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Tuck Everlasting*, Natalie Babbitt
- *Sammy Keyes* (Series), Wendelin Draanen
- *Theodore Boone* (Series), John Grisham
- *Ranger's Apprentice* (Series), John Flanagan
- *Spy Camp series*, Stuart Gibbs
- *The Vanderbeekers* (Series), Karina Van Glaser
- *The View From Saturday*, E.L. Konigsburg
- *From the Mixed- up Files of Mrs.Basil E.Frankweiler*, E.L. Konigsburg
- *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, Trenton Lee Stuart
- *The Westing Game*, Ellen Raskin
- *The Lightning Thief*, Richard Riordan (Book 1 of 5 of Percy Jackson series)
- *The Red Pyramid*, Richard Riordan (Book 1 of 3 the Kane Chronicle series)
- *The Lost Hero*, Richard Riordan, (Book 1 of 5 of the Heroes of Olympus series)
- *The Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard Series* (books 1-3)
- *When You Reach Me*, Rebecca Stead

Realistic Fiction

- *Harriet the Spy*, Meg Cabot
- *Ruby Holler*, Sharon Creech
- *Walk Two Moons*, Sharon Creech
- *Bud, Not Buddy*, Christopher Paul Curtis
- *The Watsons go to Birmingham*, Christopher Paul Curtis
- *Riding Freedom*, Pam Munoz Ryan
- *Because of Winn Dixie*, Kate DiCamillo
- *Bystander*, James Preller

Poetry

- *Love that Dog*, Sharon Creech
- *Hate that Cat*, Sharon Creech

Other Suggestions, Lists, and Resources

John Newbery Award Winning Books

<https://www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newbery-medals-honors-1922-present.pdf>

Scholastic Books: Loads of links, links, and resources

<https://shop.scholastic.com/parent-ecommerce/parent-store.html>

Goodreads: Lots of lists and options for young adults

https://www.goodreads.com/?ref=nav_home

Gutenberg Project: free classic e-books for upper middle and high school

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>