

Seventh Grade Summer Reading

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne

“Berlin, 1942: When Bruno returns home from school one day, he discovers that his belongings are being packed in crates. His father has received a promotion and the family must move to a new house far, far away, where there is no one to play with and nothing to do. A tall fence stretches as far as the eye can see and cuts him off from the strange people in the distance. But Bruno longs to be an explorer and decides that there must be more to this desolate new place than meets the eye. While exploring his new environment, he meets another boy whose life and circumstances are very different from his own, and their meeting results in a friendship that has devastating consequences.”

- In preparation for a written assessment in the first week of school, identify the themes – underlying meanings or big ideas – presented in the novel (innocence and ignorance, family and friends, humanity, and boundaries). Underline, highlight or otherwise mark passages where the themes are noted. Keep these questions beside you to guide your reading. You need not answer in written form:
 - What does “innocence” and “naive” mean when used to describe children versus when describing an adult? Can adults be naive? What must happen for one to leave innocence and enter ignorance?
 - How can friendship cross the boundaries of race, religion, and culture? How is friendship limited by those same factors?
 - What causes people to treat others in inhumane ways? What causes people to stop watching (bystander) and begin doing (upstander)?

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

“Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child’s soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson’s eloquent poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become.” (BN.com)

Summer Assignment for *Brown Girl Dreaming*

1. To truly grasp the significance of Woodson’s poem, historical context is key. It is your responsibility to look up the meaning of names, dates, places, events, etc. as you read through her life story.
2. Following the story-like format of the author, write a poem per stage of your summer vacation. You can highlight specific days or events that impacted you over the break. Please bring a printed copy of your three poems to the first day of school. The minimum is three well developed poems in any style (including blank verse).