

Grade Eight Summer Reading Book Summaries

Bagdasarian, Adam

Forgotten Fire (Historical Fiction)

“Drawing on his own great-uncle’s experiences, Bagdasarian covers the years 1915-1918 when a boy from a wealthy, well-respected family from Bitlis, Turkey, is stripped of everything simply because he is Armenian.” ~Publisher’s Summary

Brosgol, Erma

Anya’s Ghost (Graphic Novel)

Awkward, self-conscious, insecure Anya finds a new friend in the bottom of a well where she has fallen. The problem is, this friend is a ghost who has been dead for a century. As if Anya doesn’t have enough troubles struggling to fit in, her new bff is a ghost who is a surprisingly cool friend.

Farmer, Nancy

The House of Scorpion (Dystopian/Fantasy)

“With undertones of vampires and killing fields, Matt’s story turns out to be an inspiring tale of friendship, survival, hope, and transcendence. At his coming-of-age party, Matteo Alacrán asks El Patrón’s bodyguard, “How old am I?...I know I don’t have a birthday like humans, but I was born.” “You were harvested,” Tam Lin reminds him. “You were grown in that poor cow for nine months and then you were cut out of her.” To most people around him, Matt is not a boy, but a beast, but for El Patrón, lord of a country called Opium—a strip of poppy fields lying between the U.S. and what was once called Mexico—Matt is a guarantee of eternal life. El Patrón loves Matt as he loves himself for Matt is himself. They share identical DNA. ~Goodreads

Flinn, Alex

Breathing Underwater (Realistic Fiction)

“To his friends, popular and handsome sixteen year-old Nick Andreas has led a charmed life. But the guys in Nick’s anger management class know differently. So does his ex-girlfriend Caitlin. Now it looks like the only person who doesn’t realize how far from perfect Nick’s life has become is Nick himself.” ~Harperteen.

Gaiman, Neil

The Graveyard Book (Fantasy)

“Nobody Owens, known to his friends as Bod, is a perfectly normal boy. Well, he would be perfectly normal if he didn’t live in a graveyard, being raised and educated by ghosts, with a solitary guardian who belongs to neither the world of the living nor the world of the dead. There are dangers and adventures for Bod in the graveyard: the strange and terrible menace of the Sleer; a gravestone entrance to a desert that leads to the city of ghouls; friendship with a witch, and so much more. But it is in the land of the living that real danger lurks, for it is there that the man Jack lives and he has already killed Bod’s family.” ~Goodreads

Gephart, Donna

Lily and Dunkin (Realistic Fiction)

“Lily Jo McGrother, born Timothy McGrother, is a girl. But being a girl is not so easy when you look like a boy. Especially when you’re in the eighth grade. Dunkin Dorfman, birth name Norbert Dorfman, is dealing with bipolar disorder and has just moved from the New Jersey town he’s called home for the past thirteen years. This would be hard enough, but the fact that he is also hiding from a painful secret makes it even worse. One summer morning, Lily Jo McGrother meets Dunkin Dorfman, and their lives forever change” ~Goodreads

Gratz, Alan

Refugee (Historical Fiction)

“Gratz’s Refugee compellingly explores the desperation and strength that unites those struggling for a place to call home. ... Refugee is more than a story about children fleeing their homelands, it is a story about what unites us all... love, family and perseverance.” ~Publisher’s Summary

Green, John

Looking for Alaska (Realistic Fiction)

“Before. Miles “Pudge” Halter is done with his safe life at home. His whole life has been one big non-event, and his obsession with famous last words has only made him crave “the Great Perhaps” even more (Francois Rabelais, poet). He heads off to the sometimes crazy and anything-but-boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young. She is an event unto herself. She pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into the Great Perhaps, and steals his heart. Then. . . After. Nothing is ever the same.” ~Goodreads

Haddon, Mark

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime (Realistic)

“Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow. This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.”

~Goodreads

Hennessey, M.G.

The Other Boy (Realistic Fiction)

“Summer for Maddy Sinclair starts as a blur of house parties and dips in the pool—until she's caught throwing an unauthorized beachside bash. As punishment, her parents send her off to Napa Valley, where she'll spend her free time working on the family vineyard. Even with her boyfriend, Brian, miles away, Maddy's about to discover that the vineyard is a very romantic place. It's vast, sunny, magical . . . and there's another boy just waiting to steal her heart.” ~Goodreads

Kelly, Entrada Erin (Historical Fiction)

We Dream of Space

“Cash, Fitch, and Bird Nelson Thomas are three siblings in seventh grade together in Park, Delaware. In 1986, as the country waits expectantly for the launch of the space shuttle Challenger, they each struggle with their own personal anxieties. Cash, who loves basketball but has a newly broken wrist, is in danger of failing seventh grade for the second time. Fitch spends every afternoon playing Major Havoc at the arcade on Main and wrestles with an explosive temper that he doesn't understand. And Bird, his twelve-year-old twin, dreams of being NASA's first female shuttle commander, but feels like she's disappearing. The Nelson Thomas children exist in their own orbits, circling a tense and unpredictable household, with little in common except an enthusiastic science teacher named Ms. Salonga. As the launch of the Challenger approaches, Ms. Salonga gives her students a project—they are separated into spacecraft crews and must create and complete a mission. When the fated day finally arrives, it changes all of their lives and brings them together in unexpected ways.” ~Publisher's Summary

Lu, Marie

Legend (Dystopian)

“What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem. “From very different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths - until the day June's brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect. Caught in the ultimate game of cat and mouse, Day is in a race for his family's survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias's death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the sinister lengths their country will go to keep its secrets.” ~Publisher's Summary

Ness, Patrick

A Monster Calls (Realistic Fiction)

“At the beginning of the book, protagonist Conor is fighting a number of monsters – bullies at school, a monster in his nightmares, and the grief associated with an ill family member. Then a real monster shows up and Conor is forced to face some truths within himself.” ~Bored Teachers

Pennypacker, Sarah

Summer of the Gypsy Moths (Realistic Fiction)

“Aunt Louise has taken in her niece Stella, and Stella loves living with her aunt. Until that is, Louise opens her home to another foster child, Angel, who Stella does not get along with. Aunt Louise dies and the two girls decide not to tell anyone.” ~Goodreads

Raskin, Ellen

The Westing Game (Fantasy)

“Millionaire Samuel W. Westing dies at the beginning of the book and the tenants in his building are named as heirs in his will. The tenants are paired off and told the first team to solve the puzzle contained in the will will inherit Westing's entire fortune.” ~Bored Teachers

Reynolds, Allie**Shiver** (Realistic Fiction)

“They don't know what I did. And I intend to keep it that way. How far would you go to win? Hyper-competitive people, mind games and a dangerous natural environment combine to make the must-read thriller of the year. When Milla is invited to a reunion in the French Alps resort that saw the peak of her snowboarding career, she drops everything to go. While she would rather forget the events of that winter, the invitation comes from Curtis, the one person she can't seem to let go. The five friends haven't seen each other for ten years, since the disappearance of the beautiful and enigmatic Saskia. But when an icebreaker game turns menacing, they realise they don't know who has really gathered them there and how far they will go to find the truth. In a deserted lodge high up a mountain, the secrets of the past are about to come to light.” ~Goodreads

Ryan, Paula Munoz**Echo** (Realistic Fiction)

“Lost and alone in a forbidden forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and suddenly finds himself entwined in a puzzling quest involving a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica. Decades later, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California each, in turn, become interwoven when the very same harmonica lands in their lives. All the children face daunting challenges: rescuing a father; protecting a brother; holding a family together. And ultimately, pulled by the invisible thread of destiny, their suspenseful solo stories converge in an orchestral crescendo. Echo pushes the boundaries of genre, form, and storytelling innovation to create a wholly original novel that will resound in your heart long after the last note has been struck.” ~ Goodreads

Sanchez, Alex**So Hard to Say** (Realistic Fiction)

“When Frederick shows up at school, Xio is thrilled. The new boy is shy, cute and definitely good boyfriend material. Before long, she pulls him into her lively circle of friends. Frederick knows he should be flattered by Xio's attention. After all, she's popular, pretty, and a lot of fun. So why can't he stop thinking about Victor, the captain of the soccer team, instead.” ~Goodreads

Schmidt, Gary**Trouble** (Realistic Fiction)

“Henry Smith's father always told him that if you build your house far enough away from trouble, then trouble will never find you. But trouble does find Henry. It smashes in the door, taking his brother, destroying his family, and leaving Henry with nothing but a mangy black dog to take care of....” ~Publisher's Summary

Schusterman, Neil**Scythe** (Dystopian Series)

“A world with no hunger, no disease, no war, no misery. Humanity has conquered all those things, and has even conquered death. Now scythes are the only ones who can end life—and they are commanded to do so, in order to keep the size of the population under control. Citra and Rowan are chosen to apprentice to a scythe—a role that neither wants. These teens must master the “art” of taking life, knowing that the consequence of failure could mean losing their own.” ~Goodreads

Soontornvat, Christina (Nonfiction)

All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team “On June 23, 2018, twelve young players of the Wild Boars soccer team and their coach enter a cave in northern Thailand seeking an afternoon's adventure. But when they turn to leave, rising floodwaters block their path out. The boys are trapped! As the world sits vigil, people begin to wonder: how long can a group of ordinary kids survive in complete darkness, with no food or clean water? Combining first hand interviews of rescue workers with in-depth science and details of the region's culture and religion, author Christina Soontornvat—who was visiting family in Northern Thailand when the Wild Boars went missing—masterfully shows how both the complex engineering operation above ground and the mental struggles of the thirteen young people below proved critical in the life-or-death mission.” ~Publisher's Summary

Spinelli, Jerry**Crash** (Realistic Fiction)

“Everybody knows Crash Coogan, seventh-grade football sensation. He's been mowing down everything in his path since the time he could walk – and Penn Webb, his dweeby, vegetable-eating neighbor, is his favorite target. After all, Webb's not just a nerd, he's a cheerleader too. Crash and his best buddy, Mike, can't think of anything more hilarious than making Webb's life miserable. But Crash starts to realize that Webb has something he may never gain, no matter how many touchdowns he scores. And when Mike takes a prank too far, maybe even for Crash, the football star has to choose which side he's really on.” ~“Publisher's Summary

Sullivan, Tara**Bitter Side of Sweet** (Realistic Fiction)

*“Tara Sullivan’s young adult novel, *The Bitter Side of Sweet*, provides an account of modern-day child slavery in Ivory Coast, Africa. Although fictional, the story highlights the dark reality of the cacao industry as Sullivan chronicles the journey of three children to freedom.” ~Publisher’s Summary*

Sullivan, Tara**Golden Boy** (Realistic Fiction)

“Habo has always been different. He has light eyes, yellow hair, and white skin. Not the good brown skin of his Tanzanian family and not even the same white skin of tourists. Habo feels strange and alone. Habo is albino. Habo and his family are forced to leave their home to escape poachers who hunt albinos for the good luck their body parts are said to bring. Now Habo’s life is in danger. And to survive, he must not only run, but find a way to love and accept himself.” ~Pub. Sum

Thomas, Angie**The Hate U Give** (YA Fiction)

“Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, this is a powerful and gripping YA novel about one girl’s struggle for justice” ~Goodreads

Van Draanen, Wendelin**Running Dream** (Realistic Fiction)

“Jessica thinks her life is over when she loses a leg in a car accident. As she struggles to cope, Jessica feels that she’s both in the spotlight and invisible. People who don’t know what to say act like she’s not there. Jessica’s embarrassed to realize that she’s done the same to a girl with CP named Rosa. A girl who is going to tutor her through all the math she’s missed. A girl who sees right into the heart of her.” ~Publisher’s Summary

Wallace, Sandra Neil and Rich**Bound by Ice** (Non-Fiction)

*“The ship *Jeannette* sets sail for the Arctic from San Francisco, looking for a route to the North Pole. The ship becomes locked inside Arctic ice and sinks after two years adrift. The crew escape on lifeboats and make a harrowing journey back to civilization that not all survive.” ~Goodreads*

Westerfield, Scott**The Uglies** (Dystopian Series)

“Tally is about to turn sixteen, and she can’t wait. In just a few weeks she’ll have the operation that will turn her from a repellent ugly into a stunningly attractive pretty. And as a pretty, she’ll be catapulted into a high-tech paradise where her only job is to have fun. But Tally’s new friend Shay isn’t sure she wants to become a pretty. When Shay runs away, Tally learns about a whole new side of the pretty world—and it isn’t very pretty. The authorities offer Tally a choice: find her friend and turn her in, or never turn pretty at all. Tally’s choice will change her world forever.” ~Goodreads

Yang, Gene Luen (Graphic Novel)**American Born Chinese**

“American Born Chinese tells the story of three apparently unrelated characters: Jin Wang, who moves to a new neighborhood with his family only to discover that he’s the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the powerful Monkey King, subject of one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables; and Chin-Kee, a personification of the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, who is ruining his cousin Danny’s life with his yearly visits. Their lives and stories come together with an unexpected twist in this action-packed modern fable.” ~Publisher’s Summary

Zentner, Jeff (Realistic Fiction)

The Serpent King “Dill isn’t the most popular kid at his rural Tennessee high school. After his father fell from grace in a public scandal, Dill became a target. Fortunately, his two fellow misfits and best friends have his back. But as they begin their senior year, Dill feels the coils of his future tightening around him. His only escapes are music and his secret feelings for Lydia--neither of which he is brave enough to share. But even before then, he must cope with another ending--one that will rock his life to the core. ” ~Publisher’s Summary