



Grade 8: Heroes in Action

Summer Reading and Experience List

"Any topic you want to be able to read about is a topic you must become knowledgeable about." ~E.D. Hirsch Jr. and Lisa Hansel

"...what students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information relative to the content." (Marzano) Building background knowledge both helps students engage with complex texts and ensures that learning sticks. Independently selecting and reading texts, along with engaging in dynamic experiences connected to upcoming topics or themes builds this important content knowledge. When students head into the school year armed with knowledge about upcoming content, they are better able to access and develop a deeper understanding of complex texts in curriculum.

Tips for Summer Reading

- Encourage active engagement by participating in a local library's [summer reading incentive](#).
- Get your child hooked onto a [great series](#). Entertaining, or suspenseful, series are often the launchpad for a lasting love of reading.
- Reading with your child sets a powerful example and is a great way to connect.
- Take advantage of literacy apps. Interactive, engaging research-based programs can offer additional ways for students to rack up minutes reading.



This compilation of texts and experiences is designed to provide students with guided choices as they engage in independent summer reading. Lists include a range of genres, "reading levels" and types of experiences; students should be encouraged to read texts that are interesting and explore exciting opportunities in DC.

Course Overview

Course Theme

Students in 8th grade learn to become community activists, as they take action in support of a cause they care about. 8th graders will explore what it means to be a hero, both in the past and present, they will learn how growing up empowers them to be heroes. Throughout this course, students will develop and implement service learning projects that tackle social justice issues within their communities.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Unit 1: Dreaming in America

To what extent is the American Dream achievable for all?

Unit 2: Unheard Voices

How can a work of historical fiction be used to critically examine real-life historical events?

Unit 3: The Road (Not) Taken

How is conformity a right, a burden, and a responsibility?

Unit 4: Community and Connections

How am I impacted by my community? How can I impact my community?



Suggested Summer Reading and Experience List

Students should research all suggested (optional) texts and select a few interesting texts to read over the summer!

	Suggested Texts	Suggested Experiences
Unit 1: Dreaming in America	<p><i>How Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i> by Julia Alvarez (F)</p> <p><i>Out of the Dust</i>, by Karen Hesse (F)</p> <p><i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> by John Steinbeck (F)</p> <p><i>Americanah</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi (F)</p> <p>Photo Essay: How Rural Students Define the American Dream (NF)</p> <p><i>I, Too, Am America</i> by Langston Hughes (P)</p>	<p>National Museum of African American History and Culture</p> <p>Watching Oprah</p> <p>National Museum of the American Indian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Americans <p>National Museum of American History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Culture <p>PBS Virtual Resource: American Experience</p>
Unit 2: Unheard Voices	<p><i>The Year of the Hangman</i> by Gary Blackwood (F)</p> <p><i>My Brother Sam is Dead</i> by James Collier (F)</p> <p><i>Everyone's Revolution</i> by Thomas Fleming (NF)</p> <p><i>Building a New Nation</i> by Allison Lassieur (NF)</p>	<p>Daughters of the American Revolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Americana Room Artifacts of the Abolitionist Movement <p>National Museum of American History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Revolution <p>George Washington's Mount Vernon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolutionary War Theater
Unit 3: The Road (Not) Taken	<p><i>The Lions of Little Rock</i> by Kristin Levine (F)</p> <p><i>A Thousand Never Evers</i> by Shana Burg (F)</p> <p><i>The Journal of Biddy Owens</i> by Walter Dean Myers (F)</p> <p><i>Spite Fences</i> by Trudy Krishner (F)</p> <p><i>Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case</i> by Chris Crowe (NF)</p>	<p>National Museum of African American History and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Era of Segregation Exhibit <p>George Washington's Mount Vernon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whiskey Rebellion Artifacts <p>Virtual Resource: D.C. Riots of 1968</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D.C. Riots: Stories of Upheaval Oral Stories: First Person Audio Accounts
Unit 4: Community & Connections	<p><i>All American Boys</i> by J. Reynolds and B. Kiely (F)</p> <p><i>The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano</i> by Sonia Manzano (F)</p> <p><i>We Will Not Be Silent</i> by Russell Freedman</p> <p><i>We and They</i> by Rudyard Kipling (P)</p>	<p>National Museum of American History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snapshots of African Community <p>Youth Activism Project (E-Community)</p> <p>Anacostia Community Museum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to the City

*Fiction (F), Non-Fiction (NF), Poetry (P)

Talk About It!

Consider using any of the following questions to spur discussion:

- Unit 1: What do various perspectives of the American Dream have in common?
- Unit 2: What contrasts are evident between various portrayals of the American Revolution?
- Unit 3: Why do you think young people are often at the forefront of social movements and how what risks did they take during the Jim Crow era?
- Unit 4: What potential challenges and opportunities of might young people face while trying to make an impact in their community?

