

Students Entering 8th Grade:

Choose **one** novel from this list and **complete the journal assignment** on pages 2 and 3 of this packet. The rubric is on page 4.

Cracker!: the best dog in Vietnam

by Cynthia Kadohata

Told in part through the point of view of a German shepherd, *Cracker!* is an action-packed glimpse into the Vietnam War as seen through the eyes of a dog and his handler.

Virals

by Kathy Reichs

A ragtag band of teenage "sci-philes" live on a secluded island off the coast of South Carolina and rescue a dog caged for medical testing on a nearby island. They are exposed to an experimental strain of canine parvovirus that changes their lives forever.

Skink

by Carl Hiaasen

Classic Malley—to avoid being shipped off to boarding school, she takes off with some guy she met online. Poor Richard—he knows his cousin's in trouble before she does. Wild Skink—he's a ragged, oneeyed ex-governor of Florida, and enough of a renegade to think he can track Malley down. With Richard riding shotgun, the unlikely pair scour the state, undaunted by blinding storms, crazed pigs, flying bullets, and giant gators.

The Summer of Letting Go

by Gae Polisner

Four years ago, Francesca's little brother, Simon, drowned, and Francesca's the one who should have been watching. Now Francesca is about to turn sixteen, her best friend is moving on—most recently with the boy Francesca wants but can't have. At loose ends, Francesca trails her father, who may be having an affair, to the local country club. There she meets four-year-old Frankie Sky, a little boy who bears an almost eerie resemblance to Simon, and Francesca begins to wonder if it's possible Frankie could be his reincarnation.

Screaming at the Ump

by Audrey Vernick

Twelve-year-old Casey Snowden knows everything about being an umpire. His dad and grandfather run a New Jersey umpire school, Behind the Plate, and Casey lives and breathes baseball. Casey's dream, however, is to be a reporter—objective, impartial, and fair, just like an ump. But when he stumbles upon a sensational story involving a former major league player in exile, he finds that the ethics of publishing it are cloudy at best. This emotionally charged coming-of-age novel about baseball, divorce, friendship, love, and compassion challenges its readers to consider all the angles before calling that strike.

Believe: My Faith and the Tackle That Changed My Life

by Eric LeGrand &

Mike Yorkey

The defensive lineman for the Rutgers University Scarlet Knights, who was paralyzed from the neck down after suffering a severe spinal injury during a game, shares the transformative journey he calls "the best year of his life" during which he, guided by faith and optimism, triumphed over pain and adversity.

Literary Devices

The time and location (*setting*) of the novel is important because

The problem (*conflict*) in the story is

The message the author tells us about life (*theme*) is

Reflect

Write down a moment in the book that affected you in some way. Make sure to describe that moment in detail and explain why it affected you.

Rubric

Score 4

The bookmark responses demonstrate **thorough comprehension** of ideas stated and implied in the summer reading by providing **thoughtful and accurate responses** with examples and details from the novel. The responses demonstrate a **full understanding of the reading**.

Score 3

The bookmark responses demonstrate **comprehension** of ideas stated and/or implied in the summer reading by providing **mostly accurate responses** with some examples and details from the novel. The responses demonstrate an **adequate understanding of the reading**.

Score 2

The bookmark responses demonstrate **basic comprehension** of ideas stated and/or implied in the summer reading by providing **generally accurate responses** with limited examples and details from the novel. The responses show only a **limited understanding** of the reading.

Score 1

The bookmark responses demonstrate **little to no comprehension** of ideas stated and/or implied in the summer reading by providing **minimally or no accurate responses** with few or no examples and details from the novel. The response **does not demonstrate reading comprehension** of the novel.