

Middle School Summer Reading Project

Students will be reading **TWO NOVELS** over the summer: one personally selected from the canon, the other specifically assigned by their humanities teacher.

- 1) Students will present on a grade-level appropriate novel from the St. Rita Canon. They must choose a new book that they have not previously read/used. **We recommend that, when choosing a novel, you look up its Lexile Level and associated grade level** (this can be googled). Lexile Levels measure reading difficulty, not thematic appropriateness, and vary by publisher and novel edition. Some books may have a lower Lexile Level, but a higher level of thematic content (and vice versa). Most books fall into multiple grade levels due to this. We ask that you use your best judgment, choosing a novel that is at or above the Lexile Level of your child's grade. Refer to the rubric below to guide your child in creating their novel presentation. The list of canon books is attached at the end of this document.
- 2) In addition to the canon literature selection and presentation, each middle school student is assigned a second novel to read over the summer that connects to either the historical period or the literary themes that they will be studying in the coming school year. This book has been carefully chosen to help students begin the year with a deeper understanding of the stories, ideas, and historical moments that shape our classical curriculum. By reading it ahead of time, students will be better prepared to engage in thoughtful discussions and to make meaningful connections in class. On their return in the fall, students will complete a formal assessment on this specially assigned book – either a test or a written assignment – designed to help them reflect on and apply what they have read. So long as students complete their reading, they will be fully prepared for either type of assessment. For the 2026-2027 school year, the project presentation will be on Friday, August 28, 2026.

Teacher Assigned Novel, by 2026-2027 Grade:

- **Sixth Grade:** *Beorn the Proud* by Madeleine Polland
 - **Seventh Grade:** *Blood on the River: James Town 1607* by Elisa Carbone
 - **Eighth Grade:** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (unabridged)* by Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens): Chapters One – Six **only**.
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Middle School Summer Reading Project Presentation Rubric

Criteria	4 - Excellent	3 - Good	2 - Satisfactory	1 - Needs Improvement
Title + Author	Clearly states the title and author of the book.	States only the title or only the author.	Mentions either the title or author incorrectly.	Fails to mention the title and author.
Plot Summary	Provides a thorough and engaging summary of the plot, avoiding unnecessary details.	Provides a clear summary with only minor omissions and/or a few too many minor details.	Provides a basic summary with significant omissions and/or unnecessary details.	Fails to summarize the plot effectively.
Character Descriptions	Describes characters in detail, including motivations and development.	Describes characters adequately with some details.	Provides limited character descriptions.	Fails to describe characters effectively.
Major Themes	Identifies and explains major themes with depth and insight.	Identifies major themes with only some explanation.	Mentions themes without explanation.	Fails to identify major themes.
Costume + Visual Aids	Costume/visual aids are highly relevant and explained.	Costume/visual aids are mostly relevant and/or somewhat explained.	Costume/visual aids are only somewhat relevant and/or explained very little.	Costume/visual aids are irrelevant or absent.
Presentation Skills	Speaks clearly and confidently, engaging the audience.	Speaks clearly with only minor lapses in speech/confidence.	Speaks with minimal clarity and/or lacks confidence.	Struggles to speak clearly or engage the audience.
Overall Creativity	Demonstrates exceptional creativity and originality.	Demonstrates good creativity and originality.	Shows some creativity and originality.	Lacks creativity and originality.

Other skills to consider when presenting:

Volume	Volume clear & easy to understand/hear
Pacing	Speed is just right for the content being presented
Tone	Vocal inflection consistently conveys the appropriate emotion[s]
Presence	Clear command of the room's attention; close to audience and moving around appropriately
Eye Contact	Looking up & out at the audience consistently throughout presentation

Saint Rita Canon: Grades 5-8 Titles

From the Cardinal Newman Society's Guide for the Catholic Reader

- *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens)
- *A Story of Joan of Arc* (Earnest)
- *A Wrinkle in Time* (L'Engle)
- *Ablaze: Stories of Daring Teen Saints* (Swaim)
- *Across Five Aprils* (Hunt)
- *Across the Plains* (Stevenson)
- *Adam of the Road* (Gray)
- *All Creatures Great and Small* (Herriott)
- *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Yates)
- *An Old Fashioned Girl* (Alcott)
- *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery)
- *Around the World in Eighty Days* (Verne)
- *Beowulf: A New Telling* (Nye)
- *Black Beauty* (Sewell)
- *Black Stallion* (Farley)
- *Beric the Briton* (Henty)
- *Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad* (Lee)
- *Blessed Marie of New France* (Windeatt)
- *Bonnie Prince Charlie* (Henty)
- *By Pike and Dyke* (Henty)
- *Caddie Woodlawn* (Brink)
- *Captains Courageous* (Kipling)
- *Cricket on the Hearth* (Dickens)
- *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Rostand)
- *David Copperfield* (Dickens)
- *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (Cather)
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson)
- *Facing Death* (Henty)
- *Fingal's Quest* (Pollard)
- *For the Temple* (Henty)
- *Forget Not Love: The Passion of Maximilian Kolbe* (Frossad)
- *From the Earth to the Moon* (Verne)
- *Gentle Ben* (Morey)
- *Great Expectations* (Dickens)
- *Hans Brinker* (Dodge)
- *Helen Keller: The Story of My Life* (Keller)
- *Hero of the Hills* (Windeatt)
- *Holy Twins: Benedict and Scholastica* (Norris)
- *I Am David* (Holm)
- *I, Juan de Pareja* (De Trevino)
- *If All the Swords in England* (Willard)
- *In Freedom's Cause* (Henty)
- *In the Reign of Terror* (Henty)
- *Ivanhoe* (Scott)
- *Jack and Jill* (Alcott)
- *Jo's Boys* (Alcott)
- *Johnny Tremain* (Forbes)
- *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Verne)
- *Kidnapped* (Stevenson)
- *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (Green)
- *King of the Wind* (Henry)
- *Lay Siege to Heaven* (De Wohl)
- *Leif the Lucky* (D'Aulaire)
- *Lilies of the Field* (Barrett)
- *Little Men* (Alcott)
- *Little Women* (Alcott)
- *Log of a Cowboy* (Adams)
- *Madeline Takes Command* (Brill and Adams)
- *Misty of Chincoteague* (Henry)
- *My Antonia* (Cather)
- *My Side of the Mountain* (George)
- *Mysterious Island* (Verne)
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Douglass)
- *Number the Stars* (Lowry)
- *O Pioneers* (Cather)
- *Old Yeller* (Gipson)
- *Oliver Twist* (Dickens)
- *Our Town* (Wilder)
- *Patron Saint of First Communicants* (Windeatt)
- *Penrod and others* (Tarkington)
- *Pied Piper of Hamelin* (Browning)
- *Radiate: More Stories of Daring Teen Saints* (Swaim)
- *Red Hugh Prince of Donegal* (Reilly)
- *Redwall Series* (Jacques)
- *Rip Van Winkle* (Irving)
- *Robin Hood* (Pyle)
- *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe)
- *Rolf and the Viking Bow* (French)
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor)
- *Saint Benedict: The Story of the Father of the Western Monks* (Windeatt)
- *Saint Catherine of Siena* (Forbes)

- *Saint Dominic (Windeatt)*
- *Saint Helena and the True Cross (De Wohl)*
- *Saint Hyacinth of Poland (Windeatt)*
- *Saint John Masias (Windeatt)*
- *Saint Martin de Porres (Windeatt)*
- *Saint Monica (Forbes)*
- *Saint Rose of Lima (Windeatt)*
- *Saint Thomas Aquinas (Windeatt)*
- *Sarah Plain and Tall (Wilder)*
- *Son of Charlemagne (Willard)*
- *Souder (Armstrong)*
- *St. Benedict, Hero of the Hills (Windeatt)*
- *St. Joan, The Girl Soldier (De Wohl)*
- *St. Patrick (Tompert)*
- *St. Thomas Aquinas for Children (Maritain)*
- *Tales of King Arthur (Talbot)*
- *Tanglewood Tales (Hawthorne)*
- *Tarzan Series (Burroughs)*
- *The Adventures of Robin Hood (Green)*
- *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Doyle)*
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- *The Black Arrow (Stevenson)*
- *The Black Cauldron (Alexander)*
- *The Blood Red Crescent (Garnett)*
- *The Bronze Bow (Speare)*
- *The Call of the Wild (London)*
- *The Children of Fatima (Windeatt)*
- *The Children's Homer (Colum)*
- *The Chronicles of Narnia (Lewis)*
- *The Deerslayer (Cooper)*
- *The Dragon and the Raven (Henty)*
- *The Fellowship of the Ring (Tolkien)*
- *The Fledgling (Langton)*
- *The Gift of the Magi (O. Henry)*
- *The Hiding Place (ten Boom)*
- *The Hobbit (Tolkien)*
- *The Horse and His Boy (Lewis)*
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles (Doyle)*
- *The Innocence of Father Brown [or others] (Chesterton)*
- *The Island of the Blue Dolphins (O'Dell)*
- *The Jungle Book (Kipling)*
- *The Knight of the White Cross (Henty)*
- *The Last Battle (Lewis)*
- *The Last of the Mohicans (Cooper)*
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (Irving)*
- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (Lewis)*
- *The Little Flower (Windeatt)*
- *The Little Prince (Saint-Exupéry)*
- *The Lord of the Rings (Tolkien)*
- *The Miracle Worker (Gibson)*
- *The Miraculous Medal (Windeatt)*
- *The Oregon Trail (Parkman)*
- *The Pearl (Steinbeck)*
- *The Prince and the Pauper (Twain)*
- *The Ransom of Red Chief, and Other Stories (O. Henry)*
- *The Railway Children (Nesbit)*
- *The Red Badge of Courage (Crane)*
- *The Red Keep (French)*
- *The Restless Flame (De Wohl)*
- *The Song at the Scaffold (Von le Fort)*
- *The Spear: A Novel of the Crucifixion (De Wohl)*
- *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights (Pyle)*
- *The Story of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Walsh)*
- *The Story of Rolf and the Viking Bow (French)*
- *The Sword and the Stone (White)*
- *The Time Machine (Wells)*
- *The Trumpeter of Krakow (Kelly)*
- *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (Lewis)*
- *The Wanderings of Odysseus: The Story of the Odyssey (Sutcliffe)*
- *The War of the Worlds (Wells)*
- *The Weight of a Mass (Nobisso)*
- *The White Stag (Seredy)*
- *The Witch of Blackbird Pond (Speare)*
- *The Yearling (Rawlings)*
- *Thomas Aquinas and the Preaching Beggars (Larnen and Lomask)*
- *Tom Sawyer (Twain)*
- *Treasure Island (Stevenson)*
- *Tuck Everlasting (Babbit)*
- *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea (Verne)*
- *Two Years Before the Mast (Dana)*
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin (Stowe)*
- *Under the Lilacs (Alcott)*
- *Westward Ho (Kingsley)*
- *Where the Lilies Bloom (Cleaver)*
- *Where the Red Fern Grows (Rawls)*
- *White Fang (London)*
- *With Wolfe in Canada (Henty)*
- *Won by the Sword (Henty)Work (Alcott)*