

Summer Reading - For Students Entering Grade 5

Text: [*Welcome Back, Maple Mehta-Cohen* by Kate McGovern](#)

Directions: Answer **6 questions total**. You may type or write your answers on looseleaf paper.

Follow the steps below.

- You must answer **at least one question from each section (A, B, C, D)**
 - **You must answer 6 questions total**
- Write **1 paragraph (4–6 sentences)** for each answer
- Use **specific evidence from the book**
- Explain your thinking

Section A: Maple's Life & Identity

1. The novel begins with the word “normally.” What is “not normal” in Maple’s life anymore? What do we learn about her family in the beginning?
2. Maple has a “hyphenated” identity (Indian-Jewish background). How does she feel about her name and her heritage? Why is this important to her?
3. Maple compares her family life and school life at different points in the story. What is one important detail we learn about her home life?

Section B: Challenges & Growth

4. Maple struggles with reading. How does she hide her difficulty at school, and why does she do this?
5. Why do you think Maple sometimes calls herself things like having a “defective brain”? How does her thinking about herself change by the end of the book?
6. What is one major challenge Maple faces in the story, and how does she begin to overcome it?

Section C: Relationships & Choices

7. Describe Maple’s friendship with either Marigold or Aislinn. How does that friendship change during the story?
8. Jack is new to school. How does he become friends with Maple, and what do they learn from each other?
9. Maple tells lies during the story. Why does she lie, and what happens when the truth comes out?

Section D: Big Ideas (Themes) & Lessons

10. Why does Maple often say she is “fine” when she is not? What does this show about her feelings?
11. What does Maple learn about speaking up for herself (for example, when Nurse Marcus tells her to “assert yourself”)?
12. What is one important lesson Maple learns by the end of the story?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Research Connection

This is a challenge activity and does not need to be completed unless you would like to complete it.

Maple struggles with reading, but many real people also learn in different ways and still succeed. Some of these people faced challenges in school or in life and went on to accomplish important things.

Choose **ONE person**:

- Temple Grandin
- Thomas Edison
- Agatha Christie

Your Task (1 short paragraph – 5–6 sentences)

Write a paragraph answering ALL of the following:

- Who is this person?
- What challenge did they face (if any)?
- What is one important thing they accomplished?
- How does their story connect to Maple's experience in the novel?

Remember to:

- Use **complete sentences**
- Include **at least one specific fact** about the person
- Write **5–6 sentences total (not more than 8)**
- You may use **books, websites, or other resources** (1 source is enough)

Summer Reading Assignment – For Students Entering Grade 6

Text: [*When You Reach Me* by Rebecca Stead](#)

Directions: Answer **8 questions total**. You may type or write your answers on looseleaf paper.

Follow the steps below.

- Choose any **8 questions from the list below**
 - Write **1 paragraph (5–7 sentences)** for each response
 - Use **specific evidence from the novel**
 - Explain your thinking clearly (go beyond summary)
 - Write in complete sentences
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1. How does Miranda change from the beginning to the end of the novel? What causes this change?
 2. How does first-person narration shape what the reader understands—and what remains unclear?
 3. How does Miranda’s understanding of Sal change throughout the story? Why is this change important?
 4. Choose one character (Miranda, Sal, Annemarie, Colin, Marcus). How does this character show a different perspective on events in the story?
 5. How do Miranda’s relationships with her mother and friends change as she matures?
 6. How does the novel show that the past, present, and future are connected in unexpected ways?
 7. How does the story use time (including time travel) to challenge what the reader thinks is possible?
 8. What is one major theme of the novel? How is it developed through multiple events in the story?
 9. Why is misunderstanding an important idea in the novel? Use at least two examples.
 10. What is the most important realization Miranda has by the end of the novel? How does this connect multiple events?
 11. Why do you think Rebecca Stead includes *A Wrinkle in Time* throughout the novel? What might it represent?
 12. How do the mysterious notes help build suspense and meaning in the story?
 13. The chapter titles connect to *The \$20,000 Pyramid*. How does this structure reflect the way Miranda is trying to understand her world?
 14. Why is the novel told from Miranda’s point of view? How would the story be different if told by another character?
 15. At what point did you begin to understand who the Laughing Man was? What clues helped you figure it out?
 16. Who is the Laughing Man? How does the reveal of who the Laughing Man is change the way earlier events in the story are understood?
 17. Malcolm says, “Common sense is just a habit of thought.” Do you agree or disagree? Use evidence from the novel or your own experience to explain your thinking.
 18. Were you satisfied with how the mysteries in the novel were resolved? Why or why not? Explain using evidence.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Perspective Writing

This is a challenge activity and does not need to be completed unless you would like to complete it.

Choose **ONE important scene** from *When You Reach Me* and rewrite it from the perspective of a different character (Sal, Marcus, Annemarie, Colin, or Miranda's mom).

Your response should include:

- Name the **exact scene** you are retelling (include chapter name)
- Write in **first person** from the perspective of your chosen character
- Include **specific events from that scene** (not a summary of the whole book)
- Show what the character:
 - sees
 - thinks
 - feels
- Include at least **one detail from the original text**
- Do **not add information the character would not know**

English Grade 7

Summer Assignment 2026

Mrs. Okoniewski

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For your summer reading assignment, you will read a book that tells the story of Hà, a ten-year-old girl who must flee Saigon with her family during the Vietnam War and seek refuge in the United States. For all 10 years of her life, Hà has only known Saigon: the thrills of its markets, the joy of its traditions, the warmth of her friends close by, and the beauty of her very own papaya tree. But now the Vietnam War has reached her home. Hà and her family are forced to flee as Saigon falls, and they board a ship headed toward hope. Author Thanhha Lai bases Hà's story on her own childhood experiences and wrote this book as a series of first-person verse poems, each 1–3 pages in length, that span the course of a single year. The book is:



★★★★★ 6,991

[Inside Out and Back Again](#) by Thanhha Lai

ISBN 978-0061962790

You will need a **small marble composition book** (college-ruled) to complete this assignment, and you will use this same notebook for journaling in class for the remainder of the school year.

This summer work will be collected on the first day back to school in September.

Task #1: Reading of the poem “Maps” & Journaling

Read the poem, “Maps,” by Yesenia Montilla (see attached).

In your composition journal **label, number**, and in your own handwriting, dedicate two pages to the poem by responding to as many of the questions below as you can. Remember to use complete sentences.

1. Write down any interesting words or phrases (This can be a bulleted list)
2. What do you notice about how the poem is structured?
3. List any questions you have after reading the poem. What do you wonder?
4. How do you think the poet/speaker feels about maps?
5. How do you think maps contribute to the way we understand the world?
6. How do you think maps are used to convey certain ideas about different places in the world?
7. The speaker of the poem outlines the disadvantages of maps. Do you think that maps and borders have any positive traits, or do you agree with the speaker? If you believe that maps have positive traits, what are they?
8. In the poem, the speaker is separated from someone they care about and this is made more painful because they are separated by lines on the map. Why is it painful to be separated from someone you care about? In your opinion, do the lines on maps physically and emotionally divide us from others?

Task #2: *Inside Out and Back Again* Reading

Students should read Lai's novel over the summer and try to take notes **in the book** as they read. If you don't wish to write in your book, you can use sticky notes. *Inside Out & Back Again* will be our focus for the first month of school, so don't worry about right or wrong interpretations- we will have many discussions to flesh out Hà's story.

Annotations (or notes in the margins) will be a focus of the class during the school year, so each student should practice them over the summer. Here are some tips on what writing in your book might look like...

Annotations can take many forms but are mostly used to make observations about plot, characters, and major themes (*Identity, Coming-of-Age, Language/Communication, or being an Outsider*). Your book should look 'worked in'. This summer, I want you to focus the notes you take on the protagonist and narrator, *Hà*.

What do we know about her character?

What pages and scenes feature important moments?

How does she change over the course of the novel?

In what ways is she an outsider?

What details inform readers about her identity? (In other words, what makes Hà, Hà?)

How is she different from those around her?

Also, highlight, underline, and/or mark any passages that you find particularly important or significant. Then, write in the margins (marginalia), jot some notes about why you marked that passage.

Think: Why is this scene or passage in the book so important?

Pay specific attention to scenes in which *Hà* feels or is treated like an outsider or telling you about her identity and family life. Be aware of the notes you are taking. By no means should the entire book be highlighted and/or underlined. You should be able to search your notes quickly during class discussions.

Class Supply List- Please have the following on the first day back in September:

- 3-ring binder (1 ½ inch) & lined paper
- 5 Dividers (Label and place in binder: Literature, Poetry, Grammar, Tests/Quizzes, and Exam Prep)
- 1 marble composition book that is college-ruled for journaling (use the same as your summer work)
- pens/pencils/highlighters
- Post it notes for note-taking
- 2 boxes of tissues for classroom use (Please give to 'English' teacher on our first day of class in September)
- 2 dry erase markers for classroom use- any color (Please give to 'English' teacher on our first day of class)

Required Texts - Please obtain the specific editions below **BEFORE** we return to school in September. It is imperative that you purchase the following editions; this will make finding passages in class that much easier.

[*Inside Out and Back Again*](#) by Thanhha Lai ISBN: 978-0061962790 (summer assignment)

[*It's Trevor Noah: Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*](#)
(Adapted for Young Readers) by Trevor Noah ISBN-13: 978-0525582199

[*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*](#) by Salman Rushdie ISBN: 978-0140157376

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare
[\(Cambridge School of Shakespeare edition\)](#) ISBN 978-1107615397

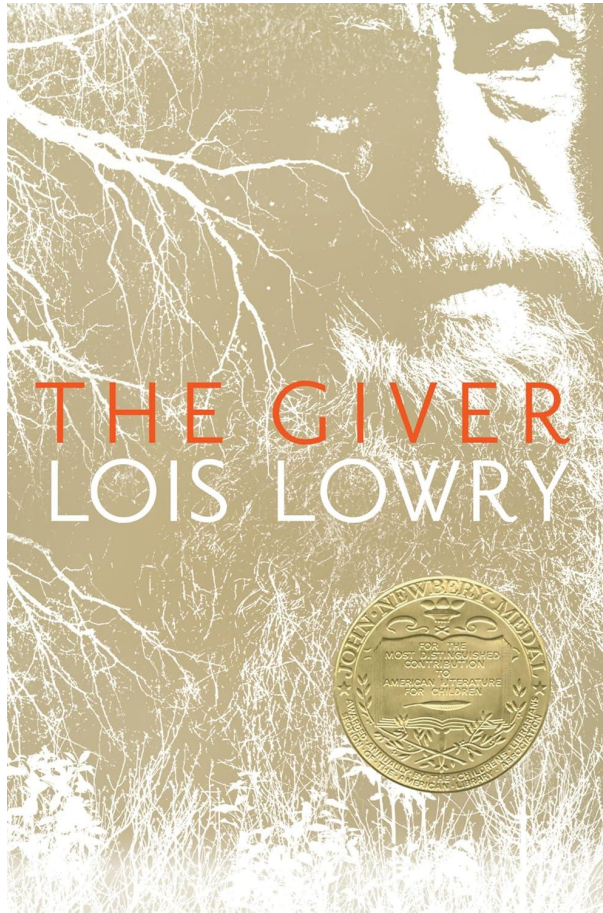
Maps

<https://poets.org/poem/maps>

Yesenia Montilla

for Marcelo

Some maps have blue borders
like the blue of your name
or the tributary lacing of
veins running through your
father's hands. & how the last
time I saw you, you held
me for so long I saw whole
lifetimes flooding by me
small tentacles reaching
for both our faces. I wish
maps would be without
borders & that we belonged
to no one & to everyone
at once, what a world that
would be. Or not a world
maybe we would call it
something more intrinsic
like forgiving or something
simplistic like river or dirt.
& if I were to see you
tomorrow & everyone you
came from had disappeared
I would weep with you & drown
out any black lines that this
earth allowed us to give it—
because what is a map but
a useless prison? We are all
so lost & no naming of blank
spaces can save us. & what
is a map but the delusion of
safety? The line drawn is always
in the sand & folds on itself
before we're done making it.
& that line, there, south of
el rio, how it dares to cover
up the bodies, as though we
would forget who died there
& for what? As if we could
forget that if you spin a globe
& stop it with your finger
you'll land it on top of someone
living, someone who was not
expecting to be crushed by thirst—



Grade 8

Summer Reading Guide:

The Giver

by Lois Lowry

This guide will help you explore *The Giver* and show up to 8th grade ready to hit the ground running. It includes some pre-reading activities, journaling, and post-reading response questions. Work at your own pace, but make sure to keep an eye on the calendar. Summer goes by too quickly!

Please note: even if you have previously read this book, re-reading it is essential. Your growing brain will notice things you missed before! Because we will be reading and writing extensively about this story, seeing it with fresh eyes will be a great experience.

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Published July 1, 1993

Clarion Books

ISBN-10 : 0544336267

Complete all your writing in a **wide-ruled composition notebook** (marbled black and white style). This notebook will be used all next year for journal exercises in writing. Be sure to use your best handwriting, grammar, punctuation, and feel free to add in your personal reactions to the reading.

Understanding Utopia and Dystopia

Before reading, it's important to understand the types of societies in *The Giver*. Look up and write the definitions of these words:

- **Utopia:**
- **Dystopia:**

Can you think of any books you have read or movies you have seen that might be an example of utopia or dystopia? Explain your answer.

Setting & Society in *The Giver*

As you begin the story, pay attention to Jonas's world. Use one page in your notebook to collect your answers and title it "Setting & Society in *The Giver*".

1. Describe the Setting:

- Where does the story take place?
- What do people's lives look like day-to-day?
- What is missing from this world compared to our own?
- What differences do you notice between the text and our own world?

2. Community Rules & Customs

Create a page in your notebook titled “Community Rules and Customs.” It should look like the chart below. Fill it out as you come across rules and customs. As you read, try to determine the reason why these rules exist and what the rules try to control or prevent. You may need to read many chapters (or the entire book!) to understand and complete this chart.

RULES	REASON

3. Reflection

On the next page of your journal, I would like you to reflect on these rules. What do these rules tell you about the place Jonas lives and what that society values? Write a paragraph of 5-7 complete sentences explaining your ideas.

4. Formal Writing Questions

Read the book in four parts. After each section, write journal responses using the prompts below. Make sure you label each response and answer all parts of the questions provided.

Example: Section 1 Formal Writing Questions *What does Jonas's society value most? Explain your answer.* Jonas's society values (your answer) the most. In the second chapter of *The Giver*, Lois Lowry writes about the rules everyone is expected to follow. "(quote from chapter 2,"(page #). This proves the community values... (what does this quote mean or prove about your answer).

Section 1: Life in the Community (Chapters 1–5)

- What does Jonas's society value most? Explain your answer?
- What rule or custom would be hardest for you to follow?
- How would you feel if your emotions were controlled?

Section 2: The Ceremony & The Assignment (Chapters 6–10)

- What does the community gain or lose by assigning roles?
- How does Jonas feel being chosen as Receiver? How would you feel?
- How would you feel if your profession or job was chosen for you? What if it was not what you wanted, but did not have a choice?

Section 3: The Memories (Chapters 11–18)

- What memory would you give someone else? Why?
- Is it better to avoid pain or to experience both joy and sorrow?
- Why does Jonas feel different from his friends and family?

Section 4: Truth & Escape (Chapters 19–23)

- How does learning the truth about "release" affect Jonas?
- Why do Jonas and The Giver want to change the community?
- What do you think happens at the end? Explain your idea.

5. Reflective Writing: Once you have completed the reading, choose one or all of the following questions to write your own personal reflection. Be sure to think about these questions before we return to school. We will spend the first weeks of school discussing with classmates.

- Is it better to live without pain if it means giving up freedom and emotion?
- What did *The Giver* teach you about memory, freedom, or identity? How is Jonas like or unlike you?
- What makes a society “perfect,” and what is the cost of that perfection?

Write a short essay (about one page) answering these questions using examples from the book and your own ideas.