8th grade Summer Reading 2026

Dear Students and Parents,

This summer we will be reading the EXCITING historical fiction novel *The Light in Hidden Places* by Sharon Cameron. It is a powerful story based on real events. It follows Stefania Podgórska, a brave teenager in Poland during World War II, who risks her life to hide thirteen Jewish people in her attic. Even when Nazi soldiers move into her house, Stefania stays strong and determined to protect those in danger. This inspiring novel shows how one young person can make a big difference through courage, kindness, and doing what's right.

The novel can be found on Amazon. You WILL need a paper copy in class the first day of school. You may find it on Audible and listen while you read and ANNOTATE your novel. See specific annotations below. The first day of school, we will take a test on the novel and turn in the Guided Reading included here. The second day of school, we will begin writing our first Critical Analysis essay.

What to ANNOTATE-----In *The Light in Hidden Places* by Sharon Cameron, Stefania Podgórska demonstrates extraordinary courage and moral strength in the face of unimaginable danger. In your copy of the novel, HIGHLIGHT **specific examples of courage and moral strength.** HIGHLIGHT examples of how Stefania's (Fusia's) **choices and actions reflect the themes of bravery, compassion, and resistance**. Be ready to discuss how YOU think her story shows the impact one person can have during a time of injustice and fear.

******Due to the fact that 8th grade will receive NEW computers when we return to school, you will need to watch the following videos on a cell phone or home computer/laptop. If you do not have access to these electronics, please email me. We can arrange a day for you to come to the library and use a loaner computer.**

Step One: Read the following article on how to take notes while watching an educational video: https://schoolhabits.com/how-to-take-notes-from-a-video-19-video-note-taking-tips/ . You will be expected to use these strategies with the two videos below. You will need to use the TWO COLUMN method that is explained in this article. The notes on the videos will be turned in on the first day of school.

Watch the following videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOIHRQlQqwU Liberators and Survivors: The First Moments. You will need at least 10 notes on this video.

https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-reflections-testimonies/one-survivor-remembers Holocaust Reflections. You will need at least 20 notes on this video.

Step Two: Read an ANNOTATE the novel *The Light in Hidden Places*.

HOW TO ANNOTATE PROPERLY FOR UNDERSTANDING:

To annotate a novel for better understanding, actively engage with the text by highlighting key passages, summarizing in the margins, and noting questions or reflections. This process helps you connect with the story, identify main ideas, and deepen your comprehension.

A. Identify Key Elements:

- **Main Ideas & Themes:** Circle or highlight words and phrases that connect to the main idea of a passage or describe a bigger picture.
- **Plot Points:** Note significant events, turning points, and character developments.
- **Literary Devices:** Identify and note examples of symbolism, imagery, metaphors, etc.
- **Setting & Atmosphere:** Note how the setting influences the story and characters.
- **Character Development:** Track changes in character's personality, motivations, and relationships.
- **Recurring Themes or Symbols:** If you notice recurring symbols throughout a text, underline or highlight them, even if you're not quite sure what they mean yet.
- **Unfamiliar Words:** Circle or highlight any words you don't recognize to look them up later.

B. Engage with the Text:

- **Write in the Margins:** Reflect on the text, ask questions, and write down your thoughts and reactions in the margins.
- **Summarize:** Condense key ideas or plot points into concise summaries in the margins.
- **Make Connections:** Note how the text relates to other texts you've read or your own experiences.
- **Ask Questions:** Jot down any questions that come to mind as you read, whether they are about the plot, characters, or the author's message.
- **Use Symbols:** Create a key with symbols to represent different types of annotations.

C. Tools & Techniques:

- **Highlighters & Pens:** Use different colors to categorize different types of annotations, like themes or character developments, says MAXQDA.
- **Sticky Tabs:** Use sticky tabs to bookmark specific pages or passages for easy reference.

D. Keep it Balanced:

- **Don't Overdo it:** Aim for focused annotations rather than highlighting everything.
- **Read Actively:** Balance note-taking with active reading and reflection.
- **Develop a Consistent System:** Choose a system that works for you and stick with it.

YOUR ANNOTATIONS WILL BE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT WHEN YOU START WRITING YOUR CRITICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL.

Step Three: Should also be done WHILE reading. Do not wait until the end to answer your Guided Reading Questions. These questions/answers can help you identify what is important to annotate. The Guided Reading Questions are included with this instruction sheet.

BE PREPARED TO TURN IN the following on the first day of school:

1. VIDEO NOTES
2. ANNOTATIONS (Mrs. Rowe will check your novel. Nothing should be on paper for this, just marked in your copy of the novel.)
3. Guided Reading Questions and Answers

Guided Reading Questions

The Light in Hidden Places by Sharon Cameron

Answer the following questions ON YOUR OWN SHEET OF PAPER. If I can't read your handwriting, I can't grade your paper.

Chapter 1: "In Przemysl, light is like a candy poster. And it's not smart to hang signs showing where the sweets are."

Explain what this quote means and how the figurative language helps the reader to understand the risk of having the lights on.

Chapter 3: "I gave him more of the same with extra vinegar" (Cameron 19).

Explain the quote.

Identify the following examples of FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE from chapters 1-3 as SIMILE, METAPHOR, ALLITERATION, OR IDIOM.

1. "A mattress springs like a gunshot" (1).
2. "The streetlights glare, hard bits of snow glinting like dust as they fall through the light" (1).
3. "But the sidewalk below my street is deserted, the windows across the street rows of dead eyes, dark with curtains and dresses and rugs" (1).
4. "A grenade of fear inside my chest" (2).
5. "The words beat with my blood" (2).
6. "With brothers, it was best to give as good as you got" (7).
7. "Something whistled and boomed, and the building quaked, knocking me to my knees" (13).
8. "He left with a storm on his face, and I was glad to be done with him" (19).

Chapter 4: Explain the following quote: "The second part of my education had begun" (27).

Chapter 5: How does Fusia put her life in danger?

Chapter 6: Explain the following quote: "What I saw was the joy of hate. The happiness of causing another person's death and pain. What I saw was evil. And every part of me defied it. The third part of my education in Przemysl had begun" (52).

Chapter 7: The author focuses on three events in Fusia's life. What are the events?

Chapter 8: The fourth part of Fusia's education started in this chapter. What did she learn?

Chapter 12: Was it right for Fusia to let Helena see the policeman beat the boy? Why? Why not?

Chapter 12 has an example of FORESHADOWING. "And in the middle of my tears, a calm steals over me. A warmth in the cold. Like an arm coming around my middle. A cheek pressing next to mine" (130). Explain how this is foreshadowing and how it moves Fusia's story along.

Chapter 13: How were the following problems SOLVED in this chapter?

1. Max was stopped by a policeman.
2. There is an unexpected knock at the door.
3. The blond policeman shows up at Fusia's apartment.

4. The policeman wants to meet Fusia at a café.
5. Max, Danuta and Henek , the Hirsches, and the Schillingers need a place to hide.

Chapter 17: Explain the following quote: "He smiles. You know that isn't true. You have a very special secret, don't you, Stefania?" (200).

Chapter 18: Explain the following quote: " 'Don't you ever come near me again,' I say…'Don't speak to me. If you see me on the street, you're going to turn and walk the other way. Disappear.'"

Chapter 19: Explain the 3 most important events in this chapter. Include page numbers.

Chapter 21: There are many events in this chapter where someone LIES. Give examples and tell WHY the character lied.

Chapter 22: Why do you think Fusia said what she did to Mrs. Krawiecka?

Chapter 23: How do the relationships in Tatarska 3 change after the Krawieckas and Ernst leave? Use quotes and page numbers to PROVE your answer.

Chapter 24: Once again, Fusia is in a difficult situation. Explain.

Chapter 25: What lies does Fusia tell in this chapter?

Chapter 26: Explain this quote: "I am a bottle that can only hold so much" (327).

Chapter 27: Explain how each of the following PROBLEMS were SOLVED.

1. Fusia tells Ilse and Edith that she can't get a medical card.
2. The doctor examines Fusia roughly and uses her as a teaching model.
3. There is no food in the house.
4. A policeman stops her on the way home from the market.
5. Fusia has run out of money to feed everyone.

Chapter 28: In what way does Fusia's exhaustion and fear prompt the events in the city with the man with one eyebrow?

Chapter 29: Why does Fusia think Mrs Krawiecka will help her?

Chapter 30: Fusia, Helena, and the THIRTEEN men, women, and children she hid survived. Looking back on the book, name at least FIVE times when YOU thought they might not make it. Include chapters and page numbers. Be ready to discuss.