2026 Summer Reading Assignment – Enhanced English Language Arts 8

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Welcome to Enhanced ELA 8! The goal of this course is to support students in preparing for college, career, and civic life through the development of strong reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. In addition to the expectations of ELA 8, Enhanced ELA is designed to help students prepare for advanced coursework in high school and beyond.

Reading is like a muscle—you only grow stronger by using it consistently. Your summer reading assignment is intended to help you continue growing as a reader, thinker, and writer before the school year begins.

Read *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton. You may purchase your own copy if you wish, but copies will also be available through the high school office. As you read, you will complete a **dialectical journal** documenting your thinking about the novel. A dialectical journal is a written conversation between you and the text. The purpose is not simply to summarize what happens, but to show your thinking, questions, reactions, and analysis as you read.

Journal Requirements

- **At least 10 dialectical journal entries**
- Entries should be spread throughout the novel rather than completed all at once
- Use a spiral notebook or composition notebook
- Divide each page into two columns

Left Column should include	**Right Column**
• a meaningful quote or passage from the text • page number(s)	• Respond to the passage with your thinking. • Your response should go beyond summary and show engagement with the text. • Each response should be approximately 3-6 thoughtful sentences

Possible Response Ideas

asking questions
analyzing characters or relationships
making personal or world connections
explaining emotional reactions
noticing patterns or changes in characters
making predictions
discussing themes or conflicts
analyzing symbolism or figurative language
discussing important decisions characters make
commenting on the author's writing style

You do **not** have to use every type of response. Assume your reader has also read the book. Instead of retelling events, focus on *why* events matter, what they reveal about characters or themes, and what you are thinking as a reader.

Example of a Weak Response

“I lie to myself all the time. But I never believe me.” (11)	Ponyboy lies to himself sometimes. This quote shows that he is not always honest with himself. I think this is interesting because people lie sometimes.

Example of a Stronger Response

“I lie to myself all the time. But I never believe me.” (11)	This quote made me stop and think because it feels really honest. Ponyboy acts tough sometimes, but deep down he seems more emotional and thoughtful than he wants other people to notice. I think he knows he is trying to convince himself that everything is fine even when it isn’t. This also makes him feel more realistic as a character because a lot of people try to ignore their problems instead of dealing with them directly.

Your completed novel and dialectical journal must be submitted to the high school office no later than **July 31, 2026 at 12:00 PM**. When school begins, you should expect several activities and assessments connected to the novel. These may include:

- class discussions
- short written responses
- character and theme analysis
- quizzes over the reading
- a timed writing assignment using evidence from the text

Your journal will help prepare you for these activities.

This assignment is designed to help you enter the school year prepared to think critically, discuss literature thoughtfully, and write analytically. Take your time with the novel and allow yourself to react honestly and thoughtfully as you read.

If you have questions during the summer, feel free to contact me by email. I may not respond immediately, but I will do my best to reply within a day or two.

I look forward to working with you this fall. Have a great summer and happy reading!

-McCloud