

Dear Students and Families,

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy a great story, stay mentally active, and get ready for a fantastic school year ahead. As part of our summer learning, all middle school students are expected to complete a summer reading assignment. This reading experience will encourage students to think critically, engage with complex characters and themes, and strengthen their reading skills while enjoying an exciting and memorable story.

Required Book for All Middle School Students:

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan

<https://www.amazon.com/Esperanza-Rising-McDougal-Littell-Library/dp/043912042X>

This historical fiction novel follows Esperanza Ortega, a young girl whose privileged life in Mexico is suddenly changed by tragedy, forcing her and her mother to migrate to the United States during the Great Depression. As she adjusts to a new life working in labor camps, Esperanza must learn resilience, responsibility, and hope in the face of hardship. This novel provides a powerful connection to Latin American history, migration experiences, and themes of perseverance and identity.

As students read, they should pay attention to:

- How Esperanza's life changes from privilege to hardship
- The cultural and historical setting of Mexico and migrant farm life
- Character development and personal growth throughout the story
- Themes such as resilience, family, identity, and hope
- Personal thoughts, reactions, and connections to key events

There is no written assignment required for this book during the summer. We'll dive deeper into this novel together during the first few weeks of school through class discussion, writing, and creative response activities.

 **All students must bring a personal copy of *Esperanza Rising* to school on Thursday, August 20, 2026.**

Student-Choice Book + Creative Project:

Students are also required to read a second book of their choice. This book:

- Must be new to the student (not previously read)
- Can be from any genre—realistic fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, mystery, etc.
- Should be a middle-grade or young adult novel that fits the student's interests and reading level

This site is a great place to browse options:
<https://www.readbrightly.com/summer-ya-books/>

Creative Book Project:

For their independent book, students will complete a creative project that includes:

- The book's title and author
- The genre
- A summary of the main characters, setting, and plot
- A reflection on the most important or memorable parts of the story

Students may select an idea from a list of suggested projects or come up with a creative format of their own. The goal is to show understanding and thoughtfulness, while also having fun with the presentation.

The student-choice book and project are due on Thursday, August 20, 2026.

If you have any questions about the assignment or need help selecting books, feel free to reach out. My email address is iwarden@welshhills.org. I can't wait to see the creative projects and to start our reading adventures together this fall!

Happy Reading,

Isaac Warden
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