Incoming Middle School (Grades 6–8)
Summer Packet

Brooklyn School of Excellence

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Middle School Summer Reading List: **Please choose 2 novels.**

Realistic Fiction / Coming of Age

1. **Wonder** by R. J. Palacio
2. **Fish in a Tree** by Lynda Mullaly Hunt
3. **Out of My Mind** by Sharon M. Draper
4. **The One and Only Ivan** by Katherine Applegate
5. **Restart** by Gordon Korman
6. **The War That Saved My Life** by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
7. **The Bridge Home** by Padma Venkatraman
8. **The Thing About Jellyfish** by Ali Benjamin

Mystery / Adventure / Survival

9. **Holes** by Louis Sachar
10. **The Westing Game** by Ellen Raskin
11. **The Mysterious Benedict Society** by Trenton Lee Stewart
12. **The False Prince** by Jennifer A. Nielsen
13. **Hatchet** by Gary Paulsen
14. **The Inquisitor's Tale** by Adam Gidwitz
15. **The City of Ember** by Jeanne DuPrau

Fantasy / Science Fiction

16. **A Wrinkle in Time** by Madeleine L'Engle
17. **The Girl Who Drank the Moon** by Kelly Barnhill
18. **The Apprentice Witch** by James Nicol
19. **The Giver** by Lois Lowry
20. **The House in the Cerulean Sea** by T. J. Klune
21. **Scythe** by Neal Shusterman
22. **The Maze Runner** by James Dashner

Historical Fiction

23. **Number the Stars** by Lois Lowry
24. **Refugee** by Alan Gratz
25. **The Night Diary** by Veera Hiranandani
26. **Esperanza Rising** by Pam Muñoz Ryan
27. **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak
28. **Chains** by Laurie Halse Anderson

Summer Reading Reminder

Choose two novels from the summer reading list.

Complete one reading tracker entry after every 2–3 chapters.

For each entry, complete the Chapter Snapshot and choose TWO additional sections that best fit what you read. You do not need to complete every section each time.

You may print additional tracker pages or use a notebook. If you use a notebook, clearly label each entry with the book title, chapter range, pages read, and date.

Middle School Summer Reading Tracker

Book Title: _____
Author: _____
Chapter: _____
Pages Read: _____
Date: _____

1. Chapter Snapshot

Write a clear summary of what happened in this chapter. Include the most important events, characters, and changes.

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Writer's Spotlight: Figurative Language

Find one example of figurative language or strong descriptive writing from the chapter.

Quote:
"_____"

What type is it?
☐ Simile
☐ Metaphor
☐ Personification
☐ Imagery
☐ Hyperbole
☐ Other: _____

What does it mean or help the reader picture/understand?

_____
_____
_____

3. Make a Connection

Choose **one** connection:

☐ **Text-to-Self:** This chapter reminds me of something from my own life.
☐ **Text-to-Text:** This chapter reminds me of another book, movie, show, or story.
☐ **Text-to-World:** This chapter connects to something happening in the world, history, or society.

My connection:

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4. Creative Corner

Choose **one**:

☐ Draw an important scene from the chapter.
☐ Create a symbol that represents the chapter and explain it.
☐ Make a “mood board” using words, small sketches, or symbols.
☐ Write a short social-media-style post from a character’s point of view.
☐ Create a new title for the chapter and explain why it fits.
☐ Write one question you would ask a character.

My Creative Choice: _____

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5. Prediction or Question

What do you think will happen next, or what question do you still have after reading?

Book Report Directions

Choose ONE of the two books you read this summer for your book report.
Use your reading tracker entries to help you remember important events, characters, quotations, themes, and writing choices.

Complete every section of the Book Report worksheet. Then write a complete book report on separate lined paper or typed pages.

Your written report must be at least 4 well-developed paragraphs:
1. Introduction: Name the book and author. Give a brief overview.
2. Summary: Explain the main conflict and the most important events.
3. Analysis: Discuss an important character, theme, lesson, or writing choice.
4. Recommendation: Explain whether you would recommend the book and to whom.

Use specific details from the book. Do not copy a summary from the internet.

Middle School Summer Reading Book Report Outline

Book Title: _____

Author: _____

Student Name: _____

Date Completed: _____

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1. Book Basics

Genre: _____

Setting: Where and when does the story take place?

Main Characters: List the most important characters and briefly describe each one.

Character	Description / Role in the Story

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2. Summary

Write a well-organized summary of the book. Include the beginning, important events in the middle, the conflict or problem, and how the story ends. Do not simply list every chapter.

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3. Character Focus

Choose one important character.

Character: _____

How does this character change, learn, struggle, or make an important decision during the story?

What is one important quote, action, or moment that reveals something about this character?

4. Theme or Lesson

What is one message, lesson, or big idea the book teaches?

Theme: _____

Explain how the author develops this idea through characters, events, or conflicts.

5. Writer's Craft

Find one strong example of figurative language or descriptive writing.

Quote:
"_____"

What type of writing technique is it?
☐ Simile
☐ Metaphor
☐ Personification

☐ Imagery
☐ Hyperbole
☐ Other: _____

Explain what the quote means and why it is effective.

6. Connection

Choose one:

☐ **Text-to-Self:** This book reminds me of something from my own life.
☐ **Text-to-Text:** This book connects to another book, movie, show, or story.
☐ **Text-to-World:** This book connects to history, society, or something happening in the world.

My connection:

7. Creative Response

Choose **one** creative option:

☐ Draw an important scene and label at least three important details.
☐ Create a new cover for the book. Include a short explanation of your design.
☐ Make a “character social media profile” for one character.
☐ Create a playlist of three songs that fit the book or a character. Explain each choice.
☐ Write a diary entry from the point of view of a character.
☐ Create a symbol that represents the book and explain what it means.
☐ Write an alternate ending.

My Creative Choice: _____

8. Recommendation

Would you recommend this book to another middle school student?

☐ Yes
☐ Maybe
☐ No

Explain your answer. Include the type of reader who would enjoy this book.

_____
_____
_____

Creative Cover Page

Create a cover page for your book report that represents the book in an interesting and thoughtful way.

Your cover page must include:

- **Book title**
- **Author's name**
- **Your name**
- A meaningful drawing, collage, or design connected to the story
- At least **three symbols or images** that represent important characters, events, themes, settings, or conflicts from the book
- One meaningful quote from the book
- A short explanation of your design

My Cover Page Explanation

Explain what your images, symbols, colors, or design choices represent. Be specific.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Quote from the Book:
"_____"

Page Number: _____

Writing Expectations

You must write TWO essays total this summer:
• ONE opinion essay
• ONE explanatory essay

Choose one topic for each essay. You may use a topic from the original assignment or from the additional topic choices.

Each essay should be at least 1½–2 full pages. Students entering Grades 7–8 should aim for 2–3 full pages.

Use the planning pages and proofreading checklist for both essays. Your work should be organized, specific, and written in your own words.

Middle School Summer Writing Assignment

Name: _____
Class: _____
Date: _____

Directions

You must complete **two essays** over the summer:

- Choose **one Opinion Writing prompt**
- Choose **one Explanatory Writing prompt**

Each essay must be **2–3 full pages long** and completed separately.

For each essay, include:

- A clear introduction that introduces the topic and states your main idea
- At least **two body paragraphs** with specific examples, explanations, and details
- A conclusion that brings your ideas together
- Complete sentences, organized paragraphs, and correct punctuation
- A completed planning page and proofreading checklist

You may use personal experiences, books, movies, school experiences, observations, or facts you already know. If you use outside research, list your source(s).

Choose Your Two Prompts

<u>Opinion Writing: Choose One</u>

Prompt 1: Should middle school students have homework every night?

State your opinion. Explain whether homework is helpful, unnecessary, or should be limited. Use examples from your own experience or what you have observed.

Prompt 2: Should students be allowed to use phones during the school day?

Take a clear position. Explain when phones should be allowed, when they should not be allowed, and why.

My Opinion Prompt Choice: _____

Explanatory Writing: Choose One

Prompt 3: What makes someone a strong friend?

Explain the qualities that make a person a good friend. Use examples from real life, books, movies, or your own experiences.

Prompt 4: Explain a challenge you have faced or seen someone else face.

Describe the challenge, how the person handled it, what made it difficult, and what was learned from the experience.

My Explanatory Prompt Choice: _____

Essay 1: Opinion Writing Planning Page

My Prompt: _____

Step 1: My Opinion

What is your position or opinion?

Step 2: Introduction

How will you introduce your topic and get the reader interested?

My thesis or main claim:

Step 3: Body Paragraph Plan

Body Paragraph 1

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my opinion?

Body Paragraph 2

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my opinion?

Optional Body Paragraph 3

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my opinion?

Step 4: Conclusion

What final thought do you want to leave with your reader?

Essay 2: Explanatory Writing Planning Page

My Prompt: _____

Step 1: Main Idea

What is the main idea you want your reader to understand?

Step 2: Introduction

How will you introduce your topic and get the reader interested?

My thesis or main idea:

Step 3: Body Paragraph Plan

Body Paragraph 1

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my main idea?

Body Paragraph 2

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my main idea?

Optional Body Paragraph 3

Main point:

Example, detail, or experience I will use:

How does this support my main idea?

Step 4: Conclusion

What final thought, lesson, or message do you want to leave with your reader?

Additional Writing Topic Choices

You must write TWO essays total:
• ONE opinion essay
• ONE explanatory essay

Choose one topic from the original assignment OR one topic below for each type.
Do not write every topic. Use the planning pages and proofreading checklist for both essays.

Opinion Writing: Choose One
1. Should school start later in the morning?
2. Should students have a longer summer break or a longer school year with more breaks?
3. Should schools require uniforms?
4. Should students be allowed to listen to music while doing independent work?
5. Is it better to work alone or in a group for school projects?

Explanatory Writing: Choose One
1. Explain how to learn a skill you know well, such as a sport, game, hobby, or activity.
2. Explain what makes a good leader.
3. Explain how technology has changed the way young people communicate.
4. Explain an important tradition in your family, culture, school, or community.
5. Explain how a person can manage stress or stay organized during a busy school week.

My Opinion Topic: _____
My Explanatory Topic: _____

Proofreading Checklist

Complete this checklist for **both essays** before submitting.

Ideas and Organization

☐ I answered the prompt fully.
☐ My introduction clearly introduces my topic.
☐ I included a clear thesis, claim, or main idea.
☐ Each body paragraph has one focused main point.
☐ I used specific examples, details, or experiences.
☐ I explained how my examples support my main idea.
☐ My conclusion brings my ideas together.
☐ My paragraphs are in a logical order.

Writing and Grammar

☐ I used complete sentences.
☐ I checked capitalization at the beginning of each sentence.
☐ I checked punctuation at the end of each sentence.
☐ I checked spelling, especially commonly confused words.
☐ I used transition words to connect my ideas.
☐ I avoided repeating the same words too often.
☐ I read my essay aloud or had someone else read it.

Final Check

☐ I completed one Opinion Writing essay.
☐ I completed one Explanatory Writing essay.
☐ Each essay is 2–3 full pages long.
☐ My name is on both essays.
☐ My handwriting or typing is neat and easy to read.
☐ I am submitting my best work.

Name: _____

Nonfiction Reading Test
The Pony Express

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

In this age of texts and tweets, it is easy to send messages. You just press a few buttons, and boom! Your message is sent. The person to whom you sent it will get it in just a few seconds. Distance is no longer an issue. But things weren't always so easy.

In 1848 gold was found in California. Thousands of people rushed there to get some. Many people liked living there and decided to stay. But there wasn't a whole lot between California and Missouri, where the nearest trains ran. The train line to California wasn't finished until 1869. It took a long time to ride a horse to Missouri.

Imagine that it is the year 1860. You have moved to California to open a shop. Most of your family stayed back East. Your shop is doing well and now you want to your family to join you. How do you get news to them? There's no phone, no train, and you can't leave your shop for too long. What do you do? Well, you could use the Pony Express.

In 1860 and 1861, the Pony Express was the fastest way to get news to and from the West. The trail that they rode was around 2000 miles long. It took most people weeks or months to ride that far. The Pony Express could make the trip in just ten days. Those speeds were unheard of at the time. So how did they do it? Well, they had a good system.



The Pony Express had 184 stations along the trail. The stations were around ten miles apart. This is about how far a horse could run at a gallop before tiring. The rider would switch to a new horse at each station. He would only take his mail pouch with him. Every 75-100 miles, the rider would get to a home station. At each home station, riders would rest. Before resting, he would give his mail pouch to a new rider. The mail never stopped moving, even while the horses and riders rested.

It was tough to ride for the Pony Express. Each rider had to weigh less than 125 pounds. Speed was the key. Most of the riders were teenage boys. They rode at a fast pace for up to 100 miles a day. If there were an emergency, one might have to ride 200 miles in a day. The ride could be rough and dangerous. Attacks by Native Americans were common. But in its time running, the Pony Express only lost one mail pouch.

The Pony Express filled an important role for a time, but it did not last. The Civil War started in April of 1861. This was bad news for the owners. The worst for them was yet to come. On October 24th, 1861, the first telegraph line to California was finished. This linked them to the rest of the country. People could send messages in an instant. Two days later the Pony Express closed. But the lore of the brave riders lives on even today.

1. Which happened first?
a. Settlers rushed to California to find gold.
b. The Pony Express was started.
c. The train line to California was finished.
d. The first telegraph line to California was finished.

2. Which best explains why Pony Express riders had to weigh less than 125 pounds?
a. Heavier men were more expensive.
b. Horses were scared of heavier men.
c. Heavier men scared customers.
d. Horses could move quicker with lighter men.

3. How fast could the Pony Express take a letter from California to Missouri?
a. 24 hours
b. ten days
c. twenty days
d. one month

4. Why were the Pony Express stations about ten miles apart?
a. This was about as far as a man could walk in a single day.
b. This was as far as a man could ride on a horse in a day.
c. This was so the riders wouldn't get so lonely at night.
d. This was as far as a horse could run without getting tired.

5. Which was probably **not** a requirement to be a rider for the Pony Express?
a. You had to be light.
b. You had to be an expert horse rider.
c. You had to be able to read and write.
d. You had to be brave in the face of danger.

6. Which best describes that main idea of the fifth paragraph?
a. It is about how many Pony Express stations there were.
b. It is about how the Pony Express carried mail so quickly.
c. It is about how the Pony Express riders slept in the stations.
d. It is about how far the Pony Express riders would go in a day.

7. Which of these ended the Pony Express?
a. The telegraph
b. The Civil War
c. Wars with Native Americans
d. The train line

8. About how far did Pony Express riders travel on a usual day?
a. 10 miles
b. 200 miles
c. 100 miles
d. 2000 miles

9. How many mail pouches did the Pony Express lose?
a. The Pony Express never lost a mail pouch.
b. One
c. Two
d. Too many to keep track

10. Which title best describes the author's purpose in writing this?
a. *Out of Touch: Why Phones are Faster Than Horses*
b. *The Pony Express: Stories of Their Bravery in Battle*
c. *Back in Touch: Why We Should Use Horses to Deliver the Mail*
d. *The Pony Express: About the 1860's Fastest Mail Service*

1. How was the Pony Express able to move letters across the country so quickly? Refer to the text in your answer.

2. How did the California Gold Rush help to create a need for the Pony Express? Use the text to support your response.

3. Why was the Pony Express no longer needed? Refer to the text in your answer.

Name: _____

The Statue of Liberty | Nonfiction Reading Test 5

More than a million people immigrate to the United States to start new lives every year, and if they are arriving in New York, one of the first sights that they will see is the Statue of Liberty. The Statue of Liberty stands on Liberty Island, near Manhattan in New York. Though she is often thought to be resident of New York, Liberty Island is actually federal property, which means that the Statue of Liberty belongs to the whole country. The Statue of Liberty is not only the tallest statue in America, it is also one of the most recognizable American symbols.

The Statue of Liberty is huge. From the tip of the torch to the pedestal on which she stands, she is just over 151 feet tall. If you include the pedestal in your measurement, she stands more than 305 feet off of the ground. That's more than 30 basketball hoops or an entire football field. Her waist size is 35 feet, which would make it awfully tough to find pants, and the tablet she holds is 23 feet long. Don't worry though; she hasn't had any trouble holding that tablet yet with her 8 foot index finger. Talk about heavy handed…

Though America financed and built the pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty stands, the statue itself was a gift from France. In this way the complete work, much like the United States, is a product of both American and French contributions. At one time America was ruled by the British. The founding fathers of America chose to fight against Great Britain for the independence of their country. France supported America by providing money, men, and weapons of war. Had it not been for French contributions during the Revolutionary War, America would not exist in the way that it does today; therefore, it is quite fitting that the Statue of Liberty, which represents freedom, came to being by a joint American and French effort. On October 28th, 1886, just over one-hundred years after America declared its independence from Great Britain, the Statue of Liberty was completed and dedicated by its designer, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.

Perhaps no person did more to bring the statue into being than Bartholdi. Not only did Bartholdi gain both French and American approval for the project, he led the French fundraising efforts and designed the appearance of the statue. The appearance of the Statue of Liberty is somewhat derived from Libertas, the Roman goddess of freedom. The torch represents how liberty enlightens the world. The seven points or rays coming from the top of the crown represent the sun, the seven seas, the seven continents, and (as with the torch) how liberty enlightens the world. Though much of the statue was modeled after depictions of goddesses, Bartholdi modeled the face after his mother. Now that's a Mother's Day gift that's hard to top.



Liberty Enlightening the World

Though Bartholdi was responsible for the external appearance of statute, the internal design can be largely credited to innovative designer, Gustave Eiffel. Though Mr. Eiffel is best known for his contributions to a tower in Paris that is named after him, he also engineered the internal structure that holds up the Statue of Liberty. Eiffel chose to use a flexible structure, so that changes in the temperature and strong winds from the ocean would not cause the statue to crack. Because of Eiffel's crafty design, the Statue of Liberty may sway as much as three inches on a windy day. If the winds exceed 50 miles per hour, the torch may sway five inches. Eiffel is also responsible for including two spiraling staircases on the interior of the statue to help visitors reach the observation point in the crown.

While most people appreciate the Statue of Liberty today, during its construction in the 1870s, many Americans were critical of the project. Some took issue with the fact that Bartholdi was French. They believed that American monuments should be designed and constructed by Americans. Others felt that the statue wasn't much of a gift since it required Americans to foot the bill for the pedestal. After the Panic of 1873, America fell into a deep economic depression that lasted through much of the 1870s. (During an economic depression people spend less money and it is harder to find jobs.) Because the nation was going through a depression, many Americans thought that money should not be spent to support a giant French statue. I think most Americans would now agree that it was a good investment.

Directions: Read each question carefully and choose the best answer. Refer to the text if necessary. Write your answer on the provided space.

1. Which is **not** represented by the seven points on the crown of the Statue of Liberty according to the text? _____

a. The points represent how liberty enlightens the world.
b. The points represent the seven continents.
c. The points represent the sun.
d. The points represent the seven days of creation.

2. Information in the second paragraph is *mainly* organized using which text structure? _____

a. Spatial order
b. Order of importance
c. Chronological order
d. Cause and effect

3. Which *best* expresses the main idea of the third paragraph? _____

a. France assisted the United States in the Revolutionary War.
b. The statue was a joint effort between France and the U.S. just like U.S. independence.
c. The U.S. was once a colony of Great Britain.
d. The statue of liberty was dedicated 100 years after America declared its independence.

4. Which is **not** a reason why people criticized the Statue of Liberty during its construction? _____

a. Some people felt that the statue should have been bigger.
b. Some people felt that the statue should have been built by an American.
c. Some people felt that France should have paid for the statue and the pedestal.
d. Some people felt that America shouldn't spend money on a statue during a depression.

5. Which of the following statements is false? _____

a. The tablet that the Statue of Liberty holds is 23 feet long.
b. The Statue of Liberty's waste size is 35 feet.
c. The pedestal underneath the Statue of Liberty is 305 tall.
d. The Statue of Liberty is over 151 feet tall.

6. Which *best* expresses the author's purpose in writing the last paragraph? _____

a. To describe what a depression is
b. To show that some people did not think very highly of the French
c. To argue why the Statue of Liberty was a good investment
d. To explain why some people were against building the statue.

7. Which of the following is an opinion? _____

a. The Statue of Liberty cost a tremendous amount of money to build.
b. The Statue of Liberty was sculpted by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.
c. The Statue of Liberty is over 151 feet tall.
d. The Statue of Liberty may sway 3 inches on a windy day.

8. Which of the following statements is false? _____

a. The guy who built the Eiffel Tower also designed the inside of the Statue of Liberty.
b. The Eiffel Tower was a gift to the Americans from the people of France.
c. The Statue of Liberty is located on federal property.
d. Bartholdi got permission from both the French and the US to build the statue.

9. Which of the following is **not** one of the ways that Bartholdi contributed to the statue? _____

a. He designed the interior of the statue.
b. He gained approval for the project from the U.S. and from France.
c. He sculpted the exterior of the statue.

d. He gained financing to complete the project from France.

10. Which *best* expresses the author's purpose in writing this text? _____
a. To persuade people to visit the Statue of Liberty
b. To inform readers with interesting facts about the Statue of Liberty
c. To entertain readers with stories about the construction of the Statue of Liberty
d. To describe the appearance of the Statue of Liberty.

11. Why is it significant or important that the Statue of Liberty is a product of both French and American efforts? Make your point, quote text to support it, explain your quote, and connect it back to your point.

12. Why were Gustave Eiffel's contributions to the Statue of Liberty important? Make your point, quote text to support your point, explain your quote, and connect it back to your point.

13. Why were some Americans against the construction of the Statue of Liberty? Make your point, quote text to support your point, explain your quote, and connect it back to your point.

14. Why does the Statue of Liberty look the way that she does? Make your point, quote text to support your point, explain your quote, and connect it back to your point.

The Fir Tree

By Hans Christian Andersen

Directions: Read the short story and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers.

Out in the woods stood a nice little Fir Tree. The place he had was a very good one: the sun shone on him: as to fresh air, there was enough of that, and round him grew many large-sized **comrades**[1], pines as well as firs. But the little Fir wanted so very much to be a grown-up tree.

He did not think of the warm sun and of the fresh air; he did not care for the little cottage children that ran about and **prattled**[2] when they were in the woods looking for wild-strawberries. The children often came with a whole pitcher full of berries, or a long row of them threaded on a straw, and sat down near the young tree and said, "Oh, how pretty he is! What a nice little fir!" But this was what the Tree could not bear to hear.

At the end of a year he had shot up a good deal, and after another year he was another long bit taller; for with fir trees one can always tell by the shoots how many years old they are.

"Oh! Were I but such a high tree as the others are," sighed he. "Then I should be able to spread out my branches, and with the tops to look into the wide world! Then would the birds build nests among my branches: and when there was a breeze, I could bend with as much **stateliness**[3] as the others!"

Neither the sunbeams, nor the birds, nor the red clouds which morning and evening sailed above him, gave the little Tree any pleasure.

In winter, when the snow lay glittering on the ground, a hare would often come leaping along, and jump right over the little Tree. Oh, that made him so angry! But two winters were past, and in the third the Tree was so large that the hare was obliged to go round it. "To grow and grow, to get older and be tall," thought the Tree--"that, after all, is the most delightful thing in the world!"

In autumn the wood-cutters always came and felled some of the largest trees. This happened every year; and the young Fir Tree, that had now grown to a very comely size, trembled at the sight; for the magnificent great trees fell to the earth with noise and cracking, the branches were lopped off, and the trees looked long and bare; they were hardly to be recognized; and then they were laid in carts, and the horses dragged them out of the wood.

Where did they go to? What became of them?

In spring, when the swallows and the storks came, the Tree asked them, "Don't you know where they have been taken? Have you not met them anywhere?"

The swallows did not know anything about it; but the Stork looked musing, nodded his head, and said, "Yes; I think I know; I met many ships as I was flying hither from Egypt; on the ships were magnificent masts, and I venture to say that they smelt like fir. I may congratulate you, for they lifted themselves on high most majestically!"

"Oh, were I but old enough to fly across the sea! But how does the sea look in reality? What is it like?"

"That would take a long time to explain," said the Stork, and with these words off he went.

"Rejoice in thy growth!" said the Sunbeams. "Rejoice in thy **vigorous**[4] growth, and in the fresh life that moves within thee!"

And the Wind kissed the Tree, and the Dew wept tears over him; but the Fir understood it not.

When Christmas came, quite young trees were cut down: trees which often were not even as large or of the same age as this Fir Tree, who could never rest, but always wanted to be off. These young trees, and they were always the finest looking, retained their branches; they were laid on carts, and the horses drew them out of the wood.

"Where are they going to?" asked the Fir. "They are not taller than I; there was one indeed that was considerably shorter; and why do they retain all their branches? Whither are they taken?"

"We know! We know!" chirped the Sparrows. "We have peeped in at the windows in the town below! We know whither they are taken! The greatest splendor and the greatest magnificence one can imagine await them. We peeped through the windows, and saw them planted in the middle of the warm room and ornamented with the most splendid things, with gilded apples, with gingerbread, with toys, and many hundred lights!"

"And then?" asked the Fir Tree, trembling in every bough. "And then? What happens then?"

"We did not see anything more: it was **incomparably**[5] beautiful."

"I would **fain**[6] know if I am destined for so glorious a career," cried the Tree, rejoicing. "That is still better than to cross the sea! What a longing do I suffer! Were Christmas but come! I am now tall, and my branches spread like the others that were carried off last year! Oh! were I but already on the cart! Were I in the warm room with all the splendor and magnificence! Yes; then something better, something still grander, will surely follow, or wherefore should they thus ornament me? Something better, something still grander must follow--but what? Oh, how I long, how I suffer! I do not know myself what is the matter with me!"

"Rejoice in our presence!" said the Air and the Sunlight. "Rejoice in thy own fresh youth!"

Vocabulary

1. **comrades**: companions or associates
2. **prattle**: to speak in a childish manner; to babble
3. **stateliness**: the quality of being dignified or worthy of respect
4. **vigorous**: rapid of growth
5. **incomparable**: beyond comparison; matchless or unsurpassed
6. **fain**: to be delighted or glad

But the Tree did not rejoice at all; he grew and grew, and was green both winter and summer. People that saw him said, "What a fine tree!" and towards Christmas he was one of the first that was cut down. The axe struck deep into the very pith; the Tree fell to the earth with a sigh; he felt a pang--it was like a swoon; he could not think of happiness, for he was sorrowful at being separated from his home, from the place where he had sprung up. He well knew that he should never see his dear old comrades, the little bushes and flowers around him, anymore; perhaps not even the birds! The departure was not at all agreeable.

The Tree only came to himself when he was unloaded in a court-yard with the other trees, and heard a man say, "That one is splendid! We don't want the others." Then two servants came in rich livery and carried the Fir Tree into a large and splendid drawing-room. Portraits were hanging on the walls, and near the white porcelain stove stood two large Chinese vases with lions on the covers. There, too, were large easy-chairs, silken sofas, large tables full of picture-books and full of toys, worth hundreds and hundreds of crowns--at least the children said so. And the Fir Tree was stuck upright in a cask that was filled with sand; but no one could see that it was a cask, for green cloth was hung all round it, and it stood on a large gaily-colored carpet. Oh! how the Tree quivered! What was to happen? The servants, as well as the young ladies, decorated it. On one branch there hung little nets cut out of colored paper, and each net was filled with sugarplums; and among the other boughs gilded apples and walnuts were suspended, looking as though they had grown there, and little blue and white tapers were placed among the leaves. Dolls that looked for all the world like men--the Tree had never beheld such before--were seen among the foliage, and at the very top a large star of gold tinsel was fixed. It was really splendid--beyond description splendid.

"This evening!" they all said. "How it will shine this evening!"

"Oh!" thought the Tree. "If the evening were but come! If the tapers were but lighted! And then I wonder what will happen! Perhaps the other trees from the forest will come to look at me! Perhaps the sparrows will beat against the windowpanes! I wonder if I shall take root here, and winter and summer stand covered with ornaments!"

He knew very much about the matter--but he was so impatient that for sheer longing he got a pain in his back, and this with trees is the same thing as a headache with us.

The candles were now lighted--what brightness! What splendor! The Tree trembled so in every bough that one of the tapers set fire to the foliage. It blazed up famously.

"Help! Help!" cried the young ladies, and they quickly put out the fire.

Now the Tree did not even dare tremble. What a state he was in! He was so uneasy lest he should lose something of his splendor, that he was quite bewildered amidst the glare and brightness; when suddenly both folding-doors opened and a troop of children rushed in as if they would upset the Tree. The older persons followed quietly; the little ones stood quite still. But it was only for a moment; then they shouted that the whole place re-echoed with their rejoicing; they danced round the Tree, and one present after the other was pulled off.

"What are they about?" thought the Tree. "What is to happen now!" And the lights burned down to the very branches, and as they burned down they were put out one after the other, and then the children had permission to plunder the Tree. So they fell upon it with such violence that all its branches cracked; if it had not been fixed firmly in the ground, it would certainly have tumbled down.

The children danced about with their beautiful playthings; no one looked at the Tree except the old nurse, who peeped between the branches; but it was only to see if there was a fig or an apple left that had been forgotten.

"A story! A story!" cried the children, drawing a little fat man towards the Tree. He seated himself under it and said, "Now we are in the shade, and the Tree can listen too. But I shall tell only one story. Now which will you have; that about Ivedy-Avedy, or about Humpy-Dumpy, who tumbled downstairs, and yet after all came to the throne and married the princess?"

"Ivedy-Avedy," cried some; "Humpy-Dumpy," cried the others. There was such a bawling and screaming--the Fir Tree alone was silent, and he thought to himself, "Am I not to bawl with the rest? Am I to do nothing whatever?" for he was one of the company, and had done what he had to do.

And the man told about Humpy-Dumpy that tumbled down, who notwithstanding came to the throne, and at last married the princess. And the children clapped their hands, and cried. "Oh, go on! Do go on!" They wanted to hear about Ivedy-Avedy too, but the little man only told them about Humpy-Dumpy. The Fir Tree stood quite still and absorbed in thought; the birds in the wood had never related the like of this. "Humpy-Dumpy fell downstairs, and yet he married the princess! Yes, yes! That's the way of the world!" thought the Fir Tree, and believed it all, because the man who told the story was so good-looking. "Well, well! who knows, perhaps I may fall downstairs, too, and get a princess as wife!" And he looked forward with joy to the morrow, when he hoped to be decked out again with lights, playthings, fruits, and tinsel.

"I won't tremble to-morrow!" thought the Fir Tree. "I will enjoy to the full all my splendor! To-morrow I shall hear again the story of Humpy-Dumpy, and perhaps that of Ivedy-Avedy too." And the whole night the Tree stood still and in deep thought.

In the morning the servant and the housemaid came in.

"Now then the splendor will begin again," thought the Fir. But they dragged him out of the room, and up the stairs into the loft: and here, in a dark corner, where no daylight could enter, they left him. "What's the meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear now, I wonder?" And he leaned against the wall lost in reverie. Time enough had he too for his reflections; for days and nights passed on, and nobody came up; and when at last somebody did come, it was only to put some great trunks in a corner, out of the way. There stood the Tree quite hidden; it seemed as if he had been entirely forgotten.

"'Tis now winter out-of-doors!" thought the Tree. "The earth is hard and covered with snow; men cannot plant me now, and therefore I have been put up here under shelter till the spring-time comes! How thoughtful that is! How kind man is, after all! If it only were not so dark here, and so terribly lonely! Not even a hare! And out in the woods it was so pleasant, when the snow was on the ground, and the hare leaped by; yes--even when he jumped over me; but I did not like it then! It is really terribly lonely here!"

"Squeak! Squeak!" said a little Mouse, at the same moment, peeping out of his hole. And then another little one came. They snuffed about the Fir Tree, and rustled among the branches.

"It is dreadfully cold," said the Mouse. "But for that, it would be delightful here, old Fir, wouldn't it?"

"I am by no means old," said the Fir Tree. "There's many a one considerably older than I am."

"Where do you come from," asked the Mice; "and what can you do?" They were so extremely curious. "Tell us about the most beautiful spot on the earth. Have you never been there? Were you never in the larder, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from above; where one dances about on tallow candles: that place where one enters lean, and comes out again fat and portly?"

"I know no such place," said the Tree. "But I know the wood, where the sun shines and where the little birds sing." And then he told all about his youth; and the little Mice had never heard the like before; and they listened and said,

"Well, to be sure! How much you have seen! How happy you must have been!"

"I!" said the Fir Tree, thinking over what he had himself related. "Yes, in reality those were happy times." And then he told about Christmas-eve, when he was decked out with cakes and candles.

"Oh," said the little Mice, "how fortunate you have been, old Fir Tree!"

"I am by no means old," said he. "I came from the wood this winter; I am in my prime, and am only rather short for my age."

"What delightful stories you know," said the Mice: and the next night they came with four other little Mice, who were to hear what the Tree recounted: and the more he related, the more he remembered himself; and it appeared as if those times had really been happy times. "But they may still come--they may still come! Humpy-Dumpy fell downstairs, and yet he got a princess!" and he thought at the moment of a nice little Birch Tree growing out in the woods: to the Fir, that would be a real charming princess.

"Who is Humpy-Dumpy?" asked the Mice. So then the Fir Tree told the whole fairy tale, for he could remember every single word of it; and the little Mice jumped for joy up to the very top of the Tree. Next night two more Mice came, and on Sunday two Rats even; but they said the stories were not interesting, which vexed the little Mice; and they, too, now began to think them not so very amusing either.

"Do you know only one story?" asked the Rats.

"Only that one," answered the Tree. "I heard it on my happiest evening; but I did not then know how happy I was."

"It is a very stupid story! Don't you know one about bacon and tallow candles? Can't you tell any larder stories?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Then good-bye," said the Rats; and they went home.

At last the little Mice stayed away also; and the Tree sighed: "After all, it was very pleasant when the sleek little Mice sat round me, and listened to what I told them. Now that too is over. But I will take good care to enjoy myself when I am brought out again."

But when was that to be? Why, one morning there came a quantity of people and set to work in the loft. The trunks were moved, the tree was pulled out and thrown--rather hard, it is true--down on the floor, but a man drew him towards the stairs, where the daylight shone.

"Now a merry life will begin again," thought the Tree. He felt the fresh air, the first sunbeam--and now he was out in the courtyard. All passed so quickly, there was so much going on around him, the Tree quite forgot to look to himself. The court adjoined a garden, and all was in flower; the roses hung so fresh and odorous over the balustrade, the lindens were in blossom, the Swallows flew by, and said, "Quirre-vit! My husband is come!" but it was not the Fir Tree that they meant.

"Now, then, I shall really enjoy life," said he exultingly, and spread out his branches; but, alas, they were all withered and yellow! It was in a corner that he lay, among weeds and nettles. The golden star of tinsel was still on the top of the Tree, and glittered in the sunshine.

In the court-yard some of the merry children were playing who had danced at Christmas round the Fir Tree, and were so glad at the sight of him. One of the youngest ran and tore off the golden star.

"Only look what is still on the ugly old Christmas tree!" said he, trampling on the branches, so that they all cracked beneath his feet.

And the Tree beheld all the beauty of the flowers, and the freshness in the garden; he beheld himself, and wished he had remained in his dark corner in the loft; he thought of his first youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas-eve, and of the little Mice who had listened with so much pleasure to the story of Humpy-Dumpy.

"'Tis over--'tis past!" said the poor Tree. "Had I but rejoiced when I had reason to do so! But now 'tis past, 'tis past!"

And the gardener's boy chopped the Tree into small pieces; there was a whole heap lying there. The wood flamed up splendidly under the large brewing copper, and it sighed so deeply! Each sigh was like a shot.

The boys played about in the court, and the youngest wore the gold star on his breast which the Tree had had on the happiest evening of his life. However, that was over now--the Tree gone, the story at an end. All, all was over--every tale must end at last.

Name: _____

The Fir Tree | Reading Quiz

1. Which character trait best applies to the Fir Tree?

a. Thoughtful b. Brave c. Impatient d. Clever

2. Which statement about the Fir Tree is **FALSE**?

a. The Fir is curious about the fallen trees.
b. The Fir gets angry at a hare for hopping over him.
c. The Fir understands the Sun, Wind, and Dew.
d. The Fir talks to birds.

3. Which statement best summarizes that Fir Tree's time in the woods?

a. He was the most popular tree in the forest until he ran out of fruit.
b. He had everything he needed but he didn't appreciate it.
c. He was in constant danger but he made the best of it.
d. He had such a happy childhood that he didn't want to grow up.

4. Who purchases the Fir Tree?

a. A rich family b. A city official c. A poor family d. A logging company

5. Which best describes how the Fir Tree responds to being decorated?

a. He is angry about being taken from the woods and almost starts the house on fire.
b. He doesn't even notice that he is being decorated because he is so ungrateful.
c. He feels uncomfortable and misses being in the woods.
d. He enjoys the attention and hopes that the rest of his life will be like this.

6. What statement about the Fir Tree is **TRUE**?

a. The Fir Tree lives his life to the fullest.
b. The Fir Tree has a lot of foolish ideas.
c. The Fir Tree knows his place in the world.
d. The Fir Tree gets along well with rats.

7. Which figurative language technique is used in the following sentence?

"*Each sigh was like a shot.*"

a. Simile b. Metaphor c. Hyperbole d. Rhyme

8. When does the Fir Tree have his most significant change in character?

a. While he is talking with the sparrows
b. While he is talking with the stork
c. While he is talking with the mice
d. While he is fully decorated and lit

9. Which is an example of **dramatic irony**?

a. The rats only want to hear stories about the larder.
b. The Fir thinks that man is waiting for spring to replant him.
c. The boy who stomps on the tree wears the star on his shirt.
d. The Fir spends several months in the loft of the home.

10. Which statement best expresses a **theme** of this text?

a. Life is not about falling down; it's about getting back up.
b. If you dream it, and you believe it, then you can achieve it.
c. If you're failing to plan then you're planning to fail.
d. Live for today because tomorrow is not promised.

Extended Response: On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following question using at least two quotes.

What lesson does this text teach readers and how does it teach the lesson?

Short Responses for "The Fir Tree" by Hans Christian Andersen

1. Theme / Message
What lesson does the fir tree learn by the end of the story? Use one specific detail from the text to support your answer.

2. Character Change
How do the fir tree's feelings about its life change from the beginning to the end of the story? Use one moment from the beginning and one from the end to explain.

3. Symbolism / Meaning
The fir tree is never satisfied with where it is. What does this suggest about people or human behavior? Use one detail from the story to support your response.

4. Conflict
What is the fir tree's main problem or conflict in the story?Use one detail from the text to explain.

5. Author's Craft
How does the author show that the fir tree is ungrateful for its life? Use one specific example from the story.

6. Important Moment
Describe a moment in the story when the fir tree could have been happy but wasn't. What does this reveal about its character? Use a detail from the text.