

8th Grade ELA/SS Summer Reading Project

Dear Parents/Caretakers,

First off, congratulations on your children reaching 8th Grade! It has been a pleasure working with them as they develop into young adults, and being there to present and guide them through quality academic material which helps expand and hone their written and critical thinking skills. We look forward to the upcoming year, and the opportunities it presents.

As learning isn't just confined to the classroom, but instead is a continuous, year-long process, we've collaborated with each other to create a summer reading and writing project which will both develop students' critical analysis skills and content knowledge. The intent for this project is to help ease students into the expectations of 8th grade level work, while also providing them an engaging learning experience to help keep their minds active during the summer break.

For this project, students will need to acquire a copy of *Rifles for Watie* by Harold Keith, and will also be provided a prompt for a historical research paper to complete which corresponds to the novel. *Rifles for Watie* is widely available at all public libraries, and for purchase online (both new, used, and as an ebook). This research project will be due the first day of class, and material from the book will be discussed in both ELA and Social Studies.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email us at your convenience. Thank you for your time, and have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Ms. Benkert and Mr. Metzling

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Writing Prompt and Directions:

In Historical Fiction, research into historical figures, locations, events, and culture is necessary in order to best enhance the fictional narrative. While our protagonist, Jefferson Davis Bussey, is fictional, the majority of characters he meets in the Union and Confederate armies were historical figures as well. The purpose of this reports will be to research these figures in order to understand both their historical significance and how their use helped enhance the plot of the novel.

In this report, you will:

1. Select a historical figure present in *Rifles for Watie*
2. Give biographical information on their life before the Civil War
3. Discuss their historical activities during the American Civil War, and their relative importance to the overall war effort of their respective side (Union or Confederate)
4. Compare the historical data you've researched about this individual to how they are portrayed in the novel
5. Discuss whether or not you find the novel's portrayal of the individual an accurate one.

Your report should be approximately 3-5 pages in length, and must contain a bibliography referencing both the novel and all other sources you use to provide historical research on your selected character. Your essay should be in 12-point, Times New Roman font, and double-spaced. Your essay must be printed out and submitted to your homeroom teacher on the first day of the 2024-25 school year.