

DSST: Cedar Incoming 7th Grade Reading Project
Summer 2026

The DSST: Cedar 7th grade reading curriculum focuses heavily on the topic of “Coming of Age”. This summer, you will prepare for your 7th grade reading class by reading a book that focuses on this topic and writing an essay that analyzes how it is used to convey a theme. You may select from the following books for your essay:

Mild	Medium	Spicy
<i>American Born Chinese</i> – Gene Luen Yang (3.3)	<i>Gathering Blue</i> – Lois Lowry (5.0)	<i>Huckleberry Finn</i> – Mark Twain (6.6)
<i>Fallen Angels</i> – Walter Dean Myers (4.2)	<i>Freak the Mighty</i> – Rodman Philbrick (5.0)	<i>I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban</i> – Malala Yousafzai (7.1)
	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> – Ray Bradbury (5.2)	

Coming of Age is the process generally thought of as the time in a person’s life when they transition from childhood to adulthood. It’s a common genre in writing and film that usually focuses on the moral or psychological growth that the protagonist (main character) undergoes.

Essay Requirements:

Your essay should be 5 paragraphs in length. It may be typed or hand-written and should contain an MLA header. It is due the first day of school and must be submitted via paper copy. Use the following guidelines to format your essay:

Intro Paragraph:

- Introduce the most important elements of the novel – what is the setting/context of the novel, who are the main characters and what are the basic elements of the plot.
- Write a thesis statement in the following format: **The novel _____ uses a “Coming of Age” story in order to convey the theme of _____ by _____.**

Body Paragraph 1:

- Who is the character that most “Comes of Age”? In what way do they change? Who were they and who did they become? Why does it matter?

Body Paragraph 2:

- What are the critical events that led to the changes in the protagonist, or main character? How did the key event or events lead to the character’s change, and who might they have been if they did not experience the key events that led to the change?

Body Paragraph 3:

- What is the theme or message that the author develops through the character’s growth over the course of the novel? How do they teach that theme, and how do they hope their audience is impacted by the theme?

Closure:

- Restate and summarize the main ideas of your essay in a new way
- Restate and summarize your thesis statement

Consult the rubric on the next page to see how your essay will be graded! This essay will count as a **formative grade** in your first trimester gradebook.

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Summer Reading Project Grading Rubric (turn in with your essay)

Student Name: _____

	5	3	1
Theme Analysis	<p>An appropriate and thoughtful theme is selected from the book that indicates true close reading and comprehension of the novel</p> <p>Theme is analyzed through the lens of characters and events in a way that indicates true close reading and comprehension of the novel</p>	<p>Theme is present, but lacking in accuracy or intellectual development</p> <p>Development of theme somewhat focused on the topic of "Coming of Age"</p>	<p>Theme not present</p> <p>Analysis of theme is absent or unrelated to the topic of "Coming of Age"</p>
Structure/ Organization	<p>Paragraphs are clearly organized</p> <p>Writing is contained within the margins</p> <p>Essay is double-spaced</p> <p>Quotes highlighted</p> <p>Requirements for each paragraph met</p>	<p>1-2 criteria are lacking from column 1</p>	<p>3 or more criteria are lacking from column 1</p>
Editing/ Conventions	<p>Few or no errors in grammar and conventions present, a clear effort at editing was made</p>	<p>Errors in formatting, spelling or grammar are noticeable, but do not impact comprehension of essay</p>	<p>Errors in formatting, spelling or grammar are substantial and significantly impact readability of essay</p>
Quotes and Text Usage	<p>Essay references text at least 3x with direct quotations</p> <p>Quotes chosen support key points made in argument and are thoughtfully selected and explained</p>	<p>Essay references text 3x with direct quotations</p> <p>Quotes chosen are not fully contextualized or explained for reader</p>	<p>Essay is lacking in quotes, or contextualization of quotes is not attempted. Quotes seem out of place if present.</p>
Completion	<p>Essay contains 5 complete paragraphs</p> <p>Body paragraphs contain 5-8 sentences. Sentences are not repetitive and each offer new ideas or development</p>	<p>Essay contains 5 complete paragraphs.</p> <p>Body paragraphs contain repetitive or low-value sentences that do not add to meaning/development</p>	<p>1 or more paragraphs is missing or incomplete</p> <p>Body paragraphs do not meet minimum requirements for length</p>

Total Points out of 25: _____ (multiply by 4 for final grade)