



**Summer Reading & Writing
For students entering 8th grade**

Read the books listed below and complete the attached Reading Guide assignment for each book. In addition, write five journal entries from the attached list of topics. Both assignments should be completed prior to the start of school on August 31, 2009. All reading guide responses and journal entries should be completed in a black & white marble notebook/journal.

The House of Dies Drear
Author: Virginia Hamilton

Each Little Bird That Sings
Author: Deborah Wiles

Student Choice –
Choose any book from the following list of authors:
Frank Peretti
Ted Dekker
Jerry B. Jenkins/Tim LaHaye
Marcus Zusak.
OR
Choose a book by any other Christian author.

If you have any questions please email me at coxjm2003@yahoo.com

Mrs. Cox
Middle School English teacher

Reading Guide for *The House of Dies Drear* **Author: Virginia Hamilton**

Background Information:

A huge, old, Civil War era house that was once a stop on the Underground Railroad comes alive with secret tunnels and mysterious characters. Thomas and his family are the next to discover the mysteries of this most unusual place.

Reading Responses:

Please complete all reading responses in a black & white marble notebook/journal.

1. Prior to reading write down everything you know about the Underground Railroad. (You may not know anything about the Underground Railroad. If not, list your predictions – what you think it was.)
2. Mr. Small is a history professor who desperately wants to live in the house of Dies Drear. Upon arriving at the house what are the reactions of his family? Describe their reactions using quotes and examples from the text.
3. Who is Mr. Pluto? Describe his role in the book. Use quotes and examples to support your response.
4. What motivates the Darrows to act maliciously towards the Smalls and others who previously occupied the house of Dies Drear?
5. What secrets does the house of Dies Drear hold? How are they discovered? Who discovers them?
6. Describe how Thomas and his father are alike. Use quotes and examples from the text to support your response.

Based on questions organized by Katie O'Dell, Reading Promotions Coordinator of the Oregon State Library in Multnomah County

Reading Guide for
Each Little Bird That Sings
Author: Deborah Wiles

Background Information:

Comfort Snowberger's family runs the funeral home, so she is no stranger to death. However, a series of events, beginning with the death of two of her own family members, make her rethink how to handle things and still live up to the family motto, "We Live to Serve".

Reading Responses:

Please complete all reading responses in a black & white marble notebook/journal.

1. There are many characters in the book *Each Little Bird That Sings*. Choose your favorite character. Describe the character. Use quotes or examples from the text to support your description. Go beyond just the physical description of the character and look into whom that character is, the role they have in the book, and note any changes in the character from the beginning of the book to the end of the book. Finally, write why you chose this character as your favorite.
2. Comfort prefers to conduct her thinking in her closet. On pages 71-71 the author describes to the reader what Comfort's closet, or thinking area looks like. Where do you do your best thinking? Describe your thinking area. Then write a paragraph that compares Comfort's thinking area with your thinking area. How are they the same? How are they different?
3. Although it is unusual for a funeral home to conduct a life service for an animal, why do the Snowbergers and the community hold a life service for Dismay, the dog?
4. Uncle Edisto seems to possess a wealth of knowledge and often provides words of advice and wisdom to members of the Snowberger family. On page 129 when Comfort and Declaration are in the middle of an argument, Comfort remembers that Uncle Edisto once said, "A real friend sees past the trouble and into your heart." What is your opinion of Uncle Edisto's advice? Describe a time in your life when this advice would have been meaningful.
5. Comfort writes a Life Notice to be submitted to *The Aurora County News* each time a special person in her family dies (see page 11 for Uncle Edisto's, page 20 for Aunt Florentine's, and page 217 for Dismay's life notice). After rereading their life notices, write a Life Notice for yourself.

Reading Response questions derived from Literature Circle Guide to Each Little Bird That Sings.

Reading Guide for Student Choice Book

Please write a one page summary in a black & white marble notebook/journal.

Write a 1-2 page summary of the book you've chosen. Your heading should include the title and author of the book and the reason(s) you chose to read it. Your summary should include the following subheadings: introduction, characters, plot, setting, theme, and conclusion. Use the subheadings to guide the topics of each paragraph. Please use as much detail as necessary *to show* what the book is about rather than just telling what the book is about.

Journal Writing Topics

Please choose five journal topics and write a 100 word response for each topic. Label your topic choice with the number. Please write all of your journal entries in a black & white marble notebook/journal.

1. Black opera singer Leontyne Price once said; "If you're not feeling good about yourself, what you're wearing on the outside doesn't mean a thing." What do you think she meant? Offer at least one example from your own experience that proves the truth of this statement.
2. Calvin Coolidge, the 30th President of the United States, said: "It takes a great man to be a good listener." Do you agree? Explain your answer. Do you think it's difficult for some people to be good listeners? Explain your answer. When is it most important for you to be listened to? Explain your answer.
3. "Work is what you do that sometime you won't have to do it anymore," says Alfred Polgar. "Without work all life goes rotten," said French writer Albert Camus. Make up your own definition of work and explain your answer.
4. Do you think the philosopher Platonius, from the first century B.C. meant the same thing when he said: "If I keep good character, I shall be rich enough"? Explain your answer.
5. A familiar nursery rhyme begins:
"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky"

List everything that is valuable or precious to you, and tell why you value it.
6. The story of "Puss in Boots" by Charles Perrault ends with these words: "Puss became a great lord and gave up chasing mice except just once in a while for the fun of it." List the things that you like to do "just for the fun of it." Explain your answer.
7. Nancy Thayer once wrote, "It's never too late- in fiction or in life-to revise." Explain at least one thing you would "revise", or change, in your life.

