

## 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

# Summer Reading Assignment

Each summer, Memorial JHS students are encouraged to continue working on their literacy skills. Literacy is a process of expanding one's knowledge of reading, writing, and thinking in order to develop a better understanding of oneself and the world. This process is fundamental to achieving competence in every educational subject. We hope this reminder inspires you to continue strengthening your literacy skills this summer! Students who complete any, or all, of the following recommended assignments, will receive extra credit in their English class this fall.

Memorial's English Department recommends that each student:

1. Choose the Short Story Assignment **OR** the Novel Assignment with Guided Questions.
  2. Complete the IXL Skills Practice to receive extra credit.
- **Short Story Assignment:** Students read, annotate, and write a text analysis response for “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros and “Amigo Brothers” by Piri Thomas.
  - **Novel Assignment and Guided Questions:** Choose one of the following novels from the list compiled by our librarian, Mrs. Mason, and respond to the corresponding guided questions. All novels and guided questions are available on the Memorial Junior High School webpage. If you have any questions about the novels and guided questions, or just want to share your thoughts about the books, please reach out to Mrs. Mason at [syersd@vschsd.org](mailto:syersd@vschsd.org).
  - **IXL Skills Practice:** Login to IXL and practice the following IXL 6<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Skills: Determine the main idea, Match quotations with their themes, Determine the themes of short stories, Analyze short stories, and Read and understand informational passages. You must complete 45 minutes with a mastery score of 80%. If you do not achieve mastery within 45 minutes, you must spend more time on the assignment until you reach 80% mastery. (A letter was sent home mid-July with login information for each student. If you do not receive this letter, please reach out to Memorial's English chairperson, Mrs. Taylor Connolly, at [connollt@vschsd.org](mailto:connollt@vschsd.org).)

## Short Story Assignment —

1. Students are encouraged to read each short story that follows and annotate as they read to help them hold onto their ideas and prepare for their written responses. Some suggested annotation symbols are:

**CH** – Important parts of the text that contribute to *characterization*

**CO** – Important parts of the text that contribute to the *conflict/s* in the story

**CI** – Important parts of the text that contribute to the understanding of the *central idea*

**WS** – Important parts of the text that include specific writing strategies such as: *metaphor, simile, symbolism, imagery, dialogue, foreshadowing, specific word choice, repetition, suspense, etc.*

\*A glossary of literary terms has been included for reference on the following page.

2. Choose **one** of the following writing tasks to complete for each story. In the writing response, students should be sure to include a topic sentence, details from the text, explanation sentences and a concluding sentence.

Choice 1: **Characterization**-Identify and explain one character trait that best describes the main character.

Choice 2: **Conflict**- Identify and explain a conflict in the text. Be sure to explain if there was/was not a resolution.

Choice 3: **Writing Strategy**-Identify and explain 1-2 writing strategies the author uses and explain why they are important to the story. Examples of writing strategies are: suspense, metaphor, simile, repetition, symbolism, and foreshadowing.

Choice 4: **Central Idea**-Identify and explain the central idea of the text.

# Glossary of Literary Terms

Below is a list of literary terms and definitions that may be helpful to refer to during this assignment.

Literary Term	Definition
Central Idea	The central idea of a text is the message about life or people that the author is trying to convey through the character's/person's experiences in the text. When determining the central idea in a text, ask yourself: What is the writer trying to get me to know, think, or believe about life, people, or the world?
Characterization	Characterization is the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character. Direct Characterization tells the audience what the personality of the character is. Indirect Characterization shows things that reveal the personality of a character--through what the character says, thinks, does, and how he/she interacts with others.
Conflict	The conflict is the struggle between opposing forces in the plot of a story. This struggle can occur between a character and an outside force, such as another character, society, nature, or fate. It can also take place within a character who is faced with conflicted feelings or indecision about how to act.
Dialogue	A conversation between two or more people that the writer writes out using quotation marks around the words spoken.
Diction	Diction is the choice of words used by the writer. Writer's use specific words to help the reader understand the characters, the plot, and to emphasize important ideas. When analyzing the writer's diction, or word choice, ask yourself: What interesting vocabulary did this writer use? What is the purpose of using this particular word or phrase? How did this word or phrase help me better understand the text?
Foreshadowing	Foreshadowing is when the writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story. Foreshadowing often appears at the beginning of a story, or a chapter, and it helps the reader develop expectations about the upcoming events.
Imagery	Words, phrases, and sentences that help the reader see, hear, feel, smell, or taste something that is being described in the text.
Metaphor	A comparison of two unlike objects or ideas not using like or as.
Repetition	When words, symbols, themes or other parts of the story are used more than once.
Simile	A comparison of two unlike objects or ideas using like or as.
Suspense	Suspense is a literary device that authors use to keep their readers' interest alive throughout the work. It is a feeling of anticipation that something risky or dangerous is about to happen.
Symbolism	An object, person, place, or action that has both a meaning in itself and that stands for something larger than itself, such as a quality, attitude, belief, or value: e.g., a tortoise represents slow but steady progress.

# “Eleven”

by Sandra Cisneros

1           What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell  
2   you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and  
3   seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when  
4   you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you  
5   don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's  
6   today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you  
7   are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.

8           Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of  
9   you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your  
10   mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five.  
11   And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry  
12   like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad  
13   and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

14          Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings  
15   inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other,  
16   each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

17          You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks  
18   even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you.  
19   And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the  
20   way it is.

21           Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like  
22 pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two  
23 instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two, I'd have known  
24 what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've  
25 known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that  
26 look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

27           “Whose is this?” Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in  
28 the air for all the class to see. “Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a  
29 month.” “Not mine,” says everybody. “Not me.”

30           “It has to belong to somebody,” Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody  
31 can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar  
32 and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's  
33 maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me, I wouldn't say  
34 so.

35           Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that  
36 stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, “I think it belongs to Rachel.” An ugly sweater like  
37 that all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the  
38 sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing  
39 comes out.

40

41           “That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine.” I finally say in a little voice

42 that was maybe me when I was four.

43 “Of course it’s yours,” Mrs. Price says. “ I remember you wearing it  
44 once.” Because she’s older and the teacher, she’s right and I’m not.

45 Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page  
46 thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don’t know why but all of a  
47 sudden I’m feeling sick inside, like the part of me that’s three wants to  
48 come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my  
49 teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven.

50 Mama is making a cake for me for tonight, and when Papa comes  
51 home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

52 But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red  
53 sweaters’ still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to  
54 the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser  
55 as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine,  
56 not mine, not mine. In my head I’m thinking how long till lunchtime, how  
57 long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the schoolyard fence,  
58 or leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and  
59 toss it in the alley.

60 Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of  
61 everybody, “Now, Rachel, that’s enough,” because she sees I’ve shoved  
62 the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it’s hanging all over

63 the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

64 "Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put  
65 that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

66 "But it's not – "

67 "Now!" Mrs. Price says.

68 This is when I wish I wasn't eleven because all the years inside of me—  
69 ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one—are pushing at  
70 the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater  
71 that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other  
72 and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does,  
73 all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

74 That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since  
75 when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a  
76 sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm  
77 eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of  
78 everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid  
79 clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth  
80 because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me until  
81 there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like  
82 when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink  
83 milk too fast.

84 But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid

85 Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldivar, says she remembers  
86 the red sweater is hers. I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs.  
87 Price pretends like everything's okay.

88           Today I'm eleven. There's a cake Mama's making for tonight and  
89 when Papa comes home from work, we'll eat it. There'll be candles and  
90 presents and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you,  
91 Rachel, only it's too late.

92           I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four,  
93 three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was  
94 anything but eleven. Because I want today to be far away already, far  
95 away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny o in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to  
96 close your eyes to see it.



# “Amigo Brothers”

by Piri Thomas

Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the lower east side of Manhattan in the same tenement building on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B.

Antonio was fair, lean, and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio’s hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world. Every chance they had the boys worked out, sometimes at the Boys Club on 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro’s gym on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Early morning sunrises would find them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweatshirts, short towels around their necks, and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads.

While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive. Between them, they had a collection of Fight magazines second to none, plus a scrapbook filled with torn tickets to every boxing match they had ever attended and some clippings of their own. If asked a question about any given fighter, they would immediately zip out from their memory banks divisions, weights, records of fights, knockouts, technical knockouts, and draws or losses.

Each had fought many bouts representing their community and had won two gold-plated medals plus a silver and bronze medallion. The difference was in their style. Antonio’s lean form and long reach made him the better boxer, while Felix’s short and muscular frame made him the better slugger. Whenever they had met in the ring for sparring sessions, it had always been hot and heavy.

Now, after a series of elimination bouts, they had been informed that they were to meet each other in the division finals that were scheduled for the seventh of August, two weeks away—the winner to represent the Boys Club in the Golden Gloves Championship Tournament.

The two boys continued to run together along the East River Drive. But even when joking with each other, they both sensed a wall rising between them.

One morning less than a week before their bout, they met as usual for their daily workout. They fooled around with a few jabs at the air, slapped skin, and then took off, running lightly along the dirty East River’s edge.

Antonio glanced at Felix, who kept his eyes purposely straight ahead, pausing from time to time to do some fancy leg work while throwing one-twos followed by upper cuts to an imaginary jaw. Antonio then beat the air with a barrage of body blows and short devastating lefts with an overhand, jawbreaking right.

After a mile or so, Felix puffed and said, “Let’s stop for a while, bro. I think we both got something to say to each other.”

Antonio nodded. It was not natural to be acting as though nothing unusual was happening when two ace boon buddies were going to be blasting . . . each other within a few short days.

They rested their elbows on the railing separating them from the river. Antonio wiped his face with his short towel. The sunrise was now creating day.

Felix leaned heavily on the river’s railing and stared across to the shores of Brooklyn. Finally, he broke the silence.

“. . . , man. I don’t know how to come out with it.”

Antonio helped. “It’s about our fight, right?”

Yeah, right.” Felix’s eyes squinted at the rising orange sun.

“I’ve been thinking about it too, *panin*. In fact, since we found out it was going to be me and you, I’ve been a pulling punches on you, trying not to hurt you.” Page 1

“Same here. It ain’t natural not to think about the fight. I mean, we both are *cheverote* fighters, and we both want to win. But only one of us can win. There ain’t no draws in the eliminations.”

Felix tapped Antonio gently on the shoulder. “I don’t mean to sound like I’m braggin’, bro. But I wanna win, fair and square.”

Antonio nodded quietly. “Yeah. We both know that in the ring the better man wins. Friend or no friend, brother or no . . .”

Felix finished it for him. “Brother. Tony, let’s promise something right here. Okay?”

“If it’s fair, *hermano*, I’m for it.” Antonio admired the courage of a tugboat pulling a barge five times its welterweight size.

“It’s fair, Tony. When we get into the ring, it’s gotta be like we never met. We gotta be like two heavy strangers that want the same thing, and only one can have it. You understand, don’tcha?”

“*Si*, I know,” Tony smiled. “No pulling punches. We go all the way.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Listen, Tony. Don’t you think it’s a good idea if we don’t see each other until the day of the fight? I’m going to stay with my Aunt Lucy in the Bronx. I can use Gleason’s Gym for some working out. My manager says he got some sparring partners with more or less your style.”

Tony scratched his nose pensively. “Yeah, it would be better for our heads.” He held out his hand, palm upward. “Deal?”

“Deal.” Felix lightly slapped open skin.

“Ready for some more running?” Tony asked lamely.

“Naw, bro. Let’s cut it here. You go on. I kinda like to get things together in my head.”

“You ain’t worried, are you?” Tony asked.

“No way, man.” Felix laughed out loud. “I got too much smarts for that. I just think it’s cooler if we split right here. After the fight, we can get it together again like nothing ever happened.”

The amigo brothers were not ashamed to hug each other tightly.

“Guess you’re right. Watch yourself, Felix. I hear there’s some pretty heavy dudes up in the Bronx. *Suavecito*, okay?”

“Okay. You watch yourself too, *sabe*?”

Tony jogged away. Felix watched his friend disappear from view, throwing rights and lefts. Both fighters had a lot of psyching up to do before the big fight.

The days in training passed much too slowly. Although they kept out of each other’s way, they were aware of each other’s progress via the ghetto grapevine.

The evening before the big fight, Tony made his way to the roof of his tenement. In the quiet early dark, he peered over the ledge. Six stories below, the lights of the city blinked, and the sounds of cars mingled with the curses and the laughter of

children in the street. He tried not to think of Felix, feeling he had succeeded in psyching his mind. But only in the ring would he really know. To spare Felix hurt, he would have to knock him out, early and quick.

Up in the South Bronx, Felix decided to take in a movie in an effort to keep Antonio's face away from his fists. The flick was *The Champion* with Kirk Douglas, the third time Felix was seeing it.

The champion was getting . . . beat . . . , his face being pounded into raw, wet hamburger. His eyes were cut, jagged, bleeding, one eye swollen, the other almost shut. He was saved only by the sound of the bell. Felix became the champ and Tony the challenger.

The movie audience was going out of its head, roaring in blood lust at the butchery going on. The champ hunched his shoulders, grunting and sniffing red blood back into his broken nose. The challenger, confident that he had the championship in the bag, threw a left. The champ countered with a dynamite right that exploded into the challenger's brains.

Felix's right arm felt the shock. Antonio's face, superimposed on the screen, was shattered and split apart by the awesome force of the killer blow. Felix saw himself in the ring, blasting Antonio against the ropes. The champ had to be forcibly restrained. The challenger was allowed to crumble slowly to the canvas, a broken, bloody mess.

When Felix finally left the theatre, he had figured out how to psyche himself for tomorrow's fight. It was Felix the Champion vs. Antonio the Challenger.

He walked up some dark streets, deserted except for small pockets of wary-looking kids wearing gang colors. Despite the fact that he was Puerto Rican like them, they eyed him as a stranger to their turf. Felix did a last shuffle, bobbing and weaving, while letting loose a torrent of blows that would demolish whatever got in its way. It seemed to impress the brothers, who went about their own business.

Finding no takers, Felix decided to split to his aunt's. Walking the streets had not relaxed him, neither had the fight flick. All it had done was to stir him up. He let himself quietly into his Aunt Lucy's apartment and went straight to bed, falling into a fitful sleep with sounds of the gong for Round One.

Antonio was passing some heavy time on his rooftop. How would the fight tomorrow affect his relationship with Felix? After all, fighting was like any other profession. Friendship had nothing to do with it. A gnawing doubt crept in. He cut negative thinking real quick by doing some speedy fancy dance steps, bobbing and weaving like mercury. The night air was blurred with perpetual motions of left hooks and right crosses. Felix, his amigo brother, was not going to be Felix at all in the ring. Just an opponent with another face. Antonio went to sleep, hearing the opening bell for the first round. Like his friend in the South Bronx, he prayed for victory via a quick, clean knockout in the first round.

Large posters plastered all over the walls of local shops announced the fight between Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas as the main bout.

The fight had created great interest in the neighborhood. Antonio and Felix were well liked and respected. Each had his own loyal following. Betting fever was high and ranged from a bottle of Coke to cold, hard cash on the line.

Antonio's fans bet with unbridled faith in his boxing skills. On the other side, Felix's admirers bet on his dynamite-packed fists. Felix had returned to his apartment early in the morning of August 7<sup>th</sup> and stayed there, hoping to avoid seeing Antonio. He turned the radio on to salsa music sounds and then tried to read while waiting for word from his manager.

The fight was scheduled to take place in Tompkins Square Park. It had been decided that the gymnasium of the Boys Club was not large enough to hold all the people who were sure to attend. In Tompkins Square Park, everyone who wanted could view the fight, whether from ringside or window fire escapes or tenement rooftops.

The morning of the fight, Tompkins Square was a beehive of activity with numerous workers setting up the ring, the seats, and the guest speakers' stand. The scheduled bouts began shortly after noon, and the park had begun filling up even earlier.

The local junior high school across from Tompkins Square Park served as the dressing room for all the fighters. Each was given a separate classroom, with desktops, covered with mats, serving as resting tables. Antonio thought he caught a glimpse of Felix waving to him from a room at the far end of the corridor. He waved back just in case it had been him.

The fighters changed from their street clothes into fighting gear. Antonio wore white trunks, black socks, and black shoes. Felix wore sky blue trunks, red socks, and white boxing shoes. Each had dressing gowns to match their fighting trunks with their names neatly stitched on the back.

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The loudspeakers blared into the open window of the school. There were speeches by dignitaries, community great boxers of yesteryear. Some were well prepared, some improvised on the spot. They all carried the same message of great pleasure and honor at being part of such a historic event. This great day was in the tradition of champions emerging from the streets of the lower east side.

Interwoven with the speeches were the sounds of the other boxing events. After the sixth bout, Felix was much relieved when his trainer, Charlie, said, "Time change. Quick knockout. This is it. We're on."

Waiting time was over. Felix was escorted from the classroom by a dozen fans in white T-shirts with the word FELIX across their fronts.

Antonio was escorted down a different stairwell and guided through a roped-off path.

As the two climbed into the ring, the crowd exploded with a roar. Antonio and Felix both bowed gracefully and then raised their arms in acknowledgment.

Antonio tried to be cool, but even as the roar was in its first birth, he turned slowly to meet Felix's eyes looking directly into his. Felix nodded his head and Antonio responded. And both as one, just as quickly, turned away to face his own corner.

Bong, bong, bong. The roar turned to stillness.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, *Señores y Señoras*."

The announcer spoke slowly, pleased at his bilingual efforts.

"Now the moment we have all been waiting for—the main event between two fine young Puerto Rican fighters, products of our lower east side."

"*Loisaida*," called out a member of the audience.

"In this corner, weighing 131 pounds, Felix Vargas. And in this corner, weighing 133 pounds, Antonio Cruz. The winner will represent the Boys Club in the tournament of champions, the Golden Gloves. There will be no draw. May the best man win."

The cheering of the crowd shook the windowpanes of the old buildings surrounding Tompkins Square Park. At the center of the ring, the referee was giving instructions to the youngsters.

"Keep your punches up. No low blows. No punching on the back of the head. Keep your heads up. Understand. Let's have a clean fight. Now shake hands and come out fighting."

Both youngsters touched gloves and nodded. They turned and danced quickly to their corners. Their head towels and dressing gowns were lifted neatly from their shoulders by their trainers' nimble fingers. Antonio crossed himself. Felix did the same. BONG! BONG! ROUND ONE. Felix and Antonio turned and faced each other squarely in a fighting pose. Felix wasted no time. He came in fast, head low, half hunched toward his right shoulder, and lashed out with a straight left. He missed a right cross as Antonio slipped the punch and crossed and countered with one-two-three lefts that snapped Felix's head back, sending a mild shock coursing through him. If Felix had any small doubt about their friendship affecting their fight, it was being neatly dispelled.

Antonio danced, a joy to behold. His left hand was like a piston pumping jabs one right after another with seeming ease. Felix bobbed and weaved and never stopped boring in. He knew that at long range he was at a disadvantage. Antonio had too much reach on him. Only by coming in close could Felix hope to achieve the dreamed-of knockout.

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Antonio knew the dynamite that was stored in his amigo brother's fist. He ducked a short right and missed a left hook. Felix trapped him against the ropes just long enough to pour some punishing rights and left to Antonio's hard midsection. Antonio slipped away from Felix, crashing two lefts to his head, which set Felix's right ear to ringing.

Bong! Both amigos froze a punch well on its way, sending up a roar of approval for good sportsmanship.

Felix walked briskly back to his corner. His right ear had not stopped ringing. Antonio gracefully danced his way toward his stool none the worse, except for glowing glove burns, showing angry red against the whiteness of his midribs.

"Watch that right, Tony." His trainer walked into his ear. "Remember Felix always goes to the body. He'll want you to drop your hands for his overhand left or right. Got it?"

Antonio nodded, spraying water out between his teeth. He felt better as his sore midsection was being firmly rubbed. Felix's corner was also busy.

"You gotta get in there, fella." Felix's trainer poured water over his curly Afro locks. "Get in there or he's gonna chop you up from way back."

Bong! Bong! Round two. Felix was off his stool and rushed Antonio like a bull, sending a hard right to his head. Beads of water exploded from Antonio's long hair.

Antonio, hurt, sent back a blurring barrage of lefts and rights that only meant pain to Felix, who returned with a short left to the head followed by a looping right to the body. Antonio countered with his own flurry, forcing Felix to give ground. But not for long.

Felix bobbed and weaved, bobbed and weaved, occasionally punching his two gloves together.

Antonio waited for the rush that was sure to come. Felix closed in and fainted with his left shoulder and threw his right instead. Lights suddenly exploded inside Felix's head as Antonio slipped the blow and hit him with a pistonlike left, catching him flush on the point of his chin.

Bedlam broke loose as Felix's legs momentarily buckled. He fought off a series of rights and lefts and came back with a strong right that taught Antonio respect.

Antonio danced carefully. He knew Felix had the habit of playing possum when hurt, to sucker an opponent within reach of the powerful bombs he carried in each fist.

A right to the head slowed Antonio's pretty dancing. He answered with his own left at Felix's right eye that began puffing up within three seconds.

Antonio, a bit too eager, moved in too close, and Felix had him entangled into a rip-roaring, punching toe-to-toe slugfest that brought the whole Tompkins Square Park screaming to its feet.

Rights to the body. Lefts to the head. Neither fighter was giving an inch. Suddenly a short right caught Antonio squarely on the chin. His long legs turned to jelly, and his arms flailed out desperately. Felix, grunting like a bull, threw wild punches from every direction. Antonio, groggy, bobbed and weaved, evading most of the blows. Suddenly his head cleared. His left flashed out hard and straight catching Felix on the bridge of his nose.

Felix lashed back with a haymaker, right off the ghetto streets. At the same instant, his eye caught another left hook from Antonio. Felix swung out, trying to clear the pain. Only the frenzied screaming of those along ringside let him know that he had dropped Antonio. Fighting off the growing haze, Antonio struggled to his feet, got up, ducked, and threw a smashing right that dropped Felix flat on his back.

Felix got up as fast as he could in his own corner, groggy but still game. He didn't even hear the count. In a fog, he heard the roaring of the crowd, who seemed to have gone insane. His head cleared to hear the bell sound at the end of the round. He was damned glad. His trainer sat him down on the stool.

In his corner, Antonio was doing what all fighters do when they are hurt. They sit and smile at everyone. The referee signaled the ring doctor to check the fighters out. He did so and then gave his okay. The cold-water sponges brought clarity to both amigo brothers. They were rubbed until their circulation ran free.

Bong! Round three-the final round. Up to now it had been tick-tack-toe, pretty much even. But everyone knew there could be no draw and that this round would decide the winner.

This time, to Felix's surprise, it was Antonio who came out fast, charging across the ring. Felix braced himself but couldn't ward off the barrage of punches. Antonio drove Felix hard against the ropes.

The crowd ate it up. Thus far the two had fought with *mucho corazón*. Felix tapped his gloves and commenced his attack anew. Antonio, throwing boxer's caution to the winds, jumped in to meet him.

Both pounded away. Neither gave an inch, and neither fell to the canvas. Felix's left eye was tightly closed. Claret red blood poured from Antonio's nose. They fought toe-to-toe.

The sounds of their blows were loud in contrast to the silence of a crowd gone completely mute. The referee was stunned by their savagery.

Bong! Bong! Bong! The bell sounded over and over again. Felix and Antonio were past hearing. Their blows continued to pound on each other like hailstones.

Finally the referee and the two trainers pried Felix and Antonio apart. Cold water was poured over them to bring them back to their senses. They looked around and then rushed toward each other. A cry of alarm surged through Tompkins Square Park. Was this a right to the death instead of a boxing match?

The fear soon gave way to wave upon wave of cheering as the two amigos embraced.

No matter what the decision, they knew they would always be champions to each other.

Bong! Bong! Bong! "Ladies and Gentlemen. *Señores and Señoras*. The winner and representative to the Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions is . . ."

The announcer turned to point to the winner and found himself alone. Arm in arm the champions had already left the ring.



## **Novel Recommendations and Guided Questions**

Directions: Read one, or all, of the following novels compiled by our librarian, Mrs. Mason, and respond to the corresponding guided questions. Novels and guided reading questions are available on the Memorial Junior High School webpage.

### ***Bystander* by James Preller**

Eric is the new kid in seventh grade. Griffin wants to be his friend. When you're new in town, it's hard to know who to hang out with and who to avoid. Griffin seems cool, confident, and popular. But something isn't right about Griffin. He always seems to be in the middle of bad things. And if Griffin doesn't like you, you'd better watch your back. There might be a target on it. As Eric gets drawn deeper into Griffin's dark world, he begins to see the truth about Griffin: he's a liar, a bully, a thief. Eric wants to break away, do the right thing. But in one shocking moment, he goes from being a bystander . . . to the bully's next victim.

### ***Roll With It* by Jamie Sumner**

The story of an irrepressible girl with cerebral palsy whose life takes an unexpected turn when she moves to a new town. Ellie's a girl who tells it like it is. That surprises some people, who see a kid in a wheelchair and think she's going to be all sunshine and cuddles. The thing is, Ellie has big dreams: She might be eating Stouffer's for dinner, but one day she's going to be a professional baker. If she's not writing fan letters to her favorite celebrity chefs, she's practicing recipes on her well-meaning, if overworked, mother. But when Ellie and her mom move so they can help take care of her ailing grandpa, Ellie has to start all over again in a new town at a new school. Except she's not just the new kid—she's the new kid in the wheelchair who lives in the trailer park on the wrong side of town. It all feels like one challenge too many, until Ellie starts to make her first-ever friends. Now she just has to convince her mom that this town might just be the best thing that ever happened to them!

### ***The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman**

When Viji and her sister, Rukku, whose developmental disability makes her overly trusting and vulnerable to the perils of the world, run away to live on their own, the situation could not be more grim. Life on the streets of the teeming city of Chennai is harsh for girls considered outcasts, but the sisters manage to find shelter on an abandoned bridge. There they befriend Muthi and Arul, two boys in a similar predicament, and the four children bond together and form a family of sorts. Viji starts working with the boys scavenging in trash heaps while Rukku makes bead necklaces, and they buy food with what little money they earn. They are often hungry and scared but they have each other--and Kutti, the best dog ever. When the kids are forced from their safe haven on the bridge, they take shelter in a graveyard. But it is now the rainy season and they are plagued by mosquitos, and Rukku and Muthu fall ill. As their symptoms worsen, Viji and Arul must decide whether to risk going for help--when most adults in their lives have proven themselves untrustworthy--or to continue holding on to their fragile, hard-fought freedom.

## **IXL ELA Summer Assignment**

In the middle of July, a letter was mailed home from Mr. Strauss that gave each student his/her IXL login information. If you did not get this letter, please email Mrs. Connolly, our English chairperson, at [connollt@vschsd.org](mailto:connollt@vschsd.org).

After signing in to [ixl.com](http://ixl.com), practice the skills listed below. You can type in the skill name and search, or look under the grade level for the skill.

### IXL Skills List for Students Entering 7<sup>th</sup> Grade in September 2022

- A.1 Determine the main idea (6th grade)
- B.1 Match quotations with their themes (6th grade)
- B.2 Determine the themes of short stories (6th grade)
- F.1 Analyze short stories (6th grade)
- G.1 Read and understand informational passages (6th grade)