

# *Summer Theme Experiences 2019*

## *Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School*

“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.”

— John Dewey

### *Summer Theme Experiences*

We have made some changes regarding what we are asking incoming 7th - 12th grade students to do over the summer months. We are evolving from our previous summer reading practices at OMS and SHS into *Summer Theme Experiences*.

### *Why Summer Theme Experiences?*

- We want our students to know that reading is a lifelong activity, not a school activity. Reading adds value to the human experience. We also want them to know that it is not the only activity of value and that all of their experiences matter.
- We want to develop our students into self-motivated, lifelong learners, and know that providing students with choice and agency are critical components towards this endeavor.
- We want to know our students as whole people. Activities at the start of the school year will be designed to broaden our understanding of our students and to let them know that we value their contributions.

### *How do students engage in summer theme experiences?*

A theme has been established for each grade-level. The goal of the themes is to establish a common discussion across each grade-level at the start of the school year, as well as to build on these themes over the course of the year. Please also see the appropriate grade-level theme document to get more information about each of the themes and some examples of what you might do to meet the goal of the theme experiences activity.

The themes were chosen because they are relevant to the ideas and content that students will be learning about that year, in addition to being consistently present in many of the books, stories, ideas, and experiences that students may choose to engage with. Whether an activity speaks directly to the theme, or is somehow related, students will be able to draw connections to these themes in a variety of ways.

**Grade 7: Using Your Voice**

**Grade 8: The Individual and the Community**

**Grade 9: Facing Adversity**

**Grade 10: Seeking Justice**

**Grade 11: Exploring Your Dreams** (PLEASE NOTE THAT STUDENT IN AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE &

**Grade 12: Finding Your Way** AP ENGLISH LITERATURE WILL DO ALTERNATE WORK.)

Students are asked to explore these themes over the summer months by engaging in at least three activities. Listed below are some ways to think about activities that will help students to engage in their theme. We encourage students to accomplish a *balance* of different activities.

**Activities to consider:**

- ***READ Text-based (In print or audio book format):***  
Read realistic fiction, graphic novels, biographies, current news articles, fantasy, science fiction, blogs, informational books, poetry, recent award winners.
- ***LISTEN / WATCH Audio/visual-based:***  
Listen to a podcast series, attend a lecture/speaker series, watch a film adaptation of a book, watch a documentary.
- ***DO Experience-based:***  
Volunteer in your community, take advantage of SPS Summer Enrichment activities, participate in activities at the public library, visit museums, engage in regular journaling activities, create artwork, attend cultural events, travel, enjoy nature, go to summer camp, build something.

**Is there a specific reading list?**

There are *no lists of specific books* or activities that students must choose from. We have provided a number of excellent resources to assist students and families in finding books, podcasts, documentaries, and activities that match a student's interests, prior experiences, and goals.

**How should students keep track of and reflect upon connections to the theme?**

Students are invited to keep track of connections to their theme during the summer as they make them, but are not required to do so. On paper, electronically, or in video form, students can keep a list of activities that they engaged in along with their personal connections. When students return to school, they will have an opportunity to share their connections with their teachers and each other.

**Some examples of ways that students could go about their Summer Theme Experiences:**

***Jake:***

Jake enjoys reading comic series, and would like to continue to read a series over the summer. He finds a series that connects to the theme because the central character is fighting for a better way of life for his society. Jake also is interested in a recent documentary about a famous sports player who wanted to change the way that other players were treated. Finally, Jake plays on a summer league for baseball, and notices that there are some players on the team who really help build team spirit. Jake keeps a Notability page that lists these three activities and writes down some notes for himself about how they connect to the theme.

### ***Allanah:***

Allanah and her friends trade books often, and they all have a few in mind that they want to read next. Her friend suggests one that she read that fits the theme because the character is really quiet in the beginning of the book and has to find courage by the end of the book. So she decides to read it. They both also know that the book has a movie adaptation, so they watch the adaptation together and talk about which they like better. For Allanah's final summer theme experience, she thinks about her visit to see extended family in New York and reflects on how difficult it was to get her ideas across to a large group. Her ideas were different than what others wanted to do, and sometimes when she tried to share her ideas they weren't accepted. Allanah doesn't love to write, so she decides to keep track of her thoughts and connections by recording herself on her iPad after each of her theme experiences.

### ***Arnav:***

Arnav is a rising 8th grader. He is very interested in the problem of hunger and malnutrition. He signs up for a one-day volunteer activity at the Worcester County Food Bank. He doesn't love to read, but his parents want him to read at least one book over the summer. While at the food bank, he asks for suggestions about a book on the struggles related to hunger. To his surprise, a fellow volunteer reveals that it was *The Hunger Games* series that made her interested in the problems and desperation that surround hunger and poverty. He has heard of the books before, but never read them. Arnav decides to read the first book in the series and watch the first movie. Both connect to the theme of facing adversity. Arnav's three experiences fulfill the summer reading assignment. Because the three experiences were so meaningful to him, he isn't worried about writing anything down--he knows he will be able to share his learning with his classmates in September.

### ***Janice:***

Janice really doesn't like to read at all, but she loves to write and draw. As a rising 11th grader, her theme is Exploring Your Dreams. Janice decides that she is going to try three new things this summer, and plans to record her experiences by either writing or drawing about them. Janice is very interested in pursuing art in college, so she books a tour at MASS ART and while she is there sits down and draws a sketch of the campus. As she draws, she reflects on the school and whether or not it is a good fit for her. The next week, Janice and her family are traveling to the Outer Banks of North Carolina for their vacation. While on vacation, she tries parasailing for the first time. She reflects in her journal about what it felt like to fly, and how much she enjoyed taking a risk. On the way home from North Carolina, Janice and her family stop in New York City to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While there, Janice thinks about becoming a famous artist one day and draws a sketch of a sculpture that inspires her. Janice has completed her summer theme assignment through these three experiences, but for good measure she picks up an art book in the gift shop on the way out of the museum. On the ride home she reads about her favorite artist, Vermeer.

**If you have any questions during the summer about Summer Theme Experiences, please contact Lisa Daly (grades 7-8) at [ldaly@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us](mailto:ldaly@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us) or Liza Trombley (grades 9-12) at [ltrombley@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us](mailto:ltrombley@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us). We are happy to help!**

**Shrewsbury High School / Oak Middle School**  
**Summer Theme Experiences**

There is a theme that has been established for each grade-level. The goal of the themes are to establish a common discussion across each grade-level at the start of the school year, as well as to build on these themes over the course of the year.

<p><b>The Grade 7 theme is <u>Using Your Voice</u></b>  <b>Some questions that students might consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are ways to “Use Your Voice?” (“Use Your Voice” means to <i>express yourself or your ideas</i>, not to talk or sing.)</li> <li>● Who are individuals or characters who have used their voice in memorable or important ways?</li> <li>● How can you use your voice in a positive way? (<i>To help yourself be successful? To help others? To solve conflict? To create change?</i>)</li> <li>● What can be the cost of standing up for yourself or others? Are people always celebrated for using their voice? Or not?</li> <li>● Can voices be used in ways that are not helpful or positive? What are some examples of this?</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Grade 8 theme is <u>The Individual and the Community</u></b>  <b>Some questions that students might consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the different groups that you are a part of?</li> <li>● How do you fit into a group?</li> <li>● What do you like about being part of a group? What can be hard about being part of a group?</li> <li>● When are groups important, when can they help?</li> <li>● When do groups present struggles or challenges to us?</li> <li>● What can you learn about the impact of an individual on a community? What can you learn about the power of a community? Is the power of the community a positive one or not?</li> <li>● What stories, historical events or figures, main characters, or experience can help you to reflect on these ideas?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Grade 9 theme is <u>Facing Adversity</u></b>  <b>Some questions that students might consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adversity comes in various forms; besides the physical, what are other forms of adversity?</li> <li>● Think about the protagonist, or a character, from the books you read, podcasts you listened to, etc., and identify all the different ways they were met with and/or were hindered by adversity.</li> <li>● Why are some people better able to face and overcome adversity?</li> <li>● What can a study of your own background/upbringing reveal about your ability to overcome adversity?</li> <li>● As you begin high school, what fears or concerns do you have in facing adversity? What skills do you think are essential in overcoming adversity?</li> <li>● What experiences can you embark on over the summer that will encourage you to become more able to confront adversity with grace and confidence?</li> <li>● What have you learned after overcoming adversity (or not overcoming adversity)?</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Grade 10 theme is <u>Seeking Justice</u></b>  <b>Some questions that students might consider:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How does (social) justice manifest itself in society?</li> <li>● Whose voices are missing from this story? How can we raise those voices up?</li> <li>● Where are needs left unmet? How can we reach those needs?</li> <li>● When is it necessary to fight against an unjust system?</li> <li>● What are the different ways we can stand up for justice?</li> <li>● Why and how do individuals try to change society?</li> <li>● Who determines what is right: the law, the authority, the individual, the society?</li> <li>● Why is it important to have a voice? To use your voice and to speak up for others?</li> <li>● When should you get involved vs. stand back? Is this your right as a citizen? How can you create change? How do you get involved in participatory politics to leverage for change in your community?</li> </ul>

**The Grade 11 theme is Exploring Your Dreams**

**Some questions that students might consider:**

- What happens when someone disagrees with your dreams? How should you respond?
- What vision do you have about the future--your personal future? The future of our society?
- In your experience, what prevents dreams from becoming reality? Is it okay if a dream remains a dream?
- Our language includes expressions that mock dreamers (e.g., “Your head is in the clouds,” “Come down to earth”). Why do we sometimes criticize dreamers in these ways?
- At what point should a dream become practical, realistic? What examples can you think of?
- Who gets to dream?
- How can you achieve your dream? How can you help someone else achieve their dream?
- When are the dreams of one character or one group of people more important than the dreams of another character or another group?

**The Grade 12 theme is Finding Your Way**

**Some questions that students might consider:**

- What roadblocks do people have in finding their way in the world?
- How do you find your way in a complex world?
- What learning experiences will help you decide what you should do in the future?
- What are the options you have for your future?
- Who do you rely on to help you find your way? Where do you find inspiration?
- What can you learn by talking to adults about the paths they have taken? Have they changed paths--and, if so, why?
- What kinds of “maps” can we use to guide us in finding our way in life?
- What issues do you feel are important to take a stand on/to speak up about?
- How do you think you can develop the strength of character to make decisions that are right for you, even when they may go against the norm?