



HERITAGE OAK

Private Education

8th Grade Summer Reading Assignment 2026-2027

This summer, it is essential that students continue stretching their minds and developing their learning. The ideal practice to support such a goal comes from reading. Please refer to the list below and complete the study assignments. The completed assignment is due on the first day of school in September.

Summer Reading

Required: *Ground Zero* by Alan Gratz

ISBN-10: 1338245759

1. Novel Assignment

- Complete the Essential Questions during or after reading *Ground Zero*. Respond to the Essential Questions in proper MLA format.
- No cover page or sleeve is needed. Please just staple the papers together.**
- This will be turned in on the first day of your Language Arts class. Students will be graded according to the Common Core Standards. A rubric is attached for reference.
- During the first week of class, students will also write an analytical response in class for a summative grade about *Ground Zero*. They will be able to use their novels for the in-class writing assignment.

Your work will serve as your first Language Arts grade and as the first entry to your 2026-2027 portfolio.

I acknowledge receipt of the summer reading assignment for my child.

Name _____

Grade for 2026-2027 _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

Please sign and return no later than June 2.

Ground Zero

The Essential Questions

DIRECTIONS:

- Use the grading rubric as your guide to answer the question thoroughly and thoughtfully. You can use the **ACE** format: ANSWER, CITE, EXPLAIN
- Please use **MLA format** to create your document and answer the questions.
 - Citations should look like this: (Gratz 39) or Gratz describes, “...” (39).
- The title of your document should be: Ground Zero Essential Questions
- Please email me at jacklyn.leimkuhler@heritageoak.org if you have any questions.

4	3	2	1
Excellent; answers the question well, gives proper analysis, and provides properly MLA cited examples from the text.	Good; answers the question adequately, gives some analysis, and provides examples.	Satisfactory; somewhat answers the question or gives an example. Minimal analysis given.	Needs Improvement; does not answer the question fully nor are examples given.

1. Based on the two first chapters, identify how Brandon and Reshmina’s stories are similar. Explain how the similarities connect and what the author may want readers to understand through this connection. Use evidence to support your response.
2. How does Mariam respond to the American soldier’s suggestion that the villagers can pick a side? What does her response reveal about the conflict the villagers face during this war? Support with textual evidence (author last name page #).
3. Why does Reshmina decide to help the American soldier? What does this action reveal about her character? Explain and support with evidence from the text.
4. How do we see the themes of revenge and refuge in Reshmina’s chapter? What might the author want readers to learn about the themes? Support with evidence from the text.
5. How is the author’s use of figurative language to describe the flames blocking the elevator effective? Support with evidence from the text.
6. Reshmina asks, “What would happen...if the big countries stopped selling weapons to the little countries?” (149). How would you answer that question? Use evidence to support.
7. What makes Brandon wonder whether the US has been a bully in Afghanistan? What do you think of this idea? Explain and support with evidence from the text.

Ground Zero Summer Reading Rubric

This rubric addresses the skills and standards involved in the assignment. Students are “graded” according to mastery rather than a point value. The focus is to show the learning and achievement in mastery or progression toward mastery/meeting the expectations.

Standards Addressed

Language 9-10.1A - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- 1 - Little or No Mastery
- 2 - Partial Mastery
- 3 - Meets Expectations
- 4 - Advanced

Language 9-10.3.a - Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (MLA)

- 1 - Little or No Mastery
- 2 - Partial Mastery
- 3 - Meets Expectations
- 4 - Advanced

Reading: Literature 9-10.1 - Cite strong and thorough evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- 1 - Little or No Mastery
- 2 - Partial Mastery
- 3 - Meets Expectations
- 4 - Advanced

Reading: Literature 9-10.3 - Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

- 1 - Little or No Mastery
- 2 - Partial Mastery
- 3 - Meets Expectations
- 4 - Advanced

