



Austin Prep

The Boys in the Boat

Middle School Summer Reading Assignment 2016

All students entering Grades 6-8 should prepare short responses (about one to two paragraphs in length for each question) to the following prompts. Responses can be typed or handwritten and should be submitted to your English teachers during the first week of class in September.

Descriptive Writing: In one or two paragraphs describe the character Al Ulbrickson. His leadership style was somewhat strict, to say the least, and at many times, he kept his opinions of the boys and their standings on the team to himself. What about him inspired Joe and the boys to work their hardest? What strategies did Ulbrickson use to encourage competition and a strong work ethic among them and why?

Expository Writing: George Pocock and Al Ulbrickson each stand as somewhat mythic figures in *The Boys in the Boat*; however, they were very different men with very different relationships to the boys. Think of a coach or advisor you have had in your life. Compare and contrast the differences between Joe's coaches and your coach. Think about their leadership styles, how they related to the people they are coaching, and their goals. Write a paragraph about how they were similar and another about the ways they differed.

Narrative Writing: In a one to two paragraph summary, retell your favorite moment in *The Boys in the Boat*?

Persuasive Writing: Write a brief book review for *The Boys in the Boat*. In a one to two paragraph response explain why you would recommend this book to a peer. If you would not recommend the book to a peer, what person or age group would most enjoy *The Boys in the Boat*? Please use specific events and ideas from the book to support your opinion.

Vocabulary Challenge: In the course of your reading, identify ten to 15 words that are unfamiliar to you or challenging. Create a flashcard for each with the word (and page number) on one side and definition on the other.

Students entering Grades 7 and 8, please see below.

Discussion Questions: In addition to the above assignment, students entering Grades 7 and 8 should also select ONE of the following questions for response. Please keep all of these questions in mind while reading *The Boys in the Boat* so that you can actively participate in class discussions in September.

1. Did you know much about rowing before reading *The Boys in the Boat*? If so, did you learn anything about rowing that you didn't know before? If not, what aspects of the sport surprised you most?
2. Thanks to hours of interviews and a wealth of archival information from Joe Rantz, his daughter Judy, and a number of other sources, Daniel James Brown is able to tell Joe's story in such fine detail that it's almost as if you are living in the moment with Joe. How did you feel as you were reading the book? What significance does Joe's unique point of view have for the unfolding of the story?
3. While *The Boys in the Boat* focuses on the experiences of Joe Rantz and his teammates, it also tells the much larger story of a whole generation of young men and women during one of the darkest times in American history. What aspects of life in the 1930s struck you most deeply?
4. Brown mentions throughout the book that only a very special, almost superhuman individual can take on the physical and psychological demands of rowing and become successful at the sport. How did these demands play out in the boys' academic and personal lives? How did their personal lives influence their approach to the sport?
5. Despite how much time Joe Rantz spent training with the other boys during his first two years at the University of Washington, he didn't really form close personal relationships with any of them until his third year on the team. Why do you think that was? What factors finally made Joe realize that it did matter who else was in the boat with him?