



7th & 8th Grade English Homework: Summer 2023

Summer Reading: Essay from *Braiding Sweetgrass* & 2 Free-Choice

Part 1: Read “The Gift of Strawberries” in *Braiding Sweetgrass* & Craft a Response

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer: A blend of botany, poetry, and ancestral knowledge, *Braiding Sweetgrass* explores our connection with the land and asks the larger question of how we know what we know.

For this summer, **ONLY** the chapter “**The Gift of Strawberries**” is required. You’re of course welcome to finish the book as one of your “free-choice” books. There is also a YA version of *Braiding Sweetgrass* if you’d like. You can find the essay in the PDF pasted & a link to a reading of it below but if you’d prefer a hardcopy, the book is available at most local bookstores and our library.

This reading and the **REQUIRED response students will craft will be the basis of an interdisciplinary project during the first week of school.**

[Braiding Sweetgrass PDF](#)

[Audio Version](#)

RESPONSE OPTIONS

EVERY 7th and 8th Grade student MUST choose ONE of the following options to complete before the start of the 2023-2024 School Year. These responses will anchor the opening weeks focus in multiple classes.

1. **Writing Option:** Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, “A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning.” Think of a time when you gave a special gift. What made it special? Was it homemade? Something you’d saved up for? Something the other person really wanted? How did you feel about giving it? How did it strengthen or change your relationship with the other person? Note: This can be less formal than a typical English essay; feel free to use “I” and to tell a story. What I value most is some kind of connection to Kimmerer’s piece. (8-10 sentences)

2. **Art Option:** Take a photo of a place in nature that you are familiar with and visit often. Research and identify 2 species of plants in that place. Are they food for specific animal species? Do they have human uses (medicinal, artisanal, etc)? Are they native or invasive species? If invasive, how did they make their way to the region?

Make a sketch of those three plants. Label the parts of the plants are used by animals and/or humans.

3. **Science Option:** How do natural resources serve you?

The author focuses this chapter in *Braiding Sweetgrass* on the strawberry as a resource. In the beginning of the essay she writes “I experienced the world in that time as a gift economy, “goods and services not purchased but received as gifts from the Earth.” Select a resource that you depend on or is of particular interest to you, it could be a plant or an animal. Describe in detail, how that resource impacts your life. What does that resource give you? Happiness? Food? Shelter? Recreation? Peace? Religion? Spirituality? Try and come up with all of the ways that you benefit from the resource. (10-12 sentences)

4. **History Option: Presentation on Perspective** – In her essay, author Robin Wall Kimmerer talks of differing perspectives (viewpoints) of indigenous peoples and those who arrive from other places (E.g. Native Canadian Métis vs. Europeans, Native Americans vs. Europeans, Australian Aborigines vs. the British, etc.).

→ Your TASK – 1. Research two cultures that came into contact with each other, and 2. Detail how each culture views either religion, animals, or land differently.

Examples could be:

- i. 19th century Native Americans’ vs. 19th century European-Americans’ views on buffalo
 - ii. The Ute Peoples’ vs. 19th century pioneers’ views on water or land usage
 - iii. Australian Aborigines’ vs. the British view on religion (beliefs, Creation stories, etc.)
 - iv. Come up with your own comparison! You can email Gary with questions.
- b. Create a presentation of your findings, and use any of the following formats:
- i. Podcast (less than 4 minutes)
 - ii. Video (less than 4 minutes)
 - iii. TED Talk (less than 4 minutes)
 - iv. Google Slides (4-7 slides)
 - v. Slidesgo (4-7 slides) <https://slidesgo.com/>
 - vi. Infographic of your choice
 1. **Canva** <https://www.canva.com/create/infographics/>
 2. **Piktochart** <https://piktochart.com/formats/infographics/>
 3. **Visme** <https://www.visme.co/make-infographics/>
 4. **Venngage** <https://venngage.com/>

Part 2: Free Choice Books & Reading Log

Read at least **2 BOOKS**, make a copy of the reading log, complete it, print it.

- Here is a list of great novels:
<https://www.npr.org/2013/08/05/207953619/100-must-reads-for-kids-9-14-the-printable-list>
- Here is a list of great non-fiction books:
<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/tween-nonfiction>
- Here is a list of “relatable” books:
<https://www.weareteachers.com/best-middle-school-books/>

The Wilkinson Public Library and Between the Covers Bookstore are also fantastic in-town resources.

Part 2 READING LOG

NAME:

Book Name	Author Name	Your Summary of the Book + your reaction to it (4-5 sentences total)
1.		
2.		

