

St. Peter Middle School Required Summer Reading—Grade 8

Regular English 8 and Advanced English 8

Woods Runner

Children's Literature Review

"Samuel is thirteen years old and lives on the edge of a wilderness in colonial Pennsylvania. The Revolutionary War rages, but for Samuel all that seems to matter is the life he leads in the woodlands that surround his family's cabin. Samuel feels at home in the woods. He loves to track game, hunt, and study all aspects of the world that exist within the forest. Samuel thinks of himself as a woods runner, a person so at home in the forest that he becomes a part of it. But then the soldiers and Iroquois come. Samuel's cabin and the nearby settlement are destroyed by the invading British forces. Samuel's parents are gone, taken captive by the enemy. Faced with this crisis, Samuel decides to track his parents in a seemingly vain attempt to rescue them. This decision begins an epic journey for Samuel. On the journey he sees the face of war in all its grim aspects. In the end, Samuel discovers a great deal about the kindness and the cruelty that people are capable of. In this historical tale, the renowned author Gary Paulsen once again takes up the task of telling the story of a bygone era. In the past Gary Paulsen has consistently demonstrated his ability to capture the nuances of a time period while crafting believable characters. In *Woods Runner* Paulsen once again captures a moment in time and the people who lived it in a way that will educate and touch his readers. This is a fine historical novel and one that allows its readers to better appreciate all the costs that war exacts." Reviewer: Greg M. Romaneck

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Touching Spirit Bear

Children's Literature Review

"In order to avoid a prison sentence, fifteen-year-old Cole Matthews opts to spend a year alone on an island in southwest Alaska. This alternative punishment is part of Circle Justice, a healing form of justice that has been practiced by native cultures for thousands of years. But Cole harbors resentment toward the world that no justice can placate. He torches his shelter, destroys his supplies, and then has a run-in with a giant white Spirit Bear that leaves him maimed and badly injured. But has this near-death experience helped Cole accept the patience, gentleness, strength, and honesty that is Circle Justice's goal? Cole's parole officer and a Native American elder, Edwin, risk their reputations so that Cole can give the island another chance. Finally, Cole realizes that it is not through anger but through forgiveness that he will find redemption. The author, who lives with an adopted 700-pound black bear in Montana, does not shy away from describing the violent and sometimes gruesome confrontations with man and beast that Cole pits himself against." Reviewer: Christopher Moning

Advanced English 8 ONLY (Advanced English reads four (4) books)

Witness

Children's Literature

"Life in a small Vermont town changed in 1924 the year the Ku Klux Klan came to town. Based on historical documentation, Hesse, using her quiet poetic form, chronicles the events through the voices of residents of the town. Looking at the pictures and ages of the residents, the reader wonders about the effect the book will have, but that wonder is soon replaced by anticipation of reading each entry. The power of the voices, especially those of Reynard Alexander, the newspaper editor, and Esther Hirsh, the six-year-old Jewish girl, is strong and pulls the reader into the very life of the town. When the Klan leaves, both the reader and the town sigh deeply, knowing that they are forever changed. The book is a fast read, but it is one that will not release the reader's mind and heart."

Advanced English 8 ONLY (Advanced English reads four (4) books)

Red Kayak

Children's Literature

"Brady Parks thought he had a normal life: going to school, hanging out with friends, and working with his dad on the river. Then one day his dad asks for help searching for a missing neighbor and her son who were kayaking on the river. Brady finds Ben, the toddler who Brady had baby-sat earlier that year, unconscious in the cold water. Brady performs CPR until the paramedics can take over and take Ben to the hospital. Brady is declared a local hero. Unfortunately, Ben dies the following day due to complications from exposure. While grieving over Ben's death, Brady discovers that the kayak sinking was not an accident; it was sabotage. Brady has to decide if he should go to the police or protect his friends. This is a great book for kids who need to see that doing the right thing is not always easy, especially when it is going against friends or peer-pressure. With issues such as death and betrayal dominating the storyline, this is a perfect choice for pre-teens who have to deal with tough issues and harsh secrets."

These reviews may be found at www.barnesandnoble.com. Simply do a search for the book and then look for the reviews tabs at the bottom of the page.