

8th Grade English Language Arts

Summer Reading & Comprehension Assignment

Student Full Name: _____

Date of Submission: September 1, 2026

Class Section: 8th Grade _____

Teacher Name: _____

Assignment Rules & Information

- **Due Date:** Tuesday, September 1st.
- **Total Value:** This assignment is worth exactly **5% of your total First Semester grade.**
- **Maximum Score:** 100 Points.
- **How it will be graded:** This assignment will be uploaded to an AI grading tool by your teacher. To help the tool read your answers correctly, please type your responses directly into this Microsoft Word (.docx) file on your computer, or save it as a clear PDF before handing it in. Avoid submitting blurry photos or messy files, as the computer may have trouble reading them.
- **Core Requirements:** You must use correct grammar, proper punctuation, and clear full sentences. For the written answers, you must use facts and examples directly from the text to support your ideas.

Part I: Reading Passages

Passage A: The Echoes of Whispering Pines

The morning fog was thick over the valley, covering the small town of Oakhaven like a blanket. To a stranger, the quiet morning would seem peaceful. But to Leo, an incoming eighth-grader, the quiet felt a bit spooky. Leo had spent every summer exploring the edges of Whispering Pines Forest. Today, it felt like the old woods were holding their breath, waiting for summer to end. The town's history was closely tied to these woods. Old local stories told of an underground river system that carved deep, maze-like caves beneath the roots of the giant trees. To the people living in Oakhaven, these stories were not just fun tales—they were serious warnings.

Leo adjusted the heavy straps of his backpack, checking to make sure his flashlight and notebook were safe inside. His grandfather had worked as the town surveyor for over forty years, maps and rocks being his main passion. He had left behind a pile of journals full of hand-drawn maps and strange notes. One note from August 1974 caught Leo's eye. It said: 'The strange sound behavior near the eastern ridge is

still happening. The rock walls act less like solid stone and more like empty speaker boxes. The wind doesn't just blow through the trees; it speaks through the rock.' Since he was curious and had nothing else to do on a boring August day, Leo decided to find this eastern ridge before the school year started and took away all his free time.

When Leo walked out of the warm, sunny meadow and entered the thick forest, the temperature dropped quickly. The sunlight came down in thin beams, showing dust particles dancing in the cool air. The ground changed from soft mud to a dry, crunchy carpet of pine needles and broken rock. Every time he stepped on a twig, it snapped loudly in the quiet woods. Leo looked down at his grandfather's old map, following a dotted line labeled 'The Whispering Gallery.' The path had disappeared years ago under wild ferns and bushes, so Leo had to use his compass and follow the exact directions written in the journal.

After two hours of walking up a steep hill, the thick trees suddenly opened up into a large, round clearing. High walls of layered stone rose up on three sides, filled with tiny cracks and dark holes. Leo stood right in the middle of the area, feeling very small next to the giant rocks. He took out his notebook to write down where he was. But when he clicked his plastic pen, a loud, sharp *click* echoed off the stone walls. It didn't happen just once; it repeated three times and turned into a low hum. Leo stopped breathing. A few seconds later, a soft sighing sound came right out of the stone walls. There was no wind at all; the air was completely still. The rock formation was behaving exactly like a giant machine built to copy human voices.

Passage B: The Science of Sound

While the old stories in Oakhaven say that spirits cause the sounds in Whispering Pines, science provides a clear explanation. It all has to do with geology and physics. The stone walls are made of limestone, which is a type of rock that easily breaks down over time. Over thousands of years, rainwater—which contains a small amount of acid—slowly eats away at the stone. This creates a huge web of empty spaces, tunnels, and deep caves underground. When these hollow spaces connect to the surface, they can trap, grow, and change sounds. Scientists call these spaces natural resonators.

In engineering, experts study how sound bounces off surfaces to design better buildings. For example, ancient Roman theaters used curved stone walls and stepped seats to push an actor's voice all the way to the top rows without any microphones. In nature, the curved limestone walls at the eastern ridge work exactly the same way. When a sound wave enters the area, it hits the hard rock and bounces straight toward the middle instead of spreading out into the sky. This is why Leo's tiny pen click sounded so loud and repeated so many times.

Underground air currents also help create the 'whispering' effect. During hot summer months, the air inside deep caves stays very cold and heavy, while the air outside on the surface gets warm and light. This difference in temperature creates a difference in air pressure. To balance things out, the cold air from deep inside the earth rushes out through the small cracks in the rock. As the fast-moving air pushes through the narrow, jagged holes, it vibrates. This is the exact same science that happens when you blow across the top of an empty glass bottle to make a whistling sound. Therefore, what people thought were ghosts was actually just the earth breathing to balance out its temperature.

Part II: Assignment Questions

Section 1: Multiple-Choice Questions (4 Points Each / 40 Points Total)

Circle or write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space provided.

1. In Passage A, why does Leo decide to go to the eastern ridge?

- A) He wants to make a new map for the town council.
- B) He is curious about his grandfather's journal notes.
- C) He is looking for a lost river to swim in.
- D) His school teacher told him to go there.

Answer: _____

2. In Passage A, the text says the town's history is 'closely tied' to the woods. What does this mean?

- A) The townspeople do not care about the forest.
- B) The town and the forest share a deep history that cannot be separated.
- C) The forest was planted recently by the town.
- D) The town makes all its money by cutting down the trees.

Answer: _____

3. How does the environment change when Leo walks into the forest?

- A) It gets hotter and the ground becomes sandy.
- B) It gets much colder and the ground is covered in dry pine needles.
- C) It gets very loud with animal sounds.
- D) The sun gets brighter and he turns off his flashlight.

Answer: _____

4. According to Passage B, what causes the tunnels and holes to form in limestone rock?

- A) Earthquakes shifting the ground.
- B) Volcanoes heating up the valley.
- C) Acidic rainwater slowly dissolving the stone over a long time.
- D) Strong winds carving out holes in the cliffs.

Answer: _____

5. Based on Passage B, what does a 'natural resonator' do to sound?

- A) It stops echoes from happening.
- B) It traps, amplifies, and changes sounds.
- C) It makes sounds completely disappear.
- D) It records sounds like a computer.

Answer: _____

6. How are ancient Roman theaters similar to the stone clearing Leo found?

- A) Both use electronics to make sounds louder.
- B) Both use wooden walls to stop echoes.
- C) Both were built by the same group of people.
- D) Both use curved stone surfaces to focus sound waves in one direction.

Answer: _____

7. What causes the cold air to rush out of the caves during the summer?

- A) Heavy underground water pushing the air.
- B) A difference in air pressure caused by hot surface air and cold cave air.
- C) Animals running through the tunnels.
- D) Tree roots growing into the caves.

Answer: _____

8. In Passage B, what everyday object is used to explain the whistling sound coming from the rocks?

- A) A backpack strap.
- B) An empty glass bottle.
- C) A clicking pen.
- D) A rainy window.

Answer: _____

9. Which words best describe the difference in style between Passage A and Passage B?

- A) Passage A is a scientific report; Passage B is a funny story.
- B) Passage A is a mysterious story; Passage B is an educational science text.
- C) Passage A is a historical poem; Passage B is a personal letter.
- D) Both passages are identical news reports.

Answer: _____

10. What is the main reason for reading both passages together?

- A) To show that science is not as interesting as old stories.
- B) To see how the same mystery can be looked at as both an adventure story and a science fact.
- C) To learn how to use a compass in the woods.
- D) To prove that limestone is the rarest rock in the world.

Answer: _____

Section 2: Open-Ended Questions (12 Points Each / 60 Points Total)

Instructions: Write your answers using complete sentences. To get full credit (12 points per question), you must use correct grammar, accurate spelling, and clear details. Use facts and examples from both Passage A and Passage B to explain your answers.

11. Connecting the Texts: Explain how the sounds Leo hears in the woods (Passage A) are explained by the science facts in Passage B. Use at least two specific details from the texts to show your connection.

12. Word Study: Look at the last paragraph of Passage B where it explains how the air vibrates through the rock cracks. In your own words, explain how this scientific fact changes the way people think about the 'ghost stories' of the town.

13. Finding Clues: In Passage A, Leo’s grandfather wrote that the rock walls act like 'speaker boxes' instead of normal granite walls. Using facts from Passage B, explain why limestone rock creates these sounds while normal granite does not.

14. Thinking About Structure: The author split this assignment into two different parts (Passage A is a story and Passage B is science). How does reading the adventure story first help you understand the science part better? Explain your opinion.

15. Grammar & Summary Challenge: Write a clear summary paragraph (4 to 5 sentences) explaining how a real place in nature can cause people to create local myths and stories. Your answer will be strictly graded on correct grammar, punctuation, and full sentence structure. Make sure there are no run-on sentences or fragments.
