



America's School of Heroes

Middle School 137

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Middle School 137's Incoming 6th Grade **ELA Summer Packet**



Dear Incoming Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Welcome to Middle School 137! The administration and staff are very excited to welcome you this coming September. To help you prepare for 6th grade, we are assigning a summer packet that must be completed during the break.

Please read the passages and complete the multiple-choice questions, short response questions, and the interview writing assignment included in the packet.

This completed packet must be brought with you on the first day of school. Your new ELA teacher will collect and grade your work.

We wish you a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you at MS 137 in September!

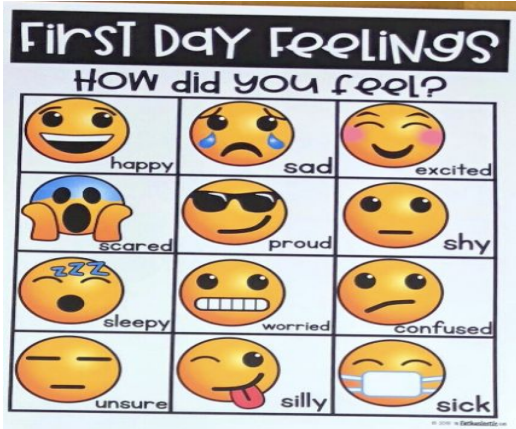
Student Name: _____

Class: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

6th Grade Summer Assignment

Please complete the packet and return it to your ELA teacher on the first day of school. Be sure to do your best work and show great effort when completing all tasks. These assignments will help your teacher get to know you as a student and assess your reading and writing skills. Work will be graded and applied towards your grade for the 1st marking period.



How do you feel about starting a new journey at Middle School 137? Why do you feel that way? Explain your thoughts.

Respond here:

Mitigate those trying situations with these cooling-down strategies



Image 1. Sixth grade students at George Washington Middle School in Alexandria, VA start their general science class each day with five minutes of meditation. Taking a few minutes to meditate is one strategy for calming down when you feel stressed, angry or upset. Photo by Jahi Chikwendiu/The Washington Post via Getty Images

By WikiHow, adapted by Newsela staff

Feeling upset is a normal part of life. Something stressful may happen at home or school, and the troubling event may leave you feeling angry or frustrated. We can't control everything that's happening around us. However, we can control how we behave and react to the challenges we face. With some knowledge and practice, we can learn useful ways to keep our cool when we feel stressed.

Do Breathing Exercises To Immediately Relax

When we're upset, our bodies go into what's known as "fight or flight" mode. The nervous system speeds up our heart rate and our muscles tense. It prepares the body as if to meet an attack.

You can offset this physical reaction using breathing techniques. If possible, find a place where you feel safe and can be quiet. Sit comfortably with your hands on your belly. Focus on your breath, breathing deeply and evenly. Mindful breathing slows the heart rate and helps us calm our feelings.

Count To 10

Sometimes it's not possible to leave a tense situation, as when we sit down to take a test. When that happens, we can still practice mindful breathing. We can also practice counting from 1 to 10. As you count, imagine that with each number, you're reaching a new level of calmness. You can do this counting exercise anywhere: at home, on the bus, or in the classroom.



Professional basketball player Tina Thompson lets out a deep breath before taking a free throw shot. Deep breathing is one way to calm down if you are upset, worried, or stressed out -- like you might be before taking a game-deciding shot. Photo: Gina Ferazzi via Getty.

Remove Yourself From An Upsetting Situation

Conflicts with others can be difficult to deal with. Sometimes we need to leave an upsetting situation. It is OK to say, "I'm going to take a break" and go for a walk or find a quiet place to sit and cool off. The goal is to give yourself some space to calm down and consider what to do next.

Acknowledge Your Thoughts

Feeling angry, scared, or upset is natural. In fact, experiencing feelings gives us a chance to learn about our emotions and accept them.

We can even talk to ourselves as a way to acknowledge our emotions. We can say something like, "I'm feeling really upset right now. That is OK because I can control how I respond to these feelings."

Make Yourself Laugh To Improve Your Mood

Laughter relieves the tension we feel when upset. We can think of a joke or watch a video that always makes us laugh. Laughter clears our minds. Afterward, you can deal with stressful situations more thoughtfully.

Make sure that the humor you use is not mean-spirited or sarcastic, though. Those kinds of humor can actually make us feel more upset.



Laughing is a surefire way to calm yourself down and cheer yourself up. The next time you feel upset, think of a joke that always makes you laugh. Photo: cheriejoyful via Flickr.

Listen To Calming Music

When you're upset, take a break and listen to your favorite music. Let the sound wash over you while you breathe and relax. If you feel like it, you can also dance or sing. Being physical and creative calms your body and also helps you connect with your feelings.

Slow, quiet music helps many people relax. More importantly, the music should be enjoyable to you

Change Your Language

When we're upset, many of us punish ourselves with unkind words. Instead, we can reframe harsh thoughts into positive statements. For example, instead of saying, "I always mess things up," we might say, "I made a mistake. Next time I'll do it differently." Using positive language is an effective way to stay calm and avoid overreacting.

You may also become upset if we "personalize" situations. Personalization means making a situation about us when it isn't. For example, if someone bumps into you in the lunch line, you may jump to the conclusion that the person did it on purpose. In truth, it may have been an accident. Even if the person is being mean, we can practice staying calm and choose how to respond.

Do Something Physical To Release Tension

You can calm your mind through physical activity. Exercise releases endorphins, which are natural chemicals that boost mood. Moderate exercise can relieve stress and anxiety.

Some people find a cleaning project calms them down. Cleaning your room is a physical activity with positive results.

Recognize That You Cannot Control Others

The only person you can fully control is yourself. Trying to control the behaviors and actions of others can lead to big problems. We cannot completely shield ourselves from the upsetting actions of other people. However, we can be kind and caring to ourselves. Reading a book or playing a game we like are ways to build up positive emotions. When we feel good about ourselves we are better prepared to deal with stress.



Reading a favorite book is one way to be kind to yourself. Photo: Peter Kovalev\TASS via Getty Images.

Try The RAIN practice

RAIN stands for Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Natural Loving Awareness. It is a way of practicing mindfulness in your daily life. Here is how RAIN works:

Recognize the experience and what is happening at the present moment. Notice how you feel, what you're thinking, and how your body is reacting.

Allow yourself to feel these things and acknowledge your feelings without labeling them "right" or "wrong." Blocking our emotions can leave us feeling more upset.

Investigate the situation with kindness. In other words, be friendly toward yourself. If you would never say something to your best buddy, don't say it to yourself.

Natural loving awareness develops as we practice the first three steps. This awareness lets us calm our inner voices that say "I'm a loser" or "I'm stupid." Natural loving kindness also helps us understand the struggles others are facing.

Practice Meditation

Studies show meditation can change how our brains respond to stress. Meditation is a calming practice that concentrates on breathing. Meditating daily for 15 minutes creates a calmer mindset.

Pay Attention To Your Emotions Each Day

Our feelings are a natural part of us and help us navigate the world. When we respect our emotions, it is easier to stay calm. When our mind is clear, we can respond better to upsetting situations.



Participants practice meditation during a group yoga session in New York City's Central Park. Meditating for a few minutes every day can help you to feel calmer. Photo: Emmanuel Dunand via Getty.

Mitigate those trying situations with these cooling-down strategies

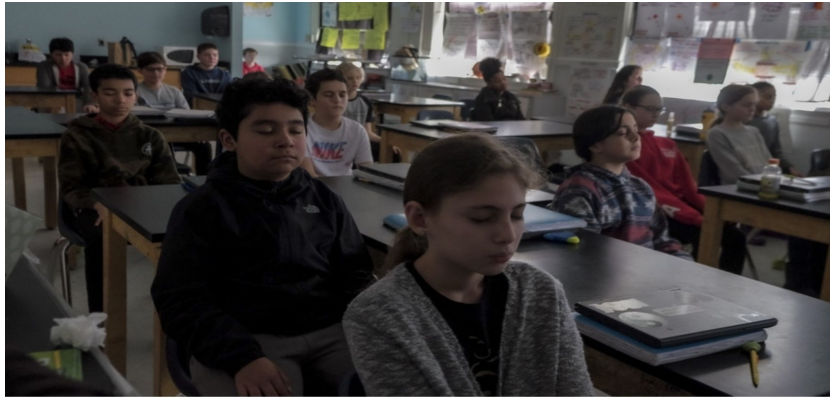


Image 1. Sixth grade students at George Washington Middle School in Alexandria, VA start their general science class each day with five minutes of meditation. Taking a few minutes to meditate is one strategy for calming down when you feel stressed, angry or upset. Photo by Jahi Chikwendiu/The Washington Post via Getty Images

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Answer the following multiple choice questions.

1. One MAIN idea of the article is that there are some things you can do to relax when you feel stressed. What is another MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) Sometimes people assume that if someone bumps into them, that person did it on purpose.
- (B) The main reason why music helps to calm you down is because it allows you to dance or sing.
- (C) Taking time to breathe deeply and acknowledge your feelings can help to calm you down.
- (D) Laughter that is mean-spirited or sarcastic can actually make you feel more upset.

2 How does the section "Try The RAIN Practice" develop the MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) It outlines the consequences of not learning to be calm and positive in daily life.
- (B) It highlights the idea that everyone faces struggles in daily life, so there is nothing to be ashamed of.
- (C) It emphasizes the idea that there is no right or wrong way to think, feel, or act in daily life.
- (D) It shows a helpful way to remember steps you can take to stay calm in daily life.

Let the sound wash over you while you breathe and relax.

(A) He felt excitement wash over him after he scored the winning goal.

(B) The clothes smelled good when they came out of the wash.

(C) Make sure to let the water wash over each of the vegetables before chopping them.

(D) The wash of color in the painting showed the beautiful ocean sunset.

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(A) map out
(B) figure out
(C) sail across
(D) travel around

Writing: Write a short paragraph (response) to explain the central idea of the article. Be sure to explain in detail and cite 2 pieces of evidence to support your answer.

[illegible]

TACO HEAD

Viola Canales is a Mexican American author who grew up in south Texas. She celebrates her Latinx culture through her writing. "Culture" refers to beliefs, values, traditions, and customs shared by a particular group. In "Taco Head," Canales writes about a young girl who struggles with taking tacos, a traditional Mexican dish, to school for lunch. The following text also contains language that some may find hurtful or offensive.

As you read, take notes on how Sofia feels about eating tacos for lunch throughout the story.



"Untitled" by Jeswin Thomas is licensed under CC0.

(1) Mama used to pack two bean tacos for my school lunch each day. Every morning she'd get up at five to make a fresh batch of flour masa.¹ She'd roll out and cook one tortilla at a time until she had a big stack of them, nice and hot, and then she'd fill each with beans that she'd fried in bacon grease and flavored with chopped onion in her huge cast-iron skillet.

And each morning I would sit at the kitchen table and say, "Mama, can I please have some lunch money too, or a sandwich instead?" But the reply was always the same: "Why, mi'ja? You already have these delicious bean tacos to eat."

It wasn't that the tacos weren't good; it was that some kids called all Mexican Americans beaners, so the last thing I needed was to stand out like a big stupid sign. All the other kids either bought their lunch at the cafeteria or took nice white sandwiches.

I started going to the very end of the cafeteria, to turn my back and gobble up my tacos.

(5) Then I started eating each taco by first putting it in a bag.

It would take me all of five minutes to eat, and then I'd go outside to the playground. I was always the first one there, often the only one for quite a while. But I didn't mind, except on really cold days, when I wished I were still inside.

On one cold day, I so dreaded going outside that I started eating my second taco rather slowly. "Hey, you!" someone shouted. I turned and found a big girl standing right 'smack in front of me, her arms crossed over her chest like bullet belts.

“What’s in that paper bag?” She glared and poked at the bag with her fat finger.

I was stunned stupid. She grabbed the bag.

(10) “Taco head! Taco head!” She yelled. In seconds I was surrounded by kids chanting “Taco head! Taco head!”

I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me whole. Not only was I found out, but the girl had caused my taco to fly open and splatter all over my white sweater.

This nightmare went on forever, until Coach Clarke, the girls’ PE teacher, blew her whistle and ordered everyone back to their seats.

“Sofia,” she said, “don’t pay attention to them. They’re just being mean and silly.” She took me to the teachers’ lounge and helped me clean up.

For two days after that, I went directly to the playground and didn’t eat my lunch until I got home after school. And then for two days after that, I ate inside a stall in the girls’ restroom.

(15) The next Monday, Coach Clarke stopped me in the hall. “Sofia, how about we eat lunch together in the cafeteria?”

When the lunch bell rang, I found Coach Clarke sitting in the middle of the cafeteria, with students standing all around her. She looked up and waved me over.

“Here, Sofia,” she said as she pulled out the chair beside her. “Everyone else was begging to sit with me, but I said no, that I was saving this chair for you.”

I sat down, feeling sick, nervous.

“How about we trade?” Coach said. She opened her lunch bag and pulled out a half-sandwich wrapped in plastic. “I’ll trade this for one of your tacos.”

(20) All the kids were staring at us.

“Oh, please, I really want to trade.”

I hesitated and pulled out my lunch. I unwrapped the foil.

“Those look good,” Coach said, reaching for a taco. “Better than any stupid sandwich I’ve ever had. See for yourself. Take a bite.”

I carefully unwrapped the half-sandwich and took a little bite. It was awful, something between sardines and bologna.

(25) “Ha! Told you!” Coach Clarke said, laughing. “Here,” she said, taking the rest of the sandwich, “you don’t have to eat it. Have your taco instead.”

As I ate one and Coach Clarke ate the other, she kept making all these loud mmmmm sounds. I knew everyone in the cafeteria could hear.

And the next day we ate lunch together in the middle of the cafeteria. We traded. Again, her half sandwich was truly awful. Do all sandwiches taste like something between sardines and bologna? I wondered.

But this time, as she ate one taco and I the other, she told me stories about herself: about how she became a coach because she’d fallen in love with sports at school; how she loved playing soccer most but had also been good at playing field hockey and softball. We laughed when she described the funny skirt she had worn playing field hockey.

I told her I liked to play soccer too, with my father and cousins in the street. Then I remembered Clara and her stories, so I told Coach Clarke about Clara and how she told me that I had inherited my great-great grandmother’s gift for kicking like a mule. I hesitated, then said, “I wish I’d kicked the girl who made fun of me.”

(30) “Sofia, learn to kick with your head instead.”

“Like in soccer?”

“No, like with your brain. And you know how you can really kick that girl, and really hard?”

“How?”

“By kicking her butt at school, by beating her in English, math, everything — even sports.”

(35) Coach Clarke and I had lunch together the rest of that week. She asked me for the recipe for the tacos. I had to ask both Papa and Mama for this, since Papa cleaned and cooked the beans before Mama fried them.

After that, I wanted to “kick that girl” so bad that I asked Coach Clarke if I could go to the library to study after lunch instead of wasting time on the playground. She arranged it for me. She also told me, “Part of ‘kicking that girl’ is to eat your tacos proudly, and right in the middle of the cafeteria.”

That year I kicked that girl in all classes and sports, especially soccer.

It wasn't long after my lunches with Coach Clarke that some of the other Mexican American kids started eating their foods out in the open too. And sometimes when I pulled out my lunch, I got offers to trade for sandwiches. But I always ate both my tacos before heading off to the library.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following statements best describes a main theme of the story?
 - A. Teachers give the best advice to students.
 - B. Talk with your bullies to let them know how you feel.
 - C. Be proud of yourself and what makes you who you are.
 - D. Family is more important than what other people think about you.

2. How does the narrator's point of view affect how the events are described in the story?
 - A. The first-person point of view gives readers a close look into Sofia's thoughts and feelings.
 - B. The third-person point of view gives readers a close look into the bullies' thoughts and feelings.
 - C. The third-person point of view gives readers a close look into the decisions Sofia's parents make.
 - D. The first-person point of view gives readers a close look into Coach Clarke's thoughts and feelings.

3. What does Sofia mean when she says "I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me whole" in paragraph 11?
 - A. Sofia wants to fight back against her bullies.
 - B. Sofia wants the bullies to get in trouble for their behavior.
 - C. Sofia wants someone to come defend her in this situation.
 - D. Sofia wants to be removed from this uncomfortable situation.

4. Which detail from the story best supports the idea that Sofia followed Coach Clarke's advice?
 - A. "Then I remembered Clara and her stories, so I told Coach Clarke about Clara and how she told me that I had inherited my great-great-grandmother's gift for kicking like a mule." (Paragraph 29)
 - B. "'No, like with your brain. And you know how you can really kick that girl, and really hard?'" (Paragraph 32)
 - C. "I had to ask both Papa and Mama for this, since Papa cleaned and cooked the beans before Mama fried them." (Paragraph 35)
 - D. "After that, I wanted to 'kick that girl' so bad that I asked Coach Clarke if I could go to the library to study after lunch instead of wasting time on the playground." (Paragraph 36)

Writing: Write a short paragraph (response) to explain how Sofias’s feelings about eating tacos at lunch change throughout the story? Be sure to explain in detail and cite 2 pieces of evidence to support your answer.

A bit of stress may help young people build resilience

By Esther Landhuis, Science News for Students, adapted by Newsela staff on 09.11.20

Word Count **572**

Level **MAX**



No kid enjoys tough problems, bad news or failure. Yet making it through stressful situations can help us become more resilient so that we can weather the hard times better. Photo: JGI/Tom Grill/Getty Images

Enduring hardship early in life, such as homelessness or losing a parent, is awful, and worse, it can mean a difficult road ahead. A completely stress-free life seems like a much better alternative, but it isn't necessarily a good thing, research is now showing. A small amount of stress may actually help kids build mental toughness.

"We learn to handle stress by handling stress," says Megan Gunnar. She works at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. As a developmental psychobiologist (SY-koh-by-OL-uh-gizt), she studies how the body copes with stress. Her work focuses on such effects in children and adolescents.

Feeling crushed by an intense stressor, such as abuse or a parent's death, can impart a sense of helplessness. That leaves people "fearful of it happening again," Gunnar explains. A stressful experience shows us that "the world is tough," she says. "But we can deal with it, perhaps with the help of family and friends," she adds. And it makes us "tougher the next time."

Resilience is the ability to bounce back after a bad experience. In one 2010 study, researchers wanted to understand how pain and stress affect resilience. They surveyed 2,398 adults in the United States. Participants answered questions about their mental health and overall well-being. And they indicated if they had experienced varying levels of adversity. This might be a serious illness or divorce in the family.

The upshot: Adults who faced some adversity reported fewer symptoms of psychological distress than did those who had experienced heavy adversity. They also fared better than those who had sailed through childhood with few hard times.

David Lyons is a behavioral neuroscientist at Stanford University in California. His team reported causal evidence for this correlation in a November 2019 paper in *Scientific Reports*. It would not be ethical to randomly assign humans to experience such stressful conditions. So the team studied squirrel monkeys that had not yet reached puberty. These monkeys experienced varying "doses" of stress.

"No-stress" monkeys enjoyed a typical life in the lab. They were housed in a cage with their mother and siblings. There was plenty of water and food. They also got toys. A second group faced a mild stressor. They spent an hour a day away from their siblings on 10 straight days. The stress dose went up a notch for a third group. These monkeys had daily separation from siblings and no access to mom during that hour. Two more groups experienced daily separation from both their mother and siblings. They also received an injection as yet one more stressor.

Ten weeks later, each monkey was moved with its mother to an unfamiliar cage. The researchers assessed the monkeys' willingness to let go of mom and explore the new digs. The team also analyzed levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the animals' blood. That blood had been collected before, during and after their time in the new cage.

On the whole, monkeys that faced one or two stressors (groups 2 and 3) clung less to their mothers than those in the last two groups. They also more readily explored their new surroundings. In general, they showed less anxiety than both the no-stress and high-stress groups.

The monkeys' cortisol patterns also reflected this trend. Animals that were exposed to mild-to-moderate stress toned down their cortisol spikes more quickly than the other groups.

Growing up healthy means "learning how to deal with mild challenge and change," Lyons concludes.

1) Read the following sentence from the article.

The upshot: Adults who faced some adversity reported fewer symptoms of psychological distress than did those who had experienced heavy adversity.

Which of these words, if it replaced the word "adversity" in the sentence above, would CHANGE the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) difficulties
- (B) hardship
- (C) indecision
- (D) misfortune

2) What is the definition of "spikes" as used in this selection from the article?

The monkeys' cortisol patterns also reflected this trend. Animals that were exposed to mild-to-moderate stress toned down their cortisol spikes more quickly than the other groups.

- (A) changes or waves
- (B) doses or injections
- (C) pierces or stings
- (D) surges or increases

3) Megan Gunnar thinks that people can develop resilience after facing hardships. Which detail from the article BEST supports this opinion?

- (A) As a developmental psychobiologist (SY-koh-by-OL-uh-gizt), she studies how the body copes with stress. Her work focuses on such effects in children and adolescents.
- (B) Feeling crushed by an intense stressor, such as abuse or a parent's death, can impart a sense of helplessness.
- (C) That leaves people "fearful of it happening again," Gunnar explains. A stressful experience shows us that "the world is tough," she says.
- (D) "But we can deal with it, perhaps with the help of family and friends," she adds. And it makes us "tougher the next time."

4) Read the paragraph below from the article.

On the whole, monkeys that faced one or two stressors (groups 2 and 3) clung less to their mothers than those in the last two groups. They also more readily explored their new surroundings. In general, they showed less anxiety than both the no-stress and high-stress groups.

Why did the author include this paragraph?

- (A) to provide further evidence that some stress can be a beneficial thing
- (B) to provide further evidence that extreme stress can help monkeys
- (C) to show that having no stress gives animals and people an advantage
- (D) to show that any amount of stress can be disastrous in most circumstances

Write a short paragraph explaining how hardships/challenges impact an individual's life? Explain. Use 2 details from the text to support your answer.

Interview your favorite character!

Task

Think about your favorite character of all time. This can be a character you read in a book, saw on TV, in a movie, or even a video game. Pretend you could ask the character 3 questions, and based on what you know about the character answer the question as you feel the character would.

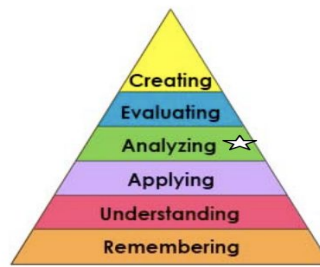
1. Decide what character you are going to focus on.
2. Use the **question stems** to help you come up with 3 questions you could ask the character. **(on next page)**
3. Answer the questions you have asked the way you believe the character would answer. **BE SURE TO ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN AT LEAST 5 COMPLETE SENTENCES.**
4. In the blank box in the top right corner include a picture of your character.

REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN AND BE CREATIVE!!

*If you would like to recreate a similar template on a separate piece of paper you may.

◆ Recall & Understanding

1. What is your name and where are you from? Do you like it there?
2. Can you describe what you look like or what you wear?
3. Can you describe something you enjoy doing in your free time?
4. Who is someone important in your life? Why?
5. What is one challenge you've faced in your story?



◆ Applying & Analyzing

6. How do you usually solve problems when something goes wrong?
7. What makes you different from other characters in your world?
8. How do you feel about the choices you made in your story?
9. What motivates you to keep going, even when things get tough?
10. If you could go back and change one thing, what would it be and why?

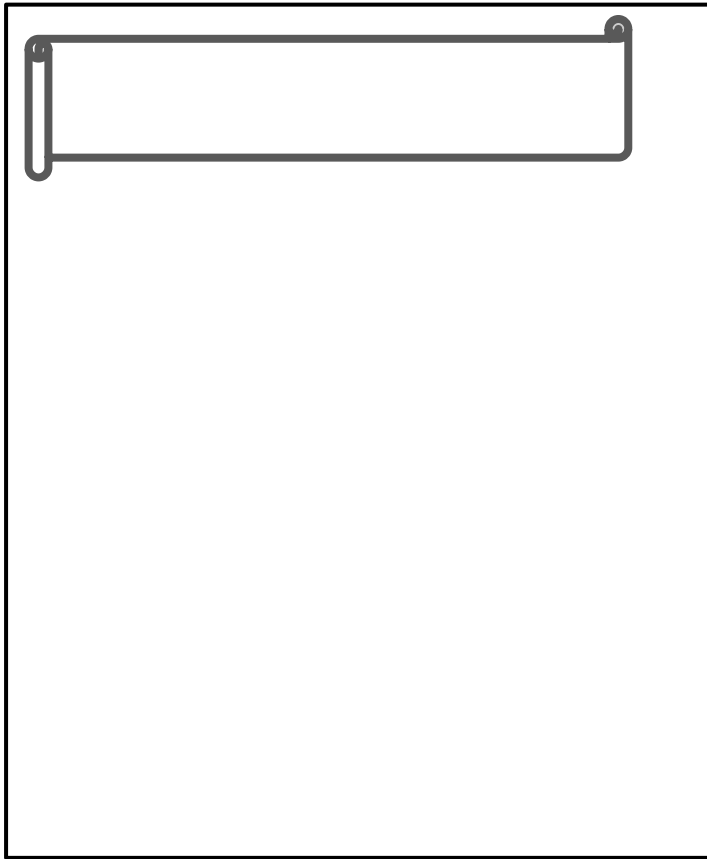
◆ Evaluating & Creating

11. What advice would you give to someone going through something similar to you?
12. How do you think others see you, and do you agree with them?
13. What do you wish more people understood about you?
14. If you could create your own ending to your story, what would it be?
15. What lesson do you hope readers or viewers learn from your journey?

My Questions

My favorite character of all time is

_____ from _____.



Question:

Response:

Question:

Response:

Question:

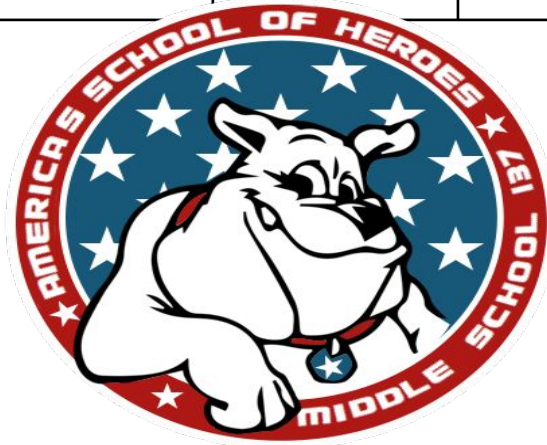
Response:

Interview Rubric

Think about your favorite character of all time. This can be a character you read in a book, saw on TV, in a movie, or even a video game. Pretend you could ask the character 3 questions, and based on what you know about the character answer the question as you feel the character would.

NGS Standards Assessed: 6RI 6W4

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Higher Order Thinking questions	Student created 3 well thought out high order opened ended questions.	Student created 2-3 opened ended questions.	Student created 1-2 b closed ended questions.	Student attempted to create 1 or less closed ended questions.
Content - Knowledge/Accuracy	Responses to the questions shows a deep analysis and understanding of the character. Includes 6-8 sentences of detail.	Responses to the questions shows an analysis of the character. Includes 4-7 sentences of detail.	Responses to the questions shows a limited analysis of the character. Includes 3-6 sentences of detail.	The responses to the questions shows little to no analysis of the character. Includes 2 or less sentences of detail.
Attractiveness/ Creativity	The poster is exceptionally attractive and creative in design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is attractive and creative in design, layout, and neatness.	The poster lacks attractiveness and creativity in design, layout, and neatness.	The poster shows little effort and time in design, layout, and neatness.



Name _____

Summer Independent Reading Log
Due on the first day of school in September

Please use this page to log your independent reading time. You are expected to read independently for **at least 30 minutes three times a week**. Each log will be collected at the end of the month in addition to three independent reading responses for texts that are completed.

[illegible]

Name _____

Summer Independent Reading Log

Due September

[illegible]