



Sager Classical Academy

8th Grade Summer Reading *Crispin: Cross of Lead* by Avi Paragraph and Reading Journal

Why We Choose to Read

In his 1952 essay entitled “The Great Conversation,” Robert Maynard Hutchins describes how great books are vital to education:

We are as concerned as anybody else at the headlong plunge into the abyss that Western civilization seems to be taking. We believe that the voices that may recall the West to sanity are those which have taken part in the Great Conversation. We want them to be heard again—not because we want to go back to antiquity, or the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance, or the Eighteenth Century. We are quite aware that we do not live in any time but the present, and distressing as the present is, we would not care to live in any other time if we could. We want the voices of the Great Conversation to be heard again because we think they may help us to learn to live better now.

Sager Classical Academy deliberately reads and studies these same voices—these books—not to dream of bygone eras, but to glean the wisdom and eternal truths that are present. Our historical fiction choice this year is a clear example of how truth remains truth through the ages.

The medieval story, *Crispin: Cross of Lead*, begins the day after Crispin’s mother, Asta, dies some time in 1377. Her death sets a chain of events in motion that disrupts the dull but stable life young Crispin had known. When Crispin overhears John Aycliffe, the local steward, speaking with a stranger, they realize he has been listening and try to capture him. Failing, they make a public proclamation that Crispin stole from the manor house and declare him a “wolf’s head”—someone outside of human society, who can be killed at will. The village priest advises him to leave the village, but he also tells Crispin surprising things about his mother, things like she could read and write. Those abilities are rare in the fourteenth century, and they mark her, and Crispin, as special.

ASSIGNMENTS

Please read the entire book and feel free to use an audiobook as you follow along in the text. You have **two assignments** to complete as you read the novel. You may either type or write these by hand. If you choose handwritten, please use your best handwriting and write on the front side of your notebook paper only.

1. **Write a paragraph (minimum 10 sentences)** explaining how Crispin changes over the course of the book. Include specific details from the story to support your ideas.
2. As you read the novel, please keep a reading journal that you will turn in on the first day of school. You will need to **write a minimum of two sentences for each chapter**. Summary sentences work best, though you may add your own thoughts and opinions.

FORMAT

Please begin your journal with the following heading:

Luke Skywalker (your name)
Mr. Kenobi (teacher name)
Lightsaber 101 (class name like Humanities 7)
4 May 1977 (current date)

Summer Reading Journal (center this title)

1. Each number will then be the same as the chapter number. You will have a minimum of **two** sentences for each number.

Do email Mrs. Norvell if you have any questions at christine.norvell@sageracademy.com.

Happy reading!