



2026

# SUMMER READING *Challenge*

*Travel across America*

**ONE BOOK AT A TIME**

Sonlight Curriculum® “Travel across America One Book at a Time” Summer Reading Challenge

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“Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

“The worker is worth his keep” (Matthew 10:10).

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# WELCOME TO THE ROUTE 66 SUMMER READING ADVENTURE!

The 2026 Route 66 Summer Reading Adventure turns summer reading into an unforgettable journey across America! Instead of simply handing your child a stack of books, invite them to hit the open road through stories, history, and discovery as they travel Route 66 from Chicago to the Pacific Coast.

At each stop along the way, kids will explore important moments in American history while tracking their reading progress mile by mile. From the Dust Bowl and cattle drives to national parks and roadside America, every destination brings history to life through reading and hands-on fun.

This interactive kit includes a Route 66 map, reading trackers, historical stop pages, and themed activities designed to keep kids motivated all summer long. As they complete reading goals and travel across America one book at a time, they'll build meaningful memories and a lifelong love of reading.

## HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

- Read a book (or number of pages) to cruise along a trip down Route 66.
- Color in the white path as you travel on your reading journey
- At each destination, pull over and read a short Route 66 | Historical Stop for that location before continuing the journey.

Set your family's reading goals, pack your sense of adventure, and get ready to hit the open road! Whether you're reading at home, on vacation, or under the summer sun, this challenge is all about exploring summer reading and a little Route 66 history—one book at a time.

On the next page, you'll find a fun letter designed to spark your child's curiosity and introduce the Route 66 Summer Reading Adventure.



# WELCOME TO ROUTE 66!

## Your Summer Reading Adventure Starts Here

Have you ever wished a book could take you on an adventure? This summer, it can!

Route 66 is one of America's most famous highways. It stretches all the way from Chicago, Illinois, to the sunny beaches of California. Along the way, travelers pass through small towns, big cities, deserts, mountains, and some of America's most interesting landmarks.

For years, families traveled Route 66 looking for new opportunities, exciting adventures, and exciting adventures. Now it's your turn to hit the road!

As you read books this summer, you'll travel across America on your own Route 66 journey. At each stop, you'll learn fun facts about history, discover interesting places, and add mile markers at each stop to see how far you've traveled.

### *Here's how your adventure works:*

- Read books to earn miles. See page 9 for more details.
- Color your route as you travel across America.
- Add mile markers as you reach each historic stop and read about it.
- Reach Santa Monica and earn your Route 66 Reading Traveler Award!

So grab a book, buckle up, and get ready for an unforgettable summer journey.

Your Route 66 adventure begins now!

## *Happy Reading!*

*- Your Sunlight Team*



# CRUISE THROUGH STORIES!

Pack your bags and get ready to hit the open road of reading! Pick and choose from the ideas below to turn your summer into a Route 66 reading adventure filled with history, discovery, and family fun. We'd love to see your journey this summer! Use #sonlightstories to share your reading road trip adventures!

1. **Visit your local library!** Start your journey by picking up books about American history, geography, road trips, or famous landmarks along Route 66. Don't forget to sign up for a library card if you don't already have one!
2. **Build a road trip reading tote.** Personalize canvas tote bags with maps, road signs, or vintage travel stickers to carry your books all summer long.
3. **Map your reading journey.** Hang up a large Route 66 map and color in each stop as your family reaches new reading milestones. **See pages 9-15.**
4. **Design vintage postcards.** After completing each historical stop, create postcards inspired by the cities and landmarks you learned about. **See page 29.**
5. **Hold a family trivia night.** Test your knowledge about American history, famous landmarks, Route 66 facts, and the places you visited through reading.
6. **Build a reading fort campground.** Grab flashlights, blankets, and books to create the ultimate roadside reading stop at home.
7. **Turn movie night into a history adventure.** Watch family-friendly historical movies or documentaries connected to places and events from your Route 66 journey. Then compare what you learned through books and film. **See page 30.**
8. **Hold a tournament of books!** Let each family member choose their favorite titles. **Use the template on page 31.**
9. **Become storytellers!** Encourage kids to create travel journals, mini documentaries, or audio recordings sharing what they learned at each stop.
10. **Celebrate crossing the finish line!** End the summer with a Route 66 celebration featuring certificates (**see page 37**), road trip snacks, sunglasses, and/or music.



## FIND GREAT BOOKS FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Cruise into your next great story:

- ★ <https://www.sonlight.com/summer>

And don't miss these mega lists of great books:

- ★ <https://blog.sonlight.com/summer-reading-list-for-elementary.html>
- ★ <https://blog.sonlight.com/summer-reading-list-middle-schoolers.html>
- ★ <https://blog.sonlight.com/high-school-summer-reading.html>





Join the  
*Summer Reading*  
**GIVEAWAY!**

Every child who completes the **Route 66 Summer Reading Adventure** will receive a coupon for a **FREE** pair of Sonlight Sunglasses - perfect for a road trip!

Plus, three lucky adventurers will be selected to **win a \$50 Sonlight coupon to use on any purchase!**

⊕ **How to Join the Fun (It's as Easy as 1-2-3!)** ⊕

- 1 Read & Track:** Print your Route 66 Reading Map (pg. 10-15) and add a mile marker sticker (pg. 16) for every book you finish or history stop completed.
- 2 Snap a Photo:** Take a clear picture of your completed map.
- 3 Submit Your Entry:** Email your photo to [submissions@sonlight.com](mailto:submissions@sonlight.com)

**DEADLINE TO SUBMIT:** *August 31, 2026*

**WINNERS ANNOUNCED:** *September 15, 2026*





## How to Build Your Reading Road Trip Map

Ready to hit the road? Follow these simple steps to piece together your Route 66 Map and begin your reading adventure from Chicago to Santa Monica.

- 1. PRINT THE ROUTE 66 MAP:** Print each page on 8.5x11 paper.
- 2. Line up the Road Trip:** Match the pages like puzzle pieces. Look for connecting roads, state lines, city stops, and mile markers. Use the map diagram below as a guide.
- 3. Tape the Back:** Flip the pages over and secure them from behind so your Route 66 road trip map stays together.
- 4. Hang It up:** Choose a spot you'll see often—your bedroom wall, school area, or homeschool nook.
- 5. Track Your Journey:** As you read, color in the white Route 66 road line to show how far you've traveled.

1 Book = 1 Stop  
or

10 Pages Read = 50 Miles Traveled

(or choose any number  
of pages for goal)



**TAX**

**CALIFORNIA**

**DARSTOW**



# TAKE A READING ROAD



# TRIP



CHICAGO





**TULSA**

**AMARILLO**

OKLAHOMA

TEXAS

ICO





**LEARN THE PAST.  
EXPLORE OUR STORY.**

Cut along the dotted line. Mark your travel stops along the Route 66 map. Glue or tape these markers on your map.

Chicago



St. Louis



Tulsa



Amarillo



Santa Fe



Flagstaff



Barstow



Santa Monica





• ROUTE 66 •  
— HISTORICAL STOP —

# CHICAGO

Illinois

## IMMIGRATION & AMERICAN CITIES



Chicago became one of America’s fastest-growing cities during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Located near major waterways and railroad routes, the city attracted millions of immigrants seeking jobs, freedom, and new opportunities. Families arrived from many different countries and settled in neighborhoods where they shared their languages, foods, and traditions.

Factories, railroads, and businesses helped Chicago grow into one of the nation’s most important cities. The contributions of immigrants helped shape American culture, while Chicago became known for its architecture, transportation, and music. Today, the city reflects the many cultures and stories that helped build modern America.



# ST. LOUIS

Missouri

## WESTWARD EXPANSION



St. Louis became known as the “Gateway to the West” because it served as a starting point for many pioneers heading into new territory. During the 1800s, families traveled west searching for land, gold, and new opportunities. Explorers such as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark also began their famous journey from this region, helping Americans learn more about the western frontier.

The Mississippi River made St. Louis an important center for trade and transportation. As more settlers moved west, the nation grew and changed, but Native American tribes were often forced from their homelands. Today, St. Louis reminds us of both the opportunities and challenges that shaped America.



• ROUTE 66 •  
— HISTORICAL STOP —

# TULSA

Oklahoma

## THE DUST BOWL & GREAT DEPRESSION



During the 1930s, Oklahoma was hit hard by severe drought and powerful dust storms. Near Tulsa and across the Great Plains, crops failed, farms were damaged, and many families struggled to survive. This disaster became known as the Dust Bowl and occurred during the difficult years of the Great Depression.

Thousands of families packed their belongings and traveled west along Route 66 hoping to find work and a better life in California. Their experiences became an important part of American history and showed the determination of people facing difficult circumstances. Today, Tulsa helps tell the story of resilience during one of the nation's toughest times.

• ROUTE 66 •  
HISTORICAL STOP



# AMARILLO

Texas

## COWBOYS & CATTLE DRIVES



Amarillo sits in the heart of Texas cattle country, where cowboys played an important role in the growth of the American West. After the Civil War, large herds of cattle were driven across the plains to railroad towns where the animals could be shipped to growing cities. Cowboys spent long days on horseback caring for livestock and guiding cattle across hundreds of miles.

Life on the trail was often difficult and dangerous, with storms, river crossings, and stampedes creating constant challenges. Although many stories about cowboys have become legends, cattle drives helped shape the economy of the West. Today, Amarillo celebrates this important part of Texas history and cowboy culture.



• ROUTE 66 •  
HISTORICAL STOP

# SANTA FE

New Mexico

## NATIVE AMERICAN & SOUTHWESTERN CULTURE



Santa Fe is one of the oldest cities in the United States and reflects the rich cultures that have shaped the Southwest. Long before European settlers arrived, Native American peoples, including the Pueblo tribes, built communities, created beautiful artwork, and developed traditions suited to life in the desert.

Spanish explorers later brought new customs, language, and religion to the region. Over time, Native American, Spanish, and Mexican influences blended together to create the unique culture of the Southwest. Today, Santa Fe is known for its adobe architecture, vibrant arts community, and rich cultural heritage.

• ROUTE 66 •  
— HISTORICAL STOP —



# FLAGSTAFF

Arizona

## NATIONAL PARKS & CONSERVATION



Flagstaff serves as a gateway to some of America's most famous natural wonders, including the Grand Canyon. As more people traveled west in the late 1800s and early 1900s, many began to realize that these beautiful landscapes needed protection. Conservationists worked to preserve important natural areas for future generations.

Their efforts helped create national parks that protect wildlife, forests, rivers, and historic sites across the country. These parks allow people to experience nature while helping preserve it for the future. Today, millions of visitors travel through Flagstaff to explore the remarkable landscapes of the American Southwest.



• ROUTE 66 •  
— HISTORICAL STOP —

# BARSTOW

California

## ROUTE 66 & ROADSIDE AMERICA



As travelers journeyed west along Route 66, Barstow became an important stop in California's Mojave Desert. The town served as a crossroads where families could rest, refuel, and prepare for the final stretch of their journey. After traveling more than 2,000 miles, many travelers knew they were getting close to their destination and the opportunities that awaited them in Southern California.

Route 66 became famous for the diners, gas stations, motels, and roadside attractions that welcomed travelers along the way. Bright neon signs, quirky landmarks, and family-owned businesses helped turn a long drive into an adventure. Today, Barstow remains an important part of Route 66 history and reminds us how automobile travel changed the way Americans explored their country.

• ROUTE 66 •  
HISTORICAL STOP



# SANTA MONICA

California

## CALIFORNIA & THE PACIFIC COAST

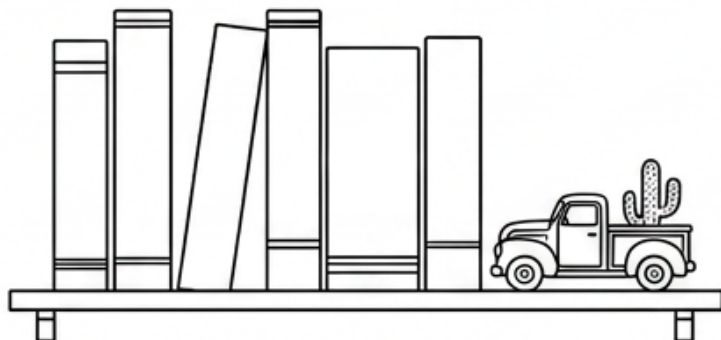
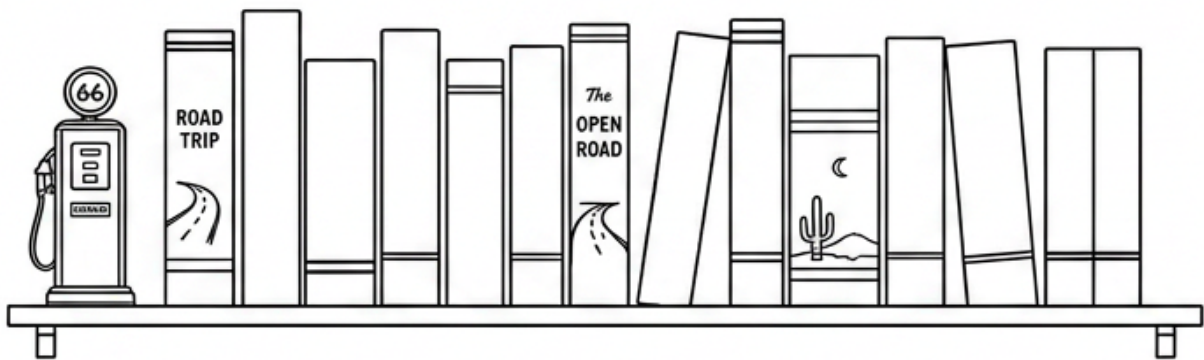
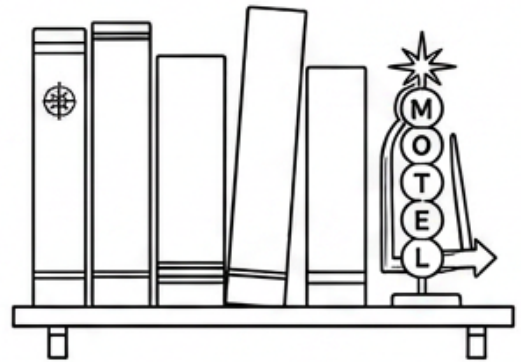
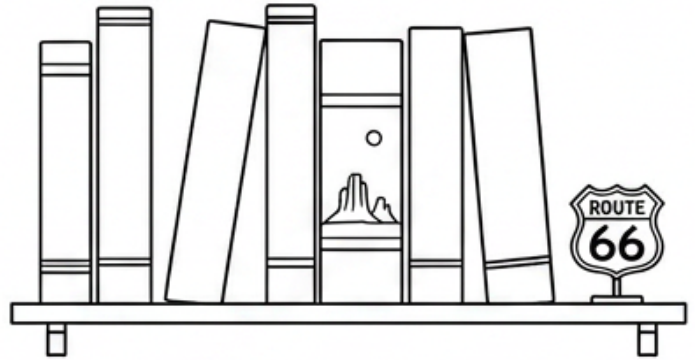
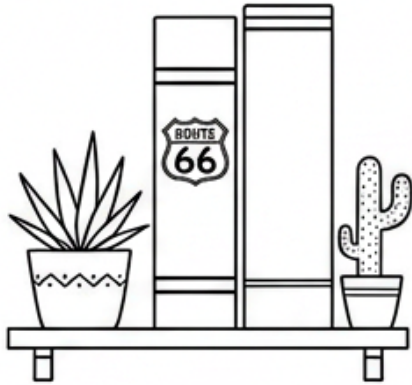


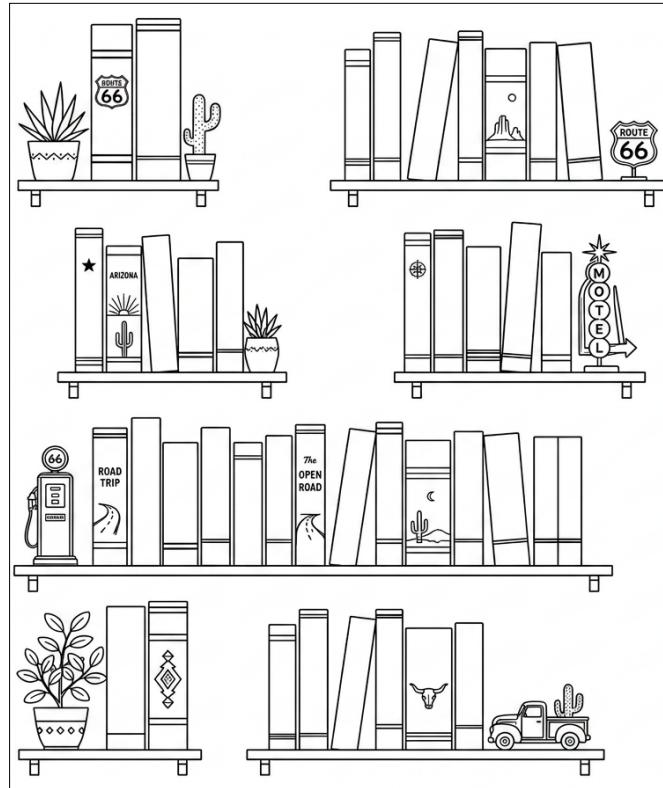
After traveling nearly 2,500 miles across America, Route 66 officially ended in Santa Monica, California, where the famous highway met the Pacific Ocean. Imagine stepping out of your car after days or even weeks of travel and seeing the ocean stretching to the horizon. For many families, it felt like the finish line of a great adventure. Although Route 66 ended in Santa Monica, many travelers continued on to Los Angeles and other communities throughout Southern California to find jobs, visit family, or start a new life.

The Pacific Coast has long been known for its beautiful beaches, mild climate, and connection to trade and travel. Today, Santa Monica's famous pier stands as a reminder of Route 66 and the millions of people who traveled America's most famous highway in search of opportunity, adventure, and a new beginning.

# #SONLIGHTSTACK

INSTRUCTIONS: Read a book and add it to the Sonlight bookshelf tracker.





## PRINT A POSTER-SIZED SUMMER READING CHART

Follow the instructions below to print Sonlight's Summer Reading Chart in a larger format so you can hang it on the wall!

1. Click this link to download a single, larger Summer Reading Chart:  
<https://cdn1.sonlight.com/pdfs/sonlight-sr2026-poster-24x36.pdf>
2. Visit any online print supplier (i.e. Staples, FedEx) and choose the Blueprint or Engineering Print service.

### EXAMPLE

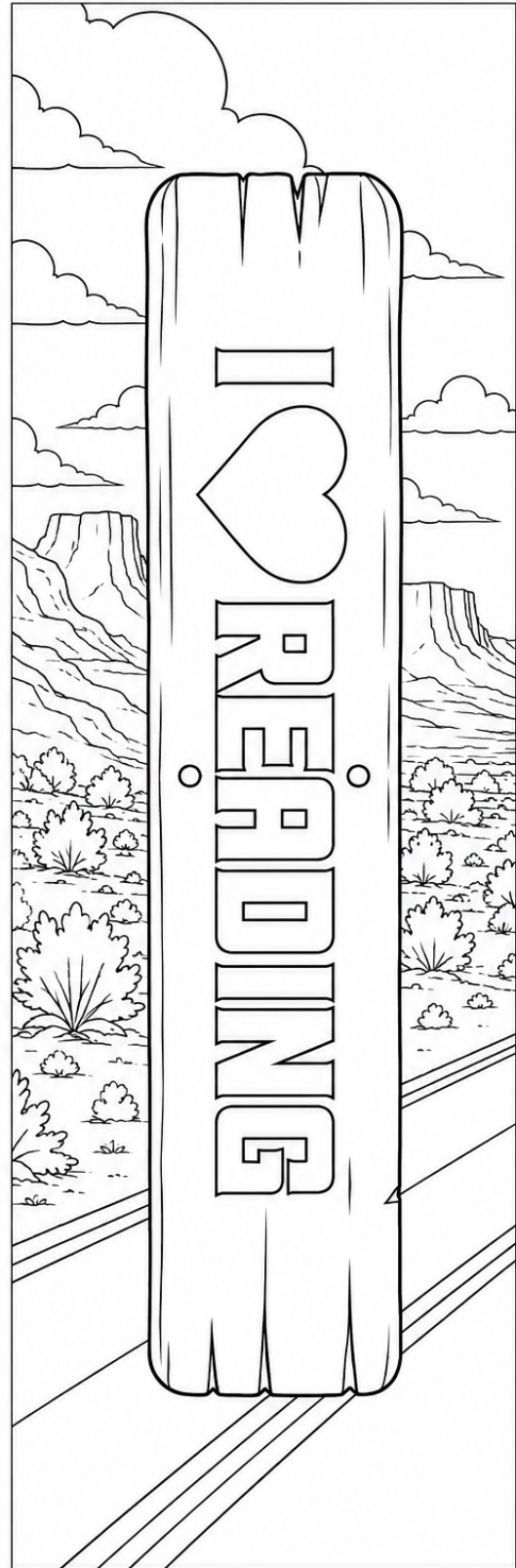
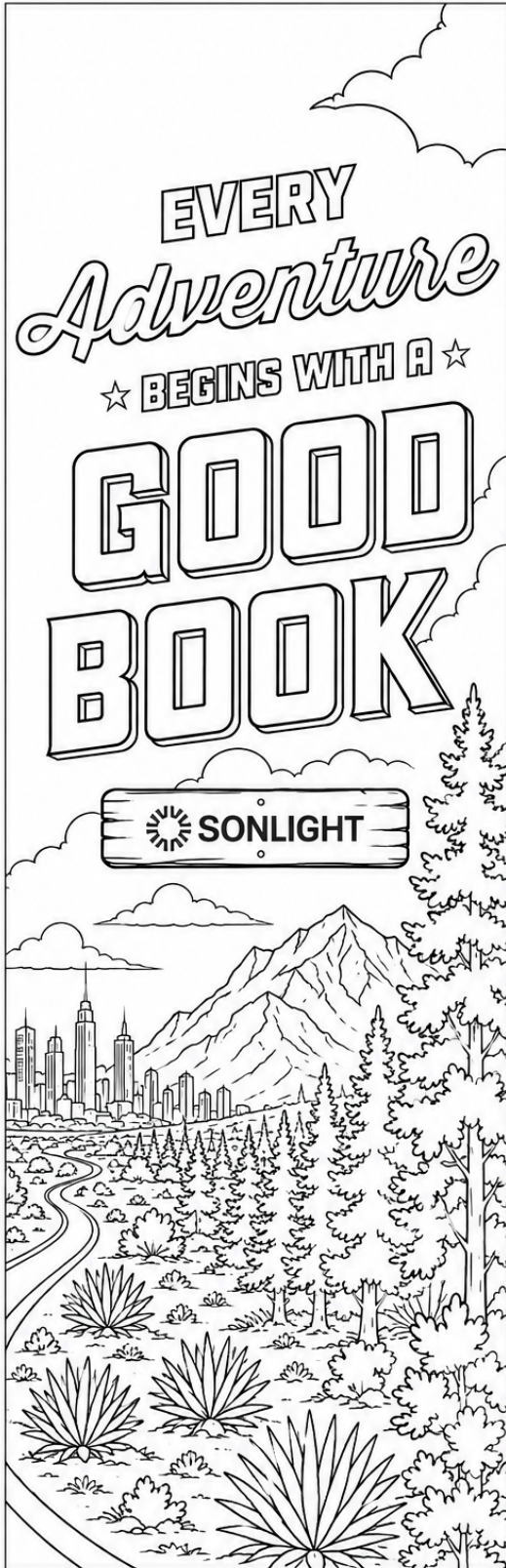
1. Visit the Staples Document Printing website at  
<https://www.staples.com/services/printing/copies-documents-printing/>.
2. At the bottom of the page, select the "Blueprints" option for a 24x36 size poster.
3. Upload the larger format PDF: <https://cdn1.sonlight.com/pdfs/sonlight-sr2026-poster-24x36.pdf> - Choose the Black & White Ink option.
4. Choose your delivery option and complete the checkout process.

# BOOKMARKS

INSTRUCTIONS: Cut out (and laminate so they last longer) the bookmarks on this BOOKMARK page or color your own on the next page.

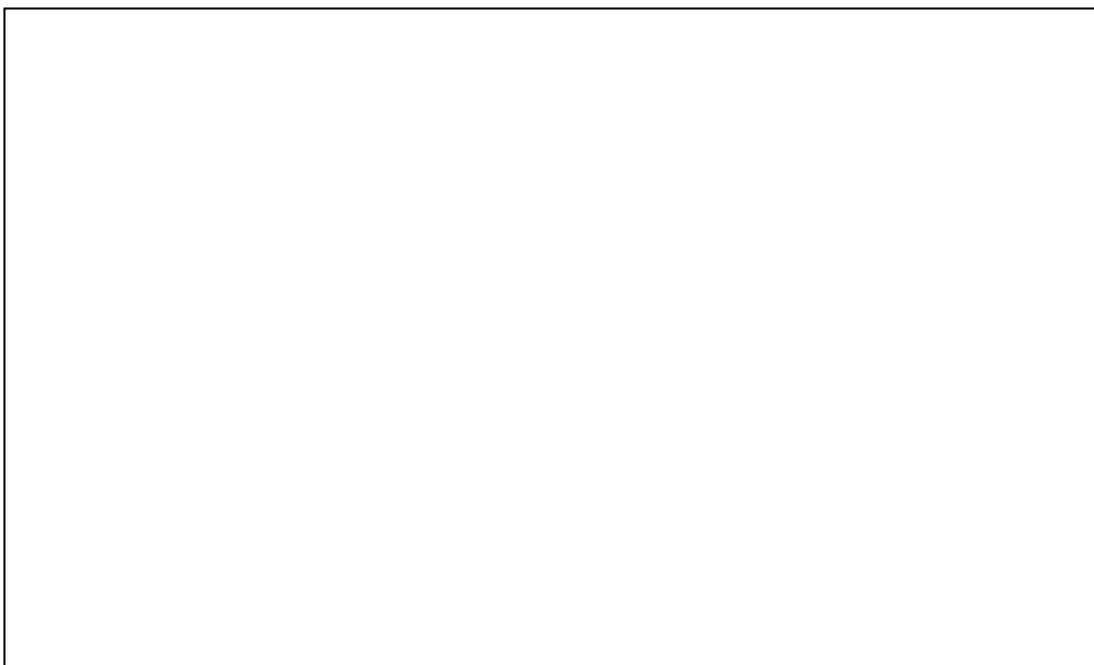
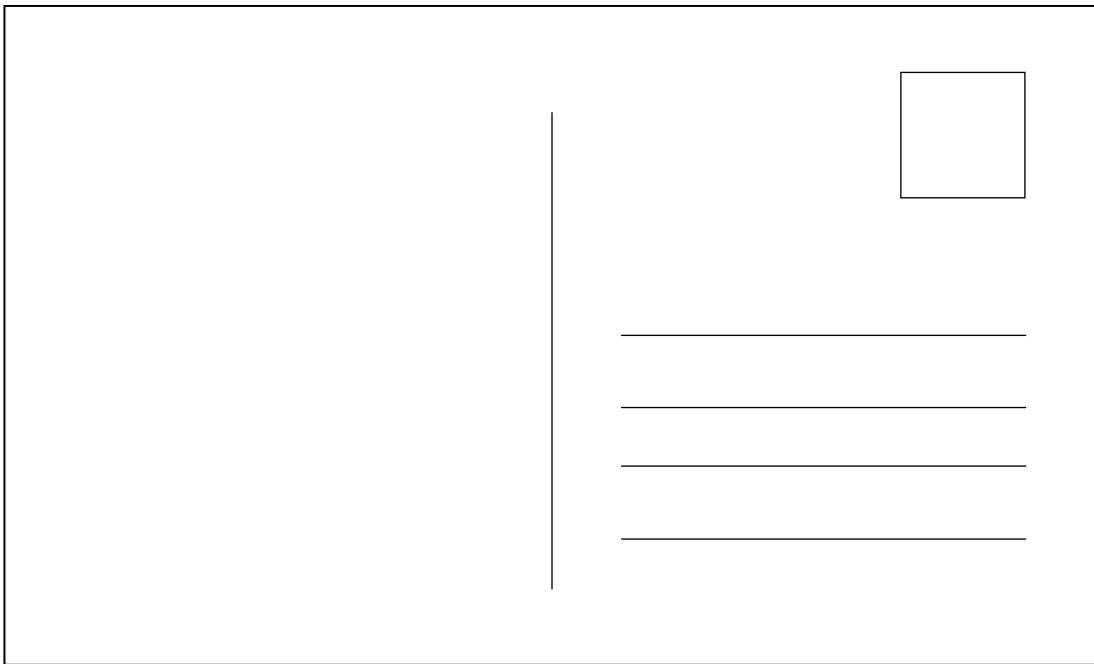


# BOOKMARKS



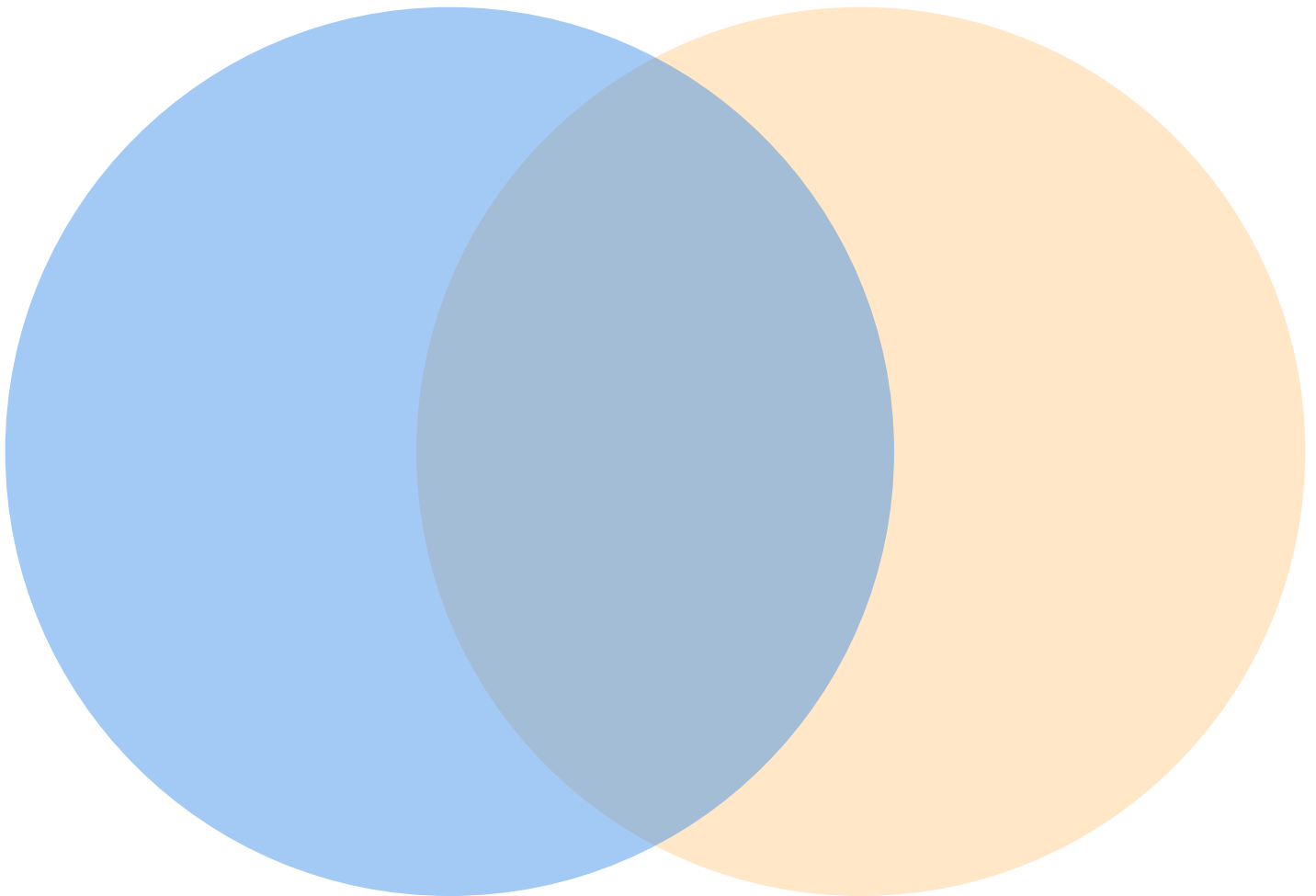
# POSTCARD ACTIVITY

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Make your own vintage postcard after each historical stop! Draw the city, landmark, or story you learned about. Add fun colors, cool details, and a short message to make it look like a real Route 66 travel postcard. Print the template on cardstock, then cut the two pieces out and glue the two sides together.

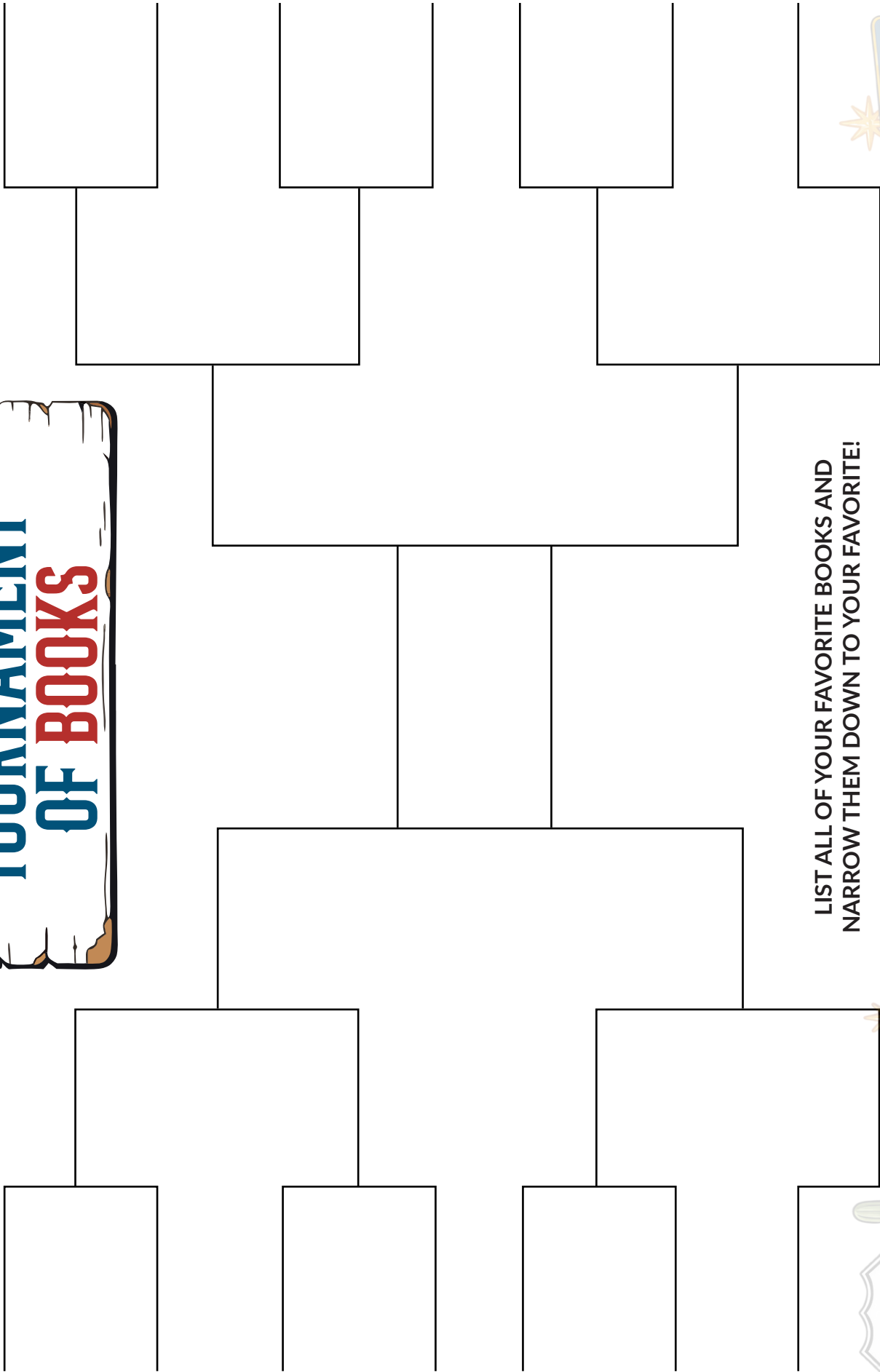


# BOOK VS. MOVIE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read a book, then watch the movie version. Compare both versions using the diagram. In the center, where the circles overlap, write the ways they are the same. On the movie side, write the traits that apply only to the movie. Do the same for the book side, including unique traits that apply only to the book.



# TOURNAMENT OF BOOKS



LIST ALL OF YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS AND  
NARROW THEM DOWN TO YOUR FAVORITE!





# We Love Books! BINGO CARD

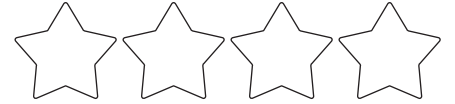


Read poetry	Read a graphic novel	Read outside	Watch a movie based on a book	Buy a new book
Read science fiction or fantasy	Read any historical fiction	Read at your local playground	Read two books by the same author	Get or use a library card
Read any biography	Read in the car	<b>FREE SPACE</b>	Reread a book you love	Read a book with an ugly cover
Read non-fiction	Read before bed	Listen to someone reading aloud	Organize your bookshelf	Read a book published before 1980
Read a book published after 2000	Read aloud to someone else	Read a graphic novel	Read a book about traveling	Read a book that makes you laugh

# MY BOOK REPORT

<b>DATE:</b>
<b>BOOK TITLE:</b>
<b>AUTHOR:</b>

**I GIVE THIS BOOK:**



## MAIN CHARACTER

MY FAVORITE CHARACTER WAS:

FOUR WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER

1.
2.
3.
4.

## SETTING

PLACE WHERE THE STORY HAPPENS:

FOUR WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE SETTING

1.
2.
3.
4.

**MY FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY:**

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**DRAW IT HERE**



Would you reread this book?

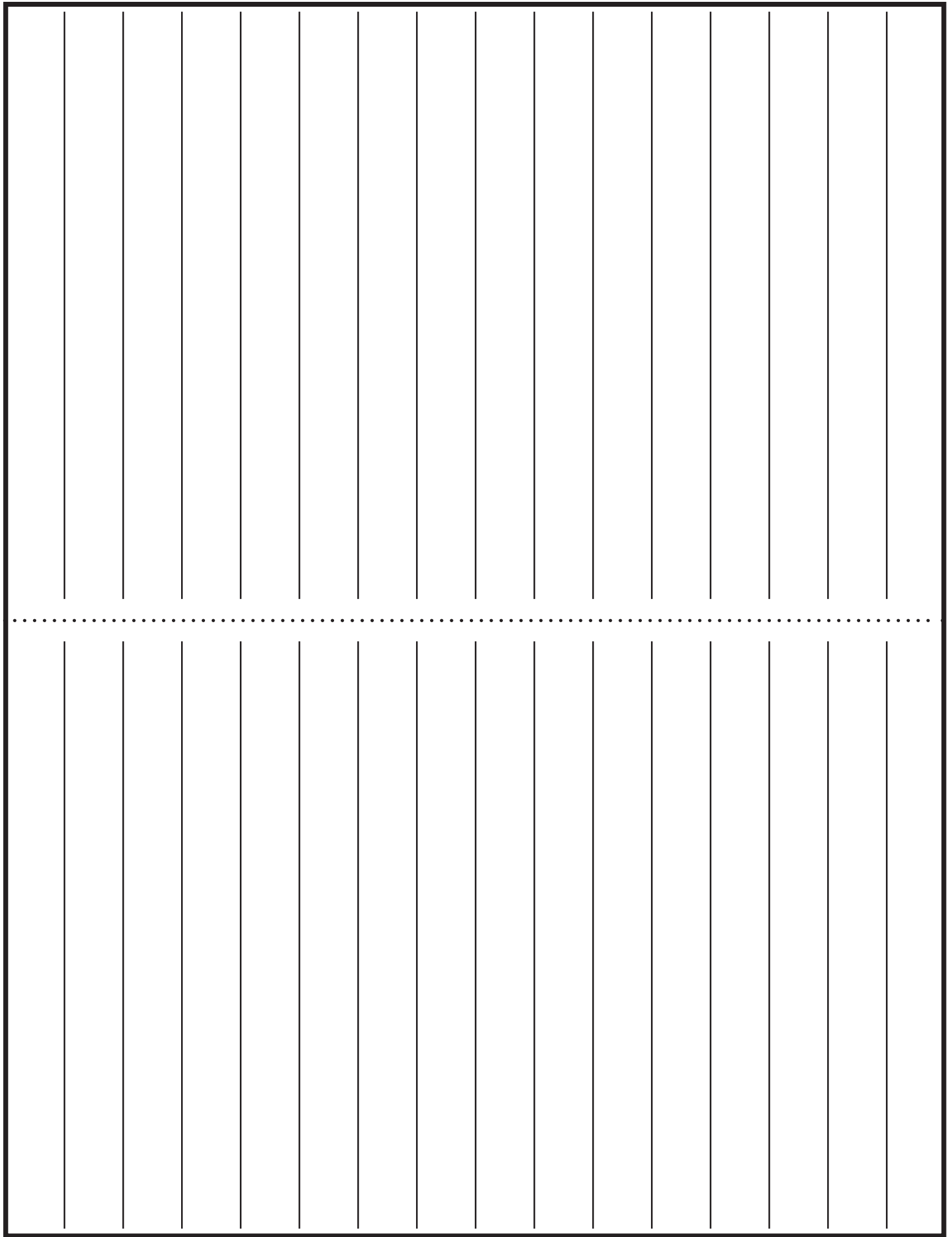
**YES**

**NO**



**INSTRUCTIONS:** The Reader Response Journal is a place to record your thoughts, reactions, questions, and connections as you read. Your journal should show that you are actively engaging with the text and thinking critically about what you read.







ROAD RUNNER AWARD  
CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

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NAME OF READER

YEAR