

## 2011 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading Program

Dear incoming 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents and students,

We are excited to announce this year's summer reading program! Each student is required to complete the following three tasks prior to the start of the year:

1. Read *The Hobbit*.
2. Read one book from the "Choice List" (more books may be read if desired).
3. Write a one-page response to the writing prompt on your "choice" book.

The purpose of the summer reading program is two-fold: 1) to encourage students to read for pleasure and 2) to provide students with a common reading experience which will be used to start the year in English class. Students should expect to participate in class discussions, activities and/or quizzes around this text as well as with the "choice" book they read. This means that students will need copies of both texts to bring with them to school in the fall. Also, students may want to do their reading at the end of the summer or review the texts just before returning to school, so that plots are fresh in the students' minds.

Happy summer reading,

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers

### "Choice" Book Writing Prompt

Once you have finished reading your "choice" book, write **one double-spaced page** typed page using the following prompt to guide your reflection on the book. You can answer all of the questions in the prompt, or focus on one or two in detail. As you write, please be sure to include the **title and author** of the book and **a brief summary (1-2 sentences)** of the plot of the book. Remember this is the first piece of writing that your English teacher will see from you in the fall, so try to show off your best qualities as a writer. **This writing assignment is due on the first day of school—Tuesday, September 6, 2010.**

*Choose a central character in your book: What would you identify as the major success or downfall of that character? What personality traits led to that success or downfall? What influenced this character as they were making decisions? How does it contribute to the overall affect of the story on you as a reader? How do you rate the text overall and would you recommend it to future reader? If you recommend it, what type of reader would enjoy this text?*

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## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading List

Required book for all incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders:

***The Hobbit: Or There and Back***

J.R.R. Tolkien

Houghton Mifflin Paperback Edition (1999) ISBN 0618002219

If you care for journeys there and back, out of the comfortable Western world, over the edge of the Wild, and home again, and can take an interest in a humble hero (blessed with a little wisdom and a little courage and considerable good luck), here is a record of such a journey and such a traveler. The period is the ancient time between the age of Faerie and the dominion of men, when the famous forest of Mirkwood was still standing, and the mountains were full of danger. In following the path of this humble adventurer, you will learn by the way (as he did) -- if you do not already know all about these things -- much about trolls, goblins, dwarves, and elves, and get some glimpses into the history and politics of a neglected but important period.

For Mr. Bilbo Baggins visited various notable persons; conversed with the dragon, Smaug the Magnificent; and was present, rather unwillingly, at the Battle of the Five Armies. This is all the more remarkable, since he was a hobbit. Hobbits have hitherto been passed over in history and legend, perhaps because they as a rule preferred comfort to excitement. But this account, based on his personal memoirs, of the one exciting year in the otherwise quiet life of Mr. Baggins will give you a fair idea of the estimable people now (it is said) becoming rather rare.

(Adapted from J.R.R. Tolkien's own description for the original edition)

Choice books for incoming 8<sup>th</sup> graders (please choose one to read and write about):

**Note:** Many of the titles below are memoirs. Memoir writing will be a focus in 8<sup>th</sup> grade English, so reading a memoir may be a good introduction to the type of writing you will be doing in English.

**Alcott, Luisa May. *Little Women***

This is the classic tale of Joe March and her sisters growing up in New England during the Civil War. This story tells of their adventures and misadventures as they travel into adulthood.

**Barakat, Ibtisam. *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood***

In this memoir, Ibtisam Barakat remembers what it was like to be a child during the Six-Day War. Fleeing from her home and becoming separated from her family, she turns to words and language for refuge.

**Bitton-Jackson, Livia. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust***

This is the memoir of Elli Friedmann, who was thirteen years old in March 1944, when the Nazis invaded Hungary. This book describes her experiences in Auschwitz, a concentration camp where she was selected for work instead of extermination.

**Brooks, Geraldine. *Years of Wonder***

An English village infected with the plague decides to quarantine itself to spare the spread of infection to the rest of the world. The selfless struggles of the villagers are chronicled in this historical novel set in 1666.

**Chevalier, Tracy. *Girl with A Pearl Earring***

The Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer represents one of the great enigmas of 17th-century art. When Griet, the novel's quietly perceptive heroine, is hired as a servant in the Vermeer household, turmoil follows. This is a beautifully written novel with well-developed characters.

**Collins, Michael. *Flying to the Moon: An Astronaut's Story***

Space traveler Michael Collins remembers his early days as an Air Force test pilot, his training at NASA, his experiences in orbit, and the first manned moon landing in this memoir.

**Cunningham, Ann Marie, and Ryan White. *Ryan White: My Own Story***

Ryan was a typical 13-year-old when he discovered he had contracted AIDS through tainted blood products he had been given for his bleeding disorder (hemophilia). In his memoir, he tells the story of his struggle with AIDS, the battle to return to school, his move, dealing with the press, and meeting celebrities.

**Deschamps, Helene. *Spyglass: An Autobiography***

This is the remarkable story of Helene Deschamps, a true-life heroine during World War II. She joins the French resistance, and later the American OSS undercover, warning partisans of upcoming raids. She leads two American pilots to freedom.

**Filipovic, Zlata. *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo***

Zlata Filipovic began her diary just before her eleventh birthday, when there was peace in Sarajevo and her life was that of a bright, intelligent, carefree young girl. When bombs begin to fall in Sarajevo, Zlata is confined to her family's apartment without water and electricity. Zlata describes this all in her extraordinary diary.

**Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl***

Anne writes the story of her refuge from the Nazis, which began in July 1942 in a back apartment in Amsterdam. Anne and her family remained in this apartment until August 4, 1944 when the police made a raid on the apartment and they were sent to German and Dutch concentration camps. Only her father survived, and it was he who saw that Anne's diary was published.

**Frey, Darcy. *The Last Shot: City Streets, Basketball Dreams***

For many adolescents on Coney Island, basketball is their only escape from a life of poverty and crime. *The Last Shot* chronicles a group of teenagers playing for one of the best teams in New York, the Abraham Lincoln Secondary School Railsplitters.

**Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life***

Jack Gantos writes the story of his reckless youth and his time spent in prison. His love of writing helped him to endure his six years in prison, which he describes as the worst experience of his life.

**Garden, Nancy. *Dove and Sword: A novel of Joan of Arc***

A fictionalized account of a young woman and healer who serves as a narrator of Joan's efforts to see the true king of France crowned.

**Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies***

A group of schoolboys are the sole survivors from a plane crash on an uninhabited island. When they form their own society, dissent descends into chaos and death in this classic novel.

**Hickman, Homer. *October Sky***

Looking back after a distinguished NASA career that fulfilled his boyhood ambition, Hickam shares the story of his youth, taking readers into the life of the little mining town and the boys who came to embody both its tensions and its dreams. With the help – and sometimes hindrance – of the people of Coalwood, the Rocket Boys learn not only how to turn mine scraps into rockets that soar miles into the heavens, but how to find hope in a town that progress is passing by.

**Iggulden, Conn. *The Dangerous Book of Heroes***

The true stories of men and women who fought, healed, invented or conjured throughout history. Riveting details make these heroes come alive. Harry Houdini a hero? Yes!

**Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Everest Disaster***

This is the true story of a summit attempt made on Mt. Everest in 1996 by an expert group of climbers. The attempt quickly turned deadly. This is a wonderful adventure story, but it is not for the faint of heart!

**LeGuin, Ursula. *Gifts***

The people of the Uplands are endowed with powerful mental gifts, which they use in frightening ways against each other. Two young people refuse to use their gifts in the service of such darkness.

**Mah, Adeline Yen. *Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter***

After her mother dies giving birth to her, Adeline's powerful family considers her bad luck. When her father remarries, she is subject to her stepmother's disdain. She yearns for the love and understanding of her family.

**Martinez, Victor. *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida***

Growing up in a Mexican American family, a young "California" boy struggles to maintain his personal identity in this National Book Award winner.

**Monk Kidd, Sue. *The Secret Life of Bees***

The story of Lily Owens, whose life has been shaped around the blurred memory of the afternoon her mother was killed. When Lily's fierce-hearted "stand-in mother," Rosaleen, insults three of the town's fiercest racists, Lily decides they should both escape to Tiburon, South Carolina--a town that holds the secret to her mother's past. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters who introduce Lily to a mesmerizing world of bees, honey, and the Black Madonna who presides over their household. This is a remarkable story about divine female power and the transforming power of love--a story that women will share and pass on to their daughters for years to come.

**Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster***

On trial for a murder committed during a robbery, the defendant, once an aspiring filmmaker, recounts his life as a movie script.

**Myers, Walter Dean. *Bad Boy: A Memoir***

Walter Dean Myers describes his Harlem childhood in the 1940s and 1950s in his memoir. Although he spent much of his childhood either getting into trouble or on the basketball court, secretly he was a voracious reader and an aspiring author.

**Osa, Nancy. *Cuba 15***

Paz, a 10th grader in suburban Chicago, spends the better part of a year preparing for her quincea-ero, the celebration of her womanhood, that her Cuban grandmother longs for her to experience. This is a story of self-discovery and the joy and pain of living with your family.

**Parks, Rosa and Haskins, Jim. *My Story***

Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus in December, 1955, sparking the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott. With courage and determination, she became one of only two women activists with the Montgomery NAACP long before the boycott, and she was also a speaker for the civil rights movement long afterward.

**Paterson, Katherine. *The Master Puppeteer***

In 18<sup>th</sup> Century Japan, Jiro must help his family survive. Apprenticed to a theater, he encounters a Robin Hood style bandit who is robbing the rich in Osaka to help the starving and the poor.

**Pullman, Phillip. *The Golden Compass***

In an alternative universe inhabited by human like and miraculous beings, a young girl, guided by a truth telling compass, pits herself against the darker forces that are fighting for domination.

**Scott, Orson Card. *Ender's Game***

With humans almost eradicated from the earth, the military has bred geniuses at war games. It all comes down to one small boy, a genius among geniuses to save the planet from aliens.

**Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Under the Persimmon Tree***

During the war, a young girl from Afghanistan and an American convert to Islam, meet and tell their stories in alternating chapters.

**Sacks, Oliver. *Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood***

Before he became a neurologist and best selling author, Oliver Sacks was a small English boy fascinated by metals, chemical reactions, photography, cuttlefish, H.G. Wells, and the periodic table.

**Scott, Robyn. *Twenty Chickens and a Saddle: The Story of an African Childhood***

For a white child in Botswana on the borders between South Africa and Zimbabwe in the 1980s and 1990s, home is an adventure in paradise, with horses, snakes, crocodiles, baobab trees, starry nights, and more. A funny, exciting family memoir.

**Silverstein, Ken. *The Radioactive Boy Scout: The True Story of a Boy and His Backyard Nuclear Reactor.***

Growing up in suburban Detroit, David Hahn was fascinated by science and while working on his Atomic Energy badge for the Boy Scouts, his attention turned to nuclear energy. He began a new project: building a nuclear breeder reactor in his backyard garden shed.

**Spinelli, Jerry. *Knots in My Yo-Yo String***

In his memoir, best-selling author Jerry Spinelli describes his childhood, when he spent his days as a rock skipper, snowball thrower, yo-yo tangler, salamander finder, dark-sky watcher, and aspiring baseball shortstop.

**Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese***

A smart witty graphic novel about growing up Taiwanese in America, woven with a touch of the Monkey King's magic thrown in for fun.

**Whittlinger, Ellen. *What's in a Name***

The town of Scrub Harbor is caught in a debate about what the name of their town should be. This book is written from multiple perspectives which allows each member of the town to share their thoughts about this issue, and about life in general.