Summer Reading Guides Middle School and Upper School, 2012

The assigned books will control 10% of your first quarter grade. There will be discussion and testing on one of the books the first week of school. The reading of the second book will be assessed through a composition. Bring the books with you to class in September. Use these guides to help you mark important passages in the books as you read.

Middle School

English 6

*Fair Weather*

One day, Rosie Beckett's family receives a letter from their Aunt Euterpe in Chicago. It is 1893, the year of the World's Columbian Exposition—the “wonder of the age.” The letter contains train tickets and an invitation to visit her for the fair. But is Aunt Euterpe ready for her country relatives? The fictional Beckett family is combined with the outstanding exposition as well as with some of the era's truly fascinating real people, including Buffalo Bill Cody.

*The Wind in the Willows*

Mole thinks his happiness is complete when, as he meanders aimlessly along, suddenly he stands by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life has he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shake themselves free and are caught and held again.

Such is the cautious, agreeable Mole's first introduction to the river and the Life Adventurous. Emerging from his home at Mole End one spring, his whole world changes when he meets with the good-natured, boat-loving Water Rat, the boastful Toad of Toad Hall, the society-hating Badger, who lives in the frightening Wild Wood, and countless other mostly well-meaning creatures. Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* has enchanted readers for four generations.

English 7

*The Indian in the Cupboard*

What could be better than a magic cupboard that turns small toys into living creatures? Omri's big brother has no birthday present for him, so he gives Omri an old medicine cabinet he has found. Although their mother supplies a key, the cabinet still does not seem like much of a present. But when an exhausted Omri dumps a plastic toy
Indian into the cabinet just before falling asleep, the magic begins. Turn the key once and the toy comes alive; turn it a second time and it is an action figure again.

**The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe**

In C.S. Lewis's book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, siblings Lucy, Edmund, Susan, and Peter start the story by playing hide-and-go-seek in their Uncle Andrew's house. They are staying with their uncle because of the difficult times and the war in England. The youngest child, Lucy, decides to hide in an old wardrobe, but this is no ordinary wardrobe. It takes Lucy to the magical world of Narnia. She comes back noticing that no time has passed, and she takes her brothers and sister along with her to this other world.

From here, the adventure has just begun. They meet talking beasts and giants, battle the evil White Witch, and learn that one of their own family members betrays them. They do this all with the help of the protector of Narnia and a lion named Aslan. This book goes beyond a fairy-tale to a much deeper meaning. The symbolism is important, and people of all ages can appreciate the book.

**English 8**

**Animal Farm**

Told in a humorous vein, the animals on a farm replay what happened during the Russian Revolution of 1917. The story begins on Manor Farm, which is run by a human. The animals on the farm are fed up with having to listen to a human and do his work. After a speech given by Old Major, the oldest pig on the farm, the animals build up the courage to revolt. The revolution is successful, and they run the human out.

Once this occurs, the animals are free. Then the pigs take control. The pigs, whose leaders are Napoleon and his friend Snowball, make up a set of rules for everyone to follow. In the beginning, these rules are the ideal rules for a perfect nation and everyone is equal. The rules are written on a wall for all animals to read and obey. This is all well and good, until the pigs start to stretch the rules and even start to erase them. Their perfect society goes downhill from there.

**Where the Red Fern Grows**

This is the story of Billy, Old Dan, and Little Ann—a boy and his two dogs. A loving threesome, they ranged the dark hills and river bottoms of Cherokee county. Old Dan had the brawn, Little Ann had the brains—and Billy had the will to train them to be the finest hunting team in the valley. Glory and victory were coming to them, but sadness waited too. And close by was the strange and wonderful power that’s only found. An exciting tale of love and adventure you’ll never forget.
Upper School

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English 9

Lord of the Flies

*Lord of the Flies* was written by William Golding. A deserted island becomes the battleground setting for stranded young boys—and for opposing views of human nature. Refugees from adult violence, British schoolboys attempt to set up their own responsible and democratic governance, but conflicting impulses of civilization and savagery rend the boys apart.

Written shortly after the horrors of World War II, the book represents Golding’s meditation on opposing views of human nature. The Romantic view of man says that man is basically good and his institutions are perfectible. A classic statement of this approach is Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s: “Man is born free but is everywhere in chains.” According to the Romantic view, man’s essential goodness is corrupted and repressed by society—by churches, schools, laws, etc. (All they are is “just another brick in the wall” of oppression.) The Romantics believe that, since society corrupts man’s essential goodness, those who are furthest removed from civilization (say Tarzan, for example, the “Noble Savage”) are innocent and free. Children also are innocent because society has not had time to corrupt and repress them.

The Doctrine of Original Sin, a Christian belief, says otherwise: Since Adam’s sin (the original one), man has “fallen” into wickedness and corruption. Only social, moral, and religious institutions can control man’s natural evil. How is the island setting of the novel the perfect laboratory for Golding’s battle between these two positions? Identify the symbols of civilization in the novel and the symbols of savagery.

All Quiet on the Western Front

Born in Germany, author Erich Maria Remarque was wounded five times during World War I while fighting at the Western Front. *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a record of seven classmates, who enlist in the army and find themselves fighting on the front lines of World War I. Young Paul Baumer narrates the story. Consider how a young person would react in war to witnessing the deaths of close friends. Note the evolution of Paul’s attitude toward war and patriotism over the course of his time on the front lines. How does Paul’s changed attitude lead to conflict—internal and external—when he comes home on leave?

Honors English 9
**A Tale of Two Cities**

_A Tale of Two Cities_ is a classic historical thriller written by Charles Dickens. The novel’s first and final lines are among the most well-known in literature: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” and “It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known.” The opening-line antithesis (best-worst) establishes the motif of _twins_ and _parallels_ that begins with the title and continues throughout the story. Lead characters Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay are strikingly similar in appearance. The two cities are Paris and London, and as Dickens tells the horrific story of the guillotine (the National Barber) and the French Revolution, he is also warning his British readers of the conditions in their own country that could one day foment bloody revolution: extremes of poverty and wealth (another of the novel’s antitheses) and indifference to the suffering of the poor.

Note Dickens’ explicit warnings on the need to reform in order to avoid the fate of the French. Find other examples of pairs and foils in the novel. Visit historychannel.com or some other website to read a brief overview of the French Revolution.

Make a list of characters and give one or two sentences of identification of each. This will help you master the large cast of colorful characters in the novel. You may turn the character identifications in for extra credit. Double-space your work if you type; skip lines if you handwrite.

**Dandelion Wine**

_Dandelion Wine_, written by the science fiction writer Ray Bradbury, is a novel of growing up in small-town America in the 1920s. Douglas Spalding, the main character, is a twelve-year-old boy who wakes up to the first day of summer vacation with a sense of profound possibilities. In a series of vignettes of small-town life, the reader follows Douglas through the adventures of a boy’s summer. Bradbury presents a golden and nostalgic view of a less technology-driven time in our history. The Happiness Machine, Leo Auffman’s invention, is a symbol for our reliance on machines in the modern world. Douglas has no television or computer to entertain him, and Bradbury implies his world is the richer for the absence of these machine-toys that dominate the lives of young people today. Look for other instances in the novel of the misuse of technology. What values do the people of Green Town have that we have lost today? What do you think is the significance of Douglas’s strange illness?

**Bonus: Lord of the Flies**

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**English 10**

*Catcher in the Rye*

The action of the novel centers on the experiences of its sixteen-year-old narrator, Holden Caulfield. Holden is an impulsive loner whom Salinger portrays as isolated and alienated from the society in which he seems unable to find his place. Because he longs for honesty and acceptance of his differences in his conformist society, Holden faces rejection and seclusion.

As you read, note the divisions between Holden’s reality and his imagined world. Be aware of the people Holden likes and the people with whom he is able to honestly communicate. Pay attention to the conflicts in the story and note whether these conflicts are resolved by the end of the novel.

*A Raisin in the Sun*

At a time when there was perceived to be no commercial viability and no possibility for critical success of a play about African Americans, the 1959 Broadway production of *A Raisin in the Sun* achieved the impossible: an all-out commercial and critical success. While the play is very much of its moment, it has also proven to be for all time; its relevance to modern life, its perpetual popularity, is attested to by the fact that it has continued to be given important and innovative new productions. It has established itself as an American classic.

Central to the play is the concept of the “dream.” What is each major character’s “dream”? Do these dreams change in any way throughout the course of the play? Are
these or any dreams realized by the play’s major characters? How might this be Hansberry’s commentary on the American dream?

Be attentive to the play’s major symbols. Examine, for example, Mama’s plant, money, George’s white shoes, Joseph’s Nigerian robes, and the contrasted sunlight and darkness. Trace the appearance of these symbols in the play and be able to discuss their significance. Make note of other symbols you believe appear in the play. The play is told in an ironic voice. Be able to identify examples of irony. Being able to understand the ironic tone of the play will enhance your understanding of the world of disappointment and false hope Hansberry portrays. However, do not miss the fact that beneath her cynicism, Hansberry is, at heart, an idealist who wants to believe in dreams that do come true.

Though many changes have occurred since the play was written, as you read, pay careful attention to the fact that many of the social problems depicted in the play are still a part of our world.

**Honors English 10**

**Brave New World**

*Brave New World* was published by Aldous Huxley in 1932. The novel is surprisingly contemporary; indeed, in many ways it appears to have predicted the world we live in today in the 21st century. The novel is a futuristic dystopia in the same genre of literature as *1984* by George Orwell and *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells. Huxley extrapolated trends in technology, sexual morality, genetics, pharmacology, and culture, and he created an imaginary world that should be disturbingly familiar.

In Huxley’s novel, God and traditional religion have been supplanted by the worship of technology. “In Ford we trust” is one of numerous parodies found in the worship of the new gods of technology. Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company, early in the twentieth century invented the assembly line method of mass production and thereby put automobiles within the financial reach of the masses. (If the book were written today as a forecast of the future, Bill Gates would perhaps be the new god.)

Huxley’s satirical treatment of social issues of the day looks keenly relevant. His satire is our reality. Identify parallels between his imaginary society and our own.

**Man’s Search for Meaning by Doctor Viktor Frankl**

Friedrich Nietzsche: “He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.”

Dr. Viktor Frankl’s work is a classic in modern psychology as well as a classic of Holocaust literature. It is “one of the ten most influential books in America,” according to a Library of Congress survey. Dr. Victor Frankl (1905-1997) was Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at the University of Vienna Medical School. During World
War II he was imprisoned three years at Auschwitz, Dachau, and other notorious Nazi concentration camps.

Forced to undergo the most horrible extremities and to struggle daily for survival, Dr. Frankl wrote this classic exploration of the role of meaning in our lives. How does he translate his experience of twentieth-century Hell into a humane and optimistic view of the meaning of life and the potential for human development? What are the critical experiences in the death camps? What conclusions does he reach about the search for happiness in life? What does he mean by “saying yes to life in spite of everything”? What are the principles of his theory of logotherapy?

After the war, Dr. Frankl was Visiting Professor at Harvard, as well as at universities in Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Dallas. The American Medical Society, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association officially recognized Dr. Frankl's school of Logotherapy as one of the scientifically based schools of psychotherapy.

“When we are no longer able to change a situation ... we are challenged to change ourselves.”

**Bonus Credit: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**

_The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time_ takes its title from a comment by the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes. The narrator of this novel is a fifteen-year-old boy detective named Christopher Boone, but he can be a hilariously “unreliable narrator” in that he has an autism spectrum disorder. We see his adventures through his eyes—but also ironically through the eyes of other characters and our own since our storyteller is clearly not “normal.” We see his attempts to understand the world he lives in, a world that frightens him and periodically makes him retreat into a shell. All the while, he is solving a murder and dealing with his own difficult family situation.

Note the effects of having a narrator that is so seriously out of tune with his world. Many of these effects are comic, but some are quite sad. Christopher is a math savant, and math appears throughout the novel, which includes chapters numbered by prime numbers. Pay attention to the incidental math lessons and to the role of math in his life.

**American Literature**

_The Pearl_

But the pearls were accidents, and the finding of one was luck, a little pat on the back by God or the gods or both (Steinbeck 16). Like its title, _The Pearl_ stands as a small work of tremendous literary and philosophical value. Told in the form of a parable, the deceptively simple tale recounts the story of Kino, a pearl diver, who finds the “Pearl of the World.” As you read, consider the following questions: What is the purpose of a
parable? To what Biblical parable does the story allude? In what way are the first two paragraphs a metaphor for human experience? Note the play between light and dark.

Look for irony in the story. How does Steinbeck portray those in power (the priest, the doctor, and the pearly buyers)? In what ways is this book a political commentary as well? Does the ending shock you? Would you have written this story differently? Are we capable of determining our own outcome, of determining how life treats us? And finally, what is the nature of courage?

The Crucible

In Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible*, John Proctor is faced with the choice between self-respect and self-preservation. It takes awesome courage to say “No” when the consequence is death, but to dissent from the will of the majority at school, at home, even in the family, takes a similar strength of character. Fiction helps us confront those moral choices in life that we avoid by luck or cowardice, or, as Arthur Miller puts it, “the stuff that you didn’t dare or want to look at before.”

Consider these questions: Could I have behaved better than the characters in the play? Am I capable of betraying my country, my friends, my family? What was happening in 1953 that Miller might have been commenting on with this play? Why did Miller use events from nearly three hundred years before to address his concerns?

AP English 11

How to Read Literature like a Professor

Every trip is a quest (except when it’s not). A simple meal or a feast can be an act of communion. Vampires don’t only roam the pages of gothic novels, and they can be a Christ figures, too. Such is the wisdom of Thomas C. Foster’s guide to cracking literary code, to understanding, in part, how to read between the lines.

As you read, keep a list in your dialectical journal. For each chapter, try to think of something you’ve already read which contains the pattern or symbol the author is discussing. In what ways are settings, events, and characters metaphors for meaning?

Cane

Published in 1923, two years before *The Great Gatsby*, Jean Toomer’s book *Cane* was instantly hailed as a masterpiece. For many scholars, *Cane* marks the beginning of the cultural and literary movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. Weaving together strands of stories and characters, Jean Toomer captures the African-American experience of the 1920’s. As you read (or re-read!) the book, ask yourself the following questions: What literary forms or conventions does he use? (Note the lyrical quality of the prose and the hymn-like character of the poetry.) In what ways do the poems function as a Greek
chorus? Why does the author draw from so many classical literary forms? How does this mosaic of form enhance the effect he creates?

Make sure to mark your book as you read and to note any passages that you feel exemplify the major themes. Pay attention to imagery and motifs. What character begins this text? What character or characters appear in the final segment? What pattern emerges as the overall structure of this work?

Finally, consider this larger question: What constitutes an African-American novel? In what ways is it specific to the culture from which it sprang and in what ways is it universal?

**British Literature**

While nearly every imaginable theme has been expressed over the various ages and epochs of British literature, perhaps none has been so thoroughly examined as the struggle between good and evil. In our first semester of British Literature, in fact, we will wrestle with this theme almost exclusively as we look into such monsters as Grendel from *Beowulf*, the witches and wicked monarchs of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and, of course, Satan himself, as he appears in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

We will begin this journey then during our summer reading. Way before Edward and Bella, before the *Blade* and *Underworld* trilogies, before even Anne Rice's Vampire Lestat, there was Bram Stoker's original *Dracula*. A classic work of gothic fiction, *Dracula* is also a textbook example of the now all but extinguished epistolary form, one of the several mediums which we'll consider during the course of our studies this year. We will follow this up with another epistolary classic, *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis. This clever 20th century tale is told through several letters between demons who are intent on "twist[ing] human strivings toward love, charity and wisdom, [and] manipulating the human soul to [their] own diabolical ends."

As the time we will spend with these two texts will be limited, feel free to buy an inexpensive, used copy or to locate one for free online. Below you will find a link to one such edition of *The Screwtape Letters*.

[http://members.fortunecity.com/phantom1/books2/c._s._lewis_-_the_screwtape_letters.htm](http://members.fortunecity.com/phantom1/books2/c._s._lewis_-_the_screwtape_letters.htm)

**Honors Utopia/Dystopia**

Utopian and Dystopian works encourage us more than most literary works to "think outside of the box," but nowhere in literature is this more true than in Edwin A. Abbott's *Flatland*. This short "masterpiece of science (and mathematical) fiction is a delightfully unique and highly entertaining satire that has charmed readers for more than 100 years.

The work of [an] English clergyman, educator and Shakespearean scholar, *Flatland* describes the journeys of A. Square, a mathematician and resident of the two-dimensional Flatland, where women--thin, straight lines--are the lowliest of shapes, and where men may have any number of sides, depending on their social status." Our class will use this
thin volume as a base from which to begin our discussion of what makes up a society, be it utopian, dystopian, or yes, even two-dimensional.

Our second great summer read is Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. Beginning with the book's title, "an anagram for 'nowhere,'" the readers are treated to a generous helping of Butler's sometimes scathing wit and humor as he satirizes 19th century England. Butler's Erewhon is a strange place, utopian in ways and dystopian in others, and our discussion of the book will center on the traditional targets and aims of utopian and dystopian satires.

**AP English 12**

*The Stranger*

The novel begins with two of the most famous sentences in existential literature: "Mother died today. Or, maybe yesterday. I can't be sure." This novel is divided into two parts. In Part I, covering eighteen days, we witness a funeral, a love affair, and a murder. In Part Two, covering about a year, we are present at a trial that recreates those eighteen days from various characters' memories and viewpoints. Part One is full of mostly insignificant days in the life of Meursault, an insignificant man, until he commits a murder. Part Two is an attempt to judge not only Meursault's crime but also his life.

To Meursault, life is not all that important. He does not ask much of life, and death is even less important. He is content merely to exist. However, by the end of the novel, he will have questioned his existing and measured it against living with a passion for life itself.

In this novel, you will learn much about life and death, freedom and non-freedom, existence and living. One learns to confront the absurdity of life and its meaning.

*The Metamorphosis*

“When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.” With this sentence, Kafka begins his story of a young man who, transformed overnight into a giant beetle-like insect, becomes an object of disgrace and anathema to his family, work, and society. He becomes a quintessentially alienated man.

A harrowing meditation on human feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and isolation, *The Metamorphosis* has become one of the most influential works of modern fiction. As W. H. Auden wrote, “Kafka is important to us because his predicament is the predicament of modern man.”

**Common Reader:** *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand.