

SUMMER READING FOR JUNIORS AND SENIORS 2015

Juniors and Seniors should read Richard Wright's *Native Son* and one of the books below.

Current Middle College students expressed an interest in looking into mass incarceration in the U.S. next year, and this book will serve as a backdrop for that discussion. (We may also look at some chapters of *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander.) Right from the start, in Wright's classic novel, Bigger Thomas has been headed for jail. It could have been for assault or petty larceny; by chance, it was for murder and rape. *Native Son* tells the story of this young, black man caught in a downward spiral after he kills a young white woman in a brief moment of panic. Set in Chicago in the 1930s, the novel is an unsparing reflection on the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country, which, given current events, many will see as very relevant today. Wright explores the psychology not only of the oppressed, but of the oppressors, illustrating how racism is destructive to both groups, though for very different reasons. As you read, consider:

What does Wright, through his novel *Native Son*, suggest are the effects of alienation from and oppression by society on the individual? What does he suggest are the effects of racism on the oppressors/society?

THE ASSIGNMENT: As you read (*Fear, Flight and Fate*), write down 10 quotes/passages from the novel (make sure they come from the beginning, middle and end) and briefly write down your thoughts about how the quotes relate to the above question. If it strikes you as relevant, you might also mention connections to current events. Bring this assignment to your first day at Middle College. You can check out the book from your local library or purchase the book from a bookstore or on-line. Middle College has 30 copies. First come, first served. If you need financial help to purchase books, contact Principal Greg Quigley in the Middle College office before June 10 (gquigley@smuhsd.org). Email English teacher Greg Lance at glance@smuhsd.org if you have questions.

ALL MIDDLE COLLEGE STUDENTS SELECT ANY ONE BOOK

ASSIGNMENT FOR YOUR SECOND BOOK: Select one book from the list below. Write a page (no more, no less) in which you defend your answer to this question: **What message or theme is the author conveying in this novel?** (What lesson does it teach? What wisdom does it convey? What is the author's underlying thesis?) Discuss several quotes from throughout the book in defense of your response. Especially, be sure to include something from the final pages. **Read more about these books elsewhere to choose the one best suited for you.**

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler (*only new Middle College students may select this novel*)

It's set in a frightening, falling-apart California of the future, a place where drought, pollution, drugs, and violence have made life almost impossible outside of gated communities. Lauren, a young woman with a vision, leads a small band of survivors north toward what she hopes will be a better life. Butler's prophecy for California's environmental and social future is bleak and scarily accurate, but at its root this is a hopeful book about learning to look squarely at the world as it is and working to make it better.

The Art of Fielding by Chad Harbach

"At a small Michigan college, shortstop Henry seems destined for the big leagues until a routine throw goes disastrously awry and the fates of five people are upended. Guert, a longtime bachelor, has fallen unexpectedly and helplessly in love. Owen, Henry's gay roommate and teammate, becomes caught up in a dangerous affair. Mike, the team captain and Henry's best friend, realizes he has guided Henry's career at the expense of his own. And Pella, Guert's daughter, returns after escaping an ill-fated marriage, determined to start a new life. As the season counts down to its climactic final game, these five are forced to confront their deepest hopes, anxieties, and secrets. In the process they forge new bonds, and help one another find their true paths. A big, warmhearted novel about ambition and its limits, about family and friendship and love, and about commitment—to oneself and to others." (Goodreads)

The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd

A novel about hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world—now the newest Oprah's Book Club selection. Hetty "Handful" Grimke, an urban slave in early 19th century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. Grimke's daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women. As the stories build to a riveting climax, Handful endures loss and sorrow, finding courage and a sense of self in the process. Sarah experiences crushed hopes, betrayal, unrequited love, and ostracism before leaving Charleston to find her place alongside her fearless younger sister, Angelina, one of the early pioneers in the abolition and women's rights movements, looks with unswerving eyes at a devastating wound in American history, through women whose struggles for liberation, empowerment, and expression will leave no reader unmoved.

My Beloved World by Sonya Sotomayor

"With startling candor and intimacy, Sonia Sotomayor recounts her life from a Bronx housing project to the federal bench, a progress that is testament to her extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself. She writes of her precarious childhood and the refuge she took with her passionately spirited grandmother. She describes her resolve as a young girl to become a lawyer, and how she made this dream become reality. Through her still-astonished eyes, America's infinite possibilities are envisioned anew in this warm and honest book, destined to become a classic of self-discovery and self-invention." (Knopf)

Caucasia -- Danzy Senna

"I disappeared into America," Birdie says, "the easiest place to get lost." She and Cole are the daughters of a black father and a white mother, Civil Rights activists in 1970's Boston. So close as to have created a private language, yet to the outside world they can't be sisters: Birdie appears to be white, while Cole is dark enough to fit in with the other black kids at school. When their parents' marriage falls apart and her mom comes to believe the Feds are after them—Birdie and her mother leave everything behind, including their identity. This compelling novel explores the subtleties of race, family, and identity.

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay by Michael Chabon

Joe Kavalier, a young Jewish artist who has also been trained in the art of Houdini-esque escape, has just smuggled himself out of Nazi-invaded Prague and landed in New York City. His Brooklyn cousin Sammy Clay is looking for a partner to create heroes, stories, and art for the latest novelty to hit America -- the comic book. Drawing on their own fears and dreams, Kavalier and Clay create the Escapist, the Monitor, and Luna Moth, inspired by the beautiful Rosa Saks, who will become linked by powerful ties to both men. With exhilarating style and grace, Chabon tells an unforgettable story.

A Place to Stand by Jimmy Santiago Baca

The true story of Baca's childhood of abandonment, his career selling drugs, and his time in prison, this is also an account of how an illiterate prisoner fought for the privilege to teach himself how to read--then to write, by corresponding with a man on the outside, and by writing poems for other cons in exchange for books. This is not a pretty history, but is an inspiration to all writers and a testimony to the human spirit.

A Tale for the Time Being by Ruth Ozeki

In Tokyo, 16-year old Nao has decided there's only one escape from her aching loneliness and her classmates' bullying. But before she ends it all, Nao first plans to document the life of her 104-year old great grandmother, a Buddhist nun. A diary is Nao's only solace — and will touch lives in ways she can scarcely imagine. Across the Pacific, Ruth, a novelist living on a remote island, discovers a collection of artifacts washed ashore in a Hello Kitty lunchbox —possibly debris from the devastating 2011 tsunami. As the mystery of its contents unfolds, Ruth is pulled into the past, into Nao's drama and her unknown fate, and forward into her own future.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr (Pulitzer Prize, 2015)

A stunningly ambitious and beautiful novel about a blind French girl and a German boy fascinated with radios whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II. Doerr deftly interweaves the lives of Marie-Laure and Werner while illuminating the ways, against all odds, people try to be good to one another.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

A classic novel that surprises with feminist themes seemingly ahead of its time. The protagonist possesses an indomitable spirit, a sharp wit and great courage in spite of her poverty. She is forced to battle against a cruel guardian, a harsh employer and a rigid social order. Relationships that would be described as "complicated" today present themselves set against the mysterious moors of England.

Orphan Master's Son by Adam Johnson

Pak Jun Do is the haunted son of a lost mother—a singer "stolen" to Pyongyang—and an influential father who runs a work camp for orphans. In this epic, critically acclaimed tour de force, Adam Johnson provides a riveting portrait of a world rife with hunger, corruption, and casual cruelty but also camaraderie, stolen moments of beauty, and love.

State of Wonder by Anne Patchett

A provocative novel of morality and miracles, science and sacrifice set in the Amazon rainforest—a gripping adventure story and a profound look at the difficult choices we make in the name of scientific progress, discovery and love.

Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder

This profound and powerful non-fiction book takes us from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba and Russia, as the charismatic but flawed genius Dr. Paul Farmer challenges widely-held preconceptions about poverty and healthcare. As a medical student, Farmer found his life's calling: to cure infectious diseases and to bring the lifesaving tools of modern medicine - so readily available in the developed world - to those who need them most. Kidder's magnificent and moving account shows how, from achieving this modest dream, one person can make a difference in solving global problems through a clear-eyed understanding of the interaction of politics, wealth, social systems and medicine.