

San Mateo Middle College

SAN MATEO UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT AND COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO

SUMMER READING 2013

Research shows that reading abilities can atrophy over the summer. To keep your minds engaged and in shape, you are required to read two books. Of course, you are welcome to read more than one!

In addition to reading one of the books on the appropriate list below, ALL JUNIORS AND SENIORS NEED TO READ **BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS**, by Katherine Boo. You will need to find and discuss 15 quotes from throughout *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* for this portion of your summer reading assignment. This work will become part of work that you will be doing in the first days of Middle College in August.

1. In what ways do you see the residents of Annawadi as being resourceful, resilient, and entrepreneurial? (Quote 3 passages that you believe best represent these qualities and discuss how those qualities are represented in the passages you have chosen.)
2. Why are the residents of Annawadi not more supportive of each other and united against the forces that perpetuate their poverty? (Quote 3 passages that you think help to explain this paradoxical truth and use them to explain your answer.)
3. Abdul remarks at one point, "It seemed to him that in Annawadi, fortunes derived not just from what people did, or how well they did it, but from the accidents and catastrophes they avoided. A decent life was the train that hadn't hit you, the slumlord you hadn't offended, the malaria you hadn't caught." (Quote 3 passages that you feel exemplify this point of view and explain how they do so.)
4. Abdul, late in the book, remarks, "I tell Allah now I love him immensely, immensely. But I tell him I cannot be better, because of how the world is." What changes does Abdul go through? What does he mean by "be better"? (Quote a passage from the beginning, middle, and end of the novel that help answer these two questions and explain how the 3 passages do so)
5. In the quote from number 4, what does Abdul mean by "how the world is?" (Quote 3 passages that you think explain "how the world is" in this book and explain what they say about how this world is.)

The assignments for both seniors and juniors are due the first day of school, August 13.

You can check out the book from your local library or purchase the book from a bookstore or on-line. If you need financial help to purchase books, contact Principal Greg Quigley in the Middle College office before June 12 (gquigley@smuhsd.org).

Both seniors and juniors: e-mail English teacher Greg Lance at glance@smuhsd.org if you want to discuss the novel, or if you have questions.

**** Up for a challenge?** Juniors or Seniors can read Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* as their second book or an additional book and participate in a series of optional book club discussions on this classic and provocative novel.

JUNIORS

The junior English course will explore among many themes, "what is the relationship between the individual and society?"

Read one of the works below and answer these questions/complete these tasks:

- *How is "society" portrayed: kind, neutral, hostile?*
- *Does the protagonist see himself/herself as an individual within society or an individual in conflict with society?*
- *For each of these questions, use 3 quotes from the novel in discussing your answer.*

Parable of the Sower, by Octavia Butler

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.

A Prayer for Owen Meany, by John Irving

An inspiring modern classic that introduced two of the author's most unforgettable characters, boys bonded forever in childhood: the stunted Owen Meany, whose errant foul ball kills his bestfriend's mother, and the orphaned Johnny Wheelwright, whose life is touched by Owen. From the accident that links them to the mystery that follows them—and the martyrdom that parts them—the events of their lives form a tapestry of fate and faith in a novel that is Irving at his irresistible best.

The Glass Castle, by Jeannette Walls

Walls grew up with parents whose stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. In the beginning, they and their four children lived like nomads, moving among desert towns, camping in the mountains. Dad, a charismatic and brilliant man, when sober, taught his children how to embrace life fearlessly. Mom was an artist who couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, calling herself an "excitement addict." As the money runs out and dad's alcoholism escalates, Jeannette and her siblings must fend for themselves. A story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love.

Reservation Blues, by Sherman Alexie

One day legendary bluesman Robert Johnson appears on the Spokane Indian reservation, in flight from the devil and presumed long dead. When he passes his enchanted instrument to Thomas-Builds-the-Fire-storyteller, misfit, and musician—a magical odyssey begins that leads from reservation bars to the concrete canyons of Manhattan. This novel has been described as "deeply moving" and "scathingly funny."

Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West, by Gregory Maguire

When Dorothy triumphed over the Wicked Witch of the West, we heard only her side of the story. But what about her arch nemesis, the mysterious Witch? Where did she come from? How did she become so wicked? And what is the true nature of evil? This is the story of Elphaba, a smart, prickly, and misunderstood creature who challenges all our preconceived notions about the nature of good and evil.

SENIORS

The major theme of the first semester is the quest for self. The readings below portray the individual that quest. Read one of the books below and answer:

- *What is the quest the protagonist goes on and what does he/she achieve?*
- *Write down at least five quotations that relate to the protagonist's "quest" or "the search for self" over the course of the novel. Explain how they relate to that character's quest.*
- *How do you see this person's quest being similar to or different from your own journey or quest, on the surface and below the surface?*

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 -- 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 -- 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--and 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 it is an inspiration to all writers and a testimony to the human spirit.

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 discovery and love.