

SUMMER READING 2014

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: Half The Sky and one that relates to our first unit in junior or senior English. Of course, you are welcome to read more!

All students (Juniors and Seniors) must read Half the Sky, by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. Many are calling the issues that this book deals with "the central moral issue of our time." Although it deals with sometimes horrific abuses that impoverished women around the globe must face, it also presents the stories of real people taking practical steps to address these injustices—something that you yourself may have the opportunity to do while at Middle College. The assignment for this book:

Choose three women's stories that made an impression on you. Explain why. Discuss what you see as being the root causes of the injustices they face and whether the action being taken addresses those causes. Use quotes from each chapter you discuss in your answers.

Below you will find your class reading selections and assignment and some themes to consider when reading the novel. Any notes you take regarding the theme as you read the novel may be used for the first assignment in the fall. The assignments for both seniors and juniors are due the first day of school, **August 12**.

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 10** (gquigley@smuhsd.org).

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

JUNIORS

The junior English course ties in with American History and is focused on The American Character: What is the image of an American and where in literature has that image developed? One of the primary questions we will explore is "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?
- What responsibility does the author seem to suggest the individual has to society?
- What responsibility does the author seem to suggest society has to the individual?
- For each of these 3 questions, use 3 quotes from throughout 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 best friend'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.”

Native Son—Richard Wright

Right from the start, Bigger Thomas had 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, Wright's powerful novel is an unsparing reflection on the poverty and feelings of hopelessness experienced by people in inner cities across the country.

SENIORS

The major theme of the first semester is one of self-analysis: Who Am I? The factors we explore are the genetic, cultural, and experiential components that have created you. The readings below represent the individual on a quest for self-knowledge.

Read one of the books below and answer in complete sentences:

- *What is the quest the protagonist goes on and what does he/she achieve?*
- *What stages do we all go through that the protagonist experienced?*
- *What advice can the modern young person draw from another's quest?*
- *Write down at least five quotations that relate to the issue of a “quest” or “the search for self.”*

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.

A Tale for the Time Being—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.

The Light Between Oceans--M.L. Stedman After four harrowing years on the Western Front, Tom Sherbourne returns to Australia and takes a job as the lighthouse keeper on an isolated island, where the supply boat comes but once a season. Tom brings with him a young, bold, and loving wife, Isabel. Years later, after two miscarriages and one stillbirth, the grieving Isabel hears a baby's cries on the wind. A boat has washed up onshore carrying a dead man and a living baby. This mesmerizing, beautifully written novel seduces us into accommodating Isabel's decision to keep this “gift from God.” And we are swept into a story about extraordinarily compelling characters seeking to find their compass in a world where there is no right answer, where justice for one person is another's tragic loss.

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