

Dear Parents,

As the year is coming to a rapid close I wish to encourage you to make reading a part of your student's summer experience. I regret to report that the average reading ability has collectively declined in schools. Their retention of independent reading, their reading and writing vocabularies, and their levels of interpretive analysis are much shallower than in previous years.

The number one strategy to improve some of these skills is to increase reading time all year round. Most children love books when they are preschoolers; they love the interactive time with parents when they can "read" together. Perhaps the love of reading also helps to delay the bedtime hour. However, by the time students reach high school, most of them view reading as a chore, an uninviting pastime. They have so many other technology-generated social activities that engage their imaginations and their thumbs. The quiet companionship of a book has lost its appeal (especially since most publishers do not include illustrations for the high-school population).

I appeal to you to consider your student's summer schedule and to deliberately provide access to a book of his/her choosing (even if you must say that if a choice is not made, you will make it). The students are not as sluggish in the beginning of the school year if they have continued to read at an unhurried pace during the summer. If a student reads with curiosity, he will steadily increase his reading vocabulary; some of those words will cross over into his own functional vocabulary (both written and oral).

The reading material should not be limited to fiction. If you subscribe to any newspapers or magazines, share interesting articles with your children. Then have discussions with them about the content of the articles. Reading online can also be valuable, but please provide wood pulp and ink for at least one of the reading sources. I am including a list of some British literature books that may appeal to your children. Many of these books are closer to the novella length, so the reluctant reader will not respond with intimidation at the thickness of the book. The process of reading improves the pace and retention abilities of the reader. Even when students read a book they do not like, they can use their critical thinking skills to identify the traits of the book that make it inferior in their estimations.

Most of your students were enrolled in Grammar and Writing for the junior English credit. Very little reading is required in that class, so when they begin the senior year, some of them will not have read a novel since May of sophomore year unless you insist that they add reading to their schedules. Reading with understanding at a relatively quick pace is an element of many college tests. So, reading should never be just an option; it must be a regular activity to prepare your students for college.

Below is a list of British literature selections. Most of them have reached classic status. If your student would like me to recommend a specific book for him/her, I am happy to meet students outside of class time to explore areas of interest. Thank you for your support this year.

Mr. Kettering

Recommended books for Seniors taking British Literature

Frankenstein – Mary Shelley

The Hound of the Baskervilles – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Pride and Prejudice/All works – Jane Austin

Robinson Crusoe – Daniel Defoe

David Copperfield – Charles Dickens

Tale of Two Cities – Dickens

Silas Marner – George Eliot

Jungle Book – Rudyard Kipling

Gulliver's Travels – Jonathan Swift

Hamlet - All works – Shakespeare

Jane Eyre – Charlotte Bronte

The Lord of the Rings – J.R.R. Tolkien

The Wind in the Willows – Kenneth Grahme

1984 - George Orwell Signet edition ISBN: 0-45-152493-4

The Great Divorce/All works - C. S. Lewis Harper Collins ISBN: 978-0-06-065295-1

A Brave New World - Aldous Huxley Perennial Classics edition ISBN: 0-060-85052-3

Lord of the Flies - William Golding

Animal Farm – George Orwell

The Charge of the Light Brigade – Lord Alfred Tennyson

War of the World – H.G. Wells

Rebecca - Daphne DuMaurier

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Through the Looking Glass – Lewis Carol

Pilgrim's Progress – John Bunyon

Canterbury Tales – Geoffrey Chaucer

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Treasure Island – Robert Louis Stevenson

Prelude(Poetry) – William Wordsworth

The BFG/All Works – Roald Dahl