

July 1, 2014

Dear Middle Schoolers,

We hope that you're having a great summer so far and that this letter finds you happy, healthy and active. While we hope that you've been enjoying the first couple weeks of summer to spend plenty of time outdoors pursuing favorite activities, we also hope that you've been finding quiet time to read regularly. Summer is a great time to pursue reading of your own choosing and we trust you've been doing plenty of that!

At the beginning of each year we offer an opportunity for students to share a highlight of their summer reading. We've found that a creative way to do that is by having students engage in a project called a "**Jackdaw**". Attached, you'll find a description of the Jackdaw project that students have found to be a fun and interesting way to share a favorite book. Please read the directions carefully and complete all components by the first day of school, Wednesday, September 3rd. In order to avoid reading a book that we often read as part of the Middle School literature curriculum, please do not choose from the following list:

The Giver

My Brother Sam is Dead

The Education of Little Tree

Huck Finn

Anthony Burns: The Defeat and

Triumph of a Fugitive Slave

Dandelion Wine

The Red Badge of Courage

All Quiet on the Western Front

Ishmael

Fahrenheit 451

To Kill a Mockingbird

If you're looking for a great book, the American Library Association (ALA) has wonderful lists of books that you might find helpful. Try <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklistsbook> for a wide variety of lists for the exploding genre of young adult literature. The public library, bookstores and your fellow classmates are additional resources for great summer picks. Please note, although the book you choose to share with classmates need not be considered a "classic", we ask that it is one of recognized quality and significance. Directing your attention to the ALA lists may be helpful in this regard.

A final request of ours is that you consider either donating or lending a copy of your favorite book (about which you did your Jackdaw) to the Middle School Library. We are interested in continuing to build our middle school library to support our development as a community of readers. (Note: it does not need to be a new copy.)

We're sure that you'll find the Jackdaw Project to be fun and interesting. If you have any questions regarding this assignment, please do not hesitate to contact one of us. Jim can be reached at 227-7124 (jhodes117@gmail.com) and Kate at 351-9874 (salmonbitz@yahoo.com). Enjoy your summer reading!

Jim and Kate

MIDDLE SCHOOL SUMMER LITERATURE PROJECT 2014

The Jackdaw

Over the summer, we expect that you'll be reading a variety of books of your own choosing. Perhaps there is a particular author or genre that you especially enjoy that summer vacation allows you the leisure to pursue. We hope this will be the case. Your task then is to choose your favorite book from your summer reading and to do the following Jackdaw activity to share with the rest of the class during the first week of school.

THE JACKDAW: A jackdaw is a black and gray bird of Eurasia and northern Africa that is related to but smaller than the common crow. Jackdaws have a reputation for being clever and bold and for being collectors of things (especially shiny objects) that they hoard in their nests. This characteristic of jackdaws as collectors of things provides the background for our literature project.

I. ARTIFACTS: Find at least seven artifacts (objects) that are in some way related to the book you read. The artifacts can just be things you have around the house; you shouldn't need to buy anything. The artifacts should have significance to the book either *literally* or *figuratively/symbolically*.

If you read a book in which the main character is a baseball player, perhaps you'd decide to include a baseball glove; that's an example of an artifact with literal significance.

If your book has a character that is gravely ill, perhaps you'd include an artifact that somehow represents the character's mortality. That would be an example of an artifact with a figurative or symbolic significance.

Have fun with the collection of artifacts. As you go about looking for artifacts and making decisions about what to include, you'll be engaging in a process of critical thinking and interpretation. Think deeply, take risks and **be prepared to justify why you included the artifacts you did.** Include your justifications in writing to help support your oral presentation.

II. CONTAINER: Bring your artifacts in a container that itself **has significance** to your book.

III. CREATIVE EXTENSIONS: *(Please choose at least one)*

- Write the preceding, next, or "missing" chapter...
- Write a poem or series of poems that in some way reflect the book...
- Write a book review that evaluates the book, recommending it or not...
- Write a letter to the author in which you offer your thoughts on the book...
- Create an illustration or series of illustrations inspired by the book...
- Create a musical composition in some way inspired by the book...
- Create some other artistic representation of the book...

IV. ORAL PRESENTATION: Be prepared to make a three-to-five minute presentation of your Jackdaw using the artifacts as a way to guide your presentation and share your choice(s) of creative extensions. Remember, provide justifications for each artifact in writing.

DUE: Wednesday, September 3rd, 2014 (Our first day of school.)