September 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Subject: Freshman Readers/Writers Workshop

The freshman English classes will be using a reading and writing workshop format this school year. This format gives students choice and targets students' individual reading level and interests. Our goal is to meet freshman academic standards while fostering a love of reading. Research shows that students actively engaged in reading are more academically successful.

To provide you with a brief synopsis of each choice novel available to students for the various units a description of each choice novel is included with this letter. Some titles are available for more than one unit, however, your student will chose a different choice work for each unit. To cultivate a love of reading, we have chosen contemporary, high interest young adult fiction. Some of these novels do contain language, violence, and/or young adult romance. Please feel free to ask your student’s teacher regarding any questions you may have regarding a novel that your student has chosen to read.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Barnes  Mrs. Blocher-Giannetti  Ms. Grant  Mrs. Gallina  Ms. Guilliams
Freshman English Teachers

CC: Enclosure
Dystopian (An Imaginary Society) Unit*
Students will be able to choose from the following six books: The Giver, The Maze Runner, Legend, All our Yesterdays, and Ember in the Ashes to go along with the anchor text, Anthem by Ayn Rand, which the class will read together.
*All of these novels will be provided by the school

The Giver by Lois Lowry
In Lois Lowry’s classic novel, The Giver, eleven-year-old Jonas lives a seemingly idyllic life in a seemingly idyllic world of conformity and contentment. However, when he begins to spend time with The Giver, an old man who is the sole keeper of the community's memories, Jonas uncovers dangerous truths of his community's secret past. With his newfound knowledge, Jonas realizes that he must escape from their world to protect himself and those he loves -- a challenge that no one has yet completed successfully.

The Maze Runner by James Dashner
The Maze Runner is a dystopian story of a young boy who wakes up in an unfamiliar place, surrounded by unfamiliar peers, and with little to no memory of his former life. Readers follow along with Thomas as he attempts to solve the mystery of the Glade, the Maze that surrounds it, and the “creators” who have put them there. This gripping story puts the readers in the shoes of the narrator as both Thomas and the reader alike try to come to grips with waking up in a new reality.

Legend by Marie Lu
Legend, by Marie Lu, is the first book in the Legend trilogy. Set in a dystopian version of the United States, our two main characters, June and Day, are teenagers struggling to find their place within a dystopian society. June is a military prodigy whose talents are highly prized by the government, and Day is a rebel surviving underground. When their paths cross, their eyes are opened to the truth of their society and they embark on a new journey together.

All Our Yesterdays by Cristin Terrrill
All Our Yesterdays by Cristin Terrrill, is a Young Adult (YA) book inspired by the popular BBC show Doctor Who. The story involves the struggles of three adult best friends, Marina, Finn and James in a dystopian society. Marina and Finn are sanctioned by the new government in a race against the clock to travel back in time together using a time machine to fix the consequences that James, a brilliant scientist known as “The Doctor” in the future, has set into motion. Readers will enjoy this thrilling adventure which contains many twists and surprises.

An Ember In The Ashes by Sabaa Tahir
An Ember in the Ashes, written by Sabaa Tahir, is set in a Martial Empire ruled by a vicious Emperor, modeled loosely after ancient Rome. This fantasy novel’s main character is Laia, who is forced to help the rebels after her brother is arrested for treason. Laia meets Elias, one of the best soldiers in the Empire, who wants only to be free. He and Laia discover that their futures are linked and that their choices will affect not only themselves, but the fate of the entire Empire.
Storytelling Unit*
Students will be able to choose one of the following six books: *The Giver, Life of Pi, The Wrath and the Dawn, Luka and the Fire of Life, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, and Revolution* to go along with the anchor text, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, which the class will read together.

*All of these novels will be provided by the school, except *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

*The Giver* by Lois Lowry
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*Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
This coming of age novel follows an Indian zookeeper’s son, Pi Patel, who loses his family in a shipwreck. As part of his experience, Pi learns about various faiths and is forced to grow up very quickly. While Pi was the only human survivor of the shipwreck, he has to navigate the waters with an adult bengal tiger, Richard Parker. This novel follows Pi’s amazing journey, both at sea and in his own life.

*The Wrath and The Dawn* by Renee Ahdieh
In this riveting retelling of *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, readers are introduced to the strong-willed and feisty Shahrzad, known as Shazi, who volunteers to be the wife of the murderous young king, Khalid, Caliph of Khorasan, to avenge the death of her friend. As Shazi and Khalid grow to know each other, she discovers that Khalid is hiding dark secrets of his own and she finds it harder and harder to carry out her original intentions.

*Luka and the Fire of Life* by Salman Rushdie
From the world renowned author, Salman Rushdie, comes a fantastical tale of magic, mystery, heroics and storytelling designed for young adults. Both *Luka and the Fire of Life* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* were written by Rushdie after his own sons requested that he write stories that they would enjoy reading as young adults. *Luka and the Fire of Life* centers around a young boy and his pets - a dog named Bear and a bear named Dog - as they embark on a fantastical hero’s journey to save Luka’s father.

*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie
The other of Rushdie’s YA books, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* welcomes readers to a mystical world where stories not only have power, but come to life. In this book, the very source of all tales, both old and new - the Story Source at the bottom of the Sea - is being threatened by the evil antagonist. Haroun and his comrades must come together to save the stories of the world, learning about both themselves and the importance of storytelling in the process.
Revolution by Jennifer Donnelly
Andi Alpers is on the edge. She’s angry at her father for leaving, angry at her mother for not being able to cope, and brokenhearted by the loss of her younger brother, Truman. Rage and grief are destroying her, and she’s about to be expelled from Brooklyn Heights’ most prestigious private school when her father intervenes. Now Andi must accompany him to Paris for winter break and is being forced to complete her senior thesis in order to graduate. However, while there, she discovers a secret journal belonging to a woman from the French Revolution. As Andi follows the woman’s heart-wrenching story of determination and loss, she finds a connection to the stranger and solace within the antique pages she reads.

The Hero Unit*
Students will be able to choose from one of the following six books: The Lost Hero, Lois Lane: Fallout, Luka and the Fire of Life, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Legend, Ember in the Ashes, or Maze Runner, to go along with the anchor text, The Odyssey by Homer, which the class will read together.
*All of these novels will be provided by the school

The Lost Hero by Rick Riordan
With a mix of fast-paced battles, scary monsters, and humor, three heroes -- Jason, Piper, and Leo -- are in mortal danger multiple times and risk their lives for one another. The Lost Hero will immerse the reader in the details of Greek mythology as an adventure with Jason, Piper, and Leo unfolds.

Lois Lane: Fallout by Gwenda Bond
In this mystery YA version of Superman, the story focuses instead on Lois Lane and a young Clark Kent (Superman) is simply a vague secondary character that helps guide Lois in her investigation of criminal activity in her new town of Metropolis. Lois’s father has warned her to stay out of trouble but Lois cannot resist the pull of a good mystery; a group of students at her new school known as the Warheads are recruiting and bullying students using a secretive video game. Despite the consequences, Lois dives into the investigation with her fellow student journalists at the local newspaper determined to get to the bottom of it with a little help from a young Superman.

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**Survivors Unit**
In the second semester, our focus will be on a Survivors Unit. Teachers will make suggestions for the choice novel; however, students will need to purchase their novel by January 8, 2016.

This unit goes along with anchor text the Holocaust memoir *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

A suggested list of novels will be available to students by December 4, 2015.