

Saint Gabriel School
590 West 235th Street
Bronx, New York 10463

September 9, 2020

Dear Parents,

Four years ago I was once again asked to handle the comprehension portion of the reading grade. In the past I had required the eighth grade students to read a series of paperback books as a supplement to the literature course. Although I am making some changes in my approach to accommodate the recently implemented core curriculum, a few books will be read, discussed, and serve as a source of writing assignments to assess the student mastery of the common core objectives.

To enable you to assist your child in the organization of his or her approach to these independent reading projects, I am enclosing this list of the required books with the corresponding dates. To meet the requirements outlined above, it is **imperative** that the students allow themselves enough time to complete the reading assignment carefully. I strongly suggest that **some notes be taken on a nightly basis.**

SEPTEMBER: *Banner in the Sky* – James Ramsey Ullman

This novel, a Newbery Honor Book has been described in the following words by *Booklist*: “Based upon the author’s personal experiences, with details from the original ascent of the Matterhorn, the story has authenticity, atmosphere, and excitement.” As usual, I assigned the September book to be read over the summer vacation period. Coupled with assigned readings from the literature textbook and various online sites, it will be used to review and explore many of the various literary vocabulary terms that will be used throughout the year. Students should already have completed their notebook assignments to participate easily in the class discussions.

OCTOBER: The students should get an independent reading book approved by me. The parents will be asked to monitor the nightly reading and sign a form that will be given to the students at the beginning of the month. I shall focus on readings from the literature book and the comprehension workbook, Moby Max, Readworks, and other online sources during class time. Some online homework is usually assigned!

NOVEMBER: “The Diary of Anne Frank” – dramatized version in the literature textbook

Worksheet assignments and quizzes will be given on this drama. The first worksheet assignments will be distributed on November 2nd, and the due dates for the three assignments are November 12th, 19st, and 30th.

DECEMBER: While the independent reading for the religion term paper assignment continues, the students should also be reading an approved shorter novel of their choice. A parent monitoring form will once again be provided.

JANUARY: *Annie's Baby* – edited by Beatrice Sparks, Ph.D., editor of *Go Ask Alice*

Reading sixteen (16) pages a night, the students should complete the nightly notes for this book by January 19th. In addition to class discussions on the “Pro-Life” issues presented in this true story, the book will be featured on both the literature and composition examinations. The students may wish to pace this assignment more comfortably by using some Christmas vacation time.

FEBRUARY: Since the religion term papers will be a major concern during this month and early March, my focus in class will be on the readings from the religion textbook, the literature textbook, and the comprehension. Once again the students will be asked to choose an approved novel for independent reading for which a parent form will be provided. Online assignments will continue!

MARCH: *No Promises in the Wind*– Irene Hunt

Since the religion term papers will be due at the middle of this month, I have chosen this historical fiction novel about America in 1932 that provides insight into what it was like to grow up during the “Great Depression.” A quick read, the students should complete the nightly notes for this book by March 26th.

APRIL/MAY: *Lord of the Flies* – William Golding

With Easter vacation, the State and MAP tests in April and early May, as well as the final examinations at the end of May, I have decided to stretch this novel over the course of these two hectic months. As with the January book, this reading assignment will figure prominently on both the literature and composition final exams. The students should pace their nightly notes so that the book is completed by Monday, May 17th. Study Guides will be provided to help the students focus on the most important details.

When taking nightly notes, the students should consider the author’s use of the setting, methods of character development, stages of plot development, and any potential themes.

Once again, I thank you for your cooperation in this very important academic area.

Respectfully yours,
Mr. Glenn A. McCarthy

