

Dear Parents,

August 2017

The central goal of any English classroom is to establish a reading habit in the busy lives of students. I hope we can recapture the pleasure and passion of readers. This letter is long, but the assumptions it rests upon are too important to be treated in a superficial manner. Please take the time to read this and know what you're signing before you do.

In years past, I have selected literature that I thought would be interesting for students. Depending on the particular student, those choices were hit or miss - sometimes the child loved the book, sometimes not.

This year will be different. Instead of forcing students to read a only books I want them to read, they will be allowed to choose some of their texts within the guidelines of literary merit and Lexile level (reading level). I think this approach will help even the most reluctant reader find literature enjoy.

Of course, good literature looks at life experiences from a variety of perspectives and forces us to consider the world in ways we may never have imagined. Authors are often brutally honest in examining how we humans respond to difficult situations. Sometimes we are heroic, sometimes we are not - but a good book will expose truths about the human condition, allow us to confront our worst fears, and guide us to live through them.

I won't know the details of every book students read and refer to this semester, and I won't remember the details of all the books I recommend to students. What I seek for all of my students is a compulsion to read – for pleasure, for knowledge, for a passion for story or information – that will keep them into the pages of a book past our assigned time for reading – past our goals of 20 to 40 books by the end of the year. This has tremendous benefits. Here are a few:

- **Reading relieves stress.** High school is stressful. Reading takes us out of the present and into another time and place. It is a perfect escape.
- **Reading builds stamina** to prepare students for college and the workplace. Reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college. Reading difficult manuals and corresponding with colleagues and clients is an expectation in many workplaces. In this class we will exercise muscles soon to be strained in the coming years. Reading for fluency and stamina has been proven to improve the reading rate of students. Fast reading develops confidence and an appetite for books as well as teaches vocabulary in context, which improves writing. This only happens when students find books they *want to read*. However, the truth is, some of those books might make you uncomfortable.
- **Reading challenges us to think critically.** There is a lot of talk in the media that “students won't read,” but I believe students substitute distractions (their phones, TV, video games) if they feel no passion for the book assigned to them. Students who haven't been readers will suddenly become quite passionate about reading with **the right book** in their hands. We have to trust these young people, who are now on the cusp of adulthood. We have to trust that books won't corrupt them any more than *Breaking Bad* or *Taken* or *The Walking Dead*. It's much more important that they are reading.

Therefore, because the students will be choosing for themselves, it is entirely likely that your child will come across a book that has situations, language, or even art that is disturbing or conflicts with your family's beliefs or morals. If you wonder why they are reading these books, I will answer, "Your son or daughter chose it." I might have recommended it because I read it and loved it, or the book may be unfamiliar to me because your child checked it out from the library, heard about it from another students,, or I haven't read it.

I understand and fully support that you might not find every book appropriate for your child. I respect your right to monitor your child's reading and encourage you to do so. Please read along and discuss the book with your child if you're concerned about the content. I think you'll be surprised at the level of maturity your child will show when it comes to examining and reacting to literature. However, if you don't want your child to read a particular book, please have that family discussion.

For classroom purposes, I will assume that you have given them permission to read whatever they've chosen. Other than clearly objectionable books like Harlequin Romances or *Fifty Shades of Gray*-type books (or literature that is just too easy for them), I will trust that you and your child have agreed to what s/he is reading. If a problem arises, please contact me to discuss it so we can work on a solution.

When you sign the attached page, it means you understand books won't be banned in my classroom and your child will be allowed to choose what s/he reads.

We will still be reading a whole-class books and a variety of short stories, articles, and poems. I teach different classes and grade levels, so each class reads different books and studies different themes. Please check my website for the works studied in each of my classes.

Please feel free to email if you have any questions, and please sign the attached form.

Thanks for your support,

Mrs. Douglas
douglal@pike.k12.ga.us

<http://pirateeducation.weebly.com/>

PS: Please come to class and share a book with us. Share your passion for reading and meet our amazing students at Pike. I would love to have you join us!

Student Reading Choice Form

Please have your child return this page only to class by August 18, 2017.

My signature below indicates that I have read the parent letter dated August 2017, from my child's English teacher. I understand my child will be allowed the choice of what to read and that I am responsible for any restrictions on what s/he reads this year.

Print Student Name

Period/ course

Date

Print Parent Name

Parent Signature
