

Humanities 8 Summer Reading Summer 2023

Dear Rising Eighth Grade Students, Parents and Guardians,

We are excited to welcome you to eighth grade humanities. We look forward to beginning our work with you in the fall! During the summer months of 2023, students should read all of *Just Mercy* (adapted for young adults) by Bryan Stevenson, **with the exception of chapters six and eight**. This text provides a revealing look at the U.S. prison system and some judicial practices that too often disservice poor people, people of color, and those struggling with mental illness. Stevenson, who has worked as a lawyer for the Equal Justice Initiative, writes compellingly about the specific cases that he has worked with over the years, and he shows how basic human rights are often ignored in our penal system. Since the eighth grade humanities curriculum addresses systemic oppression and the fight for human rights throughout history, we felt this book would be a thoughtful way to begin our discussion of these topics.

It is important to know that we are asking students to **exclude chapters six and eight** from their reading because of some particularly challenging details. We feel it is necessary to read these chapters of the book with the guidance of the eighth grade humanities teachers, so we will finish the book together in the fall. However, we also realize that some parents may want to read and discuss some of the topics covered in these chapters with their children, so if you feel that the summer months provides you with a greater opportunity to do this, then we certainly invite parents and children to read the excluded chapters together. If, however, there are parents who are unable to read these sections with their children, then we ask that students wait to read with teachers during the school year.

Because we want students to have *Just Mercy* fresh in their minds when the school year begins, **consider reading the book later in the summer**. In other words, read your free choice books first and save *Just Mercy* for your final summer reading. In addition to reading *Just Mercy*, students are **also required to read two free choice books**. Focus your selections on books that you really enjoy reading, and think about why you like those books. During the school year, we will embark upon an independent reading adventure that will hopefully allow you to discover your best self as a reader, so come to the new school year ready to discuss what brings you the greatest joy as a reader.

While it is important to choose books that you enjoy this summer, we must impose just a couple of limitations on making your choice. First, these books should not be manga or graphic novels. We all love graphic novels, but that feels like a given. In addition, you will have an opportunity to read graphic novels during the school year, especially during the time when the heaviest load of academic reading is taking place. Therefore, since the summer provides more leisure time for reading, we would like you to find books that you can enjoy but that also allow you to visualize the characters and events through words alone. Secondly, your choices should be books that you are reading for the first time. If you are looking for book suggestions, check out the [MS Summer Reading LibGuide!](#)

Sincerely,

The Eighth Grade Humanities Team
Ms. Reynolds, Mrs. Spence and Mr. Wilper

Please complete the form below and bring it with you on the first day of school!

Student name: _____

I read all of *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, **with the exception of chapters six and eight!**

I read the following free choice books. (If you read more than two, great!!)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

I enjoyed reading the free choice books I chose because _____

Parent signature:
