

September 22, 2006

Dear 6th Grade Parents,

This week we started "Literature Circles," an approach to reading that enables students to have autonomy and own their learning by choosing one of four books to read and discuss with a small group. This quarter, each of our four coming-of-age options focus on the experience of young men learning important life lessons. Many of the books touch on meaningful and provocative issues around character development, including bullying, popularity, political activism, and environmental consciousness. We invite you to engage in frequent conversations with your son about these topics.

Your son has chosen one of the following books:

- Hoot by Carl Hiaasen
 - *A novel that chronicles the experience of "new-kid" Roy Eberhardt, a 6th grader that finds himself involved in a risky act of environmental heroism. Boundaries between right and wrong are challenged in this book of character.*
 - *Reading is approximately 8 pages a day.*
- Tangerine by Edward Bloor
 - *A novel that details the moral dilemmas presented to "new kid" Paul Fisher, a passionate soccer player who lives in the shadow of his football-star brother. Paul learns important life lessons through the horrible truths revealed in this fast-paced, sports-driven story.*
 - *Reading is approximately 8 pages a day.*
- Crash by Jerry Spinelli
 - *A novel that breaks down the football-playing bully Crash Coogan and teaches him that pranks can go too far. Crash questions his own character in this novel and learns important lessons about right and wrong.*
 - *Reading requires approximately 5 pages a day.*
- The Maze by Will Hobbs
 - *An adventure novel about good-willed, 14-year-old Rick Walker, an escapee from a juvenile detention center. When Rick finds himself stranded in a canyon with only a bird biologist as company, he discovers an environmental battle that gives him an overwhelming will to rise above the tough blows that life has dealt him.*
 - *Reading requires approximately 7 pages a day.*

The boys designed their own reading schedules on Friday, September 22 with the members of their group. Our expectation is they finish the novel by October 24, having reached an assigned mid-way point by October 10. In class, we will host mini-lessons that address common themes and techniques used in all of the novels, and the boys will then discuss the book with their group and write journal responses. Please refer to the attached calendar for a general and tentative overview of our schedule. Boys will still have homework in other areas of Humanities, including grammar, history, spelling, and vocabulary, but we will schedule these assignments with mindfulness to the readings.

We appreciate your support in guiding your child to think critically about his book by asking him to strike up a conversation based on his readings. We are really looking forward to the many discussions we will have in the next seven weeks as the boys explore their novels.

Sincerely,

Casie Hall and David Kyle
The 6th Grade Humanities Teachers