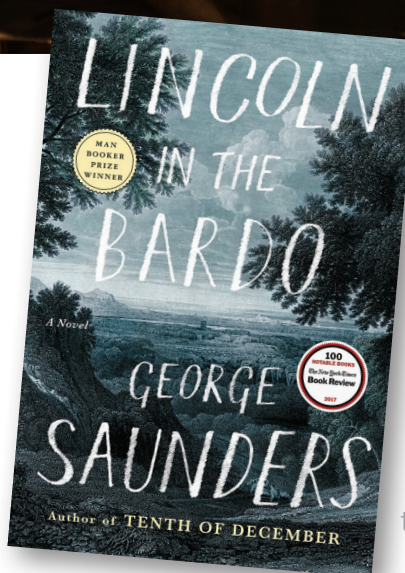


## MAN BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR GEORGE SAUNDERS VISITS CONVENT & STUART HALL

**O**n November 16, 2017 the winner of the Man Booker Prize, one of the most prestigious global awards in literature, spent the day on campus engaging with high school students and faculty. He ended his visit with an evening reception and presentation for the entire Convent & Stuart Hall community.

The 2017 Man Booker Prize for fiction was awarded to George Saunders for his first novel, "Lincoln in the Bardo," though the author has long been celebrated for his widely lauded short stories. His work regularly appears in publications such as The New Yorker, Harper's and McSweeney's and has earned him four National Magazine Awards for fiction and a MacArthur Fellowship (a "Genius Grant"). His story collection, "Tenth of December," was a National Book Award Finalist and winner of the 2014 Folio Prize.

While we celebrated the announcement of Mr. Saunders' Booker Prize, it was not the reason we invited him to campus (we had planned his visit months before the award was announced). Rather, it was upon hearing Mr. Saunders present at the Key West Literary Seminar



in January 2017 that President Ann Marie Krejcarek and other faculty in attendance recognized the opportunity for learning and engagement that his visit would provide our community. Stuart Hall for Boys faculty member Dennis Estrada, who also attended the seminar, framed possibilities of this engagement: "Through the many ghostly characters' tales in 'Lincoln in the Bardo,' Saunders is providing us with the opportunity to examine our own attachments and narratives that we hold on to so dearly. In essence, he asks us, 'What do you need to let go of? What is keeping you from moving on to the next stage of your life?' These are fundamental questions that we eventually need to turn to, and his latest work gives us yet another opportunity to explore our own depths."

Mr. Saunders' day on the Convent & Stuart Hall campus exceeded our high expectations. Cece Giarman, Grade 11, was inspired by his presentation. "Mr. Saunders really changed some of my perspectives on not only creative writing but life. He talked about how creative writing should

allow readers to see past the curtain that often conceals reality so a greater truth can be found," said Cece.

Mr. Saunders' visit was the culmination of the school's week-long book fair, celebrating a "culture of reading," which has at its heart the Great Texts Canon — a critically evaluated list of titles and mentor authors that invites students to read widely and rigorously across the K-12 curriculum. In her introduction of George Saunders, Library Department Chair Amanda Walker CES'91 stated, "Our Great Texts Canon and culture of reading here at school are based in our belief in the essential ability — the power — of the written word to reveal, and to

*Mr. Saunders really changed some of my perspectives on not only creative writing but life.*

**- Cece Giarman, Grade 11**

connect us, through both windows and mirrors; to curiosity and to questions; to content and curriculum; to the realities and experiences of others; to beauty; to joy." The school is invested in continuing to develop and

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Students interview George Saunders. George Saunders and Library Department Chair Amanda Walker.



deepen our culture of reading, in part by inviting serious, scholarly thinkers and writers into conversation with us and our students here on campus. In the past few years, these conversations have included former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins, acclaimed Palestinian-American writer Naomi Shihab Nye, Newbery Medal winners Jacqueline Woodson and Matt de la Peña, and Caldecott Honor recipient Mac Barnett, among others. Authors have engaged in presentations to groups of students and adults, writing workshops, classroom visits, and preparation and deliberation for the Prix Barat writing competition. We look forward to furthering opportunities to expand our understanding, compassion, use of language and voice through the experience of reading in community, as well as from authors about their writing processes, their reading processes, and the deep and vital connection between the two.