Visitation School
10th Grade English: Global Voices
Summer Reading Assignment 2026

The Books

All students must read the following books: *Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys and *Sold* by Patricia McCormick.

About the Required Books

Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys chronicles the lives of the main character, Lina Vilkas, and her mother and brother, all of whom are arrested during Josef Stalin's regime in Russia and sent from Lithuania to a prison camp, or *gulag*, in Siberia. Lina must learn to embrace the loving, forgiving attitude of her mother and grow up before her time as she faces unspeakable challenges. Sepetys based this beautiful novel on research and numerous interviews with people who had been teenagers during Stalin's barbarous regime, an often under-reported historical era that affected millions of people in the United Soviet Socialist Republic.

Sold by Patricia McCormick: Lakshmi is a 13-year-old girl from Nepal who is sold by her stepfather into a life of prostitution. At first, Lakshmi thinks she is going to work as a maid in the city, so she eagerly goes away, thinking that her income will help care for her mother. But the truth is that Lakshmi is kept as a slave and threatened with violence, disease, and perpetual ill-treatment at the hands of the horrid woman who owns the brothel. Upwards of 20,000 Nepalese women and girls are sex trafficked every year, and the author has dedicated this book to those girls. This book is sad yet remarkably beautiful and hopeful.

The Assignment

There is an expectation that you will be able to discuss the books fluently at the beginning of the school year and write two short essays in which you answer prompts related to the works. In other words, if you don't complete the summer reading, you will struggle with writing the essays, so PLEASE READ THE BOOKS.

The essays might reflect on the following ideas:

- How does hope help people survive challenging circumstances in your two chosen books?

- What is the most important lesson conveyed by each of the books?
- What personal traits are needed to help people overcome challenging life circumstances in your two chosen books?

How to Approach This Assignment

- Read these books whenever the spirit moves you this summer, but we would advise reading them once and then skimming them again just before school begins. We will start the year speaking about the books.
- All students must keep a reading journal for their two chosen books:
    - We encourage you to summarize by chapter or section, recording key events and plot points for each book.
    - Summaries may be written on post-it notes placed inside the books, in the margins of the books (if you have purchased them), in a paper notebook, or in a Google or Word document.
    - Proof of these reading journals must be supplied to the teacher on the first day of school. Each journal (one for each book) is worth 25 points.
- If you have questions or concerns, please email Mrs. Sutton at nsutton@vischool.org
- Have a great summer! We can't wait to see you in the fall; it's going to be a great year!