

Independent reading is something we want to encourage students to do throughout the year. Studies have shown that extended independent reading is a key skill in college success and also one of the best ways to improve your writing skills. While Literary Merit Badges are a great way to focus your reading over the summer, they can be completed at any time during the year. **Complete five badges and a media display by May 3, 2027 and earn an academic letter in Literary Society!** Direct any questions or completed work to Ms. Dahlin in B217.

### SUMMER READING - Carpe Librum *Seize the Book*

#### Literary Merit Badges

A study of ACT results showed that what differentiates students who are ready for college from those who are not is an ability to comprehend sophisticated texts that may have several layers of meaning. We want all our students to be ready for college!

Therefore, **ALL RAHS STUDENTS should pick at least two books from the twenty-three possible categories of merit badges and complete STEP 1 of each badge.**

1 - Look at the possible topics and choose two topics to help you pick two books to read over the summer

2 - Find a book you think fits the requirements. If you can't find one, email the teacher connected to the badge. **If you need some suggestions for titles and can't get in touch with a sponsoring teacher, [check out this page for possibilities!](#)**

3 - Get the book you choose approved by the teacher listed with the badge or by Ms Dahlin

4 - Read the book and follow the directions for the badge.

5 - Email your work to [amy.dahlin@isd623.org](mailto:amy.dahlin@isd623.org) or label hard copies with your name and first hour teacher and turn this work in to your English teacher during the first week of school OR drop it off in room B217. All students who successfully complete the work in Step 1 for a badge will receive a 1 inch, color button (pictured next to the badge) to celebrate their achievement. You could collect all the buttons by the time you graduate!

**6 - STUDENTS WHO WANT TO START EARNING an academic letter** from the Literary Society, complete BOTH STEPS 1 and 2 for the two badges you have chosen. Then finish 3 more badges and the publicity project by May 3rd, 2027. Fill out badge applications for the work you do for each badge and turn it in to Ms. Dahlin in Room B217. You will meet with the sponsor teacher for each badge to have a short conversation about the work you have done. When sponsoring teachers have signed off on your work for all five badges, you will create either a digital or hardcopy display for the library. When these requirements have been met, you will have earned an Academic Letter – a great addition to any college transcript! You can pursue a letter all four years at RAHS.

**You can also join the Literary Society and earn a letter by completing the badges working with other members.**

Work on a badge can be started at any time between May 1st, 2026 and May 3rd, 2027. Ask the sponsor teacher to help you develop ideas and find resources that will meet the requirements. As you do your work, take careful notes and make sure you are working all the different parts of the badge requirements.

**Get the Badge/Button.** When the sponsor teacher is satisfied you have met each requirement, they will email Ms Dahlin and let her know. If you are pursuing a letter, you will get all your badges when you complete your work.

**Requirements.** You are expected to meet the requirements as they are stated—no more and no less. You must do exactly what is stated in the requirements. If it says “show or demonstrate,” that is what you must do. Just telling about it isn't enough. The same thing holds true for such words as “make,” “list,” “analyze” and “collect,” “identify,” and “label.”

**Academic Letter: Any student who successfully earns 5 or more badges and creates a public display for the media center / Roseville Library by doing these reading projects between May 1st, 2026 and May 3rd, 2027, is eligible for an academic letter.**

## 1 - Ancient Meets Modern

### Step 1

1. Choose a book written before the Renaissance that is NOT part of RAHS curriculum. It can be philosophy, drama, epic poetry, poetry, essays, meditations, or a religious text.
2. As you read, take notes on anything that seems connected to our current world. Identify at least one personal connection to your life, one artistic connection to art or music, and one connection to the larger social, scientific, religious or political world.

### Step 2

3. Write a short piece to submit to the RAHS newspaper that helps other students see the way in which you found writing from the ancient world relevant to your world today.
4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 2 – Big Books

### Step 1

1. Read a big book (450+ pages) of either fiction or nonfiction. See Mr. Engelking for suggestions if you need it; see him anyway to get approval of your book choice.
2. Mark up a passage from the book that a shorter work might not have included and briefly explain why you think it was left in.

### Step 2

3. Design a chart showing three or four parts of the book that could have been safely cut, and three or four parts of the book that could have been even longer.
4. Set up an appointment with Mr. Engelking in room B216 to discuss your chart and talk about the passage you chose. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 3 – Books We Read For School Are Usually Boring, But *This* Wasn't Bad

### Step 1

1. Read a work of fiction or a collection of non-fiction by an author you have discovered in one of your English classes here at RAHS. For example, if you liked F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, you could choose to read his novel *This Side of Paradise*.
2. Design a poster/mind map that shows the ways in which the new work you've read is EITHER similar to (in subject, theme, style, attitude, etc.) OR different from the first thing you read by the author.

### Step 2

3. Write a brief (1-page) response explaining why you like this author, or whether you still like this author after you've read more of their work.
4. Set up an appointment with Mr. Engelking in room B216 to discuss your poster and commentary. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 4 – Caribbean, Central American and South American Literature

### Step 1

1. Read a book from a Central American, Caribbean, or South American author. Note: chances are high that this book will be translated into English from another language.
2. Choose one passage that contains a cultural tradition or other cultural information that either a) puzzles you, or b) you have not previously read about in other literature classes. (Ex: what's with all the stuff about the banana plantation in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*?) Research this information and write a brief (1 page MAXIMUM) explanation of this tradition or information.

### Step 2

3. Write a second short (1-page) reaction to the novel that explains how it expands or adds to your idea of what American literature is.
4. Set up an appointment with Mr. Engelking in room B216 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 5 – For the Love of Food

### Step 1

1. Choose a book set in another culture that makes consistent references to food - can be fiction, non-fiction, poetry - and read it, taking notes on the role of food.
2. Find a recipe for one of the dishes mentioned, research the ingredients and history of that dish, traditional cooking techniques, and then make the dish and share it with others.
3. Document your cooking and eating by photos or video.

### Step 2

4. Describe how your understanding of the culture and the book you read changed because of your experience actually making the food.
5. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 6 – For the Love of History

### Step 1

1. Choose a book about a specific aspect of a significant historical person, event, era, or political movement and read it taking notes on at least five ideas that expanded your understanding of the topic.
2. Choose one passage that you think clearly explains one of these topics, take a picture or screen shot of it, export it to Notability and mark it up. Note new words, connections to the real world, connections to other historical topics.

### Step 2

3. Identify a current issue, person, or event that connects to what you read. In two well-written paragraphs explain the connection and why the topic is important in our world today.

4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to talk about what you learned. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 7 – The Heart of Transcendentalism

### Step 1

1. Print, read, and annotate any two chapters of Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*. What do you notice? What is confusing? What is the author trying to convey?

[http://literatureproject.com/walden/walden\\_5.htm](http://literatureproject.com/walden/walden_5.htm)

2. Print, read, and annotate Chapter I from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “Nature.”

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm>

3. Print, read, and annotate any three poems from American poet Mary Oliver.

### Step 2

4. Spend 60 minutes in a natural setting (e.g. a nature center or a state or regional park).

Spend those 60 minutes outside, by yourself, in a place with some nature, without any books or electronic diversions. The goal is to forget about all the things you have to do and let go of modern distractions and tune into the natural world. Pay attention to the little things around you and give your mind a chance to hear itself think. After you get back, write down where you went, what you saw and heard (be really specific), what you thought about, and how it felt to be out there. (minimum two paragraphs/ten complete sentences)

5. Set up an appointment with Mr. MacGillis in room C211 to share the results of your study and outdoor experience. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 8 - Got game? Sports and Athletes

### Step 1

1. Choose a book about a significant athlete, team, or sporting event. Read it and take notes on at least 5 significant details that make the topic worth studying.

2. Find at least one article online that addresses the same topic. Read it and take notes on any connections or differences from the book you read.

### Step 2

3. Watch a current game/event of the sport you read about. Take notes on any connections between what you read and what happened in the game/event you watched. Explain in writing - How did reading the book change the way you watch the sport? What do you notice now that you didn’t before?

4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in B217 to talk about what you read and watched. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 9 – The Journey of a Lifetime

### Step 1

1. Read a novel, memoir, play, or epic poem about an extended physical journey or travel. The piece of literature should center around a single character or small group of characters undertaking the journey, and who grow or change because of their travels.
2. Create an itinerary for a trip YOU could undertake one day. This itinerary must include:
  - a. A statement of purpose (What you hope to gain or how you hope to grow on this trip).
  - b. A list of activities to be done and sites to be seen in each location.
  - c. A daily itinerary detailing specific locations, modes of travel between locations, and sleeping arrangements.
  - d. A proposed budget taking into account estimated costs for travel, accommodation, and activities.

### Step 2

3. Compile your itinerary with visuals into a pamphlet, poster, or Google slides presentation, as if you were proposing your trip to a board or organization that will grant you the funds for the trip if you convince them to.
4. Set up an appointment with Mr. Lane in room C188 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 10 – Laugh Track

### Step 1

1. Choose a book written by a favorite comedian and read it - taking notes on what makes it funny to you and how you connect personally to the book and/or author.
2. Find a performance, video/movie, or podcast by the same comedian and watch/listen to it. Then describe in one page what important observations about life the comedian makes.

### Step 2

3. Write a (minimum 3 minutes) set of stand-up comedy based on what you learned about yourself and/or life and society from reading and watching/listening to this comedian. Perform it in front of at least six people and video record your set.
4. Describe how you were influenced by the comedian you chose and what you learned about comedic performance from completing this task.
5. Set up an appointment with Ms. Ormseth in room C212 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 11 – Makers, Shakers, and Cars - Industrial Tech and the People Who Design Our World

### Step 1

1. Read a book about a designer of any type – graphic, automobile, architecture, etc. – taking notes on what motivates and inspires them in their work.
2. Find at least 3 visual examples of their work and explain how the design shows the ideas that you took notes on in step 1.

### Step 2

3. In three well-written paragraphs explain what interests you in the field that you read about, what designs in that field you currently love, and what in that field you would love to see become reality in the future.

4. Set up a meeting with Ms. Dahlin in B217 to show her the pictures of the designs and talk about your ideas. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 12 – Modern Japanese Literature

### Step 1

1. Read a novel written by a Japanese author after 1895. Because of different cultural norms, sex and violence could be presented in much different and more graphic ways than is typical in American literature. Be sure that you have your family's approval for whatever book you choose.

2. Where does the novel take place? Go and research the geography, history, current population, and industries of the setting. Keep complete notes on what you find in your research.

### Step 2

3. As you read take notes on the ways that the novel portrays the ideas of duty, individuality, and the perception of reality. Describe how the characters demonstrate and / or struggle with these ideas.

4. What themes do you think the novel is trying to communicate? (Recall that a theme is a complete statement about a subject.)

5. Set up a meeting with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to share and discuss your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 13 – Moving Images

### Step 1

1. Choose a topic you are interested in reading about. Find and read a book of poems or short stories organized around a topic of your choosing. Your selection must include at least one poem/story from an author from outside of Europe and North America and at least one author who is still alive. Take notes on images used and meanings created around your topic.

2. Find examples of art - this can include video, photography, painting, sculptures, installations, etc. - that reflect the images used in your poems. Then describe these connections in one page of writing.

### Step 2

3. Create a new piece of work that mixes together both examples of art and words from the poetry. This could be a video, collage, or composited image.

4. Describe how mixing the words and art changed your understanding of the topic and some of its thematic elements.

5. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 14 – Music To Your Eyes

### Step 1

1. Read a book about music, preferably one from this list:

[https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/87326.Words\\_Music\\_Pitchfork\\_Staff\\_s\\_60\\_Favorite\\_Music\\_Books](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/87326.Words_Music_Pitchfork_Staff_s_60_Favorite_Music_Books)

2. Listen to one of the albums mentioned (but not thoroughly discussed) in the book you chose and write a 125-200 word capsule review of it. A capsule review is a relatively short (1-2 paragraph) response to a book/movie/album that describes both the overall impression of the work of art as well as a few specific details. Tone and diction can vary according as necessary; it doesn't need to be 100% serious or 100% jokey.

### Step 2

3. Listen to one of the *songs* mentioned (but not thoroughly discussed) in the book you chose and write a 125-250 word reaction to it.

4. Set up a time to talk to Mr. Engelking about the 3-4 most important or significant details about music, composition, the performers, or the era covered in the book. (You can give him your two short reviews as well.) **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 15 – New Voices in Fantasy and Science Fiction novels

### Step 1

1. These are two of the most popular genres for high school readers, yet the authors students tend to pick up are remarkably limited - Tolkien, Rowling, Martin, and Herbert dominate. Yet there are so many other amazing choices out there. Research lists of current science fiction and fantasy books and authors and choose a novel to read that falls outside the common canon of these genres.

2. Keep track of the ways that the novel both followed common expectations and how it offered something new.

### Step 2

3. Research the author and their thoughts and motivations for writing the novel and write a journal entry exploring your views of how it connects to our world.

4. Meet with Ms Dahlin in B217 to share and discuss your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 16 – Page to Stage

### Step 1

1. Choose a work of drama (meant for the stage) that is not a part of RAHS curriculum and read it. Brainstorm how you would put the work on the stage if you were a director, producer, or performer. Think casting, setting, blocking, etc.

2. Find a film adaptation or stage production of the play and watch it. Take at least one page of notes on what you liked and didn't like about the production, as well as what was unexpected.

### Step 2

3. Write a short piece about how you envisioned the play as you read it versus how the director put it together in the production you watched. Some questions to consider: How were the visions similar or different? What surprised you in their interpretation? What

did you want more/less of? Were there creative choices in staging that made themes or characters clearer than a reading on the page? Would you cast it differently?

4. Set up an appointment with Mr. Hemmerlin in room B219 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 17 – The Poetry Slam

### Step 1

1. Read a published poetry book by a performance (slam) poet. Suggested publishers to find

full-length books include Write Bloody, Button Poetry, Where Are You Press, Penguin, and GrayWolf. Ms. Helmick & the RAHS Media Center have several you can borrow.

2. Attend a poetry slam. Suggested: TruArt Speaks/Be Heard MN Youth Poetry Slam series. Take notes on what you noticed about the poetry *and* the performance.

### Step 2

3. Write your own slam poem. It needs to be at least 30 lines on any subject of your choice. Record yourself performing (privately or publicly).

4. Meet with Ms. Soosai in room C213 to discuss the poetry book, the poetry slam, and to show your own slam poetry performance. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 18 – Political Punditry

### Step 1

1. Read a book or a collection of essays or articles about a social, political, or international issue you care about. The reading should be non-fiction and timely for current world events.

2. Listen to a podcast or watch a documentary that relates to the same issue. Take at least one page of notes on what the main argument is and what supporting evidence is used.

### Step 2

3. Write an article or letter to the editor for a relevant outlet referencing the piece and advocating a position on an issue. This may be a newspaper, a magazine, an online magazine, a blog entry, etc. Be thoughtful about your potential audience - try to convince others!

4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Madson in room C210 (afternoons only) to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## 19 – Science and Medicine

### Step 1

1. Read a book about a scientist, doctor, medical procedure, or scientific discovery and take notes on 1) the problem that prompted or inspired the person/work and 2) the innovative ideas and/or discovery that came from the work/person.

2. Find at least one article that addresses the same topic and take notes on any connections or disagreements with what you read in the book.

### **Step 2**

3. Do some research about how the topic has touched your own life here in MN. Is it a personal connection? A problem hospitals are currently struggling with? A dream you have for your future? Explain your connection in three well-written paragraphs.

4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in B217 to talk about what you read and learned. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## **20 – The Serious Russians**

### **Step 1**

1. Read a novel written by a Russian author. They tend to be long and they tend to be serious. Know this going in.

2. As you read, identify one social issue the author seems to be addressing and find at least three significant quotes about it in the book.

3. When you are finished, research the author's life. Write a short description of how the events the author experienced first hand are reflected in the novel.

### **Step 2**

4. Design a poster to market the book to current readers. Include: a relevant image, an important quote from the story, quotes from famous people who liked the book, a 1 sentence summary designed to interest other readers.

5. Set up an appointment with Ms Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## **21 – Social Justice through a Young Adult Lens**

### **Step 1**

1. Read a young adult book (fiction or nonfiction) related to the themes of equity and social justice. This book should include voices that have historically been absent from school curriculum required reading.

2. Write a letter to one of the characters (at least 2 pages in which you explore and respond to the characters, events, themes in the book as well as identify and reflect on a social justice issue currently happening in our community).

### **Step 2**

3. Make a list of 25 things you (or someone like you) can do right now to help promote equity and social justice in our community.

4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## **22 – Traditional Storytelling – Indigenous Culture**

### **Step 1**

1. There are lots of ways to tell stories without using written narration, and many indigenous cultures (Objibwa, Dakota, Winnebago, Navajo, etc.) are masters of this. Read a book that explores an indigenous culture and the ways that culture records history, teaches morals, and provides entertainment in ways beyond the written word – weaving, beadwork, basketmaking, painting, etc.
2. Find five images of the kinds of work you read about and take notes on what the different characteristics in each communicate to others.

### **Step 2**

3. Find and read another article about the issues and ideas that are currently important to the members of the culture you read about. Describe how you could help to bring awareness of these issues to the student body at RAHS.
4. Set up an appointment with Ms. Dahlin in room B217 to talk about what you learned. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## **23 – Visual Art and its Creators**

### **Step 1**

1. Read a book about someone who creates visual art (sculpture, painting, fashion, pottery, performance art, etc.)
2. Look up and examine five of the pieces discussed in the book.
3. Write a description of your reaction to these pieces. Do they emotionally touch or move you in some way? Why or why not?

### **Step 2**

4. Identify an artist that was influential to this artist OR an artist who found this artist influential and examine 3 pieces of their work. Write a short analysis of how you can trace the influence of the other person.
5. Set up an appointment with Ms Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**

## **24 - Scream - horror at its finest**

### **Step 1 -**

1. Choose a book that fits the horror genre
2. Track the suspenseful scenes and rank in order from least to most thrilling. (Include at least 5 scenes.) Offer a rationale for each ranking.

### **Step 2 -**

3. What film or tv episode or short story or work of art or folk tradition connects to this novel? Connect one passage from the novel to the other work of horror and explain the connection.
4. Set up an appointment with Ms Dahlin in room B217 to share your work. **To earn a letter you need to complete the requirements for 5 badges by May 3rd, 2027.**