



June 8, 2026

Dear Parents,

Students' success in high school and college across all content areas depends on thoughtful, critical reading skills. During the school year, we as teachers monitor students' reading through various means (quizzes, exams, essays, oral presentations, and other activities) and work to foster these skills.

During the summer, we ask you to encourage your children to continue reading. Just as all artists and athletes need to practice year-round if they are to excel, so too do our students need to stay intellectually in shape and train over the summer to ensure a smooth transition back to school in September. Beyond the academic benefits, of course, we hope our students enjoy reading on many levels, such as adventure, enlightenment, self-discovery, and playful escape, among others. The highest value of reading is its ability to nourish the soul.

Accompanying this letter, you will find a list of titles which we in the English department believe students may enjoy over the summer. While none of these books are required reading, we strongly recommend that students who will be in a regular English class read 1-2 titles, and students who will be in an AP or Honors English class read 2-3 titles. We suggest this for students to keep in step with the reading pace that they should expect during the school year.

As with most worthwhile pursuits, the habit and pleasure of independent reading need to be cultivated. We also invite you to read one or more books. In doing so, you would be sharing a significant experience with your child while demonstrating how important you feel reading is.

Thanks for giving your thoughtful consideration to this request. If you have any questions do not hesitate to email me at swinters@molloyhs.org. Happy Summer!

Sincerely,

Ms. Shannon Winters '06
English Department Chair



RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 9:

Han, Jenny. The Summer I Turned Pretty.

About to turn sixteen, Belly Conklin travels with her mother and brother to Cousins Beach, the beachfront town where they have spent every summer with the Fisher family. As Belly enters a new stage of adolescence, she begins to experience growing independence, shifting family dynamics, and the complexities of long-standing friendships. Over the course of the summer, she finds herself at the center of new social experiences and romantic tensions, especially as her relationships with the Fisher brothers start to change.

Hood, Susan. Lifeboat 12.

With Nazis bombing London every night, thirteen-year-old Ken Sparks is one of 90 boys and girls to ship out aboard the SS *City of Benares* to safety in Canada. After five days at sea aboard this luxury ship, the ship's officers announce that they are out of danger. They are wrong. Late that night, a torpedo explosion hurls Ken from his bunk. Terrified, Ken scrambles aboard a lifeboat with five other boys. Will they get away? Will they survive?

Lai, Thanhha. Inside Out and Back Again.

A young Vietnamese girl leaves her war-torn homeland for America in 1975. With Saigon about to fall to the communists, 10-year-old Hà, her mother, and brothers are forced to flee their beloved city and head to the United States. But living in a new country is not easy for Hà, and she finds adapting to its strange customs ever challenging. As refugees in Alabama, the family struggles with language barriers, food shortages, and severe bullying, but ultimately find hope, healing, and belonging.

Lu, Marie. Legend.

What was once the western United States is now home to the Republic, a nation perpetually at war with its neighbors. Born into an elite family in one of the Republic's wealthiest districts, fifteen-year-old June is a prodigy being groomed for success in the Republic's highest military circles. Born into the slums, fifteen-year-old Day is the country's most wanted criminal. But his motives may not be as malicious as they seem. From vastly different worlds, June and Day have no reason to cross paths - until the day June's brother, Metias, is murdered and Day becomes the prime suspect. Caught in the ultimate game of cat and mouse, Day is in a race for his family's survival, while June seeks to avenge Metias's death. But in a shocking turn of events, the two uncover the truth of what has really brought them together, and the sinister lengths their country will go to keep its secrets.

McManus, Karen M. The Cousins.

Milly, Aubrey, and Jonah Story are cousins, but they barely know each other, and they have never even met their grandmother. Rich and reclusive, she disinherited their parents before they were born. So, when they each receive a letter inviting them to work at her island resort for the summer, they are surprised . . . and curious. When the cousins arrive on the island, it is immediately clear that she has different plans for them. And the longer they stay, the more they realize how the entire Story family has secrets. Whatever pulled them apart years ago is not over--and this summer, the cousins will learn everything.

Reynolds, Jason. Look Both Ways: A Tale Told in Ten Blocks.

A collection of 10 interconnected short stories about Latimer Middle School students walking home. Set over 10 blocks, it captures the humor, vulnerability, and secret struggles of adolescence when kids are finally free from adult supervision.



RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 10:

Dickey, R. A. Throwing Strikes.

The inspiring story of how knuckleballer R. A. Dickey became one of the game's best pitchers. He had humble beginnings, and as a child kept a terrible secret. Dickey went on to pitch in the Olympics while at the University of Tennessee, but his Major League hopes took a downturn when an X-ray revealed a major problem with his throwing arm. It seemed his future in baseball was over before it even began.

Gong, Chloe. These Violent Delights.

A blood feud between two gangs runs the streets red, leaving the city helpless in the grip of chaos. At the heart of it all is eighteen-year-old Juliette Cai, who has returned to assume her role as the proud heir to the Scarlet Gang. Their only rivals in power are the White Flowers, who have fought the Scarlets for generations. Behind every move is their heir, Roma Montagov, Juliette's first love...and first betrayal. As deaths stack up, Juliette and Roma must set their guns and grudges aside and work together. If they cannot stop this mayhem, there will be no city left for either to rule.

Hinton, Anthony Ray. The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row.

In 1985, Anthony Ray Hinton was arrested and charged with two counts of capital murder in Alabama. Stunned, confused, and only twenty-nine years old, Hinton knew that it was a case of mistaken identity and believed that the truth would prove his innocence and ultimately set him free. But a different system of justice for a poor black man in the South, Hinton was sentenced to death by electrocution. He spent his first three years on Death Row at Holman State Prison in agonizing silence—full of despair and anger toward all those who had sent an innocent man to his death. But as Hinton realized and accepted his fate, he resolved not only to survive but find a way to live on Death Row.

McManus, Karen. One of Us Is Next. (sequel to One of Us Is Lying)

A ton of copycat gossip apps have popped up since Simon died, but in the year since the Bayview Four were cleared of his shocking death, no one has been able to fill the gossip void quite as he could. The problem is that no one has the facts—until now. This time it is not an app, though—it is a game. An anonymous texter revives Simon Kelleher's infamous high school gossip scheme by launching a lethal game of Truth or Dare at Bayview High. When the dares turn deadly, three friends—Maeve, Knox, and Phoebe—must uncover the culprit before more secrets and lives are destroyed.

Shusterman, Neal. Unwholly. (sequel to Unwind)

Thanks to Connor, Lev, and Risa and their high-profile revolt at Happy Jack Harvest Camp—people can no longer turn a blind eye to unwinding. However, unwinding has become big business, and there are powerful political and corporate interests that want to see it continue. Will these three friends be successful this time?

Thomas, Angie. The Hate U Give.

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that question is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could not only upend her community, but it could also endanger her life.



RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 11:

Barnes, Jennifer Lynn. The Inheritance Games.

Avery Grambs has a plan for a better future: survive high school, win a scholarship, and get out. But her fortunes change in an instant when billionaire Tobias Hawthorne dies and leaves Avery virtually his entire fortune. The catch? Avery has no idea why -- or even who Tobias Hawthorne is. To receive her inheritance, Avery must move into sprawling, secret passage-filled Hawthorne House, where every room bears the old man's touch -- and his love of puzzles, riddles, and codes. Unfortunately for Avery, Hawthorne House is also occupied by the family that Tobias Hawthorne just dispossessed. Caught in a world of wealth and privilege, with danger around every turn, Avery will have to play the game herself just to survive.

Ribay, Randy. Patron Saints of Nothing.

Jay Reguero plans to spend the last semester of his senior year playing video games before heading to the University of Michigan in the fall. But when he discovers that his Filipino cousin Jun was murdered as part of President Duterte's war on drugs, and no one in the family wants to talk about what happened, Jay travels to the Philippines to find out the real story. Hoping to uncover more about Jun and the events that led to his death, Jay is forced to reckon with the many sides of his cousin before he can face the whole horrible truth -- and the part he played in it.

Shusterman, Neal. Thunderhead. (sequel to Scythe)

A year has passed since Rowan had gone off grid. Since then, he has become an urban legend, a vigilante snuffing out corrupt scythes in a trial by fire. His story is told in whispers across the continent. As Scythe Anastasia, Citra gleans with compassion and openly challenges the ideals of the "new order". But when her life is threatened and her methods questioned, it becomes clear that not everyone is open to change. The Thunderhead cannot interfere in the affairs of the Scythedom. All it can do is observe — it does not like what it sees. Will the Thunderhead intervene? Or will it simply watch as this perfect world begins to unravel?

Stevenson, Bryan. Just Mercy (Adapted for Young Adults): A True Story of the Fight for Justice.

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he did not commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinksmanship —and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Westover, Tara. Educated.

In this memoir, seventeen-year-old Tara Westover set foot in a classroom for the first time. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there had been no one to ensure that the children received an education, and no one to intervene when Tara faced violence at home. When one of her brothers got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her thirst for knowledge transformed her, leading her to places she could never have dreamed of.

Woodson, Jacqueline. Before the Ever After.

For as long as ZJ can remember, his dad has been everyone's hero. As a charming, talented pro football star, he is as beloved to the neighborhood kids he plays with as he is to his millions of adoring sports fans. But lately, his dad has been having trouble remembering things and seems to be angry all the time. ZJ's mom explains it is because of all the head injuries his dad sustained during his career. As ZJ contemplates his new reality, he must figure out how to hold on tight to family traditions and recollections of the glory days, all the while wondering what their past amounts to if his father cannot remember it. And most importantly, can those happy feelings ever be reclaimed when they are all so busy aching for the past?

Zusak, Markus. The Book Thief

In 1939, Nazi Germany, the country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier and will become busier still. Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she cannot resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement. Liesel finds solace and resistance by stealing books and learning the power of words amidst the horrors of war.



RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS ENTERING GRADE 12:

Danticat, Edwidge. Breath, Eyes, Memory.

At the age of twelve, Sophie Caco is sent from her impoverished village of Croix-des-Rosets to New York, to be reunited with a mother she barely remembers. There she discovers secrets that no child should ever know and a legacy of shame that can be healed only when she returns to Haiti - to the women who first reared her. What ensues is a passionate journey through a landscape charged with the supernatural and scarred by political violence in a novel that bears witness to the traditions, suffering, and wisdom of an entire people.

Frankl, Victor. Man's Search for Meaning.

Viktor E. Frankl was a medical doctor at a psychiatric hospital in 1942 when he became a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps in World War II. In 1946, he published this book about his camp experiences and a method of psychotherapy he developed. Part One describes his three years in four Nazi concentration camps, which took the lives of his wife, father, mother, and brother. He closely observed inmates' reactions to their situation, as well as how survivors came to terms with their liberation. Part Two, introducing logotherapy, is an academic discussion of the psychological reactions experienced by all inmates to one degree or another. It solidified Frankl's early theory that humanity's primary motivational force is finding meaning in one's life.

Jackson, Holly. A Good Girl's Guide to Murder.

Everyone in Fairview knows the story: Pretty and popular high school senior Andie Bell was murdered by her boyfriend, Sal Singh, who then killed himself. It was all anyone could talk about. And five years later, Pip sees how the tragedy still haunts her town. But she cannot shake the feeling that there was more to what happened that day. She knew Sal when she was a child, and he was always so kind to her. How could he possibly have been a killer? Now a senior herself, Pip decides to reexamine the closed case for her final project, at first just to cast doubt on the original investigation. But soon she discovers a trail of dark secrets that might prove Sal innocent . . . and the line between past and present begins to blur. Someone in Fairview does not want Pip digging around for answers, and now her own life might be in danger.

Hawking, Stephen W. A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes.

One of the greatest minds of our time explores profound questions such as: How did the universe begin—and what made its start possible? Does time always flow forward? Is the universe unending—or are there boundaries? Are there other dimensions in space? What will happen when it all ends? This book plunges into the exotic realms of black holes and quarks, of antimatter and "arrows of time," of the big bang and a bigger God—where the possibilities are wondrous and unexpected.

Kalanithi, Paul. When Breathe Becomes Air.

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just like that, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. Kalanithi's transforms from a naïve medical student into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality. This memoir asks us to consider: What makes life worth living in the face of death?

Lewis, John and D'Orso, Mike. Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement.

In 1957, a teenaged boy named John Lewis left a cotton farm in Alabama for Nashville, the epicenter of the struggle for civil rights in America. Lewis's adherence to nonviolence guided that critical time and established him as one of the movement's most charismatic and courageous leaders. Lewis's leadership in the Nashville Movement—a student-led effort to desegregate the city of Nashville using sit-in techniques based on the teachings of Gandhi—set the tone for major civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. Lewis traces his role in the pivotal Selma marches, Bloody Sunday, and the Freedom Rides. Inspired by his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lewis's vision and perseverance altered history.