

**WMS
Middle School
Summer Reading
2008**

"Books are the bees which carry the quickening pollen from one mind to another mind."

James Russell Lowell

Last summer, for the first time, the humanities teachers decided to try what many other communities have done: we chose a piece of literature the entire middle school could read together for required summer reading. We liked the idea of being able to share this reading experience when we first arrived back at school in the fall and that we could use that book for preliminary discussions and writing assignments. Grayson, by Lynne Cox, was the book we shared; this story of a marathon swimmer's encounter with a baby grey whale separated from its mother included lots of natural history and an inspirational message about perseverance. Listening to students' comments in the fall, I was pleased to discover that the story had appealed to readers with a wide range of abilities. When they wrote, they found many different ways to respond to this story. As one might anticipate, there were varied reactions to this assignment, yet the teachers agreed that this experience had been a positive way to begin bringing our community together.

With that in mind, the humanities teachers decided that we will do the same this year. After many conversations, we have chosen The Call of the Wild by Jack London. There is a paperback edition published by Viking (a division of Penguin) in 1996 that we liked in particular because of its beautiful illustrations and rich historical annotations. Of course, there are many other versions available at libraries and bookstores. We hope that everyone finds this classic to be a good read and we look forward to hearing what you think in the fall.

For specifics on other reading requirements, there will be additional information from the teachers. Those teachers will also indicate what needs to be written over the summer. On behalf of all the teachers, I hope you find wonderful books to read. As Henry David Thoreau said in Walden, "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."

Kathy Coe

Summer Reading For Students In Middle School 2008

Because we believe reading is a lifelong love and a habit that needs to be maintained, we require summer reading. We also enjoy the shared experience of discussing a book that we have all read. This year the entire Middle School will be reading Jack London's classic The Call of the Wild. In addition, you are to read three other books. We have included a booklist for you to consult, but we know there are many others. One, for example, was compiled by The National Endowment for the Humanities called Timeless Classics (<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/timeless.html>). This list provides many possibilities for a wide range of abilities.

Look for books that will challenge and interest you; feel free to ask for recommendations from your friends, your parents, your teachers, your local librarians or bookshop owners. We suggest that you read fiction and nonfiction; if you are interested in books from a series, you may count only one in your required total. If you have a question about the appropriateness of a title, ask us.

For writing, please follow the format below. Make sure your work is typed; these are due the first day back at school in September.

Your name

Title

Author

Your Favorite Quotation

I. Setting: time and place of the book. Include any information valuable about the setting. You may write or illustrate.

II. Plot Summary: summarize the major steps in the development of the plot. Give enough information to enable the reader to know what the book is about. This should be 8-10 sentences.

III. Critical Evaluation:

A) Describe the major **character**. Think about whether he or she is believable. Interesting? Well-developed? (5-7 sentences).

B) Explain the overall **theme** of the work. What is the main idea the author is trying to communicate? What are the issues or conflicts? How are they resolved? (5-7 sentences).