



June 26, 2009

Dear Rising Form I Families,

“The best laid plans of mice and men go often astray,” wrote Robert Burns in “To a Mouse.” He did not have in mind summer reading assignments, but here we are.

Unfortunately, the summer reading letter you received a month ago contained a mistake in titles to be read. Instead of reading *The Member of the Wedding*, by Carson McCullers, students should read *Soldier's Secret: The Story of Deborah Sampson*, by Sheila Solomon Klass. We apologize for this oversight. To clarify: students entering Form I will read:

- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, by Mark Twain,
- *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands*, by Susan Carol McCarthy, and
- *Soldier's Secret: The Story of Deborah Sampson*, by Sheila Solomon Klass

These stories will be an important part of English classes in the fall. Class discussions and an essay assignment will use these stories as touch points. Additionally, students entering Form I will also have a summer writing assignment corresponding to the book. (The assignment is listed below.)

Once again, the purpose of the writing assignments is to provide your new English teacher with a sample of your written work. *These are not graded assignments.* Form I students should bring their completed assignments with them on the first day of school.

Have a wonderful summer, and please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Philip S. Cox
Middle School Director

The Pingry School
Summer Reading: Writing Assignments
Students Entering Form I
Summer 2009

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain
ISBN: 978-0520235755

Throughout the novel, we are reminded that Huck Finn is an outsider with no ties to the life in the town. Tom, however, remains drawn to Huck. Why?

Assignment: In a well-written paragraph, discuss the similarities that exist between these two characters. Your paragraph should consist of no more than ten sentences. Be sure to include specific examples from the book to prove your point.

Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands by Susan Carol McCarthy
ISBN: 978-0553381030

This coming of age novel describes the upheaval of a family experience and how it abruptly ends the main character's sense of security. When Reese's friend, Marvin Cully, an African-American orange-picker who works for her father, is killed by the local Opalakee Klan, she realizes how much her liberal family stands out in opposition to the men with white sheets and guns.

Assignment: Write a ten-sentence book review. Be sure you state why you would recommend it as a great read.

Soldier's Secret: The Story of Deborah Sampson, by Sheila Solomon Klass
ISBN 10: 080508200X; ISBN 13: 978-0805082005.

Publisher's Weekly writes: "The real-life Deborah Sampson's experiences dressing as a man for two years to serve as a soldier during the Revolutionary War form the foundation of Klass's provocative historical novel. The story starts with a terrific hook: hospitalized with yellow fever, the soldier/narrator known as Robert Shurtliff pretends to be dead to evade examination by the nurses: "Being buried alive [was] a terrible fate, but preferable to being discovered," claims the narrator, who has yet to disclose Shurtliff's real identity. As the grave diggers fight over Shurtliff's boots, a nurse realizes her patient is still alive, leading to a doctor's discovery that the patient is female. Readers then learn that Sampson was a "give-away child," passed into indentured servitude because her mother was unable to support her. Finally freed, she still feels hampered by the stringent restrictions placed on women and begins to disguise herself as a man. At times Sampson comes across as self-absorbed; it's Klass's telling use of details that brings this story to life. Ages 12–16. (Mar.)"

Assignment: (A response to this book will be assigned around the first week of October, when students will be going on their class trip.)