

August 23, 2010

Dear SMA Parent or Guardian,

Reading is a central focus at SMA, and as we begin a new school year we would like to share some thoughts about reading with you.

Reading is a skill. The only way to get better at reading is to read—this holds true for excellent readers as well as reluctant readers. With this in mind, our goal for your son or daughter is to read independently a minimum of 15 pages a day during this school term. For the average student, an amount of 15 pages a day translates to approximately thirty minutes of reading every day. While many of our students already read this much or more for pleasure, we would like to motivate *all* of our students to read for fun and to select books that are of particular interest to them.

To help each cadet reach the 15 pages a day goal, most teachers have worked hard to develop their own classroom libraries. These libraries are available to your cadet for book checkout, as research supports that availability of books is a major motivating factor in getting students to read. Students who are surrounded by books at school and at home read more. Student who read more, read better, and we have found that having classroom libraries has dramatically increased the amount of reading our students do.

We want you to know that we are sensitive to having appropriate reading material in our classroom libraries. That said, what is considered “appropriate” may vary from one parent to another. Please be aware that the selections in our classroom libraries, just like any public and school library, range from elementary level to senior high-level reading material. All have been approved and recommended by the American Library Association, the International Reading Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English. We ask you throughout the year to review any books your child has chosen to read and assist in gauging appropriateness.

Rest assured that the books in my classroom library are never assigned. They are checked out on a voluntary basis only. Some students use the library often; others find books in the SMA library, public library, or elsewhere. Any student who uses my classroom library is asked to have you, as parent or guardian, sign this document indicating that the classroom library letter has been read and understood.

In addition, as part of our English I and English I Honors curriculum this year, we will be viewing several short films, movies, or documentaries (either DVD or VHS). Most of the full feature films and short clips are educational, and therefore not rated (NR). Some of these films are rated PG, others PG13. While I usually only show a handful of these movies or clips throughout the term, I have prepared a list (below) attempting to enumerate any movie that that *might* be considered for use by me during this school term. Please know that any movie used in my curriculum has been carefully reviewed by me for appropriate viewing and contains nothing more than the average person views on a typical television commercial during prime time viewing. These videos are used to reinforce what we are learning in class and are directly tied to the curriculum and related assignments, so it is important that students view them if at all possible. *A separate assignment will be provided for students whose parents do not approve of material with specific ratings, and there will be no penalty for opting not to participate.*

I would appreciate your reviewing the list of videos below and marking the appropriate boxes on the attached pages, signing and dating the forms, and returning them to me by the end of the week. *Please note that all movies with a rating greater than PG is accompanied by a separate consent and acknowledgment form related to the specific course in which your student is enrolled.* In the future, should I consider using a film that I have not listed below, and which has a PG-13 rating or above, I will also send home a separate acknowledgment form.

I greatly appreciate your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Major Gillotte

Videos for possible viewing in English I, English I Honors, Speech and Debate, and College Writing Readiness:

Great Cities of the Ancient World (NR)
The Trojan War (NR)
The Odyssey (NR)
Clash of the Titans (PG)
Jason and the Argonauts (NR)
Joseph Campbell's Power of the Myth Series (NR)
Literature in Performance (NR)
Poetry Hall of Fame (NR)
The Good Earth (NR)
Rebecca (NR)
Lost Horizon (NR or G)
Stand by Me (R)
The Naked Jungle (NR)
Grapes of Wrath (NR)
Five People you meet in Heaven (NR)
To Kill a Mockingbird (NR)
Romeo and Juliet (PG)
My Fellow Americans (PG-13)
I Have a Dream (excerpt from MLK speech) (NR)
IZZIT Educational Series videos (short topics) (NR)
Nuit et Brouillard (NR)
All but my life (NR)
The Lost Days (PG-13)
The Paper Chase (PG)
The Great Debaters (PG-13)
The Great Courses Lecture series (various topics) (NR)
Climate Change and Sunspots (NR)
The Trail of Tears (NR)
Iron Jawed Angels (NR)
Messages from Water (NR)
Crash (R)
Man of La Mancha (PG)

PARENTAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

____ I have read and understand the reading expectations and classroom library letter

My child has permission to view films, movies, and/or documentaries in class as checked below:

____ G

____ PG

____ PG-13

____ R

____ not rated (many television programs and documentaries fall into this category)

____ unrated educational films

____ I have gone over with my child the attached Course Fact Package and have initialed each relevant section

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date _____

Student Name: _____