

Blue Ridge School Summer Reading Program

June 1, 2010

Dear Parents,

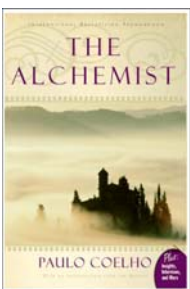
It is customary at this time of the year for the English Department to send you information about our summer reading program. By asking our students to read over the summer, we intend to accomplish two purposes. First, reading is a skill, and like any other, it can be maintained only by regular practice. So much of a student's success in academic pursuits depends on his ability to comprehend what he encounters from the written word. The books we have selected for this summer are not unduly challenging; rather they have been chosen because they are accessible to students who are college-bound as well as being informative – even entertaining. Second, the grade level specific book and the “all-school book” will be used by your son's teachers as a part of an interdisciplinary study throughout the school year.

The members of the English Department will, shortly after the beginning of the school year, offer academic rewards for those students who demonstrate that they have a basic familiarity with the book specifically assigned to your son's grade level. A simple reading of the book and a grasp of the main events described should suffice to yield rewards to be reflected in the first trimester's English grade. Our intention is to positively reinforce the summer reading experience.

The summer reading program is described below.

- Each student will be asked to read two books during the summer.
- The first book is **required of every boy**. It is the “**all-school book**,” which has been selected for the several themes that will be addressed by the various academic departments and in all school meetings at the beginning of the year.

The “all-school book” is The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho, which is available in paperback from Barnes and Noble, Waldenbooks, and B. Dalton Booksellers. It is published by Harper Collins Publishing for \$14.00. The book may also be available from your local public library. There is an unabridged audio book reading that is also available from leading bookstores or directly from either www.Audible.com or Harper Audio for those students who might benefit from listening to the book. Each student enrolled in the school for '09 – '10 was handed a copy before he left campus. Should you not be able to find a copy, the school will be happy to provide a paperback copy by mail. **Students enrolling in the school for the first time in the fall of 2010, will be provided by mail a copy of this book free of charge. It will be mailed to you as soon as the enrollment contract is returned.**



Paulo Coelho's enchanting novel has inspired a devoted following around the world. This story, dazzling in its simplicity and wisdom, is about an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of treasure buried in the Pyramids. Along the way he meets a Gypsy woman, a man who calls himself a king, and an Alchemist, all of whom point Santiago in the direction of his quest. No one knows what the treasure is, or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles along the way. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a meditation on the treasures found within. Lush, evocative, and deeply humane, the story of Santiago is an eternal testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

- The **second book** to read this summer will be **determined by the grade** into which your son will enter this fall.

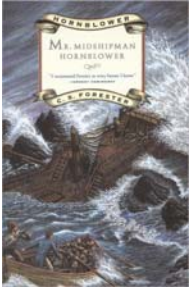


Freshmen are to read The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon by Stephen King from Scribner for \$7.99.

"The world had teeth and it could bite you with them anytime it wanted" is the first sentence of this extraordinary new novel.

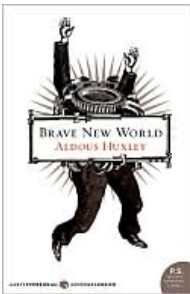
Eager to escape the bickering of her recently-divorced mother and her older brother, Pete, nine-year-old Trisha McFarland wanders off the main path of the Appalachian Trail between Maine and New Hampshire, where they have embarked on a weekend outing. As she tries to take a short-cut to catch up to her family, she strays further from the trail and deeper into the second-growth, untrodden woods, where she has no means of navigation and little defense against the elements.

Bruised, battered, and riddled with wasp and mosquito bites, Trisha elevates her spirits and preserves her connection with civilization by tuning into the radio station that broadcasts the Boston Red Sox games. She spends her first night alone, listening as her hero — #36, the closing pitcher Tom Gordon, whose jersey and baseball cap she wears on her hiking trip — strikes out the Yankees. She imagines him as her companion, and tunes into his games sporadically, as she braves treacherous slopes and fetid swamps, bacteria-ridden (and vomit-inducing) water, insatiable insects, extremes of New England weather, and many, many, lonely, uncomfortable, terrifying nights. Stalked by an unidentified creature that leaves slaughtered animals and mangled trees in its wake, Trisha bravely follows the river — and her instincts — in the hope of surviving. A classic tale that combines elements of adventure and spiritual awe, *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* engages our hearts and minds at the most primal level.



Sophomores are to read [Mr. Midshipman Hornblower](#) by C. S. Forester from Little Brown and Company paperbacks for \$11.19 dollars.

Horatio Hornblower was born in C.S. Forester's fertile imagination and became arguably more famous, certainly more personal, than Nelson, Cook and Drake combined. He fought in a dozen major campaigns during the Napoleonic wars. This story, which sets Hornblower on course at age 17, carries the intrepid young man another step forward in his career. In storm, in flame, in blood, and in love, the plot unfolds. A pleasure to read from beginning to end.



Juniors are to read [Brave New World](#) by Aldous Huxley from Harper Perennial Modern Classics for \$7.50. There is an unabridged audio book version available from BBC Audio downloadable from the Barnes and Noble website.

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley is a classic science fiction work that continues to be a significant warning to our society today. As the story moves from clinical detachment to the human interest of Bernard, the nonconformist, and John, the "Savage," readers are drawn more deeply into the plot. Finally, the reasoned tones of the Controller explain away all of John's arguments against the civilization, leading to John's death as he cannot reconcile his beliefs to theirs.



Seniors are to read [Billy Bathgate](#) by E. L. Doctorow from the Penguin Group for \$15.00.

In the poorest part of the Bronx, in the depths of the Depression, a teenage, fatherless street kid who will adopt the name Billy Bathgate comes to the attention of his idol, master gangster Dutch Schultz. Resourceful, brash, daring and brave, the narrator understands that morality will have no influence in lifting him from his poverty; by hitching his wagon to the mobster's star he can hope to provide his gentle, mad mother and himself with a way to rise out of their desolate existence.

Equally a rollicking adventure and a cautionary tale, both parable of the prodigal son and poignant coming-of-age story, it is mesmerizing reading that soars from the shocking first scene of a gangland execution through episodes of horror, hilarity and sudden, deepening insights. In his odyssey, Billy will learn about human nature as well as extortion and policy rackets; he will travel to the upstate rural community of Onandaga where Schultz will be brought to trial by special prosecutor Thomas E. Dewey; he will be exposed to the world of Park Avenue socialites; he will acquire a gun and better manners; he will discover that the "glamour and class" of a big-time racketeer is achieved through good business methods as well as violence; he will comprehend the seamy relationship between criminals and politicians, and he will fall in love.

I ask your assistance this summer in urging your son to complete the assigned readings so that he can begin the year successfully. Thank you for your effort and support.

Sincerely,

John B. Young
Chair of the English and Humanities Departments
Blue Ridge School