

To: Incoming Eighth Graders and parents

From: Mrs. Neal

Date: May 18, 2007

Re: Summer reading assignments

Summer reading is a vitally important way to keep your brain sharp and your comprehension skills tuned as you head toward high school. This year, we will be assigning summer reading that is specifically designed to enhance your Eighth Grade experience at St. Richard's. Only two books are required, but please take advantage of summer leisure time to read all sorts of literature – from Harry Potter to sports magazines to juicy romance novels.

The first required book is a historical biography, accompanied by a reading packet that is to be completed and handed in during the first week of school. Students may choose between **Thomas Jefferson – Architect of Democracy** by John B. Severance (Clarion Books) and **George Washington & the Founding of a Nation** by Albert Marrin (Dutton Children's Books). The Jefferson book is easy to find at libraries, bookstores, or amazon.com. The Washington book appears to be out of print, but you may purchase used copies from amazon.com booksellers for as little as \$3.

I have prepared a study packet to accompany both books that will make them easier for students to digest and appreciate. These can be downloaded from my History web page. Students should finish the biography by the first day of school and bring their completed packet in to me that week. It will be graded as their first History assignment of the 2007-08 school year.

For their second selection, students may choose between two autobiographies of former slaves: **Up from Slavery** by Booker T. Washington or the **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass**. Both are considered classics and appear on most recommended reading lists for Middle School students. Both are in print and available at the library and most bookstores. I have about 15 copies of each in my classroom so students are welcome to "check a book out" for the summer from me. Students will write a book review of their selections as our first English assignment of the school year. I will be providing explicit instructions on this after school starts; students should be sure to finish the book before their return to school.

I have chosen these books for the incoming Eighth Grade because I strongly believe that no student should leave Middle School without reading at least one Founding Father biography and one firsthand account of slavery and its effect on our nation.

I am excited about the educational journey we will take starting in August. If you have any questions about these books or the packet assignment, please contact me at school or at home. My home phone is 253-1382. My e-mail address is aneal@strichardsschool.org