To: Honors English II Students

Subject: Summer Reading & Essential Questions

Welcome to our *Honors English II* course! I anticipate a challenging, intellectually stimulating, and rewarding exploration of literature beginning with your required summer readings. During our course, we will explore several essential questions, designed to focus your study and ensure enduring understandings. You already have the knowledge and judgment to answer any and all of these questions based on prior experiences, opinions, and readings. However, these summer assignments will solidify, alter, or enhance your responses to these essential questions. Essential questions are provided for your consideration as you read the novels listed below. These questions serve as a preface for thematic based units in the upcoming year.

Essential Questions

*Under what circumstances does the truth set you free?*

*Are extreme means ever justified?*

*What does it mean to have integrity allowing us to overcome challenges?*

*Are divisions artificial? What defines/causes someone to be an outcast?*

*What does it mean to conform to the expectations of others? What are the benefits and costs of conformity?*

Summer Reading Selections:

* Peter Hamill’s ***Snow in August*** is set in 1940’s Brooklyn, New York. Michael Devlin, an Irish Catholic altar boy, who adores comic books and Captain Marvel, befriends Rabbi Hirsh. As they share exchanges about baseball and Yiddish, they form an unlikely alliance and deal with an insidious evil overtaking their community.
* Amy Tan’s ***The Joy Luck Club*** focuses on generational misunderstandings among four mothers and their daughters. Tan highlights the great disparity between the Chinese and American cultures.
* Susan Vreeland’s ***Girl in Hyacinth Blue*** moves from the present to the past linking the value of Vermeer’s painting to each of its custodians.
* Yann Martel’s ***Life of Pi*** recounts the harrowing journey of 16-year-old Pi Patel as he drifts on a raft in the Pacific for 227 days along with his only companion, Richard Parker, a Bengal Tiger.