

June 2020

Dear Convent 12th Grade Students and Families,

“A book is a dream you hold in your hands.” -Neil Gaiman

At Convent & Stuart Hall, we encourage dreams, both big and small. We want our students to exercise their imaginations, to travel to far off places, to be excited by everything that life has to offer — and we believe reading can take you there.

We have identified an essential text at each grade level. Additionally, we invite you to choose at least two others, either from the list we have curated in development of the literary theme for 12th grade — **“From the Personal to the Collective”** — or a work you self select.

The summer list is one we think and hope you will enjoy. We ask that you keep a journal of your reading. This is a great way to record your reading experiences and your thoughts on what you read and what it meant to you. Keep this journal over time as a personal artifact. You may be amazed to look back over your reading log and re-encounter the texts you discovered and the person you were when reading them.

Another resource for your summer reading and learning and a chapter within our ever-developing collection of *Cor Unum* resources is our [Anti-Racism Resource List](#). This is shared in support of continuing and deepening dialogue about topics that are challenging, often uncomfortable, and vital to the betterment of ourselves and our society. The [Essentials of Dialogue](#) from Generation Global have helped to guide our school community’s practice of creating safe and brave spaces from which to speak, listen and learn. This list contains multimedia resources for all ages.

Reading Prompts

Essential Summer Reading:

- [The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien](#)

These semi-autobiographical short stories detail the time O'Brien spent in the Vietnam War, the people he met, and the things he saw there.

Optional Summer Suggestions (please choose one or more):

- [Blindness by Jose Saramago](#)

This dystopia explores a town in which a mysterious and contagious pandemic strikes: unexplained blindness.

- [The Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan](#)

Family tragedy and history collide in this novel with two threads: Ruth in modern-day San Francisco supporting

her mother with dementia as well as the story of her mother's haunted childhood. (content warning: suicide)

- [*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz](#)

Oscar de León is obsessed with writing an epic work of science fiction *and* finding love; armed with grandiose ambitions and mediocre follow-through, will Oscar live out his dreams, or will his ambitions come to nought?

- [*Caucasia* by Danzy Senna](#)

In the 1970s, sisters Birdie and Cole are so close that they share their own language; when their parents separate them (light-skinned Birdie with their mother, darker-skinned Cole with their father and his girlfriend), Birdie knows that her only home is Cole, and she sets off, determined to reunite with her beloved sister.

- [*The Elephant Vanishes* by Haruki Murakami](#)

This tantalizing short story collection introduces readers to a girl who is 100% perfect, insomnia, lederhosen, and (of course) a vanishing elephant.

- [*Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi](#)

This historical novel follows the lives of two half-sisters and their descendants: one on a path that begins at a castle in luxury, the other that begins with enslavement at that very estate.

- [*The House of Names* by Colm Tóibín](#)

This novel retelling of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* brings revenge, family, and duty to life; what must a son do to avenge the murder of his father, especially when the murderer is his own mother?

- [*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* by August Wilson](#)

One of Wilson's 10 Pittsburgh Cycle plays, this dramatic work examines one ill-fated day in a recording studio as Ma Rainey and her band fight with their white producers, each other, and their own dreams.

- [*The Refugees* by Viet Thanh Nguyen](#)

This short story collection examines identity, immigration, and the ways in which our histories and our homes shape who we are.

- [*Salt to the Sea* by Ruta Sepetys](#)

In 1945, a group of survivors make the journey across Germany to reach a ship that could save them from the horrors of the war; once they reach it, is safety a guarantee?

- [*Slay* by Brittney Morris](#)

Kiera has created the coolest game of all time, one that uses Black cultural references for virtual duels; what happens when in-game action has real-world implications?

- [*The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen](#)

As Saigon falls in 1975, a South Vietnamese general flees to Los Angeles with a small group of supporters; unbeknownst to the general, one of the people he brought with him is watching him and reporting back to a

higher-up in the Viet Cong.

- [*Too Much Happiness* by Alice Munro](#)

These short stories pull readers into ten different worlds: how children can be cruel, a mother's grief, and the life of a mathematician.

- [*Your House Will Pay* by Steph Cha](#)

An act of violence between the Korean and Black communities in Los Angeles has reverberations 30 years later.

Writing Prompts for Summer Creativity:

#1–22 are suggested for Gr. K–3; #1–30 are suggestions for Gr. 4–12

“Pens and books are the weapons that defeat terrorism,” said Malala Yousafzai. Writers are historians and fortune tellers, entertainers and healers. Over the summer, and on behalf of the School’s commitment to helping you develop a strong, creative and unique voice, we would like you to **keep a handwritten journal of at least six entries** using these prompts or any other of your own. Each journal entry should be **at least a page long**. Write as much as you can about your topics. You can **fictionalize** your entries if you like - pretend to be someone else and write in their voice. You could write in the form of **poetry, song lyrics, or drama** as well. Be honest, be descriptive, be creative.

1. Write about your day from another person’s perspective. Choose a person with whom you’ve interacted. How do you think they’d see you? The day’s events?
2. Describe a stranger that you saw today. What did they look like? What do you think they’re like? What are they interested in? What do they hate?
3. Imagine that you get to meet a celebrity. Describe your interaction.
4. Write about a time you said something that you regretted.
5. Write about a time that someone said something to you that hurt you.
6. Write about something that you are proud of.
7. Choose an article out of the newspaper. Tape it into your journal. Write about it.
8. If you could live in any book, what book would it be? Why?
9. Write a review of a movie.
10. Write a review of a television show.
11. Pick a random book from your bookshelf. Then, open to a random page and pick a random sentence. Use that sentence as the first line of a story of your own.
12. Imagine that you are singing to yourself, when suddenly, the topic of the song comes true. Describe the scene.
13. Pick a formula you learned in math class. Imagine the story of the mathematician who discovered it. How?
14. Write your high school graduation speech.
15. Write about something from your childhood that you think changed you.
16. Write a story inspired by a recent dream that you had.
17. Write a new ending for your favorite book.
18. Write a poem, short story, or journal entry about a conversation that you’ve overheard.

19. Write a story inspired by one of your pet-peeves.
20. Write a story from the perspective of someone who does not have one of their major senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste).
21. Write about a time you kept a secret from someone else, or someone else kept a secret from you.
22. Write a story or journal entry about a photograph you have in your house. If you can, tape your photograph into your journal. You may also draw the photograph!
23. Interview a person in your life. Write a transcription of your interview. Try to ask them questions you do not already know the answer to!
24. Write a story inspired by a slogan for an advertising campaign.
25. Write a story inspired by a trending hashtag on Twitter or Instagram.
26. Read the newspaper. Write a poem or short story using a headline as your first line.
27. Use all of the following words in a piece of writing: bit, draw, flex, perilous, bubble, corner, pound, high, open, admonish.
28. You accidentally drink a potion that shrinks you down to two inches tall. Write a story about your day.
29. Pick a random word from the dictionary. Use this word as inspiration for a story.
30. Imagine you find a time traveling machine. Describe how you use it. Where do you go? What happens?

We wish you a healthy and happy summer and look forward to seeing you in the new school year.

On behalf of the Summer Reading Team,

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