



March 18, 2009

Dear Parents and Students:

It is once again time to think about the summer reading selections that will be used during the 2009-2010 school year. For this school year all students read one book that has been or will be used in each class. After some discussions with students and teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of the system we used this year, we are making a few changes.

During the summer and fall of 2009, students will read two books: *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd and *Three Cups of Tea : One Man's Mission to Promote Peace -- One School at a Time* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. *The Secret Life of Bees* will be assessed in each of the first semester classes, and *Three Cups of Tea : One Man's Mission to Promote Peace -- One School at a Time* will be assessed in each of the second semester classes, 2009-2010. The assessments in each class will count as 2% of the final grade. Of course, both books may be read during the summer if you choose, but the second book will not be addressed in classes until second semester.

Below are brief descriptions of the books.

### The Secret Life of Bees

Lily Owens, 14, is an emotionally abused white girl living with her cold, uncaring father on a peach farm in rural South Carolina. The memory of her mother, who was accidentally killed in Lily's presence when she was four, haunts her constantly. She has one of her mother's few possessions, a picture of a black Madonna with the words, Tiburon, South Carolina, written on the back. Lily's companion during her sad childhood has been Rosaleen, the black woman hired to care for her. Rosaleen, in a euphoric mood after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, goes to town to register to vote and insults one of the town's most racist residents. After she is beaten up and hospitalized, Lily decides to rescue her, and they go to Tiburon to search for memories of her mother. There they are taken in by three black sisters

who are beekeepers producing a line of honey with the Black Madonna label. While racial tensions simmer around them, the women help Lily accept her loss and learn the power of forgiveness. There is a wonderful sense of the strength of female friendship and love throughout the story.—*Penny Stevens, Andover College, Portland, ME --Penny Stevens (Reviewed May 1, 2002) (School Library Journal, vol 48, issue 5, p179)*

### Three Cups of Tea

One man's campaign to build schools in the most dangerous, remote, and anti-American reaches of Asia: in 1993 Greg Mortenson was an American mountain-climbing bum wandering emaciated and lost through Pakistan's Karakoram. After he was taken in and nursed back to health by the people of a Pakistani village, he promised to return one day and build them a school. From that rash, earnest promise grew one of the most incredible humanitarian campaigns of our time--Mortenson's one-man mission to counteract extremism by building schools, especially for girls, throughout the breeding ground of the Taliban. In a region where Americans are often feared and hated, he has survived kidnapping, fatwas issued by enraged mullahs, death threats, and wrenching separations from his wife and children. But his success speaks for itself--at last count, his Central Asia Institute had built fifty-five schools. (Saint Joseph Academy Online Catalog)

If a student wants to have her own copy to read, the Saint Joseph Academy Book Club will be selling copies of the book from March 23 to April 3, 2009, and also at incoming freshmen registration on March 21, 2009. Owning copies of the books may make it easier for students to prepare for the assessments they will have in classes, but students do not have to purchase copies of the books if they do not wish to; many copies are available at local public libraries. We encourage parents to read the books and discuss them with their daughters, and we hope that students and parents will find the books thought-provoking and inspiring. Parents may contact Mrs. Menard if they have any questions or concerns at 216-251-6788.

We are also including a reading guide with some suggestions that can be used in order to prepare for the assessments and discussions in the classes next school year.

Sincerely,

Leanne Gilgenbach, Librarian

Rebecca Synk, Teacher-Librarian

Michelle Kelly-Flanagan, English Department Chairperson