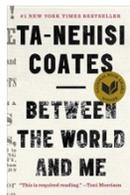
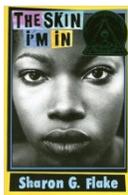
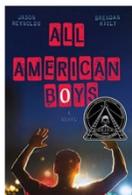


Vermont Commons School Summer Reading 2016



Dear Vermont Commons School Community,

We are pleased to announce the selection of the 2016 Common Texts! This year, students, faculty, and staff will be reading Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* (9th through 12th grade), and either Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's *All-American Boys* or Sharon G. Flake's *The Skin I'm In* (6th through 8th grade). The theme of this year's Common Text Day is race in contemporary America, and each of these three books considers this issue in an original way.

Designated "required reading" by Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* is a series of letters from an African American man to his adolescent son. Coates' moving text is part memoir, part unflinching examination of the way the construct of race functions in America. It leaves us rethinking the history of our country that we have learned, as well as considering ideas of race and privilege.

For middle schoolers, we have two titles from which we'll ask families to choose. This was a tough call for us, because while *All American Boys* is an impactful young adult novel, we want to give parents a warning about its language and content. It is the story of a black boy who is badly beaten by a white policeman. The novel is intended for a teenage audience, and while we think it is a concrete introduction to racism in America, we respect that many families may not want their middle schoolers to encounter such mature language. The biggest content warning is that the protagonists are high school boys who talk about going to parties (not in too many details, just mentioned) and swear frequently. There isn't much violence in the novel, aside from the initial incident of brutality, but language is our biggest concern. The alternative novel, *The Skin I'm In*, tells the story of Maleeka, whose dark skin is just another reason she stands out and gets taunted at her middle school. This text illuminates the ways we separate ourselves by physical appearance. Both books will prepare your child for the discussions on Common Text Day, which will take place in October.

When school begins in late August, sixth through eleventh grade students will have three assignments associated with their summer reading: a quiz on the Common Text, a letter about a text to their teacher, and an author imitation. The assignments are described in more detail below. Seniors will have work to complete for their Single Author Study course, and will receive a separate letter from Jennifer Cohen detailing these assignments.

Please feel free to email us with any questions. Enjoy your summer reading!

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Summer 2016 Reading Assignments Grades 6 – 12

Seniors:

An author imitation will be due on the first day of classes. In this assignment, students should try to approximate the voice and style of the author chosen for Single Author Study. Using similar literary devices as the author, students should compose a “deleted scene,” a scene that occurs before the book begins, or a scene that occurs after the ending (900 words min. 75 pts). Students must also include a 300 word reflection that identifies which literary devices/techniques they used (25 pts). Please include a photocopied page of the author’s work so that I can compare your writing to the author’s.

Grades 6-11:

In addition to the common text, we ask students in grades 6-11 to read two books from the 2016 Summer Reading Lists. The following are the assignments you will be responsible for when school begins in the fall.

1. **A letter**, sent by e-mail, by August 24th, to your Language Arts teacher, that answers the following questions. Extra credit if you send the letter by August 17th.
 - A. What did you do this summer? (minimum 100 words)
 - B. What were the two books, other than the common text, that you read this summer? For each book, state the title, the author, whether or not you enjoyed the book, and describe a memorable scene. We will engage you in a discussion about your books. (minimum of 200 words for each book)
 - C. What are specific ways that you learn best? Is there anything you can tell us about your learning style that would help us effectively engage you in the learning process? What are your hopes for LA class next year? (minimum 100 words)

Your letter will be evaluated on your carefully considered responses to these questions.

2. **A quiz or graded discussion on the Common Text** during the first three weeks of school.
3. **An author imitation** that will be due on the first day of classes. In this assignment, students should try to approximate the voice and style of the author of one book from the Summer Reading List. Using similar literary devices as the author, students should compose a “deleted scene,” a scene that occurs before the book begins, or a scene that occurs after the ending (75 pts). After writing the imitation, students must include a half page reflection that identifies which literary devices they used (25 pts). Please include a

photocopied page of the author's work so that your teacher can compare your writing to the author's. Below are some options to consider while writing your imitation. The imitation should at least 600 words, and the reflection should be at least 200 words.

- Point of view (1st person or 3rd person). From what perspective is this story being told?
- Tense (past or present). Is the action unfolding in the moment, or is the story being told after the fact, perhaps many years later?
- The length of your author's sentences, as well as his or her word choice. Does this author write long sentences with many adjectives? Short, clipped sentences? Both?
- Does your author use dialogue? Internal monologue?