

June 2020

Dear Vermont Commons School Community,

We are excited to announce the Common Texts for 2020! This year, students and faculty will read one text about education and any two texts from provided lists. The pandemic challenged us to reconsider education. How do we define it? What new forms can we create? How do high and low income communities experience education differently? How can we build empathy and reconsider who learns from whom? How can we help each other?

Common Text Assignment One

Sixth and Seventh will read *The Benefits of Being an Octopus*.

Eighth and Ninth will read *Return to Sender*.

Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth will read *Educated*.



Respond to your book in a 300-word personal reflection. You may use “I.” You can use the following questions to spark your thinking: How do different characters learn? How do characters find the grit to learn? What does grit look like? How did this book relate to you and your thoughts about education due to the pandemic? How does home help some students excel in school? How does home present a challenge for others to succeed in school? You must have at least one short quotation with a page number. Due to your English teacher on the first day of classes.

In the first week of classes, we will have a reading-group lunch. Sitting at small tables, we will discuss the Common Text of your group. Please bring your copy of the book and quotations to share.

Assignment Two

Grades 6-11: Read any two texts from the [VCS list](#) or the [Piedmont Unified School's list](#). The VCS list is divided into middle school fiction and non-fiction, and high school fiction and non-fiction. During the first week of classes, students will take quizzes on their two books..

Seniors will be expected to read at least two novels from their chosen author, in preparation for Single Author Study.

Last Thoughts:

Contact either Ryan Houck, Jennifer Cohen, or Kathryn McDermott if you would like to read a book that is not on the lists. Students who are accepted to VCS late in the summer, please contact Ryan Houck, Jennifer Cohen, or Kathryn McDermott for an explanation of what will be required.

Please feel free to email us with any questions, and enjoy your summer reading.

The VCS English Department

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