

Summer Reading for 2011-2012 Eighth-grade Students

Please read the following books this summer and be ready to discuss them upon return to school in August. The corresponding assignments are due on the first day of school.

- *A Step from Heaven* by An Na:

ISBN-10: 0142500275 **ISBN-13:** 978-014250027

A Step from Heaven details the difficulties faced by a family that emigrates from Korea to the United States. The story is narrated by the family's eldest daughter, Young Ju, who recounts her family's attempt to navigate a brand new culture. Young Ju's parents struggle with language barriers as they work multiple jobs at minimum wages. In order to cope, her father descends into alcoholism and is abusive towards his wife and children. Young Ju and her brother struggle as well as they try to negotiate the difficulties of becoming Americanized while maintaining their traditional roles at home. According to Susan Chira of *The New York Times*, Young Ju is "feisty, observant, empathetic and resourceful" and her "struggle to endure, and finally to rebel, makes a book full of heartbreaking scenes become, in the end, a story of triumph."

Assignment: Please download and complete the assignment from smnet.org

- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon:

ISBN-10: 9781400032716 **ISBN-13:** 978-1400032716

This novel is a coming of age story/murder mystery told from the perspective of a fifteen year old boy who has high functioning autism. The story starts out with the boy, Christopher, making a gruesome discovery: the neighbor's dog, Wellington, has been murdered with a pitchfork. Determined to find the killer, Christopher starts an investigation where he interviews each of the surrounding neighbors. These interviews ultimately lead Christopher to discover some surprising facts, not just about Wellington, but about Christopher's family as well. As a result of this new discovery, Christopher embarks on a harrowing journey to London where he attempts to reunite with a long lost relative.

Assignments:

1. As you read **each chapter** UNDERLINE YOUR FAVORITE PASSAGE (a few lines; a short paragraph) IN YOUR TEXT. Be prepared to share your markings on the first day of school.
2. One aspect of autism that Christopher struggles with is his sensitivity to outside stimuli. When placed in a new situation, Christopher is so observant that he processes and absorbs outside stimuli simultaneously. Your assignment is to find a busy place (grocery store, shopping mall, a busy street, a popular restaurant, etc.) and write two paragraphs from Christopher's point of view. Pretend you are Christopher. How would you experience this place? How many details would you notice all at once? How would you feel? How would you try to cope with the situation?