**September 2013**

Dear Parents,

I’m really excited to be your child’s Reading Skills teacher for the next 10 weeks. Every term the teachers will rotate groups. The reading groups were made using two comprehension and two vocabulary assessments taken by each student (will be shared at Conference time). Your child is in my Literature Circles reading group due to solid scores on both assessments. A third and crucial factor for success in my class is work ethic/organization. Please expect your child to have reading and writing schoolwork almost every evening including some weekends. This is not busy work by any means, but creative and critical thinking assignments. If you anticipate that this will be too challenging for you child please contact me ASAP and a different reading group assignment can be made.

Here are a few things I think are important to let you know about:

• My goal is to “turn things up a notch” and really challenge your child. Students who work hard and stay on top of their assignments will do fine. Students unable to complete assignments (this is rare) or are unwilling to put forth the effort might be moved to a different reading group. This was an issue for a few students last year.

I will send home progress reports often so this is does not come as a surprise, but the final responsibility to complete assignments rests with your child. **Please contact me now if you have concerns or reservations about these expectations.**

• Your child will be part of a **Literature Circl**e discussion group. It’s important that students complete their assigned schoolwork and nightly reading as each student plays a vital role in making the discussions successful. Students are expected to behave appropriately in their Lit Circle groups.

• Periodically I will assign newspaper and/or magazine articles with reflection questions attached. I always encourage students to share these articles with their parents hoping it spurs further discussion. My goal is to widen and broaden your child’s understanding of the world while also developing their critical thinking skills.

• Periodically I will also assign reading questions in addition to the daily Literature Circle roles. The due dates will be clear and some class time will be provided for students to complete.

\*\*\*\*\*Lost articles or discussion questions **will not be replaced** and late assignments **will** earn half points (unless it’s due to illness).

The three books I’m planning on using this term are Firegirl by Tony Abbot, Lions of Little Rock by Kristin Levine and Elephant Run, by Roland Smith. I’ve used both in the past and believe they are super books.

Firegirl is about a boy who befriends a badly burned girl who is new to his private school. Lots of good themes including friendship, family, and the social politics in school. Lions of Little Rock is set in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1958 a year after the integration of public schools. Elephant Run is set in Burma at the beginning of W.W.II. A boy is sent from England to get away from the German Blitzkrieg only to deal with the Japanese occupation of his father’s lumber plantation.

For all our books we’ll spend some time studying background information. As a rule of thumb I always refer students to speak to their parents about sensitive material (we will not study the Holocaust, for example). Feel free to contact me with questions, or concerns. Please borrow and preview these 3 books.

Sincerely,

Brian Gulka [gulka@4j.lane.edu](mailto:gulka@4j.lane.edu)

Please sign and return (this is your child’s first assignment)

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I have read and understand the expectations for Reading Skills:

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If you would like email updates, please **clearly** write your email address:

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Comments: