

June 2017

Dear Fifth Graders and Parents,

This summer you are being asked to read *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo as your required reading book. You will be doing some classroom activities related to this book during the first two weeks of school.

We also want you to read for pleasure this summer and keep track of what you read on the attached Reading Log. You must read a minimum of 2 books from the list; although you may read more. You will bring in your completed reading log on the first day of school. Your teacher will randomly pick a book or two from your reading log and ask you to write a summary about the book(s) she chooses.

This is the list of recommended books for incoming 5th Graders:

*A Dog's Life*  
*Number the Stars*  
*Bud, Not Buddy*  
*Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson*  
*Calico Bush*  
*Immigrant Kids*  
*Chasing Lincoln's Killer*  
*The Great Gilly Hopkins*  
*Maniac McGee*  
*The Hero Two Doors Down*  
*Nelson Mandela "No Easy Walk to Freedom"*  
*Stargirl*  
*Pax*  
*One Crazy Summer*  
*Save Me a Seat*  
*Soar*

Ann M. Martin  
Lois Lowry  
Christopher Paul Curtis  
Barry Denenberg  
Rachel Field  
Russell Freedman  
James L. Swanson  
Katherine Paterson  
Jerry Spinelli  
Sharon Robinson  
Barry Denenberg  
Jerry Spinelli  
Sara Pennypacker  
Rita Williams-Garcia  
Sara Weeks/Gita Varadarajan  
Joan Bauer

Intermediate Language Arts Department



**Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.**

—Groucho Marx

The love, habit, and ease of reading can be actively nurtured both at home and at school. During summer -- a time when many students regress in their academic abilities -- families can encourage reading in many creative ways. Consider the ratio of "screen time" to "page time," perhaps making one contingent on the other. The public library runs summer reading programs and carries a near-endless supply of great selections. If you're looking for recommendations online, one place to start is here: <https://www.commonensemedia.org/lists/50-books-all-kids-should-read-before-theyre-12>

Sadly, only one in five 17-year-olds reads for pleasure. There are countless reasons to make reading a daily habit, especially for children. Here are the St. Michael's Language Arts Team's Top Ten:

- 1) **SKILL:** Reading volume (whether measured in pages or minutes) has been shown to be the single best predictor of reading proficiency and fluency, particularly through independent reading done outside school. Reading just about *anything* has value: novels, picture books, newspaper articles, cookbooks, instruction manuals, atlases, reference books. Just read!
- 2) **EMPATHY:** Reading rich literary fiction (rather than pop fiction or nonfiction) increases empathy, or the ability to "read" the feelings of others, according to an article in *Science*.
- 3) **FOCUS:** Literature trains brains -- including those of young children listening to bedtime books -- to attend patiently to the beginning, middle, and end of stories. One's patience and focus can be exercised and improved through practice and repetition, much like weight training. It's vital these days, with declining attention spans seen in people of all ages.
- 4) **IMAGINATION:** Not surprisingly, many of the most inspiring and successful writers are also voracious readers. As Stephen King has said, "Books are a uniquely portable magic."
- 5) **VOCABULARY:** Children's books introduce kids to 50 percent more words than television. A child who reads 10 minutes per day reads about 650,000 words per year; a child who reads 60 minutes a day encounters about 4 million words, according to *Reading Research Quarterly*. The novel *Little Women* alone has more vocabulary than three years' worth of basal readers!
- 6) **KNOWLEDGE:** Even the most breezy of summer books can teach kids about history, science, geography, sports, the arts, and more, while igniting readers' curiosity about the world. Stock your shelves, for children with access to large numbers of books at home receive the equivalent of three extra years of schooling by the time they graduate, according to reading expert Richard Allington.
- 7) **ACHIEVEMENT:** Starting at a very early age, routine reading leads to academic success across the curriculum, even in areas not associated with reading comprehension.
- 8) **RELAXATION:** According to the University of Sussex, reading relieves stress even better than music, taking a walk, or sipping tea or coffee. Screen time at night has the opposite effect.
- 9) **MEMORY:** Brainy hobbies like reading can stave off memory loss or even Alzheimer's. Subjects in a study published in *Brain Connectivity* displayed heightened neural connectivity in two regions of the brain even five days after completing a novel.
- 10) **JOY:** No studies need be cited. A love of reading is not just a means but an end unto itself!

-St. Michael's Language Arts Department