Dear Parent/Guardian:

A central goal of the English department is to establish a reading habit in the busy lives of our students. Simply put, children who read the at home daily surpass the educational success of their peers who do not read at home--*even those who are hard-working, capable students.* Our hope is that through independent reading we will help students develop confidence, build vocabulary, reading fluency and stamina, and improve writing. It is our hope that we can work together with parents to ignite and sustain the pleasure and passion of young readers as well as to instill a comfortable confidence in students as they build stamina for reading in preparation for college and career. Because reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college and is often required in any workforce training program, we will exercise those muscles in preparation for the coming years.

Independent reading will be based on student choice, either through an award-winning book list, through a student’s own research, or through recommendations made by fellow students. By choosing a book to read, students are more likely to read rather than search the internet for summaries. By choosing a book to read, students can see that a good book is more than an assignment. It can open minds and provide experiences that they would otherwise never come to know: “A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies...The man who never reads lives only one” (George R.R. Martin).

The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see through different eyes- to live different lives. One of the benefits of reading is that it allows us to confront our worst fears and live through them. We would all rather believe that such tragedies will not happen to us, and, if they have happened to us, we may not want to live through the details in a book. Students will not be forced to read something they are not comfortable with in an independent reading assignment, but they may choose a book that contains intense subject matter and that challenges how they view the world. With the volume of books available, we will not know the details of every book students read this year or even every book recommended by teachers and students within the classroom walls. It is important to know that we will not place a tight filter on what is read independently. What we want is to nurture each student’s willingness to read- for pleasure, for knowledge, for understanding- so that they choose to read beyond assigned reading.

Because we respect your role as parents and the traditions you hold sacred, we understand your right to more closely monitor your child’s choices this year. You should feel free to contact the teacher to discuss any boundaries you may have set for your child’s reading choices, but please know that the teacher will not be able to control what students choose to read. We hope that you can discuss any concerns about the content and foster a deeper understanding of an author’s purpose. If you want to know more about a book that your child is reading, please consult the School Library Journal website, The American Library Association website, Barnes and Noble’s website, or contact your child’s teacher, and discuss what they are reading.

If you are so inclined, please consider donating books you no longer need to our classroom libraries. Our classroom benefits from castoffs. Better yet, schedule a visit with your child’s teacher so that you can share a book with us. We welcome guest speakers who seek to share their passion for reading. Thank you for your support.

Respectfully,

ELAR Teacher

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I have read and agree to the contents of this letter.

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Student Reader’s Name (please print) Parent’s Name (print):

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Parent’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date