

# Summer Reading Project

## Morris County School of Technology Class of 2014

We are excited to welcome you into our classrooms in September and hope that you will enjoy your summer reading assignment. As part of the World Literature course during freshman year, you will read books from different parts of the world, written by authors who have experienced different walks of life. Transitioning to high school can be challenging at times, but can be made easier by reading about those that have already overcome challenges in their own lives. Your reading selections for this year's assignment provides you an opportunity to reflect on success in the face of adversity.

### Reading Assignment

Analyzing and discussing literature is a key component of the English classes at Morris County School of Technology and we hope that this assignment will allow you to do just that. Choose a novel from the following list below and spend your summer actively engaging with the text. Active reading is an important skill and we encourage note-taking while reading. Notes should include comments on literary elements such as setting, characters, point of view, plot, mood, theme, motive, conflict, and symbolism, as well as points that intrigue, confuse, or inspire you. Mark up your book with comments, record them on sticky notes and place them accordingly in the text, or keep a reading journal that will allow you to reflect on what you have read.

Aside from the novel, your peer mentor will select two academy related journals for you to read and discuss with him/her and other freshmen in your academy via a virtual blog. These journals will provide you with an inside look into the academy you have chosen to study.

During the first two weeks of school your English teacher will provide you with an opportunity to discuss the readings you have completed, and to reflect upon them in a written format. You will be permitted to use both the novel and any notes you have taken to help you recall details. The best way to increase your understanding of a novel, or other reading, is to discuss it. As we are not meeting face-to-face over the summer, blogging will provide a forum for discussion.

### Novel Selections

Choose one of the following novels:

1. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, by William Kamkwamba

"Though he was not in a classroom, William continued to think, learn—and dream. Armed with curiosity, determination, and a library book he discovered in a nearby library, he embarked on a daring plan—to build a windmill that could bring his family the electricity only two percent of Malawians could afford. Using scrap metal, tractor parts, and blue-gum trees, William forged a crude yet working windmill, an unlikely hand-built contraption that would successfully power four light bulbs and two radios in his family's compound. Soon, news of his invention spread, attracting interest and offers of help from around the world. Not only did William return to school but he and was offered the opportunity to visit wind farms in the United States, much like the ones he hopes to build across Africa.

A moving tale of one boy's struggle to create a better life, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* is William's amazing story—a journey that offers hope for the lives of other Africans—and the whole world, irrefutably demonstrating that one individual can make a difference."

2. *October Sky*, by Homer Hickam, Jr.

"It was 1957, the year *Sputnik* raced across the Appalachian sky, and the small town of Coalwood, West Virginia, was slowly dying. Faced with an uncertain future, Homer Hickam nurtured a dream: to send rockets into outer space. The introspective son of the mine's superintendent and a mother determined to get him out of Coalwood forever, Homer fell in with a group of misfits who learned not only how to turn scraps of metal into sophisticated rockets, but how to sustain their hope in a town that swallowed its men alive. As the boys began to light up the starry skies with their flaming projectiles and dreams of glory, Coalwood, and the Hickams, would never be the same" (New York, Dell).

3. *Swimming to Antarctica: Tales of a Long-Distance Swimmer*, by Lynne Cox

"At age sixteen, legendary swimmer Lynne Cox reached her lifetime goal of setting a new world record for an English Channel swim. So she set her goals even higher: She became the first to swim the Strait of Magellan, narrowly escaped a shark attack off the Cape of Good Hope, and was cheered across the twenty-mile Cook Strait of New Zealand by dolphins. Her daring eventually led her to the thirty-eight degree waters of the Bering Strait, which she crossed in her usual outfit – just a swimsuit, cap, and goggles. She even swam a mile in the iceberg-choked seas of the Antarctic. With a poet's eye for detail, Cox shares the beauty of her time in the water in this new classic of sports memoir, now illustrated with photos and maps throughout" (New York, Harcourt Inc.).

4. *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster*, by John Krakauer

"This is the terrifying story of what really happened that fateful day at the top of the world, during what would be the deadliest season in the history of Everest. In this harrowing yet breathtaking narrative, Krakauer takes the reader along with his ill-fated expedition, step by precarious step, from Kathmandu to the mountain's pinnacle where, plagued by a combination of hubris, greed, poor judgement, and plain bad luck, they would fall prey to the mountain's unpredictable fury (New York, Anchor Books).

5. *Life Is So Good*, by George Dawson and Richard Glaubman

" In this remarkable book, George Dawson, a 103-year-old slave's grandson who learned to read at age 98, reflects on his life and offers valuable lessons in living and a fresh, firsthand view of American during the twentieth century. Richard Galubman captures Dawson's irresistible voice and view of the world, offering insights into humanity, history, hardships, and happiness. From segregation and civil rights, to the wars and the presidents, to defining moments in history, George Dawson's description and assessment of the last century inspire readers with the message that- through it all-has sustained him: 'Life is so good. I do believe it's getting better.' " (New York, Penguin Books).

### Blogging Assignment

As you read the novel and journal articles, join a blog with other students from your academy to discuss pertinent issues raised by the readings. By the end of this week, you will receive an email with an invitation to join a blog at [www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com). Log-on to express your thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and to answer questions raised as you read the texts. Here you have an opportunity to explore topics from the texts, make

connections to your life and the outside world, and most importantly, create a space for your group to interact with and learn from each other.

Here are some ideas:

- Post your thoughts and comments on sections of the text
- Pose questions to your “blog-mates” about the reading
- Comment and respond to posts made by your “blog-mates” – engage in conversations!
- Post links to images, YouTube videos, and articles or websites that connect to the novel and comment on their relevance

If you need help getting the conversation started refer to the questions attached.

### **Conversation Starters:**

This book was/was not emotionally involving because . . .

I would/would not read a sequel to this book because . . .

I would/would not make this book into a movie because . . .

The main piece of advice I would give to [name character] is . . .

This book would have been much better if . . .

This book has wide/limited audience appeal because . . .

One aspect of this writer’s style that (I like/don’t like) is . . . because . . .

This book will/will not be read twenty years from now because . . .

The biggest question I have about this book is . . .

My favorite scene in this book is . . . because . . .

I was really confused by . . . in this book, because . . .

The most controversial idea in this book is . . . because . . .

I do/do not think that this book is of interest to teenagers because . . .

The most important line or passage in this book is . . . because . . .

The idea that made the biggest impression on me in this book is . . .

The idea I most disagreed with in this book is . . . because . . .

My favorite character in this book is . . . because . . .

I would/would not recommend this book to other readers because . . .

If I could ask the author a question about this book, I’d ask . . .