

"The best of a book is not the thought which it contains, but the thought which it suggests;  
just as the charm of music dwells not in the tones but in the echoes of our hearts."

*John Greenleaf Whittier*

Summer 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Secaucus Middle and High Schools are introducing a new summer reading program for the 2010-2011 school year. Our teachers strongly believe that reading is an essential component in helping our students to think critically and creatively. Reading instills in them a rich vocabulary, gives them food for thought, and encourages them to seek knowledge beyond the pages of books. When reading a class novel, students experience the sharing of unique ideas and perspectives with their classmates.

With that in mind, each grade/class will be assigned one novel to read and respond to over the summer vacation. It is our hope that by having students read the same book, we can begin the new school year in a more unified way. All the books that have been chosen can be found at any library or bookstore in paperback form or ordered online. Students will be responsible for completing the novel guide that corresponds to their assigned novel (see reverse), and should be prepared for class discussions about the book when they return to school in the September. We also encourage students to read books this summer that appeal to their own individual interests, and look forward to discussing the assigned books when we see them in September.

Sincerely,

Deidre Ertle

Principal

Secaucus High School

Robert Daniello

Acting Principal

Secaucus Middle School

Christine Candela

Summer Reading Chair

English Department Facilitator

*Life of Pi*  
By Yann Martel

If you have English in the Fall semester, this assignment is due to your English teacher on September 15, 2010. If you have English in the Spring semester, you will return this assignment on September 15, 2010 to the English department. Listen for specific announcements.

**Section I – Characters**

On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph description for each character. In this novel, you will soon realize that animals, as well as people, serve as important characters.

**Section II – Quotations**

During the course of your reading the book, keep a double entry journal. On the left hand side of the page, write or type the quotations you have selected for analysis, and to the right of the quote respond to your selection. Two examples are found below:

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| 1. “The blue sharks were...the most attractive, sleek and slender, with small mouths and discreet gills. Their backs were a rich ultramarine and their stomachs snow white, colours that vanished to grey or black when they were at any depth, but which close to the surface sparkled with brilliance.” | 1. The imagery is vivid and allows the reader to experience what the character experiences out on the vast sea which is teeming with sharks – beautiful, but dangerous, too. |
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(Note: in the above example, some of the original quotation has been omitted, which is shown with the use of the ellipses.)

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| 2. “From that day onwards I felt my mastery was no longer in question...I was still scared of Richard Parker, but only when it was necessary.” | 2. The reader can see the character gaining confidence in his own survivor skills. But are they enough to save him? |
|--|---|

(Note: in the above example, the reader comment includes curiosity and speculation about the future events of the book. It is always a good reading strategy to try and make predictions as you go along.)

Your journal, when it is complete, will look like the above examples—quotations on the left, and reader response on the right. Suggested amount of quotes are a minimum of 20; however, you are encouraged to choose as many as you would like. Demonstrate a full interaction with the book.

**Section III – Themes**

Choose from among the following questions, and write ONE analytical literary essay, in which you consider one of the book’s thematic concerns. The essay should be a minimum of four paragraphs.

1. What did Pi lose during his dramatic life experience at sea? What does he gain?
2. What are Pi’s strategies for dealing with Richard Parker and what do they teach us about confronting the fearsome creatures in our lives?
3. How are Pi and Richard Parker both enemies and allies?
4. How are three distinct religions, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, all interwoven in this story?
5. Which of Pi’s “stories” do you believe and why?

\*\*Any word you do not understand in the above assignment, you are expected to look it up in the dictionary.