

May 2016

Dear Rising Eighth Grade Families,

It probably feels odd to see yourselves officially hailed by this particular nomenclature, but you are now the parents of the top grade of the Hathaway Brown Middle School. Another fabulous year of Middle School beckons after a summer of relaxation and reading.

The girls are expected to read a total of four books over the summer; obviously we encourage them to read more, but four is the minimum. One of these, Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*, is a required text that will provide the basis for the introductory unit in English this fall, for it is closely tied to the themes that the girls will be exploring in eighth grade English. *The Secret Life of Bees* recounts the life of fourteen year old Lily Owen. Fleeing a racial brawl in 1960's South Carolina, Lily and Rosaleen, her African-American housekeeper, find shelter in nearby Tiburon with three bee-keeping sisters. As she grows accustomed to living within the confines of racial and gender inequality, Lily learns the truth about her mother's past and the transforming power of love. Because your daughters will have to demonstrate a fairly in-depth knowledge of this book, we encourage them to read it carefully in August, so that their recollections will be fresh when school begins.

The other required book, a new choice for this year, is *Chasing Lincoln's Killer* by James L. Swanson. As described by Scholastic Press, this non-fiction narrative draws on rare archival material, obscure trial manuscripts, and interviews with relatives of the conspirators and the manhunters to create a fast-paced thriller about the pursuit and capture of John Wilkes Booth. *School Library Journal* adds "...the rich details and suspense are ever present. Excellent black-and-white illustrations complement the text. Readers will be engrossed by the almost hour-by-hour search and by the many people who encountered the killer as he tried to escape." A tale of intrigue and an engrossing mystery, the book will serve as an exciting introduction to the eighth grade class on American history.

Finally, we also ask that the girls read at least two additional books from the Hathaway Brown Middle School Library Summer Reading List found at www.hb.edu/page.cfm?p=1286. It is a terrific list that offers a variety of books designed to appeal to any level of reader. The girls may read these choice books at their own pace throughout the summer, but they need to complete the online component **before August 22** because school passwords will be reset before the first day of school. They should **not** complete this task for the two required novels, however.

To access the online activities for her two choice books, your daughter must first select "Haiku Login" from the Quicklinks tab on the www.hb.edu homepage. Once she arrives at the login page, she should sign in using her Google Apps account. She then will be prompted to type in her username and password. If your daughter is a returning HB student, she already has a username and password. If she is an incoming student, her login information will be forthcoming. Once she has logged into the Haiku Learning site successfully, she needs to select the "Incoming Eighth Grade" page located to the left of the central content block. Here, she will see the discussion forum we have designed. She will notice two questions, and she is to answer one question per choice book. We suggest she select which question best fits each book she has read.

Following the guidelines online, she then clicks on the first question to which she would like to respond. If she would like to read the full instructions, she needs to select "more..." after the initial prompt. Once she is ready to write, she will want to select "+New Post" in the upper left-hand corner. In the "Subject" box, she needs to enter the title and author of the appropriate choice book. In the remaining text box, she is to write



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her clear, concise, and grammatically correct response to the question to her best ability. If she is satisfied with her entry, she may select “Post.” If she would like to save it and return to post it later, she may select “Save as Draft.” Once she has written her entry for that question, she is welcome to reply to her classmates’ responses as she sees fit. Her English teacher will periodically read and respond to posts throughout the summer, and she looks forward to engaging with your daughter and her classmates through Haiku Learning before we officially begin the school year. **Please do note, however, that the Haiku pages will not go live until June 30.**

We hope that your summer will bring you and your family hours of recreational reading.

Sincerely,

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