



SUMMER LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Pope John Paul II High School

2010



This year's summer learning will center around the theme of **character**.

A person's character consists of the way they conduct themselves, the thoughts they think, and the set of ideas and beliefs they possess. Our character shapes both how we respond to situations and individuals. Times of struggle and adversity often reveal people's character, for better or worse.

The 2010 Summer Learning Experience offers you the chance to examine the character of several different individuals – both fictional and “real.” Through thoughtful engagement with these works of literature, film, and art, you will come to better understand character formation and, hopefully, think about your own character and the kind of person you want to be.

The summer reading program will have three parts, all of which have an assignment attached. **All written assignments will be collected for a grade the first day of classes.**

PART I: Reading Assignment

Choose **three** books from the list on page 2 and read them carefully, making sure to pay attention to all aspects of character and the morals associated with that virtue in the text.

- **Assignment 1:** Choose **two** of the books you read and write a series of letters (three from each character) between two of the main characters in the novel. You may choose the content of these letters but it may be helpful to center your ideas around some sort of moral issue or conflict that would allow the writers to express their character through the written word.
- **Assignment 2:** For the book you **DO NOT** choose for the letter assignment, write a three- to four-page book review of your chosen work. In this book review, be sure to include the following:
 1. Your individual/personal response or well-informed critique of the work
 2. How you responded to its characters
 3. How you think the book addresses this year's theme of **character**
 4. How any themes and/or situations from the piece can be compared to today
- **Assignment 3:** When students return to school in the fall, they will be given an in-class assessment to judge their comprehension of all three texts. The questions will be straight forward and simple; if you read carefully and with effort you should not have a problem!

Works Students May Choose From

Emma by Jane Austen

"I am going to take a heroine whom no-one but myself will much like" said Austen of the title character of her novel. *Emma* presents a seemingly frivolous matchmaking scheme that actually brings out the true character and feelings of all those involved.

A Separate Peace by John Knowles

A complex relationship between two boys in boarding school is explored, taking place in the summer before WWII.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

The story of a plain governess finds love and herself in the haunted halls of an English mansion.

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane

A short novel about a Civil War soldier and his struggle with Patriotism and Courage in the face of battle.

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

Featuring one of the most famous opening and closing lines in literature, this novel presents a character whose moral compass is revealed in a sacrifice for a friend during the French Revolution.

Inherit the Wind by Jerome Lawrence

This famous play is based on the Scopes Monkey Trial and is an important study of character in law and in American History in the face of McCarthyism and the Evolution debate.

A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt

This historical play concerns the life of Sir Thomas More, the pious, witty and sometimes fanatical Catholic priest who stood up to King Henry VIII's reformation.

Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder

This non-fiction work, set before the devastating earthquake this year, details the determination of one man to start a hospital in Haiti.

The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day

An autobiographical testament to the spiritual pilgrimage of a woman who, in her own words, dedicated herself 'to bringing about the kind of society where it is easier to be good.'



PART II: Film

Choose one of the following films to view.

Remember the Titans
To Kill a Mockingbird
The Emperor's Club

- **Assignment:** After you have watched the film, write a 1-2 page reflection on how the film relates to this year's theme of **character**.

PART III: Art

Look up the following pieces of art and think about them in terms of character...

"The Sacrifice of Isaac" by Caravaggio

"Raising the Flag at Ground Zero" by Thomas E. Franklin

"La Molendera" by Diego Rivera

"The Child's Bath" by Mary Cassatt

- **Assignment:** For TWO pieces of art, students are to study the piece and research its background and any symbols or images it contains/references. They should do this in the form of at least two written, formal paragraphs (5 – 8 sentences) per piece of art. One might address the work itself, and the other its connection to the theme of **character**.

