Welcome to SVA!
Reading is a great way to kick back, relax, and escape into another world. We hope you enjoy your summer--rest, relax, and have lots of fun. While you’re doing this, you also need to read TWO BOOKS (or more!!!).

**Required Reading Assignment**

➢ **Required Book #1:**
You are required to pick and read **ONE** of the following three books:
There is a description of each book on the back of this page.

• Mexican White Boy by Matt de la Pena
• Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson
• A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah

➢ **Required Book #2:** Here’s the good part: YOU GET TO PICK YOUR SECOND BOOK!

You will need to read your TWO BOOKS by the first day of school.

➢ **Requirements for the First Day of School:**
It is **required** that you bring both of your books to the first day of school. In the first week, you will take a short test on the required book you chose and write about your self-selected book.

**Optional Writing Assignment**
As you read each book, take a little time to think about the message, meaning, or point of the story. If you want to practice for your writing assignment, grab a piece of paper and write an optional 1 page reflection of your thoughts related to one or both of the books you read.

To help you out, we’ve added some writing prompts below. Pick the one that speaks to you and write your response to the book(s). Use paragraphs to make your writing more readable.

**Prompts:** *(Choose 1 for each optional reflection)*

• This story helped me realize . . . .
• My friends should read this book because . . . .
• This book made me think about . . . .
• After reading this book, I wonder . . . .
• I think the author wanted me to learn . . . .
• I connect (can relate) to the story (or character) because . . . .
Pick one of these books and one book of your choice!

**Mexican White Boy by Matt de la Pena**

Danny’s tall and skinny. Even though he’s not built, his arms are long enough to give his pitch a power so fierce any college scout would sign him on the spot. Ninety-five mile an hour fastball, but the boy’s not even on a team. Every time he gets up on the mound he loses it.

But at his private school, they don’t expect much else from him. Danny’s brown. Half-Mexican brown. And growing up in San Diego that close to the border means everyone else knows exactly who he is before he even opens his mouth. Before they find out he can’t speak Spanish, and before they realize his mom has blond hair and blue eyes, they’ve got him pegged. But it works the other way too. And Danny’s convinced it’s his whiteness that sent his father back to Mexico.

That’s why he’s spending the summer with his dad’s family. Only, to find himself, he may just have to face the demons he refuses to see--the demons that are right in front of his face. And open up to a friendship he never saw coming.

Set in the alleys and on the ball fields of San Diego County, Mexican Whiteboy is a story of friendship, acceptance, and the struggle to find your identity in a world of definitions.

**Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson**

The first ten lies they tell you in high school.

"Speak up for yourself--we want to know what you have to say." From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her. Her healing process has just begun when she has another violent encounter with him. But this time Melinda fights back, refuses to be silent, and thereby achieves a measure of vindication.

In Laurie Halse Anderson's powerful novel, an utterly believable heroine with a bitterly ironic voice delivers a blow to the hypocritical world of high school. She speaks for many a disenfranchised teenager while demonstrating the importance of speaking up for oneself.

**A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah**

This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them.

What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this hell and survived.