

June 2023

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Congratulations on completing 7th grade! I'm very excited to keep learning together in 8th grade!

Throughout this much-deserved break from school, students will be required to complete summer reading in order to maintain and improve the critical literacy skills they've worked so hard to develop throughout the seventh grade school year. While we know and understand that summer is busy, we also know that studies show that the more engaged students are in reading, the less likely they are to suffer from learning loss while improving their verbal and written reasoning.

This summer, rising seventh graders will be required to read **the graphic novels listed here. Students should read the books in this order:**

- ***Maus 1 and 2: A Survivor's Tale:*** by Art Spiegelman (school copies will be loaned to students, but must be returned in good condition!)
 - ***Maus 1: My Father Bleeds History***
 - ***Maus 2: And Here My Troubles Began***
 - A synopsis from Amazon: "A brutally moving work of art—widely hailed as the greatest graphic novel ever written—Maus recounts the chilling experiences of the author's father during the Holocaust, with Jews drawn as wide-eyed mice and Nazis as menacing cats. Maus is a haunting tale within a tale, weaving the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father into an astonishing retelling of one of history's most unspeakable tragedies. It is an unforgettable story of survival and a disarming look at the legacy of trauma."
- ***Soviet Daughter: A Graphic Revolution*** by Julia Alekseyeva (students must get their own copy of this novel and should plan to bring it to school with them when we return)
 - A synopsis from Amazon: "Soviet Daughter provides a window into the life of a rebellious, independent woman coming of age in the USSR, and the impact of her story and her spirit on her American great-granddaughter. This is the story of Julia Alekseyeva and her great-grandmother Lola, two extraordinary women swept up in the history of their tumultuous times. Born in 1910 to a poor, Jewish family outside of Kiev, Lola lived through the Bolshevik revolution, a horrifying civil war, Stalinist purges, and the Holocaust. She taught herself to read, and supported her extended family working as a secretary for the notorious NKVD (which became the KGB), a lieutenant for the Red Army, and later as a refugee in the United States. Interwoven with

Lola's history we find Julia's own struggles of coming of age in an immigrant family in Chicago and her political awakening in the midst of the radical politics of the turn of the millennium. At times heartbreaking and at times funny, this graphic novel memoir unites two generations of strong, independent women against a sweeping backdrop of the history of the USSR.

There is no project; however, there will be a brief quiz on the novel when we get back to school; the exact date is TBD, **but it will be within the first week**. The quiz will include short passages and the associated images and will require students to analyze those passages. After the quiz, we will work on a small project.

Happy reading,
Ms. Henkin