2006 SUMMER READING

English Department
St. Mark’s School of Texas

GRADE 9

As you read John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, mark key passages and take notes in your book. Then choose one of the following topics and write a multi-paragraph essay of at least 500 words governed by a thesis:

1. Compare the “dreams” held by the principal characters. Then discuss whether the book might be a commentary on The American Dream.

2. Discuss the various cycles in the book. What purposes do they serve?

3. Critics have asserted that in *Of Mice and Men* Steinbeck was experimenting with a new form of writing combining the novel and the stage play. What aspects of the book seem suited to the stage or screen?

Before the Pecos Wilderness Trip, read *Touching the Void*, a non-fiction work by Joe Simpson. Read actively by marking key passages and labeling them in the margin. Look for passages that show how Simpson:
- deals with fear
- supports a friend
- shows integrity
- finds inner strength
- uses ingenuity to solve a problem

While on the Pecos trip, use some of your reflections on Simpson’s experience to inform writing in your Pecos journal.

Finally, read widely over the summer. Here are some suggestions—

- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley—a scientist’s creation forces him to consider obligations between a creator and created
- *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown—while solving a murder in the Louvre, a cryptographer and a symbolist explore mysteries of Western culture
- *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam—Sputnik-inspired teenagers teach themselves rocketry
- *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom—a man suffering from Lou Gehrig’s disease shares his ideas about life
- *The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother* by James McBride—a poignant and humorous look at growing up in Harlem
- *China Boy* by Gus Lee—growing up Chinese in San Francisco
- *The Circuit* by Francisco Jiménez—short stories relating the struggles of an illegal immigrant family

On the attached log, record all the books you read during the summer. Include *Of Mice and Men*, *Touching the Void*, *The Source*, and all others regardless of whether they are on the suggested list.

On the first day of classes, bring to English:

1. your essay about *Of Mice and Men*
2. the Reading Log, filled out
3. your copies of *Touching the Void* and *Of Mice and Men* with key passages marked in both, as described above.