Tuesday, March 31

Language & Literature	
6th Grade:	Hi 6th graders! We are missing you and hoping you and your families are well. This is such a great time to get lost in a good book. Below are two resources to help you do so. The first is using the MackinVIA site, which gives you access to lots of eBooks and audiobooks for free. Here are the directions for logging in: 1.Mackinvia.com 2. School Name: Merrill Middle School 3. Click blue "Log In" button (sometimes it auto-does this for you) 4. Click "Log in with Single Sign-On" 5. Enter student email and password. **email:** id#@student.dmschools.org **password:** school computer password 6. Search for audio books and eBooks! Next, here is a link of Free Little Libraries. Find one that is near you and go check it out with your family! Many people are keeping theirs well-stocked right now. https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourmap/
7th Grade:	Hello 7th graders, We hope you and your families are staying well and enjoying some time together. As you are looking for things to do at home here are two ideas: 1. Read! It doesn't matter if it is a book, online, or a magazine. If you write up what you've been reading and email us, we are happy to read it and respond. 2. Write! This is a great time for creative writers to get into writing a story. Maybe write about a dystopian world where everyone must stay at least six feet apart from everyone except for those people they live with until a cure can be found for a terrible virus. If that isn't your thing, do some research on something you want to learn and write a PSA or commercial for that. Then you could even record it and send it to us. We would be happy to read or view these as well. You could also write letters/emails to friends or family members who you can't see right now to let them know you are thinking of them. Please know that we miss you and are hopeful that we get to see you soon. Email us if you want us to see what you are doing or just to let us know how you are doing. Take care! Mr. Severson and Mrs. Cooney
8th Grade:	Greetings 8th graders! The 8th Grade Language & Literature team hopes that this communication finds you doing well as we enter our third historic week of "social distancing" and "flattening the curve" to keep people safe and healthy. We know that things are interesting out there right now, and we want you to know that we are all thinking of you and wishing you good health, safety, and a return to normal soon. This week's Language & Literature optional learning opportunity explores the importance of storytelling in our lives--since the beginning of time, it's the way that we have communicated with one another, the way we have learned, and the way we have connected as human beings. Consider the following quote: *"Honesty matters. Vulnerability matters. Being open about who you were at a moment in time when you were in a difficult or an impossible place matters more than anything." -Neil Gaiman, from the forward of The Moth Presents All These Wonders*

As famous author Neil Gaiman expresses, it's important for all of us to play our part in recording and listening to our stories right now--"writing what you know." This week we would like to provide you with some opportunities to not only think about your own stories, but also to hear and understand the stories of others in the world. First, consider what Pixar director/animator, Pete Docter has to say about storytelling. Pixar in a Box: Introduction to Storytelling

As Mr. Docter states, you have to "write what you know" and we all know very different things. The following are some websites that have stories that people have told about things in their lives--some were amazing moments, some normal, some devastating--but ALL are stories that reflect the connections and interactions that we all have in this world. Click on the bold/highlighted links to redirect to these resources to listen to the stories of others.

- **StoryCorps--"***StoryCorps' mission is to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world" (https://storycorps.org/about/).* Click on the "Stories" heading to listen!
- **The Moth--"The Moth's mission is to promote the art and craft of storytelling and to honor and celebrate the diversity and commonality of human experience" (***https://themoth.org/about***).** ***The stories found on this page reflect the voices of young adults.***

In addition to listening to the stories of others, this is a unique time in our world's history to document our OWN stories as we remember them. This is not only about what you have been doing during this time, but also how you felt. What things have inspired you? What stories are worth remembering? What were the big moments that impacted your world? Whose stories would you love to hear more about right now? Here are some **options** for how YOU can tell YOUR story if you would like to:

- Keep an electronic journal documenting your journey through this historic event in our world. This could be a regular word document, or you could create a blog using Microsoft Sway (both apps are available when signed into your school account)
- Create your own podcast that tells your story of the 2020 Pandemic in real time. Express your thoughts and opinions about all the things you are experiencing.
- You could use virtual communication to record the stories of someone in your own life. Check out the "Participate" link on StoryCorps for how you can join the storytellers that are connecting people around the globe.
- **Finally, your journaling could be good ole' fashioned pen and paper documentation of your own stories.** Use "what you know" to create stories, fiction or true, to document your life in this moment.

Ultimately, just know that we are all missing our "normal" lives of teaching Language & Literature at Merrill and seeing all of you face-to-face in the classroom. We can all be reached by email throughout the days (9-3pm, Monday-Friday). Please feel free to just check in OR share the amazing stories that you write at this time!

Until next week--Be safe, make good choices, and look for the stories that surround you!

Your 8th Grade Language & Literature Team,
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~Mrs. Cooney--hillari.cooney@dmschools.org
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Individuals & Societies	
6th Grade:	Hello! We hope you are all doing well! During this time, we would like to remind you- reading is so important! During this break, Ms. Tharp has read *Five Dark Fates, Eve of Man, The Only Road,* and has been reading a chapter of *Junie B. Jones* each night with her niece. Mrs. Sereg has read *Where the Crawdads Sing* and has spent a lot of time reading books with her children. Charles's current favorite is *Llama Llama, Red Pajama.* This week, we challenge you to read at least one book AND talk about it with someone! We would love you to email us what you are reading, and we can discuss it with you as well! We miss you all! Ms. Tharp and Mrs. Sereg
7th Grade	We are missing you guys and wish we could debrief with you on these unique times we're living through. In the meantime, we hope you're happy & healthy. And we certainly know you're missing friends from school. Here's a (totally optional) way to connect with someone and share some knowledge: Think of a question you have about anything in the news, a place, a society or culture, or a historical event. Anything really! Try these question stems for some meaty questions: • Why does...? • How do/come...? • What if...? Do your best to find an answer to your question and then email the answer you found out to a 7th grader at Merrill (or anyone, I suppose)! If you sent your email to a 7th grader at Merrill they can respond to you by sending you what *they* wondered about and the answer they found out. If you send your email to someone else, ask them to teach you something. In this way, we can all teach someone something new. (Plus, obvi, pen pals are fun!) So, if 3 people end up emailing you what they learned, you would cut and paste your info and respond to each of them with what you learned about whatever you wondered about.
8th Grade:	Hello Everyone: We hope this note finds you and your family healthy and well and that you have been able to enjoy some of the family benefits of this unfortunate circumstance that we find ourselves in as a nation and a world. Mr. Thomas and I have been in frequent contact since school let out and have both discussed how much we miss the daily bustle of the school and how much we miss our students. This communication is designed to give you some ideas for what you can be doing independently to continue your learning for the Early American History course. These in no way should be considered "assignments," or "required," but are instead independent learning opportunities. So here we go...

The unit of study we would be working on if we were in school now is The Civil War. Here are three excellent resources to explore this content and a few suggestions for independent reading as well:

1. The Khan Academy website has an excellent, interactive section on the lead-up to the Civil War and the war itself that can be found here: https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/civil-war-era The various learning modules provide good foundational knowledge and provide "check ins" to assess your understanding of the content.
2. The amazing PBS Ken Burns documentary titled "The Civil War" provides incredible visual and primary source material for all aspects of the war. It is currently available for purchase, without delivery, on Amazon Prime at: https://www.amazon.com/Civil-War-Film-Burns-Season/dp/B0033W47HY
3. PBS In the Classroom provides excellent resources to accompany the film here: https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/classroom/overview/

There are a lot of great books on the Civil War for independent reading as well. My two favorites are "1861: The Civil War Awakening," by Andrew Goodheart, which provides the best exploration of the political environment leading up to the war and actual beginning of the war at Ft. Sumpter. Another great book is "The Killer Angels," by Michael Shaara, which details the battle at Gettysburg in a very informative, but still personal way.

You'll be hearing from us again over the next few weeks. Please stay safe and healthy.

Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Thomas

Other Notes

Grab and Go Lunch

Continue to access the Grab and Go Meals from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM weekdays at Merrill and Deer Ridge. The grab-and-go style meals include a lunch and a breakfast for the next day. Additional food items are available to students on Fridays to take home for the weekend. Bonus: You might just see a friendly face from Merrill volunteering!