

**PACKER COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE**  
Upper School  
Summer Reading Assignment

The Upper School summer reading program is designed to encourage all students to develop a passion for reading that extends beyond the scope of assigned texts or specific genres. As an Upper School student, you are expected to read a minimum of three (3) books over the summer vacation. One of the titles is assigned to the entire grade and will be discussed during the first quarter of the year:

Ninth Grade: George Orwell, *1984*

Tenth Grade: E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*

Eleventh Grade: Voltaire, *Candide*

Twelfth Grade: No assigned title

One must be selected from the “uncommon read” list of twelve banned books and will be discussed during the first week of school (see below). The remaining book (two books for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students) is to be selected from a book list of recommended titles for the grade.

#### The Summer Reading Letter

Each year, as Upper School students, you are asked to write a letter (this can be in e-mail form or “snail mail”) to your new adviser about your summer reading. This letter should serve as a way for you to introduce yourself to your adviser and is to include a list of all the books that you have read over the summer. Please select one book from this list (not the common read or a required book) and explain briefly why you liked or disliked it. Your **Summer Reading Letter** should be received by your adviser prior to the first day of school, Wednesday, September 3, 2008

Summer reading information, including the list of banned books for the “uncommon” read, can be found on the Packer intranet at: <http://fc.packer.edu/Library/libweb/summer/srlindex.htm>

#### Guiding Questions for the “Uncommon Read”

This year’s “uncommon read” focuses on banned and challenged books. As you read the book you have selected from the list of 12 banned/challenged books, please consider the questions below for the grade you are entering. Your assignment for the “uncommon” read is to prepare an informal reflection as a response to those questions. You need not approach the writing of this reflection as a formal essay. Instead, think of it as a way to organize your thoughts so that you can share them with your new adviser and homeroom members when we discuss the books in September and October.

#### If you are entering the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade

Imagine that you are the author of the book you have read. How would you defend your right to publish this book over the objections that have been raised by various voices in the community about the book?

- Identify words or passages that you believe brought controversy to this book.
- Select a passage that reflects the most important message that you have found in the book. Why is it meaningful to you?
- Overall, what are the merits of this book? What are the detractors? Why do you feel that the merits outweigh (or not) the detractors?

If you are entering the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade

In 1988, author Salman Rushdie caused an international culture crisis when he published *The Satanic Verses*, an award-winning novel inspired by early accounts of the life of the Muslim prophet Muhammad. In the book, Muhammad is tricked by Satan into including "the satanic verses" in the Qur'an. These verses would allow Muslims to pray to three pagan goddesses for intercession (a prayer to Allah on a person's behalf). The book was banned for blasphemy and burned in India, Pakistan, Iran, and Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. Finally, the Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of Iran, issued a fatwa instructing Muslims to kill Rushdie and his publishers, and Rushdie had to go into hiding under the protection of the British government. The Western value of freedom of expression came into direct conflict with Muslim beliefs, and violence over the book's contents and Rushdie's right to publish his story erupted in countries all over the world. ("Satanic Verses Controversy")

In response to Rushdie's novel, Syed Shahabuddin, a Muslim member of India's parliament, remarked, "You may hold whatever private opinions you like but you do not enjoy an absolute right to express them in public," (In Bald). Our belief in the freedom of expression might cause us to dismiss Shahabuddin's comment out of hand, unless we call to mind some immortal words from an American hero—"With great power comes great responsibility" (Spiderman). Though only a book, *The Satanic Verses* provoked people to defend their rights and beliefs and had great power to divide, enrage, and also to inspire. It also prompted questions of authorial responsibility and our responsibilities as readers of a text.

Consider your summer reading book, which was also banned and challenged for one reason or another, as you prepare written responses to the following questions:

- What is the power that the book has?
- What is the responsibility of the writer when he or she is putting their ideas out there for public consumption?
- What responsibility do you have for the text as a reader?
- What is the responsibility of the society in protecting or limiting access to this book?
- Ultimately, what are the dominant ideas and impressions you took away from this book? How do the merits outweigh (or not) the objections to the book?

#### Sources Cited

In Bald, Margaret. *Banned Books: Literature Suppressed on Religious Grounds*. New York: Facts on File, 2006. p. 294

"Satanic Verses Controversy." Wikipedia. 13 May 2008. Accessed 20 May 2008  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Satanic\\_Verses\\_controversy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Satanic_Verses_controversy)>