



Alchemy and Wisdom

8th Grade Summer Reading 2011

Opening Deep Thoughts To Ponder...

“As far as your self-control goes, as far goes your freedom.” *Marie Von Ebner-Eschnebach*

“Leaders must invoke an alchemy of great vision.” *Henry Kissinger*

“Words are also seeds, and when dropped into the **invisible** spiritual substance, they grow and bring forth after their kind”

Dear Eighth Graders and Parents/Guardians:

I welcome you to the first portal of our odyssey for next year. The eighth grade theme in English is: *Alchemy as the Pursuit of Freedom*. To be free from limitations has driven human beings to complete acts of great beauty as well as atrocity. Yet the paradox remains that without healthy boundaries, freedom does not exist.

Teenagers in particular are in love with freedom. As our leaders of tomorrow, they indeed are also the creators and gatekeepers of this treasure. In honor of this truth, I am assigning the following books for summer reading. This assignment is meant to awaken in my students what I consider to be the four keys of freedom: wisdom, compassion, reverence, and work. These titles are:

The Fifth Agreement by Don Miguel Ruiz

The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams Bianco (The UNABRIDGED version.)

Consider these books the foundation for our coursework next year. We shall refer back to these works and connect their themes to our studies. I strongly encourage the students to procure a personal copy of these two books so as to supplement their personal libraries as well as to facilitate referring back directly to the texts during the 2011-12 school year. Inexpensive used copies are available at online at Amazon.com or at Green Apple Books (Clement Street and Third Avenue).

I want the students to focus on the reading and digesting of these classics. The following **written** parts of the assignment will support that goal and is as follows:

1. Intellectual graffiti. If you are not able to locate your own copy of the book, notes for each page can be substituted.

2. A minimum 3 page paper about **each** book. Explain how this book teaches about the four keys of freedom: wisdom, compassion, reverence, and work. Include an introduction, four body paragraphs (with quotations from the book), and conclusion (with a bridge).

Please do not hesitate to contact me over the summer with any questions. I'll be hanging around Kittredge a good deal, teaching summer school and getting ready for the new year. You may also email me at: d1mckee99@aol.com

With joy and regards,

Ms. McKee