

XAVIER COLLEGE PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL  
SUMMER READING 2023



Dear Incoming Honors Junior,  
(Conflict, Social Justice, and Literature)

We hope that this letter finds you well and anticipating a rewarding junior year. We hope that you will have many good experiences and make many good decisions before we get to see you again in August. One of those decisions that we would like to help you with is the decision to remain engaged in some kind of academic activity this summer. It is our belief that encouraging students to read year-round is a key element in the development of lifelong learners. While the summer is certainly time to be away from school proper, we hope that it is not a time to stop thinking, learning, and growing.

**For summer work:**

**You will read two books this summer (see below). These required works will be part of the overall theme of the year.** These books have been selected for their interest level and readability as well as for their challenging, compelling content. In short, you should expect to think, but you should also expect to be highly engaged.

**Required Books:**

- *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* by Greg Boyle, SJ  
What does it mean to be committed to social justice? How can we challenge the assumption that some lives, particularly the lives of the privileged, matter more than others? How can the value of life and humanity be understood to mean that all lives matter? This compelling testament of Fr. Greg Boyle's ministry to Los Angeles gang members serves as an invitation to understand the human faces underneath the gang tattoos.
- *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton (any edition with explanatory notes will work; if you want extra tools at your disposal, look for [the Norton Critical Edition](#))  
Published in 1905, this American classic catapulted its author, one of America's finest writers, to fame. It features an unforgettable protagonist Lily Bart in a timeless tale of conflict between social conventions and individual fulfillment. If Miss Bart plays her cards just right – and in accordance with the rigid rules that govern the lives of young women in her social “set” – she is all but guaranteed to live the carefree life of aristocratic New York. The question is: *will* she?

In this course you will be expected to grapple with serious issues by engaging with diverse and challenging works of American literature. Reading Wharton's text will provide you with a solid springboard for doing just that. As you read, you may encounter moral values at odds with your own. These are not included to be morally subversive, but to

provide verisimilitude for the particular time, place, and situation in which the story occurs. I encourage you to focus not just on *what* happens but on *how* the events contribute to our greater understanding of the book's larger themes.

Be prepared to take a **substantive test on both texts** within the first couple of class meetings.

Additionally, please make a minimum of 15-20 meaningful annotations for *The House of Mirth* novel. If you do not like writing in the book – or you have a borrowed copy – please use post-it notes (be sure to include the page numbers you are referencing). **Please bring an annotated copy of *The House of Mirth* on the first day of class for a grade.**

### **Tips for Annotating:**

While reading, you should keep track of things like characters, setting (when and/or where), important plot points, and any unfamiliar words you encounter.

For the **15-20 required annotations**, do the following:

- Mark passages that really catch your attention.
- In the margins, write reflections / reactions / comments: Have a conversation with the text!
  - Did you like something?
  - Did something outrageous happen?
  - Did something confuse you?
  - Did it remind you of something else you've read or heard about?
  - Did it raise an open-ended question ("How...?" or "Why....?")

Please make sure to write a note, so you remember what about that passage intrigued you. You'd hate to go back to something later and not remember why you highlighted it!

We will use your annotations to jumpstart our class conversation about the novel. **Annotations will be graded on the first day of class.**