



Missoula County Public Schools  
215 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street West  
Missoula, MT 59801  
(406) 728-2400

Forward Thinking, High Achieving.

Families of 8th grade students:

Throughout the 8th grade school year, students will read several pieces of literature with compelling themes and topics.

In the novel [Inside Out and Back Again](#), written by Thanhha Lai, students will meet Ha, a 10-year-old Vietnamese girl whose family is deciding whether to flee their home during the fall of Saigon during Vietnam War. Students will analyze this novel, told in free verse, to determine how word choice impacts the tone and meaning of the story.

In another module, students will read Harper Lee's [To Kill and Mockingbird](#) and participate in a character study of the character Atticus Finch by analyzing his actions and words and what others say about him.

In the final module, students will read the compelling story of Louie Zamperini in the book [Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption](#). Students will dig into the changes in Louie as he struggles to maintain his identity during his imprisonment and later when he returns home after the war.

Each novel is partnered with several pieces of informational text so that students can compare the word choice of the different authors and different types of texts. By choosing novels with historical perspectives, we create a rich environment for student dialogue and discussion.

These novels also center around some compelling themes. In the classroom, we spend most of our time working on the characters and the word choice. We are sharing these reading selections with you, as you may want to discuss the historical themes of violence, war, racism, injustice, hate, and evil with your student at home.

We want to reassure you that certain excerpts and words may be summarized or omitted from the student readings due to sensitive content. Any time we read about sensitive topics in the world, we take care and thought to make sure that every student feels safe completing the assigned reading and participating in discussions.

If you have any questions about these readings, please consider a conversation with your child's teacher first to understand how your child's classroom is approaching the content in the texts. If necessary, the principal of the school or the staff of the MCPS Teaching and Learning Department are also available for conversations.

We take our job of preparing students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and careers very seriously, we are committed to your student's success. Thank you for letting us be your partner in the growth and development of your student.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elise Guest, S.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Elise Guest  
Executive Director of Teaching and Learning