Dear Class of 2020!

Welcome to Gateway! We are so excited to meet you in August for orientation and the beginning of our journey together in Humanities 9. To keep your mind active and your reading skills sharp, we ask that you do a bit of summer reading. The best way to become a better reader and to develop a larger vocabulary is to read!

Book Number One—Please select one book from the following list:

_The Afterlife_ by Gary Soto (176 Pages, Lexile 810)
Chuy is a normal teenage guy, making his way in the barrios of Fresno, California, and hoping to impress a pretty girl. Carefully combing his hair in the restroom at Club Estrella, he only has a few moments to consider his “loverboy” strategy before his young life is (literally) cut short by a knife-wielding stranger who misinterprets a compliment. Soon Chuy is floating above his bleeding body, embarking on a journey of personal exploration. As he drifts through his hometown (tightening his stomach muscles so as not to get blown off course) he manages to achieve many of the things he didn’t when he was alive—recognizing how much he is loved by family and friends, saving a life, punishing a thug, and even falling in love (with a ghost-girl who has committed suicide).

_Bee Season_ by Myla Goldberg (288 Pages, Lexile 1050)
In Myla Goldberg’s outstanding first novel, a family is shaken apart by a small but unexpected shift in the prospects of one of its members. When 9-year-old Elize Naumann, an otherwise indifferent student, takes first prize in her school spelling bee, it is as if rays of light have begun to emanate from her head. Teachers regard her with a new fondness; the studious girls begin to save a place for her at lunch. Even Eliza can sense herself changing. She had “often felt that her outsides were too dull for her insides, that deep within her there was something better than what everyone else could see.”

_Boy Meets Boy_ by David Levithan (192 Pages, Lexile 730)
When Paul meets Noah, he thinks he’s found the one his heart is made for. Until he blows it. The school bookie says the odds are 12-to-1 against him getting Noah back, but Paul’s not giving up without playing his love really loud. His best friend Joni might be drifting away, his other best friend Tony might be dealing with ultra-religious parents, and his ex-boyfriend Kyle might not be going away anytime soon, but sometimes everything needs to fall apart before it can really fit together right.

This is a happy-meaningful romantic comedy about finding love, losing love, and doing what it takes to get love back in a crazy-wonderful world.
• **Buddha Boy** by Kathe Koja (128 Pages, Lexile 1090)
How to survive being good. Like a flashback memory, he's there in my mind: skimming up the stairs at school, his sloppy old T-shirt big as a sail, red tie-dyed dragon T-shirt, who wears stuff like that? No one. Jinsen. The kids at Edward Ruchter High School call Jinsen “Buddha Boy” and condemn him as a freak. With his shaved head and perpetual smile, Jinsen certainly doesn't help matters when he starts begging for lunch money in the cafeteria. So when Justin is paired with Jinsen for a class project, he plans to get done with it as soon as possible, and climb right back into his safe social niche. Then Justin discovers Jinsen's incredible artistic talent and becomes curious about his beliefs. But being friends with Buddha Boy isn't simple, and Justin is forced into a cruel contest with the jocks who just can't seem to leave Jinsen, or his artwork, alone. Kathe Koja introduces an unforgettable young man who will remind readers of the true meaning of friendship and demonstrate how to draw strength from the little gods inside each of them.

• **Caucasia** by Danzy Senna (432 Pages)
In *Caucasia*—Danzy Senna's extraordinary debut novel and national bestseller—Birdie and Cole are the daughters of a black father and a white mother, intellectuals and activists in the Civil Rights Movement in 1970s Boston. The sisters are so close that they have created a private language, yet to the outside world they can't be sisters: Birdie appears to be white, while Cole is dark enough to fit in with the other kids at the Afrocentric school they attend. For Birdie, Cole is the mirror in which she can see her own blackness.

• **China Boy** by Gus Lee (336 Pages, Lexile 880)
A young, American-born child of an aristocratic Mandarin family that has fled China struggles to assimilate in 1950s San Francisco in a novel from "an incredibly rich and new voice." (Amy Tan).

• **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time** by Mark Haddon (240 Pages, Lexile 1180)
*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* takes place in the year 1998 in and around the town of Swindon, England. The fifteen-year-old narrator of the story, Christopher John Francis Boone, discovers the slain body of his neighbor's poodle, Wellington, on the neighbor's front lawn one evening and sets out to uncover the murderer. His investigation is at times aided, and at other times hampered, by the mild form of autism he lives with. After Christopher hits a policeman in a misunderstanding at the scene of the crime, the police take Christopher into custody. They release Christopher with only a stern warning, under the condition that he promises to them and to his father not to look into the murder any further. (Sparknotes)

• **The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things** by Carolyn Mackler (256 Pages, Lexile 790)
An overweight teen is sure that she's the weakest link in her high-powered family until her handsome, athletic, star-student brother has a shocking fall from grace. Fifteen-year-old Virginia Shreves has a larger-than-average body and a plus-size inferiority complex. She lives on the Web, snarfs junk food, and follows the "Fat Girl Code of Conduct." Her stuttering best friend has just moved to Walla Walla (of all places). Her new companion, Froggy Welsh the Fourth (real name), has just succeeded in getting his hand up her shirt, and she lives in fear that he'll look
underneath. Then there are the other Shreves: Mom, the successful psychologist and exercise fiend; Dad, a top executive who ogles thin women on TV; and older siblings Anais and rugby god Byron, both of them slim and brilliant. Delete Virginia, and the Shreves would be a picture-perfect family. Or so she's convinced. And then a shocking phone call changes everything. With irreverent humor, insight, and surprising gravity, Carolyn Mackler creates an endearingly blunt heroine whose story will speak to every teen who struggles with family expectations - and serve as a welcome reminder that the most impressive achievement is to be true to yourself. From the Hardcover edition. (Lexile)

- *The First Part Last* by Angela Johnson (131 Pages, Lexile 790)
Bobby did not exactly plan on being a single dad at the age of sixteen. Nor did he expect his girlfriend to die and leave him alone with his new daughter, Feather. Torn between the often-harsh reality of New York City life and his steadfast love for his new daughter, Bobby struggles through the draining first few months as a single, sixteen-year-old, school-going dad. Through sleep deprivation, family drama and a few run ins with the law, Bobby finally understands that he'll have to make some big changes in order to give Feather the life he knows she deserves. (wordpress)

- *Keesha's House* by Helen Frost (116 Pages)
Keesha has found a safe place to live, and other kids gravitate to her house when they just can't make it on their own. They are Stephie – pregnant, trying to make the right decisions for herself and those she cares about; Jason – Stephie's boyfriend, torn between his responsibility to Stephie and the baby.

- *Pattern Recognition* by William Gibson (367 Pages)
Cayce Pollard is a self employed cool hunter. She makes her living by contracting out her unique ability to determine ahead of time which logos, products and advertising campaigns will work and which won't. Hubertus Bigend runs a multinational company called Blue Ant and hires Cayce's services, requiring her to go to London - a place she refers to as mirror world. This contract will keep her from her New York apartment for some time since it will lead to an investigation of an entirely different nature. Bigend wants Cayce to find the author and creator of the 'footage' that is rapidly gaining a cult like following on line. With 135 postings so far, the footage is unique, insightful and provocative. None of the segments have audio, and yet each seems to contain a lifetime of emotion, desire, and hope. There are no discernible features, landmarks or trademarks that can be seen in any of them, and they are as likely to have been taken in 1914 as in 1980.

- *Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd (320 Pages, Lexile 840)
Lily Owens lies shaped her life around one devastating, blurred, memory-the afternoon her mother was killed, when Lily was four. Since then, her only real companion on the peach farm of her harsh, unyielding father has been a fierce-hearted black woman, Rosaleen, her "stand-in mother." When Rosaleen insults three of the deepest 'acts in town, Lily knows it is time to spring them both free. She and Rosaleen take off for a town called Tiburon, South Carolina, a name she found on the back of a picture amid the few possessions left by her mother. They are taken in by three black, bee-keeping sisters. Lily enters their mesmerizing secret world of bees and honey, and of the Black Madonna who presides over this household of strong, wise women - a place where ultimately she can find the single thing her heart longs for most.
- **Shattering Glass** by Gail Giles (224 Pages, Lexile 590)
  Fat, clumsy Simon Glass is a nerd, a loser who occupies the lowest rung on the high school social ladder. Everyone picks on him — until Rob Haynes shows up. Rob, a transfer student with charisma to spare, immediately becomes the undisputed leader of the senior class. And he has plans for Simon. Rob enlists the help of his crew — wealthy, intellectual Young, ladies’ man Bob, and sweet, athletic Coop — in a mission: Turn sniveling Simon from total freak to would-be prom king. But as Simon rises to the top of the social ranks, he shows a new confidence and a devious side that power-hungry Rob did not anticipate. And when Simon uncovers a dangerous secret, events darken. The result is disquieting, bone-chilling...and brutal. When Rob, the charismatic leader of the senior class, turns the school nerd into Prince Charming, his actions lead to unexpected violence.

- **Weetzie Bat** by Francesca Lia Block (96 Pages, Lexile 960)
  Weetzie Bat is a bleach-blonde punk pixie, a true original. The child of a screenwriter and a B-movie actress, Weetzie loves L.A.—Weetzie is L.A. In high school, she meets a slinkster-cool boy named Dirk. They become best friends and spend their days surfing at Venice Beach and their nights going clubbing on the Sunset Strip. They both are searching for love, but can’t seem to find Mr. Right. One day Dirk’s Grandma Fifi gives Weetzie what turns out to be a genie’s lamp. The genie grants her three wishes: to find a boyfriend for Dirk, to find a boyfriend for herself, and to have a home where they can all live happily. Grandma Fifi dies, leaving them her Hollywood bungalow, and Dirk and Weetzie both meet their true loves. Weetzie becomes friends with a Jamaican/Chinese family of fashion designers. Together, this kooky cast of characters learns that all you need is love.

- **The Bonesetter’s Daughter** by Amy Tan (416 Pages, Lexile 800)
  The Bonesetter’s Daughter dramatically chronicles the tortured, devoted relationship between Lu Ling Young and her daughter Ruth. . . . A strong novel, filled with idiosyncratic, sympathetic characters, haunting images, historical complexity, significant contemporary themes, and suspenseful mystery. "Los Angeles Times: ‘TAN AT HER BEST . . . Rich and hauntingly forlorn . . . The writing is so exacting and unique in its detail.” San Francisco Chronicle "For Tan, the true keeper of memory is language, and so the novel is layered with stories that have been written down by mothers for their daughters, passing along secrets that cannot be said out loud but must not be forgotten."

**Book Number Two**
You may either select a second book from the list above or read your own free choice book. The only rules are that it is a book you have not read before (in class or out), that it is at least 150 pages, and you can show it to your parent or guardian.

**How Should I Choose My Books?**
Read the book descriptions and pick 4-5 that interest you. Then go somewhere you can read the first few pages (a library, bookstore, or Amazon.com). After a few pages, think about: are you interested in the characters and the plot? Does the reading level feel right to you? A book is your reading level if it has about 3 words per page that you don’t know. You
can also go to lexile.com and find your reading level by typing in a book you've already read that was the right challenge level for you, find out what level that book was, and then check with the Lexlie levels on this list.

Once a book seems like a good one for you, read the rest of the chapter - and if you still like it, you've got your book!

**What Will I Need To Do With My Book In August?**
You do not need to do any writing before school begins; however, you need to be ready to discuss and write about Book Number One (from the list) when you return to school in August. So, you might want to read this book later in July so it is fresh in your mind. You will be asked to show that you understand the plot, character development, and themes that emerge.

Of course, you can read more than two books! Again, the best way to become a better reader is to read.

**What Supplies Will I Need For My Humanities Class?**
1. A three-ring binder (about 1.5 inches) for Humanities class only
2. 4 tabbed dividers
3. College-ruled paper (100 sheets)
4. Blue/black pens (10-20)
5. Pencils and erasers (10-20)
6. Post-it notes for marking texts (small)
7. Highlighters (3-5)
8. A spiral notebook

We look forward to meeting all of you in August to discuss the books we have read this summer and to read many more together as a class. Until then, have a safe and happy summer vacation!

*The Humanities 9 Team*