All 9th grade students are required to read two novels: *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie.

*Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
Since the beginning of the school year, high school freshman Melinda has found that it's been getting harder and harder for her to speak out loud: "My throat is always sore, my lips raw.... Every time I try to talk to my parents or a teacher, I sputter or freeze.... It's like I have some kind of spastic laryngitis." What could have caused Melinda to suddenly fall mute? Could it be due to the fact that no one at school is speaking to her because she called the cops and got everyone busted at the seniors' big end-of-summer party? Or maybe it's because her parents' only form of communication is Post-It notes written on their way out the door to their nine-to-whenever jobs. While Melinda is bothered by these things, deep down she knows the real reason why she's been struck mute, a reason she hides even from herself.

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
This book tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the 'rez' to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he thought he was destined to live.

The first few weeks of class will be devoted to the study of the summer reading novels. You should bring your own copy of the novels with you when you report to school. (If this proves to be problematic for you and your family, see your teacher at the beginning of school.) Because you will be required to create meaning from what you read, you are expected to be an active reader. That means you should take notes (highlighting or underlining important parts, writing notes in the margins or on the front and end covers) on the novel as you read to help you remember important parts.

Some things to take notes on as you read:

- Study the setting of each novel and think about the impact it has on the plot and characterization
- Describe the characters, both primary and secondary
- Note the primary conflicts in each novel and how they are resolved
- Note the climax, or highest point of action, of each novel
- Major themes
- Symbolism

Again, you are expected to be an active and engaged reader of the novels. While you are not required to complete a writing assignment on the reading over the summer, you are responsible for the reading and creating meaning from it. Testing on the novels will begin the second day of school. Bring copies of the novels with you when you report to school.