



Dear parents and students,

Summer is here and with it comes many exciting days, long naps, summer jobs, camps, early morning workouts, and perhaps some new memories with friends and family. We also hope that during the summer you spend some time exploring new worlds of characters like Percy Jackson, Dr. Frankenstein, Katniss Everdeen, or Elizabeth Bennett. Last year we asked our 10th through 12th graders to enter New Bremen, Minnesota where we fell in love with Frank and his cast of smalltown neighbors and family members. Through our shared reading, we got to discuss in our classrooms, in small groups, and in chapel, the powerful themes of forgiveness and growing up and endurance. Our hope is that our experience with *Ordinary Grace* shaped an understanding of how powerful common reads can be for our community.

This summer our common read for the entire upper school, grades 9th through 12th, is *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro, a Nobel Prize winner in Literature who is praised by literary critics for “uncover[ing] the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world.” *Klara and the Sun* is a story told through the eyes of Klara, an Artificial Friend, designed to keep Josie, her human companion, company. Klara is kind and curious and loyal to her human Josie. As you uncover the world of technology and artificial intelligence meeting human life in a visceral and poignant way, you will begin to see a story unfold of what it means to love, to hope, and to be human.

In an age when artificial intelligence is literally evolving daily, where AI is integrated in most aspects of our life, we feel that this book offers us questions about what makes us truly human and how the choices we make shape the people we become. Our hope is that this book will serve us well in stewarding the technology we have to be innovative and responsible and curious and kind, some of the same qualities we see play out in the characters you will come to know. Though Ishiguro does not provide us with many answers, he does give us the opportunity to reflect on how to interact with the world around us. As you read, may you pursue wisdom in the topics unfolding.

We would love if parents and students engage in this text together, and we look forward to the discussions to come in August and beyond. If you have any specific questions, please feel free to email your teacher for next year, while also remembering they may check email more sporadically over the summer due to travel plans.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Melissa Ammons, Mrs. Lindsay Cloer,
Mrs. Charli Gonder, Mrs. Brea Taylor, and
Mrs. Taylor Tomann