To the rising STCS 8th grade class of 2017-2018:

I hope your summer has already settled into a relaxing and pleasant pattern. You will recall that I am asking you to read two novels over the summer. John Buchan’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps* tests the limits of reader credibility in a thrilling crime story. Irene Hunt’s *No Promises in the Wind* recounts the saga of young brothers from Chicago who strike out on their own during the cruel years of the Great Depression.

When we reconvene in August, you will have no test over the stories (Whew!); nor will you be required to write a five-paragraph analytical essay on the readings (What a relief!). What am I expecting? We will engage in several Lit Circle discussions.

I am supplying an optional study guide for each of the tales. You may choose to eschew (Look it up) both, if you wish. If you purchase your own copies, some of you may prefer to record marginalia. In short, how you retain what you read is entirely up to you. I only expect that you will come to the Lit Circle sessions with some observations of your own to contribute to the confabulations.

These are terrific reads that have inspired previous groups of eighth graders with plenty to think about and talk over. I hope they will do just the same for y’all!

I am off to Chicago myself within a matter of days and trust that, at the end of one month of institute study, I will return with quality materials to share with you.

In the meantime, know that I keep you in my thoughts and prayers, grateful for what each of you has contributed to this past academic term and hopeful for all good things for you in the year that lies ahead: Great Expectations!

With affection and prayer,

Dr. Bilow