This summer you will be reading *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow* by Jerrold M. Packard (ISBN #9780312302412). You should be able to find it in a local library, but if you opt to buy the book online, new copies can be found for under $10.00 (and used copies for as little as $5.00).

What is Jim Crow? Packard takes a shot at defining it in the last two paragraphs of the Prologue. Be sure to go over that definition a few times and give it some thought. He admits that the “full range of Jim Crow is...difficult to define.” As you finished U.S. History I, you likely learned about the discrimination and mistreatment faced by black Americans in the wake of Reconstruction following the Civil War. Jim Crow, the name given to this mistreatment, was legal and quasi-legal policy throughout the United States until at least the 1960s. This means that contemporaneous to everything we will learn next year: WWI, the Great Depression, WWII, the Cold War, etc., black Americans are being oppressed socially, politically, and economically.

As you read, try to understand how and why it developed, how it impacted people as well as the development of the United States, why it prevailed for so many decades, and how it finally started to come to an end.

There is no written assignment. You should read the book carefully, thinking about the focus questions identified below and preparing to discuss, in detail, your answers as these questions will find their way into any assessment on the book and into lessons throughout the school year. Be prepared for some type of test on this book when we return to school in September.

- In chapters 2 & 3, Packard notes that many history books in the late 19th and early 20th centuries identified Reconstruction as a failure. These books generally celebrated the resumption of white power in the South as righteous and necessary. Much of this history originated with the so-called “Dunning School” which dominated the teaching of history up to the later decades of the 20th century. Do a little (outside) reading on the “Dunning School.” What is this ‘School of Thought?’ - and how could it have been so persuasive?

- Starting in the 1970s and 80s, historians like Mr. Packard started to reject the interpretations characteristic of the Dunning School. They accept that Reconstruction failed, but they argue it was because of the resumption of white power, the disfranchisement of black voters, the discrimination heaped upon black Americans, and their systematic marginalization in American society, much of which is the development of Jim Crow. Why does Reconstruction fail (to ensure civil rights and equal treatment)?

- One reason, as you’ll see, is that the Courts issue very narrow rulings on the scope of the 14th and 15th amendments, ratified during Reconstruction. There are many critical rulings, but perhaps the largest is the one in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). What do you think of this decision? Did the court rule properly (that is, using a correct interpretation of the Constitution) in reaching their decision?

- What actions and efforts are taken by individuals (and groups), from Reconstruction to the 1960s, to change the status quo and fight against racial discrimination?

- Why does it take so many years (from the late 19th century to the 1960s, at least) to address the failures of Reconstruction?

- Consider the damage done by the century of life under Jim Crow, and not just on Black Americans, their families, and their descendants. What were (and are) the possible repercussions of Jim Crow on American Society?

Have a great summer. If you have any questions feel free to see Mr. Kyle prior to the end of the year. For questions over the summer, email Mr. Kyle at jkyle@pthsd.net.