June 9, 2016

Dear Parents of the Incoming Junior Class:

Many of you are aware that all Dowling Catholic students are required to participate in an all class book-read every summer. **All incoming juniors will read the book Salt to the Sea by Ruta Sepetys during the summer prior to their junior year.** This true story follows three refugees trying to flee Germany during WWI before the Russians invade. Each of these characters has secrets they are trying to overcome through their current actions. They are all trying to get to the cruise ship called the Wilhelm Gustloff because it has promised to carry thousands of passengers to safety, but despite all they have been through, their journey is still far from over. The themes of this book-read are truth, compassion, and wisdom. All juniors will be expected to complete the activities and participate in the group discussions as they are introduced in September.

This particular book was selected because it accurately depicts the Catholic Social Teachings that we want all juniors to become familiar with during their first year as upper classmen here at Dowling Catholic, which are Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, and Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. The book will be actively discussed in all junior English and Theology classes and will be assessed in those classes as well to check for reading and understanding. Reading is highly regarded here at Dowling Catholic and this is one of many ways in which reading will be emphasized for these students.

The book is available online at Amazon and Barnes and Noble for $11.33 (online price only). It is also be on display at both Barnes and Noble locations. In addition to this, it will be available at several local public libraries, who have all been informed of this chosen title. Students are also encouraged to share copies with each other.

We look forward to seeing the Dowling Catholic High School Class of 2018 in August!

Sincerely,

Matt Meendering, Principal  
mmeendering@dowlingcatholic.org

Megan Andersen, School Library Media Specialist  
mandersen@dowlingcatholic.org
Salt to the Sea Study Guide

1. Many readers are surprised by how brutal the Russians are to the Germans during this time, despite the fact that they were all in the middle of a war. Why have people often only heard about the brutality of the Germans and Japanese during WWII?

2. How justifiable is brutality during a war?

3. In what ways do Joana’s actions prove she’s trying to make up for something she has done in her past and what was that past action?

4. Why is Florian traveling with forged papers when he holds an official government job?

5. What has Florian done to hurt the Nazis (and specifically his boss) and why has he done this?

6. Considering the terrible things that have happened to Emilia how does she view the sanctity of life and specifically the life of her unborn child?

7. Describe Alfred and his views on humanity. Is he responsible for the beliefs that have been thrust upon him by the Nazi propaganda?

8. Early on the man nicknamed “the shoe poet” claims that shoes always tell him everything he needs to know about a person. Think of some examples where he proves this throughout the story.

9. When Joana and Florian first meet what medical procedure does she perform on him?

10. What was Florian trained to do by his boss, Dr. Lange? What was the purpose of this training?

11. Florian and Emelia both have trouble trusting others when they first meet, but eventually they grow to trust each other. What are some of the things that transpire between them that lead to mutual trust?

12. What do they find happened to the family who lived in the manor house the shoe poet led them to? What do you think of the actions taken by the former owner of the manor?

13. Who is August and why are thoughts of him so calming to Emelia?

14. What does Florian have hidden in his shoe and why is it so important to him? What is the Amber Room?

15. Describe what happens when they cross the icy lagoon.

16. What is their plan for staying together at registration for boat passage? Does it work?

17. How is Alfred instrumental in getting them registered for the Wilhelm Gustloff?

18. Why does Emelia have a hard time bonding with her baby when she is first born?

19. Why does Florian continue to hide when he is safely on board the ship?

20. Why does Joana consider herself a murderer?

21. What tragedy befalls the Wilhelm Gustloff before it can safely carry its passengers to Kiel?

22. What happens to Emilia, Joana, Florian, and Alfred at the end?