Sports and Literature:
Summer Reading Assignments

1. Print out a copy of the 2 summer reading short stories

2. Read Sir Roger Bannister’s “The Four-Minute Mile” & Caroline Wood Richards’s “Running the New York City Marathon”

3. While Reading, annotate each story under the theme of Inspiration. Highlight, underline or circle specific passages throughout each text that demonstrates examples of this particular theme. Be sure to make note of any questions you may have, statements that you enjoyed reading and why, explanations of how specific excerpts illustrate the theme, character development, etc.

4. After reading both short stories and annotating the text, complete the following assignments in a Google Doc that will be uploaded to the Classroom upon returning to school next year:

A- In a 4 paragraph response (Introduction, 2 Body Paragraphs, and a Conclusion), compare-and-contrast the two short stories. Look for comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) between Bannister’s and Richards’s narratives. Before starting to write, first identify several similarities between the two accounts, as well as several differences. Then, compose a thesis statement that explains the central points you want to make. As you write the essay, use your thesis statement as a guide to organize your ideas.

B- What does Inspiration mean to you? In your own 1 to 2 page narrative, document the most inspirational moment of your life. Told through first person p.o.v., be sure to insert as much commentary on the actions displayed, and how they made you feel at the time. Also, be sure to describe why this moment meant so much to you. (Obviously, I would prefer this moment to be somewhat from the world of sports, but it does not need to be limited to such. The moment can be from any point in your life, as long as you meet the demands from above.)

KEEP THESE AS SEPARATE DOCUMENTS. THEY WILL BE UPLOADED SEPARATELY.
Sir Roger Bannister was born in 1929. On June 5, 1954, he startled the world by being the first person ever to run a mile in under four minutes. For this accomplishment Sports Illustrated named him Sportsman of the Year. Bannister, who at age 25 was already a doctor when he ran that race, gave up athletics and became a full-time neurologist. He was knighted in 1975 and has served as Master of Pembroke College of Oxford University in England.

The Four-Minute Mile
I expected that the summer of 1975 would be my last competitive season. It was certain to be a big year in athletics. There would be the Empire Games in Vancouver, the European Games in Berne, and hopes were running high of a four-minute mile.

The great change that now came over my running was that I no longer trained and raced alone. Perhaps I had mellowed a little and was becoming more sociable. Every day between twelve-thirty and one-thirty I trained on a track in Paddington and had a quick lunch before returning to hospital. We called ourselves the Paddington Lunch Time Club. We came from all parts of London and our common bond was a love of running.

I felt extremely happy in the friendships I made there, as we shared the hard work of repetitive quarter-miles and sprints. These training sessions came to mean almost as much to me as had those at the Oxford track. I could now identify myself more intimately with the failure and success of other runners.

In my hardest training Chris Brasher was with me, and he made the task very much lighter. On Friday evenings he took me along to Chelsea Barracks where his coach, Franz Stampfl, held a training session. At weekends Chris Chataway would join us, and in this friendly atmosphere the very severe training we did became most enjoyable.

1. hospital: St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London, where Bannister was a student at the time.
In December, 1953, we started a new intensive course of training and ran several times a week a series of ten consecutive quarter-miles, each in 66 seconds. Through January and February we gradually speeded them up, keeping to an interval of two minutes between each. By April we could manage them in 61 seconds, but however hard we tried it did not seem possible to reach our target of 60 seconds. We were stuck, or as Chris Brasher expressed it—"bogged down." The training had ceased to do us any good and we needed a change.

Chris Brasher and I drove up to Scotland overnight for a few days' climbing. We turned into the Pass of Glencoe as the sun crept above the horizon at dawn. A misty curtain drew back from the mountains and the "sun's sleepless eye" cast a fresh cold light on the world. The air was calm and fragrant, and the colors of sunrise were mirrored in peaty pools on the moor. Soon the sun was up and we were off climbing. The weekend was a complete mental and physical change. It probably did us more harm than good physically. We climbed hard for the four days we were there, using the wrong muscles in slow and jerking movements.

There was an element of danger too. I remember Chris falling a short way when leading a climb up a rock face depressingly named "Jericho's Wall." Luckily he did not hurt himself. We were both worried lest a sprained ankle might set our training back by several weeks.

After three days our minds turned to running again. We suddenly became alarmed at the thought of taking any more risks, and decided to return. We had slept little, our meals had been irregular. But when we tried to run those quarter-miles again, the time came down to 59 seconds!

It was now less than three weeks to the Oxford University versus A.A.A. race, the first opportunity of the year for us to attack the four-minute mile. Chris Chataway had decided to join Chris Brasher and myself in the A.A.A. team. He doubted his ability to run a three quarter-mile in three minutes, but he generously offered to attempt it.

I had now abandoned the severe training of the previous months and was concentrating entirely on gaining speed and freshness. I had to learn to release in four short minutes the energy I usually spent in half an hour's training. Each training session took on a special significance as the day of the Oxford race drew near. It felt a privilege and joy each time I ran a trial on the track.

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There was no longer any need for my mind to force my limbs to run faster—my body became a unity in motion much greater than the sum of its component parts. I never thought of length of stride or style, or even my judgment of pace. All this had become automatically ingrained. In this way a singleness of drive could be achieved, leaving my mind free from the task of directing operations so that it could fix itself on the great objective ahead. There was more enjoyment in my running than ever before, a new health and vigor. It was as if all my muscles were a part of a perfectly tuned machine. I felt fresh now at the end of each training session.

On April 24 I ran a three-quarter-mile trial in three minutes at Motspur Park with Chataway. I led for the first two laps and we both returned exactly the same time. Four days later I ran a last solo three-quarter-mile trial at Paddington. Norris McWhirter, who had been my patient timekeeper through most of 1953, came over to hold the watch.

The energy of the twins, Norris and Ross McWhirter, was boundless. For them nothing was too much trouble, and they accepted my challenge joyfully. After running together in Oxford as sprinters they carried their partnership into journalism, keeping me posted of the performances of my overseas rivals. They often drove me to athletics meetings, so that I arrived with no fuss, never a minute too soon or too late. Sometimes I was not sure whether it was Norris or Ross who held the watch or drove the car, but I knew that either could be relied upon.

For the trial at Paddington there was as usual a high wind blowing. I would have given almost anything to be able to shirk the test that would tell me with ruthless accuracy what my chances were of achieving a four-minute mile at Oxford. I felt that 2 minutes 59.9 seconds for the three-quarter-mile in a solo training run meant 3 minutes 59.9 seconds in a mile race. A time of 3 minutes 0.1 second would mean 4 minutes 0.1 second for the mile—just the difference between success and failure. The watch recorded a time of 2 minutes 59.9 seconds! I felt a little sick afterward and had the taste of nervousness in my mouth. My speedy recovery within five minutes suggested that I had been holding something back. Two days later at Paddington I ran a 1 minute 54 second half-mile quite easily, after a late night, and then took five days' complete rest before the race.

I had been training daily since the previous November, and now that the crisis was approaching I barely knew what to do with myself. I spent most of the time imagining I was developing a cold and wondering if the
gale-force winds would ever drop. The day before the race I slipped on a
highly polished hospital floor and spent the rest of the day limping. Each
night in the week before the race there came a moment when I saw
myself at the starting line. My whole body would grow nervous and
tremble. I ran the race over in my mind. Then I would calm myself and
sometimes get off to sleep.

Next day was Thursday, May 6, 1954. I went into the hospital as usual,
and at eleven o'clock I was sharpening my spikes on a grindstone in the
laboratory. Someone passing said, "You don't really think that's going to
make any difference, do you?"

I knew the weather conditions made the chances of success practically
nil. Yet all day I was taking the usual precautions for the race, feeling at the
same time that they would prove useless.

I decided to travel up to Oxford alone because I wanted to think
quietly. I took an early train deliberately, opened a carriage door, and, quite
by chance, there was Franz Stampfl inside. I was delighted to see him, as a
friend with the sort of attractive cheerful personality I badly needed at that
moment. Through Chris Brasher, Franz had been in touch with my training
program, but my own connection with him was slight.

I would have liked his advice and help at this moment, but could not
bring myself to ask him. It was as if now, at the end of my running career, I
was being forced to admit that coaches were necessary after all, and that I
had been wrong to think that the athlete could be sufficient unto himself.

In my mind there lurked the memory of an earlier occasion when I had
visited a coach. He had expounded his views on my running and suggested
a whole series of changes. The following week I read a newspaper article he
wrote about my plans, claiming to be my adviser for the 1952 Olympics.
This experience made me inclined to move slowly.

But Franz is not like this. He has no wish to turn the athlete into a
machine working at his dictation. We shared a common view of athletics as
a means of "recreation" of each individual, as a result of the liberation and
expression of the latent power within him. Franz is an artist who can see
beauty in human struggle and achievement.

We talked, almost impersonally, about the problem I faced. In my mind
I had settled this as the day when, with every ounce of strength I possessed,
I would attempt to run the four-minute mile. A wind of gale force was
blowing which would slow me up by a second a lap. In order to succeed I
must run not merely a four-minute mile, but the equivalent of a 3 minute
56 second mile in calm weather.

I had reached my peak physically and psychologically. There would
never be another day like it. I had to drive myself to the limit of my power
without the stimulus of competitive opposition. This was my first race for
eight months and all this time I had been storing nervous energy. If I tried
and failed I should be dejected, and my chances would be less on any later
attempt. Yet it seemed that the high wind was going to make it impossible.

I had almost decided when I entered the carriage at Paddington that
unless the wind dropped soon I would postpone the attempt. I would just
run an easy mile in Oxford and make the attempt on the next possible
occasion ten days later at the White City in London.

Franz understood my apprehension. He thought I was capable of
running a mile in 3 minutes 56 seconds, or 3:57, so he could argue
convincingly that it was worthwhile making the attempt. “With the proper
motivation, that is, a good reason for wanting to do it,” he said, “your
mind can overcome any sort of adversity. In any case the wind might drop.
I remember J. J. Barry in Ireland. He ran a 4 minute 8 second mile without
any training or even proper food—simply because he had the will to run.
Later in America, where he was given every facility and encouragement, he
never ran a fast race. In any case, what if this were your only chance?”

He had won his point. Racing has always been more of a mental than a
physical problem to me. He went on talking about athletes and perfor-
mances, but I heard no more. The dilemma was not banished from my
mind, and the idea left uppermost was that this might be my only chance.
“How would you ever forgive yourself if you rejected it?” I thought, as the
train arrived in Oxford. As it happened, ten days later it was just as windy!

I was met at the station by Charles Wenden, a great friend from my early
days in Oxford, who drove me straight down to Iffley Road. The wind was
almost gale force. Together we walked round the deserted track. The St.
George’s flag on a nearby church stood out from the flagpole. The attempt
seemed hopeless, yet for some unknown reason I tried out both pairs of spikes.
I had a new pair which were specially made for me on the instructions of a
climber and fell walker,^ Eustace Thomas of Manchester. Some weeks before he
had come up to London and together we worked out modifications which

3. fell walker: hiker.
hasted through my mind, how she, at that desperate moment, waited for
again. It throbbed more gently now, and the scene from summer's dawn,
No one need to persuade me. The decision was mine alone, and the
I am, she can be. If
pass before he can give his maximum effort. And how treasurable is such a

failure is an exercise in watching as success, provided the effort is

not dead by until five o'clock.

now is fine. The forecast says the wind may drop toward evening. Let's
just as I knew she would. "The day could be a lot worse, couldn't it?"

in the afternoon I called on China Chiangwei. At the moment the sun

my own restless words. Never was this letter so important as on this day.
Oxford after the war, and some of my earliest memories had been in his com-

Appointments, church, Helen's house, and family, I could forget some of my
small routine of running a home and family. And it was in watching the
-ended the problem was to acquire a suitable lunch, and to see that

learned by common consent, a question to be settled here.

that had to be made, and read about it as much as I did myself. It was
Although both he and his wife Helen knew the importance of the decision
this day, as on many others, I was glad of the peace which I found there.
So still undecided, I drove back to change my clothes, home for lunch. On
saying in weight might well mean the difference between success and failure.
would reduce the weight of each running shot from six to four ounces. This
the wind to change. Yes, the wind was dropping slightly. This was the moment when I made my decision. The attempt was on.

There was complete silence on the ground . . . a false start . . . I felt angry that precious moments during the lull in the wind might be slipping by. The gun fired a second time . . . Brasher went into the lead and I slipped in effortlessly behind him, feeling tremendously full of running. My legs seemed to meet no resistance at all, as if propelled by some unknown force.

We seemed to be going so slowly! Impatiently I shouted "Faster!" But Brasher kept his head and did not change the pace. I went on worrying until I heard the first lap time, 57.5 seconds. In the excitement my knowledge of pace had deserted me. Brasher could have run the first quarter in 55 seconds without my realizing it, because I felt so full of running, but I should have had to pay for it later. Instead, he had made success possible.

At one and a half laps I was still worrying about the pace. A voice shouting "Relax" penetrated to me above the noise of the crowd. I learned afterward it was Stampfli's. Unconsciously I obeyed. If the speed was wrong it was too late to do anything about it, so why worry? I was relaxing so much that my mind seemed almost detached from my body. There was no strain.

I barely noticed the half-mile, passed in 1 minute 58 seconds, nor when, round the next bend, Chataway went into the lead. At three-quarters of a mile the effort was still barely perceptible; the time was 3 minutes 0.7 second, and by now the crowd was roaring. Somehow I had to run that last lap in 59 seconds. Chataway led round the next bend and then I pounced past him at the beginning of the back straight, three hundred yards from the finish.

I had a moment of mixed joy and anguish, when my mind took over. It raced well ahead of my body and drew my body compellingly forward. I felt that the moment of a lifetime had come. There was no pain, only a great unity of movement and aim. The world seemed to stand still, or did not exist. The only reality was the next two hundred yards of track under my feet. The tape meant finality—extinction perhaps.

I felt at that moment that it was my chance to do one thing supremely well. I drove on, impelled by a combination of fear and pride. The air I breathed filled me with the spirit of the track where I had run my first race. The noise in my ears was that of the faithful Oxford crowd. Their hope and encouragement gave me greater strength. I had now turned the last bend and there were only fifty yards more.
overpowered. I knew if I would be some time before I could put my self in a frame of mind fit for peacefulness. I felt bewildered and frustrated happiness, explaining all other feelings. I thought at that moment I had seen the world for years. No words could be invented for such a feeling of repose. I felt sick and listless, as if the burden of physical ambition was upon me. The precious moments of realization those precious moments of realization.

Year by year as the wonderful joy my pain was forgotten and I wanted to prolong and prolong the time, however, there was this usual mitigating influence. We had done it, we had conquered. We shared a piece where no man had yet continued—secured for all time.
Caroline Wood Richards was born in 1973. She graduated from Bates College and Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City. As poet Robert Frost recommended, she combines her vocation and her avocation by teaching high-school English while still finding time to run with her husband and sometimes with her students. Regarding preparing for the New York City Marathon, she says, "The body really fuels the mind. Training for a long-term goal such as a marathon allowed me to see tangible results in my body that gave me the confidence to run the race and meet the challenge of 26.2 miles." About this piece of writing, she says, "I looked forward to the opportunity to reflect on the marathon. The writing allowed me to re-run the race, solidify and preserve my thoughts and feelings on this great personal accomplishment."

Running the New York City Marathon
The official time clock at mile twenty-two reads three hours and forty-five minutes. An anonymous runner to my left and I are joking about how it's going to be really rough to cover the last four miles in fifteen minutes in order to reach the desired four-hour finish. We run together for a hundred or so yards and then he gets lost in the crowd as we turn a corner, and I wonder whether the reason I don't see him is that he's been able to pick up his pace. I know it is crazy, but I still hold out hope to reach Tavern on the Green pretty close to four hours after I crossed the starting line at the Verazanno Narrows Bridge.

Not long after mile twenty-two, I am having a hard time keeping myself together. I am fighting to keep my facial muscles from contorting and my breathing becoming unregulated. I can feel my shoulders creeping toward my ears in two mounds of tension. From somewhere inside me a rational voice is saying, "Not now. Not now," and I repeat this to myself over and over.

I am running the New York Marathon! I am here! After months of training, long runs in both the heat of August and the chill of October,
pre-dawn runs navigating cars, cyclists and wild animals, trips to the knee doctor, and countless moments of exhilaration and doubt, I have arrived and not only am I fine, but I feel good. The thought of realizing my goal is overwhelming me to the point of tears and yet part of me knows that to get emotional here and now will ruin the rest of the run for me. That by allowing the sobs that are catching in my throat to break free, I will lose the precious rhythm which I am so lucky to have.

Instead, I take some Gatorade from a well-wishing middle-school student in a rain slicker and retreat inward, away from the crowd, because interacting with them is too real and is draining too much of my energy. I mentally re-run the early miles of the race (when adrenaline and blood sugar were both in abundance) that for me were so exhilarating. I hope that this activity will eat up some of the time it will take my fiancé running-partner and me to cover the remaining miles.

The start of the race was like nothing I have ever seen before. A sea of people in all directions, nervously self-absorbed yet friendly. I both love and hate every one of the eight minutes it takes my fiancé and me to cross the start line. I draw energy from my fellow runners and also from the helicopters swarming above us. It’s exciting and I’m scared, but I am pumped. I am ready! I have worked hard for this, and know that I will do it well.

Brooklyn is the first borough off the bridge and it will become one of my favorite parts of the race. The pack of runners is very thick, but the pace is good. The crowd is incredible. People are everywhere and they call my name, which I have written on my shirt, as I run by. “Go, Caroline!” “Come on, Caroline!” “Caroline!” Children are on their parents’ shoulders and almost everyone has a hand extended to give us high fives as we go past. Somewhere on a street lined with beautiful brownstones, some guys have The Village People’s hit song “YMCA” blaring from their stereo system and I forget that I am not out on the dance floor and my arms shoot above my head and do the appropriate letter formations as I charge up a hill. Everyone in my immediate vicinity is singing and dancing and I am disappointed when the beat of the music fades in the distance.

Coming off the 59th Street Bridge from Queens into Manhattan is like nothing else in this world. The roar of thousands catches me and carries me like a hero all the way up First Avenue from 59th Street to the Willis Avenue Bridge. Countless arches of colored balloons cross First Avenue and I know that somewhere up there around 83rd Street, my parents and
alone we have conceived something which neither of us thought possible.

endure. I have had someone with whom to grow and share, together and
this together: No only have I learned what I am capable of, and what I can
the line as intensely personal as long distance running. We've done
down the hill to the finish and throw our joined hands in the air as we cross
park and grip Burt's hand in anticipation of the finish which we have
I pick up the pace as I round the corner from 28th Street into Central

but exhilarated look in front of the other

will my will and desire to realize a long-term goal force me to put one ahead
me to the finish. They are behind me, and their encouragement combined
come out of my reflections to hear the crowd shouting at me and urging

know I can do it. I know that it is within me, but now I can find the 25-
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be like to train and run the New York City Marathon with a disability.

an image which eludes my influence and wondrous at what it must
a burning desire to be here, I am determined to leave the pain behind and
are the things which come from this course, and I can

the impact of feet on steel, and the pace is slow, concerned about my time.

Only a narrow portion of the Willis Avenue Bridge is carpeted to lessen

This page belongs
every pound of my sneaker and every cheer from the fans is paid this is my
encouraging remarks as we run by. The thought resonates in my head with
balloons and streamers, holding our orange water and water bottles
friends are watching for me: People are lined up through deep carpeting