

Summer Reading for High School Students

During the summer each high school student is required to read **2 books** from the list below and complete **2 choice assignments** that follows the reading list.

A Lesson Before Dying by Ernest J. Gaines. Set in a small Cajun community in the late 1940s, "A Lesson Before Dying" is an "enormously moving" ("Los Angeles Times") novel of one man condemned to die for a crime he did not commit and a young man who visits him in his cell. In the end, the two men forge a bond as they both come to understand the simple heroism of resisting--and defying--the expected. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction. ISBN: 9780785769811

A Street Car Named Desire by Tennessee Williams: The play takes place right after World War II, in New Orleans. The Kowalski apartment is in a poor but charming neighborhood in the French Quarter. Stella, twenty-five years old and pregnant, lives with her blue collar husband **Stanley Kowalski**. It is summertime, and the heat is oppressive. **Blanche Dubois**, Stella's older sister, arrives unexpectedly, carrying all that she owns. Blanch and Stella have a warm reunion, but Blanch has some bad news: Belle Reve, the family mansion, has been lost. Blanche stayed behind to care for their dying family while Stella left to make a new life for herself, and Blanche is resentful.

The Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan. Set in San Francisco and in a Chinese village, this novel is about a San Francisco career woman, Ruth Young, who makes her living by ghostwriting self-help books. Ruth's mother, who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, had given Ruth documents about a cave where dragon bones are mined, some of which may prove to be the teeth of Peking Man. ISBN: 0399146431.

Breathing Underwater by Alex Flinn. This realistic adolescent novel is about sixteen year-old Nick who is sent to counseling for hitting his girlfriend, Caitlin, and ordered to keep a journal. He examines his controlling behavior and his turbulent home life with an abusive father. ISBN: 0064472574.

Dracula by Bram Stoker: Jonathon Harker is the clerk of a young English solicitor. He travels to Castle Dracula in Transylvania in order to finalize the purchase of Carfax, the Count's house near the lunatic asylum in Purfleet, Essex. One evening, Harker wanders around the castle and encounters three seductive vampiresses. It is at this point that Harker's suspicions regarding his host are confirmed. He is imprisoned in the castle and, to his horror, Dracula sets off for England. Dracula's entourage is a consignment of wooden boxes filled with earth from the family graveyard.

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal by Eric Schlosser. This nonfiction work traces the growth of fast food chains and blames the fast food industry for obesity, widening the gap between the rich and poor, for ruining the environment and for global imperialism. ISBN: 0060938455.

Flight to Freedom by Ana Veciana-Suarez. This adolescent novel, part of the First Person Fiction series and written by Herald columnist Ana Suarez, is about the experience of coming to America. Yara Garcia and her family live a middle-class life in Havana but are forced to flee to Miami. This book poignantly documents Yara's story of

exile and adjustment. ISBN: 0439381991.

The Grass Dancer by Susan Power. This book tells the story of Harley Wind Soldier, a young Sioux, and several generations of his ancestors. The Sioux of North Dakota are explored through short stories, written from the tradition of oral histories, which tie the Sioux lives together. ISBN: 0425149625.

Krik? Krak! by Edwidge Danticat This challenging collection of intimate stories by Haitian-American author Danticat is about life under Haiti's dictatorships and about those who fled to America to give their children a better life. ISBN: 067976657X.

Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands by Susan Carol McCarthy. Based on actual crimes committed by the KKK in central Florida during the 50s, this novel of historical fiction is told through the eyes of twelve-year-old Reesa, in reality the author. ISBN: 0553381032.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass. This classic slave narrative was an instant bestseller in 1845 and has remained a must-read. Douglass used real names in the work and had to flee this country for a while. It depicts slavery as an assault on selfhood and focuses on becoming an individual. ISBN: 0312257376.

1984 by George Orwell. This classic describes a totalitarian society in which the government, referred to as the Party and ruled by Big Brother, controls behavior and thought of the people. An underground Brotherhood attempts resistance. The National Council of Teachers of English plans a "1984 + 20 Project" in October. ISBN: 0679417397.

The Physics of Star Trek by Lawrence Krauss. This nonfiction work by a renowned physicist discusses the current reality of transport beams, warp drives, dilithium crystals, holodecks, tractor beams, wormholes and other concepts frequently incorporated into the various Stark Trek television series. ISBN: 0060977108.

Seabiscuit: An American Legend by Laura Hillenbrand. This nonfiction work is about the world of thoroughbred horse racing and focuses on one of the sport's legends during the 1930s and 1940s. This is the universal underdog story. ISBN: 0449005615.

The Art of War by Sun Tzu: **1.** Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State. **2.** It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected. **3.** The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field. These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth; (4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien. This book depicts a group of soldiers as they march through Vietnam. They carried such things as malaria tablets, love letters, 28-pound mine detectors, dope, illustrated Bibles, each other. They also carry many intangibles. ISBN: 0767902890

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston. This novel centers on an African-American woman who tells her life story. Married three times, the protagonist is black, strong, and tender, unusual for female protagonists of the 30s. She goes through

much suffering and pain and resultant growth. This book was selected for the 2004 Read Together, Florida initiative. ISBN: 0060931418.

The Waste Land by T.S. Eliot: An extensive 5 part poem that begins with a section entitled "The Burial of the Dead". This is T.S. Eliot's vision of modern life as plagued by sordid impulses, widespread apathy, and pervasive soullessness.

Witness by Karen Hesse. This adolescent novel, written entirely in free verse, depicts the viewpoints of eleven characters who chronicle the events occurring in a 1924 Vermont town after the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan. ISBN: 0439272009.

Zoo Story by Edward Albee: The story, in simplest terms, is about how a man who is consumed with loneliness starts up a conversation with another man on a bench in Central Park and eventually forces him to participate in an act of violence. Combining both realistic and absurd elements, Albee has constructed a short but multi-leveled play dealing with issues of human isolation, loneliness, class differences, and the dangers of inaction within American society. He focuses on the need for people to acknowledge and understand each other's differences.

Choices for Required Assignments:

Choice A: A student is to keep a Reader Response Journal. Journals are to include what was read, response to what was read, questions and/or deeper analysis of what was read. Each entry must include pages read – the more pages read at each entry, the longer and more detailed the entry is expected to be. Would the you (the student) have an alternate ending? Why or why not? Explain within the journal. Each student should turn in a composition book **completely** filled out! Teachers will be looking for context, details, page references, citations of exact quotes, in-depth analysis and well thought out responses. Journals with pages full of large writing, simply to take up space will be critically graded.

Choice B: A student is to write a Critical Book Review. (Format/Rubric below)

Choice C: Student is to create a detailed story board of pertinent events - a comic-book version which is to include actual character quotes from text. This story board is to be accompanied by 2 page explanation of story Board....Why were such scenes chosen while others were left out? Plot? Climax? Resolution? Alternate Ending? Paper is to be typed, Times New Roman, 12-font, 1 inch margins.

Choice B: Critical Book Review

DUE: 1st day of school (NO EXCEPTIONS!)

Choice of Books

You may choose any book listed on the Summer Reading List. All books have a small summary to indicate genre and induce interest.

How to Write a Critical Book Review

Some tips adapted from: Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing History (Boston, 1995), 4-5:

A book review is not the same thing as a book report, which simply summarizes the content of a book. When writing a book review, you not only report on the content of the book but also assess its strengths and weaknesses. Students sometimes feel unqualified to write a book review; after all, the author of the book is a professional historian. However, even if you cannot write from the same level of experience and knowledge as the author, you *can* write an effective review if you understand what the assignment requires. In writing a review you do not just relate whether or not you liked the book; you also tell your readers *why* you liked or disliked it. It is not enough to say, "This book is interesting"; you need to explain *why* it is interesting. Similarly, it is not enough to report that you disliked a book; you must explain your reaction. Did you find the book unconvincing because the author did not supply enough evidence to support his or her assertions? Or did you disagree with the book's underlying assumptions?

To understand your own reaction to the book, you need to read it carefully and critically.

As a critical reader, you are not passive; you should ask questions of the book and note reactions as you read. Your book review then discusses those questions and reactions. Though there is no "correct" way to structure a review, the following is one possible approach.

- Summarize the book and relate the author's main point, or thesis. (Somewhere early in the paper, identify the author briefly.)
- Describe the author's viewpoint and purpose for writing; note any aspects of the author's background that are important for understanding the book.
- Note the most important evidence the author presents to support his or her thesis.
- Evaluate the author's use of evidence, and describe how he or she deals with counter evidence.
- Is the book's argument convincing? If so why, if not, why not. Cite examples from the text.
- Compare this book with other books or articles you have read on the same subject.
- Conclude with a final evaluation of the book. You might discuss who would find this book useful and why.

- *NOTE:* "Critical" does not mean negative; skeptical does not mean cynical. If a book is well written and presents an original thesis supported by convincing evidence, say so. A good book review does not have to be negative; it does have to be fair and analytical.

Expectation is a paper of 4-5 pages with appropriate *citations*.

**Remember to double space, 1-inch margins, Time New Roman, 12-Font, MLA format in-text citations. If there are any questions regarding appropriate citations, Google search: MLA Citations Purdue OWL.

Source: Professor Michael Kucher, *How to Write Book Reviews*,
http://courses.washington.edu/tande/book_reviews.htm