

Summer Reading Assignment 2020-2021
Honors American Literature | Oakland Catholic High School

Introduction*

For your summer reading assignment, you will have the chance to explore diverse ideas through a variety of texts and to respond to your reading and thinking through creative notetaking.

You will need to purchase print copies (no ebooks) of three texts, listed in the assignment below. You may purchase these texts from a variety of sources, including traditional and online booksellers. Next to the text required texts (*The Joy Luck Club* and *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*) the appropriate ISBN number is listed. Please purchase that particular copy of the text to streamline page numbers.

All the parts of this assignment are due the first week of school. Please bring all three purchased texts to school the first day of class.

Part 1 – Organizing thoughts through notetaking

Text – The StudyTee video on YouTube, “How I take notes (neat and effective)”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amVHBIhWwCo>.

Assignment: - Think about how organizing notes can help your study of literature. Get a notebook or binder of your choice with the style of paper that you prefer (lined, graph, blank, bullet point, etc.) You will use this notebook to create notes for your summer reading books as well as the major works that we study, so find one that you really like.

Why it is important – Often, we can feel disorganized when we learn something new. We may feel “lost” or overwhelmed by seemingly unconnected details. To combat this, notetaking consolidates new information into organized, categorized, visually-appealing formats. Notetaking will help you to better see and connect the important aspects of a text. This notebook will serve as a means to consolidate what you have learned throughout the year, allowing you to retrieve the significant progress we make. Make it your own. Decorate it if you like or keep it clean and clear.

Part 2 – Reading

Texts 1 + 2 – *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan ISBN: 978-0143038092
Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother by Amy Chua ISBN: 978-0143120582

Assignment – Read and annotate **at least one** (but my hope is both!) of these texts.

To annotate use a system that works for you. Here are some ideas to get you started, but you can also search for more “how to annotate” videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qAv23SfR2Q> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=246&v=muZcJXlfCWs

Create a page of notes in your notebook (listed above) to compare another culture’s experience to the American experience. Think about what the experiences in this text can reveal about American culture, Eastern culture, and what happens when East meets West. Take note of time period as well, keeping track of when the texts represent contrasts of the past and contrasts that still exist today. Feel free to compare to other texts, ideas, and personal experiences.

Why it is important – A mature thinker connects ideas, eras, cultural perspectives, and experiences. This comparison will serve as the jumping off point for our study of American Literature.

Text 3 – Choice book from the “Choice Novels for Research Paper Summer 2020” list

Assignment – Ultimately, you will be writing a research paper on this book. For now, read and annotate the book, using the instructions in the videos above, and create one notes page about your book

How you organize this page is up to you. I realize this may seem vague and undefined, but think of it this way: I am empowering you to create what you want. All I’m asking is that you create an interesting page of notes about your reading experience. The possibilities are endless; it’s up to you to make it awesome!

If you want ideas of places to start, consider setting (both place and time period and how that informs the story), characters (appearances, characteristics, motivations, development from beginning through middle to end), theme (what messages is the author addressing and how?), symbols, connections to self, text or world, key quotes, etc.

Why it is important – Thoughtful readers write to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately by selecting apt and specific evidence, organizing that evidence into broader ideas, and conveying the impact of its meaning. You will be responsible to write a research paper based on an accurate, thorough analysis of this book. Please do diligent reading, thinking, and organizing thoughts now. This will greatly help your research paper writing process.

**Note: the language and requirements of this assignment are inspired by Brian Sztabnik’s Summer Reading Assignment 2.0*

Choice Novels for Research Paper Summer 2020:

***All brief descriptions are from bn.com. Look up a bit more about each if interested!*

Annie John by Jamaica Kincaid

Annie John is a haunting and provocative story of a young girl growing up on the island of Antigua. A classic coming-of-age story in the tradition of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Kincaid's novel focuses on a universal, tragic, and often comic theme: the loss of childhood. Annie's voice—urgent, demanding to be heard—is one that will not be forgotten by readers.

The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton

Winner of the 1921 Pulitzer Prize, *The Age of Innocence* is Edith Wharton’s masterful portrait of desire and betrayal during the sumptuous Golden Age of Old New York, a time when society people “dreaded scandal more than disease.” This is Newland Archer’s world as he prepares to marry the beautiful but conventional May Welland. But when the mysterious Countess Ellen Olenska returns to New York after a disastrous marriage, Archer falls deeply in love with her. Torn between duty and passion, Archer struggles to make a decision that will either courageously define his life—or mercilessly destroy it.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath***

Sylvia Plath's shocking, realistic, and intensely emotional novel about a woman falling into the grip of insanity. Esther Greenwood is brilliant, beautiful, enormously talented, and successful, but slowly going under—maybe for the last time. In her acclaimed and enduring masterwork, Sylvia Plath brilliantly draws the reader into Esther's breakdown with such intensity that her insanity becomes palpably real, even rational—as accessible an experience as going to the movies. A deep penetration into the darkest and most harrowing corners of the human psyche, *The Bell Jar* is an extraordinary accomplishment and a haunting American classic.

The Color Purple by Alice Walker***

This is the story of two sisters—one a missionary in Africa and the other a child wife living in the South—who sustain their loyalty to and trust in each other across time, distance, and silence. Beautifully imagined and deeply compassionate, this classic novel of American literature is rich with passion, pain, inspiration, and an indomitable love of life.

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury's internationally acclaimed novel *Fahrenheit 451* is a masterwork of twentieth-century literature set in a bleak, dystopian future.

Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden.

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote***

On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their faces. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues. As Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation that led to the capture, trial, and execution of the killers, he generates both mesmerizing suspense and astonishing empathy. *In Cold Blood* is a work that transcends its moment, yielding poignant insights into the nature of American violence.

My Antonia by Willa Cather

Widely recognized as Willa Cather's greatest novel, *My Antonia* is a soulful and rich portrait of a pioneer woman's simple yet heroic life. The spirited daughter of Bohemian immigrants, Antonia must adapt to a hard existence on the desolate prairies of the Midwest. Enduring childhood poverty, teenage seduction, and family tragedy, she eventually becomes a wife and mother on a Nebraska farm. A fictional record of how women helped forge the communities that formed a nation, *My Antonia* is also a hauntingly eloquent celebration of the strength, courage, and spirit of America's early pioneers.

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

America's first psychological novel, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is a dark tale of love, crime, and revenge set in colonial New England. It revolves around a single, forbidden act of passion that forever alters the lives of three members of a small Puritan community: Hester Prynne, an ardent and fierce woman who bears the punishment of her sin in humble silence; the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, a respected public figure who is inwardly tormented by long-hidden guilt; and the malevolent Roger Chillingworth, Hester's husband—a man who seethes with an Ahab-like lust for vengeance. The landscape of this classic novel is uniquely American, but the themes it explores are universal—the nature of sin, guilt, and penitence, the clash between our private and public selves, and the spiritual and psychological cost of living outside society. Constructed with the elegance of a Greek tragedy, *The Scarlet Letter* brilliantly illuminates the truth that lies deep within the human heart.

Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison***

A first novel by an unknown writer, it remained on the bestseller list for sixteen weeks, won the National Book Award for fiction, and established Ralph Ellison as one of the key writers of the century. The nameless narrator of the novel describes growing up in a black community in the South, attending a Negro college from which he is expelled, moving to New York and becoming the chief spokesman of the Harlem branch of "the Brotherhood", and retreating amid violence and confusion to the basement lair of the Invisible Man he imagines himself to be. The book is a passionate and witty tour de force of style, strongly influenced by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce, and Dostoevsky.

*** *Contains challenging and controversial material suitable for more mature readers*