

WALT WHITMAN HIGH SCHOOL

SUMMER READING LIST FOR GRADE 9

2009-2010

The English Department looks forward to welcoming you to Walt Whitman and congratulates you on this new step in your academic journey. To assist you in your new endeavor, the 9th grade English teachers have given careful thought to compiling a list of summer reading selections. We want you to be challenged, entertained, and introduced to literature that reflects the depth of and, in some cases, provides the background to the literature you may read and analyze during the next four years. We encourage you to form summer book clubs with your friends, to discuss themes, character development, and literary styles, and to view parentally acceptable films made from some selections. In short, have fun while you complete the requirements.

Each student must read **two** selections over the summer.

Drama- One selection must be a play written by one of the listed American playwrights below. You will reflect on the play three times during the course of your reading and will record your impressions in reading logs. The reading logs should be at least one page in length each and should convey your opinions on a variety of story elements, such as; setting, characters, themes, relationships, style, and symbolism. Logs will be collected in the first week of school. Additional assessments may be given within the first four weeks of school at the teacher's discretion.

Choice- One selection must be chosen from the list below by both the student and his or her parent. Both parent and student should read the same text and discuss the work periodically throughout the process using the given discussion questions to elicit a dialogue. Answers to these questions will be collected in the first week of school and must be signed by the parent. Selections will be assessed in an in-class essay within the first four weeks of school.

Discussion Questions-

1. What do you already know about this author?
2. Peruse the cover, jacket, and first few pages of the book and predict what the book will be about.
3. How does the book open? Consider word choice, tone, and setting.
4. Which characters are dynamic? Which are static? Explain.
5. What are the major conflicts in the book? How are the conflicts resolved?
6. What is the turning point(s)?
7. Describe the climax.
8. How are relationships developed?
9. What is the author trying to convey about human nature or life (theme)?
10. Do you like the book? Why or why not?

Summer reading assessments will account for 5% of the first quarter grade.

Note: If there is a movie version of the summer reading book, you may be required to contrast and compare key elements of the movie and the text. Check the rating; if you are not allowed to see an R rated movie, don't watch it!

Drama Selections:

- **Tennessee Williams-** Do not choose *The Glass Menagerie*, per request of English Department
- **Thornton Wilder**
- **August Wilson-** Do not choose *Fences*, per request of English Department
- **Arthur Miller-** Do not choose *Death of a Salesman* or *The Crucible*, per request of English Department
- **David Mamet**
- **Neil Simon**
- **Sam Shephard**
- **Eugene O'Neil**
- **Tony Kushner**

Any logs which relate to *The Glass Menagerie*, *Fences*, *Death of a Salesman*, or *The Crucible* will not be accepted as these plays will be covered in-depth later in high school.

Choice Selections:

Blackbird by Jennifer Lauck - A beautiful memoir, both heartbreaking and absorbing, of a child's loss, loneliness and ability to survive and grow.

Caine Mutiny by Herman Wouk - One of Wouk's best known works, this World War II novel of mutiny aboard the USS Caine explores ethical and legal issues of military law in a real-life situation when the sailors and officers of the Caine are faced with the paranoia of their Captain, Queeg. (Movie version with Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney)

Days of Grace by Arthur Ashe - An introspective and poignant memoir by this champion tennis player who helped to break more racial barriers. Ashe recounts his difficult childhood, his struggles to overcome athletic barriers and his activism on behalf of those stricken with AIDS, after being stricken with the disease through a blood transfusion. He also championed such causes as apartheid and US policy on immigration.

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes – This is a highly original novel about a mentally challenged man named Charles who yearns to be smart. After a group of scientists select him for an experimental operation that will raise his intelligence to genius level, Charlie finds himself, and his life, forever changed. The story of his intellectual development is told entirely through Charlie's eyes.

The Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammett - Hammett's award-winning classic mystery involving a hard-nosed private eye, a dangerous dame, and a mysterious bird. This classic became the model for the genre in the 1940s and 1950s.(an Oscar winning movie starring the incomparable Humphrey Bogart. His character becomes the model for the film noir private eye)

This Boy's Life by Tobias Wolff - PEN/Faulkner Award winning Syracuse University Professor's memoir of withstanding the ravages of a brutal, dysfunctional family by outrageously reinventing himself. At times very grim and at times darkly humorous but a tale of triumph. (R-rated movie version available starring Robert DeNiro)

Alas Babylon by Pat Frank - Survival after a submarine nuclear attack is the focus of this story of a small group of people in Fort Repose, Florida. Rationing food, reestablishing law and order, and pondering whether there will be any future for the survivors are some of the concerns of organizer-leader Randy Bragg. The writing is simple, straightforward, and practical.

Emma by Jane Austen - An amusing look at Regency England's manners and social mores embodied by the delightful mis-matchmaker, Emma. (Movie versions: *Emma*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow, and the fun update, *Clueless*, starring Alicia Silverstone)

A Great and Terrible Beauty by Libba Bray – Libba Bray's Gothic tale of a Victorian era girls' school with a deadly secret focuses on Gemma, who at 16 must leave colonial India – the only home she has known – when her mother dies under bizarre circumstances. Forced to attend a British boarding school, Gemma is both confused and intrigued by a circle of girls who seem to hold strange power.

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens – A product of one of Victorian England's most popular serials, the novel is told in the words of a young man named Pip and chronicles his journey to manhood. After a terrifying encounter with convicts, Pip's hopes and expectations progress as he experiences rags to riches, and gradually learns about the politics and power of class, loyalty, and love.

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte - The suspenseful gothic tale of forbidden secrets, madness, and social consciousness. A young, penniless orphan journeys from governess to mistress of the manor, written at a time when women were forced to write under male pseudonyms and damsels were always in distress. (Two movies: the incredible Orson Wells and Joan Fontaine, perfectly cast as the waif-like victim with a steel backbone; a 1996 version with William Hurt and Charlotte Gainsborough)

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair - A look inside the horrors of the Chicago meat packing industry in the 1920's and 1930's.

Rebecca by Daphne Du Maurier - A modern companion to the classic tale of Jane Eyre where the delicate heroine saves both the day and the hero and rises from rags to riches. A suspenseful thriller, replete with great, threatening villains, mansions, and atmosphere. (Movie – Sir Lawrence Olivier and a type-cast Joan Fontaine original. Wonderfully creepy supporting characters)