

DHS Summer Reading Assignment for the 2009-2010 School Year

Oh, no! Not another summer reading letter!

Wait a minute. This one is different. We promise. But first, a little background. Why summer reading? Because whatever a student's plans are for the future, it is imperative that they be able to read in a variety of disciplines—math, science, literature, the arts, technology, history—as well as in the increasingly technical languages of their interests. Students today face H.S.A. tests, S.A.T. tests, A.C.T. tests, Accuplacer tests, A.P. tests, course completer tests, and certification tests. One skill that all of these tests require is the ability to read effectively. Students today also live in a world where the amount of information—and propaganda and advertising—that they must sift through every day is overwhelming: There is more information in a week's worth of the *New York Times*, for example, than the average person would encounter *in a lifetime* in the 18th century. The ability to read, understand, and manipulate all this information is the single most important skill tomorrow's workforce will demand.

If all that is true, then allowing students to “take two months off” is unconscionable. A student who doesn't participate in summer reading during his or her high school years is eight months behind his or her peers in reading—almost a full school year. That is a gap no student can afford.

But, for summer reading to work, one thing must happen: Students must actually *read*. The challenge is to find that perfect book—or magazine, or daily newspaper—to spark an interest in each student. Our goal is to develop the habit of reading. So, instead of assigning specific books, **we are asking all students to set their own summer reading goal and to keep track of what they read as they try to attain that goal.** For example, maybe you want to set a minimum number of pages that you will read each day, or a minimum number of pages you will read over the summer. Maybe you want to read the front page of the *Washington Post* every day—or the entire *New York Times* for a week. Perhaps you want to read the graphic novels upon which *300* and *The Watchmen* were based. Set a goal and track your progress on the form on the back of this letter, then turn the form—complete with parent signature—in to your English teacher on the second day of classes in August. **This form will be worth 10 homework points.**

Students taking A.P. English 11 are asked to read an award-winning *nonfiction* book (single author, collection, or anthology) as a part of their summer reading choices. Students taking A.P. English 12 are asked to read an award-winning *poetry* book (single author, collection, or anthology) as a part of their other summer reading choices. A.P. students will receive an additional letter suggesting possible summer reading titles and detailing how their summer reading will be assessed.

The choice is yours. There is something out there for everyone. Browse the magazine rack at Borders. Read your favorite online blog. Ask your favorite teacher. Look at the books posted on the bulletin boards in the English hallway. Visit the DHS Media Center. Check out the books at the Damascus Library. Google award-winning Nobel authors, Pulitzer Prize titles, or the recent Whitbread (first novel) or Hugo (sci-fi) prize. Check out the DHS web page for a list of links to award-winning books. Just read.

Joseph Nava, English Department Resource Teacher
Damascus High School

Summer Reading Completion Form for _____
(Student name/grade)

This summer, I my goal was to read _____.
(number of pages; number of books; number of magazine issues, etc.)

I set this goal because _____
_____.

Some of the things that I read were:

(Title of book/article/magazine; number of pages)

(Title of book/article/magazine; number of pages)

(Title of book/article/magazine; number of pages)

(Title of book/article/magazine; number of pages)

(Title of book/article/magazine; number of pages)

(Attach additional pages if needed)

The best thing that I read this summer was _____

(Title of book/article/magazine)

I liked it best because _____

_____.

(Parent signature/Date)

(Student signature/Date)