

Rising 12th Graders Summer Reading Assignment

Duluth High School 2019-2020

The language arts department of Duluth High School recognizes the importance of summer reading in the educational development of our students. The benefits range from improved vocabulary (hence better SAT/ACT scores) to a better understanding of the world and its inhabitants.

Honors: Honors students are **REQUIRED** to complete summer reading. You will choose a book from the list attached and read it over the summer. While reading, you are encouraged to make notes for review. You will be given a test on the novel on the first week of school; it will count as a 100 point test grade.

CP: CP students will receive extra credit for completing the same assignment as listed for Honors students above. For doing this work, you will receive a 100 test grade as bonus.

Because the books may contain mature subject matter and language, we recommend that parents serve an active role in deciding on the appropriateness of the books chosen.

Read this document thoroughly and email a 12th grade language arts teacher if you have any questions.

[Laura M. Clark@gwinnett.k12.ga.us](mailto:Laura_M_Clark@gwinnett.k12.ga.us) or

[Wanda Greene@gwinnett.k12.ga.us](mailto:Wanda_Greene@gwinnett.k12.ga.us) or

Melinda_Cholewinski@gwinnett.k12.ga.us

Obtain your summer assignment books immediately, as you may have difficulty finding them at the last minute. Do not procrastinate!

Test date: Friday, August 9th

Dystopian Choice Book – Please pick ONE dystopian novel from the list below to read over the summer. Please read closely and annotate your text using the notes in this packet. Be prepared to discuss the dystopian protagonist, the type of dystopian control in that society, and the characteristics of the dystopian society in the novel that you choose.

MODERN CLASSICS:

Parable of the Sower – Octavia Butler

Octavia E. Butler, the grande dame of science fiction, writes extraordinary, inspirational stories of ordinary people. *Parable of the Sower* is a hopeful tale set in a dystopian future United States of walled cities, disease, fires, and madness. Lauren Olamina is an 18-year-old woman with hyperempathy syndrome--if she sees another in pain, she feels their pain as acutely as if it were real. When her relatively safe neighborhood enclave is inevitably destroyed, along with her family and dreams for the future, Lauren grabs a backpack full of supplies and begins a journey north. Along the way, she recruits fellow refugees to her embryonic faith, Earthseed, the prime tenet of which is that "God is change." This is a great book--simple and elegant, with enough message to make you think, but not so much that you feel preached to.

Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood

Atwood presents here a fable of the near future. In the Republic of Gilead, formerly the United States, far-right, religious extremists type ideals have been carried to extremes in the monotheocratic government. The resulting society is a feminist's nightmare: women are strictly controlled, unable to have jobs or money and assigned to various classes: the chaste, childless Wives; the housekeeping Marthas; and the reproductive Handmaids, who turn their offspring over to the "morally fit" Wives. The tale is told by Offred (read: "of Fred"), a Handmaid who recalls the past and tells how the chilling society came to be.

Never Let Me Go – Kazuo Ishiguro

All children should believe they are special. But the students of Hailsham, an elite school in the English countryside, are so special that visitors shun them, and only by rumor and the occasional fleeting remark by a teacher do they discover their unconventional origins and strange destiny. Kazuo Ishiguro's sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go*, is a masterpiece of indirection. Like the students of Hailsham, readers are "told but not told" what is going on and should be allowed to discover the secrets of Hailsham and the truth about these children on their own. Offsetting the bizarreness of these revelations is the placid, measured voice of the narrator, Kathy H., a 31-year-old Hailsham alumna who, at the close of the 1990s, is consciously ending one phase of her life and beginning another. She is in a reflective mood, and recounts not only her childhood memories, but her quest in adulthood to find out more about Hailsham and the idealistic women who ran it. Although often poignant, Kathy's matter-of-fact narration blunts the sharper emotional effects you might expect in a novel that deals with illness, self-sacrifice, and the severe restriction of personal freedoms.

YOUNG ADULT:

Delirium – Lauren Oliver

Lena Haloway is content in her safe, government-managed society. She feels (mostly) relaxed about the future in which her husband and career will be decided, and looks forward to turning 18, when she'll be cured of deliria, a.k.a. love. She tries not to think about her mother's suicide (her last words to Lena were a forbidden "I love you") or the supposed "Invalid" community made up of the uncured just beyond her Portland, Maine, border. There's no real point—she believes her government knows how to best protect its people, and should do so at any cost. But 95 days before her cure, Lena meets Alex, a confident and mysterious young man who makes her heart flutter and her skin turn red-hot. As their romance blossoms, Lena begins to doubt the intentions of those in power, and fears that her world will turn gray should she submit to the procedure. In this powerful and beautifully written novel, Lauren Oliver, the bestselling author of *Before I Fall*, throws readers into a tightly controlled society where options don't exist, and shows not only the lengths one will go for a chance at freedom, but also the true meaning of sacrifice.

MADE FAMOUS BY THE MOVIE. . . BUT THE BOOK IS BETTER! (AND DIFFERENT)

I Am Legend – Richard Matheson

One of the most influential vampire novels of the 20th century, *I Am Legend* regularly appears on the "10 Best" lists of numerous critical studies of the horror genre. As Richard Matheson's third novel, it was first marketed as science fiction (for although written in 1954, the story takes place in a future 1976). A terrible plague has decimated the world, and those who were unfortunate enough to survive have been transformed into blood-thirsty creatures of the night. Except, that is, for Robert Neville. He alone appears to be immune to this disease, but the grim irony is that now he is the outsider. He is the legendary monster who must be destroyed because he is different from everyone else.

Employing a stark, almost documentary style, Richard Matheson was one of the first writers to convince us that the undead can lurk in a local supermarket freezer as well as a remote Gothic castle. His influence on a generation of bestselling authors--including Stephen King and Dean Koontz--who first read him in their youth is, well, legendary.

Running Man – Stephen King

Stephen King (writing as Richard Bachman) describes a science fiction dystopia where market capitalism and television game shows have spiraled out of control, and the separation between the haves and the have-nots has been formalized with separate currencies. King establishes characters quickly, creating sympathy in the first few pages for Ben Richards--whose 18-month-old baby girl is suffering from a horrible cough, perhaps pneumonia. Not able to afford medicine, Richards enters himself in the last-chance money-making scheme of the Free-Vee games. The games include *Treadmill to Bucks*, in which heart-attack prone contestants struggle to outlast a progressively demanding treadmill, or the accurately named *Swim the Crocodiles*. After a rigorous battery of physical and mental examinations, Richards is assigned "Elevator Six"--the path of a chosen few--that leads to *The Running Man* game. In this game, the stakes and the prizes are raised. Success means a life of luxury. Failure means death. Unfortunately, few ever win the game; in fact, as the producer tells Richards, in six years no one has survived.

The Road - Cormac McCarthy

Cormac McCarthy sets his new novel, *The Road*, in a post-apocalyptic blight of gray skies that drizzle ash, a world in which all matter of wildlife is extinct, starvation is not only prevalent but nearly all-encompassing, and marauding bands of cannibals roam the environment with pieces of human flesh stuck between their teeth. If this sounds oppressive and dispiriting, it is. McCarthy may have just set to paper the definitive vision of the world after nuclear war, and in this recent age of relentless saber-rattling by the global powers, it's not much of a leap to feel his vision could be not far off the mark nor, sadly, right around the corner. Stealing across this horrific (and that's the only word for it) landscape are an unnamed man and his emaciated son, a boy probably around the age of ten. The love of a desperate father for his sickly son transcends all else. McCarthy has always written about the battle between light and darkness; the darkness usually comprises 99.9% of the world, while any illumination is the weak shaft thrown by a penlight running low on batteries. In *The Road*, those batteries are almost out--the entire world is, quite literally, dying--so the final affirmation of hope in the novel's closing pages is all the more shocking and maybe all the more enduring as the boy takes all of his father's (and McCarthy's) rage at the hopeless folly of man and lays it down, lifting up, in its place, the oddest of all things: faith.

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND SERIES:

V for Vendetta – Alan Moore

V for Vendetta is, like its author's later *Watchmen*, a landmark in comic-book writing. Alan Moore has led the field in intelligent, politically astute (if slightly paranoid), complex adult comic-book writing since the early 1980s. He began *V* back in 1981 and it constituted one of his first attempts (along with the criminally neglected but equally superb *Miracleman*) at writing an ongoing series. It is 1998 (which was the future back then!) and a Fascist government has taken over the U.K. The only blot on its particular landscape is a lone terrorist who is systematically killing all the government personnel associated with a now destroyed secret concentration camp. Codename V is out for vengeance ... and an awful lot more. *V* feels slightly dated like all past premonitions do. The original series was black and white and that added to the grittiness of the feel while the coloring here in the graphic novel sometimes blurs David Lloyd's fine drawing. But these are small concerns. Skillfully plotted, *V* is an essential read for all those who love comics and the freedom, as a medium, they allow a writer as skilled as Moore.

Watchmen – Alan Moore

A classic! It all begins with the paranoid delusions of a half-insane hero called Rorschach. But is Rorschach really insane or has he in fact uncovered a plot to murder super-heroes and, even worse, millions of innocent civilians? On the run from the law, Rorschach reunites with his former teammates in a desperate attempt to save the world and their lives, but what they uncover will shock them to their very core and change the face of the planet! Following two generations of masked superheroes from the close of World War II to the icy shadow of the Cold War comes this groundbreaking comic story -- the story of The Watchmen. Who watches the Watchmen. Someone does. Someone who's trying to kill them all, one by one. Time's running out for the Watchmen...

Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics

Utopia: A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

Dystopia: A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control. Dystopias, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

Characteristics of a Dystopian Society

- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.

Types of Dystopian Controls

Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:

- Corporate control: One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include *Minority Report* and *Running Man*.
- Bureaucratic control: Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include *Brazil*.
- Technological control: Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include *The Matrix*, *The Terminator*, and *I, Robot*.
- Philosophical/religious control: Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

The Dystopian Protagonist

- often feels trapped and is struggling to escape.
- questions the existing social and political systems.
- believes or feels that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.
- helps the audience recognize the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective.