

11th & 12th Grade CP/Honors English

Summer Reading List

The 11th & 12th Honors summer reading program differs from that of grades six through ten. Students should read a minimum of *three* books over the summer. After completing your reading, you will choose an essay prompt from the list below (one that best fits a book you selected) and write a 2–3 page essay, typed and double-spaced, in response to that prompt. You are expected to have an introduction with a focused thesis statement, body paragraphs (try to exceed the obligatory three), and a thoughtful conclusion. This will be your first graded assignment, so please ensure your effort reflects your determination to succeed academically in your junior/senior year.

Remember, extra reading expands your vocabulary and leads to improved thought and writing (which, in turn leads, to good A.P. exam and SAT scores!). So read, read, read as much as you possibly can! You won't regret it.

Feel free to e-mail me with any questions or concerns at kate@ccobacademy.com. or kate.e.hanley@gmail.com. Have a great summer!

Essay Prompt Options –

- Novels and plays often depict characters caught between colliding cultures –national, regional, ethnic, religious, institutional. Such collisions can call a character's sense of identity into question. Choose a novel in which a character responds to such a cultural collision. Write a well-organized essay in which you describe the character's response and explain its relevance to the work as a whole.
- One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Write an essay in which you discuss how a character in the novel struggles to free him or herself from the power of others or seeks to gain power over others. Be sure to demonstrate in your essay how the author uses this power struggle to enhance the meaning of the work.
- A reoccurring theme in literature is “the classic war between passion and responsibility”. For instance, perhaps a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination or redress wrong, or some other emotion may conflict with moral duty. Choose a literary work in which a character confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his/her responsibilities. In your essay, show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character and its significance to the work.
- Write a well-organized essay analyzing how the author uses language to explore and represent his or her identity (or the identities of his or her characters).
- Write a carefully reasoned essay evaluating the author's argument. Then, defend, challenge, or qualify the author's argument using solid evidence from the text to support your thesis.
- Analyze some of the ways in which the author recreates his or her experiences (or represents those of his or her characters). You might consider such devices as contrast, repetition, pacing, diction, and imagery.
- The meaning of some literary works is often enhanced by sustained allusion to myths, the Bible, or other works of literature. Select a literary work that makes use of such a sustained reference. Then, write a well-organized essay in which you explain the allusion that predominates in the work and analyze how it enhances the work's meaning.
- Some novels seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes, or in traditions. Choose a novel and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author apparently wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader's or audience's views.

***REMEMBER: AVOID PLOT SUMMARY AT ALL COSTS!**

The written assignment is due the first day of school.

1. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* – Neil Postman

From Publishers Weekly: From the author of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* comes a sustained, withering and thought-provoking attack on television and what it is doing to us. Postman's theme is the decline of the printed word and the ascendancy of the "tube" with its tendency to present everything, murder, mayhem, politics, weather, as entertainment. The ultimate effect, as Postman sees it, is the shriveling of public discourse as TV degrades our conception of what constitutes news, political debate, art, even religious thought. Early chapters trace America's one-time love affair with the printed word, from colonial pamphlets to the publication of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. There's a biting analysis of TV commercials as a form of "instant therapy" based on the assumption that human problems are easily solvable. Postman goes further than other critics in demonstrating that television represents a hostile attack on literate culture.

2. *Jane Eyre* – Charlotte Bronte

Product Description: An orphan girl's progress from custody of cruel relatives to an oppressive boarding school culminates in a troubled career as a governess. Jane's first assignment at Thornfield, where the proud and cynical master harbors a scandalous secret, draws readers ever deeper into a compelling exploration of the mysteries of the human heart.

3. *The Republic* – Plato

Amazon.com review: What does it mean to be good? What enables us to distinguish right from wrong? And how should human virtues be translated into a just society? These are the questions that Plato sought to answer in this monumental work of moral and political philosophy, a book surpassed only by the Bible in its formative influence on two thousand years of Western thought. In the course of its tautly reasoned Socratic dialogues, *The Republic* accomplishes nothing less than an anatomy of the soul and an exhaustive description of a State that both mirrors and enforces the soul's ideal harmony. The resulting text is at once mystical and elegantly logical and may be read as a template for the societies in which most of us live today.

4. *The Great Divorce* – C.S. Lewis

Amazon.com review: *The Great Divorce* is C.S. Lewis's *Divine Comedy*: the narrator bears strong resemblance to Lewis (by way of Dante); his Virgil is the fantasy writer [George MacDonald](#); and upon boarding a bus in a nondescript neighborhood, the narrator is taken to Heaven and Hell. The book's primary message is presented with almost oblique tidiness--"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'" However, the narrator's descriptions of sin and temptation will hit quite close to home for many readers. Lewis has a genius for describing the intricacies of vanity and self-deception, and this book is tremendously persistent in forcing its reader to consider the ultimate consequences of everyday pettiness. --*Michael Joseph Gross*

5. *1984* – George Orwell

Amazon.com review: The year is 1984; the scene is London, largest population center of Airstrip One. Airstrip One is part of the vast political entity Oceania, which is eternally at war with one of two other vast entities, Eurasia and Eastasia. At any moment, depending upon current alignments, all existing records show either that Oceania has always been at war with Eurasia and allied with Eastasia, or that it has always been at war with Eastasia and allied with Eurasia. Winston Smith knows this, because his work at the Ministry of Truth involves the constant "correction" of such records. "'Who controls the past,' ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.'"

In a grim city and a terrifying country, where Big Brother is always Watching You and the Thought Police can practically read your mind, Winston is a man in grave danger for the simple reason that his memory still functions. He knows the Party's official image of the world is a fluid fiction. He knows the Party controls the people by feeding them lies and narrowing their imaginations through a process of

bewilderment and brutalization that alienates each individual from his fellows and deprives him of every liberating human pursuit from reasoned inquiry to sexual passion. Drawn into a forbidden love affair, Winston finds the courage to join a secret revolutionary organization called The Brotherhood, dedicated to the destruction of the Party. Together with his beloved Julia, he hazards his life in a deadly match against the powers that be.

6. ***The Count of Monte Cristo* – Alexandre Dumas**

Amazon.com review: Set against the turbulent years of the Napoleonic era, Alexandre Dumas's thrilling adventure story is one of the most widely read romantic novels of all time. In it the dashing young hero, Edmond Dantès, is betrayed by his enemies and thrown into a secret dungeon in the Chateau d'If -- doomed to spend his life in a dank prison cell. The story of his long, intolerable years in captivity, his miraculous escape, and his carefully wrought revenge creates a dramatic tale of mystery and intrigue and paints a vision of France -- a dazzling, dueling, exuberant France -- that has become immortal.

7. ***Crime and Punishment* – Fyodor Dostoevsky**

Amazon.com review: *Crime and Punishment*—the novel that heralded the author's period of masterworks—tells the story of the poor and talented student Raskolnikov, a character of unparalleled psychological depth and complexity. Raskolnikov reasons that men like himself, by virtue of their intellectual superiority, can and must transcend societal law. To test his theory, he devises the perfect crime—the murder of a spiteful pawnbroker living in St. Petersburg.

In one of the most gripping crime stories of all time, Raskolnikov soon realizes the folly of his abstractions. Haunted by vivid hallucinations and the torments of his conscience, he seeks relief from his terror and moral isolation—first from Sonia, the pious streetwalker who urges him to confess, then in a tense game of cat and mouse with Porfiry, the brilliant magistrate assigned to the murder investigation. A *tour de force* of suspense, *Crime and Punishment* delineates the theories and motivations that underlie a bankrupt morality.

8. ***The Jungle* – Upton Sinclair**

Amazon.com Review: In this powerful book we enter the world of Jurgis Rudkus, a young Lithuanian immigrant who arrives in America fired with dreams of wealth, freedom, and opportunity. And we discover, with him, the astonishing truth about "packingtown," the busy, flourishing, filthy Chicago stockyards, where new world visions perish in a jungle of human suffering. Upton Sinclair, master of the "muckraking" novel, here explores the workingman's lot at the turn of the century: the backbreaking labor, the injustices of "wage-slavery," the bewildering chaos of urban life. *The Jungle*, a story so shocking that it launched a government investigation, recreates this startling chapter of our history in unflinching detail. Always a vigorous champion on political reform, Sinclair is also a gripping storyteller, and his 1906 novel stands as one of the most important -- and moving -- works in the literature of social change.

9. ***Things Fall Apart* – Chinua Achebe**

The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature Review: First novel by Chinua Achebe, written in English and published in 1958. The novel chronicles the life of Okonkwo, the leader of an Igbo (Ibo) community, from the events leading up to his banishment from the community for accidentally killing a clansman, through the seven years of his exile, to his return. The novel addresses the problem of the intrusion in the 1890s of white missionaries and colonial government into tribal Igbo society. It describes the simultaneous disintegration of its protagonist Okonkwo and of his village. The novel was praised for its intelligent and realistic treatment of tribal beliefs and of psychological disintegration coincident with social unraveling. *Things Fall Apart* helped create the Nigerian literary renaissance of the 1960s.

10. ***All Quiet on the Western Front* – Erich Maria Remarque**

New York Times Book Review: Paul Baumer enlisted with his classmates in the German army of World War I. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into

pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. And as horrible war plods on year after year, Paul holds fast to a single vow: to fight against the principles of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other--if only he can come out of the war alive.

11. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – Harriet Beecher Stowe

Amazon.com review: This is one of those books that everybody has heard about but few people these days have actually read. It deserves to be read - not simply because it is the basis for symbols so deeply ingrained in American culture that we no longer realize their source, nor because it is one of the best-selling books of all time. This is a book that changed history. Harriet Beecher Stowe was appalled by slavery, and she took one of the few options open to nineteenth century women who wanted to affect public opinion: she wrote a novel, a huge, enthralling narrative that claimed the heart, soul, and politics of pre-Civil War Americans. It is unabashed propaganda and overtly moralistic, an attempt to make whites - North and South - see slaves as mothers, fathers, and people with (Christian) souls. In a time when women might see the majority of their children die, Harriet Beecher Stowe portrays beautiful Eliza fleeing slavery to protect her son. In a time when many whites claimed slavery had "good effects" on blacks, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* paints pictures of three plantations, each worse than the other, where even the best plantation leaves a slave at the mercy of fate or debt. By twentieth-century standards, her propaganda verges on melodrama, and it is clear that even while arguing for the abolition of slavery she did not rise above her own racism. Yet her questions remain penetrating even today: "Is man ever a creature to be trusted with wholly irresponsible power?"

12. *Three Cups of Tea* – Greg Mortenson

Amazon.com review: Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts.