

English III Honors Summer Reading

Hello, everyone! I am so excited for us to develop as readers, speakers, and writers alongside one another through our study of American literature. In this class, we will read works of literature that explore race, class, and gender in America in order to understand how the American tradition of literature came to be established and what it means to be American. The texts you read this summer will introduce you to those questions and serve as touchstones for the rest of our literary study.

You will acquire, read, and annotate *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer and one book from a short list of American fiction classics. I have provided summaries of *Into the Wild* and the American classics below, as well as information about how you will be assessed on your summer reading. Please contact me at lucas.hilliard@sumnerschools.org if you have any questions or cannot obtain hard copies of the books—I'll be happy to help.

Best,
Mr. Hilliard

REQUIRED READING

Into the Wild (Jon Krakauer)—In April 1992 a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*. Digging deeply, Krakauer takes an inherently compelling mystery and unravels the larger riddles it holds: the profound pull of the American wilderness on our imagination; the allure of high-risk activities to young men of a certain cast of mind; the complex, charged bond between fathers and sons.

STUDENT CHOICE

Moby-Dick (Herman Melville)—This 1851 novel is the story of an eerie madman pursuing an unholy war against Moby-Dick, ostensibly a giant white whale, but also a creature as vast, dangerous, and unknowable as the sea itself. But more than just a novel of adventure, more than an encyclopedia of whaling lore and legend, the book can be seen as part of its author's lifelong meditation on America.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Mark Twain)—In this 1876 novel, a boy from a Mississippi River town recounts his adventures as he travels down the river with a runaway slave, encountering a family involved in a feud, two scoundrels pretending to be royalty, and Tom Sawyer's aunt who mistakes him for Tom.

The Grapes of Wrath (John Steinbeck)—Set during the Great Depression, this 1939 novel focuses on the Joads, a poor family of tenant farmers driven from their Oklahoma home by drought, economic hardship, agricultural industry changes, and bank foreclosures forcing tenant farmers out of work. Due to their nearly hopeless

situation, and in part because they are trapped in the Dust Bowl, the Joads set out for California, seeking jobs, land, dignity, and a future.

Invisible Man (Ralph Ellison)—This novel, published in 1952, addresses many of the social and intellectual issues faced by the African Americans in the early twentieth century through the life of an unnamed narrator.

Beloved (Toni Morrison)—This 1987 novel, set after the Civil War, is inspired by the life of Margaret Garner, an African American who escaped slavery in Kentucky in late January 1856 by crossing the Ohio River to Ohio, a free state.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Anita Loos)—This 1925 comic novel primarily follows the escapades of a young blonde flapper in New York during the Roaring Twenties. The novel has been adapted for Hollywood multiple times, including a famous adaptation starring Marilyn Monroe.

The House of Mirth (Edith Wharton)—This 1905 novel tells the story of Lily Bart, a well-born but impoverished woman belonging to New York City's high society around the turn of the last century. Wharton creates a portrait of a stunning beauty who, though raised and educated to marry well both socially and economically, is reaching her 29th year, an age when her youth is drawing to a close and her marital prospects are becoming ever more limited.

Absalom, Absalom! (William Faulkner)—Published in 1936, *Absalom, Absalom!* is considered by many to be William Faulkner's masterpiece. The story concerns Thomas Sutpen, a poor man who finds wealth and then marries into a respectable family. Sutpen's story is told by several narrators, allowing the reader to observe variations in the saga as it is recounted by different speakers. This unusual technique spotlights one of the novel's central questions: To what extent can people know the truth about the past?

The House of the Seven Gables (Nathaniel Hawthorne)—This 1851 novel follows a New England family and their ancestral home. In the book, Hawthorne explores themes of guilt, retribution, and atonement, and colors the tale with suggestions of the supernatural and witchcraft. The setting for the book was inspired by the Turner-Ingersoll Mansion, a house in Salem, Massachusetts, belonging to Hawthorne's cousin Susanna Ingersoll, as well as ancestors of Hawthorne who had played a part in the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

ASSESSMENT

Annotation is an essential part of reading and writing. As you read, write in the margins of your books. Create a system of annotation that works for you, but be sure your annotations feature a combination of 1) written remarks and questions about the text and 2) meaningful symbols (a question mark for passages that confuse you, an exclamation for passages that surprise you, a star for passages that you would like to discuss with the class, and so on). While reading and annotating, look particularly at the impacts of gender, class, and race on the texts.

On the first day of the semester, I will collect your books and grade your annotations using the rubric on the following page. You will also complete a timed essay in response to your summer reading during the first week of the semester.

Annotation Rubric

+	✓	-
Annotations show one comprehends the text's plot, characters, setting, and conflicts.	Annotations show one comprehends the text's plot and characters.	Annotations do not show one comprehends the text's plot and/or characters.
The reader identifies literary devices in the text and considers how the devices impact the text.	The reader identifies literary devices in the text.	The reader does not identify literary devices.
The reader considers the impacts of gender, class, and race on the text.	The reader considers the impacts of gender, class, or race on the text.	The reader does not consider the impacts of gender, class, or race on the text.
The reader often writes complex questions and comments in the text.	The reader writes a few complex questions and comments in the text.	The reader does not write any complex questions or comments in the text.
The reader connects the text to personal experiences, current events, and other texts, including films, books, and music.	The reader connects the text to personal experiences, current events, or other texts.	The reader does not connect the text to personal experiences, current events, or other texts.
The reader identifies unfamiliar words and defines them in the margins.	The reader identifies unfamiliar words.	The reader does not identify unfamiliar words.