

# SUMMER READING

Duchesne High School



## Overview

On the following pages, you will find the reading assignments required for each of the English courses offered in the 2021-2022 school year. We will begin the school year with an exploration of these readings. The first assignments will also be rooted in your summer reading. As you read, please consult the discussion questions included on this sheet. (Incoming seniors, please note that your reading assignments depend on your first semester class. If you are unsure which English class you are taking first semester, please consult your schedule, or read all of the assignments.)

## 9th Grade: Literature and Composition

*Outliers: The Story of Success* by Malcolm Gladwell

“Why do some people succeed far more than others?” Malcolm Gladwell, acclaimed author and statistician, seeks to answer this question and delves into the science behind success. Gladwell examines elements such as one’s family, one’s birthplace, and even one’s birthdate as complex and essential factors that contribute to high levels of success.

Students in Literature and Composition should read through Chapter 4: “The Trouble with Geniuses, Part 2.”

Students in Honors Literature and Composition should read through Chapter 7: “The Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes.”

All students will resume reading the rest of the book as a class. As you read, consider the following questions and ideas:

1. What’s the 10,000 hour rule? Do you believe this rule is realistic and achievable for all individuals? Discuss how you could apply this rule to your life.
2. Gladwell cites many privileges and advantages that contribute to one’s success. Which case/argument do you find the most convincing? Why?
3. What advantages have you benefitted from? Why haven’t they been enough to catapult you to the outlier level of success? Alternatively, if you consider yourself very successful, to what do you attribute your success?

## 9th Grade: English Composition

Students in English Composition are strongly encouraged to read as much as possible over the summer.

# 10th Grade: World Literature and Composition

## *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman

Students in both World Literature and Composition and student in Honors World Literature and Composition need to read Gaiman's *Norse Mythology*. In *Norse Mythology*, Gaiman stays true to the myths in envisioning the major Norse pantheon: Odin, the highest of the high, wise daring and cunning; Thor, Odin's son, incredibly strong yet not the wisest of gods; and Loki—son of a giant—blood brother to Odin and a trickster and unsurpassable manipulator. Gaiman fashions these primeval stories into a novelistic arc that begins with the genesis of the legendary nine worlds and delves into the exploits of deities, dwarfs, and giants. Through Gaiman's deft and witty prose, these gods emerge with their fiercely competitive natures, their susceptibility to being duped and to duping others, and their tendency to let passion ignite their actions, making these long-ago myths breathe pungent life again (Goodreads).

1. What is the role of mythology in culture? Why have all civilizations created their stories: what do myths signify? What do the Norse myths, in particular, say about the Germanic/Norse cultures...and their view of humankind.
2. What other mythologies are you familiar with: perhaps Ancient Greek, African, Hindi, Native American, Sumerian? How do the Norse myths compare—are there similarities with any other group of myths that you are familiar with?
3. In Norse mythology all roads lead to Ragnarok. How did they get there? Is the cataclysmic end inevitable—is it dictated by fate or by the innate nature of the gods?

# 10th Grade: English Literature

Students in English Literature are strongly encouraged to read as much as possible over the summer.

# 11th Grade: American Literature and Composition

*A Gathering of Old Men* by Ernest J. Gaines

Set on a 1970s Louisiana cane farm, the novel addresses racial discrimination and a bond that cannot be usurped. In mid afternoon, a white woman named Candy discovers that a Cajun man has been shot by a black man. In order to protect the fate of this man, she enlists the help of every other black man she can get. She uses a system of young children to spread the message to every man to come to the house where the killing happened with a shotgun and one empty number 5 shell, so that when Sheriff Mapes comes to investigate, he would not be able to prosecute the correct murderer. The pride and bravery that the men demonstrate even in the face of jail or death is inspiring. It shows the community, friendship, and loyalty that black men in the presence of racial tension need to have to overcome the adversity given to them by the white community. As you read, consider the following question,

1. Noting the title, why did Gaines make the protagonists plural? Why couldn't this be told from the perspective of one person?
2. What is Gaines saying about how struggles against inequality have affected, as a group, black men and the community he calls "the quarter"? What might he be saying about the value of strength in numbers in resisting injustice?
3. Based on the novel, what role do the cemetery and the past play in relation to *A Gathering of Old Men* and to Gaines himself?

# 11th & 12th Grade: ACC The Process of Composition

*We Were Eight Years in Power* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

*We Were Eight Years in Power* collects essays Coates wrote for *The Atlantic*, which explore various aspects of the African American experience. The book also includes short reflections before each essay where Coates looks back on the essay and addresses both its content and his writing process. You will find these essays difficult to read. Many of you will need to reread sentences, paragraphs, and at times the whole essay before you fully comprehend it. Don't shy away from doing that work. Before school begins in August, you need to read the introduction and the first three "years". We will finish the book over the course of the first quarter. As you read, consider the following questions and prompts:

1. What do you make of the way Coates writes? Is he knowledgeable about this subject matter? If so, where does that knowledge come from? What about his form? How does he construct sentences, paragraphs, and essays as a whole? How does he move from one idea to another? How does he draw connections within paragraphs and between them?
2. Did any of the three essays stand out to you? If so, why? What did that essay have that the others lacked?

## 12th Grade: Analysis of Literature and Modern Media

Words go to the Movies:

For your summer reading, you need to choose a book that has been adapted into a movie. Your selection may come from works that are known primarily for their position in the literary canon, like Jane Austin's *Emma* or August Wilson's *Fences*. You can choose from works that are known primarily as movies, like *The Graduate* or *Hidden Figures*. You can choose works of non-fiction, like *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or Michael Lewis's *Money Ball*. You can even choose runaway sensations like *The Harry Potter Series*. Once you've read the book, watch the adaptation. As you watch and read, consider the following questions:

1. Before reading the book, had you seen the adaptation? If so, how does the adaptation influence the way you read the book? If not, which scenes strike you as cinematic? Why?
2. As you watch the movie, consider the changes made by the director, the writer, and the actors. Did the movie choose to leave out anything that surprised you? Did it make any significant changes? What do you think prompted those changes?
3. When Shakespeare was writing, plays (in some circles) were considered low entertainment and not worthy of study. The same can be said about novels when they first appeared. We are now in an era where there are "literary" works of fiction and "popular" works of fiction. The same distinction is often made with movies. "Films" are worthy of study, and we can munch popcorn while we passively consume "movies." Do these kinds of distinctions make sense with the book you read and the movie you watched? If so, why? If not, why not?

## 12th Grade: Contemporary Issues in Literature

What scares you?

Your Contemporary Issues in Literature class will focus on the horror genre. For your summer reading, you need to read a book that can reasonably fit within that genre. Your options are fairly broad. You can pick from classics like *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. You can choose from recognized masters of the genre like Stephen King or Edgar Allen Poe. Or, you can select more contemporary stories like Justina Ireland's *Dread Nation*, Matt Ruff's *Lovecraft Country*, or Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*. Find something that interests you and read it. As you read consider the following:

1. What drew you to the book initially? As you read, does the book deliver on the initial promise.
2. Did it scare you? Did you like the feeling of being frightened?
3. Is the work about something more than the monster? Does it try to address bigger ideas? If so, how?

## 12th Grade: Creative Writing

*On Writing* by Stephen King

*On Writing* is a personal book that discusses writing through the author's experiences. You don't just learn about writing techniques, you learn about Stephen King, his family, the struggles he has endured (pre- and post-fame), and what makes him tick as a popular horror novelist. The book is divided into three parts. The first part is about King's life. The second is about the craft of writing. The third returns to his life and explores the car accident that almost ended his writing career. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. Do you agree with Stephen King that the desire to write always starts with a love of reading?
2. King's wife Tabitha is his "Ideal Reader," the one person audience he has in mind when writing a first draft. When you write, do you envision a particular Ideal Reader? Who is that person? Why? What are the reader's ideal characteristics?
3. While King delights in the nuts and bolts mechanics of the writing process, he concedes that good writing involves magic as well. Do you agree with King's assertion that "while it is impossible to make a competent writer out of a good one, it is possible with lots of hard work, dedication and timely help, to make a good writer out of a merely competent one."? To what degree can a writer be made? To what extent can writing be taught? What writerly skills do you come by naturally, and which have you had to work to acquire or improve?

## 12th Grade: Medieval Literature

*The Time traveler's Guide to Medieval England: A Handbook for Visitors to the Fourteenth Century* by Ian Mortimer

The past is a foreign country. This is your guidebook. A time machine has just transported you back into the fourteenth century. What do you see? How do you dress? How do you earn a living and how much are you paid? What sort of food will you be offered by a peasant or a monk or a lord? And more important where will you stay? Through the use of daily chronicles, letters, household accounts, and poems of the day, Mortimer transports you back in time, providing answers to questions typically ignored by traditional historians. You will learn how to greet people on the street, what to use as toilet paper, why a physician might want to taste your blood, and how to know whether you are coming down with leprosy. Read the introduction, the first four chapters, and any other chapter of your choice. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. What surprises you about what Medieval life was like?
2. Compare and contrast Medieval life to life in the 21st century.
3. What did you learn about in the chapter you read by choice?

## 12th Grade: Post-Apocalyptic Literature

*Lucifer's Hammer* by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

*Lucifer's Hammer* is set in a time after a giant comet smashes into the earth and destroys most of civilization. Some humans survive and are left to pick up the pieces. Over the summer read parts I and II of the novel. As you read, consider the following questions:

1. What, if anything, could have been done to prevent this apocalypse?
2. What steps will humans have to take to reorganize and to rebuild?
3. What does this experience teach us about humanity?

## 12th Grade: The Holocaust in the Media

*Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl

Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl's memoir has riveted generations of readers with its descriptions of life in Nazi death camps and its lessons for spiritual survival. This will be the text used to discuss and analyze literature, movies and documentaries. When reading this weighty text, consider the following questions:

1. What were the "phase 1" reactions following entry into the concentration camp scene? What were the "phase 2" reactions to being well-entrenched in the concentration camp routine? What were the "phase 3" reactions to being released and liberated from a concentration camp? Explain your understanding of the gradual shift in reactions.
2. According to Frankl, "An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal." What does he mean by this paradox? How can you relate it to a time in your own life?
3. Explain how responsibility is a crucial component of logotherapy.

## 12 Grade: ACC Introduction to Literature

*The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Students will need to read the first four books of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Use the book I provided you and the study guide. If you misplace either over the summer, email me at [ddurso@duchesne-hs.org](mailto:ddurso@duchesne-hs.org) and I can arrange for you to pick up another.