

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT 2022
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THE BOOKS

All students must read *Educated* by Tara Westover and *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams.

ABOUT THE REQUIRED BOOKS

Educated by Tara Westover is the true story of the author's childhood and young adulthood. Westover is raised by her parents on a remote junkyard in Idaho. She doesn't attend school, and she is raised to distrust everything related to the government, the school system, the medical establishment, and the community at-large. But as Westover grows older, she periodically questions her upbringing and ultimately decides to follow in the footsteps of an older brother who leaves the family compound to seek an education. As Westover learns more about the world, she realizes her parents' ways are misguided and dangerous, but will she be able to help them and her siblings understand that fact?

(Note: There are passages in the book where the father engages in dangerous work-related behaviors that hurt his children or himself; additionally, there are passages where Tara's older brother Shawn is physically and mentally abusive to her. If you believe you will struggle with these passages, please let me know as soon as possible so I can choose an alternative book for you.)

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams is a classic play that focuses on the plight of the Wingfield family in St. Louis in the 1940s. Amanda Wingfield is an aging mother whose adult children are a disappointment to her because they haven't successfully launched from the family nest. Amanda's desperation to see her son, Tom, become financially successful and her daughter, Laura, married off becomes a source of tension within the family, and the play is about how the family deals with their disappointments, tensions, and problems.

THE ASSIGNMENT

There is an expectation that you will be able to discuss the books fluently at the beginning of the school year and write an essay (worth 50 points) in which you

compare and contrast the summer reading books either to each other or to a new text covered in class (or both). In other words, if you don't complete the summer reading, you will struggle with writing the essay, so PLEASE READ THE BOOKS.

The essays might reflect on the following ideas:

- What is the American Dream of each main character or person, and how does he or she pursue it? (If you don't know what the American Dream is, perhaps search Google.)
- Fortitude may be defined as “mental and emotional strength in facing difficulty, adversity, danger, or temptation.” How is fortitude demonstrated in these works?
- Examine the contrast between the desire for escape and the awareness of responsibilities and family bonds as presented in these works.
- What are common challenges people face? What character traits are necessary for overcoming life's challenges?
- Is life fair? Is it possible to overcome unfairness when one encounters it?
- If a theme is a lesson the author wants the reader to learn, what is a common theme shared by the works you read for this assignment?

HOW TO APPROACH THIS ASSIGNMENT

- Read these books whenever the spirit moves you this summer, but I would advise reading them once and then skimming them again just before school begins. We will likely start the year with *The Glass Menagerie*.
- All students must keep a reading journal. Students must summarize each chapter (in *Educated*) or scene (in *TGM*) in approximately 3-4 sentences -- either on post-it notes inside the books, in the margins of the books (if you have purchased them), in a paper notebook, or in a Google or Word document. Proof of this reading journal must be supplied to the teacher on the first day of school. It is worth 25 points.
- On the day of the essay, you may have these works on your desk.
- If you have questions or concerns, please email me at earnstein@vischool.org. Have a great summer! I can't wait to see you in the fall; it's going to be a great year!