

English 12 Honors - Summer Reading Assignment
Mr. D'Ippolito

Dear Rising Seniors,

Welcome to English 12 Honors! I am thrilled that you have chosen to challenge yourself in English during your senior year. It's an absolute pleasure to be teaching some of you again, and I look forward to meeting those of you I have not taught or gotten to know over the past four years.

Because you will be taking an honors English class, I am asking you to complete a reading and writing assignment this summer. First, you will **read two books**; the assignment for each book is explained on the pages below. You should borrow the books from the library or buy your own copies (I do have copies of *The Glass Castle*). **Please be aware that you will need the books during the first few weeks of class.** You will also write a draft of your college essay. Materials for the essay are below.

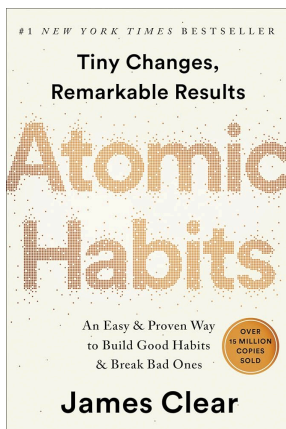
Except for the college essay, these assignments are due on the first day of class. I am available to answer any questions via email the week of August 26 before school begins. Failure to complete the summer assignments will have a major impact on your Quarter 1 grade.

I look forward to seeing you all in September!

Mr. D'Ippolito

READING ASSIGNMENTS

REQUIRED BOOK #1: *Atomic Habits*



***Atomic Habits* by James Clear**

"No matter your goals, *Atomic Habits* offers a proven framework for improving--every day. James Clear, one of the world's leading experts on habit formation, reveals practical strategies that will teach you exactly how to form good habits, break bad ones, and master the tiny behaviors that lead to remarkable results"
-Amazon.com

Clear's book that "draws on...biology, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, and more" (9) might seem like an odd pick for an English class, but we will examine the author's ideas through the lens of one of our essential questions for September: ***How can I hone the skills necessary for success in college and beyond?***

Assignment:

Grab a new notebook with multiple sections before you start reading; this will be your notebook for my class. Start a new page titled "Summer Reading - Atomic Habits" and create a two-page "spread" of notes that document your thinking as you read. This "spread" should contain **a minimum of 10 lessons**

learned from this book. *You must cite quotes from the beginning, middle, and end of the text and note how these ideas will serve you well during your senior year and in college.* You can organize this work as you see fit; just make sure it's legible.

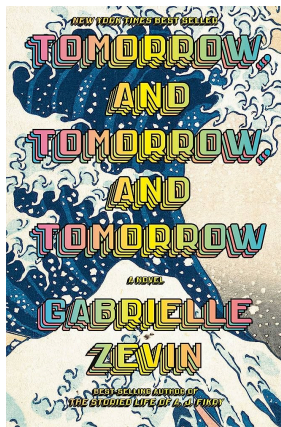
REQUIRED BOOK #2: Choice Books

Please select **ONE** or more of the following books to read for enjoyment. This is a list of contemporary books I have read and loved in recent years. Spend some time perusing the titles below and reading summaries/reviews to see which is a good fit.

I want you to read and *enjoy* this book, so there is no need to mark it up heavily; however, if a sentence or passage resonates with you, jot some notes on a post-it or in your notebook. *Hint, hint:* I'll likely ask you to discuss the book with others and/or write about it in class.

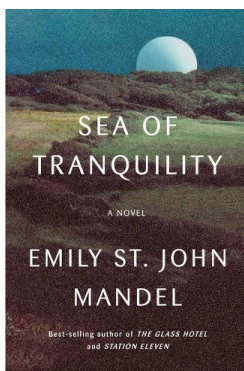
***All book summaries are pulled from Goodreads**

FICTION



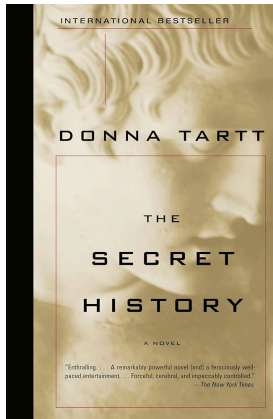
***Tomorrow, Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin**

“In this exhilarating novel, two friends—often in love, but never lovers—come together as creative partners in the world of video game design, where success brings them fame, joy, tragedy, duplicity, and, ultimately, a kind of immortality.”



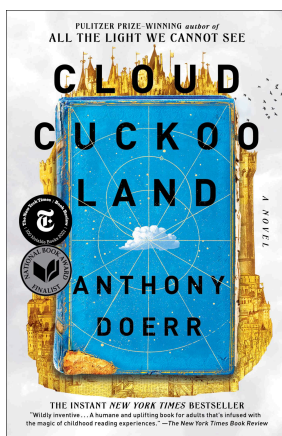
***Sea of Tranquility* by Emily St. John Mandel**

“A novel of art, time travel, love, and plague that takes the reader from Vancouver Island in 1912 to a dark colony on the moon five hundred years later, unfurling a story of humanity across centuries and space.”



***The Secret History* by Donna Tartt**

“Under the influence of their charismatic classics professor, a group of clever, eccentric misfits at an elite New England college discover a way of thinking and living that is a world away from the humdrum existence of their contemporaries. But when they go beyond the boundaries of normal morality they slip gradually from obsession to corruption and betrayal, and at last—inexorably—into evil.”

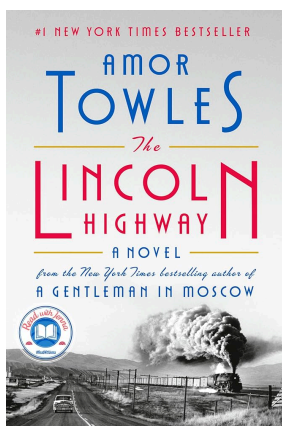


***Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr**

***National Book Award Finalist**

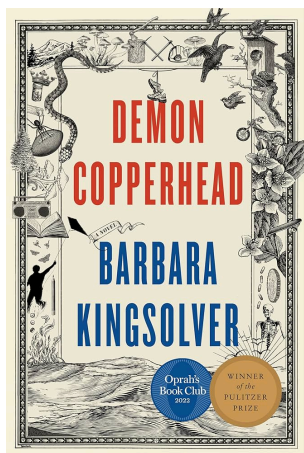
“How do we weather the end of things? *Cloud Cuckoo Land* brings together an unforgettable cast of dreamers and outsiders from past, present and future to offer a vision of survival against all odds.

Bound together by a single ancient text, these tales interweave to form a tapestry of solace and resilience and a celebration of storytelling itself. Like its predecessor *All the Light We Cannot See*, Anthony Doerr’s new novel is a tale of hope and of profound human connection.”



***The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles**

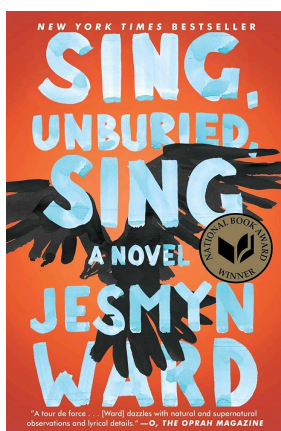
“In June 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the work farm where he has just served a year for involuntary manslaughter. His mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett’s intention is to pick up his eight-year-old brother and head west where they can start their lives anew. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have hidden themselves in the trunk of the warden’s car. Together, they have hatched an altogether different plan for Emmett’s future.”



***Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver**

***Pulitzer Prize Winner**

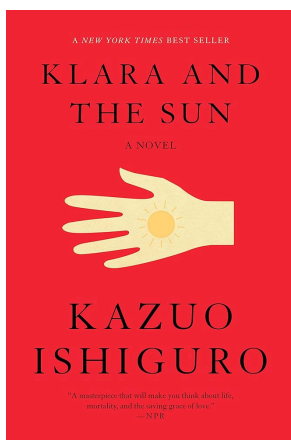
“Set in the mountains of southern Appalachia, this is the story of a boy born to a teenaged single mother in a single-wide trailer, with no assets beyond his dead father's good looks and copper-colored hair, a caustic wit, and a fierce talent for survival. In a plot that never pauses for breath, relayed in his own unsparing voice, he braves the modern perils of foster care, child labor, derelict schools, athletic success, addiction, disastrous loves, and crushing losses. Through all of it, he reckons with his own invisibility in a popular culture where even the superheroes have abandoned rural people in favor of cities.”



***Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward**

***National English Honor Society Common Reader/
National Book Award Winner**

“Jojo and his toddler sister, Kayla, live with their grandparents, Mam and Pop, and the occasional presence of their drug-addicted mother, Leonie, on a farm on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. Leonie is simultaneously tormented and comforted by visions of her dead brother, which only come to her when she’s high; Mam is dying of cancer; and quiet, steady Pop tries to run the household and teach Jojo how to be a man. When the white father of Leonie’s children is released from prison, she packs her kids and a friend into her car and sets out across the state for Parchman farm, the Mississippi State Penitentiary, on a journey rife with danger and promise.”



***Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

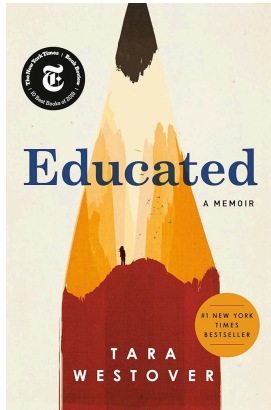
***National English Honor Society Common Reader**

“From her place in the store, Klara, an Artificial Friend with outstanding observational qualities, watches carefully the behavior of those who come in to browse, and of those who pass on the street outside. She remains hopeful that a customer will soon choose her, but when the possibility emerges that her circumstances may change forever, Klara is warned not to invest too much in the promises of humans.”

In *Klara and the Sun*, Kazuo Ishiguro looks at our

rapidly changing modern world through the eyes of an unforgettable narrator to explore a fundamental question: what does it mean to love?"

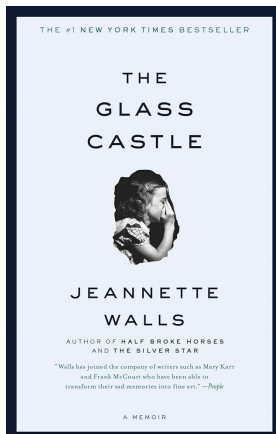
NONFICTION



***Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover**

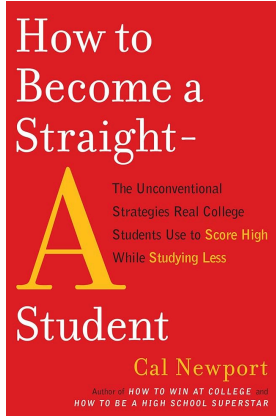
"Tara Westover was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, she prepared for the end of the world by stockpiling home-canned peaches and sleeping with her "head-for-the-hills bag". In the summer she stewed herbs for her mother, a midwife and healer, and in the winter she salvaged in her father's junkyard...

Educated is an account of the struggle for self-invention. It is a tale of fierce family loyalty and of the grief that comes with severing the closest of ties. With the acute insight that distinguishes all great writers, Westover has crafted a universal coming-of-age story that gets to the heart of what an education is and what it offers: the perspective to see one's life through new eyes and the will to change it."



***The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls (Memoir)**

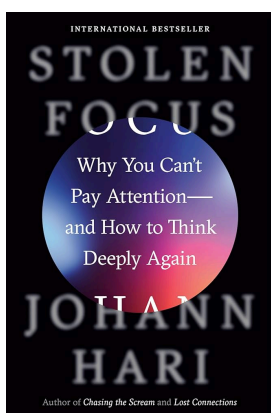
"*The Glass Castle* is a remarkable memoir of resilience and redemption, and a revelatory look into a family at once deeply dysfunctional and uniquely vibrant. When sober, Jeannette's brilliant and charismatic father captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and how to embrace life fearlessly. But when he drank, he was dishonest and destructive. Her mother was a free spirit who abhorred the idea of domesticity and didn't want the responsibility of raising a family."



***How to Become a Straight-A Student* by Cal Newport (Self-Help/Study Habits)**

Note from Mr. D'Ipp: This book was recommended to me by a former 12H student. I've read other books by Newport and look forward to reading this one over the summer.

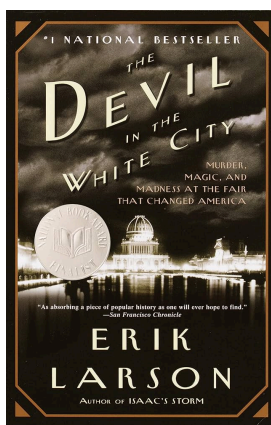
"A strategic blueprint for success that promises more free time, more fun, and top-tier results, *How to Become a Straight-A Student* is the only study guide written by students for students--with the insider knowledge and real-world methods to help you master the college system and rise to the top of the class."



***Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention—and How to Think Deeply Again* by Johann Hari (Technology)**

"We think our inability to focus is a personal failure to exert enough willpower over our devices. The truth is even more disturbing: our focus has been stolen by powerful external forces that have left us uniquely vulnerable to corporations determined to raid our attention for profit..."

Crucially, Hari learned how we can reclaim our focus--as individuals, and as a society--if we are determined to fight for it. *Stolen Focus* will transform the debate about attention and finally show us how to get it back."

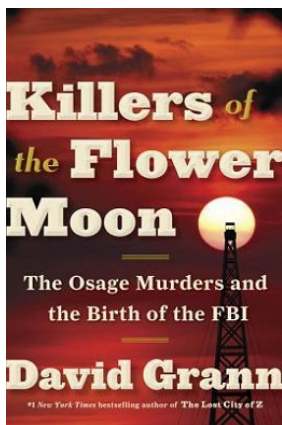


***The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America* by Erik Larson (True Crime/History)**

*National Book Award Finalist

Note: Part of this book contains graphic details about a serial killer. Please read at your discretion.

"Author Erik Larson imbues the incredible events surrounding the 1893 Chicago World's Fair with such drama that readers may find themselves checking the book's categorization to be sure that *The Devil in the White City* is not, in fact, a highly imaginative novel. Larson tells the stories of two men: Daniel H. Burnham, the architect responsible for the fair's construction, and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer masquerading as a charming doctor."



***Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and Birth of the FBI* by David Grann
(True Crime/History)**

“In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Nation in Oklahoma... Then, one by one, the Osage began to be killed off...

As the death toll rose, the newly created FBI took up the case, and the young director, J. Edgar Hoover, turned to a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to try to unravel the mystery. White put together an undercover team, including a Native American agent who infiltrated the region, and together with the Osage began to expose one of the most chilling conspiracies in American history.”

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

You should come into English 12H with a working draft of your college essay, which some of you will begin in your 11th-grade English classes. Having a rough draft in September will allow me to help you craft the best college essay possible. If you’re starting from scratch this summer, begin with the Common App prompts and the brainstorming activities. Materials and resources for the essay are listed below.

We likely won’t get to the essay unit until the second week of class, so you don’t need your completed draft until then. I will announce the due date when we return to school.

College Essay Resources:

- [College Essay Guidelines/Tips](#)
- [The Common App Essay Prompts: 2024-2025](#)
- [Brainstorming Activity 1](#)
- [Brainstorming Activity 2](#)
- [WHS Alumni College Essays](#)
- Johns Hopkins “[Essays That Worked](#)” (a great resource for unique essays!)

12H Summer Work in a Nutshell:

- 1) Read *Atomic Habits* and craft a two-page spread of notes with your 10 “Lessons Learned” from the book;
- 2) Read and enjoy a choice book from the provided list;
- 3) Write a college essay draft (650 words ***maximum***).