

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT 2024
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VISITATION SCHOOL

THE BOOKS

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

Note: I have enough copies of *The Glass Menagerie* for students to borrow; however, if you borrow my books, you may not write in them. Stop by ASAP to sign out a book if you choose to borrow one.

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: Tom Wingfield lives with his mother and disabled adult sister in a tenement in Saint Louis. Although Tom is desperate to leave his family so that he can live a life of his choosing, he feels compelled to care for his mother, Amanda, who has been abandoned by her husband, and his sister, Laura, who is paralyzed by fear and unable to create a meaningful life for herself. Amanda desperately wants Laura to get married, so she asks Tom to find a nice "gentleman caller" to bring home to Laura. This

lovely, bittersweet play is loosely based on Tennessee Williams' own life and is considered one of America's greatest plays.

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

The essay 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 a new life and the awareness of responsibilities and family bonds as presented in these works.
- Characters in works of literature can simultaneously be likable and unlikable. Their complexity makes them interesting. Support or refute.
- 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?
- What happens when people compete for power or when one person is dominant over another, especially in the same family?

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 start the year with *Educated*.
- All students must keep a reading journal.
 - Students must summarize each chapter in *Educated* in one sentence or a few brief bullet points.
 - Students must summarize each scene in *The Glass Menagerie* in approximately 3-4 sentences or a few strong bullet points.
 - Your reading journals may be written 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 these reading journals must be supplied to the teacher on the first day of school. Each journal is worth 25 points (you should have two reading journals by the end of the summer).

- 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!