

# 2024- 25 HONORS FRESHMAN ENGLISH SUMMER READING

## Overview

I ask you to peruse the list of four books below, some classic and some contemporary. Please take your time and choose a book that truly interests you (you may have to ask our good friend Google to provide you further introductions and/or reviews for the books you are not familiar with). I ask you then to read one of the books and create a critical review for the book. The requirements for the critical review are explained below.

Please feel free to contact me at [jwilson@dcdds.edu](mailto:jwilson@dcdds.edu) or on my cell phone (248) 505-8233, if you have questions or concerns. I look forward to meeting you and working with you next school year!

## Suggested Reading List (please read the summaries and do a little research before choosing)

### 1. *The Stranger in the Lifeboat* by Mitch Albom

What would happen if we called on God for help and God actually appeared? In Mitch Albom's profound new novel of hope and faith, a group of shipwrecked passengers pull a strange man from the sea. He claims to be "the Lord." And he says he can only save them if they all believe in him.

A fast-paced, compelling novel that makes you ponder your deepest beliefs, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat* suggests that answers to our prayers may be found where we least expect them.

### 2. *West With Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge

It's 1938. The Great Depression lingers. Hitler is threatening Europe, and world-weary Americans long for wonder. They find it in two giraffes who miraculously survive a hurricane while crossing the Atlantic. What follows is a twelve-day road trip in a custom truck to deliver Southern California's first giraffes to the San Diego Zoo. Behind the wheel is the young Dust Bowl rowdy Woodrow. Inspired by true events, the tale weaves real-life figures with fictional ones, including the world's first female zoo director, a crusty old man with a past, a young female photographer with a secret, and assorted reprobates as spotty as the giraffes.

Part adventure, part historical saga, and part coming-of-age love story, *West with Giraffes* explores what it means to be changed by the grace of animals, the kindness of strangers, the passing of time, and a story told before it's too late.

### **3. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee**

The unforgettable novel of a childhood in a sleepy Southern town and the crisis of conscience that rocked it, *To Kill A Mockingbird* became both an instant bestseller and a critical success when it was first published in 1960. It went on to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1961.

Compassionate, dramatic, and deeply moving, *To Kill A Mockingbird* takes readers to the roots of human behavior - to innocence and experience, kindness and cruelty, love and hatred, humor and pathos. Now with over 18 million copies in print and translated into forty languages, this regional story by a young Alabama woman claims universal appeal. Harper Lee always considered her book to be a simple love story. Today it is regarded as a masterpiece of American literature.. (Amazon)

### **4. *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger**

The hero-narrator of *The Catcher in the Rye* is an ancient child of sixteen, a native New Yorker named Holden Caulfield.

Through circumstances that tend to preclude adult, secondhand description, he leaves his prep school in Pennsylvania and goes underground in New York City for three days. The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say about Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it.

There are many voices in this novel: children's voices, adult voices, underground voices-but Holden's voice is the most eloquent of all. Transcending his own vernacular, yet remaining marvelously faithful to it, he issues a perfectly articulated cry of mixed pain and pleasure. However, like most lovers and clowns and poets of the higher orders, he keeps most of the pain to, and for, himself. The pleasure he gives away, or sets aside, with all his heart. It is there for the reader who can handle it to keep (Amazon).

If you wish to propose a different title than those listed above, please contact me, [jwilson@dcds.edu](mailto:jwilson@dcds.edu), with your proposed title.

**Please also keep reading, so you see what your purpose is for your reading of the book of your choice.**

EN113H (J. Wilson)  
Honors Freshman English

SUMMER/INDEPENDENT READING  
CRITICAL REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

You will select a book from the Independent Reading list that has a particular interest for you. Over the course of the summer, you will read and annotate this book for a video presentation where you will recommend the book or not. To be specific, I want you to shape your recommendation for the purpose of convincing me to teach your book during some future novel unit. This critical review serves only one purpose: to help me identify your strengths and weaknesses as a reader and thinker. The presentation will be graded as one single quiz grade.

PRESENTATION

You will follow the format below for a 5-7 minute video presentation, where you provide an introduction to, brief analysis of, and reasons for your recommendation for the book you have selected. You will upload this video to Canvas the first week of school.

Again, please feel free to contact me at [jwilson@dcds.edu](mailto:jwilson@dcds.edu) or at my cell phone (248) 505-8233, if you have questions or concerns.

CRITICAL REVIEW EXPLANATION Introduction

You will introduce the subject and author; this introduction should provide the reader background information of both the author and the subject of the book. Please limit this background information to the context for the book. You will close the introduction with the book's thesis, the point the book makes about its subject: for example, *The Catcher in the Rye* shows us the dangers of living too much in our imagination. You will then provide your recommendation thesis, whether or not you recommend the book to me and your peers and the reason(s) for the recommendation: for example, I recommend this book because \_\_\_\_\_ or I do not recommend this book because \_\_\_\_\_.

Again, think of this recommendation as a book that I could or should teach in a future novel unit.

Summary

You will then provide a brief summary of the book, relative to the book's thesis. Please make this summary brief by providing only details from the book that help to establish its thesis, the point the book makes about its subject. You do not need to include direct textual references in this summary, though you should paraphrase events/details from the book.

## **Analysis**

Any good book, or bad book, has parts to it that intrigue the reader: it may be the information provided or the way the information is provided. In any case, please select one passage that you believe provides useful information, useful because it is entertaining, interesting, well-written, etc. You will provide an excerpt of the passage, so that you may explain how you found the passage entertaining, interesting, or well-written. Because you will be reading this passage, be certain to pick one that is not too long. You also need to contextualize this moment, so that we may see why you found it entertaining, interesting, or well-written. You may also choose to select two short passages from different parts of the book that serve this purpose.

## **Conclusion**

The final portion provides reasons for your recommendation, relative to your recommendation thesis. These reasons should flow from the analysis of an excerpt that you offered in your analysis and that you then extend to something outside the book to show its relevancy: this extension may be a personal connection, a connection to a contemporary or universal idea or issue, or any other concept to which your reader/audience may connect.