



June, 2024

Dear Members of the Classes of 2025, 2026, 2027, and 2028:

Summertime! Finally, an opportunity to relax—to enjoy time with friends, family, and a good book!

As we do every year, the teachers in the MLHS English Department have chosen books for REQUIRED summer reading that we hope you will enjoy and that will help to kick off the 2024-2025 school year. Each selection is accompanied by a series of **FOCUS** questions or ideas to consider as you read. These will help you to see some of the key ideas and themes in the text.

Unless otherwise noted, you don't have to write anything this summer in response to your reading. However, you might want to jot down some thoughts on sticky notes in the text as you read. This will help you to stay involved in the text and to prepare for the summer reading assessments that all teachers give during the first few days of school.

All of these books are readily available at libraries, bookstores, and online booksellers. We encourage you to get your own copies so you can write in them and bring them to class in the fall.

The list that follows includes the required texts for each class. Find the course you will be entering in the fall of 2024, and get started right away.

In addition, faculty members throughout the high school have made some book suggestions they thought you might enjoy. Take a look at [THIS COLLECTION](#) of great books recommended by teachers. If these don't suit your preferences, find another book, ANY book, and keep reading! Make it a summer of good friends, good times, and good books!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Have an enjoyable, restful summer, and we look forward to seeing you in the fall!

Sincerely,

Mr. Henry
Supervisor of English and Fine Arts
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MLHS ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: REQUIRED SUMMER READING 2024

All students should thoughtfully read the assigned book(s). The **FOCUS** for each book will help students to consider ideas and concepts that will serve as key points of discussion and study in September. We do encourage students to take notes during summer reading to aid in discussions and assessments that will take place upon return to school.

Students entering English 9 (ONE book*):

I Must Betray You by Ruta Sepetys

An historical thriller set in Romania, 1989, Sepetys examines the little-known history of a nation defined by silence, pain, and the courageous human spirit. Plot: Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren't free to dream; they are bound by rules and force. When Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer, he's left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves – or use his position to creatively undermine the most notoriously evil dictator in Eastern Europe. But at what cost?

FOCUS:

In a *New York Times* interview, Ruta Sepetys talks about the importance of storytelling. She states: "What I want to get across is the strength and fortitude of the Romanian people, particularly the young people... you can be the author of your own destiny... And also that, through story, we have an opportunity for connection. What do I mean? That sometimes, history, it's a bunch of facts, it's a bunch of figures. But when reading, if we have a moment of connection, I think our heart opens. And we have a chance to care for someone that we've never met..."

- How do the personal stories and struggles of the characters foster a sense of empathy and understanding for individuals from different cultural and historical backgrounds, particularly those of people living under oppression?
- Despite the acts of betrayal, how do the characters in the novel, in particular the younger generation, show courage in their pursuit of freedom? How do their experiences compare to your own understanding of freedom?

*Students seeking additional challenge and who are considering pursuing Honors level English for grade 10 may choose to read a second historical fiction novel by Ruta Sepetys. Find titles here: <https://rutasepetys.com/books/>

Students entering English 10 College Prep (ONE book):

Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

Will has known about the rules ever since his childhood friend was killed on the playground, and he's followed the first two: no crying, and no snitching. When his older brother, Shawn, is shot and killed while walking home from the store, Will knows he is expected to follow the final rule and avenge his brother's death. He knows where Shawn keeps his gun, and he thinks he knows who the shooter is: a member of a rival gang named Riggs. Even if Will has never used a gun—never even held a gun before—rules are rules. But in the elevator on the way down to meet Riggs, Will encounters family and friends who died playing by the rules, and now Will has to decide what he is going to do when the elevator reaches its final stop. (Simon and Schuster)

FOCUS:

- This story's form, free-verse poetic narrative, may be different from the form used in stories you are used to reading. Pay attention to some of the conventions usually associated with poetry (line shape and line breaks, figurative language, rhythm, sound devices). How did the poetic form affect your reading of the story? How does it impact the tone or mood? How did it affect meaning or emotional impact?
- How would you describe the genre of this book? ("Genre" is a term we use to talk about a book's "category." For example, fantasy or science-fiction or realism.) Is it realistic? Is it purely imaginary? Is it a combination of realism and something else? Why do you think the author tells this story the way he does?
- We often talk about literature providing the reader both a window and a mirror. It is a window into a world or experience different from our own and/or a mirror in which we see ourselves and our own experience. To what extent does this book provide a window for you into the experiences of others? To what extent does this book provide a mirror through which you see some of your own life experiences?

Students entering English 10 Honors (ONE book):

Persepolis: The Story of A Childhood by Marjane Satrapi

In Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel, *Persepolis*, she uses powerful black-and-white comic strip images to tell the story of her life in Tehran, Iran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran's last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of her country... Intensely personal, profoundly political, and wholly original, *Persepolis* is at once a story of growing up and a reminder of the human cost of war and political repression. (from *Goodreads*)

NOTE: When you read a graphic novel, the temptation might be to read quickly. Actually, graphic novels require that you slow down to appreciate the author's message. Carefully examine the images AND the text, and think about how they work together to shape the narrative and impact the reader.

FOCUS:

- Though Marjane grows up in a time and place very different from our own, in what ways does she show that the experience of growing up is universal? Conversely, how does she show the ways in which it can be shaped by setting and circumstances?
- How does a person survive and make sense of their own identity in an oppressive society? In what ways must you change or adapt in order to survive? How can you simultaneously hold true to your own sense of self?
- What methods and tools do authoritative governments use to control and oppress people? What methods and tools do people use, in response, to resist oppression?
- Additional focus point: Satrapi elects to tell her story through the medium of a graphic novel. Consider why Satrapi tackles the difficult subject matter of her story in this way...How do the images and text work together to communicate her story? Could this story be as meaningful if it was not written in graphic novel format?

Students entering English 10: AP Seminar (ONE book):

1984 by George Orwell

Over 70 years after its initial publication, this timeless classic unfortunately remains both relevant and chilling. Orwell's dystopian novel depicts a future dominated by three warring states and a government that suppresses individuality. Winston Smith, the protagonist, seeks truth and beauty in a dehumanizing world.

FOCUS:

What does Orwell suggest about ...?

- the nature of truth
- the power of reason
- the ability of the powerful to distort the truth
- the nature of persuasion
- the relationship between thought and language
- the relationship between intellect and emotion

Students entering English 11 College Prep (CHOOSE ONE book):

EITHER *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone

OR *Just Mercy (Adapted for Young Adults): A True Story of the Fight for Justice* by Bryan Stevenson

Dear Martin by Nic Stone

In *Dear Martin*, Justyce McAllister is a 17 year old, extremely intelligent and ambitious student who attends a very exclusive prep school. Despite being one of only two black students in a predominantly white school, he has acclimated well; he is on the debate team, has a good group of friends, gets excellent grades and is planning on heading to Yale. That all changes when he is wrongly arrested for a crime based on race. Up until this moment, Justyce never really considered race. As a coping mechanism, Justyce begins to write letters to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These letters provide Justyce with the outlet through which he can think through issues such as race and social justice.

FOCUS:

- How do our intersecting identities shape our perspectives and the way we experience the world?
- What role does the act of writing letters to Dr. Martin Luther King serve for Justyce? What does he come to realize about himself, his identity, and concepts like race and justice?
- Is justice served in *Dear Martin*? Why or why not? Explain.

Just Mercy (Adapted for Young Adults) by Bryan Stevenson

First of all, note that you should read the version "Adapted for Young Adults." It's still a high school level book, but the story has been streamlined a bit for school use. *Just Mercy* is a work of nonfiction that follows the author's relationship with and defense of a man falsely convicted and sentenced to death row for murder. Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to defending the rights of the most vulnerable people in our society: the poor, the wrongly convicted, and those whose lives have been marked by discrimination and marginalization.

FOCUS:

- Consider the factors that led to Walter MacMillian's conviction. What does his case reveal about the way the American justice system works (or doesn't work) for some people?
- In addition to the main story about Walter MacMillian, Stevenson reviews many other cases of wrongful conviction or harsh sentencing. Which cases were memorable for you? Were you angry? Saddened? Did any moments bring satisfaction?

Students entering English 11 Honors (ONE book and an OPTIONAL book):

***Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* by Benjamin Fountain**

AND we encourage you to read another OPTIONAL Title

***Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* by Benjamin Fountain**

Fox News catches on tape a three minute and forty-five second firefight between Bravo Company and Iraqi insurgents. When the tape goes public, Bravo Company's eight members are heralded as American heroes. As a result, the Administration arranges for the company to appear during halftime of a Dallas Cowboys football game, complete with spectacle and celebrity appearances. But, 19-year old Army Specialist William Lynn begins to see beyond the flashing lights and warm greetings. Lynn soon realizes the discrepancy between perception and reality and truth and sensationalism, which causes him to confront tough questions about himself, his country, his brother-in arms, and humanity in general.

FOCUS:

- The book focuses in on civilians who talk to the Bravo team: their questions, comments – genuine though inane references to patriotism, 9/11, terrorism, God, and war are over-the-top and dizzying—their words are even presented typographically in a vertical-diagonal format. How does a civilian talk to a combatant, someone who faces the constant threat of death and witnesses violence on a scale unimaginable to most of us? What have you ever said to a returning soldier? How does the work handle such ideas as betrayal, imagination versus reality, and the coexistence of good and evil?
- What is this book satirizing? By definition, satires are humorous, even absurd. Are there sections in the book you find particularly funny? Are there parts that anger or sadden you? Is the book truly a satirical novel or do you find it to be something different, possibly more reminiscent of another genre (Hint: Fountain did not intend his work to be a satire.)
- What is the significance of the book's title?

OPTIONAL: (in addition to *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, read the following book OR a book from the [Faculty Recommendation List](#))

***Five Feet Apart* by Rachel Lippincott**

What if you fell in love with someone but could never physically touch that person? That's the big question at the heart of the new YA novel *Five Feet Apart* by first-time author Rachael Lippincott, written with Mikki Daughtry and Tobias Iaconis. Stella Grant likes to be in control—even though her totally out of control lungs have sent her in and out of the hospital most of her life. At this point, what Stella needs to control most is keeping herself away from anyone or anything that might pass along an infection and jeopardize the

possibility of a lung transplant. Six feet apart. No exceptions. The only thing Will Newman wants to be in control of is getting out of this hospital. He couldn't care less about his treatments, or a fancy new clinical drug trial. Soon, he'll turn eighteen and then he'll be able to unplug all these machines and actually go see the world, not just its hospitals. Will's exactly what Stella needs to stay away from. If he so much as breathes on Stella, she could lose her spot on the transplant list. Either one of them could die. The only way to stay alive is to stay apart. But, suddenly five feet doesn't feel like safety. It feels like punishment. What if they could steal back just a little bit of the space their broken lungs have stolen from them? Would five feet apart really be so dangerous if it stops their hearts from breaking too? (amazon.com)

FOCUS:

- What is the significance of the title "*Five Feet Apart*"? How does the title and the story affect you given that you lived through a pandemic that kept you more than "Five Feet Apart"?
- What does this novel say about love? How does one find love? What are the signs and symbols of love? How does love affect the people who feel it? Is love always a good thing? What challenges does love present for us?
- Discuss the author's choice to alternate the point of view in each chapter. What effect does this choice have on your reading of the novel? What is the significance of incorporating both voices equally throughout the novel? What would change if the novel was written from the third-person point of view?

Students entering AP English Language and Composition (TWO books):

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

AND I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history, *The Kite Runner* transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

FOCUS:

Consider the following concepts as you read:

- Betrayal and redemption
- Friendship, specifically focusing on the relationship between Amir and Hassan
- The changing political circumstances in Afghanistan and their impact

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.

FOCUS:

Read the text carefully and closely. As you read, take notes and find specific examples of the following rhetorical tools:

- Figurative Language
- Diction
- Imagery
- Tone

Explain the purpose of each example and how each example furthers Angelou's central message in work.

Students entering English 12 College Prep English 12 (ONE book):

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.

FOCUS

- The author says “the chilling truth is that [Wes’s] story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.” To what extent do you think that this is true? What, ultimately, prevented their stories from being interchangeable? To what extent do education and poverty have an impact on the lives and outcomes of the two Wes Moores? What roles does choice and “fate” have in the equation of destiny?
- How does this work explore the concept of identity and self-perception? At one point, the author states that people often live up to the expectations projected on them. Is that true? In what ways do we place limiting expectations on others? What is the impact of the expectations of others on your own sense of identity? If someone you care for expects you to succeed—or fail—will you? Where does personal accountability come into play?
- Certainly consider this work in terms of current events regarding race. How does the story told in this text speak to the social, racial, and cultural events we are witnessing across America? How can you engage personally, considering who you are and where you live, in one of the most urgent matters of our times?

Students Entering English 12 Honors: (ONE book AND an OPTIONAL book):

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

AND we encourage you to read another OPTIONAL Title

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to

moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.

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- Certainly consider this work in terms of current events regarding race. How does the story told in this text speak to the social, racial, and cultural events we are witnessing across America? How can you engage personally, considering who you are and where you live, in one of the most urgent matters of our times?

OPTIONAL: (in addition to *The Other Wes Moore*, read the following book OR a book from the [Faculty Recommendation List](#))

Words on a Bathroom Wall by Julia Walton

Adam is a pretty regular teen, except he's navigating high school life while living with paranoid schizophrenia. His hallucinations include a cast of characters that range from the good (beautiful Rebecca) to the bad (angry Mob Boss) to the just plain weird. An experimental drug promises to help him hide his illness from the world. When Adam meets Maya, a fiercely intelligent girl, he desperately wants to be the normal, great guy that she thinks he is. But as the miracle drug begins to fail, how long can he keep this secret from the girl of his dreams? - *Goodreads*

FOCUS

- Even with modern advancements and education, people still have a hard time knowing how to respond to the topic of mental illness. Why is there such a stigma with mental health? What steps can your generation take in order to help itself and all of society in becoming more compassionate and understanding of those with mental illness?
- Does *Words on a Bathroom Wall* portray mental illness accurately? Do a bit of research into schizophrenia. Does the novel capture the illness realistically?
- Do you have a secret that you dread will become public knowledge? Why such dread? To what lengths do you go to conceal your secret? What are the negative consequences of your actions? Are there any positives to keeping a secret?

Students entering AP Literature and Composition (ONE book and related assignments):

The Tragedy of Macbeth by William Shakespeare (the Folger Shakespeare Library edition is inexpensive and easy to carry)

Perhaps you are thinking, “We did this during 10th grade English.” Read on. Written between 1603 & 1607, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare’s shortest and most widely recognized plays. A penetrating exploration of human nature, gender, politics, violence, superstition, and human relationships, *Macbeth* is hailed by many as ‘the Bard’s’ most intense drama. You may have read it once, but a mature student of literature often re-reads a text (multiple times!) to gain better insight—perhaps especially when the text is written by Shakespeare.

The Summer Read and its corresponding assignments will serve as an introduction to the course and introduce several of the fundamental skills we will be developing together over the course of the year. Please note that **Assignment 2** requires a notebook in which you organize your thoughts. Your efforts will culminate in a series of seminar discussions and deep immersion into the text. For some of you, this may very well be your first serious encounter with Shakespeare. Be prepared to read it more than once to complete the assignments thoughtfully. For others, this will be an opportunity to re-read *Macbeth* and dive deeper into its complexities, build upon your understanding, and bring into focus ideas you may not have considered before. Whatever the case may be, it is important that you read closely and with purpose.

NOTE: These are NOT “end-of-the-summer-get-it-done-just-before-school-begins” assignments. You should begin early enough to do quality work and then review and sharpen your insights throughout the summer to be ready to discuss deeply when school begins.

Assignment 1:

While reading, students are asked to identify and discuss literary tropes - recurring motifs, symbols/symbolic gestures, images, situations - used by Shakespeare to develop and construct and communicate meaning. Please click the link to see the [Assignment Details](#).

Assignment 2:

While reading, students are asked to closely read and annotate the play, keeping organized notes of the play’s developing complexities for each scene. Students are also required to pay particular attention to several key soliloquies that contribute to the play’s underlying complexities and compose thesis statements exploring the speaker characters’ complex attitudes revealed in their lines. Please click the link to see the [Assignment Details](#).