



DeMatha Catholic High School Freshmen Summer Reading 2025

Greetings!

As you wrap up your eighth-grade year, it is time to think about what to read as you bridge the gap from middle school to high school. We don't intend summer reading as a daunting first assignment to be hanging over our students' heads. Nor do we intend to cram in a couple of "classics" that we would otherwise not have time to cover during the school year.

At DeMatha, we believe that there are many reasons to read, and that the various types of reading experiences are valuable for different reasons.

For this upcoming summer, all rising freshmen are required to read **Laura Hillenbrand's *Unbroken (the Young Adult Adaptation)***. When we read the same book together, we have a shared experience that helps build community.

In addition, students are asked to read a second book of their choosing. Many of the freshman and sophomore classes incorporate an "independent reading" program into the curriculum, in addition to the study of shared class texts. Students need practice selecting their own texts and cultivating a rich reading life beyond that which is "assigned." With increasing frequency, colleges inquire about whether a student "reads for pleasure," astutely using it as a measure of the student's intellectual curiosity.

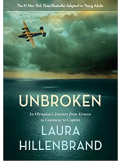
Additionally, studies have shown that the "volume" of student reading greatly contributes to the development of their language comprehension and composition skills, and students tend to read more when they get to choose what they read. While a "choice" book is strongly recommended for all students, it is a requirement for students enrolled in Honors English 9 in the fall.

Please see information about *Unbroken* and a few faculty recommendations on the back of this sheet. Happy reading, Class of 2029, and welcome to DeMatha!

The DeMatha English Department

FRESHMEN

Required for All Rising Freshmen:



Unbroken (The Young Adult Adaptation), by Laura Hillenbrand

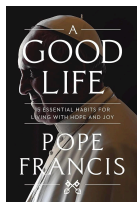
Louis Zamperini, mischievous and willful son of Italian immigrants, was headed toward a life of crime when his brother convinced him to join the track team. Zamperini discovered he had world-class talent, but the determination and toughness that made him so hard to handle as a child became invaluable traits for him in his roles as Olympic athlete, World War II pilot, and eventually a Japanese prisoner of war in appalling conditions. This is a true story of surviving incredible physical and emotional trials.

For the “Choice Text,” DeMatha teachers recommend the following, but students should select the book that they are most excited to open.



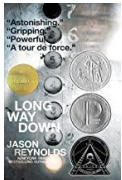
Impossible Creatures, by Katherine Rundell

Fans of Tolkien, Lewis, and Pullman are always on the lookout for the next English academic who moonlights as a fantasy fiction writer. As if to answer the call, this book has arrived in American bookstores to much fanfare. As with the titles by those aforementioned writers, readers of all ages will enjoy this saga of two kids who team up to better understand why their world is in peril and how to save the magical creatures within it.



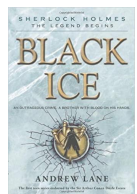
A Good Life: 15 Essential Habits for Living with Hope and Joy, by Pope Francis

Incoming freshmen are often looking for books of advice, and Pope Francis provides guidance shaped by a life of deep faith and contemplation. Written with a spirit of wonder and compassion, these pages brim with easily digestible observations about what brings peace and meaning to one's life at any age. Read with a highlighter in hand, because there are several sentences that you are going to want to return to as you move along life's journey.



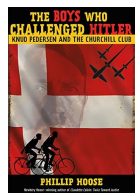
Long Way Down, by Jason Reynolds

When his older brother Shawn is shot and killed, Will Holloman thinks he's supposed to just follow the rules. No crying. No snitching. Just get revenge. Will arms himself and rides his building's elevator down to the ground floor, but on that long way down he is visited by the ghosts of other loved ones who make him question just what exactly he'd be finishing by getting revenge. This is a powerful story—told through short poems on each page—about the cycle of violence and how to escape it.



Black Ice, by Andrew Lane

Sherlock Holmes is a teenager in this adventure, and, while smart, he is not yet "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen." With the help of his mentor, Amyus Crowe, he must now save his brother from a murder conviction. The room was locked, only two people were inside—one ended up dead and Mycroft was discovered with a knife. Sherlock will have to travel the streets of London and Moscow to unravel the sinister set-up.



The Boys Who Challenged Hitler, by Phillip Hoose

The Nazi war machine has over-run much of Europe, and a group of 15-year-old Danish boys can't stand the thought that their country has let the Germans occupy their towns without a fight. Armed with only their bicycles and their bravery, the boys launch a series of sabotage efforts and guerilla-style attacks on the Nazi occupiers. Their exploits—which include escaping from prison to continue their nightly raids—inspire the adults of their country to begin resisting the Nazis at every turn.

Rising freshmen are asked to prepare written responses to their summer reading book(s) (response prompts attached). Students in the Summer Prep class will read *Unbroken* and prepare their written responses as part of the Summer Prep course.

FRESHMEN

Summer Reading Response Prompts

Please neatly hand-write your response(s) to the prompt(s) on lined paper and bring to you first English 9 class in the fall. *If you are enrolled in a summer prep course, Ms. Taylor will collect the responses and pass them to your English 9 teacher.*

Please DO use your book as you respond and look for specific supporting details. DO NOT, however, consult or copy from online summaries of the texts. We want to hear YOUR personal response, not the Internet's or a Chatbot's.

First Response

Required for All Rising Freshmen

Unbroken

Throughout *Unbroken*, Zamperini shows several qualities that affected his ability to survive during World War II. In an 8-10 sentence paragraph, please use specific details from the story to describe one of the events which Zamperini survived, and discuss the character traits that helped him the most in this moment. You should include the page number of the scene you are discussing. Are these character traits that he already had, or ones that he developed, out of necessity, along the way?

In an additional 8-10 sentence paragraph, please share a moment from your own life in which you've had to use similar character traits. We obviously do not expect your circumstances to be nearly as extreme, but everyone who has reached adolescence has had to face challenges, and recognizing the character traits that helped us navigate those challenges can better prepare us for the future. Briefly tell us a story about yourself in such a moment.

Second Response

Required for All Rising Honors Freshmen

[Choice Book]

In a third 8-10 sentence paragraph, please share which additional book you choose to read, and why you chose it. Did you select a book from the list of suggestions, or venture out on your own? What did you expect the book to be like, and did it meet your expectations? Would you recommend this book to other DeMatha freshmen — why or why not?