

I'm glad you've decided to take Dramatic Writing in the 2026-2027 school year. This is an Honors-level English class designed to emulate many of the real-world opportunities and challenges present in the professional scriptwriting community. Some of the most interesting and compelling student work I've ever seen has come from this course. Dramatic Writing is an engaging, fast-paced, rigorous, multimodal course that rewards students who put forth their best efforts.

You are expected to study, read, write, and collaborate at the **highest possible level**. You are expected to seek understanding, make meaning, and build knowledge consistently, effectively, and pragmatically. You are expected to advocate for yourself, structure time for yourself, and meet goals for yourself. You are expected to find, learn, and use industry-standard tools and college-level resources.

You do **not** need to have any special knowledge or understanding of plays, television, or film; we will develop that knowledge and understanding over the course of the year. You **do** need to be curious in your pursuit of knowledge, persistent in your study, and dutiful in your critical and creative engagement. Assigned readings and viewings should be treated like any other outside-of-class work; you will be expected to study, annotate, question, and challenge everything you are assigned to read and view.

You do not need to know how to write a play or a T.V. script or a movie pitch; we will learn those things together. You **do** need to know how to write a sentence, how to structure a paragraph, how to draft and revise and finalize a piece of writing. You **do** need to know how to identify your intended audience, how to vary your language use to reach that audience, how to determine the effectiveness of your own writing.

More important to your success in this course than any other academic knowledge or inherent skill is the ability to manage your time effectively. Students who do not succeed in this course are students who fail to keep up with the pace of viewing, reading, writing, drafting, revising, collaborating.

By the end of this course, you will have studied dozens of hours of narrative audiovisual content – plays, television episodes, movies, trailers, commercials, music videos, and documentary-style pieces. By the end of this course, you will have read dozens of complex, intricate, richly detailed works – stage plays, screenplays, articles, novels, television scripts, and college-level textbooks. By the end of this course, you will have written thousands of words of scholarship in many different modes and styles – creative, analytical, expository, reflective, personal, formal and informal.

Make no mistake: This is a challenging course.

It is also the only course where you will write a television pilot episode, study film scripts as literature, table-read a student's one-act play, debate the effectiveness of movie monsters, give speech and emotion and agency to inanimate objects, study how financial and sociocultural forces work to shape the global entertainment landscape, build video essays about artistic choices in film production design, treat as serious study the interplay of movement and sound on screen, and earn credit for maintaining an academically rigorous Letterboxd account.

I am glad you've decided to take Dramatic Writing.

Review the summer assignment closely and carefully. Do your very best. Start the year strong. I'm looking forward to working with you in the fall.

Sincerely,

Ian Custar
custar@fultonschools.org

Dramatic Writing – Summer Assignment 2026

Bridging the distance between traditional book-length literature and contemporary popular film.

This is the first work you'll complete in our writing-focused, reading-intensive, rigorous academic study of dramatic writing. I expect you to demonstrate a high level of reading, writing, and communication skill in your work that is reflective of your interest in this challenging Honors-level English language arts class.

You'll select and read a book-and-film pair from the list below. Your task is split into five parts:

1. Read and study your selected book (product: reading log)
2. View and study your selected film (product: viewing response)
3. Compare a key scene as it appears in both the novel and the film (product: film-to-scene comparison)
4. Write an analytical and reflective essay concerning the book, the film, and your experience (product: essay),
and
5. Prepare and deliver a presentation for the class that will serve as a report on your book-and-film study as well as an introduction to yourself (product: slide deck; presentation in class).

This multi-step process will take substantial time to complete. Please do not put off this assignment to the last minute. Your reading log, viewing log, and scene comparison will constitute your first practice grade. Your essay will be scored as your first minor grade. Your slide deck and presentation will count for your first major grade.

This work is due by the start of class on Monday, August 10th – first presentations also 8/10.

Special note about LLMs and AI chatbots in Dramatic Writing: You are already aware that any unauthorized use of large language model programs or any generative artificial intelligence programs in the completion of schoolwork constitutes plagiarism, which is a violation of the Innovation Academy honor code. You are aware that plagiarism carries both *explicit* costs (a grade of zero, disciplinary action) and *implicit* costs (loss of learning opportunity, strain on academic and interpersonal relationships).

It is **critical** that you **do not engage in plagiarism in any aspect** of this course, especially the uncreative, anti-intellectual, empathically hollow plagiarism of having a computer program generate predictive-text output that masquerades as human creative writing.

Any work suspected of plagiarism will be held to the highest scrutiny. Any work found to be plagiarized will be penalized to the fullest extent.

We are entering a world where authorial uncertainty runs rampant. **You** must be able to demonstrate and defend the originality, authenticity, and humanity of your own work. **Do all the work. Do it yourself. Keep your pre-writing. Keep your notes. Keep your drafts.**

If you have any questions or concerns about this assignment or your placement in this honors-level dual-credit ELA course, please contact me via email at custar@fultonschools.org – I'll reply promptly to emails received **before May 21st**; allow up to two weeks for a response to emails sent after May 21st.

PART A: Select a book-and-film pair.

Take a look at the following list and do some light research to find the book-and-film you want to study. I suggest you check GoodReads, Wikipedia, and Kirkus Reviews for the books, and the Internet Movie Database for films. Watch some trailers, read some reviews, get a sense of the book or film before you commit. You'll be spending a good bit of time with these texts, and you should read and view something that interests you and challenges you to think.

You must select a book-and-film from this list. You are responsible for finding a copy of each for study.

NOTES and ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. Some books have been made into multiple films—check the year and the director to **be sure you're viewing the film listed here.**
2. Be mindful as you select your book-and-movie pair that some of these films are rated R. It's up to you and your parents/guardians to decide whether you can view that film. Choose accordingly.
3. If your selected book is also available in audiobook format, you are more than welcome to listen to the book! You'll need to utilize quoted, cited evidence from the book in your work, so you'll also need to find a text-based physical or electronic copy.
4. The following tasks are structured to build on one another, but it is not critical that you read first and watch second. You can watch the movie or read the book in any order you wish. You can complete the following tasks in any order you wish.
5. You can definitely re-read a book or re-watch a film for this activity. It might even be a neat exercise to read/watch something you already know with a new academic goal!
6. How you choose to integrate challenging language/imagery into your writing is your own decision. Know that a direct quotation – something in quotation marks, with a page number and/or time stamp as citation, must contain the original language **OR** logical alterations presented in brackets [like this]. Here's an example from *Gone with the Wind* that may help illustrate the point:

Original, unedited quotes

When Scarlet O'Hara clings to Rhett Butler, asking rhetorically, "Where shall I go? What shall I do?" (03:47:35) in order to try to win him back, the Butler responds with a classic line of ultimate dismissal: "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn" (03:47:50).

Logical alteration, meaning unchanged

When Scarlet O'Hara clings to Rhett Butler, asking rhetorically, "Where shall I go? What shall I do?" (03:47:35) in order to try to win him back, the Butler responds with a classic line of ultimate dismissal: "Frankly my dear, I don't [care]" (03:47:50).

Here, the original "give a damn" is replaced with the bracketed "[care]" to retain the original intention of the line while excising a word that the author does not feel comfortable repeating. This decision to self-censor is YOUR decision. And yes, Gone with the Wind is nearly four hours long.

<i>Book Title, Author</i>	<i>Film Title (Year, Director)</i>
<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Jules Verne</i>	<i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954, Richard Fleischer)</i>
<i>2001: A Space Odyssey, Arthur C. Clarke</i>	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey (1968, Stanley Kubrick)</i>
<i>3:10 to Yuma, Elmore Leonard</i>	<i>3:10 to Yuma (1957, Delmer Daves)</i>
<i>A Beautiful Mind, Sylvia Nasar</i>	<i>A Beautiful Mind (2001, Ron Howard)</i>
<i>A Clockwork Orange, Anthony Burgess</i>	<i>A Clockwork Orange (1971, Stanley Kubrick)</i>
<i>A Monster Calls, Patrick Ness</i>	<i>A Monster Calls (2016, J.A. Bayona)</i>
<i>All Quiet on the Western Front, Erich Maria Remarque</i>	<i>All Quiet on the Western Front (2022, Edward Berger)</i>

<i>Anna Karenina</i> , Leo Tolstoy	<i>Anna Karenina</i> (2012, Joe Wright)
<i>Apollo 13</i> , Jeffrey Kluger and James Lovell	<i>Apollo 13</i> (1995, Ron Howard)
<i>Atonement</i> , Ian McEwan	<i>Atonement</i> (2007, Joe Wright)
<i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> , Truman Capote	<i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> (1961, Blake Edwards)
<i>Capote</i> , Gerald Clarke	<i>Capote</i> (2005, Bennett Miller)
<i>Carrie</i> , Stephen King	<i>Carrie</i> (1976, Brian De Palma)
<i>Casino Royale</i> , Ian Fleming	<i>Casino Royale</i> (2006, Marin Campbell)
<i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i> , Roald Dahl	<i>Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory</i> (1971, Mel Stuart)
<i>Children of Men</i> , P.D. James	<i>Children of Men</i> (2006, Alfonso Cuarón)
<i>Dances with Wolves</i> , Michael Blake	<i>Dances with Wolves</i> (1990, Kevin Costner)
<i>Derby Girl</i> , Shauna Cross	<i>Whip It</i> (2009, Drew Barrymore)
<i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i> , Philip K. Dick	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982, Ridley Scott)
<i>Doctor Zhivago</i> , Boris Pasternak	<i>Doctor Zhivago</i> (1965, David Lean)
<i>Dracula</i> , Bram Stoker	<i>Dracula</i> (1931, Tod Browning)
<i>Dune</i> , Frank Herbert	<i>Dune</i> (1984, David Lynch)
<i>East of Eden</i> , John Steinbeck	<i>East of Eden</i> (1955, Elia Kazan)
<i>Emma</i> , Jane Austen	<i>Clueless</i> (1995, Amy Heckerling)
<i>Fight Club</i> , Chuck Palahniuk	<i>Fight Club</i> (1999, David Fincher)
<i>Forrest Gump</i> , Winston Groom	<i>Forrest Gump</i> (1994, Robert Zemeckis)
<i>Frankenstein</i> , Mary Shelley	<i>Frankenstein</i> (1931, James Whale)
<i>Gone Girl</i> , Gillian Flynn	<i>Gone Girl</i> (2014, David Fincher)
<i>Gone with the Wind</i> , Margaret Mitchell	<i>Gone with the Wind</i> (1939, Victor Fleming)
<i>Goodfellas</i> , Nicholas Pileggi	<i>Goodfellas</i> (1990, Martin Scorsese)
<i>I Am Legend</i> , Richard Matheson (novella)	<i>I Am Legend</i> (2007, Francis Lawrence)
<i>I Know What You Did Last Summer</i> , Lois Duncan	<i>I Know What You Did Last Summer</i> (1997, Jim Gillespie)
<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> , James Baldwin	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i> (2018, Barry Jenkins)
<i>In Cold Blood</i> , Truman Capote	<i>In Cold Blood</i> (1967, Richard Brooks)
<i>Jane Eyre</i> , Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i> (2011, Cary Fukunaga)
<i>Jaws</i> , Peter Benchley	<i>Jaws</i> (1975, Steven Spielberg)
<i>Jurassic Park</i> , Michael Crichton	<i>Jurassic Park</i> (1993, Steven Spielberg)
<i>Little Women</i> , Louisa May Alcott	<i>Little Women</i> (2019, Greta Gerwig)
<i>Misery</i> , Stephen King	<i>Misery</i> (1990, Rob Reiner)
<i>Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game</i> , Michael Lewis	<i>Moneyball</i> (2011, Bennett Miller)
<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> , Agatha Christie	<i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> (2017, Kenneth Branagh)
<i>Never Let Me Go</i> , Kazuo Ishiguro	<i>Never Let Me Go</i> (2010, Mark Romanek)
<i>No Country for Old Men</i> , Cormac McCarthy	<i>No Country for Old Men</i> (2007, Joel and Ethan Coen)
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> , Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> (1975, Miloš Forman)
<i>Paper Towns</i> , John Green	<i>Paper Towns</i> (2015, Jake Schreier)
<i>Pet Semetary</i> , Stephen King	<i>Pet Semetary</i> (1989, Mary Lambert)
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , Jane Austen	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (2005, Joe Wright)
<i>Psycho</i> , Robert Bloch	<i>Psycho</i> (1960, Alfred Hitchcock)
<i>Rum Punch</i> , Elmore Leonard	<i>Jackie Brown</i> (1997, Quentin Tarantino)
<i>Simon vs. The Homo Sapiens Agenda</i> , Becky Albertalli	<i>Love, Simon</i> (2018, Greg Berlanti)

<i>The Accidental Billionaires</i> , Ben Mezrich	<i>The Social Network</i> (2010, David Fincher)
<i>The Accidental Tourist</i> , Anne Tyler	<i>The Accidental Tourist</i> (1988, Lawrence Kasdan)
<i>The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford</i> , Ron Hansen	<i>The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford</i> (2007, Andrew Dominik)
<i>The Bridge on the River Kwai</i> , Pierre Boulle	<i>The Bridge on the River Kwai</i> (1957, David Lean)
<i>The Color of Money</i> , Walter Tevis	<i>The Color of Money</i> (1986, Martin Scorsese)
<i>The Color Purple</i> , Alice Walker	<i>The Color Purple</i> (1985, Steven Spielberg)
<i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i> , Alexandre Dumas	<i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i> (2002, Kevin Reynolds)
<i>The Danish Girl</i> , David Ebershoff	<i>The Danish Girl</i> (2015, Tom Hooper)
<i>The Devil Wears Prada</i> , Lauren Weisberger	<i>The Devil Wears Prada</i> (2006, David Frankel)
<i>The Exorcist</i> , William Peter Blatty	<i>The Exorcist</i> (1973, William Friedkin)
<i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i> , Stieg Larsson	<i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i> (2011, David Fincher)
<i>The Godfather</i> , Mario Puzo	<i>The Godfather</i> (1972, Francis Ford Coppola)
<i>The Goldfinch</i> , Donna Tartt	<i>The Goldfinch</i> (2019, John Crowley)
<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> , John Steinbeck	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> (1940, John Ford)
<i>The Green Mile</i> , Stephen King	<i>The Green Mile</i> (1999, Frank Darabont)
<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> , Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (1990, Volker Schlöndorff)
<i>The Hate U Give</i> , Angie Thomas	<i>The Hate U Give</i> (2018, George Tillman Jr.)
<i>The Help</i> , Kathryn Stockett	<i>The Help</i> (2011, Tate Taylor)
<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i> , Douglas Adams	<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i> (2005, Garth Jennings)
<i>The Invisible Man</i> , H.G. Wells	<i>The Invisible Man</i> (1933, James Whale)
<i>The Iron Man</i> , Ted Hughes	<i>The Iron Giant</i> (1999, Brad Bird)
<i>The Joy Luck Club</i> , Amy Tan	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i> (1993, Wayne Wang)
<i>The Life of Pi</i> , Yann Martel	<i>Life of Pi</i> (2012, Ang Lee)
<i>The Light Between Oceans</i> , M.L. Stedman	<i>The Light Between Oceans</i> (2016, Derek Cianfrance)
<i>The Lovely Bones</i> , Alice Sebold	<i>The Lovely Bones</i> (2009, Peter Jackson)
<i>The Martian</i> , Andy Weir	<i>The Martian</i> (2015, Ridley Scott)
<i>The Outsiders</i> , S.E. Hinton	<i>The Outsiders</i> (1983, Francis Ford Coppola)
<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> , Stephen Chbosky	<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> (2012, Stephen Chbosky)
<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> , Oscar Wilde	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> (1945, Albert Lewin)
<i>The Princess Bride</i> , William Goldman	<i>The Princess Bride</i> (1987, Rob Reiner)
<i>The Remains of the Day</i> , Kazuo Ishiguro	<i>The Remains of the Day</i> (1993, James Ivory)
<i>The Road</i> , Cormac McCarthy	<i>The Road</i> (2009, John Hillcoat)
<i>The Secret Garden</i> , Frances Hodgson Burnett	<i>The Secret Garden</i> (1993, Agnieszka Holland)
<i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> , Stephen King	<i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> (1994, Frank Darabont)
<i>The Shining</i> , Stephen King	<i>The Shining</i> (1980, Stanley Kubrick)
<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> , Thomas Harris	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> (1991, Jonathan Demme)
<i>The Talented Mr. Ripley</i> , Patricia Highsmith	<i>The Princess Bride</i> (1987, Rob Reiner)
<i>The Wonderful Wizard of Oz</i> , L. Frank Baum	<i>The Wizard of Oz</i> (1939, Victor Fleming)
<i>White Noise</i> , Don DeLillo	<i>The Remains of the Day</i> (1993, James Ivory)
<i>Wild</i> , Cheryl Strayed	<i>Wild</i> (2014, Jean-Marc Vallée)

Don't see your favorite listed here? Read it later! Watch it later! You'll have plenty of opportunities!

Part B: Read your book closely and complete this Reading Log.

Start by dividing your selected book into **five sections of relatively equal length**. You can estimate this, you can count chapters, you can keep a precise number. However you determine these five sections, you'll complete one entry in the following reading log for each—**five reading log entries total**.

Each log entry must occupy at least 150 words and must include the following information:

- How much you read (the length of each section in page numbers or percentage)
- How much time you spent reading that section (estimate to the nearest half-hour)
- A brief account of how you read (location, time of day, ambient conditions, social context, etc.)
- A **personal** reflection on your reading – understandings, thoughts, interpretations, questions, challenges, musings, connections, wonderings, predictions, real-world contextualization.

Do NOT summarize your reading.

What follows is an example of one way you could organize your reading log. You are welcome to organize it in whatever way makes the most sense to you, so long as you include all required information.

Spoilers for Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1968) ahead:

Section length	Time spent reading	How I read	Personal reflection
180 pages	#h #m	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log
180 pages	3h 30m	I read these 180 pages over three days: on Friday, I read on the couch instead of watching T.V. It was relatively busy nearby (my wife was working on a project, my dog is very active and needy); on Saturday and Sunday, I read in bed before going to sleep (this is more typical of my reading habits, since things are usually quieter and calmer). I prefer to read in silence, and nighttime is the quietest time in our house.	Much of this section concerned the planetary ecologist, Kynes, who has served for decades on Arrakis as a science officer (though he's no fan of the Harkonnens). He reminds me a little bit of one of my college biology professors—he's calculating and precise and seemingly without humor, but he's got compassion and empathy when it counts. His loyalty is split between the mandates of the imperium and the cultural ways of the Fremen people, which sets him apart in a story that has (so far) been very black-and-white in its morality. I think Kynes represents a unique perspective, and even though I know he dies providing a distraction for Paul and Jessica, I think if he'd survived, he'd have defected from the imperium and joined the Fremen entirely.
180 pages	#h #m	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log
180 pages	#h #m	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log
180 pages	#h #m	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log	This is a placeholder to illustrate the fact that you'll need five total entries to complete your reading log

- ✓ Your responses are **non-evaluative** – you will receive a score based on whether or not you've met the requirements of the assignment; I will not score your work higher or lower based on your opinions, tone, or any reason other than meeting these requirements. Please be as clear, specific, and detailed as possible.
- ✓ You are allowed to write more than 150 words for each entry, and you can include information beyond what is required here. I would be very glad to read anything you feel compelled to write here. **You do not have to write more than 150 words per log entry.**

*One account of average high school student reading speed identified a consistent average of 200 words per minute; the average word count of the novels on our list is 90,000. This comes to 7.5 hours of reading. If a student reads thirty minutes every day at this average speed, they will complete 90,000 words in 15 days. The reading log exercise itself should add only a minimal amount of time to the overall work of Part B.

Part C: View and study the movie paired with your selected text.

Obtain and view the film – double-check you’re watching the listed film and not another version! You’re welcome to view this film however you can find it; make sure you can view the film at least twice on two separate days, make sure you can take pictures of what you’re watching. The Fulton County Public Library provides a free online streaming service called Kanopy that we will use in class

My advice is to watch your film once through in its entirety without pausing to make lengthy notes or answer viewing log questions. Mitigate any potential distractions. Consider who is in the room with you while you watch the film. **Turn off your phone and leave it in another room.** Hear, see, and think about the movie in real-time, as it’s unfolding. When the movie is over, think about it! Talk to someone about it! Read criticism about it!

On a **second, critical** viewing, consider the film for **narrative**¹ and **form**², then complete the following exercises

- C-1: Viewing Log (directions on p. 8)
- C-2: Book-to-film scene comparison (directions on p. 9)

NOTE: Critical viewing involves watching, listening, and thinking about the film *as you watch*, in order to develop thoughtful, informed, complex arguments and analyses.

Considering the multimodal nature of film (spoken language, music, visual imagery), the technical nature of much of the filmmaking process (tech jargon, secret lingo, tricky terms), and our natural predisposition towards passive, uncritical consumption of audiovisual media, critical viewing can be a challenging task.

The following resources provide language and concepts beneficial to informed, academic, critical viewing. Take a look, make your own meaning, and use what you learn to inform your work on this summer assignment.

- [NoFilmSchool – Learn film analysis with this cheat sheet](#)
- [The Film Fund – Cinematic study: How to watch movies like a filmmaker](#)
- [UNC Learning Center – Watching film analytically](#)

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1. **Narrative:** The story told through film; includes literary elements like characters, conflict, emotions, plot, etc.
 2. **Form:** Composition of *filmic*—or, “film-specific”—elements; includes what we see (**VISUALS**), what we hear (**AUDIO**), what the camera does (**FRAMING, FOCUS, and MOVEMENT**), and how all of these elements are connected (**EDITING**).

C-1: VIEWING LOG

As you watch your film (hopefully for a second or third time!), respond to the following twelve items using **complete sentences** and **evidence from the text (film)**. These are intended to be short-answer questions.

Limit your word count to no more than 75 words per response.

1. Describe the **opening titles**—the portion of the film that includes the title and front credits. Include a screenshot and timestamp of an especially interesting frame in the opening titles and explain why it interested you.
2. Who is/are the **protagonist/s** of this film and how do you know? How are they introduced?
3. Who/what is/are the **antagonist/s** of this film and how do you know? How are they introduced?
4. Identify and describe one significant **sign** or **symbol** from the film. What makes it important and how do you know?
5. Pause your film at exactly **15 minutes and 15 seconds**. Describe the frame you're paused on like how you'd describe a painting to someone in the dark. Include a screenshot and timestamp of the still at 00:15:15. (If this still is something distasteful or embarrassing and you'd like to include a different still, please select one as close to 00:15:15 as possible!)
6. Describe the **music** during a sad or scary part of the film. What makes it sad or scary? Include a screenshot and timestamp of a moment from this sad or scary part.
7. Pause your film at exactly **45 minutes and 45 seconds**. Describe the frame you're paused on like how you'd describe something very complex to a little kid. Include a screenshot and timestamp of the still at 00:45:45. (If this still is something distasteful or embarrassing and you'd like to include a different still, please select one as close to 00:45:45 as possible!)
8. Describe the **music** during a happy or exciting part of the film. What makes it happy or exciting? Include a screenshot and timestamp of a moment from this happy or exciting part.
9. Pause the film at exactly **one hour and fifteen minutes, fifteen seconds**. Describe the frame you're paused on like how you'd describe a zoo animal to someone who's afraid of that zoo animal. Include a screenshot and timestamp of the still at 01:15:15. (If this still is something distasteful or embarrassing and you'd like to include a different still, please select one as close to 01:15:15 as possible!)
10. What is the central **conflict** of this film? How is it resolved?
11. In 75 words or less, what is one specific thing you **liked** about this film? Why did you like this thing?
12. In 75 words or less, what is one specific thing you **disliked** about this film? Why did you dislike this thing?

C-2: BOOK-TO-FILM SCENE COMPARISON

Identify a scene in the film that corresponds to a scene in the novel. Note the page number where the scene takes place in your novel; provide a starting and ending timestamp to indicate where the scene takes place in your film.

1. In 100 words or less, describe the scene in the novel. This description will not be effusive or hyper-specific (it's only 100 words), but it should include the elements you want to compare to the film.
2. In another 100 words or less, describe the scene in the film. Again, this description will not be effusive or hyper-specific (it's only 100 words), but it should include the elements you want to compare to the book.
3. In a semi-structured response of at least 250 words (but **not** more than 500 words!), compare the **textual descriptions** in the novel to **the visual and audio presentation** of the film. Integrate specific evidence from both texts (the book and the film) into your response here; be sure to **cite** that evidence via page number and timestamp. I encourage you to utilize visual elements from the film as illustrative examples of your claims.

It may be useful to consider the thesis of your writing here; rather than accounting for every single similarity and difference, you may find it helpful to begin with an evaluative statement (thesis) to focus your comparison. An example thesis from the book and film Ender's Game might read:

“Although many of the science fiction realities of the text are preserved in Ender's first zero-g battle simulation, the film changes in character description, sound design, and violence create a movie scene that is much more emotionally intense than the scene from the novel.”

This thesis sets up a simple three-part comparison (character, sound, violence) with a specific outcome (movie = more intense). The rest of the response will reinforce these three key points with evidence.

Part D: Construct an analytical, reflective essay.

After you've read and studied your novel, viewed and studied your film, and spent some time comparing the two, you are to compose an essay that analyzes a particular aspect of this study **and** reflects on your experience and understanding. ***This work should be WHOLLY YOUR OWN – make sure to adequately cite sources of outside information, make sure to incorporate all evidence effectively into your writing, avoid any AI assistance.***

1. Choose **ONE** of the eight prompts on the following pages.
2. Develop a strong, clear, singular **thesis/argument**. This focused statement will provide structure for your essay and delimit the scope of your work.
3. Gather evidence from both texts to support your thesis. **Cite** quotes and paraphrase from the text; screenshots and scene descriptions with **timestamps** from the film. You are welcome to collect evidence from elsewhere if you'd like to – be sure to **cite** your sources.
4. Organize your work effectively. How will your ideas flow? How will you integrate your evidence? What do you need your reader to understand? What do you want your reader to wonder?
5. Proofread for easily fixed errors in grammar, spelling, diction, etc.
6. Format your essay using [MLA guidelines](#).
7. ***CHECK YOUR WORK AGAINST THE RUBRIC (p. 13).***

Your essay should occupy at least 1,000 and not more than 1,500 words in length, not counting heading or works cited page.

OPTION #1: Adaptation as argument.

How does the film adaptation interpret, transform, or challenge a central theme of the novel? In your essay, make a clear and original claim about the filmmaker's argument or message, as revealed through specific adaptation choices. Support your analysis with detailed examples from both the book and the film.

In addition to your analysis, reflect on your own experience as a reader, viewer, and writer. How did engaging with both texts shape your understanding of the theme? How did your perspective evolve as you moved from reading to viewing to writing? Consider how your personal insights and interpretations influenced your argument.

Your essay should:

- Present a thoughtful thesis about the filmmaker's interpretation of a central theme.
- Use specific, well-chosen evidence from both the novel and the film.
- Integrate your own voice, ideas, and critical perspective throughout.
- Include a reflective component that explores your process and growth as a thinker.

OPTION #2: What was lost, what was gained.

Choose a significant element from the novel – such as a character arc, subplot, or motif – that was either omitted or meaningfully altered in the film adaptation. Analyze how this change affects the story's meaning, tone, and/or emotional impact. What might the filmmaker have intended by making this change, and how does it reshape the audience's experience?

As you develop your argument, be sure to incorporate your own insights and interpretations. Don't just describe the differences—explore what they mean to you as a reader and viewer. How did your understanding of the story evolve through the process of reading the novel, watching the film, and writing this essay?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about the impact of the adaptation choice.
- Use specific evidence from both the novel and the film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that discusses your personal engagement with the texts and the writing process.

OPTION #3: Page vs. screen.

Choose a specific literary device from the novel—such as narration, metaphor, or point of view—and analyze how it is replaced, reimagined, or translated through filmic tools like cinematography, sound design, or visual symbolism. What does this shift reveal about the unique strengths and limitations of each medium in conveying meaning, emotion, or theme?

As you craft your analysis, go beyond identifying differences. Consider how your own understanding of the story changed as you moved from reading to viewing. How did the film’s interpretation challenge or deepen your perspective? What did you notice or feel differently when the story was told through images and sound instead of words?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about how a literary device is adapted through film techniques.
- Use specific examples from both the novel and the film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice, insights, and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that explores your personal experience of reading, viewing, and writing—and how this process shaped your interpretation.

OPTION #4: Embodied characters.

Choose one character and analyze how their portrayal in the film—through performance elements such as acting, costume, gesture, or physical presence—alters, amplifies, or subverts their depiction in the novel. How do these choices shape the audience’s perception of the character, and what new dimensions or tensions do they introduce?

As you develop your analysis, reflect on your own evolving understanding of this character. How did your perception shift as you moved from reading about them on the page to seeing them embodied on screen? What surprised you, challenged your assumptions, or deepened your insight?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about how the film’s performance choices affect the character’s portrayal.
- Use specific examples from both the novel and the film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that explores your personal experience of engaging with the character across both mediums and through the writing process.

OPTION #5: Your expectations, their choices.

Before watching the film, you likely formed expectations based on your reading of the novel—about the story, the characters, the tone, or even how certain scenes might look or feel. In this essay, reflect on those expectations and analyze how the film either fulfilled, challenged, or completely reimagined them.

Which creative decisions in the film—such as casting, setting, pacing, or visual style—surprised you the most? How did these choices reshape your understanding of the story or characters? What did you gain from seeing the story interpreted through a different medium, and what, if anything, felt lost?

Your essay should:

- Explore your personal expectations and reactions as a reader-turned-viewer.
- Analyze specific creative choices in the film and how they compare to the novel.
- Make a thoughtful claim about how these choices influenced your interpretation.
- Include a reflective section on how the process of reading, viewing, and writing deepened or complicated your understanding of the text.

OPTION #6: Reframing the message.

Explore how the film adaptation updates or recontextualizes one or more of the novel's central themes for a different time, place, or audience. Consider how changes in setting, casting, dialogue, tone, or visual style reshape the story's social commentary. What new meanings or resonances emerge through these choices?

As you analyze the adaptation, reflect on your own experience as a reader and viewer. How did the film's reinterpretation of the theme challenge or expand your understanding of the original text? What did you notice or think differently about after seeing the story through a contemporary or culturally distinct lens?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about how the film reimagines a theme from the novel.
- Use specific examples from both the book and the film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that explores how reading, viewing, and writing shaped your interpretation and engagement with the theme.

OPTION #7: A mirror of its moment.

Analyze how either the novel or the film adaptation serves as a reflection of its cultural and historical context. How does each version speak to the values, fears, or questions of its time? Consider how elements such as setting, character portrayal, dialogue, or themes are shaped by the era in which the work was created.

As you develop your analysis, reflect on your own perspective as a modern reader and viewer. How did learning about the historical context influence your interpretation of the story? Did you find yourself connecting more with one version than the other? Why?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about how the book or film reflects its cultural and historical moment.
- Use specific examples from the text and/or film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that explores how your understanding of the story evolved through reading, viewing, and writing—and how context shaped that understanding.

OPTION #8: The story we needed.

Which version of the story—the novel or the film—do you believe is more powerful or relevant for today's audience? Develop a thoughtful argument that explains your position, using specific analysis from one or both texts to support your claim. Consider how each version addresses contemporary issues, connects with current values or concerns, or resonates with your own experiences and observations.

As you write, reflect on your journey through reading, viewing, and writing. How did your perspective shift as you moved between the two mediums? What surprised you, challenged you, or deepened your understanding of the story's message? How did your own values and context influence your interpretation?

Your essay should:

- Make a clear, original claim about the relevance or impact of one version of the story.
- Use specific examples from the novel and/or film to support your analysis.
- Integrate your own voice, insights, and critical thinking throughout.
- Include a reflective section that explores how engaging with both texts—and the process of writing—shaped your final viewpoint.

Analytical, reflective essay rubric

	Excellent	Proficient	Developing	Limited
Interpretive argument (15 pts)	Presents a clear, original, and insightful claim that addresses the prompt in a sophisticated way. Argument shows depth, nuance, and complexity.	Presents a clear and focused claim that addresses the prompt with some original thinking. May lack nuance or complexity.	Presents a general or somewhat unclear claim. Argument may oversimplify or veer toward summary.	Claim is unclear, missing, or superficial. Argument is vague, overly summary-based, or off-topic.
Textual analysis (25 pts)	Integrates specific, well-chosen evidence from both the novel and the film. Demonstrates a deep understanding of both texts and explores the effects and meanings of adaptation choices.	Uses appropriate and accurate evidence from both texts. Analysis connects examples to the argument but may lack depth or insight in places.	Evidence is inconsistent, vague, or unevenly used. May rely too heavily on summary or fail to clearly link evidence to argument.	Evidence is sparse, misused, or absent. Analysis is minimal or missing. Shows limited engagement with the texts.
Writer's voice & insight (25 pts)	Writer's voice is confident, thoughtful, and original. Personal insights are well-integrated and enhance the argument. Demonstrates critical thinking and clear engagement with the ideas.	Writer's voice is present and appropriate. Some personal insight is included. Shows critical thinking but may not be fully developed.	Voice is generic or inconsistent. Insights may be shallow or only loosely connected to the argument.	Voice is flat, disengaged, or missing. Little to no critical thinking or personal insight evident.
Reflective engagement (25 pts)	Includes a meaningful and specific reflection on the process of reading, viewing, and writing. Reflection shows clear evolution of understanding and connects personally with the text.	Includes a clear reflection on process and perspective. May not be deeply developed, but connection is evident.	Reflection is present but underdeveloped or somewhat disconnected from the essay's main argument.	Reflection is minimal or missing. Shows little connection to process or personal engagement.
Conventions of writing (10 pts)	Essay is free from any noticeable errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, or spelling. Word choice and sentence structure are optimized for clarity and style.	Essay contains noticeable errors, but these do not interfere with the overall effectiveness of writing. Word choice and/or sentence structure may not always be optimal.	Essay contains noticeable errors that interfere with the overall effectiveness of the writing. Word choice and sentence structure	Writing does not reflect grade-level minimum expectations for written expression.

NOTES:

- **Word count** is an expectation, not a rubric item. Papers over or under the word count will lose 10 points.
- **Citation** of all specific evidence – including paraphrased text and summarized film scenes – is an expectation, not a rubric item. Papers without clear, accurate parenthetical in-text citation AND a properly formatted words cited page will lose 10 points.
- **MLA formatting** is an expectation, not a rubric item. Improperly formatted papers will lose 10 points.

Part E: Build—and prepare! and rehearse!—a reflective, introductory presentation.

Your task is to develop and deliver to the class a brief (3 to 5 minutes), image-heavy, well-rehearsed presentation and accompanying slide deck that communicates the following information:

- A personal introduction that includes specific information about your interests and experiences with film, television, stage plays, and any other audiovisual narrative media
- A **one-sentence synopsis** of your book and film, **and**
- A spoiler-free **overview and explanation of the central argument** of your written work from the summer assignment.

Rubric: Presentation and slide deck

Category	Excellent	Proficient	Developing	Needs improvement
Content and structure	Fully addresses all required elements: personal intro, media interests, book/film synopsis, and central argument. Additional personal touches enhance engagement.	Addresses all required elements with minor omissions or lack of clarity.	Some required elements are missing or underdeveloped.	Major components are missing or unclear.
Visual design	Slides are highly visual, well-organized, and enhance the presentation. Images are relevant, meaningful, and cited properly.	Slides are mostly visual and organized. Most images are relevant and cited.	Slides are somewhat visual but may lack clarity or relevance. Citations may be incomplete.	Slides are text-heavy, disorganized, or lack visuals. No image citations.
Delivery and preparation	Presentation is confident, well-rehearsed, and engaging. Minimal reliance on notes. Clear articulation and pacing.	Presentation is clear and mostly rehearsed. Some reliance on notes. Minor issues with pacing or clarity.	Presentation shows limited rehearsal. Noticeable reliance on notes. Delivery lacks confidence.	Presentation is unprepared or difficult to follow. Heavy reliance on notes or reading.

You're encouraged to include anything else you'd like, especially by way of introducing yourself to the class.

You are welcome to prepare a notecard or half-sheet to help recall specific quotes/info and to help guide your presentation. **BUT:** you should be familiar with your presentation, confident in your delivery, and not rely on notes.

This presentation should be **highly visual**, with relevant and meaningful images incorporated effectively into the slides throughout. **Provided citational information for all images on a concluding slide.**

There is **no slide limit**. When in doubt, make a new slide!

There is a **strict time limit** for delivering your presentation. Presentations under 3 minutes will lose 10 points; presentations longer than 5 minutes will be cut off at 5:01 and will lose 10 points. **Rehearse with a stopwatch!**

Presentations begin Monday, August 10th

Dramatic Writing – Summer Assignment 2026

Submission directions and final checklist

You should end up with **five different documents** for this assignment. **Name each document** in a way that clearly communicates necessary identifying information.

The work you submit must be a **static, offline** electronic document. The easiest way to ensure that your document is static (that it cannot be changed after submission) and offline (that it can be accessed electronically without internet connection) is to save your work as a PDF. An exception for this assignment is the slide deck – if you prefer, you can submit a **downloaded copy** of your work with the PPT/PPTX filetype.

Under no circumstances will you receive credit for ANY ONLINE-SHARED SUBMISSION. Working on Canva? **Export as PDF.** Working in the Word Online app? **Download your work as a PDF.** Typing in Google Docs? **Save as PDF.** Building with Google Sheets? **Save as PDF.**

If you're in doubt about anything, ask me!

Documents to be submitted – FIVE in total, each NAMED:

1. Part B: Reading log (p. 6). Submission format: **PDF.**
2. Part C-1: Viewing log (p. 8). Submission format: **PDF.**
3. Part C-2: Book-to-film scene comparison (p. 9). Submission format: **PDF.**
4. Part D: Analytical, reflective essay (p. 10). Submission format: **PDF.**
5. Part E: Slide deck for presentation (p. 14). Submission format: **PPT/PPTX or PDF.**
***Note:** You don't need to submit index card or prepared notes if you plan to use notes in your presentation, make sure you have that information with you starting Day 2!*