



SENIOR SEMINARS: SUMMER READING 2026-2027

Rising seniors are required to read four texts this summer:

1. *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver
2. *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi
3. Choice book
4. Choice book

For the two required texts, you will write short, 500-700 word essays to be submitted via Blackbaud/TurnItIn on the first day of class in August. For your Choice Books, you may choose anything you want to read and have not read before, including non-fiction, biography, etc. You do not need to get this book approved; just choose something you will enjoy and really want to read!

***Demon Copperhead* Essay: Literary Analysis – Choose one.**

Prompt 1

Women in the novel like Demon's mother, Dori, and Emmy navigate poverty and addiction under different constraints than men do. Focusing on two female characters, analyze how gender shapes their vulnerability, agency, and narrative function. Does Kingsolver's feminist lens complicate or reinforce the male-centered bildungsroman structure?

Prompt 2

Regional identity in the novel is simultaneously a source of pride, community, and shame. Analyze how Kingsolver uses the physical landscape of southwestern Virginia (its mountains, coal heritage, and rural isolation) to shape Demon's sense of self. How does the novel push back against "hillbilly" stereotypes while still depicting devastation?

Prompt 3

Demon narrates his own story from inside addiction, poverty, and trauma. Analyze how Kingsolver constructs an unreliable yet sympathetic narrator. Where does Demon's perspective and voice obscure or distort events? How does his dialect, humor, and self-awareness function as both testimony and defense mechanism?

Theo of Golden: Personal Narrative – Choose one.

Prompt 1

Golden is more than a setting; it is a community of connected lives, invisible threads, and shared history. Write about a place that shaped who you are: a neighborhood, a school, a church, a stretch of road, a grandparent's kitchen. What were the unspoken rules of that place? Who were its Theos or the quiet presences who held it together? What did you only understand about it after you left, or after it changed?

Prompt 2

Theo gives without explanation, performance, or expectation of credit. Write about a time you gave something to someone: your time, your attention, a physical object, forgiveness, or even a piece of hard truth. The gift doesn't have to be grand. It does have to be real. What moved you to give it? What did you expect in return? What actually happened? What does the experience reveal about why generosity is sometimes harder than it looks?

Prompt 3

Theo's greatest gift is not the portrait itself but the message it carries: *someone noticed you*. Write about a time when another person truly saw you and not just your surface. It may have been a teacher who recognized a talent you doubted, a stranger who showed unexpected kindness, or a friend who remembered something you had tried to forget. What did that moment of being seen cost the other person? What did it give you?