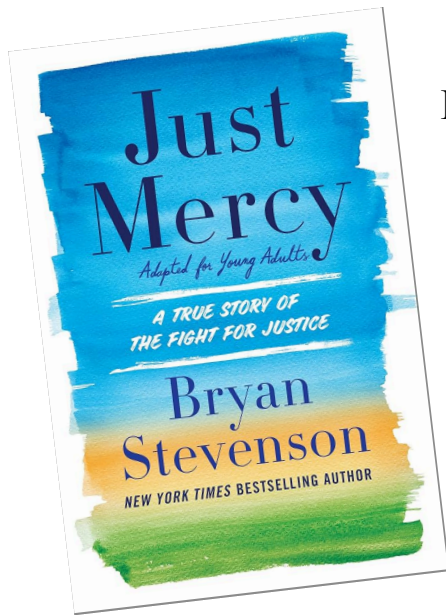




English I Summer Reading Assignment 2026

“It’s necessary to recognize that we all need mercy, we all need justice, and - perhaps - we all need some measure of unmerited grace.”

This summer, you will read [Just Mercy \(Adapted for Young Adults\) by Bryan Stevenson](#).

Students are expected to purchase a copy of the novel for class (ISBN: 978-0-525-58006-5); digital copies will not be allowed. **Again, be sure to purchase and read the young adult version of this text.** Please bring your book with you on the first day of school.

Amazon link to purchase the text (you may buy from your retailer of choice, just make sure to refer to the ISBN number to ensure the right text):

https://www.amazon.com/Just-Mercy-Adapted-Young-Adults/dp/0525580034/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0

Over the summer, students will be expected to complete the following tasks:

1. Read and annotate the book.
2. Prepare for a multiple-choice test on the first day of school.
3. Be prepared to participate in activities and a discussion related to how Stevenson communicates a theme about justice, compassion, and/or grace.

Annotation Guidelines:

1. As you read, keep track of characters, places, names of organizations, etc. on a blank page near the front cover of the book. Handwrite names and brief descriptions.
 2. Using an actual highlighter of any color, highlight ideas from the text **that reveal information about the novel's theme/message**. In addition, highlighted information should have a note in the margin written in pen; this note should explain the significance of the highlighted material. Feel free to also mark ideas that stand out to you and/or make notes about personal connections to the text.
 3. There should easily be **15** or more highlights with annotations once you are finished. These highlights/annotations should be spread throughout the entire book. The quality of annotations will be assessed, so make sure your descriptions are specific and compelling.
 4. After reading the book, handwritten a one-page final reaction to it. This is not a summary! Instead, it should be your opinion about the text. Remember, this needs to be handwritten directly in the text as well. You can write this on the blank page next to the back cover. It should be 100 words minimum.
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Sample Annotation from a Different Text:

A note should be around five or more words that offer something substantial in meaning. You should offer your own analysis and/or observations of the text. Avoid general statements like "this is an example of a theme." You need to explain how/why!

news: the daily bombings of Germany and Stalingrad, the preparation of the Second Front. And so we, the Jews of Sighet, waited for better days that surely were soon to come.

I continued to devote myself to my studies, Talmud during the day and Kabbalah at night. My father took care of his business and the community. My grandfather came to spend Rosh Hashanah with us so as to attend the services of the celebrated Rebbe of Borsche. My mother was beginning to think it was high time to find an appropriate match for Hilda.

This passed the year 1943.

SPRING 1944. Splendid news from the Russian Front. There could no longer be any doubt: Germany would be defeated. It was only a matter of time, months or weeks, perhaps.

The trees were in bloom. It was a year like so many others, with its spring, its engagements, its weddings, and its births.

For a moment, the people were saying, "The Red Army is advancing with giant strides . . . Hitler will not be able to harm us, even if he wants to . . ."

Yes, we even doubted his resolve to exterminate us.

Annihilate an entire people? Wipe out a population dispersed throughout so many nations? So many millions of people! By what means? In the middle of the twentieth century!

And thus my elders concerned themselves with all manner of things—strategy, diplomacy, politics, and Zionism—but not with their own fate.

Even Moishe the Beadle had fallen silent. He was weary of talking. He would drift through synagogue or through the streets, hunched over, eyes cast down, avoiding people's gaze.

In those days it was still possible to buy emigration certificates

WHAT CAN HATRED DO TO OUR WORLD?

to Palestine. I had asked my father to sell everything, to liquidate everything, and to leave.

"I am too old, my son," he answered. "Too old to start a new life. Too old to start from scratch in some distant land . . ."

Budapest radio announced that the Fascist party had seized power. The regent Miklós Horthy was forced to ask a leader of the pro-Nazi *Nyilas* party to form a new government.

Yet we still were not worried. Of course we had heard of the Fascists, but it was all in the abstract. It meant nothing more to us than a change of ministry.

The next day brought really disquieting news: German troops had penetrated Hungarian territory with the government's approval.

Finally, people began to worry in earnest. One of my friends, Moishe Chaim Berkowitz, returned from the capital for Passover and told us, "The Jews of Budapest live in an atmosphere of fear and terror. Anti-Semitic acts take place every day, in the streets, on the trains. The Fascists attack Jewish stores, synagogues. The situation is becoming very serious . . ."

The news spread through Sighet like wildfire. Soon that was all people talked about. But not for long. Optimism soon revived: The Germans will not come this far. They will stay in Budapest. For strategic reasons, for political reasons . . .

In less than three days, German Army vehicles made their appearance on our streets.

Despite the rising tensions and occasional violence, they still continued to ignore all the warning signs to remain optimistic. No one expected anything to happen.

ANGUISH. German soldiers—with their steel helmets and their death's-head emblem. Still, our first impressions of the Germans were rather reassuring. The officers were billeted in private homes, even in Jewish homes. Their attitude toward their hosts was distant but polite. They never demanded the impossible,

city, or any valuables. Everything had to be handed over to the authorities, under penalty of death. My father went down to the cellar and buried our savings.

As for my mother, she went on tending to the many chores in the house. Sometimes she would stop and gaze at us in silence.

Three days later, a new decree: every Jew had to wear the yellow star.

Some prominent members of the community came to consult with my father, who had connections at the upper levels of the Hungarian police; they wanted to know what he thought of the situation. My father's view was that it was not all bleak, or perhaps he just did not want to discourage the others, to throw salt on their wounds:

"The yellow star? So what? It's not lethal . . ."
 ((Poor Father! Of what then did you die?))

But new edicts were already being issued. We no longer had the right to frequent restaurants or cafés, to travel by rail, to attend synagogue, to be on the streets after six o'clock in the evening.

Then came the ghettos.

TWO GHETTOS were created in Sighet. A large one in the center of town occupied four streets, and another smaller one extended over several alleyways on the outskirts of town. The street we lived on, Serpent Street, was in the first ghetto. We therefore could remain in our house. But, as it occupied a corner, the windows facing the street outside the ghetto had to be sealed. We gave some of our rooms to relatives who had been driven out of their homes.

Little by little life returned to "normal." The barbed wire that encircled us like a wall did not fill us with real fear. In fact, we felt this was not a bad thing; we were entirely among ourselves. A

made no offensive remarks, and sometimes even smiled at the lady of the house. A German officer lodged in the Kahns' house across the street from us. We were told he was a charming man, calm, likable, and polite. Three days after he moved in, he brought Mrs. Kahn a box of chocolates. The optimists were jubilant: "Well? What did we tell you? You wouldn't believe us. There they are, your Germans. What do you say now? Where is their famous cruelty?"

The Germans were already in our town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict was already out—and the Jews of Sighet were still smiling. The narrator is somewhat surprised he speaks in a tone of optimism as if they shouldn't be as optimistic with everything going around.

The weather was sublime. My mother was busy in the kitchen. The synagogues were no longer open. People gathered in private homes: no need to provoke the Germans.

Almost every rabbi's home became a house of prayer.

We drank, we ate, we sang. The Bible commands us to rejoice during the eight days of celebration, but our hearts were not in it. We wished the holiday would end so as not to have to pretend.

On the seventh day of Passover, the curtain finally rose: the Germans arrested the leaders of the Jewish community.

From that moment on, everything happened very quickly. The race toward death had begun.

First edict: Jews were prohibited from leaving their residences for three days, under penalty of death.

Moishe the Beadle came running to our house.

"I warned you," he shouted. And left without waiting for a response.

The same day, the Hungarian police burst into every Jewish home in town: a Jew was henceforth forbidden to own gold, jew-

Elie tells the reader the narrator is finally showing what the war was for.