

2026-2027 Honors Senior English Summer Reading Information

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Because this is a senior-level and honors-weighted class, you have the privilege and responsibility of helping design the curriculum. At the beginning of the school year, you and your classmates—using the parameters that I have established—will be making decisions about the literary selections that we will be reading. I hope that you will be excited about the opportunity to help design your own course of study.

That opportunity begins now. **You also are going to choose your summer reading**—again with parameters. Since you will be in an honors-level class, please don't take this level of choice as license to be lazy. Choose some good books! **On the first Friday of school, you will turn in your completed forms**, making a case for why your book choices are an appropriate level for an honors weighted senior class. See my email for an easier link to use.

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EdL-ZMGrPtLZEU5FdahSOkkzqY_Mva5Qb378rc8hxwk/edit?usp=sharing).

So here are the rules:

- You need to choose and read **two novels**.
 - (A novel is a **book-length fictional narrative**. Make sure that you are **choosing fiction**. Do not choose a memoir or biography. These are not novels.)
 - Eventually, you will be writing a compare/contrast-style essay on the novels, but your novels do not have to be similar to do this. All novels contain elements such as theme, conflict, etc., so you will be able to write successfully with any two novels.
- The two novels must **each be at least 200 pages long**.
- You should choose novels **you have not already read**.

Other Suggestions about Choosing

What type of novel should I choose? You are free to choose:

- Classic or contemporary—These novels do not necessarily have to be things that would appear on school reading lists, just high-quality books.
- Any genre that you prefer (See other guidelines. Some genres—romance fiction, action adventure, mystery—tend to be inappropriate for honors level. Some are just escape fiction.)
- Sometimes books labeled YA (young adult) are really just middle school books, but some of them are really wonderful. **If you look at YA books, consider carefully.**

How do I determine if the novel is appropriately challenging?

The language/writing itself is probably somewhat challenging. How do you know that?

- Open the book and read a few pages. Does it seem well written? Do you like the way the author uses language? (Often Amazon will give you access to the first few pages of a book.)
- Consider the **lexile level**. The lexile rating of a book rates the level of language. This is not an absolute number, but it can be helpful. A 12th grade lexile equivalent is listed at 950-1220, but quite a few books that are 800 or above would be fine (and even some a little below, but you should check with me on those. For example, both *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy and *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zuzak are below 800, and either would be fine choices.) Another similar rating is ATOS. You can look this up, too.

- Do you find it on lists designed for upper level high school students or on middle school lists?
- Look up the “grade level” or “age level” of the book. Sometimes you can find that. Sometimes books that are listed lower than senior level would fit into the “challenging and mature” subject matter, so don’t dismiss one immediately. However, if it lists below 8th grade, it is probably not okay. **It may be that the themes and situations presented are challenging and mature.** Think back to *Lord of the Flies* in sophomore year. Even though that book is often seen as a lower read than sophomore level due to its language and style, the events and themes presented are more mature than a younger middle school student can fully grasp.
- Has it received awards? What awards? (Best Romance Novel or Best Beach Read is probably not what you are looking for. Being a Best Seller is also not always an indication of literary merit or challenge. Colleen Hoover-style books, for example, have not proven to be the greatest for this assignment.)

How do I get ideas about what to read?

- Search for senior level reading lists to find a large number of titles.
- Go to the library! They may have displays or lists, or you could ask a librarian! Our school librarians and public librarians will likely have some great suggestions if you have some interests in mind. **Our FWC library has a special novelist database and other resources just for finding great books to read!**
- Go to Barnes and Noble or Half-Price Books and look at the table where they have displayed summer reading from other schools.
- Consider the novels that will be read in the other senior level classes here at FWC that you will not be taking. The on-level seniors have a long list of classic novels for summer reading, and the AP class will be reading several novels that would be accessible to you. You could also possibly consider classic works that you might have missed in junior-level classes.
- Look at lists like “Books You Should Read before You Die” or “Best Novels Ever Written.” (Be sure to consider who published this list and what their goals were. Check titles against some of the other guidelines I have suggested.)
- Look at book club lists and other similar lists. (Not all book clubs are looking to challenge themselves, so do some further research on these titles.)
- Look at Pulitzer Prize lists. These would make good choices.
- Ask adults and your peers who are readers if they have any recommendations.
- Is it written by an author who has written other books used in your English classes?

If you really do not know if a book is acceptable, email me, and I will get back to you.

Supplies I will ask for the first full week of school:

- 1 box kleenex **OR** 1 can Lysol/Clorox wipes **OR** 1 container Lysol/Clorox wipes
- \$\$ for whatever novels you (as a class) select at the start of the year (this is usually in the \$25-\$45 range). This will likely be charged to your school account, and I will let you know all of that information before charges are made.
- Please bring your summer readers to class with you the first day; we will get started right away!