



Dear Class of 2030,

Welcome to St. John's! We are so excited to meet you and learn together over the next 4 years.

St. John's College High School is a truly special place to be. We are thrilled that you have chosen to bring your talents, interests and unique perspectives to our community.

9th grade English will challenge you to become more inquisitive, critical thinkers. It will motivate you to grow as a writer, a reader, a speaker and, overall, a successful learner. While we study several classics, you will also find opportunities to read books of your own choosing, develop your literary analysis, delve into creative writing and poetry work, build resumes and writing portfolios, and ultimately find confidence in swiftly adapting to different audiences and purposes.

For your summer reading, we ask that you choose **one** of the texts on the next page to read. Afterwards, you will write your teacher a letter to accompany your choice. We will build community in our classrooms this fall using these texts. You will turn in your letter the first day of school; there will be additional assignments relating to the book of your choosing.

**Details for assignment completion:**

- All work should be your own. We want to know what *YOU* think and hear *YOUR* voice. Base your writing task on your interaction with the book; do not use internet sources.
- Type and save your writing task. You will submit it electronically once the year starts.
- You should expect a test and class activities on the book in the first week of classes, so make sure that your annotations are thoughtful.
- You need to read this book in a **physical copy**. If you check it out from a library, retain the copy for class, and use post-it notes and a notebook for annotations. If you have any questions, please email [cpaluch@stjohnschs.org](mailto:cpaluch@stjohnschs.org).

**Suggestions for while you are reading:** Interact with the text and make annotations to help you prepare for your written task as well as for the work we will do in class. Be ready to share your annotations. Highlight or mark key passages and write notes, especially regarding:

- Anything that connects to present-day issues, problems, or trends
- Any interesting language or parts that make you reread to find deeper meaning
- Any meaningful moments in which the protagonist learns, changes, or grows

## **2026 Book Choices (summaries taken from Goodreads):**

### ***I Must Betray You* by Ruta Sepetys.**

#### **For the historical fiction fans:**

Romania, 1989: Communist regimes are crumbling across Europe. Seventeen-year-old Cristian Florescu dreams of becoming a writer, but Romanians aren't free to dream; they are bound by rules and force.

Amidst tyrannical dictatorship in a country governed by isolation and fear, Cristian is blackmailed by the secret police to become an informer. He's left with only two choices: betray everyone and everything he loves—or use his position to creatively undermine the very people who threaten him. Cristian risks everything to give a voice to the people of Romania, and in doing so, unmask the truth behind the regime and exposes what is happening in his country to the world... but what is the cost of freedom?

### ***I am Malala- Young Readers Edition* by Malala Yousafzai, with Patricia McCormick**

#### **For the nonfiction fans:**

When the Taliban take control of the Swat Valley in Pakistan, one girl speaks out. Malala Yousafzai refuses to be silenced and fights for her right to an education. This memoir details Malala's struggle to be heard in a world of oppression... a struggle that almost took her life. Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey, one that has made her a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest nominee ever for the Nobel Peace Prize. *I am Malala* is the remarkable tale of one girl, one family, beating the odds through courage and perseverance, and is a story that will make you believe in the power of an individual's voice to inspire change in the world.

### ***Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury:**

#### **For the dystopian/science fiction fans:**

Guy Montag is a fireman. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden. Montag never questions the destruction and ruin his actions produce, returning each day to his bland life and wife, Mildred, who spends all day with her television "family." But when he meets an eccentric young neighbor who opens his eyes to the reality of his present, Montag begins to see the world through the ideas in books instead of the mindless chatter of television... and begins to question everything he has ever known.

### **Written Task: 250-300 words**

Once you have completed your book, write a letter to your future teacher. This should be a three paragraph letter:

- The first paragraph should introduce yourself to us. Answer questions like: Who are you? What school do you come from? What do you like to do? Do you have any other family or friends with you at St. John's? etc.
- The second paragraph should continue to be about yourself, but specifically regarding your experience with English. Answer questions like: What has been challenging or rewarding about English classes you've taken in the past? What do you like about reading, and what do you find difficult? Is there a certain genre of books you prefer to engage with? If so, why do you like this genre? Finish this paragraph by explaining why you picked whichever summer reading book you chose.
- The last paragraph should focus upon your experience with the book. Answer questions like: What did you think about the book? What did you like or dislike? Were there certain characters, people, events, moments, or conversations that stood out to you or that you connected with? If so, was it a positive or negative feeling? Would you recommend this book to your classmates? In this paragraph, include one quote from the book that you found most meaningful, intriguing, or important, and explain why you picked that quote.

The document is to be typed out in a Word Document and will be submitted digitally during the first week of school.