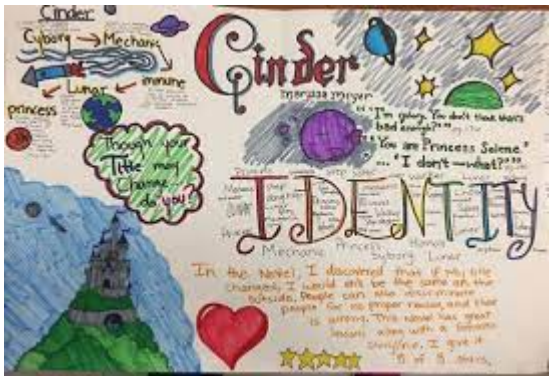
2026.2027 Summer Assignment - Ms. Schnell

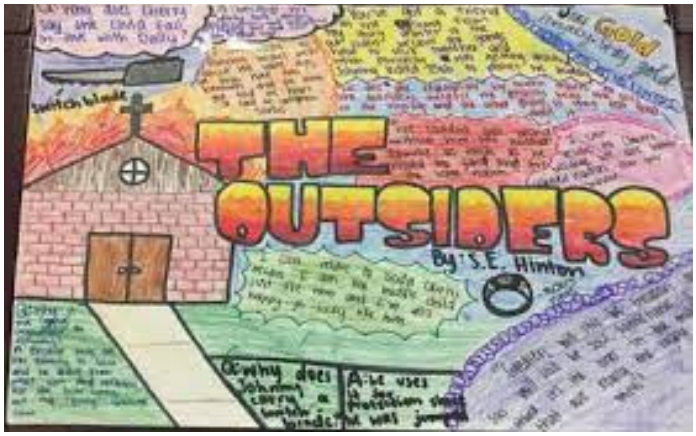
Summer Reading Assignment for <u>ALL students</u> taking English 12 AA

Review the list of novel choices on the following pages, and choose one to read. All titles are available through the library, or for purchase at any bookstore or Amazon.

After reading your choice novel from the list below, create a one-pager that discusses the following:
Theme, characterization, setting, important quotes, and symbols. See below for some excellent examples.

One-Pager Examples:





Books to choose from:

Colson Whitehead
The Underground Railroad. A vital book that forces us to reckon with the brutalities of slavery. This is a work of postmodern "historical fiction," as Whitehead reimagines the Underground Railroad as an actual system of trains and tracks running beneath 19th-century America. We follow the interconnected lives of several runaway slaves who trudge a phantasmagoric, yet oddly real version of America during the time of slavery. This adventurous and highly readable novel will surely spark lively conversations among students.

Maya Angelou
All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes. The author, her son, and several friends travel through Ghana discovering the real country and the author's dreamed-of ancestral "homeland" – touching anecdotes and great description.

James Baldwin
Go Tell It On The Mountain. One day in the life of a fourteen-year-old – as well as the past, dreams, and desires of his family – reveals the development and search for identity of an African-American boy.

Elif Batuman
The Idiot. A Turkish-American student discovers life at Harvard, email, the beauty of language, and (a kind of) love. This compelling novel, told in the unique and likable voice of its first-person narrator, will give you insight into college life in the 1990s (and today) while dazzling you with its prose. Published in 2017.

Ta-Nehisi Coates
Between the World and Me. This work of nonfiction, by celebrated Atlantic Monthly columnist Coates, is written as a long letter to his son and explores race in contemporary America. Lyrical, brutal, and more than relevant.

Kate Chopin
The Awakening. This is a daring novel which shows the transformation of Edna Pontellier from a young wife and mother to a woman who declares her freedom and spiritual rebirth.

E.L. Doctorow
Ragtime. Doctorow's work is a captivating and uniquely American story. Set at the turn of the 20th century in New York, this novel features historical figures like J.P. Morgan and Harry Houdini rubbing shoulders with Doctorow's fictional characters. A truly mesmerizing look at American history through the lens of fiction.

W.E.B. Du Bois
The Souls of Black Folk. his collection of essays by one of America's great thinkers explores race, identity, will, religion, and many other important topics. A key work to understanding our country's history and the legacy of slavery.

Pat Frank

Alas, Babylon. Published at the height of the Cold War, this is the chilling story of the members of a north Florida community suffering – and surviving – a nuclear war.
John Gardner

Grendel. The monster Grendel from the classic English epic Beowulf retells, from his point of view, the story of his life prior to his battle with the Great Prince, as well as the battle itself.

Ernest Hemingway
A Farewell to Arms. A tragic love affair set during World War I realistically discusses the disillusionment felt by some individuals in the modern world.

Gayl Jones
Corregidora. Ursa is a beautiful and powerful blues singer who works a roadhouse dive-bar in the early part of the 20th century. She is haunted by her legacy: her grandmother and mother were both molested by their plantation owner/master. As she recounts her family's tragic narrative, she finds she may be repeating the past with her current boyfriend. Because her family line was started through violence, perhaps Ursa's only way through life is to match violence with violence and pain with pain. A book that is dark, gripping, wrenching, and powerful; it examines the need for the blues, the need for testimony, and the importance of storytelling.

Catherine Lacey
The Answers. A young woman with a mysterious illness needs money to fund her treatments, so she takes a job as an "emotional girlfriend" – part of an experiment with a millionaire to test the limits of love, attraction, and dedication. Keen insight on our emotional lives and the often inexplicable bonds of relationships. Super hip and very cool. Published 2017.

J. Drew Lanham
The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature. Written in an easy-to-read and poetic style, the careful descriptions of the natural world (Lanham writes eloquently about many species of birds, plants, and more), and the frank discussions of race relations in rural South make this memoir a very compelling book. Published 2017.

Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee
Inherit the Wind. An intense drama about one of the most controversial trials of the century. Two of the greatest American lawyers of the time battle about a teacher's right to teach, freedom of speech, and the great questions of evolution.

Ben Lerner
10:04. A writer ponders the hazy line between reality and fiction. We see our narrator use his life in his fiction, write an epic poem, and wonder about the meaning of an art "in the present tense." A beautifully written and intellectually stimulating novel that provokes a great many interesting questions. The title comes from the scene in Back to the Future when Marty McFly and Doc time travel. For my money, the best novel published in 2014.

Gloria Naylor
Mama Day. This novel explores the intricacies of an isolated yet modern African-American family on the fictional Willow Island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina. Multiple perspectives and a plain prose style have helped make this a classic. Gullah culture, voodoo, the oral tradition, and well-drawn characters. Deceptively simple.

Annie Proulx
The Shipping News. Can one find happiness, security, and identity in remote Nova Scotia? The unlikely hero of this novel overcomes physical and emotional obstacles to try to do this.

Sylvia Plath
The Bell Jar. This is an autobiographical novel about an ambitious and brilliant young woman's search for values and her eventual breakdown.

Chaim Potok
The Chosen. A baseball game brings together two boys from different backgrounds. As they become friends, they learn how different Jewish beliefs and traditions influence their lives and their futures.

Mark Twain
The Innocents Abroad. Humorous letters Twain wrote to a San Francisco newspaper while traveling in Europe with a group of naive fellow Americans compiled into a funny travel narrative.

Margaret Walker
Jubilee. This Civil War novel chronicles the life of Walker"s great-grandmother, and through her, a white plantation owner and his beloved black mistress. Through her narration of events, the author captures the spirit of freedom over bondage.