

May 13, 2026

Dear Incoming Tenth Grade Honors English Students:

Welcome to the tenth grade honors English!

The tenth grade honors English class has been designed to increase rigor and student responsibility. It is challenging: it requires motivation, strong independent reading skills, work ethic, and achievement. Reading selections, classroom methods, and independent learning requirements necessitate greater study time and skill. In light of this, the course is weighted when calculating class rank.

SUMMER READING REQUIREMENT: To begin the class next year, you must have read two novels: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, and *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger.

You are highly encouraged to keep a reading journal. Good journals will include important characters, plot details to help jog your memory later, questions about the reading, literary elements, etc. Online resources (like Spark Notes) can be used for their intended purpose—to support your reading, rather than replace it. **Within the first two or three days of our return to school, you will be tested on knowledge, comprehension, and analysis of the novels. Thoughtful and purposeful reading is required to do well on these tests.** In addition, there will be required Socratic discussions and in class essays.

This summer reading requirement is representative of the kind of additional effort that will be expected of the honors English students on a regular basis. If you anticipate difficulty meeting this requirement and others like it, please contact your guidance counselor so that your schedule can be adjusted accordingly.

We are delighted that you are willing to challenge yourself and that you have the ability, drive, and ambition necessary to excel in upper-level courses. We look forward to learning with you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Katherine Richter
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Reading Journal-Suggested

*You are highly encouraged to keep a reading journal, but it is optional. It will help you to process your understanding of the novels and serve to assist you in reviewing your reading before the tests at the beginning of the year. **In the past, students who have kept journals have been more successful on the summer reading tests.***

How and where to keep your journal is up to you—some students like a dedicated notebook, but it could also be done on looseleaf or on the computer.

How often you write is also up to you. You may want to complete an entry at the end of each chapter, at the end of each reading session, or every few chapters.

The journals should discuss literary elements in the novels and should generally follow this format:

Plot development: (What happened in this section?)

Character development: (What new characters are introduced? What are they like and how are they important? What changes do we see in characters that were introduced earlier?)

Setting: (What is the setting? How is the setting playing a role in this section of the book?)

Theme: (What themes are emerging? How do you know?)

Important Quotations: Was there a passage that was particularly interesting or compelling? Jot it down!

Other elements and devices to look for and take note of: Conflict, Point of View, Symbolism, Foreshadowing, Flashback, Motifs, etc. – This section may be best completed when you are finished reading and you are reflecting on the whole piece.

BONUS: This is a wonderful opportunity to COMPARE and CONTRAST two very different novels. What themes do these novels share? What about stylistic details – how is each written in a unique way? What about other elements – point of view, symbolism, etc. – do the authors utilize these differently? How? Is one or the other more or less successful in so doing?