English 9 Honors Summer Reading

Dear incoming 9th-grade honors students,

You must read **two books** over the summer for English 9H. The required novel, as well as the two options for the second book, are all coming-of-age stories that feature young people exploring the world around them and considering who they are and who they will become in these worlds.

FIRST BOOK – REQUIRED FOR ALL: *The Sword in the Stone* by T.H. White, published in *The Once and Future King* (I cannot emphasize too many times that you are only reading the first novel in this quartet of novels; see details to make sure you read/buy the correct version!!!)

SECOND BOOK – Pick ONE of the two options below and complete a creative project (options specified further on):

- *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram
  OR
- *One Two Three* by Laurie Frankel

The novel required for all is T.H. White's 1938 classic fantasy novel ***The Sword in the Stone,*** which imagines the legendary King Arthur's boyhood and coming of age. Set in a semi-historic, semi-fantastical world, it is the most demanding of the books in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure. This novel will set up important thematic ideas we will explore throughout the year, including the importance of being open-minded and empathetic, and the importance of developing independence as we explore the world around us.

Darius the Great is Not Okay by Adib Khorram is a novel published in 2018 and written specifically for a young-adult audience. Like *The Sword in the Stone*, it is also a coming-of-age story, but the setting is contemporary, and the world the American-but-half-Persian protagonist explores is Iran, where he goes to spend a summer with his grandparents. Among other things, the novel addresses mental health issues, living up to parental expectations, fitting in, and developing friendships.

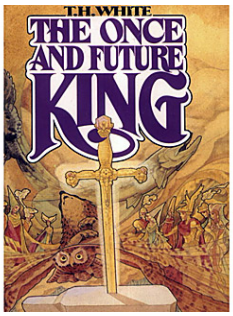
Laurie Frankel's ***One Two Three***, published in 2021, is written in a contemporary, conversational style; a trio of diverse heroines – triplet sisters Mab, Monday, and Mirabel – alternate to narrate the mystery shrouding an environmental disaster in their American town; there's also an intertwined teen romance going on. Detailed assignments appear on the second and third pages of this letter.

I look forward to seeing you in September. In the meantime, the picture at the top of this page is meant to be a reminder that summer is a time to enjoy the outdoors and natural world as much as possible. Get away from your screens, find books you love beyond the assigned summer reading, take walks, go on adventures, enjoy being with your families.

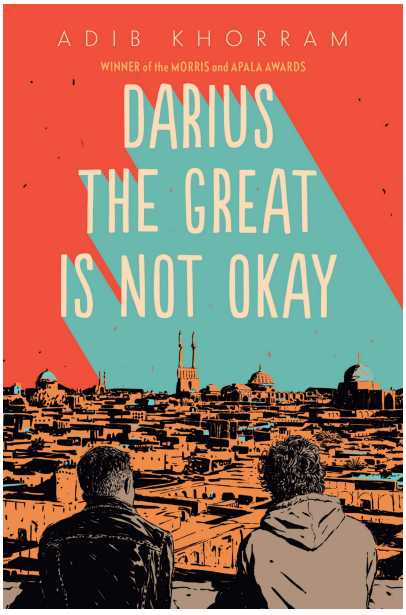
Best,
Ms. Smith-Yahia

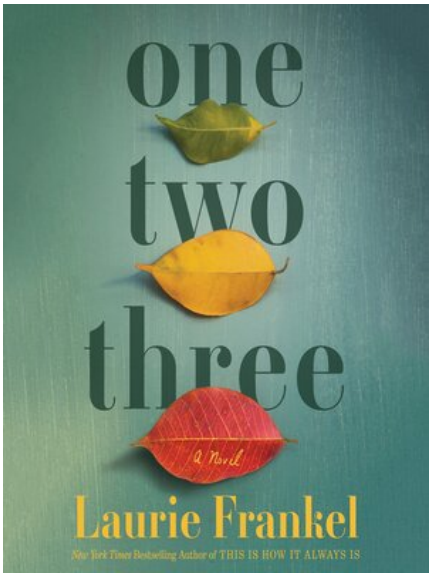
FIRST BOOK - REQUIRED: *The Sword in the Stone*

Please note: it is difficult to find *The Sword in the Stone* published as a separate volume from the other three novels that altogether make up *The Once and Future King*. Even if you can find it as a separate volume, it may actually be an adaptation and not the original. Therefore, please purchase *The Once and Future King*. However, you are only being assigned the first book in the quartet, which is *The Sword in the Stone*.
There are two potential ISBN's for this edition - 0441627404 and 978-0441627400

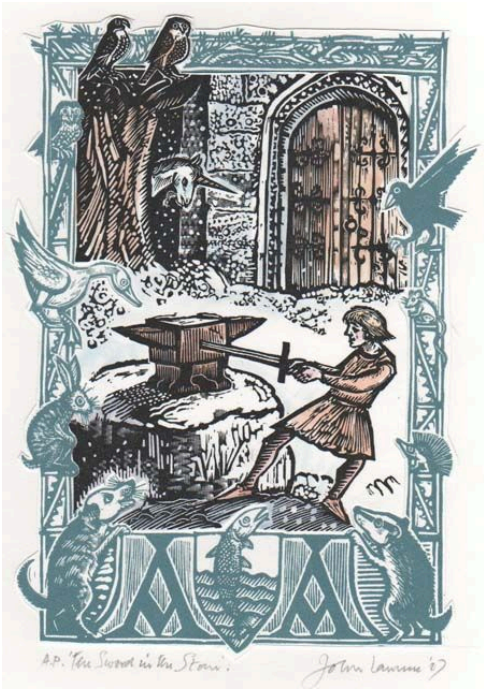


SECOND BOOK – CHOICE - ONE OF THE TWO BELOW





The Sword in the Stone by T. H. White (1938)



"The Wart [Arthur] did not know what Merlyn was talking about, but he liked him to talk. He did not like the grown-ups who talked down to him, but the ones who went on talking in their usual way, leaving him to leap along in their wake jumping at meanings, guessing, clutching at known words, and chuckling at complicated jokes as they suddenly dawned. He had the glee of the porpoise then, pouring and leaping through strange seas." (The Sword in the Stone)

This novel is demanding, and the first chapter might be a little bit challenging. As my son observed not long ago, "Oh, wow, it throws you into Latin in the first sentence!" In building the medieval world of the novel, the author also gives the reader a great deal of detail on castle architecture and the art of falconry. But be patient - the first chapter is all of eight pages, and by page 28, eccentric Merlyn and his owl Archimedes have appeared, and from there, the novel is delightful as the author tells the story of King Arthur's coming of age and his discovery of his place in the world. The Wart in the passage above is the young King Arthur, and his unconventional tutor is Merlyn, who plunges him into a series of **perspective-shifting animal transformations** which begin when Arthur looks into the castle moat one hot summer day and says, "I wish I was a fish." Read persistently and carefully, and I think you'll find that, like the Wart, "jumping at meanings, guessing, clutching at known words, and chuckling," you, too, will be gleeful like the porpoise and the young Arthur, "leaping through strange seas."

Please come in prepared with notes that consider the ideas White's novel suggests about:

- Education, including perspective shifts
- Human society and relationships
- The natural world
- Leadership
- The formation of identity

We will closely examine certain passages in the first few weeks of school, and you will be writing about this novel after we've spent some time working with it together.

***Darius the Great Is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram (2018)**

OR

***One Two Three* by Laurie Frankel (2021)**

Project due on the third day of class

When we look into a mirror, we see ourselves reflected; peering in, we can examine ourselves more closely. Books can be like a mirror: we might read them and find aspects of ourselves and our world reflected back at us in ways that help us to understand who we are and our place in the world.

Books that mirror us can be very valuable. Students often say they like a book because "it's so relatable." Finding a relatable character who mirrors us can be illuminating; such illumination can be comforting or it can be thought-provoking and even unsettling.

However, if we always see ourselves reflected back, we might start to forget how vast and diverse the world is. We might lose our open-mindedness. We might become a bit self-centered. That is why we should also seek out books that act like windows. When we look out a window, we see the world beyond us. When a book acts as a window, it provides a view into someone else's reality, someone else's life. We might find that these other realities match up quite nicely with our own. We might find that they are very different, and that's okay too. The world does not always look like us.

In your projects (see options below), please consider the ways in which the summer reading book (either *Darius the Great is Not Okay* OR *One Two Three*) acts for you as a mirror **and/or** the ways it acts as a window.

FORMAT OPTIONS FOR YOUR PROJECT - DO NOT USE AI!!! If you choose the comic strip or postcards option, your work must be done by hand.

Comic Strip

Create a 2-page comic strip with multiple panels and text representing a significant moment/conflict or theme in your text that acts as a window and/or mirror in some way.

Make sure that you create the comic strip in such a way that it is

- Meaningful in excerpted form to someone who has not read the book. For example, you could present a conflict/choice that leaves a reader thinking along the lines of "That's an interesting or compelling situation - what would I do?" Or perhaps there's a way to convey an interesting thematic idea through your panels.
- You do not need an equal amount of boxes on each page. Comics often vary the size and number of boxes depending on what the context is.

- You can use quotations from the novel or you can write your own accompanying text. It's likely that you will have to write in your own words to fit the needs of the comic strip form.
- Make sure you are neat (use a ruler for boxes, etc.)
- You do not need to be an artist! Many comic strips feature figures that are quite basic.

Series of Postcards

Create at least **three** postcards:

- Illustration on the front
- Dated message and recipient on the back

You may write from your own perspective about your reading experience at three different points in the chosen novel, addressing the postcard to our class (potentially), OR from the perspective of a character in the novel; for example, Darius might be writing from different locations in Iran, or Mab might be writing from Bourne…

Book Trailer/Book Tok

Create a video in which you either review your chosen novel as a Tik Tokker or podcaster, or create a trailer to hook audiences.

Each video should include:

- Be about two minutes long.
- Your response to the novel - mirror and/or window
- Thoughtful, specific details and quotations from your novel.
- Feature the book itself (i.e., you are holding/displaying the book)
- One relevant element of the novel in the background for visual interest .
- Be entertaining (in other words, you do not have a monotone voice or look down to read from your notes)

*I did not come up with this metaphor (mirrors and windows), which is, at this point, widely used as one way to think about the value of books in school. It comes from a paper on education published in 1988 by a woman named Emily Style.