

2026 PHS Grade 9 Honors Genre Studies Summer Reading Assignment #1

*Incoming 9th-grade Honors Genre Studies students are required to read **two books** this summer. **Honors** students must choose a **Non-Fiction** book on this list and record a **minimum of 5 important quotes**. For each quote, write a **50-100-word explanation** as to why this passage is important. Cite each quote using MLA format.*

This assignment must be typed, include MLA citations, and will be due the first full week of school via Turnitin.com to check for AI and plagiarism. A printed hard copy is also due the first full week of school for reference during a graded class discussion. The goal is to analyze, not summarize! All work must be original; do NOT present ideas from another source or classmate as your own.

Summer Reading - Multilingual Students:

We want to ensure that all of you, especially our newcomers and multilingual students, feel included in our summer reading experience. This summer, you have three options for selecting a text:

Mandatory at the Honors Level:

You must read the book, *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck. You may read the translated version of this text or the English version. Please see assignment #2 on page six for directions.

For the 2nd text selection, you may:

1. Read any book in your home language that aligns with grade-level appropriate content and text complexity. If you choose this option, make sure the text is complex enough to complete the assignment that follows.
2. Read the translated version of any book from the list that follows.

Whether you are reading in your first language or a new one, the goal is to enjoy reading and expand your learning in a way that is comfortable and meaningful to you.

Choose quotes you think are important in connection to the theme(s) in the book and explain how one or more of the following literary elements impact the book:

- Characterization
- Setting
- Foreshadowing
- Irony
- Theme
- Conflict
- Imagery
- Figurative language

Set up your 2-column quote analysis in the following way and include MLA citations:

QUOTE	SIGNIFICANCE
“Dad was always inventing things, too. One of his most important inventions was a complicated contraption he called the Prospector. It was going to help us find gold.” (Walls 23).	Although the author portrays the father as an antagonist during the first section of the book, it is clear that, as a child, Jeanette believed her father was a misunderstood genius. The descriptive imagery of her father’s creative inventions, such as The Prospector, implies that the author believed as a small child that her father was a superhero and capable of fixing anything. There is an internal conflict within Jeanette. Will her faith in him be vindicated later in the story? Will The Prospector be used to help the family obtain the funds to build their dream home?

Grade 9 Honors Genre Studies Summer Reading Non-Fiction Titles

As this is a list aimed at high school-level students, some of the books address mature ideas and issues. Please preview the books before making your selections so that you are not surprised by the content.

***A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* by Ishmael Beah**

This is how wars are fought now: by children, hopped-up on drugs, and wielding AK-47s. Children have become soldiers of choice. In the more than fifty conflicts going on worldwide, it is estimated that there are some 300,000 child soldiers. Ishmael Beah used to be one of them. What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this and survived.

***The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamba**

William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi, a country where magic ruled, and modern science was a mystery. It was also a land withered by drought and hunger. But William had read about windmills, and he dreamed of building one that would bring to his small village a set of luxuries that only 2 percent of Malawians could enjoy: electricity and running water. His neighbors called him misala—crazy—but William refused to let go of his dreams. With a small pile of once-forgotten science textbooks, some scrap metal, tractor parts, and bicycle halves, and an armory of curiosity and determination, he embarked on a daring plan to forge an unlikely contraption and small miracle that would change the lives around him.

***Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter* by Adeline Yen Mah**

In *Chinese Cinderella*, Adeline Yen Mah returns to her roots to tell the story of her painful childhood and her ultimate triumph and courage in the face of despair. Adeline's affluent, powerful family considers her bad luck after her mother dies giving birth to her. Life does not get any easier when her father remarries. She and her siblings are subjected to the disdain of her stepmother, while her stepbrother and stepsister are spoiled. Although Adeline wins prizes at school, they are not enough to compensate for what she really yearns for -- the love and understanding of her family.

***Eleven Seconds* by Travis Roy and E.M. Swift**

In this heartfelt testament to the power of love and the strength of the human spirit, Travis Roy, who suffered a devastating injury eleven seconds into his first college hockey game, reveals how he has managed to cope after the accident and, with the help of family and friends, overcome tremendous barriers to begin a new life.

***Burn Down the Ground: A Memoir* by Kambri Crews**

In this powerful, affecting, and unflinching memoir, a daughter looks back on her unconventional childhood with deaf parents in rural Texas while trying to reconcile it to her present life, one in which her father is serving a twenty-year sentence in a maximum security prison. *Burn Down the Ground* is a brilliant portrait of living in two worlds—one hearing, the other deaf; one under the laid-back Texas sun, the other within the energetic pulse of New York City; one mired in violence, the other rife with possibility—and heralds the arrival of a captivating new voice.

***The Mamba Mentality* by Kobe Bryant**

Kobe Bryant's presence on the court was legendary, and it belied a complicated and often troubled life off the court. In *The Mamba Mentality*, Bryant shares his outlook on life and basketball and delves into his famous "Mamba Mentality" philosophy, an approach to playing that's built on passion, tenacity, and the singular pursuit of athletic excellence. It's a fascinating look at the gone-too-soon powerhouse player and his thorny relationship with success, fame, and sports.

***The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown**

It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world.

***Fierce: How Competing for Myself Changed Everything* by Aly Raisman**

Discover Aly Raisman's inspiring story of dedication, perseverance, and learning to think positively even in the toughest times on her path to gold medal success in two Olympic Games--and beyond. Aly's road to success was full of hard work, perseverance, and victories, but not without its hardships. Aly faced many obstacles, from naysayers who said she'd never make it in gymnastics to classmates who shamed her for her athletic body to a devastating betrayal of trust. Through it all, Aly surrounded herself with supportive family, friends, and teammates and found the inner strength to remain positive and believe in herself. Now, in her own words, Aly shows what it takes to be a champion on and off the floor, and takes readers on a behind-the-scenes journey before, during, and after her remarkable achievements in two Olympic Games--through her highest highs, lowest lows, and all the moments in between.

***Obsessed: A Memoir of My Life with OCD* by Allison Britz**

Until the sophomore year of high school, fifteen-year-old Allison Britz lived a comfortable life in an idyllic town. She was a dedicated student with tons of extracurricular activities, friends, and loving parents at home. But after awakening from a vivid nightmare in which she was diagnosed with brain cancer, she was convinced the dream had been a warning. Allison believed that she must do something to stop the cancer in her dream from becoming a reality. Unable to act "normal," the once-popular Allison became an outcast. Finally, she allowed herself to ask for help and was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder. This brave memoir tracks Allison's descent and ultimately hopeful climb out of the depths.

***Hidden Girl* by Shyima Hall**

Shyima Hall was born in Egypt on September 29, 1989, the seventh child of desperately poor parents. When she was eight, her parents sold her into slavery. Shyima then moved two hours away to Egypt's capital city of Cairo to live with a wealthy family and serve them eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. When she was ten, her captors moved to Orange County, California, and smuggled Shyima with them. Two years later, an anonymous call from a neighbor brought about the end of Shyima's servitude—but her journey to true freedom was far from over.

***Beautiful Boy* by David Sheff**

What had happened to my beautiful boy? To our family? What did I do wrong? Those are the wrenching questions that haunted David Sheff's journey through his son Nic's addiction to drugs and tentative steps toward recovery. Before Nic became addicted to crystal meth, he was a charming boy, joyous and funny, a varsity athlete and honor student adored by his two younger siblings. After meth, he was a trembling wraith who lied, stole, and lived on the streets. David Sheff traces the first warning signs: the denial, the three a.m. phone calls—is it Nic? the police? the hospital? His preoccupation with Nic became an addiction in itself. But as a journalist, he instinctively researched every treatment that might save his son. And he refused to give up on Nic.

***Solito* by Javier Zamora**

Javier's adventure is a three-thousand-mile journey from his small town in El Salvador, through Guatemala and Mexico, and across the U.S. border. He will leave behind his beloved aunt and grandparents to reunite with a mother who left four years ago and a father he barely remembers. Traveling alone except for a group of strangers and a coyote hired to lead them to safety, Javier's trip is supposed to last two short weeks. At nine years old, all Javier can imagine is rushing into his parents' arms, snuggling in bed between them, living under the same roof again. He does not see the perilous boat trips, relentless desert treks, pointed guns, arrests, and deceptions that await him; nor can he know that those two weeks will expand into two life-altering months alongside a group of strangers who will come to encircle him like an unexpected family.

***Offside: Challenges Faced by Women in Hockey* by Rhonda Leeman Taylor**

Offside is the intimate story of Rhonda Leeman Taylor's experience in the hockey world of the '60s, '70s, and '80s, and the discrimination and challenges she faced as a female player, coach, and builder. Rhonda was one of the founders of organized women's hockey in Canada in the 1980s. As the first salaried female employee working for the OWHA, Rhonda sat as chairwoman of the inaugural Women's National Hockey Championships, directed the first Female Council (the main voice for girls' hockey today), and was the first woman to ever sit on the CAHA (Hockey Canada) Board of Directors. *Offside* details the numerous trials that women like Rhonda had to overcome to make hockey a socially acceptable sport for women in Canada. Her story combines colorful and thought-provoking anecdotes to bring to light the important history that paved the way for women to enjoy the game today.

***Lucky* by David A. Greene**

In 2018, in the remote Mantiqueira mountain range in Brazil, a sickly stray dog chose to follow a runner during the Brazil 135 ultramarathon. He stayed by his side for 140 miles. Fast forward to 2021, when Lucky the stray, now living the life in Florida, set off with his ultrarunner soulmate, David Green, on the journey of their lives — a four-month run covering 3,400 miles from Jacksonville Beach, Florida, to Muir Beach, California. An RV became their nightly retreat-on-wheels, captained by Chris, an affable chef from Brooklyn, who would provide so much more than food. This is David's honest account, his love letter to Lucky, after three short years together, during which time they inspired each other to break barriers of what is thought possible for dogs and humans -- physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

***Trust the Grind* by Jeremy Bhandari**

This book includes exclusive interviews with top athletes in sports today. *Trust the Grind* reveals how these men and women reached the height of their profession. The book encompasses sixteen athletes from eleven sports. Each chapter tells a different story, as each superstar shares the habit that helped them accomplish their goals and reach the pinnacle of their profession.

***Finding Chika* by Mitch Albom**

This is a moving memoir that recounts the author and his wife's journey with Chika Jeune, a young Haitian girl from their orphanage who is diagnosed with a fatal brain tumor. The book chronicles their two-year, worldwide quest for a cure, detailing how Chika became their adopted daughter and transformed their lives with her bravery.

2026 PHS Grade 9 Honors Genre Studies Summer Reading Assignment #2

*Incoming 9th-grade Honors Genre Studies must also read the novella Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck and take notes, which can be used during an **in-class assessment** during the first or second week of school. As you read Steinbeck's novella and take notes, keep in mind the motifs listed below. Your notes (**1-2 pages handwritten**) must include page numbers so that you will be able to locate your textual evidence efficiently during the in-class assessment.*

Stay focused on the motifs listed below rather than merely summarizing the novella. The goal is to analyze, not summarize! All work must be original; you must NOT present ideas from another source or classmate as your own.

**** Notes will be collected by the teacher for credit.**

Focus on the following motifs for your summer note-taking assignment:

- Individualism
- Loneliness
- Violence
- Friendship
- Discrimination/Prejudice (including race and gender)
- American Dream
- Sacrifice

You can also look for quotes that seem significant, thought-provoking, or perplexing and mark them with Post-Its or highlight them in the book.

For example, you might record:

- Effective and/or creative use of stylistic or literary devices
- Structural shifts or turns in the plot
- A passage that makes you realize something you hadn't seen before
- Examples of patterns: recurring images, ideas, colors, symbols, or motifs
- Events you find surprising or confusing
- Passages that illustrate a particular character or setting