

Summer Reading Assignments - 11th American Literature

Statement of Purpose - “Why do we require summer reading?”

This question is often asked. The answers are multiple but begin with the nature of our school – a college preparatory high school. One of our academic goals is to prepare students to succeed in the college and university environment. Colleges and universities expect students to come having already read a significant amount and variety of literary works. That goal cannot be achieved exclusively during the school year.

Additionally, we believe that a summer reading program will:

1. Maintain and improve reading proficiency. Educational studies have shown that student reading skills deteriorate when they do not read over the summer months.
2. Increase fluency and vocabulary skills as students are introduced to new themes and vocabulary in their selected books.
3. Develop a wider range of reading interests as students are exposed to subjects and authors outside of their usual choices.

Strategies for Planning Your Summer Reading

The first and most important tip is: DON'T LEAVE IT ALL UNTIL THE WEEK BEFORE SCHOOL!

This may be obvious, but it needs to be said.

1. Buy your novel early.
2. Once you have your books, the following system seems to work well for some people:
 - a. Add up all the pages that need to be read.
 - b. Add up all the days of summer vacation.
 - c. Subtract days you will need for writing assignments and days that it will not be possible for you to read.
 - d. The total number of days you have left are “reading days.”
 - e. Divide the total reading days by the total number of pages. This is how much you need to read each day to stay on track. Find a system that works for you.



Instructions: First and foremost, we want you to read! Read for enjoyment; become part of the novel yourself. Pretend you are one of the characters in the novel. Would you make the same choices as the characters? What would you do differently?

1. Purchase: You have the choice of reading **ONE** of the following novels that you have not already read:

- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak
- *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok
- *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles
- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
- *Just Mercy* by Brian Stevenson

2. Read: Just read! Find a nice quiet area and *just read*.

3. Assignments the first full week of school:

1. **One Pager:** You will complete a one-page literary analysis of your novel the first week of school.
2. **In-class essay:** You will write an in-class essay which will serve as a baseline and driving tool for writing instruction/essays. While you are not *required* to annotate your novel, you are encouraged to consider the attached *Simple Guide to Text Annotation* and receive extra credit.

4. Simple Guide to Text Annotations: While we are not requiring you to annotate your summer reading, it is a helpful tool as you prepare for the in-class writing assignment and one-page literary analysis over your summer reading. Marking and highlighting a text is like having a conversation with a book – it allows you to ask questions, comment on meaning, and mark events and passages you want to revisit. Annotating is a permanent record of your intellectual conversation with the text.

5. What will text annotations do for me? Text annotation has several advantages for the reader (you!). It will:

1. Improve your concentration so you will not become distracted and have to reread the text.
2. Provide an immediate self-check for your understanding of the text's key ideas.
3. Help you remember more.
4. Assist you in getting ready for tests on the material.
5. Negate the need of time spent in rereading the chapters.
6. Help you state ideas in your own words.

6. DUE DATE: Friday, August 14, 2026

- Signed Reading Pledge (be mindful to sign on the correct novel)
- Annotations:
 - IF you chose to annotate using the *Simple Guide to Text Annotation*, you will receive **extra credit** on your first full essay. Your teacher will make note of any annotations.

- The second reward you will receive is the ability to address the in-class essay prompt and one-pager analysis with knowledge gained through your diligence in reading and annotating. 😊

Reading Pledge Statement Summer 2026

Your Name: _____
(Print)

1. *The Book Thief*

Pledge: I have read the entire unabridged version of this novel, and I have not used any reading helps (Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Internet sites, etc.) to complete my summer reading.

_____ (signature)

2. *The Chosen*

Pledge: I have read the entire unabridged version of this novel, and I have not used any reading helps (Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Internet sites, etc.) to complete my summer reading.

_____ (signature)

3. *A Separate Peace*

Pledge: I have read the entire unabridged version of this novel, and I have not used any reading helps (Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Internet sites, etc.) to complete my summer reading.

_____ (signature)

4. *Fahrenheit 451*

Pledge: I have read the entire unabridged version of this novel, and I have not used any reading helps (Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Internet sites, etc.) to complete my summer reading.

_____ (signature)

5. *Just Mercy*

Pledge: I have read the entire unabridged version of this novel, and I have not used any reading helps (Spark Notes, Cliff's Notes, Internet sites, etc.) to complete my summer reading.

_____ (signature)

6. Annotations (optional)

Pledge: I have chosen to annotate my novel in addition to reading it. I will share my annotations with my teacher to receive the **extra credit** towards my first essay.

_____ (signature)

Study Strategies: A Simple Guide to Text Annotation

What is text annotation?

Textbook annotation is part of a system of textbook marking that involves the reader (the student...you!) in:

1. Writing brief summaries in the text's margins
2. Listing or numbering multiple ideas (causes, effects, reasons, characteristics)
3. Sketching pictures and charts to explain difficult processes/concepts
4. Predicting & writing possible test questions
5. Noting puzzling or confusing ideas that need clarification by the professor
6. Underlining key ideas or concepts

What will text annotation do for me?

Text annotation can have several advantages for the reader (you!). It will:

1. Improve your **concentration** so you will not become distracted and have to reread the text.
2. Provide an immediate self-check for your **understanding** of the text's key ideas.
3. Help you **remember** more.
4. Assist you in getting ready for **tests** on the material.
5. **Negate** the need of time spent in rereading the chapters.
6. Help you state ideas in **your own words**.

What should I look for to annotate?

Here are some important factors/areas to look for when reading and annotating:

What am I looking for?

How do I annotate it?

Definitions

Def. * []

Lists, features, causes, effects, characteristics, reasons

1. (done in the text/margin)
2.

Names, dates, events that are key

Underline or (circle)

Examples of main idea

ex (in the margin)

Good summary of the passage { (in the margin)

Good test questions of the passage T.Q. (in the margin)

Something you didn't understand ?? (in the margin or the text)

How should I text annotate?

Here are some steps to applying annotation to texts:

1. Skim through the chapter. Note the organization of the chapter (are there subheadings, pictures, graphs, etc.)
2. Skim the introduction, THEN the conclusion, before reading the entire chapter. This will help you get a sense as to what exactly you should know before diving in and reading.
3. Read one or more paragraphs. Then STOP. The amount of text you can read will vary from text to text, according to difficulty and organization.
4. Think about the key ideas that you have read—what is the author arguing, or how is the author supporting the argument?
5. Briefly write the key ideas in the margin, looking for the following:
 - Definitions
 - Examples
 - Lists
 - Causes and effects
 - Characteristics
 - Likenesses/differences
 - Names or dates or other important information
6. Check your annotations to be sure that they make sense to you.
7. Go on to the next section or paragraph. Remember, not every paragraph will have a key concept that should be annotated, but every page or section usually does.

How can I study from my annotated text?

How can you study based on this system?

1. Cover the text.
2. Read your annotations. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do my annotations make sense?
 - Do I understand the concepts identified?
3. If not, uncover the text and reread only the key material. Do not reread the entire section.
4. In essence, you want to talk yourself through the entire chapter/text and actively learn the material.