

HONORS ENGLISH IV SUMMER READING INFORMATION

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This year, we are going to do something different with the honors English IV class. Because this is a senior level and honors weighted class, I am going to give you the privilege and responsibility of helping design the curriculum. At the beginning of the school year, you, together with your classmates, will be making decisions, with parameters that I establish, about the literary selections that we will be reading. I hope that you will be excited about the opportunity to help design your own course of study.

And that opportunity begins now. **You also are going to choose your summer reading**—again with parameters. Since you will be in an honors level class, please don't take this level of choice as license to be lazy. Choose some good books! One of your assignments when you return to school will be to defend your book choices. You will need to make a case for why the books you chose are an appropriate level for an honors weighted senior class. So here are the rules:

- You need to choose and read **two novels**. (A novel is a **book-length fictional narrative**. Make sure that you are **choosing fiction**. Do not choose a memoir or biography. These are not novels.)
- The two novels must **each be at least 200 pages long**.
- You should choose novels **you have not already read**.

Other suggestions about choosing:

<p>What type of novel should I choose?</p>	<p>You are free to choose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classic or contemporary • Any genre that you prefer (See other guidelines. Some genres are just not going to be appropriate for honors level. Some are just escape fiction.) • Sometimes books labeled YA (young adult) are really just middle school books, but some of them are really wonderful. If you look at YA books, consider carefully.
<p>How do I determine if it is appropriately challenging?</p>	<p>This might mean that the language/writing itself is challenging. How do you know that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open the book and read a few pages. Does it seem well written? Do you like the way the author uses language? (Often Amazon will give you access to the first few pages of a book.) • Consider "lexile" level. The lexile rating of a book rates the level of language. This is not an absolute number, but it can be helpful. A 12th grade lexile equivalent is listed at 950-1220, but I find that quite a few books that are 800 or above would be fine (and even some a little below, but you might want to check with me on those. For example, both <i>The Road</i> by Cormac McCarthy and <i>The Book Thief</i> by Marcus Zusak are below 800, and either would be fine choices.) Another similar rating is ATOS. You can look this up, too. • Do you find it on lists designed for upper level high school students or on middle school lists? • Just look up "grade level" or "age level" of the book. Sometimes you can find that. Sometimes books that are listed lower than senior level would fit into the "challenging and mature" subject matter, so don't dismiss one immediately. However, if it lists below 8th grade, it is probably not okay. • Has it received awards? What awards? (Best Romance Novel or Best Beach Read is probably not what you are looking for. Best seller is also not always an indication of literary merit or challenge.) <p>It might mean that the themes and situations presented are challenging and mature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think back to <i>Lord of the Flies</i> in sophomore year. Even though that book is often seen as a lower read than sophomore level due to its language and style, the events and themes presented are more mature than a younger middle school student can fully grasp.
<p>How do I get ideas about what to read?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for senior level reading lists. You can find a large number of titles that way. • Go to Barnes and Noble and look at the table where they have displayed summer reading from other schools. • Consider the novels that will be read in the other senior level classes here at FWC that you will not be taking. The on-level seniors have a long list of classic novels for summer reading, and they read <i>Brave New World</i> during the year. The AP class will be reading several novels that would be accessible to you. Ask me. You could also possibly consider classic works that you might have missed in junior level classes. Some of these would be appropriate choices for you. • Look at lists like "Books you should read before you die" or "Best Novels Ever Written." (Be sure to consider who published this list and what their goals were. Check titles against some of the other guidelines I have suggested.) • Look at book club lists and other similar lists. (Remember that some book clubs just like to read easy books and not challenge themselves, so do some further research on these titles.) • Look at Pulitzer Prize lists. These would make good choices. • Is it written by an author that has written other books used in your English classes?

So happy choosing! Happy reading! If you do not know if a book you are choosing is okay, email me, and I will get back to you. I will be out of the country for a week in early July, so if you don't hear back from me during that time, be patient.

Blessings on your summer!

Sharon Bryant

