



Mountain Lakes High School

June, 2021

Dear Members of the Classes of 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025:

Summer is a time for adventure. Some of you might even travel to visit special places and see new things. Believe it or not, reading is a bit like travelling. In a book, you can explore new environments, meet new people, and (most importantly) learn new things about yourself and the world around you.

For our summer reading list, the teachers in the English Department have chosen books that we hope you will enjoy and that will help to frame the 2021-22 school year, introducing themes that will resurface in your studies throughout the year. Each reading is accompanied by a series of **FOCUS** questions or ideas to consider as you read. These will help you to see some of the key ideas in the text. You don't have to write anything this summer in response to your reading, but you might want to take some notes, as these will help you to stay involved in the text and may help you to prepare for the summer reading assessments that all teachers give during the first few days of school.

How can you succeed in your summer reading? Start early! Don't wait until the panicked, last few days before school begins. Plan ahead and give yourself time to enjoy the book. Read a little each day. You may find that you are soon reading way more than you expected.

Also, when you are done with your assigned book(s), don't stop reading. Read everything! Read anything! Reading really is a great way to engage in thinking about new ideas and learning about perspectives other than your own. Ask questions; engage in conversations with friends and family; find out what others are reading and check out those books, too. You may not always agree with the ideas in books or the way characters think or behave, but you'll always learn. Most of the really smart people you know are readers. Join the conversation!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Have an enjoyable, restful summer, and I hope we all see each other soon!

Sincerely,

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MLHS ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: REQUIRED SUMMER READING 2021

Each student should read carefully the book(s) identified for the class in which he or she is enrolled for the 2021-22 school year. The **FOCUS** for each book will help students to consider ideas and concepts which will serve as key points of discussion and study in September. We do encourage students to take notes during summer reading to aid in discussion and assessments that will take place upon return to school.

Students entering 9th Grade English (ONE book):

We Were Liars by E. Lockhart

“Thrilling, beautiful, and blisteringly smart, *We Were Liars* is utterly unforgettable,” writes John Green, New York Times bestselling author. “We are Sinclairs. Beautiful. Privileged. Damaged. Liars. We live, at least in the summertime, on a private island off the coast of Massachusetts. Perhaps that is all you need to know....” The narrator of this modern suspense story, Cadence Sinclair, experiences a mysterious accident one summer that leaves her with total amnesia. But what actually happened?

FOCUS:

- Consider the moral questions raised by this novel. How are racism, land ownership, inheritance, materialism, greed, and manipulation handled by Lockhart? In your opinion, what can the characters and readers learn about these thematic ideas?
- Is the Sinclair family acting of their own free will or are they in some way moving through patterns established in fairy tales and in real life that have existed long before them?

Students entering 10th Grade College Prep (ONE book):

Long Way Down by Jason Reynolds

Will has known about the rules ever since his childhood friend was killed on the playground, and he’s followed the first two: no crying, and no snitching. When his older brother, Shawn, is shot and killed while walking home from the store, Will knows he is expected to follow the final rule and avenge his brother’s death. He knows where Shawn keeps his gun, and he thinks he knows who the shooter is: a member of a rival gang named Riggs. Even if Will has never used a gun—never even held a gun before—rules are rules. But in the elevator on the way down to meet Riggs, Will encounters family and friends who died playing by the rules, and now Will has to decide what he is going to do when the elevator reaches its final stop. (Simon and Schuster)

FOCUS:

- This story’s form, free-verse poetic narrative, may be different from the form used in stories you are used to reading. Pay attention to some of the conventions usually associated with poetry (line shape and line breaks, figurative language, rhythm, sound devices). How did the poetic form affect your reading of the story? How does it impact the tone or mood? How did it affect meaning or emotional impact?
- How would you describe the genre of this book? (“Genre” is a term we use to talk about a book’s “category.” For example, fantasy or science-fiction or realism.) Is it realistic? Is it purely imaginary? Is it a combination of realism and something else? Why do you think the author tells this story the way he does?
- We often talk about literature providing the reader both a window and a mirror. It is a window into a world or experience different from our own and/or a mirror in

which we see ourselves and our own experience. To what extent does this book provide a window for you into the experiences of others? To what extent does this book provide a mirror through which you see some of your own life experiences?

Students entering 10th Grade Honors (ONE book):

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a philosophical tale of a young man who makes the ultimate moral bargain: eternal youth for the sacrifice of his soul. Written in 1891, the story resonates again today as we are immersed in a culture obsessed with images of youth and beauty. What are we willing to do to retain our chosen image of ourselves? What effects do our behaviors have upon our souls?

FOCUS:

- Pay attention to Dorian's transformations in the novel. What lines does he cross or decisions does he make that cause irrevocable change in his character?

Students entering 10th Grade AP Seminar (ONE book):

1984 by George Orwell

70 years after its initial publication, this timeless classic unfortunately remains both relevant and chilling, Orwell's dystopian novel depicts a future dominated by three warring states and a government that suppresses individuality. Winston Smith, the protagonist, seeks truth and beauty in a dehumanizing world.

FOCUS:

What does Orwell suggest about ...?

- the nature of truth
- the power of reason
- the ability of the powerful to distort the truth
- the nature of persuasion
- the relationship between thought and language
- the relationship between intellect and emotion

Students entering 11th Grade College Prep OR PXL English 11 (ONE book):

Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger

Holden Caulfield is a 16-year-old character who tries to navigate his life in a "phony" world. Salinger tells Holden's story in a series of episodes he experiences after getting expelled from a posh private school (again!), and his recollection of each event over three days in December 1949.

FOCUS:

- Holden perceives himself in opposition to his environment. How is he affected by this environment and how does he cope? How does his age affect his perception of his environment and impact his ability to contend with world around him?

Students entering 11th Grade Honors (TWO books):

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

AND I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer

In April of 1992, a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car, and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his body was discovered by a hunter. Why did he do it? What did he find in the wild? Why did he die?

FOCUS:

- Does the sense of adventure depicted in this story appeal to you?
- What things drove the main character to take his journey?
- How does the main character's physical journey (across America and "into the wild") correspond with his personal, emotional, and/or psychological journey?
- What does this main character discover about himself and the world around him? What does this story suggest about the relationship between the individual and society? What does this story also suggest about the allure of the American wilderness and society's connection to it or disconnection from it?

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors ("I met and fell in love with William Shakespeare") will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.

FOCUS:

- The title of Angelou's narrative comes from a poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar. Look up this poem, and then consider why Angelou adopts this as her book's title.
- Consider how the narrator comes to a sense of herself in the story. What experiences shape her self-perception (positively and negatively)? What people are influential in her life in terms of coming to a sense of herself? In what ways does she grow in confidence with who she is?
- As a displaced person, the narrator seems to be in search of home, a place to belong. Where is home for the narrator? Where does she belong?

Students entering AP English Language and Composition (TWO books):

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

AND *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history, *The Kite Runner* transports readers to Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction.

A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

FOCUS:

Consider the following concepts as you read:

- Betrayal and redemption
- Friendship, specifically focusing on the relationship between Amir and Hassan
- The changing political circumstances in Afghanistan and their impact

***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou**

Here is a book as joyous and painful, as mysterious and memorable, as childhood itself. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* captures the longing of lonely children, the brute insult of bigotry, and the wonder of words that can make the world right. Maya Angelou's debut memoir is a modern American classic beloved worldwide.

FOCUS:

Read the text carefully and closely. As you read, take notes and find specific examples of the following rhetorical tools:

- Figurative Language
- Diction
- Imagery
- Tone

Explain the purpose of each example and how each example furthers Angelou's central message in work.

Students entering English 12 College Prep OR PXL English 12 (ONE book):

***The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore**

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.

FOCUS

- The author says “the chilling truth is that [Wes’s] story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.” To what extent do you think that this is true? What, ultimately, prevented their stories from being interchangeable? To what extent do education and poverty have an impact on the lives and outcomes of the two Wes Moores? What roles does choice and “fate” have in the equation of destiny?
- How does this work explore the concept of identity and self-perception? At one point, the author states that people often live up to the expectations projected on them. Is that true? In what ways do we place limiting expectations on others? What is the impact of the expectations of others on your own sense of identity? If someone you care for expects you to succeed—or fail—will you? Where does personal accountability come into play?

- Certainly consider this work in terms of current events regarding race. How does the story told in this text speak to the social, racial, and cultural events we are witnessing across America? How can you engage personally, considering who you are and where you live, in one of the most urgent matters of our times?

Students Entering English 12 Honors: Humanities (TWO books):

The Other Wes Moore by Wes Moore

AND Words on a Bathroom Wall by Julia Walton

***The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore**

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FOCUS

- The author says “the chilling truth is that [Wes’s] story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.” To what extent do you think that this is true? What, ultimately, prevented their stories from being interchangeable? To what extent do education and poverty have an impact on the lives and outcomes of the two Wes Moores? What roles does choice and “fate” have in the equation of destiny?
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- Certainly consider this work in terms of current events regarding race. How does the story told in this text speak to the social, racial, and cultural events we are witnessing across America? How can you engage personally, considering who you are and where you live, in one of the most urgent matters of our times?

***Words on a Bathroom Wall* by Julia Walton**

Adam is a pretty regular teen, except he's navigating high school life while living with paranoid schizophrenia. His hallucinations include a cast of characters that range from the good (beautiful Rebecca) to the bad (angry Mob Boss) to the just plain weird. An experimental drug promises to help him hide his illness from the world. When Adam meets Maya, a fiercely intelligent girl, he desperately wants to be the normal, great guy that she thinks he is. But as the miracle drug begins to fail, how long can he keep this secret from the girl of his dreams? - *Goodreads*

FOCUS

- Even with modern advancements and education, people still have a hard time knowing how to respond to the topic of mental illness. Why is there such a stigma with mental health? What steps can your generation take in order to help itself and all of society in becoming more compassionate, understanding, and tolerant of the mentally ill.
- Does *Words on a Bathroom Wall* romanticize mental illness, specifically schizophrenia? Do a bit of research into schizophrenia. Does the novel portray the illness realistically?
- Do you have a secret that you dread will become public knowledge? Why such dread? To what extent do you go to conceal your secret? What are the negative consequences of your actions? Are there any positives to keeping a secret?

Students entering AP Literature and Composition (TWO books):

Oedipus the King (also called Oedipus Rex) by Sophocles (The version translated by Paul Roche will be the one used in class. *Oedipus the King* is included in his translation of *The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles*. If you purchase this edition, that would be ideal. It is widely available online and from online booksellers)

AND *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare

***Oedipus* by Sophocles**

The famed Athenian tragedy in which Oedipus's own faults contribute to his tragic downfall. A great masterpiece on which Aristotle based his aesthetic theory of drama in the *Poetics* and from which Freud derived the Oedipus complex, King Oedipus puts out a sentence on the unknown murderer of his father Laius. By a gradual unfolding of incidents, Oedipus learns ...(amazon.com).

FOCUS

- What control do we have over our own fates, the courses of our lives? Are we free to choose our destinies or are those chosen for us by forces beyond our control?
- How does this work explore the concept of identity and self-perception? What do we really know about who we are? How do we come to know ourselves? What happens when our chosen image of ourselves is torn away?

***Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare**

Critically acclaimed as one of Shakespeare's most complex and intriguing plays, *Twelfth Night* is a classic romantic comedy of mistaken identities, and also an interesting consideration of traditional social roles and gender expectations. As with all of Shakespeare's comedies, radical cultural shift and social unrest is just beneath the surface laughter (from amazon.com).

FOCUS:

- Note the gender roles, allusions, and the concept of appearance versus reality.
- How does Shakespeare play with social and cultural boundaries?