

Berlin High School English Department
Accelerated/Honors Program
Required Summer Reading Titles for 2008

One important component of the accelerated/honors program is required summer reading. All accelerated/honors students will read three or four (depending on grade level) teacher-selected summer reading books per year and take a test on the three or four books at the start of the school year. *Students who achieve success (85% or above, average of all tests) on the summer reading tests will be welcomed into the accelerated/honors section; it is suggested strongly that students who score below 85 on the summer reading tests reconsider their decision to take the accelerated/honors course.*

Going into English 9 Accelerated:

1. The Time Machine – H. G. Wells
2. Oliver Twist – Charles Dickens
3. I am the Cheese – Robert Cormier

Going into English 10 Accelerated:

1. Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen
2. The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
3. Nickel and Dimed – Barbara Ehrenreich

Going into American Studies Accelerated:

Students must read:

1. The Kentucky Cycle, Robert Schenkkan
2. My Antonia, Willa Cather
3. How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents, Julia Alvarez

American Studies students must also choose one of the following:

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou
Growing Up, Russell Baker
The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston
Hunger for Memory, Richard Rodriguez
On Gold Mountain, Lisa See

Going into Junior Honors English:

1. Babbitt – Sinclair Lewis
2. Snow Falling on Cedars – David Guterson
3. The Glass Menagerie – Tennessee Williams
4. The Bell Jar – Sylvia Plath

Going into Accelerated Humanities:

1. Sophie's World - Jostein Gaarder (Required Reading, subject to summer reading test)
2. The City of Joy - Dominique Lapierre (Suggested, Optional Reading)

Going into Advanced Placement Senior English:

1. The Stranger – Albert Camus
2. Othello – William Shakespeare
3. Three Tall Women – Edward Albee
4. Siddhartha – Hermann Hesse

Per Board of Education policy, an alternate reading selection is provided to students if parents/guardians find a reading selection objectionable. An alternate selection is provided once parents/guardians complete a challenged text form, available from the high school principal.

Justifications for Accelerated/Honors Summer Reading Pieces, Grades 9-12

Four Objectives of Grade Nine Accelerated English

To recognize the characteristics of literary genres

To define and use literary terminology correctly

To evaluate, interpret, and analyze literary works

To develop an increased enjoyment of reading

Wells. **The Time Machine**

Thematic connections to course curriculum: include individual integrity, love/dependency, and a cautionary perspective on science's role in human development.

Rationale for book's selection: This is a Nineteenth Century science fiction novel. As such, it represents an early version of a genre very popular with our students. Its bleak Darwinian future includes important cross curricular connections to science. This novel is set in late Victorian England, so its context can be a problem for young readers. Also, Wells' vision includes disturbing parallels to our own society and what it may become.

Cormier. **I Am the Cheese**

Thematic connections to course curriculum: include family relationships and responsibilities, internal vs. objective reality, self invention, and the quest for factual truth.

Rationale for book's selection: This novel explores, through narrative and hyperbole, the same essential concerns important to our students. The protagonist's quest for truth leads him through encounters with personifications of each of his greatest anxieties. This novel questions the sincerity of basic human relationships, including parental love, friendship, sexuality, and trustworthiness of supposedly benevolent authority.

Dickens. **Oliver Twist**

Thematic connections to course curriculum: include family relationships and responsibilities, friendship/loyalty, self invention.

Rationale for book's selection: An important emphasis of Nine Accelerated English is the study of genres.

Oliver Twist is a densely plotted novel with vivid characterizations. It explores important themes relevant to our students' own lives. It coordinates well with **A Separate Peace**, which we will read in the school year. The class may read Dickens' **Great Expectations**, as well. This novel includes some archaic social attitudes, especially concerning race, women, and children. There is significant verbal and physical violence in this novel. An abusive extra-marital relationship culminating in a brutal murder is central to the plot.

Grade 10 Justifications

Hosseini, Khalid: *The Kite Runner*

- **Thematic connection to course curriculum:**

- In reading *The Kite Runner*, tenth graders analyze several of the themes focused on throughout the course of the academic year. Some examples of these themes include: redemption, outcasts, family values and relationship dynamics, and various forms of prejudice (sexism, classism, ethnocentrism).

- **Rationale for book's selection:**

- There are numerous reasons why everyone, students included, should read this piece of literature. The specific lessons that *The Kite Runner* conveys include: diversity (text features characters from modern day Afghanistan), multiculturalism, redemptive subject matter easily relatable to the lives of all students, and history (specifically Afghani politics from the 1970's through modern, Taliban run times). All of these lessons are connected to the literary choices that students will read throughout the academic year. For example, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck develops the similar themes of friendship, loyalty and difficult choices with catastrophic consequences, and *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger develops similar themes of being an outcast and redemption. This novel does include one specific scene within its pages that is graphic in nature. However, the events of this scene are critical to understanding the conflicts, lessons and themes developed in the story.

Austen, Jane: *Pride and Prejudice*

- **Thematic connection to course curriculum:**

Pride and Prejudice deals with issues of class and an individual's place in society and within a family. The novel also explores the dynamics of relationships, a key theme of grade 10 reading selections. In addition, there are numerous internal and external conflicts, two of the central literary terms/concepts present in the grade 10 curriculum.

- **Rationale for book's selection:**

The novel provides a foray into a discussion of "What is good literature?" and represents the classic Victorian novel within the tenth grade curriculum. Students will understand what characteristics can make a piece of literature "classic". *Pride and Prejudice* presents a piece worthy of structural analysis in terms of plot elements, relevant symbolism, and dialogue. The novel presents gender role stereotypes that are not uncommon in the literature of the period.

Ehrenreich, Barbara: *Nickel and Dimed*

- **Thematic connection to course curriculum:**

Nickel and Dimed deals with issues of race, class, and gender, all of which are central to the grade 10 curriculum. The piece can be connected readily to pieces as divergent as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Anthem*.

- **Rationale for book's selection:**

Nickel and Dimed presents some views of economic realities in present-day America. The text is relevant because of the current nature of the ideas presented; students will be quite familiar with the businesses and occupations that are referenced throughout the work. As a work of nonfiction, *Nickel and Dimed* ties in perfectly with the school- and department-wide goal of reading nonfiction pieces for information. There are a few examples of coarse language contained within the book as the author presents excerpts of inter

2008 Junior Honors English Summer Reading

Lewis. Babbitt

Thematic connections to course curriculum include the loss of family values/structure, materialism, personal goals for success, sense of community.

Rationale for the book's selection: The novel compares well with The Great Gatsby, showing the early twentieth century with its emphasis on material growth and the destruction of traditional family values. The novel focuses on George Babbitt, the scion of a mid-western family, and his attempts to maintain his credibility while experiencing many setbacks including familial problems, the loss of a valued friend, and the deterioration of his own sense of self.

Gutterson. Snow Falling on Cedars

Thematic connections to course curriculum include prejudicial treatment of minorities, the impact of war on society, and the efficacy of the judicial system.

Rationale for book's selection: The novel explores the discriminatory treatment of a minority segment of the American populace. It compares well with such literary works as A Lesson Before Dying and "A Raisin in the Sun". While the focus of the novel is on societal and judicial injustice, the plot also reveals the growth of a personal relationship between a young man and woman from two disparate segments of society.

Williams. "A Glass Menagerie"

Thematic connections to the course curriculum include the changes from a patriarchal to a matriarchal society, isolation, living with disabilities, and coping with societal pressures to conform.

Rationale for the book's selection: The play focuses on an individual who is not a mainstream member of society. The protagonist, Laura, can be compared with many characters from American Literature, Hester Prynne, Bartleby, and Esther Greenwood, among others. The plot unfolds in a most straightforward fashion, using realistic dialogue and human response.

Plath. The Bell Jar

Thematic connections to course curriculum include alienation and loneliness, the search for personal fulfillment, family pressure, and the need to conform.

Rationale for book's selection: The novel focuses on a personal search for fulfillment against a background of conformity. Esther Greenwood can readily be compared to other female protagonists in American Literature, such as Antonia Shimerda, Daisy Buchanan, and Hester Prynne. Esther attempts to cope with chronic depression and the impact that such depression can have on a young woman's development as a functional member of society.

Three Statements from the course's AP/UConn Audit Description

1. **AP Honors English is a seminar in writing about some of the world's best literature."**
2. **"Readings will include selections from various genres."**
3. **"We will learn about important movements in literature... ."**

Albee. **Three Tall Women**

Thematic connections to course curriculum include family relationships and responsibilities, temporal relativity, self invention, existentialism.

Rationale for book's selection: This is a representative post modern drama by an important American playwright. AN important goal in this course is to experience, understand, and relate a breadth of literature to experiences, including to other readings. This play presents a grotesquely dysfunctional family whose search for, and eventual recognition of, what's meaningful is far from that to which we would hope our students aspire. Rude language is found in the play and the text includes references to an extramarital relationship. We consider this play in a group which also includes **Waiting for Godot**, **Bonny Barbara Allen**, and **Porphyrria's Lover**.

Camus. **The Stranger**

Thematic connections to course curriculum include family relationships and responsibilities, temporal relativity, self invention, existentialism.

Rationale for book's selection: This is a representative modernist novel. As a French text, it helps satisfy the course's emphasis on world literature. It is an important example of existential writing. The central character's isolation from his world is often seen as a metaphor for the individual's lonely place in modern Western society. The plot of the novel includes a murder within the text; traditional religious and social assumptions are rejected by the central character. We will consider this novel in a group which also includes Chekhov short stories and **Dover Beach**.

Hesse. **Siddhartha**

Thematic connections to course curriculum include family relationships and responsibilities, temporal relativity, self invention, and the quest for spiritual truth.

Rationale for the book's selection: This novel brings into fictional focus Western philosophers' search for meaning in Eastern spirituality. As a German text, it helps satisfy the course's emphasis on world literature. Its Indian sources are the same as those which inspired, a century earlier, American Transcendentalists to intellectualize the Romantic Movement. The eponymous hero seeks his life's meaning in a variety of representative venues, including friendship, religion, sensual gratification, asceticism, and commerce. His eventual discovery of truth as an individual matter is at the expense of nothing else – all options are available, and the fitting choice for him is one of service and reflection. This novel's plot includes uncritically portrayed episodes of lust and greed. We will consider this novel in a group which also includes **Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man**, **Sonnet 116**, and **Barbie Doll**.

Shakespeare. **Othello**

Thematic connections to course curriculum include the outsider's situation, family relationships and responsibilities, racist preconceptions, self invention.

Rationale for the book's selection: This is one of Shakespeare's most well known and influential works. Our consideration will focus on its dramatic aspects, as well as on the powerful portrayal of xenophobic vitriol, and its effect on love. This play includes profane language, father-daughter hostility, and a slew of stabbings. Murder, suicide and off-stage torture are prominent as well. We will consider this play in a group which also includes **Cry the Beloved Country**, **To an Athlete Dying Young**, and **Cinquains for Rocky**.