

LHS Honors English 9 Suggested Summer Reading List

The first novel on this list, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, will be assigned as part of the 9th grade honors curriculum, so all 9th grade honors classes will be reading this novel. Reading it, or a portion of it, in advance, would give you a head start, but it is not a requirement that you read this in advance of the 2018-2019 school year. *To Kill a Mockingbird* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and is ranked by the Guinness Book of World Records as the top selling novel of all time.

The other novels listed here are suggestions for those of you who like to read over the summer and are offered in case you are looking for novels to add to your own personal reading list.

*** **Lee, Harper.** *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee's coming-of-age- novel is told through the eyes of Scout Finch, a young girl who grows up in Maycomb, Alabama, in the 1930s. The reader learns about her father Atticus Finch, an attorney who hopelessly strives to prove the innocence of a black man unjustly accused of rape; and about Boo Radley, a mysterious neighbor who saves Scout and her brother Jem from being killed.***

Alvarez, Julia. *In the Time of the Butterflies*. This novel, framed by the narrative of the one surviving sister, Dede, chronicles the lives the Mirabel sisters, who become involved in the revolution to overthrow the nearly thirty-year reign of the oppressive Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. Due to their commitment to the revolution, three of the four Mirabel sisters are assassinated and later eulogized as martyrs for their country. The courage and desperation of the sisters is inspiring, but readers are forced to contemplate the terrible atrocities committed by dictatorships throughout history and the lives that have been wasted as a result. Each of the girls, Patria, Minerva, and Maria Therese (Mate), relates her own story, starting when they are children in the 1940s. *In the Time of the Butterflies* is an American Library Association Notable Book and a 1995 National Book Critics Circle Award nominee.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Despite this literary classic's Victorian setting, the story continues to resonate with young adults in the 21st century. Jane is orphaned at a young age and subjected to the cruelty of her new guardian, Aunt Reed. When Jane attends Lowood charity school, her situation does not improve. The girls at the school ostracize Jane, intensifying her feelings of alienation and worthlessness. Jane's life seems to improve when she secures a position as governess at Thornfield Hall and falls in love with the mysterious Rochester. When he deceives her, Jane's indomitable spirit does not allow her to wallow in self-pity. Readers admire Jane because in spite of her seemingly miserable lot, she transcends misery and betrayal to find love, happiness, and acceptance.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. A classic since its publication in 1952, *Invisible Man* recounts the story of a young, nameless, black man as he experiences the insidiousness of American

intolerance, prejudice, and cultural blindness. "I am an invisible man," he says in his prologue. "When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed, everything and anything except me." However, this is hard-won self-knowledge, earned over many years of degradation, oppression, chastisement, and alienation inflicted on him by the society in which he lives. The narrator's search for identity and journey toward self-actualization become the reader's, proving that truth is subjective and elusive.

Heller, Joseph. *Catch 22*. Published in 1962, this grim satire attacks the foolishness and senselessness of war. Set during World War II, Yossarian, the main character, sums up his feelings when he says to one of his comrades, "You're talking about winning the war, and I am talking about winning the war and staying alive." When asked to choose between winning the war or staying alive, Yossarian, replies, "It doesn't make a damn bit of difference who wins the war to someone who's dead." Even though the subject matter is intensely serious, the story, mainly due to the Yossarian's brutal realism and caustic sarcasm, is often humorous with the intent of illuminating the horror and absurdity of the situation in which he is mired.

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and The Sea*. Within the circumscribed frame of the novella are many of the themes that preoccupied Hemingway as a writer and as a man. The routines of life in a Cuban fishing village are evoked in the opening pages with a characteristic economy of language. The stripped-down existence of the fisherman Santiago is crafted in a spare, elemental style that is as eloquently dismissive as a shrug of the old man's powerful shoulders. With age and luck now against him, Santiago knows he must row out "beyond other men," away from land and into the deep waters of the Gulf Stream, where one last drama would be played out, in an empty arena of sea and sky.

Irving, John. *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. Johnny Wheelwright, the narrator and best friend of Owen Meany, describes Owen as a boy with a "wrecked voice" and "the smallest person I ever knew." Johnny also claims he is a Christian because of Owen's influence on his life. Owen's dwarfishness and strangely squeaky, scratchy voice are the source of much humor, and his religious convictions contribute to the novel's moral and political overtones. Ironically, Owen accidentally kills Johnny's mother with a baseball. Owen's tragic end is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Bean Trees*. Marietta Greer changes her name to Taylor after she leaves her home in Kentucky. As Taylor travels west in her '55 Volkswagen, she enjoys her freedom. However, her life changes one day in Oklahoma when a Cherokee woman leaves her baby on Taylor's front passenger seat and begs her to take it. Taylor keeps the baby and names her Turtle. When in Arizona, Taylor's car gets two flat tires, so she decides to stay. Taylor finds her new responsibility as a mother difficult and overwhelming as well as a rewarding miracle.

London, Jack. *Call of the Wild*. This novel by Jack London, published in 1903, is often considered to be his masterpiece. London's version of the classic quest story uses a dog as the protagonist of the novel. Buck, who is shipped to the Klondike to be trained as a sled dog,

eventually reverts to his primitive, wolf-like ancestry. He then undertakes an almost mythical journey, abandoning the safety of his familiar world to encounter danger, adventure, and fantasy. When he is transformed into the legendary "Ghost Dog" of the Klondike, he has become a true hero. -- The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature

McBride, James. *The Color of Water.* While growing up, James McBride never knew where his mother had come from. When he asked her if she was white, she simply replied that she was "light-skinned", triggering a long-standing confusion about his own racial identity. McBride alternates between telling his life story and the life story of his mother, Ruth, who runs away from her overbearing father, washing her hands of her Jewish heritage. In her new life, she finds happiness with Dennis, an African American man with whom she has eight children.

Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd.* Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd* (also known as 'Billy Budd, Sailor') is an icon of American literature. In it, Melville explores innocence lost, the diabolical forces which conspire to corrupt and to harm, and the making of legends when integrity is preserved. In 'Billy Budd,' we see the title character rise from a talented but naïve young sailor to the ranks of legend and martyr, an example of incorruptible goodness in a malevolent world.

Smith, Betty. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.* The beloved American classic about a young girl's coming-of-age at the turn of the century, Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is a poignant and moving tale filled with compassion and cruelty, laughter and heartache, crowded with life and people and incident. The story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan and her bittersweet formative years in the slums of Williamsburg has enchanted and inspired millions of readers for more than sixty years. By turns overwhelming, sublime, heartbreaking, and uplifting, the daily experiences of the unforgettable Nolans are raw with honesty and tenderly threaded with family connectedness -- in a work of literary art that brilliantly captures a unique time and place as well as incredibly rich moments of universal experience.

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help.* Aibileen, a black maid, is beloved in the book for her quiet handling of adversity (the death of her son and various racial mistreatment) and her warmth and compassion. She works with Skeeter Phelan, a young white woman, to help tell the story of black maids in the South in the 1960s and infuses her character with both morality and accountability.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the best selling novel of the nineteenth century. In her fictional account of the pre-Civil war era, Stowe paints an appalling view of slavery. The novel chronicles the lives of slaves on Arthur Shelby's farm. When Arthur is faced with the reality that he may lose his farm, he considers selling some of his slaves to cover his debts. His wife, Emily, hates the idea because she had promised one of her housekeepers, Eliza, that she and her child would never be sold. When Eliza overhears Arthur's plan, she plans her escape from slavery to save her son.

