

American Literature – Summer Reading Assignment

Your American Literature course is a survey of American Literature spanning from Native American and Colonial times through the modern era. Because there is no way that we could read EVERYTHING that I'd love to read with you during the course of the school year, I will be requiring you to read one book on your own during the summer, one in the fall semester and one in the spring semester. You will have a writing assignment to complete for each book. Each of the three books must meet the following requirements:

- must be written by different authors
- must be from different time periods in American Literature
- try to select plays or novels from different genres

You will then choose one of the four writing assignments below and complete one for each of the three books you select. You cannot repeat an assignment and you cannot (obviously) repeat a book. Your summer reading assignment will be due on the day you return to school. Your fall and spring semester assignment deadlines will be set at a later date.

I strongly encourage you to research each book before you decide to purchase and read it. Find a summary and see if it seems interesting to you. If not, select a different book ☺

Suggested works:

*Note: If you'd like to read another work by an American author (or another work by one of the authors listed below), you may, but you must get approval from me first.

Slaughterhouse-Five	Kurt Vonnegut
Of Mice and Men	John Steinbeck
Fahrenheit 451	Ray Bradbury
The Red Badge of Courage	Stephen Crane
A Separate Peace	John Knowles
The Call of the Wild	Jack London
The Secret Life of Bees	Sue Monk Kidd
Invisible Man	Ralph Ellison
My Antonia	Willa Cather
Hiroshima	John Hersey
The Poisonwood Bible	Barbara Kingsolver
Catch-22	Joseph Heller
The Autobiography of Malcolm X	Malcolm X with Alex Haley
Ellen Foster	Kaye Gibbons
The Glass Castle	Jeanette Wells
Caramelo	Sandra Cisneros
Fences	August Wilson
Death of a Salesman	Arthur Miller

Assignment - For each of the works that you read, you will write an essay of approximately 500 words addressing **one** of the following:

Choice 1 – Some novels and play seem to advocate changes in social or political attitudes or in traditions. Choose such a novel or play and note briefly the particular attitudes or traditions that the author wishes to modify. Then analyze the techniques the author uses to influence the reader’s or audience’s views. Avoid plot summary.

Choice 2 – Choose a novel or play that depicts a conflict between a parent or parental figure and their son/daughter or character that is like a child. Write an essay in which you analyze the sources of the conflict and explain how the conflict contributes to the meaning of the work. Avoid plot summary.

Choice 3 – Choose a distinguished novel or play in which some of the most significant events are mental or psychological; for example, awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness, etc. In a well-organized essay, describe how the author manages to give these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense and climax usually associated with external action. Do not merely summarize the plot.

Choice 4 – Select an important character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character’s villainy and show how it enhances meaning in the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.