

Reading Selections

11th: American Ideals/Values

Mandatory:

- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller

Student Choice: select one (1) from the following list:

- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
- *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton
- *My Antonia* by Willa Cather
- *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair

Introduction to Summer Reading

The summer reading assignment at THS is an important means for students to keep their critical reading and thinking skills sharp from one year to the next. Students will have the opportunity to engage in the readings as a foretaste of the academic expectations of the next grade level, to strengthen their understanding of literary elements, and to articulate their own ideas about the literature that derive from the results of their own reading and thinking rather than that of secondary sources (i.e. Cliff Notes, End Notes, Schmoop, etc.). Students will work at their own pace, which can renew the joy of reading and help them practice important time management skills needed during the school year. Finally, the summer reading assignment serves to spark classroom conversations about the literature and to generate ideas for essays, projects, or other summative assessments over the literary works.

To help students in this grand endeavor, we make the following recommendations for completing the summer reading assignment:

- Read the entire text before answering the specific questions in order to understand the full plot and character development rather than reading solely to answer the questions.
- After reading the books, answer the questions within a week so as not to forget details.
- Prior to the beginning of the school year, review the content of each book and reread your journal responses to refresh your knowledge of plot and characters.

Summer Reading Assignment Details

Students in 9th-12th grades (non-AP courses) will complete a Critical Response Journal for both summer reading books using the following criteria:

- Students will answer the five specific questions for the mandatory work for their grade level and choose five general questions to answer for the student choice reading book.
- All journal entries should be typed, collated, and stapled together with a cover sheet indicating the student's name and grade level.
- Minimum length of journal responses for each question should be 100-150 words.
- Each journal response should be labeled with the title of the work and the specific question being answered.

- Students are expected to use their own ideas and to demonstrate their understanding of the books by completing this assignment. Therefore, students should NOT consult internet and/or other sources of information about the books in order to avoid plagiarism, which includes but is not limited to:
 - cutting and pasting information or answers from an internet source
 - copying information or answers from any source other than the book itself
 - paraphrasing the ideas of or altering the words of other sources

Due dates for the summer reading assignments:

- Friday, August 16 for students enrolled prior to the first day of school
- Friday, August 30 for students enrolled on or after the first day of school (mandatory reading selection only, answering the five specific questions)

Grading Policy for Summer Reading Assignment:

- Formative Assessment Grade of the Critical Response Journal, based on the following:
 - Thorough, substantial responses that include specific details and references to the books
 - Accuracy of plot and character—correctly identify the actions of the story and the characters involved
 - GUMS: grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling
 - Following directions
- Summative Assessment Grade during the 1st Quarter as determined by each teacher

Mandatory Questions for *Death of a Salesman* (Answer ALL questions.)

1. The title *Death of a Salesman* can be understood both figuratively and literally. In your discussion, provide specific details to show how the title reflects characters, settings, events, symbols, or other ideas present in the play.
2. Describe the importance of names in this play. How do Happy and Biff's names contrast with or support their characters? Interpret the name "Loman."
3. Describe the setting (both time and place) of the play. How does the setting contribute to the main ideas (themes) presented in the work? How has the Loman's home changed?
4. Trace one of the symbols (stockings, diamonds, etc.) throughout the play and explain why and how Miller has used it.
5. What moral or ethical choices do the main characters make in the play? Describe the impact these decisions have on the character him or herself as well as others involved in the plot.

General Questions for Student Choice Book (Select five questions to answer.)

1. How does the title relate to the book? In your discussion, provide specific details to show how the title reflects characters, settings, events, symbols, or other ideas present in the novel or play.
2. Give an example of a specific turning point in the novel or play. Explain the importance of this event.
3. What objects, characters, or places function as symbols in the novel or play? Identify three symbols and explain the meaning and significance of these symbols.

4. What broader social issues does the author address in the book, for example, class conflicts, poverty, prejudice, etc.? How do these issues affect the plot and characters? Provide specific examples to support your answer.
5. Select a major or minor character from the novel or play and describe this character's motivations. Why does he or she act in this manner? Does the character undergo any changes during the course of the story?
6. What specific experiences, struggles, or conflicts of the characters in the work are relevant to our own experiences in the 21st century? What makes these particular experiences universal?
7. Examine the characters' actions: do they act with free will, directing their own lives, or do they act according to fate, unable to determine their own lives? Provide specific examples from the novel or play to support your answer.
8. Describe the setting (both time and place) of the novel or play. How does the setting contribute to the main ideas (themes) presented in the work?
9. Most writers use irony—a discrepancy between what we expect to be true or to happen and what actually is true or does happen—to draw attention to important ideas or themes in their works. Cite an example of irony in the novel or play and explain the important idea it reveals.
10. What moral or ethical choices do the main characters make in the novel or play? Describe the impact these decisions have on the character him or herself as well as others involved in the plot.