

Bearden High School Summer Reading for 2025-26

Parents and students:

Students enrolled in Honors and AP English courses at Bearden are expected to complete summer reading before the start of class. During the first few weeks of class each term, the students are required to complete exams, write essays, and participate in discussions on the selected texts. *Reading a summary of the text is not a substitute for this assignment.*

Tips:

When completing summer reading novels, the students should be active readers, ***thoroughly annotating*** each of the texts. AP and Honors teachers expect student annotations to provide evidence of critical reading, which may include the following:

- Take notes about the basic elements of literature in the reading selections (plot, setting, characterization, point of view, theme, conflict, climax, etc.)
- Highlight important segments of the selection, and reflect on why it is significant
- Ask questions about the selection

The BHS English Department suggests that these texts be purchased to make this process easier. Rising English II Honors and AP Literature students should pay close attention to the instructions about the required assignments. If necessary, we can make hard copies available for pickup this summer, and digital versions are available on the school website.

If you have questions or concerns, my email address is tim.vacek@knoxschools.org. I have also included a contact for each grade level for any questions you have about specific texts.

Thank you,
Tim Vacek
English Department Chair

Contacts

9th Grade – Kelley Davis (kelley.davis@knoxschools.org)

10th Grade – Rebecca Napreyeva (rebecca.napreyeva@knoxschools.org)

AP Lit – Nescha Lee (nescha.lee@knoxschools.org)

AP Lang & AP Seminar – Tim Vacek (tim.vacek@knoxschools.org)

NOTES ABOUT ANNOTATION (from the AP Central Website)

Why Annotate?

- Annotate any text that you must know well, in detail, and from which you might need to produce evidence that supports your knowledge or reading, such as a book on which you will be tested.
- Don't assume that you must annotate when you read for pleasure; if you're relaxing with a book, well, relax. Still, some people—let's call them "not-abnormal"—actually annotate for pleasure.

Don't annotate other people's property, which is almost always selfish, often destructive, rude, and possibly illegal. For a book that doesn't belong to you, use adhesive notes for your comments, removing them before you return the text.

Don't annotate your own book if it has intrinsic value as an art object or a rarity. Consider doing what teachers do: *buy an inexpensive copy of the text for class.*

Tools: Highlighter, Pencil, and Your Own Text

1. Yellow Highlighter: A yellow highlighter allows you to mark exactly what you feel is necessary. Equally important, the yellow line emphasizes without interfering. Highlighters in blue and pink and fluorescent colors are even more distracting. The idea is to see the important text more clearly, not give your eyes a psychedelic exercise. While you read, highlight whatever seems to be key information. At first, you will probably highlight too little or too much; with experience, you will choose more effectively which material to highlight.

2. Pencil: A pencil is better than a pen because you can make changes. Even geniuses make mistakes, temporary comments, and incomplete notes. While you read, use marginalia—marginal notes—to mark key material. Marginalia can include check marks, question marks, stars, arrows, brackets, and written words and phrases. Create your own system for marking what is important, interesting, quotable, questionable, and so forth.

3. Your Text: Inside the front cover of your book, keep an orderly, legible list of "key information" with page references. Key information in a novel might include themes; passages that relate to the book's title; characters' names; salient quotes; important scenes, passages, and chapters; and maybe key definitions or vocabulary. Remember that key information will vary according to genre and the reader's purpose, so make your own good plan.

As you read, section by section, chapter by chapter, **consider doing the following, if useful/necessary:**

- At the end of each chapter or section, **briefly** summarize the material.
- Title each chapter or section as soon as you finish it, especially if the text does not provide headings for chapters or sections.
- Make a list of vocabulary words on a back page or the inside back cover. Possible ideas for lists include the author's special jargon and new, unknown, or otherwise interesting words.
- Important plot happenings
- Supporting details or textual evidence to support a conclusion you are drawing
- Writer's craft to create effect, such as figurative language, imagery, characterization, etc.

Assignments for both AP Seminar-Language Combined & AP Language

1. Choose one of the following to read critically:

- *The Girls of Atomic City* by Denise Kiernan – Kiernan seeks to expose an area of Oak Ridge history that has not received much coverage in her book *The Girls of Atomic City*. Women from all over the country worked tirelessly at the Clinton Engineer Works in the 1940s, knowing only that they were helping the American war efforts – oblivious to the world-changing technology that they were working to uncover. Kiernan weaves a factual narrative based on her exhaustive interviews with several of those women, revealing all the once esoteric details of their existence in the Secret City.
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien – O'Brien brilliantly blends fiction and nonfiction in *The Things They Carried* as he reflects on his experiences in the Vietnam War. O'Brien's poignant thoughts on war, death, and sacrifice resonate with his growing audience. The book, which is more of a collection of interconnected short stories than it is a novel, is quickly becoming viewed as a contemporary classic. (Excellent story; language and themes may be objectionable.)

2. *Participate in an enriching educational experience:* In AP Language, we will work hard to develop your skills in critically analyzing and writing evidence-based arguments. Much of the evidence that students use to support claims in their papers comes from all of their experiences in and out of the classroom. Think about this like collecting experience points in a video game – the more XP that you have, the better you are at the game. When you start writing in AP Lang, we want your library of experiences to be as diverse and expansive as possible, and this summer presents an opportunity to collect great evidence for future essays. Please complete at least one experience in one of the following categories:

- Culture – Are you traveling this summer? Do you love art or history? Have you ever wanted to immerse yourself in a culture different from your own? Soak up all that you can during a unique cultural experience this summer and reflect on how it expands the ways you view the world and your community. Here are a few examples of possible experiences: visiting another part of the U.S.; traveling abroad; exploring a national park or historical site; touring a museum; learning about a different culture by engaging with its language, cuisine, or art.
- Service – Want to help others and learn more about individuals with different backgrounds from your own? Volunteer for a service organization or for a cause that you care about and reflect on how the experience impacted you.
- Media – What areas of academia most interest you? Do you love robotics? How about poetry or politics? Are you passionate about the environment or the future of education? Identify an area (or areas) of interest and seek out a media

experience in that field. Here are a few suggestions: subscribe to a TED Talk channel, listen to a series of podcasts, follow and read a columnist from a reputable news organization. And remember that those who score your work on the AP exam next May will have a high standard; thus, the more scholarly, the more unbiased the source of information, the better. How does your media experience confirm/challenge your ideas?

Please email if you have another idea in one of the categories that does not seem to fit in the description. When you come back to school, we will complete an activity where you will reflect on your summer experience, so do whatever you need to make sure you remember all the important details. That could include taking notes; recording a voice memo; saving pictures, pamphlets, downloads of articles; etc. If you feel like you have successfully remembered all the important details without doing any of those things, that is fine too. We will not collect anything from you other than the assignment that you will complete early in the semester.

*Please contact Tim Vacek at tim.vacek@knoxschools.org or Autumn Suranofsky at autumn.suranofsky@knoxschools.org should you have any questions or concerns about either the books or the instructions for the educational experience.