

Halls High School

Outside Readings 2020-21

An alternate reading selection is available for any objectionable material. If parents or students have any questions, they should email the teacher(s) of the courses or call the guidance office on Wednesday mornings and leave a message. Most of the works are available in the public domain, so they are free to read online. A helpful site is gutenberg.org.

English I Honors

Teacher: Melissa Sandling katherine.sandling@knoxschools.org

*These pieces are to be read prior to the first day of class. Students will choose TWO of the following titles and will be tested on the material within the first week of the semester.

Animal Farm by George Orwell

This short novel shares the story of some animals who overtake a farmer and his land to work for themselves. What begins as an ideal setting gradually becomes one in which many of the inhabitants wish to leave. The allegorical value of this text will help build critical thinking skills. Topics of greed, betrayal, dishonesty, and violence are present, but they are used to encourage us to think for ourselves and trust our own instincts.

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry

Hansberry's play invites us to the home of the Younger Family as they experience a profoundly emotional time: they are due to receive thousands of dollars from the late patriarch's life insurance. As we witness their success and heartbreak, we also witness various styles of managing such events- and various plans for the use of said money. Racial discrimination and greed are prevalent topics. This piece has made a frequent appearance on the Advanced Placement Literature Examination.

Odyssey by Homer

Homer's ancient story relates many tales and lessons of the epic journey of a hero- flawed though he may be. It also incorporates Greek myths that still hold important background in our culture. Infidelity / betrayal, adult situations, murder, revenge, war are present topics; so are love, forgiveness, unity, and reliance / guidance from a higher power.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

Mark Twain's classic tale of a young, mischievous boy is still a frequent option on the Advanced Placement test. Though the title character is often lazy and unkept, the reader is also allowed into his innocent quest for a pretty girl and his heroic, quick-thinking that saves lives and leads authorities to catch a violent criminal. This story does involve "historically accurate" language which is considered highly offensive in our time, but in using such language, Tom is ironically developed as a much deeper character when we see his true intentions.

English II Honors

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The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

This novel relates the effect of shame and scandal on the lives of a Puritan community, centered on an act of adultery. Topics such as sin, self-reliance, truth, and revenge are explored. The Scarlet Letter is a classic American novel that deals with adultery, sin, religion, and redemption. Hawthorne's prose is dense with irony and symbolism, but readers who persevere will be rewarded by his subtle humor and acute understanding of human foibles. (*Common Sense Media*)

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare

Set in Rome in 44 BC, the play depicts the moral dilemma of Brutus as he joins a conspiracy led by Cassius to murder Julius Caesar to prevent him from becoming dictator of Rome. Following Caesar's death, Rome is thrust into a period of civil war, and the republic the conspirators sought to preserve is lost forever. Topics such as betrayal, jealousy, and greed are dealt with in this classic play.

English III-IV Advanced Placement: Language and Composition

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*Two pieces are to be read prior to the first day of class. Students will be tested on the material within the first week of the semester.

Piece 1: Choose one Shakespeare play.

Hamlet* **

The ghost of the King of Denmark tells his son Hamlet to avenge his murder by killing the new king, Hamlet's uncle. Hamlet feigns madness, contemplates life and death, and seeks revenge. His uncle, fearing for his life, also devises plots to kill Hamlet. The play ends with a duel, during which the King, Queen, Hamlet's opponent and Hamlet himself are all killed. (shakespeare.org.uk)

Macbeth* **

Three witches tell the Scottish general Macbeth that he will be King of Scotland. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth kills the king, becomes the new king, and kills more people out of paranoia. Civil war erupts to overthrow Macbeth, resulting in more death. (shakespeare.org.uk)

Piece 2: Choose one from the following list.

***Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen**

Pride and Prejudice is a romantic novel by [Jane Austen](#), first published in 1813. The story charts the emotional development of the protagonist, [Elizabeth Bennet](#), who learns the error of making hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between the superficial and the essential. The comedy of the writing lies in the depiction of manners, education, marriage, and money during the [British Regency](#) period.

***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley**

The 1818 novel that launched dozens of Hollywood horror movies bears little resemblance to any of them, but is quite creepy enough, flowery prose and all, and, historically speaking, went a long way toward inspiring a genre in which things go very badly for many reels. It's also a mainstay of high school honors literature classes and a good intro to both Gothic literature and science fiction. Its themes of delving into the dark arts will have allure for the Twilight set, while the science project run amok (and the arrogance of its creators) is a subject that remains all too timely. Bigotry alert: One of the subplots involves noble Christian characters who risk all to save a Muslim friend from certain death, and once safe he betrays them to an evil fate. (*Common Sense Media*)

***Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte`**

Wuthering Heights is a gorgeous, epic novel of love and revenge, full of passion and unforgettable characters. The novel bears little resemblance to familiar film versions in which Heathcliff is interpreted as a misunderstood romantic. Heathcliff's pride and suffering make him cruel, menacing, and his and Cathy's

end is not the stuff of fairy tales. However, the novel is thrilling, and it is full of its own kind of romance. It's also worth noting that there are almost certainly ghosts in this book, though Bronte leaves it up to the reader whether or not to believe. (*Common Sense Media*)

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini ***

The novel starts as an eloquent Afghan version of the American immigrant experience in the late 20th century, but betrayal and redemption come to the forefront when the narrator, a writer, returns to his ravaged homeland to rescue the son of his childhood friend after the boy's parents are shot during the Taliban takeover in the mid '90s. (Student Resource Center. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.)

The Life of Pi by Yann Martel ***

Pi Patel, a young man from India, tells how he was shipwrecked and stranded in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger for 227 days. This outlandish story is only the core of a deceptively complex three-part novel about, ultimately, memory as a narrative and about how we choose truths. (Student Resource Center. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.)

***Excellent story; language and themes may be objectionable.