

Hello Class of 2020 and Parents,

Welcome to high school! We are so excited to meet you all in August, and we hope you enjoy your summer. You will have a summer reading assignment to complete before returning to school in August. All incoming freshmen will choose *any* book from the [2016 TAYSHAS](#) list. This list is compiled each year by a committee of Texas teachers and librarians for the purpose of motivating young adults across the state to become life-long readers. If you signed up for Pre-AP English I*, you will read [The Count of Monte Cristo](#) in addition to a TAYSHAS book of your choice.

***For Pre-AP students only:**

The Count of Monte Cristo (Please note: this is ABRIDGED and is NOT the entire novel. All students need this exact title so that they read the same abridged version.)

ISBN-10: 0553213504

ISBN-13: 978-0553213508

[This book may be purchased anywhere, but can also be found on amazon.com.](#)

During the first week of school, your teachers will give you an assignment over your summer reading. This assignment will count for a **quiz** grade and might include an essay, a visual representation, or other activity provided by your teacher.

Our goals for this assignment are:

- To establish a reading habit in the busy lives of high school students.
- To alleviate the “summer slide” where students lose much of the progress they made during the school year by not engaging in anything academic for three months (“[The Importance of Summer Reading](#)”).
- To have a piece of literature that students can refer back to for examples throughout the school year. Pre-AP classes will use *The Count of Monte Cristo* as an anchor piece that will continually be referenced throughout the school year.

Students will be expected to return in the fall having read one book from the [TAYSHAS list](#). Beyond that expectation, students should also read books of their own choosing, and, upon returning to school, they should be ready to share and discuss the book or reading choices they made. The number of books is not as important to retaining reading skills as the *consistency* of reading throughout the summer months. Students should aim for thirty minutes of reading a day. Although annotating is not a requirement, it can certainly be beneficial. Students also can share their thoughts about books in a reading journal by writing, by drawing pictures, or by keeping track of what they read on a Google Doc. Again, this is not a requirement, but it might help students to better remember what they have read. Students should choose a format that meets their needs and should be excited to share book ideas with their peers once school convenes in August.

The best books challenge our beliefs by helping us see through different eyes—to live a different life. While we won’t know the details of every book students read, what we seek for all of our students is a compulsion to read—for pleasure—for knowledge—for a passion—for a story or information that will keep them in the pages of a book past their assigned reading.

Reading has tremendous benefits. Here are just a few:

- **Reading relieves stress.** Freshman year is stressful. Reading takes you out of the present and into another place and time; it is a perfect escape.
- **Reading builds stamina** to prepare students for high school and college. Reading for an hour or two in one sitting is a basic expectation in college. In freshman English classes, we will exercise muscles soon to be strained in the coming years. Reading for fluency and stamina has been proven to improve the reading rate for students. Fast reading develops confidence and an appetite for books as well as teaches vocabulary in context, which improves writing, but it only happens when students find books they *want* to read.
- There is a lot of talk in the media that ‘students today won’t read,’ but we believe students substitute all of those other distractions (the internet, social media, TV, etc.) if they feel no passion for the book assigned to them. In our experience, students who haven’t been readers since elementary school will suddenly become quite passionate about reading with **the right book** in their hands, but those books might challenge your values. Is that okay with you?

Our hope is that students and parents alike will enjoy the pleasure of reading this summer. Try new genres, read a book together, or listen to an audio book while traveling. Most importantly, find time to validate and honor the reading choices your student makes throughout the summer. We are convinced that such reading will become its own reward and that our Highlanders will be life-long readers.

We believe we have to trust these young adults more. We have to trust that books won’t corrupt them anymore than movies, music, television, or social media might. It is more important that they are reading! One of the great benefits of Young Adult literature is that it can provide an avenue for conversations with teenagers that might be difficult to start but are worthy, relevant, and important. If you are concerned about the content of a book your student chooses, we certainly understand and respect you asking him or her to choose another title from the list. However, we also encourage you to use this as an opportunity to read along with your student and start those conversations! If you want to know more about the book your student chooses, the TAYSHAS list provides a brief description of each of the titles. You can also visit the [School Library Journal](#) web site, the [American Library Association](#) web site, or even Amazon.com.

If you have any questions, please contact the school, and they will put you in touch with one of the 9th grade English teachers.

Thank you for your support,

TWHS 9th grade English Teachers

Resources:

American Library Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org>

“The Importance of Summer Reading.” Retrieved from

<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/brief01.pdf>

School Library Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.slj.com>

TAYSHAS 2016 list. Retrieved from

http://www.txla.org/sites/tla/files/groups/YART/docs/Tayshas/docs/2016TayList_Annotated.pdf