

Introduction to College Literature

St. Mary's University/ CDH

Summer Reading: Due after Labor Day

Read two (2) books from the following list.

Pick works you have NOT read before. Pick three quotes from each book. In MLA style, write error-free, typed responses (min. 150 words each) and answer the following two questions (Total 900 words):

a) How does this quote relate to various aspects of the book, both literally and figuratively?

b) How do you relate to this quote or why did you pick it?

The Bell Jar Sylvia Plath

The Bell Jar is Plath's shocking, realistic, and intensely emotional novel of a woman falling into the grips of insanity. Set in the late 50s and early 60s, primarily in NY. Most students who read this book give it a stellar rating.

Genre: Realism/semi-autobiographical/Feminist

Brave New World Aldous Huxley

Written in the 30s, Huxley's stark warning about technological advances and government control still resonates in today's world.

Genre: Science Fiction/ Dystopic novel

Brown: The Last Discovery of America Richard Rodriguez

Brown's poetic memoir reflects on race in the US and provides surprising insight into American life in a broader sense. It is particularly interesting how he deconstructs the racial profiles we still use from the days of the Nixon administration.

Genre: Memoir/essays/Non-fiction

Great Expectations Charles Dickens

Dickens's haunting novel describes the education and development of Pip, as his life is altered by a series of events and he realizes the truth of his “great expectations”.

Genre: Historical fiction/ Classical literature of the Romantic Period.

Go Tell it on the Mountain James Baldwin

Baldwin’s stunning first novel is an American classic that resonates through the decades.

Genre: Realism/symbolic/poetic/ African American literature.

The Pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman

Written just after his war-time experience, Szpilman’s remarkable tale of survival can be inspirational to today’s generation.

Genre: Memoir/ Holocaust literature/Non-fiction

The Namesake Jhumpa Lahiri

Lahiri’s powerful novel addresses some of the difficulties of assimilation into US culture. The protagonist has a name he dislikes, but it leads him to discover his origins and uncover many aspects of his family’s history. The author was born in the UK and raised in the US.

Genre: Coming-of Age novel/Transnational literature/ Realism

Jane Eyre Charlotte Bronte

Many writers and scholars consider this novel one of the best for young women to read today. It tells of the struggles of a young woman to find her strength through adversity.

Genre: Classical literature of the Romantic Period/ Coming-of-Age/ Feminist literature.

Beloved Toni Morrison

Voted by writers as their most inspirational novel, Morrison's tale from the American Civil War challenges and provokes readers to pay attention.

Genre: Magical Realism/tragedy/ Historical fiction.

Lord of the Flies William Golding

Placed on the Advanced Level curriculum in the UK, this symbolic novel is often read by younger readers in the US who struggle with its allegorical nature. It can be read as an adventure or as a critique of humanity's worst impulses. It remains a page-turner.

Genre: Allegory/Coming-of-age novel/symbolic

On the Road Jack Kerouac

This novel describes Kerouac's personal adventures with prose that jives in jazz riffs. Written quickly but meticulously researched, this novel tells of adventures on the road in the late 40s and early 50s.

Genre: Beat Generation/Road novel/

Catcher in the Rye J. D. Salinger

Do you want to read another banned book? Holden Caulfield is a 17-year old who sees the adult world as "phony." This is a coming-of-age novel that has inspired readers and writers for three generations. Some CDH students love it; others hate it. Read it and you can find out why.

Genre: Coming-of-age novel/Confessional/Social criticism

Daughter of Fortune Isabel Allende

An orphan raised in Chile, Eliza Sommers follows her lover to California during the Gold Rush of 1849. The author is one of today's foremost Latina writers, born in Peru and raised in Chile.

Genre: Historical fiction/Coming-of-age novel/Fiction in the Romantic tradition.

Questions: Contact either Dr. Sinclair-Wood at

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Many of these books are available from CDH for loan or from your local library.