



Dear Incoming English Class of 2023-24,

Welcome to Censorship: Challenging the First Amendment. I know you must be excited! I'm sure you're all looking forward to meeting your new teachers, and to continue building on the friendships, both old and new, you made this past year.

This year, you have chosen to take Censorship: Challenging the First Amendment. In this course, you will study texts that have been challenged in school systems and libraries across the nation, focusing on how various social, political, and religious groups interpret the First Amendment and the freedoms-- or lack thereof-- associated with these rights. The course will be split into two main units: semester one will focus on famously challenged texts and semester two will explore texts written about the consequences of censorship in our society. By signing up for this course, you are agreeing to the following:

#### **Statement on Mature Class Content & Climate**

Censorship: Challenging the First Amendment is a course designed to discuss the various ways the First Amendment is interpreted in school systems across the nation, focusing on the ever-increasing concept of book banning to explore how we use the First Amendment to both grant freedom and restrict access to American students. In this class, we will discuss a variety of topics that require sensitivity from all individuals in the room. Because of this, your maturity is expected. Any inability to talk about these topics in a professional manner could result in immediate removal from the course. You are encouraged to ask questions and your instructor acknowledges that mistakes are human; however, respect and maturity will be valued over all else. If you have questions about this, please contact Ms. Harris directly at [wharris@belovedccs.org](mailto:wharris@belovedccs.org).

Your summer reading assignment will be to read and annotate one book. Details regarding how to annotate your books will be provided on the following pages. Your work is due on the first day of school, and your annotations will be checked for a grade. Additionally, you will use your books and annotations to help you write an in-class essay.

As an added **BONUS**, you may also complete a creative project for your book that will be graded for extra credit. This optional project will be due via email no later than the first day of school for the 23-24 school year.

You are now entering a whole new chapter of your life, one filled with exciting challenges and difficult decisions. Build upon your hard work by actively practicing time management. There will be times you are so stressed you will want to drop everything. There will be times you fall behind. Learning how to manage your time and allocate your brain power is a huge advantage. Please take this to heart. Finally, remember that you are not alone! If you have a question or if you fall behind, say something! You all have the resources to succeed.

Please turn in your summer assignment on the first day of school. Your grade will be deducted 10 points for each day late. **Do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns.** I want to wish you good luck this year in everything that you do. This is going to be an amazing year for all of us, so enjoy!

Sincerely,

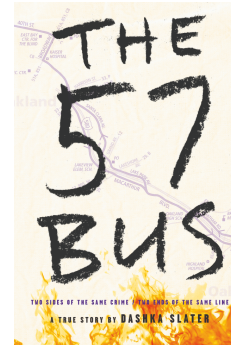
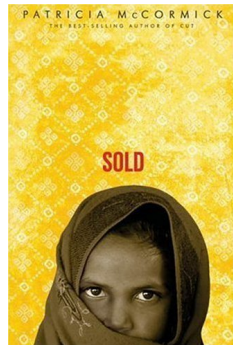
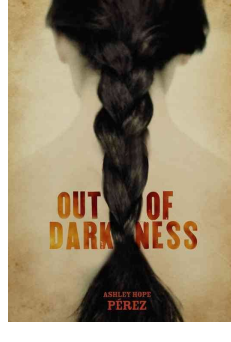
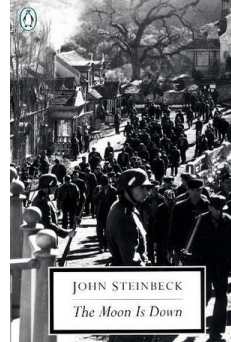
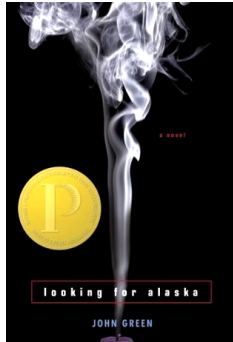
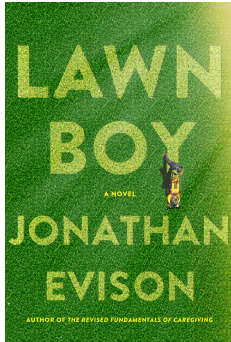
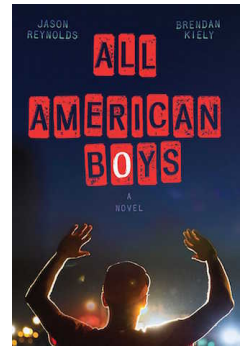
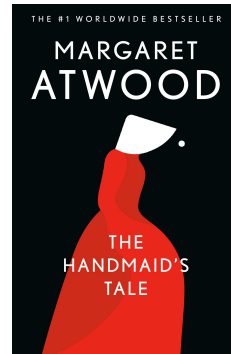
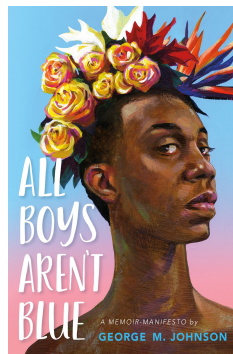
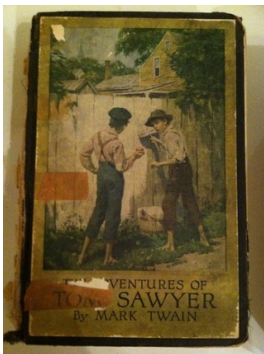
*Ms. Harris*

Whitney Harris  
ELA Department Chair  
BelovED Community Charter School Network  
wharris@belovedccs.org

## 2023-2024 Summer Reading Task

### PART I: Novel Choices

- ★ Read ONE of the fiction options from the list below. As you read, make sure you actively annotate. These annotations will be checked for a grade. [Book synopses are below].
- ★ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** All of the novels below have been challenged by multiple school systems across the nation. Each of these novels has potentially triggering content. Before you select your novel, be sure to read the synopsis provided fully and google any trigger warnings associated with the text.



### **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain**

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* revolves around the youthful adventures of the novel's schoolboy protagonist, Thomas Sawyer, whose reputation precedes him for causing mischief and strife. Tom lives with his Aunt Polly, half-brother Sid, and cousin Mary in the quaint town of St. Petersburg, just off the shore of the Mississippi River. St. Petersburg is described as a typical small-town atmosphere where the Christian faith is predominant, the social network is close-knit, and familiarity resides.

Unlike his brother Sid, Tom receives "lickings" from his Aunt Polly; ever the mischief-maker, would rather play hooky than attend school and often sneaks out his bedroom window at night to adventure with his friend, Huckleberry Finn the town's social outcast. Tom, despite his dread of schooling, is extremely clever and would normally get away with his pranks if Sid were not such a "tattle-tale"...

### **All American Boys by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely**

That's the sidewalk graffiti that started it all...

Well, no, actually, a lady tripping over Rashad at the store, making him drop a bag of chips, was what started it all. Because it didn't matter what Rashad said next—that it was an accident, that he wasn't stealing—the cop just kept pounding him. Over and over, pummeling him into the pavement. So then Rashad, an ROTC kid with mad art skills, was absent again...and again...stuck in a hospital room. Why? Because it looked like he was stealing. And he was a black kid in baggy clothes. So he must have been stealing.

And that's how it started.

And that's what Quinn, a white kid, saw. He saw his best friend's older brother beating the daylights out of a classmate. At first Quinn doesn't tell a soul...He's not even sure he understands it. And does it matter? The whole thing was caught on camera, anyway. But when the school—and nation—start to divide on what happens, blame spreads like wildfire fed by ugly words like "racism" and "police brutality." Quinn realizes he's got to understand it, because, bystander or not, he's a part of history. He just has to figure out what side of history that will be.

Rashad and Quinn—one black, one white, both American—face the unspeakable truth that racism and prejudice didn't die after the civil rights movement. There's a future at stake, a future where no one else will have to be absent because of police brutality. They just have to risk everything to change the world.

Cuz that's how it can end.

### **All Boys Aren't Blue by George M. Johnson**

In a series of personal essays, prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist George M. Johnson explores his childhood, adolescence, and college years in New Jersey and Virginia. From the memories of getting their teeth kicked out by bullies at age five, to flea marketing with their loving grandmother, to their first sexual relationships, this young-adult memoir weaves together the trials and triumphs faced by Black queer boys.

Both a primer for teens eager to be allies as well as a reassuring testimony for young queer men of color, *All Boys Aren't Blue* covers topics such as gender identity, toxic masculinity, brotherhood, family,

structural marginalization, consent, and Black joy. Johnson's emotionally frank style of writing will appeal directly to young adults.

### ***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley**

*Brave New World* is a dystopian novel by English author Aldous Huxley, written in 1931 and published in 1932. Largely set in a futuristic World State, inhabited by genetically modified citizens and an intelligence-based social hierarchy, the novel anticipates huge scientific advancements in reproductive technology, sleep-learning, psychological manipulation and classical conditioning that are combined to make a dystopian society which is challenged by only a single individual: the story's protagonist.

### ***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood**

Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead. She may leave the home of the Commander and his wife once a day to walk to food markets whose signs are now pictures instead of words because women are no longer allowed to read. She must lie on her back once a month and pray that the Commander makes her pregnant, because in an age of declining births, Offred and the other Handmaids are valued only if their ovaries are viable. Offred can remember the years before, when she lived and made love with her husband, Luke; when she played with and protected her daughter; when she had a job, money of her own, and access to knowledge. But all of that is gone now...

### ***Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison**

For Mike Muñoz, a young Chicano living in Washington State, life has been a whole lot of waiting for something to happen. Not too many years out of high school and still doing menial work—and just fired from his latest gig as a lawn boy on a landscaping crew—he knows that he's got to be the one to shake things up if he's ever going to change his life. But how? In this funny, angry, touching, and ultimately deeply inspiring novel, bestselling author Jonathan Evison takes the reader into the heart and mind of a young man on a journey to discover himself, a search to find the secret to achieving the American dream of happiness and prosperity. That's the birthright for all Americans, isn't it? If so, then what is Mike Muñoz's problem? Though he tries time and again to get his foot on the first rung of that ladder to success, he can't seem to get a break. But then things start to change for Mike, and after a raucous, jarring, and challenging trip, he finds he can finally see the future and his place in it. And it's looking really good. *Lawn Boy* is an important, entertaining, and completely winning novel about social class distinctions, about overcoming cultural discrimination, and about standing up for oneself.

### ***Looking for Alaska* by John Green**

**Before.** Miles “Pudge” Halter is done with his safe life at home. His whole life has been one big non-event, and his obsession with famous last words has only made him crave “the Great Perhaps” even more (Francois Rabelais, poet). He heads off to the sometimes crazy and anything-but-boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young. She is an event unto herself. She pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into the Great Perhaps, and steals his heart. Then. . . .

**After.** Nothing is ever the same.

### ***The Moon is Down* by John Steinbeck**

Taken by surprise, a small coastal town is overrun by an invading army with little resistance. The town is important because it is a port that serves a large coal mine. Colonel Lanser, the head of the invading

battalion, along with his staff establishes his HQ in the house of the democratically elected and popular Mayor Orden.

As the reality of occupation sinks in and the weather turns bleak, with the snows beginning earlier than usual, the "simple, peaceful people" of the town are angry and confused. Colonel Lanser, a veteran of many wars, tries to operate under a veil of civility and law, but in his heart he knows that "there are no peaceful people" amongst those whose freedom has been taken away by force. The veil is soon torn apart when Alexander Morden, an erstwhile alderman and "a free man," is ordered to work in the mine. He strikes out at Captain Loft with a pick axe, but Captain Bentick steps into its path and dies of it. After a summary trial, Morden is executed by a firing squad. This incident catalyzes the people of the town and they settle into "a slow, silent, waiting revenge"...

### **Out of Darkness by Ashley Hope Pérez**

"This is East Texas, and there's lines. Lines you cross, lines you don't cross. That clear?"

New London, Texas. 1937. Naomi Vargas and Wash Fuller know about the lines in East Texas as well as anyone. They know the signs that mark them.

"No Negroes, Mexicans, or dogs."

They know the people who enforce them.

"They all decided they'd ride out in their sheets and pay Blue a visit."

But sometimes the attraction between two people is so powerful it breaks through even the most entrenched color lines. And the consequences can be explosive.

"More than grief, more than anger, there is a need. Someone to blame. Someone to make pay."

Ashley Hope Pérez takes the facts of the 1937 New London school explosion—the worst school disaster in American history—as a backdrop for a riveting novel about segregation, love, family, and the forces that destroy people.

### **Push by Sapphire**

Precious Jones, an illiterate sixteen-year-old, has up until now been invisible: invisible to the father who rapes her and the mother who batters her and to the authorities who dismiss her as just one more of Harlem's casualties. But when Precious, pregnant with a second child by her father, meets a determined and highly radical teacher, we follow her on a journey of education and enlightenment as Precious learns not only how to write about her life, but how to make it her own for the first time.

### **Sold by Patricia McCormick**

Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut in the mountains of Nepal. Her family is desperately poor, but her life is full of simple pleasures, like raising her black-and-white speckled goat, and having her mother brush her hair by the light of an oil lamp. But when the harsh Himalayan monsoons wash away all that remains of the family's crops, Lakshmi's stepfather says she must leave home and take a job to support her family.

He introduces her to a glamorous stranger who tells her she will find her a job as a maid working for a wealthy woman in the city. Glad to be able to help, Lakshmi undertakes the long journey to India and arrives at "Happiness House" full of hope. But she soon learns the unthinkable truth: she has been sold into prostitution.

An old woman named Mumtaz rules the brothel with cruelty and cunning. She tells Lakshmi that she is trapped there until she can pay off her family's debt—then cheats Lakshmi of her meager earnings so that she can never leave.

Lakshmi's life becomes a nightmare from which she cannot escape. Still, she lives by her mother's words—"Simply to endure is to triumph"—and gradually, she forms friendships with the other girls that enable her to survive in this terrifying new world. Then the day comes when she must make a decision—will she risk everything for a chance to reclaim her life?

### ***V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore**

A frightening and powerful tale of the loss of freedom and identity in a chillingly believable totalitarian world, *V for Vendetta* stands as one of the highest achievements of the comics medium and a defining work for creators Alan Moore and David Lloyd.

Set in an imagined future England that has given itself over to fascism, this groundbreaking story captures both the suffocating nature of life in an authoritarian police state and the redemptive power of the human spirit which rebels against it. Crafted with sterling clarity and intelligence, *V for Vendetta* brings an unequaled depth of characterization and verisimilitude to its unflinching account of oppression and resistance.

### ***The 57 Bus* by Dashka Slater**

One teenager in a skirt.

One teenager with a lighter.

One moment that changes both of their lives forever.

If it weren't for the 57 bus, Sasha and Richard never would have met. Both were high school students from Oakland, California, one of the most diverse cities in the country, but they inhabited different worlds. Sasha, a white teen, lived in the middle-class foothills and attended a small private school. Richard, a black teen, lived in the crime-plagued flatlands and attended a large public one. Each day, their paths overlapped for a mere eight minutes. But one afternoon on the bus ride home from school, a single reckless act left Sasha severely burned, and Richard charged with two hate crimes and facing life imprisonment. The case garnered international attention, thrusting both teenagers into the spotlight.

## **Annotation Guide**

To annotate or not has been an age-old question of passionate readers. Annotation is the process by which we interact with a written text. The process can be different from one person to another, but the similarities are illustrated by marking up passages or making notes as one reads.

When you read without annotating, there is a tendency you won't retain the information; rather, you will be absorbing words passively instead of analyzing the text. No matter the process you adopt, the aim is to engage with the book for easy comprehension and greater understanding.

Annotation is a valuable tool to use while reading for many multifaceted reasons, such as:

### **1. To better comprehend what you're reading.**

Reading without questioning is like hearing without listening. Annotation is an active process that helps the reader think critically about ideas and concepts that will be used later.

### **2. To bring to mind principal vital points.**

Writing down vital information as you read will highlight key points and help you recall it later.

### **3. To broaden your knowledge and not just for recognition.**

Annotating a book as you read will save you the stress of going back to revisit an entire section. When you already have notes in the margins and key points highlighted, your eye is naturally drawn to the excerpts that you will need to review later.

#### **You must have at least one marginal annotation per page. Some good strategies for annotating:**

- Question → ask about something in the passage that is unclear
  - *What does he mean by "Western culture"?*
- Clarify → answer earlier questions or confirm/disaffirm a prediction
  - *Western culture = traditions, customs, beliefs associated with Europe*
- Connect → make a connection to your life, the world, or another text
  - *Mr. Santoni said this in class when we were reading Sula.*
- Evaluate → make a judgment about what the author is trying to say
  - *Good point. Never thought of it like this.*

**Annotating a book is like having a conversation with it as you read! Turn the page to see an example.**



## Sample Annotation Page

### Introduction: How'd He Do That?

MR. LINDNER? THAT MILQUETOAST?

? = timid, bland, meek

Right. Mr. Lindner the milquetoast. So what did you think the devil would look like? If he were red with a tail, horns, and cloven hooves, any fool could say no.

♥ read in 8th grade

!!  
The class and I are discussing Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun (1959), one of the great plays of the American theater. The incredulous questions have come, as they often do, in response to my innocent suggestion that Mr. Lindner is the devil. The Youngers, an African American family in Chicago, have made a down payment on a house in an all-white neighborhood. Mr. Lindner, a meekly apologetic little man, has been dispatched from the neighborhood association, check in hand, to buy out the family's claim on the house. At first, Walter Lee Younger, the protagonist, confidently turns down the offer, believing that the family's money (in the form of a life insurance payment after his father's recent death) is secure. Shortly afterward, however, he discovers that two-thirds of that money has been stolen. All of a sudden the previously insulting offer comes to look like his financial salvation = deliverance from evil, harm

Bargains with the devil go back a long way in Western culture. In all the versions of the Faust legend, which is the dominant form of this type of story, the hero is offered something he desperately wants - power or knowledge or a fastball that will beat the Yankees - and all he has to give up is his soul. This pattern holds from the Elizabethan Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus through the nineteenth-century Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust to the twentieth century's Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and Damn Yankees. In Hansberry's version, when Mr. Lindner makes his offer, he doesn't demand Walter Lee's soul; in fact, he doesn't even know that he's demanding it. He is, though, Walter Lee can be rescued from the monetary crisis he has brought upon the family; all he has to do is admit that he's not the equal of the white residents who don't want him moving in, that his pride and self-respect, his identity, can be bought. If that's not selling your soul, then what is it? Facts.

Like Ariel giving up her voice

The chief difference between Hansberry's version of the Faustian bargain and others is that Walter Lee ultimately resists the satanic temptation. Previous versions have been either tragic or comic depending on whether the devil successfully collects the soul at the end of the work. Here, the protagonist psychologically makes the deal but then looks at himself and at the true cost and recovers in time to reject the devil's - Mr. Lindner's - offer. The resulting play, for all its tears and anguish, is structurally comic - the tragic downfall threatened but avoided - and Walter Lee grows to heroic stature in wrestling with his own demons as well as the external one, Lindner, and coming through without falling.

Devil never plays fair

It comes so easily to ELA teachers!

A moment occurs in this exchange between professor and student when each of us adopts a look. My look says, "What, you don't get it?" Theirs says, "We don't get it. And we think you're making it up." We're having a communication problem. Basically, we've all read the same story, but we haven't used the same analytical apparatus. If you've ever spent time in a literature classroom as a student or a professor, you know this moment. It may seem at times as if the professor is either inventing interpretations out of thin air or else performing parlor tricks, a sort of analytical sleight of hand.

Actually, neither of these is the case; rather, the professor, as the slightly more experienced reader, has acquired over the years the use of a certain "language of reading," something to which the students are only beginning to be introduced. What I'm talking about is a grammar of literature - a set of conventions and patterns, codes and rules, that we learn to employ in dealing with a piece of writing. Every language has a grammar, a set of rules that govern usage and meaning, and literary language is

## **PART II: \*Optional\* Extra Credit**

### ***Creative Assignment***

Complete ONE of the following assignments **for extra credit** based on your chosen novel. You will complete this assignment on a separate document or platform that you will share with me by the first day of school.

#### **☐ Poem or Lyrics**

- Write a poem or song (40 line minimum) to represent a major theme, character, motif, phrase, piece of dialogue, or plot element of your choice. Then write two paragraphs explaining how the poem or song relates and represents your reading.
- The poem or song must have a title.
- Use descriptive words and figurative language.

#### **☐ TikTok Journal**

- Create a TikTok account dedicated **only** to this project.
- Record a series of TikTok videos based on your novel. You should create a minimum of five (5) videos. Any additional videos you create would be appreciated and encouraged, but optional:
  - **TikTok #1:** Record a book review. What are your thoughts on the book as a whole? Thumbs up? Thumbs down? What did you like or dislike? Check out other TikTok book reviews to see some models. #BookTok
  - **TikTok #2-4:** Reenact three favorite scenes from the novel. You may involve parents, siblings, friends--or even pets!--to take on the character roles, in addition to yourself. Or, if you want to do some inventive editing and costume work, you can play all the characters yourself.
  - **TikTok #5:** Find an existing sound on TikTok that relates to your book in some way. Create a video that demonstrates how the sound ties into the novel.

#### **☐ Playlist**

- Brainstorm ten (10) songs that would work as a “soundtrack” to the novel.
- Create a slideshow or a list of the songs. For each one, include the song’s title, musical artist, and a 2-3 sentence explanation of how it fits a scene or character in the novel. Your list or slideshow should be colorful and inviting for the viewer. All of your writing should be proofread. Be sure to include specific text evidence to support your choices.

#### **☐ Graphic Novel**

- Design and illustrate a graphic novel (comic book) version of an important scene from the novel.

- Your graphic novel should be at least five pages in length. If you are artistically gifted, this is an opportunity to show what you can do!

❑ **Social Media Profile**

- Create social media profiles for three characters in your novel.
- Each character's social media profile should include captioned photos, a full character bio, and at least five (5) "posts." Should be based on *Instagram*, *Facebook*, or *Twitter*.
- There should be communication between the characters as if they are experiencing the events of the novel in real time.
- You may create actual accounts or simply create "mock" accounts on Google Docs or Google Slides.