



Dear Incoming English Class of 2023-2024,

Welcome to Memoirs, Manifestos, & True Crime. 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 Memoirs, Manifestos, and True Crime. In this course, you will study texts from various subgenres to understand how authors use nonfiction to communicate their ideas on personal, social, and political topics. The course will be broken into three main units- each focusing on a group of related thematic topics- to allow you to explore the various ways writers cater to specific audiences to accomplish a goal. By signing up for this course, you are agreeing to the following:

Statement on Mature Class Content & Climate

Memoirs, Manifestos, and True Crime is a course designed to discuss the various ways authors use nonfiction to articulate arguments and persuade audiences. To do this, we'll study three key genres: memoirs, manifestos, and true crime, discussing topics ranging from addiction and redemption to veganism and morality. It should be noted that the true crime section of the course is not for the faint of heart or stomach-- the genre itself is a study of unimaginable crimes. Our discussion of these topics will 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.

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,

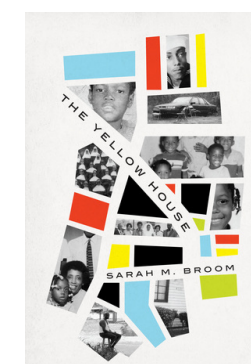
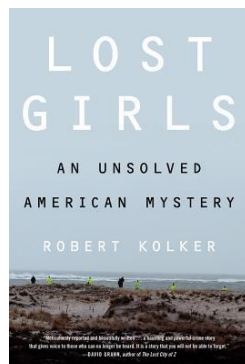
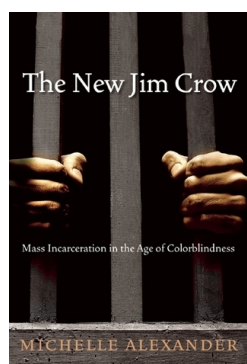
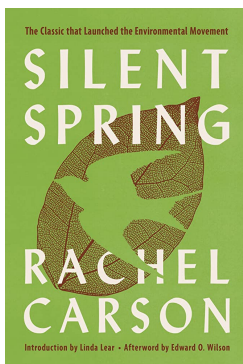
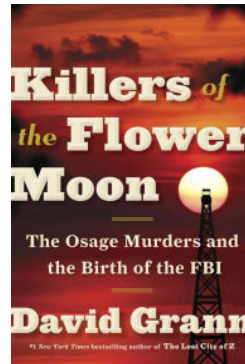
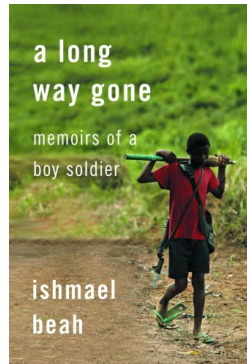
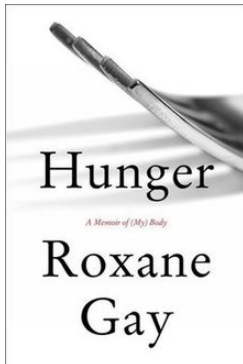
Ms. Harris

Whitney Harris
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2023-2024 Summer Reading Task

PART I:

- ★ Read ONE of the non-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].



Hunger by Roxane Gay: In her phenomenally popular essays and long-running Tumblr blog, Roxane Gay has written with intimacy and sensitivity about food and body, using her own emotional and psychological struggles as a means of exploring our shared anxieties over pleasure, consumption, appearance, and health. As a woman who describes her own body as “wildly undisciplined,” Roxane understands the tension between desire and denial, between self-comfort and self-care. In *Hunger*, she explores her past—including the devastating act of violence that acted as a turning point in her young life—and brings readers along on her journey to understand and ultimately save herself.

With the bracing candor, vulnerability, and power that have made her one of the most admired writers of her generation, Roxane explores what it means to learn to take care of yourself: how to feed your hungers for delicious and satisfying food, a smaller and safer body, and a body that can love and be loved—in a time when the bigger you are, the smaller your world becomes..

A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah: The devastating story of war through the eyes of a child soldier. Beah tells how, at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and became a soldier.

What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this hell and survived.

In *A Long Way Gone*, Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts.

***Killers of the Flower Moon* by David Grann:** In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, the Osage rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe. Then, one by one, they began to be killed off. One Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, watched as her family was murdered. Her older sister was shot. Her mother was then slowly poisoned. And it was just the beginning, as more Osage began to die under mysterious circumstances.

In this last remnant of the Wild West—where oilmen like J. P. Getty made their fortunes and where desperadoes such as Al Spencer, “the Phantom Terror,” roamed – virtually anyone who dared to investigate the killings were themselves murdered. As the death toll surpassed more than twenty-four Osage, the newly created F.B.I. took up the case, in what became one of the organization’s first major homicide investigations. But the bureau was then notoriously corrupt and initially bungled the case. Eventually the young director, J. Edgar Hoover, turned to a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to try to unravel the mystery. White put together an undercover team, including one of the only Native American agents in the bureau. They infiltrated the region, struggling to adopt the latest modern techniques of detection. Together with the Osage they began to expose one of the most sinister conspiracies in American history.

***Under the Banner of Heaven* by Jon Krakauer:** Jon Krakauer’s literary reputation rests on insightful chronicles of lives conducted at the outer limits. In *Under The Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, he shifts his focus from extremes of physical adventure to extremes of religious belief within our own borders. At the core of his book is an appalling double murder committed by two Mormon Fundamentalist brothers, Ron and Dan Lafferty, who insist they received a revelation from God commanding them to kill their blameless victims. Beginning with a meticulously researched account of this “divinely inspired” crime, Krakauer constructs a multilayered, bone-chilling narrative of messianic delusion, savage violence, polygamy, and unyielding faith. Along the way, he uncovers a shadowy offshoot of America’s fastest-growing religion, and raises provocative questions about the nature of religious belief.

***Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson:** *Silent Spring* is an environmental science book. The book documents the adverse environmental effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides. Carson accused the chemical industry of spreading disinformation, and public officials of accepting the industry's marketing claims unquestioningly.

The book appeared in September 1962 and the outcry that followed its publication forced the banning of DDT and spurred revolutionary changes in the laws affecting our air, land, and water. Carson’s book was instrumental in launching the environmental movement.

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

"Jarvious Cotton's great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Klu Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation; his father was barred by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole."

As the United States celebrates the nation's "triumph over race" with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities are locked behind bars or have been labeled felons for life. Although Jim Crow laws have been wiped off the books, an astounding percentage of the African American community remains trapped in a subordinate status--much like their grandparents before them.

In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principle of color blindness. *The New Jim Crow* challenges the civil rights community--and all of us--to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America.

Lost Girls by Robert Kolker: Award-winning investigative reporter Robert Kolker delivers a humanizing account of the true-life search for a serial killer still at large on Long Island and presents the first detailed look at the shadow world of online escorts, where making a living is easier than ever, and the dangers remain all too real. *Lost Girls* is a portrait of unsolved murders in an idyllic part of America, of the underside of the Internet, and of the secrets we keep without admitting to ourselves that we keep them.

The Yellow House by Sarah M. Broom: In 1961, Sarah M. Broom's mother Ivory Mae bought a shotgun house in the then-promising neighborhood of New Orleans East and built her world inside of it. It was the height of the Space Race and the neighborhood was home to a major NASA plant--the postwar optimism seemed assured. Widowed, Ivory Mae remarried Sarah's father Simon Broom; their combined family would eventually number twelve children. But after Simon died, six months after Sarah's birth, the Yellow House would become Ivory Mae's thirteenth and most unruly child.

A book of great ambition, Sarah M. Broom's *The Yellow House* tells a hundred years of her family and their relationship to home in a neglected area of one of America's most mythologized cities. This is the story of a mother's struggle against a house's entropy, and that of a prodigal daughter who left home only to reckon with the pull that home exerts, even after the Yellow House was wiped off the map after Hurricane Katrina.

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.