

Summer Reading List – Grade 9 2010

As a candidate for 9th grade English next fall, you are expected to read two books from this list over the summer. During the second week of school, you will write an essay in class to show how well you have understood the books. The essay will also help your new English teacher to see how well you write.

The following list contains a brief description of each book and a numbered rating system to indicate to you the degree of difficulty of each book:

1. a book slightly easier than 9th grade level
 2. a book typical of the reading ability of a 9th grader
 3. a book geared to slightly older students
 4. a difficult book – you should be a good reader with the persistence to finish a lengthy book.
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1. **Big Mouth and Ugly Girl** – Joyce Carol Oates (2) When Matt Donaghy is falsely accused of threatening to blow up his high school, one of his classmates, Ursula Riggs, who calls herself “Ugly Girl,” knows the truth and comes to his defense. This tale of friendship and romance, by an acclaimed novelist, provokes real thought about the threat of school violence in America.
 2. **Sea of Monsters** – Rick Riordan (1) *Sea of Monsters* is the second book in Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson and the Olympians series. The novel picks up back at Camp Half Blood, where Percy discovers that his best friend is being held captive by a Cyclopes. Percy’s winding and dangerous adventures allude to those of the Greek hero Odysseus, a key player in the 9th grade English curriculum.
 3. **Maus I and Maus II** – Art Spiegelman (1-2) Cartoonist Art Spiegelman, using comic-book format, documents his father’s experiences in Nazi-occupied Poland. Spiegelman twists this chillingly real, Holocaust survival tale by portraying the repressive Nazis as cats and hunted Jews as mice.
 4. **The Hobbit** – J. R. R. Tolkien (1-2) Bilbo Baggins, the hobbit, joins Galdalf the Wizard and a troop of dwarves on a treasure hunting expedition. Will he survive his confrontations with the fearsome dragon Smaug?
 5. **Dairy Queen** – Catherine Murdock (2) After her father is injured, 15-year-old DJ takes over the lion’s share of the work on her family’s small dairy farm. Following her summer spent training the rival team’s quarterback, DJ decides to go out for the sport herself, not anticipating the reactions of those around her.

6. **Elsewhere** – Gabrielle Zevin (3) Elsewhere is where fifteen-year-old Liz Hall ends up after dying. A place so like Earth, yet completely diverse, Elsewhere is where Liz will age backward from the day of her death until she becomes a baby again and revisits Earth. How can Liz let go of the only life she has ever known and accept a new one?
7. **The Color of Water** – James McBride (3) In this combination of biography and autobiography, McBride explores the life of his mother, a woman raised as an Orthodox Jew who marries into an African-American community, as well as his own life as a biracial child.
8. **A Separate Peace** – John Knowles (3) Against the backdrop of World War II, Gene and Phineas, teenagers in a New England prep school, confront issues of friendship, rivalry, and identity. Is one truly guilty of maiming the other?
9. **The Glass Castle** – Jeannette Walls (3) In this memoir, Walls narrates the story of her spirited, frustrating, and fascinating adventures as the child of two brilliant but irresponsible parents who wind up homeless in New York.
10. **The Iliad** – Homer (4) Scenes of warfare, wounds, heroes, gods, and a wide range of human emotions fill the pages of this classic epic of the Trojan War.
11. **Great Expectations** – Charles Dickens (4) Pip, an orphan, grows to forget his impoverished childhood after an undisclosed benefactor gives him a fortune. Meanwhile, he struggles to become a gentleman and win the love of Estella, a beautiful girl from his childhood, all the while uncovering secrets of his past.
12. **March** – Geraldine Brooks (4) Mr. March (the absent father in Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women*) almost destroys his marriage when he volunteers to serve in the Civil War as a Union chaplain, then almost destroys his health when working with Union "contraband" (freed slaves growing cotton on freed plantations for the Union war effort). His wife Marmee must overcome her deep resentment towards him after his idealistic dreams are shattered and give him a reason to live.