

Dear Incoming Freshmen,

Welcome to Preston High School! We here at the English Department can't wait to meet you!

Since reading is the best way to meet the academic challenges that high school, and, later, college will send your way, we have created a list of requirements for the summer—all to prepare you for your first high school year in English.

We require all freshmen to read three books, one of which must be James McBride's *The Color of Water* using The Riverhead Trade, 10th anniversary edition (ISBN #978-1594481925). You will find the assignment for *The Color of Water* on the next page, which you can complete as a Word or Google document. You can choose the additional books from the lists that follow: One book from the fiction list and another from the non-fiction selections.

If you should have any questions, feel free to email Ms. Esposito, the English Department Chairperson, at mesposito@prestonhs.org. Have a great summer and see you in September!

Sincerely,

The Freshmen-Level Faculty

Assignment:

1. You are required to purchase and read *The Color of Water*; a suggested version appears below. You must bring this book with you to English class on the first days of school.

The Color of Water, by James McBride (ISBN 978-1594481925)

This memoir describes growing up interracial from the perspective of the son of an African American father and white Jewish mother. McBride, an accomplished journalist and musician, has viewed the yawning chasm of racial division from both sides and, despite carving out a successful life, has been scarred. He focuses on a single, singular parent, a rabbi's daughter who later helped her husband establish an all-black Baptist church in her home and saw twelve children through college. His mother's own story, juxtaposed with McBride's, helps make this book a standout.

2. Complete the written assignment regarding this book (see this document's page 3).

3. Read at least two more books. Choose one book that appeals to you from the fiction selections and one from the non-fiction selections listed on this document's pages 4—8. You are expected to have completed all these books by the first day of class in September. Read for understanding and enjoyment and to broaden your cultural background. But be prepared to write knowledgeably about these books during the first week of classes.

2. Assignment:

The Color of Water explores the idea of identity: how we become who we are. Choose THREE important events in EACH of the narrators' (Ruth's and McBride's) lives. Your description of each event should be one paragraph (six paragraphs altogether), explaining why the event is important in terms of the character's identity. In your response, for each conflict please explain what the narrator learns about his/her identity from the experience.

When Ruth describes the abuse she faces from her father, we understand the depth of her hatred for her life in Suffolk. She says, "My father did things to me when I was a young girl that I couldn't tell anyone about." (McBride 42) As a result, Ruth develops an intense dislike of her family life and looks for every opportunity to escape. She dates a Peter, a young black man, which was a dangerous thing to do at that time. She runs away to New York, and most significantly, she rejects her identity as a Jew. All of these can be seen as a reaction to her father's abuse. Ruth must reinvent herself in order to survive.

Keep in mind: The work should be done on a computer, not hand-written, and should be saved. Use normal margins and the 12-point font of Times New Roman. On the first day of class, please prepare to submit your work to Google-Classroom, where the system will authenticate it. Remember that this is your first assignment (and your first grade for the school year), and your first opportunity to show your English teacher the level of your investment. Make sure to give these assignments adequate time and thought.

**Preston High School stresses the importance of "textual evidence" when writing any assignment. This means that a high school student supports her opinions with specific passages found in her book. As you do the Summer Reading assignment, you should include references to specific passages, including the page numbers.

3. Additional Readings

Section One: Choose at least one fiction book from this section. Feel free to read more.

Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry

Ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen is the central character, who lived in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1943 and was caught up in the events surrounding the rescue of the Danish Jews. She and her family risked their lives to help Annemarie's best friend, Ellen Rosen, by pretending that Ellen is Annemarie's older sister; the sister had died earlier in the war during her work for the Resistance.

Interpreter of Maladies, by Jhumpa Lahiri

This collection of stories is about the lives of Indians and Indian Americans who are caught between the culture they have inherited and the "New World" they now find themselves in.

When I Was Puerto Rican, by Esmeralda Santiago

The story begins in rural Puerto Rico, where her warring parents and seven siblings led a life of uproar, but one full of love and tenderness as well. Growing up, Esmeralda learned the proper way to eat a guava, the sound of the tree frog in the mango groves at night, the taste of the delectable sausage called morcilla, and the formula for ushering a dead baby's soul to heaven. But just when Esmeralda seemed to have learned everything, she was taken to New York City, where the rules--and the language--were bewilderingly different. How Esmeralda overcame adversity, won acceptance to New York City's High School of Performing Arts, and went to Harvard, where she graduated with highest honors is a record of a tremendous journey by a truly remarkable woman.

The Secret Life of Bees, by Sue Monk Kidd

Living on a peach farm in South Carolina with her harsh, unyielding father, Lily Owens has shaped her entire life around one devastating, blurred memory--the afternoon her mother was killed, when Lily was four. Since then, her only real companion has been the fierce-hearted, and sometimes just fierce, black woman Rosaleen, who acts as her "stand-in mother." When Rosaleen insults three of the deepest racists in town, Lily knows it's time to spring them both free. They take off in the only direction Lily can think of, toward a town called Tiburon, South Carolina--a name she found on the back of a picture amid the few possessions left by her mother. There they are taken in by an eccentric trio of black beekeeping sisters named May, June, and August.

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, by Jonathan Safran Foer

The book's narrator is an eight-year-old boy named Oskar Schell. Two years before the story begins, Oskar loses his father on 9/11. In the story, Oskar discovers a key in a vase that belonged to his father.

Stargirl, by Jerry Spinelli

When Stargirl enrolls at Mica High, all of the students are in awe, but she especially captures the attention of Leo Borlock, a junior at Mica. With her long flowing brown hair, plain face, and rather eccentric outfits, her classmates don't know whether to love her for having the guts to be different, or hate her for breaking the rules of high school. In fact, they react by doing a little bit of both. First they embrace her uniqueness by imitating her, and then, just as quickly, they turn on her for being unusual. Despite her status as outcast, Leo and Stargirl become a couple, and he experiences what it's like to be shunned. In hopes of gaining acceptance Leo encourages her to become normal. Together both Leo and Stargirl learn a lesson about conforming to the will of the group versus being yourself.

Nothing But the Truth, by AVI

Harrison, NH--Ninth-grade student Philip Malloy was suspended from school for singing along to "The Star-Spangled Banner" in his homeroom, causing what his teacher, Margaret Narwin, called "a disturbance." But was he standing up for his patriotic ideals, only to be squelched by the school system? Was Ms. Narwin simply trying to be a good teacher? Or could it all be just a misunderstanding gone bad--very bad? What is the truth here? Can it ever be known? Heroism, hoax, or mistake, what happened at Harrison High changes everything for everyone in ways no one--least of all Philip--could have ever predicted.

Finding Nouf, by Zoe Ferraris

Zoë Ferraris's electrifying debut of taut psychological suspense offers an unprecedented window into Saudi Arabia and the lives of men and women there. When sixteen-year-old Nouf goes missing, along with a truck and her favorite camel, her prominent family calls on Nayir al-Sharqi, a desert guide, to lead a search party. Ten days later, just as Nayir is about to give up in frustration, her body is discovered by anonymous desert travelers. But when the coroner's office determines that Nouf died not of dehydration but from drowning, and her family seems suspiciously uninterested in getting at the truth, Nayir takes it upon himself to find out what really happened to her.

Mudbound, by Hillary Jordan

When Henry McAllan moves his city-bred wife, Laura, to a cotton farm in the Mississippi Delta in 1946, she finds herself in a place both foreign and frightening. Laura does not share Henry's love of rural life, and she struggles to raise their two young children in an isolated shotgun shack with no indoor plumbing or electricity, all the while under the eye of her hateful, racist father-in-law. When it rains, the waters rise up and swallow the bridge to town, stranding the family in a sea of mud.

Catherine, Called Birdy, by Karen Cushman

This book takes place in medieval England in 1290. Birdy is the 14-year-old daughter of an English country knight who is very inventive and humorous. The book is written in journal form because Birdy's brother, who is a monk, taught her to read and write and he suggested to her that writing the account of her days will help her grow "less childish and more learned." Each different passage tells of the adventures of her days and how her parents are trying to make her act like a lady so her father can marry her off. Birdy hates to act like a lady and doesn't want to get married. This journal describes her adventures throughout a year of her daily life and her efforts to get rid of any male suitor that her father wants her to marry.

Chinese Cinderella, by Adeline Yen

"Mama died giving birth to you. If you had not been born, Mama would still be alive." Even though Mama died two weeks after the birth from a fever, this brutal message dooms Wu Mei (Fifth Younger Sister) throughout her sad and lonely childhood in China during the 1940s and 1950s. Wu Mei, whose English name is Adeline, faces the anger and cruelty of her family; only an aunt and grandfather are supportive. Shunted off to boarding schools, left out of family activities, Adeline nevertheless thrives academically and hopes desperately (and in vain) to please her father. In this memoir she offers a bittersweet look into the pain of childhood and a fascinating glimpse at a tumultuous time in China.

The Martian Chronicles, by Ray Bradbury

From "Rocket Summer" to "The Million-Year Picnic," Ray Bradbury's stories of the colonization of Mars form an eerie mesh of past and future. Written in the 1940s, the chronicles drip with nostalgic atmosphere--shady porches with tinkling pitchers of lemonade, grandfather clocks, chintz-covered sofas. But longing for this comfortable past proves dangerous in every way to Bradbury's characters--the golden-eyed Martians as well as the humans.

She's Come Undone, by Wally Lamb

Meet Dolores Price. She's 13, wise-mouthed but wounded, having bid her childhood goodbye. Stranded in front of her bedroom TV, she spends the next few years nourishing herself with the Mallomars, potato chips, and Pepsi her anxious mother supplies. When she finally orbits into young womanhood at 257 pounds, Dolores is no stronger and life is no kinder. But this time she's determined to rise to the occasion and give herself one more chance before she really goes under.

The Girl with the Pearl Earring, by Tracy Chevalier

Chevalier transports readers to a bygone time and place in this richly imagined portrait of the young woman who inspired one of Vermeer's most celebrated paintings. "Girl with a Pearl Earring" is the story of 16-year-old Griet, whose life is transformed by her brief encounter with genius, even as she herself is immortalized on canvas in oil.

Esperanza Rising, by Pam Munoz Ryan

Esperanza thought she'd always live with her family on their ranch in Mexico--she'd always have fancy dresses, a beautiful home, and servants. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and Mama to flee to California during the Great Depression, and to settle in a camp for Mexican farm workers. Esperanza isn't ready for the hard labor, financial struggles, or lack of acceptance she now faces. When their new life is threatened, Esperanza must find a way to rise above her difficult circumstances--Mama's life and her own depend on it.

Section Two: Choose at least one non-fiction book from this section. Feel free to read more.

Into The Wild, by John Krakauer

In April 1992, a young man from a well-to-do family hitchhiked to Alaska and walked alone into the wilderness north of Mt. McKinley. He had given \$25,000 in savings to a charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet and invented a life for himself. Jon Krakauer brings Chris McCandless's uncompromising pilgrimage out of the shadows and illuminates it with meaning in this mesmerizing and heartbreaking tour de force.

Go Ask Alice, by an anonymous author

Alice is your typical teenage girl. She worries that she is too fat. She wants a boyfriend and often says, "I wish I were popular and beautiful and wealthy and talented." She frequently makes resolutions in her diary to do better in school, work toward a calmer relationship with her mother, and lose weight. Her life changes when she goes to a party and is given acid in her drink. She loves the feeling the drug gives her: "Closed my eyes and the music began to absorb me physically. I could smell it and touch it and feel it as well as hear it." She wants more and quickly becomes a part of the drug scene. For about a year and a half Alice goes on and off drugs and runs away from home twice. Each time she manages to find her way back to her parents. They take her in, get her help, and all seems to be rosy until Alice is once again given acid without her knowledge. This time, she has a bad trip, ends up in the hospital, and then a mental hospital. Her parents stick by her, but her life of drug abuse ultimately ends with a fatal overdose—whether it is intentional or accidental is not known. *Go Ask Alice* has become a classic story of warning against the use of drugs. For the teen scene of today, this story will appear as slightly dated. The issues of relationships both in and out of school have not changed much in the last forty years. The basic story remains a chilling cautionary tale.

Zlata's Diary, by Zlata Filipovic

When *Zlata's Diary* was first published at the height of the Bosnian conflict, it became an international bestseller and was compared to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, both for the freshness of its voice and the grimness of the world it describes. It begins as the day-to-day record of the life of a typical eleven-year-old girl, preoccupied by piano lessons and birthday parties. But as war engulfs Sarajevo, Zlata Filipovic becomes a witness to food shortages and the deaths of friends and learns to wait out bombardments in a neighbor's cellar. Yet throughout she remains courageous and observant. The result is a book that has the power to move and instruct readers a world away.

A Place to Stand, by Jimmy Santiago Baca

Jimmy Santiago Baca's harrowing, brilliant memoir of his life before, during, and immediately after the years he spent in a maximum-security prison garnered tremendous critical acclaim and went on to win the prestigious 2001 International Prize. Long considered one of the best poets in America today, Baca was illiterate at the age of twenty-one and facing five to ten years behind bars for selling drugs. *A Place to Stand* is the remarkable tale of how he emerged after his years in the penitentiary—much of it spent in isolation—with the ability to read and a passion for writing poetry. A vivid portrait of life inside a maximum-security prison and an affirmation of one man's spirit in overcoming the most brutal adversity, *A Place to Stand* "stands as proof there is always hope in even the most desperate lives."

Fast Food Nation, by Eric Schlosser

Journalist Eric Schlosser argues that the fast food industry has triggered the growth of malls in America's landscape, widened the gap between rich and poor, fueled an epidemic of obesity, and propelled American cultural imperialism abroad. He discusses facts about food production and preparation, the ingredients and taste-enhancers in the food, the chains' efforts to reel in young, susceptible consumers, and other unsettling facts.

Isaac's Storm, by Erick Larson

Isaac's Storm blends science and history to tell the story of Galveston, Texas, its people, and the hurricane that devastated them. Drawing on hundreds of personal reminiscences of the storm, Larson follows individuals through the fateful day and the storm's aftermath. The storm itself, however, is the book's true protagonist--and Larson describes its nuances in horrific detail.

Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee, by Charles Shields

To Kill a Mockingbird—the twentieth century's most widely read American novel—has sold thirty million copies and still sells a million yearly. Yet despite her book's perennial popularity, its creator, Harper Lee, has become a somewhat mysterious figure. Now, after years of research, Charles J. Shields brings to life the warmhearted, high-spirited, and occasionally hardheaded woman who gave us two of American literature's most unforgettable characters—Atticus Finch and his daughter, Scout. At the center of this lively book is the story of Lee's struggle to create her famous novel, but her colorful life contains many highlights—her girlhood as a tomboy in overalls in tiny Monroeville, Alabama; the murder trial that made her beloved father's reputation and inspired her great work; her journey to Kansas as Truman Capote's ally and research assistant to help report the story of *In Cold Blood*. *Mockingbird*—unique, highly entertaining, filled with humor and heart—is a wide-ranging, idiosyncratic portrait of a writer, her dream, and the place and people whom she made immortal.

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