

# Duchesne's 2024 Summer Reading List

Each student should read as much as possible during the summer. However, All students need to complete the following class-specific reading assignments before the beginning of the fall semester.

## 12th Grade Classes

### ACC Introduction to Literature:

*The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Students will need to read the first four books of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. Use the book I provided you and the study guide. If you misplace either over the summer, email me at [ddurso@duchesne-hs.org](mailto:ddurso@duchesne-hs.org) and I can arrange for you to pick up another.

### Holocaust in Literature and Media:

*The Choice* is a powerful, moving memoir—and a practical guide to healing—written by Dr. Edith Eva Eger, an eminent psychologist whose own experiences as a Holocaust survivor help her treat patients and guide them toward freedom from trauma, grief, and fear. One of the few living Holocaust survivors to remember the horrors of the camps, Edie has chosen to forgive her captors and find joy in her life every day. *The Choice* weaves Eger's personal story with case studies from her work as a psychologist. Her patients and their stories illustrate different phases of healing and show how people can choose to escape the prisons they construct in their minds and find freedom, regardless of circumstance. Eger's story is an inspiration for everyone.

You will need to be ready to discuss the following questions when we start the semester:

1. In the beginning of the book, Dr. Eger asserts that there is no hierarchy of suffering, a statement she maintains after sharing her story of barely surviving the Holocaust. Do you agree? How does Dr. Eger demonstrate this belief throughout the book? How does she put her own suffering on the same level as that of her patients?
2. What roles do fear and shame play in Dr. Eger's life, both past and present? How does she describe the constant presence of shame and fear? How do these emotions contour her life after liberation? As a psychologist, how does Dr. Eger recommend dealing with fear? With shame?
3. After arriving at Auschwitz, Dr. Josef Mengele forces Dr. Eger to dance for him to "The Blue Danube." Discuss the power and residual effect of this moment on Edie's life.

### Nature Literature:

*Hadestown* is a Greek tragedy with a modern twist: Hades is an oil baron, the underworld is a power plant, and Orpheus plays an electric guitar. You'll find, though, that these aren't the only modern concerns in this 2006 musical – on the surface, it's a blend of the Hades and Persephone creation myth and the tragic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, but this blended narrative is grounded in the all-

too-modern conflict between nature and industry. Your task this summer is to read a few selections from Edith Hamilton's classic *Mythology* (listed below) in addition to listening to the original cast album for *Hadestown* (available free on YouTube and Spotify). These selections will not only give you the background to appreciate Anaïs Mitchell's musical, but will also help us hit the ground running with our discussion of nature and literature.

Before you listen to *Hadestown*, you should read the following selections from Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*:

- The "Introduction to Classical Mythology" (in full)
- From Part One, Chapter One ("The Gods"): Hades, Hermes, and the Muses
- From Part One, Chapter Two ("The Two Great Gods of Earth"): Demeter
- From Part Two, Chapter Two ("Eight Brief Tales of Lovers"): Orpheus and Eurydice

You should be prepared to discuss the following questions at the start of the semester:

1. Mitchell takes some creative license with adapting these ancient Greek myths into a single coherent musical. What changes does Mitchell make to these myths, and what did she keep the same? Why do you think she makes these changes?
2. *Hadestown* was written in 2006, shortly after a series of climate disasters that raised public awareness of climate change – and, more importantly, the people and places most directly harmed by climate change. How do you think these concerns with climate change play into this musical's narrative?
3. The myths at the center of *Hadestown* are both stories of love and loss. How do these two romances differ, and how are they similar? And how does *Hadestown* connect their love stories to changes in the natural world?

### **Post-Apocalyptic Literature:**

Shute's *On the Beach* occurs after a nuclear World War III has destroyed most of the globe. The few remaining survivors in southern Australia await the radioactive cloud that is heading their way and bringing certain death to everyone in its path. Among them is an American submarine captain struggling to resist the knowledge that his wife and children in the United States must be dead. Then a faint Morse code signal is picked up, transmitting from somewhere near Seattle, and Captain Towers must lead his submarine crew on a bleak tour of the ruined world in a desperate search for signs of life. *On the Beach* is a remarkably convincing portrait of how ordinary people might face the most unimaginable nightmare.

You will need to be ready to discuss the following questions when we start the semester:

1. Do you think the events of the novel are believable? Do you think the behavior of the characters in the novel is believable? Why or why not?
2. What is the significance of work in the characters' lives?
3. How has the definition of sanity changed in the aftermath of the nuclear war?
4. Discuss the role and imagery of nature in the novel.

## Shakespeare:

The best way to understand Shakespeare – and have fun while doing it! – is to see his work on the stage. So, that is what you will be doing this summer. Your summer reading assignment for this year is to attend a live production of a Shakespeare play. Luckily, the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival has two that you can attend for free: *As You Like It*, which will be on stage in Forest Park from May 29 till June 23, and *The Tempest*, which will be touring through various parks in the Metro area between July 30 and August 25. (Though, please, make sure to see your production *before* the school year starts.) **You will need to provide evidence that you attended one of these productions.**

You can find plot summaries for both plays through the Folger Shakespeare Library ([www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)), which may be helpful to read before you see whichever production you choose. Make sure to take notes during/after the show – it may be a while between when you see the show and when the semester starts.

You will need to be ready to discuss the following questions when we start the semester:

1. How would you describe your experience of seeing Shakespeare live? Did anything surprise you? What other arts or activities did you see at the performance?
2. Both plays feature characters forced into exile, whether on a remote island or in the Forest of Arden. How does the setting seem to shape how the characters act towards each other? Would they act differently if they weren't in exile – and, if so, what do you think Shakespeare is saying about the places where we live *our* everyday lives?
3. Pay careful attention to the characters' sets and costumes, especially if you see *As You Like It*. How might these choices relate to the play's plot and/or characters? Do you think these choices work well with the play's plot/characters?

## 11th Grade Classes

### American Literature and Composition:

*The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative (Indigenous Americas)* by Thomas King

"Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous." In *The Truth About Stories*, Native novelist and scholar Thomas King explores how stories shape who we are and how we understand and interact with other people. From creation stories to personal experiences, historical anecdotes to social injustices, racist propaganda to works of contemporary Native literature, King probes Native culture's deep ties to storytelling. With wry humor, King deftly weaves events from his own life as a child in California, an academic in Canada, and a Native North American with a wide-ranging discussion of stories told by and about Indians. So many stories have been told about Indians, King comments, that "there is no reason for the Indian to be real. The Indian simply has to exist in our imaginations." That imaginative Indian that North Americans hold dear has been challenged by Native writers – N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louis Owens, Robert Alexie, and others – who provide alternative narratives of the Native experience that question, create a present, and imagine a future. King reminds the reader, Native and non-Native, that storytelling carries with it social and

moral responsibilities. "Don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now."

Be prepared to discuss:

1. Throughout the text, King says that "the truth about [stories](#) is that that's all we are" (2). What does he mean by this, and why does he repeat that point six separate times in the text?
2. Why do most of the chapters begin with the story of turtles holding up the earth on their backs? What is the significance of the idea that it's "turtles all the way down" (2)?
3. King mentions that people have an image of an Indian in mind, whether it be one from a team mascot, a film, or history. What do you picture when you think of the term "Indian," and how has King's argument changed your conception of an Indian?

## **ACC Composition:**

*A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf

The fall semester of ACC Comp focuses on a deceptively simple question: what is literacy? To get us started with this question, you will read Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* over the summer. Virginia Woolf, an accomplished novelist and master of the Modernist style, was asked to give a lecture on the subject of women and fiction. That lecture became *A Room of One's Own* – part fiction, part memoir, part treatise. Much of the lecture takes the form of a stream-of-consciousness narrative in which Woolf (or, rather, "Mary") reflects on the state of women's education and literacy in the early 20th century. Today, *A Room of One's Own* is a foundational text for understanding feminist thought and – especially for our purposes – what it means to be "literate."

As you read her lecture, consider the following questions:

1. Woolf looks to answer why so few women have written. In doing so she addresses issues of economics, history, and tradition. What is her thesis? How does she defend it? Is it persuasive?
2. One of the key themes Woolf addresses is the relationship between genius and adversity. What is her argument about their connection? How does she defend it? Do you find it persuasive?
3. Consider Woolf's style. In the lecture she creates imaginary characters, addresses her own life, and makes explicit arguments. How do these three genres work together to develop her claims? Also take some time to examine what Woolf is doing with her sentences. How do they work? How do they build momentum?
4. Finally, consider those left out of Woolf's argument. Who are they? Are they rightly excluded? What does their exclusion suggest about Woolf's biases?

## **10th Grade Classes**

### **World Literature and Composition (All levels):**

*A Thousand Ships* by Natalie Haynes

Natalie Haynes retells the end of *The Illiad* and most of *The Odyssey* through the eyes of the women. “The devastating consequences of the fall of Troy stretch from Mount Olympus to Mount Ida, from the citadel of Troy to the distant Greek islands, and across oceans and sky in between. These are the stories of the women embroiled in that legendary war and its terrible aftermath, as well as the feud and the fatal decisions that started it all.”

As you read, consider the following:

1. In the Greek culture, women were not considered heroes in the same way that the men were. Do they deserve the title of “hero”?
2. Did reading the female perspective of this war change your view on the Trojan War or on war in general? Have you ever thought about the consequences of war on those left behind before reading this story?
3. Did you give the Gods and Goddesses stories more weight than the human stories? What did you think about the interactions between the Gods and Goddesses?

## 9th Grade Classes

**English Composition:** Read and compile 10 multi-page articles that reflect who you are and the things you care about most. At least two articles must come from the St. Louis Post Dispatch.

**Literature and Composition:** Read to chapter “Nudging Again” in *Feed* by M.T. Anderson (roughly half the book).

**Honors Literature and Composition:** Read all of *Feed* by M.T. Anderson.

We will start with assignments/projects and discussions related to summer reading at the beginning of the quarter. Those reading M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*, look at the “Questions to Consider.”

### **Description:**

Set in the near future, *Feed* focuses on the issues of corporate power, consumerism, information technology, data mining, and environmental and societal decay. American culture is completely dominated by advertising and corporate exploitation, and the people are manipulated easily through brain implants called feeds.

The Duchesne English department acknowledges the use of some vulgar language in M.T. Anderson’s *Feed*. We are not encouraging the use of vulgar language. Its presence in the novel does speak thematically to the decay of society and language. We will address the use of common vernacular at the start of the year along with the questions below.

### **Questions to Consider:**

**Technology and media:** How does the feed affect peoples’ abilities to read, write, or even talk to each other? How might their dependence on the feed reflect our own relationships with our phones and

other “smart” technologies?

**Politics/social awareness:** How does the feed affect peoples’ awareness of what’s happening in the world around them/the world outside the United States? Do you think the technology we use has the same effect?

**Data mining:** How do people find privacy with the feed? Is it even possible? How does the technology we carry in our own pockets affect our sense of privacy?