

## ENGLISH 11 Summer Reading and More

Congratulations! With the successful completion of this school year, you will move into the category of “upperclassmen.” Next year, you’ll get your class ring in celebration of your high school accomplishments and begin seriously considering your future by taking SATs and ACTs and by making college visits and, in some cases, early applications. It will be an exciting time – one in which the decisions you make and the work you do could very well affect the opportunities you have later.

In English next year you will be studying a survey of American literature. Your knowledge of American History will come in handy as we look at how the development of the country influenced thinking and writing.

One thing that you need to do to prepare for your junior year in English is to complete two short summer reading assignments prior to the beginning of school. You should read the following two books and be ready for some sort of assessment during the first week of school.

1. *Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton – This novella, set in a wintry Massachusetts village around 1900, tells the bleak story of a man trapped by the consequences of his actions. In it, the author explores ideas about commitment, love, and responsibility. She uses the setting to develop tone and to foreshadow the plot’s end. She also effectively uses a number of symbols: ask yourself what the tree, the cat, the pickle dish, the train, and the color red might represent.

2. *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams – This play was the author’s first great success. Seen through the eyes of Tom, his pitifully dysfunctional family struggles to find a sense of worth in lower-middle class St. Louis in the 1940s. One lives in the past, one strives for the future, and one is content simply to live in the moment. This play is more than plot: keep an eye out for symbols that suggest what these characters really are at the core of their being. Also, watch the unusual stage devices that affect the story’s meaning (lights and sounds and projected pictures and . . . )

Read actively. Don’t be content to scan the words on the page. Make predictions about what will happen. Jot down notes about details you find striking or that may be important. Allow yourself to connect with characters by putting yourself in their positions. Make judgments about their behavior. This kind of active reading will help you understand and remember key elements about whatever you read.

Let me encourage you also to read something this summer just because you want to. Choose a good best seller to take to the beach, read the morning newspaper and your favorite magazines, or start your day by reading from the scriptures or from a good devotional book. Research shows that those students who read do far better on college entrance exams than those who do not. Reading is the best thing you can do to improve your ACT and SAT scores.

Enjoy your summer, and return in August ready to make the most of your junior year.

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