

HONORS FRESHMAN SUMMER READING

One of the most important things you can do in the summer months to keep your mind alert is to read. Pick some things you enjoy—newspapers, magazines, or fiction—and read a little something every day. This will help you, not only to keep your mind sharp and be ready for school in the fall, but also to increase your vocabulary and your reading comprehension. In fact, studies show that students who read on a regular basis improve their scores on standardized tests and college entrance exams.

In addition to this reading, you should spend some time reading the assigned summer reading books for freshmen. These are books that are nationally recognized as exceptional literature; they are also books that the teachers in Harding’s English department believe students will find worthwhile.

One is *Out of the Silent Planet* by C. S. Lewis. You may recognize the author as the writer of the Narnia Chronicles. Your assignment is somewhat different from the Narnia series. First of all, it is in the science fiction genre. Interestingly enough, it was written before any actual space travel had been made, so it is highly imaginative. Second, it is more difficult literature -- the vocabulary may be somewhat challenging. Don’t let that daunt you; just keep a dictionary handy. By the way, Lewis integrated his philosophy of Christian faith into many of his books. This is one of them, so watch for the ideas of heaven and God and Satan and angels. In fact, as you think past the surface level plot, you should begin to discover what Lewis proposes about how sin came into the world and what Earth would be like without it. This is the first year this book has been on Harding’s reading list, so I’ll be eager to hear your evaluation of it.

The other book you’ll need to read is *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles. The story is set in a boys’ prep school in the Northeast where high school students struggle with friendship, jealousy, guilt, and the lessons of becoming men during the time of war. The places in the story represent those lessons; your job as a reader is to determine what those are and how they are developed throughout the plot.

We’ll have tests over these books within the first week of school and then a more in-depth discussion about them. In order to help you comprehend and maintain the book, let me recommend a couple of tactics to use as you read. These are good ideas for any book you read.

- 1) **Underline or highlight** information as you read. If it seems to develop the character, the theme, or the symbolism, mark it in your book. This will give you something to review before your test.
- 2) **Title the chapters** after you read each one. In just a few words, summarize the plot so that you can find information more quickly.
- 3) **Look up definitions** of words that are unfamiliar. Sometimes, you can determine the meaning of a word from the context and just keep reading. However, if a word crops up more than once, it would be a great idea to look it up.
- 4) **Write down questions** about things that don’t make sense; then have a conversation with someone else who is reading the book and bring up those questions.

I hope you have a great summer, full of fun and great words.