

11th Grade Summer Reading

Theme: Inclusion and Exclusion in America - A Paradox

Rationale: Throughout its existence, America and American society has long been viewed as a land of inclusion that promotes tolerance, acceptance, and unity between all of its inhabitants, while also instituting long-standing social practices that may exclude some individuals based on a person's social, economic, racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural background, as well as other differences. These contrasting aspects of American society being both inclusive and exclusive poses a fascinating paradox, which challenges us to consider whether or not America lives up to some of its greatest ideals of equality, justice, and freedom in spite of such a contradiction. With these ideas in mind, the following summer readings titles are meant to help you further explore and examine these contradictions and discover for yourself which trait (inclusion or exclusion) America seems to embody, fulfill, and live up to more fully.

REQUIRED TEXT - All rising juniors must read the following text,

1. *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver ISBN-13: 978-0062277756

Clear-eyed and spirited, Taylor Greer grew up poor in rural Kentucky with the goals of avoiding pregnancy and getting away. But when she heads west with high hopes and a barely functional car, she meets the human condition head-on. By the time Taylor arrives in Tucson, Arizona, she has acquired a completely unexpected child, a three-year-old American Indian girl named Turtle, and must somehow come to terms with both motherhood and the necessity for putting down roots. Hers is a story about love and friendship, abandonment and belonging, and the discovery of surprising resources in apparently empty places.

SELECTED TEXTS - Choose **at least one** of the following texts to read

2. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison ISBN-13: 978-0679732761

A classic from the moment it first appeared in 1952, *Invisible Man* chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. *Invisible Man* is certainly a book about race in America, and sadly enough, few of the problems it chronicles have disappeared even now. But Ellison's first novel transcends such a narrow definition. It's also a book about the human race stumbling down the path to identity, challenged and successful to varying degrees.

3. *The Leavers* by Lisa Ko ISBN-13:978-1616208042

One morning, Deming Guo's mother, Polly, an undocumented Chinese immigrant, goes to her job at a nail salon—and never comes home. No one can find any trace of her. With his mother gone, eleven-year-old Deming is left mystified and bereft. Eventually adopted by a pair of well-meaning white professors, Deming is moved from the Bronx to a small town upstate and renamed Daniel Wilkinson. But far from all he's ever known, Daniel struggles to reconcile his adoptive parents' desire that he assimilate with his memories of his mother and the community he left behind.

4. *Into the Wild* by Jon 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. His name was Christopher Johnson McCandless. He had given \$25,000 in savings to charity, abandoned his car and most of his possessions, burned all the cash in his wallet, and invented a new life for himself. Four months later, his decomposed body was found by a moose hunter. How McCandless came to die is the unforgettable story of *Into the Wild*.

5. *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei

In 1942, at the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, every person of Japanese descent on the west coast was rounded up and shipped to one of ten "relocation centers," hundreds or thousands of miles from home, where they would be held for years under armed guard. *They Called Us Enemy* is Takei's firsthand account of those years behind barbed wire, the joys and terrors of growing up under legalized racism, his mother's hard choices, his father's faith in democracy, and the way those experiences planted the seeds for his astonishing future.

As you read, keep in mind the "rationale" for this summer's reading theme. Pay close attention to characterization, symbolism, use of narrative devices, and tone. Annotate your novels as you go. This will help immensely in September.