

Summer Reading Assignment for Incoming 9th-Grade English Honors Students

(1) *Life of Pi*: Make sure to begin reading at “Author’s Note”.

- At least three times while you are reading, pause and do some writing to reflect on what you have read (roughly once per every 100 pages). Think of your reflections as a kind of ongoing conversation with the author – be as casual or as formal as you wish. Reflect on anything at all as long as it is something you find interesting or puzzling (something about Pi’s character, a passage you love for the sheer beauty of the writing, the novel’s defense of zoos, the novel’s quirky consideration of swimming pools in Paris, Pi’s embrace of multiple religions, some aspect of Richard Parker... really – anything that strikes you). No page requirement, no page limit. Typed or handwritten – whatever you prefer. My only requirement is that you make reference to specific passages and page numbers. We will use your reflections as the basis for a class discussion; I will collect these reflections following the discussion.
- Do you see any connections between *Life of Pi* and *The Alchemist*? Note down passages from each that you might connect in some meaningful way.

(2) Tales from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, translated by Ted Hughes. These are available for download on the English Department Homepage, at the bottom of the page under “Summer Reading”. The readings are labeled “English 9 Honors – Mythology Packet”), and include:

- “Phaeton”
- “Echo and Narcissus”
- “Arachne”
- “Pyramus and Thisbe”

For these four tales of transformation, please:

- Read and annotate; **write a polished summary of each tale that is no more than five sentences (not collected).**
- As you read and annotate, look for
 - Human situations that are relatable – in other words, what about these stories can we, human beings living in the 21st century, connect with? What aspects of these tales (based on Greek myth and written by a man born in 43 BCE!) seem timelessly compelling and truthful?
 - Where do you see evidence of the power of soaring imagination?
 - What figurative language do you encounter, and what is its effect?
 - What thematic connections can you make between stories?
- **Write a one-page typed reflection interpreting the image below.** What message is the artist conveying? Which of the tales from Ovid does the image allude to? To what extent do you agree with the artist’s message as you see it? What would life have been like before mirrors were invented and our source of reflection was a pool of water or a polished silver vessel? Begin with a topic sentence, include a quotation from the text in your response, and structure your paragraph logically – in other words, do not merely answer a string of questions (provided simply to give you some thinking prompts). I will collect these reflections when we begin class.



Beyond these assignments, I hope you can find time to do all kinds of non-required reading! I look forward to welcoming you all to the high school in September.