

The Renaissance Charter School

Incoming 10th Grade Summer Reading Project 2025-2026

If you have any questions over the summer, please email us:

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DUE DATE: Friday, September 26, 2025 at 11:59pm

Submission on Google Classroom & physical copy in class (if applicable)

All students entering the 10th grade are required to read one book from the list below. Books are all available through local libraries, bookstores, through online book vendors. It is your responsibility to obtain the novel and to be prepared to submit this work in the fall.

***Plagiarizing in ANY CAPACITY, will earn a zero and an incident report.
Additionally plagiarism (of any form) is tracked in the high school and can result
in semester failure and suspension if there are multiple occurrences.***

Creative Assignment:

Select **ONE** of the following choices and bring the physical copy to school on Friday, September 26, 2025. The digital submission of your creative assignment is due at 11:59pm on September 26.

A) Mind Map of Empathy

Construct a colorful mind map centered on the main character, branching out into emotions, challenges, and moments in the book that invite empathy. Use images, symbols, and minimal keywords.

B) Emotion Masks

Create two masks representing contrasting emotions the character feels (for example, hope and fear). Decorate each mask with colors and imagery that represent those feelings, then explain how these emotions relate to empathy in the story.

C) Character Emotion Portrait

Create a detailed portrait of the main character that visually represents their emotional state or inner conflict. Use colors, shading, and symbols to express what they're feeling and experiencing.

D) Graphic Novel Page

Design a single graphic novel page (4–6 panels) that captures a key empathetic moment from the book. Include illustrations and speech/thought bubbles with brief, impactful phrases or emotions.

E) Symbolic Object Creation

Design and create a symbolic object or artifact that represents the main character's experience or emotional struggle. Use craft materials or everyday items to build something that captures their story's theme.

Writing Assignment:

In class in September, there will be an announced on-demand writing assignment where you will craft a **character study** of **the protagonist** within the text. You will examine and analyze the **conflicts** they are involved in and how they react in particular situations within the text.

Choices of literature (summaries from Good Reads)

10th Grade English centers on literature where characters experience marginalization, oppression, racism, and/or prejudice. Over the course of the year, we will discuss writing from a variety of authors whose novels reflect global perspectives and universal themes. The novels listed below are written by diverse authors who offer a window into complex narratives that have similar thematic connections to the novel choices in the coming school year. Many of the summaries are adapted from an online source, goodreads.com.

1. *Dominicana* by Angie Cruz

Fifteen-year-old Ana Cancion never dreamed of moving to America, the way the girls she grew up with in the Dominican countryside did. But when Juan Ruiz proposes and promises to take her to New York City, she has to say yes. It doesn't matter that he is twice her age, that there is no love between them. Their marriage is an opportunity for her entire close-knit family to eventually immigrate. So on New Year's Day, 1965, Ana leaves behind everything she knows and becomes Ana Ruiz, a wife confined to a cold six-floor walk-up in Washington Heights. Lonely and miserable, Ana hatches a reckless plan to escape. But at the bus terminal, she is stopped by Cesar, Juan's free-spirited younger brother, who convinces her to stay. As the Dominican Republic slides into political turmoil, Juan returns to protect his family's assets, leaving Cesar to take care of Ana. Suddenly, Ana is free to take English lessons at a local church, lie on the beach at Coney Island, see a movie at Radio City Music Hall, go dancing with Cesar, and imagine the possibility of a different kind of life in America. When Juan returns, Ana must decide once again between her heart and her duty to her family.

2. *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas

Piri Thomas' coming of age memoir on the streets of Spanish Harlem that recounts his experience of being born outsider: a Puerto Rican in English-speaking America; a dark-skinned morenito in a family that refused to acknowledge its African blood. Piri recounts his experiences that begin with his early adolescence growing up in El Barrio to his lock-up in Sing Sing for shooting at police officers at the age of 22. Thomas' compelling work shares his journey of harrowing tragedy and personal triumph.

3. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sanchez

Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never abandon their family. But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role. Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out every possible way Julia has failed. But it's not long before Julia discovers that Olga might not have been as perfect as everyone thought. With the help of her best friend Lorena, and her first love, first everything boyfriend Connor, Julia is determined to find out. Was Olga really what she seemed? Or was there more to her sister's story? And either way, how can Julia even attempt to live up to a seemingly impossible ideal?

4. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon

Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. And he detests the color yellow. This improbable story of Christopher's quest to investigate the suspicious death of a neighborhood dog makes for one of the most captivating, unusual, and widely heralded novels in recent years.

5. *Challenger Deep* by Neal Shusterman

Caden Bosch is on a ship that's headed for the deepest point on Earth: Challenger Deep, the southern part of the Marianas Trench. Caden Bosch is a brilliant high school student whose friends are starting to notice his odd behaviour. Caden Bosch is designated the ship's artist in residence to document the journey with images. Caden Bosch pretends to join the school track team but spends his days walking for miles, absorbed by the thoughts in his head. Caden Bosch is split between his allegiance to the captain and the allure of mutiny. Caden Bosch is torn.

6. *Circe* by Madeline Miller

In the house of Helios, god of the sun and mightiest of the Titans, a daughter is born. But Circe is a strange child--neither powerful like her father nor viciously alluring like her mother. Turning to the world of mortals for companionship, she discovers that she does possess power: the power of witchcraft, which can transform rivals into monsters and menace the gods themselves. Threatened, Zeus banishes her to a deserted island, where she hones her occult craft, tames wild beasts, and crosses paths with many of the most famous figures in all of mythology, including the Minotaur, Daedalus and his doomed son Icarus, the murderous Medea, and, of course, wily Odysseus. But there is danger, too, for a woman who stands alone, and Circe unwittingly draws the wrath of both men and gods, ultimately finding herself pitted against one of the most terrifying and vengeful of the Olympians. To protect what she loves most, Circe must summon all her strength and choose, once and for all, whether she belongs with the gods she is born from or with the mortals she has come to love.

7. *Chain-Gang All-Stars* by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Two top women gladiators fight for their freedom within a depraved private prison system not so far-removed from America's own. Loretta Thurwar and Hamara "Hurricane Staxxx" Stacker are the stars of Chain-Gang All-Stars, the cornerstone of CAPE, or Criminal Action Penal Entertainment, a highly-popular, highly-controversial, profit-raising program in America's increasingly dominant private prison industry. It's the return of the gladiators and prisoners are competing for the ultimate prize: their freedom. In CAPE, prisoners travel as Links in Chain-Gangs, competing in death-matches for packed arenas with righteous protestors at the gates. Thurwar and Staxxx, both teammates and lovers, are the fan favorites. And if all goes well, Thurwar will be free in just a few matches, a fact she carries as heavily as her lethal hammer. As she prepares to leave her fellow Links, she considers how she might help preserve their humanity, in defiance of these so-called games, but CAPE's corporate owners will stop at nothing to protect their status quo and the obstacles they lay in Thurwar's path have devastating consequences. Moving from the Links in the field to the protestors to the CAPE employees and beyond, *Chain-Gang All-Stars* is a kaleidoscopic, excoriating look at the American prison system's unholy alliance of systemic racism, unchecked capitalism, and mass incarceration, and a clear-eyed reckoning with what freedom in this country really means.