

The Renaissance Charter School

Incoming 12th Grade Summer Reading Project 2025-2026

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

josephwasserman@rencharter.org

shahreenislam@rencharter.org

DUE DATE: Friday, September 8, 2025 at 11:59pm

Submission on Google Classroom

At this point in your academic experience, you have been exposed to and practiced reading and writing in a variety of genres. In 12th Grade English, you will hone your academic writing and explore creative written expression. For **Part 1** of this project, you will demonstrate your skill in analytical thinking and essay writing. For **Part 2**, you will have the freedom to choose a creative genre of writing to explore and express your unique thinking about your summer reading book. Use this opportunity to challenge yourself intellectually, be creative and have fun! Submit the outline, typed literary analysis essay and creative writing on the first day of classes. The assignment will count as your first project grade of the semester in English.

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.

Requirements:

1. Read **one** of the books from the list below.
2. **Part 1: Literary Analysis Essay:** 3-4 pages, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, textual evidence (paraphrased and at least one direct quote per body paragraph), MLA citations
 - Create and attach outline
 - Create an original thesis with a clear argument about a prominent THEME in the book. DO NOT write one word thematic topics, such as family, religion, childhood. INSTEAD, write an argument about the message the author conveys, such as: dangers of dictatorships; gender roles can be challenged; etc. Your supporting arguments, developed with evidence in the body paragraphs, will demonstrate how the author conveys this message.
3. **Part 2: Creative Writing:** 1-2 pages, typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins
 - Express your understanding and analysis of the book through a different genre than an essay. You may want to focus on a particular character, conflict, theme, setting, or scene that intrigued you. Consider taking on the voice of one or more of the characters, depending on which genre you choose.
 - *Possible genres to choose from:* story, letter, poem, song, news or magazine article, dialogue, interview, eulogy, speech, flashback, missing chapter, alternate ending, advice column, etc.
4. Do not forget to **submit the OUTLINE to part 1.**

Evaluation Criteria:

- Evidence of engaged reading: use of direct quotes or references to specific details from the book)
- Intellectual thought: analytical, original, creative thinking and insight into the characters, conflicts and themes of the books
- Thorough writing process: careful choice and construction of genre, thoughtful and creative use of language, development of ideas, carefully revision and editing for grammar and conventions

Essay Checklist:

Overall

- ☐ You MUST create an OUTLINE for your essay and hand it in with your essay.
- ☐ Your essay must be 3-4 pages long, double spaced with 12-point Times New Roman font.
- ☐ Proofread and spell-check your work for correct conventions - punctuation, capitalization, spelling and grammar (reading it ALOUD often helps to catch errors)

Introduction:

- ☐ Introduce the title of the book (*italicized*) and the author's first and last name capitalized.
- ☐ Introduce information relevant to your thesis argument (ex. setting, characters, key plot points).
- ☐ All essays must have a clearly articulated Thesis Argument about the theme and how the author develops this theme through literary elements or techniques.

Body Paragraphs (at least three):

- ☐ Clear Topic Sentence is a Supporting Argument for the overall Thesis Argument
- ☐ Textual evidence should be both paraphrased **and** in the form of direct quotes.
- ☐ Use at least one quote per body paragraph.
- ☐ Evidence is introduced, explained and analyzed.
- ☐ Concluding Sentence finalizes the argument.

Conclusion:

- ☐ Re-states the Thesis Argument in new words.
- ☐ Summarizes the Supporting Arguments.
- ☐ Finalizes the Thesis Argument.
- ☐ Connects the Thesis Argument to the larger world.

Book Choices (summaries from amazon.com) - Choose one:

During the first semester of senior year, you will be reflecting on your life in order to write personal essays and personal statements for college applications. As you read one of these selections, consider the question, "How does someone become who they are?"

1. One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey

In this classic novel, Ken Kesey's hero is Randle Patrick McMurphy, a boisterous, brawling, fun-loving rebel who swaggers into the world of a mental hospital and takes over. A lusty, life-affirming fighter, McMurphy rallies the other patients around him by challenging the dictatorship of Nurse Ratched. He promotes gambling in the ward, smuggles in wine and women, and openly defies the rules at every turn. But this defiance, which starts as a sport, soon develops into a grim struggle, an all-out war between two relentless opponents: Nurse Ratched, backed by the full power of authority, and McMurphy, who has only his own indomitable will. What happens when Nurse Ratched uses her ultimate weapon against McMurphy provides the story's shocking climax.

2. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

The Namesake takes the Ganguli family from their tradition-bound life in Calcutta through their fraught transformation into Americans. On the heels of their arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle together in Cambridge, Massachusetts. An engineer by training, Ashoke adapts far less warily than his wife, who resists all things American and pines for her family. When their son is born, the task of naming him betrays the vexed results of bringing old ways to the new world. Named for a Russian writer by his Indian parents in

memory of a catastrophe years before, Gogol Ganguli knows only that he suffers the burden of his heritage as well as his odd, antic name. Lahiri brings great empathy to Gogol as he stumbles along the first-generation path, strewn with conflicting loyalties, comic detours, and wrenching love affairs. With penetrating insight, she reveals not only the defining power of the names and expectations bestowed upon us by our parents, but also the means by which we slowly, sometimes painfully, come to define ourselves.

3. **The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz**

Oscar is a sweet but disastrously overweight ghetto nerd who—from the New Jersey home he shares with his old world mother and rebellious sister—dreams of becoming the Dominican J.R.R. Tolkien and, most of all, finding love. But Oscar may never get what he wants. Blame the fukú—a curse that has haunted Oscar’s family for generations, following them on their epic journey from Santo Domingo to the USA. Encapsulating Dominican-American history, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* opens our eyes to an astonishing vision of the contemporary American experience and explores the endless human capacity to persevere—and risk it all—in the name of love.

4. **The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. LeGuin**

A lone human ambassador is sent to the icebound planet of Winter, a world without sexual prejudice, where the inhabitants’ gender is fluid. His goal is to facilitate Winter’s inclusion in a growing intergalactic civilization. But to do so he must bridge the gulf between his own views and those of the strange, intriguing culture he encounters...

Embracing the aspects of psychology, society, and human emotion on an alien world, *The Left Hand of Darkness* stands as a landmark achievement in the annals of intellectual science fiction.

5. **Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston**

One of the most important and enduring books of the twentieth century, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* brings to life a Southern love story with the wit and pathos found only in the writing of Zora Neale Hurston. Out of print for almost thirty years—due largely to initial audiences’ rejection of its strong black female protagonist—Hurston’s classic has since its 1978 reissue become perhaps the most widely read and highly acclaimed novel in the canon of African-American literature.