



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Herndon High School

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June 10, 2009

Parents, Guardians and Students:

To meet the expectations of the Fairfax County Public Schools for encouraging intellectual growth and critical thinking skills, the Herndon High School English Department requires a summer reading assignment. This assignment, while generally required by Fairfax County, has been shaped by Herndon High to address the needs of our specific Program of Studies and these assignments take the place of the county list in fulfilling this requirement.

The summer reading list for all classes will be sent to area bookstores, including Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, and Borders. In addition, it will be available on the Herndon High School web site. If no written assignment is specified, students should bring the book with them on the first day of school in September. If a written assignment is required, it will be due on the first day as well.

We want students to take advantage of this opportunity to start the year successfully. We wish you an enjoyable and enriching summer.

Sincerely,

Janice Jewell, Chair  
English Department

## Summer Reading --- 2009 --- English 10 HONORS

Below you will find two titles. Each story is set during WW2 and explores the Holocaust. Choose ONE story to read over the summer. There will be an assessment of your reading during the first week of the school year. Please bring your book with you to school the first week. Either story will compliment the study of Night by Elie Wiesel-- which will be read during the course of the school year.

### 1. The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak

#### **Review**

"Brilliant and hugely ambitious...Some will argue that a book so difficult and sad may not be appropriate for teenage readers...Adults will probably like it (this one did), but it's a great young-adult novel...It's the kind of book that can be life-changing, because without ever denying the essential amorality and randomness of the natural order, *The Book Thief* offers us a believable hard-won hope...The hope we see in Liesel is unassailable, the kind you can hang on to in the midst of poverty and war and violence. Young readers need such alternatives to ideological rigidity, and such explorations of how stories matter. And so, come to think of it, do adults." -*New York Times*, May 14, 2006

"*The Book Thief* is unsettling and unsentimental, yet ultimately poetic. Its grimness and tragedy run through the reader's mind like a black-and-white movie, bereft of the colors of life. Zusak may not have lived under Nazi domination, but *The Book Thief* deserves a place on the same shelf with *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel's *Night*. It seems poised to become a classic."

- *USA Today*

"Zusak doesn't sugarcoat anything, but he makes his ostensibly gloomy subject bearable the same way Kurt Vonnegut did in *Slaughterhouse-Five*: with grim, darkly consoling humor."

- *Time Magazine*

"Elegant, philosophical and moving...Beautiful and important."

- *Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

\*Do not be deterred by the length of this book (550 pages).

### 2. Maus: A Survivor's Tale: A Father Bleeds History by Art Spiegelman

#### **Amazon.com Review**

Some historical events simply beggar any attempt at description--the Holocaust is one of these. Therefore, as it recedes and the people able to bear witness die, it becomes more and more essential that novel, vigorous methods are used to describe the indescribable. Examined in these terms, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is a tremendous achievement, from a historical perspective as well as an artistic one.

Spiegelman, a stalwart of the underground comics scene of the 1960s and '70s, interviewed his father, Vladek, a Holocaust survivor living outside New York City, about his experiences. The artist then deftly translated that story into a graphic novel. By portraying a true story of the Holocaust in comic form--the Jews are mice, the Germans cats, the Poles pigs, the French frogs, and the Americans dogs--Spiegelman compels the reader to *imagine* the action, to fill in the blanks that are so often shied away from. Reading *Maus*, you are forced to examine the Holocaust anew.

This is neither easy nor pleasant. However, Vladek Spiegelman and his wife Anna are resourceful heroes, and enough acts of kindness and decency appear in the tale to spur the reader onward (we also know that the protagonists survive, else reading would be too painful). This first volume introduces Vladek as a happy young man on the make in pre-war Poland. With outside events growing ever more ominous, we watch his marriage to Anna, his enlistment in the Polish army after the outbreak of hostilities, his and Anna's life in the ghetto, and then their flight into hiding as the Final Solution is put into effect. The ending is stark and terrible, but the worst is yet to come--in the [second volume](#) of this [Pulitzer Prize](#)-winning set. --*Michael Gerber*