

Robinson Secondary
Summer 09' Assignment

ENGLISH 9

Your adventure begins with English 9!

Purpose: This year you will begin a journey towards self- discovery by exploring different genres of literature, writing, and film.

Directions: For your summer assignment you will be asked to read one of the following books from the attached list. These books all have a common theme of self-discovery.

Due Date: You will need to read the book by September 17th or 18th. On that day, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in preparation for a book discussion involving all 9th grade students.

Final Assessment: The culminating activity for this summer assignment will be the group book discussion. Your English teacher will provide you with requirements and standards for this discussion as the due date approaches.

Contact Person: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this assignment, you can email the following people:

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English 9 Team
Required Summer Reading Options
Choose one!



Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

Since the beginning of the school year, high school freshman Melinda has found that it's been getting harder and harder for her to speak out loud: "My throat is always sore, my lips raw.... Every time I try to talk to my parents or a teacher, I sputter or freeze.... It's like I have some kind of spastic laryngitis." What could have caused Melinda to suddenly fall mute? Could it be due to the fact that no one at school is speaking to her because she called the cops and got everyone busted at the seniors' big end-of-summer party? Or maybe it's because her parents' only form of communication is Post-It notes written on their way out the door to their nine-to-whenever jobs. While Melinda is bothered by these things, deep down she knows the real reason why she's been struck mute: Andy Evans. [Intermediate]

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Intense is the word for Ender's Game. Aliens have attacked Earth twice and almost destroyed the human species. To make sure humans win the next encounter, the world government has taken to breeding military geniuses -- and then training them in the arts of war... The early training, not surprisingly, takes the form of 'games'... Ender Wiggin is a genius among geniuses; he wins all the games... He is smart enough to know that time is running out. But is he smart enough to save the planet? [Advanced]

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes by Chris Crutcher

A social outcast in junior high due to his excessive weight, narrator Eric Calhoun found a kindred spirit in Sarah Byrnes, whose face and hands were hideously disfigured in a childhood accident. Now a senior and considerably slimmed down through competitive swimming (though still aptly called "Moby"), Eric remains fiercely devoted to his friend, whose caustic tongue is her only protection from life's inequities. When Sarah abruptly stops talking and is committed to a mental ward, Eric is compelled to take action to help her, but quickly finds that he is in over his head. He risks their friendship by breaking his vow of secrecy and enlisting others' aid--help that comes from such unlikely quarters as a former bully, Eric's swim coach and, most surprisingly, his mother's seemingly wimpy boyfriend. A subplot centering on a self-righteous teammate drives home the point that nothing is as it appears on the surface, and leads to Eric being caught between his menacing vice-principal and the even more malevolent Mr. Byrnes--with spine-tingling results. [Intermediate/Advanced]

Gathering Blue by Lois Lowry

Kira is an orphan and she has a twisted leg, she lives in a village with very little technology and one that casts aside those who do not contribute. The weak, injured, and helpless are abandoned. However, things are starting to turn around for Kira, she has been spared by the all powerful Council of Guardians, for she has a gift she is a weaver and can die cloths in ways no other in the community can. As an artisan she is installed in the palatial Council Edifice and spends the whole year working her trade, her primary task is to care for the Robe of Remembrance that tells the story of this community. But with her privilege comes expectations that she will do the council biddings. She befriends a young boy and his ragged dog, Matty 'The Fiercest of the Fierce'. Matt tells Kira about another village where people are not cast aside, where they share their food. Matt brings her a gift the color blue, and a blind man that is her father. She is torn between staying and leaving the life she knows, and the truths she can find out what will happen. [Reluctant]

Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie by David Lubar

Starting high school is never easy. Seniors take your lunch money. Girls you've known forever are suddenly beautiful and unattainable. The guys you grew up with are drifting away. And you can never get enough sleep. Could there be a worse time for Scott's mother to announce she's pregnant? Scott decides high school would be a lot less overwhelming if it came with a survival manual, so he begins to write down tips for his new sibling. Scott's chronicle of his first year of bullies, romance, honors classes, and brotherhood is both laugh-out-loud funny and touchingly wise. [Intermediate]

Double Identity by Margaret Peterson Haddix

After her mother suffers a nervous breakdown, 12-year-old Bethany Cole is deposited with Myrlie Wilker, an aunt of whom she has never heard. Myrlie and several other residents of Sanderfield, Illinois, do a double take when they see Bethany--for she reminds them of Elizabeth, Bethany's heretofore-unknown older sister, who died some 20 years earlier. In carefully crafted, gripping prose, Haddix slowly reveals the family secrets that have been kept from Bethany all these years: her sister's death, her parent's desperate grief, and the deal they made with a wealthy businessman. [Intermediate]

When Zachary Beaver Came to Town by Kimberly Willis Holt

Summer in the tiny Texas town of Antler is traditionally a time for enjoying Wylie Womack's Bahama Mama snow cones and racking up the pins at Kelly's Bowl-a-Rama, but this year it's not going well for Toby Wilson. His 13-year-old heart has been broken twice: once by his mother, who left him and his father to become a country singer in Nashville, and then again by his crush Scarlett Stalling, the town beauty who barely acknowledges Toby's existence. But when Zachary Beaver, "The World's Fattest Boy," comes to Antler as part of a traveling sideshow, Toby begins to realize that there might just be people who have it worse than him. By reaching out to Zachary in small ways--such as helping him realize his lifelong dream of being baptized--Toby is better able to put his own problems into perspective. At the baptism, Toby finally feels at peace: "Zachary smiles and I wonder if he's feeling different. Because standing here waist deep in Gossimer's Lake... I'm feeling different--light and good and maybe even holy." By summer's end, Toby's friendship with Zachary has provided him with the emotional

stamina to begin dealing with his mother's decision and to gracefully accept the fact that Scarlett will forever be just beyond his reach. [Reluctant]

The First Part Last by Angela Johnson

The First Part Last is the story of teenager Bobby Morris, a guy who likes to hang out with his friends K-Boy and J. L.; they're typical boys who want to shoot hoops, buy a slice of pizza in a New York City neighborhood, or play with a Game Boy. But things are never the same when Bobby gets Nia pregnant; she's flipping out about this baby developing inside her belly, and Bobby is learning all too fast what it takes to be a daddy and a man. Bobby narrates the story, explaining all the feelings he has for his new baby daughter called Feather. It seems everything he does these days must be done in consideration of his daughter. Bobby and Feather are irrevocably tied together and Bobby is trying his best to cope with the joys and challenges of his new role. [Reluctant/Intermediate]

Buddha Boy by Kathe Koja

Like a flashback memory, he's there in my mind: skimming up the stairs at school, his sloppy old T-shirt big as a sail, red tie-dyed dragon T-shirt, who wears stuff like that? No one. Jinsen. The kids at Edward Rucher High School call Jinsen "Buddha Boy" and condemn him as a freak. With his shaved head and perpetual smile, Jinsen certainly doesn't help matters when he starts begging for lunch money in the cafeteria. So when Justin is paired with Jinsen for a class project, he plans to get done with it as soon as possible, and climb right back into his safe social niche. Then Justin discovers Jinsen's incredible artistic talent and becomes curious about his beliefs. But being friends with Buddha Boy isn't simple, and Justin is forced into a cruel contest with the jocks who just can't seem to leave Jinsen, or his artwork, alone. [Reluctant]

Estrella's Quinceañera by Malin Alegria

Estrella Alvarez is finally getting her life together. She has earned a scholarship to an elite private school in San Jose and made friends with some of the wealthy girls. Now, however, she is ashamed of her mother and her home, and has dropped her former best friends. To make things worse, her mother and Tía Lucky are insisting on going through with her *quinceañera*, complete with mariachi band and puffy-sleeved orange dress. She has fallen for Speedy, a classmate from the barrio, but is forbidden to see him. As the plans for the party progress, Estrella's world implodes as she alienates her family and friends with half-truths and deceptions. It is left to her to cobble together a *quinceañera*, be proud of her heritage, and still be true to herself. [Intermediate]

The Angel Experiment (Maximum Ride Series) by James Patterson

A group of genetically enhanced kids who can fly and have other unique talents are on the run from part-human, part-wolf predators called Erasers in this exciting SF thriller that's not wholly original but is still a compelling read. Max, 14, and her adopted family—Fang and Iggy, both 13, Nudge, 11, Gazzy, 8, and Angel, 6—were all created as experiments in a lab called the School. Jeb, a sympathetic scientist, helped them escape and, since then, they've been living on their own. The Erasers have orders to kill them so the world will never find out they exist. Max's old childhood friend, Ari, now an Eraser leader, tracks them down, kidnaps Angel, and transports her back to the School to live like a lab

rat again. The youngsters are forced to use their special talents to rescue her as they attempt to learn about their pasts and their destinies. The novel ends with the promise that this journey will continue in the sequel. As with Patterson's adult mystery thrillers, in-depth characterization is secondary to the fast-moving plot. The narrative alternates between Max's first-person point-of-view and that of the others in the third person, but readers don't get to know Max very well. [Intermediate]

A Child Called It by Dave Pelzer

David J. Pelzer's mother, Catherine Roerva, was, he writes in this ghastly, fascinating memoir, a devoted den mother to the Cub Scouts in her care, and somewhat nurturant to her children--but not to David, whom she referred to as "an It." This book is a brief, horrifying account of the bizarre tortures she inflicted on him, told from the point of view of the author as a young boy being starved, stabbed, smashed face-first into mirrors, forced to eat the contents of his sibling's diapers and a spoonful of ammonia, and burned over a gas stove by a maniacal, alcoholic mom. Sometimes she claimed he had violated some rule--no walking on the grass at school!--but mostly it was pure sadism. Inexplicably, his father didn't protect him; only an alert schoolteacher saved David. One wants to learn more about his ordeal and its aftermath, and now he's written a sequel, [The Lost Boy](#), detailing his life in the foster-care system. [Reluctant/Intermediate]

Life As We Knew It by Susan Beth Pfeffer

It's almost the end of Miranda's sophomore year in high school, and her journal reflects the busy life of a typical teenager: conversations with friends, fights with mom, and fervent hopes for a driver's license. When Miranda first begins hearing the reports of a meteor on a collision course with the moon, it hardly seems worth a mention in her diary. But after the meteor hits, pushing the moon off its axis and causing worldwide earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes, all the things Miranda used to take for granted begin to disappear. Food and gas shortages, along with extreme weather changes, come to her small Pennsylvania town; and Miranda's voice is by turns petulant, angry, and finally resigned, as her family is forced to make tough choices while they consider their increasingly limited options. Yet even as suspicious neighbors stockpile food in anticipation of a looming winter without heat or electricity, Miranda knows that that her future is still hers to decide even if life as she knew it is over. [Intermediate]

The Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

The escapades of the Greek gods and heroes get a fresh spin in the first book in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series, about a contemporary 12-year-old New Yorker who learns he's a demigod. Perseus, aka Percy Jackson, thinks he has big problems. His father left before he was born, he's been kicked out of six schools in six years, he's dyslexic, and he has ADHD. What a surprise when he finds out that that's only the tip of the iceberg: he vaporizes his pre-algebra teacher, learns his best friend is a satyr, and is almost killed by a minotaur before his mother manages to get him to the safety of Camp Half-Blood--where he discovers that Poseidon is his father. But that's a problem, too. Poseidon has been accused of stealing Zeus' lightning bolt, and unless Percy can return the bolt, humankind is doomed. [Reluctant/Intermediate]

One of those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies by Sonya Sones

The sassy title tells readers right away that this book is NOT like one of those hideous books where the mother dies, even if fifteen-year-old Ruby's mom has recently succumbed to cancer. Sonya Sones has made a reputation for engrossing and emotionally valid verse novels with her two previous books, *Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy* and *What My Mother Doesn't Know*, and here she has the good sense to avoid the platitudes of the tearjerker, focusing not on the melodrama of death but on the grieving process of a feisty teen--sometimes even with humor. Ruby has turned her grief into anger at her father: because he divorced her mother before she was born, because she has had to leave her best friend Lizzie and her boyfriend Ray to come to Los Angeles to live with him, and because he is Whip Logan, a very famous and rich movie star. She turns a cold shoulder to all his gentle and persistent attempts to relate to her, sneers at the glamour of his Beverly Hills mansion and famous friends, and spends most of her time writing desperate emails to Lizzie and Ray, and her dead mother, from her Dream Bedroom. The friendship of Max, Whip's live-in assistant/personal trainer, is some comfort, and Ruby has a harder and harder time keeping her sneer as Whip ups the ante, from rides in his classic vintage cars, to shopping trips for anything she wants, to weekends in Las Vegas and Catalina and a party where Eminem is the guest of honor. But an earthquake leads to a surprising revelation that changes everything for Ruby, in an enormously satisfying ending. [Reluctant / Intermediate]

Make Lemonade by Virginia Euwer Wolff

Poetry is everywhere, as Wolff (*The Mozart Season*) proves by fashioning her novel with meltingly lyric blank verse in the voice of an inner-city 14-year-old. As LaVaughn tells it, "This word COLLEGE is in my house, / and you have to walk around it in the rooms / like furniture." A paying job will be her ticket out of the housing projects, so she agrees to baby-sit the two children of unwed Jolly, 17, in an apartment so wretched "even the roaches are driven up the wall." Jolly is fired from her factory job and her already dire situation gets worse. Through her "Steam" (aka self-esteem) class, LaVaughn decides that it isn't honorable to use Jolly's money to prevent herself becoming like Jolly, so she watches the kids for free while Jolly looks for work. But there are few opportunities for a nearly illiterate dropout, and LaVaughn sees that her unpaid baby-sitting is a form of welfare. Heeding her mother, LaVaughn decides that the older girl has to "take hold." She prods Jolly to go back to school, where the skills she learns not only change her life but save that of her baby. Radiant with hope, this keenly observed and poignant novel is a stellar addition to YA literature and has won several awards in the young adult category. [Intermediate]

*All reviews taken from Amazon.com, 2008-2009