



DeMatha Catholic High School Freshmen Summer Reading 2022

Greetings!

As you wrap up your eighth-grade year, it is time to think about what to read as you bridge the gap from middle school to high school. We don't intend summer reading as a daunting first assignment to be hanging over our students' heads. Nor do we intend to cram in a couple of "classics" that we would otherwise not have time to cover during the school year. Instead, we keep the following guiding principles in mind as we find high-interest books for our students' summer reading:

Summer reading should be interesting—even fun. Many researchers note that boys don't read as much as girls. Failure to account for this in summer reading at an all-boys school misses the opportunity to instill a love of reading in boys on their way to adulthood. A "classics-only" summer reading list misses boys for whom ESPN.com or *The Players' Tribune* is go-to reading.

Summer reading creates a common culture. Every summer, the faculty reads a book in common that helps us create community. We discuss it as we get ready for the new school year and it enables lively conversation and new connections. Similarly, our students are part of our community, and we ask them to belong to each other by reading some things in common.

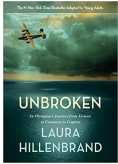
Summer reading should keep the mind nimble. The school year is composed of rhythms of intense effort followed by reflection. The school year is composed of the introduction of the new and the review of the familiar. Summer reading should fit into that rhythm.

Please see the book choices and descriptions on the back of this sheet. Happy reading, Class of 2026, and welcome to DeMatha!

The DeMatha English Department

FRESHMEN

Required:



***Unbroken*, by Laura Hillenbrand**

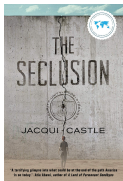
Louis Zamperini, mischievous and willful son of Italian immigrants, was headed toward a life of crime when his brother convinced him to join the track team. Zamperini discovered he had world-class talent, but the determination and toughness that made him so hard to handle as a child became invaluable traits for him in his roles as Olympic athlete, World War II pilot, and eventually a Japanese prisoner of war in appalling conditions. This is a true story of surviving incredible physical and emotional trials.

Choose One:



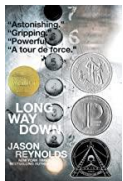
***Akata Witch*, by Nnedi Okorafor**

Often referred to as “the Nigerian Harry Potter,” this coming-of-age novel follows a young American-born girl as she grows up in Nigeria. Her foreign-birth is only one of the traits that distinguishes her from her peers: she is also albino, and a witch, who had been unaware of her powers when she first moved to Nigeria. Now there is a serial killer on the loose. How will she navigate both this impending danger and her own complicated identity?



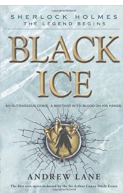
***The Seclusion*, by Jacqui Castle**

Fans of novels like *The Hunger Games* and *The Maze Runner* will find themselves engrossed in this dystopian version of America. In the year 2090, our country has been walled off from its neighbors, is suffering from environmental disasters, and is in a state of constant surveillance. When Patch stumbles upon some forbidden books, she begins to understand the truth about her country. The next question becomes about what she should do with this new knowledge.



***Long Way Down*, by Jason Reynolds**

When his older brother Shawn is shot and killed, Will Holloman thinks he's supposed to just follow the rules. No crying. No snitching. Just get revenge. Will arms himself and rides his building's elevator down to the ground floor, but on that long way down he is visited by the ghosts of other loved ones lost who make him question just what exactly he'd be finishing by getting revenge. This is a powerful story—told through short poems on each page—about the cycle of violence and how to escape it.



***Black Ice*, by Andrew Lane**

Sherlock Holmes is a teenager in this adventure, and, while smart, he is not yet “the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen.” With the help of his mentor, Amyus Crowe, he must now save his brother from a murder conviction. The room was locked, only two people were inside—one ended up dead and Mycroft was discovered with a knife. Sherlock will have to travel the streets of London and Moscow to unravel the sinister set-up.



***The Boys Who Challenged Hitler*, by Phillip Hoose**

The Nazi war machine has over-run much of Europe, and a group of 15-year-old Danish boys can't stand the thought that their country has let the Germans occupy their towns without a fight. Armed with only their bicycles and their bravery, the boys launch a series of sabotage efforts and guerilla-style attacks on the Nazi occupiers. Their exploits—which include escaping from prison to continue their nightly raids—inspire the adults of their country to begin resisting the Nazis at every turn.

Rising freshmen are asked to prepare written responses to their two summer reading books (response prompts attached). Students in the Summer Prep class will read *Unbroken* and prepare the first written response as part of the Summer Prep course. They must complete the second book and written response independently.

FRESHMEN

Summer Reading Response Prompts

Please type your responses to the prompts using Word or GoogleDocs. Your English 9 teacher will explain how to submit your writing during the first week of school.

Please respond with a thoughtful paragraph (7-10 sentences) to EACH of the prompts below.

Please **DO** use your book as you respond and look for specific supporting details. **DO NOT**, however, consult or copy from online summaries of the texts. We want to hear **YOUR** personal response to the books, not the Internet's.

Prompt 1

Unbroken

On page 140 of *Unbroken*, the author describes the devastating effects of the prisoners' physical and emotional abuse by the Japanese prison guards:

"[T]he guards had deprived them of something deeper: dignity. This self-respect and self-worth, the innermost armament of the soul, lies at the heart of humanness. To be deprived of it is to be dehumanized, leaving victims in a state of profound wretchedness and loneliness, unable to hang on to hope."

In a paragraph, describe the different kinds of abuse Louie and the other prisoners had to endure. What were the most humiliating experiences, the ones that stripped them of their dignity? How were they able to survive or resist?

Prompt 2

Black Ice

Akata Witch

The Boys Who Challenged Hitler

The Seclusion

Long Way Down

For the second book you read (one from the list above), write a paragraph in which you introduce us to the main character and describe the conflict he/she faces in the story. What specific moment do you think is an important turning point for the main character? What does he realize or how does he change as a result of this turning point?