

English 9—“Honor vs. Reputation”

Summer reading: Choose **two** of the following (listed from most accessible to most challenging, though all four are ideal summer reading texts in that they are the most accessible texts of the year):

- Adib Khorram, *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* (2018, present day)
- Erika L. Sánchez, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* (2017, present day)
- Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999, but set in 1991-1992)
- Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (2014, but set in 1977)

Summer assignment: In the spirit of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, **write a letter (or series of letters) to me about your thoughts on these books**. Respond to specific scenes from the texts, but feel free to mention any moments from your own life that relate—or can’t relate—to the characters’ lives. These letters are meant to demonstrate that you read these books closely and thought about them deeply. The ratio of book details vs. details from your life should be 75%-25%. Spend at least 750 words on each book, for a total of 1500+ words. NO plagiarism, AI, or online summaries.

Notes on why I chose these texts:

- All four of these books are important and are terrific companions to our first major text, J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*. Just as *Catcher* deals with depression and mature themes, so do these. I try to straddle the line between content warnings and spoilers, so please let me know if you’d like a list of specific scenes and subjects to be aware of, and I’d be happy to provide them.
- Differentiation and representation are both important to me, which is why I’m offering a choice for the summer before your first year of high school. Select the novels that most speak to you and will challenge you in some way. Reading level is only one way. Learning about other cultures, experiences, and time periods is another. You’re required to read two; feel free to read more!

Tips to help you (and your parents/family!) choose which books to read:

- The two books containing the most mature material are *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. These are also the two books most directly related to *The Catcher in the Rye*; both books even reference *Catcher* by name several times.
- Three of these books feature multicultural families and themes: Darius from *Darius the Great Is Not Okay* has a white father and a Persian-American mother. Much of the book takes place in Iran. Julia from *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. A small portion of this book takes place in Mexico. Lydia from *Everything I Never Told You* has a Chinese-American father and a white mother.
- These books, especially *The Perks of Being Wallflower*, feature LGBTQ+ characters.
- For students interested in mysteries, both *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and *Everything I Never Told You* center around the mystery of a young woman who has just died.
- The only book classified as an “adult” rather than “young adult” novel is *Everything I Never Told You*. It has the highest reading level, the only one likely to be taught in an AP Lit class.

Checklist for what this summer assignment needs in order to get a good grade:

- _____ At least 750 words about each book, for a total of 1500+ words (all killer, no filler).
- _____ Ratio of details from the book to details from your life is about 75% -25%.
- _____ Demonstrates you read books closely and thought about them deeply.
- _____ Well-organized, well-written, and carefully edited for errors.

You'll type these letters. In the fall you'll turn them in as the first assignment on Google Classroom.

One more note: The first essay you'll write in English 9 will be a timed write in-class essay over one of these four books. And then the first take-home essay you'll write will be over *The Catcher in the Rye*, and you'll be welcome (but not required) to make connections to one or more of these books you read over the summer. So it's very important that you read and think deeply about at least two books from this list! It will affect not just one assignment/grade, but several assignments/grades.

I'm so looking forward to teaching you next year. Happy reading!

—Ms. Johnson

P.S. In case you're interested in knowing what other works we're reading in English 9, here they are:

- Two poetry units (one in the fall and one in the spring)
 - A packet of contemporary poems by various poets, all connected to summer reading
 - A collection, Luisa Muradyan's *I Make Jokes When I'm Devastated*
- Three novels:
 - J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*
 - Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*
 - Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- Three plays:
 - Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
 - Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*
 - William Shakespeare, *Othello*