

Mount Mercy Academy

Summer Reading 2026

Students in all grade levels (9-12) will be required to participate in a school-wide read of a chosen text. The entire school community will all be reading the same book, with the goal of fostering a greater sense of unity within Mount Mercy Academy. Reading collectively allows us to connect with one another through our thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

“How do we diminish the distance between us? Reading is one way to close that distance. It gives us a quiet universe that we can share together, that we can share equally.” – Author Michelle Kuo

As always, the chosen book will apply to the Critical Concerns of Mercy.

These Critical Concerns include:

Earth: We believe in the need for sustainability of life, supporting both a lifestyle and legislation that acknowledges everyone’s right to water and the need to address climate change.

Women: Through our schools, colleges, health-care institutions and spirituality centers, and through our legislative advocacy, we give special attention to women’s education, health and spirituality.

Non-Violence: We work for peace through prayer, education, personal and communal practices of nonviolence, and legislative advocacy to reduce armed conflicts, gun violence and human rights abuses.

Immigration: Believing firmly in the dignity of every person, we work for just and humane immigration laws in the U.S., address policies that push people to flee their countries, and examine the global impact of immigration.

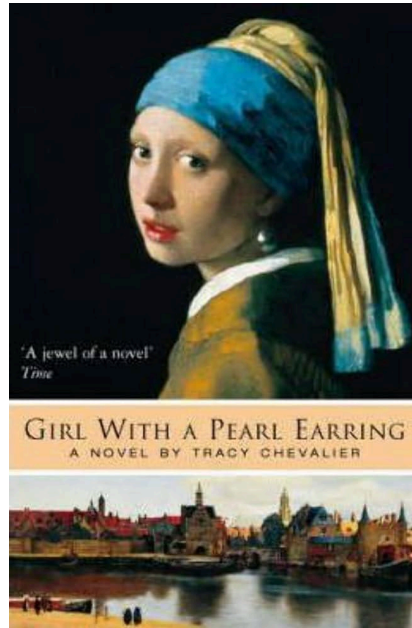
Racism: We believe racism is an evil affecting us all. We work to recognize and dismantle institutional racism in order to become an anti-racist multicultural community.

Assignments:

1. While you are reading, carefully and thoughtfully annotate the text. A specific list of tips to help you with annotations is included on page 4 of this packet. You will receive a grade for your annotations during the first week of school. The rubric for the annotations assignment is included on page 5 of this packet.
→ ***PLEASE NOTE:*** If you borrow your book from the library and annotate with post-it notes, you **MUST** make arrangements to keep the book until after the first week of school so your annotations can be graded. Notes on a separate sheet of paper will not be accepted and no exceptions will be made.
2. Your English teacher may also choose to give you **additional** readings, writing assignments, and/or assessments based on your careful analysis of your summer reading. Please find the course you will be enrolled in for the 2026-2027 school year beginning on page 3 of this packet to see if there are any additional requirements.

The Critical Concern of focus for the 2026-2027 school year is *Women*.

**For our school-wide selection, please read
Girl With a Pearl Earring, by Tracy Chevalier**



Summary

In mid-career, the celebrated Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer painted a girl wearing a pearl earring. This famous painting, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, has been called the Dutch *Mona Lisa*. Sometimes she appears to be smiling, while other times she seems unbearably sad.

History and fiction merge seamlessly in this luminous novel about artistic vision and sensual awakening as seen through the eyes of the young woman who was the inspiration behind one of Vermeer's famous paintings.

In seventeenth-century Delft, a strict social order reigns, dividing rich and poor, Catholic and Protestant, master and servant. When sixteen-year-old Griet goes to work as a maid in the home of the city's most renowned painter, she is expected to know her place. But in the Vermeer household, dominated by his mercurial wife and her formidable mother, Griet soon catches the eye of the master. Captivated by Griet's quiet manner, intuitive spirit, and fascination with art, Vermeer begins to draw her into his world— a rarefied place of exotic color and dazzling light, shifting shadows, and unimaginable beauty.

These works explore the many dimensions of human nature, the power of choice and chance, family, the human experience, social justice and injustice, as well as the belief in one's self and the good in others.

Additional Course Requirements

English I

Please complete the summer reading assignment ONLY. In addition to the assignment listed above, you will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

English I Honors

In addition to the school-wide summer reading assignment, please read and annotate *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott. You will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

English II

Please complete the summer reading assignment ONLY. In addition to the assignment listed above, you will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

English II Honors

In addition to the school-wide summer reading assignment, please also read and annotate *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury. You will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

English III

Please complete the summer reading assignment ONLY. In addition to the assignment listed above, you will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

AP English Language

In addition to the school-wide summer reading assignment, please also read and annotate *The Art of the Personal Essay*, by Phillip Lopate. Over the summer, be sure to look out for emails from Mr. Brown with specific information pertaining to summer reading.

English IV

Please complete the summer reading assignment ONLY. In addition to the assignment listed above, you will also receive a grade based on your participation in activities related to the book that will take place during the first week of school.

AP English Literature

In addition to the school-wide summer reading assignment, please also read and annotate *1984*, by George Orwell. During the first weeks of school, you will demonstrate your careful reading and thoughtful analysis of the required reading through your annotations of the selections, your composition of an AP-style essay, and analytical activities and discussions that will require you to use your annotations and notes. Further, please purchase *How to Read Literature Like a Professor (Third Edition)*, by Thomas C. Foster. We will be reading excerpts from this text throughout the school year.

Annotation Tips

The goal of annotating is to create a conversation between yourself and the text you are reading in order to develop a deeper meaning of the material. When you are reading, have a pencil and a highlighter (or multiple highlighters) close by and follow the strategies listed below. Keep in mind that you do not necessarily need to use every strategy on every page of the text.

1. Record keywords, or topics, in the margins whenever you encounter the topic in the text.
2. Make brief notes at the top of the page, or on sticky notes, to mark important plot events. At the end of a section or chapter, write yourself a brief summary of what happened.
3. If you are having difficulty understanding, stop and read again. Sometimes it is helpful to break a difficult passage, or sentence, down into parts, and try to understand it a little at a time. It is okay to do this. Good readers do it all the time. You may want to use a sticky note or the margin to write down your interpretation of the difficult text.
4. Use check marks, asterisks, arrows, stars, etc. to mark important items or details. If you highlight, you could use different colors for different literary elements and create a key for your color codes.
5. Circle or highlight words that are unfamiliar or unusual. Try to figure out what the words mean through the way they are used; supplement your guesses by consulting a dictionary.
6. Highlight phrases that describe important characters and places (characterization and setting).
7. Highlight words, images, and details that seem to form a pattern, or motif, throughout the text. These patterns usually will lead the close reader to discover a thematic idea.
8. Mark passages that you think might be symbolic.
9. Highlight the use of figurative language and other literary devices. Look specifically for the common ones (simile, metaphor, allusion) and consider the author's purpose for using that element in the story. It would be a good idea to take some notes in the margin so you will remember what you were thinking.
10. If you get an idea, write it down! It may never occur to you again. If a question pops into your head, write it down in the margin and continue reading to see if you discover the answer.
11. Write notes when you formulate an opinion about a character, setting, or event. Document any inferences you make while reading. Make connections to previous sections of the text. Record your feelings, reactions, and comments with words and/or symbols.
12. Don't highlight/underline/mark everything! If you mark too much, nothing will stand out and you will have defeated the purpose of annotating.

Annotation Rubric

Excellent: 30 points

Text has been thoroughly annotated with questions, observations, and reflections of the content as well as the author's writing; variety of topics marked for discussion; variety of literary devices marked. Comments demonstrate analysis and interpretation – thinking goes beyond the surface level of the text. Thoughtful connections are made to other texts, and life experiences. Marginal comments accomplish a great variety of purposes. Consistent markings appear throughout text.

Proficient: 20-25 points

Text has been annotated reasonably well with questions, observations, and/or reflections of the content, as well as the writing. Comments demonstrate some analysis and interpretation – thinking somewhat beyond the surface level of the text. Attempts at making connections are evident. Marginal comments accomplish a variety of purposes. Some lapses in entries exist; may be sporadic.

Adequate: 10-15 points

Text has been briefly annotated. Commentary remains mostly at the surface level. The commentary suggests thought in specific sections of the text rather than throughout. There is little or no attempt to make connections.

Inadequate: 0- 5 points

Text has little to no annotations. The notes do not reveal a close reading of the text.