

Required Summer Reading

Course: English II Honors

Novel: The Chosen by Chaim Potok

Nonfiction Work: Talking to Strangers by Malcolm Gladwell

Welcome to sophomore English. As the current school year begins to wind down and summer break approaches, students at the honors level are required to fulfill the necessary summer reading obligations for next school year. Our hope is that you view the reading requirements as an opportunity to enhance your learning and to prepare you for a successful start in English II. For English II Honors, there are two works that will need to be completed prior to entering the course. These include The Chosen and Talking to Strangers.

You will need to purchase your own copy of the works so that you will be able to highlight or underline important passages or make notes in the page margins. Used copies of the books may be ordered on Amazon.com for a minimal price, but you also may want to attempt to find them at local used bookstores such as Southland, The Book Rack, Cover to Cover, or McKay's. Please bring your works with you to school during the first week of instruction.

Set in the time period of the late stages of World War II, The Chosen traces the development of an unlikely friendship between two Jewish boys, Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders, living in New York. From a serious injury to intimidating conversations with the infamous Reb Saunders (Danny's father), Reuven grows an attachment to Danny but must also face the complexities that come with getting to know him. In the process, he also must learn the meaning of true friendship.

Talking to Strangers is a classic Gladwellian approach to examining things often overlooked or misunderstood. This book explores how our inability to communicate with others can lead to tremendous conflicts and often grave miscalculations. Gladwell analyzes many modern conundrums: why Neville Chamberlain trusted Hitler, how Fidel Castro fooled the CIA for years, how Bernie Madoff was able to convince thousands of people to trust him with billions of dollars. These and other stories are woven together through masterful rhetoric to explain how communication or miscommunication can lead to drastically different outcomes.

When your English class begins either in the fall or spring, you will be asked to display your knowledge of the books through discussion, writing, and objective testing. Please remember that the completion of summer reading is a required component of an Honors English class and is a necessary step to begin the course on a successful note. In preparation for discussion and writing, it is important that you take notes and write down your own questions as you read. By doing this, you will be prepared to bring your own insight to share in class. Enjoy the works!