

IB 12 Summer Reading Assignments

Read TWO books from this list and choose ONE essay

An American Dream, by Norman Mailer

Stephen Rojack is a decorated war hero, a former Congressman, and a certified public intellectual with his own television show. He is also married to the very rich, very beautiful, and utterly amoral Deborah Caughlin Kelly. But one night, in the prime of his existence, he hears the moon talking to him on the terrace of a fashionable New York high-rise, and it is urging him to kill himself. It is almost as a defense against that infinitely seductive voice that Rojack murders his wife. As Rojack runs amok through the city in which he was once a privileged citizen, Mailer peels away the layers of our social norms to reveal a world of pure appetite and relentless cruelty.

As I Lay Dying, by William Faulkner

One of William Faulkner's finest novels, *As I Lay Dying*, originally published in 1930, remains a captivating and stylistically innovative work. The story revolves around a grim yet darkly humorous pilgrimage, as Addie Bundren's family sets out to fulfill her last wish: to be buried in her native Jefferson, Mississippi, far from the miserable backwater surroundings of her married life. Told through multiple voices, *As I Lay Dying* vividly brings to life Faulkner's imaginary South, one of literature's great invented landscapes, and is replete with the poignant, impoverished, violent, and hypnotically fascinating characters that were his trademark.

Fight Club, by Chuck Palahniuk

Every weekend, in the basements and parking lots of bars across the country, young men with white-collar jobs and failed lives take off their shoes and shirts and fight each other barehanded just as long as they have to. Then they go back to those jobs with blackened eyes and loosened teeth and the sense that they can handle anything. Fight club is the invention of Tyler Durden, projectionist, waiter, and dark, anarchic genius, and it's only the beginning of his plans for violent revenge on an empty consumer-culture world.

The Metamorphosis, by Franz Kafka

Franz Kafka's haunting short novel, *The Metamorphosis*, explores the trials and tribulations of a young man struggling under the expectations of those around him. Kafka's magical realism takes the reader from Gregor Samsa's transformation from man to giant insect and through his subsequent isolation. *The Metamorphosis* is threaded with universal themes, making the work a deeply moving and often disturbing journey into the human psyche. Kafka writes with a depth of emotion and intellectual sincerity that continue to resonate with readers of across the globe today. **(PDF available)**

Notes From Underground, by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Notes From Underground is considered by many to be the first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator (generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man) who is a retired civil servant living in St. Petersburg. The first part of the story is told in monologue form, or the underground man's diary, and attacks emerging Western philosophy, especially Nikolay Chernyshevsky's "What Is to Be Done?" The second part of the book is called "Àpropos of the Wet Snow," and describes certain events that, it seems, are destroying and sometimes renewing the underground man, who acts as a first person, unreliable narrator. **(PDF available)**

(All book descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com)

IB English 12 Summer Reading

Answer ONE essay question only.

(A) Acquiring material wealth or rejecting its attractions has often been the base upon which writers have developed interesting plots. Compare the ways the writers of two works you have studied have developed such motivations.

Or

(B) “Make them laugh, make them cry, make them wait.”

Focusing on one of these demands for the writing of fiction, show how it emerges as a significant factor in creating interest in two or three works you have studied.

“Some works of literature are universal and timeless; others seem specific to one place and/or time.” In what ways do two works in your study explore this range of possibilities?

Or

(C) Though plot may be said, at its simplest level, to be a sequence of events, what truly distinguishes prose fiction is the use of narrative disruption: impediment, detour, diversion, or digression. In the two works that you read, how have writers created narrative disruption and to what effect?

Or

(D) “Successful characterization involves taking the reader to the heart, to the inner core, of an imagined person.” In the two works that you read, discuss by what means and with what degree of success authors have tried to “take you to the heart” of their characters

Or

(E) Writers make many deliberate choices in the course of creating their works. Considering one or two stylistic aspects, compare the effectiveness of some choices writers have made in two works you have studied.

Or

(F) A moral or a lesson is a common convention in stories. In what ways, and for what purposes have the two authors that you have chosen either adhered to, or subverted this convention.