

Entering 8th Grade:

- *Racing In The Rain*, a novel by Garth Stein PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS THE YA VERSION. DO NOT PURCHASE: *The Art of Racing In The Rain* which is intended for more mature audiences and by the same author.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, a 7 page short story by James Thurber.

Link attached here.

I Don't Know How To Drive, a song by Julian Velard. Lyrics linked here

I Don't Know How To Drive Video

Two Poems About What Dogs Think (Probably), a 4 minute Ted Talk by Billy Collins

Transcript of *Two Poems About What Dogs Think (Probably)* by Billy Collins Link attached here.

Hard on the Gas, a very short poem by Janet S. Wong Link attached here

Marginalia, a poem by Billy Collins Link attached here.

Dear 8th grade students,

I am looking forward to our work together next year. I have met several of you already and get the strong sense that you are a thoughtful and intellectually curious and creative group. I hope to honor that curiosity and creativity right from the start, so above are your summer reading assignments. I think you will find this eminently “do-able,” interesting, and worthy of conversation.

All texts with the exception of the novel, *Racing In The Rain*, are available as attachments and linked above. They should be read and annotated by your return to school.

I do not think there is merit in getting this reading done fast at the beginning of the summer because by September you will have little in depth recollection of what you read. Rather, I would suggest that you assess the length of these texts in relationship to your comfort level with digesting them and make a schedule for completion from there that will see you completing them without stress over the summer.

I ask that in all cases you engage these texts via a hard copy versus a digital copy of the material. In other words, read a physical copy of the novel and print all other texts to read them. This even goes for TED talks. Before watching them, print the provided transcripts so that you can follow along.

The reason why I want you to work from hard copies is that in each instance, I want you to annotate the text. To annotate is to take notes in the margins of a text- as I am sure you already know. Please annotate in the margins of the two TED Talk transcripts, and the stories. Write in the margins of the novel.

I am not grading the substantive quality of your annotations, but I will give you a completion and effort grade on them. That means that as long as you attempt to annotate in good faith, you will get full credit for this portion of the summer work. Though I am only grading for completion, I will nonetheless, provide some hints for annotating below to give you some direction in this regard. Remember, “good faith” means your best effort.

Use any regimen you want for annotating. Do you wish to read a text and then go back and annotate it, or do you prefer to annotate as you go along?

I ask also that you read the novel slowly and carefully and each of the other texts work several times (not necessarily on the same day) and make more and more annotations during all of those readings as more and more thoughts come to you. For the TED talk, please watch it at least three times, and read the transcript at least three times as well.

During the first week of school you will be asked to hand in your annotations for a completion grade, and you will have a brief objective plot quiz (nothing analytical) to ensure you have done the reading.

After we discuss these texts in class and annotate them together in more detail, an analytical quiz will follow.

You should feel free to email me (cjames@brownschool.org) with questions over the summer. Looking forward to meeting you all!

Fondly,
Dr. James

Annotating Tips

- 1) All unknown vocabulary (If you leave a word undefined, that is fine as long as you know its meaning.)
- 2) Chapter/Text summaries (a few bullet points at the beginning of chapters/text so that you can quickly sum up what the overall intent of the text is)
- 3) Allusions (an allusion is any reference to some concept outside the text from history or literature, etc that you need to know to understand the point the author is making. Allusions are particularly present in the poem *Marginalia*)
- 4) Elements of fiction (characters, symbol, setting, theme, motif, imagery, use of diction- don't sweat terms with which you are not familiar-just give it a shot)
- 5) Avoid annotations which are personal revelations like "This is funny" or put them in but know that they don't contribute to your annotating grade for class. :)
- 6) Annotate with the idea in mind that you want to be able to use your annotated book to reference material quickly in class discussions. Make sure they are annotations that will help you find passages.
- 7) Avoid excessive underlining and highlighting. Use these tools sparingly and only to point out where the sentence is about which you are writing in the margin. Remember, if you highlight or underline, you need to have words too to suggest why you underlined or highlighted a passage.