

American Literature Honors Summer Reading 2026

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Welcome to American Literature Honors! I look forward to our time together next year. In order to prepare for your return to school in the fall, you will be reading *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover, a true story about a young lady who is raised by parents who nearly isolate her from the rest of the world. Through trials, her own strength, and a series of impacting events, she is able to move outside of her family's peculiar bubble and into a world of her own.

Assignment One: Annotation/ Marking a Text

As you read, you will need to annotate. This is also called marking the text. Consider this "showing your work." It is important, especially during the summer, that you make note of your thoughts while you read. This will be especially important when you return to class and we have discussions and written assignments about the text. If you own your book, you will be able to mark the book in the margins and within the text. You can highlight, underline, and explain your thinking. If you do NOT own your book, you can use Post-It notes to keep your notes.

Annotating and Marking a Text

The practice of annotating is very important to help you be able to participate in class discussions. It will also help you refer back to the text for writing assignments that require textual evidence. Each time you sit down to read, you should have with you: a pen/pencil, a highlighter, page flags and or Post-It notes (these are especially important if you are annotating a book that does not belong to you.) As you read, you should look for and mark the following:

- Chapter titles are important and will always hint at something to come. Provide a prediction based on the chapter title.
- Passages that are meaningful. This could be a personal opinion about a passage or a passage that you think is meaningful to driving the plot.
- Words that you do not know. Sometimes these span beyond being a vocabulary word. Perhaps a character is using something or participating in something that you have never heard of before. In that case, mark it. When you are done reading for the day, go back and look it up.
- Check for and note the point of view (first person, second person...). Determine who is narrating the story and find places of reliability. Can the narrator be believed?
- Question, question, question! Write questions you have about the text. Question the characters' motives, actions, reactions, relationships, word choice, etc. Then consider possible answers to these questions.
- Are there any repeating ideas or symbols? Look for ideas that present themselves in more than one way and mark them.

- Make connections with the text. How does the text connect to something you have read or seen before? How does the text relate to real-world situations or other real-world situations outside of this text? How does this text relate to your own situation and your own situations?

Assignment Two: Quote Assignment

As you read and annotate, you should also find 15 important quotes that contribute to any and all of the following:

- Setting
- Character/Character descriptions/character development
- Conflict
- Relationships
- Growth
- Turning Points
- Any other important details that contribute to the book's plot

These quotes will be used in class discussion the first week of school.

Quotes should be marked/annotated and **hand-written on paper**. You can also use a composition journal. For each quote, you should include:

- The exact quote (this can be narration or dialogue). Please remember that a quote is not limited to just one sentence. It can also be a passage of several sentences.
- The chapter and page number in which the quote can be found.
- The context of the quote. In other words, what was happening in the book at the time of the quote?
- An analysis of the quote. In other words, why is this quote important? Does it show that the main character is learning something new? What is the "new" way of thinking? How does that contribute to the overall message of the novel?
- Why was this quote chosen? What led you to choose this passage/ quote?

Sample Entry:

Chapter 1, Page 3 (first line on the page)

Quote:"My strongest memory is not a memory. It's something I imagined, then came to remember as if it had happened."

Context: This is the opening line of the book, so there is very little context. I can tell from this line that the book will be a re-telling of Westover's past, perhaps as she remembers it.

Analysis: Because this book is a true story based on Tara Westover's life, this statement by Westover resonates with me. The entire book will be based on her life experiences. She will have to call on her memory in order to tell her story. The fact that her first memory is imagined makes me curious about her ability to tell her past honestly and truthfully. This line also

resonates with me because I can connect to the idea of thinking that something happened in my past when really it didn't. As I get older, I realize that I may not be accurate with my memories. This will help me be sympathetic toward Westover as she tells her story.

I chose this quote because I think it's interesting that Westover would choose to open her story by letting her readers know that she is not always accurate with her memories. She puts it out there that she is going to be telling us memories that may be influenced by other sources and may not be correct.

Assignment Three: Theme Assignment

In addition to locating significant quotes, you will choose TWO of the following themes and find at least FOUR passages that point to that theme (for a total of 8 passages). Passages can include phrases, sentences, multiple sentences, dialogue, and narration. Themes include:

- Learning and Education
- Memory and History
- Devoutness and Delusion
- Family, Abuse, and Entrapment
- Home
- Secrets

Passages should be recorded by hand on paper. You may also use a composition journal. For each passage, you should include:

- The exact passage
- The chapter and page number on which the passage can be found
- The context of the passage
- The theme that the passage hints to
- An explanation of how the passage supports the theme

These passages will be used for an in-class writing assignment to be completed upon the return to class.

Assignment Four: Personal Response Assignment

1. Before you start reading, you will divide the book into four parts. How you make your divisions is completely up to you. You might consider your summer schedule and commitments and make your divisions based on those events. For example, if you know that you will be busy most of June, you may want to only have two chapters in your first section and then divide the rest of the novel into three equal sections.

2. After you finish reading each section, you will write a personal response to that section. This should be hand-written on paper. Again, you may also use a composition journal. The personal response is NOT a retelling of events in that section of the book. Instead, it is your opinion about those events. Each response should be between two and three pages (if you have large hand-writing, this should be about four to five pages). Your opinion should include background/ context information and your response. Your focus should be on YOUR reactions to the text. Possible responses could include:
 - a. Do you agree or disagree with a character's actions or reactions?
 - b. What emotions did you encounter as you read?
 - c. Do you have concerns?
 - d. Is there anything you wish you could say to any of the characters? Why? What would you say?
 - e. Do you wish that events would have turned out differently? Explain.
 - f. Do you have predictions about what will happen next?
 - g. What do you relate to?
 - h. What do you find interesting?