

**All English I students choose one of the books below. (Including Concepts)  
Honors English I students at Mehlville High School will read *The Hobbit* and choose one other book from the list.  
Reading Strategies students should choose a book from the Bluford Series.**

*The House of the Scorpions* Nancy Farmer

*The Book Thief* Markus Zusak

*Divergent* Veronica Roth

*One Shot at Forever* Chris Ballard

*Clarity* Kim Harrington

*The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic-And How it Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World* Steven Johnson

*The Hobbit* J.R.R. Tolkien

*13 Reasons Why* Jay Asher

*This Boy's Life: A Memoir* Tobias Wolff

**All freshmen will be required to write an in class essay based on one of the books the first or second day of school.**

## Summer Reading Prompts

### Symbolism

A symbol is an object, action, or event that represents something or that creates a range of associations beyond itself. In literary works a symbol can express an idea, clarify meaning, or enlarge literal meaning. Select a novel and, focusing on one symbol, write an essay analyzing how that symbol functions in the work and what it reveals about the characters or themes of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

### Character Foils

In a literary work, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. For example, the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Choose a novel in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work.

### “Novel” Endings

An effective literary work does not merely stop or cease; it concludes. In the view of some critics, a work that does not provide the pleasure of significant “closure” has terminated with an artistic fault. A satisfactory ending is not, however, always conclusive in every sense; significant closure may require the reader to abide with or adjust to ambiguity and uncertainty. In a well-organized essay, discuss the ending of a novel. Explain precisely how and why the ending appropriately or inappropriately concludes the work. Do not merely summarize the plot.

### Questions and Answers

Critic Roland Barthes has said, “Literature is the question minus the answer.” Choose a novel and, considering Barthes’ observation, write an essay in which you analyze a central question the work raises and the extent to which it offers any answers. Explain how the author’s treatment of this question affects your understanding of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.

### Bad Guys

From a novel, select an important a character who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character’s villainy and show how it enhances meaning in the work.

### Illumination

In *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), novelist Edith Wharton states the following:

At every stage in the progress of his tale the novelist must rely on what may be called the illuminating incident to reveal and emphasize the inner meaning of each situation. Illuminating incidents are the magic casements of fiction, its vistas on infinity.

Choose a novel that you have studied and write a well-organized essay in which you describe an “illuminating” episode or moment and explain how it functions as a “casement,” a window that opens onto the meaning of the work as a whole. Avoid mere plot summary.