

Maranatha Christian Academy  
Summer Reading 2024 (English 12, entering grade 12)

The ability to read is a fundamental life skill. Reading can also be one of the most rewarding and pleasurable activities in which we engage. With guidance from the Learning Commons and our English/Language Arts departments, MCA has set a goal to encourage students to appreciate and enjoy quality literature and reading. As such, during the summer, students are given one book at each grade level that all are required to read and review. Please see below for your specific assignment. Happy reading!

- I. Welcome to English 12! This class contains works from around the world, typically excluding the majority of the United States and the British Isles. We will be reading short stories, plays, poetry, and novels from authors from France and Russia to Africa and Poland to South America and Iran. The class focuses on literature and learning how to articulate thoughts through discussion and writing, as well as expanding grammar and vocabulary. If you have questions about the class or the summer reading assignment, the best way to reach me is through email at [julie.raines@mcamustangs.org](mailto:julie.raines@mcamustangs.org).
- II. This summer you will be reading *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak.
  - i. For the literature guide to *The Book Thief*, which includes possible concerns and rationale, see below.
- III. As you read the book, you may keep a reading log, take notes, etc. Upon your return to school in the fall, you will be taking a comprehensive exam on the book, as well as participating in and completing some in-class activities.
  - i. If you choose to take notes\* of the book, these notes may be used on any exam or in-class activities. \*notes must be a hard copy, whether handwritten or typed and printed out.
- IV. You must read the book by **the beginning of our second English class period**. Because we jump into class content in the first week of school, this due date prevents students' summer reading assignment from interfering with the new homework that will be given at the start of the school year.

If you would like to read more than your required summer reading, additional titles/reading lists are available on MCA's website.

Maranatha Christian Academy  
Summer Reading 2024 (English 12, entering grade 12)

Language Arts Department Reaction to Literature Statement: At a twelfth-grade level for literature, it is our purpose to not only challenge students in their abilities to read and write, but also to think critically and through a Christian worldview on possibly controversial issues, politics, and themes that are not only important nationally but also internationally. Issues that might, from particular social, historical, or cultural viewpoints, be considered controversial, including references to ethnicities, nationalities, religions, races, dialects, gender, or class, may be addressed in texts that are appropriate for the senior-level English course. The best response to controversial language or ideas in a text might well be a question about the larger meaning, purpose, or overall effect of the language or idea in context. Students should have the maturity, skill, and will to seek the larger meaning of a text or issue through thoughtful research.

Texts that contain or reference sensitive or controversial material will be discussed with the utmost understanding and thoughtfulness, as well as a Christian worldview. The following description of our summer reading includes the author and title, a brief plot summary, a rationale for inclusion in the curriculum, and finally a listing of possible concerns for major works read in class. Any concerns not specifically mentioned that may come up during the reading will be discussed in line with biblical principles and a Christian worldview.

While *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak follows the story of a young German girl named Liesel Meminger, it is narrated by an unlikely figure: Death. This choice of narrator becomes more understandable when the reader learns that Liesel is growing up in Germany in the late 1930s-1940s, the rise and height of the Holocaust and the Nazi party's power. The book opens as Liesel is adopted by her foster parents after being left by her mother. She begins a journey of discovery, both of herself and of the world around her. Filled with topics of ethics, morality, faith, and kindness, *The Book Thief* asks readers to examine their own worldview.

*Possible concerns:* There is language throughout the book, some in English and some in German. Students will discuss whether the presence of profanity automatically makes something "bad" and how we as Christians should encounter these instances. Since the book takes place during the Holocaust, there is violence; however, nothing is graphic or descriptive, rather it is poignant and emotional. Also, since the book is set during the Holocaust, there is some prejudice and racism.

*Rationale:* Many works that students are exposed to from the Holocaust are from a Jewish perspective; this book is told from a German perspective. It is important for students to see different perspectives of events so they can better formulate their own views and better apply their Christian worldview. Students will discuss worldview questions such as:

Maranatha Christian Academy  
Summer Reading 2024 (English 12, entering grade 12)

- Who is God?
- What is the nature of the universe?
- What is right with the world? What is wrong with the world?
  - How do we fix it?
- Who is man, and what is the essential nature of mankind?
- Is there a fixed moral standard for human behavior?
  - What does God's Word say is the moral standard for man's behavior?
- What is the ultimate purpose of mankind?
- What happens after we die?

Students will also view the film adaptation of the book upon their return to school in the Fall. They will analyze the similarities and differences and strengths and weaknesses of each medium. This is a great introduction to their first semester book assignment, in which they will choose a book to read and a movie adaptation of the book to write a review on.

Extensive reviews on *The Book Thief* can be found on both Common Sense Media and Plugged In. These both offer parental and student insights. According to Common Sense Media, "This is a devastatingly powerful book that bears several rereadings, and should become a staple of literature discussion groups for sophisticated teen and adult readers." Both reviews rate the book five stars and recommend it for ages 12 or 13+.

- [The Book Thief Book Review | Common Sense Media](#)
- [The Book Thief - Plugged In](#)