

June 2016

Dear Incoming Senior,

To facilitate a productive fall semester, the English Department requires every student—from incoming freshmen to seniors—to do some summer reading. You must also bring a one page (400-700 word) **book review for each book that you read** with you on the first day of class next semester. Also, please bring a marble notebook with you to class on the first day.

A sample of a book review is on the back of this sheet. For each review, you need to do a few things:

- Give a short summary of what the book is about, including information such as the author's name, the genre (fiction, nonfiction), and a basic outline of the plot or main idea—without giving away too much for those who have not read the book (first paragraph)
- What you liked—or didn't like—about the book; details about the book (middle paragraphs)
- Whether or not you recommend this book to your classmates (last paragraph)

You MUST Choose THREE of the ten books below.

1. *Boy* by Roald Dahl. This memoir by Roald Dahl is one of the most vivid, alive books you will ever read about childhood.
2. *Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain. It's a classic for a reason. Full of adventure, wit, style and charm, it's a must-read for the rascal—or would be rascal—in all of us.
3. *Nudge* by Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler. One of the most influential books of economics and psychology in recent years, the authors describe how governments can use what we know about how people make decisions to make society better.
4. *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. A contemporary classic. A father and his son travel through an incredibly bleak, post-apocalyptic landscape in this extraordinary novel.
5. *The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way* by Amanda Ridley. Ridley follows several high school exchange students around the world, to schools in Poland, South Korea, and Finland in an attempt to understand why the education systems of some countries are so successful. An insanely interesting look at schools in America and abroad.
6. *Where You Go is Not Who You Will Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania* by Frank Bruni. In this book-length essay Bruni investigates how *who* you are is more important than *where* you will go to school. Thoughtful and insightful.
7. *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet* by Reif Larsen. A great, weird novel about a twelve year old map maker from Montana who hitchhikes to Washington, DC to accept an award. One of the most unique designs of any works of fiction you are ever likely to read.
8. *A View from the Bridge* by Arthur Miller. A classic play by the author of *A Death of a Salesman* about Eddie, a dockworker in post-WW II Red Hook, Brooklyn. Full of intensity!
9. *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson. A hilarious memoir about a middle aged man's attempt to hike the Appalachian trail. Hint: he's totally unprepared for how hard it will be. Hence the funny.
10. *Chasing Perfection: A Behind-the-scenes look at the high stakes game of creating an NBA Champion* by Andy Glockner. Glockner explains how analytics (advanced statistics) have been introduced to basketball, and focuses on the use of stats to assess individual teams and players.

Please feel free to email me (Mr. Kulnis) with any questions, comments or concerns at dkulnis@yuhsb.org. I look forward to a fun and exciting year of senior English.

Jimmy Jam
Mr. Kulnis English P5
12/6/16

Book Review: *Inside of A Dog* by Alexandra Horowitz (word count: 537)

Man's best friend — the dog. It has long been wondered what a dog understands about the world; how intelligent they really are, what they think about, and what they know about humans. Alexandra Horowitz, an ethologist — a scientist that studies animal behavior — discusses all of these things on the layman's level in Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know.

Horowitz structured the book so that it flows very well in the reader's mind. She starts by talking to the reader in order that they learn how to think about animals in an objective manner and to un-anthropomorphize them. A smiling monkey, for instance, is not happy but is threatening you by baring its fangs. Then the dog's umwelt — its perception of the world — is taken into account through all senses. Firstly, as it is the most major of a dog's senses, smell. Dogs smell the world in incredible detail, possibly better than how we see the world with our eyes. Next is audio: "Dogs don't talk to humans" you might say but Horowitz shows just how wrong you would be by describing the intentions of the different kinds of noises that dogs make and how you can listen to your dog and try to understand. Lastly, Horowitz considered the sight of a dog and then moved on to the inner workings of a dog's brain. How intelligent in what areas are they? Can they understand attention? Do they know that they exist? Do they know what time is? Cases for and against are examined for all sorts of questions and are backed by studies as well as Horowitz's own findings.

Horowitz's work was written scientifically but also so that any random Joe off the street could pick it up and read it. Each major section of the book is split into bite size topics to help break up all of the scientific mumbo jumbo. Horowitz also uses little snippets of stories about her own dog, Pumpnickel, at the beginning of and at certain intervals during her chapters to make the text a bit more identifiable and to introduce the topic. Every term even slightly scientific was explained in enough detail to inform the reader without boring them about the inner workings of a dog's vomeronasal organ (something in their noses to help their smelling). With clarified language and small chunks of text, Horowitz's writing is ideally suited for a normal person who just wants to understand their dog.

Horowitz's subject, the dog, has been studied surprisingly less than many other animals considering its prominent role in human society as a friend and lifelong partner. Horowitz used what research there is as well as her own findings from careful recordings of her dogs social interactions to stitch together a picture of what it's like to be a dog — a looking glass into a dogs eye view. After reading the book, I can confidently say that I appreciate dogs more than I ever have. Their long sniffs through the grass don't bother me as I walk them, their messy, slobbery greetings are welcomed, and every slight movement is another opportunity to understand what the dog is trying to tell me.