

Dear American Studies Student,

Since good readers make good writers and good readers make good thinkers, each student entering Montgomery Blair High School in August is required to complete reading and writing assignments in preparation for the fall semester.

The Particulars:

- Work counts towards 1st marking period.
- Work is due on September 1st or 2nd.

The deadline is September 8th or 9th.

Choosing a Book:

- Please select and read the works specified in this brochure.
- If you have read either title previously, please reread so that the text is fresh in your mind.
- You can find these two novels at your local library. There is no need to purchase the books, but you may do so if you wish.
- Since these are required titles, the English Department has copies of *Invisible Man* to lend to you. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* can be found on line. We will check out copies of *Invisible Man* to students following the exam periods on June 10, 14, and 15 in room 137.
- Call if you have questions: 301.649.2856.

READING ASSIGNMENT

Read the following texts:

1. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

by Harriet Beecher Stowe

This novel tells the story of slavery as understood by a Northern, white woman. It is named for Tom, but his is not the only story in this text. Stowe's comment on Christianity in the face of slavery is one that continues to spark debate and inspire controversy. Does Christianity justify or condemn slavery? Read this novel and prepare to engage in one of the most heated debates in American Studies. Find the entire text on-line:

http://www.pagebypagebooks.com/Harriet_Beecher_Stowe/Uncle_Toms_Cabin/

2. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

Invisible Man chronicles the travels of its narrator, a young, nameless black man, as he moves through the hellish levels of American intolerance and cultural blindness. Searching for a context in which to know himself, he exists in a very peculiar state. "I am an invisible man," he says in his prologue. "When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me." But this is hard-won self-knowledge, earned over the course of many years. As the book begins, the narrator is expelled from his Southern Negro college for inadvertently showing a white trustee the reality of black life in the South, including an incestuous farmer and a rural whorehouse. The college director chastises him: "Why, the dumbest black bastard in the cotton patch knows that the only way to please a white man is to tell him a lie!"



WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The culminating activity will be completed in class. The activity will consist of a selected response test, and a writing prompt. You are also required to bring notes (guidelines below) with you to class by September 1st or 2nd. You will turn your notes in after the test.

**Complete the notes for only one of the novels: either *Invisible Man* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
Read both novels; complete notes for one.**

1. Write a summary, no more than a page, of the entire work.
2. Write a description, no more than a paragraph, of the main character.
3. Note 3 different events that occur in the text that either challenge or affirm your vision of America.
4. Make a timeline of significant events and episodes that occur in the text, noting any that parallel actual American history.
5. All work should be typed or neatly handwritten in blue or black ink.

Note: In addition to giving your teacher a paper copy of your notes, you may also have to submit your work to "Turnitin.com."

The notes count in the HW for preparation and learning category. The in-class writing assignment is a summative grade.



Dear Parents,

Reading is not only a life-long skill that a person needs to succeed as a student and a worker, but also an essential skill in civic and personal activities. Perhaps even more importantly, reading opens the world to a person through various forms of literature. Reading gives students the opportunity to learn about people, times, regions, and ideas that may enhance their knowledge and development. Reading also can bring a lifetime of pleasure.

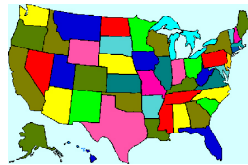
Research strongly suggests that reading, like most skills, improves with practice and decreases when we neglect it for even a short time. Therefore, consistent with our commitment to prepare all students for success during school and after graduation, MCPS continues to expect all students to read during the summer.

In keeping with the belief that reading promotes students' mental growth, improves their capacity to process information, and enhances their ability to understand themselves and the world around them, students at Montgomery Blair will read, and respond—in writing—to the texts they read. (The entire rubric for the writing assignment can be found at the web site listed below.) Successful completion of the summer reading assignment will benefit your child as he or she progresses through our curriculum. We owe it to our students to prepare them for an increasingly competitive and complex world.

This summer reading information can also be obtained at <http://www.mbhs.edu>. Click on "Depts," and then go to "English."

TITLES TAUGHT AT BLAIR DO NOT CHOOSE FOR SUMMER READING

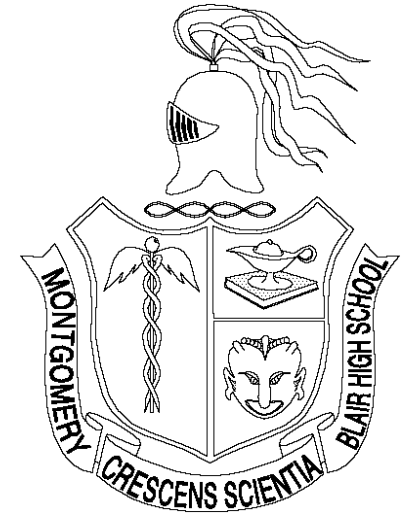
The list below contains titles that may be assigned in **American Studies**. Students wishing to get a head start on regular-term reading may read titles from this list. However, these books may not be used for the summer reading assignment.



Beloved
Bless Me, Ultima
Life on the Mississippi
The Sound and the Fury
A Streetcar Named Desire
Their Eyes Were Watching God
Typical American
Unaccustomed Earth

and selections from
American Short Stories

Montgomery Blair High School



2011
American Studies
Summer Reading