

**Pikesville High School
Summer Reading
AP Language and AP Literature
2010 - 2011 School Year**

Advanced Placement courses at Pikesville High are designed to imitate college-level courses. You are expected to read a wide variety of literature in both the 11th and 12th grade and carefully analyze what you read. It is because of this that you are required to complete your summer reading before the first day of classes. You **will be** assessed on these books within the first few weeks of school. The books chosen are approved by the College Board and reflect the types of books you will read all year long. All are available in the public library. If you cannot find a copy, contact the school for assistance.

AP English 11

Me Talk Pretty One Day, David Sedaris

Year after year students find the essay "Me Talk Pretty One Day" to be a lasting favorite. This particular essay comes from a chapter in the book titled the same. David Sedaris is witty, funny, sarcastic, concise, and likable as he writes about jazz, school, parents, dogs, New York, Chicago, France, and his eclectic experiences along the way. One may merely muse at some of the chapter titles in the Contents to ignite interest: "See You Again Yesterday," "The City of Light in the Dark," "I'll Eat What He's Wearing," and "I Pledge Allegiance to the Bag." Laughter is, after all, the best medicine.

The Glass Castle, Jeannette Walls

"Memoirs are modern fairytales," claims *The New York Times*. Jeannette Walls' memoir *The Glass Castle* carries a strong fairytale-like theme--forgiveness. Walls' mother advises her to "just tell the truth...that's simple enough." *The Glass Castle* challenges the simplicity of *truth*.

AP English 12

The Awakening, Kate Chopin

This nineteenth century classic novel was scorned by the people of the Victorian conservative South where women were still the property of their husbands. Chopin writes a realistic novel, rich with imagery and an ironic narrator who explores independence, desire, self-expression, solitude, and consequences. The "awakenings" that you will have as a reader are just as important as those of the protagonist, Edna Pontellier. Maybe you too will awaken to your "position in the universe as a human being."

Beowulf (any translation)

Beowulf, considered to be the first epic written in the English language, contains themes that address the human condition. Although written centuries ago, this tale of heroism is still gripping, exciting, and human. And although the poem was not widely read until the twentieth century, it became very influential at that time, influencing music, art, theater, and literature. Students who are familiar with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy will recognize many of the characters and events, which isn't surprising since J. R. R. Tolkien was a scholar of Old English and knew the tale well. Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* is a wonderful treat! Other excellent translations include those by Burton Raffel and Frederick R. Rebsamen.

Grendel, John Gardner

But what about the other side of the *Beowulf* story? *Grendel* is a modern retelling of the *Beowulf* story told by the monster *Beowulf* eventually kills. Using an "unreliable narrator" who tells the story from the first person point of view, John Gardner brings this story of a true antihero into the 20th century. Should the reader trust *Grendel*? Is *Grendel* telling the truth? The writer Jane Smiley has suggested that the monster in *Grendel* is "a metaphor for the necessity for a dark side to everything; where a hero is only as great as the villain he faces." But what a wonderfully wicked villain he is!!

Questions about summer reading should be directed to Mr. Hill, English department chair, at ghill@bcps.org.