

May 24, 2022

Dear Members of the Class of 2023,

Your senior year will begin soon! You will find yourself with one foot still at Seton and the other foot out the door, ready to step into your next adventures. Some of you may nearly be leaping out the door! Whether you are starting/completing college or trade school applications, exploring military service or gap year options, working a part-time job, or planning college visits, this will be an exciting, and perhaps nerve-wracking and stressful, time, with all sorts of decisions and extra responsibilities on your plate. Take it all in and pray for God's guidance and peace.

As you know, we will be introducing Dual Enrollment English at Seton School next year. You, the Class of 2023, will be the first class to take English 12 / ENG 111-112: College Composition. Our course at Seton covers both literature **and** composition, so we will be enjoying great works of literature as we hone our writing skills.

The first of our great works you will read this summer:

- *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Austen)
- *The Screwtape Letters* (C.S. Lewis)
- A 19th/20th Century Choice Novel from the following list (see back for descriptions):

Mary Barton (Elizabeth Gaskell)

Brideshead Revisited (Evelyn Waugh)

A Tale of Two Cities (Charles Dickens)

The Children of Húrin (J.R.R. Tolkien)

Hard Times (Charles Dickens)

The Power and the Glory (Graham Greene)

The choice novels have been selected to introduce you to characters who experience some of the topics you will be discussing in your Apologetics and History courses. In these novels, we see a variety of protagonists that are faced with all sorts of odds – poverty, war, dehumanization, temptation, despair, totalitarian regimes, religious doubt – and that, each in their own ways, overcome these odds through the grace of God. In class, we will discuss how the British authors represent these characters, their struggles, and the operation of grace, and how literature can be a means of proclaiming truth to a culture in decline. In your senior year at Seton, you will be challenged to consider how you will “carry the fire” – how you will be a beacon of hope, a speaker of truth, and a follower of Christ after you graduate.

Keep in mind that our English class is **a college course** – one foot in, one foot out, indeed.

For a successful start to your senior year and college career, attentively read all three books on your summer reading list. You will need to have **your own copy** of each of the books to use during the first quarter of our course. **Please read our two required novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Screwtape Letters*, by Monday, August 29. Please finish reading your choice novel by Wednesday, September 7.**

Your first major writing assignments for English 12 will be on these books, and we will start these papers within the first few weeks of school. Additionally, you will be quizzed all of the books. Of course, you could cheat, but you would miss three great books, and you wouldn't be able to write the papers without plagiarizing. Honesty and learning are both extremely important! I challenge you to strive for integrity and excellence in your lives, in big and small things.

What is the best way to be ready for the quizzes and the writing assignments? Read the books in August. If you read them earlier, read the one you liked the best again, in mid-August, taking notes on ideas for topics (things you like, or notice are important). Skim the other books just before the quizzes. Also, consider reading with a notebook and pen ready to jot down BRIEF notes at the end of each chapter about what happened and what you think is interesting or important. That is active reading—a great skill to develop.

I look forward to seeing you all in class in late August.

St. John Paul II the Great, patron of youth, and Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us!

In Christ,
Mrs. Yeago

Overviews of Choice Novels (Choose ONE to read.)

Recommended Publishers: Penguin Classics, Signet Classics, Wordsworth Classics, Dover Thrift. See also Ignatius Press Critical Editions (for *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Tale of Two Cities*)

19th Century Options

***Mary Barton* (Elizabeth Gaskell):**

A dramatic tale of the lives of working-class folk involving crises of conscience, rumors and gossip, a murder mystery, and a love triangle. Through a series of struggles, the independent and confident title character, Mary Barton, wrestles with the true value of beauty, duty to family, honesty, and sacrifice. If you like books with strong female characters, and enjoy a good mystery with an edge-of-your-seat court scene, this could be the book for you.

***A Tale of Two Cities* (Charles Dickens)**

Follow the lives of a group of cleverly intertwined characters caught up in the wake of the French Revolution and Reign of Terror. If you enjoyed *Les Misérables*, if you enjoy rich symbolism in your books, and if you want to read the rest of the novel that begins with the famous line - "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" – this could be the book for you.

***Hard Times* (Charles Dickens)**

Set in a mill town in Northern England, this novel follows the principles of Utilitarianism to their logical conclusion. Dickens said of this novel: "My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else." If you enjoy humor and satire, if you're curious about the critique of industrialization, and/or if you want to choose the shortest 19th century novel on the list, this could be the book for you.

20th Century Options

***Brideshead Revisited* (Evelyn Waugh)**

In this reflective novel that starts in the middle of war and then jumps back in time, Waugh explores the changing culture and landscape of England from the "golden days" before the war up through war-time. More character-driven than plot-driven. If you enjoy quirky characters and/or British period dramas, liked *The Great Gatsby*, and wonder what Oxford used to be like, this could be the book for you.

***The Children of Húrin* (J.R.R. Tolkien)**

Arranged into a unified narrative by Christopher Tolkien, this Great Tale of Middle Earth relates the doom laid on the family of Húrin Thalion, focusing on his son Túrin and daughter Niënor. Featuring outlaws, elves, dragons, vengeance, curses, death, destruction, drama, and struggles against seemingly-insurmountable odds, the tale maintains a pervasive atmosphere of melancholy, as The Professor taps into the elegiac mood of the Northern epics he so admired. If you like *The Lord of the Rings*, compelling battle scenes, and/or reflections on fate versus free will and the problem of pain, this could be the book for you.

***The Power and the Glory* (Graham Greene)**

In Greene's own words: "The aim of the book was to oppose the power of the sacraments and the indestructibility of the Church on the one hand with, on the other, the merely temporal power of an essentially Communist state." Set in 1930s Mexico, this darker, grittier novel follows a protagonist, the "whisky priest," who is hunted relentlessly by ruthless authorities. Full disclosure: The Vatican considered adding this book to the *Index* back in the day, but prelates such as the future Pope Paul VI argued in favor of the book's literary merit and valuable, redeeming portrayal of a sinful world. If you like spy novels, dislike sentimental novels, and hate Communism, this could be the book for you.