

12th Grade British Literature Summer Reading

- **Choose one of the following books to read this summer. Take 3 pages of notes on events in the plot, characters, important quotations, etc. Notes will be due the first week of school. You will use these notes to write an in-class essay on your book.**

Book List:

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley

Utopia, Thomas More

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Bronte

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy

Book Abstracts:

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley: Written in 1931 and published in 1932, *Brave New World* is set in London of AD 2540 (632 A.F. in the book), the novel anticipates developments in reproductive technology and sleep-learning that combine to change society. The future society is a living embodiment of the ideals that form the basis of futurism.

Utopia, Thomas More: Written (originally in Latin) in 1516 by Sir Saint Thomas More, *Utopia* is a frame narrative primarily depicting a fictional island society and its religious, social and political customs. The name of the island is derived from Greek words which literally mean "no-place land, non-existing place." One interpretation holds that while Utopia might be some sort of perfected society, it is ultimately unreachable. Despite modern connotations of the word "utopia," it is widely accepted that the society More describes in this work was not actually his own "perfect society." Rather he wished to use the contrast between the imaginary land's unusual political ideas and the chaotic politics of his own day as a platform from which to discuss social issues in Europe.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson: A novella written by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson and first published in 1886, this story is about a London lawyer who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr. Henry Jekyll, and the misanthropic Mr. Edward Hyde. The work is known for its vivid portrayal of a split personality in the sense that within the same person there is both an apparently good and an evil personality, each quite distinct from the other. The novella's impact is such that the phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" has come to mean a person who is vastly different in moral character from one situation to the next.

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Bronte: Published in 1847, this novel is a first-person narrative of the title character, a poor English orphan characterized by her plainness, honesty, and intelligence. The reader moves with Jane through her literal journey from life with her cruel aunt to Lowood School to Thornfield Hall, but also through her inward struggle to find independence and happiness.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy: First published in 1891, this novel follows the story of Tess, the eldest child of uneducated, rural peasants, John and Joan Durbeyfield. A story examining social class and criticizing elements of modernism, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* challenges social mores of the time period through the trials of the protagonist.