

## **Summer Reading Assignment**

English II Honors

Ms. Mathes and Mrs. Villareal

In this course, we'll explore the topic of culture and its effect on identity formation, particularly in teens. As a starting point for our discussion, this summer we'd like you to read two books: *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely and *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. While we're asking you to read these books over the summer, they're really our first major texts for the year, and we will discuss the books extensively as well as write about them. Please don't assume that just because it's summer reading it "doesn't count."

*All American Boys* is a common read for all sophomores this summer. The book is about two boys, Rashad Butler and Quinn Collins; one boy is arrested and beaten by a police officer; the other boy witnesses what happens but struggles to come forward about what he saw. As the aftermath unfolds, everyone in the boys' community is forced to face, in their own way, the truth that racism persists in our nation and involves all of us, whether we want it to or not. Although it's a work of fiction, this book addresses so many of the topics concerning race, culture, and identity that flood our news feeds on a daily basis. We are also excited to be hosting one of the authors of this book, Jason Reynolds, at Jesuit in October. More on his visit later.

Equal parts adventure tale, coming-of-age narrative, social critique, and mystery, *Into the Wild* tells the true story of a young man named Chris McCandless who grew up in our nation's capital, came from an attentive, upper income family, received an excellent college education, and was described by many as motivated and personable. Despite, or perhaps *because of*, these advantages, Chris struggled to identify himself as an individual and to reconcile his social responsibilities with his personal goals and values. Ultimately, McCandless turned his back on his family, education, society, and all the material comforts of life to wander America as a vagabond—working odd jobs, making friends in low places, living life on his own terms. He reached the ultimate goal of his journey, Alaska, with the aim of living off the land for a time, and while he realized that dream in his first few weeks, a series of unfortunate events led Chris to die of starvation less than four months after his arrival in the Alaskan bush country.

Author Jon Krakauer is a journalist and the author of several well-known works of nonfiction. He became fascinated with Chris McCandless's story after he wrote an article for *Outside* magazine about the young man's unconventional life and mysterious death. *Into the Wild* chronicles Krakauer's attempt to understand more deeply what motivated Chris McCandless to seek out such extreme isolation and self-sufficiency by tracing McCandless's journey across the US and talking to the people he befriended as well as the family he left behind. McCandless's story (and Krakauer's book) has provoked passionate and varied responses: some people view Chris as a visionary who suffered a tragic end, while others dismiss him as an arrogant, self-centered man who got what he deserved.

### **Expectations for Reading *All American Boys***

- Active, engaged reading is a **must** for this class and for this book. We expect you to **underline passages** that contribute meaningfully to your understanding of character, conflict, and symbolism and **add notes in the margins** about **how/why these quotes are significant**. Focus on quotes that contain good showing details and/or suggest an associative meaning.
- For each character in the book, highlight quotes that reveal their attitude towards racism and their response to it. Come to class with *one specific character* from the book (major character or minor character) whose reaction to the events of the story was inspiring or troubling to you, and be prepared to share quotes about that individual and their response.
- Also come to class prepared to discuss and write about *specific moments in the book* that challenge or reinforce your current thinking about race and stereotypes in America.

### **Expectations for Reading *Into the Wild***

- Active, engaged reading is a **must** for this class and for this book. We expect you to **underline passages** that contribute meaningfully to your understanding of character, conflict, and symbolism and **add notes in the margins** about **how/why these quotes are significant**. Focus on quotes that contain good concrete details and/or suggest an associative meaning.
- You'll find annotation less time consuming and more useful to you in class and in writing your paper if you are **selective** about what you underline and annotate. We've included a list of questions about the book below. **We recommend that you choose 1-2 of these topics before you begin reading the book, write them on the inside cover of your book, and annotate quotes that help you explore and develop a better understanding of these topics.** A well-annotated book will benefit your class participation and writing assignments, so start acclimating yourself to this expectation this summer.
- We also want you to keep an **association journal for this book** this summer, and have it ready to turn in on the first or second day of class. You **MUST** type your work and can access a blank association journal form from Mr. Villareal's Canvas page. If you were in English I last year, Mrs. Villareal or I will email you an electronic copy of the journal template.
- We've included a sample journal entry with this handout; **please organize your entries in the same way.**
- How many quotes do you need? Well, plan to complete a journal entry after every **2-3 chapters of the book**. So, after you finish reading 2-3 chapters, choose 1 quote from those chapters that has **excellent concrete details or associative properties**, and write a thorough journal entry on that quote. After you finish another 2-3 chapters, find another quote and do the same

until you have finished the book. Think about choosing quotes that help you develop your understanding of one or more of the topics below so that you have excellent material for a paper. **AVOID CHOOSING LINES OF TEXT WHERE THE AUTHOR TELLS YOU OUTRIGHT WHAT TO THINK OF A PARTICULAR DETAIL, AS THESE LINES REQUIRE NO ANALYSIS.**

- You will write an essay on *Into the Wild*, so again we encourage you to read carefully, annotate, and challenge yourself to move beyond summary or stating the obvious in your journal entries. Think of your journal as pre-writing for your paper.

**Topics to annotate for as you read (Choose 1-2 on which to focus your annotations):**

- An excerpt from the epigraph that begins chapter four reads, “To the desert go prophets and hermits; through the deserts go pilgrims and exiles.” “Nabi” is the Hebrew word for **prophet**, and it literally means mouthpiece. So, a prophet is a mouthpiece for God. A prophet is someone whose message transcends time and challenges the listener to be their best self. Prophets are counter-cultural and are often persecuted, as their message challenges the status quo. In scripture, true prophets are usually unlikely figures who did not choose or even want the role but feel they are called to it. According to this definition, can we see Chris as a prophet, his actions as prophetic?
- Chris doesn’t get along at all with his parents, and he doesn’t have much respect for arbitrary figures of authority. However, he does connect with and respect many other people over the course of his travels. **Who are the people who make the greatest impact on Chris**, and what traits/values does Chris find attractive about these people and their lives? What do they teach him that he believed his parents could not?
- One of the themes in this book is transformation and self-knowledge. What features of the culture Chris grew up in cause his desire for transformation? Why doesn’t he fit in? How does Chris believe the “vagabond” lifestyle will help him achieve transformation and self-knowledge? Is Chris successful, in your opinion, in achieving transformation?
- According to *Into the Wild*, when faced with society’s norms, what are the various responses (OR what is one response) to the cultural tension teens may experience? What are the consequences of these responses?
- According to Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, what are some safe ways to test our own personal limits, both physical and emotional? OR . . . According to the text, are there any safe ways to test our own personal limits? According to Krakauer, what is the relationship between personal risk and growth?

- What message does Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* communicate about the importance of community?

### Sample Journal Entry

<b>Cite Evidence</b> Cite using MLA documentation (Krakauer 17)	<b>Label Evidence as Diction / Imagery / Detail</b>  <b>Also Label whether evidence develops conflict, character, theme, symbol, or other element of fiction</b>	<b>Write Associations</b> (What associative qualities, conditions and values is the author implying/suggesting through the evidence?)	<b>Determine Relationships between Pieces of Evidence</b>  <u>repetition</u> [similarity, analogy, recurrence, echo, parallelism]  <u>contrast</u> [incongruity, antithesis, opposition, tension]  <u>shift</u> [turn, transformation, alteration]  <u>juxtaposition</u> [contiguity, adjacency, montage]	<b>Determine <u>Associative Meaning</u> produced because of this relationship. Include a sentence or phrase to establish the context for the quote, and practice zooming in on concrete details and elaborating on how they develop your understanding of character conflict, or theme.</b>
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"make a **radical change** in your lifestyle and begin to **boldly** do things which you may previously never have thought of doing, or been too hesitant to attempt. So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet **will not take the initiative to change their situation** because they are **conditioned** to a life of security, **conformity**, and conservation, all of which may **appear** to give one peace of mind, but **in reality** nothing is more **damaging to the adventurous spirit** within a man than a secure future. If you want to get more out of life, you must **lose your inclination for monotonous security** and adopt a helter-skelter style of life that will at first **appear** to you to be crazy. But once you become accustomed to such a life you will see its full meaning and its incredible beauty"

### DICTION DEVELOPS CHARACTER AND THEME

RADICAL, BOLD-- strong, active, different from the norm

WILL NOT TAKE THE INITIATIVE-- he *believes* people have the power within themselves to change their lives; personal philosophy

CONDITIONED-- suggests we are part of an experiment—being controlled by forces larger than ourselves

CONFORMITY, MONOTONOUS SECURITY— conformity and security dull people's minds and spirits

APPEAR, IN REALITY-- Chris believes life in the "real world" is the illusion

### CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RADICAL, BOLD, ENLIVENING LIFESTYLE CHRIS BELIEVES IS BEST AND THE MONOTONOUS LIFESTYLE WE'RE CONDITIONED TO DESIRE

### REPETITION OF CONTRASTING WORDS SHOWS HOW STRONGLY HE FEELS

Chris's rich language and use of polar opposites **in his letter to Ronald Fra** reveals his personal philosophy that **life in society is suffocating and damaging while life on the road is liberating and fulfilling.**

**Words like "radical, bold, initiative, adventurous"** are all strong, active words that contrast words like "hesitant, conditioned, security, and conformity" to show how he views these two lifestyles differently. **The first lifestyle is for people**

**who show initiative in their lives—who are in control of their own destiny while the second is for people who allow themselves to be controlled and complacent.** The repeated contrasts between these words also suggests that Chris views life in very black and white terms; he's an extremist.

Chris creates a small paradox when he claims that a life of safety and security is actually "damaging." While a life of safety might preserve the body, Chris believes it dulls the mind and spirit. Therefore, his decision to leave wasn't just a matter of preference; it was a matter of self-preservation.

Chris feels we all have the power and need to break our social conditioning and take the initiative to change our lives. Only then can we truly live.

(Krakauer 57).		distracting us from the “full meaning” of life.		
		MONOTONOUS SECURITY VS. HELTER-SKELTER— he uses a lot of opposites; not a lot of gray area for Chris		

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Statement of main idea (topic sentence): (In other words, what argument can you make about how this evidence develops your understanding of character, conflict, symbolism, theme, or another element of fiction?)

Topic of Evidence + *Argument about Function* + **Rationale** = Topic Sentence