

Dear 2019-2020 English 11R students and parents,

A central goal of the English department of Clarence High School is to establish a reading habit in the busy lives of our students. By offering both fiction and nonfiction options for English 11R summer reading, we hope each student will discover a story that piques his or her interest.

Summer reading helps to keep our students' minds sharp while they recharge for the exciting and productive school year ahead. As students begin to seriously consider choices for their post-high school lives, the summer before junior year offers an opportunity to explore new interests and think in different ways.

Choose one of the following two books. Be prepared to complete an in-class assessment during the second week of the course. You are welcome and encouraged to take notes, but you will not be allowed to use them during the in-class assessment. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Adams (cadams1@clarenceschools.org) or Mr. Chambers (achambers@clarenceschools.org).

NOTE: If you are taking AP English Language and Composition, you have a different assignment. For information, please consult the Guidance Department website.

Sincerely,
Clarence High School English 11R Teachers

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks

By Rebecca Skloot

From Goodreads.com:

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they’d weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb’s effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions.

Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave.

Now Rebecca Skloot takes us on an extraordinary journey, from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to stark white laboratories with freezers full of HeLa cells; from Henrietta’s small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia — a land of wooden slave quarters, faith healings, and voodoo — to East Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells.

Henrietta’s family did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research without informed consent. And though the cells had launched a multimillion-dollar industry that sells human biological materials, her family never saw any of the profits. As Rebecca Skloot so brilliantly shows, the story of the Lacks family — past and present — is inextricably connected to the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of.

Over the decade it took to uncover this story, Rebecca became enmeshed in the lives of the Lacks family—especially Henrietta’s daughter Deborah, who was devastated to learn about her mother’s cells. She was consumed with questions: Had scientists cloned her mother? Did it hurt her when researchers infected her cells with viruses and shot them into space? What happened to her sister, Elsie, who died in a mental institution at the age of fifteen? And if her mother was so important to medicine, why couldn’t her children afford health insurance?

Intimate in feeling, astonishing in scope, and impossible to put down, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* captures the beauty and drama of scientific discovery, as well as its human consequences.

Feed

By M.T. Anderson

From Goodreads.com:

Identity crises, consumerism, and star-crossed teenage love in a futuristic society where people connect to the Internet via feeds implanted in their brains.

For Titus and his friends, it started out like any ordinary trip to the moon — a chance to party during spring break and play with some stupid low-grav at the Ricochet Lounge. But that was before the crazy hacker caused all their feeds to malfunction, sending them to the hospital to lie around with nothing inside their heads for days. And it was before Titus met Violet, a beautiful, brainy teenage girl who has decided to fight the feed and its omnipresent ability to categorize human thoughts and desires. Following in the footsteps of George Orwell, Anthony Burgess, and Kurt Vonnegut Jr., M. T. Anderson has created a not-so-brave new world — and a smart, savage satire that has captivated readers with its view of an imagined future that veers unnervingly close to the here and now.