

Midland 12th-Grade English SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT 2020

Literature has the power to both capture and inform the human experience. In these strange physically-distanced times, we seek ways to connect with and support one another. As such, the English Department has chosen two texts that focus on resilience through pandemic: *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel (2011), and/or *Fever 1793* (2002) by Laurie Halse Anderson.

All Midland students will read one (or both!) of these books as their English summer reading selection. **We will engage in inter-grade-level discussions about these novels upon return to campus.** See descriptions of books below and choose whichever book appeals to you!

Station Eleven: *A dystopian novel set in post-apocalyptic Great Lakes Region of the American continent in which a wandering Shakespearean troupe of actors brings hope to humanity.*

Synopsis:

One snowy night a famous Hollywood actor slumps over and dies onstage during a production of King Lear. Hours later, the world as we know it begins to dissolve. Moving back and forth in time—from the actor's early days as a film star to fifteen years in the future, when a theater troupe known as The Travelling Symphony roams the wasteland of what remains—this suspenseful, elegiac, spellbinding novel charts the strange twists of fate that connect five people: the actor, the man who tried to save him, the actor's first wife, his oldest friend, and a young actress with the Traveling Symphony, caught in the crosshairs of a dangerous self-proclaimed prophet. Sometimes terrifying, sometimes tender, *Station Eleven* tells a story about the relationships that sustain us, the ephemeral nature of fame, and the beauty of the world as we know it. (Mandel)

Pages: 337

Challenge level: Moderate

Link to book reviews: [New York Times](#) (if you want something weighty and lengthy) and a Purdue English Department [blog entry by a junior](#) in college (if you want something short and sweet).

Fever 1793: *A historical fiction young adult novel tackling the yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia.*

Synopsis:

August 1793. Fourteen-year-old Mattie Cook is ambitious, adventurous, and sick to death of listening to her mother. Mattie has plans of her own. She wants to turn the Cook Coffeehouse into the finest business in Philadelphia, the capital of the new United States. But the waterfront is abuzz with reports of disease. "Fever" spreads from the docks and creeps toward Mattie's home, threatening everything she holds dear. As the cemeteries fill with fever victims, fear turns to panic, and thousands flee the city. Then tragedy strikes the coffeehouse, and Mattie is trapped in a living nightmare. Suddenly, her struggle to build a better life must give way to something even more important – the fight to stay alive. (Anderson)

Pages: 251

Challenge level: Young Adult

Link to book review: <https://duelinglibrarians.net/reviews/fever-1793.shtml>

In addition to one of the pandemic books described above, you will **read one more book of your choice**.

If you would like suggestions, look on your local library or bookstore websites. Look at “best summer reading” articles or “best 100 books” lists. Read a book you’ve always wanted to but have never had the time. Ask your friends or family members what their favorite books are. Sample books first before committing. I want your choice book to be one you really enjoy.

What’s next?

Write a one-page personal response to each book. (This is pretty open-ended.)

Consider some of these questions:

- What did you like about it? Or hate about it?
- What type of reader would you recommend it to?
- Did you relate to any of the characters? Why or why not?

Include a **Works Cited entry** at the end of each personal response.

You may also draw or make some art to connect to the book. (This is optional.)

In plain English--

Read 2 books:

1. **Either** *Station Eleven* **or** *Fever 1793*.
2. One more book of your choice

(“If I read both *Station Eleven* and *Fever 1793*, can those be my two books?” YES!)

I expect you to come to school with the two pages of response (one page on each book) ready to hand in on the first day of English 12. Typing is optional but much appreciated.

I look forward to spending next year reading and writing with you as you move towards graduation.

Enjoy your summer,

Alison Nikitopoulos