

English 12H - Summer Reading Guide

The Road by Cormac McCarthy

Falling in the category of post-apocalyptic fiction, *The Road* falls in the same category as literature/movies/shows you may have encountered before such as *I Am Legend*, *World War Z*, *The Stand*, “The Walking Dead”, etc. What is unique about this novel, though, is that you never really learn what caused the apocalypse. Furthermore, unlike most novels in this genre, it is also a story about the bonds between a father and a son. McCarthy writes this haunting, depressing story partly as homage to his relationship with his own son. In fact, some of the dialogue between the father and son in the novel is directly taken from conversations between Cormac and his son John. As you read this novel, consider the connection between this father and son and also consider the theme for 12H: Who Am I? Below are some questions and ideas to help guide your reading and understanding of the text, particularly as it relates to the theme of this course.

1. At which points in the novel do characters face identity shaping moments? What makes characters decide definitively, this is who I am and this is who I am not?
2. How does the setting affect people’s decisions about who they are in this novel? Why do some choose more virtuous paths? Why do some choose less virtuous paths?
3. What do the man and boy mean when they talk about “carrying the fire”?
4. What is the role of faith and God in the novel?
5. What do you make of McCarthy’s writing style in this novel? Why are there no chapters, quotations marks, semicolons, etc.?
6. How different do you think the man’s attitude and decisions would have been if he did not have a child with him? What does this say about parenting, in general?
7. How does the boy’s innocence affect the way he views the world? Consider specifically how he and his father differ in their reactions to their shared experiences.
8. Is this a hopeful novel in the end? Why/why not?