

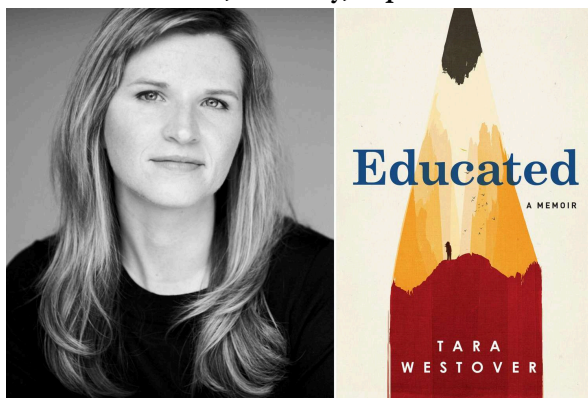
## US English 9-12

### 2025 Summer Reading Project

Summer reading is an expectation of all students. We unequivocally believe that you continue to grow as readers and thinkers with each new book you pick up. The exposure to and study of complex ideas and artful writing often develops your own thinking and sophistication as a reader and writer. All Upper School students (9-12) will read a shared text with the goal of fostering conversation and community across the campus. Faculty and staff will also have an opportunity to share and be part of this collective experience.

This summer, we will be reading [\*Educated: A Memoir\*](#) by Tara Westover [ISBN 978-0399590504]. *Educated* is the true story of the author's childhood and young adulthood. Westover is raised by her parents in the secluded Idaho mountains. She doesn't attend school, and she is indoctrinated to distrust everything related to the government, the educational system, the medical establishment, and the community at large. But as Westover grows older, she periodically questions her upbringing and ultimately decides to break away from her roots to seek an education. Her memoir was on *The New York Times* bestseller list for more than two years and was a finalist for several national awards, including the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, the PEN/Jean Stein Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Westover is one of several authors participating in the upcoming 2025-26 BABEL lineup sponsored by the [Just Buffalo Literary Center](#), an event students may be interested in attending.

**DUE Date, Tuesday, September 9**



Entertainment Weekly

**Note:** *Educated* contains depictions of physical and emotional abuse suffered by the author, primarily at the hands of family members, and some racist language. These depictions are not the primary focus of the reading, and we believe the literary benefits of this book far outweigh the difficulty of some of its content. But there are passages in the book where the father engages in dangerous work-related behaviors that hurt his children or himself; additionally, there are passages where Tara's older brother Shawn is physically and emotionally abusive towards her, and both misogynistic and racist language are elements of that abuse. Notably, the racist language is censored in the most recent US paperback edition of the book. If you believe you will struggle with these passages or have further concerns, either omit and skip over the section or feel free to reach out to any one of us if you have questions or would like to discuss these topics further.

**As you read, you should take notes to help your memory in September. Concepts to consider as you read:**

**Setting:** Details of time and place

**Narrative Style:** The point of view or structure of the text, the language

**Characters:** The significant people/individuals in the novel. (Note: Avoid only focusing on physical features. Instead, consider personality, motivation, relationships with others, changes over time)

**Themes:** The Power of Education, Tradition vs Innovation, Identity/ Freedom & Control, Power of Family & Community, Cultural Exchange, and Memory & Truth (see below "Thematic Response")

## **TASK:**

Select **ONE** of the following prompts and reflect critically on the themes and ideas that Westover develops in her memoir:

### **1. Thematic Response (Critical Writing)**

Select **two** or **three** themes that you see recurring in the memoir. Write a critical response that **includes textual evidence** about how you found meaning within those themes (How might they show up in your own life, in your community, or within the national discourse?) *What did you find relatable or compelling or thought provoking, infuriating or problematic—and why?* Dig into specific ideas or moments that got you thinking.

- **Power of Education** - *How does education allow for questioning and re-evaluating our memories & upbringing? Self improvement? Growth & resilience?*
- **Tradition vs Innovation** - *How can tradition be defined, and what are its potential benefits and drawbacks? How can innovation be defined, and what are its potential benefits and risks? How can tradition serve as a foundation for innovation and evolution?*
- **Identity/Freedom & Control** - *Where does our identity come from? What identities, if any, are permanent? How do other people's opinions shape and form us?*
- **Power of Family & Community** - *How do family dynamics and relationships impact individual identities and well-being? How have your experiences with family influenced your understanding of love, support, and belonging? Is there something in your community or neighborhood that is significant to you? What is it? Why is it so important?*
- **Cultural Exchange** - *How do you believe cultural exchange can promote understanding, empathy, and unity among people from different backgrounds?*
- **Memory & Truth** - *What is the role of memory in shaping individual and collective narratives? How does one's perception of childhood change as we gain new knowledge from experiences? Is truth objective and absolute, or a matter of individual perception? How does one distinguish between personal truth and objective truth?*

Dedicate a minimum of 3-4 handwritten pages or minimum 500 words typed to your critical piece.

### **2. Artistic Representation (Creative Choice)**

Respond artistically to a theme or scene from the novel that speaks to you or explores an important idea from the book. This may include an extended [art/writing journal](#) of creative reflection that addresses one or more themes, a zine, painting, sculpture, collage, musical piece, or other form of art. It may be any size or medium, but it must be your own original artwork and look as if you have spent some time on your creation.

In considering *Educated*, you may want to use the “importance of story,” images, impressions, or setting as a focus for the art journal page(s). You may also choose to consider a collage of several etched ideas from the text (a quote, symbols, characters, conflict, or motifs). These are only ideas...be creative. You should complete at least one full art journal page/piece to submit.

In addition to the artistic piece, you need to include a **150 word summary** that connects your creative piece to the text. The piece should delve into your response to the book, not just provide an illustration/artwork. The reflection should discuss what is being represented in your work (color choice, reasoning behind selection of theme or scene, clarify any/all elements you included and why).

### **3. Letter to the Author (Creative/Personal Response & Correspondence)**

Write a thoughtful letter to Tara Westover that responds to her memoir. Share your reactions, reflections, and connections to her story, while engaging with at least one major theme of the book. Make sure to write as if she might actually read it, being respectful and sincere. Write like it's a conversation, not an essay. The letter should be 350-500 words, typed in Google Docs. You can print or share your letter with your fall semester English teacher.

**Your Letter Should Include:**

- **A date/greeting/closing**

- How would you address the author? ( Dear Ms. Westover, )
- How would you sign your letter (e.g., Sincerely, )
- **A personal reaction** to the memoir:
  - What part of Westover's story most affected or surprised you?
  - How did the book make you feel? Did anything challenge your perspective?
- **A thematic connection:**
  - Choose **one of the core themes** (Power of Education, Tradition vs Innovation, Identity/ Freedom & Control, Power of Family & Community, Cultural Exchange, Memory & Truth) and discuss how it resonated with you.
  - You can also share a personal story or reflection that connects to that theme.
- **Some thoughtful questions:**
  - What are at least **two** questions you would ask Westover--about herself, about her book, about being a writer--if you could? And you can! at BABEL this year.
- **A closing message of appreciation or reflection:**
  - What did you learn from her story?

#### Student Rubric

	Does not meet expectation	Meets expectation	Exceeds expectation
Student work meets the length/component requirements for selected tasks.			
Student demonstrates thoughtful engagement with, and thorough understanding of, source material.			
(For task 1 only) Thematic analysis is supported by textual evidence.			
(For tasks 2 and 3 only) Creative choices reflect a serious engagement with the prompt and include commentary details that support reasoning.			

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any one of us:

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