

Would You Have Wanted This Curriculum in High School?

There's a growing consensus that the curriculum of many American high schools has been dumbed down, and that we need to expect more of our students.

In response, some schools are returning to a curriculum that approximates the rigor of [times past](#). One is Trinity School at River Ridge – a private school in Minnesota about a stone's throw from the Intellectual Takeout offices. Here is the [reading list](#) from their Humane Letters Seminar, which combines the subjects of Literature and History:

9th grade

Documents in American History

The Declaration of Independence

The U.S. Constitution

The Federalist Papers (selections)

Selections from the writings of Thomas Jefferson

Selections from the Lincoln-Douglas debates

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* & *Civil Disobedience*

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* & *An American Slave*

Will Cather, *My Antonia*

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*

Short stories of Stephen Crane, Willa Cather, Flannery O'Connor

Thornton Wilder, *Our Town*

American poetry

10th grade

Documents in European history

Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections)

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (selections)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Inequality*

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*
(selections)

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (selections)

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

British and European poetry

11th grade

Homer, *Iliad & Odyssey*

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*

Sophocles, *Theban Plays*

Plato, *Gorgias, Apology, Crito, Meno or Phaedo, Republic*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*

Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*

Augustine, *Confessions*

12th grade

Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter*

Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law*

Martin Luther, *Letter to the Galatians*

Dante, *Inferno*

Montaigne, *In Defense of Raymond Sebond*

Descartes, *Meditations*

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth & Hamlet*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*
Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (selections)
Hegel, *Reason in History*
Mill, *On Liberty*
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*
Flannery O'Connor, *Parker's Back*
James Agee, *A Death in the Family*
Raymond Carver, *A Small Good Thing*
Ethan Canin, *The Palace Thief*
Contemporary American poetry

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