

## HONORS ENGLISH 9

### SUMMER READING BOOK OF CHOICE – REVIEW

#### Requirements:

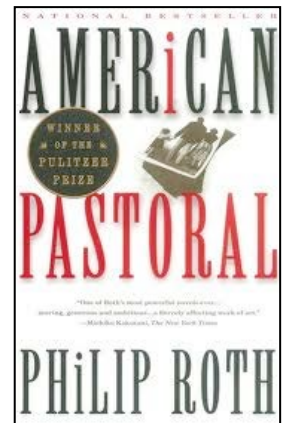
- Times New Roman (or similar Serif font). 16 pt. for stars (insert→symbol→Wingdings) and title / author; 12 pt. for genre, date, pages.
- Single-spaced; the entire review should fit on one page.
- 250 (or so) words for the summary, following the S/W/B/S format (e.g., Somebody / Wanted / But / So) format
- 150 words for your assessment of the book, noting strengths and weaknesses
- Include an image of the book or one that relates to the story. (To position it: after pasting in the image, click on it→right click/control click→format picture→layout→tight.)

#### Example:

☆☆☆☆☆ *American Pastoral*, by Philip Roth. Fiction; 1998; 432 pages.

This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel focuses on the story of Seymour “the Swede” Levov. When the narrator, author Nathan Zuckerman, was a boy, Swede was his idol. A gifted athlete and hero in his Newark high school, Swede was admired by the guys and adored by the girls, and—despite how easily he could have been the prototypically cocky, 1950s jock—he was a genuinely humble and noble person. Both men are now much older, and the book opens with Swede contacting Zuckerman because he wants the author to write the story of some terrible things that have happened to him. Unfortunately, Swede dies before Zuckerman can get the story. The narrator’s voice disappears after the first hundred pages, and the remainder of the book is the story Zuckerman has pieced together, imagined, or both, about the rise and fall of his former hero.

As an adult, Swede seems to have created a life that is the very image of the American Dream in the 1950s. Though he could likely have become a professional athlete, he marries a former Miss New Jersey and dutifully settles into running his father’s Newark glove-making business. As he approaches middle age, Swede believes he has everything he’s ever wanted—a beautiful home in a small town, a successful business, and a wonderful family. But the upheavals of the 1960s undo it all when his precocious daughter, radicalized by the anti-Vietnam movement and resentful of her seemingly flawless home life, blows up the town’s post office, killing a doctor in the process. She goes underground, and every aspect of Swede’s life slowly disintegrates because of his guilt over what she has done, his disbelief about how he could have raised a daughter capable of such destruction, and his agony over what will become of her.



Roth’s book may be too meticulously detailed for some readers (who don’t, for instance, feel the need to know the finer points of glove making), but this same attention to detail ultimately gives the book its power and overwhelming sense of immediacy. Swede’s psychological torment is sometimes excruciatingly painful to read, but, through the Levov family, Roth is able to create a loving tribute to and critique of the American Dream. By sharing Swede’s aspirations, we are able to understand how remarkable American success stories truly are. And though his daughter, Mary Levov, is a rather bratty stand-in for leftist intellectuals, we are also given ample reason to share her outrage about Americans who are totally preoccupied with their own suburban perfection while their government causes incredible destruction abroad. With *American Pastoral*, Roth has given us an insightful look into ourselves and our national character that will stay with the reader long after the last page is finished. ~Paul Cierpial