Twelfth Grade Summer Reading List
2020-2021

Summer reading in the High School is designed to promote pleasure in reading, enabling students both to explore intellectual interests related to their course work and to discover books and subjects they might not otherwise encounter. To accomplish these goals, each student is asked to read three books from the lists for his or her grade level next year. At least one of these books must be chosen from the English list; the other two books may be chosen from either the general list or the English list. You can learn more about these books from our library catalog at this link: [https://tinyurl.com/usn-srl-12](https://tinyurl.com/usn-srl-12)

Advanced Placement courses, intended to be more rigorous than courses in the regular curriculum, may require additional summer assignments—see the separate AP Summer Reading page.

English Department Summer Reading List for Twelfth Grade
Students who plan to take AP English should read at least one starred book. Titles followed by a + are plays or collections of poems—please read two of these selections in lieu of a novel. We strongly urge you to investigate as many of these books as possible through your favorite library, bookstore, or website. Enjoy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classics of World Literature</th>
<th>Contemporary Voices in World Literature</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Austen, Sense and Sensibility</em></td>
<td>Amichai, <em>Selected Poetry</em> +</td>
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<td>Borges, <em>Labyrinths</em></td>
<td>Atwood, <em>The Testaments</em></td>
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<td><em>Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita</em></td>
<td><em>Barker, Regeneration</em></td>
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<td>Camus, <em>The Plague</em></td>
<td>Boland, <em>New Collected Poems</em> +</td>
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<td>Chekov, <em>The Cherry Orchard</em> +</td>
<td>Dorfman, <em>Death and the Maiden</em> +</td>
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<td><em>Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment</em></td>
<td>Flanagan, <em>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</em></td>
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<td>Dumas (fils), <em>Camille</em></td>
<td>Foer, <em>Everything is Illuminated</em></td>
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<td><em>Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury</em></td>
<td>Gysin, <em>A Thousand Splendid Suns</em></td>
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<td><em>Flaubert, Madame Bovary</em></td>
<td>Kundera, <em>The Book of Laughter and Forgetting</em></td>
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<td><em>García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude</em></td>
<td>Lee, <em>Pachinko</em></td>
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<td>Ibsen, <em>The Wild Duck</em> +</td>
<td><em>Mitchell, The Bone Clocks</em></td>
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<td><em>Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</em></td>
<td><em>Morrison, Sula</em></td>
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<td>Lorca, <em>Gypsy Ballads</em> +</td>
<td>Nguyen, <em>The Sympathizer</em></td>
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<td>Lorde, <em>The Black Unicorn</em> +</td>
<td>Novik, <em>Uprooted</em></td>
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<td>Mahfouz, <em>Fountain and Tomb</em></td>
<td>Orange, <em>There There</em></td>
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<td><em>Nabokov, Speak, Memory</em></td>
<td>Ozeki, <em>A Tale for the Time Being</em></td>
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<td><em>Naipaul, A House for Mr. Biswas</em></td>
<td>Powers, <em>The Overstory</em></td>
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<td>Neruda, <em>Residence on Earth</em> +</td>
<td>Pynchon, <em>The Crying of Lot 49</em></td>
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<td>O’Brien, <em>The Third Policeman</em></td>
<td>Quê Mai, <em>The Mountains Sing</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pirandello, <em>Six Characters in Search of an Author</em> +</td>
<td>Ruiz Zafón, <em>The Shadow of the Wind</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rilke, <em>Duino Elegies &amp; The Sonnets to Orpheus</em> +</td>
<td><em>Rushdie, The Ground Beneath Her Feet</em></td>
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<td>Rimbaud, <em>Illuminations</em> +</td>
<td>Saramago, <em>Blindness</em></td>
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<td>Sōseki, <em>Botchan</em></td>
<td>Smith, <em>Swing Time</em></td>
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<td><em>Sterne, Tristram Shandy</em></td>
<td>Szymborska, <em>View with a Grain of Sand</em> +</td>
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<td>Tsukiyama, <em>The Samurai’s Garden</em></td>
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<td>Whitehead, <em>The Intuitionist</em></td>
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General Summer Reading List for Twelfth Grade

This general list, comprised of suggestions from the entire high school faculty, is intended to broaden the summer reading experience beyond the English Department. In the spring of 2010, a student from the class of 2008 suggested that alumni might also make interesting contributions to the lists. We welcomed this idea. Therefore, this list now contains suggestions from both faculty and alumni. Blurbs may be written by the recommender or may be adapted from the publisher’s description of the book.

Natalie Angier, *The Beauty of the Beastly*

Aimee Bender, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*
In this recent novel, Bender imagines that her narrator, Rose Edelstein, can taste the feelings that were present as everything she eats was created. This magical realist LA tale is at turns quirky, engaging and funny. (Freya Sachs)

Joel Best, *Damned Lies and Statistics*
Modern discourse about social problems often begins with a statistic: for example, “the number of children killed by guns has doubled every year since 1950.” Statistics don’t exist in a vacuum, so each claim comes with a motive, and opposing activists usually offer their own counterclaim. Navigating these numbers can be daunting, but our drive to improve our society demands that we consider them carefully in order to make informed decisions and, ultimately, public policy. In *Damned Lies and Statistics*, Best discusses common misconceptions of numbers and suggests ways for individuals to move past them in order to communicate more effectively and detect deceptive or erroneous messages. This book is a resource for the Statistics: Lies and Power class. (Andy Hedman)

Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*
After interviewing scientists in many fields, Bryson wrote this engaging overview of scientific understanding of our world, intended for the general reader. His framework follows the history of the earth, but along the way he touches on fields like quantum physics and astronomy as well as the natural sciences. This book is filled with interesting scientific facts and the history of their discoveries. Mr. Slovenski found something on nearly every page that made him say, “I can’t believe I didn’t know that, and I’m so glad I now do.” (Steve Slovenski and Ann Wheeler)

Italo Calvino, *Cosmicomics*
In these “cosmicomics,” primordial beings cavort on the surface of the moon, play marbles with atoms, and bear ecstatic witness to Earth’s first dawn. Exploring natural phenomena and the origins of the universe, these beloved tales relate complex scientific concepts to our common sensory, emotional, human world. (Richard Swor ’09)

Sean Carroll, *The Particle at the End of the Universe*
This is a great review of the discovery of the Higgs Boson. The author describes what the silly thing is, its scientific importance, and the extremely protracted and costly search for it. (Will Mason ’85)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
In Rachel Carson’s seminal environmental text, she explores issues with DDT and its environmental impact. This book, scientifically fascinating and intriguingly written, helped launch the environmental movement. (Freya Sachs)

Ha-Joon Chang, *Economics: The User’s Guide*
Unlike the authors of *Freakonomics*, Chang is adamant that economics is not a study of everything. He delivers an engaging and concise description of a modern economy. This book is an excellent introduction to different schools of economic thought and to why some countries are rich and others are poor. (Bill Wilson)

Edmund de Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family’s Century of Art and Loss*
Nonfiction, but so fascinating it reads like fiction. When Edmund de Waal inherited a collection of netsuke (tiny Japanese wood and ivory carvings), he wanted to know more about the relatives who had owned them—and how the collection had survived, as most of the older generation of his family was killed or vanished in the Holocaust. De Waal starts with his one surviving uncle, in Tokyo, and his search for his family history takes him on to Vienna, London, and finally Odessa, Russia, where his great-grandfather had a huge grain empire. (Kiki Forsythe ’68)
John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*
A classic text of political and educational theory, *Democracy and Education* is the master work of the greatest American philosopher of the 20th century. Dewey shows the intimate and interwoven relationship between democracy and education, challenging the reader to think carefully about the meaning of these concepts. This book is a great read for the philosophically minded student interested in thinking deeply and critically about the duties of democratic citizenship and the challenges that remain for education. (Jeff Edmonds)

David James Duncan, *The Brothers K*
A moving portrayal of four brothers and their conflicted parents as they passionately navigate the politics of the 1960s, religion, and their dreams of professional baseball. (Liz Mask)

Jean Echenoz, *1914*
This brief, lyrical French novel tells the story of five boys from the same village who go off together to the First World War. (Ann Wheeler)

Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*
This book documents the story of Lia Lee, the severely epileptic daughter of Hmong refugees in Merced, California. The views of the Hmong and Lia’s Western doctors are completely at odds with regard to what her condition is and how to care for her. The story that unfolds is one of misunderstandings and clashing cultures. Ian Trupin ’09 writes, “I read this book for an introductory course in medical anthropology, and it had a huge impact on how I think about health, illness, and medicine in the context of culture…. What Lia’s family and doctors have to go through, and the extent to which they are talking past each other on the subject of Lia’s condition, made me aware of the cultural construction and the subjectivity of health and illness for the first time in my life.” (Ian Trupin ’09)

Hans Fallada, *Every Man Dies Alone*
A remarkable fictionalized study of the psychology of resistance in Nazi Germany, particularly recommended for students enrolled in Social Conscience. (Matthew Haber)

Tana French, *In the Woods*
Rob Ryan is a detective on Dublin’s murder squad—but, unknown to most of his colleagues, he also has a mystery in his own past: when he was twelve years old, two of his best friends disappeared and he was found alone in the woods, wearing blood-covered shoes. He has never been able to remember what happened. In the book, as he (along with his professional partner and best friend, Cassie Maddox) investigates the murder of a young girl, he also begins to revisit the puzzle of his own past. (Ann Wheeler)

Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (Release 3.0)*
The World Is Flat 3.0 is essential reading on globalization, its opportunities for individual empowerment, its achievements at lifting millions out of poverty, and its drawbacks—environmental, social, and political—powerfully illuminated by its Pulitzer Prize-winning author. (Eliot Goldfarb ’11)

Robert Galbraith, *The Cuckoo’s Calling*
In Galbraith’s debut novel, Cormoran Strike, a private detective who lost his leg in the Afghanistan war, investigates the apparent suicide of a world-famous supermodel. Shortly after the novel’s publication, readers were surprised to learn that “Robert Galbraith” is a pseudonym for J. K. Rowling. Although her style and approach to storytelling are very different here than in the Harry Potter series, the characters are equally compelling. (Ann Wheeler)

Steven Galloway, *The Cellist of Sarajevo*
The core of this novel of the siege of Sarajevo in 1992 is the truly remarkable action of a cellist who witnesses a mortar killing twenty-two people standing in a breadline. For twenty-two days the cellist plays in the crater to memorialize their deaths. The novel examines the stories of four people and their attempts to survive and keep hold of their humanity during the longest siege of a capital city in modern warfare. (Pat Miletich)

Gabriel García Márquez, *Cien Años de Soledad*
A Latin American classic, this novel is a fictional account of the lives of the Buendía family. (It may be read in Spanish by AP students; the English translation, found on the “Classics of World Literature” list, also counts as a selection for senior English courses.) (Rhonda Prater)
Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That*
A British scholar and poet’s autobiography of his youth and experience in World War I. (Mackey Luffman)

Robert Grudin, *Time and the Art of Living*
Grudin writes about the way we experience time: about the quality of our attention to the moments of our lives, about various ways to think about the way we spend our time—generally about how to live well. The book invites slow, thoughtful reading. This book is out of print, but used copies can be found online. (Ann Wheeler)

David Halberstam, *The Children*
Halberstam tells the story of the college students who spearheaded the Nashville sit-ins in 1960 and later became leaders in the national Civil Rights movement. Every page of this massive book is fascinating, but you may choose to read only the section about Nashville (Book 1, also titled “The Children,” through page 234). (Ann Wheeler)

Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens*
*Sapiens* is a sweeping narration of *Homo sapiens* from pre-historical times to the current day. Harari’s book is rare in that it is deeply researched, highly readable, and relevant to issues we grapple with currently. Equal parts philosophical, scientific, and historical, it accomplishes a primary goal of intellectual inquiry: a better understanding of today through examination of the past and speculation about the future. (Jeff Edmonds)

Kent Haruf, *Plainsong*
In the small town of Holt, Colorado, a high school teacher is confronted with raising his two boys alone after their mother retreats first to the bedroom, then altogether. A teenage girl—her father long since disappeared, her mother unwilling to have her in the house—is pregnant, with nowhere to go. And out in the country, two brothers, elderly bachelors, work the family homestead. (Cindy Crenshaw)

Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe*
No book has made me think more deeply about how humans choose or avoid choosing how to organize themselves. Reading this book feels like a conversation between a group of people who disagree about many things but have a common purpose for their discussion—to take no way of being (or of thinking) for granted. (Wilson Hubbell)

Adam Johnson, *The Orphan Master’s Son*
This book tells the winding tale of an orphan who, alternating between criminality and heroism, finds his way through the ranks of North Korean society. It’s part love story, part horrifying exploration of life under Kim Jong-il’s repressive totalitarian regime. (Matthew Haber)

John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*
This classic of military history is a short, accessible survey of three battles in Western Europe that had major consequences for their survivors and subsequent political events. It skillfully weaves together factors like psychology, animal behavior, technology and the impact of organizations to explain what the experience of battle was like then. In turn, this approach helps us understand why people in the past chose some actions over others. (Mackey Luffman)

Alan Lightman, *The Discoveries: Great Breakthroughs in 20th-Century Science*
A book chronicling the greatest scientific discoveries of last century, with summary introductions and the original papers heralding the discoveries. (George Flatau)

Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*
In this book, Miłosz writes from his own experience of living in Poland under Communist rule, explaining both the appeal and the abuses of the Communist system. Matt Kastrinsky ’05 “found it very fascinating and an enjoyable read. When Communism and Stalinism are widely demonized in Western history and cultural education, I found a story that explains the allure and reasoning behind intellectuals’ support of Stalinism to be a welcome addition to any well-rounded education.” (Matt Kastrinsky ’05)

Lorrie Moore, *Like Life*
Mordant and incredibly perceptive short stories about contemporary women and their tentative forays into real, messy life. (Katie Greenebaum)
Paul Murray, *Skippy Dies*
This is a very funny novel set in a tony but declining Irish boarding school. Whatever you’re thinking, it’s not that. Very contemporary, very large in scope, a little crass, a little sentimental, but always compelling. And, yes, Skippy does, in fact, die. (Katie Greenebaum)

Sylvia Nasar, *A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash*
A journalist’s moving depiction of John Nash, a leader in the academic world of mathematics who battled schizophrenia through much of his career. (Debbie Davies)

Michelle Obama, *Becoming*
Obama’s memoir gives an inside view into what her life has been like, from growing up on the South Side of Chicago to meeting Barack Obama and becoming the first African-American family in the White House. Her voice is genuine and full of both humor and reflection. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Ann Patchett, *State of Wonder*
In Nashville writer Ann Patchett’s novel, a research scientist travels reluctantly to South America in search of a missing colleague and an elderly mentor. As she travels deeper into the wilderness, her adventures become stranger and stranger. (Rosie Siman ’04)

Jodi Picoult, *Sing You Home*
*Sing You Home* starts with a tragedy that quickly turns into a life change for Zoe, the main character. This book deals with topics of religion, gay rights, suicidal teenagers, in vitro fertilization and parental rights. Once you pick it up, it is very hard to put down. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*
In *The Botany of Desire*, Pollan examines the way that other species have influenced us, including the human desire for sweetness/apples and our desire for beauty/tulips. (Diane Sorrel)

Charles Seife, *Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea*
This quick “biography” traces the history of the number 0 from its inventors, the Babylonians, through its controversial effects on religion and society to its importance in our belief in quantum physics and the Big Bang. This witty book focuses on the ideas behind mathematical concepts and zero’s effect on them. Readers are invited to play along with Seife as he explains the many wonders zero reveals. (Debbie Davies and Nathan Schine ’09)

Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon*
Solomon discusses his own experience of depression, and explore the disease’s history and various treatments, as well as the influence of politics and big business on how it is perceived. (Katie Greenebaum)

Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*
Hiro Protagonist, a pizza delivery man in future America, lives an alternate life as a warrior prince in the Metaverse, where he embarks on a mission to destroy the virtual-reality villain who is trying to bring about infocalypse. Weaving contemporary imagery with Sumerian myths and virtual reality, this fast-paced novel offers a hip vision of life in the near-future information age. Elizabeth Reiland ’07 writes that this book is “well-loved by people in tech fields” and that “it also makes me think about different aspects of the world in ways I might not otherwise have even considered.” (Elizabeth Reiland ’07)

Amy Tan, *The Bonesetter’s Daughter*
A novel about the relationship between a Chinese-born mother who is losing her memories and her American-born daughter who learns about her mother’s past. (Robin Lynn Clinard)

Donna Tartt, *The Goldfinch*
When Theo Decker is thirteen years old, his mother is killed in an explosion while they are visiting the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Stunned and confused, he staggers out with one of the paintings: *The Goldfinch* by Carel Fabritius. As Theo moves from the Park Avenue apartment of a classmate to his father’s house in Las Vegas, as he becomes an art dealer and drug addict, as he gets involved with the Russian mob, he always carries the painting with him. This Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is filled with engaging characters and surprising plot twists. (Ann Wheeler)
Amor Towles, *A Gentleman in Moscow*

People, comrades, ladies and, of course, gentlemen: go and obtain a copy of *A Gentleman in Moscow*. It is a delightful read and perhaps deceptively so. I might encourage you to read it twice over so that the book’s decadent prose does not blind you to crucial themes—the sanctity of commitment, the link between identity and home, the nobility inherent in change—that emerge from Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov’s remarkable feat of finding fulfillment in confinement, albeit of the most luxurious sort. Rostov’s is a situation in which we could all find ourselves: feeling overwhelmed and restricted by our circumstances. But when faced with such a daunting inevitability, all we need to do is consult the Count. Constructed with aptly elegant language, this ever-capable and suave protagonist will remind you that confinement is only a frame of mind. (Malcolm Moutenot ’13)

James Welch with Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*

An account of myth-busting and movie-making that helps you understand why, in the words of the bumper sticker, “Custer had it coming.” (Mackey Luffman)

Tara Westover, *Educated*

Tara Westover first entered a classroom at the age of 17, and found herself just a few years later studying in the hallowed halls of Cambridge University. This often shocking and also tender portrait of her childhood with her large and complicated Mormon family on a survivalist compound in Idaho really gets to the heart of what an education is and needs to be: an offering of new perspectives and a fostering of the will to grow and change. Westover trained herself to write by reading great short stories, and it shows: each chapter is a well-crafted, self-contained exploration—of her relationships with her troubled and violent older brother, with her manic and fundamentalist father, with her cowed but talented mother, and eventually with her treasured “teachers,” the classics of literature and philosophy. (Katie Greenebaum)

Charles Wheelan, *Naked Statistics*

From batting averages and political polls to game shows and medical research, the real-world applications of statistics continue to grow by leaps and bounds. How does Netflix know which movies you’ll like? What is causing the rising incidence of autism? As Wheelan shows us in *Naked Statistics*, the right data and a few well-chosen statistical tools can help us answer these questions and more. He clarifies key concepts, reveals how biased or careless parties can manipulate or misrepresent data, and shows us how brilliant and creative researchers are exploiting the valuable data from natural experiments to tackle thorny questions. This book is a resource for the Statistics: Lies and Power class. (Andy Hedman)

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*

In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for Northern and Western cities, in search of a better life. Andrew Zibart ’71 writes that you should read this book because “it’s fascinating…. Never knew there were actually two Bibles (one for white folks, one for black).” (Andrew Zibart ’71)

Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*

A look at the loss of diversity, its effects, and some solutions. (Tamara Berthel)

Simon Winchester, *Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded, August 27, 1883*

The largest volcanic eruption to hit humankind during the 1800s is only part of a complex story involving the lucrative European spice trade, tsunamis that reverberated around the planet dozens of times over, and possibly the genesis of radical Islam, which defines much of the present global political scene. (Steve Smail)

Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature*

The historical account of the man who brought transcendentalism and Spinozism together with rigorous science—seeing the whole in favor of the parts—is great, and what one would expect. In addition to that, you get these unexpected historical moments and encounters and the impact of knowing that in 1869 essentially every American child would name Alexander von Humboldt as the most famous scientist in the world, and for his 100th anniversary there were national holidays all over the world… and now, no one has ever heard of him. (Wilson Hubbell)