Eleventh 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-11

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 Eleventh Grade (American Literature)
If you are considering AP English for your senior year, we recommend that you read at least one starred book. Any work marked with a + is a collection of poems or a play—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.

Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf (play) +
Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale
Baldwin, Notes of a Native Son
   Going to Meet the Man: Stories
Bennett, The Mothers
Brinkley, A Lucky Man
Chabon, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay
Chiang, Exhalation
Clifton, Blessing the Boats (poems) +
DeLillo, Libra
Diaz, Drown
Dove, Thomas and Beulah (poems) +
Edson, Wit (play) +
Erdrich, The Round House
*Faulkner, Light in August
   *The Hamlet
Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise
Ginsberg, Howl (poems) +
Green, The Squanicook Elegues (poems) +
Guare, Six Degrees of Separation (play) +
Hannah, Airships
Harjo, A Map to the Next World (poems) +
Heller, Catch-22
*Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls
   *The Sun Also Rises
*James, The Portrait of a Lady
Kim, Miracle Creek
Klay, Redeployment
Kushner, Angels in America (play) +
Kwon, The Incendiaries
Le Guin, The Dispossessed (sci-fi)
Levine, What Work Is (poems) +
Lewis, Voyage of the Sable Venus (poems) +
Malamud, The Assistant
McBride, The Good Lord Bird
McCarthy, All the Pretty Horses
McMurtry, Lonesome Dove
Miller, Death of a Salesman (play) +
O’Neill, Long Day’s Journey Into Night (play) +
Potok, My Name is Asher Lev
Roth, Goodbye, Columbus
   American Pastoral
Rum, A Woman Is No Man
Russell, Vampires in the Lemon Grove
Saunders, Tenth of December
Smith, Life on Mars (poems) +
*Steinbeck, East of Eden
*Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Vonnegut, Cat’s Cradle
*Warren, All the King’s Men
*Wharton, The House of Mirth
Williams, The Glass Menagerie (play) +
   Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (play) +
Wilson, Nothing To See Here
*Wright, Native Son
General Summer Reading List for Eleventh 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.

Rick Bragg, All Over But the Shoutin’
As an adult, Rick Bragg became a reporter for the New York Times. This book is his memoir of growing up in very rural northeast Alabama during the 1950s and ’60s. (Ann Wheeler)

Truman Capote, In Cold Blood
A revealing glimpse inside the minds of two murderers and one enamored writer. (Robbie McKay)

Caleb Carr, The Alienist
Noted military historian Carr writes a gripping historical mystery set in New York City at the turn of the century. (Pat Miletich)

Ron Chernow, The House of Morgan
A history of the U.S. financial system and economy through the lens of the House of Morgan, from the mid-1850s to the 1980s. Hawkins Entrekin ’06 writes that “given the recent financial crisis, I think this book gives some great history and perspective on U.S. economic history, and is a really great and interesting read to boot…. It would really give students some great information that will help make them well-informed citizens.” (Hawkins Entrekin ’06)

Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies
An analytical study of why some societies succeed and others fail. (George Flatau and Lorna Morris)

Michael Eric Dyson, Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America
Although Michael Eric Dyson is a well-known professor of sociology at Georgetown, and the author of many scholarly books, he describes this book as a cry from his heart, telling a specifically (but not necessarily exclusively) white audience what he thinks they need to know about the experience of African-Americans in this country. Stunned by the recent presidential election, Dyson writes a book that is very much of this moment (name-checking Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar and Colin Kaepernick) but also one that looks back at American history to see what has brought us here. (Ann Wheeler)

Jonathan Franzen, The Twenty-Seventh City
St. Louis, Missouri, is a quietly dying river city until it hires a new police chief: a charismatic young woman from Bombay, India, named S. Jammu. No sooner has Jammu been installed, though, than the city’s leading citizens become embroiled in an all-pervasive political conspiracy. Set in the mid-1980s, The Twenty-Seventh City predicts every unsettling shift in American life for the next two decades: suburban malaise, surveillance culture, domestic terrorism, paranoia. Although Franzen is best known for his novel The Corrections, Thomas Gibney ’04 notes that this is “his first novel, better than The Corrections.” (Thomas Gibney ’04)

Doris Kearns Goodwin, No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II
In this book, Goodwin explores the political partnership of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt and the times in which they lived. (Pat Miletich)

Chad Harbach, The Art of Fielding
It’s the story of all-star shortstop Henry Skrimshander, who plays for the Westish College Harpooners (one of many very funny and somewhat misguided Melville affectations the school has adopted after learning that the author once gave a guest lecture on its campus), his fall from all-star status, and the spiral that his fall sends his friends and teammates into. It’s a beautiful story of friendship, love, and coping with disappointment, set in an idyllic small college environment. The characters are deep, fascinating, and often hilarious. A perfect book for baseball lovers and haters alike. And once you pick it up, you’ll find yourself hard-pressed to put it down. (Edward Gottfried ’07)
Paul Hoffman, *The Man Who Loved Only Numbers: The Story of Paul Erdős and the Search for Mathematical Truth*
Erdős was an amazing and prolific mathematician whose life as a world-wandering numerical nomad was legendary. He published almost 1,500 scholarly papers before his death in 1996, and he probably thought more about math problems than anyone in history. Like a traveling salesman offering his thoughts as wares, Erdős would show up on the doorstep of one mathematician or another and announce, “My brain is open.” (Debbie Davies)

John Irving, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*
Do you believe in Fate? In miracles? Irving’s *A Prayer for Owen Meany* might make you a believer in one or the other, or both. Or maybe—likely—you have a best friend, one who is extraordinary, loyal, and endlessly impressive. Either way, in reading *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, you will be asked to take a leap of faith and dive into an outlandish, yet overwhelmingly charming narrative, that just might make you a believer. (Malcolm Moutenot ’13)

Paulette Jiles, *News of the World*
This is an intriguing story of an old man wandering the post-Civil War West and reading newspapers to paying audiences eager to know of the world outside their small towns and rural hamlets. Along the way he agrees to return a young white girl, formerly held captive by the Kiowa tribe, to her family. The best parts of the book are when the young girl and old man must learn about one another on the journey to return her to her relatives. (Pat Miletich)

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America*
This exciting scholarly work interweaves the story of a serial killer at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair with descriptions of the immense challenges of constructing the fair, its historical importance, and the famous figures who attended it—turning it all into a first-rate historical mystery. (Pat Miletich and Ann Wheeler)

Alan Lightman, *The Accidental Universe*
Lightman is both a physicist and novelist. In this collection of seven essays, he considers our current scientific understanding of the larger universe and questions how these scientific theories fit into our psychological and spiritual quest for meaning in our lives. (Ann Wheeler)

Robert K. Massie, *Catherine the Great*
This biography tells the extraordinary story of an obscure young German princess who traveled to Russia at age 14 and rose to become one of the most remarkable, powerful, and captivating women in history. Not only is the book recommended by two alumni, but it was also written by an alumnus—Robert K. Massie graduated from PDS in 1946. (Martha Keith Butler ’46 and Scott Sudduth ’54)

Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*
An unannounced circus, with games and manipulations that stretch far beyond the performance itself, *The Night Circus* is an adventure for the characters and for the reader. Morgenstern creates a world you want to understand, full of surprise and magic. (Rosanne Siman ’04)

Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*
An unusual novel about the journey of Japanese picture brides to husbands on the West Coast before World War II, *The Buddha in the Attic* builds a collective portrait of the women rather than following the story of just one bride. The result is a fascinating perspective on the culture clash and personal challenges of these women as the war and Japanese internment loom. This story is taken up in Otsuka’s novel *When the Emperor Was Divine*. (Pat Miletich)

Mark and Delia Owens, *Cry of the Kalahari*
Carrying little more than a change of clothes and a pair of binoculars, Mark and Delia Owens arrived deep in the Kalahari Desert of southern Africa, living for seven years in an area with no roads, no people, and no source of water for thousands of miles. Here they met animals that had never seen humans before. (Tamara Berthel)

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*
This book has radically changed our perspective on the recent rise of income and wealth disparities in the United States and other countries across the globe. Piketty marshals an extensive and eclectic array of sources, including Victorian novels, to make the case that rising inequality has been the norm since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. (Bill Wilson)
Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*

In this engaging book, Pollan explores the complexities of our current food system, looking at conventional, local, and organic agriculture, and considers foraging as well. A fascinating read for people who care about the story of their food. (Freya Sachs)

David Sedaris, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*

Humorous essays about fatsuits, frustrations, and family. This book is filled with the acerbic wit and insight for which Sedaris is known. (Robbie McKay)

Louise Shivers, *Here to Get My Baby Out of Jail*

Growing up in Atlanta, North Carolina served as my family’s vacation state for much of my childhood. Consequently, I have a penchant for Southern fiction, so a friend recommended I read *Here to Get My Baby Out of Jail*. Roxy, a young mother, meets Jack Ruffian, who picks up odd jobs at her father’s funeral home. He also ends up working at the tobacco farm that Roxy and her husband run. As she tells the story, we see Roxy navigate her roles of daughter, wife and mother while struggling to be true to herself. This book is out of print, but used copies can be found online. (Cindy Crenshaw)

Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*

An ethnographic look into an underprivileged community outside Chicago that explores the social networks and fictive kinships that keep the community alive. Julia Garrison ’08 writes, “People often don’t understand the challenges that people on welfare, government-subsidized housing, and other benefits face. They often don’t realize that even with these benefits, families have trouble feeding their children. This book provides insight as to how these families use their social networks to make ends meet.” (Julia Garrison ’08)

Elizabeth Strout, *Amy and Isabelle*

In the small, gossip-ridden New England town where Amy Goodrow, 16, lives with her mother Isabelle, the inhabitants go about their daily lives—work, school, home—with mundane complacency. Bored and listless and full of secret turmoil, Amy grows more and more alienated from her mother with the arrival of a stranger in town, and what begins as an adolescent awakening threatens to become her undoing. Strout went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Olive Kitteridge*, but this first novel is every bit as rich and painstaking, a brilliant study in characterization and point of view. (Rachel Levy Howell ’00)

Héctor Tobar, *Deep Down Dark: The Untold Stories of 33 Men Buried in a Chilean Mine, and the Miracle that Set Them Free*

The subtitle of this book says it all. In 2010, thirty-three Chilean miners were trapped when the mine where they were working collapsed. As a result of an international effort, they were rescued sixty-nine days later. Héctor Tobar talked to all of these men, read diaries that they kept while trapped, talked to their families (many family members spent two months living in tents just outside the mine) and wrote this fascinating book, telling of the emotional and physical struggle of all involved during those difficult days when no one knew if these thirty-three men would ever see sunlight again. Ann Patchett has written that in this book Tobar “is taking on all the big issues of life…. What is life worth? What is the value of one human life? What is faith? Who do we become in our Darkest hour?” (http://www.npr.org/2014/12/11/369409338/join-the-morning-edition-book-club-were-reading-deep-down-dark)

Jeannette Walls, *The Glass Castle*

Walls and her siblings were dragged around the country by a brilliant, alcoholic father and an unconventional, artistic, narcissistic mother. The children learned to support themselves, eating out of trashcans at school or painting their skin so the holes in their pants didn’t show. One by one, each child escaped to New York City. Still, it wasn’t long before their parents appeared on their doorsteps and began living as a homeless couple in Manhattan while their children rose in the world. (Katie Greenebaum)

Tobias Wolff, *This Boy’s Life*

Novelist Tobias Wolff’s memoir of his tempestuous childhood, as engagingly well-written as it is unsettling. (Katie Greenebaum)