Ninth 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-9](https://tinyurl.com/usn-srl-9)

**English Department Summer Reading List for Ninth Grade**

Titles followed by + are graphic novels or collections of poems. We strongly urge you to investigate as many of these books as possible through your favorite library, bookstore, or website. Enjoy.

Acevedo, *The Poet X* +  
Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*  
Ahmed, *Internment*  
Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*  
Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*  
Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*  
Brontë, *Jane Eyre*  
Brunt, *Tell the Wolves I’m Home*  
Cronn-Mills, *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children*  
Foer, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*  
Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying*  
Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*  
Hersey, *Hiroshima*  
Hesse, *Siddhartha*  
Hinds, *The Iliad* +  
Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*  
Karim, *That Thing We Call a Heart*  
Kidd, *The Secret Life of Bees*  
Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees*  

Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*  
Krosoczka, *Hey, Kiddo* +  
Lahiri, *The Namesake*  
McBride, *The Color of Water*  
Mishima, *The Sound of Waves*  
Noah, *Born a Crime*  
Olivares, *Citizen Illegal* +  
Orwell, *1984*  
Potok, *The Chosen*  
Quinn, *Ishmael*  
Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*  
Slater, *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives*  
Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*  
Thomas, *The Hate U Give*  
Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*  
Wilson, *Alif the Unseen*  
Yi, *Our Twisted Hero*  
Yoon, *The Sun Is Also a Star*
General Summer Reading List for Ninth 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. Blurs may be written by the recommender or may be adapted from the publisher’s description of the book.

Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie
Albom spends time with his chronically ill former teacher and in doing so learns important lessons about courage and life. (Dana Mayfield)

M. T. Anderson, Feed
Feed is a great young adult novel set in a dystopian future ruled by consumerism, connectivity, and advertisers. Every person has a direct internet feed implanted in their brains. It could be a cool, quick read to help the students ponder authenticity in the world. (Andy King)

Daniel James Brown, The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics
Chowning Johnson Aguilera ’01 says, “If you haven’t read it, it’s one of my all-time top 10 books. It’s about the U.S. gold medal Olympic team during the buildup to World War II. Fantastic writing, story and peek into world and American history.” (Chowning Johnson Aguilera ’01)

Matthew Crawford, Shop Class as Soulcraft
Crawford is dissatisfied with the degree to which higher education trains us to be workers who deal only in the language of ideas, and he presents a dichotomy between doing work that relies on thinking (the abstract) and work that relies on doing (the concrete). If you’ve ever asked the question, “When am I actually going to use [insert academic subject here],” this might be a great read for you. (Justin Karpinos)

Mark Dunn, Ella Minnow Pea: A Progressively Lipogrammatic Epistolary Fable
Ella Minnow Pea is a girl living happily on the fictional island of Nollop off the coast of South Carolina. Nollop was named after Nevin Nollop, author of the immortal phrase containing all the letters of the alphabet, “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.” Now Ella must act to save her friends, family, and fellow citizens from the encroaching totalitarianism of the island’s Council, which has banned the use of certain letters of the alphabet as they fall from a memorial statue of Nevin Nollop. As the letters progressively drop from the statue they also disappear from the novel. The result is a hilarious and moving story of one girl’s fight for freedom of expression, as well as a linguistic tour de force sure to delight word lovers everywhere. (Jim Manning)

Laurie Frankel, This Is How It Always Is
Claude is the fifth child and the fifth boy in his family. At a young age he prefers wearing dresses and bikinis. His family supports and loves him as Claude becomes Poppy. In keeping Poppy’s secret from their friends and acquaintances, the family struggles with balancing the truth with the secret they are keeping. The writing is wonderful and the characters are flawed and lovable! (Margee Brennan)

Darcy Frey, The Last Shot
This book follows three inner-city boys from Coney Island through their high school years, as they hope that basketball will give them a way out of the ghetto. Chris Meadors ’00 writes, “For any sports lovers, the preface will make them shiver and they won’t be able to put it down.” (Chris Meadors ’00)

Malcolm Gladwell, Outliers
Outliers is about how uncontrollable environmental factors have profound effects on our world. Ned Hildebrand ’06 finds this book “very interesting and a great nonfiction read.” (Ned Hildebrand ’06)
Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken*
During the Second World War, Louie Zamperini’s plane crashed into the ocean. Ahead of him lay thousands of miles of open ocean, leaping sharks, a foundering raft, thirst and starvation, enemy aircraft, and, beyond, a trial even greater. Michael Rosen ’82 says the book is about “the resolve of an individual whose plane is shot down over the ocean and survives insurmountable risks and dangers. It is also about inner strength and forgiveness.” (Michael Rosen ’82)

Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*
“... At a point in life when one is through with boyhood, but has not yet discovered how to be a man, it was my fortune to travel with the most marvelously appealing of teams.” The first sentence of this masterpiece of sporting literature sets its tone. The team is the mid-20th-century Brooklyn Dodgers, the team of Robinson and Snyder and Hodges and Reese, a team of great triumph and import. (Trent Boysen)

Sam Kean, *The Disappearing Spoon*
Science writer Kean takes readers through the most interesting parts of the periodic table of the elements, discussing how various elements were created, discovered, or used. From college pranks (like the disappearing spoon) to mind-bending experiments (like the creation of the Bose-Einstein condensate, an entirely new state of matter), from nefarious purposes (poisons, nuclear war) to medical miracles (X-rays, sulfa drugs), the elements take on a life of their own in this engaging and fascinating book. (Pamela Malinowski)

Christina Baker Kline, *Orphan Train*
This novel describes the lives of two girls raised by families other than their own. One girl grew up in the Midwest at the time of the Great Depression, and one is growing up in Maine in contemporary times. Their paths cross when one is elderly and the other is in high school, trying to stay out of “Juvie.” An unlikely but important friendship develops, changing both women. The two women are interesting and compelling characters. Their lives are heart-wrenching, and their friendship is heart-warming. The historical accounts of the social programs initiated early in the 1900s to relocate orphaned children from Northeast cities like NYC to rural communities in the Midwest are fascinating. (Debbie Van Slyke)

Christopher McDougall, *Born to Run*
This book is a tall tale that happens, incredibly, to be a true story. In vivid and energetic language, McDougall explores our human history, discusses why people run ultramarathons, and introduces us to the Tarahumara tribe, which incorporates distance running into its cultural practices. Especially recommended for cross-country runners—it will inspire you to run more this summer than ever before. (Jeff Edmonds)

James A. Michener, *Mexico*
This book tells the story of an American journalist who travels to Mexico to report on a bullfight between two great matadors and, while there, discovers the history of his Mexican ancestors. (Rhonda Prater)

Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*
Mowat’s account of the summer he lived alone in the frozen tundra observing the wolves is a remarkable tale. Through his studies he developed a deep affection for these wild creatures, which are of no threat to the caribou or man. (Tamara Berthel)

A collection of offbeat essays by one of the greatest nature writers. (George Flatau)

Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy*
McKenzie Andrews ’11 writes, “This is the first interesting nonfiction book I read in high school. It follows the life of a T-shirt, beginning with its start as raw materials and continuing until it is manufactured in China, sold in the U.S. and then donated to Africa. It offers insight into the international economy and globalization, while also giving a different perspective on something you see every day. Almost every product around us comes from another country, and it’s especially important for us as Americans to understand this global supply chain. It’s also just cool to get a better understanding of how our world works.” (McKenzie Andrews ’11)
Robin Sloan, *Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore*
Clay Jannon leaves the world of technology to take a job as a clerk in a bookstore. He gradually realizes that he has stumbled into something more than a simple bricks-and-mortar bookstore. The store is a gathering place for a worldwide secret society searching for immortality. Just for fun. (Ann Wheeler)

Sonia Sotomayor, *My Beloved World*
In her memoir, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor writes about her life, taking readers from a Bronx housing project all the way to the federal bench, a journey that offers an inspiring testament to her own extraordinary determination and the power of believing in oneself. Mrs. Davies says, “I liked her discussion of her personal growth and the emphasis on her Hispanic background. It’s also interesting how she persevered in spite of hardships (diabetes, alcoholic father) and discrimination.” (Debbie Davies)

Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, *Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters*
On January 15, 2009, Captain Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger had minutes to make the decision of whether to return a stricken plane to the airport for a safe landing or to attempt a risky emergency landing of US Airlines flight 1549 on the Hudson River. This memoir not only describes the details of this event, which became known as the “Miracle on the Hudson,” but also relays the lifetime experiences which led to his interest in becoming a pilot and his fascination with flying. The lively narratives and anecdotes engage readers as they realize that this life-saving decision was the culmination of a myriad of lessons derived from classmates, teachers, parents and colleagues. (Betty White)

Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone*
This novel is a coming-of-age story about twins and the girl they both love, spanning two continents (Africa and North America). The richness of their family story and their dedication to each other is enthralling. The writer, Abraham Verghese, was a doctor in East Tennessee when HIV/AIDS came into our world. (Anita Schmid)

Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*
Genetic research like the kind Wells does is revolutionizing human paleoanthropology and rewriting much of humanity’s growth, from a small group of maybe 100 individuals in Africa (50,000-100,000 years ago) to what will soon become our ten-billion-strong human population on Earth. (Steve Smail)

Richard Wright, *Black Boy*
Wright chronicles his childhood and adolescence as a black male in the segregated South. His inspirational journey—from suffering to survival to triumph—highlights larger systemic failures and the remarkable power of reading and finding one’s individual voice. (Dana Mayfield)