Eleventh Grade Summer Reading List
2018-2019

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
Chabon, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay
Clifton, Blessing the Boats (poems) +
Collins, Ballistics (poems) +
DeLillo, Libra
Diaz, Drown
Doctorow, Ragtime
Dove, Thomas and Beulah (poems) +
Edson, Wit (play) +
Erdrich, Love Medicine
*Faulkner, Light in August
  *The Hamlet
Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise
Ginsberg, Howl (poems) +
Green, The Squanicook Elogues (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
Klay, Redeployment
LeGuin, 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
McCullers, The Heart is a Lonely Hunter
McMurtry, Lonesome Dove
Miller, Death of a Salesman (play) +
Momaday, House Made of Dawn
Ng, Little Fires Everywhere
O’Neill, Long Day’s Journey Into Night (play) +
Peele, Reasons for and Advantages of Breathing
Potok, My Name is Asher Lev
Rankine, Citizen: An American Lyric (poems) +
Roth, Goodbye, Columbus
  American Pastoral
Russell, Vampires in the Lemon Grove
Saunders, CivilWarLand in Bad Decline
Smith, Life on Mars (poems) +
*Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath
  *East of Eden
*Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
Vonnegut, Cat’s Cradle
*Warren, All the King’s Men
*Wharton, The House of Mirth
*Whitehead, The Underground Railroad
Williams, The Glass Menagerie (play) +
  Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (play) +
Wilson, Tunneling to the Center of the Earth
Woodson, Another Brooklyn
*Wright, Native Son
General Summer Reading List for Eleventh Grade

Several years ago, we broadened USN’s summer reading lists by adding this general list, comprised of suggestions from the entire high school faculty, to the English Department list. In the spring of 2010, a student from the class of 2008 who fondly remembers his experience with summer reading suggested that alumni might also make interesting contributions to the lists. We welcomed this idea. Therefore, in the list below, you will find suggestions for summer reading from both faculty and alumni.

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)

Kenneth Brower, *The Starship and the Canoe*
An intriguing double biography of the famous astrophysicist Freeman Dyson and his son George, who drops out of college to paddle the Vancouver Island waters and live in a treehouse. One of them is designing a spaceship, the other an ocean-going kayak. An exceptional questioning of 20th-century technology. (Liz Mask)

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)

Joan Didion, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*
This collection of essays was recommended by both Michael Landsman ’08 and Chloe Stillwell ’08. Chloe writes that “Didion gives an honest, vivid, and somewhat eulogistic description of life and people, especially California in the 1960s…. I know this book would have had a profound impact on me in high school and maybe saved me a year as an urban studies major.” (Chloe majored in writing; she further says that “as a nonfiction concentration student, her take on the genre, even stories that didn’t directly involve her, inspired me as a writer.”) Michael says that “this book changed my life; I never travel anywhere without my copy. Her essay ‘On Self-Respect’ will resonate with all young people coming to terms with themselves. Didion provides the cynical heft of a journalist, the philosophical insight of an academic, and the creative flourish of an artist as she explores the Summer of Love in San Francisco, John Wayne’s final days, Joan Baez, Los Angeles traffic, and vacationing in Hawaii.” (Michael Landsman ’08 and Chloe Stillwell ’08)

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, 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)
Dave Eggers, *What is the What*
In this epic tale, Dave Eggers explores the life of Valentino Achak Deng, a refugee from the Sudanese civil war. It’s a fictionalized memoir of his life and experiences, sometimes full of dark moments, at other turns lyrical, telling the story of one of the “Lost Boys” and his journey. (Katie Greenebaum and Freya Sachs)

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
This classic work, a fascinating look into Franklin’s worldview and values, demonstrates the ways in which he is truly the “American Incarnate.” (Pat Miletich)

Jonathan Franzen, *The Twenty-Seventh City*
According to Amazon.com, “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)

Robert Heinlein, *Starship Troopers*
Recommended by David Tannenbaum ’05, this classic science fiction novel presents an alternate society in the future and tackles subjects such as the relationship of the soldier and the government, the citizens’ role in society, and the right to vote. David writes that “this book has shaped my views on my country, the society in which I live and gave me a purpose in the direction that I should take with my life. Caveat: the movie is no representation.” (David Tannenbaum ’05)

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)

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*
In this book, Kidder tells the story of Dr. Paul Farmer’s travels around the world and his work with disease control, particularly with people living in extreme poverty. It’s both an inspiring true story and a call to arms. (Betty White)
Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*
Kolbert uses the accounts of extinctions of several species to investigate the sixth mass extinction, the one caused by humans. She writes vividly of her field experiences following scientists studying current species threatened by extinction. (Dawn Matthies)

Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities*
A sometimes frightening look at the inequalities present in many school systems, this study of American public education reveals conditions that many could not have imagined. (Betty White)

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*
Amazon.com describes this recent biography as “the extraordinary story of an obscure young German princess who traveled to Russia at fourteen 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 or stories of one or a handful of brides. 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. In this wilderness they met animals that had never seen humans before. (Tamara Berthel)

Michael Parker, *If You Want Me to Stay*
A fourteen-year-old boy tells the story of how he did everything he could to save his family after his mother left and his father’s hold on sanity unraveled. On a journey from North Carolina to the coast, Joel and his little brother Tank thread their way back to their mother. (Delia Seigenthaler)

Peter Pezzelli, *Francesca’s Kitchen*
Francesca is a widow whose family lives far away. She is searching for a way to be needed. Through cooking and mothering, she finds a way. This story is about family and love. (Robin Lynn Clinard)
Nathaniel Philbrick, *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*
According to Amazon.com, “The ordeal of the whaleship *Essex* was an event as mythic in the nineteenth century as the sinking of the Titanic was in the twentieth. In 1819, the *Essex* left Nantucket for the South Pacific with twenty crew members aboard. In the middle of the South Pacific the ship was rammed and sunk by an angry sperm whale. The crew drifted for more than ninety days in three tiny whaleboats, succumbing to weather, hunger, disease, and ultimately turning to drastic measures in the fight for survival. Nathaniel Philbrick uses little-known documents—including a long-lost account written by the ship’s cabin boy—and penetrating details about whaling and the Nantucket community to reveal the chilling events surrounding this epic maritime disaster.” (Brittany McFall ’00)

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*
This book has radically changed our perspective on the recent rise in 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)

Esmeralda Santiago, *Cuando era puertorriqueña*
*Cuando era puertorriqueña* is the autobiography of Esmeralda Santiago; it’s her coming-of-age story. Santiago takes the reader through her childhood as a country girl (“jíbara”) to her drastic move to New York at the age of thirteen. Santiago explains to the reader what it was like to be an Other in a new place and an outcast among other minority groups, whether because of her nationality, ethnicity, or language. The autobiography is touching and revealing. All in all, a must-read. Students who are not studying Spanish may enjoy this book in English translation. (Heather McRae)

Robert Schenkkan, *The Kentucky Cycle*
Winner of the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, this play addresses history on a very personal, character-driven level from generation to generation between two Kentucky families; it’s a page-turner, as it involves action, tragic events, love, violence, revenge. (Catherine Coke)

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)

Maria Semple, *Where’d You Go, Bernadette?*
A witty satire of the prep school world—and architecture, Hollywood, and more. Combine an intrepid fifteen-year-old, a missing mother, Antarctica, Seattle, the FBI and a quest, and you get this remarkably funny novel. (Freya Sachs)

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?”

Anne Tyler, Digging to America

In Digging to America, Anne Tyler tells the story of two families, beginning with the arrival of their adopted Korean infants. In this warm-hearted, humorous tale, both families confront in different ways all the usual trials of life in affluent suburban America, leading readers to think about what being “American” really means. (Debbie Davies)

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife’s Tale

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, historian Ulrich “translates” and expands upon the journal Martha Ballard kept during her years as a midwife in Hallowell, Maine. It is a wonderful look into 18th-century life in a small New England town. (Penny Phillips)

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: A Memoir

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