



**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**  
**Summer Reading List**  
**For Students Entering Grade 11**

**Essential Questions:**

1. What does a work of literature have to say about the American Character in terms of the
  - desire for freedom?
  - the search for identity?
  - the conflict between the individual and society?
  - the struggle between good and evil?
  - the pressure to conform?
  
2. What is the nature of the American Dream, and how does it change for different people in different times and places?

<b>Selections</b>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Synopsis</b>
Boyle	<i>The Tortilla Curtain</i>	In this explosive and timely novel, T. Coraghessan Boyle explores an issue that is at the forefront of the political arena. He confronts the controversy over illegal immigration head-on, illuminating through a poignant, gripping story the people on both sides of the issue, the haves and the have-nots. <b>From Penguin.com</b>
Bryson	<i>A Walk in the Woods</i>	Hiking provides only a backdrop to a heartfelt discourse on the social condition of America, local history, the environment, and the complexities of friendship. The pretext for the book was Bryson's interest in "rediscovering America" after returning to the United States after twenty years in Britain. <b>From a review on Amazon.com</b>
Cather	<i>My Antonia</i>	First published in 1918, and set in Nebraska in the late 19th century, <i>My Antonia</i> is the tale of the spirited daughter of a Bohemian immigrant family planning to farm on the untamed land. Antonia, somewhat downtrodden by circumstance and hard work, represents immigrant struggles with a foreign land and tongue, the restraints on women of the time, general human desires, and the American frontier spirit. <b>Amazon.com Review</b>
Enger	<i>Peace Like a River</i>	Reuben "Rube" Land, an asthmatic 11-year-old recalls the events of his childhood in small-town Minnesota circa 1962. In the winter of his 11th year Rube's brother Davy guns down two schoolyard bullies who break into the Lands' house. After Davy's escape from jail, Rube, his younger sister Swede, and their father hit the road too, determined to find Davy. In the end it's in Rube's father that Enger finds something quietly heroic in the bred-in-the-bone Minnesota decency of America's heartland. <b>Amazon.com Review</b>
Kidder	<i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i>	In some readers, this book about infectious disease specialist Paul Farmer may sow the seeds of humanitarian activism. Farmer's goal is nothing less than redressing the "steep gradient of inequality" in medical service to the desperately poor. His work establishing a complex of public health facilities on the central plateau of Haiti forms the keystone to efforts that now encompass initiatives on three continents. Farmer and a trio of friends created a charitable foundation called Partners in Health (PIH). <b>From School Library Journal</b>

Lahiri	<i>The Namesake</i>	On the heels of an arranged wedding, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Ashoke does his best to adapt while his wife pines for home. When their son Gogol is born, the task of naming him reflects their hope of respecting old ways in a new world. With empathy and penetrating insight, Lahiri explores how we respond to parental expectations and how we come to define who we are. <b>Amazon.com (product description)</b>
McCullough	<i>1776</i>	Esteemed historian David McCullough covers the military side of the momentous year of 1776 with characteristic insight and a gripping narrative. McCullough writes vividly about the dismal conditions that troops on both sides had to endure and also explores the importance of motivation and troop morale. Enthralling and superbly written, <i>1776</i> is the work of a master historian. <b>Amazon.com Review</b>
Momaday	<i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i>	Mr. Momaday retells the Kiowa myths that he learned from his grandmother, speculates on the actual history they may symbolize, and describes, with infectious nostalgia, the Indian life he knew as a child. There are distinctive illustrations by the author's father, Al Momaday. <b>Atlantic Monthly Review on Amazon.com</b>
Moody	<i>Coming of Age in Mississippi</i>	Blunt, powerful, and angry, <i>Coming of Age in Mississippi</i> dares the reader to find anything poetic in the lives of black people living in rural Mississippi in the 1940s and 50s, "where they knew ...the price you pay daily for being black." Anne Moody's book is both proof of her convictions and a forthright testament to the sacrifices, terror, and courage that made up the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. From <b>500 Great Books by Women</b>
Posnanski	<i>The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O'Neil's America</i>	Posnanski, sports columnist for the <i>Kansas City Star</i> , spent a year on the road with the iconic Negro Leagues player and manager Buck O'Neil (1911–2006), recording the 94-year-old's encounters with scores of fans and his vast repertoire of entertaining stories. Posnanski paints an uplifting portrait of a man who was without bitterness despite long experience with racial discrimination. <b>From Publishers Weekly</b>
Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Though “Uncle Tom” has become a synonym for a fawning black yes-man, Stowe’s Tom is actually American literature’s first black hero, a man who suffers for refusing to obey his white oppressors. <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> is a living, relevant story, passionate in its vivid depiction of the cruelest forms of injustice and inhumanity—and the courage it takes to fight against them. <b>Amanda Claybaugh (Columbia University) on Barnes and Noble.com</b>
Tan	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i>	Four mothers, four daughters, four families whose histories shift with the four winds depending on who's "saying" the stories. In 1949 four Chinese women, recent immigrants to San Francisco, begin meeting to eat dim sum, play mahjong, and talk. United in shared unspeakable loss and hope, they call themselves the Joy Luck Club. Rather than sink into tragedy, they choose to gather to raise their spirits and money. Forty years later the stories and history continue. <b>Amazon.com Review</b>